

# Family Connections

Volume 9, Issue 1 ~ Winter 2010

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## Getting to School - and Paying for It

Article by Robin Nixon, National Foster Care Coalition

Reprinted in National Advocate (Winter 2005)

### Paying for College or Vocational School

It is an economic fact of life these days that every college credit is worth its weight in gold in terms of opportunity and income. Sometimes it seems that college credits must be made of gold, too, considering how much they cost! For foster youth, who may not have any financial support from family members, the costs of college might be impossibly high. There are, fortunately LOTS of resources out there, some of which are just for students who have been in care.

Here are three things that will help to ensure that students are able to pay for higher education and training opportunities:

- o **Start early:** A lot of scholarship applications are due in the fall of the senior year. Federal financial aid should be applied for as early as January of the year that the student will be attending (apply in January to start school in the summer or in the fall). Deadlines are generally inflexible, and some scholarship funds are disbursed on a "first come, first served" basis.
- o **Do lots of research:** There are not only federal programs to provide scholarship money specifically for foster youth, but also state programs, which might be scholarships or even tuition waivers – free attendance at state universities and colleges. There are a multitude of private scholarships, some based on need, and some on merit or other area of ability.
- o **Make sure that students understand the connection between academic progress and their scholarships:** Most scholarship programs, as well as financial aid, are contingent on satisfactory progress in school. The job doesn't end once the money is received! Students need lots of support while they are in college, as well as some accountability to an adult that they trust and who they know will help them stay motivated.

There are a number of financial resources, scholarships, and other assistance that have been directly targeted at helping foster youth pay for and stay in college. The implementation of these programs varies significantly from state to state, even though some of the funds come directly from the federal government and are part of a federal program. They may be implemented more effectively in some places than others, and it's up to all involved to work together in order to ensure that young people have access to these opportunities.

### Federal Financial Aid

All foster youth are eligible to receive federal financial aid. This aid comes in the form of a package that usually includes grant funds, loans, and sometimes work study funds. Students apply by filling out the Free Application for Student Financial Aid (FAFSA).

The amount of financial aid a student qualifies for is mostly based on family income, but here's the good news: foster youth (and former foster youth who have left the system) can mark themselves down as a 1-person family (only you). This means that they don't count their parent's income, which means foster youth usually qualify for the maximum amount of financial aid available. <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>.



Continued on Page 10

# News You Can Use: Foster Care & Adoption Advisory Boards

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### Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition

**Denise Kelley:** 800.FOSTER.3  
denisekelley@foster-adopt.org

## Local and State Boards Working for You

The Children's Division supports foster parents through the on-going work of the State Foster Care & Adoption Advisory Board. Each area/region of the state holds local meetings and works to resolve issues of their area foster/adopt parents. The state board consists of two parent representatives from each local board, and three foster parent association representatives.

### 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.

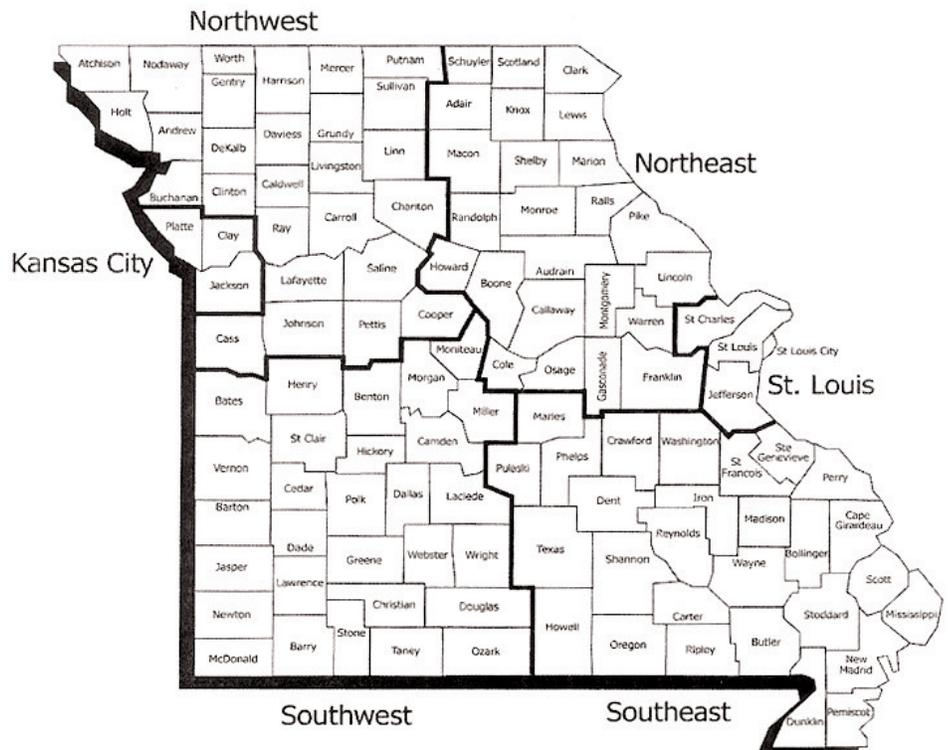
**Goal 5:** To provide an opportunity for resource families, Children's Division staff, and the community to network and share resources.

### 2010 Meetings - Mark Your Calendar

**Date / Time:** Tuesday, March 9, 2010 / 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Howerton Building  
615 Howerton Ct., Room 7  
Jefferson City, MO 65103

All foster and adoptive parents are welcome to attend the meetings and are also encouraged to contact area representatives with issues related to foster or adoptive children and families.

