

# Caregiver Connection

February 2012

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.  
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION

## Preparing kids in your home for fostering

Excerpted from ARW/  
FCARC of Wisconsin



Not only do parents make adjustments in their lives when a child in care enters their home, the children in the house are in for changes too... big changes! It doesn't matter if they are born or adopted into the family or are currently in foster care. Adjustments come easily for some – they move over at the table, know they will have to share your time and smile – while others are still processing the changes they had to make well into adulthood.

One foster dad, with humor and insight, tells a story about his 9-year-old son. On the evening that he and his wife were going to foster parenting classes, his son said, "Dad, so you and Mom are going to be gone all night and neglecting me all evening so that you can learn how to care for other kids you're going to bring into our house?"

This wise father knows that his son anticipates making some big changes and is worried. It's the savvy parent who knows the whole family will be making changes. On the other hand, some birth children take fostering and adopting for granted. They are in a position to appreciate what their parents are doing and feel part of it.

Growing up in a foster home is what it is – it's hard to describe unless you have lived another way to compare it to something. Both reactions are valid. Be open to any reactions your kids may have and have some tools ready to help the family expand.

### Educating Your Family

Long before the first child arrives in your home, prepare your family for the changes that will occur. Here are some suggestions from foster parents to help you.

**Discuss what you learn in PRIDE** and discuss the decision to foster as soon as you can.

**Talk to your kids.** When a mom is pregnant, parents talk with their children to prepare for the upcoming event. Do the same when preparing your family to foster.

**Anticipate how you're going to answer tough questions**, like, "Why can't she live with her real mom?" Or "Why does he do that?" When answering tough questions, it helps to talk in generalities by talking about why some kids are in care or why some kids might act out because of past trauma.

**Teach your kids about confidentiality** and remind them frequently about how they are expected to honor it. Tell them what they can and can't talk about and how to answer questions. Teach them to tell others, "That's not something I can share."

**Show your kids how to be empathetic.** The child coming in has been through a huge change and is probably having a hard time and needs time to adjust. Help them understand how challenging it would be to adjust to a whole new family, school, foods, friends, teachers, all at once.

**Remind your children that they can be good teachers** for the new kids in their home. Remind them that their behavior can strongly influence the new children in the home.

**Consider making Welcome Home Books and Life Books** for children who come into your care and enlist the help of your whole family.

## Mark your calendars – We Are Family day

Sunday, May 6, 2012 is the fourth annual We Are Family Day with the Seattle Mariners at Safeco Field. The afternoon game against the Minnesota Twins will begin at 1:10 p.m.



Discounted tickets will again be available for the game. This event is Washington's major appreciation event for foster parents, relative caregivers, adoptive parents and others working with children and youth in the child welfare system. We Are Family Day has recorded the largest crowds of any event sponsored by the Mariners over the past two years.

Watch the March Caregiver Connection for more information. If you would like to help plan this event or would like more information, please contact Bob Partlow, bob.partlow@dshs.wa.gov or 360-902-8063.

**Be realistic with your children about sharing your time and energy with other children.** The new child may require more than what seems to be his fair share of attention. Remind them how much you love them, and let them know how special they are for being part of a family that cares about people.

**Learn about the history of children whose parents have not been able to care for them.** Some movies and books to look into include: *The Orphan Trains*, *Evelyn*, *The Martian Child*, *Antoine Fischer*, *Annie*, *Lilo & Stitch*, *The Blind Side*, *Meet the Robinsons*, *Hotel for Stray Dogs*, *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Lost Boy*.

**Prepare your family for the inevitability of children leaving your home.** Talk about it and let them grieve in their own ways. Some may not seem touched by the change and another child might feel the separation and loss deeply.

### Stress and Support

If you or your children are having a hard time with fostering, talk to your workers. You can also find support from other foster parents and foster parent hubs and support groups.

### Safety

Tell all of the children in your home that they can come to you any time if they don't feel safe - for whatever reason. Make this a basic household rule and repeat it often. Children who have been traumatized may have experienced sexual or physical violence may act out. You must teach all the children to say "no" and tell you if something happens.

As your children navigate the waters of fostering with you, they learn a tremendous amount about the world and how to live when they become adults. As a parent who opens their arms to embrace children needing the fundamental love and care required by fostering, you are teaching your children the truest kindness of the human heart. Teach them well.

## Working together for kids

In 2007, the state legislature passed Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1624, which initiated quarterly consultation meetings between foster parents and Children's Administration officials. Regional and statewide meetings review issues specific to recruitment, reducing foster parent turnover, training and other topics that support services for children, families and caregivers.

