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## 2021 Open Courts Pilot Project: Final Phase

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by

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### Summary Abstract

Between May 2021 and early June 2021, the final phase of the Open Courts Pilot Project (the “Project”) was implemented to study the feasibility and desirability of the opening or limited opening to the public of certain juvenile court proceedings, except in proceedings related to sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup> During this phase of the Project, the evaluation was expanded beyond previously used local pilot and control sites to involve surveying all judges and parties statewide who would be affected by opening child welfare proceedings. As described in [2018-05](#) and [2020-02](#) the Administrative Office of the Courts conducted a statewide survey of judges, parties, and caregivers who have experience in the juvenile proceedings described below:

- Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse (DNA) proceedings under KRS Chapter 620<sup>2</sup>, and
- Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings under KRS Chapter 625<sup>3</sup>.

Two survey questionnaires were developed. One was distributed to judges who preside over child welfare proceedings and the other questionnaire was sent to current and former participants including foster/adoptive parents, guardians, relative caregivers, youth who experienced out-of-home care, and other participating stakeholders.<sup>4</sup> Initial analysis of the questionnaire data indicate the opinions from

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<sup>1</sup> [KRS 21A.190](#).

<sup>2</sup> KRS Chapter 620, “DNA Cases”: [Kentucky Revised Statutes - Chapter 620](#).

<sup>3</sup> KRS Chapter 625, “TPR Cases”: [Kentucky Revised Statutes - Chapter 625](#).

<sup>4</sup> The participant survey questionnaire was also completed by professional participants, such as educators, social workers, therapists, and other advocates. [Open Courts Family Survey 2021 - Formstack](#)

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

judges (19 judges responded) and participants (264 respondents with 80% being classified within the foster and adoptive parent role) were mixed when asked about the effects of opening DNA or TPR cases on children and families. Data from the completed 2021 surveys reflected diverse views. Responses to opening DNA and TPR court hearings ranged from being beneficial, neutral, to having a negative impact. These different sentiments were found among judge respondents and stakeholders. However, the judges identified possible negative impacts that opening court would have on children and families involved in the comment sections. While stakeholders were more evenly split between being beneficial or not, reasons for their respective opinion differed between the judges and other respondents.

Caution must be given when making conclusions about the the 2021 Open Courts Pilot Project findings. First, there were few judges completing the questionnaire. Nineteen judges out the Kentucky judiciary responded. This response rate is below the acceptable reponse rate of 50% or higher.<sup>5</sup> Second, potential stakeholders were contacted through convenience sampling,<sup>6</sup> which is not based on a complete list or population of potential stakeholders, in which probability sampling can be conducted. Convenience sampling of the stakeholder was based on selection of Family and Juvenile Service's (FJS) contacts and self-selection of those who were contacted by FJS to distribute the participant surveys. This sampling method was chosen since a total contact list of all potential stakeholder exists. Within current resources and time constraints, convenience sampling allowed FJS to reach a nonparametric sample. Third, the low response from family members and children also must be taken into account when interpreting the results. The quantitative and qualitative findings from both questionnaires, therefore, cannot be generalized across the Commonwealth, because the participants do not represent the total populations of judges or stakeholders, respectively. However, recommendations are made available for consideration.

## Introduction

In 2016, the Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill (SB) 40, which requested that the Supreme Court of Kentucky institute a pilot project to study the feasibility and desirability of opening court proceedings related to dependency, neglect, and abuse (DNA) and termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings, except for proceedings related to sexual abuse. SB 40 provided the Kentucky court system with guidelines for the implementation of the Open Courts Pilot Project: [KRS 21A.190](#), which provides the framework for the project; [KRS 21A.192](#), which provides the procedures that shall be followed; and [KRS 610.072](#), which addresses the attendance of the public at these hearings. The pilot project would last for four years unless extended by the General Assembly. The Supreme Court of Kentucky accepted the request and initiated the Open Courts Pilot Project using the parameters set by SB 40.

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<sup>5</sup> Nulty, D. "The adequacy of response rates to online and paper surveys: what can be done?" [Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education](#) Volume 33, 2008 - [Issue 3](#).

<sup>6</sup> Taherdoost, Hamed, Sampling Methods in Research Methodology; How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research (April 10, 2016). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3205035> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3205035>.

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is required to monitor and evaluate the pilot project to determine:

1. Whether there are adverse effects resulting from the opening of certain proceedings or release of records;
2. Whether the pilot project demonstrates a benefit to the litigants;
3. Whether the pilot project demonstrates a benefit to the public;
4. Whether the pilot project supports a determination that such proceedings should be presumptively open;
5. Whether the pilot project supports a determination that such proceedings should be closed;
6. How open proceedings under the pilot project impact the child;
7. The parameters and limits of the program;
8. Suggestions for operation and improvement of the program;
9. Rule changes which may be needed if the program is to be made permanent and expanded to all courts; and
10. Recommendations for statutory changes which may be needed if the program is to be made permanent and expanded to all courts.<sup>7</sup>

The final evaluation of the Open Family Courts Pilot Project involved a statewide survey of judges, parties, and caregivers who have experience in child welfare cases. The survey instruments consisted of multiple-choice opinion statements and open-ended space for additional explanations of responses regarding the effects of opening DNA and TPR proceedings on:

- The children and family members involved in the case;
- The public attending the proceeding; and
- The accountability of the professionals involved in the case.

## Methods for Evaluating Open Court Pilot Project Final Phase

Between the months of May 2021 and early June 2021, the final phase of the Open Courts Pilot Project was implemented to study the support for opening or limited opening of Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse (DNA) proceedings under KRS Chapter 620 and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings under KRS Chapter 625 to the public. During the final phase, the evaluation was expanded to seek statewide input instead the previous methods of targeting specific pilot and control sites as authorized by the Orders of the Supreme Court of Kentucky in [2018-05](#) and in [2020-02](#).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> KRS 21A.190(3)(c).

<sup>8</sup> The first and second pilot project evaluations were conducted per Orders of the Supreme Court of Kentucky in [2018-05](#) and in [2020-02](#). The first order authorized: Jefferson (Circuit 30), Hopkins (Circuit 4), and Harrison, Nicholas, Pendleton and Robertson (Circuit 18) Counties as the pilot project sites. Jefferson County is an urban area containing the largest city in

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Respondents**

Surveys were distributed through email directly to the judges, while the Executive Officer of the AOC Department of Family and Juvenile Services (FJS) emailed agencies asking for assistance in contacting stakeholders associated with the given agency emailed (refer to Appendix B for email messages). Below is the list of agencies contacted requesting their participation in the respective surveys.

Survey Questionnaire	Agencies Contacted
<b>Judge</b>	Judges who hear DNA and/or TPR proceedings, Kentucky Court of Justice
<b>Participant/Stakeholder</b>	Citizen Foster Care Review Board Volunteers, Kentucky Court of Justice (CFCRB)
	Department of Community Based Services, Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (DCBS)
	Adopt Us Kids
	Kinship KY
	Adoption Support for Kentucky (ASK)
	Family Resources and Youth Services Centers
	Foster Parent Mentor Program
	Kentucky Foster & Adoptive Parent Training Support Network
	Kentucky Foster and Adoptive Care Association (KFACA)
	Family Recovery Court (Jefferson County, Kentucky Court of Justice)
	Families Moving Beyond Abuse (Bullitt)
	Helping Hands
	Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams, Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (START)

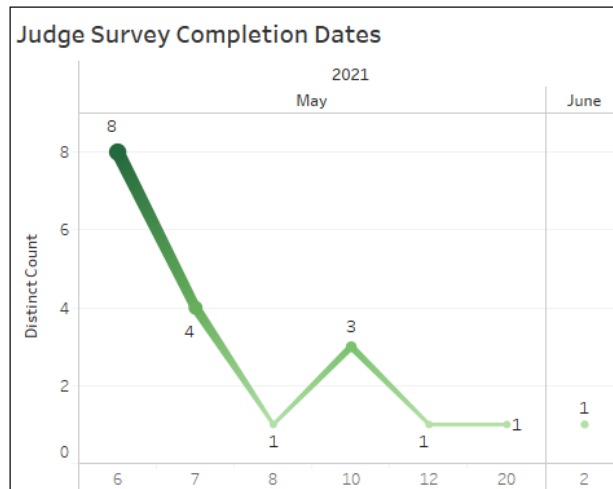
Judge Respondents

Nineteen (19) judges who preside over DNA and/or TPR cases completed the survey. Below is the completion line graph depicting the number of questionnaires completed between May 6 and June 2, 2021. With such a low response rate, the statistical results and conclusions cannot be generalized, but will only apply to the nineteen (19) judge respondents (refer to Appendix C for judge respondents).

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Kentucky, while the other counties were classified as being more rural. Demographically similar control sites were also chosen. The control site observations provided baseline information, which will be compared with the open court proceedings. The counties agreeing to be the control group for the project were Fayette (Circuit 22), Christian (Circuit 3), and Ohio, Butler, Edmonson, and Hancock (Circuit 38) counties. The second order authorized: Divisions 1, 2, 5 and, 6 of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Family Court as the open court pilot site, to determine the feasibility and support for opening DNA and TPR proceedings.

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE



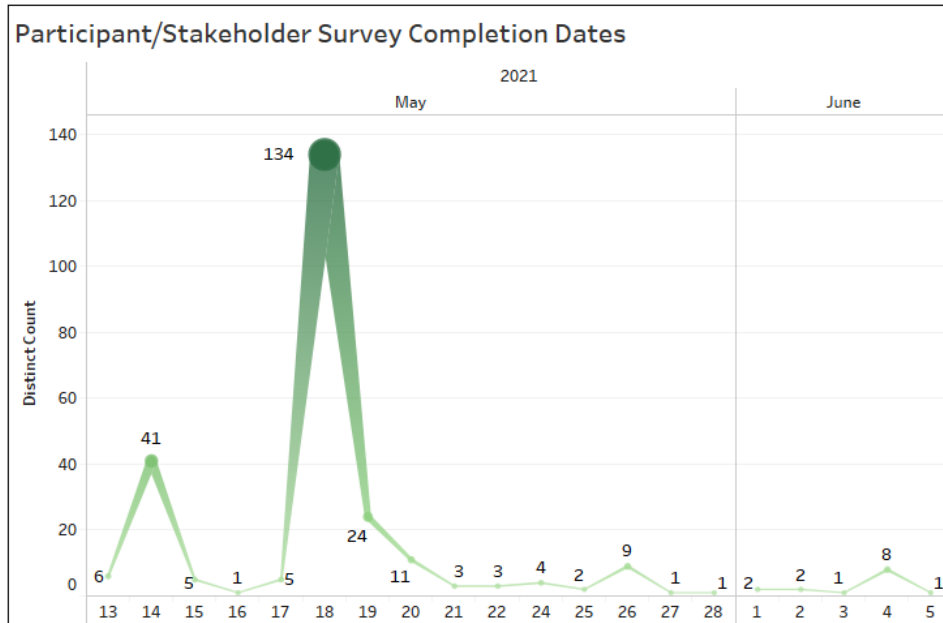
Stakeholder Respondents

In contrast, the list of potential stakeholder respondents was derived from convenient sampling of known agencies (state government and nonprofit organizations). Each agency was emailed the purpose and web address of the questionnaire and were specifically requested by FJS’s Executive Officer to:

“...distribute the below survey to people in your organization, program, board, coalition, and/or initiative to gather their thoughts on opening child welfare court to the public...we want to gather more input from those who are directly affected by child welfare court cases: parents, foster parents, caregivers, and youth with former experience in care. To that end, would you please share the short anonymous survey, linked below, to anyone who fits one of these categories?”

Between May 13 and June 5, 2021, a total of 264 stakeholders completed the questionnaire originally distributed to the above-mentioned agencies. The statistical results and conclusions cannot be generalized to all foster/adoptive parents, guardians, relatives, youth who experienced out-of-home care, and other stakeholders, because the possible respondents were not derived from random sampling of a total population.

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE



Approximately 80 percent of the respondents were classified within the Foster and Adoption Parent role category. The individual groupings by respondents' specified roles are presented in Appendix D.

Role	%	Distinct Count
Foster and Adoptive Parent	80.7%	213
Advocate	7.2%	19
FRYSC School	4.5%	12
Relative Placement	3.4%	9
Social Worker Therapist	3.8%	10
No Response	0.4%	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>264</b>

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

## Survey Questionnaires

Two separate survey questionnaires were designed using [Formstack](#):

- Judges who preside over DNA and/or TPR proceedings.
- Stakeholders, such as foster/adoptive parents, guardians, relatives, and youth who experienced out of home care.<sup>9</sup>

Formstack's no-code productivity solution allowed FJS to easily develop both survey instruments using SmartList forms, and the drag and drop builder. The online survey form was mobile responsive, so survey respondent could easily access the survey using any e-device. Each survey questionnaire had a unique URL, or web address, which enabled the respondent to complete the questions. To ensure the results remained anonymous, the contact information was not statistically analyzed. The Executive Officer emailed the judges and participant group members their respective questionnaires (see Appendix A for example of both email messages).

Opinion statements from the previous two pilot site evaluations were queried again, with some statements being modified for more precision. The survey instrument for the judges requested opinions on the effects of opening DNA and TPR proceedings having:

- Positive to negative impact on preparation, quality, and efficiency of the proceeding itself;
- Positive to negative impact on the children and families, on the parties, and on the public attending the proceeding;
- Agree to Disagree with possible positive impact on the accountability of professionals to the children involved in the proceedings; and
- Agree to Disagree whether opening the proceedings would be beneficial for children and families, and parties.

As with the other phase's questionnaire, the judge respondents were given opportunities throughout the questionnaire to explain their specific 5-point opinion scale responses.

The stakeholder survey questionnaire opinion statements focused on the effects of opening DNA and TPR proceedings:

- Would have on the overall outcome of the case;
- Would be helpful to the respondent; and
- Would have on the attention each professional noted gave to the case.

The respondents used the 5-point opinion scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree to express their opinion and were given an opportunity to further explain their respective scaled opinion responses.

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<sup>9</sup> The participant survey questionnaire was also completed by professional participants, such as educators, social workers, therapists, and other advocates.

## Statistical Analyses

In this section, statistical results are reported from the questionnaires distributed to the judges (19 respondents) and stakeholders (264 respondents). The answers from the respective surveys were exported into two separate Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets. Using Tableau Prep Builder (Version 19.4.2), each spreadsheet was prepared, edited, and adapted into a Tableau user-friendly data extract. The statistical analyses of each data extract were calculated and displayed visually using Tableau Desktop Professional Edition (Version 2019.4.8).

For both questionnaires, five-point scaled responses are presented as horizontal stacked bar charts and crosstabulation tables. The crosstabulations including all responses, along with additional explanations to opinion statements, are made available within Appendices C (judge respondents) and D (stakeholders).

### Judges: Effect on Having Case Open

When asked about the impact of opening child welfare cases to the public, most judges responded:

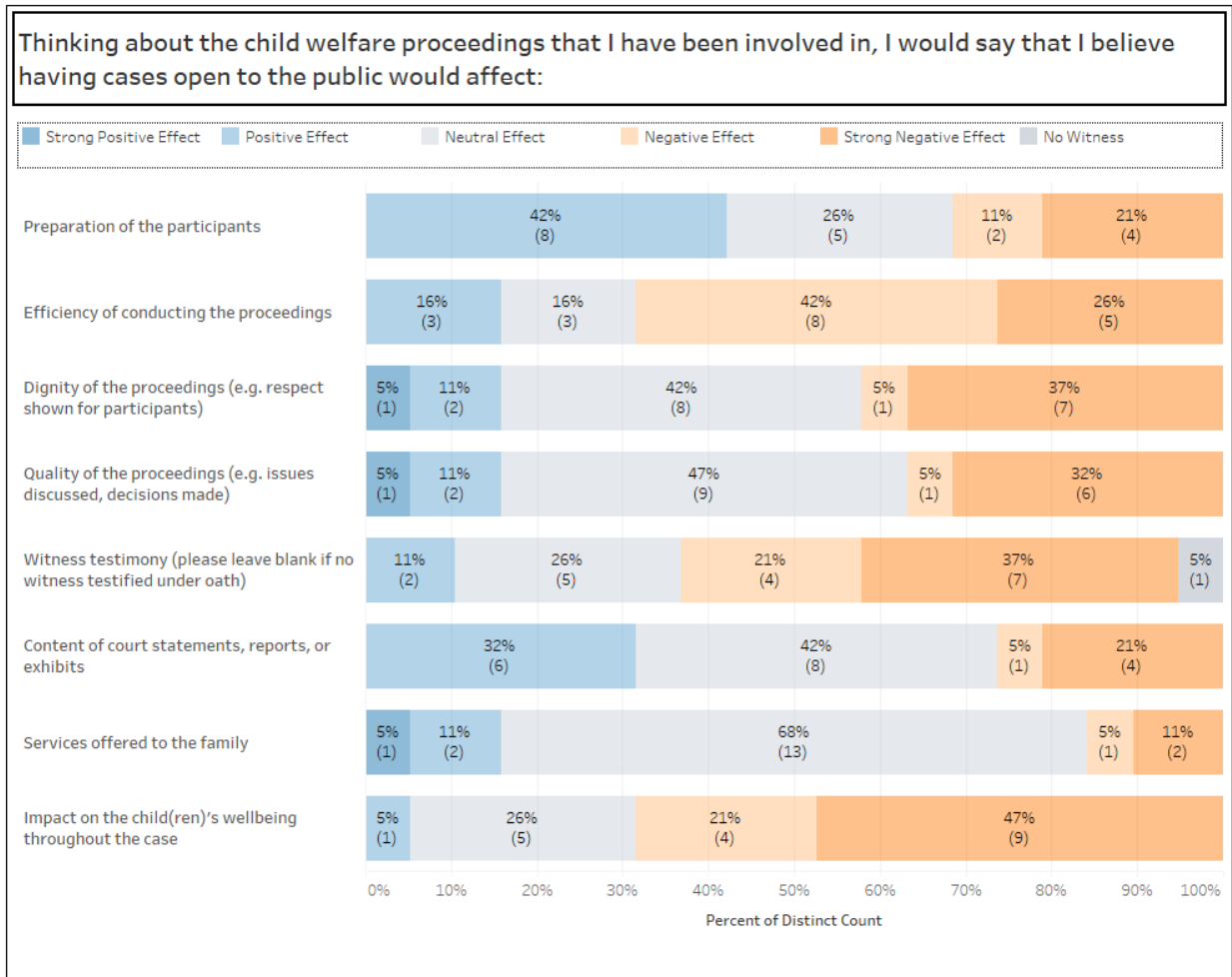
- Negatively regarding the impacts on the child(ren)'s wellbeing throughout the case (68%), the efficiency of conducting the proceedings (68%), and witness testimony given during the proceedings (58%)
- In contrast, most felt there would be no effect on the services offered to the family (68%; Neutral Effect)

As for the other aspects of the case, the largest percentage of judge respondents believed opening the cases to the public would have a:

- Positive to neutral effect on preparing the participants or the court statements, reports, or exhibits (68%)
- Negative to neutral effect on the dignity of the proceedings (88%)
- Neutral to negative effect on the quality of the proceedings (83%)



2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE



Although most respondents did not make additional comments (14 indicated “No Response”), four (4) did have additional explanations for keeping the cases closed. According to those comments, allowing the public to be present will have negative impact on the children and family members, particularly concerning court decorum and communication. Moreover, the commenting respondents stated that case information should remain confidential for the children’s well-being.

**Thinking about the child welfare proceedings that I have been involved in, I would say that I believe having cases open to the public would affect: Additional Comments**

**Allowing people from the public to be present for an AD or DNA case, other than attorneys, case workers, and/or service providers can only NEGATIVELY affect the court proceedings in all aspects of a DNA or AD case. I believe we would see people claiming to be family friends or a friend of friend, or a family member's girlfriend who just want to come and listen to what is going on with other people's lives. It would be a disaster, as parents who are trying to get their life together will feel as if they cannot express that they have relapsed or be honest about mistakes for fear of how the public would perceive them . Not to mention when children are being talked about in these reports of the cases and testified to, you are talking about serious issues in a child's life that now someone who wants to listen can then spread to the whole world that information through social media or other outlets and that could detrimentally affect those children and their mental wellbeing. I am Strongly against allowing these proceedings to be open as a Judge and as a former attorney who worked in this field for several years. All the attorneys in my area feel the same way I do. If this is an issue about space and**

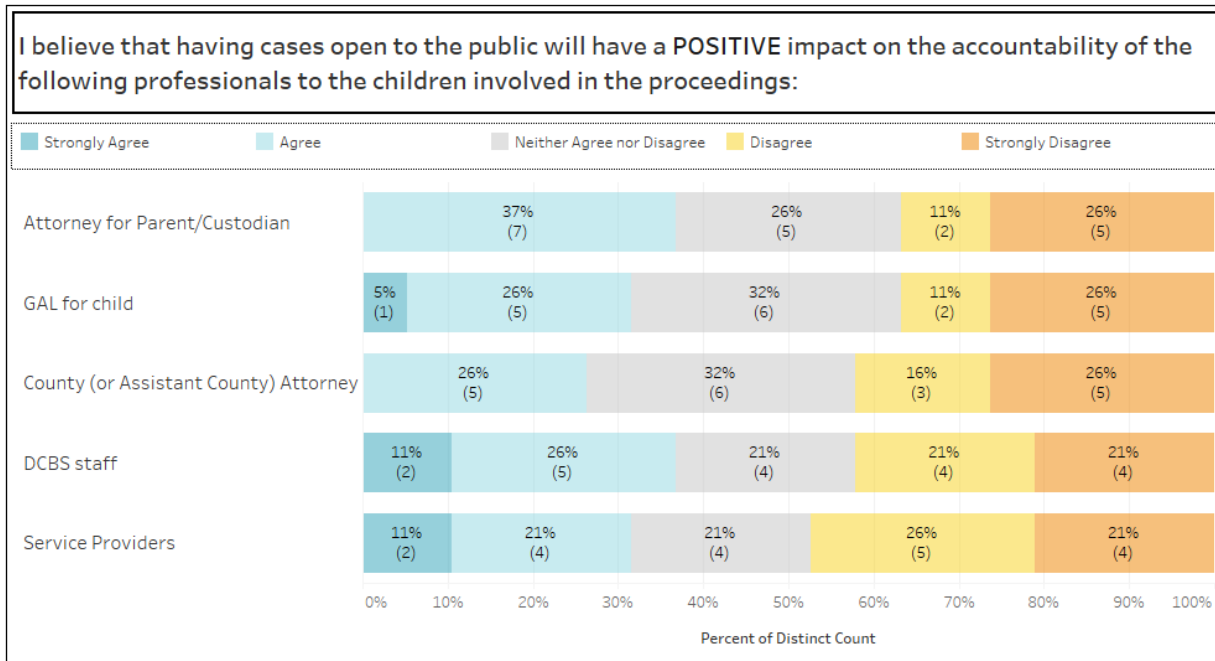
2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Thinking about the child welfare proceedings that I have been involved in, I would say that I believe having cases open to the public would affect: Additional Comments**

sealing files and keeping in a locked area is a problem can there not be better ways to solve that issue than to allow private, serious information about children and their family members from being accessed by the public.	
I am concerned that opening the proceedings could result in the Jerry Springer show. The main reason to open them, in my view, is to dispel the public perception that we are hiding something.	1
Opening DNA cases serves no legitimate purpose and would impair the Court and the litigant's ability to have useful dialogue. Remember we were elected to do what is right not what is popular. Keep these proceedings confidential.	1
Opening the Court room in all cases just makes the temptation to play to the gallery worse. The larger the group present, the harder it is for children to talk.	1

**Judges: Impact on Accountability**

Overall, the judge respondents tended to be evenly split between Agree and Disagree “that having the cases open to the public will have a positive impact on the accountability of the professionals to the children involved in the proceedings.” Regarding the accountability opinion statement for DCBS staff judges tended to respond evenly distributed between Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. As for Services Providers, more judges disagreed with the opinion statement.



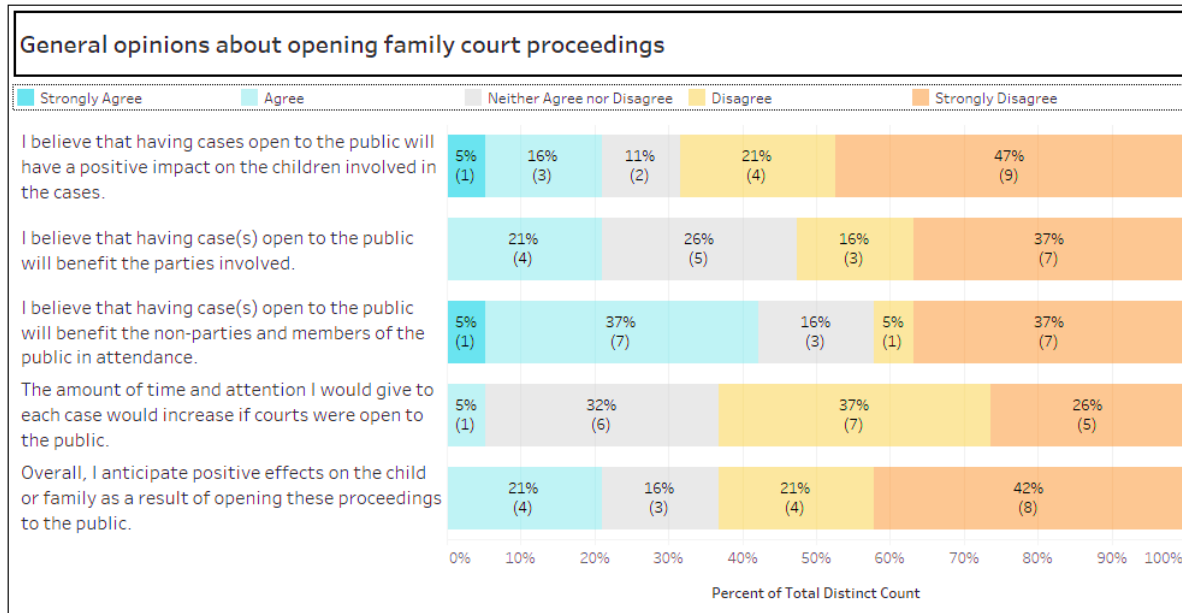
Below are additional comments conveying that four of the judge respondents believed all parties should be professional, regardless of whether the cases are open to the public, and it is their responsibility to hold professionals accountable.

