

Internet safety

by Naomi Rand

Almost all children today have access to the Internet through schools, libraries, community centers, or their home. And most 8 to 18-year-olds, 74 percent, have Internet access from their home computers according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Not only do more children have access to the Internet than ever before, but they are using it more, too. Many schools incorporate the Internet into their curricula and encourage online research for projects. But that's not all kids are doing online. They also email, chat with friends through instant messenger and in chat rooms, play games, create websites and web blogs, and just surf the 'net.

Even as kids grow more savvy in their use of the Internet, it can still be a dangerous place. The good news is that most dangers can be avoided if children and their parents learn about smart Internet use.

What parents can do

- Talk with children about the benefits and risks of the Internet. Ask them what they do online, what websites they visit, who they chat with, and what games they play.

- When possible, go online with your children. Have them show you their favorite websites, online games, and chat rooms.

- Go online and look at websites, chat rooms, and blogs that your children might visit. This will help you identify what you think is important to discuss with them. Make a list of any websites you find that you think your children will enjoy and share it with them.

- Keep the computer in a busy area of the house.

More children have access to the Internet than ever before.

- With your children, agree on rules of what they can and cannot do online, when they can go on the Internet, and how long they can stay.

- Have your children sign McGruff's Internet pledge and post it by the computer so they remember how to stay safe online.

- If your children tell you that they saw something inappropriate online, don't blame or punish them. Remember that how you react will affect what your children share with you in the future.

- Ask who your children talk to online and how they communicate (i.e. email, instant messenger, chat rooms, blogs, etc.). Tell them that you expect them to be as nice online as they are offline. Make sure they know the dangers of meeting new friends online.

- Decide if you want to allow your children to purchase items or sign up for online services (e.g., membership to a gaming website) on their own or if they should ask your permission first.

- Teach children about plagiarism. Explain that if they conduct online research they must give attribution to the author, organization, or website that created the content.

- Talk with children about downloading music and movies online. If you decide to let your children download files onto your computer, show them legal ways to do so, such as using pay per download or pay per month services like iTunes and Napster.

- Consider using a filter, blocking, or ratings system for your computer.

For more information on Internet Safety, visit iKeepSafe.org to meet McGruff's friend Faux Paw, the Internet safety cat.

Media literacy

Children today are bombarded with messages from newspapers, books, magazines, billboards, television, movies, video and computer games, and music. All too often the message is that violence is an acceptable way to deal with problems. The characters do not have to examine the consequences of their actions because the situation is not real.

Of all the media, TV may have the biggest impact on your child. The moving images and sound hold attention. The average child spends more time watching TV than any other activity but sleeping.

Even cartoons and commercials average 25 violent acts per hour. Children as young as 14 months will imitate what they see people do on TV. Most children now choose media figures as their role models—a few decades ago, most chose their parents.

Violence in books, magazines, newspapers, movies, songs, and computer and video games can also affect your children. Heroes who solve their problems with violence and engage in other risk-taking behaviors, all without any adverse effects, are not good reality models.

Much of your children's media consumption occurs outside of school. You will have the greatest influence over this source of violence. Below are some ways that you can monitor the messages your children receive from the media.

- Make it a family rule that violence has no place in your home. Monitor reading materials, TV and radio programs, and games your children play.

- Limit your child's television viewing to two hours or less per day. Plan together a weekly schedule of the programs you want to watch. Turn the TV off when the selected programs are over. Help your child interpret programs. Explain what is real and unreal, and make connections between consequences and actions.

Area Inservices

Grandparents as Parents

- 1st Wednesday of each month (March 5), 10 a.m., at 3609 Mishawaka Ave., South Bend.
- 3rd Monday of each month (March 17), 6:30 p.m., at Living Stones Church, 718 East Don Moyer Ave, South Bend. Contact number for both locations is (574) 232-6890.

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.

Federal Tax Benefit Guide for Foster/Adoptive Parents and Kinship Caregivers

Now available! The guide includes important tax information and links to all forms needed to complete your taxes. For more information, contact Christin Kundert at the NFPA office, 800-557-5238 or go online to <https://www.nfpaonline.org/content/index.asp>?

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.

- Encourage your child to participate in a wide range of activities. You can require or promote other at-home activities, such as exercise, hobbies, crafts, reading, playing games, tending pets, helping with household tasks, doing homework, and writing letters. Plan some activities with your child. Set a good example by developing a variety of interests yourself.

- Join forces to advocate for positive programming in the media. Collaborate with teachers and other parents to support positive programming and reduce violence. Write or call network and local TV stations, government regulatory agencies, advertisers, and policy makers to express your concerns.

- Watch television with your children. Be aware of what and how much they are watching.

Reservations for the following training sessions can be made by calling (574) 533-1234 or 800-282-0809, ext. 754. 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.

Elkhart

March 1, 8, 15, 29
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
March 29 will end at 2:00; no CPR)

St. Joseph County

February 23, March 1, 8, 15
Saturdays, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
March 15 will end at 2:30 after 1st aid

Locations:

February 23 & March 1 - Kern Road Mennonite Church, 18211 Kern Road, South Bend
March 8 - Virginia Tutt Branch Library, 2223 Miami, South Bend
March 15 - River Park Branch Library, 2022 Mishawaka Avenue, 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

- Saturday, March 15, 11:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m., St. Joseph Co., River Park Branch Library, 2022 Mishawaka Ave., South Bend
- Saturday, March 29, 11:15–11:45 a.m., Elkhart

Inservice training locations:

St. Joseph County:
Please note location with each event

Elkhart Co. Dept. of Child Services
347 West Lusher Ave.
Elkhart, IN

First Aid (immediately following Universal Precautions training)

- Saturday, March 15, St. Joseph Co., River Branch Library, 2022 Mishawaka Ave., South Bend
- Saturday, March 29, Elkhart

CPR

- Saturday, March 29, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., St. Joseph Co., Kern Road Mennonite Church, 18211 Kern Road, South Bend
- Saturday, April 5, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., Elkhart

Inservice classes

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

Parenting Teenagers with Personality Disorders

Tuesday, February 26, Elkhart
Amy Spurgeon will provide helpful tips on parenting teens, especially teen girls.

Handbook Training

Cancelled until a new handbook is published.

Pre-adoption/Permanency, Part I & II

Tuesdays, March 4 & 11, Elkhart
Information on adoption subsidies and post adoption. Required of adoptive parents.

"Radio" Movie & Discussion

Monday, March 3, St. Joseph Co., Juvenile Justice Center, 1000 S. Michigan St. South Bend

The story of a high school coach and the developmentally challenged man whom he took under his wing. Discussion follows.

Family Violence and Special Victims Unit

Saturday, March 8, 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., River Valley Community Church, 5585 Bittersweet Rd., Mishawaka

Information on family violence will be presented by Harry Creider, a detective from the Special Victims Unit. RSVP by February 29.

Coordinators' Corner

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



Jerica Tripp

Hello Foster Parents! I am so excited to join you on the Foster Care Team. I have so much respect for each one of you and your dedication to the children in our community. You give of yourselves so selflessly and we cannot thank you enough for what you do!

As stated in last month's newsletter, I have been at Oaklawn for over seven years. During that time I have worked in the Access Center where we triage clients who are in need of mental health and/or addiction services. I have also spent the last three years doing foster parent home studies on a part-time basis. As a result I have had the privilege of meeting some of you and the amazing Foster Care Team. I am sure most of you have become familiar with Melissa Miner, Teresa McLain and Jody Richards. I have truly enjoyed working with them these last few weeks and we are excited to see how we can serve you in the future!

Thank you again for what you do and I look forward to working with each one of 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
