



# Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County  
Health & Human Services  
July 2012



## Fostering Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin - ARW/FCARC

Fostering a child or youth with special health care needs can be an incredibly challenging and rewarding experience. An experienced Wisconsin foster parent said that one of her greatest joys is seeing a child accomplish something that no one thought was possible.

As a foster parent of a child with special health care needs, you may see a newly acquired skill as being huge in terms of the child's development, whereas others might take it for granted and just expect it.

With the great joys, also come the challenges of trying to learn about each child's specific health care needs and how to best care for those needs.

As a foster parent, you may have nursing staff coming into your home to assist the child with their cares, using specialized medical equipment, and attending numerous medical appointments with various specialists. In essence, you become an advocate and the knowledge hub of information - often keeping the parents, case manager, doctors, teachers, and therapists up to date with critical information.

### Navigating the Medical Health Field

Some newer ideas are "the medical home" and "care notebooks." The medical home is *not* a home at all, but more of a philosophy. It means that the doctors' office provides coordination and comprehensive care for a child with special health care needs.

Your doctor's office will assign a care coordinator, who will work to help coordinate services for the child. Not all doctors offices in Wisconsin have this service yet. For more information on the medical home, see: <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/children/medicalhome/index.htm>.

The idea of a Care Notebook comes directly from the medical home initiative. A care notebook is a notebook of medical information that helps parents maintain an ongoing record of the child's care, services, providers, and notes.

A care notebook will hopefully further increase the team approach in caring for a child's special health care needs and improve communication among all service providers. For more information about care notebooks, see [http://medicalhomeinfo.org/tools/care\\_notebook.html](http://medicalhomeinfo.org/tools/care_notebook.html)

### Strategies for Working with Medical Staff

Even though it's easy to be intimidated by the "professionals," don't be afraid to ask questions. Try to learn how the system works, including learning about the child's team and their roles.

Ask for specifics to be on the agenda, or better yet, you create the agenda and take a lead role in meetings. Try to have someone come with you whose job is only to take notes and be supportive.

Agree on a regular type of communication: phone, e-mail, fax, etc. Email is particularly good (if all are able to use it) because everyone only has to say things once and everyone is all on the same page - literally!

If you find yourself getting frustrated, try to find positive ways to get your point across. You might also repeat information back to make sure you understand and heard things correctly. And ask others to repeat what your perspective is.

### Tips for Being an Effective Advocate

Part of working with medical staff - or any team - is being an effective advocate. You might want to try the following.

- Do your research and learn about the specific issues.

- Prepare ahead of time. Write down questions you want to ask before the meeting.
- Follow up meetings with thank you letters or emails.
- Have the confidence to ask the tough questions.
- Listen to what is being said both verbally and non-verbally at meetings.
- Try and check your personal feelings at the door and focus on sharing information.
- Figure out what the main issue is and then practice telling how it directly affects the child.
- Think of solutions in terms of meeting the needs of the child and solving the issue.
- Know ahead what compromises you are willing to make.
- Ask for additional support if you need it. There are some wonderful support groups and resources available.

### 10 Resources for Fostering Children with Special Health Care Needs

- 1) **CYSHCN** (Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Program)  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/children/>
- 2) Special education services advocacy organizations:
  - **FACETS** (WI Family Assistance Center for Education, Training, & Support)  
<http://www.wifacets.org>
  - **WISPEI** (Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative)  
<http://www.wi-pec.net/WISPEI.htm>
- 3) **Birth to Three**  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/bdds/birthto3/>
- 4) **FCARC** (Foster Children and Adoption Resource Center)  
<http://wifostercareandadoption.org/>
- 5) **Parent to Parent services and Resource Centers**  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/children/resourcecenters/index.htm>
- 6) **WFAPA** (Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association)  
<http://www.wfapa.org/>
- 7) **County Health Departments**  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/LocalHealth/>
- 8) **Wisconsin Department of Health Services**  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/bdds/index.htm>
- 9) **Transition Resources for students with disabilities**  
<http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/transition.html>
- 10) **Childcare and Respite Resources**  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/children/resourcecenters/index.htm>

### Five Language Tips

Another strategy that may help you when working with teams or when trying to educate your friends and families is paying attention to the words you use.