Please RSVP to your area representative, or to Cheryl Williams, Secretary of the Board, at [williams.cd@sbcglobal.net](mailto:williams.cd@sbcglobal.net).



## Inside CD: Your Children's Division Update

### Missouri's child protection system is now fully accredited



The Missouri Department of Social Services announces that the 22nd Circuit of the Children's Division, which manages child welfare issues in the City of St. Louis, has been found in compliance with the standards for accreditation by the Council on Accreditation (COA).

"I want to congratulate staff in the 22nd Circuit for their hard work and tremendous dedication to reach these national, best practice standards," said

Paula Neese, Children's Division Director. "In meeting these standards, the 22nd Circuit staff helps maximize our efforts to achieve favorable outcomes for the children and families that we serve."

A panel of COA reviewers found the 22nd Circuit to be in compliance with each of the major categories for more than 800 standards that an agency must follow to be accredited. The local office met rigorous standards in adoption services, foster and kinship care services, child protection services and family-centered casework, as well as organization and management standards in general areas such as ethical practice, financial management and organizational integrity.

"Each local jurisdiction has gone through a similar process of strengthening their practices as the Division has worked toward the goal of having Missouri's entire state child welfare system obtain accreditation status. Accreditation makes us a more professional organization, supporting an optimal environment for meeting the incredible demands placed on the child welfare system as we work with communities to protect Missouri's children. This process is making us a better child welfare organization," Neese said.

The state's child protection system is organized around Missouri's 45 judicial circuits. Now that the 22nd Circuit has completed the accreditation process, all 45 circuits and the state's Central Administration and Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline are in compliance with the standards of accreditation.

### DSS Expands Efforts to Improve Early Childhood Care

*Child care grants provide thousands of Missouri children access to quality care*

The Missouri Department of Social Services is working to get Missouri children on-track to a successful future through quality early childhood care and education. DSS recently awarded \$622,061 in Missouri Child Care Grants to enable eight facilities to begin or expand early childhood programs.

The grants were issued from the Early Childhood Development, Education and Care Fund. Since 1999, the fund has invested more than \$35 million in early care and education programs. The money has allowed facilities throughout Missouri to increase access to quality care for more than 6,000 children.

"In challenging economic times like these, it's more important than ever to help working families access child care that is safe, reliable and fosters early childhood development," said Ron Levy, DSS Director.

The latest Missouri Child Care Grant recipients are:

- Messiah Lighthouse Child and Family Development Center—Springfield
- CXE, Imperial—Imperial
- Kids Corral Childcare Center—Poplar Bluff
- Children's Learning Center—Camdenton
- Playful Scholars Child Care Center—Kansas City
- Bright Futures Daycare and Preschool—Higginsville
- Academy for Creative Education—Imperial
- Sonya R. Clayton—Kansas City

DSS Missouri Child Care Grants are awarded to care providers for a four-year time period. To qualify for a grant a facility must reserve 10% of its capacity for children from low income families and be licensed, or become licensed within six months of the date it is awarded a grant. Missouri Child Care Grants are administered by the Early Childhood & Prevention Services Section of the Children's Division and funded from a portion of riverboat gaming fees.

### 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 left-hand column on page two.

#### 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, to inquire about the process.

## Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

### **Resource Provider In-Service Training Credit for Train the Trainer and Spaulding (CD09-87)**

Resource Providers shall receive in-service training credit for attendance at Train the Trainer (TTT) classes and Spaulding training. The Child Welfare Manual and the Foster Parent Attendance Record, SS60-B, code sheet have been updated to reflect this policy revision.

### **Child Care Policy Clarification of Citizenship and Social Security Number Requirements (CD09-91)**

Previous policy required parents of children needing child care to supply a valid social security number or agree to apply for a social security number. Effective with the date of this memorandum, a social security number is NOT required as a condition of eligibility for child care. Staff will continue to request a social security number and the client may voluntarily provide it. However, disclosure of a social security number is strictly voluntary and will not affect their eligibility for child care assistance. 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.

### **HIPAA, CPR, and First Aid Training for Resource Providers (CD09-94)**

The purpose of this memo is to provide clarification of the required resource provider training: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), and First Aid. The HIPAA training requirement must be completed prior to licensure. The resource provider is then credited one in-service training hour. All licensed resource homes must also successfully complete CPR training during the first year of licensure and every two years thereafter. The provider will then be credited for three (3) in-service training hours. All licensed resource homes must successfully complete first aid training during the first year of licensure and every two years thereafter. The provider will be credited for three (3) in-service training hours for successfully completing the training.

### **Fostering Connections and Increasing**

### **Adoptions Act of 2008 (CD09-109)**

The purpose of this memo is to introduce changes in the eligibility for Chafee services and to reinforce recent changes regarding transition planning for older youth. Effective immediately, all youth who were adopted or entered guardianship after the age of sixteen are eligible for Chafee Foster Care Independence Program Services. Transition planning information is captured on the CD-94, Adolescent Family Support Team Guide and Individualized Action Plan. Transition plan requirements were introduced in Memo CD09-05 Older Youth Program and can be found at Section 4, Chapter 21.7 Exit Plan.

### **Revision of Foster/Adoptive Family Medical Report, CW-215 (CD09-115)**

In response to a Continuous Quality Improvement request, the Foster/Adoptive Family Medical Report, CW-215, has been revised to include a response from the physician that the patient is free from communicable diseases. It is required that a CW-215 be completed on each individual residing in the household with the exception of any foster youth placements. The CW-215 is available on Children's Division E-Forms and CD Forms Desktop.

