

THE STAR CHILD ISSUE



The Newsletter for Licensed Child Foster Care Providers of Washington County ★ Spring 2020

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Communication Regarding Foster Care and COVID-19

We are in a time of uncertainty and ever changing information. Your licensing team is thankful for the work you continue to do with children. In this time, we will pass along any information when we get it. Please know there are still a lot of unknowns and if we send you an email update, it is possible that the next day new information exists. We do not intend to overwhelm your email inbox, but want to share information with you as we get it. That being said, if you have not provided us with an email address, you may not receive information as quickly as needed. If you have an email address you would like to have updated, please call Anna at 651-430-8307 or email ComSvsCFCLicensing@co.washington.mn.us. You can also contact your licenser with any questions you may have.

Here are some websites with COVID-19 information:

1. The Washington County website will give up-to-date county-wide information: www.co.washington.mn.us/3168/COVID-19
2. The Minnesota Department of Health website is dedicated to information related to Coronavirus: www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html
3. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Melissa Pitts Our Newest Child Foster Care Licenser



Hi, my name is Melissa Pitts and I am the new Child Foster Care Licenser at Washington County. I have worked for Washington County since 2015 and initially started as a Child Protection worker and then moved on to be a Child Care Licenser. When I started my career in child welfare 15 years ago, I actually started as a foster care licenser so I am so thrilled to be able to license and support foster parents again! It is truly a passion of mine. I thank you all in advance for the love, support, and care you give the children in your care. You are greatly appreciated!

Licensing Unit's Mission

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



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P.O. Box 30
Stillwater, MN 55082
www.co.washington.mn.us

Nicole Carew Our Child Foster Care Intern



Hi, my name is Nicole Carew and I am the intern for the child foster care licensing program at Washington County. I am currently a student in the Masters of Social Work program at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. I will be graduating in May of 2020! Prior to my internship at Washington County, I worked as a housing case manager for families and children in Hennepin County for four years. Along with my passion for social work, I enjoy reading a good book or taking a walk around one of the local lakes in Minneapolis.

Welcome New Child Providers

July 2019

- **Karen & Steven Ferguson,** Scandia (Kin)
- **Courtney & Luke Opsahl,** Forest Lake (Non-Kin)
- **Gina & David Schad,** Lake Elmo (Non-Kin)

August 2019

- **Meredith & Jesse Caskey,** Lake Elmo (Kin)
- **Nikki & Jim Koshenina,** Stillwater (Non-Kin)
- **Alexis Rodriguez & Carlos Casanova,** Oakdale (Kin)
- **Brenda Teich & Mark McClellan,** Oakdale (Non-Kin)
- **Stephanie & Michael VerBout,** Oakdale (Non-Kin)

October 2019

- **Owakihi,** Forest Lake (Corporate)

November 2019

- **Heather DeVaughn & Glenn Fager,** Woodbury (Kin)
- **Darlene King,** Oakdale (Kin)

December 2019

- **Arica & Bjorn Hedstrom,** Woodbury (Kin)

January 2020

- **Valerie & Marshall Freeman,** Oakdale (Kin)
- **Nancy & Rick Hancks,** Woodbury (Kin)
- **Ranae & Mike Kiser,** Stillwater (Kin)
- **Alyssa & Daniel Morgan,** Cottage Grove (Non-Kin)
- **Jayne Ochs & David Caulfield,** Hugo (Kin)

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Reporting Requirements for Runaway Youth

Foster parents and caregivers of foster youth must immediately report any missing foster child within 24 hours to the following entities:

- **Local law enforcement:** Provide a description of what the youth was last wearing, the time they were last seen, etc., so agency staff can enter the information into the National Crime Information Center database. Also, report if it is believed that a youth has unwillingly left placement or has been removed by an unauthorized person.
- **Child's case manager:** *If after-hours, it should also be reported to the on-call worker.* If the child is from Washington County, after-hours calls are handled by the Washington County Crisis Response Unit at 651-275-7400. If the child is from outside of Washington County, follow the instructions from the placing agency regarding who to contact for after-hours emergencies.

Monthly Billing Changes: Online Submission and New Email Address for Questions

Monthly billing forms are now available for submission online as an alternative to the paper forms. Paper forms can still be submitted and sent to the Washington County accounting department (address provided on the form) or faxed to 651-430-6639, Attn: Community Services Accounting Unit.

How to use online submission:

This form is compatible using a computer browser or a cellphone browser.

1. Go to our website: www.co.washington.mn.us/fostercaremonthlybillingform
 - Click on Foster Care Monthly Billing (online).
 - Save this web page as a favorite for the next time you need to submit a bill.
2. The following items are mandatory:
 - Provider Name(s)
 - Phone
 - Child's Social Worker
 - Address
 - Child's Name
 - From and To Dates
 - Check box
 - Completed by
3. Click submit.
4. If an email address was entered on the form, you will receive a confirmation email regarding your submission.

