



# Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County  
Health & Human Services  
May 2012



## Respecting the Confidentiality of Children in Care and their Families By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin - ARW/FCARC

Imagine you are standing in line at a grocery store and a stranger asks you a question about one of the children in your care. Before you can answer, think about how you would feel if a friend told a stranger something personal about you or your family.

We all deserve privacy, even in these days of various social media. (For more about that, see our tipsheet, [The 411 on Social Media, Networking and Texting!](#))

To maintain confidentiality, Wisconsin has laws to protect the private information of children and families involved in the child welfare system. These laws pertain to foster parents and specify what can and cannot be said, as well as what the consequences could be if confidentiality is broken.

Respecting confidentiality helps build relationships with the child and child's birth family by showing respect for all of the family members and their personal stories.

### What are Some of the Key Points?

- Foster parents cannot provide information to people who are not authorized to receive it. If you have any questions about if a person has the authority to receive the information or how to answer a particular question, refer the person to the child's case worker.
- Foster children cannot be photographed or interviewed by the media without permission from their parents or legal guardian. (Foster parents are *not* the legal guardians, but kids in care are placed with foster families by a legal court order.)
- Foster parents cannot speak to media about children placed in their home.
- If there's no need to specify that a child is in the foster care system when introducing him or her, don't identify him as such.

For example, if you're at a church or social event and shaking hands with greeters, you can simply say, "Hi I'm Chris Smith and these are my kids, Ty, Rose, and Jay."

But if you're meeting a doctor or dentist for the first time, it might be helpful for you to let him or her know that you might not know the full history of the children in your care because they're in foster care.

### What Can I Say?

There will be many occasions when someone asks you a question about or about your children in care and the foster care system. Many people are curious about foster care, especially children.

Instead of talking about your situation, specifically, try sharing something about why you became a foster parent.

Or you can educate others about foster care, by telling them an interesting fact about foster care in the United States - such as 12 million people have grown up in foster families.

A good rule is to keep conversations about foster kids general and positive. Talk about activities the children in your home are involved in or talk about some of the current issues with the child welfare system in general.

If someone asks you something particularly uncomfortable, you can always just walk away, change the subject, ignore the question or tell the person that it's confidential and you can't answer those questions.

### Here Are Some Other Guidelines You Might Find Helpful

- Introduce the children in your home - but by first name only.
- Don't mention the child's birth parents' names or reasons why a

child is in care. Most experienced families find a clever way to change the subject or focus on something else about the child. It's better to talk generally why you are a foster parent or why kids come into care.

- Keep school information, medical files, treatment plans, and referral materials in a locked cabinet.
- Promote self esteem in the child, by talking about interests and strengths, saying, "This is Rose and she likes to play soccer and help me cook. She says she doesn't like school, but her teachers speak highly of her."
- Don't post pictures and stories of children in care on Facebook and other sites, without permission of their parents or legal guardians. It's a good idea to check with the social worker, too.
- Gently redirect your children if they start to disclose too much information.
- Teach birth, adoptive and foster children in your home to also follow confidentiality guidelines. It's natural for siblings to fight dirty when they're mad, but stress that it's never okay for them to share anyone else's personal information.

Setting boundaries around who you talk to and what you talk about with others regarding your foster children will help to maintain confidentiality. It also helps to think about these situations before they arise.

### How Does Confidentiality Impact You?

You may not think that maintaining confidentiality will impact you one way or the other. However, it can greatly impact your license and your current placements. The following are some things that could happen to you - and have happened to other families in Wisconsin - after breaching confidentiality.

- Your foster child may be removed from your care.
- Your family may have to comply with a corrective action plan to maintain your license.
- Your placing agency (your county or the private agency you are licensed by) may revoke your foster license, with the potential to not have one issued in the future.
- You open yourself and your agency up to a lawsuit.

Continued on Page 3

**Prospective Foster Parents need to do Part 1 of the training on the following website:**  
<http://www.wcwts.wisc.edu/foster-parent-training>  
**We will then meet to discuss the learning points and to answer your questions.**

**Thursday,  
June 14, 2012  
6 - 8 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.**



## Lisa's Corner

Lisa Roberts  
Manager of the Children and  
Family Division

We successfully completed our QSR – Quality Service Review – the week of March 19 – 22 with the final wrap up, review meeting on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. I would like to start by thanking everyone who participated in the review in any way. Reviews were done on 12 individual cases including interviews with all people involved in the case. Additionally, many focus groups were conducted to obtain valuable feedback from all of our various partners. The preliminary results of the review reflect the OUTSTANDING work being done by our staff. It clearly portrayed the MANY strengths in our practice including engaging, teaming, planning, trauma informed care, and many others. The review also helped to clarify the challenges we face moving forward including the staggering prevalence of trauma, substance abuse, mental illness and incarceration in the parents we serve. This will help us focus our practice and identify ways to overcome these barriers in the future. Also, to note, the reviewers were SO impressed with the quality of our foster parents. They acknowledged the involvement, investment and commitment by our foster parents as well as the exceptional allegiance to not only the child but the whole family as reflected in the dedication to shared parenting. I can't tell you how proud I am to be a part of this exceptional system. Thank you all for the part you play in helping Waukesha be the best it can be!

