



## Foster Care Training and Support Groups

by Mindy McBride  
Recruiter

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| January  | Emergency Protocols<br>and Procedures  |
|          | Protecting your child and using the on-call system   |
| February | The Implementation Plan/<br>Grievance Process  |
|          | Also looking at the rights and responsibilities of<br>foster caregivers during this training |
| March    | Foster Parent Grief  |
|          | How to handle the hurt when your youth in care<br>returns home                               |

Meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month with a session from 12:30-2:30 and one from 6:30-8:30. Foster caregivers will receive an invitation from their licensing worker that has the Zoom meeting link on it for each individual meeting.



## The real question is

What Happened **TO** You instead of Why Did You Do That? or What Were You Thinking?

by Carol Bennett-Barker  
Trainer

**T**hese perspectives are nothing new, and clearly reflect much of the information shared in Updated Parenting Skills Training. Trauma re-shapes the brain, experience drives behavior, kids who have experienced significant trauma just want to survive...you know these kids first-hand. In a meltdown, kids are not thinking...the brain is reacting and focused on survival. Anyone who doesn't know about trauma in a clinical way may have no idea what a foster or adopted child or youth may feel. But - we always need to consider the brain and the child's known history. What's behind the inappropriate behaviors, AND why do I take the behavior personally? Especially in light of what we know about the brain and trauma?

So...some begin the day with the mantra which reminds us - "it's not about me. It's not about me." And of course it's just not about me. If we use the perspective that a child or youth is defiant, or stubborn, or selfish, or hurtful, we're missing an

opportunity to promote safety, to promote connection, as that same child or youth is exhibiting behaviors driven from their trauma history, behaviors that are all about survival rather than about "being difficult". We want to draw them into our calm...I can just imagine Dr. Karyn Purvis speaking to one of these youth, arm extended, palm up, with a calm voice, speaking in terms of "what do you need from me?" or "what can I do for you?" These simple, self-controlled responses promote connection (essential), a feeling of safety and acceptance, a recognition that someone cares... This might not work every time, but when used consistently and compassionately, can help a child who experienced much too much of "what happened to you". Being responsive rather than reactive can move mountains with these children and youth in care. That's what we do - move mountains of trauma by not giving up, by focusing on their strengths, and addressing with the team the needs of each child or youth.

# Something's in the Oven

# Pumpkin Cookies!

by Carol Bennett-Barker  
Trainer

Something that is too easy to believe, but really is easy and “tasty”, according to my 4 year old grandson.

1 spice cake mix  
1 egg  
1 15 oz can pumpkin

That's all you need besides 2 cookie sheets and an oven and cooling racks or waxed paper for the cookies to cool.

Mix the raw egg gradually into the canned pumpkin. Fold in the spice cake mix, until well-blended (a spoon works nicely – no need for a mixer.) Drop by spoonfuls onto a cookie sheet lightly sprayed with cooking oil. Bake for 11 to 12 minutes at 375. Let cool for 2 to 3 minutes on the cookie sheets, then move to the cooling racks or waxed paper. These cookies taste fine unfrosted, but with vanilla or cream cheese frosting, you'll need an extra pot of coffee ... or hot chocolate. Store in a tightly covered container.



# The Numbers, the Need

by Jessee Towery, Assistant Controller  
and Sharon Brooks, Licensing Manger

As of January 1, 2022, The Center for Youth and Family Services provided care for **1101** children and youth, with the assistance of **690** licensed foster homes and **297** unlicensed foster homes with placements.

## Harriet's Creative Corner

by Harriet Kersh  
Licensing Coordinator

Looking for something creative to do with the kids this weekend? How about making a caterpillar! All you need is some colored construction paper, scissors, glue, and googly eyes.

This could also be made with a clean egg carton, pipe cleaners, and buttons, all items that are inexpensive to purchase at the Dollar Store! Once assembled, hide the caterpillars in some house plants, on a book shelf, or in the refrigerator for an extra layer of fun! This could brighten anyone's day if they are stuck inside for quarantine or not able to play outside with this blustery winter weather!



### Branch Offices

<b>Bloomington-Center</b>	309.829.6307	<b>Lincoln</b>	217.732.3771
<b>Bloomington-Morris</b>	309.820.7616	<b>Macomb</b>	309.833.1791
<b>Champaign</b>	217.352.5179	<b>Peoria</b>	309.323.6600
<b>Danville</b>	217.443.1772	<b>Rock Island</b>	309.786.0770
<b>Galesburg</b>	309.342.1136	<b>Springfield</b>	217.528.3694
<b>LaSalle</b>	815.223.4007		



# Get Connected with CYFS

## Self-Care by Amanda Troyer

It is January 2022 – how did that happen? And the cold Illinois winters are alive and well. I hope everyone is staying warm and healthy. Many feel a little less happy or joyful in the winter. Some experience what is called seasonal depression this time of year with less sunshine. Medical doctors and counselors are helpful in addressing these issues – yes, there is help for the winter blahs.

So let's talk about self-care. We make time for whatever is important to us - our kids' sports and music events, school meetings, special family time. We find a way to fit it in despite the daily demands of living. Here's the challenge - to view yourself as important and to make time for yourself, which will help you to balance all those pieces of life that are essential, as a parent, as a colleague, as a friend. Our kids need us to be at our best because they are navigating some heavy waters moving through childhood and working through the effects of past trauma. They need our strength, love, and hope to keep going and to be able to heal and to grow.

What does this look like? First, foster care is something you do because you are committed to helping children and their families, relative or traditional. Fostering means "temporary", and one major expectation for all foster caregivers is to support the case goal. The first priority for permanence is return home, but should this goal be ruled out, the permanency goal may change to adoption and/or guardianship. Many foster caregivers may eventually become adoptive parents, but there are no guarantees to anyone about what to expect.

Second, fostering will add stress to your marriage or relationship with your significant other. Building a strong team and recognizing each other's needs can provide a more positive fostering experience. If someone is struggling within the relationship, make sure you come together as a couple to figure out how to reconnect and find solutions that will recharge each other. Foster children need their foster parents

to be healthy – these children and youth are learning from what we model on how to communicate, how to treat each other respectfully with love, how to give and take. Here's another situation where therapy, individual or couples, can promote greater mental health and strength as partners. When we are engaged in therapy, we model to the children and youth in care the value and possibilities of therapy for everyone, including them. Yes, modeling is our strongest teaching tool.

Third, you need alone time. Time to quiet the noise and do something you thoroughly enjoy. Time to put aside the appointments, the feelings, the parent's no shows, the court dates, the caseworker visits, the parent/child or sibling visits, interactions with birth parents, etc. Nurture yourself and find peace within. Plus – check your focus. If we focus on the positives, we feel better. Those around us will feel better. And we're modeling again what is healthier living. Focusing on the positive helps us relax, de-stress, and lower our blood pressure. Plug in healthy eating, walking, drinking water, 8 hrs. sleep, half hour nap when you can, social distancing, wearing a 3-ply face mask, washing your hands frequently, sanitizing, and unplugging the screens around you - all helpful tasks and attitudes which promote a healthier lifestyle.

Fourth, you need adult time with friends. Don't have friends? Well there you go... that's your first step! Go meet some! The more support you have the better your experience will be. You'll have your village to help you understand and care for these children and youth who can be very challenging. They can offer respite, or bring you a meal when they know it's been a hard day, week, or month, plus offer a listening ear, etc.

So...let's make 2022 the year of self-care. It all begins with the first step – and everyone will benefit from your efforts and wisdom. Happy New Year!

~Amanda