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

<b>I believe that having cases open to the public will have a positive impact on the accountability of the following professionals to the children involved in the proceedings.</b>	
<b>Accountability is the court's job.</b>	1
<b>I don't think it would have an impact at all. If anything, it may hinder the process and less questions would be asked for fear the public may use that info inappropriately.</b>	1
<b>I HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE REGARDLESS IF THE PUBLIC IS THERE OR NOT. THESE CASES ARE RECORDED.</b>	1
<b>If people are professional, having an audience would not matter.</b>	1

**Judges: General Opinions**

The questionnaire for judges also included five general opinion statements (see the statements in the graph below). Each statement had responses ranging from the Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, with the opportunity to explain their responses (Appendix C).



Generally, most of the judge’s responses ranged from Strongly Disagreed to Disagreed with the following opinion statements:

- “I believe that having cases open to the public will have a positive impact on **the children** involved in the cases.” (68% of judge respondents Strongly Disagreed to Disagreed)
- “I believe that having case(s) open to the public will benefit the **parties involved**. (53% of judge respondents Strongly Disagreed to Disagreed)
- “The amount of **time and attention** I would give to each case would increase if courts were open to the public.” (63% of judge respondents Strongly Disagreed to Disagreed)
- “Overall, I anticipate positive effects on **the child or family** as a result of opening these proceedings to the public.” (63% of judge respondents Strongly Disagreed to Disagreed)

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Below are examples of additional comments for the above opinion statements having Disagree to Strongly Disagree statements.

I believe that having cases open to the public will have a positive impact on the children involved in the cases.		
<b>Disagree</b>	I am concerned that the children will be told more about what happens in court.	1
	The only parties to "benefit" are those who are not already necessary and beneficial to the process. The court involves those who offer positive benefits for the children already. Opening these cases will have a chilling effect on candid conversations and solutions.	1
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	IT IS NOT THEIR FAULT OF CHILDREN THAT THEY ARE IN COURT. THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN DONE TO THEM SHOULD NOT BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. AND CHILDREN SHOULD NOT HAVE TO TESTIFY BEFORE A CROWD OF UNKNOWN PEOPLE.	1
	It puts the child in a spotlight they do not want or need. My normal court has CASA volunteers, social workers, lawyers, family members, and assorted court personnel present in every case. I have let the media in every time there has been a request. This is more than enough to insure the child's interest is guarded. Why not ask a child whether they would rather testify in front of a larger group of people or smaller?	1
	Sensitive matters involving children and families should not be open to the public.	1
	The children receive no benefit from the proceedings being open to the public. The proceedings take longer due to the necessity of admonishing the public, and the discussions are less open and honest. If we are to truly help these children, the discussions from service providers must include full and honest disclosure. Additionally, the presence of the public has a chilling effect on the parents' willingness to admit mistakes and ask for help, particularly when they know the people who are observing.	1

I believe that having case(s) open to the public will benefit the parties involved.		
<b>Disagree</b>	Parties are in crisis in these cases. Adding the role of spectacle to them will not benefit these families.	1
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	See above, it will only hurt the parties involved, especially the children who do not want their information for the public to see, as well as the parents who are trying to get their lives back together.	1
	THESE CASES ARE HECTIC AND STRESSFUL ENOUGH WITHOUT HAVING TO DEAL WITH A CROWD FULL OF PEOPLE SITTING IN THE COURTROOM. I REALLY DON'T SEE ANY BENEFIT TO THE PARENTS HAVING THE PUBLIC INVOLVED.	1

The amount of time and attention I would give to each case would increase if courts were open to the public.		
<b>Disagree</b>	Parties are my focus. Not the public.	1
	The size of the audience would not impact my attention to the cases.	1
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	I do not adjust the time or attention that I give to any case based on who may be observing. All cases, whether confidential or not, receive the amount of time and attention necessary to reach a fair resolution or decision. The amount of time is impacted by the number of cases and the seriousness of each case that is on the docket.	1
	I take every case very seriously, and I spent every moment that needs to be spent on a case regardless of who is in the courtroom. In my area we already have people who want to come in that have no business coming into a courtroom of a confidential case, changing that policy would only serve those nosy people who want to know what is going on with everyone and then could be disastrous if they spread that information about people's private lives going through the most difficult times in their lives.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Overall, I anticipate positive effects on the child or family as a result of opening these proceedings to the public.		
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<p>I WILL SAY THAT THE PUBLIC HAS NO IDEA OF HOW MANY DEPENDENCY, NEGLECT AND ABUSE CASES THAT EXIST IN THEIR COUNTY. MAKING THESE CASES PUBLIC WOULD BRING THAT TO LIGHT. WITH THAT SAID, THE CHILD SHOULD NOT HAVE TO GO THROUGH LIFE WITH THE PUBLIC KNOWING THE HORRIBLE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN DONE TO THEM.</p> <p>THESE CASES SHOULD BE TREATED WITH RESPECT, IN A QUIET COURTROOM WHERE WE CAN ALL CLEARLY HEAR WHAT IS BEING SAID AND THE PARTIES, COUNSEL, SOCIAL WORKERS AND CASA FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH SAYING WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID. I FEAR THAT AN OPEN COURTROOM MAY HINDER THIS ASPECT OF THE COURT PROCEEDINGS.</p>	1
	<p>When we began this pilot project I was Strongly in favor of opening the courts to the public. However, after doing so, I changed my position completely. The chilling effect on the parents was enormous and the detriment to the child in losing confidentiality cannot be remediated.</p>	1

When considering the public or non-parties attending an open court proceeding, the judge respondents either agreed or disagreed with the statement:

- “I believe that having case(s) open to the public will benefit the non-parties and members of the public in attendance.”

Refer to Appendix C for all additional explanations given to general opinion statements.

**Stakeholders: Effect on Outcomes and Parties**

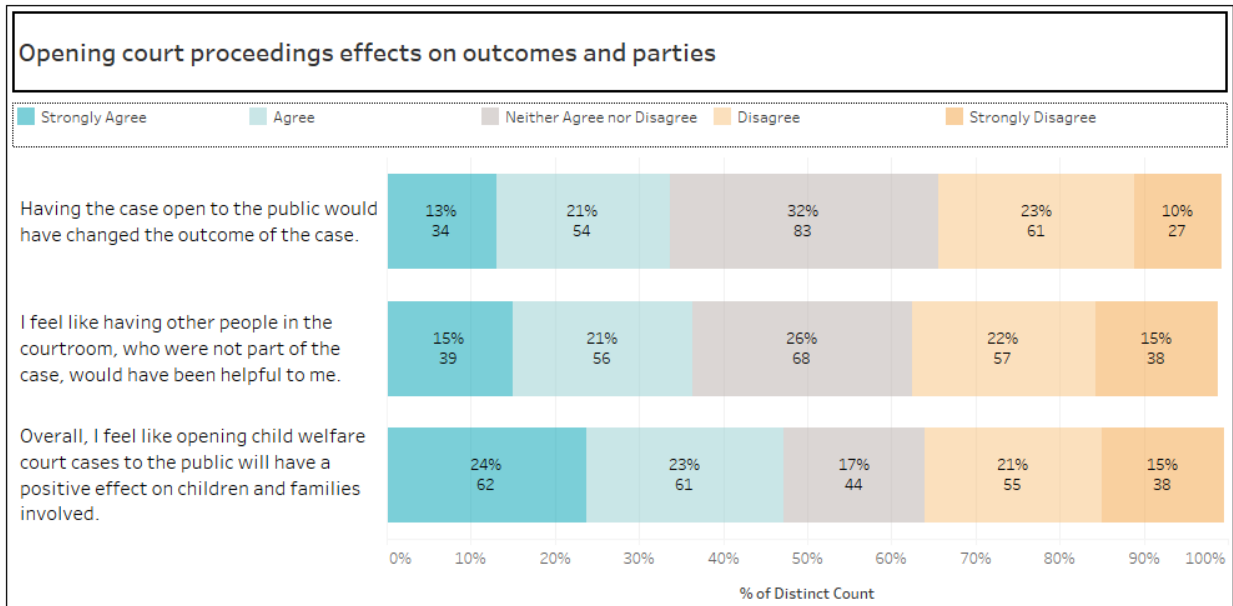
The 264 respondents of the stakeholder questionnaire were nearly split between agreeing and disagreeing with the opinion statements:

- “Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.”
- “I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of the case, would have been helpful to me.”

While slightly more respondents tended to Agree (47%) than Disagree (36%) with the statement:

- “Overall, I feel like opening child welfare court cases to the public will have a positive effect on children and families involved.

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE



The additional explanations for each opinion statement sorted by respondent’s role category and opinion scale responses are found in Appendix D.

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Respondents**

Since approximately 80 percent of the respondents were classified as foster and adoptive parent role category, their additional explanations associated with either Strongly Agree or Strongly Disagree are specifically examined.

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Category: “Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.”**

Examples of explanations given by Foster and Adoptive Parent respondents are noted below. Those having Strongly Agree scale responses tended to believe either opening the court proceedings would be beneficial to finding the truth, or harmful to the parties involved.

Foster and Adoptive Parent <u>Strongly Agree</u> Additional Comments: Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.	
Any person who views the situation logically would come to a better conclusion than the judge did.	1
As a foster parent and police officer I believe the whole picture of the child's life is missed. I am for keeping families together but not a such a disservice to some children.	1
Being able to know exactly what our foster children have witnessed and went through is the only way to truly understand the behaviors the exhibit and proper ways to help them.	1
I believe that if more people were involved in the case, they would see how poorly the judge does his job for these foster children. That is why so many kids are in foster care. Because the judge will not sign papers.	1
I think the more people you have that will voice their opinion for the kids, the better the chance they kids will stay out of a bad home life. Social workers see the kids once a month, but friends, family, Daycare's, schools etc. see them on a regular basis a can see what progress the child has made. A lot of them are going back home to the same abuse, and the more people the children must voice their concerns then maybe they will be heard and saved.	1
If the public was aware of the situation with the parents, they would disagree with most of the judgements passed I. Family court. It's absolutely a disgraceful system - placing children back in addicts care, separating	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent <u>Strongly Agree</u> Additional Comments:	
Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.	
siblings and ultimately being a circus act in court with some judges berating foster parents for filing CPS reports. It's absurd.	
Open to the public would have allowed day care workers, teachers, and medical providers to speak regarding the child's status and give recommendations.	1
Public would make it hard for all involved.	1
The courts will act different when they are open to public criticism, which in my opinion is a very good thing.	1
The judge in our case has not had an opportunity to see all the children in person and together to see their behaviors and needs, to assess the possibility of healthy reunification and the ability of the parents to care for the high needs of their children.	1
This is a violation of the children's privacy and the right to have agency over their own stories. Additionally, I just sat through a TPR case for my foster son and the level of abuse and neglect his bio parents faced growing up was traumatic to everyone involved in the case. These hearings are not for public consumption and should remain private.	1
Transparency and people who knew things could help with truth	1

Foster and Adoptive parents indicating Strongly Disagree with the opinion statement “Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case” tended to assume that opening the court would have no impact or negative impact. For examples, see below.

Foster and Adoptive Parent <u>Strongly Disagree</u> Additional Comments:	
Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case	
Being open to the public does not change the facts and only increases emotions.	1
Children's life needs to be protected from people who just want to be nosey	1
I assume the public would only be there to observe the case and not participate. I do not see how that would have any impact on the proceedings.	1
I cannot imagine how additional observers would have altered the issues addressed. Either the family members of my placement completed their plans for reunification, or they did not.	1
In our children's case the biological parents may have brought their extended families into the courtroom, but these individuals were not approved by DCBS to care for the children. So, having them there, if anything, may have hurt the case of each of the biological parents (separated). In the end, TPR occurred in our children's case.	1

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Category: “I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of the case would have been helpful to me.”**

Among Foster and Adoptive Parent respondents who indicated they Strongly Agree to the opinion statement “Opening the proceedings would be helpful to the respondents” believed the new process would: make the case more efficient and/or effective; would enable respondents to have advocate/support person(s); would encourage all points of view to be expressed during the proceedings; and also improve accountability of the parties.

Foster and Adoptive Parent <u>Strongly Agree</u> Additional Comments:	
I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of the case, would have been helpful to me.	
Again, our paperwork had been lost so many times and no one seemed to communicate. With a public hearing, other people would have been able to see how ridiculous the process was.	1
As a Foster Parent you are being in opposition to the parents. Everyone else has a support person, but we are not allowed to have one and must weather court alone.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent <b>Strongly Agree</b> Additional Comments: I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of the case, would have been helpful to me.	
For us, our children suffered substantiated physical abuse. Hearing about it is sometimes traumatic, but necessary for us to fully understand and help them. Our support system which our children have adopted as part of their own support systems would benefit from knowing some of this information also. So, it would not help with trials/reviews, but would help our parents to understand some of the behaviors they witness. (And that makes addressing the behavior more effective as they could help address the cause and not just the behavior itself.)	1
Also, they would be emotional support for us while we hear things that cause a degree of trauma when hearing about things that happened to children you love and protect.	
Having my family my wife's family and our support system there would've been very important	1
I had to speak openly in court about the care and condition of the children in the presence of the birth family and would have liked to have someone there to support me during that process.	1
I think more people watching the case will allow more people to encourage those making decisions for children would try to work at a better pace.	1
I would like to have had someone advocating for us and the boys.	1
To protect our anonymity, we relinquished our right to participate in the hearing. We didn't want to give up that right, but we also didn't want to have our names and address distributed to the birth family. Ultimately, we decided that keeping our address unknown for the safety of the child was more important than our need to participate, but we shouldn't have to choose. If public could attend, we could be there without having to be named on the paperwork and still protect the child.	1
More eyes onto the case are better for accountability	1
See above. Also, we were only told about 1 court date in the 15 months we had our foster son. The case worker refused to tell us when court was	1
Taking people in the community and bringing them into the court room allows them to get different perspectives. Real life people. Not just social workers and judges who feel they can do or say whatever they want because "That's what has always been done".	1
There're always 2 sides to a story or more. The child needs more people to speak on their behalf.	1
Witnesses	1
Yes, yes, yes! Your village is always helpful.	1
Yes. The support from a variety of people is best for children in foster care. The social workers only see a glimpse of the child's status and sometimes lack time to gather and evaluate the comments from all parties involved. The lack of information results with the courts making decisions that may not be in the best interest of the children.	1

As for the foster and adoptive parent respondents who answered Strongly Disagree to whether opening the courtroom would be helpful to them, their additional comments emphasized the following negative consequences: opening the case to the public would be distracting, confusing, disrespectful, and dangerous. Some concluded these cases should remain private.

Foster and Adoptive Parent <b>Strongly Disagree</b> Additional Comments: I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of the case, would have been helpful to me.	
As a foster parent it isn't helpful having more people involved. And the children in my care have not been assisted by the amount of people that know their personal business. Opening the possibility of public exposure to the abuse a child has been through is not helpful.	1
I believe with child abuse on the rise, more steps should be taken to protect the children.	
To open the court to other abusers and media could only be harmful to those already abused.	
<b>PRIVACY IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILDREN AND AFFECTED FAMILY MEMBERS.</b>	



2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent <b>Strongly Disagree</b> Additional Comments:	
I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of the case, would have been helpful to me.	
Because the court is supposed to find the truth. Individual needs to know what they are dealing with.	1
Having other people in the court room would be a distraction and not add anything to the proceedings unless they had direct involvement with the case.	1
I feel that it may have confused the issues	1
I Strongly disagree with this. Family members or friends that are considered family or persons who are Strongly tied to the case, yes absolutely should be allowed in, they can be a great resource to a hurting family. But, having just any person put their 2 cents into something that is none of their business in the first place is dangerous and uncalled for.	1
I think ANY case involving children with abusive and drug abusing parents should remain private to protect the children and foster parents from people who are not directly effective. Opening courts allows potentially dangerous people access to victimize children and foster parents.	1
In fact, strangers to me and to the child placed with me did attempt on one occasion to get into the courtroom, and this made me very uncomfortable. Specifically, one of the child's parents had other older children who had been adopted by a couple from elsewhere in the state. They were attempting, without standing, to get custody of the child placed with me. One of them posted on social media about the court case, sharing personal information about the child placed with me that upset me. I felt it violated the child's privacy and might even make the child unsafe. Then the adoptive couple showed up at a court date and tried to get in. I spoke with them outside the courtroom, and they seemed well-meaning. However, there were already multiple family members aiming to get custody of the child placed with me, and the added drama of these strangers showing up made the circumstances feel more stressful. I was glad that they weren't allowed into the courtroom. I worried about my placement's privacy being further violated.	1
Others make things distracting	1
There is no reason for anyone to be able to hear the details of abuse and neglect that are not parties to the case. Period.	1
This is one of my biggest complaints about court. These cases are life altering for kids, families and foster families. Having others in the room, not affiliated with the case, is problematic. I have been in court when a goal was changed to adoption, mom was struggling a lot, very emotional. And there were unaffiliated attorneys, workers and others who were laughing. It was terrible. They were likely laughing at something else entirely, but it didn't matter in that moment. Court should be a private and very professional place. In my experience, and I have over 10 years' experience in multiple counties, this practice undermines the process.	1
To me if they aren't involved with the child in some way it would make the child feel embarrassed and stressed...	1

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Role Category: “Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.”**

In contrast to the previous opinion statements, the overall statement had more respondents Agree than Disagree that opening child welfare cases would have a “positive effect on children and families involved.” Below are examples of additional explanations to the response Strongly Agree. The positive explanations focused on improvement of the court’s accountability, possible improvement of the system, as a whole, increased input from foster parents and others concerned with the case, possibly provide more needed resources/services, and encourage the parents to be more responsible.

Foster and Adoptive Parent <b>Strongly Agree</b> Responses	
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.	
Absolutely. Opening the child welfare courts to the public would do nothing but generate positive change in the actions of the courts. It might be miserable on the courts end, but the court is here to work for us, so they will have to adjust.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent <b>Strongly Agree</b> Responses	
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.	
Accountability around the board to ensure the safety of children	1
Bottom line: Accountability.	1
I feel as though the courts are more concerned with protecting parents' rights (and its own liabilities) more so than the rights of the child. I think the court of public opinion would consider what's right for the children, not the parents. I think if the public were aware of our case, they'd be outraged at how it's been mishandled from the onset with the unauthorized visits, changing of localities to get a more lenient judge, the no-shows from the GAL, the 2 years wait for TPR. Additionally, if the case were public, I could lean on my normal support system because I'd be allowed to discuss the case.	1
I feel that there would be increased accountability for all in involved. Things would not be swept under the rug. Also, foster parents would have the ability to attend court, since some judges shut us out.	1
I think it's important for the public to understand what happens in these cases and how they fail children daily. I think the public would be shocked to see a child removed from a secure foster home where they have been for a long period of time and handed over immediately to a distant relative that surfaced that is a stranger! I think the public would be appalled to see children forced by the court to have visits with their abusers despite the negative affects it has on them.	1
If the public knew what the children were made to endure then I think there would be an outcry. I also think it would help the public understand why these kids act the way they do and go on to repeat the cycle if they were able to hear the details of the cases. I would hope then that there would be more compassion for the children and reforms could be made.	1
Informing the public of the system's inadequacies illuminates areas for improvement. Providing funds and resources for these broken or under serviced areas will make the biggest difference.	1
It would keep the social workers and supervisors and everyone else involved in the case honest. It would also allow the foster parents to present issues without fear or repercussions from the "sw" or removal of the child.	1
Judges cannot make good decisions on cases if they have no experience with the children and caregivers involved.	1
Most parents I have dealt with state that they are not responsible or at fault for having their children removed from their care. It's always someone else's fault. Open court would name them, and they would be responsible and help them to make positive changes to get their children back.	1
Once the bio families realize that others can see their actions.	1
People can really see what is going on in the courts, or the lack of it from the judge	1
Resources for both children and families.	1
This way maybe these children will not fall through the cracks. Since I was not allowed in the court room the judge did not hear about the nightmares after spending Time alone with the biological family or the behavior changes. Thus, making the decision to let the kids start stay overnight and everything going from bad to worse	1
This would hopefully make parents start to realize that what they do will be seen by the public eye and what they do directly affects their children but THEM too.	1
Yes, I believe it would have a positive effect but also require methods of organization in the courtroom. This would allow grandparents, family, friends, caregivers, teachers, etc. to have a voice when decisions are being made regarding the best interest of foster children.	1
Yes! It allows everyone to be seen and heard.	1

When the foster and adoptive parent Strongly Disagreed, they encouraged keeping the cases closed and private. Bottomline, opening the proceeding would increase community gossip about the child and would do more harm. Two exceptions, however, were noted:

“I think if the proceedings were not shrouded in secrecy that in marginal cases where the cabinet is not providing help to parents that are really trying that there would be pressure to improve services. I also think that if it is clear the parents are not trying there would be pressure

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

to move the cases toward permanency. If it was possible to allow the public to know the problems within the system without hurting the victims I would agree. But I am sitting on the side of the child. My rights are never considered.”

“I have been in court where the children's rights have not been considered. I have seen children services be the target of mistakes made.”

Foster and Adoptive Parent Strongly Disagree Responses	
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.	
Absolutely not. It would only add to the sad chaos that these children are already going through.	1
Disagree completely. These cases are sensitive, and the public does not need to know all this information. This can be traumatic for the children involved who have already endured so much.	1
I disagree, the children are protected by the public NOT knowing who their family is. It is the families right and detrimental to the Childs welfare for them to decide when their situation is explained. As adoptive parents we want our children to know their bio parents loved them, we don't want to bring up the trauma and pain from their past, especially if they've forgotten it. Why have the public known and be able to say oh yeah, "I knew your bio mom when she uses to do this or do that?" No kid should have to live with strangers knowing their personal stuff. I feel like it would keep them stranded in the past instead of their bright future ahead. Children carry the shame of what their parents did, it's tough to get them past that but it can be done. Not if everyone else though is involved. I can't imagine people I don't even know knowing about my home life. I think a child would feel invaded. These children already have trust issues.	1
I feel like it would be extremely harmful for details of some cases (even without sexual) to be made public. We need to let the child decide on what details of his/her past to be made known to others. This is directly connected to their self-esteem and feelings of worth. To let others, know about the negative aspects of their past will certainly lead to degrading of self.	1
I feel this is not the right course for family cases such as the ones previously mentioned. When children are involved because of the parents wrong-doing, the child is the victim. By keeping these cases private, children have the chance to start fresh when they are taken from their homes. New foster parents of the children do need to be kept in the loop, so they know what may trigger a child to exhibit negative behaviors.  This is how I would look at it: There is a court case about Little Johnny being sexually abused. The case is all over the news including the child's name. No matter where he goes, he will have a difficult time putting the past behind him because everyone knows what happened to him and brings it up. (In a hypothetical world, everyone would take care of him, but we live in the real world where people (kids and adults) say or do things to purposely hurt others.)	1
I think if the proceedings were not shrouded in secrecy that in marginal cases where the cabinet is not providing help to parents that are really trying that there would be pressure to improve services. I also think that if it is clear the parents are not trying there would be pressure to move the cases toward permanency.	1
If it was possible to allow the public to know the problems within the system without hurting the victims I would agree. But I am sitting on the side of the child. My rights are never considered. I have been in court where the children's rights have not been considered. I have seen children services be the target of mistakes made.	1
If my goal as a foster parent is to help families heal, then a public execution is not the way to do this. Furthermore, my foster child would not be protecting from what some random adult might go and say to one of his/her peers, and then that other child might go and repeat in school about my child. We are all subject to confidentiality, but a random adult in the courtroom would not be.	1
The public does not need to be in the court room while a child's life is being decided. The fact that the child is a minor should be reason enough. The public cannot go to a school meeting about that child and hear about his/her educational/behavioral progress. Those same things, only on a bigger scale, are part of discussions in court. What good could come from letting just anyone hear all about a child's life? Gossip and negativity would be the result. These cases are already full of gossip and negativity. They do not need more. Those directly involved with the case should be the only people permitted to be in that court room. With Foster children that have endured neglect and abuse, you most often do not know the full extent to which they have been abused or by whom. With letting	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Strongly Disagree Responses**

Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.

anyone into the courtroom, a child's abuser, that the system has no idea about, could show up. This would in turn be a trigger and cause more stress with the child if they are in attendance. Even if the child is not there, anyone who knows the court date, such as relatives or friends of the family, could attend and find out sensitive information regarding where the child has been moved to or about the Foster Parents. Speaking as a Foster Parent, I would not want that information known for safety reasons.

There could be nothing positive about Open Courts.

1

Absolute wrong decision to continue this process.

It allows too many individuals into the situation that wanted nothing to do with the situation until it became last ditch efforts....and it is too late at that point.

**STOP PLAYING WITH THE MINDS OF THESE TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN AND THOSE WILLING TO TAKE THEM TO A BETTER LIFE.**

Some of these children have never seen their bio-parents, and some have been so estranged from them that this small effort of "reuniting" of all the relatives they never knew they had would cause the child even more trauma. Open Courts only allows those whom DO NOT need to be involved, the chance of involvement and to skew the case.

