



Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
May 2011



Foster Parents and Social Workers: Allies and Advocates for Youth in Care By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin/ARW/FCARC

Foster parents and social workers provide essential and critical roles in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of the children who are entrusted in their care and supervision.

By working together; as allies and advocates for youth in care, foster parents and social workers will be able to effectively identify, address and successfully fulfill the needs of children in care.

Tom Eckels, social worker with the Wood County Department of Social Services, shares his perspective on the importance of foster parents and social workers uniting together to ensure that the best interests of children in care are being met:

- **Develop and maintain a mutually respectful and cooperative working relationship with one another.** Youth in care rely on their foster parents and social workers, to form a partnership in order to ensure that their needs are being addressed, assessed and met.

- **Establish open and consistent lines of communication.** Just as communication is important for maintaining all healthy relationships, it is essential for meeting the needs of children in care. Communication between foster parents and social workers is vital, and by establishing open lines of communication, potential misunderstandings and misinterpretations will be avoided.



Social workers need to receive feedback from foster parents on a consistent and continual basis. Foster parents should **never** feel that what they have to say is not important, relevant, etc. This information and input is **always** valuable and appreciated.

Conversely, social workers have the responsibility of sharing information regarding a child who is in need of placement, but that information is not always available to the social worker.

For example, when an emergency placement occurs, the social worker is not always able to obtain all of the information at that time, due to many factors: time constraints, lack of the parents willingness to share information, not being able to find the key people during the emergency. However, it is imperative to share information, feedback, and input with one another throughout the course of the child's placement in care.

- **Comply with the guidelines that are outlined in the case plan.** Foster parents have a natural advocacy role in all areas and as a result, they need to fully consider the goals and objectives outlined in the case plan throughout their advocacy efforts. Again, open communication is essential to ensuring the ultimate success of the case plan. Be willing to share your opinions and suggestions with the social worker.

- **Work effectively with birth parents and extended family members.** In foster care, the goal is to reunite children with their family when it is deemed appropriate and in the best interest of the child. Therefore, the child's family plays and integral role throughout the placement.



Teach and model positive parenting skills to the birth parent(s) by being supportive, consistent, respectful, and flexible regarding their child. Family interactions are a priority; unless deemed otherwise by the court.

- **Confidentiality.** Keep information about your child/youth in care and their families confidential at all times. Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 48—Children's Code and Chapter 938 - Juvenile Code, and "Rules for Licensing Foster Homes" prohibit the sharing of confidential case information with unauthorized people. If you have additional questions regarding confidentiality issues, we encourage you to talk with your foster care coordinator.



- **Collaborate with community groups, community agencies and local and state resources** to provide the child and his or her family with assistance and support. Community groups and organizations are valuable resources for yourself, your child and your child's family. Consult with your child/youth's social worker about what opportunities would be available and appropriate.



- **Seek out guidance and training opportunities** through local and state foster and adoption support groups, associations and resource centers. Local and state associations provide guidance, support, training and mentoring/peer network support opportunities and are highly recommended resources.

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Pre-Placement Training for Prospective Foster Parents

Starting in March 2011 Prospective Foster Parents need to do Part 1 of the training on the following website:

<http://www.wcwt.wisc.edu/foster-parent-training>

We will then meet to discuss the learning points and to answer your questions.

Thursday, May 19, 2011

6-9 PM

Thursday, June 20, 2011

6-9 PM

All Classes are held in the Brookfield Room (G137) in the Human Services Center located at 500 Riverview Avenue.

Please enter the building at door 6. Call Shari Rather at (262)548-7267 to register.



Jesse's Corner

Jesus Mireles
Manager of the Children and
Family Division

May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month and I would like to thank all of our foster parents for their time and commitment to the children of Waukesha County.

In the past month, I had several opportunities to meet and interact with others that are invested in the safety, health and well-being of the children and families we serve. In late March, St. Aemilian-Lakeside and its subsidiaries - Integrated Family Services and Capitol West Academy - held a daylong symposium called **Creating a Trauma Informed Community**. The event focused on how the child welfare system serves vulnerable children and families, most of whom have been affected by trauma such as abuse and neglect and how that impacts health, behavior and ultimately the community. Internationally known experts Dr. Robert Anda and Dr. Bruce Perry discussed their research, which shows how trauma physically and behaviorally affects individuals – from acting-out behavior to shortened life spans due to poor health – and how therapeutic techniques based in neuroscience can mitigate these effects and create dramatic changes in people's lives.

