



Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
October 2012



Ways to Help Youth and Children in Care By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin - ARW/FCARC

Children in the foster care system are often some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Many people feel the desire to help, but are unsure of ways to reach out and make a difference in the life of a child.

Wisconsin has an estimated 6,000 children in foster care. The majority of these children will be reunified with their birth families, while some will be adopted and others will "age out" of the foster care system. Children in our foster care system are generally school age and can have needs that range from needing a safe home to specialized therapy to needing a trusted friend.

Then there are many of us who truly want to help, but fostering or adopting is not a perfect fit at this time in our lives. There are many alternative ways to help children in the foster care system through mentoring, recruiting other parents, providing respite, volunteering, or donating.

Respite Provider

Respite providers are a constant need in Wisconsin. A respite provider is someone who holds a foster care license for the sole purpose of short-term care of a child in foster care. This may consist of a weekend break for foster parents or sometimes even as long as a week or two.

Respite is a wonderful way to create connections and support foster families and foster children. Contact your county foster care coordinator (wifostercareandadoption.org/snnav/147/page.htm) for information on becoming a respite provider. There are also other organizations that provide respite and many are listed at the Wisconsin Respite Association, respitewarewi.org.

Mentoring

You can become a mentor for a child who needs an adult role model. Mentors fulfill many roles including friend, tutor, supervisor, and guide. A mentor is someone who supports a child in his or her journey. Or even the foster parents.

You can be a mentor through both county and private agencies. If you are a local business owner, maybe you could offer a youth in foster care an apprenticeship with your business.

"I really wanted to be a foster parent," says Dane County mentor Meg Stevens. "But my husband wasn't up for the idea. So I became a mentor instead."

She goes on to say, "I have been so impressed by the foster parents who welcome children into their homes and give them a fighting chance. They often need a mentor's support just as much as the kids do."

You can contact your local social or human service agency or a treatment foster care agency wifostercareandadoption.org/snnav/147/page.htm to find out how you can become involved in mentoring in your community.

Help By Recruiting Others

Even though you personally may not become a foster or adoptive parent, perhaps you could help recruit others. You could refer friends, neighbors, or relatives to contact us at the Wisconsin Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center. We will give them information on the process to become a foster or adoptive parent. Contact us at 800-947-8074 or at info@wifostercareandadoption.org.

You could also display foster care and adoption brochures or posters within your community or business or host an informal event. Some people have invited foster parents to come speak at their churches or at service groups (Elks, Lions Club, Rotary, etc.) that they attend.

Community Volunteerism

The opportunities to volunteer and make a positive difference in the lives of youth in care are endless. Volunteers are needed in schools to help with mentoring, after school tutoring, or coaching. There are many opportunities to volunteer at community centers such as:

- YMCA, ymca.net
- Boys and Girls Clubs, bgca.org
- Girl/Boy Scouts, girlscouts.org or scouting.org
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters, bbbs.org
- After School programs
- Community centers
- Daycare Centers
- Hospitals or Clinics
- Community Service Programs

The United Way, liveunited.org, supports many agencies that affect foster care. Perhaps your skills and knowledge could be useful in community service groups like the Elks Club, Rotary, Knights of Columbus, or Lions and Lioness Clubs.

Volunteer Drivers

Many counties have a Volunteer Driver program, where you transport children to appointments. As many parents know, sometimes the best conversations you have with kids is when you're driving. This is a vital support for youth and families. Some volunteer driver programs reimburse you for mileage for some appointments, but check with your local human service agency for additional details and information.

Background Checks and Training

If you choose to help a child directly—through driving, mentoring, fostering, etc.—you will be required to go through the county or agency's background check process. This is standard for all caregivers in Wisconsin. Your agency or county staff will give you the forms that you'll need to complete.

Most programs also have additional training or orientation that you'll be required to attend.



