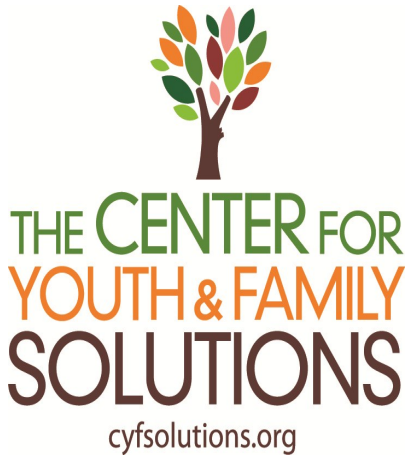


The Foster Caregiver Connection

Connecting Foster Caregivers in Central and Downstate

New Beginnings



"We can't change the past, but we can make a difference today, and from now on..."

As a trainer for Parenting Skills Training, I often hear from foster parents about a wide array of emotions concerning the foster children who come into the foster home. Some times it is frustration or disappointment. Other times it is sadness or regret that children must suffer so much trauma. All of us know these are very normal reactions to the foster care experience. If we let them, these feelings can get in the way of helping the child heal. Knowing these feelings are understandable is important so we don't let them get in the way helping children know they are loved, accepted unconditionally, and realize they have a purpose and a future filled with possibilities. The role of a foster parent is to help children achieve in spite of where they have been or what they have experienced. Rather than allowing the intense emo-

tions we feel get in the way of the care we give, we need to gather the energy they produce to help the children placed in our care.

In every way, a foster child experiences a new beginning when first placed in a foster home. Our job is to help this child to feel safe, to feel comfortable, and to feel like an equal part of our family. Doing this is concrete proof that we love them, and are committed to ensuring their needs are met. Helping the foster child experience these feelings also promotes healing and relationship, two critical factors for every child to build resilience for their life's journey.

How do we do this? I know many of our foster caregivers are mindful of the process, every day, in giving encouragement and praise to these children and youth, liberally provided with opportunities for decision-making when possible, and for following their passions by taking part in music, drama, sports, clubs, - activities which provide new information and skills

to further develop interests they already demonstrate.

The words we choose contain power, for good or evil, so we choose them carefully to build, uplift, and inspire the children and youth in our care. "Thank you", "great job", "you're amazing", or a simple "I love you" can catch their attention, and impact the way they see and understand the world. A high-five for showing effort at school, or a thumbs-up for finishing their chores are just as valuable a response for some, without using words.

So every day, we encourage them, remind them there's a reason they are here, and that they are strong, creative, and worthy of giving and receiving love. We do this with no strings attached, focused on the positive behaviors they are developing, rather than on the challenges we experience now...because "we can make a difference today, and from now on..."



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Happy 1st Birthday to CYFS!

March 1, 2013 was the 1st birthday of The Center for Youth and Family Solutions. It's important to recognize all the people who are part of achieving this milestone, including each of you! Here's a quote from our first Annual Report—

"Our **Foster Care Program** and **Intact Family Services** protect children from abuse and neglect and help them heal from trauma. Our goal is to ensure each child we serve has a safe and stable family to grow up in. In FY 12, ranked among the top performing programs in the state, we reunified **61** children with parents who made the necessary changes to provide a safe and nurturing home and facilitated adoptions or permanent guardianship for **88** children in foster care."

We reached these benchmarks together, because of the work that you do every day, with commitment, compassion, and courage. Thank you so much for being part of this important journey, providing safety and love for almost a thousand infants, children, and youth in foster care (as of March 1, 2013). You are making a difference for good, day by day, step by step, from heart to heart.





The Big Family Calendar

Bloomington

April 8, DCFS Foster Parent Support Group, 6 pm, at Grace Church in Normal.

April 30, Foster Parent Advisory Board Meeting, 6-8 pm, with training on Uniting Pride. RSVP Lois at 309.820.7616.

June 25, Foster Parent Advisory Board, 6-8 pm, with training on Love & Logic. RSVP Lois at 309.820.7616.

June 1, Bake Sale at the Bloomington Farmer's Market.

LaSalle

April 7, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 4 to 6 pm at CYFS.

Peoria

April 16, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 6 to 8 pm, at The Center for Youth and Family Solutions. Guest speaker is Steve Montez from the Peoria Park District, sharing information about summer programming for children and youth. RSVP to Carol at 309.323.6529 to request child care and register for the meeting.

April 19, noon—**Hands Around the Courthouse**, at the Peoria County Courthouse, recognizing Child Abuse Prevention in the month of April.

April 22, Fundraiser at Culver's at 4612 N. University, from 4 to 8 pm. Come join us in support of our Foster Care program, and to help recruit more foster homes—thanks!

April 23, CAB meeting (Community Advisory Board), starts at 6 pm, CYFS Office in Peoria. RSVP Allison at 309.323.6557.

April 25, speaker Dr. Bruce Perry will provide a free presentation on "The Impact of Trauma and Neglect on the Developing Child", at the Embassy Suites in East Peoria. Please call Jackie asap at 309.624.2419 to register.

May 2, Specialized Foster Caregiver Support Group, 6 to 8 pm. RSVP Shannon at 309.323.6542.

June 1, Run Wild 8K Wild Mile Fun Run—for the whole family, a benefit for CYFS at Wild Life Prairie State Park. More information available at cypsolutions.org/RunWild8K.

