

Social and extracurricular activities for foster children

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

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 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

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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.

(See *Activities, cont. on page 2*)

(Activities, cont. from page 1)

6. Ensure that there is adequate and appropriate supervision by talking with adult supervisors and 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.

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/Starke 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.

Online training

Check out <http://www.fosterclub.com/training/index.cfm> for free online that can be counted as inservice hours.

Memorial Health Works

March 19, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Spring Fitness Blitz. Your family is invited for an evening of fun and education. Light snacks will be available. All foster parents need to sign in when they arrive, as well as when they leave. Call Lori at (574) 232-6730 with your name and phone number, along with the number of adults and children attending. Deadline for RSVP is March 2.

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

March 14, 21, 28, April 4
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
Oaklawn, Elkhart

St. Joseph County

April 18, 25, May 2, 9
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
Location to be announced

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, March 25, 6:00 p.m., JJC, South Bend

First Aid (immediately following Universal Precautions training)

- Wednesday, March 25, 6:30 p.m.
JJC, South Bend

CPR

- Saturday, March 21, 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m., South Bend
Location to be announced
- Saturday, March 21, 1:00—4:00 p.m., South Bend
Location to be announced

Important information about trainings

- Both Elkhart County and St. Joseph County trainings are held at various locations. Check individual trainings for location.
- You **MUST** register for classes in advance so that we can prepare for the number attending.

- Wednesday, April 15, 6:00-9:00 p.m., South Bend
Location to be announced
- Saturday, April 25, 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m., Oaklawn, Elkhart
- Saturday, April 25, 1:00—4:00 p.m., Oaklawn, Elkhart

Inservice classes

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

Understanding and Parenting Children with Disrupted Attachment

Tuesday, March 3, Oaklawn,
Elkhart

Discover the reasons for and behaviors resulting from disrupted attachment. How to provide a safe environment and build trust with kids.

Handbook Training

Monday, March 16, Plymouth
Location to be announced

Required of all foster parents. Handbook covers DCS policies, financial resources, documentation, child development, educational needs, child health and many more important topics.

Cultural poverty

Monday, March 9, JJC, South Bend

Based on Ruby Payne's work on cultural poverty, this class will explain the framework from which foster children come. How to work with children of poverty.

Pre-adoption/Permanency

Part 1 - Tuesday, March 3
Part 2 - Tuesday, March 10
both at Oaklawn, Elkhart

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.

Separation and Loss Issues for Foster Parents

Monday, March 23, Oaklawn,
Elkhart

A look at the effects of separation and loss on children who enter and exit foster care.

Understanding and Dealing with Anger

Tuesday, March 31, South Bend
Location to be announced

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, Oaklawn, 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.

Coordinator's Corner

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



Jerica Tripp

Hello foster parents! I'd like to update you on some recent changes.

First of all, there have been changes to the Foster Parent Liability Insurance. The Indiana Department of Child Services will support county-licensed foster parents by paying for the foster parent liability insurance in 2009, *if the foster parent pays for their own membership to IFCAA*. Please visit the IFCAA website at www.ifcaa.org for

specific information regarding what the liability insurance covers. This website also gives you information on how to apply for membership and receive the liability insurance. If you have any questions, please call IFCAA at (800) 468-4228.

Secondly, as I'm sure you are all aware, the State of Indiana has assumed responsibility for your payments as foster parents. I know many of you have attended the District Financial Trainings so hopefully that has helped you with this process. If you continue to have difficulty with this, contact your local Department of Child Services.

Thirdly, the St. Joseph County Department of Child Services has moved to a new location. Their new address is: 300 N. Michigan St., Suite 230, South Bend, IN 46601. The main phone number is (574) 232-3042.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank you all for the work you do in our communities. I greatly admire your dedication to the children amidst busy schedules at home. We have been working hard to implement new trainings for you this year, so hopefully this information will support you even more as foster parents. Thanks again for all you do!

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

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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
