

Family Connections

Volume 11, Issue 4 ~ Fall, 2012

In This Issue:

Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board

- Pages 2 - 3

Expert Exchange

- Page 3 - 4

Policy Updates

- Pages 6 - 7

Resources for Parents

- Pages 8 - 9

Foster & Adoption Resource Centers

- Page 10

Waiting Children

- Page 11

And much more. . .

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November was National Adoption Month Celebrating the adoption of children in foster care

What first started in 1976 as a week-long celebration, has now become a month long celebration each November to bring awareness to the hundreds of thousands of children in foster homes awaiting adoption and to celebrate family. This November, states, communities, and agencies throughout the nation held events to bring the need for families for these children and teens to public awareness. The celebration includes National Adoption Day (Adoption Saturday) with courthouses throughout the nation participating and hundreds of opportunities for courts to open their doors and finalize the adoptions of children from foster care.



National Adoption Day is a collective national effort to raise awareness of the more than 100,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families. This annual, one-day event has made the dreams of thousands of children come true by working with policymakers, practitioners and advocates to finalize adoptions and create and celebrate adoptive families.

The goals of National Adoption Day include:

- Finalize adoptions from foster care in all 50 states
- Celebrate and honor families who adopt
- Raise awareness of the more than 100,000 children in foster care waiting for permanent, loving homes
- Encourage others to adopt children from foster care
- Build collaboration among local adoption agencies, courts and advocacy organizations

For more information about National Adoption Day events and foster care adoption, please visit www.nationaladoptionday.org or <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/adopt/activity/events.htm>.

The National Adoption Day Coalition created the One Day Project to share with the thousands of waiting children and families what this "one day" feels like. The stories highlight the emotion of the day an adoption is finalized as one that will never be forgotten. To view how lives of children have been forever impacted, visit <http://www.nationaladoptionday.org/onedayproject/view-stories>.

National Adoption Day Coalition Partners include: Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Freddie Mac Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services, Children's Action Network, The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, and The Alliance for Children's Rights.

In total, National Adoption Day helped nearly 40,000 children move from foster care to a forever family. According to the National Adoption Day Coalition, 4,500 children in foster care were adopted on **National Adoption Day, November 17, 2012.**

Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board

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Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board

The Children's Division supports foster parents through the on-going work of the State Foster Care and Adoption Advisory Board. Each area/region of the state holds local meetings quarterly and works to resolve issues of their area foster/adoptive parents.

The state board consists of two parent representatives from each Regional board (6) and three foster parent associations' representatives. Parent representatives are asked to make a two year service commitment to the state board.



If you have any questions or concerns regarding foster care or adoption in the state of Missouri, or you have an issue that you feel needs to be addressed by the Board, please contact your area representative/board member or one of the Associations.

Missouri State Foster and Adoption Board meeting minutes can be found at: <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/fostercare/recruitment-retention-foster-adoptive-parents/>

Members of the Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board consist of two representatives from seven regions and shall be appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the senate, based upon recommendations by regional foster care and adoption boards, or other similar entities.

Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board

The Missouri State Foster Care & Adoption Board held a special training session for members on August 2nd. During the meeting members were trained on "Legal Aspects of Foster Care" and "Data Reporting". These trainings were designed to allow board members to gain a better understanding of how the system works, and what reports are available to measure success. Armed with this knowledge, Board members will be able to better serve the needs of foster families across the state.

After the meeting members were invited to the Governor's Mansion for a reception held by the Governor and First Lady. Governor Nixon signed the bill which created the Missouri State Foster Care & Adoption Board to provide an independent review of Children's Division policies, to draft proposed changes to existing policy, and to determine the nature and content of in-service training. The Governor was also responsible for appointing each Board member, and remains keenly interested in their work.

The Board met again on September 11th, and spent most of the day developing the organizational framework that the Board will operate under. Board members also discussed the need to fill vacancies that still exist on the Board. Positions remain open in the NW Region, NE Region, Kansas City Region, SE Region, and in the St. Louis County Region. Two positions are open in St. Louis City Region. If you are interested in becoming a member of the Board, please fill out the application found at the Boards & Commissions website, or contact your area representative. http://governor.mo.gov/boards/pdf/BOARDS_AND_COMMISSIONS_APPLICATION.pdf

Much of the actual work of the Board is done between meeting dates. Policy reviews are conducted using email, and the ensuing debates are both lively and enlightening. The Board has conducted reviews on proposed transportation policy changes, quarterly visits, non-owner insurance policies, and other matters that have a daily impact on foster/adoptive families. Board members are also advocates for the foster families in their area, and can help solve local and regional problems by working with local and regional Children's Division staff.

