

Family Connections

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Cyberbullying

Experiencing bullying is challenging and upsetting. It's one of those situations that leaves a permanent mark on a person's inner fabric and can forever alter their life path, depending on how the situation is handled.

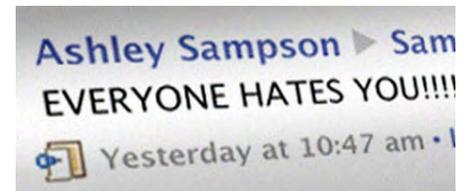
It's no surprise that as more of life has become digital and online, bullies have gone there too. The problem with online bullies is that they are faceless and often harder to identify and stop than bullies in the off-line realm. The effect, though, is no less significant, especially on children. In fact, online bullying—cyberbullying—is the most common negative situation that can happen in the online space to any of our kids.

What makes cyberbullying so challenging?

Kids don't report it to adults and don't want to "rat out" their friends. To add insult to injury, schools uniformly don't have great strategies for handling it. How do you know if a child is being bullied? It can be challenging to figure out. Look for subtle signs in behavior such as:

- Not wanting to go to school or an activity
- Becoming upset after using the computer or cell phone
- Seeming unusually sad, withdrawn, or moody
- Avoiding questions from you about what's happening

Kids who bully may have similar signs, but you may notice unusual computer activity such as switching screens when you walk in or multiple log-ins that you don't recognize.



Kids who come into foster care due to abuse or neglect are more likely to become a victim of bullying, or to be a bully themselves. According to a 2007 study of bullying in Japan, South Africa, and the United States, 72 percent of children who were physically abused by their parents became a bully, a victim of a bully or both. -Susan M. Swearer, Co-Director of Bullying Research Network

As with all childhood changes from normative behavior, anything that's extreme and interfering with home, school, and friends warrants further investigation. Call the school to see if grades are slipping, and call your pediatrician to arrange an evaluation including a discussion of whether it would be appropriate to obtain psychologic input.

Why is bullying on the rise? Bullying expert and psychologist, Dr. Joel Haber, notes that bullying is on the rise due to technologic changes in our culture. Dr. Haber feels as other experts do that it's the accessibility coupled with technology that is part of the issue. The indirect nature of the Internet allows even good kids to be mean because of the faceless power that the screen builds in. Dr. Haber notes that "it's easier to have fun at someone else's expense" and that being online removes the empathy that face-to-face contact creates. *Article continues on page 8.*

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 two foster parent associations' representatives. Foster 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.

Adoption Tax Credit Now Permanent

The bill to avert the fiscal cliff, which was signed on January 2nd, made the adoption tax credit permanent, extending the credit as it was in the 2001 Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act.

The credit will remain flat for special needs adoptions, which means that people who adopt children who are determined to be special needs (or hard to place) by a state or county child welfare agency can claim the maximum credit regardless of their expenses.

The adoption credit is not refundable for 2012 and beyond, which means that only those individuals with tax liability will benefit.

The maximum amount of the credit for 2013 cannot yet be confirmed, but it will be at least \$10,000 (but might be higher due to adjustments for inflation). Additional details as they become available can be found at <http://adoptiontaxcredit.org/>.

The adoption tax credit, which can be claimed for eligible adoption-related expenses, has helped thousands of American families offset the high cost of adoption since the credit was established in 1997. Since 2003, families that adopted children with special needs could claim the full credit regardless of their qualified adoption expenses. The credit has made adoption a more viable option for many parents who might not otherwise have been able to afford adoption, allowing them to provide children with loving, permanent families. With more than 100,000 children in U.S. foster care available for adoption, and countless millions of orphaned and abandoned children around the world, the continuation of the adoption tax credit is vital to providing love, safety, and permanency to as many children as possible.

- From *The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)*.

