

Family Connections

Volume 10, Issue 1 ~ Winter, 2011

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And much more. . .

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Help Your Child Bridge the Divide Between Foster Care and Adoption

by Brenda McCreight, Ph.D., 2010

The other day an adoption worker and I were talking about preparing a seven-year-old boy for adoption. The child had been in foster care for four years - three years in one home and another year in his current placement. His worker was concerned about the boy's ability to attach and wondered what she could do before the adoption to help the adoptive parents start building an attachment-based relationship with their new son.

Workers focus on attachment for good reason. Attachment is a basic need and a stage of brain development common to all humans. When robbed of that developmental stage, children (and their families) suffer from behavioral challenges that arise from early abuse and neglect. Attachment, however, is a long-term endeavor; while the task of helping a child move between placements is immediate and short-term. If the transition is handled well, it will set the foundation for the attachment process to begin.

The most effective transitions involve careful planning and follow-through by workers and families. If workers and adoptive parents ignore the tasks of transition, the child and parents may be so overwhelmed by a multitude of seemingly *small stuff* that the initial weeks of placement create new obstacles to attachment.

Some years ago I worked with parents who were adopting a 10-year-old girl. They had taken pre-adoption classes and attended three additional adoption workshops, even joining an online adoption community, and felt very prepared to welcome their daughter into their home and lives.

They were stunned when the bright, charming, talkative child became sullen and emotionally closed after only two weeks in their home. They felt they had done everything they could to prepare, but she was clearly unhappy. They began to think they made a mistake in adopting.

At our first visit, the parents recounted just how they prepared for adoption. I then asked what changes they had made in their day-to-day lives to create a degree of familiarity for their daughter. They paused, looked at each other, and after several minutes of hemming and hawing, confessed that they hadn't made a single change. They had unconsciously assumed that their daughter would adapt to them.



Story continued on page 8...

News You Can Use: Foster Care & Adoption Advisory Boards

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The Purpose of Local and State Boards

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.

Goals of the Advisory Board

Goal 1: To use available internal and external data to identify systemic needs, and develop plans to address those needs, using resources available within the agencies involved and the community as a whole.

Goal 2: To improve partnership between the Children's Division, other relevant state agencies, and foster parents through ongoing communication, input and support.

Goal 3: To work together with the Children's Division to clarify policy and practices, provide feedback and recommendations regarding present and proposed policies related to child welfare.

Goal 4: Improve the Children's Division's communication with, and resource families' knowledge of, Children's Division policy.

Goal 5: To provide an opportunity for resources families, Children's Division staff, and the community to network and share resources.



Get Involved

Local Advisory Board:

Each local board operates within its own established bylaws. To find out more information about the work being done in your area, contact your parent representative or foster parent association listed in the column to the left.

State Advisory Board:

Each area board is responsible for sending two parent representatives to the state meetings held quarterly in Jefferson City. Parent representatives are asked to make a two-year service commitment to the state board. If you are interested in representing your area, contact your parent representative, listed in the column to the left.

Support for Foster Parents Regarding Hot Line Allegations and Investigations

by Rick Hill, OHI Unit Manager, Children's Division

The Missouri Children's Division (CD) is the state agency responsible for investigating all allegations of child abuse and/or neglect. This responsibility and the authority to conduct such investigations is set out in RSMo. 210.109 through 210.922. The Out of Home (OHI) Unit is a special investigations unit within the Children's Division. The OHI Unit has been designated as the investigating authority when the Children's Division receives any report alleging abuse or neglect of a child in a Family Resource Provider home.

The role of the OHI Unit is strictly investigative to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred and ensure the safety of children in a home. The OHI Unit investigator is responsible for collecting all of the information and evidence relevant to any reported incidents. This information is shared with the child's case managers, licensing worker, and other Children's Division staff as appropriate. Information may also be shared with law enforcement personnel, juvenile officers, and courts, if appropriate. Case management and placement decisions are made by the case manager using all available information, including information gathered during the investigation process. Any issues of concern raised during the investigation are conveyed to the local CD office so those issues can be addressed.

