A LETTER TO OUR FOSTER PARENTS
DECEMBER 2012

Dear Washington County Foster Parents,

The modern day recession has brought considerable attention to economic factors that impact us each and every day. We now talk often of assuring a positive “return on investment” – not just of our monetary assets, but also our time and talents. We use the term “value added” as we discuss strategies to improve and streamline our business process and simplify procedures that don’t directly attribute to the outcomes we seek. It was this term, “value added”, that caught my attention when I was thinking about the role of foster parents in our social service delivery world.

As foster parents, you add real value in several ways. Your efforts with young, old, disabled, and vulnerable people assures them that their basic needs will be met, that they will be safe, and that their lives will stabilize, if not dramatically improve. That is truly “value added”. You regularly go beyond the standard expectations and provide that extra something that enriches the lives of our shared customers.

As an extension of Washington County, you also add value for the taxpayer as well as the state, county, and particularly the Community Services Department. You work side by side with county social workers, probation officers, and eligibility workers to help solve many of the complex problems that life deals out. You accept the challenges of anti-social behaviors and serious physical or mental impairments, often without flinching. Without your service, many of those we serve would find their way into institutions that far exceed the cost of care that can be found in a quality foster home. Again, great value.

This Holiday Season, the staff and I would like to thank you for the value you add and the love you bring to those whose lives are better because of you. Some of these folks will thank you themselves; others may not be able to. Regardless, we all wish you the very best! Happy Holidays to you and your families!

Daniel J. Papin,
Director, Washington County Community Services

WE WISH LINDSAY THE BEST

Lindsay Brekke came to Washington County in May of 2008 as an Adult Foster Care Licensor. Lindsay’s background in licensing served her well; she hit the ground running. Robbin and Lindsay became a wonderful team from working with adult providers to planning support group and trainings. In September of 2010, Lindsay switched to child foster care licensing. Lindsay pursued her MSW at UW–Eau Claire in the fall of 2010-2012. She did a great job supporting and educating providers, conducting the informational meetings, matching emergency placements at a moment’s notice, hosting trainings, and enthusiastically calling out the door prizes at the annual Foster Provider Recognition. We will sincerely miss Lindsay’s vast knowledge base, quick wit, ability to be a good team player, advocate for foster providers, and willingness to take on a challenge. We wish her the best of luck in her new job as Supervisor in Mower County Health and Human Services!
Presentation does matter

When I was a kid my mother could never go anywhere without having the house all tidied up and the beds made. It was as if a robber came and left, they would be able to say we had a neat and clean house. When we hosted neighborhood card club night or were baling hay (yes, I’m a farm girl) once again the house would have to be neat as a pin. My mother wanted to present a good example and was proud of our modest home.

Having people come into your homes for pre-placement visits is similar to having a guest into your home or someone seeing it for the first time. You want to present a positive image, a welcoming home and impression for the kids, adults and family members coming to your home. In child care we call it curb appeal and marketing, and unfortunately whether we like it or not there is some presentation and marketing in foster care as well. I totally agree that we need foster parents who are accepting, nurturing and structured, but we want to show what a clean, organized and welcoming house would look like for the individuals we are serving and their families. Don’t get the wrong idea; I’m not expecting you to go out and get interior designers to spruce up your home, only requesting you take some time to survey your home for future projects and opportunities to increase the welcoming value.

If you are already acing this list, please pat yourself on the back – thank you. If there are areas where improvement needs to be made, New Year’s is just around the corner and we would love to support you to attain your goals. Here is the “Company is coming” visual assessment to use on your home and own appearance:

- **How does the outside of the house look?**
  - Are there old cars in the front yard, clutter stacked up next to the house, cobwebs on the front porch from the last 10 years, old swing sets rusted and not used for years still in the yard?
  - Do a little curb assessment; does your home look welcoming to someone coming to visit? Do you have a banner, welcome sign or wreath on the front door?
  - Is the lawn mowed frequently or the snow shoveled with a path to the door?
  - Is the patio and/or back yard welcoming as well with a couple of lawn chairs out there, access to pools inhibited, etc.
  - Is the outside of the house clean and in general good repair? If there is fencing, is it in good repair?

- **Now you are to the front door** and you ring the doorbell or knock on the door, then YOU answer the door.
  - Are there five barking and jumping dogs running around or have the dogs been put into another room? Are they on a very short leash or trained? This can frighten those who are not familiar with dogs.
  - Is the front entrance cleared and clean so one can take off their shoes and not trip with any space to turn?

