

## CYFS Foster Caregiver/Adoptive Parent Connection

### Yes, It's THAT Time of Year...

What do we mean? Holidays are a completely different, oftentimes wildly unpredictable experience in an adoptive or foster home. Holidays may trigger behaviors in our children that have been hidden for years...or that we had hoped the child had let go after a certain period of time while placed within our families. How does this work?

Holidays are intense. Holidays receive attention globally that other days do not. Expectations are abundant even for the Scrooggiest Scrooge. Our children and their families are no different. The events we experience during our first two or three years are the most powerful events in our lives, for good or bad. Our brains are behind this dilemma...those first two or three years are when the brain is developing most rapidly, being so vulnerable in order for the foundation of language development to be set in place. This heightened vulnerability, unfortunately, leaves all of the brain at greater risk for negative impact from traumatic events. To be "vulnerable" for language development requires the brain to be "vulnerable" to any and all trauma.

What do we experience with these children? Disappointment, our own expectations unmet, feeling unappreciated, frustrated, and exhausted. Again. And our foster or adoptive children and youth...usually resistant to change and/or new experiences...can display a new level of defiance, lack of cooperation, anger which can hurt others or self. With all the changes in schedule and events, often in the company of strangers. Shiny party clothes and fancy hair may end up in shreds, or in a heap on the floor. Encouraging children to use good manners—appropriate social skills—can fall on deaf ears. Worst part is—looking at a gathering of children and youth, it's our child that stands out because of her or his behavior, with others—including adults—looking on in horror at a child who is reacting to feeling overwhelmed, still lost in feelings of grief and loss. Holidays can also act as a reminder of what each child in care has already lost...their first family. So...maybe we should expect challenging behavior. These are losses from the heart.

What helps? Honor old traditions that are most important to our foster or adoptive children and youth. Listen for what the child or youth would like to do. What would they most like to experience? Make cookies or gifts or cards? Then we do it. We schedule on the calendar—everyone can know what's planned and decide whether or not to participate. Who would the child especially like to remember at the holidays, and how?

Is there an opportunity for birth family and foster family to come together for some special time, at a school or other community program? To watch an old holiday movie together? Or share a special meal?

A new tradition for the child or youth may encourage giving to others...help serve a holiday meal to people who are homeless, make cards for the nursing home, helping at a local animal shelter, etc. Start a conversation and step back to listen to the thoughts of these beautiful spirits. End the day with "true listening", discovering how the day went, and were there any surprises. Keep things simple—not every moment needs to be scheduled. And throughout every day, remember how grateful we are for every child or youth, every day.



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YOUTH & FAMILY  
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*Many thanks for all  
you do, every day,  
for the children and  
their families!*

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## Galesburg

**Wednesday, October 17, Fostering Connections on Human Trafficking, 5 to 6:30 pm**, Nathan Haynes, Deputy Sheriff, McLean County, will present this information at First Lutheran Church, 364 E. Water Street, in Galesburg.

**Monday, October 22, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 5 to 6:30 pm**, at Maple Avenue Christian Church, 1300 Maple Avenue, Macomb. Lisa Allen will present on Reunification and working with birth parents. Child care is provided. RSVP required. If no one RSVP's, the training will be canceled.

**Saturday, November 3, Trivia Night Fundraiser**, - proceeds will go towards the holiday party and winter clothing apparel for those in need. Doors open at 5:30 pm, Trivia begins at 6 pm, at McGuire's and Davies Funeral Home, 1007 N. G Street, Monmouth. \$100 per team or \$10 per person. Bring your own beverages—raffle baskets and 50/50 drawings. Register by calling 309.342.1136.

**Friday, December 7, Holiday Party! 4:30 to 7:30 pm**, at the First Christian Church, 514 N. Sunny Lane in Monmouth. RSVP Amanda at 309.342.1136 to ensure we have plenty of food. Come when you can and enjoy a fabulous meal. A photographer will be available for holiday pictures—dress really cute!