Lisa's Corner

Lisa Roberts
Manager of the Children and
Family Division

Dear Foster Parents,

I recently had the pleasure to sit with a foster parent couple who is licensed through Waukesha county. We had the opportunity to discuss their experiences, the good and the bad, and their perceptions of our system. This couple was very nervous to call and ask for the meeting. They stated they didn't want to be seen as "complainers" and I know people worry that if they say anything negative, they will be "blacklisted" and won't get future placements. So I want to say I truly understand the risk this couple took in stepping forward. I also want to thank them for their courage and willingness to put themselves out there. I hope they would say the same, but from my perspective we had an EXCELLENT discussion. Hearing people's specific experiences allows me the opportunity to look at our system from a different perspective and consider various ways to make improvements. For example, as a result of the conversation with this couple, we are creating a "tip sheet" to share with foster parents at the time of a new placement. We realize that you may not have ever had a placement before and/or it may have been awhile since you'd been involved in any training. This "tip sheet" will help provide some reminders of things you need to know or consider at the time of initial placement. We also want to provide emergency contact numbers so you never feel like you're out there alone. In addition, we intend to have Shari or Libby, your licensing worker, follow up with a phone call and a home visit if necessary within the first couple days of a new placement to make sure everything is going ok and to help answer any questions you may have. Although there is an Access/IA worker assigned, this is often a VERY busy time for them and they may not be as accessible to you as they would like or as you may need. There are other systemic considerations we are looking at more closely, like improving the caretakers' involvement in completing the CANS, the child's strength and needs assessment, as well as a few other considerations. All of this happened as a result of one couples' willingness to step out of their comfort zone and ask to share their experience. I would like to make sure everyone understands how proud I am of all of my workers for the extraordinary job they do every day. They never cease to amaze me with how they handle the most delicate and difficult of situations with grace and finesse. Despite our best efforts though, we will still make mistakes and still have plenty to learn and improve. Especially with the number of changes coming our way, with new standards and increased initiatives and mandates, we need not only your continued patience and support but also your willingness to share your thoughts, concerns and suggestions. I welcome any of you to contact me at any time. I look forward to continuing to team with you in the future to make Waukesha County's Child Protective Services the absolute best it can be.

Lisa



Training Offered By Waukesha County

Parent Café
November 15, 2012
5:30 PM
Center for Excellence
N4W22000 Bluemound Road
Waukesha



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

Trauma Informed Parenting
For Waukesha County Resource Families
Sponsored by the Southern Partnership
Presented by Kathy Mullooly, LCSW



October 15, 2012 - Introduction to Trauma Informed Parenting
October 22, 2012 - Trauma 101
October 29, 2012 - Understanding Trauma's Effects
November 5, 2012 - Building a Safe Place
November 12, 2012 - Dealing with Feelings and Behaviors
November 26, 2012 - Connections and Healing
December 3, 2012 - Becoming an Advocate
December 10, 2012 - Taking Care of Yourself

All classes are in the Brookfield Room at Waukesha County Human Services. Enter Door 7.
Please park in the back employee parking lot.
All classes are from 5:30 to 8:30 PM.
Call Shari Rather to register at 262-548-7267.

Implementing Shared Parenting
Highly recommended for all new foster parents

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

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
Tuesdays, October 2 - 30
6:00 - 7:30 PM

Kids Managing Anger (Parent and child class)
Mondays, October 15 - 29
5:30 - 7:30 PM

Adult Anger
Mondays, November 5 - 19
5:30 - 7:30 PM

Calming The Explosive Volcano
Tuesdays, November 6 - 27
6:00 - 7:30 PM

New Ideas for Parenting Children & Adolescents with ADHD/ADD
These classes will explore the five gifts of the ADHD/ADD child, and teach parental coaching skills that cultivate the child's emotional intelligence.
Tuesdays, November 13 - 27
6:00 - 7:30 PM



Donations

This is another important way for you to assist children in need. Many foster children enter care with little or no personal belongings. Child welfare and human service agencies would be happy to accept donations such as:

- Clothing
- Blankets
- Baby supplies
- Personal care items
- Books and toys for all ages
- Cameras
- School supplies
- Art supplies
- Backpacks
- Photo albums
- Bikes
- Gift Cards
- Musical instruments
- Scrapbooking supplies
- Computers

Contact your local human agency before you donate to find out what they might need.

You could also help local foster and adoption support groups or associations. Check with the Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parents' Association at <http://wfapa.org>. Perhaps you could sponsor a foster child for extra-curricular activities, summer camps or sports teams. You could donate gift cards to non-profit agencies that help children.

Many businesses support foster and adoptive families by offering discounts on products, services, or events. (See *Foster Friendly Businesses* at: wifostercareandadoption.org/dnav/214/page.htm)

There are so many ways to help children—maybe you have your own unique ideas to help kids in your area. Your one (or several!) act of kindness may change children's lives and give them hope they may not have had before. Any form of reaching out and supporting a youth in care makes a tremendous impact.

In short, if you have an idea of how to help a child in care, someone will likely accept it. Any form of reaching out to someone in care is sure to make a big impact.

To offer your help, find the foster care coordinator in your area by going to: wifostercareandadoption.org/snav/147/page.htm. Or contact us at: 800.947.8074.

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Handling Meltdowns in Public **By: Kirk Martin**

You know what it's like. You've been penned up inside all week and would just like to enjoy a simple, peaceful meal out together as a family.

Okay, maybe not peaceful, but without incident.

