

Family Connections

Volume 10, Issue 4 ~ Fall 2011

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Family Connections is edited and published by:

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Jefferson City, MO 65103
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November is National Adoption Month

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 will hold 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. Since 2000, more than 35,000 children have had their adoptions finalized on National Adoption Day.

On **November 19th, 2011**, families, adoption advocates, policymakers, judges and volunteers will come together and celebrate adoption in communities large and small all across the nation during the 12th Annual National Adoption Day.

What are you doing to Celebrate?

Many communities sponsor National Adoption Month events. Promoting awareness can be done through planned events and campaigns, gatherings and celebrations, and simple everyday activities. These are all opportunities to educate ourselves and others about adoption and about issues surrounding adoption. With a little advance planning, our efforts can work wonders. Even one family for one child is a success. For more information about the events taking place and foster care adoption, please visit www.nationaladoptionday.org or <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/adopt/activity/events.htm>. If events are not offered in your area or you want to do more, there are many activities and things you can do throughout November. Here are a few ways you can help...

Light a Candle. Make a dedication for those who have touched your life through adoption.

Join an adoptive parents support group in your area. If there isn't one, consider starting your own.

Share ideas and advocacy plans on the National Adoption Awareness Month message board at AdoptionForums.com

Write a letter or send a virtual card to people who have touched your life through adoption.

Be a mentor to a foster child.

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.



Since 2000, more than 35,000 children were joined together with their forever families as part of National Adoption Day activities.

News You Can Use: Foster Care & Adoption Advisory Boards

Board Representatives

Northwest Region

- Rep 1: VACANT
- Rep 2: VACANT

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Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition

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Local and State Boards Working for You

The Children's Division supports foster parents through the ongoing work of the State Foster Care and Adoption Advisory Board. Each area/region holds local meetings quarterly and works to resolve issues of their area foster/adoptive parents. The Board consists of two parent representatives from each Regional board and three foster parent association representatives.

Resource Parent Handbook

The Missouri Children's Division and the Missouri State Foster Care Advisory Board have a Missouri Resource Parent Handbook available for download at <http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/fostercare/pdf/fcresource.pdf>. This handbook is available to resource parents to provide quick and easy access to important information. The Children's Division and the Missouri State Foster Care Advisory Board are committed to improving communication. If at any time you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact your licensing worker, Children's Service Worker, or another resource parent.

Changes to the Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board

During the 2011 Legislative Session, the Missouri Legislature passed and the Governor signed an omnibus bill related to the provision of foster care and adoption services in the state. The current Missouri State Foster Care & Adoption Board was addressed in this bill and defined in statute. Missouri Revised Statute 210.617 now reflects the State Board language. This effort by the members of the State Board solidifies this critical committee by requiring its continued existence and defining its primary tasks.

As members of this Board, all foster and adoptive parents elected by their areas must be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. This process assures qualified representation from around the state, and formalizes the critical role that these Board Members assume in representing Missouri's foster and adoptive families.

Per the new statute, the members will have responsibility for reviewing the Children's Division's policy and procedure and submitting recommendations to the Division for changes which benefit Missouri's foster and adoptive children and families. The language also repeats the previously defined role of the Board in determining the nature and content of in-service training for foster parents in the state.

The Board, which holds meetings quarterly, will be subject to Sunshine Laws in holding open meetings (which any interested citizen may attend). The Board will also provide reports annually to the Governor and the Director of the Department of Social Services which summarize actions taken within the Board during that year.

The full text of the new statute appears below and on page three:

210.617. 1. There is hereby created within the Department of Social Services the "Missouri State Foster Care & Adoption Board," which shall provide consultation and assistance to the Department and shall draft and provide an independent review of the Children's Division policies and procedures related to the provision of foster care and adoption in Missouri. Additionally, the board shall determine the nature and content of in-service training which shall be provided to foster and adoptive parents in order to improve the provision of foster care and adoption services to children statewide consistent with section 210.566. **Continued on Page 3.**

News You Can Use: Foster Care & Adoption Advisory Boards

The board shall be comprised of foster and adoptive parents as follows:

1. Two members from each of the seven Children's Division areas within the Department of Social Services delineated as follows:
 - (a) The northwest region;
 - (b) The northeast region;
 - (c) The southeast region;
 - (d) The southwest region;
 - (e) The Kansas City region;
 - (f) The St. Louis area region;
 - (g) The St. Louis City region;
2. Area members 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.
3. Statewide Foster Care & Adoption Association representatives shall be voting members of the board as approved by the board.
4. All members of the Board shall serve for a term of at least two years. Members may be reappointed to the board by their entities for consecutive terms. All vacancies on the board shall be filled for the balance of the unexpired term in the same manner in which the board membership which is vacant was originally filled.
5. Each member of the board may be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses incurred by the member in performance of his or her official duties. All reimbursements made under this subsection shall be made from funds within the Department of Social Services' Children's Division budget.
6. All business transactions of the board shall be conducted in public meetings in accordance with sections 610.010 to 610.030.
7. The board shall elect officers from the membership consisting of a chairperson, co-chairperson, and secretary. Officers shall serve for a term of two years. The board may elect such other officers and establish such committees as it deems appropriate.
8. The Board shall establish such procedures necessary to:
 - (1) Review Children's Division proposed policy and provide written opinions and recommendations for change to the Children's Division within thirty days of receipt of the proposed policy;
 - (2) Provide draft policy suggestions, at the request of the Children's Division or in response to issues by the board, to the Children's Division for improvements in foster care or adoption practice; and
 - (3) Fulfill its statutory requirement in accordance with section 210.566 to determine the content of in-service training to be provided by the Children's Division to foster and adoptive parents.
9. The board shall provide to the Director of the Department of Social Services, the Governor, the Office of the Child Advocate, and upon request, members of the General Assembly, a written report of annual activities conducted and made.
10. The board shall exercise its powers and duties independently of the Children's Division within the Department of Social Services in order to ensure partnership and accountability in the provision of services to the state's children affected by abuse and neglect. Budgetary, procurement, and accounting functions shall continue to be performed by the Children's Division.

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 on page two.

Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

The Importance of Father Engagement (CD11-81)

The purpose of this memorandum is to remind workers of the importance of Father Engagement, and to notify staff of minor modifications to the Child Welfare Manual (CWM) that emphasize the involvement of both parents. Children who live absent their biological fathers are, on average, at least two to three times more likely to be poor, use drugs, experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems, to be victims of child abuse, and to engage in criminal behavior than their peers who live with their married, biological (or adoptive) parents (2010 National Fatherhood Initiative). Responsibilities of staff when engaging fathers:

- Encourage custodial parents to be cooperative when it comes to involving the nonresident or non-custodial parent as appropriate in preserving the safety and best interest of their children;
- Encourage mothers to identify fathers early in the case;
- Complete a diligent search process;
- Maintain regular contact with team members including custodial, incarcerated, non-resident or non-custodial parent according to the case plan.
- Ensure that the child has planned regular contact with his/her father. Fathers need to see their children on a regular basis. At times the presence of one or more family members can make a difference in visitation because they can share the child with the father, bring more excitement and energy to the visit, as well as point out family resemblances to him;
- Provide services directed to removal or reduction of any barriers to visitation;
- Assist in the connection of fathers and their children;
- Offer support or coaching before or during visits. This can be done by the worker or a parent aide and is especially important to those fathers who are incarcerated;
- Encourage incarcerated fathers to participate in services such as: Inside-Out Dads, Parents As Teachers, Story Link, Building Strong Relationships, or Parent Link; Fathers are to be encouraged to write letters, send pictures, cards, make phone calls and give the worker details of how to visit them if appropriate;
- Staff should be in close communication with the Institutional Activity Coordinator or the incarcerated father's case manager at the facility. Refer to Section 4 Chapter 7 Attachment B, for more information;
- Staff should utilize the CS-2A, Incarcerated Parent's Child Status Report.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-081.pdf>

2011 Legislation Update and Related Policy Revisions (CD11-75)

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce legislation that was passed in the 2011 legislative session that will either directly or indirectly impact the Children's Division (CD). These provisions became effective on August 28th, 2011.

Senate Bill 54 creates the "Amy Hestir Student Protection Act" and establishes the "Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children." A summary of the sections relevant to the CD are below. This bill:

- revises the authority of the Office of the Child Advocate to allow the child advocate to file any findings or reports regarding the parent or child with the court.
- authorizes the Office of the Child Advocate to offer mediation when child abuse allegations arise in school.
- states, if a student reports sexual misconduct by a school employee, the employee and the district superintendent must forward the allegation to the CD within 24 hours.
- requires every school district to develop a written policy concerning teacher and employee student communication.
- requires school districts to include in its teacher and employee training a component that provides information on identifying signs of sexual abuse in children and of potentially abusive relationships between children and adults, with an emphasis on mandatory reporting.
- gives third-party reporters of child abuse reporting alleged incidents to school employees immunity from liability if report is made in good faith.
- requires CD to provide information about the Office of the Child Advocate to those not satisfied with the results of an investigation.
- allows the CD to reopen a case at the request of the alleged perpetrator, the alleged victim, or the Office of the Child Advocate.
- modifies the statute of limitations for the prosecution of unlawful sexual offenses involving a youth age 18 or younger so that such a prosecution must be commenced within 30 years after the victim turns 18.