Psychotropic Medication and Ensuring the Safety and Proper Care of Children in Foster Care

Children in foster care often have emotional and behavioral challenges as a result of maltreatment and trauma, and many receive psychotropic medications to manage their symptoms. The use of these medications must be managed with care. Federal law requires the Children's Division (CD) to develop a plan for the appropriate use and monitoring of psychotropic medications. As a community partner, CD wants to inform you of Missouri's plan. The Children's Division, MO HealthNet Division, and the Department of Mental Health are working together to review psychotropic medication utilization for children in foster care. Representatives have been meeting for several months to develop a protocol to monitor the appropriate use of psychotropic medications. Standards have been developed based on best practices for prescribing psychotropic medications. At the state level, the group representatives will be notifying prescribers as well as key individuals who assist in the coordination of a person's health when a prescription exceeds a standard. These notifications are meant to keep our children safe and increase the awareness of best practice guidelines.

In addition, the interagency group is adopting a second opinion procedure for foster children prescribed five or more psychotropic medications and/or prescribed two or more antipsychotic medications. Prescribers will receive a letter outlining the issue and the prescriber will be asked to submit records to be reviewed by a board certified child psychiatrist. The reviewer will then offer recommendations regarding the use of psychotropic medications. If the prescriber is in agreement with the recommendations, no further steps are required. If the prescriber wishes to discuss the recommendations with the reviewer, a phone call will be arranged.

As the state continues to review the use of psychotropic medications for children in state custody, additional procedures may be put in place to ensure safe and effective treatment of children. As a stakeholder in the systems which care for Missouri's children, CD wants to keep you informed of these efforts and will provide updates as appropriate.

- From the Missouri Children's Division.



Children's Division Adoption Information Registry

The Missouri Children's Division maintains an Adoption Information Registry in Jefferson City. The Adoption Information Registry is a service within the Missouri Children's Division by which adult adoptees (age 18 and older) and their biological parents or adult siblings may indicate their desire to be contacted by each other upon the voluntary registration of all parties to the Adoption Information Registry.

Who Can Register?

- * adult adoptees 18+ years adopted from foster care in Missouri
- * biological parents of a child adopted from foster care
- * adult siblings of a child adopted from foster care in Missouri

What information is available? Identifying information of other registrants, which is provided to the adult adoptee and the biological parent(s) and/or adult siblings, will include name, address, telephone numbers (if applicable), and place of birth.

How do you register? Adopted adults, biological parents and adult siblings must complete and file separate registration forms with the Missouri Adoption Information Registry. To obtain a copy of this form, the individual can contact the Foster Adopt Hotline at (800) 554-2222 or on-line at dss.mo.gov/cd/adopt/adoir.

Where to send forms? Registration Forms can be sent in an envelope marked "Confidential" to: Missouri Children's Division, Adoption Information Registry, P.O. Box 88, Jefferson City, MO 65103.

Expert Exchange: Professional Answers to Your Questions

Helping Children Openly Communicate

By Dennis O'Brien, MA, LCSW

Parents Ask: How hard should we push our child to excel, especially at school or sports? The more we push, the less she seems to do.

Not as hard as you may think. There is no question that success in school is important, but parents who "care too much" and push too hard may cause children to fail rather than excel. Loving, misinformed parents push their children to get top grades and continually raise their test scores in the mistaken belief that this will assure access to prestigious colleges and guarantee a successful professional career. But this is a blueprint for constricting a child's potential, not a recipe for success.

How pressure backfires: When parental pressure unwittingly conveys a message that a child is not living up to expectations, a child may begin to believe that she can never do well enough to please them. Self-esteem suffers, and many children protect themselves from perceived failure by going through the motions. If they don't really try, they can't really fail. This is as true for all children. As a result, some drop out. Many underachieve.

How parents can help children thrive: Examine your priorities. When children who are talented enough to succeed stop trying to do well, parents need to examine their own attitudes. What messages are you sending, perhaps unintentionally, by your own behavior? Do the unspoken norms of your family require perfection? To what extent are you inflicting success-at-all-costs values on your children by the way you lead your own life? Be honest. Discuss it with your spouse.

Look for symptoms of stress. Does she break into tears or complain

that stomach aches or minor injuries or inconveniences will prevent her from performing effectively or

What messages are you sending your child, perhaps unintentionally, by your own behavior?

performing at all? Is she wound too tight, always worried that something will go wrong? Does she react with anger when you encourage her to participate in activities she once enjoyed? Behaviors like these suggest your child may be conflicted about her ability to meet your standards for success. Worse still, a foster or adoptive child who feels insecure may begin to think your love is conditional upon her success.