As many of you are aware, for the past year our Department has lead this discussion in our community. In collaboration with St. Aemilian-Lakeside, we have created a committee called Trauma Informed Care Partnership of Waukesha County. We have over fifty (50) community partners and a wide range of stakeholders to learn how to create a more trauma informed community and to improve outcomes for those most in need as well as the society in which we all live. The **National Center for Trauma-Informed Care** describes a trauma sensitive environment as "an environment that is intended to be more supportive, comprehensively integrated, and empowering for trauma survivors." Our committee is interested in creating a more sensitive and supportive environment where we can work more effectively with children and families that have struggled with trauma. Throughout the past year, we have asked questions such as, How do we make sense of the vast information about trauma and trauma informed care that is out there? How do we incorporate the new research, treatments, into our existing practices? In an attempt to answer these questions, the Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services has teamed with community partners including: St. Aemilian-Lakeside, La Casa de Esperanza, Parents Place, Waukesha County/Lutheran Social Services (LSS) Birth to Three, CARE Center, Lad Lake, Family Services of Waukesha, and others to begin to answer these questions. The committee's charge: **"Be agents of hope and inspiration that will provide information and support through training and a forum for sharing information regarding trauma while building a team of community partners."**

In addition, to this committee, Lisa Roberts, Permanency Services Supervisor and I participate in the Trauma and Child Maltreatment Prevention Committee sponsored by the **Wisconsin Children's Trust Fund**. We are pleased to join this committee to share ideas on how to incorporate the work of Dr. Perry and Dr. Anda in the area of prevention. We hope to increase our knowledge and work with our community partners in preventing children from experiencing adverse childhood experiences. I think working statewide and locally will enhance our knowledge and ability to implement changes to become a more trauma informed community.

The second opportunity I had was to participate in the planning for a special program titled **Journey Home**. This program is designed to provide an experiential trip, through the eyes of children in need of permanency and safety in their lives. As many of you know, children come into the foster care system due to abuse and neglect. The role of the child welfare system is to help families become safe and stable, or to find other permanent solutions that enable children to grow and become productive adults. We invited some of our social workers, legal system experts, medical professionals and the foster/adoptive families to share their experience and discuss their roles in child welfare. Participants will get on a bus and travel throughout the County, getting a first-hand look at the programs and providers available to children in Waukesha County, while providing information to them about the process from investigating a neglect/abuse referral through achieving permanency. In collaboration with Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Jockey International®, and St. Aemilian-Lakeside, we are inviting businesses, politicians and organizations to join us on this journey so we can work together to make better families, and employees and, ultimately, a brighter future for Waukesha County. I look forward to participating in our **Journey Home** and updating you in the next "Jesse's Corner".

Training Offered By Waukesha County

Parent Café

May 17, 2011

Time: 5:30 to 8:30 PM

Location: Center for Excellence
N4W22000 Bluemound Rd
Waukesha



We provide FREE dinner and childcare.

Sponsored by: Waukesha County Health and Human Services & Waukesha Head Start

To register for childcare, RSVP, or for questions call, 262-548-8080.

Just a reminder that attending a Parent Café counts as 2 hours of ongoing training.

Parent Café Host Training

June 16, 2011

5:45 to 8:45 PM

Center for Excellence

N4W22000 Bluemound Road

Waukesha

Child Care and a light dinner will be provided.

Training

Parents Place Programs

262-549-5575

www.ppacinc.org

Prices for some classes may apply. Call 262-549-5575 to register. Free pre-registered childcare is available while attending most classes. Space is limited.

Love and Logic®

Mondays, May 2 - 23, 2011

5:30 - 7:30 PM

Co-Creative Discipline: Teaching Children to Cooperate

Tuesdays, May 3 and May 10, 2011

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Secrets to Good Communication

Tuesdays, May 17 and May 24, 2011

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

New Ideas for Parenting Children & Adolescence with ADHD/ADD

Wednesdays, May 18 and May 25, 2011

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Waukesha County Foster Parent Annual Meeting and Potluck

May 12, 2011

5:15 PM to ?

Elmbrook Church

777 South Barker Road in Brookfield

Come and learn about the new

CANS Assessment Tool

Updates in the World of Foster Care

Appreciation Event

Staff Changes - Meet the two new social workers

Socialize with other foster parents

Dinner will begin at 5:15 PM

Meeting will begin at 6:15 PM

3 hours of ongoing training credit will be given to those who attend.

Foster Care - It's A Different World

By Jo Ann Wentzel

Families are challenging today. When you have a traditional number of kids it is difficult, when you have additional kids, more than the average home, and challenging kids such as in foster care, the world you live in is a different place. Thinking about the fact that foster parents open up their homes to strangers and immediately make family members of them is something that the average family doesn't do. Your world is very unlike that of your non-fostering neighbors.