### **Additions to Safe Sleep Practices Form, CD-117 (CD09-110)**

Current policy requires the resource provider to review and agree to adhere to the practices of the Safe Sleep Practices recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, CD-117, during the initial home visit and at each license renewal. Foster Family Home Licensing Rules regarding sleeping arrangements include:

1. Foster children should never sleep in a bed with foster parents
2. Each foster child under age two (2) shall have a separate bed

Policy is now revised to include that the worker will discuss the dangers of co-sleeping with an infant and direct the resource parent to information located on the State Technical Assistance Team web site, <http://www.dss.mo.gov/stat/statpres/prevention.htm>.

### **Concurrent Permanency Planning (CD09-111)**

This memorandum and manual revision

clarifies the use of reunification as a permanency plan. Reunification with a caretaker or custodial parent from which the child was removed, or reunification with the non-custodial parent are all considered reunification plans. A case plan of reunification should always be a primary permanency plan, not a concurrent permanency plan. If the possibility exists to reunify with either parent or a principal caretaker from whom the child was removed, the primary permanency plan would be reunification.

### **Clarification Regarding Requirements for Transitional Living Program Placements and Independent Living Arrangements (CD09-113)**

The purpose of this memo is to clarify requirements for Transitional Living Program Group Homes, Transitional Living Program Single/Scattered Site Apartments, and Independent Living Arrangements as well as the process for Foster Care Case Management Agencies to follow when utilizing a provider that is not contracted with the Children's Division for Transitional Living Program services.

### **New Resource: Parent Internet Information Site (CD09-114)**

On the Children's Division Internet page, <http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/index.htm>, a link has been added for foster parenting information. The link contains information for foster parents including Division memorandums that specifically address foster parenting issues. Resource providers are encouraged to view the link periodically for information updates.

### **Social Networking and Foster Youth (CD09-122)**

This memo serves as a reminder to resource parents for: 1.) prohibition of resource parents social networking foster youth photographs and identifying information, 2.) Internet safety, and 3.) policy regarding photographs in periodicals. Staff will continuously support, promote, and monitor the adherence by resource providers.

### **Increase in Child Care Income Eligibility Guidelines (CD09-123)**

Effective December 1, 2009, child care income eligibility guidelines are increased to maintain eligibility at 127% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for initial child

## Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

care applications and 139% for transitional child care eligibility. Form IM 4 CC attachment has been updated to reflect the new income guidelines for initial child care applications. The new transitional child care income guidelines can be viewed online at "Transitional Child Care Income Guidelines."

### **Travel Expense Log and Respite Provider Evaluation/Payment Invoice Revisions (CD09-126)**

In response to the Continuous Quality Improvement process revisions have been made to the Travel Expense Log, CD-106, and Respite Provider Evaluation/Payment Invoice, CD-111. The revised forms are to be used immediately upon publication of this memo. All copies of the old forms will be eliminated.

### **Trial Home Visits (CD09-127)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify a change in policy regarding trial home visits (THV). It has been normal practice for the Alternative Care (AC) Client Information function in FACES to close out automatically at 180 days if the child was on a trial home visit regardless of whether the Children's Division (CD) had been relieved of legal custody. This policy revision is the result of a recent Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) review and will require the AC Client Information function to remain open until jurisdiction is terminated.

### **New Supreme Court Rules-Important Changes to Informal Discovery, Notice of Hearings, and Title IV-E (CD09-129)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce new Supreme Court rules, rule 123.08, that will make important changes to juvenile court procedures and will have a direct impact on the Children's Division's (CD) work with the court. These juvenile court rules, like laws that are passed by the legislature, are required to be followed. The new rules went into effect on January 1, 2010. The new Supreme Court rules require the juvenile court to strictly follow the requirements of Title IV-E. This includes making the appropriate contrary to the welfare and reasonable efforts findings in court orders, which will ensure that the state will be able to claim Title IV-E federal funding for children in CD custody who qualify.

### **Revision of the Professional Family Development Plan, CD-100 (CD09-130)**

In response to the Continuous Quality Improvement process the Professional Family Development Plan, CD-100, instructions have been revised. The CD-100 is to be developed with the resource family within the first 30 days of licensure. This plan is to be reviewed at each quarterly visit, annually and at re-licensure when developing a new CD-100 for the renewed licensure period. The original intent for developing the CD-100 was to streamline and make more concise the STARS Step 11 requirement. The format of the required information has been restructured on the form and the evaluation and signature sections have been revised to accommodate the 8 times the form is to be reviewed with the family during the 2 year licensure period.

### **Missouri Heart Gallery 2010 Registration Procedure (CD09-131)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to make staff aware of the procedure for registering children who are awaiting permanency through adoption in the 2010 Missouri Heart Gallery. Each child must have a completed Missouri Waiting Child Registration Form - CD121 and a completed copy of their AdoptUsKids profile. Incomplete forms or out of date AdoptUsKids profiles will be returned for completion or updating. In addition, a 35mm or .jpg digital photo of the child being registered and a copy of the child's media profile are to accompany each registration. The completed registration form, photo, and profile are to be returned to the Adoption Exchange for photographer assignment and must be received by the Adoption Exchange by January 20, 2010.