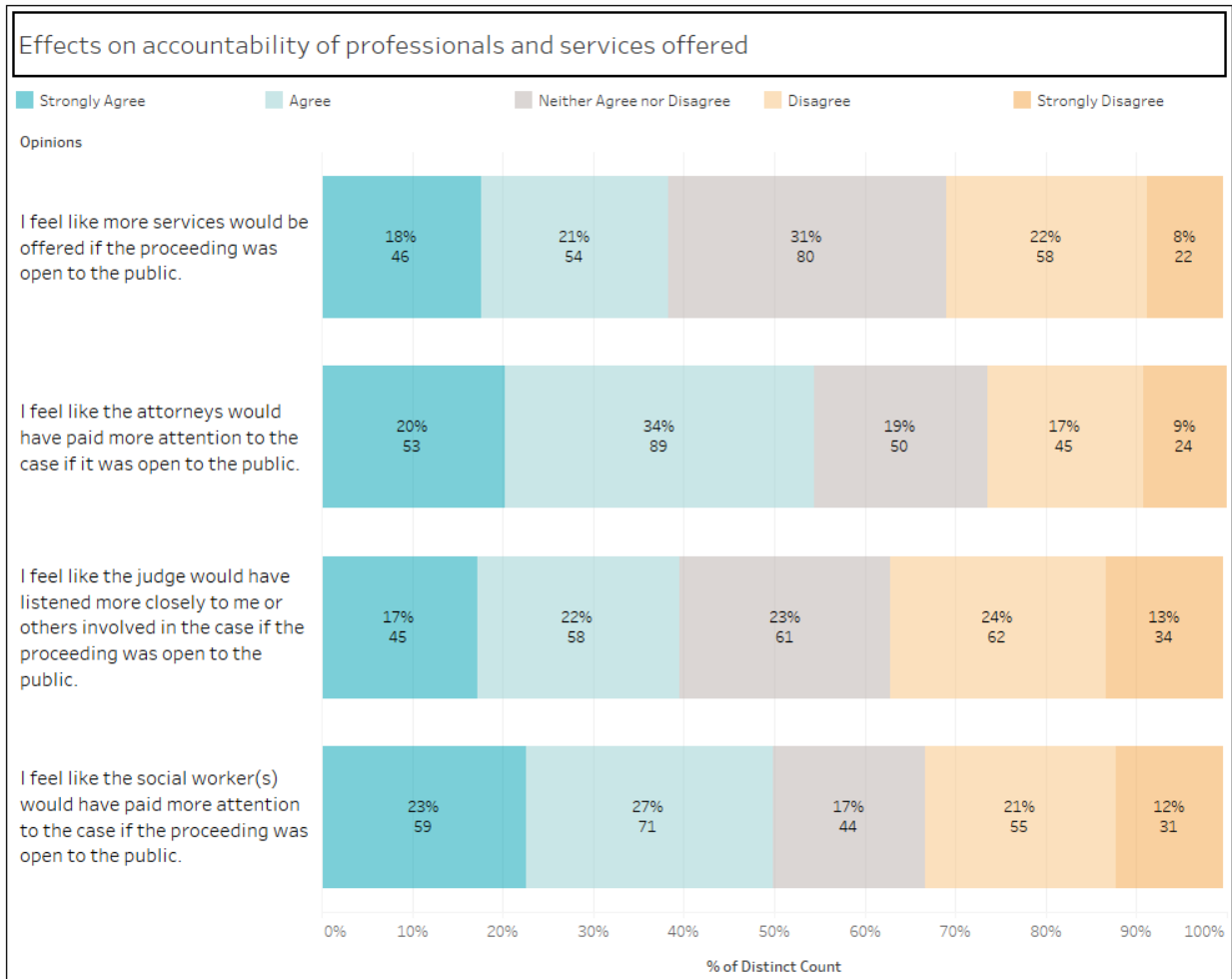
### **Participants/Stakeholders: Effect on Accountability**

When considering opening child welfare court cases, the stakeholder respondents were more likely to Agree than Disagree with the following statements:

- "I feel like the **attorneys** would have paid more attention to the case if it was open to the public."
- "I feel the **social worker(s)** would have paid more attention to the case if the proceeding was open to the public."

In contrast, the response distribution of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree was more evenly distributed regarding **judge's listening behavior** and **services**.

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE



Appendix D contains the additional explanations associated with each accountability opinion statement.

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Respondents: Final Additional Comments**

At the end of the survey instrument, respondents were given an opportunity to provide final comments (Refer to Appendix D).

Below are comments made by foster and adoptive parents. The final comments have been categorized as: more positive, more negative, or both positive and negative responses concerning the effects of opening DNA and TPR cases. The “more positive” grouping of statements argue that the family court cases should be open to the public and to all parties involved with the child, while the “more negative” grouping argues for all child welfare cases to remain closed and private.

Foster and adoptive parent respondents having a positive opinion about opening the courts noted the following reasons:

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

- Respondents wanted to be notified and attend court
- Courts should be open to all who are involved in children’s lives
- Opening courts will increase professional accountability toward child’s best interest
- More input from all parties associated with child increases the likelihood of making the most informed decisions
- Transparency will inform the public of the need for changing the system
- Opening courts will improve the case scheduling process
- Foster parents will have a voice in the courts

Foster and adoptive parents who expressed more negative additional comments regarding the possibility of opening child welfare cases were concerned with:

- Harming the children when case matters were not kept private
- Humiliating and shaming children when case information is made public
- Disrespecting and causing additional trauma to the child and family members

Response for Opening Proceedings	If you have any additional comments, please include them below:	
<b>More Positive</b>	As a foster parent, I would like to attend court proceedings involving our foster child. Social workers sometimes cannot give information, or it is fragmented.	1
	As foster parents, we are bound and gagged when it comes to the case. We have no power to participate without jeopardizing safety. We are only allowed to discuss the case with other foster parents in peer groups or with our mentor. It's isolating and frustrating. I think public involvement would encourage the transparency that is needed in this department. We need better accountability.	1
	Because kids and families deserve our time and attention- not to be swept under the rug and ignored	1
	Bottom line, these children's welfare should be the #1 priority. What is in their best interest? How can we help them? How can we enhance their lives through this traumatic period? Everyone should think of the children and their needs, their lives, and how we can be of service to them.	1
	Cases should only be open to those people directly involved in the child's life.	1
	Foster care has no winners, only varying degrees of loses. Children lose the most. We need to hold those who hold these children's lives in their hands accountable. Foster parents, cabinet employees, attorneys, CASAs, judges...If those proceedings were open maybe those involved would truly make the best interest of the child their property.	1
	Having these cases open to the public may reveal to community members the need for changes in the child welfare system. It may prevent children from being sent back into conditions that are just as bad, if not worse, than the conditions they came from in the first place and let others see that the rights of children, and their wellbeing, need to be considered as well as the parents' rights. It might also prevent those involved with DCBS and the judicial system from neglecting to present all the necessary information needed to make informed decisions that are in the best interest of the children regarding cases. It seems that social workers have too much power when it comes to whether children stay in foster care or return home to their parents. I feel like incorporating the community would be beneficial.	1
	I absolutely think DNA cases should be open to the public. It also will allow foster parents a way to track court dates since DCBS is not always forthcoming and often excludes us from court.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Response for Opening Proceedings	If you have any additional comments, please include them below:	
	I am a foster/adoptive mom, who also served as a CASA volunteer. The family court I observed was used to working together and the defense attorneys barely spoke up. The judge and all the attorneys and staff would joke about the individuals involved in the cases in between hearings. It was a very unprofessional and unfair way to determine the futures of families. I feel this behavior and the easy-going nature of closed court would change with a public audience.	1
	I feel judges and DCBS would more closely follow laws allowing foster parents to be notified of and attend hearings if it were open. In addition, I have not been allowed to attend any hearings via Zoom with the rest of the participants while courts have been closed due to COVID. I am only allowed to hear the proceedings via phone and while muted. I know other foster parents who have not been able to find out when the hearings are even scheduled.	1
	I feel that foster parents should be able to voice concerns about the case as we have most of the time.	1
	I think having an open court will help keep judges responsible. There're too many situations that have happened with judges that go unknown about because the courts are closed. I think so for that aspect it's a good thing to have courts open it's just protecting the kid's stories that I think are important.	1
	I think having more witnesses and thus more accountability to the judges and attorneys would be helpful. In my experience, the case is not being looked at in its entirety and is being dragged out. Having other people involved (especially if they were allowed any input) could be beneficial.	1
	I think that if the court cases were open to the public then there would be more accountability for all involved	1
	I understand the reason for secrecy, however the lack of transparency permits shortcuts and bad practices to persist that are not good for the children.	1
	I'm sorry to say this but kids in foster care are being over looked. Just forgotten about in my experience. I've had bad social workers. You tell them stuff then when asked they know nothing. Give them notes or anything and they never got in the file. It's supposed to be all about the kids. In my experience they are lacking that in the system. These kids need more people speaking up for them and maybe someone will listen.	1
	It would be nice if foster parents were notified if court dates in a timely manner so at least we could be there. In addition, why can we not know who our child's GAL is? I don't find out unless I happen to get a notified and am in the court. And why are children who are old enough and want to be in the court room not allowed to be there?	1
	It's great that opening these proceedings to the public is being considered. I wish that something would be done about the failure of the courts to abide by KRS620.360. As a foster parent, mentor, member of CFCRB and someone involved in numerous foster parent groups I can tell you that foster parents are NOT being notified of court hearings. They are NOT being allowed in to court hearings. In some cases, even the social workers are not being allowed into the hearings. This is not just during Covid, this has always been an issue.	1
	The system is broken, maybe allowing more people to see the system in progress will help us develop a better system.	1
	There are a lot of laws not currently being enforced by the judges or attorneys. But having the dockets open, there will be more accountability and knowledge of what is happening. Kentucky is the #1 state for child abuse and out-of-home care. More people need to see why and what is being done for change to occur	1
	Transparency and Accountability	1
<b>More Negative</b>	Although some professionals may be more conscientious about their job if the proceedings are public, this should be weighed against the harm that could be caused. Regardless of how anyone "feels" about the issues above, the child has the right to privacy and until they are old enough to speak for themselves legally, they should be protected, including their privacy. Social workers, lawyers, and judges should not need the threat of the public being present to do their job, and children should bit have to give up their privacy to force them to do so.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Response for Opening Proceedings	If you have any additional comments, please include them below:	
	Cases are so deeply personal it seems intrusive to allow those not directly involved in the process as voyeurs into this world. It's private information that families of parents who have been removed already have to have out in the open for social workers, foster parents etc. to work together raising the child. No need to expose their already exposed private lives to unnecessary people.	1
	Children in the foster care system deserve privacy. Why should anyone other than family of origin, foster families, and officers of the court be included?	1
	I am stunned that this would even be consider. My foster children are worth far more than to have the details of their abuse publicized. Furthermore, even though I am a foster mom, I have seen parents work with family court and DCBS to get CLEAN and WELL and become FABULOUS parents. Our goal is to HELP them. They are not being charged as criminals and being assigned sentences - the court is intervening to protect the child and to work with the family for reunification.	1
	I feel like it would be humiliating to the child to have the public present to witness some of the most traumatic times of their life. Times are hard enough on foster children, they are already ashamed of their situation. I don't feel that opening their case to the public is in the best interest of the children.	1
	I feel that opening these cases to the public degrades and disrespects the biological family and child. It could also cause more trauma for the children involved as their information would be public and others may use this against them in the future. Please protect these children and their stories.	1
	I think opening these hearings to the public would be very detrimental to the children. It will open them up for public humiliation. It's no one's business as to what situations or background these kids come from. Most of them are not going to be comfortable with the public knowing their circumstances. This is their story and should be left up to them if they share what they have been through. These kids' lives are traumatic enough. Please do not allow for further public humiliation.	1
	I'm only a foster parent, but I'm not sure these parents that are going through this, want these open to the public, where anyone can hear what's going on. Plus, I feel like it's a violation of the privacy of the children involved. They have no say in anything, so they should at least get to keep their own story.	1
	I do feel like the foster parents' input should be asked more, because for the time they are in our home, until they leave, they are "ours". We know a lot about them.	
	If the cases are public, then it can be covered by newspapers and television. I feel that they would only cover the cases in negative or sensational manner. And I say this as a member of the media. For example, the media would be interested in a child custody case if the parents had been arrested and convicted on drug charges, not in the interest of the child.	1
	Not OPEN to the public, but flexible enough to include supports for the families and the children.	1
	PLEASE stop Open Courts in DNA and TPR cases. The children were neglected and abused, that is why they are in the system... and once TPR has started, that is further proof that the bio parents are going to continue to neglect them, as they have had, in some cases, 2 years to get their act together and prove the right thing, Open Courts need to cease. Cases are private matters and should be treated as such.	1
	The only people who belong in the court room are those involved in the case. I do support the foster parents to be in the court room	1
	These children go through enough trauma let alone having cases with public attention just wouldn't be right. I'm not sure how this would help anything.	1



2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Response for Opening Proceedings	If you have any additional comments, please include them below:	
<b>Both Positive and Negative</b>	Having open courts could give a lot of the oversight needed regarding the judges. The flip side is that having too many people in the courtroom creates chaos.	1
	It seems to me that on balance Public Access is a good thing, however it should be Strongly limited to prevent harm to children who might be perpetually traumatized by reliving these events if they are recorded and made public. I also think that the type of public pressure that open access might bring to the system should be there anyway or could be achieved by means other than opening the courtroom. The underfunding and under staffing of the cabinet and the attorney panel is a critical problem that needs a comprehensive solution. Simply opening the courts is not enough and may very well worsen the problem if those issues are not addressed.	1

## Discussion

The majority of judges felt that opening the DNA and TPR proceedings would not have a positive effect on the children’s well-being, would not have a positive impact on the children or families in the courtroom, and would not be beneficial to the parties involved with the case. In contrast, when considering the organization and accountability of professionals, judges’ opinions ranged from positive to negative. Some judges felt the professionals are always held accountable, and the cases were hectic and stressful enough without opening the proceedings to the public. When asked about their overall opinion about the effect on children and families involved, one judge stated:

*“When we began this pilot project I was Strongly in favor of opening the courts to the public. However, after doing so, I changed my position completely. The chilling effect on the parents was enormous and the detriment to the child in losing confidentiality cannot be remediated.”*

In contrast, support was noted by some judges and is nicely summed up by one respondent’s final additional comment expressing both the need for transparency and the concern with efficiency:

*“Overall, I think that opening courts is a positive thing. We need transparency so that the public has confidence that we are working hard as a court system to help families. While I do believe that the families we see will neither be helped nor hurt by opening the proceedings, I think that we might see some positive improvements in counsel/caseworker’s performance if courts are open. The only negative would be efficiency. It will certainly take longer to hold court proceedings if they are open to the public (weeding out sex abuse cases or other cases that may need to be closed on a case by case basis, etc.).”*

Judges who supported opening DNA and TPR proceedings and who also noted additional explanations, proposed opening the courts would increase transparency, which would then increase the public’s understanding of child welfare cases and perhaps even assist the court’s continuing efforts towards efficiency and effectiveness. Those not supporting open family court expressed continuing privacy was most important when hearing DNA and TPR proceedings. Public knowledge of the case matter,

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

particularly regarding various forms of abuse, would be harmful and perhaps cause more trauma for the children and family members.

Foster and adoptive parent respondents tended to more evenly Agree or Disagree with the opinion statements on the effects of opening the court on the outcome, the respondent, and the children and families involved. The same is true for the opinion statements concerning the accountability of the professionals involved with the case. Among those supporting opening child welfare cases, some reasons given were transparency in order to hold judges, social workers, and other professionals accountable; and some felt it would enable the responding persons (mostly foster parents) to be notified and have a more active role in the proceedings.<sup>10</sup> Participants, and judges alike, who wanted the proceedings to remain closed, believed opening the proceedings would have a negative impact thus would be harmful to the children and families involved.

Foster and adoptive parent respondents who supported opening the courts, provided the following final comments:

1. *"It's great that opening these proceedings to the public is being considered. I wish that something would be done about the failure of the courts to abide by KRS 620.360. As a foster parent, mentor, member of CFCRB, and someone involved in numerous foster parent groups, I can tell you that foster parents are NOT being notified of court hearings. They are NOT being allowed in to court hearings. In some cases, even the social workers are not being allowed into the hearings. This is not just during Covid, this has always been an issue."*
2. *"The system is broken, maybe allowing more people to see the system in progress will help us develop a better system."*

Examples of final comments from foster and adoptive parents respondents not supporting open family courts, include:

1. *"The only people who belong in the court room are those involved in the case. I do support the foster parents to be in the court room."*
2. *"These children go through enough trauma let alone having cases with public attention just wouldn't be right. I'm not sure how this would help anything."*

Recurring themes mentioned by some foster and adoptive parents were (1) not being notified of scheduled court proceedings, (2) not being in agreement with the social worker's summary of their concerns to the courts, and (3) not having support or an advocate during the various proceedings. For

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<sup>10</sup> Participants assumption opening the courts would increase their role is their opinion. Perhaps the best solution would be statewide implementation of KRS 620.360(1)(r).

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

example the respondent in the first supportive statement felt opening the proceedings would verify the “...failure of the courts to abide by KRS 620.360...”

KRS 620.360 (1)(r) was enacted in 2018 and updated in 2021. The effective date of the 2021 amendments were not in effect at the time of this survey<sup>11</sup>. The statutory language at the time of this survey became effective July 14, 2018 and provided that foster parents had the right:

“To receive notice of, have a right to attend, and have a right to be heard in, either verbally or in writing, any cabinet or court proceeding held with respect to the child. This paragraph shall not be construed to require that a foster parent caring for the child be made a party to a proceeding solely on the basis of the notice and rights to attend and be heard.”

Based upon the recurring comments by foster parents on their inability to be informed of the relevant court date, to be allowed in the court proceeding related to a child in their care, or to be heard within that proceeding are of concern. However, those experiences do not address the substance of the Project: Whether these proceedings should be open to the public. Foster parents should have the ability to exercise their rights under the statute regardless of whether the proceeding is opened to the public.

## Conclusion

When added to results from previous phases of the project, the overall tenor of the responses throughout the Open Courts Pilot Project have been marked with considerable ambivalence toward the ultimate question of whether to open child welfare cases. There have been slight variations among some constituency groups in certain areas, but no clear path has emerged. No phase of the Open Court Pilot Project has yielded sufficient data to support a recommendation that child welfare cases be opened to the public or to support a recommendation that they remain presumptively closed. It is also important to note that, despite attempts, no phase has resulted in significant responses from the persons whose privacy and personal integrity would be most impacted by opening child welfare cases – children and parents. The lack of a clear answer is not unique to Kentucky’s study.<sup>12</sup> Still, though there is no clear answer to the ultimate question of whether to open child welfare courts, recommendations

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<sup>11</sup> The current language of KRS 620.360(1)(r), effective June 29, 2021, provides that foster parents have the right, “To receive notice of, have a right to attend, and have a right to be heard in, either verbally or in writing, any cabinet or court proceeding held with respect to the child currently placed in their care, *provided the cabinet has no concerns related to maltreatment of the child while in the foster parent’s care.* (Emphasis added)

<sup>12</sup> National Center for State Courts, Evaluation Data: Open Hearings and Court Records in Juvenile Protection Matters, Volume II (August 2001) (Minnesota’s findings indicated that opening courts might increase professional accountability, but it provided no insight to systemic ramifications.); Broberg, Gregory B., Final Report, Arizona Open Dependency Hearing Pilot Study (Mar. 5, 2006) (Arizona’s findings found no impact on judicial proceedings, but that finding was affected by low responses and inconsistent closures); Juvenile Access Pilot Program Advisory Board, Report to the Connecticut General Assembly (Dec. 31, 2010) (Connecticut found that 60% disagreed with opening, but that interested parties (i.e., foster parents) should be allowed).

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

were identified for positive changes for the child welfare court process as a whole. These recommendations are given in the next section.

## Recommendations

The recommendations below are based on the information collected through each phase of the Open Courts Pilot Project.

1. Any decision related to openness should be based on what is in the child's best interest balanced with the rights of parents, foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relatives who are providing care.
2. Any decision about legislative changes must include meaningful collaboration with multiple representatives from all affected groups (E.g., parties, foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, relatives who are providing care, judges, clerks, attorneys, and court security officers).
3. Judges should retain the discretion over the operation of their courts to ensure safety, respect, and decorum.
4. Rulemakers should consider using the pilot project's administrative rules as an example for rule and statute change, if it is determined that child welfare cases be opened.
5. All parties, foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relatives who are providing care should know the appropriate avenues for officially requesting action against or making complaints about each professional: judges, attorneys, and social workers.
6. Agencies should collaborate to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relatives who are providing care for the child receive notice of hearings as required by law.<sup>13</sup> Consideration should be given to developing e-notifications for all scheduled proceedings and to ensuring current addresses are entered into the system for all required persons, including foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relatives who are providing care for the child.

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<sup>13</sup> KRS 620.360 & FCRPP 16(2).

## **Appendices**

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## Appendix A: Questionnaires

### Open Courts Judge Survey 2021

(The web survey instrument did not fully export or save as a PDF file.)

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In order to determine whether "Open Courts" might potentially benefit the citizens of the Commonwealth, Senate Bill 40 was passed into law in April of 2016 and became effective on July 15, 2016. This led the Supreme Court to institute a pilot project "to study the feasibility and desirability of the opening or limited opening" to the public of court proceedings related to dependency, neglect, and abuse (DNA) and termination of parental rights (TPR). KRS 21A.190; KRS 21A.192; and, KRS 610.072.

To comply with this legislation, we are collecting information to document the ways in which Open Court practices impact those who attend these hearings. This survey is specific for judges presiding over DNA or TPR proceedings.

**Note: Proceedings related to sexual abuse are excluded and should not be considered when responding to this survey.**

1. Thinking about the child welfare proceedings that I have been involved in, I would say that I believe having cases open to the public would affect the following:

	Strong Negative Effect	Negative Effect	Neutral Effect	Positive Effect	Strong Positive Effect
Preparation of the participants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Efficiency of conducting the proceedings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dignity of the proceedings (e.g. respect shown for participants)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of the proceedings (e.g. issues discussed, decisions made)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Witness testimony (please	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

7/14/2021

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witness testified under oath)					
Content of court statements, reports, or exhibits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Services offered to the family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impact on the child(ren)'s wellbeing throughout the case	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please share any comments regarding the above statements:


**Directions:** Please take a few moments to complete the remainder of the survey based on your experiences in presiding over child welfare court. Read each statement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement on the following scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree.

2. I believe that having cases open to the public will have a positive impact on the children involved in the cases.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

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2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

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Strongly Agree

Please explain:

3. I believe that having case(s) open to the public will benefit the parties involved.

Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

Please explain:

4. I believe that having case(s) open to the public will benefit the non-parties and members of the public in attendance.

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Disagree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

Please explain:

5. The amount of time and attention I would give to each case would increase if courts were open to the public.

Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

Please explain:

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7/14/2021

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6. I believe that having cases open to the public will have a positive impact on the accountability of the following professionals to the children involved in the proceedings:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Attorney for Parent/Custodian	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
GAL for child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
County (or Assistant County) Attorney	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
DCBS staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Service Providers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please share any comments regarding the above statements:

7. Overall, I anticipate positive effects on the child or family as a result of opening these proceedings to the public.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

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7/14/2021

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Please include any additional comments here:

If you have any further questions, comments, or concerns, please direct them to:  
Nathan Goins, Family Court Liaison [nathanielgoins@kycourts.net](mailto:nathanielgoins@kycourts.net)  
502-573-2350 Ext. 50529

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**Open Courts Participant/Stakeholder Survey 2021**

*(The web survey instrument did not fully export or save as a PDF file.)*

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1. Which role best fits your prior experience in the child welfare court system?

- Youth with former experience
- Biological parent
- Foster parent
- Other:

For the remaining questions, the Supreme Court of Kentucky has been asked by the Legislature to study the opening of court proceedings in cases concerning Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse (DNA) and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR). These proceedings are normally closed to the public meaning that only individuals identified as a party to the case is permitted to be inside the courtroom during the hearing. An "open" court proceeding means the public would have the right to attend. We are collecting information on how Open Court practices may have affected families like your own and will use the information you provide to compile a final report for the Kentucky Legislature.


Thank you for taking the time to share your opinions and thoughts.

Note: Sexual abuse cases are not included in this study. If your case involved substantiated sexual abuse, please do not complete the survey.

Directions: Please take a few moments to complete this survey based on your experiences with child welfare court. Read each statement and indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by selecting strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree.

2. Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree

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Agree  
 Strongly Agree

Please explain:

3. I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of the case, would have been helpful to me.

Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

Please explain:

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Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

Please explain:

5. I feel like the attorneys would have paid more attention to the case if it was open to the public.

Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

Please explain:

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6. I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the proceeding was open to the public.

Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

Please explain:

7. I feel like more services would be offered if the proceeding was open to the public.

Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

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Strongly Agree

Please explain:

8. Overall, I feel like opening child welfare court cases to the public will have a positive effect on children and families involved.

Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

Please explain:

If you have any additional comments, please include them below:

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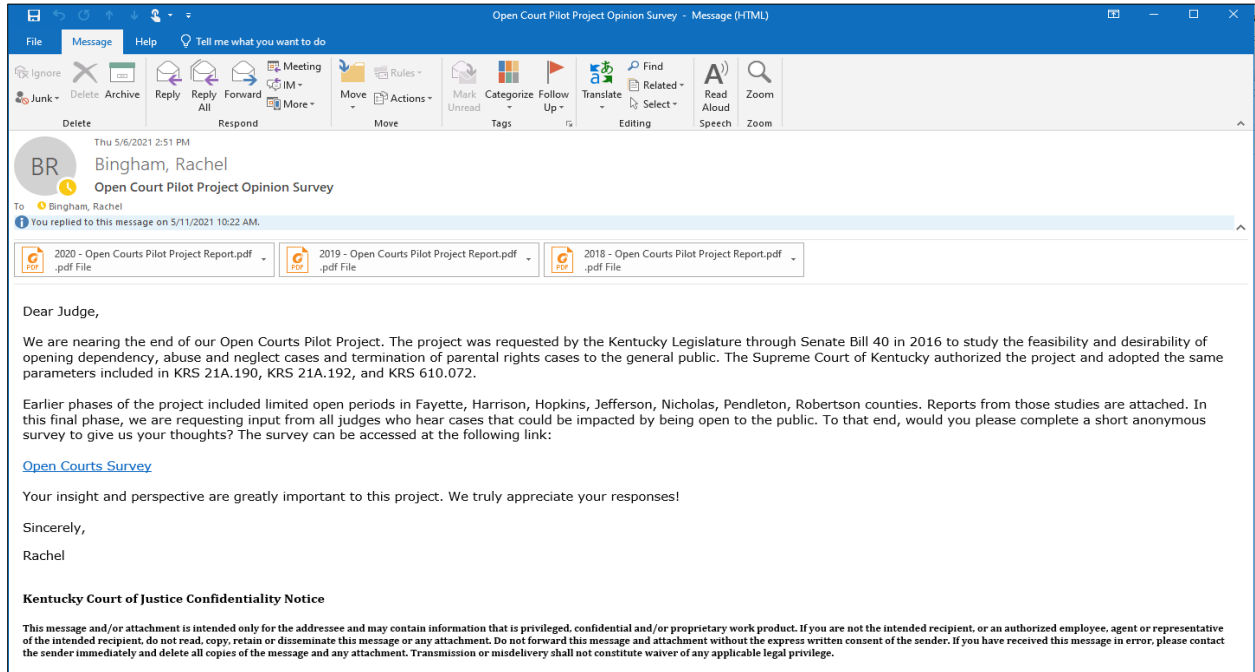
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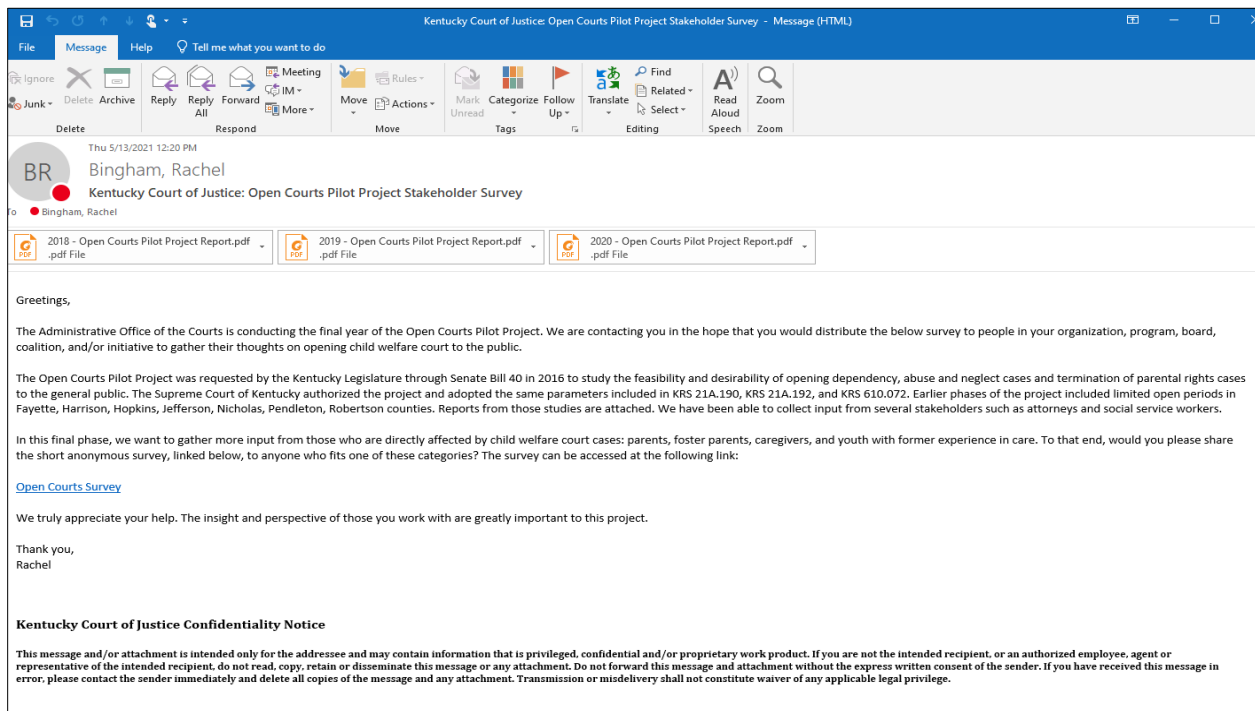
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## Appendix B: Email Messages

### B.1 Judge email message



### B.2 Participant/Stakeholder email message



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## Appendix C. Judges Who Hear Family Matter Cases

### C.1 Judge Survey Completion

Judges Hearing Family Matter Respondents: Completion Dates		
	%	Distinct Count
May 6, 2021	42%	8
May 7, 2021	21%	4
May 8, 2021	5%	1
May 10, 2021	16%	3
May 12, 2021	5%	1
May 20, 2021	5%	1
June 2, 2021	5%	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19</b>

### C.2 Judge Respondent Answers to Opinion Statements and Additional Explanations

Thinking about the child welfare proceedings that I have been involved in, I would say that I believe having cases open to the public would affect the following:														
	Strong Positive Effect		Positive Effect		Neutral Effect		Negative Effect		Strong Negative Effect		No Witness		Grand Total	
	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count
Preparation of the participants			42%	8	26%	5	11%	2	21%	4			100%	19
Efficiency of conducting the proceedings			16%	3	16%	3	42%	8	26%	5			100%	19
Dignity of the proceedings (e.g. respect shown for participants)	5%	1	11%	2	42%	8	5%	1	37%	7			100%	19
Quality of the proceedings (e.g. issues discussed, decisions made)	5%	1	11%	2	47%	9	5%	1	32%	6			100%	19
Witness testimony (please leave blank if no witness testified under oath)			11%	2	26%	5	21%	4	37%	7	5%	1	100%	19
Content of court statements, reports, or exhibits			32%	6	42%	8	5%	1	21%	4			100%	19
Services offered to the family	5%	1	11%	2	68%	13	5%	1	11%	2			100%	19
Impact on the child(ren)'s wellbeing throughout the case			5%	1	26%	5	21%	4	47%	9			100%	19

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Thinking about the child welfare proceedings that I have been involved in, I would say that I believe having cases open to the public would affect: Additional Comments	
Allowing people from the public to be present for an AD or DNA case, other than attorneys, case workers, and/or service providers can only <b>NEGATIVELY</b> affect the court proceedings in all aspects of a DNA or AD case. I believe we would see people claiming to be family friends or a friend of friend, or a family member's girlfriend who just want to come and listen to what is going on with other people's lives. It would be a disaster, as parents who are trying to get their life together will feel as if they cannot express that they have relapsed or be honest about mistakes for fear of how the public would perceive them. Not to mention when children are being talked about in these reports of the cases and testified to, you are talking about serious issues in a child's life that now someone who wants to listen can then spread to the whole world that information through social media or other outlets and that could detrimentally affect those children and their mental wellbeing. I am Strongly against allowing these proceedings to be open as a Judge and as a former attorney who worked in this field for several years. All the attorneys in my area feel the same way I do. If this is an issue about space and sealing files and keeping in a locked area is a problem can there not be better ways to solve that issue than to allow private, serious information about children and their family members from being accessed by the public.	1
I am concerned that opening the proceedings could result in the Jerry Springer show. The main reason to open them, in my view, is to dispel the public perception that we are hiding something.	1
No Response	14
Opening DNA cases serves no legitimate purpose and would impair the Court and the litigant's ability to have useful dialogue. Remember we were elected to do what is right not what is popular. Keep these proceedings confidential.	1
Opening the Court room in all cases just makes the temptation to play to the gallery worse. The larger the group present, the harder it is for children to talk.	1
We had no random public or press attend during the project.	1

I believe that having cases open to the public will have a **POSITIVE** impact on the accountability of the following professionals to the children involved in the proceedings:

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Grand Total	
	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count
Attorney for Parent/Custodian			37%	7	26%	5	11%	2	26%	5	100%	19
County (or Assistant County) Attorney			26%	5	32%	6	16%	3	26%	5	100%	19
DCBS staff	11%	2	26%	5	21%	4	21%	4	21%	4	100%	19
GAL for child	5%	1	26%	5	32%	6	11%	2	26%	5	100%	19
Service Providers	11%	2	21%	4	21%	4	26%	5	21%	4	100%	19

I believe that having cases open to the public will have a positive impact on the accountability of the following professionals to the children involved in the proceedings.

Accountability is the court's job.	1
I don't think it would have an impact at all. If anything, it may hinder the process and less questions would be asked for fear the public may use that info inappropriately.	1

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I believe that having cases open to the public will have a positive impact on the accountability of the following professionals to the children involved in the proceedings.	
<b>I HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE REGARDLESS IF THE PUBLIC IS THERE OR NOT. THESE CASES ARE RECORDED.</b>	1
<b>If people are professional, having an audience would not matter.</b>	1
<b>No Response</b>	15

General opinions about opening court proceedings												
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Grand Total	
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
I believe that having cases open to the public will have a positive impact on the children involved in the cases.	5%	1	16%	3	11%	2	21%	4	47%	9	100%	19
I believe that having case(s) open to the public will benefit the parties involved.			21%	4	26%	5	16%	3	37%	7	100%	19
I believe that having case(s) open to the public will benefit the non-parties and members of the public in attendance.	5%	1	37%	7	16%	3	5%	1	37%	7	100%	19
The amount of time and attention I would give to each case would increase if courts were open to the public.			5%	1	32%	6	37%	7	26%	5	100%	19
Overall, I anticipate positive effects on the child or family as a result of opening these proceedings to the public.			21%	4	16%	3	21%	4	42%	8	100%	19

I believe that having cases open to the public will have a positive impact on the children involved in the cases.		
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	No Response	1
<b>Agree</b>	No Response	1
	DNA cases are amongst the most misunderstood and disliked of family court's duties. Opening them to the public will allow citizens to learn for themselves what happens.	1
	I am hopeful that opening the courts will promote accountability among the parties.	1
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	No Response	1
	Again, no one came. I allow friends and family to attend anyway, unless there is an objection (which is rare).	1
<b>Disagree</b>	No Response	2
	I am concerned that the children will be told more about what happens in court.	1
	The only parties to "benefit" are those who are not already necessary and beneficial to the process. The court involves those who offer positive benefits for the children already. Opening these cases will have a chilling effect on candid conversations and solutions.	1
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	No Response	4
	Allowing people from the public to be present for an AD or DNA case, other than attorneys, case workers, and/or service providers can only NEGATIVELY affect the court proceedings in all aspects of a DNA or AD	1

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I believe that having cases open to the public will have a positive impact on the children involved in the cases.		
	case. I believe we would see people claiming to be family friends or a friend of friend, or a family member's girlfriend who just want to come and listen to what is going on with other people's lives It would be a disaster, as parents who are trying to get their life together will feel as if they cannot express that they have relapsed or be honest about mistakes for fear of how the public would perceive them. Not to mention when children are being talked about in these reports of the cases and testified to, you are talking about serious issues in a child's life that now someone who wants to listen can then spread to the whole world that information through social media or other outlets and that could detrimentally affect those children and their mental wellbeing. I am Strongly against allowing these proceedings to be open as a Judge and as a former attorney who worked in this field for several years. All the attorneys in my area feel the same way I do. If this is an issue about space and sealing files and keeping in a locked area is a problem can there not be better ways to solve that issue than to allow private, serious information about children and their family members from being accessed by the public.	
	IT IS NOT THEIR FAULT OF CHILDREN THAT THEY ARE IN COURT. THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN DONE TO THEM SHOULD NOT BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. AND CHILDREN SHOULD NOT HAVE TO TESTIFY BEFORE A CROWD OF UNKNOWN PEOPLE.	1
	It puts the child in a spotlight they do not want or need. My normal court has CASA volunteers, social workers, lawyers, family members, and assorted court personnel present in every case I have let the media in every time there has been a request. This is more than enough to insure the child's interest is guarded. Why not ask a child whether they would rather testify in front of a larger group of people or smaller?	1
	Sensitive matters involving children and families should not be open to the public.	1
	The children receive no benefit from the proceedings being open to the public. The proceedings take longer due to the necessity of admonishing the public, and the discussions are less open and honest. If we are to truly help these children, the discussions from service providers must include full and honest disclosure. . Additionally, the presence of the public has a chilling effect on the parents' willingness to admit mistakes and ask for help, particularly when they know the people who are observing.	1

I believe that having case(s) open to the public will benefit the parties involved.		
<b>Agree</b>	No Response	2
	Again, as in answer above, education of the public about what happens in court is valuable to the courts' effectiveness.	1
	I am hopeful that opening the courts will promote accountability among the parties.	1
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	No Response	4
	I don't know how the parties would benefit, other than by not being able to say that everything is secret.	1
<b>Disagree</b>	No Response	2
	Parties are in crisis in these cases. Adding the role of spectacle to them will not benefit these families.	1
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	No Response	4
	See above, it will only hurt the parties involved, especially the children who do not want their information for the public to see, as well as the parents who are trying to get their lives back together.	1
	See previous response	1
	THESE CASES ARE HECTIC AND STRESSFUL ENOUGH WITHOUT HAVING TO DEAL WITH A CROWD FULL OF PEOPLE SITTING IN THE COURTROOM. I REALLY DON'T SEE ANY BENEFIT TO THE PARENTS HAVING THE PUBLIC INVOLVED.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

I believe that having case(s) open to the public will benefit the non-parties and members of the public in attendance.		
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	These are the only people who will benefit. But it will not extend to the families before the court.	1
<b>Agree</b>	No Response	5
	I believe our community at large does not understand the prevalence of substance abuse and mental health struggles going on locally; opening the courts would likely improve awareness of the issues and community needs.	1
	See the above two answers.	1
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	No Response	2
	See above.	1
<b>Disagree</b>	No Response	1
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	No Response	3
	HOW? I ALLOW ATTORNEYS, CASA VOLS AND SOCIAL WORKERS TO REMAIN IN THE COURTROOM FOR TRAINING PERSONS. IT IS BENEFICIAL TO THEM TO SEE HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS AND THEY TOTALLY UNDERSTAND THAT THESE CASES ARE CONFIDENTIAL.	1
	I don't see how it would even benefit the public people in attendance, as it would only serve to give them private info about individuals that would then allow them to do harmful things with that information.	1
	I saw no evidence of benefit to any person, whether involved in the proceedings or as a member of the public observing.	1
	The public has no interest in the individual juvenile cases before the Court	1

The amount of time and attention I would give to each case would increase if courts were open to the public.		
<b>Agree</b>	No Response	1
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	No Response	4
	HOWEVER, THERE ARE A LOT OF SECURITY CONCERNS AND INTERRUPTIONS WHEN YOU HAVE A COURTROOM FULL OF PEOPLE. HAVING A QUIET, ORGANIZED SETTING IS BEST SUITED WHEN DEALING WITH THESE VERY IMPORTANT ISSUES OF PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY MEMBERS.	1
	It is doubtful that the time I take on any case or the way a case is handled will be changed if open to the public.	1
<b>Disagree</b>	No Response	5
	Parties are my focus. Not the public.	1
	The size of the audience would not impact my attention to the cases.	1
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	No Response	3
	I do not adjust the time or attention that I give to any case based on who may be observing. All cases, whether confidential or not, receive the amount of time and attention necessary to reach a fair resolution or decision. The amount of time is impacted by the number of cases and the seriousness of each case that is on the docket.	1
	I take every case very seriously, and I spent every moment that needs to be spent on a case regardless of who is in the courtroom. In my area we already have people who want to come in that have no business coming into a courtroom of a confidential case, changing that policy would only serve those nosy people who want to know what is going on with everyone and then could be disastrous if they spread that information about people's private lives going through the most difficult times in their lives.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Overall, I anticipate positive effects on the child or family because of opening these proceedings to the public.		
<b>Agree</b>	No Response	4
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	No Response	1
	I do not think the family would be affected at all by opening the courts.	1
	No one came.	1
<b>Disagree</b>	No Response	4
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	No Response	4
	I WILL SAY THAT THE PUBLIC HAS NO IDEA OF HOW MANY DEPENDENCY, NEGLECT AND ABUSE CASES THAT EXIST IN THEIR COUNTY. MAKING THESE CASES PUBLIC WOULD BRING THAT TO LIGHT. WITH THAT SAID, THE CHILD SHOULD NOT HAVE TO GO THROUGH LIFE WITH THE PUBLIC KNOWING THE HORRIBLE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN DONE TO THEM.	1
	THESE CASES SHOULD BE TREATED WITH RESPECT, IN A QUIET COURTROOM WHERE WE CAN ALL CLEARLY HEAR WHAT IS BEING SAID AND THE PARTIES, COUNSEL, SOCIAL WORKERS AND CASA FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH SAYING WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID. I FEAR THAT AN OPEN COURTROOM MAY HINDER THIS ASPECT OF THE COURT PROCEEDINGS.	
	See 1-6 above.	1
	See answers above.	1
	When we began this pilot project I was Strongly in favor of opening the courts to the public. However, after doing so, I changed my position completely. The chilling effect on the parents was enormous and the detriment to the child in losing confidentiality cannot be remediated.	1

**Judge Additional Comments**

Please include any additional comments here:	
<b>No Response</b>	14
<b>I REALLY SEE NOTHING POSITIVE ABOUT THIS PROPOSED LEGISLATION. IT IS A HORRIBLE IDEA.</b>	1
<b>I wrote no further explanations in that I think this decision has already been made. I think this survey is just a process. When I have tried to discuss the issue, the response I have gotten is how wrong I am, how I am not interested in best practices, etc.</b>	1
<b>Overall, I think that opening courts is a positive thing. We need transparency so that the public has confidence that we are working hard as a court system to help families. While I do believe that the families we see will neither be helped nor hurt by opening the proceedings, I think that we might see some positive improvements in counsel/caseworker's performance of courts are open. The only negative would be efficiency. It will certainly take longer to hold court proceedings if they are open to the public (weeding out sex abuse cases or other cases that may need to be closed on a case by case basis, etc.).</b>	1
<b>See comments above.</b>	1
<b>The cliché, 'Sunshine is the best disinfectant' seems to work here.</b>	1



2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Appendix D. Participant/Stakeholder Respondents**

**D.1 Survey completion dates**

Participants Affected by Child Welfare Cases: Completion Dates		
	%	Distinct Count
May 13, 2021	2.3%	6
May 14, 2021	15.5%	41
May 15, 2021	1.9%	5
May 16, 2021	0.4%	1
May 17, 2021	1.9%	5
May 18, 2021	50.8%	134
May 19, 2021	9.1%	24
May 20, 2021	4.2%	11
May 21, 2021	1.1%	3
May 22, 2021	1.1%	3
May 24, 2021	1.5%	4
May 25, 2021	0.8%	2
May 26, 2021	3.4%	9
May 27, 2021	0.4%	1
May 28, 2021	0.4%	1
June 1, 2021	0.8%	2
June 2, 2021	0.8%	2
June 3, 2021	0.4%	1
June 4, 2021	3.0%	8
June 5, 2021	0.4%	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>264</b>

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**D.2 Participant/Stakeholder Regrouped Role Categories**

<b>Role</b>	<b>1. Which role best fits your prior experience in the child welfare court system?</b>	<b>Distinct Count</b>
<b>Foster and Adoptive Parent</b>	Foster parent	208
	Other: Adoptive Parent	2
	Other: Adoptive parent (from foster care)	1
	Other: caregiver	1
	Other: Foster, then adopted and unexpected Kinship presently awaiting TPR as well	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>Advocate</b>	Biological parent	4
	Other:	5
	Other: Attorney	1
	Other: Child advocate	1
	Other: Community Advocate	1
	Other: Community Partner	1
	Other: family advocate	1
	Other: I also serve on the IPR board	1
	Other: KY	1
	Youth with former experience	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>FRYSC School</b>	Other: Family Resource Center Coordinator	1
	Other: Family Resource Center Coordinator in elementary schools; Former Instructional Assistant in grades K-5	1
	Other: Family Resource Coordinator	1
	Other: Family Resource Coordinator for an elementary school	1
	Other: FRC	1
	Other: FRC Coordinator	2
	Other: FRYSC	2
	Other: School employee	1
	Other: School Personal	1
	Other: Teacher/school employee	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Relative Placement</b>	Other: Fictive Kin	1
	Other: Foster grandparent	1
	Other: Grandmother/Foster parent	1
	Other: Grandparent and former child protection worker	1
	Other: Grandparent/Kinship	1
	Other: Grandparents/Foster parents	1
	Other: Guardian and Grandmother	1
	Other: Kinship Care	1
	Other: Relative placement, relative custody, relative foster parent	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

<b>Role</b>	<b>1. Which role best fits your prior experience in the child welfare court system?</b>	<b>Distinct Count</b>
	Total	9
<b>Social Worker Therapist</b>	Other: Former DCBS Child abuse investigator	1
	Other: Foster parent and therapist who works with family courts for 20 years.	1
	Other: Mental Health Case manager	1
	Other: Previous CPS work. MSW	1
	Other: Professional in the Field	1
	Other: Professional, and Step Parent to children within a JDNA case	1
	Other: Social Service Clinician	1
	Other: Social Service Worker/Family Resource Worker	1
	Other: State Workforce Development	1
	Other: Therapist in public and private sector	1
	Total	10
<b>No Response</b>	No Response	1
	Total	1
<b>Grand Total</b>		264

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**D.3 Participant/Stakeholder Respondent Answers to Opinion Statements and Additional Explanations**

Opening family court proceedings opinions															
Opinions	Role	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Response		Grand Total	
		%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count
Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.	Foster and Adoptive Parent	15%	31	19%	41	30%	64	25%	53	11%	23	0%	1	100%	213
	Advocate	5%	1	21%	4	37%	7	16%	3	11%	2	11%	2	100%	19
	FRYSC School	17%	2	17%	2	58%	7	8%	1					100%	12
	No Response											100%	1	100%	1
	Relative Placement			33%	3	33%	3	22%	2			11%	1	100%	9
	Social Worker Therapist			40%	4	20%	2	20%	2	20%	2			100%	10
I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of the case, would have been helpful to me.	Foster and Adoptive Parent	16%	35	21%	45	28%	59	22%	47	12%	25	1%	2	100%	213
	Advocate	5%	1	11%	2	21%	4	26%	5	32%	6	5%	1	100%	19
	FRYSC School			17%	2	33%	4	17%	2	25%	3	8%	1	100%	12
	No Response											100%	1	100%	1
	Relative Placement	22%	2	33%	3			22%	2	22%	2			100%	9
	Social Worker Therapist	10%	1	40%	4	10%	1	10%	1	20%	2	10%	1	100%	10
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare court cases to the public will have a positive effect on children and families involved.	Foster and Adoptive Parent	26%	55	25%	53	15%	32	21%	45	13%	27	0%	1	100%	213
	Advocate	16%	3	11%	2	16%	3	21%	4	32%	6	5%	1	100%	19
	FRYSC School	8%	1	17%	2	42%	5	17%	2	17%	2			100%	12
	No Response											100%	1	100%	1
	Relative Placement	11%	1	22%	2	11%	1	11%	1	33%	3	11%	1	100%	9
	Social Worker Therapist	20%	2	20%	2	30%	3	30%	3					100%	10

