

Social and extracurricular activities for foster children

by James W. Payne, director, Indiana Department of Child Services

Note: We are repeating this article we ran last month in the newsletter per request of Director Payne.

I have been concerned for years about our handling of children who come into our care and our desire and responsibility to allow them to have a normal life. This is more apparent and appropriate the longer the child is in care and probably the older the child is while in our care. But it includes all children.

I addressed this issue at the Foster Care Association meeting several months ago and committed to get this Director's Note out. I indicated at that meeting that we should give children the opportunity to participate in Boy Scout or Girl Scout activities, school activities, dating, overnights with a friend, the prom, band camp, soccer and other sports, faith/church functions and other similar activities.

The concern has been expressed that, while the children are in our care, we have an increased obligation and responsibility to keep them safe. While that is true and safety is always our paramount and first concern, they still deserve the right to be children. I believe every child has the right to participate in age-appropriate social and extracurricular activities.

It is our responsibility as an agency and as foster parents or caregivers to give children that opportunity and to make sure that they are safe and protected during

those times. I also believe that foster parents and caregivers must take reasonable steps to determine the appropriateness and safety of those activities.

As a note, the recent MARC Report comparing foster care per diems of every state indicates that Indiana ranks third in the nation for paying an appropriate amount for foster care. We therefore have the right to have the very best people

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serving as foster parents and other alternative care givers and to have high expectations of their care for our children. As we do this, I believe it is important to state that we can expect foster parents and caregivers to exercise a reasonably prudent standard of substitute parental care that is characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions for children who we place in their care.

Since we entrust foster parents and caregivers with our children in their home environment 24 hours a day, seven days a week, we have to be prepared to trust them to make good decisions about where those children may stay or who they are with during social and extracurricular activities. All this is done with the

goal of normalizing the lives of children who are in the foster care system by allowing them to participate in those activities, for example, school sponsored field trips or sports, sleep-overs with friends, scouting, group meetings with friends, the prom, etc. Foster parents and caregivers should take reasonably prudent steps to ensure that children are safe while engaged in those activities. Those include:

1. Having the right information about the child and the child's history to make those informed decisions consistent with the prior activities of the child as well as his/her ability and safety.
2. Take into consideration the child's ability, mental and physical health, and behaviors.
3. Consider when the activity will be held and make sure that it does not interfere with other responsibilities of the child and those responsible for the child.
4. Ask all the right questions—is the activity age-appropriate, does it enhance the treatment plan of the child, is it reasonable for the child, what are the benefits that the child will receive, etc..
5. Evaluate the risks involved in the activity consistent with the child's overall circumstances—no high risk activities.
6. Ensure that there is adequate and appropriate supervision by talking with adult supervisors and

(See Activities, cont. on page 2)

(Activities, cont. from page 1)

being assured of their appropriateness. This does not mean conducting a criminal background check.

7. The activity should have reasonable age-appropriate supervision and careful thought and reflection should be given when there is limited adult supervision, i.e. dating or the prom. Priorities should be given to group activities.

In conclusion, the goal again is to permit children to be children within reasonable parameters that ensure safety, limited or no risk of harm or injury, and meet the guidelines above.

These activities should be reported to the case manager and included in any communication with the parents, foster parents, child and family team meetings, and to the court. Let's let children be children and support and encourage activities and events that allow them to grow up as normally as possible under the circumstances and time.

Pending Legislation:

Senate Bill 303 requires the DCS to consider a child who is two years of age or older as a hard to place child for determining eligibility for state adoption subsidies. Currently, the age for a hard to place child is ten years of age, therefore this Bill will lower the age of eligibility considerably. The Bill also requires adoption records or other adoption information to be stored and maintained for at least 99 years from the date the adoption is filed, unless the records or other information is transferred to the State Registrar. The records may be stored in an electronic or other format. More information on this Bill can be found on IARCCA's website: <http://www.iarcca.org/> Once there, click on Online Reference Library/Legislative Activities/Bill Track. Senate Bill 303 can currently be found on pages 23-24.

