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Resource Unit’s Mission

To enrich the lives of children and adults by promoting safe and quality licensed care.

GUN SAFETY IN THE HOME

Recently it has been difficult to avoid the issue of fire arms and tragic events. With that in mind, it seemed very appropriate to print the following article in the newsletter.

Promoting justice and public safety through quality legal representation for the citizens of Washington County is the mission of our office. Although a mission statement is easy to recite, living up to it presents many challenges. Nowhere is this challenge greater than when a prosecutor must decide whether to bring charges in the accidental shooting of a child.

Twice this December prosecutors in the Twin Cities have faced this difficult task. In each case, a child found a gun in the home and shot his sibling; one case ended with a 4 year old shooting his 2 year old brother to death and the other involved a 2 year old shot by his 9 year old brother while the parents were away. In reviewing the cases, the prosecutors were faced with the difficult task of finding a way to enforce the law without doing further harm to families already stricken with grief.

How can these tragedies be avoided? Simple: public education on gun laws and safe gun storage practices. In Minnesota it is a gross misdemeanor to negligently store or leave a loaded firearm in a location where the person knows, or reasonably should know, that a child is likely to gain access, unless reasonable action is taken to secure the firearm against access by the child. Child access prevention laws have been shown to be effective at reducing accidental shooting deaths among children. One study showed that in states where such laws had been in effect for at least a year, accidental child firearm deaths fell by 23%.

In states where a law already exists, such as Minnesota, the key is education about safe gun storage. Parents need to know that if they are to have a loaded firearm in their home, they must either lock the gun away or prevent an accidental discharge by using a trigger lock device that prevents the gun from going off. Researchers found that of 94 people who possessed firearms in their homes with children under seven, 36% admitted to keeping their firearms loaded, 45% did not store their guns locked, and 57% failed to store them in a locked compartment. This has to stop. These same parents undoubtedly make sure their toddlers ride in car seats buckled up, cannot access the family’s liquor cabinet or poisonous cleaners, and regularly change smoke detector batteries. So why miss the biggest threat to children’s safety in the home by leaving a loaded gun in the closet or under the mattress?

If children are in the home, this is not only a bad idea, it is also illegal if steps are not taken to secure the weapon. Consider instead a safe gun storage plan. If you have a plan share it with a neighbor. It is only through education that we can curb the tragedies of accidental child shootings.

Have a safe and happy new year.

Peter J. Orput, Washington County Attorney

WEAPONS IN YOUR HOME

The Home Safety Checklist requires that “Weapons be unloaded. Weapons and ammunition must not be visible and must be stored separately in locked areas.” Weapons may also include hunting knives, swords, hunting arrows, and any other objects designed as a weapon. These must be locked to prevent access to not only children but the vulnerable adults in your homes. Ammunition must be under a second lock if kept in the same area such as a locker. If you have questions, please talk to your licensor.
Asking for Help is a Sign of Strength

Respite Care as a Service

Many years ago I worked for the Department of Human Services and was responsible for the respite grants through the child welfare programs. “Asking for help is a sign of strength” was the motto the federal government used to encourage the use of respite care for families at risk of abusing their children or to encourage those of us who think asking for help is a sign of weakness to change our mindset. In the future issue of The Star, we will highlight a provider who solely does respite care, sometimes for years as this article is more about the practice of respite.

We have come a long way in the field of respite and how it is viewed in Minnesota and especially in Washington County. Respite care is defined as a planned break from one’s parents and/or caregiver. Typically in Washington County we think of respite care for 1–2 weekends a month where the child goes from their family home to a licensed foster (respite) provider’s home. It technically cannot last more than 30 consecutive days or it becomes a foster placement. We actively recruit providers to serve our youth with mental health issues, as well as youth with developmental disabilities and in child protection cases. This is seen as a service to prevent out-of-home placement.