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses:**

**Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.**

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses: Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Foster and Adoptive Parent	Strongly Agree	Accountability for what the bio parents have done to their children.	1
		Any person who views the situation logically would come to a better conclusion than the judge did.	1
		As a foster parent and police officer I believe the whole picture of the child's life is missed. I am for keeping families together but not a such a disservice to some children.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses: Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.	
Because the parents that are on drugs and have their children taken into custody wants to keep that hidden and if it's not hidden maybe just maybe they will get help. Which in turn can also help they child in these cases.	1
Being able to know exactly what our foster children have witnessed and went through is the only way to truly understand the behaviors the exhibit and proper ways to help them.	1
Had the case been open to the public, everyone would have known what was best for the child in our care after 17 months moving to a relative 5,000 miles away that they hadn't met but a few times before was the best thing. Everyone including people in the court room still tell us to this day that they can't believe the judge allowed it to happen. Anyone and everyone that we talked to agree this child was done WRONG!!	1
I believe that if more people were involved in the case, they would see how poorly the judge does his job for these foster children. That is why so many kids are in foster care. Because the judge will not sign papers.	1
I honestly have not had a good experience since being a foster parent. I feel anyone close to the child has the right to speak up as the child might have told them some things they haven't told anyone else.	1
I think the more people you have that will voice their opinion for the kids, the better the chance they kids will stay out of a bad home life. Social workers see the kids once a month, but friends, family, Daycare's, schools etc. see them on a regular basis a can see what progress the child has made. A lot of them are going back home to the same abuse, and the more people the children must voice their concerns then maybe they will be heard and saved.	1
If the public was aware of the situation with the parents, they would disagree with most of the judgements passed I. Family court. It's absolutely a disgraceful system - placing children back in addicts care, separating siblings and ultimately being a circus act in court with some judges berating foster parents for filing CPS reports. It's absurd.	1
Judicial oversight for judges acting against medical advice of medically complex children. Judicial oversight of any sort other than elections.	1
No Response	11
Open to the public would have allowed day care workers, teachers, and medical providers to speak regarding the child's status and give recommendations.	1
Our birth Mom was involved in a high-profile case that made nation-wide news. If the public knew we've been awaiting a TPR hearing since October of 2019, I doubt the hearing would have been rescheduled every 90 days for almost 2 years. I think the public pressure to have the hearing would have not allowed this case to languish in court.	1
Our foster/adoption was family. Other family members did not believe what the courts were saying about the biological parents. If everything was open to the family, the children and the rest of the family could see what was really happening. Years later, we have he said/she said stories. The adopted children have been contacted by the biological parents (they are adults now) and are being told that everyone "lied" to them. Fortunately, we have a great relationship with our boys and have encouraged "relationships" with their biological parents. But I believe if the courts were not so worried that we were "in it for the money" initially, that lots of things would have gone smoother. We have lots of issues with the way things were handled and really no recourse (the boys were with us in foster care, then removed because we wouldn't adopt all 3 - we said yes to the younger 2 but couldn't adopt the	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses: Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.		
	oldest - and then 4 years later asked by children services to take the 2 that were still in the system but not with us. The boys have gone through lots of therapy and have/had lots of issues.	
	Public would make it hard for all involved.	1
	The courts will act different when they are open to public criticism, which in my opinion is a very good thing.	1
	The judge in our case has not had an opportunity to see all the children in person and together to see their behaviors and needs, to assess the possibility of healthy reunification and the ability of the parents to care for the high needs of their children.	1
	This is a violation of the children's privacy and the right to have agency over their own stories. Additionally, I just sat through a TPR case for my foster son and the level of abuse and neglect his bio parents faced growing up was traumatic to everyone involved in the case. These hearings are not for public consumption and should remain private.	1
	This really depends. I believe seeing witnesses in the case would help.	1
	Transparency and people who knew things could help with truth	1
Agree	As a foster parent, I had input that would have directly impacted the case, but the judge refused to allow me in the courtroom. Her teacher also had input but was not allowed access to the court proceedings. The child was returned to the parent and is being neglected again.	1
	As the foster parent I feel like I should be more informed and if the case was open to the public I would have known about it and been able to be there	1
	Being transparent would hold bio parents more accountable for deeds and actions or lack of. Public knowledge & embarrassment in the age of social media is crucial. What people appear and personify and what they are is two different things.	1
	Children cannot be identified but with parents they can. After having 7 children removed from their care at the time it may have prevented 3 other children from being taken too.	1
	Foster parents and other family are not always allowed into court. If we were, more information could have been provided to the judge	2
	I believe that the process would have been faster (we had our foster daughters for 19 months before we became "approved") There would def be more accountability and force a more organized system. People would see that it's not just their case that has had issues, etc.	1
	I believe the cabinet would have followed the judge's orders if they were accountable to the public.	1
	I cannot say that it "would" have changed the outcome of the case, but it potentially could have.	1
	I feel if the family was able to attend that it would have made a difference. I feel that if they were there that they would have not thought about what was best for the child.	1
	I feel like the public needs to know how broken this system really is.	1
	I feel like there would be more accountability to do the right thing.	1
	I have kids that DCBS has Investigated several times and took to court. DCBS found not abuse nor neglect. Outsider petitioned the court for emergency removal dusting home was not safe attorneys made their agreement including kids GAL kids were removed. Because dad was accused of being back on drugs and lying in court.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses: Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.		
	I think by making it public, the cover would be lifted and possibly have quicker admissions of guilt in cases, the cases wouldn't drag on so long. And permanency could possibly be established with less Trauma for the child.	1
	I think it opens the court room up to folks who want to " know" but may not necessarily be of any help.	1
	If outsiders were in the room, it could affect the feeling in the environment and influence the judge's decision.	1
	If people saw what truly was happening between the birth parents and children, the public wouldn't stand for it. they wouldn't stand for the injustices and the dragging out of court proceedings that these kids must go through to have permanency established.	1
	In many jurisdictions the decisions are made behind closed doors and not even in the courtroom. In County they are often done in "side room hearings" without the judge but the judge's assistant doing the representation. The system needs to be opened so that there is accountability.	1
	In my opinion, at least listening to what the Foster parent has seen and dealt with should be relevant to the case. After all the foster parents are the one who 90% or more of the time are supervising the parent visits. The foster parents could be more than of an advocate for the child rather than having better numbers for a success rate.	1
	It would have been harmful to the family because it was a small town.	1
	Judges would incur more scrutiny.	1
	No Response	15
	Our foster son was neglected and abused. He went back to bio parents the first time when dad was still using meth. Child (2 yrs. old) tested positive for meth. Dad was arrested for first degree possession and trafficking of multiple drug. Did not do much jail time due to coved. Mom was testing positive as well. We got child back months after this happened. We had him for another 7 months while parents made a feeble attempt to work their plan. Foster son was had signs of sexual abuse but due to developmental delays was not able to disclose so it was unsubstituted. Child was reunified and within a week his pre-k school started making abuse reports against parents. If this was open to anyone other than the workers, then there would be a public outcry. I work with high risk and delayed children in our public school and the amount of kids that get sent back to parents who haven't changed is crazy. The public has a right to know.	1
	Teens had no chance to voice their opinion or desires for the case	1
	These cases are hard enough on kids without having additional family members and gawkers in the courtroom.	1
	Witness could have testified that the parents were still using drugs	1
	Yes, to a certain degree	1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	Case is still ongoing.	1
	For one particular case I've been involved in, A judge went rogue and violated Kentucky statutes around ICPC. I don't know that having others in the courtroom, especially those not familiar with the ICPC, would have prompted her to follow the law. Sadly, even the GAL assigned to the case admitted he was unfamiliar with ICPC law, so he was ignorant to the Judge's violations and wouldn't have been able to advocate accordingly.	1
	Foster parents should always be included in the court case	1
	Have not been in court for such.	1
	Have not reached an outcome	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses: Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.	
I am unsure if the public would have the opportunity to speak. If so, I think this could be detrimental to the case, as uninvolved persons could interject information that is false, incorrect, or misinterpreted. If the public would be there just as observers, then I don't believe the outcome would be affected.	1
I do not feel it will have an effect either way. It is all down to a judge's ruling so unless the public is influencing the judge's decision in some way, shape, or form, then it doesn't matter if it is open or not.	1
I don't know that it would have, but it could have.	1
I don't think the outcome of the case would change. I personally would not want the public knowing which cases I'm involved in as a foster parent. I feel it would take away my security.	1
I feel it would have went a lot quicker.	1
I think the case could be open to the public.	1
It is my belief, that as a former Foster Parent, that all information was confidential in the case. So confidential, that even as the PRIMARY caregiver of our child (she is now legally adopted to us) that during the 2 years in foster care with us, we were not even privy to all of the information of the bio parent and family. This is very unnerving, as there were many things that we needed to have disclosed during this time. Even small things such as medical history of the bio parents could not be released to us, for "privacy" reasons. However, ALL of our information as Foster Parents was an open book, and we were made to disclose financial, health and family histories. This is very one-sided as very unfair. Allowing the public to enter a court case as such a very sensitive time, and allowing general public to hear all about personal things, seems very discriminatory, and honestly downright unethical when simple facts couldn't be shared among the Foster and Bio families through the process.	1
It might, It is hard to say but it definitely would make the state more accountable for their actions	1
It's hard to tell. In the 18 months we've had the children I've never seen or spoken to the judge. I've been called into court once during the goal change.	1
It's possible additional outside input from Friends of the biological parents might have been considered by Court players in their decision-making. Those friends and family would have had more direct access if the courtroom was open. As a result they would have been more informed.	1
Mine is just starting TPR. But, I think foster parents should be able to attend. I did foster care years ago and had two children, it went to court and against the workers stating not allow children to go to family went back. I knew family and grandparents got the children without parents to be involved they terminated their rights. But, family all lived together in Indiana. They had home here and there. But, as foster parent has no comments to be heard.	1
No Response	39
Or case would've maybe been changed if the media could've got a hold of it. We had our child for three years from six months to three years and a biological dad came in in two months' time the child was gone.	1
Our issues are contained within our single family, and it is still ongoing. As we are not through the process, yet I am unsure of how this would affect it.	1
Public opinion does help. Overall, I think the public wants what is best for kids.	1
Some cases of foster children it would change the outcome of the cases were open to the public but others it may not. I feel as though the public need to be	1



2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses: Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.		
	more informed on how the system works before laying cases in front of them though.	
	The case I was involved in was clear cut. The father of my foster children having his rights terminated. The father's attorney was trying to have the children adopted and have an agreement for visitation with the father. I would not agree to any such agreement. My personal information was given to the father. This action put me and the children in danger. And if the case was open to the public more people would have seen my personal information. I believe the children should be protected better. Making the children's information available to the public only makes it easier for them to continue to be hurt. The shouldn't be able to hear any foster parents' information or possible relatives of the children information. PRIVACY Is better for the adjustment of the children. And privacy may assist in having relatives consider helping the children.	1
	The Judge is always going to follow their decisions have the public is not going to influence that.	1
	The outcomes of these cases are not dependent upon attendance by attendance; rather their outcomes are based on the parents' ability or inability to create, maintain, and complete a case plan for reunification. Furthermore, many the decision of many cases has already been established at the adjudication and unless significant changes present the outcome is always predictable.	1
	These parents need to be held accountable. I understand I. Certain situations parents just need guidance but in others such as molestation or rape by parents or trusted adults are just swept under the rug after the child's removed because it's too much effort otherwise. In my case I had a child who was starved beaten and raped she came I to car. We are fighting for justice now because she's ready not the hush hush caused another 6-year-old to be to be brutally raped by him. had it been public her mom could have saved her	1
	While the public may be informed of the case information, and while they may take measures to ensure a desired outcome, the final decision resides with the courts-not the public.	1
Disagree	How am I supposed to know?	1
	I don't believe that would have affected the case at all.	1
	I don't know of any other time of court case where having the proceedings open to the public influences a case. Judges are supposed to be impartial. If a judge could be influenced by the presence of people being in the room, that judge either needs to get control of the courtroom or lose their job.	1
	I don't think it is good for the child in this case to be put into the public eye. So many of these children have unbelievable drama from their lives before becoming foster kids. A lot of kids are cruel and would tease put down another child.	1
	I don't think it would have an impact on the parent's lack compliance with services.	1
	My children's case was a case of a biological parent having a lifelong drug addiction, refused to complete AA or any treatment programs or parenting classes. The biological parent has had 6 children removed, all adopted by foster parents - over a 12-year time span. Each time it's because she takes drugs while pregnant, neglects them after birth, abandoned them and refused to work her case plan. Having an open court wouldn't have made this person "want" to suddenly care about her children.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses: Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.		
	My experience was with termination of parental rights. I don't think that the outcome would have been swayed either way had the public been able to be present. The testimony I gave was about the condition of the children I took in as a Foster Parent. I can't see any weight in having the public present during this situation.	1
	No Response	38
	Our case was heard over Zoom. This was not an ideal situation.	1
	the facts of the case were indisputable. any parties that needed to testify were present either way.	1
	The facts of the case would still be the same whether it was open to the public or not.	1
	The Judge is making the final decision, I can see where foster parents would like to be in court, so they are more informed on what is going on with their children. I feel as a foster parent we don't know enough of the judicial procedures to understand the system.	1
	The just she we had have chance after chance to the parents, and this was for over a year and a half of the child building a bond with us.	1
	The only thing that would change the outcome is to not let the cases drag on so long. My foster daughter has been with us since the week before she turned 2, she will be 5 this August and it still has not ended. The court gives too many changes to the birth family and doesn't consider the foster family or the child.	1
	The outcome is based on the facts. Either the parent is doing what they have been asked or they are not. Having others in the courtroom would only cause a distraction and would open up the chances of extended biological family being more aware of foster/adoptive families.	1
	With the TPR of our son, there really wasn't anyone that knew his family, so I don't think there would have been any difference.	1
Strongly Disagree	Being open to the public does not change the facts and only increases emotions.	1
	Children's life needs to be protected from people who just want to be nosey	1
	I assume the public would only be there to observe the case and not participate. I do not see how that would have any impact on the proceedings.	1
	I cannot imagine how additional observers would have altered the issues addressed. Either the family members of my placement completed their plans for reunification, or they did not.	1
	In our children's case the biological parents may have brought their extended families into the courtroom, but these individuals were not approved by DCBS to care for the children. So, having them there, if anything, may have hurt the case of each of the biological parents (separated). In the end, TPR occurred in our children's case.	1
	No Response	18
No Response	No Response	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Other Role Responses**

**Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.**

Other Role Responses Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Advocate	Strongly Agree	No Response	1
	Agree	I think it would be of benefit for the foster parents to respond as they have the child 24 hours a day. Going through the GAL or multiple workers sometimes skews the message.	1
		No Response	2
		Sometimes having other people in to see how the system works benefits to the best interest of the child.	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	I believe the experience would have usually been the same. Transparency sometimes can cause all parties to be more cordial but been devastating depending on the result and privately does the same.	1
		If I desired to attend court, I was always given the info.	1
		No Response	5
	Disagree	I am opposed to open court for juveniles under All circumstances.	1
		No Response	2
	Strongly Disagree	No Response	2
No Response	No Response	2	
FRYSC School	Strongly Agree	It would give people that work in the school or resource coordinator that work closely with the families an opportunity to share what they know about the families.	1
		We need to take the child's mental and emotional wellbeing into consideration. In most situation the children are humiliated enough without having the public there to watch.	1
	Agree	In a school setting, we are required to say something if we see something. We had children from the same household with attendance issues. Upon resolving that, the children would show up in the same clothes day-to-day, not bathed, acquiring lice which went untreated and worst of all, random bruises on their legs, feet, and hands. We made multiple calls to our county's CHFS to little avail. The family never got a case opened here. They went to a neighboring county and were immediately taken from the home (I'm not certain why) and were placed with foster parents here--so they were back in our district. We watched them thrive in their new home, parent was ordered to take classes and graduated from the parenting course. Parent then had to set up home to show upkeep, etc. It took parent multiple tries with caseworker to do this. Parent got children back. Parent promptly moved them back to our district into a different home, got to keep caseworker which was literally the only redeeming thing. I believe we could have kept those children in a foster situation longer because it was working, the foster parents were involved in their activities and school activities, easy to contact, etc.	1
		No Response	1
		Neither Agree nor Disagree	Depends on who in the public hears the case. Will it make the child a "public figure"? How will others (meaning adults who speak without watching who is listening) talk about this and then their children go into school and ask child in case about it.

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Other Role Responses			
Having the case open to the public would have changed the outcome of the case.			
		N/A	1
		No Response	5
	Disagree	No Response	1
<b>Relative Placement</b>	Agree	My accusations where from a 12-year-old that was mad because I his guardian and grandmother had clamp done on allowing him to do what he wanted His accusations of him and his other grandmother involves the removal of. 3 children. His sister and his niece and nephew	1
		No Response	1
		Our family would have been able to better support the interests of our foster grandchild if permitted to be in attendance	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	No Response	3
	Disagree	I don't see how having it be open court would change the outcome.	1
		This was an open court case of neglect. This is just an ongoing problem that the courts can't be at fault for.	1
	No Response	Having people who knew about the situation may have hindered some folks from lying.	1
<b>Social Worker Therapist</b>	Agree	Many cases present only one side. The parents are often portrayed in a very negative manner, with few skills and the knowledge of how to present their cases. The GAL's and parents' attorneys spend time with the biological family and often have limited information. These same people that are trying to help may have limited knowledge to what DCBS is expected to do BY POLICY, and it often harms the clients.	
		I would assume that as in criminal court, some issues would not be allowed, so the whole picture is not there.	
		This does not even begin to touch on the social media aspect. These families deserve some privacy and their lives not turned into a circus. Maybe some other type of Family Court oversight should be considered.	1
		No Response	2
		The number of people in the room often affects any testimony by the victim. Furthermore, there appears to be more animation on the part of the accused when an audience in present.	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	I have been given arguments from both sides and I see points from both sides.	1
		No Response	1
	Disagree	No Response	1
		That is more traumatizing to the children involved in the case.	1
	Strongly Disagree	Evidence speaks for itself. These cases go through a rigorous process and this opportunity to teach the public how the system works or does not work is critical in the transparency and trust building relationships between law and public.	1
I think allowing the court open to the public holds the court system more accountable.		1	

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses**

**I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of my case, would have been helpful to me.**

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses			
I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of my case, would have been helpful to me.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Foster and Adoptive Parent	Strongly Agree	Again, our paperwork had been lost so many times and no one seemed to communicate. With a public hearing, other people would have been able to see how ridiculous the process was.	1
		As a Foster Parent you are being in opposition to the parents. Everyone else has a support person, but we are not allowed to have one and must weather court alone.	1
		For us, our children suffered substantiated physical abuse. Hearing about it is sometimes traumatic, but necessary for us to fully understand and help them. Our support system which our children have adopted as part of their own support systems would benefit from knowing some of this information also. So, it would not help with trials/reviews, but would help our parents to understand some of the behaviors they witness. (And that makes addressing the behavior more effective as they could help address the cause and not just the behavior itself.)	1
		Also, they would be emotional support for us while we hear things that cause a degree of trauma when hearing about things that happened to children you love and protect.	
		Having my family my wife's family and our support system there would've been very important	1
		I had to speak openly in court about the care and condition of the children in the presence of the birth family and would have liked to have someone there to support me during that process.	1
		I think more people watching the case will allow more people to encourage those making decisions for children would try to work at a better pace.	1
		I would like to have had someone advocating for us and the boys.	1
		To protect our anonymity, we relinquished our right to participate in the hearing. We didn't want to give up that right, but we also didn't want to have our names and address distributed to the birth family. Ultimately, we decided that keeping our address unknown for the safety of the child was more important than our need to participate, but we shouldn't have to choose. If public were allowed to attend, we could be there without having to be named on the paperwork and still protect the child.	1
		More eyes onto the case are better for accountability	1
		No Response	20
		See above. Also, we were only told about 1 court date in the 15 months we had our foster son. The case worker refused to tell us when court was	1
		Taking people in the community and bringing them into the court room allows them to get different perspectives. Real life people. Not just social workers and judges who feel they can do or say whatever they want because "That's what has always been done".	1
		There're always 2 sides to a story or more. The child needs more people to speak on their behalf.	1
		Witnesses	1
		Yes yes yes! Your village is always helpful.	1
		Yes. The support from a variety of people is best for children in foster care. The social workers only see a glimpse of the child's status and sometimes lack time to gather and evaluate the	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of my case, would have been helpful to me.		
	comments from all parties involved. The lack of information results with the courts making decisions that may not be in the best interest of the children.	
Agree	Not helpful to me personally, but helpful to the children. I believe they would have had more stability if the cabinet had been held accountable buy the general public.	1
	Better decisions would be made if judges knew laziness and lack of concern would be known to the public.	1
	Child's teachers, therapist, etc.	1
	For support it would have been nice to have been able to have a family member go with me. Especially since we have to sit and wait for so long. But I wouldn't want it to be a free for all where anyone with no ties to the case could show up.	1
	Having family in the court, even if not directly involved, provides support.	1
	Having providers to be able to advocate for the child rather than having all communications tossed out as hearsay.	1
	I had family members and friends who were my supports and assisted me with advocacy. I would like to choose WHO I want in the court room during my case.	1
	I think open communication with the public would hold judges and attorneys more accountable	2
	It would have been helpful to have close family members.	1
	It's difficult to explain to someone who wasn't in the courtroom exactly what happened during a court hearing. There are usually lots of moving parts.	1
	More support for foster parents	1
	No Response	26
	Provide moral support.	1
	Support	1
	The teacher couldn't testify as to what the child's educational needs were and that the parent didn't work to meet those needs.	1
	Therapists would have been beneficial	1
	There are also key eye witnesses who might have criticized all information.	1
	There is a degree of accountability to the public to make the right decisions instead of the easy one	1
	Yes to a certain agree	1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	Again, others in a courtroom would serve no purpose. The Judges rely heavily upon the recommendations of the Social Services system (which in and of itself is a hot mess).	1
	Again, persons whom know nothing about the case, need not be present.	1
	As a foster parent I understand the need for privacy, so I understand that I couldn't have somebody there that wasn't a part of the case.	1
	As a Foster Parent our voice is muted, I can't foresee how changing this give us any voice, even giving the fact that we are with the child(ren) 24/7.	1
	For moral support, it would have been helpful to me. Otherwise not--general public, etc.	1
	I am not sure since I was unable to be at the hearings	1
	I assume that the people who would be interested in attending the hearings would be people who know the parties and not necessarily people who know nothing about the parties. For parents, having people there who know the situation may be comforting but it could also add more pressure as they may not know all aspects of what is being discussed. The same can be said for foster parents and the child. The parties may also feel like they are being judged by people who are not involved in the case. That being said I feel like there are both benefits and disadvantages to this.	1
	I believe the facts speak for themselves. Either a biological parent is willing to work their plan and be a responsible and good parent or they are not.	1
	Having the public in attendance is not going to change the facts one way or the other.	

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of my case, would have been helpful to me.		
	It might however hold the judges and caseworkers to a higher standard. If the public can see judges returning children to unfit homes and parents - where those children suffer - instead of keeping them in loving foster or fictive kin homes maybe they will stop returning the children to dangerous homes.	
	I can't see how it would have impacted the case at all.	1
	I don't think having uninterested parties would have helped our case, but I think it could help the system in general if more uninterested parties were involved and saw the process. I think it would aid transparency and reform for the system.	1
	I don't think it would benefit me, but I do think it would improve accountability to judges, cps workers, GALs, etc.	1
	I feel like only bio parents, foster parents, and anyone who could give testimony should be involved. Depending on age. If younger child not like it will stay with them if someone see's situation but, older children could just be nose people coming.	1
	I have no opinion on this one	1
	If someone is not directly involved with the case, children or parents they should not be in the court room.	1
	In some cases, yes but in others no.	1
	it really can go either way. Family may come to support bio family members but do nothing to support them after the court case. This gives a false impression that the family has more support than reality.	1
	No one is allowed in the court room except those that are allowed to be involved in the specific case.	1
	No Response	38
	Our issues are contained within our single family, and it is still ongoing. As we are not through the process, yet I am unsure of how this would affect it. But if this entails different character witnesses being able to be involved I can see that as being helpful.	1
	Public spectators would have no effect on facts stated in court proceedings in my opinion.	1
	Subjective.	1
	The question should read "helpful to the child" not "helpful to me". All decisions should be geared towards keeping children safe, first and foremost. All others' needs and/or desires should be secondary.	1
Disagree	Don't need a lot of people there that it's none of their business	1
	I was aware of my own role in the legal process and the appropriate measures for securing the attendance of other people. I also didn't need to do that as a foster parent.	1
	If they're not apart of the case in any way they offer no suggestions	1
	No Response	38
	People in the court would not do anything but spread gossip that is not true.	1
	See explanation for #2	1
	The only help in having other people might have been the person that called law enforcement and DCBS about the situation in regards to the children.	1
	The parents never even showed.	1
	They would have said things about the mother because they were very against having her work a plan. Not thinking what's best for the children.	1
	With children you don't need more people around it's just going to make it worse.	1
Strongly Disagree	As a foster parent it isn't helpful having more people involved. And the children in my care have not been assisted by the amount of people that know their personal business. Opening the possibility of public exposer to the abuse a child has been through is not helpful. I believe with child abuse on the rise, more steps should be taken to protect the children.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of my case, would have been helpful to me.		
	To open the court to other abusers and media could only be harmful to those already abused. PRIVACY IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILDREN AND AFFECTED FAMILY MEMBERS.	
	Because the court is supposed to find the truth. Individual needs to know what they are dealing with.	1
	Having other people in the court room would be a distraction and not add anything to the proceedings unless they had direct involvement with the case.	1
	I feel that it actually may have confused the issues	1
	I Strongly disagree with this. Family members or friends that are considered family or persons who are Strongly tied to the case, yes absolutely should be allowed in, they can be a great resource to a hurting family. But, having just any person put their 2 cents into something that is none of their business in the first place is dangerous and uncalled for.	1
	I think ANY case involving children with abusive and drug abusing parents should remain private to protect the children and foster parents from people who are not directly effective. Opening courts allows potentially dangerous people access to victimize children and foster parents.	1
	In fact, strangers to me and to the child placed with me did attempt on one occasion to get into the courtroom, and this made me very uncomfortable. Specifically, one of the child's parents had other older children who had been adopted by a couple from elsewhere in the state. They were attempting, without standing, to get custody of the child placed with me. One of them posted on social media about the court case, sharing personal information about the child placed with me that upset me. I felt it violated the child's privacy and might even make the child unsafe. Then the adoptive couple showed up at a court date and tried to get in. I spoke with them outside the courtroom, and they seemed well-meaning. However, there were already multiple family members aiming to get custody of the child placed with me, and the added drama of these strangers showing up made the circumstances feel more stressful. I was glad that they weren't allowed into the courtroom. I worried about my placement's privacy being further violated.	1
	No Response	14
	Others make things distracting	1
	There is no reason for anyone to be able to hear the details of abuse and neglect that are not parties to the case. Period.	1
	This is one of my biggest complaints about court. These cases are life altering for kids, families and foster families. Having others in the room, not affiliated with the case, is problematic. I have been in court when a goal was changed to adoption, mom was struggling a lot, very emotional. And there were unaffiliated attorneys, workers and others who were laughing. It was terrible. They were likely laughing at something else entirely, but it didn't matter in that moment. Court should be a private and very professional place. In my experience, and I have over 10 years' experience in multiple counties, this practice undermines the process.	1
	To me if they aren't involved with the child in some way it would make the child feel embarrassed and stressed.	1
No Response	Have not been in court for such.	1
No Response	No Response	1