- **Are you dressed in clean appropriate clothes** for the weather and occasion?
  - Do you look professional, freshly showered, hair combed and ready to conduct business?
  - Maybe a notebook ready with written questions in mind.

- **Now we are in the house** and it is always good to have meetings around a cleaned off, wiped off dining room or kitchen table. People like tables because they give you something to lean on and give you something to lay all the paperwork on.
  - Having the smell of coffee brewing or baking cookies is probably a luxury few of us have the time to do these days, but it does connect with the senses.
  - Having a clean not so cluttered household is a plus for respite care and fostering. Are the sofas piled high or are they cleared off with an afghan neatly hung over the back? Are there big piles of “stuff” all over the house or just a couple of clutter spots that will need attention someday? There are very cool storage units to help get organized.
CERTIFICATE OF RENT PAID DUE JANUARY 31 FOR ELIGIBLE RESIDENTS

All rental property owners, managers, or operators must provide a Certificate of Rent Paid (CRP) to each person who rented from them during the previous year unless the property is tax-exempt.

This CRP requirement also applies to group residential housing (GRH) facilities covered by waiver programs, including adult foster care. If a resident receives income only from certain government assistance programs (SSI & MSA/GRH), they are not eligible for the renter’s refund. Therefore, you don’t need to issue a CRP to any resident whose only income is from the following programs (click the links to view relevant laws for each):

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI), under Title XVI of the Social Security Act
- Minnesota Supplemental Aid/Group Residential Housing (MSA/GRH), under Minnesota Statutes, sections 256D.35 to 256D.54

**Note:** If a resident has any other income beyond what they receive from SSI or MSA/GRH, they may be eligible for a renter’s refund. You must give them a CRP if – and only if – some of their other income is used to pay rent.

The forms appear to still be in the process of being updated. For the CRP form and instructions go to:

- [www.revenue.state.mn.us/Forms_and_Instructions/2011/crp_ldin_12.pdf](http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/Forms_and_Instructions/2011/crp_ldin_12.pdf)
- [www.revenue.state.mn.us/individuals/prop_tax_refund/Pages/Certificate_of_Rent_Paid_(CRP)_Waiver_Programs_-_Adult_Foster_Care.aspx](http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/individuals/prop_tax_refund/Pages/Certificate_of_Rent_Paid_(CRP)_Waiver_Programs_-_Adult_Foster_Care.aspx)

People take different roads seeking fulfillment and happiness. Just because they’re not on your road doesn’t mean they’ve gotten lost.

- Dalai Lama

ADULT FOSTER CARE PROVIDERS SUPPORT GROUP & OTHER TRAININGS

Support Group meets the 4th Tuesday of every other month. The upcoming meeting date is:

**Title:** Senior Exercise

**Date:** January 22, 2013 • 6:00-8:30 p.m.

**Take Charge of Your Paperwork Training**

This class will give you “hands-on” training to get you organized. Bring your files and get it done!

**Date:** February 7, 2013 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.

*Flyers will be sent out with more information regarding these trainings.*
Welcome New Child Providers:

**OCTOBER 2012**
• Joy & Matt Gilson, Woodbury (Kin)

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

“Give Kids a Smile”

In just a few months, thousands of volunteers with the MN Dental Association’s annual charitable program, “Give Kids a Smile” will be offering free care to children from families who face barriers to dental care. The dates of this FREE event are Friday, Feb. 1 and Sat., Feb. 2, 2013.

While we do not yet have the complete list of participating dental clinics, free care will likely be available in or near your community. That’s why we want to make sure you have the information you need to inform those families you know could most benefit from this program.

The MN Dental Association is proud to coordinate this statewide program each February when volunteers provide about $2 million worth of free dental care to more than 5,000 children in need across the state.

To find out more about the “Give Kids a Smile” program visit: www.mndental.org/public_home/about_us/give_kids_a_smile/.

What works for children with attachment issues?

It takes a wealth of understanding and skills to parent a child who lacks the foundational experience of a secure attachment. Unlike children whose introduction to the world has been kind, a child who has endured abandonment, neglect, and/or abuse often struggles with basic family life concepts. A child’s first model of family may promote the belief that parents do not have his best interest in mind—a viewpoint that can produce a myriad of negative behaviors such as questioning parental roles, the purpose of discipline, and the ability to ask for help.