The second type of respite care is from a licensed foster provider to another licensed provider. This might be for a break from the children you are serving due to high level of attention and interaction they require or due to going on vacation/trip, etc. Historically, this happened very informally between providers. This is truly a wonderful service you all provide to support and help each other. With the increased use of respite care, increase in sibling groups being placed together (a very good thing), and decrease in number of non-kin providers we have begun to experience situations where the potential exists for providers receiving the youth for respite to be overcapacity in their numbers. So staff will be asking about respite placements when calling for placement resources and for emergency placements. Please be upfront about potential respite situations when you are called particularly for emergency placements. Taking an emergency placement may impact the respite child that was coming over for the weekend.

Pay for respite, as many of you know, is taxable income as it is considered a service as opposed to foster care per the IRS. Some of you have received a 1099 from the Accounting Department when the respite reimbursement is over $600 in a calendar year. Providing respite care for a family is reimbursed by combining the basic foster care rate and difficulty of care assessment and paid by Washington County. Providing respite between licensed providers is paid by the provider seeking the respite to the one giving the service. Washington County provides no reimbursement for this type of respite. Respite care typically is reimbursed day in and day out which is different than foster placements.

Respite care is a win-win for everyone involved when it works well. Kids can have some special attention or see a positive home environment which may give them hope for the future. Parents and caregivers can go to day treatment, go for coffee with friends, work on a needed project, sleep, go on a date with one’s spouse, give one-on-one time to another child, etc. Please call me or your licensor with questions or points missed. Thank you for being there for each other and the families we serve!

Submitted by: Suzanne Pollack, Washington County Licensing Supervisor
CHOOSING A FINANCIAL PLANNER

In November, Bernie Johnson-Clark spoke to our Adult Foster Care Support Group about money management. Setting goals is the first step toward managing your money. Once you have a goal, you make plans on how to reach that goal financially. Financial planners are trained to help you meet your long term goals. They can help you sort out how, where, and when to invest your money, help you strategize on where your savings money should go, possibly structure your money for some tax savings, or plan for retirement. Here are some tips to help you choose a financial planner.

How do I choose the right financial planner for me?
Choosing a financial planner is as important as choosing a doctor or lawyer. Working with a financial planner is a very personal relationship. You may want to interview at least three planners in person to find the right one to serve your needs. Check with the planner to see if there is a fee for the initial interview.

Questions to ask when choosing a financial planner:
- What financial planning designations the planner holds and professional affiliations and memberships.
- What is their educational background and work experience.
- What is the planner’s basic approach to financial planning.
- How does the planner prepare a plan.
- How will the planner address your particular needs.
- Whether the planner or others will implement recommendations from the plan.
- What services does the planner provide.
- What are the planner’s areas of specialization.
- What types of clients does the planner serve and any minimum net worth or income requirements.
- What licenses to offer certain financial products, such as life insurance or securities, do they have.
- How is the planner compensated for services and the typical charges.

What are the CFP (CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER) marks?
The CFP certification is awarded to individuals who have successfully completed the certification requirements of the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc. To obtain the CFP certification, the following qualifications must be met:
- Examination. An individual must successfully complete the CFP Board’s Comprehensive Certification Examination, which tests the individual’s knowledge on a multitude of key financial planning topics.
- Experience. An individual must acquire three to five years of financial planning-related experience prior to receiving the right to use the CFP marks.

DID YOU KNOW?
PRE-MEASURED DETERGENT PACKETS WARNING
Pre-measured detergent packets for dishwashers or laundry can look like candy? Just like candy, they are bite sized and brightly colored. They were introduced by various companies as a convenient way to dispense detergent. Children across the country have ended up in emergency rooms, some being placed on ventilators following exposure. The damage could include the eyes as well as the mouth and throat if the package ’sprays’ when it is bitten. Poison control centers have put out alerts to warn the public of the dangers. Keep these products away from children and vulnerable adults by keeping them up high and/or in a locked cabinet.