House Bill 604 and House Bill 431 contain duplicate provisions related to foster care and adoptive parent recruitment and retention. This legislation establishes:

- the Foster Care & Adoptive Parents Recruitment & Retention Fund, which upon appropriation, must be administered by DSS and used to grant awards to licensed community-based foster care and adoption recruitment programs.
- a requirement that the CD convene a task

force to review the recruitment, licensing and retention of MO foster/adoptive parents.

- that the CD is required to include information pertaining to the nature and disposition of any denial, suspension or revocation of a license to operate a foster home. This bill specifies "only" information pertaining to the nature and disposition of any denial, suspension or revocation of a license to operate a foster home, shall be provided in this response.
- an order of preference for placement of a child as follows:
 1. Grandparents and relatives;
 2. A trusted adult that has a preexisting relationship with the child, such as a godparent, teacher, neighbor, or fellow parishioner who voluntarily agrees to care for the child; and
 3. Any currently licensed foster parent capable of accepting the child.
 4. Deviation from this order, because a placement is contrary to the best interest of the child, must be clearly documented.
- the CD to make reasonable efforts to place siblings in the same placement, unless doing so would be contrary to their safety/well-being. If siblings are not placed together, the CD must make reasonable efforts to provide frequent visitation and interaction between them, unless this is contrary to their safety or well being.
- Any person receiving a preference may be licensed in an expedited manner if the child is placed in such person's care.
- in statute the "Missouri State Foster Care & Adoption Board," which provides consultation and assistance to the Department and shall draft and provide an independent review of the CD policies and procedures related to the provision of foster care and adoption in Missouri.

Senate Bill 351 modifies provisions regarding adoption records. This allows:

- adopted adult's lineal descendants to receive non-identifying information concerning undisclosed biological parents or siblings if the adopted adult is deceased.
- descendants, if the adopted adult is deceased, to request identifying information of the undisclosed biological parents from the circuit court having original jurisdiction.
- consent from the adoptive parent is no longer required when the adopted adult is requesting identifying information of the biological parent.
- if a biological parent authorizes release of the information or if a biological parent is found to be deceased, the court shall disclose the identifying information as to

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that biological parent to the adopted adult as long as the other biological parent is 1) unknown; 2) known but cannot be found and notified; 3) deceased; or 4) has filed with court an affidavit authorizing the release of information.

- adopted adults to obtain identifying information on adult siblings with their consent without the court having to find that such information is necessary for health-related purposes.

House Bill 555, House Bill 604 , and House Bill 648 contain duplicate provisions related to rights of individuals with disability or disease. The Bills:

- specify that the disability or disease of an individual cannot be the basis for a determination that a child is in need of care or it is necessary to remove a child from a parent's custody without a specific showing that there's a causal relationship between the disability or disease and a substantial and significant risk of harm.
- state the disability or disease of an individual cannot be the basis for a determination that an applicant is unfit or not suitable to be a foster parent without a specific showing that there is a causal relationship between the disability or disease and a substantial and significant risk of harm to a child or an inability to be a foster parent.
- specifies that the disability or disease of an individual cannot be the basis for a determination for a TPR without a specific showing that there is a causal relationship between the disability or disease and a substantial and significant risk of harm.
- The disability or disease of a prospective adoptive parent shall not constitute a basis for a determination that the petitioner is unfit or not suitable to be an adoptive parent without specifically showing a causal relationship between the disability, or disease, and a substantial and significant risk of harm to a child.

SB 73 and 47 creates the "TANF Child Protection and Drug Free Home Act."

- Requires DSS to develop a program to screen applicants for or recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program benefits for whom the department has reasonable cause to believe, based on the screening, engages in the illegal use of a controlled substance.

House Bill 111 changes the laws regarding judicial procedures including:

- Currently, a school employee or volunteer commits the crime of sexual contact with a student while on public school property, a class D felony, if they have sexual contact with a student while on public school property. The bill removes the

requirement that the crime be committed while on public school property and adds an elected or appointed official of the school district to the list of individuals to whom the provision applies.