All Board meetings are open to the public. Upcoming meetings are posted on the DSS website, along with the minutes from previous meetings. If you would like more information about the Missouri State Foster Care & Adoption Board please contact your regional representative or parent association listed on the left.

Toll-Free Information Numbers

Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline (MO only) 1-800-392-3738

Elderly Abuse/Neglect Hotline 1-800-392-0210

Food Stamp Case Information 1-800-392-1261

Foster Adoptline 1-800-554-2222

Income Maintenance Call Center 1-855-373-4636

Missouri Rx Plan (MoRx) 1-800-375-1406

Missouri School Violence Hotline 1-866-748-7047

MO HealthNet Participant Services 1-800-392-2161

MO HealthNet Service Center 1-888-275-5908

Office of Child Advocate 1-866-457-2302

Rehabilitation Services For The Blind 1-800-592-6004



Jessica, daughter of Board member Dean Aye, meets Governor Nixon and First Lady, Georganne Nixon.

Expert Exchange: Professional Answers to Your Questions

Helping Children Openly Communicate

By Dennis O'Brien, MA, LCSW

Parents Ask: How can I help my child when she won't talk about what she's going through? Even though I ask her, I can't seem to get her to talk about important things. I don't want to give up, but what else can I do?

Parents often feel frustrated when they don't know how to reach an uncommunicative child who seems distressed or not functioning well. This is common. Many children and teens—not just foster and adoptive ones—find it difficult to share troubling feelings with parents or ask for help. This withdrawal can be especially frustrating to parents who have opened their hearts to foster or adopt children who may have suffered huge losses, been abused or neglected, and may have disabilities or special needs. How do you help a child who apparently needs help but doesn't seem to be able to ask for it?

But there's hope for parents of uncommunicative kids. Children—even foster and adoptive children—communicate all the time, even when they don't seem to be. Parents need to learn how to listen actively and effectively—and let children know we've heard, and that we care.

Sometimes a child speaks through her silence, her withdrawal, acting out or other behaviors that signal she has something important to communicate but cannot find the words or, quite often, the courage or trust in her adult caretakers to use them. When this is true, parents need to read the behavioral cues and help their child learn to translate the feelings that trouble her into words that communicate

Many children and teens—not just foster and adoptive ones—find it difficult to share troubling feelings with parents or ask for help.

what she is experiencing. This not only helps parents understand what a child is going through, it also helps the child become aware of how strong emotions—emotions which may be rooted in past traumas—are affecting her moods, feelings and behaviors in the present.

Here's what parents can do.

First, prepare yourself by identifying what's most painful in your child's life. Has your child experienced some serious emotional traumas in the past? What are they? If not abuse or deprivation, almost certainly loss of family and possible friends. What are the current challenges he faces? How could past traumas affect the way he handles these current challenges? Don't assume that past traumas are affecting your child, but don't rule out the possibility. They could be affecting him unconsciously, and he may not realize it.

Next, consider how you might feel if you had survived the challenges your child has. How would you feel if you lost your family when you were two, four or eight years old? How would you cope? Would you be angry or depressed? Would you blame yourself? Would you find it hard to trust? That may be how your child feels, even though she cannot find the words to express it

or perhaps even identify it herself.

Then, after you have prepared yourself, begin to look for emotions that could underlie dysfunctional behavior. Could there be anger, confusion, fear, sadness or grief? What could have caused these feelings? Anger at what happened?

Confusion about what's to become of her life? Fear that bad things may happen again? Grief for the family and friends she has lost? Fear that she may disappoint you and lose you too?

Don't assume that past traumas are affecting your child, but don't rule out the possibility. They could be affecting him unconsciously, and he may not realize it.

Give your child opportunities to put his feelings into words by describing behaviors you have noticed and ask about them and the feelings he may be having. For example: "I noticed you were playing pretty rough. I wonder if you might be feeling angry." Or, "You seem to be pretty quiet. Anything on your mind? Sometimes I get quiet when I'm worried or feeling sad." Then be silent and listen, even if it's difficult.