UNUSED MEDICATIONS?
Washington County residents can dispose of their unused and expired medications at year-round collection drop boxes.

Drop boxes are located at the following places:
- Cottage Grove Svc. Center
- Forest Lake Svc. Center
- Stillwater Law Enforcement Center

Questions:
www.co.washington.mn.us/meds or (651) 430-6655

ADULT FOSTER CARE PROVIDERS SUPPORT GROUP & OTHER TRAININGS

Vulnerable Adult Law Training
Topics include VA Act definitions, the process of reporting and investigating, record keeping, required training, and a question and answer session.
Date: March 6 • 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

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

Title: Hospice From A-Z
Date: Tues., March 26 • 6:00-8:30 p.m.

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

DECEMBER 2012
• Jennifer & Greg Sabin, Cottage Grove (Kin)

JANUARY 2013
• Roberta & Steve Hill, Woodbury (Kin)
• Jennifer & Jason Skalicky, Forest Lake (Child)

DID YOU KNOW

2013 SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SYEP)
Tree Trust is excited to announce that the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) application was released on February 19, 2013. This is the first year that we will offer the application electronically, so check www.treetrust.org!

SYEP is offered to at-risk youth ages 14-21 in Hennepin, Washington, and Dakota Counties. Participants have various at-risk characteristics such as low-income; basic skills deficiency; limited English ability; physical, emotional or learning disability; and others.

If you know someone who is interested, please see the Tree Trust website for more information.

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How do I contact a financial planner or obtain a membership directory? You can search online by clicking on the Planner Search provided by the National Financial Planning Association. www.fpanet.org/PlannerSearch/PlannerSearch.aspx

If you’d rather work over the phone, call the toll-free hotline at 1-800-282-PLAN (7526).

Or you may want to ask for a referral from a reliable friend, family member, or business associate who is working with a financial planner. Attorneys, accountants, insurance agents, bankers, and other financial specialists may also be good sources because financial planners frequently work with them to carry out a client’s financial plan.

Sources: Bernie Johnson-Clark, Education Manager, Consumer Credit Counseling Service, Family Means, Stillwater MN www.fpamn.org/visitors/visitors.html#anchor3

PEER SUPPORT KEY TO ADOPTIVE FAMILY SUCCESS: LESSONS LEARNED IN MINNESOTA

Since 1999, with funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, North American Council on Adoptive Children (NACAC) has run a parent-to-parent support program for adoptive families across Minnesota. Currently known as the Adoption Support Network (ASN), the peer support program offers:
• One-on-one phone, e-mail, and sometimes in-person support, information, and referral to resources from 8-10 experienced adoptive parents (parent support specialists)
• 25 in-person support groups in every region of Minnesota
• A Facebook support group
• Periodic retreats for adoptive parents
• Whole family events and activities

Program evaluations have consistently shown that the types of peer support our program offers makes a difference. Parents feel less isolated, have enhanced parenting skills, can better understand and respond to difficult behaviors, and have stronger family relationships. Over the course of working with a few thousand adoptive families, we have also learned important lessons about families’ needs and how to meet them.

Adoptive Families Have Many Needs
Children who have been in foster care due to abuse and neglect face many challenges. Early trauma, including prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol, adversely affects brain development and can lead to physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities that may manifest in extremely difficult behaviors. Families who adopt internationally and privately may face similar challenges, and all types of adoptive families have to deal with issues of grief, loss, identity, and more.

Families Who Connect with Support Early are Better Prepared
The serious and unique needs of children adopted from care create a different day-to-day reality for
adoptive families. Even experienced parents may not be prepared for the depth of an adopted child’s challenges and how these challenges can radically change the whole family’s life.

To ensure families are ready for their new parenting role, ASN encourages pre-adoptive families to attend adoption support groups and to connect with their local parent support specialist. By connecting with the adoption community before placement, families can develop more realistic expectations, learn how best to manage behaviors and respond to challenges, and identify useful resources to contact when they have questions or concerns after their children come home.