- Currently, any person who has pled guilty or no contest, been convicted of, certain specified sexual offenses is prohibited from residing within 1,000 feet of certain schools or child care facilities. The bill specifies that a child care facility includes any licensed child care facility or any facility which is exempt from licensure but subject to state fire, safety, health, and sanitation inspections and holds itself out to be a child care facility. The bill also requires a person incarcerated for a sexual assault offense to successfully complete the treatment, education, and rehabilitation program provided prior to being eligible for parole or conditional release.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-075.pdf>

Transportation Services (CD11-71)

The transportation contracts provide an alternative means of addressing transportation needs when all efforts to arrange more desirable transportation have been exhausted. Some of the reasons for accessing transportation services may include transportation to school, parental visits and medical visits. Transportation contractors only provide non-emergency transportation services for CD clients needing short term trips that can be completed in one day and must be related to a child/family service plan. CD should make every effort to arrange these services with the contractor via written notification at least 24 hours prior to the need for service.

Transportation Contract Utilization

When considering transportation services or making arrangements for a CD client to be transported, staff must consider:

- **Is the service for which the client is being transported a Medicaid eligible service?** If so, staff must contact the Managed Care provider for that client. If the client is covered by MC+ Managed Care, see the number on the back of the member card. If the client is covered by MC+ fee for service, call 1.866.269.5927 to arrange transportation.
- **Have all other transportation means been exhausted?** Staff must attempt to arrange transportation through other staff, volunteers, resource providers and other resources before considering the use of a contracted transportation service provider.
- **Are the clients in Residential Treatment?** The residential facilities are required to provide transportation to children placed in their facility under terms

of their contracts.

- Contracted transportation service providers are only required to provide a curb to curb service. If door to door service is needed, then staff should utilize one of the other preferred transportation arrangements and not consider contracted transportation services as an option.
- Only children age 16+ determined to be capable may travel alone with a contracted transportation provider. If there is any question about the ability of the youth to safely reach the destination by traveling alone, a parent or guardian, CD staff, or adult companion approved by CD should accompany him/her.
- All youth under 16 must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, CD staff or a CD approved adult companion. An exception may be made for children 13-15 deemed capable of traveling alone, but only after CD receives written authorization from their parent/guardian. All other children must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, CD staff or CD staff approved adult companion. If no other transportation can be employed, staff must make arrangements with the transportation contractor(s) for the transportation.

Contracted transportation providers are not required to provide car seats or any specialized passenger restraint equipment, adult companions, aides, or door to door service. If these are needed, it is the responsibility of CD to address those needs prior to arranging for contracted transportation services. If CD does not provide these items for the contracted provider, the provider shall refuse to provide the service per the contract.

On occasion, it is conceivable that staff has explored the use of all more desirable or preferred means of transportation and the use of a contracted transportation provider and arrangements for transportation can still not be achieved. Then, and only then, is it acceptable to pursue the use of a non-contracted transportation provider. In these instances, the worker must document all efforts made to utilize more desirable or preferred transportation, document all efforts and explanations why a contracted provider could not be utilized and receive prior approval from the Regional Director, his/her designee or the Circuit Manager before arranging for the use of a non-contracted transportation provider.

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Documentation that transportation services cannot be provided by a contracted provider and subsequent approval to utilize a non-contracted provider must be submitted with the non-contracted provider's invoice before payment will be made.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-071.pdf>

Revision of Fair Hearing Policy (CD11-69)

The steps to take have been clarified including time frames and information about data entry in FACES. It is imperative that a foster home license or a vendor approval not be closed with an adverse close reason of denial or revocation until after the entire due process is completed. The home shall be placed on Administrative Hold until the complete grievance process has reached its conclusion, including the expiration of the 90 day time frame for filing an appeal in their circuit court per RSMO 208.100. If the appeal is filed timely with the circuit court, the conclusion cannot be entered until the final decision of the court case is filed.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-069.pdf>

Adoption and Guardianship Subsidy Submission (CD11-61)

The Contract Management Unit (CMU) will no longer accept scans and faxes of subsidy paperwork. CMU receives a significant number of subsidies for processing each month. Current policy requires that originals be kept in the Central Office subsidy record. Scans and faxes will only be accepted for emergency residential placements, and will require staff to receive approval via contact with CD Central Office subsidy unit program staff to send the necessary paperwork via fax or scan. Staff are also required to follow up by sending the original paperwork as soon as possible. If families delay signing and returning subsidy paperwork, they are to be reminded of their responsibility for the payment of any services rendered prior to receiving approval by the Division Director (refer to CD09-121 for more information and a letter you can provide to your families regarding this matter). Visit this link for additional reminders for supervisors and staff who work with subsidies.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-061.pdf>