When a family resource provider has allegations made against them or a family member,

it can be an emotionally-charged time. They should expect to be treated with respect by the OHI Unit. No one likes to be accused of wrongdoing and the Children's Division understands that hotline reports are made for any number of reasons. These can range from the caller reporting legitimate concerns, to a caller who is being vindictive for any number of reasons. It is impossible to determine the accuracy of reported information until an investigation is completed. Therefore, it is essential that all reported allegations of child abuse and/or neglect be thoroughly investigated to determine their validity. The investigator needs to take all necessary steps to get at the truth of the situation including asking questions and gathering any relevant documents.

Generally, the investigation will look like this:

- The OHI investigator will contact local law enforcement and request that they co-investigate the allegations. Therefore, law enforcement may or may not be actively involved in the investigation.
- The person the allegations are against will be contacted by an OHI investigator. That investigator will explain the allegations and give the individual(s) an opportunity to

offer information or evidence.

- The investigator will interview all children in the home at the time of alleged incident and the investigator will seek to interview all other household members.
- The investigator will attempt to identify and gather information from anyone else who may have information about the reported allegations.
- After all information and evidence is collected, the OHI investigator will assess that information and determine if there was child abuse or neglect.
- The investigation will be concluded with either a finding that the allegations were unsubstantiated or that there is a preponderance of evidence for abuse or neglect.
- Those who had allegations made against them will be formally notified by letter of the investigation's findings. Those findings are shared with the Children's Division.
- If the investigation results in a preponderance of evidence finding for abuse or neglect, there is an appeal process. This finding is preliminary and remains so until either 60 days have passed without a request for administrative review, or the Child Abuse Neglect Review Board has ruled upon the case.
- If there are no criminal charges pending, the alleged perpetrator may, within 60 days of being notified of the evidence finding, request an administrative review.
- The Unit Manager reviews the investigation record. Following that review, the Unit Manager may uphold the preponderance of evidence finding or reverse the finding and make it unsubstantiated. The review is based on evidence presented in the record.
- If the preponderance of evidence finding is upheld at this level, the case is referred to the Child Abuse Neglect Review Board (CANRB) for further review and an administrative hearing is scheduled. The alleged perpetrator may appear in person, with or without counsel, or participate via teleconference. The CANRB members consider all information and either uphold the Children's Division finding or reverse the finding. If the CANRB upholds the preponderance of evidence finding, the finding is no longer preliminary and the alleged perpetrator's name is entered into the Central Registry.
- If the preponderance of evidence finding is upheld by the CANRB the alleged perpetrator may, within 60 days, file a petition in Circuit Court requesting a judicial review of the evidence finding. After a hearing, the Circuit Court may uphold or overturn the Children's Division's finding. If the finding is overturned, the alleged perpetrator's name is removed from the Central Registry and the finding is changed to unsubstantiated. If the finding is upheld by the court the alleged perpetrators' name remains in the Central Registry.

Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

Respite for Emergency Foster Care (CD10-123)

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform staff that licensed resource providers who are contracted to provide Emergency Foster Care may on rare occasions, such as a death in the family, illness, or unplanned hospitalization, find it necessary to receive respite care services. On those occasions:

1. Payment for the respite provider is made by following the Payment Request instructions located in the FACES Financial Management handbook.
2. The time that the foster youth is in respite care continues to count toward the maximum 60 consecutive days of being in an emergency placement.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2010/cd10-123.pdf>

Opening FCS Cases on Non-Resident and Non-Custodial Parents (CD10-121)

The purpose of this memorandum is to remind staff of the importance of opening Family-Centered Service (FCS) cases on non-resident and non-custodial parents in cases where both parents are receiving services. Each parent should have a FCS case open in FACES. The children will be listed on both cases as case members, with the whereabouts noted as appropriate.

In situations where no services are being provided, and the non-resident or non-custodial parent is not a viable placement, no FCS case should be opened. In such circumstances, the non-resident or non-custodial parent should be listed on the custodial parent's FCS case as a case member and their whereabouts indicated as out of the home.

