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**“Wounded Children, Healing Homes”: Understanding Foster/Adoptive Child Care Crises**

Reprinted with permission from the Foster Parent College Connections newsletter. Foster Parent College provides online training for foster, adoptive and kinship parents. For more information visit www.fosterparentcollege.com.

All parents experience crises and challenges. However, foster parents are faced with challenges that families raising birth children don’t share. And at times, these additional challenges can escalate into full-blown crises. Crises for foster children can be triggered by events, anniversaries, or even times of the year that remind children of losses or traumatic experiences.

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**From the Director…..Becky Price-Mayo, MSW, LBSW-IPR**

July ushered in the 14th year partnership between the SFA School of Social Work and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, and the Child Welfare Professional Development Project continues to be multifaceted with the people it serves and the educational opportunities it offers.

Foster and adoptive parents have several options for receiving training hours via the Child Welfare Information Center the REACHOUT Newsletter and the annual conference. This summer, the center added the most recently released DVDs in the Foster Parent College series as well as new books and videos. Be sure to read about these new resources on page 9. Call our toll-free number (877.886.6707) and leave a message for our graduate assistant, Latoya Brooks. She will return your call and provide individualized help in finding the training resources you need!

The REACHOUT Newsletter also offers ONE HOUR foster parent training. To receive training credit, complete the enclosed test and return it to your caseworker. This issue features the article, Wounded Children, Healing Homes: Understanding Foster/Adoptive Child Care Crises, from the folks at Foster Parent College. They provide concise, practical strategies to prevent and cope with crises experienced by many children and youth in foster care. For more in-depth training, feel free to call our toll free number for a

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Parents can prevent or alleviate foster and adoption-related crises for most common triggers (see textbox below) through strategies that help them anticipate and avoid triggers, promote communication and understanding that the child is now safe and protected, and express empathy and support as the child moves through his grief process.

**Common Triggers for Foster Care-Related Crises:**

- Birthdays
- Mother’s Day
- Moving
- Transition to a new school or graduation from high school
- Illness or death of a parent or grandparent
- Death of a pet
- Divorce of adoptive parents
- Holidays
- School assignments (the dreaded Family Tree, etc.)
- Visits with members of the primary family
- Court hearings
- Visits from the social worker

Generalized survival skills for foster parents include:

- Acknowledge the child’s grief. Don’t assume grief will disappear if losses are not discussed. The only way out of grief is “through.”
- Network with other foster families. Foster families understand the challenges of parenting a traumatized child. Others may offer solutions that won’t be relevant or useful for foster families.
- Don’t overreact to behaviors; not all behaviors are related to foster care.
- Don’t under-react to foster care-related issues. Your child may be afraid to express his sadness regarding earlier losses or traumas, fearing that you will interpret this as an act of disloyalty. Get as much information as possible about the child’s birth family and history.
- Communicate openly and honestly about the child’s history. Encourage the child to have realistically positive feelings about his birth family. To enjoy positive self-esteem, he must feel good about his “roots.”
  - Remember, the child is able to love more than one set of parents at the same time. Your child should not be asked to choose. It is natural and expected that he will have strong feelings for people who have cared for him or who should have cared for him during his life.
- Be alert for reactions to foster care-related triggers.
- Allow the foster father to become the primary parent during adolescence. Much of the child’s grief and anger regarding abandonment and divided loyalties are directed toward the birth mother. This anger is often transferred to the foster mother (a dynamic known as “splitting”). The foster mother/foster child relationship can become very strained. The foster father should han-
Raising children is rewarding, but stressful, business. Foster parents are vulnerable to even higher levels of stress related to raising children. Some of the added stressors for foster families include:

- Unmet expectations regarding foster care and family life
- The impact of foster care on other relationships (with the spouse, other children in the family, extended family, close friends)
- Coping with child’s needs or challenging behaviors
- Dealing with multiple service providers (or the lack of foster care-competent service providers)
- School issues
- Feelings of failure and resulting guilt
- Difficulty in finding substitute caregivers to provide occasional respite or relief
- Managing either openness in the relationship with primary parents or the lack of a relationship with birth parents (including the psychological, rather than physical, presence of birth family members)

Even when exposed to high levels of stress, foster parents can prevent crisis through effective coping strategies. The following list of coping strategies can help foster parents keep stress from escalating into crisis:

- Choose your battles and win the war. You can’t work on everything at once. Avoid control battles whenever possible.
- Maintain a sense of humor. Connecting with other foster parents can help you find some comic relief in foster family life.
- Stop comparing yourself to other families. You are comparing your “insides” with other people’s “outsides.”
- Find a foster care-competent family therapist. Your family needs a therapist who understands trauma and also knows typical stages of foster family adjustment.
- Find outlets for your own emotional, spiritual and physical needs, and design opportunities to enjoy those.
- Identify who owns the problem. The people who own the problem are in charge of solving it. If it isn’t your problem, don’t try to control it.
- Do a role check. Is one parent carrying most of the load? Occasionally, one parent over functions as the nurturing parent or as the disciplinarian. In these situations, one parent does not allow his or her partner to participate fully in the parenting role. One technique that helps restore balance is to discuss and list parenting tasks each parent does very well and parenting tasks that are problematic or disastrous for each parent. Parents can then share responsibilities based on their strengths and interests.
Understanding Foster/Adoptive Child Care Crises continued

- Stay regulated. Don’t jump into the child’s fear. Your child is counting on you to be a port in the storm when she feels out of control. Heather Forbes, a therapist and adoptive mother, directs parents to “Stop, Drop, and Roll.” (Stop talking. Drop into your breathing. Roll back into your relationship with your child.)

- Take a break—find respite care. Re-charge your batteries with some time away from the challenge.

- Remember, your child’s progress will not always be consistent. Growth is not always linear, but can (and will) happen in fits and starts. Children who have learned to distrust adults need significant time to trust and attach.

- Look for patterns in your child’s outbursts. If you understand her triggers, you may be able to prevent an explosion altogether, or lessen the intensity significantly.

- Use family meetings creatively. Family meetings are good opportunities to teach children about planning, problem-solving and decision-making.

- Find ways to have fun with your child – increase your positive interactions. Having fun builds attachment for both of you.

- Reframe your definition of success and celebrate small gains. We sometimes sabotage ourselves with unrealistic expectations of how the family will ad-

just to foster care. Pay attention to the significant improvements you have made in your child’s life situation and acknowledge the positive impact your ongoing commitment is having on his efforts to heal earlier wounds.

This article is adapted from “Wounded Children, Healing Homes” (2009) by Jayne Schooler, Betsy Keef Smalley and Tim Callahan. Betsy Keef Smalley is a member of the FPC Faculty and is the Director of Foster Care and Adoption Training at the Institute for Human Services (IHS) in Columbus, Ohio. She is lead author of the IHS Preservice Training for Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Caregivers, which is being adapted for FPC. Session one, “Child Abuse and Neglect,” is now available online on www.FosterParentCollege.com. Session two is in production.

Foster and Adoptive Training Conference
Save the Date!
April 16, 2011
Stephen F. Austin
State University
Nacogdoches, Texas

CEUs for LSW, LPC, TAADAC and LCDC
Foster Parent Training Hours

Conference Sponsors:
SFA School of Social Work
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
Region 5 FPA Council
The 13th Annual Region 5 Foster & Adoptive Training Pre-Conference: Promoting Birth Parents Engagement with Children was held April 16, 2010 at Stephen F. Austin State University.

The SFA CWPDP and CPS FAD staff planned the workshops to meet Title IV-E training needs for Region 4 and 5. There were 51 participants in attendance, including 13 child welfare professionals. Social work continuing education units were awarded to workshop participants.

The workshop “The Hole in the Soul: Fatherhood Engagement” by Kenneth Thompson was one of two workshops offered.

The second workshop, “Role of Spirituality in Achieving Positive Outcomes”, by Dr. Emmerentie Oliphant and Dr. Kathleen Belanger presented current information related to faith and coping.

The 2010 Annual Youth Leadership Conference “Kids Fest” was held April 17, 2010, at the First Christian Church for Ages 5-17 and at Right Step Day Care for Ages 0-4.

The 13th Annual Region 5 Foster and Adoptive Training Conference: Hope, Love, and Family was held April 17, 2010 at Stephen F. Austin State University.

The Conference Planning Committee comprised of FAD staff, Region 5 foster parent associations and SFA CWDPD staff met throughout the year to identify presenters to develop workshop topics that meet Title IV-E training needs. In addition, the committee planned and coordinated the awards luncheon, which honored foster parents and caseworkers. Featured guests were Judy Bowman TDFPS, CPS regional administrator; Irene Clements, TFFA President; and Terri Jaggers, Mrs. USA, former foster child and adoptive parent. There were 130 participants, plus presenters, student volunteers, CWDPD staff and information booth representatives.
The East Texas Council on Adoptable Children, adoption support group is a great group to become involved with as an adoptive and/or foster family.

The ETCOAC meets every other month, typically on the second Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon. There are different guest speakers and trainings for every meeting.

Knowing other adoptive families in the community is a wonderful resource and a way to make valuable friendships, both for parents and children alike. Child care is provided, and the children have a good time together.

For more information, please contact April Keith at 903. 676. 2432 or COAC President Chris Young at 903. 923. 0584.