June 18, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 6 to 8 pm, at The Center for Youth and Family Solutions. Guest speaker is Ashley Bechtold from The Child and Family Connection on Screening and Early Intervention.

July 16, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 6 to 8 pm, at The Center for Youth and Family Solutions. Guest speaker is Carl Cannon from the Peoria Park District, on Youth in Peoria.

Springfield

April 2, May 7, June 4, Foster Caregiver Advisory Board, 5:30 to 7 pm at CYFS. RSVP to Becky or Kaeley, at 217.528.3694.

April 16, May 21, June 18, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 5:30 to 7 pm at CYFS. RSVP to Becky or Kaeley, at 217.528.3694.



The Center for Youth and Family Solutions will be hosting a very special Birth Mother's Day event to honor all birth mother's who placed their child in an adoptive home. Birthmothers whose children are placed in foster care are often forgotten when it comes to thinking of their role in a child's life. They were the first mothers and despite their challenges, remain very important to the child.

Come join us on May 11 from 11:00-11:30 for Birth Mother's Day Balloon Release. This will be a good time to remember that without her, your child would not be in your life. For more information contact your licensing worker.





Mary Kay's Corner

Fostering Strong Sibling Relationships

Remember the fun you had as a child when the weather got warm and the days grew longer? Going outside after a spring rain and splashing in puddles or playing tag in the warm spring grass with your brother or sisters. Children, especially children who have experienced trauma, need regular carefree time spent with their siblings to soften the impact of trauma experienced by abuse and neglect.

With approximately 70 per cent of the children in foster care having another sibling in care, it is really important to preserve their connections to their brothers and sisters. As foster parents you can play a vital role in securing sibling relationships by facilitating and participating in sibling visits.

While DCFS rules require sibling visits for children in care to occur at least two times a month, there are many ways foster parents can encourage sibling relationships. This can begin by simply listening to the child as they share stories, thoughts or concerns about their brothers and sisters. Empathize with them and try not to minimize their concerns. Let them know you understand how important these relationships are and that you will do whatever you can to help them keep these connections.

Another way to help sustain sibling relationships is to provide opportunities for fun and positive interaction between the children. Having their foster parent facilitate and participate in the visits allows the child to feel more secure with both you and the relationships they are keeping with their siblings. As a foster parent, you will learn a great deal from the child's interaction with his or her siblings. This is information that will help you as you help the child.

Remember foster parents who help with sibling visits can be reimbursed for supervising the visits and for transportation. A foster parent who hosts an overnight or weekend visit in their home can be reimbursed \$100 for supervising the visit. If you supervise shorter visits you can be reimbursed \$25 an hour, up to four hours. Reimbursement for supervising visits is capped at \$100 per month. Additionally driving a child to and from a visit is also eligible for reimbursement at a rate of \$0.50 per mile. The maximum reimbursement for travel each month is \$50. Talk to your case manager to learn more about completing the appropriate paperwork for these reimbursements.

Foster parents can also work together to help siblings in care stay connected. Get to know the other sibling's caregivers. Perhaps you can think of ways to work together to make sure the children continue to have healthy contact with each other. Consider switching off on hosting sibling visits. Other ways to give kids more time to interact with each other between face to face visits may include phone calls, letter writing, or even Skyping. Be creative! Remember anything that you do to encourage ongoing contact with siblings will make a powerful statement to the children about the connection they have to each other.

Mary Kay

Remember to check into the **FOSTER PARENT RESOURCE PAGE** on the CYFS website. Your licensing worker will give you the password that will keep you connected to important updates and information for CYFS foster parents.



Important Phone Numbers

Child Abuse Hotline

800.252.2873

Missing Child Helpline

866.503.0184

Advocacy Office

800.232.3798/217.524.2029

Foster Parent Hotline

800.624.KIDS/800.624.5437

Adoption Hotline

800.572.2390

Inspector General

800.722.9124

Daycare Information

877.746.0829/312.328.2779

Youth Hotline

800.232.3798

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions

2610 W. Richwoods Blvd.
Peoria, IL 61604

Branch offices in Bloomington, Champaign, Danville, Galesburg, LaSalle, Lincoln, Macomb, Rock Island, and Springfield

Phone: 309.323-6600
Website: www.cyfsolutions.org

Branch Offices

Bloomington—Morris	309.820.7616	Lincoln	217.732.3771
Champaign	217.352.5179	Macomb	309.883.1791
Danville	217.443.1772	Peoria	309.323-6600
Galesburg	309.342.1136	Rock Island	309.786.0770
LaSalle	815.223.4007	Springfield	217.528.3694

Achieving Solutions.
Together.



April—Prevent Child Abuse Month

We will see many blue ribbons around our communities during the month of April—if you don't have one, just make one to wear on your lapel throughout the month, in recognition of the work we do and to raise awareness that there's much work still to be done in preventing child abuse. Hope you can take part in some of the local activities—we **can** prevent child abuse every day!



There's no way The Center for Youth and Family Solutions could provide services to families whose children need to be in foster care without you, our amazing foster caregivers. For all the sleepless nights, for countless hours of advocacy for services in the area of education, physical and mental health services, and each time you have gone "above and beyond" for the foster child or youth in your home, please accept our heartfelt thanks.

May—Foster Caregiver Appreciation Month