



# Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County  
Health & Human Services  
October 2010



## Maltreatment Allegations

By: The Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center

When you made the commitment to become a foster or adoptive parent, you may have not ever considered that you might become the subject of a child abuse investigation.

However, foster and adoptive parents have allegations made against them at a higher rate than the general public. Often the allegations are found to be unsubstantiated but having to go through the investigation process can be stressful, scary, and frustrating.

While there is no guaranteed way to avoid an allegation of child abuse or neglect, there are ways to minimize the risk of allegations. The suggestions listed below come from the National Foster Parent Association (<http://nfpainc.org>) and are listed to give you some tips for minimizing the risk of an allegation of abuse and neglect:

- Participate in training for foster and adoptive parents on caring for children who have been abused or neglected.
- Find out as much information as possible before deciding whether to take a placement, including the child's abuse history both at home and in out-of-home placements. Do not accept a referral for a child who you do not feel you can adequately parent.
- Ask whether the child has a history of making allegations of abuse against caregivers. Such a history does not mean the child is untruthful, but it could indicate a need for more involved treatment and more cautions being put in place in your home.
- Advocate and work to ensure that all the child's needs are identified and met.
- Understand and follow all laws and regulations related to foster care and adoption.
- Have consistent family rules and expectations for the entire family.
- Provide a **high** level of supervision for a child who demonstrates inappropriateness or has a prior history of sexualized behaviors.
- Keep a daily log and record any unusual events, behaviors, comments, reactions before or after interaction with family members; school issues; medical, dental, or therapy appointments; and all discussions with other professionals about the child's progress and needs (including social workers, attorneys, mental health professionals, etc.).
- You should document your notes in a spiral notebook with the date on each entry, and keep it locked in a cabinet (for confidentiality reasons). Keeping a spiral notebook shows that you haven't changed any entries, whereas notes on a computer are not as credible since information could have been changed, added, or deleted.
- Foster parents should promptly report any unusual incident or injury to the child's agency or tribal worker.
- Maintain good working relationships with everyone involved in the child's life.

**So what do I do if I am being investigated or an allegation is made against me or other members of my household?**

Going through an allegation and investigation of child abuse or neglect is a very difficult, emotional, and challenging experience. Having access to other parents who have experienced an allegation and have successfully managed the situation is invaluable to foster parents during the allegation investigation process.

To find another foster or adoptive parent to talk with you can give us a call at the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center at 1-800-947-8074 or contact the Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association at <http://www.wfapa.org/>

**In addition to talking with another parent the National Foster Parent Association suggests the following:**

- Maintain a professional attitude.
- Stay focused on understanding and following the procedures in place to resolve the maltreatment report.
- Maintain or start a log of every conversation or activity related to the investigation, including the person calling and the agency they work for.
- Ask for all documents such as a copy of the complaint or report of abuse and the safety plan established for the child.
- Read documents carefully and ask questions about anything you do not understand.
- Keep track of timelines for the investigation.
- Provide information and documentation to the agency about the event that caused the report to be made.
- Reach out to local foster care support groups and associations and ask for support and assistance.
- Request that the child welfare agency provide at least one contact person in the agency to provide basic information about the investigation process.
- Maintain the family routine; do not isolate yourself from friends and family.

The primary source for the above information came from Regina Deihl's Allegations of Maltreatment Against Foster Parents—Keeping All Children in Foster Care Safe.

