

Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
September 2012



Helping Achieve School Success By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin - ARW/FCARC

Getting ready for school can be an overwhelming experience for a child as well as for foster parents. You may have a child in your home beginning a new school, returning to the same school, or may have a new child coming into your home during the school year you haven't even met yet. There's a lot of information and things to remember. We hope the following will help you and your child prepare for having a successful school year.

Preparing for Starting a New School

The first step in starting a new school is making sure to register your child and that the new school obtains previous school records. If your child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan, make sure you also get a copy.

School districts vary widely in their enrollment process. If you run into any issues, hopefully, your worker and your child's parents can help in the process.

Additionally, talking to former teachers is often helpful in understanding what your child might need to be successful at the new school.

In order to help ease some stress for both you and your child, try to meet with the current teacher before starting a new school. For more information, see ARW's tip sheet *Helping Kids in Care Change Schools* on the FCARC website.

Other things you might consider include:

Volunteering in the classroom a day or two a week, or as often as your schedule permits, or joining your child for lunch to help with this transition. If you aren't able to be with your child at school, maybe a scheduled phone call to check in with your child in care can help him or her feel more at ease.

Your children may only need you to do so until they are feeling comfortable. However, some children may need extra support from you throughout the school year.

Finding out what works best for ongoing communication between you and teachers. This might be regularly scheduled phone calls, emails, or a communication notebook that goes back and forth. Being proactive can help your child have a successful school year - don't wait until conference time to address issues.

Sharing information before your child starts school. When children enter care, their home environment has changed and this often impacts their school performance. Ideally, all of you - birth parents, worker, child and yourself - will meet together before school starts. If that is unable to happen, then talk with those same people about what information you can share and what should be kept private.

Your children may feel stigmatized from being in the foster care system. They may not want

their peers or even school staff to know that they're in care. Talk with your children about how to address this before they start school.

As with many things, who you know and learning the unspoken rules is what helps you the most. Getting to know teachers, school staff and other parents is invaluable. "I still get intimidated at times, especially when enrolling a new student or when my kids change teachers," says one veteran parent. "But it helps that I have a good relationship with the office staff."

Day-to-Day Reminders

When working with schools, keep the following in mind.

Maintaining confidentiality. Your child being in care is private information not to be shared without proper consent. Also see our tip sheet, *Respecting the Confidentiality of Children in Care and their Families* on the FCARC website.

Working with birth parents. School is a good avenue to team with birth parents in advocating for your child. Birth parents know their children and you can build on that knowledge when working with teachers and other school staff.

Setting attainable goals. Remember your children's developmental and skill levels and adjust your perceptions. Meet them where they are and team up with them for success.

Celebrating successes. Make a big deal out of accomplishments - no matter how big or small.

Being mindful of your child's triggers. You may not know all of your child's triggers - and that's okay. If your child starts having an issue, there may be a something that's triggering that. For example, they may have had a past traumatic experience with an adult male and may not be comfortable with someone you take for granted, such as a male bus driver, guidance counselor or principal.

Transitioning. Transition are often closely related to triggers. The start of a school year, holidays, and the end of a school year are all transition times and can be a bit of a struggle for your child.

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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,
September 13, 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

Dear Foster Parents,

Where did summer go? Although it was hotter than others, it certainly didn't go any slower. Now it's that time of year again to get kids back into the swing of school. A whole new routine gets put in place with stricter bedtimes, early mornings, homework time, etc... This is always an adjustment for everyone. Don't forget to be patient with yourself and your kids as all of you make these changes. Also remember, just as routines are important to our kids' success at school, so is collaboration and teaming with our school partners. This is the time of year to build bridges and strong partnerships among home, school staff, after school or daycare, doctors, therapists, social workers and anyone else on "the team". Our kids can be complicated. Some have extensive trauma histories, mental health diagnoses, behavioral struggles, learning disabilities, social skill deficits, etc. As a result of these challenges, the concept - "it takes a village" is even more applicable to the health, well-being and success of our kids. I know that teaming and collaborating can be difficult at times... everyone comes to the table with a different role and expertise, a different set of expectations, a different understanding, a different awareness of the issues or a different idea of how to handle the challenges. It truly takes everyone being respectful, listening to each other, maintaining the focus of "what's best for this child", a willingness to be open and hear each other out, a desire to focus on solutions, a willingness to be wrong sometimes, a commitment to compromise if needed and a genuine attempt to put emotions aside. I know these sound like simple things to do but I also know from experience how difficult collaboration can be sometimes. I encourage you all to push through the difficult times. Children's outcomes truly are better when the entire team is working together. Be your child's best advocate and make sure these teams come together at least every quarter to check in and problem solve. The success of our kids is truly worth the struggle.