Just as the waiter brings your food and you pick up your fork, one of the kiddos starts melting down.

Your anxiety and blood pressure skyrocket. He's getting louder.

You try the sweet "Shhhhh's, its okay, honey," but you know that has-

n't worked the last 497 times you tried it.

Other parents are starting to glance over. You get that sick feeling in your stomach, which turns to anger. Your tone is short now—"Stop it. Now."

Your son is getting more upset. People are turning around in their chairs.

You know what they are thinking: "Can't you even control your kids for a simple meal?"

Embarrassed, you yank your child's arm and pull him to the bathroom.

Now he's crying and you feel awful.

So how can we change this situation? Realize that there are three incontrovertible facts of life that you cannot control. The secret is learning to control what you can.

1. You will be judged

Get used to it. Some people will think you are a terrible parent. That you're too soft. Or too harsh. They'll wonder "Why do you appear in public if you can't control your child?" You can feel the glares and hear the lectures in your head. These things are beyond your control. What CAN you control?

Control your embarrassment. This is YOUR issue, not the child's. If you allow another person's opinion to cause you to snap at your kids, you are giving a stranger power over your emotions. That stranger now has power over your relationships because you are doing what HE thinks should be done - which is the expedient, convenient approach.

Do not give anyone that power. You don't owe anyone an answer. In the end, your relationship with your child is most important. And when your child sees that you can remain calm and emotionally available to them, even when others are giving dismissive glances, they will feel safe and secure.

2. Other people will say stupid things

Count on it. You'll get stares from people wondering why you have three multi-ethnic kids about the same age. In the presence of your kids, people will ask:

- "So where is your mother?"
- "Where did you get them?" (As if there's a Kids R Us to pick out children!)
- "What's wrong with their REAL parents? Drugs? Oh, that's a shame."
- "They are so lucky you took them."

You can't control other people's ignorance, but you can control your response.

Make it personal. Brag about your kids' gifts and passions. "This is Tarik and he can play the piano and guitar beautifully. Jacy has the biggest heart in the world and I wouldn't be surprised if she helps millions of kids with disabilities one day. And this is Carlos, the best Lego builder in America and future architect. I guess you can tell I'm really proud of my kids and blessed to have them in my life."

This should produce some shame in the people asking the questions - good! By controlling how YOU talk about YOUR kids, you can change how other people view them. And boy does it feel good for kids to hear Mom and Dad brag about their specific gifts.

3. Your kids will have meltdowns in public

It's a given. You can be the greatest parent ever and it will happen. SO the big question becomes: WHEN this happens, how are YOU going to react?

Handling Meltdowns in Public

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Control yourself, not your kids. Look inward and control your own anxiety. Get to a calm place first. Otherwise, you will just yank the child's arm, speak in a terse tone, and threaten. The situation will get worse as your child jerks his arm away.

Your job isn't to control your child's behavior. It's first to control your own and then teach your children to control their own.

The quickest way to change your child's behavior is to first control your own. Speak in a firm, matter-of-fact manner, like you've been through this before and it's no big deal.

Calmly redirect your child - if you can, give him a specific job to focus on. ("Could you please get us twelve napkins and seven packets of ketchup? That would help me a lot.") Getting kids moving is a great way to extinguish the emotional fire.

When you stay immovable, it gives your kids confidence. Inside they know, "I can count on my Mom when I'm at my worst."

Is it easy? Absolutely not. So practice it ahead of time your child gets upset, what specific action can you take? How are you going to calm yourself in that moment? Picture it and practice it. It gets easier!

I'd like to wrap this up with a special note from my teenage son. I think it's good to hear the perspective of a child in this situation:

A Kid's Perspective

"When I'm upset and freaking out, it's usually because I'm feeling out of control of the situation. I don't need my parents

freaking out. That just makes me more upset because now no one is in control of themselves, and it's just a big scream-fest or threat-fest. When they are yelling or just glaring down at me, it's not safe to even apologize. What I really need when I'm upset is for my parents to model calm and lead me into a calmer place."

-Casey Martin

On behalf of our family, we want to personally thank you for your selfless commitment to helping children. You are lifesavers. If we can help in any way, write and let us know you are a foster parent.

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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

August 2012 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
34 Children

Treatment Foster Care:
9 Children

Group Homes:
3 Children

Residential Care Facilities:
8 Children

Relative Placements:
43 Children

Level 2 Foster Homes:
118 Homes

Level 1 Foster Homes:
35 Homes

Total Homes Assisting Other
Counties
19 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

262-548-7267

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

Jack Safro
Toyota•Ford•Lincoln•Mercury
Lexus•Infiniti•Scion