### **Residential Treatment Rehabilitation and Aftercare Services (CD09-132)**

The purpose of this memo is to discuss revised Residential Treatment Agreements, including the aftercare services. These agreements will better align with available funding streams for services to children in residential treatment programs. The agreements will be piloted with four providers in January, 2010. These agreements will eventually replace the current residential treatment contracts statewide within the next 12 months. The agreements will not include emergency,

infant/toddler or maternity residential services. They will be provided through separate contracts. Aftercare services will replace Family Focused Residential Services (FFRS) under the new agreements. FFRS will continue to be provided through the current Residential Treatment contracts for as long as those contracts are in existence.

### **The Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MOCCRRN) (CD09-124)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to instruct staff on child care referrals. Staff are instructed to discontinue using, maintaining, and distributing lists of child care providers, but rather to refer persons seeking child care to the Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network for assistance. The Department of Social Services, Children's Division contracts with the Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MOCCRRN) 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. The MOCCRRN also provides services to child care providers, policymakers, and employers.

*The above is a brief summary of the current policies impacting the Children's Division. A more complete explanation is available at <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2010>*

### **Fall 2009 - Correction Addendum to Transportation Policy (CD09-65)**

Mileage reimbursement for transportation costs will now include reimbursement for youth in Independent Living Arrangement (ILA) placements and youth in Transitional Living Advocate (TLA) placements.

**Correction:** Allowable transportation costs include medical care, counseling, visits with parent(s) and siblings, court, FST and PPRT meetings and other trips that are intended to support the case plan may be reimbursed at 100%. Other mileage may then be reimbursed each mile over 15 miles round trip.

# Tax Credit Resource Center

## Tax Time:

With the help of North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), we have included in this issue helpful information to help sort out those frequently asked questions, or where you can get them answered. Please know that NACAC is not a tax expert, and these opinions should not be considered legal or financial advice. You should consult your own tax advisor before filing.

## Missouri Tax Credit

As part of Missouri's enacted legislation, HB 1453, \$2-million in adoption tax credits are set aside for adoption of children who are wards of the state. You may even be able to claim the credit for adoptions that occurred in previous years.

Before proceeding, let's review what a tax credit is. According to IRS Publication 968, "The adoption credit is the amount that you subtract from your tax liability." The following summarizes the information on the Missouri Department of Revenue website, <http://dor.mo.gov/tax/taxcredit/atc.htm>.

**Purpose:** Provides a credit to assist in the nonrecurring adoption expenses for a special needs child.

**Eligible Applicants:** Any person residing in this state that legally adopts a special needs child is eligible to receive a tax credit up to \$10,000 for nonrecurring adoption expenses for each child.

**Eligible Activities:** The child must be a special needs child as determined by the Children's Division, a child-placing agency licensed by the state, or by a court of competent jurisdiction.

**How the Program Works:** To claim the Adoption Tax Credit, the parent, or their employer if the employer is claiming the full credit, must complete Form MO-ATC. The claimant must attach a copy of the completed Form MO-ATC along with the tax return the first year the credit is being claimed. Effective January 1, 2000, up to 50 percent of any tax credits earned for adoptions finalized after January 1, 2000, may be claimed upon placement of the child and the remaining 50% claimed after

the special needs adoption is final.

**Eligible Use of Tax Credit:** The credit may be carried forward four subsequent years. During the year of adoption, or any year in which the credit is carried forward, the credit will be reduced by the state's cost of providing care, treatment, maintenance, and services when the child is placed, with no intent to return to the adoptive home, in foster care or residential treatment licensed or operated by the Department of Social Services, Children's Division, the Division of Youth Services, or the Department of Mental Health, or when a juvenile court temporarily or finally relieves the adoptive parents of custody of the child.

For more information, visit: <http://dor.mo.gov/tax/taxcredit/atc.htm>, or contact MO Department of Revenue, at 573.522.2089, or [taxcredit@dor.mo.gov](mailto:taxcredit@dor.mo.gov).

## Federal Tax Credit

Beginning in 2003, families adopting a child with special needs from foster care were able to access a federal adoption tax credit without needing to document expenses. For tax year 2009, the tax credit is approximately \$12,150 per child and parents have this year and up to the next five years in which to claim the credit.

## How do I know if my child is considered to have special needs according to the IRS?

The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) interprets the instructions for Form 8839 (the Adoption Tax Credit form) this way: If you receive adoption subsidy (assistance) for your child, the state that provides the subsidy has determined that your child has special needs. Your adoption subsidy agreement (or application and agreement) is the evidence that the state has determined your child to have special needs. These instructions can be found at the following web address: [www.irs.gov/instructions/i8839/ch02.html#d0e284](http://www.irs.gov/instructions/i8839/ch02.html#d0e284)

## A child is a child with special needs if all three of the following statements are true:

The child was a citizen or resident of the United States or its possessions at the time the adoption process began.

A state (including the District of Columbia) has determined that the child cannot or should not be returned to his or her parents' home. The state has determined that the child will not be adopted unless assistance is provided to the adoptive parents. Factors used by states to make this determination include:

- A. The child's ethnic background and age,
- B. Whether the child is a member of a minority or sibling group, and
- C. Whether the child has a medical condition or a physical, mental, or emotional handicap.

If you check the box in column (d), indicating the child has special needs, be sure to keep evidence of the state's determination in your records.

## Tax Issues Related to Adoption

Adoptive parents often ask whether adoption assistance (adoption subsidy) payments are taxable. Many also wonder about claiming their child as a dependent and using the child tax credit. NACAC reviewed related IRS publications, and below offer their interpretation of these issues.