Study Time for Child Care Families (CD11-60)

Effective immediately, study time is allowed for all eligible child care families when they are engaged in the post-secondary need component for child care assistance, regardless of the receipt of Temporary Assistance benefits. One hour of study time for each credit hour of enrollment is standard policy. Allow additional study time on an hour for hour basis for lab time only when lab hours are not included in the total credit hours. If the child care family does not request study time, it is the responsibility of the Eligibility Specialist to inform the family that study time is available, based on this revised policy. Child care is a necessary support for families to succeed in their academic activities. Authorize child care services to accommodate the parent's class, lab, and study schedule. Continuous child care coverage between class, lab or work schedules is acceptable when reasonable travel time to and from the child care setting does not allow the parent time to return to the scheduled activity. Visit the link below to see additional county responsibilities

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-060.pdf>

Child Care System Changes for Citizenship & Social Security Number Policies (CD11-58)

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

Effective 09.17.09, a SSN is not required as a condition of eligibility for child care benefits. Child care assistance cannot be denied or placed in pending status because of an individual's failure or refusal to disclose his/her SSN or the SSN for any household member, including children for whom benefits are requested.

CITIZENSHIP

Child care benefits may only be granted to a citizen or qualified alien. Qualified alien status must be verified at the time of application for all children for whom benefits are requested. Any individual who is born in the US is considered a U.S. citizen. This includes children whose parents are not citizens, such as undocumented alien parents, parents with student visas, or parents with lawful temporary residence status. Verification of citizenship status is only required if questionable. Example: an applicant declines to declare their citizenship status and states the child needing care is a citizen, but cannot produce a birth certificate to verify relationship. This would be an

example of questionable citizenship status.
<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-058.pdf>

Protective Services Child Care Legal Matrix (CD11-57)

The intent of the matrix is to inform staff, based on legal status, what types of placements and placement subtypes are allowed for a child to receive child care services. The matrix assists in outlining the FAMIS/FACES Interface system edits which prevent payment from being made for certain placement types. Staff is to use this resource tool to assist them in the child care authorization process, especially addressing whether child care is allowed when a child is in a certain placement type. This document is a tool and does not replace protective services child care policy. Staff needing additional information or assistance may contact the FAMIS/FACES or call 573.751.4031.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-057.pdf>

Availability of Child Development Wheels (CD11-56)

Child Development Wheels, developed for the Children's Division by ParentLink to be used with active Intensive In-Home and Family-Centered Services cases, were introduced to Children's Division staff in Memo CD 10-33 dated April 8, 2010.

Because of the success Children's Division staff have had using the wheels as a teaching tool helping parents to understand the developmental stages and needs of their children, Memo CD 10-107, dated September 16, 2010 notified Children's Division staff of the intent to keep a supply of the wheels in stock for continued use.

The purpose of this memo is to advise Children's Division staff that an additional supply of the Child Development Wheels are available to Children's Division staff. Staff are instructed to contact the PDS Contact at the website below when a new supply is needed.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-056.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/2011.

Resources for Parents & Professionals

Kids Count Data Book 2011

View National and state-by-state data on key indicators of child well-being. This year's essay, "America's Children, America's Challenge: Promoting Opportunity for the Next Generation," explores how kids and families are faring in the wake of the recession and why it's important to help children reach their full potential and become part of a robust economy and society.

According to data released by the Annie E Casey Foundation in its 2011 KIDS COUNT Data Book, **Missouri ranks 34th in key indicators of child health and well-being.**

The Data Book highlights **improvements for Missouri** children in a few areas, including the following:

- Between 2000 and 2009, there has been a 36% decline in the number of Missouri teens who are not in school and are not high school graduates, with a national ranking of 29 based on the most current data.
- The child death rate in the state has improved by 15% between 2000 and 2007, but Missouri is still ranked 40th compared with other states. The teen death rate has improved by 11% and Missouri ranks 36th in the nation.
- The teen birth rate has improved by 8% with a national ranking of 32.

In addition to the 10 key measures tracked in the Data Book, the KIDS COUNT Data Center (<http://datacenter.kidscount.org>) provides easy, online access to the latest child well-being data on hundreds of indicators by state, county, city, and school district. It serves as a comprehensive source of information for policymakers, advocates, members of the media, and others concerned with addressing the needs of children, families, and communities. By visiting the Data Center, users can **download the complete Data Book**, and **create interactive maps and graphs**. Visit the new mobile site being launched in conjunction with this year's Data Book from your Smartphone, such as the Droid, BlackBerry, or iPhone.

