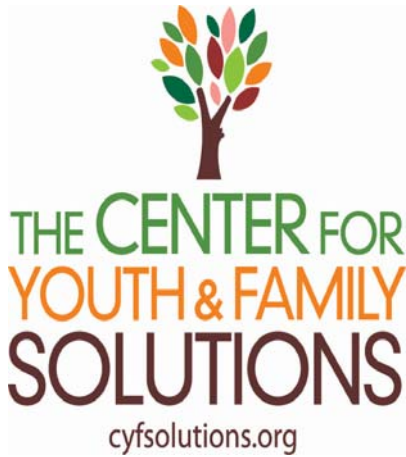


Foster/Adoptive Caregiver Connection

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We Can't Change the Past, but We Can Make a Difference Today!



What things do you anticipate this year? Will one of your foster children go "home?" Or begin visits with a previously absent family member? Is the child's court case headed toward termination of parental rights, or is there permanency on the horizon, either in your home or the home of another prospective adoptive parent?

The children in our care depend upon us in many ways, well beyond meeting their physical needs of food and shelter, medical and educational services, as well as their emotional needs—feeling safe, learning how to trust, being loved and accepted in a family environment. The way we address meeting the needs of children in our care makes a difference in each foster child's life today, no matter what he or she experienced prior to their placement in our foster homes.

Our foster children have very little voice much of the time. Many struggle with sharing what is in

their hearts—feelings of anxiety, fear, doubt, anger, disappointment, despair, among other feelings which often result from their unique experience in loss of family, loss of dreams, loss of connections to their first "world." They may feel invisible, hopeless, powerless—and whether or not the child or youth can express these feelings with words, the feelings are real and

might be expressed in other ways which are destructive to self and/or others.

We can't change the past. But we can come to each foster child where they are (shared by a very wise foster dad in Springfield), and offer love, patience, time, encouragement, and comfort. Yes, we can make a difference today, followed by a brighter tomorrow.



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New DCFS Training—How to Talk with Children About their Sexual Health

The Sexual Health course has new dates open, beginning in January, running through June 30, 2014. Register today so you can select the best date and time for you to attend this important new class designed for caseworkers; foster, adoptive, relative and guardianship parents and parents.

After the training, you will be better prepared to talk with children about preventing and delaying pregnancy, preventing sexually transmitted infections, and recognizing relationships that may not be in their best interest. Participants will also

learn the latest terminology our young people are using to describe sexual and relationship activities. Caseworkers and the caregivers who have attended reported that the course prompted interactions that were interesting, enlightening, and helpful.

This course consists of two, three-hour classes that are interactive and engaging. Classes are scheduled on weekdays, weekday evenings, and Saturdays in order to accommodate everyone's schedule. Contact your licensing worker or check www.DCFSTraining.org for the training schedule. Registration may occur during business hours by calling 1-877-800-3393, option 1.

The Calendar



Bloomington

Monday, January 20, 2014, 5:30 to 7:00 pm, for 10 weeks, Parenting Today's Teen, 15 hrs. training credit. Register by calling Bill at 820-7616 or e-mail at bkinzie@cyfsolutions.org.

Tuesday, January 28, 2014, 6:00 to 8 pm, Foster Caregiver Advisory Board.

Thursday, February 27, 2014, 6:30 to 9:30 pm, Stock the Cellar, at The Castle Theatre, 209 E. Washington, Bloomington. Tickets available online at www.stockthecellar.eventbrite.com.

Champaign

Monday, January 13, 2014, 5:30 to 7:30 pm, Foster Caregiver Support Group.

Thursday, January 16 & 23, 2014, 6:00 to 9:00 pm on, DCFS Training—Sexual Health and Preventing Pregnancy in Youth in Care. CYFS Licensing Worker Carol Groskreutz will be one of the trainers for these two sessions. Another class is scheduled for April 21 and 28. Both of these classes will be held at the CYFS Office in Champaign. Please call your licensing worker if you have questions or would like to register.

Monday, February 10, 2014, 5:30 to 7:30 pm, Foster Caregiver Advisory Board.

Monday, March 10, 2014, 5:30 to 7:30 pm, Foster Caregiver Support Group.

Galesburg

Thursday, January 30, 2014, Meet the new licensing worker in Galesburg, 4 to 5 pm, CYFS Galesburg Office, and 5:20 to 6:20 pm in the board room at Monmouth Public Library in Monmouth. If neither of these times work, please call Amanda at 309-342-1136 to arrange for another time to meet. Discussion will include formation of the Foster Caregiver Advisory Board for the Galesburg area.