Most of us take language for granted or think that the "politically correct police" are out to get us. But the way we use words says more about us - and others - than we think.

Continued on Page 3



## Lisa's Corner

Lisa Roberts  
Manager of the Children and  
Family Division

Dear Foster Parents,

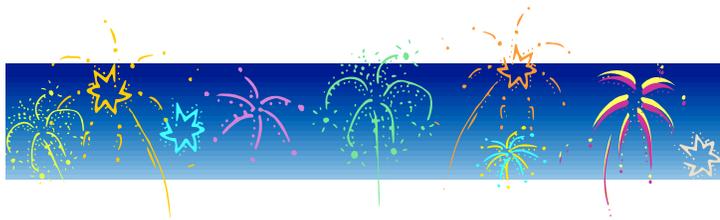
I hope everyone is enjoying this beautiful summer we are having! It's such a great time for our kids to get out, enjoy our wonderful parks and camps, challenge themselves to learn new skills and spend time with friends. I think we sometimes forget the importance and value of "play". I had the opportunity recently to go to a trauma training on "experiential therapy". This clinician talked about the value of rhythmic, repetitive sensory experiences. He discussed how many of the kids in our system didn't have these opportunities. The trauma they experienced resulted in delays of lower brain development. These sensory motor skills help develop those areas of the brain most affected and under-developed due to trauma. He provides sensory motor experiences in nature to face fears and challenge new skills, develop mastery and increase confidence. Kids learn to cooperate, count on each other, push themselves to do more than what they thought they could all while having fun. They encourage families to take time to play together. When kids are safe and relaxed, they open up and give parents those "teaching moments" we are always looking for. So get out there and take a hike or bike ride, go camping, enjoy the many beautiful parks or go to the zoo together.

Talking about the zoo, don't forget about our annual foster parent appreciation event coming up July 18th at the Milwaukee County Zoo. We will have live music from a band of local high school students, great food, our famous face painting artist and our second annual talent show! Make sure all the kids come prepared to showcase their unique skills and abilities. The stage will be theirs! A HUGE thank you to Jack Safro for their ongoing support. Without them this event would not be possible. Thank you also to Shari and her crew for the endless hours of planning, arranging and organizing they do to make this event so special and memorable year after year.

Lastly, I wanted to extend a challenge to each of you to consider what it would take for you to expand your offer to helping children in need to some of our most challenging groups... teenagers and children with special needs. We have lots of families struggling to take care of their autistic, developmentally disabled or physically challenged children. These kids require 24/7 care and as we all know, parents sometimes need a break. Have you considered opening your home and hearts to a special needs child on the weekends...or after school when families need support...or taking in a teenager in need. These are the kids we struggle to find enough support and resources for. If these kids ultimately end up in care, they often are placed hundreds of miles from home and/or in our most expensive placements. Please consider what training and support we could provide you and your family to expand our resources to these children. Let Shari know your thoughts.

Have a great rest of the summer and I look forward to seeing you all at the zoo!

Lisa



## Training Offered By Waukesha County

Parent Café  
July 19, 2012  
5:30 PM  
Center for Excellence  
N4W22000 Bluemound Road  
Waukesha



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

### 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.

#### Uncontrolled Child

Many young children have not learned to control their angry emotions and resort to hitting, biting and throwing things. This course looks at possible motivations for such behaviors and how parents can take steps to control them.

Mondays, July 9 - 30  
6:00 - 7:30 PM

#### Active Parenting

An evidence based curriculum teaching positive discipline and communication techniques to develop courage, responsibility, and character in children.