CASE EXAMPLE

- A child is removed from his mother and placed into the custody of Children's Division.
- The case manager enters the alternative care information about the new placement in FACES and in the case record within 24 hours.
- A FCS case is opened on the mother.
- The non-resident father is located and requests placement of his child.
- A FCS case should then be opened on the non-resident father and services provided.
- Contacts with each parent should be documented in that parent's FCS case.
- All contacts with the child should be documented in the child's alternative care (AC) case.
- A reference should be made in the non-resident parent's case file indicating the child's AC case number.

The Child Welfare Manual has been updated to reflect the information outlined in this memorandum.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2010/cd10-121.pdf>

Documentation and Record Maintenance Manual Updates (CD10-120)

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform staff of updates made to Section 5 Chapter 1.1 of the Child Welfare Manual. The forms that need to be maintained in the case record have changed with the implementation of FACES. The full implementation of the FACES system has now been completed. As a result, Section 5 Chapter 1.1 of the Child Welfare Manual has been modified to comply with FACES.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2010/cd10-120.pdf>

Revision of the Resource Home and Safety Checklist (CD10-119)

In response to the Continuous Quality Improvement Process, the Resource Home and Safety Checklist, CS-45, and its instructions for completion have been revised to clarify the appropriate uses of the form.

The CS-45 is used to determine that a potential placement home meets the required safety standards per 13 CSR 35-60.040, Licensing of Foster Family Homes; Physical Standards for Foster Homes.

Licensing workers use this form in its entirety, completing all sections for all resource provider homes during the licensing process.

Workers use this form as a safety checklist for potential placement providers completing only sections A, B, and D, at such time it is determined that the child(ren) cannot remain in their household until certain changes have been made and, therefore, a potential unlicensed kinship or relative provider has been identified for temporary placement.

The form serves to inform the potential placement provider of the expectations and to gain general information. A potential placement provider shall not be licensed until the home meets safety standards.

The revised CS-45 and instructions are available on Children's Division e-forms. The revised form is to be utilized beginning the date of this memorandum.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2010/cd10-119.pdf>

Keep Current...

This is a brief summary of the current policies impacting the Children's Division. A more complete explanation is available at: www.dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2010.

Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

Waiver of Two Week's notice, CS-44 (CD10-118)

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform staff that the Waiver of Two Week's Notice, CS-44, is now available in Word format on Children's Division E-forms.

Per policy and statute, except in emergencies, foster parents shall be given two weeks advance notice and a written statement of the reasons before a child is removed from their care. When requesting removal of a child from their home, foster parents shall give two weeks advance notice, consistent with Division policy, to the child's caseworker, except in emergency situations.

If a child is placed with an emergency resource family or a regular resource family where the placement is intended to be for less than two (2) weeks, the Children's Service Worker will complete the CS-44.

Beginning with the date of this memorandum, use only the CS-44 located on e-forms and destroy all unused copies of the previous CS-44 form.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2010/cd10-118.pdf>

Worker Access to Family Care Safety Registry, FCSR (CD10-116)

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce changes to the process for the Children's Service Worker to obtain on-line access to the Family Care Safety Registry, FCSR.

When conducting a re-licensure, the Children's Service Worker is able to obtain background screen information regarding the FCSR registered resource parent applicant on-line. It is no longer necessary for the worker to complete the MULES access form to obtain this on-line access to the FCSR.

The Children's Service Worker obtains on-line access to the FCSR by doing the following:

1. Go to the FCSR home page, www.dhss.mo.gov/fcsr;
2. Click on the Forms link;
3. Click on the How to Become a FCSR Internet User link;
4. Click on the Internet Background Screening Access/Security Request.
5. Return the completed document by Fax to 573-522-6981, or by mail to: DHSS/Family Care Safety Registry PO Box 570 Jefferson City, MO 65102

The worker will be notified by fax when their access is granted by FCSR. At that time, user IDs and training on how to make a screening request using the FCSR internet service will be provided. Policy has been revised to reflect the on-line access process change. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2010/cd10-116.pdf>

The Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MOCCRRN) Regional Reorganization and Operational Name Change (CD10-114)

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise staff that the Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MOCCRRN) has restructured its regional offices and will begin operating as Child Care Aware® of Missouri.