Follow up with opened-ended questions that cannot be answered with a Yes or No: How do you feel? When did you begin to feel this way? How strong is the feeling? When is it most intense? How do you try to deal with it? What do you think might have caused it? Remain

Resources for Parents and Professionals

silent after each open-ended question and listen actively so your child can have time to expand on what he said.

Listen actively by paraphrasing what your child says. Don't repeat everything she said. Focus on what seems to be the most important, and say it back in your own words. Pay special attention to her feelings. Restate them gently. For example, "You seem to be feeling confused." Or, "You're both sad and angry?"

Don't add any of your own ideas or theories when you listen actively. Paraphrasing takes the guess work out of communication and lets your child know you are paying attention to what he is saying. This helps your child feel understood and closer to you.

Gently make connections to the past. Ask, for example: Do you remember other times when you felt like this? What caused those feelings then? How did you deal with them? How well did that work? What's different now?

Your day-to-day persistence is the key to long-term success—for you and your child.

Be patient. Learning to connect behaviors and moods to underlying emotions or to link underlying emotions to past events that caused these reactions is a process for a child as well as adults. She can't just flip a switch. Learning to trust that you will listen, care and not go away is also a process that takes time, practice and incremental success.

Reassure your child. Reassure her of your commitment to her. Reassure her that you will listen and not be overwhelmed by what she says. Reassure her that you believe in her ability to heal. Reassure her of your love.

Insights to keep in mind when you get discouraged:

Dealing with burdens of the past is ongoing. We all want to turn the page on the past and move ahead. But much as parents—and their foster children—want to bury a painful past, it's almost impossible to do so unless you recognize the huge influence it has—and are willing to deal with it when it surfaces.

Children who feel betrayed by adults often test parental commitment to see if you really mean what you say. Will you stick with him, his troubling behaviors seem to ask. Even when he is difficult? This testing is not malicious or probably even conscious—it's almost an instinctive survival tactic for an insecure child.

It's OK to feel discouraged. It's normal. What's important is to recognize your feelings, talk about them with your spouse, a good friend or someone who can understand. Then get some exercise. Do something you enjoy. What's not OK is to allow these feelings to diminish the efforts you make to help your child learn to communicate with words rather than behaviors. Your day-to-day persistence is the key to long-term success—for you and your child.



Dennis O'Brien is a licensed clinical social worker, experienced educator and therapist, who has written educational materials for the Washington University School of Medicine Dept. of Psychiatry. O'Brien's April 6, 2010 column, "Prevent teen suicide by addressing it," won an award from the Missouri Institute of Mental Health for outstanding reporting on suicide. His columns have appeared regularly in the Suburban Journal and publications of the CHARACTERplus, Gifted Association of Missouri, Gifted Resource Council, the Post-Dispatch and St. Louis Moms & Dads.

ParentLink

ParentLink, partially funded through the Children's Division's Early Childhood and Prevention Services Section, strengthens and supports families by providing parents and professionals quality information and resources, including:

WarmLine: Professionals confidentially assist parents and professionals with parenting concerns and resources via phone (800-552-8522 English and 888-460-0008 Spanish) M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. or e-mail (parentlink@missouri.edu).

Website: Access to library materials, information about community opportunities, and links to parenting websites at www.ParentLink.missouri.edu.

Library of Parenting Materials: 1,600+ titles of parenting materials (books, curricula, videotapes, DVDs, etc.) free to parents and professionals on topics such as development, discipline, special needs, incarcerated parents, and grandparents raising grandchildren that can be checked out via mail.

Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

Working with Incarcerated Parents (CD12-65): The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce enhanced policy for working with incarcerated parents. These changes come as a result of the Program Improvement Plan to enhance case management practice, specifically family engagement with incarcerated parents. A workgroup composed of contracted and CD staff from each of the regions made recommendations for changes resulting in the following new policy which:

- Provides clear expectations about the service worker's responsibilities and guidelines for requesting a service worker
- Establishes an identified CD staff person for counties with prisons to serve as a liaison between the agency and the prison
- Provides information on the importance of working with incarcerated parents through training opportunities

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2012/cd12-065.pdf>

Parental Notice and Interviewing in CA/N Investigations (CD12-73): The purpose of this memorandum is to inform staff revisions have been made to the Child Welfare Manual to further clarify the process staff should adhere to when providing parental notice and completing interviews in a CA/N Investigation. The primary purpose of the Division's response to any CA/N Investigation is to establish children's safety and well-being. Once established, the focus of the interviewing process in a CA/N Investigation should be: to collect enough information about the allegations to conclude by a preponderance of evidence whether or not a child was the victim of child abuse or neglect to gather sufficient information to complete a thorough family-centered assessment of the family's strengths, needs, and presenting

elements of risk to take appropriate action based upon the information gathered.