Questions:

For all questions regarding your reimbursement, contact

Nicole in Accounting at 651-430-6050 or ComSvsFosterCarePayments@co.washington.mn.us. There is also a link to this email address titled Foster Care Payments on the form.

Foster Parent Court Hearing Notice

As of October 2019, foster parents will receive a mailed notice of every court hearing pertaining to each foster child in their care. The purpose of the new hearing notice is to better engage foster parents and encourage their participation in court hearings. The new notice was developed as a result of a 2016 federal audit called the Children and Family Services Review (CFSR). The audit requires that the court improve on engagement of foster parents in the court process to increase their participation at hearings.

On the notice, you will find instructions for how to participate in the hearing. When you arrive in the courtroom, you will need to tell the Assistant County Attorney that you are present so they can inform the judge. The judge may then call on you during the hearing to share information about the child(ren) in your care.

Foster parents are not required to attend court hearings. Your participation is strongly encouraged, however, as your feedback on how the foster child is doing physically, emotionally, educationally, and socially is highly valued and may help the court better understand the child's needs. Contact the child's case manager if you have any questions regarding court hearings or your role in them.

Mindfulness

According to *Psychology Today*: To live mindfully is to live in the moment and reawaken oneself to the present, rather than dwelling on the past or anticipating the future. It is a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.

Individuals with a history of trauma have difficulty being present while reliving the past experiences or fear of potential future risk. These factors cause barriers to learning, sleep, and relationships.

When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we are sending in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future. The benefits can be found to decrease depressive symptoms, anxiety, and stress. To support foster children in practicing mindfulness through their five senses follow these steps:

- **5 Sight:** Identify 5 things you see
- **4 Hear:** Identify 4 things you hear
- **3 Touch:** Identify 3 things you can touch
- **2 Smell:** Identify 2 things you can smell
- **1 Taste:** Identify 1 thing you can taste

Book resources:

- *The Mindful Child* by Susan Kaiser Greenland
- *Fully Present: The Science, Art, and Practice of Mindfulness* by Susan L. Smalley, Ph.D. and Diana Winston
- *Everyday Blessings* by Myla Kabat-Zinn and Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.

Book resource for kids:

Breathe Like a Bear: 30 Mindful Moments for Kids to Feel Calm and Focused Anytime, Anywhere by Kira Willey

Short video:

Train Your Brain to Be Kinder:

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/train_your_brain_to_be_kinder

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Welcome New Child
Providers on page 2*

February 2020

- **Lavada & Michael Brennan,**
Woodbury (Kin)
- **Theresa & David Constantine,**
Cottage Grove (Kin)
- **Melissa & Ken Gangi,**
Cottage Grove (Kin)
- **Carrie & Chris Yates,**
Stillwater (Non-Kin)

Supply Bags for Foster Children

Safe Haven Foster Shoppe is a non-profit organization that provides children in foster care with supply bags at time of placement. Bags are age and gender-specific and can be customized for the specific needs of each child. At a minimum, bags include one outfit, pajamas, socks, underwear/diapers, blanket, toothbrush/toothpaste, hairbrush, shampoo/conditioner, body wash, a book, and a stuffed animal. Bags for infants include items such as bottles and pacifiers, and bags for teens include items such as feminine products for girls. When a child is placed in your home, contact Anita Olson 763-742-7799 to request a placement bag. Safe Haven will personally deliver the bag to your home!

That Discomfort You're Feeling is Grief

Written by Scott Berinato. Originally published by Harvard Business Review on March 23, 2020

Some of the HBR (*Harvard Business Review*) edit staff met virtually the other day — a screen full of faces in a scene becoming more common everywhere. We talked about the content we're commissioning in this harrowing time of a pandemic and how we can help people. But we also talked about how we were feeling. One colleague mentioned that what she felt was grief. Heads nodded in all the panes.

If we can name it, perhaps we can manage it. We turned to David Kessler for ideas on how to do that. Kessler is the world's foremost expert on grief. He co-wrote with Elisabeth Kübler-Ross *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*. His new book adds another stage to the process, *Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief*. Kessler also has worked for a decade in a three-hospital system in Los Angeles. He served on their biohazards team. His volunteer work includes being an LAPD Specialist Reserve for traumatic events as well as having served on the Red Cross's disaster services team. He is the founder of www.grief.com, which has over 5 million visits yearly from 167 countries.

Kessler shared his thoughts on why it's important to acknowledge the grief you may be feeling, how to manage it, and how he believes we will find meaning in it. The conversation is lightly edited for clarity.

HBR: People are feeling any number of things right now. Is it right to call some of what they're feeling grief?