**Time Spent with Other Adoptive Families Normalizes Adoption**

For adoptive parents who are raising children with special needs, life can be very isolating. Other families, neighbors, and even extended family may not understand the child’s behaviors or how a traumatic background affects both the child and her entire family. It is of great value for adoptive families to belong to a community of families who are traveling the same path and have encountered similar obstacles while raising their children. Experienced parents who have raised children with similar needs can validate and normalize the special needs adoptive experience and keep families from feeling alone and misunderstood.

To meet this need, ASN’s support groups, peer support from specialists, social events, and parent retreats all connect families with one another. The weekend retreats, offered a few times a year on particular topics (trauma, parenting teens) or for special audiences (adoptive mothers, transracial families) provide in-depth opportunities for learning, socializing, and reflecting. As one adoptive mother at a recent moms’ retreat noted, “It’s important to find support from other parents on this journey.” Another commented, “This is like getting my annual booster shot of ‘I can do this!’” Parents who attended the October 2012 Healing Families Retreat relished opportunities to “get on the same parenting page” with their partners, feel less alone, and “recharge with people who get it.”

Because many adopted children also struggle with feeling different or alone and uncertain about the role of adoption in their life, ASN supports activities that bring entire adoptive families together. Parents and children connect through regional and local playgroups, family picnics, holiday parties, and cultural events. Between July and September last year, for instance, more than 200 children and 100 parents attended tribal powwows and naming ceremonies, as well as trainings at the Upper Midwest American Indian Center and American Indian Family and Children Services.

More casual get-togethers help build community and a sense of belonging for adoptive families. As one parent who attended family activities explained, “Not only do I as a parent no longer feel alone, my kids who were adopted from foster care no longer feel alone as they spend time with other kids like them.”

**Parents Can Learn from One Another**

But peer support is about much more than simply normalizing the experience of raising adopted children or children with special needs. Parent support specialists are able to inform new or struggling parents about the special needs common in adoption and help them access resources to improve relationships among family members. Parents can learn about the impact of trauma and attachment difficulties, and how children with traumatic experiences often benefit from very specific parenting strategies. ASN staff connect adoptive families with therapists who are adoption-competent or specialize in treating children who have experienced trauma.

These connections make a significant difference in both parents’ and children’s daily lives. As one parent we served explained, “There have been changes in my kids, especially one of them, in terms of attachment and identity. I am more confident as a parent because of the resources. I am more aware of the help that is out there.”

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**CHILDREN’S DENTAL SERVICES**

The Forest Lake Public Health WIC clinic will be offering Children’s Dental Services (CDS) the first Wednesday of each month from 8:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. starting in April through the end of 2013.

A full range of dental care services will be provided including exams, cleanings, fluoride, sealants, fillings, extractions, crowns, and more.

Those eligible are children from birth-21 years old and pregnant women of all ages. The following are accepted: MNCare, MA, private insurance, sliding fee scale applicants.

Call for an appointment:
(612) 746-1530
(866) 543-6009

**CHILD FOSTER CARE RATES**

The rate at which you will be paid will be determined by adding the base rate (set by the State of Minnesota) to any Difficulty of Care points the child’s placement situation may warrant. The Difficulty of Care level, if any, will be determined by Community Services staff.

**Basic Foster Care Rates for 2013:**

| Ages 0-11 | $21.69 |
| Ages 12-14 | $24.97 |
| Ages 15-20 | $25.84 |

**Initial Clothing Allowance Rates for 2013:**

| Ages 0-11 | $438.00 |
| Ages 12-14 | $740.00 |
| Ages 15-20 | $836.00 |

Continued on page 6
Another noted, “We were much better able to parent our kids with special needs with keeping realistic expectations. We learned to have more of a sense of humor.”

Technology Offers New Ways to Connect
Adoptive families face many demands on their time. Due to their children’s special needs, parents may have to provide extra supervision and guidance, spend more time working with teachers and school administrators, and attend therapy or other appointments. As a result, parents must be able to get support in a variety of ways that fit into their busy lives.