Interviewing is an essential component of the investigative process utilized by the Children's Service Worker to establish children's safety, collect evidence, and complete a thorough assessment of the family system. Although children's safety and well-being is paramount, staff should respect the rights and roles of parents, whether custodial or non-custodial, and ensure they are provided notice at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Division is required by §210.145 RSMo to notify at least one parent prior to staff interviewing a child unless:

- one of the parents is the alleged abuser; or
- the child is in the Division's legal custody; or
- the child is in danger of serious physical harm or threat to life.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2012/cd12-073.pdf>

Obtaining Credit Information for Older Youth (CD12-77): Effective with this memo, all youth age 16 and 17, will receive a fraud prevention service check through Central Office. As youth in this age range cannot enter into contracts or credit transactions, the report will identify potential discrepancies and/or inaccuracies. For youth age 16 and 17, this information is not part of a consumer file rather is fraud prevention and therefore the information obtained cannot be used for establishing a youth's creditworthiness or eligibility for credit, insurance, employment, or for any other purposes unrelated to the detection, prevention or remediation of identity theft or other fraud against the minor youth.

Any information regarding a youth with a credit history should be shared with the youth. If discrep-

ancies, fraud and identify theft are indicated, the Family Support Team and Division of Legal Services should be informed. For 18, 19, and 20 year olds there may be legitimate negative items due to late payments or debts. Regardless of the reason steps should be taken to help resolve these issues if possible.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2012/cd12-077.pdf>

Transracial Parenting in Foster Care and Adoption (CD12-82): Children's Division policy no longer specifies the Transracial Parenting Project as the sole training resource to meet the need of providing training and support to those resource parents who wish to explore whether fostering or adopting a child of a different culture is appropriate for their family. The training curriculum should include but is not limited to:

- Information that highlights the important issues involved in caring for a child of another race, culture, or ethnicity. Including but not limited to identity development, family issues, community resources
- Information to educate parents on what it truly means to parent a child(ren) of a different race, culture, or ethnicity
- Strategies to help parents explore ways to prepare for parenting a child(ren) of a different race, culture, or ethnicity

The expectation is that the training facilitator will have experience in parenting a child of a different culture.

In-service training credit for up to six (6) hours may be earned with submission of documentation that transracial parenting training was completed.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2012/cd12-082.pdf>

Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

Revised Safe Place for Newborns Brochures (CD12-83): The purpose of this memorandum is to inform staff of revisions to the Safe Place for Newborns Brochures. These revisions have been made in accordance with The Safe Place for Newborns Law 2005 (SECTION 210.950, RSMo.). The law allows a parent to permanently give up a child who is less than one year old, as long as the child is safely given to a firefighter, an EMT (emergency medical technician), law enforcement officer or hospital staff.

Staff are encouraged to share these brochures with parents and professionals on behalf of the Department of Social Services (DSS). The decision to give up a baby is a serious decision for both the baby and the parents of the child. The Department of Social Services cannot provide legal advice and encourages anyone who may have questions about giving up their baby under this law to speak with an attorney.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2012/cd12-083.pdf>

Revision of the Foster/Adoptive Family Medical Report, CW-215 (CD12-87): A resource provider applicant or household member must have been examined by a physician within the past twelve (12) months per 13 CSR 35-60.030(A) for the physician to complete the Medical Report.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2012/cd12-087.pdf>

Release of Information to Resource Parents (CD12-88): The Foster Parent Bill of Rights, 210.566.2(2) RSMo, provides for the licensed resource provider to have pertinent information regarding the foster youth currently placed in their home or the foster youth's family. This includes full disclosure of all medical, psychological, and psychiatric conditions of the child. The statute also allows foster parents

to have access to any information regarding the child or the child's family including family history of mental or physical illness, sexual abuse perpetrated by the child, criminal background, fire-setting or other destructive behavior or any other information which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to protect the foster or adoptive family.

Licensed resource parents are members of the professional team, which includes the Family Support Team, FST. Information is shared with the team members to assist in making decisions regarding safety, visitation, service and treatment needs, placement, and other case plan activities. Protected health information covered by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) may be provided to FST members to assist them in ensuring the child receives the proper care and treatment. Resources providers, as part of the FST, have access to all information shared with other FST members such as juvenile officers, Guardian-Litens, and school personnel.