2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Other Role Responses**

**I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of my case, would have been helpful to me.**

Other Role Responses				
I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of my case, would have been helpful to me.				
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#	
Advocate	Strongly Agree	I wish my therapist and case manager would have been in the court room with me.	1	
	Agree	I do think that having all parties involved in the case could limit some of the confusion and overlap I have experienced.	1	
		No Response		1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Doesn't affect me either way.		1
		No Response		2
		Not ever been faced with this personally		1
	Disagree	Natural parents are going through enough without putting their failure on display.		1
		No Response		4
	Strongly Disagree	No Response		6
	No Response	No Response		1
FRYSC School	Agree	No Response	1	
		Social workers don't work as close to the families as a resource person. They have more cases and are over loaded with other cases. The resource center also has more trust with the resource person than of a social worker.	1	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	N/A	1	
		No Response	2	
		Support systems are extremely important to children and families. If they have a support that is not part of the case, then special requests should be able to be made for attendance. Open to the public could be detrimental if you have opposing sides filling up the courtroom.	1	
	Disagree	No Response	2	
	Strongly Disagree	No Response	3	
No Response	No Response	1		
No Response	No Response	No Response	1	
Relative Placement	Strongly Agree	Kinship families are often more elderly. They really need someone else to be there for them as support element. Sometimes to speak on their behalf when they can't afford an attorney. I do not think it should be totally open court - children's confidentiality needs some protection; but stakeholders should be allowed to bring someone in to support them.	1	
		See above	1	
	Agree	I believe that the court should be familiar with extended family members to better understand the full picture of a child's experiences. Our family is very close, and we want to be as involved as possible in the process for the best outcome for the child.	1	
		No Response	1	

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Other Role Responses			
I feel like having other people in the courtroom, who were not part of my case, would have been helpful to me.			
		They could have seen things from objective. Also, to what they had observed	1
	Disagree	No Response	1
		the court room was full.	1
	Strongly Disagree	Having people in the courtroom who were not involved in the case would not be beneficial to anyone in my opinion. I feel like child cases should be closed to protect the child from onlookers or anyone just wanting to be nosy!	1
		It could be potentially dangerous identification of foster parents to allow people unknown to them be allowed to hear the case. We cannot protect Kentucky's children if we don't know there is a potential threat of someone we do not know, but may be distantly related to the case, being able to identify us, research, locate our residence, and gather information about our family's school, church, work and recreational locations. This potential exposure extends to placing minor children, biological and those in placement at risk. Significant risk of "cancel culture" as it relates to foster parent employment, personal property protection and potentially placing minor children unknowingly in danger. It is not a good idea to expose foster families of specific children to the public. Minor identities are protected in every court but identify parents and foster parents and that child or family could become a target, or the family could be the target of false allegations. We simply want to work to care for Kentucky children and support Kentucky families, be heard, and exercise our right to be a party to the case without being on display. Our children of neglect and abuse cases deserve the right and dignity to not have details of such be reviewed by the public!	1
<b>Social Worker Therapist</b>	Strongly Agree	Yes, this is beneficial because sometimes that other party is a support person and someone to lend a shoulder or a trusting mechanism for the party in court.	1
	Agree	At times there are other that can help give a history of behavior of the persons accused, as well as, that of the victim.	1
		No Response	2
		This does not apply to me, however if others were allowed in the courtroom, then community resource members can make note of the supportive services needed and can later make connections with the courts.	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	As an SSW this could go both ways. Sometimes the parents bring in too many friends and family and it is distracting and can become a "mess." Other times I feel it is good for others to hear what the judge says as they only have the word of the parents when they exit the courtroom i.e. "they removed my kids for no reason."	1
	Disagree	No Response	1
	Strongly Disagree	No Response	2
	No Response	No Response	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses**

**Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.**

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses			
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Foster and Adoptive Parent	Strongly Agree	Absolutely. Opening up the child welfare courts to the public would do nothing but generate positive change in the actions of the courts. It might be miserable on the courts end, but the court is here to work for us, so they will have to adjust.	1
		Accountability around the board to ensure the safety of children	1
		Bottom line: Accountability.	1
		I feel as though the courts are more concerned with protecting parents' rights (and its own liabilities) more so than the rights of the child. I think the court of public opinion would consider what's right for the children, not the parents. I think if the public were aware of our case, they'd be outraged at how it's been mishandled from the onset with the unauthorized visits, changing of localities to get a more lenient judge, the no-shows from the GAL, the 2 years wait for TPR. Additionally, if the case were public, I could lean on my normal support system because I'd be allowed to discuss the case.	1
		I feel that there would be increased accountability for all in involved. Things would not be swept under the rug. Also, foster parents would actually have the ability to attend court, since some judges shut us out.	1
		I think it's important for the public to understand what happens in these cases and how they fail children on a daily basis. I think the public would be shocked to see a child removed from a secure foster home where they have been for a long period of time and handed over immediately to a distant relative that surfaced that is a complete stranger! I think the public would be appalled to see children forced by the court to have visits with their abusers despite the negative affects it has on them.	1
		If the public knew what the children were made to endure then I think there would be an outcry. I also think it would help the public understand why these kids act the way they do and go on to repeat the cycle if they were able to hear the details of the cases. I would hope then that there would be more compassion for the children and reforms could be made.	1
		Informing the public of the system's inadequacies illuminates areas for improvement. Providing funds and resources for these broken or under serviced areas will make the biggest difference.	1
		It would keep the social workers and supervisors and everyone else involved in the case honest. It would also allow the foster parents to present issues without fear or repercussions from the sw or removal of the child.	1
		Judges cannot make good decisions on cases if they have no experience with the children and caregivers involved.	1
		Most parents I have dealt with state that they are not responsible or at fault for having their children removed from their care. It's always someone else's fault. Open court would name them, and they would be responsible and help them to make positive changes in order to get their children back.	1
		No Response	36
		Once the bio families realize that others can see their actions.	1
		People can really see what is going on in the courts, or the lack of it from the judge	1
		Resources for both children and families.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.		
	See above	1
	This way maybe these children will not fall through the cracks. Since I was not allowed in the court room the judge did not hear about the nightmares after spending Time alone with the biological family or the behavior changes. Thus making the decision to let the kids start stay overnight and everything going from bad to worse	1
	This would hopefully make parents start to realize that what they do will be seen by the public eye and what they do directly affects their children but THEM too.	1
	Yes, I believe it would have a positive effect but also require methods of organization in the courtroom. This would allow grandparents, family, friends, caregivers, teachers, etc. to have a voice when decisions are being made regarding the best interest of foster children.	1
	Yes! It allows everyone to be seen and heard.	1
Agree	Again, accountability and scrutiny for all parties involved is beneficial to everyone. Closed door proceedings prevent transparency.	1
	Again, I think increases transparency will hopefully reduce the negative, retaliatory behaviors of the cabinet and perhaps improve accountability simply because they know they are being watched. They also use "confidentiality" as a way of keeping us silent and also in the dark when we have the right to be informed and to advocate for our children.	1
	I feel that there needs to be some protections in place surrounding the core issues of the case to protect the children's privacy (namely around sexual abuse) so the general public may have an overall sense of the case but not specifics. I think the more transparency and people involved, the newer ideas and options a can be put in place for families.	1
	I think it could push other officials involved to be more involved in the process.	1
	I think like anything there is good and bad. I do believe the cabinet needs more accountability and this seems like a way to get that.	1
	I think there would be more accountability towards moving the case forward in a timely manner & focus more on getting outcomes to aid the children.	1
	I'm a little worried about open hearing cases impacting the privacy of children but do believe if the general public saw how some children are placed back with biological family prematurely and without proper merit, it might create the necessary outrage to enact change within the system.	1
	If families had a chance to talk to the judge and give their insight to how the children are handling the day to day activities since be removed from their home.	1
	Improve accountability, counter the overwhelming burn out and remind everyone this is a human who is greatly impacted by all the people in power over their lives.	1
	It may help the parents seek help sooner	1
	It will ensure that the child's best interests are met.	1
	It will hold workers, lawyers and judges more accountable for the actions they take in regards to the children. It would also allow foster parents better access to the court procedures, as many times judges don't want foster parents in the courtroom.	1
	It would make family and friends of the children or the families feel more welcome in the courtroom.	1
	More accountability!	1
	No Response	37
	There is a higher degree of accountability when court cases are open to the public.	1
	Yes to a certain agree	1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	Have not been in court for such.	1
	I don't know. I am torn to be honest. I could see it being both good and bad. Too many people involved could be bad, but it could also help by opening up more services for the family?	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.		
	I personally do not see the positive effect this would have. In my eyes, I see this as just being a way people for who have no need to gain any information from these proceedings to sit in and gain knowledge that won't benefit them or the community in any way. Basically, I see open hearings just being a way for people to gossip about all parties. Which would not be beneficial to anyone in my opinion.	1
	I really do not see how having the cases open to the public will change anything other than create a public opinion that may or may not be valid.	1
	I think it depends on each situation.	1
	I think it's a fine line you're taking the chance of a lot of drama in the court room and dealing with families. You're risking telling a child story before they're able to understand it. But on the flipside if that helps get more services for kids and for people to understand trauma that would be a good thing.	1
	I think this is a very difficult decision. I don't see much harm in opening them up however except in the instance where a child later attempts to view their own hearing information. I would want to make sure that although public citizens can see the testimony live, they have limited access to go back and retrieve copies. Copies of hearing testimony could be potentially damaging to children who might obsess over details or be re-traumatized by living through the events.	1
	I would need more information about how that would be in the best interest of the children involved. We definitely do NOT need the put these children through any more than they already go through during these cases.	1
	I'm ambivalent on this issue. I don't see where it would hurt anything to have a public gallery, but I don't see where it would help either.	1
	I'm sorry, but being new to the whole process doesn't give me much insight on the benefits or disadvantages of this.	1
	No Response	17
	Only way it would is if listen to what is said and look into what is said. I can say I'm best for child but look at it. Did I take to Dr.s did I take care of and love child do I have stable home, how long have I lived their how often did I move around. Bio parent can say they are best but are they just because they are blood. Do they have transpiration to take child to appointments? How often were police called to home. How many children have they lost. Where do they live and how long are they stable?	1
	That's complicated. On one hand, would you want your family matters aired publicly? On the other the cabinet and courts don't have enough accountability.	1
	This could go badly or it could go great just like with anything.	1
	This is new to me and I'm not really sure.	1
	Until the entire child welfare system is designed and updated to reflect modern-day practices and experiences; nothing will change - especially with regard to attendance.	1
Disagree	Children have the right to have their cases be private.	1
	DNA cases have a very negative stigma associated with them, so I worry that having a child/family publicly linked to these cases will cause that stigma to follow them throughout their lives.	1
	I believe it opens families and their children up to more scrutiny and judgment which is neither healthy or helpful. I DO believe families and children should decide who can attend their court proceeding; similar to special education meetings...the family can invite others and those others are welcome to attend.	1
	I can understand why greater transparency might be positive. Often times it is. However, in reading through these questions I do not see how opening the court to more people would make a child's experience in foster care any easier, and that is my primary concern. I am also concerned about the privacy of foster children and their families. It may well be that	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.		
	from the vantage point of others participating in this process there are positive outcomes that are not visible to me as a foster parent who has only one experience with the courts.	
	I feel like opening the proceedings to the public would open up room for disruptions in the courtroom and put the foster/adoptive families at risk.	1
	I think closed sessions are more private and can allow the parties to feel more confidential.	1
	I think it is a very sensitive subject, and you put children who have been through trauma in a very vulnerable position. Ultimately, I think there would be more damage done than good. Their parents or another adult hurt them in some way and now others know what happened to them... for an adult this could be empowering, but for a child, it could be humiliating. I also think you have situations where the parents are trying to rehabilitate and regain custody of their children. When their faults are on display for the world, it can make them feel like their past poor decisions are their forever identity. I understand the desire to hold people accountable and let the community know what they've done. But I truly don't think it's in the best interest of the children, especially if there's any hope for reunification.	1
	I think there is another level of accountability when actions are made public, however, children deserve protection and allowing media or others not directly related to the case pushes the limits of confidentiality in our media driven society. I do believe foster parents and family members should be permitted.	1
	No Response	32
	Not everyone needs to know the child's story! Protect them! They already have experienced so much trauma and they deserve a fresh start!	1
	Only people involved in that child life	1
	The children involved who know their friends parents or just other people would know about the case would cause more trauma they would have to deal with	1
	there are both pros and cons to opening to the public. The biggest con is that I feel that the children involved would be negatively impacted by opening up the issues to the public. Kids can be very mean and having the family issues put out there just give the bully's more ammo.....	1
	Until we get a court that is more concerned about the child's rights than the parents' rights I don't see how this will make any difference. My daughter knows me and my husband as her mom and dad but there is a change she will still go home after 3 years explain that to a level 2 autistic child.	1
Strongly Disagree	Absolutely not. It would only add to the sad chaos that these children are already going through.	1
	Disagree completely. These cases are sensitive, and the public does not need to know all this information. This can be traumatic for the children involved who have already endured so much.	1
	I disagree, the children are protected by the public NOT knowing who their family is. It is the families right and definitely detrimental to the Childs welfare for them to decide if and when their situation is explained. As adoptive parents we want our children to know their bio parents loved them, we don't want to bring up the trauma and pain from their past, especially if they've forgotten it. Why have the public known and be able to say oh yeah, "I knew your bio mom when she used to do this or do that?" No kid should have to live with strangers knowing their personal stuff. I feel like it would keep them stranded in the past instead of their bright future ahead. Children carry the shame of what their parents did, it's tough to get them past that but it can be done. Not if everyone else though is involved. I can't imagine people I don't even know knowing about my home life. I think a child would feel invaded. These children already have trust issues.	1
	I feel like it would be extremely harmful for details of some cases (even without sexual) to be made public. We need to let the child decide on what details of his/her past to be made	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.		
	known to others. This is directly connected to their self-esteem and feelings of worth. To let others know about the negative aspects of their past will certainly lead to degrading of self.	
	<p>I feel this is not the right course for family cases such as the ones previously mentioned. When children are involved because of the parents wrong-doing, the child is the victim. By keeping these cases private, children have the chance to start fresh when they are taken from their homes. New foster parents of the children do need to be kept in the loop, so they know what may trigger a child to exhibit negative behaviors.</p> <p>This is how I would look at it: There is a court case about Little Johnny being sexually abused. The case is all over the news including the child's name. No matter where he goes, he will have a difficult time putting the past behind him because everyone knows what happened to him and brings it up. (In a hypothetical world, everyone would take care of him, but we live in the real world where people (kids and adults) say or do things to purposely hurt others.)</p>	1
	I think if the proceedings were not shrouded in secrecy that in marginal cases where the cabinet is not providing help to parents that are really trying that there would be pressure to improve services. I also think that if it is clear the parents are not trying there would be pressure to move the cases toward permanency.	1
	<p>If it was possible to allow the public to know the problems within the system without hurting the victims I would agree. But I am sitting on the side of the child. My rights are never considered.</p> <p>I have been in court where the children's rights have not been considered. I have seen children services be the target of mistakes made.</p>	1
	If my goal as a foster parent is to help families heal, then a public execution is not the way to do this. Furthermore, my foster child would not be protected from what some random adult might go and say to one of his/her peers, and then that other child might go and repeat in school about my child. We are all subject to confidentiality, but a random adult in the courtroom would not be.	1
	No Response	17
	The public does not need to be in the court room while a child's life is being decided. The fact that the child is a minor should be reason enough. The public cannot go to a school meeting about that child and hear about his/her educational/behavioral progress. Those same things, only on a bigger scale, are part of discussions in court. What good could come from letting just anyone hear all about a child's life? Gossip and negativity would be the result. These cases are already full of gossip and negativity. They do not need more. Those directly involved with the case should be the only people permitted to be in that court room. With Foster children that have endured neglect and abuse, you most often do not know the full extent to which they have been abused or by whom. With letting anyone into the courtroom, a child's abuser, that the system has no idea about, could show up. This would in turn be a trigger and cause more stress with the child if they are in attendance. Even if the child is not there, anyone who knows the court date, such as relatives or friends of the family, could attend and find out sensitive information regarding where the child has been moved to or about the Foster Parents. Speaking as a Foster Parent, I would not want that information known for safety reasons.	1
	<p>There could be nothing positive about Open Courts. Absolute wrong decision to continue this process. It allows too many individuals into the situation that wanted nothing to do with the situation until it became last ditch efforts....and it is too late at that point. STOP PLAYING WITH THE MINDS OF THESE TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN AND THOSE WILLIGN TO TAKE THEM TO A BETTER LIFE&gt; Some of these children have never seen their bio-parents, and some have been so astringed from them that this small effort of "reuniting" of all the relatives they never knew they had would cause the child even more trauma.</p>	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses			
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.			
		Open Courts only allows those whom DO NOT need to be involved, the chance of involvement and to skew the case.	
	No Response	No Response	1

**Other Role Responses**

**Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.**

Other Role Responses			
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Advocate	Strongly Agree	No Response	3
	Agree	Just from the answer above.	1
		Will make sure all aspects of the children's needs are adequately presented. Things are not as likely to be skewed by parties involved.	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	No Response	3
	Disagree	I think it depends on the nature and notoriety of the case.	1
		No Response	3
	Strongly Disagree	Don't do this to those babies.	1
		No Response	5
	No Response	No Response	1
FRYSC School	Strongly Agree	I think the privacy of children would be impacted in a negative way. There hearings need to be private for the protection of the children. I do not believe having the public in the courtroom will offer anything positive. These children/families have been through enough. They do not need strangers in the courtroom learning of matters that should remain within the family circle. Especially when there is abuse. These children need to be protected not put on display for the public to watch for their entertainment.	1
	Agree	I know there would be instances where this would be an issue (irate grandparents or other relatives, significant others involved, etc.) who could possibly behave irrationally but yes, overall, this would benefit different organizations to help them understand the ins and outs of the case and to offer support just by being one of the child's safe people in the room.	1
		No Response	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Even though there could be positive outcomes, the negative outcomes outweigh.	1
		N/A	1
		No Response	3
	Disagree	No Response	2
Strongly Disagree	No Response	2	
No Response	No Response	No Response	1



2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Other Role Responses				
Overall, I feel like opening child welfare cases to the public will have a positive impact on the children and families involved.				
<b>Relative Placement</b>	Strongly Agree	Please be an agent of change in this system!!! Too many children have been sacrificed for convenience instead of doing what is truly in their best interest. If we don't make changes it is only going to keep getting worse.	1	
	Agree	No Response	2	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	No Response	1	
	Disagree	No Response	1	
	Strongly Disagree	Definitely not. Parents that are down do not need to be exposed to everyone that can file into a courtroom, while they are working hard to reunify their families. Opening courtrooms could have quite the negative effect on children, by putting their safety at risk. Foster parents or other caregivers has many reasons to not want to identify themselves to an unknown population, safety of family being a priority!	1	
		I feel that they should stay closed. It is not the business of anyone not involved in the case and puts the child's privacy at risk.	1	
		No Response	1	
	No Response	No Response	1	
	<b>Social Worker Therapist</b>	Strongly Agree	No Response	1
		Agree	Yes because sometimes seeing what another goes through can change the behavior of the next party and maybe head it off at the pass and not have another court case in the system.	1
Agree		No Response	2	
Neither Agree nor Disagree		I really don't know at this point I can't make an opinion one way or the other. I see that it would have positive impacts but I worry about the privacy of our children and the information about them that will be exposed to the public.	1	
		No Response	2	
Disagree		It seems that people think that if s a person in authority says it in court it is the gospel. Professionals are trained how to act in court. Scared, nervous, or otherwise uneducated clients are not.	1	
		No Response	1	
		There are pros and cons, but int he case of child welfare cases, I would vote not to have the public present.	1	

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Opening family court proceedings and accountability of professionals															
Opinions	Role	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Response		Grand Total	
		%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count
I feel like the judge would have listened more closely to me or others involved in the case if the proceeding was open to the public.	Foster and Adoptive Parent	20%	42	22%	46	23%	49	23%	49	12%	26	0%	1	100%	213
	Advocate			26%	5	26%	5	26%	5	16%	3	5%	1	100%	19
	FRYSC School	8%	1	8%	1	33%	4	33%	4	17%	2			100%	12
	No Response											100%	1	100%	1
	Relative Placement	11%	1	33%	3	33%	3			11%	1	11%	1	100%	9
	Social Worker Therapist	10%	1	30%	3	10%	1	30%	3	20%	2			100%	10
I feel like the attorneys would have paid more attention to the case if it was open to the public.	Foster and Adoptive Parent	23%	50	34%	73	16%	35	17%	36	8%	18	0%	1	100%	213
	Advocate	5%	1	37%	7	16%	3	21%	4	16%	3	5%	1	100%	19
	FRYSC School			25%	3	33%	4	33%	4	8%	1			100%	12
	No Response											100%	1	100%	1
	Relative Placement	11%	1	33%	3	22%	2	22%	2	11%	1			100%	9
	Social Worker Therapist	10%	1	30%	3	10%	1	40%	4	10%	1			100%	10

**Foster and Adoptive Parent**

**I feel like the judge would have listened more closely to me or others involved in the case if the proceeding was open to the public.**

Foster and Adoptive Parent I feel like the judge would have listened more closely to me or others involved in the case if the proceeding was open to the public.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Foster and Adoptive Parent	Strongly Agree	Accountability	1
		Agreed because again; they would have gotten other opinions.	1
		At least Calvert wouldn't have verbally accused me of filing false CPS cases only because the CFHS didn't investigate thoroughly enough.	1
		Considering the judges don't follow the law and let foster parents in the courtroom if it was open to the public they couldn't stop us!	1
		How can a judge make a decision on a case without all the facts?	1
		I think it's important for more eyes to be on these proceedings.	1
		I think that others who are involved with the foster children other than foster parents should be able to express concerns, or just be able to let the court system know about what they think is the child's best interests.	1
		I was told by the casa that the case worker did not tell the judge that the parents did not work any part of their plan, that she did not tell the judge about any investigations (some were open investigations when the judge granted reunification), did not say that mom was dating and living with a convicted, noncompliant sex offender and only told the judge that after	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent I feel like the judge would have listened more closely to me or others involved in the case if the proceeding was open to the public.		
	losing every child they had (8) that they were suitable parents for this child. Casa put all these things in her report and the case worker refuted them.	
	I would at least have a chance to speak	1
	I would feel safe to participate without being named on the court documents.	1
	It may have helped the judge to realize how the case effects the child.	1
	It's easy to see that the judges get frustrated with the lack of details provided by the DCBS at times. Additional parties are needed.	1
	No Response	24
	See above. Judges need to stop giving biological parents that cannot get it together in 12 months preferential treatment. If a bio parent can't complete rehab, attend meetings regularly, get a job and suitable housing in 12 months then TPR needs to take place and the children should be adopted into loving safe homes. My children were placed in my care at 60 days old. Yet it took 917 days in foster care for a TPR and moved to adoption. There is no excuse for children to languish in foster care that long. If a bio parent cannot commit and turn their life around in 12 months then grant the TPR and get the children out of the system. I for one believe the children should come first, not the parents. The children didn't ask to be born into chaos, and the children deserve better.	1
	The foster child I had was having extreme issues due to receiving drugs from family members during supervised visits. I ended up having to give my notice because he became violent. He was with me for 9 months and I would have been a great witness to have been able to participate in his hearing for his release back to the grandmother whom is and was under drug court supervision. He is a K on the same road that I worked so hard to get him off of and had him working and involved in school sports with tons of support.	1
	The judge did not listen to my concerns at all. If there had been more exposure or accountability, I feel like she would have.	1
	The social worker s and their supervisor would have not been so quick to threaten me if they knew that the case was public and that I could have called anyone to listen to it including the news channels	1
	There would have been a strong presence of supporters who knew where our foster daughter wanted to be.	1
	We, as foster parents, were never allowed to attend the legal proceedings.	1
Agree	being open to public would have the courts more aware and transparent.	1
	Foster parents rarely have a voice in court matters. Judges don't want to hear what we have to say. Lawyers never want to talk to you about the children they are representing. Judges make decisions about a child life based on what people, who have either never met the child or only see said child once a month, have to say about the child.	1
	If I had actually been allowed to attend my voice might have been heard.	1
	Judge would have to allow our voices as foster parents to be heard.	1
	No Response	33
	Not open to the public, but open to participants of my choosing.	1
	I don't think court rooms should be OPEN, but I think the family/participants	

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent I feel like the judge would have listened more closely to me or others involved in the case if the proceeding was open to the public.		
	should be able to invite their supports to be present. I also believe seeing the support I have could have influenced the judge.	
	Our judge doesn't look out for the best interests of the child. If she had to look at future voters, she might be more open to hearing everything.	1
	That may help in the way that the judge gives so many chances to the parents.	1
	They are voted into position. But the majority of people voting have no experience with the court system. Knowing the voters are actively passing attention may help with better decisions	2
	We were not even given access to court hearing and therefore had no chance to speak to the judge	1
	We were told that we weren't allowed in the courtroom	1
	Yes to a certain agree	1
	Yes, improve accountability.	1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	Again, I don't think this would help our particular case but I think it helps transparency and engagement to have an audience.	1
	Again, the facts of the case remain the same. And I believe that the Judge would make a ruling based on those facts. However, I can see where people being in the court room may give people courage to say what they need to. And I can also see where they could say less as well.	1
	Always a biased opinion.	1
	Because we, as Foster Parents, were not allowed to speak on behalf of the child during ANY court appearance, as per the agreement with the DCBS system, I do not feel that random listeners should have vocal input on a case they know nothing about.	1
	Depends on the judge and the child's case.	1
	Have not been in court for such.	1
	I don't feel like, and I'm sorry for this. I know it's all about children being reunited with parents. And I totally get that. But, I think circumstances should go in to play. If parent has already had more than 2 children taken. Shouldn't have any chances. I get people make mistakes and can change. But, if it has happened once and clean up give them chance. But, if it is ongoing they shouldn't have chances...Sorry... I think kids' welfare should go into consideration. What are they being put through going in and out of parent's home. Foster homes. Moved around losing everything over and over.	1
	I have never had a chance to speak up in court and I've not heard any or our 12 or 13 workers in 4 years speak up in court on kids' behalf.	1
	I think the judges would listen the same regardless of who was in the courtroom.	1
	I've not even seen a judge a single time via zoom since talking placement a year ago	1
	If Foster parent were asked to be part of the case their observations should be taken into consideration	1
	Judges don't listen to foster parents. We're never asked for our input or opinion but are completely ignored. I'm lucky to be in a county where the judge follows the law and at least allows me in the preceding. A lot of foster parents are not.	1
	No Response	32