## Adoption Assistance Payments as Taxable Income

Since 1974, the IRS has ruled that adoptive parents do not normally need to include adoption assistance benefits in their taxable income.

However, the IRS also says that adoption assistance benefits may be taxable if they exceed the amount an adoptive family spends to support the child. This situation might occur if adoption assistance was a family's sole source of income. In cases such as this, some of the adoption assistance funds are used to meet the needs of the parent(s), so not all funds are being spent to support the child. NACAC is not aware of any states that have a different definition of taxable income, **but parents should consult their tax preparers or a tax advisor about state specific rules.**

## More Tax Questions?

Call 651.644.3036, e-mail [adoption.assistance@nacac.org](mailto:adoption.assistance@nacac.org), or visit <http://www.nacac.org/postadopt/taxcredit.htm>.

## Expert Exchange: Professionals Answer Your Questions

### Parents Ask:

*I have one teen that is about to graduate and another looking forward to her senior year. I am trying to find some Missouri resources to help them out with college. Where do I start?*

Getting ready for college and work can be a challenge. Thankfully there are several opportunities available for Missouri's foster and adopted youth.

Many youth in foster care are thinking about college and need to know about scholarships and assistance available. I have gathered several pieces of information for youth in foster care and youth that have been adopted from foster care.

### Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE)

3515 Amazonas Drive  
Jefferson City, 65109  
800.473.6757  
icweb@dhe.mo.gov  
<http://www.dhe.mo.gov>  
<http://www.dhe.mo.gov/ppcindex.shtml>

The main website for access regarding all information about higher education in the state of Missouri, this site offers links and other information for students and parents interested in accessing higher education in Missouri.

The Planning and Paying for College section of this website offers all available state of Missouri based scholarships along with eligibility requirements and deadlines for each.

In addition, this website also provides valuable information on choosing schools, loans, grants and scholarship links to other funding resources and general financial management

information as it pertains to higher education.

### Missouri Education and Training Voucher (ETV)

missouri@statevoucher.org  
<https://www.statevoucher.org/state.shtml?state=MO>

The Missouri Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV) is an annual federal grant provided to states to fund youth who remain in care, or have aged out of the foster care system and who are enrolled in college, university and vocational training programs.

Students may receive up to \$5,000 a year based on their cost of attendance. They must enroll before their 21st birthday and may continue to receive support until age 23. Funds may be used for tuition, dorm fees, books, student loan repayments and qualified living expenses.

*To be eligible, students must:*

1. Youth must be in foster care, adopted from foster care after age 16, or aged out of foster care.
2. For most states, youth must be aged 18-20; however the age requirement varies by state.
3. Youth must have a high school diploma or GED.
4. Youth must be accepted into or enrolled in a Title IV, accredited college or vocational/technical training program.

### National Foster Parent Association (NFPA)

2313 Tacoma Avenue S,  
Tacoma, WA 98402  
800.557.5238  
info@nfpaonline.org  
<http://www.nfpainc.org/content/index.asp?page=YOUTHSCHOLARSHIP&nmenu=4>

The National Foster Parent Association (NFPA) offers scholarships for foster youth, adopted youth, or biological youth of currently licensed foster parents, who wish to further their education beyond high school, including college or university studies, vocational and job training, and correspondence courses, including the GED. Foster parents must also be members of NFPA.

Students must be high school seniors at time of application or meet an age requirement if already graduated. Eligibility requirements vary dependent on whether the child is going to attend a college/university or a vocational/work program, correspondence or GED program.

*Regardless, all students must complete the following:*

1. Completed application form
2. A minimum of two letters of recommendation from: foster parent(s), social worker(s), residential center, principal/teacher/guidance counselor, employer, etc. will be required with each application.
3. A typewritten statement in 300-500 words on "Why I want to further my education and why I should be considered for a National Foster Parent Association Scholarship" will also be required.

### Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

P.O. Box 480  
Jefferson City, 65102  
573.751.9094  
<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/aplus>

The A+ Schools program,



initiated in 1993 by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, allows qualifying students who graduate from

designated A+ high schools to receive free tuition and fees at public two-year colleges. Graduates of any designated A+ high school within the state of Missouri may attend college at designated partner schools. Eligibility is outlined in detail on the MDESE website.

*To be eligible, students must:*

1. Complete an A+ agreement form during their sophomore year (forms are available in high school counseling departments).
2. Stay in an A+ school for the next three years.
3. Maintain at least a 2.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale.
4. Attend school at least 95 percent of the time.
5. Tutor or teach younger students for 50 hours without pay.
6. Demonstrate good citizenship and avoid the illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol.
7. Make a good faith effort to secure all available federal postsecondary student financial aid assistance funds that do not require repayment.
8. Male students must register under the United States Military Selective Service Act and show proof of such registration.

### Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis

8215 Clayton Road  
St. Louis, 63117  
(314) 725-7990  
<http://www.sfstl.org/>

The Scholarship Foundation of  
(Continued on page 10)

## Media Mania

### Surf's Up: Online Resources

Below are links and information related to preparing and going to college, financial aid and saving for college from the Official Website of the State of Missouri:  
<http://www.mo.gov/Education/>

### Going to College

#### Find a College or University

An online database allowing users to search for institutions, programs and degrees, including those associated with the University of Missouri System.  
<http://higherred.mo.gov/ProgramInventory/search.jsp>

#### Tuition and Fee Schedules

Information on tuition and fees at Missouri's public and independent colleges and universities.  
<http://www.dhe.mo.gov/tuitionandfees.shtml>

#### Financial Aid

Explore information about financial aid for college tuition on the Department of Higher Education's web site.  
<http://dhe.mo.gov/payingforcollege.shtml>

### Preparing for College

#### Student Reminder Service

Sign up to receive monthly email reminders and helpful hints about preparing for college.  
<http://www.dhe.mo.gov/reminders2.shtml>

#### Missouri Saving for Tuition Program (MOST)

MOST is a qualified tuition program established under Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code. MOST is designed to help people save for the costs of education after high school.  
<http://www.treasurer.mo.gov/Most.asp>

#### College Savings Tools

Calculate how much you need to save, make conversion decisions, diversify, project future college costs and calculate your tax deductions.  
<http://www.treasurer.mo.gov/CollegeSavingsTools.asp>

### Preparing Younger Students

#### Discovery Channel School

The creators of the popular Discovery channel initially designed this site with parents and teachers in mind — but the fun activities have major kid-appeal too.  
[school.discovery.com](http://school.discovery.com)

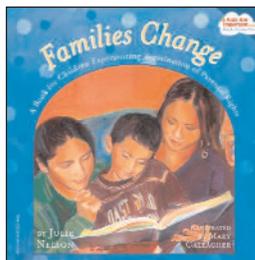
#### CoolMath4Kids

Games, brain twisters and coloring-book activities for a variety of age groups help make math fun. A great site for kids who are struggling with multiplication and need to practice their skills.  
[coolmath4kids.com](http://coolmath4kids.com)

#### Science Made Simple

This no-frills site helps kids learn science the easy, hands-on way with clear, detailed answers to their questions and lots of fun!  
[sciencemadesimple.com](http://sciencemadesimple.com)

### Book Spot



### Families Change: A Book for Children Experiencing Termination of Parental Rights

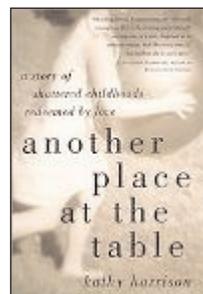
By Julie Nelson

Reading level: Ages 4-8  
Paperback: 32 pages  
ISBN-10: 1575422093  
ISBN-13: 978-1575422091

All families change over time. Sometimes a baby is born, or a grown-up gets married. And sometimes a child gets a new foster parent or a new adopted mom or dad. Children need to know that when this happens, it's not their fault. They need to understand that they can remember and value their birth family and love their new family, too. Straightforward words and full-color illustrations offer hope and support for children facing or experiencing change. Includes resources and information for birth parents, foster parents, social workers, counselors, and teachers.

#### About the Author

Julie Nelson is passionately committed to supporting society's most highly stressed children. She is a teacher and home visitor for the Families Together Preschool, a nonprofit early intervention program, and an instructor at the University of Minnesota Center for Early Education and Development.



### Another Place at the Table

By Kathy Harrison

Paperback: 256 pages  
Publisher: Tarcher (May 24, 2004)  
ISBN-10: 1585422827  
ISBN-13: 978-1585422821

It's 1988, and Harrison, a happily married mother of three, takes a job with Head Start, working with at-risk four-year-olds. Her heart goes out to the foster kids; before long, she and her husband take state training and adopt two sisters. Five children make a big family, but Harrison finds it tough to turn her back on needy children. She and her husband start accepting emergency care "hot-line" foster children, too; soon, Harrison quits her day job and becomes a full-time-overtime, really-foster parent. In addition to a stay-at-home mom's usual duties, Harrison is caring for children with serious emotional baggage and often complex medical problems. There are lawyers, therapists and social service people to meet with, plus the scheduling of visits to birth mothers, an emotional roller coaster for all parties.

How do you "give enough" to each child so they get a healthy sense of family, "without loving them too much to let them go in the end?" With over half a million American children in foster care today, Harrison's personal but vitally important account should be read by public policy makers and by anyone with a spare room in their home.

## A Parent's Guide to Calling the Doctor

It is 2:00 a.m. and your 3-year-old wakes suddenly with a fever of 101 degrees. Or, you've just picked up your 10-year-old after school and he injured his foot playing kickball. Every day thousands of parents are confronted with minor and major health issues concerning their children. How do you know when your child's problem is one you can handle at home? When should you call the doctor? What information does the pediatrician need?

In addition to name and date of birth, the office staff will want to know your child's most important symptoms, including current temperature if fever is present. Have any symptoms changed recently or worsened? Have your questions written down so you are ready when the doctor returns your call.

### When speaking with the doctor:

Remind her of any chronic conditions like asthma or diabetes that your child has, or drug allergies if medications are going to be called into the pharmacy. If your child is currently on medications prescribed by a specialist, notify the pediatrician of that. Listen to your intuition. If your gut feeling is causing you to feel very nervous about your child's condition, tell the physician that, too.

By the end of the call you should know if the doctor needs to see your child. If no visit is needed, do not hang up the phone until you understand what treatment is necessary for the symptoms. Have pen and paper ready in case the doctor has a list of home care instructions. You should also be aware of what type of symptoms you should call back for. Just in case, have your pharmacy number available, too.

The following list will give you some guidelines so you will know how urgent your child's symptoms may be.

Young infants require a little more caution than those over 3 months of age since they can be more difficult to assess and may become sick more quickly than an older baby or child.

