



The Quality Parenting Initiative is an approach and philosophy to strengthening foster care including kinship care, by refocusing on quality parenting for all children in the child welfare system. It is a process designed to allow communities to implement strategies and practices that will be meaningful and improve the quality of care within their own communities.

When parents can't care for their children, the foster or relative family must be able to provide the loving, committed, skilled care that the child needs, working effectively with the system to achieve the best possible permanency option for that child. Both the caregiver's parenting skills and the system's policies and practices should be based on child development research, information and tools.

QPI is an effort *to rebrand* foster care, not simply by changing a logo or an advertisement, but by changing the expectations of and support for foster parents and other caregivers. The key elements of the process are:

- defining the expectations of caregivers,
- clearly articulating these expectations (the brand statement), and
- aligning the system so that those goals can become a reality.

When these changes are accomplished, the new brand becomes the basis for developing communication materials and designing integrated recruitment, training and retention systems.

When QP is successful, caregivers have a voice, not only in issues that affect the children they are caring for, but also in the way the system treats children and families. Caregivers, agency staff and birth parents work as a team to support children and youth. Caregivers receive the support and training they need to work with children and families and know what is expected as well as what to expect. Systems are then able to select and retain enough excellent caregivers to meet the needs of each child for a home and family.

Louisiana, along with 9 other states and over 60 sites have formed a network that shares information and ideas about how to improve parenting and recruit and retain excellent families. They develop policies and practices that are based on current child research to support skilled loving parenting. The major successes of the project have been in systems change and improved relationships. Louisiana is focused on achieving some of the same measurable improvement in outcomes as other states such as:

- Reduced unplanned placement changes;
- Reduced use of group care;
- Reduced numbers of sibling separation; and
- More successful improvements in reunification.

QPI implementation began in July, 2016 in Covington and Lafayette regions with the final region, Baton Rouge, launching QPI in May 2017. Cross-section community stakeholder teams have been formed to address local priorities such as joint education and training of system team members, improving communication between foster parents, birth parents, other system members, information sharing and confidentiality guidelines, and improved and increased participation in court processes; all focusing on improving the quality of care children experience while in foster care.

For more information on QPI see [www.qpi4kids.org](http://www.qpi4kids.org) and beginning in June 2017, track LA QPI at [www.lcwta.org/qpi](http://www.lcwta.org/qpi)