The KIDS COUNT Data Book with state-by-state rankings can be found at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>. For interactive Missouri KIDS COUNT data, visit <http://oseda.missouri.edu/kidscount/>.

Follow the Annie E. Casey Foundation and this issue on Twitter @aekidscount and on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/KIDSCOUNT>

New Report Highlights Older Youth Adoption

Released in July by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, **Never Too Old: Achieving Permanency and Sustaining Connections for Older Youth in Foster Care** highlights promising practices in youth permanency, but notes that much more remains to be done.

To download the report, visit http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/research/2011_07_never_too_old.php.

Hearing Notification for Foster Parents

Have you ever wished you could communicate directly to the judge regarding a child living in your home? You can!

If you are receiving notification but cannot attend the court hearings, the Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA), has a mechanism for your voice to be heard. If you are not receiving notification, contact the child's case worker.

The mechanism consists of two-steps, a form and distribution process. The form, "Caregiver Court Information Form," allows you to report on your foster child's needs, progress, and adjustment in your home. The form can be found at

<http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/info/forms/index.htm>. Once

the form has been completed, send it to the juvenile officer in the child's county of jurisdiction.

It is vital for the judge to have as much information as possible to make solid informed decisions for the child's future. Your help is needed to make this happen.



Things To Do This Fall

Attend a Missouri Adoption Heart Gallery Event

The Heart Gallery features professional photographs of Missouri foster children awaiting adoption. These photographs capture the hearts and souls of the featured children. The 2011 Missouri Heart Gallery will be presented in an electronic format at www.moheartgallery.org, as well as appearances throughout Missouri. Listed below are sites where the gallery will appear in local communities throughout Missouri. If you have a suggestion for a location not listed below please send your idea to crystal.l.wilson@dss.mo.gov. The Children's Division (CD) of the Department of Social Services partners with the Adoption Exchange of Missouri to host the gallery.

Check out the Missouri Heart Gallery Facebook fan page to keep up with events happening around the state: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Missouri-Heart-Gallery/166056128270>

November. 17th / Northeast

Columbia's 6th Annual Diamond Night (Tiger Hotel, 23 S. 8th St., Columbia, MO 65201)

November. 3rd – 10th / Southeast

St. Andrews Children's Fair, St. Andrews Lutheran Church (804 N. Cape Rock Dr., Cape Girardeau, MO 63701)

November 1st – 4th / St. Louis

Wainwright Building (111 N. 7th St., St. Louis, MO 63101)

November 1st / Northeast

Forget Me Not Gala, Capitol Plaza Hotel (415 West McCarty St., Jefferson City, MO 65101)

October 31st – November 7th / Jackson County

Woods Chapel Church (4725 Northeast Lakewood Way, Lee's Summit, MO 64064)

October 25th – 31st / Southwest

Springfield's Incredible Pizza Co. (2850 South Campbell Avenue, Springfield, MO 65807)

October 22nd – 24th / Southwest

2nd Baptist Church of Springfield (3111 East Battlefield, Springfield, MO 65804)

October 20th / St. Louis

Missouri Compassion Eastern Region Fall Conference, Grace Bible Church (1912 Central Pkwy., Florissant, MO 63031)



Fall Recipe: Baked Apples

When the leaves begin to change, nothing says Fall like apple picking. This is a fun and delicious way to spend time with your children and give them memories that will last a lifetime. This yummy treat is the perfect dessert for a chilly autumn day. This recipe serves four.

Ingredients:

- 4 apples, peeled and cored
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup raisins

Yummy Tip:
The warm apples are good topped with a scoop of fat-free vanilla frozen yogurt!

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375°.

Place the apples in a shallow baking pan.

Mix the remaining ingredients together and spoon over the apples.

Bake, uncovered, for about an hour or until the apples are tender but not mushy.

Read more at Family Education: <http://recipes.familyeducation.com>



Educational Resources

Key Factors to Educational Success

(From 2011 Children's Division Memorandum CD11-76)

Whether school experiences are positive or negative—it is undeniable that school plays an important role in the lives of children. Children in foster care should be given the same educational opportunities as children not in foster care.

Key Factors to Educational Success:

Establish a good working relationship with school personnel.