We here at the Department are going through our own "growing pains" of collaboration. For the sake of time management, fiscal responsibility and business continuity, we are looking for ways to increase our collaboration among our foster care program, licensed relatives and kinship programs. The workers in these various areas take great pride in providing excellent service to each of their choice populations. I sincerely commend the jobs they do and their advocacy for those they serve. As a result of this new collaborative effort, we are creating a new "Resource Family" newsletter that will go out to all level 1 and 2 foster homes, unlicensed court ordered kinship providers and voluntary kinship providers. We truly understand that there are unique issues connected with each group but feel that there are many similarities that we can build on. This will certainly be a work in progress and we welcome your feedback and request your patience along the way!

Lastly, I want to announce that Shari Rather and Kathy Mullooly are working hard to arrange the Trauma Informed Parenting series for resource parents in October/November this year. More specifics on the dates will be forthcoming but the training objectives are:

- Learn what might constitute a traumatic experience and how such experiences may impact a child's social, emotional, and neurological development.
- Begin to examine a particular child's functioning through a trauma lens. The development of a trauma lens will increase one's understanding of why children in alternate care often act in ways that seem unreasonable and/or situational inappropriate. Furthermore, this will lead to an increased awareness of why traditional discipline techniques might not be as effective with these children.
- Gain a sense of empowerment in one's ability to help a child heal from their trauma history.

Lisa



Training Offered By Waukesha County

Parent Café
September 20, 2012
5:30 PM
Center for Excellence
N4W22000 Bluemound Road
Waukesha



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

Training

Implementing Shared Parenting
November 17, 2012
9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Waukesha County Human Services Center
500 Riverview Avenue
Waukesha
Brookfield Room (Enter Door 6)
Register at the southernpartnership.wisc.edu

Foundation Training Series
September 8, 2012
Module 1 - Partners in Permanency & Module 2 - Cultural Issues in Placement

September 22, 2012
Modules 3 - Maintaining Family Connectedness & Module 5 - Impact of Maltreatment on Child Development

October 6
Module 4 - Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect Parts A & B

October 22
Module 6 - Attachment & Module 7 - Separation and Placement

November 3
Module 8 - Guidance and Positive Discipline & Module 9 - Effects of Fostering on Your Family

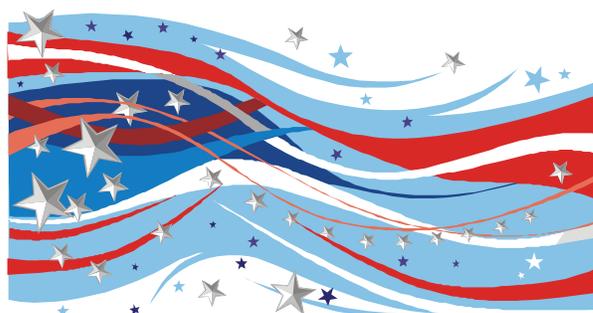
This is required training for all foster parents within the first two years of being licensed.

Trauma Informed Parenting
The learning objectives for this training are as follows:

- Learn what might constitute a traumatic experience and how such experiences may impact a child's social, emotional, and neurological development.
- Begin to examine a particular child's functioning through a trauma lens. The development of a trauma lens will increase one's understanding of why children in alternate care often act in ways that seem unreasonable and/or situational inappropriate. Furthermore, this will lead to an increased awareness of why traditional discipline techniques might not be as effective with these children.
- Gain a sense of empowerment in one's ability to help a child heal from their trauma history.

These sessions require a commitment to attend every class. This training will be presented by Chris Foreman.

Dates: Mondays, September 17th, October 1st, October 15th, October 29, November 5th and November 12th.



Happy Labor Day!

Scheduling appointments after school whenever possible. This helps prevent disruption to their regular day and may reduce unwanted questions about why James misses gym each Tuesday.

Planning for school routines before school starts. A few weeks before school starts, begin regular bedtimes, meals, and after school routines. For children who may come into your home during the school year, get them into a routine a few days before they start school.