Kessler: Yes, and we're feeling a number of different griefs. We feel the world has changed, and it has. We know this is temporary, but it doesn't feel that way, and we realize things will be different. Just as going to the airport is forever different from how it was before 9/11, things will change and this is the point at which they changed. The loss of normalcy; the fear of economic toll; the loss of connection. This is hitting us and we're grieving. Collectively. We are not used to this kind of collective grief in the air.

You said we're feeling more than one kind of grief?

Yes, we're also feeling anticipatory grief. Anticipatory grief is that feeling we get about what the future holds when we're uncertain. Usually it centers on death. We feel it when someone gets a dire diagnosis or when we have the normal thought that we'll lose a parent someday. Anticipatory grief is also more broadly imagined futures. There is a storm coming. There's something bad out there. With a virus, this kind of grief is so confusing for people. Our primitive mind knows something bad is happening, but you can't see it. This breaks our sense of safety. We're feeling that loss of safety. I don't think we've collectively

lost our sense of general safety like this. Individually or as smaller groups, people have felt this. But all together, this is new. We are grieving on a micro and a macro level.

What can individuals do to manage all this grief?

Understanding the stages of grief is a start. But whenever I talk about the stages of grief, I have to remind people that the stages aren't linear and may not happen in this order. It's not a map but it provides some scaffolding for this unknown world. There's denial, which we say a lot of early on: *This virus won't affect us*. There's anger: *You're making me stay home and taking away my activities*. There's bargaining: *Okay, if I social distance for two weeks everything will be better, right?* There's sadness: *I don't know when this will end*. And finally there's acceptance. *This is happening; I have to figure out how to proceed*.

Acceptance, as you might imagine, is where the power lies. We find control in acceptance. *I can wash my hands. I can keep a safe distance. I can learn how to work virtually*.

When we're feeling grief there's that physical pain. And the racing mind. Are there techniques to deal with that to make it less intense?

Let's go back to anticipatory grief. Unhealthy anticipatory grief is really anxiety, and that's the feeling you're talking about. Our mind begins to show us images. My parents getting sick. We see the worst scenarios. That's our minds being protective. Our goal is not to ignore those images or to try to make them go away — your mind won't let you do that and it can be painful to try and force it. The goal is to **find balance in the things you're thinking**. If you feel the worst image taking shape, make yourself think of the best image. We all get a little sick and the world continues. Not everyone I love dies. Maybe no one does because we're all taking the right steps. Neither scenario should be ignored but neither should dominate either.

Anticipatory grief is the mind going to the future and imagining the worst. To calm yourself, you want to **come into the present**. This will be familiar advice to anyone who has meditated or practiced mindfulness but people are always surprised at how prosaic this can be. You can name five things in the room. There's a computer, a chair, a picture of the dog, an old rug, and a coffee mug. It's that simple. Breathe. Realize that in the present moment, nothing you've anticipated has happened. In this moment, you're okay. You have food. You are not sick. Use your senses and think about what they feel. The desk is hard. The blanket is soft. I can feel the breath coming into my nose. This really will work to dampen some of that pain.

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Child Foster Care Training

DISCLAIMER: In preparation of this newsletter, every effort has been made to offer the most current, correct, and clearly expressed information possible. Nevertheless, inadvertent errors in information may occur. For training information, please check the sponsor listing to be certain of all the details related to the training.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

We understand that during this time when **in-person trainings have been cancelled until further notice**, you may be needing to access more online options to maintain your annual training hours. See our reminders below:

***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.

COMMUNITY TRAININGS

WEBINAR: The Impact of Trauma on Children's Development: What to Know and What You Can Do!

This workshop will help participants understand how early experiences of adversity and trauma can impact brain development, attachment, social-emotional development, and self-regulation. After understanding the different areas of development that are affected, we will consider strategies that parents, teachers, and other care providers can use to support children (and families) who have experienced trauma. We will discuss case examples and share specific tools that participants can take back to their own settings. Participants are welcome to bring questions and situations that they have experienced as examples for group discussion. Finally, we will discuss the impact of secondary traumatic stress on those who work with and care for children with trauma histories and strategies for managing those effects.

Date/Time: Mon., April 13 • 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$30 live webinar + webinar download

Registration: <https://education.mnadopt.org/v2/?c=event&id=1766>

WEBINAR: Sorting It Out: The Parent-Child Relationship and Anxiety

Anxiety: it's everywhere, but where does it come from? Why is it so prevalent and what do we do with it? In our world today, many are focused on how to get rid of anxiety or make it better. By embracing anxiety, we can reduce the need for adaptive behaviors that focus on getting rid of anxiety or relieving the negative feelings. Children cannot change this on their own and need the parent-child relationship to support the change. This workshop will help caregivers deepen their understanding of anxiety and learn how to embrace it for themselves and their child.