Since this Foster Care issue is on confidentiality, I wanted to comment briefly on the importance of this topic. As you all know, I am a proud parent of two beautiful girls who I LOVE to take pictures of and show off to the world! I get it! However, no matter how cute and adorable your foster children are...no matter how proud you are of them... or how much you want to sing their praises to the world... they are still foster children and their information MUST remain confidential. In this day of social media and electronic gadgetry, maintaining confidentiality can be very difficult. I encourage you to make this an ongoing discussion with your social worker and licenser to ensure your compliance.

And, while we are talking about social media...I encourage all of you to attend one of the various trainings regarding protecting our kids in the social media world. One session will be held here at the Waukesha County DHHS building on May 1<sup>st</sup> from 6:00 to 9:00 and the other will be through the Waukesha School District on May 23. Other trainings to note, are the Parent Café which will be May 17<sup>th</sup> at the Center for Excellence and the Annual Foster Parent Potluck Meeting held May 9 from 5:30 to 8:30 at the Center for Excellence. All foster parents MUST complete 10 hours of ongoing training every year to maintain their license. These are GREAT opportunities to meet that requirement as well as learn new approaches and new modifications. Things are ALWAYS changing in the Child Protective Services world and active involvement on your part will help keep you up to speed on those changes that affect you! For example, were you aware that foster parents now have the authority to sign for school activities? Yes...this has been a recent change in legislation! Please make sure you attend the Foster Parent Annual Potluck to hear more valuable information.

Thanks to all who shared their parenting stories with me after my last article...I LOVE to hear from you...email me at any time...  
[roberts@waukeshacounty.gov](mailto:roberts@waukeshacounty.gov). To close, I want to make sure I HONOR all the mother's out there and wish you a VERY HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY! I am often inspired by quotes and thought this one was perfect...

**The noblest calling in the world is that of mother. Motherhood is the most beautiful of all arts, the greatest of all professions. She who can paint a masterpiece or who can write a book that will influence millions deserves the plaudits and admiration of mankind; but she who rears successfully a family of healthy, beautiful sons and daughters whose immortal souls will be exerting an influence throughout the ages long after paintings shall have faded, and books and statues shall have been destroyed, deserves the highest honor that man can give.-David O. McKay**

Also May is Foster Care Month...a special thank you to all of you who open your hearts and homes to children in need.

Lisa



## Training Offered By Waukesha County

**Parent Café**  
May 17, 2012  
5:30 PM  
**Center for Excellence**  
N4W22000 Bluemound Road  
Waukesha  
To register for childcare, RSVP or for questions call, 262-548-8080.



### Training

**The Dark Side of Digital Technology:  
The Internet, Cell Phones and Social Media**  
May 1, 2012  
6:00 - 9:00 PM  
**Cost: \$20 per person for webinar**  
**Free in person at Waukesha County Human Services Building**

**Waukesha County Human Services Building**  
500 Riverview Avenue  
Waukesha, WI 53188  
Register with Shari Rather at 262-548-7267 if you are attending the in person free seminar at Waukesha County Human Services Center  
Register online at: <http://socialmedia-youth.eventbrite.com> for Webinar

**Caregiver Health: Finding the Balance in Life**  
May 8, 2012  
6:00 - 8:00 PM  
**Cost: \$15 per person**  
In person or via webinar  
**ARW**  
6682 W. Greenfield Ave., Suite 310  
Milwaukee, WI 53124  
Register online at: <http://caregiverhealth2012.eventbrite.com/>

**Attachment in Infant Adoption**  
May 31, 2012  
6:00 - 8:00 PM  
**Cost: \$15 per person**  
Webinar or in person at:  
**Catholic Charities - Madison**  
30 S. Franklin Street  
Madison, WI 53703  
Register online at: <http://infantattachment.eventbrite.com/>

