

Supports for foster parents

by Jerica Tripp, M.S.

A huge task

As foster parents, you probably experience a great deal of excitement as well as added stressors when a foster child is placed in your home. You're working with case workers, biological parents, therapists, teachers, CASA's, and many others. This "team approach" is very important to your success as a foster parent as well as the child's success in your home.

A number of topics are covered in pre-service training that might be helpful to you now as an "experienced" foster parent. Following are some tips that can help foster parents better deal with stress and also prevent multiple moves and disruptions for foster children.

Positive coping strategies

At times, you may be overwhelmed with a child who has difficult behaviors. In these intense situations, it is important for you to feel supported. Situations have a tendency to escalate when parents are on edge and feel they don't have any resources. Here are a few things mentioned in pre-service training that can help relieve some of these stressors.

- Talk to a friend, spouse, or pastor
- Take a walk or exercise
- Leave the situation for a while to recoup energy
- Take a vacation
- Do something nice for yourself—a hot bath, a favorite food, a small gift

- Seek emotional support from loved ones
- Participate in Foster Parent Support Groups
- Utilize respite care

When it feels like too much

Foster parents have the benefit of a team of people for support. You have a great deal of resources at your fingertips, so feel free to make the most of them! Seek counsel from case workers and investigate

Situations have a tendency to escalate when parents are on edge and feel they don't have any resources.

services available within the community mental health center. Talk with teachers and see what services are available in the schools. Some schools have a program called "Five Star," an after-school program that teaches integrity and values to children. We want to do everything we can to help make sure your placement is successful!

"I can't do it anymore"

If this is the case, it is extremely important to keep the DCS caseworker informed of any ongoing problems you are experiencing in the home. It is not necessary to report the little "hiccups," but certainly the problems you feel could get out of control. If you feel

the behaviors aren't getting better and that you can no longer handle having the child in your home, please call the DCS caseworker two weeks in advance. It is not always easy finding an appropriate placement, so we need time to find a home that will be able to work with the child on an ongoing basis.

Removing a child from a foster home is very difficult for all concerned and can add to the trauma children have already experienced when they were removed from their biological home. If you feel a child is out of control and fear for your safety, please know that you can call the police. You do need to let the DCS caseworker know, but we want you to have the emergency support you need.

Thank you!

These issues are never easy to talk about, but we are all a team and want to work together as effectively as possible. I have no doubt that we all want to provide safe and loving homes for these children. I know that each of you make sacrifices on a daily basis and we are so grateful for your efforts.

If you do need any extra support, please remember the support groups in your county. We are here not only to help the children, but to help you as you care for them. I feel so privileged to work with each one of you. It is so comforting to know that our foster children are being loved and treated as if they were your own children. Thanks again!

Safe sleeping for babies

We are repeating this important information for foster parents.

- Place babies on a firm sleep surface, such as on a safety-approved crib mattress, covered by a fitted sheet.

- Always place babies on their backs to sleep for naps and at night. The back sleep position is the safest.

- Never place babies to sleep on pillows, quilts, sheepskins or other soft surfaces.

- Don't use pillows, blankets, quilts, sheepskins or pillow-like crib bumpers in their sleep area, and keep any other items away from the baby's face.

- Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding out of babies' sleep area.

- Keep babies' sleep area close to, but separate from, where you and others sleep. Your baby should not sleep in a bed or on a couch or armchair with adults or other children.

- Think about using a clean, dry pacifier when placing the infant down to sleep, but don't force the baby to take it. (If you are breast-feeding your baby, wait until your child is one month old or is used to breast-feeding before using a pacifier.)

- Do not let your baby overheat during sleep. Dress your baby in light sleep clothing, and keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult.

- Reduce the chance that flat spots will develop on your baby's head by providing "tummy time" when your baby is awake and someone is watching, changing the direction that your baby lies in the crib from one week to the next, and avoiding too much time in car seats, carriers and bouncers.

Sources: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Service

Area Inservices

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. Contact number for both locations is (574) 232-6890.

Health Works Kids Museum

"Back to School," September 18, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Museum is located at 111 W. Jefferson Blvd., South Bend. Bring the whole family for a night of fun and education. Light snacks provided. Two credit hours for foster parent training. Parking garage available; go to the second floor parking and bring your ticket for validation. RSVP by September 12 by calling Lori at (574) 236-5386 with name and number attending.

Family Involvement Fund (FIF)

Foster parents of children with disabilities are eligible to receive financial support through the Family Involvement Fund for actual expenses to participate in conferences, training events, and other activities. Funding limits may change, but are currently up to \$250 per person, per program year and up to \$500 per family. The application must be received at least 30 days prior to the first day of the event. For more info, contact Cathy Beard at 1-800-825-4733 or via email at fif@indiana.edu.