## Peoria

**Tuesday, October 16, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 6-8 pm**. Tonight's topic is Human Trafficking. 2 hrs. training and child care available. Please contact your licensing worker to reserve a spot for child care.

**Tuesday, November 20, Foster Caregiver Support Group, 6-8 pm**. Tonight's presenter will be our CYFS Agency Nurse, Jen Cunningham, talking about her role and the need for medically complex specialized foster caregivers. 2 hrs. training and child care available. Please contact your licensing worker to reserve a spot for child care.

**Mondays, October 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, November 5, Updated PST Sessions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8, 5:30 to 8:30 pm**. No child care available. Next group will begin January 31, 2019, 5:30 to 8:30 pm.

## November—National Adoption Month

This celebration was first declared in the United States in Massachusetts by Governor Dukakis in 1976, for a week of raising awareness of the need for more adoptive homes. President Reagan proclaimed the first the first **National Adoption Week** in 1984, followed by President Clinton expanding the week observance to one month of recognition in 1995, In 1998, President Clinton directed the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a plan to use the internet as a central tool to identify homes for children in need of adoption from foster care, and in 2008, President Bush provided an explanation of National Adoption Month in Spanish.

Learn how teens who have experience in foster care are sharing their stories to support others. See what opportunities might exist near you. Visit resources for youth on the National Adoption Month website to find out more. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam/youth/>

## Springfield

**Tuesday, October 16, 5:30 to 7:30**. Foster Caregiver Support Group at the Springfield CYFS Office for the Springfield and Lincoln area. Child care and a meal provided. RSVP your licensing worker—thanks!

### ~Life Is a Gift~

*~I wanted to take the time to hit the "pause" button to make sure I told you I notice how much of a difference you are making for the children in your home or all of those who have come and gone. Too often the business of life takes away the focus of what is truly important. There are no guarantees in life therefore making the most of the time we have today is extremely important. All of you have impacted the lives of children and our staff in significant ways and I am blessed to work with each of you! My job is more fulfilling when I get to work with you!~*

It is easy to become frustrated with your children's birth parents. Their behavior and choices can be infuriating - afterall you are the ones watching the children hurt when their parents disappoint them over and over again. You are the shoulder they lean on when they cry for their parents and you are the ones who try to help heal the deep wound within... Sometimes it can be helpful to remember we're all in this game called life trying to figure out how to survive. Some people know how to handle life's stressors better than others and some may not realize how damaging their choices are to their family members, *most especially their children*. I encourage each of you to try to find compassion and remember our children's previous birth family *cannot* be erased. And often times when we speak poorly about their parents, children internalize what we say about their birth parents and start to believe they too are bad. So honor the parents who came before you and always be kind. You may be the first person who has offered them a kind word, gesture, smile, etc. Support reunification when possible - there is no need to feel threatened by this as you have been an instrumental person in this child's life (and their parent's life) even if they leave you. Your support to the birth parents may allow you to stay in contact when they return home. Stay strong and love deeply. You are much appreciated!

**Quote of the Month:** *"Be somebody who makes everybody feel like a somebody."*J



## *Mary Kay's Corner*



My October calendar has a big red circle around it marking this time of year as the time to pull together the work our foster parents and our staff have been doing to ensure the CYFS team complies with the State of Illinois Foster Parent Law.

If you have been around for a while, you will recall the Foster Parent Law is an official public policy, established by the Illinois General Assembly to recognize the integral role of foster caregivers on the child welfare team. The Foster Parent Law requires agencies such as The Center for Youth and Family Solutions to develop and annually review an Implementation Plan of the Foster Parent Law. As in the past, many of our foster parents have already helped us review the 2018 plan so we can write our 2019 plan. Again this year we have learned so much from both our foster care staff and our foster parents. You all are amazing. Your dedication to ensuring the children who come into our care are treated with compassion and respect is remarkable. Look for our 2019 Implementation Plan around the middle of October. It can be found on our CYFS foster parent web page or talk to your licensing worker to make sure you have a chance to read and comment.

