



Resource Family Connection

News, Events and Information Benefiting
the Children of Waukesha County

June 2015



Shared Parenting: Putting the Needs of Children First By: Coalition for Children, Youth and Families

Imagine your favorite potted plant. Now picture someone taking that plant and cutting it off where the plant meets the soil and sticking the remaining stem into a new pot of dirt. The plant doesn't thrive and yet you gave it a great new pot with fresh soil, water, and organic fertilizer. Must be something wrong with that plant...

Or is it that we, as a system, have just cut the child off from the roots of his family and taken him out of his familiar soil? What if we can help him to retain his roots while we're temporarily replanting him until the first pot is able to mend a few holes? (*Thanks to the Institute of Human Services for the example.*)

Shared parenting is the newest term for what some foster families have been doing all along—welcoming a relationship with the family of the child in care. It happens successfully when foster parents and parents work together to raise children.

Toni, an experienced Wisconsin foster parent, says that, "Shared parenting involves opening your home to a child's family for visits, frequent communication, and making decisions together."



Shared parenting is a philosophy that governs the way foster families and families involved with the system work together. It emphasizes the key role foster parents play in keeping children connected to their families, while at the same time allowing the children's parents to remain the experts—the parents—on their children. Foster parents are key in helping to give the natural parents credibility and confidence.

When kids in care see two families working together and giving the okay to have a relationship with both families, they experience less stress and don't have to worry as much about loyalty to either family. Shared parenting can result in kids having shorter placements and quicker returns home. Even in cases where kids can't return home, shared parenting often helps kids put the pieces of their life together more easily.

Initial Meeting

Upon initially meeting with a child's family, try to get information from the parents about the child. Parents need to be empowered. They are an excellent resource for gaining insights into the needs of the child in your care. You might also ask if there are others (family friend, mentor, favorite aunt, grandparent, etc.) who could or should be involved in the parenting or caretaking process.

- ⚙ Discuss the specific needs of the child and how the needs can be met. How will the IEP plan be implemented? When does he or she get meds? Is there an important blanket or bedtime ritual that should be maintained?
- ⚙ Outline specifics such as schedules, roles, and responsibilities. Who will make the doctor's appointments? Will the child's parents and foster parents be able to attend parent-teacher conferences? How will the child get to the visits?
- ⚙ Anticipate disagreements and discuss ways that you can work together to resolve them.
- ⚙ Discuss the family's expectations about contacts and visits within the

foster home, birth home and community. Are weekly visits enough? Are they doable with everyone's schedule? Can the child call the family whenever he wants or just at certain times of the day?

Developing connections

The following are some suggestions in initially developing this relationship.

- ⚙ Welcome the child's family into your home, and set boundaries with both the parents and child about any areas that are off limits to others (usually bedrooms). Or go with the child and the family if the child wants to give a tour of the whole house.
- ⚙ Encourage regular contact between parents and children, as approved by the placing agency. Help make parents feel comfortable visiting in the foster home, or work with the family to find a neutral spot where everyone feels comfortable (school, a mall, library, restaurant, etc.).
- ⚙ Reassure the parents that your job as a foster parent is to keep the child safe and provide temporary care. Remind them that you are not a replacement for the child's parents.
- ⚙ Encourage regular contact between the adults about the child's health, behavior, school, friends, community, and job.
- ⚙ Take photos of the child within the foster home along with photos during visits with family. Give your child's family copies of these photos.
- ⚙ If possible, ask the parents to schedule appointments for the child or try to accommodate the parents' schedule when setting up appointments.
- ⚙ Encourage the birth parent to participate and have input into decisions about child care, school, medical, extra curricular activities, religious, and cultural events.

It might be easy to become overwhelmed or get discouraged about all the extra things that you should do—especially because you're already doing a lot just to care for the children placed in your home.

However, it might be helpful if you try to imagine that you're the one who has a child in care and just how grateful you'd be if someone were doing those extra things to keep you involved.

Recognizing parent strengths

Recognize the strengths of the parents, and praise them for their efforts and successes. Examples include the following:

- ⚙ "You sure have good ideas about how to handle Juan's tantrums. I'm glad you have shared this with me."
- ⚙ "I sure appreciate seeing you every week. It helps Juan see that we get along."
- ⚙ Turning negative attributes into positive strengths can be trying. Sometimes a parent may question the foster parent's quality of care of their child. Turn this into a positive strength by saying, "It seems like you really care about Juan. For his sake, I want to make sure that we agree on what to do next."

