

Buzzy Buddy — Utah Foster Care Pilot: Results

Utah Foster Care Pilot Program

Prepared by Leadelle Parish, MBC · Founder, SOS Play, LLC · August 2026

Overview

Since July 2026, SOS Play has run a pilot with Utah Foster Care, placing Buzzy Buddy — a patent-pending plush bear that delivers bilateral stimulation through alternating vibration in each paw — directly into homes caring for children with trauma histories.

Feedback below reflects 20 survey responses from 10 unique foster, adoptive, and caseworker households collected between mid-July and late-August 2026, gathered through Utah Foster Care contacts.

At a Glance

90%	100%	14	10
of children engaged with the bear (18 of 20 responses)	of 30-day respondents said every child in care would benefit from one	of 20 responses reported the bear “calmed them down”	unique foster/adoptive families and caseworkers represented

Regulation Improved Over the 30-Day Window

All 10 families in the pilot have now completed a 30-day follow-up survey. Nine of them also completed an initial survey (within days of receiving the bear), allowing a direct before-and-after comparison of self-rated emotional regulation for the same child. The tenth family did not report a baseline score, so they're not included in the improvement figures below. The results:

+1.7 pts	8 of 9
average gain in regulation score per child, from baseline to 30 days	families with a scored baseline saw improvement — none declined

Improvement was often substantial — one family's score rose by 4 points on the 10-point scale, and several others rose by 2. One family's score held flat; none moved in the negative direction. This kind of within-family, before-and-after signal is what SOS Play believes makes the case most clearly: it isn't just that families liked the bear, but that caregivers observed measurable change in the same child over the same month.

What Families Reported

Regulation was rated on a 1–10 scale (1 = melts down at the drop of a hat, 10 = independently recognizes and responds to big feelings).

Among respondents surveyed within the first few days of receiving the bear, self-rated child regulation averaged 2.4 out of 10 (9 of 10 responses; one left the field blank). By the 30-day mark, the average across all 10 families was 4.4 out of 10. That raw comparison is useful context, but it mixes children who started at very different points — the more telling figure is the change within each child: across the 9 families with both a baseline and a 30-day score, regulation rose by an average of 1.7 points on the 10-point scale, with a typical (median) gain of 1 point and one family gaining as much as 4 points. Scores this low at baseline reflect that these are children with significant trauma backgrounds.

The most common reported outcomes, in order of frequency:

- Calmed the child down — 14 mentions
- Helped with sleep — 6 mentions
- Helped the child transition between activities or environments — 6 mentions

- Helped the child focus or sustain attention — 6 mentions
- Supported a 5-hour car ride, used by multiple children in the same family — 1 mention

In Their Words

“Without a doubt. The buzz is a GREAT distraction... There was one instance when she was in pain from a hang nail... We prompted her to use the buzz and she was calmed within minutes and went to sleep.”

— Foster parent, ~30 days post-placement

“The emotional regulation the bear provided was amazing. I was surprised when it worked so quickly to calm them down and help them hear what I was saying... Very happy with our therapy bear. 100% recommend!”

— Utah Foster Care caseworker and foster parent

“I think that utilizing a bear that helps calm the autonomic nervous system is an amazing tool and strategy that would help with kids with PTSD, trauma, or even attachment issues in care. I think it will help them learn to regulate on their own.”

— Foster parent, ~30 days post-placement

“Sometimes as foster parents and even more as a foster child it seems there is no reprieve from trauma, sensory overload, meltdowns, and life just being too much. Having something to help with regulation in the form of a teddy is genius and so appreciated!”

— Foster parent, ~30 days post-placement

Areas for Continued Learning

- Sensory adjustment period: a few children (including one with an FASD/autism diagnosis) initially disliked the motor sound or vibration before adjusting within days.
- Size: one respondent suggested a smaller size for younger children, noting the current bear was hard for a small child to carry.
- Sleep-safety guidance: the instruction not to sleep with the bear was difficult for one child who had bonded strongly with it — an opportunity to refine guidance or product design for overnight use.
- Ease of use: one respondent noted the on/off button could be easier to operate.

Conclusion

The pilot has served its purpose: demonstrating, in real Utah foster homes, that Buzzy Buddy provides meaningful, measurable support for children navigating trauma and the stress of the foster care system. SOS Play is grateful to the families and caseworkers who took part.

Contact: Leadelle Parish, MBC · Founder, SOS Play, LLC · leadelle@sosplay.com · SOS Play — “Calm You Can Carry”