Welcome New Child Providers:

September 2016
• Jaclyn Finseth
  Oakdale (Kin)

October 2016
• Catherine Bohnen
  Mahtomedi (Kin)
• Jacqueline Bradford & Courtney Boever
  Oakdale (Kin)
• Kristin Fernholz
  Lake Elmo (Kin)
• Faye Freitag & Hubert Schiell
  Stillwater (Kin)

November 2016
• Matthew Jacob
  Woodbury (Relative)

Inside This Issue
Surviving the Holidays cont.  2
Fun Activities  2
Informational Meeting  2
Child Foster Care Training  3
What’s in Child FC Rule?  4
Incident Reports  4
Resource Corner  4

SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

The days are getting shorter, the temperatures are getting cooler, and the stores are brimming with décor. The holidays are here! No matter what you celebrate, it’s no secret that this time of year can often be filled with more stress than good cheer. As a foster parent, your level of stress can be heightened as you help your foster children cope with the grief, loss, and trauma triggers that often surface during the holidays. We hope you will consider implementing some of the following suggestions to decrease your stress and practice good self-care this season!

Remember Your Coping Strategies
How do you usually cope with stress? Are you the type of person who finds solace in a nature walk or does journaling release your tension? Is exercise your go-to stress relief or do you prefer a quiet soak in the bathtub? Whatever works for you, remember to use these strategies during the holidays, too. Taking time for yourself may feel like an indulgence during this busy time of year, but taking care of yourself is essential before you can effectively meet the needs of the children in your care. Other suggestions for coping strategies include: listening to music, practicing yoga, deep breathing, reading a book, having coffee with a friend, playing Sudoku or other puzzle games, getting a massage, etc.

Simplify Your Shopping
It can be tempting to want to shower your foster children with gifts to make up for the sadness they may be feeling this time of year or to heal their disappointments of holidays past. Keep in mind, however, that receiving excessive amounts of gifts can be overwhelming and over-stimulating for foster children. Consider giving all children in your home a few meaningful gifts instead. Some families may also choose to make a donation towards a non-profit, decided upon by all members of the family, or put money towards a fun family outing, such as a day at the Children’s Museum.

Practice Your Right to Say No
Prioritize which holiday activities and gatherings are most important to you and your family, and then give yourself permission to say “no” to the rest. Slowing down and taking time to reflect on what the season means to you can do wonders for your mental health. In addition, children with a history of trauma tend to do better with a stable, predictable daily routine, so avoiding excessive amounts of special celebrations can be beneficial for your foster children, too.

Rerevaluate Your Traditions and Expectations
Consider each of your family members and what traditions might be most meaningful to them. Honor traditions that make sense for your family, not ones that meet societal expectations of a “perfect” holiday. Ask your foster children about traditions they experienced prior to joining your family and incorporate ones they enjoyed. Don’t be afraid to create new traditions or to let go of those that are creating more stress than joy.

Seek Support
The pressure to create a picture-perfect holiday and the expectation that this is the “most wonderful time of the year” can leave us feeling overwhelmed and lonely. In addition, the holidays are a time when we are reminded of the past and when feelings of grief and loss tend to resurface. If you are struggling, share your feelings with a trusted confidant. Ask your partner, brother, friend, neighbor, or other members of your support system for help. Connect with another foster parent. Call your social worker or schedule a session with a therapist.

Here are some suggestions for helping your foster children through the holidays:
• Prepare your foster children for what to expect in your home. Which holidays do you celebrate and why? What traditions do you incorporate and why do they have special meaning to your family? What celebrations will occur and who will participate? Preparing children in advance about these details helps to reduce their anxiety and stress.

Continued on page 2
Foster Parents Needed!

Word of mouth is one of the best forms of recruitment to get new foster parents in Washington County. If anyone has said to you, “I’ve always thought about becoming a foster parent” or you know of someone who is good with kids, wants to help the community, and you think has what it takes to become a foster parent, please send them our way!

We need people who can provide care to a variety of youth, such as teens, sibling groups, children with mental health diagnoses, developmental disabilities, and everything in between.

We need foster parents in all areas of the county. Whether families can only commit to one or two weekends per month for respite care or be a placement resource, we have a need for both!

Please pass the word on so we can keep kids in our local foster homes.

OUR NEXT CHILD FOSTER CARE INFORMATIONAL MEETING:
Mon., January 9
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Government Center
14949 62nd St. N.
Stillwater

For more information call 651-430-6455.

Thanks so much!