You build trust if you respect the parent's strengths.

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FAMILY HIGHLIGHT

The Koenings Family

We are proud and honored to introduce you to two foster parents who have been selected as the 2015 Governor's Foster Care Award. Chuck and Judy Koenings have been Waukesha County foster parents for the past 8 years. Chuck is a retired experienced clinical therapist who worked at Norris Adolescent Center with teenage boys for 14 years. Judy is an IT manager at an insurance company. Their second placement resulted in having a little boy for 4 years, which was far longer than they had anticipated. They embraced shared parenting with a mother who had significant mental health needs and with the child's grandmother. Ultimately this child was reunified with the mother and the Koenings remain an ongoing support system for the family. They have requested placements in which they can continue to do shared parenting with birth parents, feeling this is their strength and embracing the philosophy that reunification is the best permanency plan for children whenever possible. They are kind, compassionate and supportive toward foster children, their parents and extended family.

Chuck and Judy have had a 14-year-old girl in their home since August, 2014. They have developed a close relationship with her and continually make efforts toward shared parenting. Due to their flexibility and expertise in caring for children with challenging behaviors, they are often called with requests for placements. They always consult with the child in their home, stating it is her home too and they want to make sure she is comfortable with any decisions they make.

Because of their interest and expertise in shared parenting, the Koenings were recently approached to participate in the new program called FAST for Infants and Toddlers, a pilot program managed by Lutheran Social Services in which new parents, infants and grandparents are invited to learn new ways to connect with a baby and toddler; strengthen relationships within the family; gain knowledge of community resources and connect with other new parents and grandparents. Chuck and Judy are volunteering as mentors to the families involved in the program and are co-facilitating a support group for family members. Through this experience, Chuck has identified the need for a support group for fathers that he will be developing.

Chuck and Judy continually feel compelled to give of themselves to enhance the quality of life for others. They have been essential in the creation of a newly developed support group for Waukesha County foster parents. Their future goal is to foster infants and toddlers with the goal of mentoring and supporting birth parents to assist in the reunification process. They are deeply respected and valued for their ongoing commitment to the children and families of Waukesha County.

Chuck and Judy practice trauma-informed techniques in parenting the foster children in their care. They have been extremely effective at mitigating challenging behaviors of the children in their care. By always treating birth parents with respect and acceptance, they have demonstrated to children that it is ok to love their parents. Through sustaining relationships with families beyond the period of out-of-home placement, they send the positive message to children and families that they will always be there for them. Through all of their hard work and dedication, they touch multiple lives, resulting in the prevention of abuse and neglect of children and creating hope for so many.

The letter of acknowledgement for the Governor's Foster Care Award stated that they were chosen because of their extraordinary commitment to being a positive influence on children in foster care and consistently going above and beyond what is expected to advocate on behalf of foster youth. We congratulate them on being the recipients of the 2015 Governor's Foster Care Award!



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Be prepared for setbacks

There may be relapses by the parent, and they may not be interested or able to maintain the shared parenting relationship as they had in the past. Talk to your caseworker to keep them informed of the relationship with the birth parent and shared parenting process. You might also want to talk to other foster parents to see how they handled things when there were roadblocks between the families.

Strengthening the shared parenting relationship

Foster parents can promote a healthy relationship between child and parents) through not only their communication and attitude, but also through day-to-day actions, such as:

- ⚙ Ask the birth parent to help with the child's life book. Ask for pictures and stories.
- ⚙ Have children draw pictures, write stories, or poems for their parents.
- ⚙ Invite the birth parent to join in the child's favorite activity with the foster family (family bike ride, playing a board game).
- ⚙ Offer to celebrate special events such as birthday or other family events by inviting your child's family to your home or restaurant.
- ⚙ Once a child has been returned home to his or her family, offer to maintain contact through phone calls and provide support to the family, as approved by the supervising agency.