The statewide committee was established as the "1624 Committee". It was recently renamed the "Foster Parent Consultation Team". The team consists of 4 foster parent representatives from each of the three regions, two members of the Foster Parent Association of Washington State (FPAWS) and CA staff members.

The committee has tackled numerous issues since 2007. Many foster parents initially stepped forward to serve as representatives for their regions. This year in 2012, the team began its new year with four new representatives elected last November. Foster parents are encouraged to attend the quarterly regional meetings with other foster parents to bring and discuss topics and issues important to them. From those meetings, two topics are identified for discussion at the statewide meeting. Local team members can provide information to interested foster parents about the time and place of the regional meetings.

The Consultation Team was developed as a venue where foster parents could consult with Children's Administration staff on issues that affect foster parents statewide and to work collaboratively to address those issues. Committee members say the consultation team is a work in progress, and has proven its usefulness in working together on issues and has helped create better working relationships.

"It's the best vehicle for communication we've had in 29 years," said Beth Canfield of Bremerton, a 29-year foster parent and co-president of FPAWS.

"I see it as an attempt to collaborate and look together at practices and policies over the years," said Bernice Morehead, who has facilitated many of the meetings in her position as Stakeholder Communications Manager for CA.

The team recently produced a list of topics where successful work has been done. Among them:

- Updating a CA staff list on the foster parent web site
- Clarifying travel Reimbursement issues
- Clarifying Rate Assessment issues
- Reviewing policies ranging from respite, communication, children missing in care, guardianship, transition planning for dependent youth, caregiver notification of court dates and educational services and planning.
- Collaborating on a new frequently asked questions pamphlet on licensing regulations and issues and a brochure on investigations of allegations of abuse and neglect and licensing violations
- Improved caregiver training
- Helpful information about medical issues to improve access for all caregivers

New team member Josh Hinman, is executive director of a private child placing agency. He and his wife Brenda are new foster parents. "There are things in the system where I would like to see collaboration to improve; among them are better connections between foster parents and biological parents," he said.

Marci Miess of Onalaska, a founding member of the group who just retired, said many foster parents are unaware of the group, but they see it as something helpful to them once they learn of it.

"When they know about it, they are excited about the opportunity to work with CA and help make changes," she said.

All foster parents are encouraged to attend the regional Foster Parent Consultation Meetings. Please check with your regional team members for dates, times and locations of the meetings.

### New representatives

A complete listing for the Foster Parent Consultation Team representatives can be found on the last page of the Caregiver Connection. The following is contact information for the new representatives to the group.

Region 1 North, Ginger Schutt  
509-230-4058; fosmom09@comcast.net

Region 1 South, Gina Coats  
509-952-3851; ginacoats85@yahoo.com

Region 3 North, Josh Hinman  
360-536-3205; fostercare4kids@gmail.com

Region 3 South, Sarah Blanchette  
(503) 501-6969; nymow@yahoo.com



Know the court date!



Partner the Parrot reminds you to check on the next court date for the child or children in your care. Your voice is important to making decisions about those children.

If you can't attend in person, you can send your comments in a Caregiver Report to the Court, which you can get from the child's social worker or from the Children's Administration web page

## Voices of children

Again this year, the Family Education and Support Services is holding the Voices of Children Raised by Grandparents and Other Relatives contest. The contest is for children in Washington state who are being raised now or were raised in the past by a relative other than their parents. The contest honors both the children and the more than 37,000 relatives in Washington State who are raising them.

Children ages 5-19 who wish to enter, may write a poem, short essay, or draw a picture that describes how living with a relative (such as a grandparent, aunt, or uncle) has made a positive difference in their life. Entries will be judged in the age categories 5-7, 8-12 and 13-19. Prizes of \$100 will be awarded for the top two entries in each age category. The deadline is April 10, 2012. For more specifics about the contest: [www.FamilyESS.org](http://www.FamilyESS.org)

## Helping youth see their future

By Alexia Everett, College Success Foundation

The increasing importance of education and training after high school is undeniable. It is a simple fact: young adults with postsecondary education and training have access to a wider range of jobs and make more money.

As parents, we want our youth and young adults to succeed, but we don't always know how best to support them when it comes to preparing for the worlds of higher education and career. Reflecting back on my own experience as a teen, I can only remember receiving two pieces of advice on the subject. My grandfather consistently suggested that I join the Merchant Marines (like he did), while my aunt suggested that I become a teacher (like every woman in my family for two generations).

