



Exploring Foster Parents' Experiences of Well-being During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Conversations with Foster Parents

Date: October 2, 2020

Dear Foster Parent,

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. Our names are Dr. Michael Savage and Dr. Vera Woloshyn. We are faculty members at Brock University and are currently conducting a research study about foster families' well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are inviting you to participate in this research study

There are three ways that you can participate in this research study. First, you are invited to complete an anonymous online survey. Second, you are invited to complete an individual interview. Finally, you can choose to participate in both the anonymous online survey and the individual interview. **The anonymous online survey is anticipated to take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete and the individual interview is expected to take between 45-60 minutes to complete.**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. All information provided through the completion of this study will be kept confidential. Individual participants' responses will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team. At no point, will any identifying information about you, the youth you foster, or the Children's Aid Society/Family and Children's Services agency you work for be included in any published materials or reporting of this study.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (REB File #20-042) and is approved by the Foster Parent Society of Ontario (FPSO) and the League of Ontario Foster Families (LOFF). If you have any questions or require any further information about this study, please contact us using the contact information below.

To access the survey, click the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/fosterparentwellness>

To arrange an individual telephone or video conference interview please contact Michael Savage (msavage@brocku.ca)

Thank you in advance for your consideration to participate in our study.

Sincerely,

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Faculty of Education
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Exploring Foster Parents' Experiences of Well-being During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Conversations with Foster Parents

Principal Investigator: Dr. Michael Savage, 905-688-5550 ext. 6213
msavage@brocku.ca

Co-Investigator: Dr. Vera Woloshyn, 905-688-5550 ext. 4212
vwoloshyn@brocku.ca

DATE: October 2, 2020

Dear Foster Parent

Thank you for expressing your interest in participating in our research study examining foster families' experiences of well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research study is being carried out by Drs. Michael Savage and Vera Woloshyn (Faculty of Education, Brock University) and is approved by the Foster Parent Society of Ontario (FPSO) and the League of Ontario Foster Families (LOFF). We are especially interested in how foster parents maintain and support their own well-being, and how they perceive and support the well-being of the foster youth under their care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHAT IS INVOLVED

As a potential participant, you may elect to participate in either the online survey, individual interview, or both (online survey and individual interview). **Links for the online survey and individual interview are provided at the end of this letter.**

Online Survey

- 1) The anonymous online survey is hosted on SurveyMonkey.
- 2) The online survey contains questions about foster parents and foster youth well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3) The survey consists of both open-ended questions and questions answered using a Likert Scale. It should take you between 30-45 minutes to complete.

Note: SurveyMonkey is located on an American server and is subject to Homeland Security Laws such as the Patriot Act.

Individual Interview

- 1) Individual interviews will be completed with a member of our research team by phone or videoconference (Skype, FaceTime, Microsoft Teams) at a time of your convenience. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete.
- 2) The interview questions will explore your own and your foster youth's experiences of well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 3) Interviews will be audio recorded for subsequent analysis and transcribed by an experienced transcriptionist who has signed a third-party confidentiality form.
- 4) Your interview will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name).

Note: All members of the research team (researchers, graduate students) have signed confidentiality forms. The primary role of the interview will be to listen, although they may ask you questions for clarification.

Online Survey and Individual Interview

- 1) Complete the online survey and the individual interview.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

It is hoped that you will benefit from having an opportunity to discuss and reflect on your beliefs and experiences of well-being during this extraordinary time. Your responses will fill an important gap in the literature by informing researchers and educators about foster family well-being during the global pandemic.

As the online survey and individual interview involve discussion of potentially sensitive topics, it is possible you may experience some degree of psychological distress either during or after the study. The researchers and graduate research assistant have experience in discussing issues related to mental health and wellness and are available to debrief about the study. You will also be provided with a list of local services and resources related to mental health and wellness that you are encouraged to contact if you should experience ongoing distress. Additionally, you may contact your health care provider if you experience any distress.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your personal responses are considered confidential will not be shared with your employer (Children's Aid Society/Family and Children's Services), the FPSO, or colleagues. Your name or any identifying information will not be included in any way with the reporting of study findings. Rather, only general trends and patterns will be reported and shared with the FPSO and other academic outlets.

Online Survey

- All information collected through the online survey is considered anonymous.
- You will not be asked to provide your name while completing the survey.
- No identifying information, including your name, will be included or associated with any survey results.

Individual Interviews

- All information collected through the individual interviews is considered confidential.
- You will be asked to choose a pseudonym (fake name) as part of the interview.
- Pseudonyms and anonymous quotes will be used when reporting the study findings.
- Audio recordings will be confidentially destroyed once transcription is complete.

Note: All written records, notes and other materials related to this research study will be kept in a secured and locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office. All digital and electronic materials will be kept in password-protected file. The data will be kept for seven years. Access to this data will be restricted to the principal investigator, Dr. Michael Savage, co-investigator, Dr. Vera Woloshyn, and their graduate research assistants who have signed confidentiality forms.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are welcome to ask any questions about the research focus, methodology and your involvement in the study at any time.

- You may decline to answer any question or to participate in any component of the study.
- You may request that your entire interview or any section of your be removed from the study.
- You may decide to withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty. If you withdraw from the study, any interview data that you provided will be confidentially destroyed at that time.
- You can withdraw from the survey at any time by pressing the submit button at the end of the survey or by closing the browser window. Any incomplete data will not be included in the study results.

Note: Once you have submitted the online survey, it is impossible to remove your survey responses from the study as the researchers will not be able to identify which submission is yours (anonymous data).

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study will be used in conference presentations and publications. At the conclusion of the study an Executive Summary of the study will be uploaded to the Foster Parents Society of Ontario website under the 'Articles' tab.

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Dr. Michael Savage by email (msavage@brocku.ca). This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (file # 16-062). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

By responding to the links below, I consent to participate in the research study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Letter of Invitation/Informed Consent. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional information I want about the study and understand that I may ask questions at any time in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time and that I may stop any aspect of my participation at any point.

- 1) By clicking the submit button, I agree to participate in the online survey described above.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/fosterparentwellness>
- 2) By emailing msavage@brocku.ca, I agree to participate in the individual interview described above.

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND SERVICES

If, after completing the online survey or the individual interview, you experience any psychological distress the following community mental health supports and service are available to assist you. All of them provide confidential services administered by trained mental health professionals.

Canadian Mental Health Association

The CMHA is a national charitable organization that promotes mental health and wellness. They provide confidential counseling services, rehabilitative programs and support groups to residents across Canada. They accept self-referrals.

<https://cmha.ca/>

info@cmha.ca

416-646-5557

ConnexOntario

They provide free and confidential health services information for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental illness and/or gambling. Their services are live-answer 24/7.

<https://www.connexontario.ca>

1-866-531-2600

Parents for Children's Mental Health

Provide support, education and coping strategies to families so they may be effective in their navigation of the mental health system and support for the children, youth and young adults with mental health challenges under their care.

<http://www.pcmh.ca/>

416-220-0742