Installing car seats

Do you sometimes struggle with installing car seats for the children in your care? Through the web site <http://www.chop.edu/consumer/jsp/division/generic.jsp?id=77971> you can access instructional video clips which demonstrate, step-by-step, the installation of car seats. There are different videos for the different age groups of children.

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** meets 3rd Monday every other month at the Plymouth Library. Next meeting is March 17, 6:00-7:30 p.m. Contact Melissa Bachtel at (574) 935-3052.

Parenting Classes

Mondays, October 20-December 15, 5:00-8:00 p.m., Bashor Children's Home, Goshen. Wednesdays, October 22-December 17, 9:15-11:45 a.m., Joy Rose Center, Elkhart. Thursdays, October 23-December 18, 5:00-8:00 p.m.

To register, contact Elizabeth Cruz at (574) 522-1998, ext. 71. Please note, these are nine-week workshops. Fee for the entire series is \$35 for a single parent or \$45 for two parents.

Michiana Behavioral Health Center

Emotional intelligence—How it affects your daily life, Friday, October 17, 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., with Joel McArthur, MA, LMHC, McArthur Counseling, Warsaw, IN. Lunch served at 11:00 a.m.; speaker begins between 11:15-11:30 a.m. Seating limited, please call for reservations to (574) 936-3784.

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

September 13, 20, 27, October 4
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Oaklawn, Elkhart

October 25, November 1, 8, 15
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Oaklawn, Elkhart

St. Joseph County

September 20, 27, October 4, 11
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
October 11 will end at 2:00 p.m.
United Way, South Bend

November 8, 15, 22, December 6
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
December 6 will end at 2:00 p.m.
United Way, 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 due at each relicensure.

Universal Precautions/ Bloodborne Pathogens

- Wednesday, September 10,
Oaklawn, Elkhart, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

First Aid (immediately following Universal Precautions training)

- Wednesday, September 10,
Oaklawn, Elkhart

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.**

CPR

- Saturday, September 27, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., Oaklawn, Elkhart
- Saturday, September 27, 1:00-4:00 p.m., Oaklawn, Elkhart
- Saturday, October 18, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend
- Saturday, October 18, 1:00–4:00 p.m., Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend

Inservice classes

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

Handbook Training

Cancelled until a new handbook is published.

Life as a Foster Parent

Tuesday, September 2, Department of Child Services, Elkhart
The realities and challenges of foster parenting and how to work through them.

Educational Surrogate

Tuesday, September 9, Juvenile Justice Center, South Bend

A surrogate parent is appointed to ensure that the educational rights of a child with disabilities are protected when the parent is unable or unwilling to do so.

Pre-adoption/Permanency

Part 1 - Monday, September 15, JJC, South Bend

Part 2 - Monday, September 22, JJC, 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 Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Saturday, September 20, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., River Valley Community Church, Mishawaka
Dan Ryan from Logan Center will speak on how parents can work with this diagnosis.

Family Team Meetings

Monday, September 29, Oaklawn, Elkhart

DCS caseworkers will talk about how to make the most of Family Team Meetings.

Effective Communication with DCS

Monday, October 13, JJC, South Bend

"Pictures of Hollis Woods" Movie & Discussion

Tuesday, October 21, Plymouth library

Coordinator's Corner

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



Jerica Tripp

Hello foster parents! It's hard to believe that summer is almost over! I'm guessing by now you that some of you are making final preparations for sending your children to school. I hope that this is smooth, stress-free time for you and your family.

I understand there has been some confusion regarding training locations so here are a few tips to help avoid this in the future. When you are signing up for a training,

please verify that you know the correct address and location. If you happen to forget, please try to call at least two days in advance as normally we do not have any one in the office on Saturday mornings.

When we need to relocate a training, we send out a postcard that says "Location Change." If there is not time to send out a postcard, we will contact you by phone and leave a message on your voice mail. I would hate for anyone to show up at the wrong location and have to make up a class. I know the classes already take a great deal of time so we want to do everything we can to help you meet your requirements.

If you ever have any questions about a class location please do not hesitate to call! We are here to serve you and provide you with the best training possible.

Lastly, thank you so much to

those of you who have contacted me with training ideas! I will certainly do my best to find a professional who can train on some of these specific topics.

Thank you again for all that you do. I hope that the beginning of this school year is an exciting time for you and your family!

Foster Parent Network-News is published monthly for foster families and the professionals who relate to them. Please send changes of address to:
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Toll free: 800-282-0809, ext. 754
Fax: (574) 537-2638

**Important information for
Foster Parents!**
Address Service Requested

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

OAKLAWN



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
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OAKLAWN

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