On the other hand, is your child extremely critical of herself even when she is doing well? Does she seem to think that whatever she does is never good enough? This may suggest she has internalized excessively high standards for herself and will never enjoy her successes or use them to strengthen her self-esteem. Going forward, she may not take the risk of doing something she might enjoy if she fears she cannot do it well enough to meet the unrealistic and unhealthy standards she has internalized.

Stop pushing and begin communicating your acceptance of the protective limitations your child has set for herself. Children who are pushed to pursue their parents' dreams don't have time to develop their own. Competitive, well-intentioned parents sometimes behave as if they are intent on designing the perfect child and measuring their success by achievements. If you back off, your child may gradu-

ally expand her horizons at her own pace.

Don't micromanage. Parents who micromanage their children's lives may cause them to behave in exactly the ways they least desire because their children defend themselves against the pressure to excel and the pain of failure by deliberately underachieving or refusing to try things that they might enjoy. In the long run, support and acceptance will do more to motivate a child than any amount of pressure.

Don't over-schedule. Parents who over-schedule a child with enrichment activities while subjecting the child's performance to constant scrutiny undermine their child's

...a foster or adoptive child who feels insecure may begin to think your love is conditional upon her success.

ability to be a resilient contender in life. Even when a child appears to be holding up under this parental pressure to excel, self-esteem takes a hit because the real message comes through loud and clear: The way I am is not good enough. I must do more.

Help your child set reasonable goals and develop a practical plan to achieve them. Teach her to redefine success in terms of making a reasonable effort that is appropriate to the task on hand, not simply grading out on top. Does she understand how much she needs to study to earn an acceptable, though not a perfect, grade? Does she realize she doesn't have to know everything to be prepared for a test, and that you don't expect perfection?

Resources for Parents and Professionals

Remind her of the other things that you value for her, like having friends and hobbies, and being well-rounded and happy with herself. Use opportunities and challenges that arise to help her learn to figure out when it's important to do her best and when it's better to just do "well enough" and still have energy for the rest of her life.

Encourage your child's love of learning, not high-scoring. There are many ways parents can nurture a child's love of learning, but emphasizing grades and test scores are not among them. Show interest in what your child is studying. Use appropriate questions to communicate your values and nurture your child's interest in learning. Instead of opening a conversation by asking, "How did you do on your history test?" ask, "What interests you about ancient Egypt? Would you like to learn more about the significance for everyday life between the gods Hapi and Hathor? How could you do that if you wanted to?"

Encourage your child to develop personal interests that go beyond

the school curriculum. This does not mean encouraging them to join as many clubs and activities as possible "because it will look good on your college résumé." It does mean nurturing both your child's academic and non-academic interests, encouraging exploration and supporting risk-taking. Children often need encouragement to try something different, especially something which does not lend itself to easily identifying who's the best.

A passion for photography, dance, art, or music can help a child develop character traits which lead to success. Some passions lead directly to career choices. Others simply teach a child to plan, to attack a project aggressively, to persist and to master a challenging interest for the inherent pleasure it brings them. Traits like these are better predictors of success than test scores or grades.

Praise and encourage your child's efforts. Praise helps a child strive much more effectively than pressure. It also builds self-esteem. Consistently making an effort

builds character and confidence, while a desperate striving to excel distorts values and damages children's self-esteem. Their sense of identity and personal well-being get tangled up in the notion that they must be the best at whatever they undertake in order to be lovable.

Bottom Line: Parental pressure often backfires. Children respond much more positively to encouragement and praise. Parents who learn to do that are much more effective in helping a foster or adopted child overcome challenges and develop the skills and character traits that lead to long-term success.



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. 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.



Meet David

David is a thoughtful, friendly, and creative 12 year old who loves to learn. Described as a "hands-on guy who enjoys trying new things," he has lots of different interests and hobbies. Whether it's playing video games, chess, swimming, listening to music, or watching wrestling or football on TV, David's up for it. He also enjoys arts and crafts and likes to spend time drawing, building model cars and glass blowing, a skill he was introduced to recently. David's favorite activity is fishing, and he loves to talk about the one that got away AND the one that didn't! His dream vacation would definitely be a deep sea fishing trip.