Foster parents are frequently recognized for helping the children in their care open doors so that the kids can fly on their own. But as a foster parent, you also have a great opportunity to help not just the child, but for his or her family as a whole. As the old adage says, "Give your children roots and wings." Thanks to the many foster parents who are helping to keep those roots intact.

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Random Act of Kindness

We wish to thank St. Dominic Catholic School's K3 teacher, Brenda Kornacki and her K3 students who collected pajamas to give to children in foster care for their service project. We are deeply appreciative of the wonderful pajamas and the great work of the Pajama Program!

Never Underestimate The Valuable and Important Difference You Make In Every Life You Touch.

For The Impact You Make Today Has A Powerful Rippling Effect On Every Tomorrow.





Horeb Springs Hours

330 Spring St. PH (262) 524-3727
 Opening: Saturday, June 6-7 (closed 6/8-12)
 Official Opening: Saturday, June 13
 Closing: Monday, August 30, 7:00 pm

Please note Horeb Springs pool will be closed from 5:00 - 6:00 pm, Saturday, July 18 to prepare for "Oodles of Noodles" night.

August 17 - August 30, Horeb Springs Aquatic Center will close at 7:00 pm

Monday - Friday

6/22-7/30 12:30 - 4:30 pm Open Swim
 6:15 - 8:00 pm Open Swim
 6/15-19, 7/31-8/28* 12:30 - 4:30 pm Open Swim

*Open swim time is split to accommodate swim instruction

Saturday

11:00 am - 12:30 pm (Zero Depth Entry Only)
 12:30 - 8:00 pm Open Swim

Sunday

10:00 am - Noon Family Swim
 12:30 - 7:00 pm Open Swim

Daily Pool Fees 2015

Daily Fees	Open Swim	After 5:00 pm
Children (1-17)	\$3.50	\$2.50
Adults	\$4.50	\$3.50
Seniors	\$1.50	\$1.00

Water Slide Fees (Horeb Springs Aquatic Center Only)

	Regular Rate \$2.50	Discount Rate \$1.50
Monday - Friday	12:45 - 4:15 pm	6:30 - 7:45 pm
Saturday	12:45 - 5:00 pm	5:00 - 7:45 pm
Sunday	12:45 - 5:00pm	5:00 - 6:45 pm

Buchner Pool Hours

223 Oakland Ave. PH (262) 524-3726
 Opening: Saturday, June 6-7 (closed 6/8-12)
 Official Opening: Saturday, June 13
 Closing: Friday, August 28

August 18 - 22 & August 25 - 29 open from 3:00 - 6:00 pm

Please note: Buchner Pool will be closed from 5:00 - 6:00 pm on Saturday, June 27 to prepare for Wild Water West

Monday - Friday

12:30 - 5:00 pm Open Swim
 5:00 - 6:00 pm Family Swim
 6:00 - 8:00 pm Open Swim

Saturday

12:30 - 8:00 pm Open Swim

Sunday

10:00 am - Noon Family Swim
 12:30 - 7:00 pm Open Swim

Clothing Closet Corner

The Foster Care Clothing Closet is a resource established to help meet the clothing needs of children placed in foster care and is available to all resource families. If you have a child placed in your home, please contact your social worker to make arrangements to visit the clothing closet.

We have had a steady stream of donations coming in particularly for younger children and are running out of room. We are currently looking for donations of clothing for older children/teens. If you have a donation you would like to make for this population, please contact Susan Peck at 262-896-8574.

In addition to clothing, the Foster Care Clothing Closet currently has the following items:

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Child Games/ Board Games | Baby Floor Games (3) | Children's Books | Tricycle | Bottle Warmer |
| Stroller | Small Quilts (8-10) | Bags/Backpacks | Water Kettle | Diapers & Wipes |
| Training Pants | Hanging Mobile | Baby Carriers | Pack and Play | Formula (very limited) |
| Shoe Boxes: (containing toiletries) | Blankets | | | |



Save The Date For This Event!

