



Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
August 2009



Working with Children Who Have Been Traumatized From Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center

As caregivers, we often care for kids who may have experienced the trauma of physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and domestic violence.

While experiencing or witnessing physical or sexual abuse is a common source of trauma for children, the emotional turmoil of being removed from their parental home is additionally traumatic and stressful. When we as caregivers, therapists, and school staff have an understanding of the trauma and its effect on learning and processing, children in our care have a better chance to overcome their past.

Recognizing Symptoms

Emotional, behavioral, and physical delays may be noted in traumatized children. The brain development is altered, resulting in children having difficulty controlling emotions and behavior.

They may recreate the traumatic event or experience some of the following symptoms:

- Anxiety
- Sleep disturbances
- Aggression
- Withdrawal
- Hyperactivity
- Persistent levels of fear

You should contact a mental health professional if your children experience the following symptoms:

- Flashbacks
- Episodes of being easily startled
- Emotional numbness
- Episodes of a racing heart and sweating (unrelated to exercise)
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts or actions

Finding a therapist that you and your children trust is imperative with working with kids who have PTSD and other trauma — as much for your own sake as for the sake of your children. As a caregiver, you should be comfortable in sharing your own observations of your child, as well as accepting insight and support from a therapist.

Often it takes a lot of time to help kids overcome the trauma of their pasts, and it's often hard to see the very real progress we're making by letting the child live in a safe and consistent home.

Interventions for Caregivers

The response you have on traumatized children has a definite impact on them. Being calm, organized, and in control reassures children that they are in a safe place.

- Develop a daily routine and prepare children for events of the day. Unexpected changes can often set children with traumatic backgrounds into a tailspin.
- Set gentle but firm limits for behavior by setting consistent, clear rules and consequences. ("You may ride your bike to the store and be home at 4:00 p.m.")



- Develop non punitive consequences for their behavior. ("There will be no bike riding this afternoon since you were late yesterday coming home from the store.")
- Take time to listen to your children.
- Give children choices and a sense of control by allowing them to make as many choices a possible. ("You may choose either the blue shorts or the jean shorts to wear today.")
- Make only promises that can be kept. ("Tonight we will roast some hotdogs on the fire.") Follow through helps develop trusting relationships.
- Nurture and comfort through touch and conversation. Pay attention to how the children respond to physical touch and adjust your response and boundary setting accordingly.

Meeting the Children's Needs

Children who have been traumatized often function at varying levels behaviorally, emotionally and physically. At what level of development are the children in your care displaying?

Acknowledge this functioning level and parent them accordingly in order to meet their special needs. Often children who have been exposed to abuse, neglect or violence are emotionally and behaviorally immature, express strong emotions and may have physical delays.

Some effective ways to meet the exceptional needs of traumatized children include the following:

- Let children know that having powerful emotions such as fear, sadness, anger, pain, and rage is okay.
- Follow the children's lead and let them talk, draw and write about the trauma. Share this information with the children's treatment team.
- If children seem to be upset or show increased symptoms during certain activities, end the activities. Often a smell, a place, a food or a sound can trigger a reminder of the past trauma and symptoms can resurface.
- Keeping a log or journal of behaviors can be useful in further assessment and treatment when shared with the children's treatment team.
- Be a role model and teach appropriate social behaviors and physical boundaries.
- Minimize long physical separations from your children. Take time to prepare children for separations and of your return. ("I will be going to a meeting tonight at 6 pm. Mary will take care of you at the house, I will be home by 8 o'clock and see you before bedtime.")
- Be patient. Remember that the impact of trauma on children can have long term effects, some of which may last for years.
- Continue to educate yourself about the issues of trauma and their effect. You are an important part of the treatment team.
- Provide insight into the day-to-day care of your children by communicating often with the child's social worker, teacher, therapist, psychiatrist, and other treatment team members.





Jesse's Corner

Jesus Mireles
Manager of the Children and Family Division



**CALLING ALL CREATIVE KIDS!!
DO YOU WANT TO BE FAMOUS?
IT'S YOUR CHANCE TO PUT YOUR
ARTWORK ON DISPLAY**

I hope everyone is having a nice summer vacation! We recently presented an overview of our out of home care placements, including foster care, to our Health and Human Services Board and Committee. The membership of the committee and board includes several County Board Supervisors and citizen members appointed by our County Executive, Dan Vrakas.