MOCCRRN is licensed as a member of the national organization Child Care Aware®, considered to be the nation's most respected hub of information for parents and child care providers. In order to bring more name-awareness to their efforts, MOCCRRN began operating as Child Care Aware® of Missouri effective October 1, 2010. All references and hyperlinks to MOCCRRN on Department of Social Services' websites have been changed to reflect updates to Child Care Aware® of Missouri.

Staff are also advised that the

MOCCRRN offices in St. Joseph, Macon, Warrensburg, and Cape Girardeau are closed. Services for those areas will continue through one of the remaining Child Care Aware of Missouri offices.

The Department of Social Services, Children's Division contracts with the Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MOCCRRN), doing business as Child Care Aware® of Missouri, to act as the state-wide resource and referral source for parents/representatives who are seeking child care for children in the state of Missouri. Staff is instructed to refer persons seeking child care to the Child Care Aware® of Missouri and not maintain or distribute local lists of child care facility referrals as instructed in Memo CD09-124/OEC90-18. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2010/cd10-114.pdf>



Information and Resources

Changes to Federal Adoption Tax Credit

The federal adoption tax credit was made refundable for the first time! Meaning you can claim it for a refund even if you owe no taxes. Families who adopt a child with special needs from foster care can claim the credit without needing to incur or document expenses. The credit per-child is now \$13,170 for adoptions finalized in 2010. Now that the credit is refundable many more families will benefit; even families who adopted earlier than 2010, but didn't have enough tax liability to access the credit in previous years. Families that finalized adoptions in 2005-2009 can carry forward unused tax credit to their 2010 return and claim it as a refundable credit.

Be informed when preparing your taxes or visiting your tax consultant, visit the resources listed below. Since this is new, some tax consultants may not be aware of the changes; help to educate them of the recent updates to the federal credit by referring them to the IRS instructions for Form 8839 and NACAC's fact sheets.



To learn more about the adoption tax credit and how it might benefit your family, visit: www.irs.gov/formspubs/article/0,,id=177982,00.html or www.nacac.org. The information listed is not intended to be professional tax advice, please check with a professional tax consultant.

The Make A Wish Foundation Joins with AdoptUsKids Grant

The Make a Wish Foundation is a "wish-granting" organization for children with life-threatening medical conditions. Their network of nearly 25,000 volunteers serves as wish granters, fundraisers, special events assistants and in numerous other capacities.

The Make a Wish Foundation has recently joined with AdoptUsKids to consider wish requests made on behalf of children in foster care, or children who have been adopted from foster care and have life-threatening medical conditions.

In order to qualify for the wish granting program the child must:

1. be between 3 and 18 (up to the 19th birthday) years of age.
2. have had no previous wish granted.
3. have a doctor verified life-threatening condition.
4. somehow communicate their wish (either verbally, with switches, pointing at pictures, signing, or shaking their heads yes or no).

Children who have a wish granted may qualify for a second wish, funeral assistance and other benefits offered through the organization.

If you know of a child or youth who meets these qualifications, or if you have further questions regarding the wish granting program, please contact Kathy Ledesma, National Project Director for AdoptUsKids, at kledesma@adoptuskids.org.

2011 Missouri Foster Care & Adoption Association Conference

In Partnership with the Missouri Children's Division

Date: June 16-18, 2011

Location: Tan-Tar-A Resort, Osage Beach, MO (located equal distance from Kansas City and St. Louis and within 90 minutes of Springfield and Columbia)

Renew your membership or join MFCAA by March 31st and receive two entries for your chance to **win a Netbook or 32" LCD HDTV** (to be given away at the Conference). MFCAA membership per year is \$20.