While I appreciate the fact that my loved ones were thinking of my future, I didn't really find these two suggestions very helpful. I was clueless as to what I wanted to do after high school, and I knew even less about what resources were available to help me. I believe that I chose to go to college because when I was a little girl, I watched my mother work very hard to pursue her teaching degree. Watching her work to be a successful student became ingrained in my subconscious, so while I didn't have a clue as to what I wanted to be when I grew up, I at least knew I wanted to go to college.

From one professional who works with youth to another, understanding how to navigate both the



secondary and postsecondary education systems is a full time job. Keeping updated on all of the resources available to support our youth in regards to education and career is another full time job. Parents need support. We need a network of professionals who can inform and support us, so that we can then assist our youth and young adults. This is why you should attend the 5th annual Passport to College Regional Summits.

The Passport to College Regional Summits bring together a variety of professionals to network and share information in an effort to improve the educational outcomes of youth and young adults in Washington State's foster care system. These free, one-day summits are part of Washington State's Passport to College Promise Scholarship Program - a scholarship and support program that encourages foster youth to prepare for and

succeed in postsecondary education and training.

If you are looking for advice on how to talk to your youth and young adults about their education and career options, then this summit is for you.

If you are interested in meeting professionals who can provide support with preparing and persisting in high school and beyond, then this summit is for you.

This year, there are four summit locations for you to choose from: Pasco, Seattle, Spokane, and Tacoma.

For more information and to register, visit <http://destinationgraduation.net/passport-summit-2012/>.

Licensed caregivers and relatives caring for dependent youth are eligible to receive reimbursement for childcare. Funds are limited and available on a first come, first serve basis.

Amy Gardner, Director of Capital Kids, had this to say about last year's event:

"As a foster parent for nine years, I had the privilege to attend the Passport Summit at Centralia College. The information I received was invaluable to guiding a foster teen to pursue their higher education. They provided resources for foster parents to help their teens apply for scholarships and grants. The summit also provided a panel of teens that are successful in college which was very inspiring for us to listen too. As we know, our children are our future, and this event is a great way to get the support you need to help your teen succeed."

## Staying healthy

To help family caregivers stay healthy, this resource brochure may be helpful. Link here: <http://www.ama-assn.org/resources/doc/public-health/ama-aarp-brochure.pdf>



## Washington State's Kinship Navigators

Serving grandparents and relatives raising children

### SOUTHEAST WASHINGTON

Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Yakima, and Walla Walla Counties: Catholic Family and Child Services – Yakima  
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Mary Pleger, mpleger@ccyakima.org;  
509-965-7100 or 1-800-246-2962

Benton, Franklin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla, and Asotin Counties  
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: (Also Spanish Speaking)

Tina Khabir\*, tkhabir@ccyakima.org; 509-946-4645, Ext. 2021

### Yakima and Kittitas Counties

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Mary Pleger, mpleger@ccyakima.org;  
509-965-7100 or 1-800-246-2962

### Yakama Nation: Yakama Nation Area Agency on Aging

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Karen Cummings\*, kcummings@yakama.com;  
509-865-1454

\*Funded by Federal Family Connections Grant

### CENTRAL WASHINGTON

Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan, Grant, Lincoln, and Adams Counties:  
Catholic Family and Child Services

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Jennifer Santillan, jsantillan@ccyakima.org;  
1-509-662-6761, Ext. 4557 or 1-800-261-1094

### SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Skamania, Wahkiakum Counties: Children's Home Society, Southwest Washington region

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Tammy Bedlion, Tammyb@chs-wa.org;  
360-695-1325, Ext. 4214

### EASTERN WASHINGTON

Ferry, Pend Oreille and Stevens Counties: Rural Resources

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Vicki Pontecorvo, vpontecorvo@ruralresources.org;  
509-684-3932 (part-time)

Spokane County: Elder Services – Spokane Mental Health

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Angela Andreas, aandreas@smhca.org;  
509-458-7450, Ext. 3007

Whitman County: Council on Aging and Human Services

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Amanda Rich, coaamanda@qwestoffice.net;  
509-397-4305, Ext. 102

### PUGET SOUND

King County: Senior Services of Seattle – King County

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Helen Sawyer, helens@seniorservices.org;  
206-727-6264

Lewis, Mason and Thurston Counties: Family Education and Support Services

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Lynn Urvina, KinNavigator@qwestoffice.net;  
360-754-7629 or 1-877-813-2828