David is helpful around the house and is hoping to learn to cook this year. He's taking a cooking class at school and is eager to try out new recipes and sharpen his skills. A good student, David's favorite subject is math and he thinks he

might like to become an accountant. For more information about David, please contact Shonetta Reed at 800.367.8373 or shonettareed@foster-adopt.org.

Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

2012 Legislative Session Update (CD12-102)

HOUSE BILL 1323

Leaving Documentation or Calling before Responding to a Report (Section 210.145.6 RSMo.)

Prohibits Children's Division (CD) from calling prior to a home visit or leaving a business card or other documentation when responding to or investigating a child abuse or neglect report, under the following circumstances:

- No person is present in the home;
- The alleged perpetrator resides in the home and the child's safety may be compromised if the alleged perpetrator becomes aware of the visit;
- The alleged perpetrator will be alerted regarding the attempted visit; or
- The family has a history of domestic violence or fleeing the community

Workers are to use the above criteria for consideration when determining if alerting the alleged perpetrator would compromise the safety of the child, as well as considering their own safety in planning for home visits.

Providing Written Material to the Alleged Perpetrator and Allowing it to be Read (Section 210.145.6 RSMo.)

A worker who is responding to an investigation will provide written material to the alleged perpetrator which includes information about the investigative process, their rights to an appeal and their right to legal representation. This information is included in the CS-24 "Description of the Investigation Process." The worker is to give the alleged perpetrator a reasonable amount of time to read the material or have it read to him or her by the case worker before the visit commences. This provision specifies the event shall not exceed five minutes. This requirement is waived when a child faces an immediate threat or danger, or the person responding to or investigating the report feels threatened or in danger of physical harm.

Requirement to Review Repeated Hotline Calls (Section 210.145.4 RSMo.)

CD is to review the collective content of screened out hotline calls when three or more calls involving the same victim are received within a 72-hour period. The purpose of the review is to determine if the collective information

from these calls meet statutory criteria for a child abuse and neglect report or whether the calls were made for the purpose of harassment.

Initial review of three calls received will be completed by CANHU and an alert sent to the field when criteria are met. The calls will be sent to the field supervisor in situations where additional information is required to determine if 1) a referral should be upgraded to CA/N or 2) calls were made for the purpose of harassment. Staff will be responsible for gathering information and making a determination.

When field staff, upon review, finds the criteria for a CA/N report are met the field will send a field report to CANHU. If field staff determines the conditions for harassment are met, staff will follow CD harassment policy.

Death or Serious Injury of a Child After a Hotline Report has Been Made (Section 210.135.3 RSMo.)

CD is to establish procedures for evaluating staff when a child dies or is seriously injured after a report is made to the child abuse/neglect hotline. The evaluation is to include the worker or workers who handled any reports related to the case, as well as the case worker or workers assigned to the investigation, and the Circuit Manager assigned to the county.

When a child dies or is seriously injured during an investigation or when there is an open case, CD shall:

- Conduct a preliminary evaluation of staff involved with the case to determine if an assessment is necessary to decide if workers involved in the case are competent to perform their duties.
- Conduct an assessment, if necessary, within 3 days of the child's death.

Callers Instructed to Call 911 for Emergencies. (Section 210.145.6 RSMo.)

Requires Children's Division CANHU staff to instruct callers to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline to call 911 in instances when a child may be in immediate danger. The CANHU protocol currently includes scripted language to instruct callers to contact 911 under these circumstances.

Sam Pratt's Law (Section 544.456 RSMo.) This law allows any court in a case involving the abuse, neglect, or

death of a child to impose, as a condition of release, the prohibition of the defendant from providing child care services for compensation pending final disposition of the case.

The court is to notify the Department of Health and Senior Services and the Department of Social Services when it makes such a determination and at final disposition of the case.

Low-Wage Trap Elimination Act (Sections 208.044, 208.053 and 544.456 RSMo.)

This act allows for the Hand-Up Pilot Program for persons currently receiving child care who have a rise in income above the allowed monthly maximum from suddenly losing their benefit. This is a voluntary program in which participants are required to pay a monthly premium.

Unlicensed Child Care Facilities (Sections 210.211 and 210.245 RSMo.)