Send your registration and membership fees to:
Jan Eagleburger, 225 S. Troy Springfield, MO 65802

Cost:

Early Bird Rates (Before March 31st)

- MFCAA members, \$65 per person

- Non-members, \$90 per person

Rates (Before May 15th)

- MFCAA members, \$90 per person

- Non-members, \$115 per person

- Daily rate (not including banquet or special events), \$30 per person

Information and Resources

Today's Children Face Poor Health as Adults

The Centers for Disease Control announced that by 2050, up to one-third of all adults will have diabetes. That's our teenagers when they hit middle age. Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness and medical amputations – usually feet or legs, and is a major contributor to heart attack, stroke, and kidney failure. Diabetes is largely preventable by eating less sugar, limiting fast food, banning high fructose corn syrup from the diet, eating plenty of fresh natural foods, and exercising at least 30 minutes a day.

There is also the first generation in a century predicted to be significantly less healthy as adults than their parents. It's not too late to make lifestyle choices that will help them live healthier lives. Simple changes include:

- Buy breads, catsups, tomato sauces and other foods with no high fructose corn syrup.
- Serve soft drinks as an occasional treat, and then choose drinks sweetened with cane sugar.
- Consider limiting sugary desserts to weekends, birthdays and holidays. On weekdays serve fruit or yogurt for dessert.
- As much as possible, serve whole grain breads, cereals, and brown rice.
- Sneak grated or pureed vegetables into as many foods as possible.
- Be active together. Family walks, games of tag in the backyard, and turning on the stereo and dancing indoors are all no-cost, fun ways to encourage fitness and family closeness.

“Their (our children’s) generation is the first in a century predicted to be significantly less healthy as adults than their parents.”

Talk to your children about why you are making changes. Encourage their input. Accept that you don't have much control over the choices they make away from home, but feeding them healthfully at home will compensate for some of their poor choices and might even influence their choices. More information is available at the websites below.

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iFoster Free Member Discount Program Helps Foster Parents

This program can save the average household over \$4,500 a year with discounts at national and local retailers, grocery stores, healthcare providers (dental & vision), restaurants, movie theatres and attractions. They have over 60,000 discounts now with new discounts constantly being added.

If you are a transition age foster youth (age 16 to 21), family (foster, adoptive, resource, kin, guardian), group home, transitional housing (ILP for emancipated youth), multi-service foster and adoptive agencies, and other organizations (e.g. CASA, government agencies, associations, foundations) supporting our children in foster care, you're invited to become a member and save! To register, visit www.ifoster.org.

Helping raise children in foster care



Websites for Kids Health:

www.healthy-recipes-for-kids.com

Healthy recipes for the kids and the whole family

www.kidshealth.org

Information about health, behavior, and development from before birth through the teen years

www.eatingwell.com

Recipes, healthy cooking, and nutrition information

www.letsmove.gov

The Let's Move! campaign, started by First Lady Michelle Obama

www.healthychildren.org

Pediatric health information for families

www.aap.org

American Academy of Pediatrics

www.healthfinder.gov

US Department of Health and Human Services

www.bam.gov

BAM! Body and Mind: Learn what you need to know to make healthy lifestyle choices

www.mayoclinic.com

Award-winning medical and health information and tools

Help Your Child Bridge the Divide Between Foster Care and Adoption

Story continued

from page 1:

Children must complete many transitional tasks to cross the divide between foster care and adoption.

They may:

- gain adoptive parents whose race or religion is different from theirs or that of previous foster parents;
- move from a rural to an urban setting (or vice versa);
- have different habits and expectations about food/meal time rituals;
- change socio-economic levels;
- join a larger or smaller family;
- come with different ideas about house-keeping and chores;
- attend a new school with unfamiliar academic requirements;
- expect different discipline for certain behaviors; and
- be exposed to new rules at every turn.

I could go on, but you get the idea. In a new family, children are bombarded with changes and new directives, and though each seems small on the surface, the cumulative effect can be overwhelming and exhausting. At this point, kids may shut down or act out from the stress of trying to adapt.

Emotionally exhausted children present extremely negative behaviors that can undermine the adoptive placement and make parents mistakenly think that their child has reactive attachment disorder or some other brain-based behavior disorder. The good news is that most of the early behavioral challenges can be avoided if the gulf between foster and adoptive homes is acknowledged and bridged during and immediately after the transition period.

