



Resource Family Connection

News, Events and Information Benefiting
the Children of Waukesha County

April 2013



Supporting Young People When It Is Time for Court

Most young people in foster care are invited to attend court, to be involved in the proceedings, and sometimes testify. That's a good thing, because hearing from children helps judges make appropriate decisions. But that doesn't mean being in court is easy for kids.

In fact, many young people report feeling anxious, angry, and frustrated with their experiences in court (Zinn & Slowriver, 2008). To chance this, resource parents must know how to prepare children for court and support them afterwards.

Court Can Be Scary for Kids

Court is hugely important to children in foster care. After all, it's where decisions are made about whether they can go home. If children are crime victims, court is where the person whom committed the crime - possibly a family member - will be tired and, if needed, sentenced. Give the seriousness of the issues being decided, simply knowing court is being held can be anxiety producing.

Being present in court can be even more so. Children may feel scared and uncomfortable about testifying in front of judges, lawyers, and people they don't know. Memories of their abuse or neglect may rise to the surface. They may experience overwhelming emotions. If the abuser is a loved one, children may blame themselves for the charges against that person. Or they may think that if they testify about the maltreatment they won't get to go home. There may be feelings of intense self-blame, especially if the child's brothers or sisters have also been placed in care and are upset with them for disclosing the abuse and neglect (Jenkins, 2008).

A Resource Parent's Role

Fortunately, there's a lot caregivers can do to support children in foster care around court.

Before Court

Educate yourself. Foster parents and kinship caregivers must understand how the court process works and who the different players are.

Your licensing social worker is a good source for this information, as he or she will be able to provide you with details about how your particular judicial district works. A good sources for learning about relevant court procedures is:

- Help Your Kids Help Themselves: A Parent's Guide to the Juvenile Justice Process. <http://bit.ly/Sfn.YVy>. Explains what happens if a child in your care commits a crime.

Prepare the child. As mentioned above, the court process can be nerve-racking for children. Fortunately, most resource parents naturally do a lot of things for children that indirectly help them prepare for and cope with the stresses of the court process. These include getting to know and building a trusting relationship with the child, nurturing the child, and reaching out to birth families through the shared parenting approach.

It is important to be able to provide answers to the questions children have about court. The child's attorney and the child's social worker will probably be the best people to answer the child's ques-

tions. However, sometimes it falls to foster parents and kinship parents to respond, so you should be ready to questions* such as:

Child's Initial Questions

- What does the courtroom look like?
- Who will be in the courtroom?
- What does each person in the courtroom do?
- Where will I sit? Who will sit next to me?

Child's Ongoing Questions

- What is the purpose of the hearing?
- Who will be attending the hearing?
- Will I be expected to speak? What if I do not want to speak? Can another means of communication be used?
- What should I do if I have questions, need to use the bathroom, or feel scared?
- How am I expected to behave? What happens if I misbehave?
- Can I bring quiet toys to court?
- Can I bring a support person or item to court?
- How should I dress for court? Why is attire important?
- How long will the hearing last?
- How long will the child have to wait for the hearing?
- Where will the child wait for the hearing?

Visiting the courthouse in advance is one way to allay children's fears and answer their questions. Contact the child's social worker to see about arranging a field trip to the courthouse. Be sure to bring books or appropriate toys on this outing, in case you must wait.

More Tips for Preparing Children for Court

- Normalize anxiety. Reassure children that anxiety about court is normal and everyone, including social workers and lawyers, experience it.
- Ensure the child understands that sometimes several hearings are held and they may have to return to court.
- Even if they aren't attending, tell children that a hearing about them is scheduled. This may cause some anxiety, but it is better than an "out of the blue" announcement about the court's decision.
- If the child is not attending court but wishes to write a letter to the judge, make it clear the letter will be read by all parties at the hearing.
- You can't know in advance what will be decided in court, so don't make promises to children you can't keep (e.g., that they'll never be asked to talk about their abuse or neglect in court again).
- Avoid criticizing any parties in the case. It's okay to describe an individual's behavior as bad, but not the individual him or herself.
- Never give gifts or rewards to a child for testifying in court. This could make it seem as if you are trying to influence the child's testimony.
- Be sure to thank the child for their courage and their willingness to be involved in the court process.