Large families are familiar with some of the problems involved with caring for a whole mob of kids. Everything you do is on a large scale - cooking, shopping, laundry, school events, doctors, illnesses and meetings. I think they have some idea of what life as a foster parent is like. But, foster parents have all this and then add the stress of a variety of behavioral problems, learning disabilities and kids just trying to push the envelope—and lots of these kids. Family dinners look like Roman feasts with all the dishes.

A parent in a melded family resulting from several marriages and each spouse bringing their own children to the family have some idea of what the family dynamics are for a foster family. But as foster parents you have a whole array of personalities that you are trying to make into a unit to function as a family. The numbers and look of the family change constantly as kids come and go. That is what makes your situation so unusual.

Most families have problems and crisis occasionally; a foster family lives it 24/7. There is usually at least one child among your brood who thinks it is his job to keep you in a constant state of anxiety. You wonder if the oldest one is doing drugs. You may worry the middle one has a very strong crush on an older girl. The next two are both experiencing school problems and one has been thrown off the bus for 'acting out'. The smallest one is not responding well to love and attention. You believe she isn't bonding with you and your husband. And those are just the beginning since problems can change hourly and new kids can arrive with their own set of problems. Older kids can move out on their own, or get put into another facility. The face of the family constantly changes.

In many regular homes, where kids are doing fine, rules established, and life somewhat normal, parent's day ends at a reasonable bedtime and begins at breakfast. Not so for the foster parent who needs to do a bed check, or wait up for kids with later curfews, or do all those things the too-short day didn't include. Maybe a new crisis breaks out or you have a suicidal teen or one that is simply too upset to sleep, your day lengthens. Maybe someone just needs to bear their soul or have finally become ready to make an important revelation. Whatever the reason, your job is not a 9-5 one.

Foster parents must know so many things to get through one day, that your world barely resembles that of most parents. You need to have more than a working knowledge of drugs. A foster parent needs to know the signs of abuse. There is a need to understand reverse psychology and the concepts of reinforcement and re-direction. You need to be great at logistics since you must be everywhere at once and also learning how to stretch a dollar or a day will add to your value.

As foster parents we must display more patience and control than other parents, because kids coming into our homes are not well-behaved usually, they are not in-control themselves, and they do not want to be there sometimes. Raising kids requires patience no matter what kind of parent you are, but a foster parent cannot lose it without fear of repercussions and possibly losing that child. They are and must always be the professionals.

The chaos and craziness that is the norm for a foster parent is hard to understand for most people. The question of why you do this along with the usual statement, "I could never do what you do" lets foster parents know they are not exactly like average people. The fact that you like it and won't do anything else convinces the world you are different. This fact means that friends must come from the ranks of other 'crazy' people just like you - namely foster parents.

So when your world seems like it is from another planet and you feel like you live on the fringe of society, when your day resembles nothing like your parents and you look in the mirror and do not recognize that wild eyed parent, you know, it is true. You live in a different world. But most times it is a wonderful world - rewarding and interesting and you do make a difference.

Congratulations for being you and able to handle those outer limits.



Books on the Nightstand

By: Becky Burmester

A book store regularly e-mails me a survey. The questions are an attempt to learn what influences my purchasing decisions. I frequently select books based on the information on the cover. Pictures don't matter much to me, but words are important.

The Connected Child by Karyn Puvion, Ph.D., David Cross, Ph.D. and Wendy Lyons Sunshine has a cover that captured my interest. A bright yellow circle promises to "Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family."

After a solid week of fruitless nagging about meals, homework, etc. with my adopted 7-year-old son, this sounded like just what I needed. Below the title the book continues selling itself, indicating it is for parents who have welcomed children from other countries and cultures, from troubled backgrounds, and with special behavioral or emotional needs.

I read this and think: I need this book NOW! My family life could improve - hope rises.

I am nearly always at the front of the line for more training concerning parenting. I do not believe that I will ever have too much understanding of issues in parenting, nor do I believe that there is a single way to parent all children. There are approaches that work better with some children than with others.

The Connected Child arrived at my house at a time when I was near the end of my rope. I was repeating the same ineffective approaches to dealing with my son all of the time. They did not work on Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday, but Thursday found me trying the same old things (loss of privileges, time outs, and some ineffective ranting and raving). We needed help and we needed it NOW!

On the book jacket Carol Kranowitz (author of *The Out-of-Sync Child*) calls *The Connected Child* "a must read for all families striving to correct and connect with their children." I think, I have to read this book, and quickly!

The book is written in a non-technical, chatty style. I got enthused early on and read straight through from cover to cover. This book is about parent child interactions in their entirety, with a table of contents that makes it easy to find the particular parenting technique you are interested in.