Tentative Foster Caregiver Support Groups, 4:00 to 6 pm, February 13 (Galesburg), February 27 (Monmouth), March 13 (Galesburg), 27 (Monmouth). Location will be announced. Please RSVP Amanda at 309-342-1136 for these support group meetings.

Peoria

Tuesday, January 21, 6 :00 to 8:00 pm—Foster Caregiver Support Group. Guest speaker, Gretchen Taylor, discussing "Things to Consider in Fostering Our LGBTQ Foster Youth." RSVP to Carol at 309-323-6529.

Monday, January 27, 6 pm—Adoptive Caregiver Support Group on transracial adoption. Call Sara at 815-223-4007 with questions.



Crockpot Cinnamon Apple Oatmeal—easy!

Slice 2 apples, use as first layer in bottom of crockpot. Sprinkle with 1/4 cup brown sugar, 1 tsp. cinnamon, 2 cups uncooked oatmeal, 2 cups water, and 2 cups milk. Do not stir. Cook overnight on low for 8 to 9 hours. Everyone will wake up to a wonderful smell on a chilly morning, with a great start to a busy winter day.

Tuesday, January 28, 5:30 to 7:00 pm—Foster Caregiver Advisory Board meeting. RSVP to Allison at 309-323-6557 to reserve child care.

Monday, February 3, through Monday, March 31, 6 :00 to 9:00 pm—Parenting Skills Training for foster caregivers in Peoria, for nine consecutive weeks. RSVP to Carol at 309-323-6529.

Tuesday, February 18, 6:00 to 8 pm—Foster Caregiver Support Group. Guest speaker, Sess Walker, discussing "How to Care for Hair and Skin." RSVP to Carol at 309-323-6529.

Friday, February 28 through Saturday, March 1, Bergner's Community Days at Sheridan Village. Coupon books available for \$5 by calling Carol at 309-323-6529.

Tuesday, March 18, 6:00 to 8:00 pm—Foster Caregiver Support Group. Guest speaker, Lori Horgan, DCFS, "How to Use the VTC." RSVP to Carol at 309-323-6529.

Rock Island

Date to be announced-Parenting Skills Training for foster caregivers in Rock Island, for 9 consecutive weeks. Call Denise, Bob, or Lindsay at 309-786-0770 for information/registering.

Tuesday, January 21 and 28, 6:00 to 8:00 pm, Relative Foster Caregiver Introduction to the Foster Care System, with Sue. RSVP to Denise, Bob, or Lindsay at 309.786.0770.

Springfield

Tuesday, January 7, 5:30 to 7:30 pm, Foster Caregiver Advisory Board.

Tuesday, January 21, 5:30 to 7:30 pm, Foster Caregiver Support Group.

Tuesday, February 4, 5:30 to 7:30 pm, Foster Caregiver Advisory Board.

Tuesday, February 18, 5:30 to 7:30 pm, Foster Caregiver Support Group.

Tuesday, March 4, 5:30 to 7:30 pm, Foster Caregiver Advisory Board.

Tuesday, March 18, 5:30 to 7:30 pm, Foster Caregiver Support Group.

ALSO—Informational meetings about adoption and fostering are held at each branch office on the second Tuesday of each month, starting at 5:30 pm.

DCFS is offering several trainings across the region this winter and spring. Please call your licensing worker for information regarding training topics, dates/times, and locations, as well as information on how to register. This information can also be found on-line at www.DCFSTraining.org.



Mary Kay's Corner

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

One of the greatest pleasures I have as the Assistant Director of Licensing is that I have an opportunity to work with you, our CYFS foster parents. Through the Foster Care Advisory Boards, phone conversations and general activities many of you have shared your stories and provided a wealth of information that has been helpful in understanding how our foster care staff and our foster parents work together as a professional child care team. Like any relationship however, this relationship needs to be attended to and not taken for granted. Therefore, in 2014 we remain committed to focusing on ways we can maintain healthy and respectful professional relationships between staff and foster parents.

To better understand this relationship, we are dedicating this column in the next few newsletters to exploring and defining our work. It is hoped that by gaining a better understanding of our roles, expectations and relationships, we will strengthen and sustain each other so the children we serve can receive the best possible care.