Court Orders and Court Reports

Per policy, the resource provider accepting a placement in their home will be provided a copy of the court order placing the foster youth in Children's Division Custody. The provider shall receive all subsequent court orders while the foster youth is placed in their home until the release of jurisdiction is signed by the judge. The resource provider may also have a copy of the court reports regarding the placement(s) in their home.

Other Protected Information

Section 191.656.1(e) RSMo, provides that HIV information about a family member may be released to the resource provider. Release of Drug and Alcohol Information is more restrictive than HIPAA. To access information about Drug and

Alcohol treatment, an authorization from the individual to disclose must be obtained or a court order specifying the release of this information must be made.

Sanctions

Resource parents who fail to comply with the privacy policies and procedures of HIPAA policy will be subject to civil and criminal sanctions and disciplinary actions up to and including revocation of license or approval as well as prosecution in a court of law. Disciplinary actions will become part of the resource parents licensing record. Further questions regarding protected information should be submitted to the local privacy officer.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2012/cd12-088.pdf>

Child Care Referral to the Department of Health and Senior Services (CD12-99):

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce a new policy regarding the child care referrals between the Children's Division (CD) and the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been developed between CD and DHSS which outlines the responsibilities of both agencies in relation to the investigation of child abuse and neglect reports involving child care providers. This memorandum outlines CD's responsibilities with regard to the MOU.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2012/cd12-099.pdf>

Keep Current...

This is a brief summary of the current policies impacting the Children's Division. A more complete explanation with additional updates is available at: www.dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2012.

Resources for Parents

Special Letter to Foster and Adoptive Parents from Lori Ross, President and CEO of Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association and foster and adoptive parent.

Dear Friends,

As many of you have heard already, an aspect of child welfare service in Missouri is changing. In several counties in the Northwest area of the state, and in the Kansas City region, the Children's Division is trying something new--full privatization of resource development.

For those of us who live in parts of the state where some of our Foster Care Case Management has been privately contracted for the last six years, we have some experience in understanding how it is possible for the system to 'contract out' some of the services that had been done exclusively by the Children's Division for many years. In our circuits we've experienced the ups and downs of trying to figure out how cases are transitioned, how information is communicated and how problems are resolved when there are more players involved than just the state agency's local office.

One of the BEST reasons that private agencies can do things differently than a state agency can is the flexibility they have in terms of the dollars they can spend. Private agencies can raise private dollars to help support the same programs and services that states cannot raise. Private agencies have more flexibility in terms of how they can allocate their program dollars in order to respond more quickly to the individual or changing needs of their clients.

I have been a foster/adoptive parent for the last 27 years. Six of those years I had the opportunity to foster in the state of Kansas. While in Kansas I was licensed through a private agency. That experience was very positive for me and it allowed me to imagine the possibilities and see that a different kind of interaction was possible between foster/adoptive families and their licensing agency. Our licensing agency in Kansas was relatively small and had about the same number of licensing staff that the Kansas City, Jackson County Children's Division has. Their job was not to place children or supervise children's cases for the foster care system, their job exclusively was to recruit, train and license foster and adoptive homes.

My licensing worker and her supervisor were there to support my family through each placement. They demonstrated through every interaction their support of and appreciation for the work we were doing in our home. They advocated for placements we hoped to take, they helped navigate problems in obtaining services for kids in our home by reaching out to other child placing agencies to help solve problems on our behalf. They saw to it that we, as a family, were well cared for. They knew us well, and they were comfortable in our home as we were comfortable having them in our home. If they had a concern about us, we addressed it together. We were valued, partnered with, and we happily chose to continue to foster with this agency until we moved back to Missouri six years later.

The experience of being licensed by this agency has framed how I want to see licensing work for foster, adoptive and kinship families in Missouri. As Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association has grown and our advocacy work on behalf of foster and adoptive families has increased, we've seen trends that we'd like to reverse. For example statistics show that half or more of foster parents are not retained beyond the first year of fostering. This grim measure shows that we're not doing enough to help and support the families that we recruit into doing this work. In our advocacy work, time and again, families from all over the state relate their frustrations with feeling unheard, unsupported, and disrespected. These are the exact opposite of the outcomes we want for these very valuable resource providers without whom this system could absolutely not function.