Tuesdays, July 10 - 24  
6:00 - 7:30 PM

#### Growing Creative and Happy Kids

A love of learning, thinking, creativity and solving problems are important qualities children need to develop. Parents will learn how to model, encourage and nurture these qualities in their children through interactive fun. Parents and children (ages 5 - 12) meet the first hour separately and in a combined group for the last hour to use the information learned by inventing, creating, experimenting and more.

Monday, July 23  
1:00 - 3:00 PM

#### Educational Fieldtrips for Moms and Tots

Born Learning and Parenting the Early Years staff will host monthly fieldtrips

#### Born Learning Trail

(Meet at specified location. Call for directions/information)  
Wednesday, July 11  
9:30 - 11:00 AM

#### Kids Smarts: A Preschool/4K Readiness Program

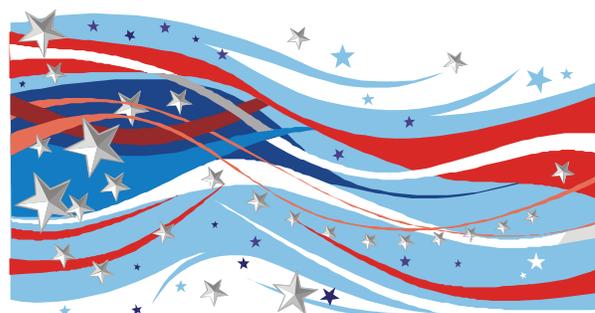
Get your child off to the right start in school. These structured playgroups prepare parents and kids for the preschool or kindergarten experience.

Tuesdays, June 18 & August 1  
10:00 - 11:00 AM

#### General Parenting Support Group

Parenting is one of the toughest jobs there is, but you are not alone. Join with other parents sharing and learning new ideas to make your life less challenging and more positive. Our facilitator will listen and assist in finding the answers for your unique situation.

Tuesdays, July 9 - 23  
5:30 - 6:45 PM



Happy 4th of July!

## Fostering Children and Youth With Special Health Care Needs Continued from Page 1

Here are some points to keep in mind:

- 1) **Be informed.** Use the most current and up-to-date terminology. For example, use disability instead of handicapped.
- 2) **Be positive.** Focus on the child's abilities and only use the diagnosis if necessary.
- 3) **Use "people first" language.** If you need to say the child's diagnosis, start with the child's name first, then the diagnosis. For example, Jon is a child who has autism, not "Jon is an autistic child." And even, "Jon is a child in care." Not "Jon is a foster child."
- 4) **Be respectful.** Only talk about the child's disability if you need to; nobody likes to constantly hear about being different.
- 5) **Be sensitive:** words like "normal," "regular," and "problems" can have a negative connotation. Consider using "typical," "challenges," and "abilities" instead.

One of the greatest things about fostering a child with special health care needs can be that unexpected smile or twinkles from their eyes.

"It's easy to be consumed with caring for specialized medical needs," says a Wisconsin stepmother. "But despite the challenges, these kids are still kids and they want to do the same things that kids do, just on a level that is attainable for them. Take joy in doing the simple things like reading a book or playing a game. It can help you see your children as a child and not as a diagnosis."

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### Autism Spectrum Disorders By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin ARW/FCARC

What are autism spectrum disorder? According to the National Institute of Mental Health, "Autism Spectrum Disorders (also known as Pervasive Developmental Disorders) cause severe and pervasive impairment in thinking, feeling, language, and the ability to relate to others. These disorders are usually first diagnosed in early childhood and range from a severe form, called autistic disorder, through pervasive development disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), and to Asperger's Syndrome." These disorders are "characterized by varying degrees of impairment in communication skills, social interactions, and restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior" (American Psychiatric Association, 2007-10-16).

How common is the occurrence of autism in children?

It is estimated that 3.4 of every 1,000 children who are between 3-to 10-years old has autism. Children who are diagnosed and treated at an early age show significant improvement. However, only 50 percent of children with autism are diagnosed before kindergarten.

**When and how does autism become apparent?**

"Pediatricians, family physicians, daycare providers, teachers, and parents may initially dismiss signs of ASD, optimistically thinking the child is just a little slow and will "catch up."