Staff can advocate for child(ren) in the educational system by communicating regularly with the educational personnel at the school;

Ask questions. Asking questions about a child's education can make a difference. By asking questions, you are conveying to the school someone is looking out for the child;

Follow up. Being a good advocate involves not only letting educators know what you think a student needs and working out a solution with them, but also following up to make sure what's decided is fully implemented; and

Document. Keep good educational records, review them regularly, and keep them up to date. Especially for children in special education, there will be a lot of paperwork to organize. Obtain necessary releases and set up clear procedures with the school and the foster parent for receiving copies of report cards, IEP minutes, etc.

Education Records:

Keeping educational records is necessary for educational stability of foster children. Educational information is assessed and captured in the usage of the Child Assessment and Service Plan (CS-1) and the Family Functioning Assessment/ReAssessment (CD14a).

Additionally, staff are required to include in a child's case file the following:

- Name and address of current school provider;
- Child's current grade level performance (Grade Card);
- Child's school record history;
- Educational needs (e.g., special education documents)
- Educational plans based on individual need, including an IEP; and
- School pictures for each school year.

Federal Educational Compliance: Foster Parents Help Needed

The impetus for this article was the Spring 2011 Family Connections newsletter article entitled, "Education Decision Maker (EDM)." The Children's Division (CD) appreciates the advocacy and passionate efforts to meet the unique education needs of children in the foster care system. However, **your additional help is needed!**

The federal government uses a process, the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), to monitor positive outcomes for children focusing on safety, permanency, and well-being. Of these three focus areas, well-being is the most difficult to define, measure, and track over time. Children's overall functioning is influenced not only by the services and efforts of the child welfare agency, but also by the services provided by other family-serving agencies such as the mental health and school systems.

Well-being is divided into three parts: 1) case planning and visitation 2) education needs, and 3) physical, mental and behavioral needs. While all the well-being issues are vital, the education compliance is receiving the lowest score in our internal reviews and is one of our greatest struggles.

So how do we change our course? We are seeking help from you, our foster parents, to assist us in this endeavor. Your help will aid CD's educational compliance and avoid the risk of losing federal financial support.

How? Foster parents can start by providing copies of current educational records to the case manager for the child's case file which you may receive or obtain from the school your foster child attends. Federal law requires the child welfare agency to include in every foster care case file the attendance record, school performance information (such as progress reports and grade cards) and if applicable, Individualized Education Plans, known as IEPs. Compliance with the federal law would be greatly enhanced and the child would benefit if these items were shared on a regular basis.

However, further help is needed. Foster parents can enhance the Family Support Team discussions by providing the child's overall school performance status at each meeting to keep all team members informed. If in-person or phone attendance is not possible, then a written statement could be prepared in advance to be read at the Family Support Team meeting. All the information shared at the meetings is documented. This documentation will support what is in the case file with enriched information.

Foster parents are invaluable! Thank you for your diligent service. *(From Missouri Children's Division)*

Foster and Adoption Resource Center

Eastern MO ARC

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition
1750 S. Brentwood Blvd., Ste. 210, Brentwood, MO 63144
800.FOSTER.3 (314.367.8373) / www.foster-adopt.org

Support Groups FREE to Foster and Adoptive Parents and Older Youth

Any parent will tell you that foster care and adoption takes more than love, it takes skills, too! The Coalition offers a variety of skill-building support groups. They are all held at the Foster & Adoption Resource Center (1750 South Brentwood Boulevard, Suite 210, St. Louis, MO 63144). Call Nickie Steinhoff, Director of Training & Community Support at 314.367.8373 or visit www.foster-adopt.org and click on "For Parents" for more information and to see upcoming dates for Support Groups.

[RE]FRESH: A Fashion Coalition™

[RE]FRESH is a fashion adventure of new and repurposed clothing for teens and twenties! [RE]FRESH offers foster and adoptive families high-quality, low-cost clothing, and generates revenue to support the Foster & Adoption Resource Center through sales to the general public. We also offer job training and volunteer opportunities for youth in foster care through our Fostering Financial Success: [RE]FRESH Program. [RE]FRESH is open Thursday through Sunday. All of the proceeds go toward our programs that help foster and adoptive families.

Visit www.refreshstl.org for more information including shopping details and procedures for youth in foster care and foster/adoptive/kinship families.

24-Hour Crisis Intervention for Pre- and Post-Guardianship/Adoptive Families in St. Louis County

The Coalition offers free, 24-Hour access to Crisis Intervention for pre- and post- guardianship/adoptive families in St. Louis County. We help families:

- 1) manage immediate crises;
- 2) improve child, parent, and sibling relationships;
- 3) increase family self-management skills; and
- 4) prevent disruption.