Source: Baldwin, 1998

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Lisa's Corner

Lisa Roberts
Child & Family Services
Division Manager

I recently had the honor and pleasure to celebrate the retirement of one of our social work supervisors, Don Daniels. Don has worked in the area of child protective services, foster care/alternative placements and most recently children with long term special needs. He provided supports and services to children and families in Waukesha County for 30 years! His retirement party was a wonderful opportunity to reflect on how amazing and committed not only he, but all the social workers and supervisors in Waukesha County really are. Our social workers and supervisors dedicate their lives to helping others, supporting families and keeping kids safe. Their passion, compassion, professionalism, enthusiasm, energy, diligence and dedication never ceases to amaze me. This isn't just a "job" for these folks and I want to take a minute to thank not only Don for all of his years of service but to thank all of the social workers and supervisors for all that they do and the sacrifices they make to help our families and our community.

Don's retirement is just one in a long string of personnel changes occurring at the Department. One of our seasoned social workers is moving into a different division to utilize her therapeutic skills working with adolescents struggling with sexual issues. Another long time social worker has been promoted to a supervisor position in the Adolescent and Family Division. And, Shari, one of our foster care licensing coordinators is planning her retirement this summer. We are certainly happy for each of them and wish them the best but will also miss each of them as they head off on their new adventures.

Our long time juvenile court commissioner, Linda Georgeson, retired recently and has been replaced by Linda Saafir who was an attorney in our corporation counsel's office for many years. Commissioner Saafir is excited about her opportunity to help our families and juveniles in juvenile court. We met recently to discuss how to make our permanency reviews and other hearings most meaningful. First and foremost, Commissioner Saafir, like Judge Bohren, is interested in hearing from you. You are all some of the best advocates we have for the kids in our system. Please do not be afraid to attend these hearings and share your thoughts and opinions. Also, bring the kids so they can be a part of the process. All of the decisions made affect them. Let's use these times as teaching opportunities to help our kids learn how to speak up, express their wants and needs and advocate for themselves. What wonderful, invaluable, lifelong skills we can be helping them develop.

All of these changes made me stop and think about how change and loss (even when it's from a happy occasion like a retirement or promotion, etc) can be extremely difficult and challenging for all of us, young and old alike! Imagine, if we react so strongly to the everyday changes happening around us, what the kids in our system must go through considering the significant changes they experience – new home, new caretakers, new school, new friends, new providers, etc.! Resiliency is really the key to handling the challenges, changes and losses life throws at us. Consider some of the things that help to build resiliency...create and nurture strong connections/relationships, recognize that change is a natural part of life, take care of yourself, maintain routines, work toward goals, cling to a hopeful outlook, nurture a positive self view and help yourself by helping others! There are lots of ways to build these skills in ourselves as well as to help our kids build resilience. Keep up the great work you are doing and realize that the time and energy you put into our kids today will positively affect them for the rest of their lives! Thank you for all you do!

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After Court*

In an ideal world, after a hearing the attorney for the child should debrief the child about the experience. However, sometimes it falls to resource parents or the child's caseworker to do this.

* Adapted from New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children, 2008

Whoever does the debriefing should begin by thanking the child for their courage and the part they played in the court process. Make sure the child understands what happened, what the implications of the hearing are for the child, and what happens next.

How People in Different Roles Can Prepare Children for Court*	
Attorney for the Child	The attorney for the child makes certain the child is aware of the hearing and lets the child know he/she is entitled but not required to attend. The attorney is the point person for familiarizing the child with all aspects of the hearing, for explaining what is going to happen, and determining the child's preferences and wishes so that they can be taken into consideration.
Child Welfare Worker	This caseworker is also a source of information and can answer questions about the purpose and expectations of the hearing. Discussing who will be in court, what the child will see, and what is expected of the child will help alleviate stress and provide a better understanding of what to expect.
Guardian ad Litem	The GAL is a specially trained person appointed by the court who volunteers his or her time to investigate the facts of a case and make recommendations to the court on what is in the child's best interest. The GAL can be a resource and can share insight if he or she has a connection with the child.
Foster Parent	Foster parents should support the child and provide reassurance about the hearing, answer questions, encourage participation, and support the child's decision whether to attend court.
Birth Parent	Where appropriate, birth parents can speak to the child about the hearing, answer questions, encourage participation, and support the child's decision whether to attend court.
Judge	The judge can request that children attend their court hearings and can ask why a child is not in court. It is not the responsibility of the judge to determine if a child has been prepared for court and proceed accordingly.

Licensing Tips

According to DCF 56 Foster Parents should notify the supervising department (Waukesha County Human Services) no later than the end of the next working day when the foster home's telephone number is changed. This has been a real issue of late. Another issue has been having an adult relative or friend move into your home again. The Department needs to be notified to ensure the safety of the children in the home. Background checks must be completed immediately by law and licensing standard. Please help us maintain our high standard by making the proper notification.