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ARW/FCARC

For another article on Allegations go to <http://www.fosterparents.com/articles/allegations.html>

### Pre-Placement Training for Prospective Foster Parents

Monday, October 4, 2010	6-9 PM
Monday, October 11, 2010	6-9 PM
Monday, November 1, 2010	6-9 PM
Monday, November 8, 2010	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.**



## Jesse's Corner

**Jesus Mireles**  
Manager of the Children and  
Family Division

This edition of our Foster Parent Newsletter is focusing on maltreatment allegations against foster parents. I was asked to give any words of wisdom or advice. Well, one of the biggest challenges that we've had in Waukesha County is responding to allegations of abuse or neglect by foster parents. As you can imagine this is a very difficult situation for everyone involved starting with the alleged victim, other foster children, the foster parent and their children. Our primary responsibility is to ensure the safety and well being of the children but at the same time we need to support our foster families. This is a very delicate balance and we try to do it respectfully and honestly without jeopardizing the integrity of any investigation. As with any allegation of abuse or neglect, the information shared with our Department needs to rise to the level of a child abuse referral and if so, an investigation will be initiated but that decision will be made by one of the surrounding counties that have agreed to investigate child abuse/neglect allegations against one of our foster parents. Since we license our foster homes and have a vested interest in supporting you and your families we cannot investigate any child abuse or neglect allegation made against one of our Waukesha County Licensed Foster Homes. Our system is set up to remove any potential conflict of interest or an appearance of a conflict of interest. As a result, we have an agreement with several surrounding counties (Ozaukee and Washington) to assist us in handling these allegations. These investigations are called: Independent Investigations. We will work cooperatively with whichever county decides to investigate the allegation. During this process, we will share any information requested but will not try to influence or interfere with the independent investigation. We will be as supportive to you as possible but cannot do anything that may influence the outcome of the investigation. This may make you and your family feel "less supported" but we want to ensure you that will do whatever we can to support you during this investigative period.

With this said, it's important to understand that we try to match the needs of children with the strengths of your foster family in order to make a good match. When this is done, I believe the likelihood of an allegation being made against a foster parent is reduced significantly. It also is important that you update your assigned social worker on the challenges and stresses that you are experiencing in parenting your foster child since we can provide additional supports and services to assist you and your family.

I believe we can minimize any allegations made against you or your family if we work collaboratively, share information timely and provide you with the additional supports.

As I have shared previously, the State is mandating foster parent training for all foster homes effective January 1, 2011. The good news is that we have already mandated foster parent training so this will not be a change in our practice. Our ongoing challenge is to ensure that all of our current licensed foster homes meet their foundation and ongoing training requirements. As I noted in my previous "Jesse's Corner" article, we have some foster parents that have not completed their training so "please" contact Shari Rather at (262)548-7267 and get your training hours completed.

As always, we appreciate your commitment to fostering in Waukesha County and look forward to working with you and your family!

Jesse



## Training Offered By Waukesha County



### Foundation Training Fall 2010

#### October 9, 2010

Attachment 9:00 to 12:00  
Placement and Separation 12:30 to 3:30

#### October 14, 2010

Sexual Abuse 6:15 to 9:15

#### October 28, 2010

Effects of Fostering on the Family  
Potluck  
6:00 to 9:15

Call Shari Rather to register at (262) 548-7267  
All above Classes are at Waukesha County Health & Human Services  
Enter at Door 6

#### November 6, 2010

Shared Parenting  
9:00 AM to 3:30 PM  
Elmbrook Church

Call Shari Rather to register at (262) 548-7267



#### Parent Café

#### November 18, 2010

5:30—8:30 PM

Center for Excellence

Call to register: (262) 548-8080  
Child care and dinner provided

## Training

### Parents Place Programs

262-549-5575

[www.ppacinc.org](http://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.

### A Support & Educational Program for Parents with Children Facing Multiple Challenges

This class is on-going and meets every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month from 6 - 7:30 p.m.

This is a support and education program for parents who have children experiencing the following:

- Attention deficits
- Anger management problems
- Sensory integration issues
- Poor social skills & self-esteem issues

Parents will gain support, share experiences, learn about new resources and listen to experts on several topics.

The child's class will meet separate from parents and offer education focused on each child's developmental stage. Through art and play activities, they will build self-esteem, social and organizational skills.

### Parenting Between Two Homes

Meets every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month from 6 - 7:30 p.m.  
Divorce can leave parents frustrated and children torn between two homes. This group will offer suggestions on how to put a halt to this damaging process, so you can maintain your balance and integrity.