In a 2002 research study, a common complaint among foster parents was noted to be that their role was often very unclear. Expectations placed on foster parents may vary depending on the age and circumstances of the child who comes into their home. Additionally, foster parents and foster care workers may not have the same view of the foster parent's role. Some foster workers may assume the foster parent knows more about the practice of foster care or the requirements for care when in fact many foster parents need help in developing a working knowledge of the child welfare system. Some foster parents are hesitant to share their lack of knowledge for fear it will not be received well. To address this, we turned to some of our more seasoned foster parents. They have found a way to provide care and work within the child welfare system and their experience is invaluable.

One seasoned foster parent shares, "Foster parents become foster parents because they love children and want to make a difference to a child who has been hurt or neglected. Training helps foster parents understand some of the challenges they will face as they provide foster care. However, it is not until a child is placed in the home that you truly begin to see how complicated providing the service may be." This was confirmed in another research study that noted, "For foster parents, the desire to be helpful can feel thwarted by the requirements of the child welfare system. It is not as easy as just doing what you think the child needs." As a foster parent, you need to work with the child's worker, the family worker and your licensing worker to ensure all of the necessary mandates and protocols are followed. This can feel very different than stepping into just help and nurture a child.

So how can we develop some clarity of the role of our foster parents? One seasoned foster parent suggested foster parents and the foster care staff read the agency's implementation plan. This plan spells out the rights and responsibilities of the foster parent and the agency. It provides insight into everyone's role and responsibilities. Another foster parent mentioned it was very helpful to her to debrief with her licensing worker. "My licensing worker acts like an interpreter. She knows me and knows how to explain things so I can learn what is needed. Once I have a better understanding of the situation, it is much easier for me to know how to work with all of the staff." This makes some sense because the licensing worker is the first worker the foster parent gets to know and trust. As part of the child welfare team, licensing workers know the foster parent and may be able to help clarify some of the questions or concerns. Utilize your licensing worker!

Another suggestion offered to foster parents was to take advantage of any opportunity to get to know the CYFS staff. This may be by attending support groups, child family team meetings or simply just by taking the time to get to know the child's worker. By getting to know each other as partners in service, we will be more able to openly communicate our thoughts, feelings and concerns. This open communication will strengthen the relationship and enhance the care given to the children.

Communication is a two way street. Staff has been encouraged to add a bit more time to their home visits so they not only get a chance to make sure the foster parent gets all of the necessary information on the child, but also to get to know the foster parent. We can learn so much from each other if we just make the time to talk and listen. Of course, there are things the worker may not be able to share because of confidentiality. Foster parents and staff need to respect this and understand this it is not meant to get in the way of the relationship or the service to the child but rather to ensure everyone's right to privacy is respected. One foster parent stated, "It is okay for me to ask any question, but I have to understand that I may not get an answer or the answer I want. That is okay. At least I know I have done my job and asked."

Our staff appreciates the work that is done 24/7 by our foster parents. We want to make sure we are providing you with the knowledge and support you need to care for your foster children. If you are having a difficult time understanding something or if you feel we can do a better job in supporting you, first talk to your worker and your licensing worker. Creating an awareness of how we can best work together is sometimes all it takes to get us all on the right path. If that does not work, take advantage of meeting with a foster care supervisor. They can be a great resource in helping you understand how the child welfare system works. (cont. pg 4)



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.



Mary Kay's Corner cont.

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In the end, what really matters is that we all take responsibility to tend to these very important professional relationships. After all, the children we serve are counting on us all to do our best on their behalf.

The Need—Medically Complex Foster Caregivers

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions is seeking individuals who are either currently licensed or willing to become licensed in order to provide care, safety, structure, stability and nurturing for the most vulnerable children and youth in foster care, those with a wide array of medical needs. The ideal caregiver is a team player, actively participating in all of the child's needs – transporting the child to various medical and therapy appointments and taking part in child and family team meetings, counseling appointments, and school staffings. In addition to providing care for the child in their home, medically complex caregivers often have the opportunity to work with the child's family, helping with visits, mentoring the parent(s), and allowing phone contact. Medically complex caregivers receive monthly reimbursements for the children placed in their home, along with support services in case management, nursing support, counseling/therapy, and training as needed. Ongoing trainings tailored for medically complex caregivers are provided by the agency, with a minimum of 16 hours required annually. Please contact us through our website, www.cyfsolutions.org or call Jamie at 1-800-788-8881.

