

I was a Case Manager for the county and had a CADI/DD caseload. Going into FRS and CRS homes for annual meetings I could see the difference and I wanted to be part of that. I started an Adult Foster Care Home in 2020. My husband who is the only other staff we have is a nurse, we have 3 children who are very active and wanted one special person to join our family. We waited many months after getting licensed, having people touring our home and waiting for that perfect fit for the right level of care we felt we could provide. I schedule and attend all client meetings. We learned how to do virtual visits, virtual meetings. I do all the 245D paperwork, and complete required training.

We have been asking friends and family if they would be willing to become staff so we can go out on a date or even a walk after dinner. Unfortunately, many people don't find the very low pay we could offer worth it to help our roommate with such often bathroom cares, mobility issues and the patience of the constant repetition.

The assumption that FRS homes only take the people that need very little cares or just need a safe environment to live is a joke really. It angers and saddens me that this is the perception as it is NOT the reality. Our roommate needs micro prompts for every simple task. But the biggest difference between FRS and CRS homes, is that my beloved become part of our extended family – they aren't just a job and a paycheck.

There are CRS homes I have been in that I wouldn't leave my child with, and that is for simple reasons that are easily preventable. The front doors are always unlocked for staff coming and going, some of the staff could hardly speak English, and the clients hardly had any privacy or consistency with the high turnover. I learned that during the Pandemic how CRS homes had to be run for safety and that is actually the main reason our person moved in. They were extremely high risk, however being bound to your room not seeing their family on typical weekend visits and eating the same junk food day after day sitting in bed on a table isn't the quality of life the guardians wanted for them.

The biggest issue we face is a misunderstanding of what FRS homes bring to the table. We provide consistent, family-oriented programming. We provide the people we serve with a home and with people that they can depend on because we live with them. We do NOT just take the least level of care. We have seen our pay continually decrease and we have to fight to be able to financially support ourselves. I know another FRS provider who recently had a situation where the MN-Choice Assessment said the person only needed 4 hours of care so they gave them a rate of \$84.00 a day. They had to terminate the person served because with all the rules that only apply to FRS homes:

- You aren't supposed to work out of the home
- You must be available 24/7 for support
- You must have someone in the home at night
- You must provide half of the direct care
- You still need to do all the same paperwork as a CRS home

They could not afford to keep that person. It was a travesty that they were put in that position. It makes it impossible to live, especially if you only have a one-bed facility. The average I was told is \$138 daily. If you divide that by 24 hours – it is \$5.75 per hour. That isn't even minimum wage. If we want to take time off we have to pay someone to take care of our people – we have to pay them market rate (a rate that isn't even supported in the system). Imagine trying to hire someone so you can take a weekend off.

My question is this: Would the case manager have even asked a CRS home (shift staffed) to accept that \$84 rate? We hear that we aren't taxed and that is one of the factors in determining rates of an FRS home. That is an unfair factor for many reasons:

- **Foster Care is taking someone in as a family member and the income derived is much like "child support"**
- **Foster care providers lose their privacy, their freedom to just walk away from the house whenever they please without paying someone to come in goes away**

We also don't get the benefits CRS homes do when it comes to our actual facility costs because, for some reason, living in the home we provide services in is seen as a cost saving to us. However, most people get to leave their work at work. My work needs me to think for them 24/7, needs me to fill their water glass 6 times a day, all personal hygiene tasks, all reading and writing tasks, all chores tasks are taught and assisted, day in and day out. I get woken up in the middle of the night almost always for bathroom assistance. I never get to leave my job, and I do it because I know that I'm qualified and helping someone live their best life, they can with me and my family. Going in the community for activities regularly, attending sporting events my kids are in, having park picnics, shopping, playing games together as a family. The feeling that they never had siblings growing up and now they do or that their parents were never invited to their birthday party in their CRS home for over 9 years! The quality of life we provide is so much superior and rich, it's not just a job, but we also should be paid fair so we could get a break if we could find the staff eventually. Our housemate visits family on Saturdays and when we ask them to take them for extra time the response is I wish you had staff! Their own parents will sign them up for bowling or a dance and even us the phrase "I'll staff this" which completely blows my mind. They understand how much work it is, and know the feeling of being so tired that they made the choice to have their child live outside their home, despite all the fears that come with that choice. Our roommate is so much healthier and happier living with us, we are able to meet all his needs and we need DHS to back up our needs as qualified professional seasoned providers.

I've been seeing the emails about all the CRS homes shutting down due to staffing shortages. So, if FRS homes aren't going to get paid fair and can't help one single person that's getting pushed out of a CRS than who is going to care for them?

After reading my story I hope this is your takeaway:

- not all FRS homes are typical
- FRS homes take on all levels of support
- not all FRS homes can operate without support staff
- Daily rates and people we serve need to be person-centered because no two people are alike
- You need to be better or you will lose, in my opinion, the best type of programming available to those in need.

I keep hearing, FRS homes don't understand what is expected of them and they aren't qualified like CRS homes are to run their homes. I would challenge that and say that CRS homes can't offer the same level of family-centeredness as FRS homes can and therefore, they can't offer the same commitment of quality care as we do.

If it is a paperwork or understanding of the rules and regulations. Please help us become better at that by:

- Creating a paid mentoring program where you pay the people that you consider “quality” to mentor those that aren’t
- Make the website more user friendly and not so cumbersome so that we can find things easier
- Maybe dumb it down a little so that those who have no corporate head leading us, can better understand what you are saying
- Make sure everyone is following the same rules (every DHS Department, County, County staff interprets the mandates differently creating a system whereby the providers are the losers especially if our clients come from multiple counties)
- Thank us for the great job we are doing instead of only telling us what we are doing wrong
- Show FRS providers that we matter!

Thank you for taking the time to read this,

Capri Loegering, MS
Living Freely