In sum, children who have tough life beginnings can be very difficult to parent.

So, what works for a child who has attachment issues? It depends. Effective parenting techniques will vary based on the child’s temperament, developmental age, learning style, and belief system. Many children who have suffered early maltreatment have a faulty belief that they are bad or defective. In their minds, caregivers treated them poorly or their birth parents abandoned them because they are intrinsically faulty or deficient. Given that belief, children may consciously or subconsciously think, “Since I am basically defective, what’s the point in improving my behavior?”

Individuals act in accord with their primary beliefs about themselves, their life, and others. Actions will give clues to a person’s beliefs. For example, a troubled child’s actions might indicate these beliefs about self-worth:

“I’m only worthwhile when I have your undivided attention.”

“I am only loved when I get my own way.”

“When someone corrects me, it shows me that she does not love me.”

If a parent does not address these faulty beliefs, few parenting strategies or methodologies will help. Most parenting guidance assumes that a child’s core belief is positive and, therefore, the child will choose good things for himself. A negative core belief inspires very different choices.

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which would have an instant impact.

- Have the floors been cleaned or vacuumed in the last week? In the last day if you have 4 – 5 furry animals? We don’t want to see fur balls, mouse droppings, or lots of dead bugs laying around.
- Has the bathroom been cleaned in the last few days, in case one of the team members or kids needs to use it?
- Is there counter space to make something to eat and are there clean dishes drying in the sink? Or even put away? Are the cupboard doors on and shut?
- Are the beds made and the bedrooms (at least the one the foster youth will be using) tidy and clean?

This is obviously not an exhaustive list but hopefully gives one a sense of what “guests” are looking at when they come for a pre-placement visit, staffing, placement plan meeting, relicensing visit, etc. This is a very busy world we live in and keeping up with all the information we receive in the mail, from gifts, good deals, etc. can be a challenge. We ask that you take the “Company is coming” assessment and develop an action plan for 2013! You will find that one truly does feel a sense of accomplishment with completed projects or ready for the meeting when prepared physically and mentally! Happy New Year to each of you and know we truly do appreciate your commitment to foster care!

*Article by: Suzanne Pollack, Licensing Supervisor*
In addition to healthy attachments, children need boundaries and discipline to learn how to navigate life. In our experience, children with attachment difficulties often have common perceptual problems that need to be accounted for when choosing a discipline technique. Children who have attachment issues:

- may inaccurately read non-verbal cues and misinterpret spoken phrases. In fact, they commonly place negative interpretations upon others’ neutral words and actions.
- may not seek positive attention. Due to past experiences, these children may be more comfortable with negative attention because it fits their faulty belief system, tends to be more intense and undivided, and is habit forming. They also may not know when they do things right.
- may have difficulty regulating their internal emotional states. They may frequently become overwhelmed with strong emotions that block their ability to use a coping strategy.
- are often very controlling. Based on experiences with untrustworthy or absent caregivers, they may have had to take care of themselves and not rely upon other people for help—a habit that can be hard to break.
- tend to be very anxious and may mask their fear or disability through opposition. One 16-year-old youth reported that he frequently says “no” to a request right away so he has more time to understand what the person is asking.

A single parenting methodology or technique will not work well for all stages and ages. This adage may apply even more to children who suffer from attachment difficulties due to their emotional immaturity, poor coping skills, and uneven development. In order to assess whether a specific parenting technique is right for you and your child, ask yourself if this form of parenting will help:

- create a more connected relationship between you and your child,
- regulate your child’s emotions, and
- give your child a sense of accomplishment or mastery that combats a faulty belief and leads to positive self-esteem.

Parents must be purposeful in their interventions and tailor techniques to their child’s unique needs. Thinking ahead is crucial since most of us do not have the wherewithal to assess and react appropriately to a situation while we are in the midst of a crisis. In my years of work with children and adolescents who have attachment issues, I have been privy to parents’ triumphs and struggles in raising their children and have gathered their sage parenting advice:

Gauge your expectations according to the child’s emotional age and abilities, not his chronological age. Many children who suffer early childhood maltreatment experience delayed emotional, social, cognitive, and sometimes physical development. When adults expect them to act their chronological age, these children may become overwhelmed (which may, in turn, present as oppositional behavior). Observe and evaluate your child’s development separately from his chronological age to find parenting strategies that will work for him as he is now.