The most accessible and immediate source of support ASN provides is on Facebook. The Facebook page is a private group, monitored by ASN staff, with more than 410 members. Between January and September 2012, members logged more than 11,000 posts in which they asked questions, shared concerns, provided information for others, or simply offered words of encouragement, support, or humor. Common themes have touched on school problems, attachment issues, FASD, sensory integration difficulties, challenging behavior, and core adoption issues.

The beauty of online support is that it can be immediate and tailored to individual situations. A parent who is facing the prospect of day treatment for her child can ask the group about different programs and get multiple members’ feedback within hours—sometimes even minutes—instead of waiting for the next support group meeting. Over time, attendance at in-person support groups has gotten smaller while the Facebook group has grown steadily.

Thanks to the recent retreats, some of the Facebook members were able to meet each other in person—an opportunity that made parents’ online connections even stronger. As one parent recently posted, “I wanted to thank all of you for the tremendous amount of support I’ve received from this group and all the ladies I was able to meet face-to-face at the retreat…. I know there is a long road ahead of me, but it doesn’t feel so scary with all of you here. Thanks!”

Partnering with Others Increases Outreach to Families
One truth of effective adoptive family support is that no one organization can do it alone. ASN partners with multiple stakeholders statewide to offer specialized resources for families. Partners include county, tribal, and private agency child welfare staff, mental health providers, and churches, as well as organizations like the Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and PACER Center. Staff also maintain connections with adoption workers in every county and most private adoption agencies in the state. These connections help ASN reach more families to offer services, and enable us to share adoption information with the community.

Partnerships enabled us to provide training to many adoptive parents without having to plan or offer the sessions directly. In 2011, ASN awarded 17 mini-grants throughout the state to counties or agencies that collaborated with local adoptive parent support groups. Grants funded training geared toward the local families’ identified needs, and more than 400 parents attended these trainings.

We have more than 12 years of experience providing direct parent-to-parent support, so we know adoptive families benefit from peer support and related services. Support we offer can even help families facing tremendous challenges stay together. As one parent explained, “For the first time I have come close to considering disruption. I am fighting to keep this adoption viable and that is due to the support your organization provides. Otherwise it would be too tough.” Another parent simply wrote, “You were our lifeline through very tumultuous times. Thank you!”

Thank you, adoptive families, for opening your hearts to waiting children.

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, March 5
(*unless otherwise noted)

Specialty Training: Part I: Working With Adolescents
Adolescence is a unique, complex, and difficult time in life. It is exciting yet frightening. For young persons that are involved in the foster care system, life and development can be even more dynamic. This training, which is designed for caregivers of young people, will assist you in understanding "typical" adolescent development and behavior as well as the unique attributes of youth involved in the foster care system. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss and explore strategies for understanding development, culture, communication, special needs, and building relationships.

Date: Tuesday, May 7 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers

Resource Family Training: Sexual Abuse — Module 9
This training examines the definition and dynamics of child sexual abuse. Participants will learn that sexual abuse is a complex problem and that children who have been sexually abused may have a hard time adjusting to a new home. Additional training and resources to successfully care for these children and teens will be discussed.

Date: Thursday, March 14 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers

Resource Family Training: Effects of Caregiving on the Family — Module 10
Participants will learn to recognize signs of family stress and know the importance of developing and using support systems to prevent a family crisis. Procedures will be outlined that are required if allegations of maltreatment are made. Health, hygiene, and nutritional issues will be explored.

Date: Thursday, April 11 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/ Shaken Baby Syndrome Training
This training is required when caring for kids 5 and younger.

Date: Wed., April 17 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Trainer: Washington Co. Community Services Staff

C.A.R.S. (Children and Restraint Systems) Training
This training is required when caring for kids 8 and younger. Limited seating! No walk-ins.