Continued from Surviving the Holidays on front page

- Ask your foster children about traditions they experienced prior to joining your family and try to incorporate ones they enjoyed.
- Being away from home at the holidays, even if home was not a safe place, can be difficult for foster children. Allow them to share their feelings with you. Acknowledge that they may be struggling, and help them understand it is okay for them to feel sad or to miss their birth family. Some children may also feel guilty for enjoying the holidays in your home, as they may feel they are betraying their birth family. Understand that some children may need more “downtime” to grieve during the holidays, while others may prefer to stay busy to keep their minds off of things.
- The holidays can be a trigger for children with a history of trauma. Expect behaviors such as temper tantrums, reverting back to behaviors from early days of placement, regressing back to developmentally younger behaviors, withdrawal or isolation, rebellious behaviors, etc. Teach your foster children positive coping strategies, such as deep breathing, taking a break, drawing/painting, taking a walk, playing a sport, listening to music, etc.
- Allow children to make cards or small gifts for their family members if they choose. Work with the child’s case manager to arrange delivery and ensure that safety measures and the case plan are followed appropriately.
- Talk with your foster children in advance about upcoming gatherings – who will be there, what to expect, what the location will look and sound like, basic behavioral expectations, etc. This helps children feel prepared and reduces their level of anxiety.
- Try to introduce foster children to relatives prior to large holiday gatherings. Meeting lots of new people, in a new place, while participating in new traditions and eating new foods can be overwhelming for children. Try to ease them in gradually.
- Try to prevent inappropriate or invasive questions about your foster children by reminding your family and friends in advance of your child’s right to confidentiality. Mentally prepare for how you will address any questions that may arise during holiday celebrations. Ask your foster child how they would like to be introduced to your family and friends.
- If you are hosting a gathering, plan a special “cool down” spot where your children can go if they feel overwhelmed, sad, angry, or just need a break. Depending on your child, this space may foster quiet activities to calm your child, such as a bedroom where they can read or listen to music, or it may be a space where they can release their emotions physically, such as doing jumping jacks or shooting a basketball. If you are attending a gathering, speak with the host in advance about arranging a similar space in their home, or bring items from home you know will help soothe your child.


FUN ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Looking for something fun and memorable to do with your foster child(ren) this Winter? Here are some great suggestions for the whole family!

- **Washington County Parks:** The first Tuesday of every month (non-holiday) your visit is FREE. No vehicle permit required. [www.co.washington.mn.us/537/Free-Tuesdays](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/537/Free-Tuesdays).
- **Pinterest:** The world’s catalog of ideas to find great winter activities kids. [www.pinterest.com/debchitwood/kids-winter-activities](http://www.pinterest.com/debchitwood/kids-winter-activities).
- **2016 Holidazzle:** Fireworks, movie nights, skating, carriage rides, meet Santa, kids zone, live entertainment, etc. November 25 - December 23. [www.holidazzle.com](http://www.holidazzle.com).
- **Free Christmas meals from the Salvation Army:**
  - Minneapolis (1010 Currie Ave.): Dec. 25. *Free coats will be given.* Call 612-338-0113.
WASHINGTON COUNTY

All trainings will be held at the Washington County Government Center in Stillwater unless otherwise noted. To register for trainings contact Katie Olsen at 651-430-6646 or katie.olsen@co.washington.mn.us. All trainings are free to Washington County Foster Care Providers unless otherwise noted.

*Reimbursement Reminder:* Foster parents can seek up to $100 training reimbursement per calendar year per household.

*Training Reminder:* 12 hours of training is required yearly. One hour needs to be mental health related.

CARS (Children & Restraint Systems) Training

This training is required when caring for kids 8 and younger. Limited participants! No walk-ins. Anyone arriving more than 15 minutes late will need to attend a different session.

Date/Time: Tues., January 17 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Washington County Public Health Staff

Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma Training Series

Understanding how trauma affects children can help you to make sense of their baffling behavior, feelings, and attitudes. This workshop is a 14-hour course that offers skills and techniques to help you to respond appropriately to children’s behavior and support them in developing healthy attachments and coping strategies.

Date/Time: Part I: Thurs., February 2 • 5:30-9:00 p.m.
Part II: Thurs., February 9 • 5:30-9:00 p.m.
Part III: Thurs., February 16 • 5:30-9:00 p.m.
Part IV: Thurs., February 23 • 5:30-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers

SUID (Sudden Unexpected Infant Death)/AHT (Abusive Head Trauma) Training

This training is required when caring for kids 5 and younger.

Date/Time: Wed., February 8 • 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Trainer: Washington County Staff - MNCPD certified

Introduction to Mental Health for Resource Families

This course provides an introduction to a number of common mental health diagnoses that foster and adoptive children often present within the child welfare system. Each diagnosis is discussed in terms of origins, symptoms, behaviors, treatment, interventions, and cultural considerations. It also includes information and helpful tips about common co-occurring or dual diagnoses. This course meets the training requirement in 245A.