**Parents Place Programs**  
262-549-5575  
[www.ppacinc.org](http://www.ppacinc.org)

**Understanding & Accepting My Child With Autism Spectrum Disorder**  
Wednesday, May 16  
6:00 - 7:30 PM

**Parenting During Crisis**  
Monday, May 14  
5:30 - 7:00 PM

**Uncontrolled Child**  
Tuesdays, May 15 - June 5  
6:00 - 7:30 PM

**Southern Partnership Presents**  
**Trauma Informed Care & Parenting**  
June 14, 2012 from 10:00 AM to Noon  
~or~  
June 21, 2012 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM  
**Dr. Mary Hess**  
Learn how and why trauma affects children's behavior and offer suggestions on how to help them calm themselves and process their reactions.  
**Retzer Nature Center**  
W284 S1530 Madison St., Waukesha, WI  
Please RSVP to Shari  
Shari Rather 262-548-7267

## Respecting the Confidentiality of Children in Care & their Families Continued from Page 1

While it's natural to want to share stories and experiences with friends and family, one of your responsibilities as a foster parent is to not divulge specific and identifying information about your foster children and their birth families.

The good news is that once your relatives and people in the community get to know your kids for who they are, they'll stop asking about their past and instead you'll be sharing the stories that all of us parents share: the time your child missed the bus and had to walk the three miles to school, the time he got the lead in the school play, the vacations you took together as a family.

In addition to the information you received about confidentiality throughout the licensing process, there are also some good resources on our website, including:

- *The Foster Parent Handbook* at: [www.wifostercareandadoption.org/dnav/206/page.htm](http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/dnav/206/page.htm)
- *The LaCrosse County's Confidentiality Foster Parents Guide: Putting the Pieces Together* at: [www.wifostercareandadoption.org/library/377/confidentiality august 2007.doc](http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/library/377/confidentiality%20august%202007.doc)

If you have any questions regarding confidentiality and foster care please contact your social worker or call us at 800-762-8063.

© 2011 Adoption Resources of Wisconsin ARWFCARC  
Used with permission from Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Inc.  
<http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org>

### Internet Safety Tips for Caregivers By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin ARW/FCARC

The internet offers many opportunities for adults and children to learn, and the Internet has also dramatically changed how we communicate.

Unfortunately, the Internet is also a place where children and adults can be seriously victimized by various kinds of predators. Children and adults can be exposed to: cyber-bullying, inappropriate content, and loss of privacy.

In order to effectively protect our children, parents need to know the dangerous aspects of the Internet, including taking the necessary steps to promote Internet safety for your family.

The Crimes Against Children Research Center found that one in five youth using the Internet received online sexual solicitations. We need to encourage our children to come to us when something inappropriate happens.

Following are some tips that may be helpful for you and your children.

#### Establishing Family Ground Rules

Families have established house rules for a multitude of behaviors and expectations, but sometimes families neglect to address the importance of developing clear and consistent rules regarding computer usage.

Families can post a written *Family Internet Agreement* that should:

- Set clear boundaries on prohibiting the posting or sharing of personal identifying information online; such as names, pictures, telephone numbers, addressees, passwords, or credit card numbers. This includes *not* letting your child's last name appear on the "from" line and some foster parents don't allow their child to have even his or her first name as part of the email address. Absolutely do *not* let your child have an email address such as: Jane.Doe2011@email.com
- Designate the amount of time that each child can be online.
- Specify time frames when each child can be online.
- Give a general outline of which sites are appropriate (i.e. Disney, Ask Jeeves, Wikipedia, etc.) and which sites are forbidden (i.e. all sites that require the viewer to be 18 or older).
- Establish specific Internet ground rules of what is acceptable and appropriate behavior.
- Specify who the child should tell if he or she receives any threatening material.
- Prohibit opening of e-mails or attachments from an unknown person.
- Depending on the team members' input, consider making one of the rules be that the foster parent (and others as necessary) be allowed to know the password of the account and monitor mail periodically. Stress that the child has a right to absolute privacy with "snail mail," but that the Internet is a riskier place.

- Share this Internet agreement with other members of the child's team (birth family, social worker, school staff, respite providers, etc.).

#### Educate:

- Become familiar with the Internet. This is important whether or not you have a computer in your house because computers are easily accessible to your children.
- If need be, enroll in a computer class or consult with friends, neighbors, or colleagues.
- Set up a time to talk with your children and have them teach you what they already know. You're likely to learn something new, and it helps build your child's self esteem to teach you something.



**Communicate:** Talk openly about the dangers that exist on the Internet and encourage to be responsible.

**Supervise:** By placing your computer in a central and visible location, such as a living room instead of a bedroom, you will be able to closely and consistently monitor Internet use. Make sure that the monitor is facing in such a way that people who are passing by can view it easily. This has an added benefit of the kids knowing that you're going to safe sites when you're at the computer, as well.



**Explore Together:** Learn from one another by utilizing the Internet as a teaching tool and educational resource. While the Internet can be dangerous, it is also an invaluable resource of opportunities to learn and grow together.