Date: Thurs., April 18 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Trainer: Washington Co. Community Services Staff

Mandated Reporter Training
This training is designed for Mandated Reporters who are interested in learning more about requirements for reporting child abuse and neglect in Washington County. *If you have not had this training in the last 4 years, the information you have is out-of-date.

Date: Thurs., April 25 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Trainer: Don Pelton, Child Protection Intake Supervisor

METRO TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES
Raising Resilient Kids
Bob Downs, Family Therapist, will discuss the skills kids need, the core components of resilient families, and how parents can raise children to face challenges, bounce back from adversity, and learn life-long lessons in the process.

Date: Tues., March 5 • 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Location: District Education Center, Mahtomedi

Date: Thurs., March 28 • 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Location: East Ridge High School, Woodbury

Cost: FREE but must register
Registration: www.surveymonkey.com/s/QGVXW8V

RAD Labs! Reactive Attachment Disorder: How to Survive & Thrive Beyond the Diagnosis (5 Part Series)
Join Deanna McMahon and Krista Nelson for this training specifically designed to address support and education needs of those parenting child(ren) with significant attachment impairment and/trauma issues with an emphasis on good self-care and humor.

Date: March 18/April 15 & 22/May 6 & 13 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Location: Wilder Foundation, St. Paul
Cost: BEFORE/ON March 18: $100/person for ALL 5 sessions / AFTER March 18: $25/person for each session or $40/parenting couple
Registration: www.mnadopt.org/calendar.php
Mike and I have been doing foster care for over 22 years. We have had over 400 kids in placement at our home. We were first licensed in Colorado when Mike was stationed at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. When he retired, we moved back home to Minnesota where our family lives. We continued to do foster care in Minnesota as we really love being able to provide care for the kids. I love being able to stay home for my kids. Providing foster care has exposed our kids to different cultures and family situations. This has been both an eye opening and rewarding experience for them. They are always excited when new placements come in to care. They love sharing their toys and life style.

What prompted you to become licensed?
We love kids and wanted to open our house to provide a safe, loving, secure place for them to come.

What keeps you going every day?
Humor! The love and support of Mike and my family.

What is something you have learned that would be helpful to other providers?
Be polite and understanding of everyone you are working with: the workers, families, and other county staff.

What advice would you give to someone that is newly licensed?
Reach out for support from other foster care providers and attend trainings. Never judge or condemn a parent for the current situation. Try to stay neutral and not form opinions. Everyone makes mistakes. Move forward and be there for the kids.

What have been the most helpful resources for you?
Trainings and family.

What is your best memory of providing foster care?
Having the opportunity to expand our family by adopting multiple placements.

Welcome Anne Fildes!
Anne Fildes is the new Child Foster Care Licensor at Washington County; serving the northern part of the county. She is originally from Ohio where her family still lives and has a Master’s degree in Social Work from the University of Chicago. Her husband’s name is Nick and they have one son, Elias, who is 8 months. She has 24 nieces and nephews ranging in age from 6 months to 18 years old. Prior to moving to the Twin Cities, she and her husband lived in Oakland, CA and she still really misses CA during the winter. Before coming to Washington County, Anne was a Children’s Mental Health Case Manager at Canvas Health for almost 5 years. She is currently working out of the Stillwater office but will move to Forest Lake in the next few months.

Improved Adult Foster Care Website
Over the past several months we have made changes and updates to the adult foster care information available on the Washington County website. We have just added a link for provider and resident related forms. Most forms are available in both pdf and word versions. Simply click on the format you choose and the form will open. No more having to call or email your licensor asking for forms!

We will continue to add content useful to both new and experienced providers over the next several months. Look for information about completing background studies, a calendar of coming trainings, information on the home safety checklist, frequently asked questions, and useful links. Visit the site and let us know what you think.

To access the site go to www.co.washington.mn.us, click Doing Business - click Licenses - click Foster Care Licensing - click Adult.