Advocating for children in care. As a foster parent, you know the needs of the child in your care. The child's parents also provide additional insights that can be beneficial to share with the school staff. It's okay to advocate for what children need to be successful in school.



Homework

Designating a homework space and time for homework can help your child stay in a routine and keep a consistent schedule.



Some children in care seem to struggle with school work. This may be because of lack of attendance at school, early trauma, frequent moves or any number of reasons. Here are some suggestions to try to help with school work:

Break homework into smaller steps.

Sometimes breaking things into smaller steps alleviates stress, anxiety, and keep them better focused. For example, instead of having your child work on 20 math problems at a time, have him or her work on five at a time.

Remember where your child is at developmentally. Your child may not be working at the same level as other kids their age. Your child is unique, and may learn in a more non-traditional way.

Develop realistic expectations and celebrate accomplishments. Meet children where they are and celebrate their accomplishments.

Teach organizational skills. Develop a system for school working going back and forth, such as different colored folders and notebooks for different classes.



Consider a mentor or tutor. A lot of schools have older children who assist younger children with school work. Perhaps your child could be involved with organizations like the YMCA or Big Brothers and Big Sisters that provide mentors. Also check with people at your school to see if they can recommend a tutor if need be.

Try to keep in mind that some assignments may be emotionally taxing. Assignments about family trees, Child of the Week, holidays, Mother's Day, and Father's Day are just a few that may be a trigger for your child.



School can be a wonderful experience for your children. Your children may gain healthy connections to teachers, coaches, counselors, and other staff. Friends and learning social skills are also a good emotional support for them.

But school is sometimes one of the biggest stressors for children and parents alike. Don't hesitate to call us at 800.947.8074 for support.

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Many children who are fostered experience difficulties in school. Traumatized by the abuse and neglect which brought about their placement in foster care, along with the trauma of being removed from their families, most of these children have difficulty directing their attention and energies to learning in school.

In addition, frequent transfers from school to school and multiple moves may add further strain to the burden these children carry. Handling the emotional and developmental problems which are part of their young lives does not make school a primary focus for many of these children. These vulnerable children require special educational provisions for many of them to progress in school.



By law, children have a right to special educational services from the ages of 3 years old up to 21 years old or not yet graduated from high school if they are affected by disabilities based on emotional, learning, or physical disabilities. These disabilities are categorized as:

- Cognitive disabilities (CD)
- Hearing impairments (HI)
- Speech and language impairments (SL)
- Visual impairments (VI)
- Emotional behavioral disability (EBD)
- Orthopedic impairments (OI)
- Autism
- Traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- Specific learning disabilities (SLD)
- Other health impairments (OHI)
- Significant developmental delay (SDD)

Some children require physical or occupational rehabilitation to meet their educational goals. Others require special instruction provided by specially trained cognitive learning disabilities teachers (CD) or emotional behavioral disabilities teachers (EDS) and support staff. They may require special educational settings and equipment.

When a child has such disabilities, schools are required by law to create and Individual Educational Plan (IEP), specific to that child. This plan is based on an evaluation conducted by the school to determine what disabilities the child has and which services must be in place to help a child meet individual educational goals.

The IEP is developed by a team of people, which may include teachers, school guidance counselors, special education directors, social workers, school nurses, administrators, and school psychologists.

Others who should be involved include: people from supporting agencies, foster parents, involved relatives, and the child when possible, as long as there is permission of the birth parent or the person who has been granted signing authority by the school to act in place of the parent.

An in-depth evaluation is conducted of the child prior to this meeting. Specific plans of action are then proposed to help the child meet defined educational goals.

As part of the assessment, parents may be asked for input that is often invaluable to the total assessment. You may be asked to complete a home assessment or inventory to describe the child's behaviors and abilities.

However, it is important to know that foster parents are not a part of the IEP team unless the birth parent gives written permission for the foster parents to be part of the team.

In rare circumstances, if foster parents meet the specific criteria specified in Wisconsin DPI Bulletin 00.11 (<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/sped/bul00-11.html>), they may also meet the legal guidelines for participation as a member of the team. Also, in some circumstances, foster parents may be brought into the IEP meeting as an advocate if the birth parent agrees. Consult with your social worker for further clarification.