Any child care facility which is exempt from licensure will disclose to any parent or guardian, of children in its care, that the facility is not licensed. Any person who violates this provision a second or subsequent time will be guilty of a class A misdemeanor and assessed a fine of \$200 per day up to a maximum of \$10,000.

SENATE BILL 628

Joint Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (Section 21.771 RSMo.)

Establishes the "Joint Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect" a legislative committee composed of seven members of the House of Representatives and seven members of the Senate. The purpose of this committee is:

- To make a study and analysis of Missouri's child abuse and neglect reporting and investigation system;
- To develop a plan to improve the decision process for removal of a child from a home;
- To determine if additional personnel and resources are necessary to adequately protect children and improve their welfare;
- To address the need for additional foster care homes and to improve the quality of care provided to abused and neglected children in the custody of the state; and

To submit a full report annually to the General Assembly of its activities and recommendations for legislative

Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

action, as well as recommendations for administrative or procedural changes in the internal management or organization of the state or local government agencies and departments.

Automatic Stay on any Paternity Proceeding when the Father is charged with the Act of Rape (Section 452.374 RSMo.) Requires the court to issue an automatic stay on any paternity proceeding when there are pending criminal charges alleging an act of rape by the putative father until there is a final disposition of the criminal charges. In future proceedings, this legislation also prohibits the denial of visitation rights to the mother when the court is determining which parent is most likely to allow meaningful contact with the other parent.

Modification of the Crime of Domestic Assault (Sections 565.072, 565.073 & 565.074 RSMo.) Modifies the crime of domestic assault (1st, 2nd, and 3rd degree) by including any child who is a member of the family to the list of persons to which the provision applies.

Modification to the Crime of Abuse or Neglect of a Child to include Abusive Head Trauma (Section 568.060 RSMo.) Changes "the crime of abuse of a child" to "the crime of abuse or neglect of a child," and adds "abusive head trauma" to the statute.

Abusive head trauma is defined as "a serious physical injury to the head or brain caused by any means, including but not limited to shaking, jerking, pushing, pulling, slamming, hitting, or kicking." A person commits the crime of abuse or neglect of a child if they cause a child under 18 to:

- suffer physical or mental injury; or
- be placed in a situation which may result in physical or mental injury, or
- suffer abusive head trauma.

Crime of Sexual Misconduct Involving a Child (Section 566.083)

The crime of sexual misconduct involving a child is modified to include a person knowingly coercing or inducing a female child, who is known by the person to be younger than 15 years of age, to expose the breasts of the female child through the internet or other electronic means for the purpose of arousing or gratifying the sexual desire of any person, including the child.

Sexual Offender Registry - Missouri Criminal Code (Section 2 RSMo.)

This act requires the Joint Committee on the Missouri Criminal Code to evaluate which offenses should be removed from the sexual offender registry without jeopardizing public safety or posing a threat to society.

Definition and Provisions Related to Vulnerable Persons (Section 491.075 RSMo.) Current law provides for the exception to the hearsay statute for a child under 14 who is testifying regarding offenses under chapter 565, 566, 568 or 573 RSMo. This act adds "vulnerable person" to the exception.

Vulnerable person is defined as "a person who, as a result of an inadequately developed or impaired intelligence or a psychiatric disorder that materially affects ability to function, lacks the mental capacity to consent, or whose developmental level does not exceed that of an ordinary child of fourteen years of age."

Juvenile Court Jurisdiction (Section 211.031 RSMo.) This act lowers the age from 15 and 1/2 years to 15 years for any youth who is involved in a state or local traffic violation, allowing the juvenile court jurisdiction over any child in this instance.

HOUSE BILL 1577

Students in Foster Care (Section 160.1990 RSMo.)

House Bill 1577 supports the provisions of Senate Bill 291, the Foster Care Education Bill of Rights. This legislation requires public school districts and child placing agencies to ensure foster children receive every benefit of a public education.

SENATE BILL 599

Reports Related to Spanking or the Use of Reasonable Force in Schools (Section 160.261 RSMo.)

Previously Section 160.261 required the superintendent of schools or the president of the school board to notify the juvenile office of incidents of alleged child abuse which arose out of or were related to a spanking, or the use of reasonable force to protect a person or property, or a report made for the sole purpose of harassing a public school employee. This bill replaces the juvenile office with law enforcement.