At the request of some of our foster parents, we are working on a way to email the implementation plan to our foster parents. This will give foster parents another way to have it as a quick resource when needing to understand foster parent rights and responsibilities. Please make sure your licensing worker has your updated email address so we can forward you the 2019 Foster Parent Implementation Plan as soon as it is completed.



*- 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**

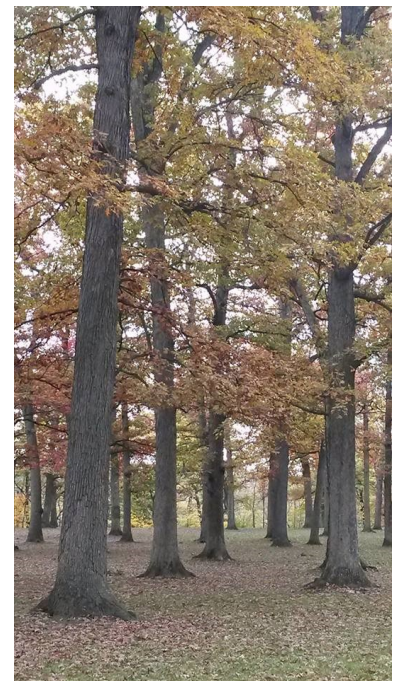
800.722.9124

#### **Daycare Information**

877.746.0829/312.328.2779

#### **Youth Hotline**

800.232.3798





# The Center for Youth and Family Solutions

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Achieving Solutions  
Together



\*On September 30, 2018, The Center for Youth and Family Solutions served 1,126 children and youth in foster care for the state of Illinois, with the help of more than 660 licensed homes, 76 relative homes with pending applications, and 25 unlicensed CYFS foster homes that provided for their placement. **Many, many thanks, everyone, for all you do, every day!**



## Felt Safety – What does this mean?

**Most concepts in this flyer are taken directly from the link below—  
read the whole article at:**

<http://holtinternational.org/pas/newsletter/2012/08/12/emotional-regulation-felt-safety-a-new-take-on-an-old-term/>

“In the past, helping a child feel safe was understood in terms of keeping a very scheduled family environment, limiting your child’s exposure to new people or things, and feeding your child familiar foods, etc. All of these approaches, while helpful, only address a child’s physical environment.”

Felt Safety is not simply knowing or understanding you are safe but actually feeling you are safe. It is more psychological than physical. A child may know they are safe physically but still feel unsafe on the inside.

It is important to be mindful when correcting or disciplining children but still keeping their felt safety in mind. Sometimes we need to view behaviors in a more positive light- crazy concept isn’t it?! For example, misbehaviors can be viewed as **opportunities to teach children new skills**. In the education field this can be viewed as “**teachable moments**.” Behaviorally- we call these opportunities “**Re-Dos**.” Re-Do’s help the child learn the appropriate way to behave. Adults instruct the child what is appropriate behavior and then the child is asked to model the appropriate response, sort of like a role play. The more practice the child gets, the more natural their responses become when a similar situation occurs.

**An example of how this might look:** Sarah purposely bangs into another child. Her parent asks: “Is that treating Mary with respect?” And prompts for a “no” answer. Next saying, “Let’s practice showing respect when we walk by Mary.” Then walk the child through the appropriate behavior and make a big deal of her doing it right. Parents need to go overboard in celebrating the correct behavior so as to make a lasting impression, and it needs to be repeated hundreds of times to override the old behavior.

**Felt safety is all about the relationship you develop with your child. Structure and nurture will help you achieve this among many other things. Finding the balance is the key.** Here are some ways to increase felt safety: remain calm when there are crises, monitor your tone of voice, analyze and only use appropriate touch if your child can handle it, choose the type of words you use very carefully- remember you can’t take back what you say, etc.

### Quote of the Month:

“If a child needs nurture and I give him structure, I harm his ability to trust me. If a child needs structure and I give him nurture, I harm his ability to grow.” Dr. Karyn Purvis

*Amanda Troyer  
CYFS Licensing Worker*