Spurred by my passion to change the things which are not working, I began work a few years ago, to advocate for passage of legislation that would require the state to place emphasis on these very valuable members of the child welfare team. The result of that legislation was the creation of the Missouri Task Force on the Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Families. One of the key strategies that group considered and then recommended was the idea of increasing privatization of resource development services for foster, kinship and adoptive families.

At my agency, MFCAA, which began providing resource development services three years ago in a sub-contract partnership with Cornerstones of Care, we have been tracking the numbers for the families that we recruit, train, license and then retain. Because we focus exclusively on this aspect of the child welfare process and don't delve into the work of child case management (like the agency in Kansas that I worked with), we believe our work with our families is uniquely supportive. We retain our families annually at a rate of 94%. *(continue on next page)*

Resources for Parents

And when we consulted with other private agencies that provide resource development services in our area, we found that their retention rates were higher than typical state retention rates as well, and their families reported feeling satisfied and valued by their agencies. So we don't believe that these results are exclusive to us.

What we do believe is that despite the best efforts of individual workers within the Children's Division to do this work in a way that is supportive and that values families, it is very difficult to achieve these kinds of positive outcomes without access to the flexibility in funding and individualized and timely response that a private agency can provide.

Because of this belief, as I alluded to above, I am and have been from the beginning, a strong advocate for the idea of piloting full privatization of resource development services in parts of Missouri. I know that the transition to a new way of doing things is challenging and frightening. But I invite you to consider the possibility that this transition may actually result in a much more positive experience for you, your family and the many other families who are working to make a difference in children's lives every day.

As this pilot is implemented, the Children's Division hopes to host community meetings or forums in which I hope that you and your colleagues will participate. These forums will allow you to meet and interact with whichever providers are selected to offer resource development services in your area. They will be great places for you to get your questions answered and your concerns heard.

It is not the goal of the Children's Division or any agency that might ask for the privilege of providing

this service to force anything on you. My hope is that you will feel respected as you select the provider in your area that you would like to transfer your license to.

It is also not the goal of the Children's Division for your well-loved and respected Children's Division licensing workers to be out of a job. These valuable employees will have the opportunity to continue with the Children's' Division in other positions, or to interview for licensing positions with the agencies who receive the contracts.

This change has been structured as pilot so that this method of providing licensing services to families can be evaluated and compared with the work done in other areas of the state. We recognize that while this is likely to work well, it may not. And if it doesn't it won't expand, and the pilot will be revisited.

I am personally grateful that my corner of Missouri has been selected for this project. I'm always interested in experiencing a little discomfort if the greater good can be achieved as a result. And in this case, the greater good will benefit many of you and most definitely the children you are working with now and will work with in the future. I hope that you will keep an open mind and join me in welcoming this opportunity for change. I truly believe that you will be glad you did.

Thanks for your consideration,

Lori Ross

Auto Insurance for Older Youth in State Custody

This fall the Children's Division introduced the availability of an auto liability insurance policy for older youth ages 18 to 21, in the custody of the Children's Division for vehicles they drive but do not own.

With this program, a youth may purchase an auto policy in his/her own name which includes a specially developed form titled "Named Non-owner Coverage Youth in State Custody". The policy provides state required limits of liability and uninsured motorist coverage to the insured youth when driving any vehicle he or she does not own.

The Automobile Insurance Plan (AIP) is the market of last resort for consumers who need auto insurance but cannot find it through standard automobile insurance companies. Additional information about AIPSO can be found at <https://www.aipso.com/AboutAipso.aspx>. Any agent licensed to write automobile insurance in the state can assist a qualified youth in obtaining insurance through the Missouri Automobile Insurance. Youth may also contact the Plan at <https://www.aipso.com/ContactAIPSO.aspx> or by calling 800-424-0026 for a list of producers/agents in their area who have submitted business to the Missouri Automobile Insurance Plan.

To read the entire Children's Division policy memo that introduced this plan, visit <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2012/cd12-096.pdf>

Foster and Adoption Resource Centers

Eastern MO ARC

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800.FOSTER.3 / www.foster-adopt.org

In mid-October, parents and child welfare professionals had the opportunity to receive training from Jeff Katz, Executive Director of Listening to Parents. The goal of Listening to Parents is to eliminate the unnecessary barriers that prevent qualified, loving parents from adopting children in foster care.