HOUSE BILL 1576

State Health Insurance for Foster Parents (Sections 103.078 and 210.539 RSMo.)

Any state licensed Level B foster parent, as defined in Section 210.543, RSMo, is eligible to purchase the same health insurance plan as state employees for himself or herself and his or her dependents through the plan provided by Missouri Consolidated Health Care Plan at the actuarially determined premium for health care coverage.

Prior Authorizations for Behavioral Health Services (CD 12-112)

The Children's Division recently received correspondence from MO HealthNet Division regarding Prior Authorizations (PA) for Behavioral Health Services for children in Legal Status 1 (fund codes 01, 02, 12), and former foster care youth eligible for Medicaid under Senate Bill 577 (fund code 13). Effective 12-31-12, all Prior Authorizations, regardless of any remaining unused units left on the PA, will close.

Should a child currently in treatment continue to need ongoing services, a new PA period will begin on 1-1-2013. Staff should contact the child's behavioral health providers to assure they are requesting new authorizations immediately so there will be no lapse in coverage.

Providers who have questions may refer to the guidelines outlined in MOPsychotherapy Bulletin Volume 30, Number 27, dated November 30, 2007 and Section 13.11 of the Behavioral Health Services provider manual. The bulletin and manual may be accessed at www.dss.mo.gov/mhd.

Providers who have been paid for services in excess of four hours for a participant in the last rolling year will not receive four additional non-prior authorized hours for that participant.

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/.

Cyberbullying (continued from page 1)

Ross Ellis, founder and CEO, Love Our Children USA, a national nonprofit dedicated to stopping all violence against children, including bullying, agrees: "Cyberbullying is huge." E-mails and calls she receives from families confirm the statistics, and she's learned about cyberbullying by instant message (IM), e-mail, and texting. Her best advice to parents is to take all threats any child informs parents of seriously: "You don't know the hatred of the bully." She is so right about that. It is very important to evaluate all threats a child informs you of to determine the level of intensity and how much danger your child may be in.

What should parents do if their child is being bullied?

- Save all e-mails, IMs, and texts
- Try to talk to the other parents and determine what may have transpired
- Talk to the schools and be prepared for the school to not want to get involved

"In a world of brands and marketing, there's this idea that there's no such thing as bad attention. And there's nothing like 'starting drama' to guarantee both attention and entertainment."
- www.connectsafely.com

Call the police if the situation seems to place your child in serious danger with a significant threat, or the other parent will not help you.

Studies show that the child being bullied often knows the bully. The police can track the IP address to find the bully and keep your child safe, which is the ultimate goal. Even if your child claims to know the bully, knowing for sure by tracking the IP is the best insurance policy, as there have been cases of mistaken identity in the online world with people using other people's computers and cell phones to send harmful messages and bully.

"If a child says he or she was bullied, take it seriously," Ross says. "That's a form of violence against a child. It must be taken seriously and the child needs help to look into it and the tools to work it out. Adults must listen."

Any child online is at risk for being bullied. Our off-line senses for detecting that something is off with our child will help us pick up that something may have occurred and questions should be asked. Monitoring programs that help you uncover situations that your child may not know how to talk to you about can help facilitate conversations that kids find very difficult to bring up to any adult, including parents.

It's important to keep an open mind and listen without overreacting if your child comes to you with hard-to-hear information. And be on the lookout.

- Article by Gwenn Schurgin O'Keeffe, MD, FAAP; from www.healthychildren.org/.

Cheat Sheet for Online Communication with Your Kids

E-mail	Advantages: great for letter-like communication, updates, sending pictures, attachments, references, humor, and staying in touch Disadvantages: not great for "instant" communication or for having a conversation off-line
Text	Advantages: updates such as plan changes Disadvantages: not great if requires immediate reply; not perfect for full, long conversation; may hinder writing and social abilities in teens because of shorthand used
Social networking	Advantages: great way to stay connected and let kids know you are involved; good for humor and just being involved Disadvantages: privacy concerns—entire network can view post; not appropriate for private conversation but often used that way
Cell phone call	Advantages: allows direct communication Disadvantages: limited by cell coverage
Instant messaging	Advantages: instant communications like texting Disadvantages: must be online and logged on to the service to communicate with the person of interest; not great for full conversation
Video chat	Advantages: visual conversation in real time; can see body language and facial expressions to gauge emotional responses Disadvantages: connection issues; interference issues if music or other ambient noise on either side; need to be online and logged in