Resource Family Recognition Picnic
 Saturday, July 25, 2015
 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM
 Minooka Park



Training and Events



Contact Numbers:

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
262-548-7212

Eve Altizer, Supervisor
262-548-7272

Rebecca Hollister, Supervisor
262-548-7271

Kathy Mullooly, Supervisor
262-896-6832

Janis Ramos, Foster Care Coord.
262-548-7267

Susan Peck, Foster Care Coord.
262-896-8574

Libby Sinclair, Relative Licensing
262-548-7277

Social Workers:

Tracy Clark 262-548-7270

Megan Fishler 262-896-8570

Laura Jahnke 262-548-7359

Becca Kuester 262-896-6857

Jessica Larsen 262-548-7346

Melissa Lipovsek 262-548-7348

Maria Maurer 262-548-7345

Chelsey Nisbet 262-896-6896

Rachel O'Sullivan 262-548-7262

Stacy Pawlak 262-548-7262

Michael Reed 262-548-7347

Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson 262-548-7273

Linda Senger 262-548-7698

Kinship Workers:

Linda Finn 262-548-7254

Jessica Morris 262-548-7256

Children's Mental Health Outreach
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911

Family Emergency: 211

Foster Parent Mentor

Jen Mersfelder 262-542-2926

David Mersfelder 262-542-2926

Training Offered By Waukesha County

Parent Café

Parent Café's are an educational opportunity for parents to come together and deal with the stressors, worries and challenges of parenting in a supportive environment.

June 16, 2015; October 6, 2015; and December 1, 2015

5:30 PM to 8:00 PM

Center for Excellence, N4W22000 Bluemound Road, Waukesha

To register for childcare, RSVP or for questions call, 262-521-0317.

Waukesha County Foster Parent Orientation

Waukesha Department of Health and Human Services invites you to attend a foster parent orientation meeting. These meetings are open to anyone who is interested in learning about our foster care program. **If you are currently in the process of becoming a licensed foster parent, you are required to attend an orientation session prior to approval of your foster care license.**

We encourage you to complete the online foster parent pre-placement training prior to attending this information session. The training can be found online at <http://wcpwds.wisc.edu/foster-parent-training/>. Please save the certificates after you have completed each module. These are required to become licensed.

When:

June 9, 2015; July 14, 2015; August 11, 2015; September 8, 2015; October 13, 2015; November 10, 2015; and December 8, 2015

All orientation sessions occur from 6:00 - 8:00 PM

Where: Human Services Center, 514 Riverview Ave., Waukesha, WI 53188

To register for an orientation session, contact your foster care coordinator.



Relative Caregivers Support/Education Group

Third Tuesday of each month

June 16, 2015

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 (262-548-7267) or Libby (262-548-7277)

Foster Parent Support Group

First Wednesday of each month, beginning

August 5, 2015

6:00 PM to 7:30 PM

Parents Place

1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI

262-549-5575

On-sight daycare is available, but you must register in advance to secure a slot as there may be a cut-off depending on the number of children.



Training

Parents Place Programs

262-549-5575 www.ppacinc.org

- **Love and Logic**®
Mondays, June 1 - 22 from 5:30 - 7:00 PM
- **Calming The Explosive Volcano**
Tuesdays, June 2 - 23 from 6:00 - 7:30 PM
- **Pampering The Parent**
Tuesday, June 16 from 5:30 - 7:00 PM
(Free dinner included with this class)
- **Self-Esteem & Self Worth (parent & child class)**
Wednesdays, June 17 & 24 from 5:30 - 7:00 PM
- **Cook With Your Kids And Learn About Healthy Eating (parent & child class)**
Thursdays, June 18 - July 9 from 1:00 - 2:00 PM

Coalition for Children

www.coalitionforcyf.org

For other training opportunities, see the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families website: www.coalitionforcyf.org. They offer interactive webinars that count toward the required face to face training hours.

April 2015 Placements

Waukesha County Licensed Homes

Relative/Kinship/Level 1 Placements:
36 Children

Level 2 Placements:

96 Children

Waukesha County Children in Out of Home Placement

Juvenile Corrections: 3 Children
Residential Care Facilities: 10 Children
Group Homes: 1 Child
Shelter Care: 1 Child

Relative/Kinship Level 1 Foster Homes: 40 Children
Treatment Foster Homes: 11 Children

Missing From Care: 1 Child
Inpatient Hospital: 1 Child

Level 2 Foster Homes: 37 Children
Total Children in OHC: 105 Children

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

FASPP
Norma Schoenberg
920-922-9627