### Playgroup

Tuesdays or Wednesdays

9:30 - 11:00 a.m.

A free on-going group for parents, grandparents, or primary caregivers and children

**WFAPA—Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association**

WFAPA is a peer and volunteer-based organization that supports and advocates for foster and adoptive parents by offering training and support programs. WFAPA advocates for legislative measures with our fellow representatives in Madison.

WFAPA's conferences bring in highly qualified speakers who help educate on how to handle and better understand tough issues.

WFAPA conferences reach a statewide population, and encourage networking among foster and adoptive parents. You never know who might have an answer for you!

WFAPA also educates the public and brings more positive light to foster and adoptive parenting through stories in different areas of the media (including radio, newspaper, etc.) and through our quilt, which tells the stories of Wisconsin foster and adoptive children.

**SAAN—Surviving Allegations of Abuse and Neglect**

SAAN is a peer driven support network, the purpose of which is to minimize the trauma of foster and adoptive families while undergoing an allegation without compromising the integrity of that investigation.

Foster parents welcome children into their homes who bring their histories and issues along with them. For this reason, foster and adoptive parents are at a higher risk of some day having an allegation against them

Undergoing an investigation is a stressful and scary situation for anyone, whether or not the allegation is substantiated. SAAN is here to provide information to support you throughout the investigation process.

**FASPP—Foster and Adoptive Support and Preservation Program**

FASPP's mission is to meet the needs of foster and adoptive parents statewide through a network of peer driven support and information which will help to preserve foster and adoptive families.

- Are you under an investigation?
- Do you need information?
- Are you feeling lost?

If so, FASPP may be able to help! Our FASPP volunteers are highly trained to provide you with information and/or resources to guide you through various issues. FASPP is made up of volunteers—fellow foster or adoptive parents.

Northern: 1-715-938-6110

Northeast: 1-715-938-6120  
1-715-938-6130

Midstate: 1-715-938-6140  
1-715-938-6150

You can call any of the numbers listed—it does not have to be your region!

**Support Waukesha County  
Human Services**

**Purchase a Coupon Booklet for**



**Each coupon booklet includes:**

- One **\$10 off coupon** to use on a single regular or sale price merchandise item of \$10 or more throughout the store. You're getting paid back twice the amount of your \$5 donation!
- Six 20% off coupons & one 30% early bird coupon (6 am – 10 am).
- Exclusive Bonus coupons & 3 web-exclusive offers.

**Coupon booklets are available from Shari Rather at 548-7267**

**100% of the \$5 coupon booklet price for each one sold is ours to keep!**

**We appreciate your support.**

**Taking Respite  
By Alexandria vonKirschner, MSW**

The term *Respite* is used in the foster care system to mean a break from the day-to-day rigors of parenting high needs children. Interestingly, *respite* comes from the Latin word *respectare*, which means to look back. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd Edition* defines respite as a delay or cessation, for a time, especially of anything distressing or trying, or alternately, as an interval of relief. While foster parenting is hopefully not always a distressing life choice, parents can benefit from a regular time to rest and look back at their family life.

Foster parents are loving, giving people. They not only care about children, but also are willing to open their hearts and their homes to kids who need help. Unfortunately, these caretakers often expend so much energy caring for others, they may have little left for themselves. Foster parents may have the personal expectation that they must be on duty 365 days a year and feel guilty about taking time to recharge their batteries. As the previous discussion of overall wellness shows, in order to be a happy effective foster parent, replenishing your energy in not a luxury, but a necessity.

**Planning To Relax**

Planning for respite time is an important first step in parental stress management. Stress is more easily relieved before it reaches a crisis stage. Schedule your respite break before you are overwhelmed by responsibility and on the verge of burnout. It is also helpful to plan how you will spend your child-free time. Be aware of what you need to refuel yourself and plan activities in your time off to fill in those needs. Identify which elements of overall wellness are most important to you and build these into your mental health breaks. Be sure to balance activity with down time. Sometimes the best stress reducing agenda is no agenda. Remember that relaxation and stress management are not just for respite days. Parents can benefit from daily scheduled time to care for themselves.