Resources for Parents

Online Resources for Parents and Youth

<http://www.getnetwise.org/>
Contains the largest online repository of instructional how-to video tutorials that show parents and users how to keep their family's online experiences safe and secure. Instructional videos range from setting your search engine to filter pornography in its search results to activating your computer's security settings.

<http://www.childrenonline.org>
Devoted to the safety of children and teens online

<http://www.connectsafely.org/>
Where parents, teens, educators, and experts discuss and learn about safe blogging and social networking

<http://www.fbi.gov/fun-games/kids/kids-safety>
Safety tips for kids on the Internet from the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Site focuses on online safety and ways to report abuses

<http://www.GetParentalControls.org>
The independent guide to online safety resources

<http://teenangels.org/>
A group of teen volunteers who have been specially trained in all aspects of online safety, privacy, and security. After completion of the required training, the Teenangels run unique programs in schools to spread the word about responsible and safe surfing to other teens and younger kids, parents, and teachers

<http://www.nsteens.org/>
A program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®. NSTeens resources empower tweens to make safer online choices through lessons.

FAFSA Reminder!!

Students should apply for federal assistance by filling out the Free Application for Student Financial Aid (FAFSA). The amount of financial aid you qualify for is mostly based on family income, but here's the good news: foster youth (and some former foster youth) can mark themselves down as a 1-person family. This means that they don't count their parent's income, which can mean more financial aid. This rule also applies to youth adopted from foster care after their 14th birthday. For more information, visit www.fafsa.ed.gov.



It pays to file early!

No matter what your individual state or school filing deadline, when it comes to your FAFSA, the sooner you file after January 1st each year (the date that the federal processor begins accepting applications), the better!

Many types of financial aid (particularly need-based aid, including grants, loans and work-study programs) are limited and are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Therefore, the sooner your FAFSA is fully processed and released to your school's financial aid administrators, the better your chances of receiving consideration for the maximum amount of financial aid for which you may be eligible.

Important FAFSA Deadlines for Missouri Students:

Federal Deadline

- Online applications must be submitted by midnight Central Time, June 30th, 2013.
- Any corrections or updates must be submitted by midnight Central Time, September 24th, 2014.

State Deadline

- Missouri - April 1st, 2013 by midnight, Central Time.

College Deadline

- Check with the college(s) you are interested in attending. You may also want to ask your college about their definition of an application deadline whether it is the date they receive your FAFSA, or the date your FAFSA is processed.

Links to other financial aid resources:

www.collegeboard.org	www.fastweb.com
www.finaid.org	www.savingforcollege.com
www.UNCF.org	www.orphan.org
www.jimcaseyyouth.org	www.getcollegefunds.org
www.collegenet.com	www.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html
www.collegescholarships.com	www.nrcys.ou.edu

Foster and Adoption Resource Centers

Eastern MO ARC

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition
1750 S. Brentwood Blvd., Ste. 210
St. Louis, MO 63144
800.FOSTER.3 / www.foster-adopt.org

Training Extravaganzas

The Extravaganza is an all-day training that allows foster/adoptive/relative caregivers to receive 7.5 in-service training hours in one day, and you can bring the kids, too! Upcoming dates:

March 23rd, 2013 June 8th, 2013
August 10th, 2013 October 26th, 2013

Visit www.foster-adopt.org/trainingextravaganzas for registration information.

Educational Advocacy

The Coalition has Educational Advocates available year-round to help with IEPs and educational concerns. Please contact:

Trish Taddeucci, Educational Advocate at
800.367.8373 x2232

Tiffany Lovelace, Educational Advocate at
800.367.8373 x2243

FREE 24/7 Crisis Intervention

When crisis erupts, get help with our 24-Hour Crisis Intervention services for families in St. Louis County, St. Louis City, Jefferson County, and St. Charles County. Visit www.foster-adopt.org for details and eligibility requirements. For immediate assistance, call 314.614.2342. Crisis Intervention is FREE for pre- and post-guardianship/adoptive families. This program is made possible thanks to the St. Louis County Children's Service Fund, the St. Charles County Community and Children's Resource Board, the Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis, and the St. Louis Mental Health Board.