Thank you.

Shari

Advice for Foster Parents About Going to Court

When it comes to court, foster parents have a vital role to play. Although judges have the responsibility to make decisions about children, they can only make good decisions if they receive good information. Foster parents can have a huge impact on the lives and welfare of children by attending court and sharing information about the children in their homes.

Your Rights

Foster parents have a legal right to be **notified** of the following important court hearings for children in foster care. Foster parents also have a legal right to **participate** in these hearings:

- **Review Hearings.** Held every six months until the child is in a permanent home and the case is closed. Can be combined with Permanency hearings.
- **Permanency Hearings.** Must be held by the twelfth month the child is in care and every six months thereafter. Can be combined with Review hearings.
- **Post-TPR Review Hearings.** If termination of parental rights occurs, these hearings are held every six months until the child is in a permanent home and the case is closed.

Other Important Hearings

Although they do not have a right to be notified or to participate in them, there are two other types of court hearing that foster parents are often involved in:

- **Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Hearings.** These occur only when necessary. Foster parents may be called as witnesses during Termination of Parental Rights hearings, especially if they have done shared parenting or are willing to adopt.

Stay Informed and Know Your Role

It is very important for you to stay informed about court hearings and ensure that your voice is heard throughout the process. You can also play an important role in making sure that the children's voices are heard at every step along the way. If you have questions about the court proceedings or schedule of hearings, talk to your child's social worker.

Participate in the Court Process

You are an important part of the professional team. Your input at every decision point is essential to ensuring the best interests of the child will be met. It is also understandable to feel nervous about participating in court. Being prepared will help you feel less nervous. Here are some tips to help you be an effective participant in the court process.

Tips for Participating in Court

- Stay informed about court dates and times. Speak up and ask for information if you do not feel you are getting what you need.
- Ask the social worker and attorneys involved with the case to explain the purpose of each hearing and to help you understand your role.
- Always arrive at least 15–30 minutes early for court hearings to allow time to get through security and find the correct courtroom. However, you should also be prepared to wait; courts are busy and there are often delays.
- Bring the child or children whose hearing you are attending, but make child care arrangements for other children in your care.
- Dress professionally. Do not chew gum, eat, or drink anything in the courtroom. Turn off your cell phone.
- Bring records with you. This can include notes you have made about the child's progress while in your care, a log of doctor's appointments, school records, and notes related to visits with the birth family.

- Keep in mind that any written materials you bring may be requested by and copied by all attorneys for the official record.
- When you speak, speak slowly, clearly, and using clear and professional language. Give all of your answers out loud, do not simply nod or shake your head. Refer to the judge as "Your Honor."
- Be as clear and complete as possible when responding to questions or offering information about the child so that the judge will have adequate information upon which to make a decision.
- Avoid appearing to be hostile to or against the birth family. The court often listens best to foster parents who have truly attempted to work with birth families and who are not focused on a personal objective/agenda (e.g., getting the child to stay permanently in their home).
- When asked to give sworn testimony, make sure you have discussed this with the attorney and you understand what this means.
- If your religious beliefs prevent you from taking an oath, inform the lawyers and social worker ahead of time so that an alternate pledge can be arranged.
- Prepare yourself by reviewing the list of common questions (see below).
- Talk to other foster parents about their experiences in court.
- Relax - remember, you are an important part of the team!

Adapted from New York State Citizens' Coalition for Children, 2006 (<http://nysccc.org/>)

Common Questions Foster Parents Are Asked in Court

- How long have you been a foster parent, and how many children have you cared for?
- How long have you known this particular child? Did you have a relationship with this child before you became her foster parent?
- Do you have any special training or experience related to caring for children?
- What was the physical and emotional condition of this child when she first came into your home?
- What changes have you noticed in the child's behavior, emotional state, or physical condition since being in your home?
- Describe the child's typical day.
- Describe your relationship with the child's birth parents.
- Have you observed the child interacting with her parents? Can you describe the interaction? You may be asked to give specific dates or details for these observations.
- Describe the nature of the child's contact with the birth parents - such as dates and length of visits, phone calls, gifts, etc.
- How does the child react and/or behave before and after contact with her birth parents?
- How is the child doing in school?
- How is the child's health? When was the last time the child went to the doctor?
- What other activities (sports, recreation, music, church, etc.) is the child involved in?
- What concerns do you have?
- If reunification does not happen for this child, are you interested in making a permanent commitment to the child through adoption or guardianship?

