

CYFS Foster Caregiver/Adoptive Parent Connection



THE CENTER FOR
YOUTH & FAMILY
SOLUTIONS
cyfsolutions.org



Many thanks for all you do, every day, for the children and their families!

Inside this Issue

Focus on the positive pg. 1

Calendar pg. 2

Mary Kay's Corner pg. 3

Roller Coaster Ride pg. 4
by foster caregiver Lisa Allen

Focus on the Positive—We All Need This

For most of us, we've all had the moment of trying to remember why we signed up to foster or adopt...and really scratch our heads when we're in the "thick" of it. The times when no one is listening, when the house is a total mess, there's half an hour before the caseworker is coming for a home visit, and Suzie just fell and now has a nose bleed. Did I mention that you also have a headache that could kill a hippo since the 3 doctor's appointments for all of the kids to be current on immunizations this afternoon? And no one was "on their best behavior"...

This is the challenge for every parent, whether foster or adoptive or biological. Also the challenge for every family to make it through the day the best way we can. After all, in the summer when the kids are out of school, there is always more traffic in and out of the house—camp, play dates, band practice, baseball teams and games, short trips to friends or relatives, swimming at the local pool...

Sometimes it helps to remember what we are teaching our children at these times—the value of using empathy for others and their needs or wants, being able to modify or cancel plans at the last minute due to unforeseen issues, finding fun in the basement during the scariest thunderstorm, and no matter how crazy the day may have been, to express love and appreciation at the end of the day to each other, because that's one of the things that "family" can do, one way "family" can make a difference. Personally, I've met many foster, adoptive, and biological parents who are strong in being able to do these things, to not let the things that really don't matter get in the way of the things that really do. And these parents do this every day, something which can change lives over time, in a very good way.

I try to remember it's not the destination that a journey is all about—yes, playing in a national forest or at the beach is a lovely way to spend time together, but there are so many lessons to be shared and learned through everything it takes to get there. If you've seen the Disney/Pixar movie, "Lilo and Stitch", you'll remember Lilo said—"Ohana means family. And family means no one gets left behind or forgotten." That's what we teach, day by day. Enjoy each moment, as nothing lasts forever, except love...



CYFS Foster Caregiver/Adoptive Parent Connection

Galesburg

Tuesday, July 31, August 7, 14, 21, and 28, 6 to 9 pm, Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma, a DCFS training, at LSSI in Nachusa.

Peoria

Tuesday, July 24, 6 to 8 pm, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 6 to 8 pm, Room 144. We will have the opportunity to view a movie, "Camp", released in 2013, the story of a financial advisor who signs up to be a counselor at a camp for kids in the foster care system..."intriguing from the first scene, CAMP portrays the struggles of foster kids: betrayal, anger and lost hope. This movie is an absolute must see!" Discussion will follow. Child care is not available.

Thursday, July 26, 6 to 7:30 pm, Room 144, FCAB meeting.

Saturday, July 28, 9 am to noon, Dream Center Peoria, 2,500 backpacks will be given away. Each child or youth must be accompanied by a parent or a guardian, and must visit a minimum of 5 information booths for area agencies/programs prior to receiving a backpack filled with school supplies, free of charge.

Tuesday, August 21, 6 to 8 pm, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 6 to 8 pm, Room 144. CYFS Foster/ Adoption Conversion Worker Jennifer Durbin will present information with question and answer on the foster care/adoption conversion process. 2 hrs. training credit.

Monday, September 10, 17, 24, October 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, November 5, Updated PST Training, 5:30 to 8:30 PM, 9 consecutive sessions in Room 115 at the Peoria CYFS Office. Contact your licensing worker to register by September 4, 2018. No child care provided. This training is required for all specialized foster care homes.

Tuesday, September 18, 6 to 8 pm, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 6 to 8 pm. CYFS Foster Caregiver Dr. Dawn Michaud, will share information on special education services and programs, and how to help your foster child or youth receive the educational support often needed by children and youth in care. Time will be provided for question and answer. No child care will be provided.



Rock Island

Saturday, August 25, Jordan Rahn Forever Young Run. All the benefits go to help children in Foster Care through the Foster Hope Program. There is a 5K and 1 Mile option. All Foster children can register for FREE! They get a t-shirt and their name goes in a raffle to win various prizes. It is an all day event at Veteran's Park in Atkinson that includes games, live music, food, vendors, petting zoo, beer tent! It's a wonderful event for a wonderful cause put on by the most wonderful family! (who are also foster parents!!) PLEASE SUPPORT THIS EVENT!!!! Sign up instructions are at:

<https://runsignup.com/Race/IL/Atkinson/JordanRahnForeverYoungRun>

Springfield

Wednesday, July 11, Foster Caregiver Appreciation Picnic, 5:30 pm., at Rochester Park. CYFS will provide the food.