### If you are concerned about an infant 3

### months of age or less, call immediately if:

- Baby is limp, not responsive, difficult to awaken, poor color.
- Rectal temperature of 100.4, or higher.
- Breathing is labored, wheezing, or grunting.
- Repeated vomiting (not spitting up) or projectile vomiting.
- Refusing to eat 2 times in a row.
- Frequent watery stools.
- No wet diaper for 8 hours.
- Any trauma or injury.
- Baby has a new yellow skin color, or a worsening of jaundice.
- Crying where baby is extremely irritable or has a high pitched cry for over one hour.
- A rash that looks like bleeding under the skin, or purple/red freckles.

### For an older infant or child call immediately for:

- Labored breathing.
- If your child appears much sicker than usual with a routine illness. If he is playful, eating and drinking, your child's body is successfully coping with the illness.
- Rash that looks like bleeding under the skin or red/purple freckles.
- Stomach pain that is lasting over 2 hours or is worsening over time. Especially if the lower abdomen, on the right side is affected.
- Symptoms of dehydration: no urine in 12 hours, inside of mouth dry and sticky, crying without tears, limp or not responsive.
- Blood in stool or vomit.
- Severe headache.
- Fever 105 or above.
- Worsening skin infection: area has spreading redness, red streak is observed, or area becomes hard and has pus - especially if child develops fever.

### Call immediately for these trauma/injury symptoms:

- Injured body part looks crooked or deformed.
- Head trauma.
- Gash that may need stitches, or uncontrolled bleeding.
- If your child refuses to use an injured arm or leg for more than one hour.
- Animal or human bite that has punctured the skin.

- Eye injury causing pain, or eye tearing for over 15 minutes.
- Always call Poison Control for any toxic or poisonous substance that has been swallowed, inhaled, in the eyes or on the skin. Keep their number 800.222.1222 posted by your phone.

### When to call for a NON URGENT illness during office hours:

- Vomiting over 24 hours (if no accompanying diarrhea) and no signs of dehydration.
- Ear pain.
- Fever (100.4 or over) lasting over three days in child over 3 months.
- Cough or cold symptoms lasting longer than 10 days.
- Fever with sore throat.
- Rash lasting over 3 days.
- Mild injury with persistent swelling or pain.
- Symptoms that come and go over a long period.
- Symptoms that are lasting longer than expected.

*If you are just not sure whether the child needs to be examined by the doctor. The nurses at St. Louis Children's Hospital can help you determine the need to call your pediatrician. Please call 314.454.KIDS or 800.678.KIDS M-F 7 a.m. until 11 p.m., and weekends from noon until 8 p.m. if you have questions.*

## Quick Healthy Recipe

Banana Popsicle

This is an easy and fun snack that children love to make and EAT! Gather the following:

- 1 banana
- 2 craft sticks
- Vanilla yogurt
- Low-fat cookie crumbs or low-fat graham cracker crumbs, crushed

Cut banana in half. Insert craft stick into the flat end. Roll banana in yogurt and crushed cookies. Place on waxed paper. Freeze 1 hour.

*Recipe courtesy of:*

<http://www.bjc.org/?id=2140&sid=1>

## Continued Stories

### Getting to School - and Paying for It

(Continued from page 1)

File the FAFSA as early in the year as possible, and then contact the Financial Aid Office of the School that the student will be attending. The Financial Aid office can answer any questions, and also work with the student to determine what the costs of attendance at the school will be. Each school has some flexibility in determining costs of attendance, and may be able to include some costs especially relevant to foster youth, such as transportation and child care. Figuring out the costs of attendance is also important for determining how Chafee ETV funds are used.

### The Orphan Foundation of America

The Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) has a number of scholarship programs available, as well as some wonderful support programs, such as mentoring and care packages, for young people who are in college. OFA awards hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships each year. The application deadline for the next round of OFA scholarships is March 31, 2010. Application criteria can be found at [http://www.orphan.org/scholarship\\_info.html](http://www.orphan.org/scholarship_info.html)

One more important note: Even if a young person has not finished high school or completed a GED, they **still may be eligible to attend an institution of higher education, as well as receive scholarships and financial aid.**

For this to happen, a college or vocational school has to make a determination that the student will be "able to benefit" from the program offered (another of those technical terms). Each student must be evaluated individually and should work directly with the school or program he or she wishes to attend. In some cases, particularly at community colleges, the young person may be able to enroll and attend college course while at the same time completing a GED course and taking the exam.

*For more information on this kind of program, contact the admissions office at a local community college.*

### Expert Exchange

(Continued from page 7)

St. Louis, a nonprofit organization that provides access to post-secondary education via interest free loans to members of our community who otherwise would not have the financial means to fulfill their educational goals.

Interest-free student loans are made on a non-discriminatory basis to applicants of all ages who demonstrate financial need, satisfactory academic progress, and strong character. Eligible participants can live in Missouri or Illinois and must live within designated eligible counties. The foundation has a variety of interest-free loan programs, emergency loans, and grants.

### Fast Web

444 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 3000,  
Chicago, IL, 60611  
Email: [info@FastWeb.com](mailto:info@FastWeb.com)  
<http://www.fastweb.com/>

For nearly 15 years, FastWeb has been the leading scholarship search provider. As a scholarship matching service, FastWeb matches users to scholarships based on their qualifications. The scholarship database contains 1.3 million scholarships worth over \$3 billion.