Date/Time: Tues., March 7 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers

Relating to Primary Families

When a child enters foster care, that experience can be the most traumatic event of his or her young life, even more than the abuse that led to the removal. The transition from removal to reconnection to reunification (permanency) is a fragile process full of emotion for all who are part of that process. Foster parents often facilitate visits and participate in other forms of interaction between foster children and their birth families. There is an expectation that foster parents will actively support primary parents in their reunification efforts. The goal of this workshop is to provide information about why the involvement of foster caregivers with primary families is critical for the child and for both families. This training will also enhance skills of foster caregivers in engaging primary families, managing conflict, diffusing issues, developing strategies of support, and expediting permanency for children.

Date/Time: Part I: Tues., April 11 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Part II: Tues., April 25 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers

METRO TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

FosterParentCollege ONLINE Training

FosterParentCollege.com offers an online, self-paced, inexpensive way to complete training hours and learn about a variety of topics related to foster parenting. All courses can be completed on a computer in the comfort of your own home! Most courses include video segments, informative handouts, interactive exercises, an interactive questionnaire, and a printable summary. Topics include child development, caring for children who have been sexually abused, parent-child attachment, lying, stealing, running away, self-harm, and many more. Visit www.fosterparentcollege.com to learn more.

Marital Conflict: The Hidden Hurt of Foster Care and Adoption - ONLINE Training

This webinar pulls back the curtain on how the stress of raising troubled children seeps into marriages (and intimate partnerships). Stress predictably stretches even well-matched couples away from each other causing misunderstandings and arguments, sometimes even feelings of abandonment and anger. In this webinar you’ll discover your (and your partner’s) parenting style, playfully illustrated as one of four dog breeds. Then we explore how couples can stay out of the dog house when feeling the stress of parenting.

Date/Time: Tues., December 6 • Noon-1:30 p.m.
Cost: $18 webinar only; $30 webinar & webinar download
Registration: www.mnadopt.org/event/webinar-marital-conflict-hidden-hurt-foster-care-adoption/?instance_id=1211

Special Education & Challenging Behaviors

This workshop will discuss the development of an IEP (Individualized Education Program) for children who struggle in school due to their behavior. Parents and others will learn strategies to communicate effectively with the IEP team about their child’s behavior needs, address the school discipline policy, and resolve disagreements.

Date/Time: Thurs., January 19 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Location: PACER Center, 8161 Normandale Blvd., Mpls.
Cost: FREE
Registration: www.pacer.org/forms/workshops.asp?wksp=E96A82C-FC314C68A19A316F7491AF63
WHAT'S IN THE CHILD FOSTER CARE RULE

This is the continuation of our highlighting of the bullet points from the Agreement Between Foster Parents and Placement Agency that foster providers are expected to adhere to.

The foster parents may expect the agency to:

- Conduct orientation sessions for foster parents that explain the respective roles of the agency, foster parents, and a child’s family; explain concurrent permanency planning; and provide information about relevant laws and rules regarding responsibilities of the foster parent.
- Provide the foster parent with training opportunities.

The agency may expect the foster parents to:

- Provide a child with a safe and healthy family life that promotes a child’s development as a physically and mentally healthy person. This includes:
  - Providing for the basic needs of a child.
  - Including a child in the activities of daily family life as much as possible. Considering a child’s age, their needs, and the provisions in the out-of-home placement plan, these activities would include eating meals with the family and participating in recreational activities.
  - Facilitating a child’s school attendance.
  - Providing a child with timely access to basic, emergency, and specialized medical, mental health, and dental care and treatment by qualified professional.
  - Encouraging age-appropriate activities, exercise and recreation.
  - Explaining house-rules and telling the foster child about their expectations regarding behavior, treatment of others and household items.
  - Providing supervision in accordance with a child’s age, needs, and the out-of-home placement plan. The foster parents must know the whereabouts of a foster child in their care.
  - Make every effort to increase their understanding of and respect for the religious, racial and cultural heritage of a child and their family.

INCIDENT REPORTS

Accidents and injuries are part of life. However, it is important that they be reported to your licensor and the case manager if either happens to the child in your care. Verbally notify the case manager and your licensor as soon as possible. Follow this by completing and submitting to your licensor the reporting form, Child Foster Care Incident Report, located in Section 6 of your manual. If you need additional forms, please contact your licensor. It is better to report something rather than wonder if it is something you should report. Whether or not an insurance claim should be submitted to Minnesota Joint Underwriting Association (MJUA) can be discussed with your licensor.

RESOURCE CORNER

Welcome to “Resource Corner” a new section we will periodically feature in our newsletter. Our goal is to recommend books, movies, articles which may be helpful in caring for the children you foster. In the future, we would be happy to add any you have come across and found beneficial. Please feel free to forward them to your licensor.

The Connected Child
by Karyn Purvis
This book talks about parenting children with a history of trauma and how to adjust parenting strategies accordingly.

Families Change: A Book for Children Experiencing Termination of Parental Rights
by Julie Nelson
This book was read to a 5-year-old by her therapist to help her understand her situation. www.amazon.com/Families-Change-Experiencing-Termination-Important/dp/1575422093