Lisa Roberts, Permanency Services supervisor and Shari Rather, Foster Care coordinator, started their presentation with the "Freddy Foster" exercise enabling the board and committee members to get a better understanding of what children may experience when being placed in foster care. In addition, they presented information about our 2009 foster care program including:

- 123 Foster Homes currently licensed by Waukesha County
- Specific Child Homes = 7
- Homes on hold= 13 (pending adoptions, foster parent request, training needs)
- Homes with Milwaukee Placements= 15
- Homes with Jefferson County Placements= 2
- Homes we consider full= 24
- Able to Accept children = 50 (most want children under 6)
- Respite only homes: 10
- 21 foster home licenses were closed between 1/2/09 and 6/1/09.
- 1 revocation in 2009 as of 5/5/09
- Inquiries to date: 50

I think Lisa and Shari did a very good job of provided an overview of our foster care program. The committee expressed their appreciation for the commitment and dedication of our foster parents and staff in meeting the needs of our children and families. I also want to thank you and our staff for the fine work you do in ensuring the safety, permanency and well-being of children.

As I mentioned previously we will be undergoing a Continuously Quality Improvement/Quality Service Review (CQI/QSR) the week of August 24th. We will have a focus group for foster parents and this will give you and opportunity to share your thoughts and feelings about our foster care program. The tentative date is Monday, August 24th at 5 pm. We will also have a focus group for our foster children. I would like you to talk to your social worker and determine if your foster child should be invited or participate in this focus group. In addition to the focus groups, you may have a case that is selected for review. If that occurs, you will be invited to talk to the reviewer about our planning, services and overall view of how we provide social work services to ensure child safety, permanency and child well-being. We will send you more information about the focus groups and families selected for review in the future. I look forward to hearing your comments and thoughts about foster care in Waukesha County.

Jesse

**Pre-Placement Training
for Prospective Foster Parents**

August 6, 2009	6-9 PM
August 20, 2009	6-9 PM
September 3, 2009	6-9 PM
September 17, 2009	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.

It's not too early to begin working on your art work. The ROKs committee is having its fourth annual non-competitive Art Show on **November 12th in the Board Room of the Human Services Center.** (Please note, the location has been changed to the Board Room. Every year we display art done by the talented kids who work with WCDHHS. Some of the artwork has included drawings, paintings, sculptures, jewelry, poems, stories and "Sculpey" figures. Last year we also included decorated suitcases and canvas shopping bags, as well as decorated furniture. We have also had a flautist, poet, singer, sketch artist and a drum circle that have performed at past Shows. If you can sing, dance or play a musical instrument, we would love to have you be part of the program on November 12. From young children to older teenagers, all art efforts are included in the Show. The committee also has some funds that can be used to purchase supplies for those young artists who need them. Please contact your social worker if you need supplies.

Please think about being a part of this year's Show and mark your calendars for November 12. We'd love to have you join us. The young people who have participated in the past have enjoyed having the chance to show others their artistic efforts. We look forward to your involvement. If any young people, parents or caregivers have any questions, please contact your worker. More information about the Show will be included in future Newsletters.

To help all of our young artists in their efforts, we will also be hosting an **Art Creation Day** in the lunchroom of the Human Services Center on Tuesday, August 4, from 1:00 to 3:00. We will have lots of art supplies available for anyone to use and will also have adults available to help any young people who would like to use this time to create their art.

Finally, if you would like to help us prepare the art for display the week before the Show (putting it on matting, making name tags, etc., please contact your worker. We would love to have you join us in getting things ready for the Show. We will be working on these preparations on the afternoon of Thursday, November 5th. Thank you.



**Waukesha County
Department of Health & Human Services
Foster Parent Summer Foundation Training**

August 4, 2009	Separation & Placement
August 11, 2009	Guidance & Positive Discipline
August 18, 2009	Effects of Fostering on the Family

All trainings are held in the Brookfield Room at Waukesha County Human Services Center located at 500 Riverview Avenue. Enter the Department at Door 6 and go to room G137. This is required training for all foster parents who took Pre-Placement training. This training is required within the first two years of licensure. To reserve your spot please call Shari Rather at (262)548-7267. The class size is limited to 30.

Does Your Child Have A Communication Problem?

This chart will help you understand the different types of communication problems and how they affect your child's ability to communicate effectively.

PROBLEM

Articulation Disorders

EFFECT ON COMMUNICATION

These may result in speech that is hard to understand, due to sound substitutions or omissions. Your child's speech may sound immature, call negative attention to him, and interfere with his communication. His self-esteem may also be affected.

Delayed expressive-language development

Short, incomplete, incorrect, or immature sentences call attention to your child and interfere with his communication. He may sound much younger than his age. Questions may have immature structure.

Delayed receptive-language development

This limits your child's ability to understand spoken language. Concepts such as colors and numbers, descriptive words (wet/dry), and time (yesterday/tomorrow) are affected as well as understanding directions and commands. This may become quite apparent in school.