FastWeb provides a search to find student scholarships and also provides information and guidance as students find their college or first job. They provide current news on financial aid, scholarships, college, jobs and internships, and student life. The site is tailored to the needs of parents, students or anyone seeking educational information regardless of where they are within the college or graduate search process.

### The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

<http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/chafeebr/o.pdf>  
<http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/resources.htm>

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. This program incorporates and expands the former Independent Living Program (ILP) and expands services for after care youth ages 18-21 who have exited care at age 18 or after, but have not reached age 21.

Independent living services are provided to young people to assist them as they transition to adulthood. Independent living services are not an alternative to adoption. Enrollment in the independent living program shall occur concurrently with continued efforts to locate and achieve placements in adoptive families.

### Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA)

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

Don't forget... This is also the time to complete the Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA).

Students should complete the FAFSA as soon after January 1, 2010 as possible, and by midnight June 30, 2010. Some of the applications for scholarships and vouchers require the FAFSA to be completed.

In addition, the FAFSA considers students for grants and work study programs on a first-come, first-served basis. Visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) for more information, or to fill out the form electronically.

*For more information on scholarships, loans, financial aid assistance, or any educational need, please contact: Leslie Lewis, Director of Education for the Eastern Missouri Adoption Resource Center.*

*Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition  
111 North Seventh Street, Suite 402  
Saint Louis, Missouri 63101  
800.FOSTER.3 (314.367.8373) x37  
[leslielewis@foster-adopt.org](mailto:leslielewis@foster-adopt.org)  
[www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org)*



## Waiting Children: Seeking a Forever Family

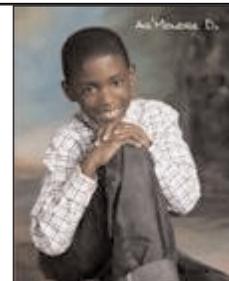
### Meet Ar'Mondre

*An amazing boy... A future police officer*

**Ar'Mondre (11)** is an attractive and soft-spoken, happy boy, whose is of average height and build. He is shy around unfamiliar people; however, once he gets to know a person he can be very engaging and talkative. Ar'Mondre loves to build things and loves art.

He loves to eat at McDonalds. He shows interest in cooking and is very proud of his ability to do his spelling homework. Ar'Mondre wants to be a Police officer when he grows up. He is artistic and creative, and has excellent hand writing. He wants to do well and is hardworking and persistent.

Ar'Mondre is also independent and has great sense of humor. A two-parent family, with a strong father figure would be ideal for Ar'Mondre, who requires consistent, firm structure to do his best. A single man would also be appropriate for Ar'Mondre. *To learn more about Anthony, contact Leewa Khatiwada, Adoption Specialist at Children Permanency Partnership, at 314.963.8205, or [l.khatiwada@cppmo.org](mailto:l.khatiwada@cppmo.org).*



### Meet Willie, Kantriel, Keron, Janae and Jamahl

*Loving family group with two sets of twins!*

Willie, Kantriel, Keron, Janae and Jamahl are now available for adoption, and the children are hoping that a home can be found that can take all five of them. **Kantriel (upper middle, 14)** is just a few minutes older than his twin, **Keron (upper right)**. Described as easygoing and laid back, Kantriel loves to read, and especially enjoys going to the library. Kantriel is a good student who likes learning and really enjoys going to school. Like his twin, Keron, too, is a ninth grader, and a good student. In his spare time, he enjoys video games, riding bikes and going shopping. A responsible shopper, Keron is glad for the opportunity to do chores to earn money.



**Willie (upper left, 12)** says that it is sometimes strange being the only one in the family without a twin. He loves to play sports in his spare time, especially soccer, baseball, basketball and football. He also describes himself as "handsome and good," and looks forward to living in an adoptive home with his sister and three brothers.

**Janae (lower left, 9)** is an outgoing and friendly girl with a bubbly personality, who loves to laugh and have fun. She enjoys reading, playing games, and "just being a kid." **Jamahl (lower right)** is a happy, polite and well-mannered young man, who's very talkative, especially about food! He loves to do most anything outside, such as riding bikes, swimming, and playing basketball. He also likes playing video games. *To learn more about this sibling group, please contact Becky Evans, Bringing Families Together, at 314.731.3969 x316, or [beckye@bringingfamilies.together.com](mailto:beckye@bringingfamilies.together.com).*

### Meet Ashley

*Enjoys new and old friendships*

**Ashley (14)** has been praised for her playful spirit and out-spoken personality. She thrives when given positive attention, and responds by showing compassion for others and lending a helping hand. Having and being a friend is something Ashley enjoys and she takes pride in her successes at school.

Ashley has experienced the effects of neglect and abuse; she has shown great strength in continuing to participate in treatment, learning how to live within limits and communicating effectively and respectfully with people in her life. She is easily able to express herself and has learned to advocate for her own needs. Ashley is most successful in a family setting when caregivers communicate limits, provide positive feedback and show her respect, patience and a commitment to adoption.

Ashley is currently stable living with a therapeutic foster family. She has flourished in this structured, nurturing, stable environment with positive adults. She will need to continue counseling and have opportunities to further strengthen her blossoming social skills. Ashley will also need continued contact with her siblings, who are placed separately. *To learn more about Ashley, please contact Liz Johnson, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter for Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition, at 800.FOSTER.3 (314.367.8373) x31, or [lizjohnson@foster-adopt.org](mailto:lizjohnson@foster-adopt.org).*



Family Connections  
c/o The Coalition  
111 North Seventh Street, Suite 402  
Saint Louis, Missouri 63101