#### Resources

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has developed a parent's guide to Internet safety: <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm>

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's website is the Nation's Resource Center for child protection: <http://www.missingkids.com>

The Children's Partnership website has many resources including a PowerPoint presentation that you can download for free as well as a free downloadable resource booklet entitled: The Parents' guide to the Information Superhighway: Rules and Tools for Families Online: <http://www.childrenspartnership.org>

NetSmartz provides resources for parents and guardians, educators, law enforcement, teens and kids and in addition, there is a Spanish online resource: <http://www.netsmartz.org>

i-SAFE.org incorporates classroom curriculum with dynamic community outreach to empower students, teachers, parents, law enforcement, and concerned adults to make the Internet a safer place: <http://www.i-SAFE.org>

SafeKids.com provides tips and resources for families, youth and adults about safely navigating and exploring the Internet and in addition, they include an Online Safety Quiz: <http://www.safekids.com>

Be Safe Online provides advice and information about Internet safety for parents and teachers, plus opportunities to discuss problems and share solutions: <http://www.besafeonline.org>

GetNetWise is a public service created by Internet industry corporations and public interest groups with the goal of having "Internet users are only "one click away" from the resources they need to make informed decision about their and their family's use of the Internet." <http://www.getnetwise.org>

#### Filters Software

Parent can elect to purchase filter software that will block pornography, hate sites, questionable chat rooms, as well as other dangers on the Internet. The following are a few suggestions. <http://www.bsecure.com>  
<http://www.netnanny.com>

# May 2012 Foster Parent Spotlight

## Rebecca Hollister



Rebecca Hollister is the new Supervisor for the Permanency Services Unit at Waukesha County Health and Human Services. Rebecca graduated from the UW La-Crosse with a Bachelor's of Science in Psychology. She then went on to Capella University to get her Masters in Social Work and Community Service. Before starting her position

here in January 2012, she worked in the Ongoing Child Welfare Program for Integrated Family Services, a subsidiary of St. Aemilian-Lakeside, working in partnership with the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare.

When asked as to what in the field of Social Work brings her the most joy is seeing the change that families go through. Change is hard work and some people take that for granted. Being able to reunify families, help children achieve permanence, and building relationships with clients is an important and joyful part of social work.

When asked what she enjoys most about working at Waukesha County, she said the people. Everyone was very welcoming. She also enjoys the ability to be innovative and trendsetting in the field. Rebecca's priority as the Unit Supervisor is to help develop others professionally. Doing so she leads by example, and will not ask her co-workers or staff to do anything she would not do herself. She is always willing to help, and her door is always open.

Rebecca stressed that the culture of foster parenting between her previous experiences and Waukesha County is completely different. She enjoys how the foster parents of this county take shared parenting to the next level, and go out of their way to do what they can for the child. She feels they invest themselves as part of a team and do what they can to help the child and family reach permanency. She looks forward to more success stories of Waukesha County's Foster Parents and their interaction with families.



**Save The Date:**  
 July 18, 2012  
 2:00 - 8:00 PM  
 An Afternoon with the  
 Animals  
 Milwaukee County Zoo  
 Sponsored by  
 Jack Safro Toyota



### Adoption Resources of Wisconsin Events

**Foster & Adoptive Parents Rock Dance Party**  
 Friday, May 4, 2012  
 Quaker Steak & Lube, New Berlin, WI  
 7 - 9 PM

**Fourth Annual Homes for Kids Golf Outing**  
 Thursday, August 23, 2012  
 The Bull, Sheboygan Falls, WI  
 Sponsorship opportunities also available

**Contact Information:** Jenna Czaplowski  
 414-475-1246

#### 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  
 David Mersfelder .... 262-542-2926  
 Nikki Mertens..... 262-246-6180

**Rebecca Hollister, 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 2012 Placements

**Regular Foster Care:**  
 35 Children

**Treatment Foster Care:**  
 12 Children

**Group Homes:**  
 2 Children

**Residential Care Facilities:**  
 12 Children

**Relative Placements:**  
 55 Children

**Level 2 Foster Homes:**  
 114 Homes

**Level 1 Foster Homes:**  
 40 Homes

**Total Homes Assisting Other**  
**Counties**  
 16 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

Suzanne Arnold ..... 262-548-7348

Kate Flansburg ..... 262-896-6857

Laura Jahnke ..... 262-548-7359

Maria Maurer ..... 262-548-7345

Susan Peck ..... 262-896-8574

Madeline Prange ..... 262-548-7394

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

#### 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](http://www.waukeshacounty.gov)  
 And follow the links to foster care.