Listening to Parents began in response to a contradiction. While tens of thousands of children wait in foster care to be adopted, many "aging out" of foster care without a family, countless parents are turned away or turned off by the process of adopting a child from foster care.

Listening to Parents documented the many obstacles parents face in dealing with child welfare agencies. These include poor customer service, difficulty in reaching the right staff, disproportionate agency focus on screening out prospective parents, and bureaucratic delays.

The focus of both training sessions was to build communication skills. Parents were provided tips and language to advocate for the youth in their home while still maintaining a level of professionalism to not inhibit future interactions with the child's team. Likewise, professionals were provided information to assist them in responding to questions and concerns of caregivers as well as other child welfare professionals in order to help expedite permanency.

According to Katz, the following are factors influencing adoption decisions:

- Access to professionals who could talk to prospective parents about the adoption process
- Opportunities to meet children in foster care who need adoptive families
- Being knowledgeable about the adoption process
- Having supportive services (i.e., a social worker, mental health services, parenting classes)
- Being knowledgeable about children in foster care; and
- Having access to post-adoption services

Western MO ARC

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association (MFCAA)
3210 S Lee's Summit Rd., Independence, MO 64055
816.350.0215 / www.mfcaa.org

An invaluable piece of information was spoken during a training session at the North American Council on Adoptable Children's annual conference by Jack Brennan of Family Focus Adoption Services, New York. He said in words what I've known in my heart for a long time, but have never heard anyone say. He said, "Adoption is an unconditional, irrevocable, forever final claim. NO behavior on the part of a child justifies a disruption or dissolution of that claim. Every child is entitled to the love and security that adoption provides. However, every child is NOT entitled to live in the community."

Adoptive parents who have disrupted an adoption aren't uncommitted or weak. In every adoption disruption I've seen parents who have used every resource within their arsenal to seek and obtain professional help and that help has failed them in one of many ways.

If we, as a system, believe in the mantras... "EVERY CHILD IS ADOPTABLE" and "EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FOREVER FAMILY", then we have an obligation to get down in the mud and really do everything as peers, as professionals, and as systems to help families to do this incredibly difficult work once the adoption certificate is signed. As a community we need to elevate the discussion of post adoptive support, and take a REAL look at what that means for our complex and multiply traumatized kids. We need to keep exploring the new evidence and research that comes forward, but we need to remember that as human beings we don't know it all. And likely we never will. We need to be committed to doing our best individually and together as a child welfare system and community to do WHATEVER it takes to support the critical connection that our adopted kids have with the parents who have claimed them. It absolutely IS the relationship that makes the difference.

The above is an excerpt from an MFCAA newsletter article written by Executive Director, Lori Ross. To view the entire article, visit <http://www.mfcaa.org/img/files/newsletters/2012/October%202012.pdf>.

The Adoption Resource Centers of Missouri are brought to you in partnership with the Children's Division. Both regional centers build on the community's current programs, allowing a wider variety of adoption-related services for you and your families. More information can be found by calling or viewing the Centers' websites.

Waiting Children: Seeking Forever Families

Missouri Diligent Recruitment

The Children's Division and partner organizations have entered into the final year of a five year Adoption Opportunities grant. The grant has joined together the private and public agencies to initiate a creative new approach based on experience, knowledge, and a commitment to making the lives of Missouri's foster children better. It is the partnership's mission to bring together potential families and child welfare professionals to find permanent connections for children with caring adults.

The grant calls for youth to be randomly selected from the population managed by the Children's Division and their Contracted Case Managers in St. Louis City and County, Jefferson and St. Charles Counties. The youth are then assigned into a control group (services as usual) or an intervention group (Extreme Recruitment). Extreme Recruitment is an intensive 12-20 week process to find homes for hard to place children and prepare them and their family for adoption or guardianship. Lessons learned will be shared after the final evaluation is completed.

Below are youth involved with Extreme Recruitment who are still looking for their forever family. If you are interested in learning more about them, contact Denise Kelley at 800-367-8373 or denisekelley@foster-adopt.org.



Emily (16) & Kerie (13)



Brandon (16)



Juan (13)



Dontate (16)

For more information on the Diligent Recruitment project, visit www.modiligentrecruitment.org. Questions regarding Extreme Recruitment or any of the youth listed above can be directed to Denise Kelley, Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition, at 800.FOSTER.3 or denisekelley@foster-adopt.org.

Family Connections
c/o The Coalition
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