The Family Support Network has family therapy openings for pre- and post-adoptive/guardianship families in St. Louis County. There is currently little or NO wait. To make a referral, call 314.614.2342.

Need other resources? Our Family Advocacy Services can assist. Call 800.FOSTER.3.

Western MO ARC

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

I am overwhelmed with thankfulness for the gift of community that we have at MFCAA. Whether it is in person, in our clothes closet or food pantry, in the group setting of our training and support groups, one-on-one through our advocacy assistance, or via email through the JCFAP loop or on Facebook, we are a solid and supportive community. And that, my friends, is a very unique experience for foster and adoptive parents. I have spent the last two years doing part time work consulting in other states through the North American Council on Adoptable Children's Community Champions Network, and I have never encountered in any place in the country, what we have here.

Using MFCAA's model, and with our blessing and support, our partners are growing other resource centers in Jefferson City, Springfield and other areas of the state, with a goal of uniting their community's foster and adoptive parents in the kind of solidarity and support that we have here in KC. I am proud of what we've accomplished together, and for each other, and I'm filled with gratitude for the promise that we will see in the years to come.

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/November%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



Meet Megan

Megan, who will be 18 in February, has not given up the hope to be part of a permanent family and knows that every child, regardless of age, needs a place to call home. Megan would be an amazing addition to any family. Her quick wit and immense talents make her a joy to be around. Megan enjoys singing almost as much as others enjoy listening to her! When not singing herself, Megan likes listening to rock music, however, she will make an exception for Taylor Swift! Megan is also artistically talented and enjoys drawing. In fact, she hopes to attend art school to develop her drawing skills. She does very well in school and makes good grades. Megan is highly motivated and works hard in school. She is always able to speak her mind and never at a loss for topics to discuss. Megan likes to laugh and especially likes watching funny movies. She can recite some of her old favorites from beginning to end. For more information about Megan, contact Gayle Flavin at 314.367.8373 or gayleflavin@foster-adopt.org. **Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.**

Meet Willie

Willie is an outgoing fun loving 15-year-old who would make an awesome addition to a forever family. Willie is very personable when you meet him. He enjoys talking and sharing about himself. Willie likes being a leader and setting good examples for others. He likes to read, cook, dance, ride his bike, and play video games. He said his favorite video games are Dragonball Z and Naruto. Willie also likes sports. His favorite sports are soccer and baseball. Willie said he has played on a soccer team before and that he really liked being on a team. At school, Willie enjoys reading and Art class. Willie has expressed that when he becomes an adult, he hopes one day to be a famous actor and dancer. He said he is really good at dancing. When asked about his favorite food to eat, he said broccoli and cheese. His favorite place to go is Six Flags in St. Louis.

Willie does well with adults as well as his peers. Willie has a great relationship with his brothers which he would like to continue. Willie will do well in a home that is nurturing and consistent. This will help him continue his growth and development. Willie wants to be in a family that he knows will be there for him and care for him. For more information on Willie, please contact Shivonne Goosby at shivonne.l.goosby@dss.mo.gov or 314.340.3472.

Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.



Meet Tessa

Tessa is an affectionate and bubbly 15 year old. She is creative, very bright, has a vivid imagination, and is a big fan of country music. Tessa also adores horses. She would love to live on a farm or with a family who shares her passion for animals. Tessa enjoys writing and reading fictional novels such as the Twilight series and books about horses. This 9th grader also loves listening to country music, gymnastics, JROTC, and identifies herself as a "tomboy." Tessa likes affection, one on one attention, and thrives in a structured environment. More than anything, Tessa wants (and deserves) a forever family who will love her unconditionally and, in her words, "not give up on me." Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio. For more information please contact Bobbie Thomas at 573.238.2624 x238 or bobbie.j.thomas@dss.mo.gov. **Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.**

Family Connections
c/o The Coalition
1750 South Brentwood Blvd., Ste. 210
Saint Louis, Missouri 63144