I began implementing some changes in my parenting as I was reading the book. Eye contact moved to the front burner. Shawn and I had some difficulties making eye contact every time. I cringed as I realized just how far our relationship had to go.

I began to stop and take three deep breaths before reacting. By the end of the first day, the kids were paying much more attention to this than I ever imagined. I accidentally took four deep breaths rather than the three I had been taking and they told me, "Hey, that's four breaths!" I was calmer and they were more responsive.

This is a book I highly recommend. The price is \$16.95 for a paperback copy. The techniques I have tried with my 5 and 7 year old became effective once they realized this is how I will respond now. I don't successfully follow through every time, but I am getting better and my family is happier most of the time.

Thank You!

Over 600 pairs of socks were collected by

Hillcrest School in Waukesha

at their annual sock hop
and are now available to foster families.

Rock Your Socks Off!

Thank you to everyone who participated.

Champions of Trauma Informed Care Jesse Mireles and Lisa Roberts

Jesús (Jesse) Mireles and Lisa Roberts work for the Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services. He is the Children and Family Division Human Services Manager and she is the Permanency Services Unit Supervisor. Jesse is a Racine native who has a degree in sociology and more than 30 years of experience in social work, with almost 25 of those in management. He has a background in community advocacy and has worked with numerous community partners including the Waukesha County Juvenile Court, school districts, community-based organizations, other counties, tribes and the State of Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Lisa's degrees are in psychology, and she has been a licensed professional counselor for more than 15 years. In 1997, she began her work at Waukesha County as a crisis therapist in the out patient mental health clinic, later coordinating the Children's Mental Health Outreach Program. For the past eight years, she has been in her current position, and she continues to provide after hours on-call crisis therapy services through the Mental Health Association in Waukesha County on the weekends.

Jesse and Lisa are the driving force behind an endeavor called the Trauma Informed Care Partnership of Waukesha County. The group now includes more than 50 different public and private organizations that employ trauma informed care in their work. Participants meet bimonthly to share information, support and training opportunities, with a goal of creating a trauma informed system of care. As this unique and exciting group moves forward, more people are coming to the table to learn more about trauma informed care, network, and help foster a philosophical and perspective shift on its overall value to individuals, families and to the community.



Greetings Foster Parents:

It is that time of year that I have Milwaukee Brewer Tickets available. I have tickets for the following games:



- May 10, 2011 against the San Diego Padres at 7:10 PM
- May 23, 2011 against the San Diego Padres at 7:10 PM
- May 24, 2011 against the Washington Nationals at 7:10 PM
- May 25, 2011 against the Washington Nationals at 12:10 PM

Please email me if you are interested in a game and the number of tickets you need and I will forward you the tickets. Just remember you need to use the tickets because the Brewers do keep track of the empty seats.

Hope to see you at the game,

Shari

A Very Special Thank You

to

Oakwood Church of Hartland

for their generous donation of clothing racks and organizing of our Clothing Closet.

Contact Numbers:

Waukesha H & HS
262-548-7212

Children's Mental Health Outreach
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911
Family Emergency: 211

Foster Parent Mentor

Jen Barcus..... 262-542-2926
Judy David..... 414-461-5403
David Mersfelder 262-542-2926
Nikki Mertens..... 262-246-6180

Lisa Roberts, Supervisor
262-548-7271

Mary Alice Grosser, Supervisor
Relative Licensing
262-548-7272

Shari Rather, Foster Care
Coordinator
262-548-7267

Libby Sinclair
Relative Licensing
262-548-7277

March 2011 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
40 Children

Treatment Foster Care:
17 Children

Group Homes:
5 Children

Residential Care Facilities:
11 Children

Relative Placements:
49 Children

Relative Foster Homes:
80 Homes

Regular Foster Homes:
115 Homes

Total Homes Assisting Other
Counties
17 Homes

For Allegations of Abuse and
Neglect Support, please call:

FASPP

Norma Schoenberg
920-922-9627

Social Workers:

Jennifer Adler 262-548-7265

Bob Alioto 262-548-7262

Angie Briggs 262-548-7275

Kate Flansburg 262-896-6857

Maria Maurer 262-548-7345

Susan Peck 262-548-7348

Janis Ramos 262-896-8069

Michael Reed 262-548-7347

Cindie Remshek 262-548-7639

Greg Rewolinski 262-548-7270

Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson 262-548-7273

Mark Sasso 262-548-7346

Linda Senger 262-548-7698

Deanna Stevlingson . 262-896-8570

Rick Wimmer 262-548-7359

We Need You!

For more information about becoming a foster parent in Waukesha County, please contact Shari Rather at:

srather@waukeshacounty.gov

262-548-7267

Or visit our website at www.waukeshacounty.gov
And follow the links to foster care.