Fostering a Child with an IEP

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Wisconsin schools must follow strict Wisconsin and federal education laws and regulations in creating these educational plans and in implementing them. These regulations are created to protect the educational rights of all children to an education that accommodates their individual needs and abilities.

As a foster parent, it is important for you to have complete and detailed information about the educational rights of the children you foster and the process for obtaining appropriate education and special educational services.

You may request an evaluation for a child if you suspect that he or she has a disability which affects his or her ability to be successful in school. Connect to this link for further information about making that request: <http://www.specialized.us/pl-07/pl07-index.html>. In all cases, foster parents must talk to the social worker before making the referral so that the child's parent is informed.

As a foster parent, it makes good sense to stay in contact with the teachers and others at school. But if the child you foster has an IEP and is involved in special educational services, it's even more important to stay in good communication with the child's teachers, the special education teachers and aides, guidance counselors, school social worker, administration and anyone else who is involved regularly with the child.

If your child in care has been identified as having an IEP and has been in special education in a previous school prior to a new placement, an evaluation is given to the new foster parents by the social worker. It is the responsibility of the new school to request the records. If there is an IEP, the law mandates continuity of special educational services for the child by the new school.

Complex laws and regulations govern the IEP process. However, there are excellent resources at the state and national level to help foster parents understand this process. Many can be accessed through our center. These excellent resources help foster parents navigate through the complexities of the assessment and IEP process.

One excellent resource is the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support, Inc. or FACETS. Their staff can be reached, toll free, at 1-877-374-4677, or at: <http://www.facets.org>.

Another great resource is an online guide, *A Guide to Special Education Advocacy for Resource Families*, from the Casey Family Foundation www.svcf.org/downloads/Casey_ExecSummary_NCLB.pdf.

Know that you are an important link in meeting the special educational needs of the children you foster. Your daily support and encouragement can make all the difference in the educational achievement of these vulnerable children.

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<p>Contact Numbers:</p> <p>Waukesha H & HS 262-548-7212</p> <p>Children's Mental Health Outreach 262-548-7666</p> <p>Medical Emergency: 911 Family Emergency: 211</p> <p>Foster Parent Mentor Jen Barcus..... 262-542-2926 David Mersfelder 262-542-2926 Nikki Mertens..... 262-246-6180</p> <p>Rebecca Hollister, Supervisor 262-548-7271</p> <p>Mary Alice Grosser, Supervisor Relative Licensing 262-548-7272</p> <p>Shari Rather, Foster Care Coordinator 262-548-7267</p> <p>Libby Sinclair Relative Licensing 262-548-7277</p>	<p>July 2012 Placements</p> <p>Regular Foster Care: 30 Children</p> <p>Treatment Foster Care: 9 Children</p> <p>Group Homes: 5 Children</p> <p>Residential Care Facilities: 10 Children</p> <p>Relative Placements: 36 Children</p> <p>Level 2 Foster Homes: 120 Homes</p> <p>Level 1 Foster Homes: 32 Homes</p> <p>Total Homes Assisting Other Counties 17 Homes</p> <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>For Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Support, please call:</p> <p>FASPP Norma Schoenberg 920-922-9627</p> </div>	<p>Social Workers:</p> <p>Jennifer Adler 262-548-7265</p> <p>Bob Alioto 262-548-7262</p> <p>Suzanne Arnold 262-548-7348</p> <p>Kate Flansburg 262-896-6857</p> <p>Laura Jahnke 262-548-7359</p> <p>Maria Maurer 262-548-7345</p> <p>Susan Peck..... 262-896-8574</p> <p>Madeline Prange 262-548-7394</p> <p>Janis Ramos..... 262-896-8069</p> <p>Michael Reed..... 262-548-7347</p> <p>Cindie Remshek 262-548-7639</p> <p>Greg Rewolinski 262-548-7270</p> <p>Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349</p> <p>Kim Sampson 262-548-7273</p> <p>Mark Sasso 262-548-7346</p> <p>Linda Senger 262-548-7698</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">We Need You!</p> <p>For more information about becoming a foster parent in Waukesha County, please contact Shari Rather at:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">srather@waukeshacounty.gov</p> <p style="text-align: center;">262-548-7267</p> <p>Or visit our website at www.waukeshacounty.gov And follow the links to foster care.</p> <div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Jack Safro Toyota•Ford•Lincoln•Mercury Lexus•Infiniti•Scion</p> </div>
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