Area Inservices

Support Groups

Elkhart County, contact Jody Richards at (574) 533-1234, ext. 218.

St. Joseph County group meets the 1st Thursday of each month Contact Tom & Linda Cleveland at (574) 232-3404.

Marshall County group meets the 3rd Monday of every other month at the Plymouth Library (May 19, 6-7:30 p.m.). Contact Melissa Bachtel at (574) 935-3052.

Grandparents as Parents

- 1st Wednesday of each month, 10 a.m., at 3609 Mishawaka Ave., South Bend.
- 3rd Monday of each month, 6:30 p.m., at Living Stones Church, 718 East Don Moyer Ave, South Bend. For more information, call (574) 232-6890.

Parent Classes by CAPS

Classes include both parents and children. During the first part of class, children and parents are in two separate classrooms learning about family life and behavior. During the last 30 minutes of the class, parents and children are together in group activities trying to put what they have just learned into action. Fee for the 9-week workshop is \$35 for a single parent and \$45 for two parents. To register, call Elizabeth Cruz at (574) 522-1998, ext. 71.

Mondays, April 6-June 8, 5:00-8:00 p.m.

Wednesdays, April 8-June 3, 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Thursdays, April 9-June 4, 5:00-8:00 p.m.

New Handbook!

The Indiana Foster Family Resource Guide is now available! The purpose of the guide is to provide insight into areas of parenting that will be most helpful to foster/adoptive parents. The information will be distributed to existing and prospective foster/adoptive parents as well as those who are seeking licensure. Throughout this guide, links to related policies are listed by policy name and web address where possible. The guide can be accessed online at: <http://www.in.gov/dcs/files/1003NewFosterGuide4Web.pdf> or go to [www.in.gov/dcs, Programs/Services, Placement, Foster Care and Indiana Foster Family Resource Guide](http://www.in.gov/dcs/Programs/Services/Placement,FosterCareandIndianaFosterFamilyResourceGuide). Each local DCS office and LCPSA will soon have printed copies available as well.

Family Involvement Fund

Foster parents of children with disabilities can receive financial support through the Family Involvement Fund for expenses for conferences, training events, and other activities. Currently this rate is up to \$250 per person, per program year and up to \$500 per family. Applications must be received at least 30 days prior to the first day of the event. For more information, call Cindy Bard at 1-800-825-4733 or email fif@indiana.edu.

Reservations for the following training sessions can be made by calling (574) 533-1234 or 800-282-0809, ext. 243. Classes may be cancelled if not enough persons register. Alternative training is available through books, audio and video. A web site at www.fosterparents.com lists approved foster parent trainings. For a list of pre-approved materials as well as the training verification form, go to www.oaklawn.org, click on Services and Programs, then Services for Children and Adolescents, then Collaborative Programs. Look for Traditional Foster Care to find the forms. Remember, traditional homes can receive up to four hours and special needs or therapeutic homes can receive up to eight training hours annually through books, audio, video or internet. Certification of the training hours are dependent upon approval from the training coordinator. Please note that child care is NOT provided during trainings.

Preservice

Required training: 20 hours for foster parents or 26 hours for adoptive parents. Day one of each training session must be taken first. All pre-service classes include Universal Precautions and First Aid Training; you do not need to sign up for these classes separately.

Elkhart County

May 2, 9, 16, 30
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Elkhart

St. Joseph County

April 18, 25, May 2, 9
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
South Bend

First Aid & Safety

Meets criteria for certification and State requirements for Foster Parents. CPR—due before certification expires; First Aid—due every three years; Universal Precautions must be current at relicensure.

Universal Precautions/ Bloodborne Pathogens

- Wednesday, May 13, 6:00 p.m., Elkhart

First Aid (immediately following Universal Precautions training)

- Wednesday, May 13, 6:30 p.m. Elkhart

CPR

- Wednesday, April 15, 6:00-9:00 p.m., South Bend
- Saturday, April 25, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., Elkhart

Important information about trainings

- Both Elkhart County and St. Joseph County trainings are held at various locations. You will be told the specific location upon registration.
- You **MUST** register for classes in advance so that we can prepare for the number attending.