To help children and build that bridge, adoptive parents can:

- **Ask the adoption worker or counselor to query the child's foster parents about their routines and rules**—including those

that involve meals and snacks, bedtime, hygiene, discipline, and religion. Make a list of differences and similarities between the child's current environment and your family's environment. The list will help you understand the changes that are in store for your new child.

- **Decide which family rules and standards can be bent or revised or worked in later to make the child's transition less stressful.**

Some parents try to enforce standards right away to "set the tone for how we intend to live." A child, however, may interpret a boot camp atmosphere as a rejection of who she is and evidence that she is not good enough for the family. Very few rules for daily life cannot be overlooked now and then or worked in gradually. Look at your family's values and habits to see if they might need an overhaul anyway.

In my family, we eat at the table and hold hands and pray before a meal. One child who joined the family was used to wandering while he ate and did not want to pray. We explained this to the other children, and for a few weeks invited the new child to the table but allowed him to choose. When ready, our son decided to join us at the table and later even held hands and prayed.

- **Study the changes that your new child is facing and determine how you can forestall or eliminate many of them.**

Focus on your ability to adapt instead of putting all the responsibility for changing on the child.

- **Talk directly, or have the worker or foster parent talk, with the child about changes she can expect.**

Make sure the child knows how you and your family will help her to adapt and what changes our family is making to help ease the transition.

- **Encourage the child to say which changes seem scary and which seem exciting.**

The child may go numb at this point, so ask again later on.

- **Work to keep aspects of daily life more familiar for the child.**

Did the foster mom make killer spaghetti and meatballs every Friday night? Get the recipe and follow the same schedule. And yes, your child may whine that the spaghetti isn't as good, but she'll know you're trying. Use the same laundry soap as the foster parents so the child's sheets and clothes have a familiar smell. If the child had a pet that the foster family keeps, consider getting a similar pet for your family.

- **Address transracial and trans-religious issues up front, preferably before the child moves in.**

Find mentors who share the child's race and/or religion and can help him identify his fears, questions, and concerns about the new situation. Again, this is an issue that may make the child go numb, but if it's out in the open the child knows that you are aware and willing to help when he is ready. If the move happens too quickly to prepare the child ahead of time, have someone assume the mentoring role shortly after placement.

- **Keep conflicts with the foster parents private and don't talk about them around your child.**

The child does not need extra stress, and adoption workers can mediate any issues that may arise.

Our fourth child was almost six when

Learn more at www.theadoptioncounselor.com and www.theadoptioncounselor.com/blog

Parent to Parent: Tips from Parents, for Parents

we adopted him. He wanted to stay in his foster home, but they were anxious to have him move on. So, though they lived only an hour away, there were few pre-placement visits and too little time for my son to fully realize his loss.

In the few visits we had, we gained a sense that we were cast in the role of the boy's rescuers. As a result, we focused mainly on promoting attachment and acquainting him with his new life. We showed him his new school, walked around the neighborhood and pointed out houses where other children lived, took him swimming where we had signed him up for lessons, and helped him pick out furniture and bedding for his room. We did a lot of things to prepare our son for his immediate future.

Our son moved in and it all went smoothly - as smoothly, that is, as adopting a child with FASD and ADHD and attachment challenges can go. In fact, one night, as I was about to fall asleep, I was thinking about how great this adoption was and how little had changed in my life. I sat up abruptly as it dawned on me that *too little* had changed.

I was horrified. In the process of trying to rush the attachment and integrate him into the family, we had almost made his needs and personality disappear. We had put him into a position of having to submerge himself and were forcing him to make emotional twists and turns that he could not have sustained—all to please us and survive this transition. Of course, this was done with the best of intentions, but you know which road is paved with good intentions!

Any child who joins an adoptive family should change her parents' lives. If you find yourself complaining that the child is adapting too poorly or slowly, turn the complaint on yourself. You, as the parents, need to consider that

maybe the child is being asked to adjust too much and that it is now your responsibility to assess:

- What activities or behaviors you can change to ease the transition,
- Which changes can be deferred until the child has time to get more comfortable with the family;
- What supports you can bring in to help the child adapt to changes in her life that you cannot avoid or defer.