Be consistent! Follow through with what you say. Although a parenting technique may not consistently divert a blow up, children need to know what will happen. There is comfort in the mere structure of discipline. By following through on a consequence, you keep your word and establish a boundary that will help your child feel more secure in your presence. Do not toss out a strategy without giving it a chance to work.

What does not work now may work later. Children move through different developmental stages. As they mature, different parenting strategies may work even if they were not initially successful. For example, logical and natural consequences may not work for a child who believes she does not deserve good things or for a child who is developmentally like a two-year-old.

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DID YOU KNOW?

SMOKING IN GARAGES
MN State Fire Code 2007, Section 310.2 says, “Smoking shall be prohibited... in spaces where flammable or combustible materials are stored or handled.” Gasoline that is used in cars, lawn-mowers, snowblowers, etc., is flammable. Please refrain from smoking in the garage.

FARE FOR ALL

Fare for All is a program of the Emergency Food Shelf Network which sells packages of fruit, vegetables, and frozen meat for up to 40% off retail prices. This discounted shopping program is open to everyone!

Packages range in prices from $10 to $30. Just come and shop. No registration, preregistration, or identification is required. Fare for All accepts cash, credit, debit, and EBT cards.

For dates and locations call (763) 450-3880 or www.fareforall.org.

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old—where autonomy may be more important than self benefit. As she gets more attached to you and revises her core beliefs, it may become a viable parenting method.

Be explicit and clear about your good intentions. One way to diffuse negative interpretations is to be explicit. I witnessed one parent, for example, whose son interrupted her during a conversation. She stated very clearly, “You interrupted a conversation.” Her son kept talking. She continued, “When you interrupt me, I have less interest in what you are saying. I want to be interested in what you are saying because I love you. It would be better if you wait quietly until I finish this portion of the conversation. I will ask you what you want when there is a pause in the conversation. Then, I will listen to what you have to say.”

Incredibly, the child did as she said. He was also pleased that he could navigate that social situation correctly and gain the response he wanted.

Calm your child before you do anything else. Research indicates that when people are highly anxious, they cannot learn new things. Children whose past includes abandonment, neglect, or abuse tend to be more anxious and more easily overwhelmed by negative emotions and environmental stimuli (noise, light, too many people, etc.). Employing techniques to calm your child before attempting to address a behavioral problem may give you more success.

Structure to reduce anxiety. Children who experience a rocky start in life may enter new homes and situations in survival mode. Consequently, they may instinctively need to have some control over their situation so that they can feel safe. A structured, predictable environment can help to reduce a child’s anxiety and make them feel more secure in the home.

Structuring might begin with routines. A large white board can tell children what will happen and what they are expected to do. Structuring can also mean thoughtfully preparing for possible problems. Parents can tell their children stories that anticipate feelings and model ways to handle different situations. Parents can also role play interactions using puppets or toys to illustrate a problem and potential solutions.

Be kind to yourself! Parenting a child with attachment issues can be an extremely isolating experience. To form a secure attachment with a difficult child, parents must find support. External and internal supports can help you be the parent you want to be for your child. Some ideas:

• Join a support group or meet with other parents who understand your life.
• Journal the progress your child makes. Track every small step.
• Allow yourself time away.
• Be thankful for the good things in your life; review them morning and night.
• Exercise and eat healthy food.

So, what works with children who have attachment issues? Many parenting techniques are helpful. It is important, however, to remember that each method is only a tool to use at a given time so the child will learn what he needs to know to be healthy. In the end, no one parenting strategy will be the ticket for a successful relationship with your child. Parenting is a process that takes time, and with ongoing commitment, healing and connection can occur.


Article by: Melissa Nichols, Lead Therapist, Family Attachment and Counseling Center, Deephaven, Minnesota www.familyattachment.com/pages/whatworksparenting.pdf
WASHINGTON COUNTY

All trainings will be held at the Washington County Government Center in Stillwater unless otherwise noted. To register for trainings contact your licensor. All trainings are free to Washington County Foster Care Providers unless otherwise noted. *Reminder: Foster parents can seek up to $100 training reimbursement per calendar year per household.

Child Foster Care Support Group

Meet with other providers to support and share your experiences in foster care. Get credit for 1/2 hr. of training!

Date: *First Tues. of every month • 10:00 a.m.-Noon
Tuesday, January 8
(*unless otherwise noted)

Specialty Training: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Participants will learn how Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) can impact emotional, behavioral, and physical development from infancy to adulthood, the differences in brain development, and the importance of early assessment and intervention. Participants will explore daily challenges at home and in school and discover effective strategies to address the emotions and behaviors of the children.