Adapted from New York State Citizens' Coalition for Children, 2006 (<http://nysccc.org/>)

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Training and Events



Training Offered By Waukesha County

Parent Café

April 11, 2013
5:30 PM
Center for Excellence
N4W22000 Bluemound Road
Waukesha
To register for childcare, RSVP or for questions call, 262-548-8080.



Waukesha County Foster Parent Required Pre-Placement Training

Prospective Foster Parents need to do Part 1 of the training on the following website: <http://www.wcwts.wisc.edu/foster-parent-training> (Please bring your training certificates to the class)

We will then meet to discuss the learning points and answer your questions.
April 8, 2013
6:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Waukesha County Human Services
500 Riverview Ave.
Brookfield Room G137 - Enter Door 6.
Call Shari Rather to register at 262-548-7267.

Relative Caregivers Support/ Education Group

Third Tuesday of each month.
April 16, 2013
6:00 PM to 7:00 PM
Parents Place
1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI
262-549-5575
Free childcare available. Please call Parents Place to reserve your spot.
Waukesha County Relative Resource Families
Please RSVP to Janis (262-896-8069) or Libby (262-548-7277)

Foundation Training

Required for Level 2 Foster Home
4/2/13 Impact of Trauma on Child Development
4/9/13 Attachment
4/16/13 Placement and Separation
4/23/13 Positive Guidance and Discipline
4/30/13 Effects of Fostering on the Family
All classes are in the Brookfield Room at Waukesha County Human Services. Enter Door 6.
All classes are from 5:30 to 8:30 PM.
Register at <http://wcpds.wisc.edu/pds-online/>

Trauma Informed Parenting For Waukesha County Resource Families Sponsored by the Southern Partnership Presented by Kathy Mullooly and Bob Alioto

4/13/13 Intro. To Trauma Informed Parenting
4/13/13 Trauma 101
4/27/13 Understanding Trauma's Effects
4/27/13 Building a Safe Place
5/11/13 Dealing with Feelings & Behaviors
5/11/13 Connections & Healing
6/1/13 Becoming an Advocate
6/1/13 Taking Care of Yourself
All classes are in the Brookfield Room at Waukesha County Human Services. Enter Door 6.
All classes are from 9:00AM to 3:30 PM.
Lunch will be provided.
Call Shari Rather to register 262-548-7267.

The Court Process

April 18, 2013
5:45 PM to 8:00 PM
Waukesha County Human Services
500 Riverview Ave.
Brookfield Room G137 - Enter Door 6.
Call Shari Rather to register at 262-548-7267.

SAVE THE DATE

- **Annual Meeting**
May 9, 2013
5:30 PM
Center for Excellence

Training

Parents Place Programs
262-549-5575 www.ppacinc.org

- **Love and Logic**
Monday, April 1 - 29 from 6:00 - 7:30 PM
- **Teaching Cooperation and Self Control**
Monday, May 6 - 20 from 6:00 - 7:30 PM
- **Special Workshop - Bullying**
Wednesday, May 29 from 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Royal Family Kids' Camps

Royal Family Kids' Camp is a one week resident summer camp especially designed with the foster child and other at-risk children in mind.
When and where is Camp? August 19 - 23, 2013 at Oakwood Church
What is the cost? The cost is covered by local business and individuals who care about children.
For more information, contact Shari Rather at (262)548-7267.

Contact Numbers:

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
262-548-7212

Rebecca Hollister, Supervisor
262-548-7271

Mary Alice Grosser, Supervisor
262-548-7272

Kathy Mullooly, Supervisor
262-896-6832

Shari Rather, Foster Care Coord.
262-548-7267

Libby Sinclair, Relative Licensing
262-548-7277

Social Workers:

Jennifer Adler..... 262-548-7265

Bob Alioto..... 262-548-7262

Suzanne Arnold..... 262-548-7348

Megan Fishler..... 262-896-8570

Laura Jahnke..... 262-548-7359

Becca Kuester..... 262-896-6857

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

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

Kinship Workers:

Linda Finn..... 262-548-7254

Deb Fosberg..... 262-548-7256

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

If an Allegation of Abuse or Neglect has been made against you, please call:

FASPP
Norma Schoenberg
920-922-9627

February 2013 Placements

Regular Foster Care: 34 Children	Treatment Foster Care: 17 Children	Group Homes: 1 Children	Residential Care Facilities: 8 Children
Relative Placements: 45 Children	Level 2 Foster Homes: 111 Homes	Level 1 Foster Homes: 45 Homes	Total Homes Assisting Other Counties 16 Homes