For immediate assistance, call Dawn Milburn, Lead Family Intervention Specialist at 314.614.2342. Crisis Intervention is made possible thanks to a generous grant from the St. Louis County Children's Service Fund.



For more information on any of our our programs, please visit www.foster-adopt.org, or call 800.367.8373.

Western MO ARC

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

Annual Gala a Huge Success

The Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association's Forever Families Gala rose to new heights this year - with nearly 350 guests and supporters in attendance! The event was held in the ballroom of the InterContinental Hotel on the Country Club Plaza on Saturday, August 20th. Jackson County Executive Mike Sanders and his wife Georgia, State Representative Paul LeVota, the evening's Master of Ceremonies, State Representative Jason Holsman, their wives, and Independence School District Superintendent Jim Hinson were among the invited guests that visited with featured speaker Nathan Ross and MFCAA President and CEO, Lori Ross. Board members, major supporters, and MFCAA staff filled the room. The gala planning committee is grateful to sponsors, volunteers, and attendees, and is already looking at ways to make next year's event even more spectacular!

We are turning to our foster community for help!

MFCAA is interested in recruiting families who are currently underrepresented in the foster family population including those who are African American, Latino or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBTB). They specifically want to find families who are interested in sibling groups, older youth, and youth with special behavioral and medical needs. Interested in fostering or adopting? Call Jennifer Johnson at 816.350.0215.

Become a member!

MFCAA Membership is free, and all services are available free of charge to members. To qualify for membership, you must have an adoptive, foster, or kinship placement in your home (or be actively awaiting placement of foster children). If you are interested in becoming a foster/adoptive parent, please call 816.350.0215. You can fill out an online membership form or download a printable version at the MFCAA website:

www.mfcaa.org/contact_membership.html.

MFCAA Training Schedule 2011

Trainings are a great opportunity to visit with other foster parents and share information. Questions? Please call Mary LeFebvre at 816.350.0215 or email mary@mfcaa.org. View the complete training list at www.mfcaa.org.

Clothes Closet and Food Pantry

The Clothes Closet is open 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Food Pantry is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays (at MFCAA) to all MFCAA Members. Emergency? Call 816.350.0215 for an appointment.

Waiting Children: Seeking Forever Families

Meet Timmy

12-year-old Timmy is an energetic young man who loves to be social and thrives when interacting with others. This sweet and playful boy enjoys being outdoors, listening to music, and singing songs. One of his favorite activities is playing catch.

Though Timmy faces some physical disabilities and sometimes uses a wheelchair, nothing stops this active and playful boy. Timmy does well in school and loves his teacher. He is very inquisitive and likes learning new things - especially when it comes to trying new foods!

The perfect family for Timmy would help him maintain contact with his sister and be able to provide one-on-one support for his daily care and emotional needs. But most of all, they would love him unconditionally. Timmy is legally free for adoption and in need of a forever family.

For more information on Timmy, please contact Gayle Flavin, Extreme Recruiter at the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition at 800.367.8373 or gayleflavin@foster-adopt.org. **Photo courtesy of Hastings' Creative Images Inc.**



Meet Nolana

In her free time, Nolana likes to ride bikes, scooters, and play outside every chance she gets. Her very favorite place to go is the park. She's always wanted to live on a farm because she loves animals so much! Nolana is an incredibly smart little girl - getting A's and B's in class. Nolana enjoys telling jokes and making people laugh. She's quite the little comedian! To her, being adopted means being safe in a family.

For more information on Nolana, please call Melissa Walters at Missouri Alliance, 573.338.0340 or mwalters@ma-cf.org. **Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.**

Meet Shaelyn

Shaelyn (12) is sweet, appreciative, and a joy to be around. She loves to draw, do crafts, and work on almost any type of artistic project that she can transfer from her imagination to paper. Art is her favorite subject in school. Recently, Shaelyn has really started listening to music and singing. Her dream is to sing on stage with Miley Cyrus! Shaelyn also likes dancing, basketball and music. Three things Shaelyn likes about herself are her sense of style, her singing voice, and the kind way that she treats others. Like most girls her age, Shaelyn loves to go to the mall and shop! Shaelyn's smile is very captivating and endearing, and you can't help but notice her bright eyes and childlike innocence.

More than anything, Shaelyn wants to find a mom and dad to love her and care for her "forever." She wants to be part of a family that will make her feel like she has a place to belong.

For more information on this wonderful child, please call Holly Evers, Missouri Alliance, at 573.239.2352 or hevers@ma-cf.org. **Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.**



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