**What To Do On A Respite Day**

Spend special focused time with biological children.  
Renew the bond with your spouse/partner.  
Plan adult-geared activities with friends.  
Pursue your hobbies.  
Enjoy a clean house for 24 hours.  
Explore new interests.  
Establish a ritual to delineate respite time.  
Practice doing nothing.



**What Not To Do On A Respite Day**

Clean house.  
Run errands.  
Read parenting books.  
Have other children over for respite.  
Anything that you should do.



**Looking Back**

Arranging a time to look back at our life choices is helpful in staying enthusiastic about our work and course to achieving our goals. Foster parenting is emotionally challenging and labor intense. The rewards of foster parenting are often not immediate and parents wonder if they are truly making a difference. As part of your reflection on being a foster parent, it may be helpful to consider the following questions: Why did I become a foster parent? What were my unspoken expectations about fostering? How did I feel when these expectations were not met? How have I changed since I became a foster parent? Why do I continue to provide foster care? What do I need to feel appreciated? When you are clearer about your needs and expectations, decide with whom to share this information. By planning caring for yourself you are teaching your children about self worth, balancing needs and leading healthier lives overall.



—Reprinted from "Resources"

# October 2010 Foster Parent Spotlight

## Eric & Tammy Godfrey



Eric and Tammy are Waukesha County foster parents who have had 2 placements. Currently, they have a sibling group placed in their care. The Godfreys decided to become foster parents because they love children, but are unable to have their own.

They also felt that becoming foster parents was helpful to their community.

Tammy was born and raised in the Milwaukee area but Eric spent his childhood in quite a few different states before ending up in Wisconsin in 1993. In the summer of 1994, Tammy and Eric met while fishing with a mutual friend. Tammy was having a hard time launching the boat using her brother's truck, so Eric offered to back the boat in for her. They have been together for 16 years and were married in September 2005. The Godfreys currently reside in Brookfield.

Eric works at Metal-Era in Waukesha, where he has been employed for 11 years. Tammy has spent the last 5 years working for General Mills in Milwaukee. They enjoy fishing, playing Bocce in leagues, working around the yard, and cooking. The Godfreys have attended all the required trainings as well as other trainings that have been offered. These have helped the couple look at things differently and see both sides of a problem. They find support in each other, as well as their family and social worker.

Through fostering, they have been rewarded with seeing the children in their care happy and safe. They enjoyed seeing the mom of their first foster child work so hard to get her child back

and although it was hard to see the child go, it was good to see the family be reunited. The challenges that Tammy and Eric have faced are understanding birth parents and realizing that there are issues that they have no control over.

Tammy and Eric feel that they have been blessed with opportunities to care for wonderful children. Although they have faced challenges, they feel that it has been worth all the time and effort. Their advice to other foster parents is to be patient. Foster parenting is a learning experience for both the foster parent and the foster child. There are no magic cures but time helps. Kids will see the love you give them and will feel safe and comforted knowing that you care. Cherish the love these children give back – even after all they have been through. Finally, take one day at a time.



### 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  
Judy David..... 414-461-5403  
David Mersfelder .... 262-542-2926  
Nikki Mertens..... 262-246-6180

Lisa Roberts, 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 2010 Placements

Regular Foster Care:  
44 Children

Treatment Foster Care:  
17 Children

Group Homes:  
2 Children

Residential Care Facilities:  
11 Children

Relative Placements:  
65 Children

Total Homes Assisting Other  
Counties  
17Homes

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

Angie Briggs ..... 262-548-7275

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

Susan Peck..... 262-548-7348

Janice 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

Rick Wimmer..... 262-548-7359

### 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.



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