As part of your foster home assessment, The Center for Youth and Family Solutions licensing staff provides you with information on how to protect children in our care from risk of harm. When you are first licensed, your licensing worker assessed your home and neighborhood with regards to registered sex offenders. While your worker assesses this risk at your initial licensure, it is the responsibility of each foster parent to take an active role in keeping our kids safe. This begins by knowing where your foster child is and who they hang around with. It also is your responsibility to check the National Sex Offender or State of Illinois Sex Offender list to identify any registered sex offenders who live near your home or in the neighborhoods where your child plays. You can use <http://www.isp.state.il.us/sor/sor.cfm> or <http://www.nsopw.gov> or <http://www.familywatchdog.us/Default.asp> as links to help identify risk. If you do not have a computer to assist in an online search, contact your licensing worker for assistance.

If an offender is found to be living near the foster home or in the neighborhood, you will need to come up with a safety plan and share it with your licensing worker.



Mary Kay's Corner

Summer is in full swing and as many of you already know so is the CYFS review of the CYFS foster parent implementation plan. The plan addresses rights and responsibilities of foster parents. In this edition, we are going to look at some general responsibilities of foster parents.

Your role as a foster parent is important in helping children recover from childhood trauma and experience a better quality of life. Critical to your fostering experience is open communication with all of the CYFS staff who actively participate in caring for our children. To assist with keeping the lines of communication open, foster caregivers are provided contact information for licensing worker, the child's caseworker, after hours and supervisors. As a foster parent, you are encouraged to call whenever you feel you need input or assistance from the staff.

CYFS also holds child family team meetings to assist with this communication. You can attend these and listen to what the care team already knows about the child as well as add important information about what you know about the child needs. Open and honest communication between foster parents and the CYFS team provides a solid foundation for meeting the child's needs and models for the children healthy, respectful ways to interact with others.

Another responsibility foster parents have is to treat children in your care and their families with dignity, respect and consideration. All foster caregivers at CYFS are expected to embrace the agency's mission statement, which ensures each person is treated with dignity, compassion and respect. This goes beyond compliance of the Foster Home Licensing Standards, which state children in the foster homes need to be treated equitably. It encompasses how foster parents behave when working with the children, their families and the child's casework staff. Foster parents need to model supportive, respectful and accepting behavior when addressing the child's culture, ethnicity, religion, and family connections.

The last responsibility we will review is your responsibility to take care of yourself. Yes, this is challenging work sometimes and it can take its toll. You need to take time to re-energize. Sometimes this is as simple as taking a walk or listening to music. Other times it might mean using respite or asking to be put on hold for a month to allow you to rest and regroup. CYFS encourages you to attend support groups or events where you can network with other foster parents. Sometimes just being around others who understand can be a huge stress buster!

As a CYFS foster parent we know you take your responsibilities very seriously. We respect and appreciate that about you. If you have any questions about these or other responsibilities, please contact your licensing worker.

Have a happy and safe summer!

- Mary Kay

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



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Achieving Solutions Together



*On July 1, 2018, The Center for Youth and Family Solutions served 1122 children and youth for the state of Illinois, with the help of more than 667 licensed homes, 73 homes with pending applications, and 17 unlicensed CYFS foster homes that provided for their placement. **Many, many thanks!**



Don't give up!
Take a break, get some rest, but don't give up! You are important in the life of a child!

Roller Coaster Ride

The journey of foster parenting is like a roller coaster. Sometimes the roller coaster is running smoothly up and down around the curves. During this time you and the child are bonding, getting to know each other, playing games, learning attitudes, needs, wants and personality. The child is fitting in to your family and you are adjusting to make sure the child is involved in meals, activities, chores and making friends in the community. You are doing everything to help the child feel secure and loved in your home. The child is learning to adjust to new family rules, responsibility, being a big or little sister or brother. The child is probably excited and scared, not sure what to think about all the love and affection they are receiving.

Then out of the blue the roller coaster slams to a stop and runs backwards. You have no idea what happened, everything was running smoothly, everyone seemed to be adjusting to the changes in the family, but something triggered an emotional or physical or mental break the child becomes troubled. It is during this time we need to remember the trauma the child has been through, the things they have seen or heard. Remember it probably wasn't anything we did to trigger the episode but a smell, vision, or sound. We need to stay calm and not to react to the child's emotions. We cannot react!

This is where the roller coaster seems to spiral out of control for us. We do not always remember to stay calm and to not react. Then we beat ourselves up and cannot seem to get out of the negative thoughts: Maybe we can't do this. Maybe they need more than we can give them. Maybe they would be better off with another family, one that has more experience as a foster parent. During these times, we need to realize parents are not perfect, whether they are bio parents or foster parents. We are going to make mistakes. We are not going to remember all the child's triggers, but that is okay, making a learning moment for yourself and the child, out of the episode is what matters. Most important of all, keep telling yourself, you're only human and you can make a difference in the child's life and the child is making a difference in your lives including your other children's lives.



Written by CYFS Foster Caregiver Lisa Allen