Date/Time: Thurs., April 16 • 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$18/person

Registration: <https://education.mnadopt.org/v2/?c=event&id=1750>

WEBINAR: Common Medical Conditions for Adopted or Foster Care Children

This webinar will cover common conditions that can be seen for children who are adopted, both internationally and domestically. It will also review common conditions that can be seen in children who are, or who have had experience in a foster care placement. We will talk about the medical, developmental, and emotional conditions prospective adoptive and foster parents may want to be familiar with as they proceed toward a child placement in their home.

Date/Time: Thurs., April 23 • Noon-1:30 p.m.

Cost: \$30 live webinar + webinar download

Registration: <https://education.mnadopt.org/v2/?c=event&id=1770>

WEBINAR: How to Address Sexual Behaviors in Foster Children & Youth

This webinar will provide caretakers with a context of how to identify and respond to a range of problematic sexual behaviors in children and youth. This will include a developmental context for not only sexual behaviors, but the functioning of the whole child, concrete examples and techniques of how to prevent and effectively deal with problematic sexual behavior, and actual case examples to illustrate the successes and pitfalls when addressing sexual issues in children and youth.

Date/Time: Fri., April 24 • 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$18/person

Registration: <https://education.mnadopt.org/v2/?c=event&id=1774>

WEBINAR: And Then There Was Violence: History, Impact, and Healing Paths for Families

As adoptive and foster parents, we show up with a desire for kids to grow up in safe and nurturing homes. Managing violent and aggressive behaviors that often arise due to historical trauma and attachment disruptions...gets complicated. Join Wendy Wolff and Dr. Rick Delaney for a candid discussion about the complexities of violence. We will wander through the history of violence, identify different types of violence and aggression, and spend most of our time together sharing our experience with violence and the impact it has on our human need for safety and connection. Once we bring our truth forward and

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Visit us on the Washington County website at:

www.co.washington.mn.us/childfostercare

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acknowledge the impact violence has on our homes and bodies, we will explore healing paths that will help us parent with more honesty, compassion, and hope.

Date/Time: Sat., April 25 • 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Cost: \$18/person

Registration: <https://education.mnadopt.org/v2/?c=event&id=1777>

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You can also think about how to **let go of what you can't control**. What your neighbor is doing is out of your control. What is in your control is staying six feet away from them and washing your hands. Focus on that.

Finally, it's a good time to **stock up on compassion**. Everyone will have different levels of fear and grief and it manifests in different ways. A coworker got very snippy with me the other day and I thought, *That's not like this person; that's how they're dealing with this. I'm seeing their fear and anxiety*. So be patient. Think about who someone usually is and not who they seem to be in this moment.

One particularly troubling aspect of this pandemic is the open-endedness of it.

This is a temporary state. It helps to say it. I worked for 10 years in the hospital system. I've been trained for situations like this. I've also studied the 1918 flu pandemic. The precautions we're taking are the right ones. History tells us that. This is survivable. We will survive. This is a time to overprotect but not overreact.

And, I believe we will find meaning in it. I've been honored that Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's family has given me permission to add a sixth stage to grief: Meaning. I had talked to Elisabeth quite a bit about what came after acceptance. I did not want to stop at acceptance when I experienced some personal grief. I wanted meaning in those darkest hours. And I do believe we find light in those times. Even now people are realizing they can connect through technology. They are not as remote as they thought. They are realizing they can use their phones for long conversations. They're appreciating walks. I believe we will continue to find meaning now and when this is over.

What do you say to someone who's read all this and is still feeling overwhelmed with grief?

Keep trying. There is something powerful about naming this as grief. It helps us feel what's inside of us. So many have told me in the past week, "I'm telling my coworkers I'm having a hard time," or "I cried last night." When you name it, you feel it and it moves through you. Emotions need motion. It's important we acknowledge what we go through. One unfortunate byproduct of the self-help movement is we're the first generation to have feelings about our feelings. We tell ourselves things like, *I feel sad, but I shouldn't feel that; other people have it worse*. We can — we should — stop at the first feeling. *I feel sad. Let me go for five minutes to feel sad*. Your work is to feel your sadness and fear and anger whether or not someone else is feeling something. Fighting it doesn't help because your body is producing the feeling. If we allow the feelings to happen, they'll happen in an orderly way, and it empowers us. Then we're not victims.

In an orderly way?

Yes. Sometimes we try not to feel what we're feeling because we have this image of a "gang of feelings." If I feel sad and let that in, it'll never go away. The gang of bad feelings will overrun me. The truth is a feeling that moves through us. We feel it and it goes and then we go to the next feeling. There's no gang out to get us. It's absurd to think we shouldn't feel grief right now. Let yourself feel the grief and keep going.