Expressive-language disorder

Unusual, curious, or inappropriate remarks in otherwise well-constructed sentences. This calls negative attention to your child and limits or stops his conversations. Your child may repeat questions posed by others or speak off topic.

Hearing loss

Depending on the degree of hearing loss, this affects your child's ability to learn language and speech. It may result in slowed receptive-and expressive-language development. Your child may also have an articulation disorder.

Language pragmatics problems

Misuse or ignorance of social rules for language may result in difficulties having conversations, adverse attention to your child, poor self-esteem, or poor social adjustments.

Stuttering

Disruptions of the smooth flow of speech may interfere with communication, call adverse attention to your child, or negatively affect her self-esteem. Face-to-face communication is difficult.

Voice disorders

Differences in tone or loudness affect communication by making the message hard to understand or drawing negative attention to your child. Self-esteem may be affected.

~ from HEALTHY KIDS 4-10, Fall 1991

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 may be apparent from birth. In most cases, the 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.

Often times, 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 preciously 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?

- 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.

Resources

- <http://www.kylestreehouse.org>
- <http://www.med.yale.edu/chldstdy/autism/index.html>
- <http://nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/autism/introduction.shtml>
- http://www.apa.org/topics/topicautism_b.html
- <http://www.autismspeak.com>



Autism Spectrum Disorders

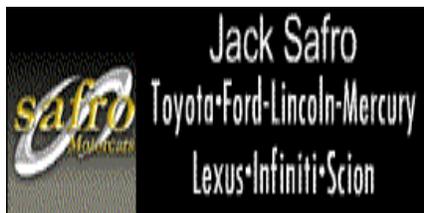
From the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center

What are autism spectrum disorders? According to the National Institute of Mental Health, "Autism Spectrum Disorders (also known as Pervasive Developmental Disorders) cause severe and pervasive impairments 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, thought 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.

Special Thanks to All of the Sponsors of Our 2009 Foster Family Appreciation Picnic



Food

Bartolotta Restaurant Group - \$25.00 gift certificate
 Casa Del Rio – (2) \$10.00 gift certificates
 Chili's – 10 free kids meals
 Divino Gelato – (3) \$5.00 gift certificates
 North Star American Bistro - \$40.00 gift certificate
 Oscars Frozen Custard – 30 free cones
 Panera Bread Co. – (2) meal for 2 certificates
 TGI Fridays – (5) \$10.00 bonus bites
 Weissgerber's Seven Sea's – Brunch for two
 Wisconsin Hospitality Group- (2) \$10.00 Pizza Hut gift certificates

Entertainment

Betty Brinn Children's Museum – (1) family pass
 Bristol Renaissance Faire – (4) passes
 Comedy Sportz – (3) admissions
 Fun World – (4) games mini golf
 Green Bay Packers – (2) Hall of Fame tickets
 Milwaukee Admirals – (4) tickets
 Milwaukee Brewers – (2) club seat tickets
 Milwaukee Bucks – (4) tickets
 Milwaukee County Zoo – (2) passes
 Milwaukee Public Museum – (2) passes

Milwaukee Wave – (4) tickets
 Morning Star Golf Course – (4) rounds of golf
 Prairieville Park- (4) mini golf passes
 Swing Time – (8) mini golf passes
 Waukesha County Parks – (6) skate passes
 Waukesha State Bank – (4) movie passes, (2) free popcorn

Store

Sendik's - \$25.00 gift certificate
 Target (New Berlin) - \$25.00 gift certificate
 The Learning Shop – educational toys
 Wal-Mart (Mukwonago) – (2) \$20.00 gift certificates

Other

Hair and Body Solutions Salon and Spa- \$60.00 gift certificate
 Milwaukee Magazine – (2) Subscriptions
 Quad Graphics - \$100.00 check



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
Nikki Mertens
(12 and under)
262-246-6180

Patty Vorlob
(12 and under)
262-521-1397

Lisa Roberts, Supervisor
262-548-7271

Shari Rather, Foster Care Coordinator
262-548-7267

June 2009 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
47 Children
7 Admitted
0 Discharged

Treatment Foster Care:
15 Children
0 Admitted
1 Discharged

Group Homes:
4 Children
0 Admitted
0 Discharged

Residential Care Facilities:
6 Children
0 Admitted
1 Discharged

Relative Placements:
26 Children
0 Admitted
5 Discharged

Social Workers:

Bob Alioto 262-548-7262

Suzanne Arnold 262-548-7348

Peggy Beisser 262-548-7261

Angie Briggs 262-548-7275

Jennifer Eiler 262-548-7260

Jeannine Eng 262-548-7268

Margaret Johnson 262-548-7265

Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson 262-548-7273

Linda Senger 262-548-7698

Ted Wuerslin 262-548-7269

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.