"In time, when a child is more connected to this wonderful new family that his presence has helped to create, he may be ready to make adjustments that bring him more in line with the rest of the family."

— Dr. Brenda McCreight
(author, therapist, and mother of 15)

We are about to adopt our 15th child. I've had many children since my 4th joined us so I've had lots of chances to learn how to do this better. This time, I'm going to make sure we attend to every possible transitional need we possibly can. I'm going to make sure I'm challenged and inconvenienced and that I do a large share of the adapting.

Our new daughter is almost 17, so in some ways the transition could not be easier. She is older, has good verbal skills, and has already moved through nine different families. She is well-versed in the processes of moving, saying goodbye, and trying to adapt. I'm going to ask questions and I'm going to listen to her answers. I'm going to find out what I need to do to help her with this transition. This time, I know that it's my willingness to change and adapt, not hers, that will be the bridge for her to transition from foster child to my child.

Dr. McCreight is an adoption-specialized therapist and trainer who provides counseling in person and online. The mother of 15 children, she is also the author of Help I've Been Adopted, Parenting Your Older Adopted Child, Recognizing and Managing Children with FAS and Eden's Secret Journal, The Story of an Older Child Adoption.

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Foster/Adoptive Family from Missouri Featured on CBS Television Special

"A Home for the Holidays" is an annual one-hour primetime CBS television special. Its goal is to create public awareness about the joys of adoption and draw attention to the children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted. Triage Entertainment produces the special in association with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, the Children's Action Network and Goldsmith Entertainment.

In 2010, a foster/adoptive family from Missouri was chosen to be featured! In the words of this adoptive mother, "We are so very blessed by this experience." Their story aired on CBS on December 22nd, 2010.

To view past clips regarding the show, you can visit:
http://www.cbs.com/specials/home_for_the_holidays/video/?pid=6SyOFMI_cR6KfCU7GNjKxvEvFUsW7PPu&vs=Default&play=true

Foster and Adoption Resource Center

Eastern MO ARC

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition
111 N. Seventh Street, 402, St. Louis, MO 63101
800.FOSTER.3 (314.367.8373) / www.foster-adopt.org

A Place to Call Home

St. Louis' NBC affiliate, **KSDK NewsChannel 5** has taken an extraordinary lead in supporting adoption. Committed to producing a weekly segment, "A Place to Call Home," KSDK has featured "waiting children" in respectful, unique, and informative ways. "A Place to Call Home" features the hardest-to-place children: older youth and sibling groups in foster care. The program is highly successful. The Children's Division (and its contracted agencies), case manager and/or adoption worker can refer any child whose case plan is adoption. Children need not reside in the St. Louis area to be featured on "A Place to Call Home." For more information or to make a referral, please contact Jessi Brawley at 314.367.8373 x36 or jessibrawley@foster-adopt.org.



Resources and Information for Foster and Adoptive Parents

The Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition offers newsletters to help keep you up to date. The "News You Can Use" newsletter provides foster and adoptive parents and professionals in the child welfare community with policy updates, information, resources, and training schedules. If you would like to receive the newsletter by mail or email, please sign up at www.foster-adopt.org.

You can also keep up-to-date on current events and be alerted with valuable resources by joining the Coalition on Facebook (www.facebook.com/fosteradopt) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/fosteradopt).

Mark Your Calendar

2011 St. Louis Regional Kinship Care Conference

Strategies for Supporting Relative Caregivers of Children and Youth featuring Dr. Joseph Crumbley (Author, Family Therapist, Trainer, Consultant)

Date / Time: Friday, April 15, 2011 / 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Location: University of Missouri St. Louis
J.C. Penney Conference Center

Cost: \$45 (includes lunch & parking)
(4.25 Social Work credit hours pending)

The purpose of the conference is to provide professionals methods of supporting and intervening with kinship caregivers and their families, and to offer caregivers coping strategies to manage the family dynamics and emotional issues specific to kinship care.