Children with ASD do not follow the typical patterns of child development. In some children, hints of future problems in communication and social skills become more noticeable as the child lags further behind other children the same age. Some other children start off well enough.

Oftentimes, between 12 and 36 months old, the differences in the way they react to people and other unusual behaviors become apparent.

Some parents report the change as being sudden, and that their children start to reject people, act strangely, and lose language and social skills they had previously acquired. In other cases, there is a plateau, or leveling, of progress so that the difference between the child with autism and other children the same age becomes more noticeable," according to NIMH.

**What is Asperger's Syndrome?**

Asperger's Syndrome (AS) is a developmental disorder characterized by major difficulties in social interaction, and restricted and unusual patterns of interest and behavior. Asperger's Syndrome is considered part of the autism spectrum.

**What are some specific behaviors that children who have autism exhibit?**

According to Kyle's Tree House, an association of Autism Spectrum Support groups (2007-10-16), some of the symptoms may be exclusivity or a lack of significant age appropriate relationships with others, which may be exhibited by:

- Repetitious and self-stimulating behaviors
- Lack of eye contact
- Low attention span.

**Autism is exhibited by developmental delays but can vary greatly. They include:**

- Language difficulties
- Self-help skills such as dressing and toilet training
- Academic challenges
- Injurious behavior to oneself or others.

**What can I do if I suspect that my child has autism?**

- I. Language difficulties
- Contact your pediatrician for a consultation and referral to a certified mental health clinician who has expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders.
- Call the school to find out about services available in your district. Talk to the counselors, social workers and teachers who may be working with the child.
- Join a support organization for autism and become involved with other families who face the same challenges.
- Educate yourself and your family with as much information as you can about this disorder.
- Explore all funding sources; the treatment of autism can be expensive.

**References used in this article**

*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-IV-TR* (fourth edition, text revision). Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2000.  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/autism/introduction.shtml>

Dingfelder, Sadie F. *The Dilemma of a Definition*. *American Psychology*, APA Online, volume 35, number 11, 2004, page 48.  
<http://www.apa.org/monitor/dec04/definition.html>

Klin, A., Ph.D. and Fred R. Volkmar, M.D. (1995). *Asperger's Syndrome: Guideline for Assessment and Diagnosis*, published by the Learning Disabilities Association of America.  
<http://www.med.yale.edu/chldstdy/autism/asdiagnosis/html>

Yeargin-Allsopp M, Rice C, Karapurkar T, Doernberger N, Boyle C, Murphy C. *Prevalence of Autism in a US Metropolitan Area*. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. 2003 Jan 1; 289(1):49-55. Cited by the National Institute of Mental Health.  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/autism/symptoms.shtml>

Kyle's Tree House.  
[http://www.kylestreehouse.org/autism symptoms.cfm](http://www.kylestreehouse.org/autism%20symptoms.cfm)

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**Adoption Resources of Wisconsin Events**

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

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

**Foster Parent  
Appreciation Event  
RSVP by July 9th**



Please Join Us at the  
**Milwaukee County Zoo**

Wednesday, July 18, 2012

Face Painting: & Art Projects 4:00 to 7:00 PM

Music: 4:00 to 6:30 PM

Dinner & Talent Show: 6:00 PM

Thank you for all you do for the foster children of Waukesha County!

**Fun! Fun! Fun!  
RSVP to Shari Rather  
By July 9th:  
(262) 548-7267  
Sponsored by Jack  
Safto Toyota.**



**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

**May 2012 Placements**

Regular Foster Care:  
34 Children

Treatment Foster Care:  
8 Children

Group Homes:  
3 Children

Residential Care Facilities:  
10 Children

Relative Placements:  
61 Children

Level 2 Foster Homes:  
116 Homes

Level 1 Foster Homes:  
28 Homes

Total Homes Assisting Other  
Counties  
18 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

**We Need You!**

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

[srather@waukeshacounty.gov](mailto: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.