Date: Tuesday, January 8 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers

Resource Family Training:
Discipline — Module 7

This training examines the importance of discipline based on the child’s age, developmental level, past experiences, and their current situation. It also explains the rationale for statutes and rules on physical punishment in alternative care homes.

Date: Thursday, January 10 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers

Child Foster Care Orientation—Session I:
County Orientation & Overview of Foster Care

Date: Thursday, January 17 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Washington Co. Community Services Staff

Child Foster Care Orientation—Session II:
The Provider as a Team Player

Date: Thursday, January 24 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Washington Co. Community Services Staff

Child Foster Care Orientation—Session III:
House Rules, Expectations, Transitions, Visitation, & Supports to Providers

Date: Thursday, January 31 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Washington Co. Community Services Staff

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome/Shaken Baby Syndrome Training

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

Date: Thurs., February 7 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Trainers: Katie Zacharias & Greg Coleman, Canvas Health

Dinner & Training:
Continuation of Caring for Traumatized Children/Youth

The presenters' expertise is in the area of working in the home with families and foster providers to assess the needs of the family and to develop a strategy to help families deal with day-to-day life issues and better understand the trauma our foster youth have experienced. This strategy includes teaching and “hands on” techniques that are practical for foster providers including how to deal with sensory issues and calming techniques. (2 hour trg.)

Date: Tuesday, February 12 • 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Trainers: Katie Zacharias & Greg Coleman, Canvas Health

Child Passenger Restraint Systems Training

This training is required when caring for kids 8 and younger. Limited seating! No walk-ins.

Date: Tues., February 19 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Washington Co. Community Services Staff

Resource Family Training:
Primary Families — Module 8

This training helps the participants to understand the grief process of a birth parent whose children have entered an out-of-home placement and the importance of involving the birth family in case planning, daily decision-making, and other activities to support reunification.

Date: Thursday, February 21 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers
Ronda Nelson, Oakdale, has been a licensed adult provider for 25 years.  

What prompted you to become licensed?  
I became a foster care provider because someone I knew needed a home.  
I also wanted to stay at home with my children while they were growing up.  

What keeps you going every day?  
I've always said I have the best job in the world.  I have been so lucky to get great people to share my life with.  I got to stay home and raise my children.  My life, my children's lives, and the lives of the adults in my home have changed for the better.  Yes, there are days that don't go so well, but there are so many days that make it worth it.  And a good sense of humor helps.  

What is something you have learned that would be helpful to other providers?  
Document, document, document.  I had a very sad, unexpected situation come up with a client I had for 17 years.  I am so glad I had the documentation I did so I could say, this is what happened.  Also your licensing worker is your best advocate.  

What advice would you give to someone that is newly licensed?  
Network!  You need to have a support system, someone who knows what it is to share your home with others.  Someone who knows what it is like to work 24/7/365.  A good way to do this is to go to the bi-monthly foster care support meetings through the county.  You can meet other providers and talk about issues you may need help with.  

What have been the most helpful resources for you?  
Other foster care providers and trainings.  I have been providing foster care for 25 years and I am still learning new things.  The county provides trainings, and I find out about trainings from friends.  The trainings I have taken have helped me become a better foster care provider, and some have improved my personal life.  

What is your best memory of providing foster care?  
That my children grew up not realizing that the adult they grew up with had an intellectual disability or that he was a person of color.  He was just a part of our family and a person they loved.  

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The Home Safety Checklist requires that all medications be inaccessible to children and vulnerable adults.  It also requires all Schedule II Medication to be locked.  Schedule II Medications are considered controlled substances under Federal Law.  To be considered a Schedule II Medication it must meet the following criteria:  

1. The drug or other substance has a high potential for abuse.  
2. The drug or other substance has a currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States or a currently accepted medical use with severe restrictions.  
3. Abuse of the drug or other substances may lead to severe psychological or physical dependence.  

The list of Schedule II Medications include but is not limited to morphine, codeine, Vicodin (hydrocodone), oxycodone, Percocet, Ritalin (methylphenidate), and methadone.  Your pharmacist can tell you whether a medication is considered a Schedule II Medication.  

The link below is a list of all controlled medications:  
www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=152.02#stat.152.02.3