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent I feel like the judge would have listened more closely to me or others involved in the case if the proceeding was open to the public.		
	Not unless the judge is going to allow the family to speak, it may benefit your case.	1
	Our judge has been great; although we haven't felt comfortable or like we could speak in court. This was never explained to us. The cabinet seems to just want foster parents to keep their mouths shut and stay out of the way. If we don't, they do small things to punish us.	1
	Subjective and relative to the judge overseeing the case. Do they truly care or just checking a box to say they showed up for work?	1
	The Social Services department is relied upon heavily; despite the fact they spend nearly no time with or around these children; regardless of COVID restrictions.	1
	This depends on the judge. In one case we were part of, the judge frequently asked us questions or requested comment from us.  In another case, a different judge/different county, the judge has never asked us a question nor requested our comments on anything. We attend every court date we can whether it be a review or a trial. In this particular case we were, what felt like purposely, left out of court dates. We attended all we knew about and was permitted to attend.	1
Disagree	Again, people can't just walk up to the bench and tell the judge what they think about a case. That's not how court works.	1
	As a foster parent, I always try to attend every court date where I am allowed, in case the judge wishes to ask me questions and so that I am as informed to advocate for my placement as possible. However, for this placement the judge never spoke to me or asked me any questions. I do not believe that the presence of additional people in court would have caused her to do so.	1
	Foster parents don't get a say in anything and we don't ever get to testify or speak so it wouldn't make a difference if there were more people there or not. It would be nice if foster parents did get to speak though.	1
	I don't feel like open to the public is necessary, but those actually involved in the case (including children and foster parents) should be given opportunity to speak with the judge face to face	1
	I feel like the Judge did listen and with only the people involved in the case in the courtroom, the Judge is able to focus on the case being presented.	1
	I feel the pertinent persons are the only people who should be heard.	1
	I think closed court allowed for more details to be shared that may have not been shared with an audience.	1
	I think this will almost have them listening less as they will want to minimize conversations.	1
	No Response	37
	Overall, I think the judge in my case is very professional. I don't think an open courtroom would sway her judgment.	1
	The judge didn't seem to listen to anyone regardless. The lawyer and social workers just talked over and about our son's birth mom. She wasn't heard at all.	1
	The judge shouldn't be swayed by others.	1
	The judges have their blinders on a lot.	1
Strongly Disagree	A judge rule by the rule of law.	1
	Better decisions would be made if judges knew laziness and lack of concern would be known to the public.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent			
I feel like the judge would have listened more closely to me or others involved in the case if the proceeding was open to the public.			
		I Strongly disagree on this because, the more people, the more distractions in the court room. I would have preferred not to be a part of a parent's court case in anyway. It was intimidating for me to be in court with the parents of my foster children.	1
		If the issue for bio families is having representation of others, their lawyers should be instructed to call them as witnesses so that they can be a part of the hearing.	1
		Judges thoroughly review the facts. Public spectators would have no effect on a judge reviewing and making a determination in a case.	1
		No Response	16
		The general public does not know anything about this child.	1
		The judge bases his or her decision off of the facts, not based on the people who are there.	1
		The judge did listen intently to my testimony.	1
		the judge involved in our cases always listens and takes our concerns and issues seriously.	1
		The judge listens in this case, but the cabinet employee did what they wanted anyway.	1
	No Response	No Response	1

**Other Role Responses**

**I feel like the judge would have listened more closely to me or others involved in the case if the proceeding was open to the public.**

Other Role Responses			
I feel like the judge would have listened more closely to me or others involved in the case if the proceeding was open to the public.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Advocate	Agree	No Response	4
		Sometimes it helps knowing other people are there and see their reactions to the questions and answers	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	no	1
		No Response	3
		Possibly, depending on the situation.	1
	Disagree	No Response	5
	Strongly Disagree	No Response	3
No Response	No Response	1	
FRYSC School	Strongly Agree	We keep record of each interaction between us and the child, us and the parent/guardian, and between us and social workers/reports made. Documentation would have helped this instance.	1
	Agree	No Response	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	N/A	1
		No Response	3

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Other Role Responses			
I feel like the judge would have listened more closely to me or others involved in the case if the proceeding was open to the public.			
	Disagree	Judges should listen closely to all parties regardless of public or private proceedings.	1
		No Response	3
	Strongly Disagree	No Response	2
<b>No Response</b>	No Response	No Response	1
<b>Relative Placement</b>	Strongly Agree	The judge needs to have more input to better understand what is truly the best placement for a child.	1
	Agree	In one of the first EPO hearings where my grandkids were put directly in foster care instead of inquiring for available family - the Judge went through the case so fast and didn't sort out all available options. I believe had this been more public that would have been different and the kids wouldn't have stayed in foster care as long. The other error was that DCBS failed to do the background checks on two hearings keeping the children in foster care - had this been public this probably wouldn't have happened.	1
		No Response	2
	Disagree	I thought the judge was very attentive to the situation.	1
		No Response	1
		There are plenty of people that the judge is ruling in front of, even as parties, we are not aware of ALL of the information a judge might have to base their judgment on.	1
	Strongly Disagree	I don't understand how having others in the courtroom would make the judge listen more closely. That really makes no sense to me.	1
	No Response	No Response	1
<b>Social Worker Therapist</b>	Strongly Agree	When others are watching and learning and paying attention there is more interest in the case because people know they are being reviewed in a way.	1
	Agree	At times yes	1
		No Response	2
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Does not apply to me but I see where this can be a valid feeling.	1
		I don't think having it public would make a difference on this for me.	1
		I tried to have my case delivered in a fair way, with the pros and cons. Many people seem to feel that parents should get one strike and no more.	1
	Disagree	No Response	1
	Strongly Disagree	I feel as though the judges that I have stood in front of to give testimony have been very attentive and allowed very little to distract them.	1
No Response		1	

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses**

**I feel like the attorneys would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.**

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses			
I feel like the attorneys would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Foster and Adoptive Parent	Strongly Agree	Accountability	1
		Attorneys want a name as someone who genuinely fights for their clients. They cannot get that reputation I'd they are not working hard for the children they are assigned.	1
		Attorneys would pay more attention to the case if open to the public. This situation would cause the attorney to be more knowledgeable of the case and more prepared, versus taking 2 minutes to talk with the child/foster parent before the court hearing.	1
		Especially GALs who completely neglect cases. If their negligence was exposed perhaps they'd actually do their jobs	1
		GAL's often fail to prepare for these cases appropriately, often times never meeting the child or arranging to speak with interested parties.	1
		I believe that the dependency abuse and neglect system is very poorly administered in this state. Attorneys paid little attention to our foster child's case until the moments leading up to hearings. Having public access to these courtrooms may have increased pressure to handle the cases in an appropriate manner	1
		I've been very unimpressed with my experiences with GALs as a foster parent. In five years of fostering over 8 placements, I've never had an engaged GAL. Oftentimes, they're seen scrambling the day of court trying to get details about the case. Perhaps, if the hearing was open to the public, they'd feel more compelled to be more engaged with their cases outside of the few minutes they spend preparing the morning of the hearing.	1
		Including the judge	1
		Most definitely!	1
		Most GAL's are pitifully uninformed about their cases. They are not contacting the child or the foster family as they are supposed to and they rely on the 3 minutes they speak to the worker before court. I don't think they would want the public to find out they don't know anything about the child they are supposed to represent.	1
		No Response	30
		Our attorney is headed to retirement - he doesn't care. He talks mostly about his grandkids on the phone with us. If people were there they could witness the lack of efficacy.	1
		Our GAL does not seem to feel any sense of urgency for wrapping this case up. Our placement has been with us for 3 years and we don't even have a TPR court date. She doesn't return my phone calls or emails. Public pressure might actually prod things along.	1
		STRONGLY agree because then they are being watched and made sure they are doing everything they can for the child's sake.	1
		The attorneys are overwhelmed and they are just trying to process through.	1
		The GAL does not know who they are representing and being open to public would ensure that they knew who was on the docket.	1
		The guardian ad litem did not listen to my concerns at all. If there had been more exposure or accountability, I feel like she would have.	1
The State sent a brand new lawyer to represent their case. No supervisor. It was an embarrassing mess. They would never have done that if this had been open to the public. The news stations would have had a field day.	1		
We met the boys attorney once, and that was right before she went in to represent their best interest. She was the second attorney. The first attorney they had met with	1		



2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
I feel like the attorneys would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.		
	them outside of the court date and got some background from them and talked to us as well.	
	We were never even told who the GAL was. The gal didn't not see our foster son or make contact the whole time we had him. He just did what the case worker told him to do	1
	Yes this would be accountability.	1
Agree	Because everyone could see if they are a good or bad attorney	1
	Because lawyer do not want to look bad or they don't know their job.	1
	During court, attorneys are often quiet or seen not paying attention. If it was public, they would be more willing as more people can hold them Accountable rather than the parties who can be seen as simply complaining	2
	Hopefully with the families being present maybe things would be more personal.	1
	I believe there would be more accountability. I've never met or spoken to my foster children's GAL.	1
	I feel like the parent's attorneys would have a better understanding if they were to have some experience with the children and better understand their needs.	1
	I feel like, too often, attorneys are just going through the motions. They may feel additional pressure to "perform" if court cases are open to the public.	1
	I know myself and other families have had a lot of problems with attorneys assigned to the children calling and doing what they're supposed to be doing they literally will call the night before court and try to learn the whole case because nobody knows they're a part of the case. So it's like why put the effort in nobody knows you're doing it.	1
	I only agree in the sense that no one wants to be made to look like a fool and more people seeing what's going on will make people strive to do their very best.	1
	I think the GALs could have been more attentive with accountability.	1
	In our experience, specifically the GAL, is not too involved and gets their information mostly from the case worker. If it was open to the public it could put a little more pressure on them to get as much information from all sources as possible.	1
	It's possible but I think most lawyers try to act in the best interest of their clients.	1
	Maybe they would look over the file before the case started and feel more responsible if people were seeing their mistakes. We had a GAL think she was bio Mom's lawyer and ask for things only to open her folder and realize that she was not bio Mom's lawyer, she was the child's lawyer.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
I feel like the attorneys would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.		
	<p>Maybe? I understand GAL's do not get paid much for the amount of work they have to do. However, we have yet to have one that gave a case their all.</p> <p>In our first case ever, the GAL was nearly non-existent even with us requesting to meet them so they could meet our child. The judge eventually replaced them just before the review that was established to discuss permanency goals near the 15 months in care mark. The new GAL was invited to meet our child but declined the offer. This new GAL gave a cursory opinion, at best, with an obvious lack of reviewing the case by sheer evidence of not being aware of major determining factors in the case. Their opinion was based solely on their opinion of the biological parent. Damage to the child was of no importance; the main concern was the biological parent. This felt very unfair to the child.</p> <p>In our most recent case, the GAL was also offered to meet our children and declined. The GAL then spoke at length in many reviews about not accepting the opinions of other professionals, including doctors, therapists, and social workers, that had worked with our children directly, saying their opinions were formed so very quickly for children they had only met 10-15 times. This statement from a person that had never met the children and was making recommendations of their own.</p> <p>GAL's so far, to us, appear to advocate for the parents, not the child/children. However, I understand our experience is limited to these two cases.</p>	1
	<p>most of the lawyers related to the cases we had were not necessarily serious about the cases. I feel that they were just "making the motions" . If others were present they may have taken them more seriously.</p>	1
	No Response	48
	<p>Not open to the public, but open to participants of my choosing.</p>	1
	<p>I don't think court rooms should be OPEN, but I think the family/participants should be able to invite their supports to be present. I also believe seeing the support I have could have influenced the attorneys.</p>	
	<p>Probably wouldn't have been so uncaring for the children involved.</p>	1
	<p>See above.</p>	1
	<p>The attorney only met with the child once. CASA, social workers, foster parents, and teachers knew the child and the child's needs.</p>	1
	<p>The attorneys (especially the appointed attorneys) are rarely prepared for hearings and often do a poor job representing their clients. As an attorney myself, I would never show up as unprepared as they are. I was involved with one case (as a foster parent) where the father's attorney had clearly never spoken to or laid eyes on his client during the entire time the case was ongoing.</p>	1
	<p>The children's attorneys never talk to us as foster parents we would be able to tell more about what was going on with the child</p>	1
	<p>The lawyers usually are not very involved or interested in the best interest of the children they are representing.</p>	1
	<p>There has been no contact or questions asked</p>	1
	<p>Yes to a certain agree</p>	1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	<p>attorneys work for who is paying them.</p>	1
	<p>Have not been in court for such.</p>	1
	<p>I can't say. Have yet to see or talk to any attorney.</p>	1
	<p>I think it helps to have an audience.</p>	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses			
I feel like the attorneys would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.			
		My son's is a simple no-show-parents case.	1
		No Response	26
		Not been involved so I don't really know. But like judges I think all need to look at background of families. Bio parents and family members. They aren't always best choice if they have had drug issues also.	1
		Our Foster's GAL never once called, visited, or communicated with the child; yet in Court was required to represent her best interest. Which without knowing the child, was defaulted to whatever the Cabinet had to say!	1
		Subjective and relative to the lawyers involved. Are they invested, just doing a job, burned out, etc.?	1
		The attorney works for the person whom hired them. This has no bearing on public attendance. And any attorney whom needs an audience, is not working for the case, they are working for themselves.	1
		They may have been more prepared at least.	1
	Disagree	As a foster parent, my only contact with attorneys involved was indirect. I only ever spoke with my placement's guardian ad litem. The attorney for the Cabinet and the personal attorneys of the child's family members (at least four were involved) did not engage with me, beyond occasional casual conversation. Although I cannot assess their dedication to the case personally, I have no reason to believe that outside observers would alter their handling of any aspect of the process.	1
		closed allowed for intentional focus	1
		No Response	31
		The attorney in our case was for the mom even though a Specialist told him she should not get our foster daughter back.	1
		The attorneys should have spoken with all involved parties prior to court. Having the public there would not change anything.	1
	Strongly Disagree	Attorneys represent the client not the public spectators that would attend.	1
		Attorneys should be held accountable for mistakes they make in court. I believe some attorneys would use the distraction in court to their favor. To win a case for the offender an attorney may use others to influence the outcome.	1
		Better decisions would be made if judges knew laziness and lack of concern would be known to the public.	1
		More people in the court room cause distractions.	1
		No Response	13
		The attorneys were paying attention to the case because of the welfare of the children.	1
	No Response	No Response	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Other Role Responses**

**I feel like the attorneys would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.**

Other Role Responses			
I feel like the attorneys would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Advocate	Strongly Agree	Attorneys like to be seen, any PR is good PR.	1
	Agree	I do think they perform better with an audience. Unfortunately many families only get to speak with their attorney right before the case is heard.	1
		No Response	5
		Sometimes for other cases	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	No Response	4
	Disagree	No Response	3
	Strongly Disagree	No Response	3
No Response	No Response	1	
FRYSC School	Agree	Most are public defenders/elected and that may make both sides more accountable.	1
		No Response	2
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	I am not clear if attorneys were on this particular case, I'm assuming yes, but I would not know how much they cared.	1
		N/A	1
		No Response	2
	Disagree	No Response	4
Strongly Disagree	No Response	1	
No Response	No Response	No Response	1
Relative Placement	Strongly Agree	I believe many of them are just going through the motions and they are not interested in a child as a valued person. These children experience severe trauma based on decisions made for them by people who do not know them or care about their futures. It's all about just placing them with a bio family member instead of what is the right thing to do.	1
	Agree	No Response	3
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	No Response	1
		We can't control people with other people. They are sworn to represent their client to the best of their ability. There are some good and bad in every situation. A better solution might be to "vet" some of the public defenders That don't seem to do a good job Gathering facts Needed to adequately represent families.	1
	Disagree	No Response	2
Strongly Disagree	Once again I don't understand how that would be the case.	1	
Social Worker Therapist	Strongly Agree	Yes because they are paid by some of those people possibly in the future or by chance as a future client and their reputation is on the line.	1
	Agree	I believe they would be held more accountable.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Other Role Responses			
I feel like the attorneys would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.			
		No Response	2
Neither Agree nor Disagree		Does not apply to me but I see where this can be a valid feeling.	1
		No Response	2
		Unsure, the attorneys are not paid enough. If the case was a really bad one, I would hate to see any attorney showboating.	1
		No Response	1
Disagree		No Response	1
Strongly Disagree		No Response	1

Opening family court proceedings and accountability of professionals															
Opinions	Role	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Response		Grand Total	
		%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count	%	Distinct Count
I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the proceeding was open to the public.	Foster and Adoptive Parent	23%	49	26%	55	22%	46	18%	38	11%	24	0%	1	100%	213
	Advocate	26%	5	32%	6	5%	1	11%	2	21%	4	5%	1	100%	19
	FRYSC School			42%	5	33%	4	17%	2	8%	1			100%	12
	No Response											100%	1	100%	1
	Relative Placement	33%	3	22%	2	33%	3			11%	1			100%	9
	Social Worker Therapist	20%	2	30%	3	10%	1	20%	2	10%	1	10%	1	100%	10
I feel like more services would be offered if the proceeding was open to the public.	Foster and Adoptive Parent	19%	40	20%	42	23%	48	30%	63	8%	18	1%	2	100%	213
	Advocate	11%	2	26%	5	26%	5	26%	5	5%	1	5%	1	100%	19
	FRYSC School			25%	3	17%	2	50%	6	8%	1			100%	12
	No Response											100%	1	100%	1
	Relative Placement	11%	1	22%	2	22%	2	22%	2	22%	2			100%	9
	Social Worker Therapist	30%	3	20%	2	10%	1	40%	4					100%	10

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses**

**I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.**

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses			
I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Foster and Adoptive Parent	Strongly Agree	Accountability. We have a bio parent who is now compliant after 2+ years and we are required to make supervised visitations. Our TPR hearing has been pushed back, and then sat with no date in sight. We now have the hearing and our 6yr old has to go through seeing him and then not...again.	1
		As it stands they are largely unaccountable to anyone. If there are questions about how a case was handled they hide behind confidentiality.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.		
	Failures on the part of the social worker led to a poor outcome in our case. If there had been more exposure or accountability, I believe the Cabinet would have done their job better.	1
	Hopefully the social worker would come more prepared to court if it were public.	1
	I have done everything by the book with foster parenting, and the biological mom hasn't done her case plan and it's been 3 years. I feel like I have to adjust everything, or change things such as visitation days, times, meeting places, whatever is may be that the mom wants us to do. Almost like she gets rewarded, and I have to do what they tell me to do. So if more eyes and voices were there for the children, maybe they would work harder for the kids.	1
	If the case worker was being judged by the public then maybe she would think harder when reunifying with parents who are still using. Due to my job I am aware of 3 other groups of children that she reunified to parents who have made no effort. One mother overdosed the week after reunification. We have to deal with the behaviors that these kids present with at school every day, not the case worker. She doesn't see how her decision effects so many children.	1
	It would put more pressure on DCBS to tighten up their timeliness. Not let investigates drag on for 2 or 3 months before they even test for drugs	1
	No Response	32
	Oh 100% agree. Social workers don't get enough credit for what they really do to these children once they are out of states custody. How the trauma affects them. People in the public like school teachers can see the trauma that comes from removing or keeping these children in the wrong environment.	1
	People do better when more people are watching	1
	See above. I told my children's caseworker for months that the bio parent was still using, but it took her 9 months to order a follicle test. Why? You could tell the parent was high at the supervised visitation. Why did it take 9 months to get a follicle test. The follicle test was positive. Positive for cocaine and weed. Bio parent was passing pee tests all along, she finally admitted to using someone else's pee.	1
	Social workers wouldn't be as apt to lie under oath.	1
	Some workers have strong ethics and this would not change how they act. However, other works care more about pleasing their supervisor and closing cases than the wellbeing of the child. I think if the court were open to the public they might have a stronger sense of obligation to the wellbeing of the child.	1
	The original case that made headlines got botched by DCBS social workers. They did not investigate calls from neighbors or the daycare regarding suspected abuse sufficiently, thus resulting in the murder of a child in DCBS care. The social workers have also botched our case, allowing visitations without the order of the judge, which has led to the significant stalling of this case. Public accountability might encourage the workers to read the damn file before making decisions regarding contact with the parent.	1
	The social workers often do things because they know they can and nobody will know	1
	They are also overwhelmed.	1
	They only seem to do the right thing when they are being watched and they know they are being watched.	1
	We had so many social workers, it was a revolving door. The info was never really relayed correctly from one to another. We did have a couple great ones, and a couple who just didn't care.	1
Agree	I've worked with some cps workers who did the minimum and didn't clearly convey risks and concerns. (Others were great but again, accountability helps)	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.		
	All parties would be more likely to be held accountable if cases were open to the public and garnered the attention they deserve.	1
	Although some professionals may be more conscientious about their job if the proceedings are public, this should be weighed against the harm that could be caused. Regardless of how anyone "feels" about the issues above, the child has the right to privacy and until they are old enough to speak for themselves legally, they should be protected, including their privacy. Social workers, lawyers, and judges should not need the threat of the public being present in order to do their job, and children should bit have to give up their privacy in order to force them to do so.	1
	Any time more people are able to see what is happening, people are more likely to do better with their job	2
	As above, I think social worker interest in the case might have increased if there was additional public pressure to handle cases like this in a timely manner. However, I know firsthand that they are very overworked and I'm not sure that additional public pressure would somehow make them magically able to devote more time to each individual case.	1
	Depends on worker	1
	I feel like, too often, social workers are just going through the motions. They may feel additional pressure to "perform" if court cases are open to the public.	1
	I only agree in the sense that no one wants to be made to look like a fool and more people seeing what's going on will make people strive to do their very best.	1
	It could show transparency when it comes to DCBS	1
	No Response	39
	Not open to the public, but open to participants of my choosing.	1
	I don't think court rooms should be OPEN, but I think the family/participants should be able to invite their supports to be present. I also believe seeing the support I have could have influenced the social worker.	
	Our worker (Meade co) she is nice, but not motivated. They drag their feet. does not get in a hurry...	1
	Social worker are so overworked it is sad, and it would make a big difference I feel if we were there to represent the children we foster. Plus if we were allowed to speak, to let the Judge hear what the foster parent has been thru.	1
	They have too many cases and reunification isn't always best for the children that have been removed from the parents.	1
	They would have more people look at them to see if they are doing their jobs	1
	Yes to a certain agree	1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	Again, if the Social Worker needed an audience, they are in the wrong profession. Many, if not all of the social workers, have so many caseloads that it is hard for them to pay close attention in general. They do not need open court to help them do their job.	1
	All of our workers have been very good at being on the side of the child.	1
	Have not been in court for such.	1
	I can't honestly say. I've had bad experience with the workers we have had.	1
	I feel Maddie know what is going on with the family	1
	I feel that the social worker I had was invested.	1
	I realize our Social Services system is burdened and overwhelmed, but that entire Division and Cabinet are systemically defunct and incapable of handling the needs of children in their care!	1
	I think people focus more when there is an audience.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.	
		Most caseworkers we had worked hard I don't think that they had the time to care if it was open to the public or not they were overworked and underappreciated.	1
		No Response	23
		Subjective and relative to the worker involved. Are they invested, just doing a job, burned out, etc.?	1
		The social workers did a great just b.	1
		They have a hard job. They do their best. Maybe the support of others would help them.	1
		This is tricky in that I think SW need more parameters because very seldom do they appear to care about the child at all. But I am not sure this is how you set those parameters.	1
		We love our workers	1
		What I have seen social workers listen. They in past case cried not wanting children to go back to family. all of the ones I've dealt with this time. Seem to care about child. Listen to what you tell them about family. I'm not saying Bio parents should never be able to visit or see children. They just should be watched. Do what's best for children. Let them see how life could turn out if don't stay clean.	1
	Disagree	Again, the social workers should have spoken with anyone interested prior to the court date. General public is not beneficial	1
		closed allowed for intentional focus. the only problem for social workers in my opinion is the large caseloads!	1
		most social workers do a great job and the judge goes against the recommendations	1
		My child social worker has been on top of everything. my child has been involved in.	1
		My social worker was/is amazing!	1
		No Response	37
		Our social worker has been very good	1
		Our social workers fought for the child.	1
		Our social workers were excellent.	1
		social workers due the best they can, I don't feel it would affect the case any differently	1
	Strongly Disagree	Better decisions would be made if judges knew laziness and lack of concern would be known to the public.	1
		I believe social workers being held accountable for the children's safety should be what makes them pay attention to the case. Their responsibility for care and protection should come first.	1
		Media hasn't assisted in helping families during the process. It has only spotlighted victims, social workers and foster care workers.	
		In both cases the social workers gave their all. In one case, the worker recommended and advocated for reunification and in the second case the worker advocated for goal change to adoption.	1
		My social worker was extremely supportive, and I cannot imagine how she could have been more so. She always attended court with me to help me understand the process and to explain what was happening to me. I am very grateful to her. The child placed with me had two social workers during the period of the court proceedings. Although they were not as responsive or communicative as my own worker, or as I would have liked, I do not believe that outside observers would have had a greater impact that was produced by my advocacy and the efforts of the multiple family members of the child who were actively involved in the case. I know that the children's workers are often carrying very heavy caseloads, and I think there are likely other means of supporting	1