For more information, visit www.extension.missouri.edu.

Western MO ARC

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

Clothes to Closet

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association's Clothing Closet provides clothing, shoes, coats, toys, high chairs, car seats and more, free of charge, to all MFCAA Members. Clothing Closet hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Food Pantry

MFCAA's Food Pantry provides basic food items to all Members, and is open Tuesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call 816.350.0215 for an appointment.

Resource Library

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association has a lending library with video tapes, DVD's, cd's, and books that can be checked out and used for outside training hours. Call Mary at 816.350.0215 for more information

On-site Training

On-site trainings are held at Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association throughout the year. Childcare is provided during training sessions for children ages three and older. All trainings are held at the Drumm Farm Dining Hall, on the same campus as MFCAA. For Training questions, please call 816.350.0215.



Help MFCAA Gather Information and Resources for Foster and Adoptive Families

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association is working to gather information and resources to include on their website at www.mfcaa.org from every county in Missouri. If you know of therapists, tutors, respite care providers, attorneys, support groups or other resources for foster and adoptive parents in your county, please email lori@mfcaa.org with the information and an email address or phone number for each. MFCAA wants to make locating help easier for foster and adoptive parents throughout Missouri.

Waiting Children: Seeking Forever Families

Meet Martwan and Robbie

Martwan loves playing football and has a wonderful imagination. By his side, always looking up to him, is his little sister, Robbie. She loves playing with dolls and is very smart.

Martwan is a talkative 7-year-old. People who know him described as “outgoing, open, and attentive.” He has a great imagination and likes riding bikes, and playing football and basketball. He also likes to play on the computer.

3-year old **Robbie** is cute and smiley. She looks up to her big brother and heartily agrees with whatever he says! Robbie likes to play with her dolls and dress them up. Robbie also likes interacting with other children her age.

Both kids are healthy and doing well in school. Martwan takes medication daily for concentration at school and has an IEP which helps him stay focused. Robbie attends preschool and is exceptionally smart for her age.

Both kids are being adopted together. Martwan and Robbie have an older brother who is placed with his father with whom contact should remain.

For more information on Martwan and Robbie, please contact Lori Jester, Adoption Specialist, at 816.325.6046 or lori.b.jester@dss.mo.gov.



Meet Brad and Zach

Both boys are active in ROTC and want to be police officers when they grow up.

Zack (pictured to the left of his brother, Brad) is a 17-year-old young man that loves skateboarding, playing video games, eating pizza, and being with friends. Zach is an active kid and he enjoys sports and his physical education class in school. He's currently in ROTC and loves it! It has inspired him to possibly enter the military some day, though he's still undecided. He'd also like to be a police officer. Zack is very protective of his brother, Brad.

Brad (15) loves to watch television and play video games. Like his brother, Brad's favorite class in school is also physical education. Brad is active, recently starting ROTC. When he grows up, Brad wants to be a police officer or professional baseball player! His favorite foods are chicken, pizza,

watermelon, ice cream, and cake. For more information on Zach or Brad, please contact Monteshia Goodloe, at 816.889.2124 or monteshia.l.goodloe@dss.mo.gov.



Meet Jervon

Jervon enjoys swimming, basketball, dancing, and is a wonderful singer.

Jervon (17) is a sweet, loving boy who has been waiting patiently for a forever family. This teen says that he “gets along with other people” and describes himself as “friendly.” Jervon’s foster parent agrees, saying, “he makes good company.” Jervon does not have a favorite subject in school, where he does well overall with one on one attention. He is described as a “laid back” kid, although he does like being active. He enjoys activities such as swimming, basketball, dancing, and singing. Like most teenagers, Jervon loves playing video games.

Jervon would do well in any family as long as they provide him with love and consistency. He is legally free for adoption. For more information, contact Sheila Suderwalla, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter at 314.367.8373 x30 or sheilasuderwalla@foster-adopt.org. **Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.**



Family Connections
c/o The Coalition
111 North Seventh Street, Suite 402
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