SPANISH SPEAKING NAVIGATOR: Rosa Venancio,

fessassist@qwestoffice.net; 360-754-7629 or 1-877-813-2828

Pierce County: HopeSparks

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Rosalyn Alber, ralber@hopesparks.org;  
253-565-4484, Ext. 105

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Jessie Holden, jholden@hopesparks.org;  
253-565-4484, Ext. 104

### NORTHWEST WASHINGTON

Whatcom County: Northwest Regional Council (AAA)

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Laina Berry, BerryLS@dshs.wa.gov; 360-676-6749  
(part-time)

### STATE CONTACT

Hilari Hauptman, Aging and Disability Services Administration, DSHS,  
Hilari.hauptman@dshs.wa.gov; 1-800-422-3263 or 360-725-2556

### KINSHIP CARE IN WASHINGTON STATE WEBSITE

www.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare

## Important contact information for caregivers of children in out-of-home care

Foster parents can use these resources to find support in the valuable work they do. Other resources are located on the Children's Administration foster parent web page:  
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/fosterparents/>

### FOSTER PARENT AND CAREGIVER CRISIS AND SUPPORT LINE: 1-800-301-1868

### ON-GOING / CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Three private agencies work as contractors with CA to build supports for foster parents. Hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents are part of their work to help sustain our caregivers. They also work as liaison to help resolve issues between caregivers and CA staff. Find connections by your county:

#### REGION 1 North

Dru Powers (dru.powers@juno.com) 509-928-6697

(Adams, Asotin, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pen Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Whitman)

#### REGION 1 South

Lila Rose (lrose@lcsnw.org) 509-969-8554

Rosy Nechodom, (rnechodom@lcsnw.org) 509-619-4035

(Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Kittitas, Klickitat, Yakima, Walla Walla)

#### REGION 2 North

Shala Crow (fosterhearts@hotmail.com) 360-220-3785

(Island, San Juan, Skagit Snohomish, Whatcom)

#### REGION 2 South

Stephanie Swallow (ptslswallow@comcast.net) 206-850-4520

(King)

#### REGION 3 North

Elizabeth Griffin Hall (elizanngriffin@aol.com)

Lyn Okarski (Fostercaresnet@aol.com) 253-472-9252

(Kitsap, Pierce)

#### REGION 3 South

Monica Davis (mdavis@lcsnow.org) 360-430-1510

(Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Lewis, Mason Pacific, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum)

### FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State

FPAWS is an all volunteer, non-profit association, led by experienced caregivers who provide support and helpful services to all caregivers (foster, adoptive, and kinship) in Washington State. In addition, FPAWS advocates for caregivers with Washington's legislative officials, all levels of Children's Administration staff and other community service providers to enhance the child welfare system. Contact FPAWS at [www.fpaws.org](http://www.fpaws.org) or 1-800-391-CARE (2273).

### Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST)

FIRST provides support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect. Phone: 253-219-6782 Monday - Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., If no answer, please leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

### Fostering Well-Being Care Coordination Unit (FWB CCU)

FWB CCU can help answer health-related questions or help you with health related issues for children/youth in your care. Contact information: 1-800-422-3263 or 360-725-2626 (8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) or e-mail: [dhsfwbccu@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:dhsfwbccu@dshs.wa.gov). Please take care not to include any identifying information about a child unless sent through an encrypted/secure e-mail account.

## Foster Parent Consultation Team

The following are the representatives of the Foster Parent Consultation Team:

### REGION 1 NORTH

Cindy Gardner rc.gardner@comcast.net h: 509-928-2040 c: 509-714-6961

Ginger Schutt Fosmom09@comcast.net 509-230-4058

### REGION 1 SOUTH

Victoria Erwin Victoriaerwin9@yahoo.com 509-386-2423

Gina Coats ginacoats85@yahoo.com 509-952-3851

### REGION 2 NORTH

Debra Ellsworth dkfoster3@gmail.com 360-941-2244

Shala Crow fosterhearts@hotmail.com 360-220-3785

### REGION 2 SOUTH

Tess Thomas TMT3000@aol.com 206-371-0974

Talya Miller mytie5683@aol.com 206-786-1491

### REGION 3 NORTH

Elizabeth Griffin Hall elizanngriffin@aol.com h: 360-876-7515 w: 253-473-9252

Josh Hinman fostercare4kids@gmail.com 360-536-3205

### REGION 3 SOUTH

Amy Gardner michaelamy52@msn.com 360-200-2102

Sarah Blanchette nymow@yahoo.com 503-501-6969