2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses			
I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.			
		them (for instance adding to the total number of social workers) that would enable them to spend more time on each case.	
		No Response	15
		Our workers have been nothing but fantastic	1
		Social workers represent their client(s) not the public that would come to gain knowledge that is not useful to them.	1
		The Social Worker(s) did pay appropriate attention to the circumstances involved.	1
		the workers that we have been involved with have always been attentive to the "case" but more importantly to the children involved in the case.	1
		There are often side-bar conversations happening in open court. Closed court brings everyone into focus.	1
	No Response	No Response	1

**Other Role Responses**

**I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.**

Other Role Responses			
I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Advocate	Strongly Agree	No Response	3
		People watched, always perform better, sadly.	1
		They would have to pay more attention because they sure don't help the child in this county. Not for the best interest of the child on stuff that has been reported and they say not enough evidence well the next time for the child may be too late.	1
	Agree	No Response	3
		same as above	1
		Social workers need accountability to the SOP.	1
		Sometimes the story is skewed, all opinions would probably be beneficial for the child or children.	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	No Response	2
	Disagree	No Response	1
	Strongly Disagree	No Response	4
No Response	No Response	1	
FRYSC School	Agree	Might hold them to a higher standard.	1
		No Response	2
		The fact that multiple attempts of reporting were made to one county's CHFS were never met with an opening of a case would probably have made the other county's workers more attuned.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Other Role Responses			
I feel like the social worker(s) would have paid more attention to the case if the it was open to the public.			
		This may be true. In our county, we cannot get a DCBS worker to assist with information/ action on referrals until something catastrophic happens.	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	N/A	1
		No Response	1
	Disagree	No Response	4
	Strongly Disagree	No Response	1
<b>No Response</b>	No Response	No Response	1
<b>Relative Placement</b>	Strongly Agree	I feel the same as I expressed above about many of the social workers. Many, not all of them, are overworked and just looking to place a child in the easiest place so they can move on to the next one. It is tragic. My heart breaks for children taken from loving foster care homes who want to adopt them but are given back again to bio families who are not capable of raising them. They are torn away from those they love and are attached to in the name of "family". When family should be defined as those who love them unconditionally and whom they love as well. This is why so many children in the foster care system have mental health needs. The system crates the problems that last a lifetime.	1
		I would hope they would. I was a former so is worker for the Cabinet. I had never been treated with such disrespect. No worker listened to anything I had to say. I was devastated by their decisions A very traumatic experience for me.	1
		See comments to number 4	1
	Agree	Because I provided information to the case that they ignored. One being that he had run away the night before	1
		No Response	1
	Disagree	Again, I don't think it is the job of the public to police dependency court hearings.	1
		No Response	1
		to many cases not enough time.	1
	Strongly Disagree	Same explanation as before.	1
	<b>Social Worker Therapist</b>	Strongly Agree	No Response
Yes because they get lax behind closed doors when it's just them and their "friends"			1
Agree		I believe they would be held more accountable.	1
		Maybe. I fear that when a client enters into family court, part of the decision has been made that they have screwed up.	1
		The work needs to be front loaded to avoid court in cases that do not cause a safety risk.	
		No Response	1
Neither Agree nor Disagree		Does not apply to me but I see where this can be a valid feeling. I have a friend that is a faster parent and the lack of communication is sad.	1
		No Response	1
Disagree		No Response	1
Strongly Disagree		No Response	1
No Response	No Response	1	

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses**

**I feel like more services would be offered if the proceeding was open to the public.**

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses			
I feel like more services would be offered if the proceeding was open to the public.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanation	#
Foster and Adoptive Parent	Strongly Agree	Accountability to the public	1
		bio parents could share what they believe their needs are.	1
		I don't think outsiders truly know what is involved in these cases	1
		I think our sons birth mom could have succeeded if she had been given real help and heard.	1
		I think uninterested parties may help push for more action than the standard.	1
		Many times requests for services are dismissed by the courts.	1
		More people may get involved	1
		My son was offered no services past adoption and was in fact not even declared special needs when they knew he probably was after been delivered at home from a mother who drank during pregnancy; just because the test results came back inconclusive... well we all know that there are all sorts of drugs that don't show up in blood test and it doesn't mean the baby wasn't exposed. Now 4 years later he has severe ADHD and anxiety and audio sensory disorder and needs all sorts of therapy that my health insurance will not cover and we don't know what we can do to help him. The state really failed him and abandoned him all over again... And that's just on the medical aspect of things. We also had to put him in a special school and the cost of it is difficult to absorb, since we are not getting any help from the state it is very difficult since I had to quit my great paying job for a lesser one in order to be more available to help him. All around financially and all the state failed this child in my opinion. We are glad we adopted him and we love him to death and will do everything we can to help him but if he had Medicaid it would have been that much easier.	1
		No Response	27
		Public viewing would help in all regards to keep consistency across the board.	1
	Some may offer their services or know of a service that could benefit the families	1	
	The Cabinet has continually messed up our foster children's' cases. If there was more exposure or accountability, I believe the Cabinet would do their job better.	1	
	Visibility leads to accountability, across the board.	1	
	We had trouble getting any services.	1	
	Agree	I feel like there are plenty of services offered to families and birthparents in foster care cases but maybe there would be more services for the kids experience in the trauma maybe there would be a push for courts to limit the time birth parents have To get their act together so it doesn't continue to add to the drama for the child.	1
	No Response	36	
	Options like CASA workers may be more widely used	1	
	Probably more of an opportunity to speak on behalf of the children we represent. I realize the judicial system has to be fair, but what the children have went thru is so tragic. The judges don't hear that part of the story.	1	
	That's possible	1	
	The more we know. The more we can help with resources.	1	

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Foster and Adoptive Parent Responses		
I feel like more services would be offered if the proceeding was open to the public.		
	Yes to a certain agree	1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	Services were offered to bios but they did not comply. I worked hard to ensure the kids had the services they need.	1
	Have not been in court for such.	1
	I really don't know what services could come out buy this. Maybe I don't know all out there.	1
	If the parents wanted to fix it they would have asked for more help.	1
	No Response	54
	Not really, there are only as many services in the public as there are available. What is offered is what is usually available.	1
	Our foster sons bio parents were offered every program, opportunity, support and assistance and they still did not complete anything	1
	Services offered are at the mercy center of referrals submitted by Social Services workers!	1
	Since 2017, I have witnessed numerous services offered to birth parents to aid in their rehabilitation success, so I am not sure if that would change.	1
	Subjective and relative to the services offered. The city and state does not want to help people in the community.	1
Disagree	How would opening to the public affect the number of offered services?	1
	I cannot speak to the services offered to biological families, but I do not see how opening the court proceedings would impact the services available to the child placed with me. These were not a part of the court proceedings. While accessing some services were complicated at times, I would argue that there are other, better ways to insure that foster children receive support.	1
	I don't think it would affect it.	1
	I'm unaware of any other services to could be offered if the proceeding was open to the public. It's not like these proceeding should be a part of the media.	1
	No Response	40
	Overall, I think the judge in my case is very professional. I don't think an open courtroom would sway her judgment.	1
	Parents are already offered every available/relevant service. If a service is not offered their attorney should request it. Having open proceedings should not change that.	1
	Plenty of services available.	1
	We have been able to access all services available given the COVID protocols	1
	Strongly Disagree	I believe that more services should be offered because, they are needed. To be held accountable for your job and actions taken or not taken could be part of these services. .
I think if the proceedings were not shrouded in secrecy that in marginal cases where the cabinet is not providing help to parents that are really trying that there would be pressure to improve services. I also think that if it is clear the parents are not trying there would be pressure to move the cases toward permanency.		1
No Response		14
Services and Open Court do NOT go hand in hand.		1
PLENTY of services are offered to Bio-parents, it is their opportunity to use or loose.		1
No Response	There are already a plethora of services available. I think the problem is the quality of the services not the quality. Some therapists are better at their jobs than others.	1
	No Response	2

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

**Other Role Responses**

**I feel like more services would be offered if the proceeding was open to the public.**

Other Role Responses I feel like more services would be offered if the proceeding was open to the public.			
Role	Response Scale	Further Explanations	#
Advocate	Strongly Agree	No Response	2
	Agree	Anytime there is an opportunity for collaboration, it is helpful.	1
		More people could see what really takes place.	1
		No Response	3
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	For the most part services are adequate.	1
		No Response	4
	Disagree	No Response	5
	Strongly Disagree	No Response	1
No Response	No Response	1	
FRYSC School	Agree	As far as I know parent was only given a parenting class. Parent could have used a comprehensive approach with supports built in to keep the parent accountable to the situations that rose up before the open case and removal of the children.	1
		No Response	2
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	If services we readily available to all and information given to proper channels, then being open to the public or not would have no bearing on if services are offered. They should be offered regardless.	1
		N/A	1
		No Response	4
	Disagree	No Response	2
	Strongly Disagree	No Response	1
No Response	No Response	1	
Relative Placement	Strongly Agree	If the public could observe I believe things would be handled much differently	1
	Agree	No Response	2
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	No Response	2
		No Response	1
	Disagree	No Response	1
		Services are important. I have never experienced a family not receive needed services, or requested services.	1
	Strongly Disagree	How would that make a difference? If it does then there is something truly wrong with the system.	1
No Response		1	
Social Worker Therapist	Strongly Agree	if others were allowed in the courtroom, then community resource members can make note of the supportive services needed and can later make connections with the courts	1
		No Response	1
	Yes for everyone involved. Not to mention the public will also learn what services they did not know existed and maybe be able to access so that should they need them they know where to get them.	1	

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Other Role Responses			
I feel like more services would be offered if the proceeding was open to the public.			
	Agree	No Response	1
		Someone there might know of some service that others sitting in the courtroom are not aware and could offer some assistance. Also, members of community partners could come and sit and be prepared to assist.	1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Depends on the county, type of case ...too many variables	1
		No Response	3
	Disagree	No Response	1

**Final Professional/Stakeholder Additional Comments**

Role	If you have any additional comments, please include them below:	
<b>Foster and Adoptive Parent</b>	Although some professionals may be more conscientious about their job if the proceedings are public, this should be weighed against the harm that could be caused. Regardless of how anyone "feels" about the issues above, the child has the right to privacy and until they are old enough to speak for themselves legally, they should be protected, including their privacy. Social workers, lawyers, and judges should not need the threat of the public being present in order to do their job, and children should not have to give up their privacy in order to force them to do so.	1
	As a foster parent I feel like biological parents get too many chances and way too long to straighten up in order to get their children back. We as foster parents are always in the know that reunification is the goal, BUT while the parents are taking their slow sweet time we are providing, loving, nurturing and giving our all to these children. And then the parents are given the child back after maybe years and the FP feelings aren't considered because we know reunification was the goal. But if we don't live a grow attached we wouldn't be any better than the biological parents. And we are the one that acts like it's for the best because they gave birth to the child. TPR parents who have already got children in the system and keep having more, or the babies that are born addicted because they didn't care enough to stop the drugs and get help. I could keep going but I think you get my point.	1
	As a foster parent, I would like to attend court proceedings involving our foster child. Social workers sometimes cannot give information or it is fragmented.	1
	As foster parents, we are bound and gagged when it comes to the case. We have no power to participate without jeopardizing safety. We are only allowed to discuss the case with other foster parents in peer groups or with our mentor. It's isolating and frustrating. I think public involvement would encourage the transparency that is needed in this department. We need better accountability.	1
	Because kids and families deserve our time and attention- not to be swept under the rug and ignored	1
	Bottom line, these children's welfare should be the #1 priority. What is in their best interest? How can we help them? How can we enhance their lives through this traumatic period? Everyone should think of the children and their needs, their lives, and how we can be of service to them.	1
	Cases are so deeply personal it seems intrusive to allow those not directly involved in the process as voyeurs into this world. It's private information that families of parents who have been removed already have to have out in the open in order for social workers, foster parents etc. to work together raising the child. No need to expose their already exposed private lives to unnecessary people.	1
	Cases should only be open to those people directly involved in the child's life.	1
	Children in foster care are special and worth protecting from future physical and emotional trauma. I will never understand why birth parents can present to weekly visits at the DCBS office that have recently been in jail for drug trafficking without drug screens. This stresses the children making them feel rejected when parents don't show up and this leads to emotional trauma. This impacts their daily thoughts, behaviors, and educational performance. This results in the need for additional counseling when stopping the exposure to trauma is an overlooked solution.	1
	Children should not get physically spanked by a birth parent or screamed at multiple times during a supervised visit. All kids should have a GAL at all times and an extra liaison assigned by the court for the child/foster parent to assure the social worker is invested in the child's needs.	

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Role	If you have any additional comments, please include them below:	
	Emotional trauma is real and sometimes kids are in the system several years counting the months required (per policy) for possible reunification. This prolongs the trauma and each case should be unique and not locked into a set number of months when kids' birth parents are not showing any signs of improvement. Increased public awareness may help as more people can advocate for the children.	
	Children in the foster care system deserve privacy. Why should anyone other than family of origin, foster families, and officers of the court be included?	1
	Foster care has no winners, only varying degrees of loses. Children lose the most. We need to hold those who hold these children's lives in their hands accountable. Foster parents, cabinet employees, attorneys, CASAs, judges...If those proceedings were open maybe those involved would truly make the best interest of the child their property.	1
	Foster Parents are not being included regularly in Court hearings, etc. In my opinion, it would have been easier to let our foster daughter go home to her biological family after three removals and 994 days this past removal, if we were able to see the case play out. We had to almost entirely rely on the social worker for information. It would have been helpful to see the body language of the Court, hear the GAL (who I literally never got to speak to), etc.	1
	Having open courts could give a lot of the oversight needed regarding the judges. The flip side is that having too many people in the courtroom creates chaos.	1
	Having these cases open to the public may reveal to community members the need for changes in the child welfare system. It may prevent children from being sent back into conditions that are just as bad, if not worse, than the conditions they came from in the first place and let others see that the rights of children, and their wellbeing, need to be considered as well as the parents' rights. It might also prevent those involved with DCBS and the judicial system from neglecting to present all of the necessary information needed to make informed decisions that are in the best interest of the children regarding cases. It seems that social workers have too much power when it comes to whether or not children stay in foster care or return home to their parents. I feel like incorporating the community would be beneficial.	1
	I absolutely think DNA cases should be open to the public. It also will allow foster parents a way to track court dates since DCBS is not always forthcoming and often excludes us from court.	1
	I am a foster/adoptive mom, who also served as a CASA volunteer. The family court I observed was used to working together and the defense attorneys barely spoke up. The judge and all the attorneys and staff would joke about the individuals involved in the cases in between hearings. It was a very unprofessional and unfair way to determine the futures of families. I feel this behavior and the easy-going nature of closed court would change with a public audience.	1
	I am stunned that this would even be consider. My foster children are worth far more than to have the details of their abuse publicized. Furthermore, even though I am a foster mom, I have seen parents work with family court and DCBS to get CLEAN and WELL and become FABULOUS parents. Our goal is to HELP them. They are not being charged as criminals and being assigned sentences - the court is intervening to protect the child and to work with the family for reunification.	1
	I feel judges and DCBS would more closely follow laws allowing foster parents to be notified of and attend hearings if it were open. In addition, I have not been allowed to attend any hearings via Zoom with the rest of the participants while courts have been closed due to COVID. I am only allowed to hear the proceedings via phone and while muted. I know other foster parents who have not been able to find out when the hearings are even scheduled.	1
	I feel like it would be humiliating to the child to have the public present to witness some of the most traumatic times of their life. Times are hard enough on foster children, they are already ashamed of their situation. I don't feel that opening their case to the public is in the best interest of the children.	1
	I feel that foster parents should be able to voice concerns about the case as we have the children majority of the time.	1
	I feel that opening these cases to the public degrades and disrespects the biological family and child. It could also cause more trauma for the children involved as their information would be public and others may use this against them in the future. Please protect these children and their stories.	1
	I know in my current position I love boys. I think courts should process things faster. Not necessarily who watches in court. Look at back ground of Bio parents. Help child get in a family faster not in limbo. I appreciate the children's workers and our workers.	1
	I pray that something I have written makes a difference to the victims.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Role	If you have any additional comments, please include them below:	
	I think having an open court will help keep judges responsible. There's too many situations that have happened with judges that go unknown about because the courts are closed. I think so for that aspect it's a good thing to have courts open it's just protecting the kids stories that I think are important.	1
	I think having more witnesses and thus more accountability to the judges and attorneys would be helpful. In my experience, the case is not being looked at in its entirety and is being dragged out. Having other people involved (especially if they were allowed any input) could be beneficial.	1
	I think opening these hearings to the public would be very detrimental to the children. It will open them up for public humiliation. It's no one's business as to what situations or background these kids come from. Most of them are not going to be comfortable with the public knowing their circumstances. This is their story and should be left up to them if they share what they have been through. These kids lives are traumatic enough. Please do not allow for further public humiliation.	1
	I think that if the court cases were open to the public then there would be more accountability for all involved	1
	I understand the reason for secrecy, however the lack of transparency permits shortcuts and bad practices to persist that are not good for the children.	1
	I would love to be involved as a volunteer for anything involved with the system. I don't think I can do fostering again right now, but would love to be involved just with the process somehow.	1
	I'm only a foster parent, but I'm not sure these parents that are going through this, want these open to the public, where anyone can hear what's going on. Plus, I feel like it's a violation of the privacy of the children involved. They have no say in anything, so they should at least get to keep their own story.	1
	I do feel like the foster parents input should be asked more, because for the time they are in our home, until they leave, they are "ours". We know a lot about them.	
	I'm sorry to say this but kids in foster care are being over looked. Just forgotten about in my experience. I've had bad social workers. You tell them stuff then when asked they know nothing. Give them notes or anything and they never got in the file. It's supposed to be all about the kids. In my experience they are lacking that in the system. These kids need more people speaking up for them and maybe someone will listen.	1
	If the cases are public, then it can be covered by newspapers and television. I feel that they would only cover the cases in negative or sensational manner. And I say this as a member of the media. For example, the media would be interested in a child custody case if the parents had been arrested and convicted on drug charges, not in the interest of the child.	1
	Instead of reunification being the main concern try looking at the whole picture of the case. Don't let the cases drag on for years. This is not the first case we have been involved in. Our son had been in 13 homes before the age of 7 when we got him. His mom had been incarcerated for 3 years for manslaughter. They decided she was rehabilitated and let her out. They started visits and our son got his hopes ups. After over a year of visits, the day of court he went to school and turned his books in and told the teacher he was getting to go home with his real mom. His mom tested positive for drugs. He had to go back to school and face the kids. It didn't end there we didn't get to actually adopt him until he turned 11. That is too long for a child's life to be in turmoil.	1
	It seems to me that on balance Public Access is a good thing, however it should be Strongly limited to prevent harm to children who might be perpetually traumatized by reliving these events if they are recorded and made public. I also think that the type of public pressure that open access might bring to the system should be there anyway or could be achieved by means other than opening up the courtroom. The underfunding and under staffing of the cabinet and the attorney panel is a critical problem that needs a comprehensive solution. Simply opening up the courts is not enough and may very well worsen the problem if those issues are not addressed.	1
	It would be nice if foster parents were notified if court dates in a timely manner so at least we could be there. In addition, why can we not know who our child's GAL is? I don't find out unless I happen to get notified and am in the court. And why are children who are old enough and want to be in the court room not allowed to be there?	1
	It's great that opening these proceedings to the public is being considered. I wish that something would be done about the failure of the courts to abide by KRS620.360. As a foster parent, mentor, member of CFCRB and someone involved in numerous foster parent groups I can tell you that foster parents are NOT	1



2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Role	If you have any additional comments, please include them below:	
	being notified of court hearings. They are NOT being allowed in to court hearings. In some cases even the social workers are not being allowed into the hearings. This is not just during Covid, this has always been an issue.	
	It's a shame foster children are in the system so long, when their parents haven't even see the child in over 2 years. Someone needs to do something about the court system/the judge in Powell County.	1
	My child was denied special needs benefits and the per deem and when I try to appeal it (there is something that says that you have 30 days from the denial to appeal the decision, I was threatened with the removal of the child I had in my house from birth and that we were set to adopt in a month	1
	My kids stayed in foster care over 2.5 years. Our home wasn't the first placement either. This should've been a lot quicker for the kids. These kids need to feel normal. I feel if the public is watching they'll try to move cases faster and not let kids stay in care for years. You and I both know the public talks and that isn't good for anyone.	1
	No	1
	No comment	1
	No Response	159
	Not OPEN to the public, but flexible enough to include supports for the families and the children.	1
	Our case is probably the reason for this bill	1
	PLEASE stop Open Courts in DNA and TPR cases. The children were neglected and abused, that is why they are in the system.... and once TPR has started, that is further proof that the bio parents are going to continue to neglect them, as they have had, in some cases, 2 years to get their act together and prove the right thing,  Open Courts need to cease. Cases are private matters and should be treated as such.	1
	Speed up the process. If open courts would that then open them up. Have more judges! The time frame for cases start to finish is far too lengthy. In the life of a child it is an eternity. Speed up the process and open court may be a start.	1
	Termination of Parental Rights should be filed after 8 months if the parents are not trying to work their case plan.	1
	The only people who belong in the court room are those involved in the case. I do support the foster parents to be in the court room	1
	The system is broken, maybe allowing more people to see the system in progress will help us develop a better system.	1
	The whole foster care system needs an overhaul... Our foster child has been in care for 2.5 yrs. No contact with bio family. We just now got paternity testing done... We the foster parents had to do it, we had to fight for it, cut thru the red tape... The worker just kept saying, she's emailed the child support office, but they are not responding. Back and forth for 5 months, finally we had enough. We got it done. We are still waiting on TPR... Closure would go a long way with kids.	1
	There are a lot of laws not currently being enforced by the judges or attorneys. But having the dockets open, there will be more accountability and knowledge of what is happening. Kentucky is the #1 state for child abuse and out of home care. More people need to see why and what is being done in order for change to occur	2
	These children go through enough trauma let alone having cases with public attention just wouldn't be right. I'm not sure how this would help anything.	1
	Transparency and Accountability	1
	We have children who have gotten a little older and matured enough that we could talk to them about who their birth family is and discuss the situation. We also have children who are in no way ready for that discussion. I couldn't imagine if someone else told them something that their parents or councilor didn't feel they were ready to know and understand yet. I think this all should be what is best for the children, their privacy, their trust, their growth, their (Healing) journey! Thank you and Thank you for all you do!	1
<b>Advocate</b>	I believe open court has been a good process in serving children in the welfare system. However, notices do not always get sent out to interested parties so they can participate. This needs to be better communicated to all. Thank you.	1

2021 OPEN COURTS PILOT PROJECT: FINAL PHASE

Role	If you have any additional comments, please include them below:	
	I believe you are asking the wrong questions. Instead of those listed above, you should have consulted with victims' advocates and you might be asking questions such as how having open court would positively or negatively influence the child, both in the moment and for their lifetime, whether it is from the direct influence on them or their caregivers.	1
	I feel like our kids pay the cost because sometimes they are just left hanging out there to defend for themselves, our systems need to care more of what is happening with them they are kids. They need someone to care for them and most of their parents, guardians don't just what they can draw from checks and food stamps that most of them don't even get to benefit from.	1
	It might be helpful if the family could decide whether it should be open or closed.	1
	Meade county needs an overhaul. Cases are stuck and paperwork lost for multiple families. If they are this disorganized when it comes to cases where TPR is already filed....how can they be trusted that they are handling cases of reunification properly.	1
	No Response	13
	The children have been exposed to so much prior to court. Exposing the children and parties to the public will have tendency to have effects on the outcome of the case negative or positive. It's our nature when there is an audience.	1
<b>FRYSC School</b>	No Response	12
<b>No Response</b>	No Response	1
<b>Relative Placement</b>	I think there should be guidelines as to what or whom can attend. Press should be allowed but made to protect the confidentiality of the children. I don't know that everyone should be allowed to be present but maybe stakeholders be allowed to have someone there for them. Limit attendance on some of the cases with guidelines.	1
	No Response	5
	The children deserve privacy. Only the required parties are necessary for proceedings. However, I feel that if local statistics were released to the public (regularly), there would be more community action and involvement.	1
	The goal at the end of the day is to find permanency for Kentucky children. Keep them safe while in the care and custody of the cabinet. Assist families in finding stability . It has nothing to do with public opinion and is not the job of the public to police the court when such sensitive information is being discussed, exposed, and ruled on. Police the GAL's, attorneys, judges, and social workers with known parties. It is unfair to make a public spectacle of family matters relating to Kentucky foster children/ children in out-of-home care, or their families and caregivers. Don't expose these KENTUCKY kids. They are innocent, opening court could cause information to be related to them, they carry a burden as it is, let us keep them anonymous by not identifying their parents or foster families or their personal cases.	1
	Whose bright idea was it to open these cases to the public? I would not want my families/child's private issues put out there to be gawked at from people just being nosy.	1
<b>Social Worker Therapist</b>	I typically testify as a therapist at least 6x per year in TPR hearings. I have always felt "heard" by family court.	1
	I would be happy to work on a pilot project or anyway to help this process.	1
	No Response	8