- Saturday, April 25, 1:00–4:00 p.m., Elkhart
- Saturday, May 16, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., South Bend
- Saturday, May 16, 1:00–4:00 p.m., South Bend

Inservice classes

10–20 hours of training required each year. **Classes are 6:00–9:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted.**

Handbook Training

Monday, April 20, Elkhart

Thursday, May 21, South Bend

Recommended for all foster parents. Covers DCS policies, financial resources, documentation, child development, educational needs, child health and many more important topics.

Pre-adoption/Permanency

Part 1 - Thursday, May 7

Part 2 - Thursday, May 14

both in South Bend

Required for those wishing to adopt. The curriculum is session 11 & 12 of pre-service training for foster, adoptive and kinship parent/caregivers. 3 hours in-service credit.

Understanding and Dealing with Anger

Tuesday, March 31, South Bend

Understand their source of anger and learn how to communicate with children who have been abused and carry feelings of violence and rage as they enter their foster home.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum

Monday, April 13, Elkhart

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, or FASD, have profound, lifelong effects on the person who has it. This training provides insight, information, and practical strategies to help you make the most of your child's potential.

Eating Disorders & Self- Harming Behavior

Tuesday, April 28, South Bend

Discover practical solutions and strategies for children with various types of eating disorders, as well as for children who self-harm.

Working with Traumatized Children

Monday, May 4, Elkhart

Understand what drives traumatized children's behaviors and how to effectively parent them.

Coordinator's Corner

Jerica Tripp, M.S.
Team Leader, Traditional Foster Care



Jerica Tripp

Hello foster parents! We usually publish a short newsletter in April, but some very important changes have recently taken place about which I want you to be aware.

Unfortunately, we are all feeling the impact of a tough economy right now. As a result, the State has had to make some difficult decisions that are going to be impacting each of you. As of January 1, 2009, respite care will no longer be available to foster parents through a per diem.

We were instructed that there is nothing to prevent foster parents from forming a respite care group for each other (possibly through their foster parent association), but that DCS will no longer pay a per diem to the foster parent and the respite parent at the same time.

This appears to mean that if you are needing respite you will be responsible for setting it up. It is imperative that you let the case manager know prior to going out of town that the child will be in a different home. Please don't confuse this with adoption respite, which will continue as a covered service.

Secondly, for those of you in Elkhart County, Traditional Foster Care Licensing will be moving back to the Elkhart County Department of Child Services. The licensing family case manager is now Lisa Morris-Carr. Lisa has been with DCS for many years and offers a great deal

of experience. Lisa can be reached at (574) 266-2402.

Lastly, I hope you all know how much you are valued. You do an excellent job caring for the children in our communities and we could not do this work without you! If you have any ideas for future trainings please don't hesitate to contact me at: jerica.tripp@oaklawn.org.

Thank you!

Foster Parent Network-News is published monthly for foster families and the professionals who relate to them. Please send changes of address to: Gloria Miller Holub, editor
P.O. Box 809, Goshen, IN 46527
E-mail: info@oaklawn.org
Jerica Tripp, Team Leader, Traditional Foster Care
E-mail: jerica.tripp@oaklawn.org
Phone: (574) 533-1234, ext. 754
Toll free: 800-282-0809, ext. 754
Fax: (574) 537-2638

Address Service Requested
Important information for
Foster Parents!

Goshen, Indiana 46527
330 Lakeview Drive
P.O. Box 809

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Foster Parent Training Registration Form

Use this form only for network training classes (those in the box on page 3). Please complete the following information about yourself, your spouse or companion (if applicable) and the training sessions you would like to attend. Fold, seal, stamp and mail to the Traditional Foster Care office.

First Participant

Name _____ Phone _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Agency that maintains your license _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

Second Participant

Name _____ Phone _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Agency that maintains your license _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

**Traditional Foster Care
2600 Oakland Avenue
Elkhart, IN 46517**

Place
stamp
here