Dear Region 5 foster and adoptive parents,

Wow! Is it time for the newsletter already? Time really tends to get away from me, and I know it can from you as well. A lot has gone on these past months, and I want to catch you up on all the changes that are coming and going!

We have had the joy of new life and the sorrow of losses in the FAD program this summer. We were all delighted to welcome into the world Jennifer Vincent’s new baby girl, Mya Alyse Vincent, on May 12. She is a beautiful little bundle of joy! Congratulations to the Vincents! We also all shared in sorrow with Annie Flemon as her mother, Lillie Flemon Taylor, finally went home to heaven this summer after a long illness. Please join us offering our love and comfort to Annie during this difficult time.

The Conference in April was a great success, and we are already in the planning phases for next year’s conference. Put it on your calendar for April 16. We are going to have a great lineup, and we want YOU to be a part of it! We are looking for a record turnout next year. As always, we will provide the Youth Conference and Day Care so that you can spend your day in training and not worry about what is happening with your children.

Please remember T3 (Third Tuesday Training). This is a program that we would like to continue, but we are not having the turnout that we expected, especially in the northern part of the region. Many of you missed out on a great presentation by Kim West in August on signs of drug use in teens and little extra piece on sexting, the practice of sending sexually explicit e-mails and photos over the cell phone. We also had low turnout in Lufkin in July when our very own Sonya Holmes presented on hair and skin care for children of different ethnicities. Thank you Sonya and Kim! On Tuesday, September 21 we will have programs on fire safety in the Lufkin and Beaumont offices starting at 6 p.m. Please plan to be there to learn more about how to keep your home safe from fire. Look for

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announcements about other T3 trainings coming up in the fall.

We had an unannounced RCCL inspection in July. That is when the RCCL representative shows up at our office and reviews case records for completion. FAD had only one deficiency for this review! There were several deficiencies related to medication documentation that were credited to the CVS side, but we know in FAD that this is our responsibility. Please expect to get additional information in the mail (watch for the brightly colored post cards) and to have one-on-one instruction from your foster home development specialist over the next quarter on the proper way to complete medication logs. We know how hard it is to keep up with this, and we want to help you to be successful in every way, so please get with your worker if you are having problems.

Fostering Connections has gotten off to a great start in regions 4 and 5. I am proud to tell you that our “little bitty” regions have led the state in verification of relatives as foster parents! As of today, we have verified nine families providing care for 16 children! We are so delighted to be able to offer our relative and fictive kin families the same kinds of benefits and support that other verified foster families receive. We also want to send a special thank you out to Becky Adams, a kinship specialist who has taught two PRIDE classes to relative families. She has been a lifesaver for the FAD program!

Your foster home staff has been hard at work teaching PRIDE classes and getting families verified for foster care and adoption. We want to send a special thank you and congratulations to all of the new families that have been approved since the last newsletter!

There are 43 new families to welcome!

- Richard and Dayra Newton
- Stephanie and George Garza
- Miscelle Ford
- Randy and Sabrina Griffin
- Joseph and Joanne Estes
- Carl and Rosemary Terry
- John and Myndi Munoz
- Jason and Nikki Bass
- Randy and Robbie Fry
- Tim and Tammy Hardy
- Meagan Ballenger
- Robert and Stormy Westbrook
- Charlotte Polk
- Tom and Vicki Ramey
- Allen and Kham Ross
- Ron and Jodi Miller
- Mitchell and Dinetta Lewis
- Eric and Atasha Quebedeaux
- Russell and Urena Koenig
- Clarence and Linda Blackstock
- Gayla Davis
- Elizabeth Biegalski
- Ulunda Green
- Dayton and Gina Jones
- Chad and Jill Wilson
- Stephen and Pamela Hartt
- Kimberly Simms
- John and Penny Jones
- James and Christy Lee
- Theresa Westbrooks
- Merle and Janice Kirchhoff
- Gregory and Angela Carr
- Jason and Veronica Barnes
- Lloyd and Kenyatta Robertson
- Gilbert and Shirlene Moye
- John and Brooke Clark
- MC and Janet Metcalf
- Willie and Rachel Johnson
- Larry and Pamela Franklin
- Jessie and Wendell Moore
- Charles and Hortencia Shields
- Shelia Nathaniel
- Jacqueline Shello

As always, we thank you so much for all you do for our children. Please be sure to let your FAD specialist or one of us know if there is anything you need.

Ginny L. Judson                Jennifer Vincent
FAD Supervisor                              FAD Supervisor
Latoya Brooks
Graduate Assistant

The previous article in this issue provided information about crises and challenges that foster parents face. The Child Welfare Information Center has resources that will further assist foster/adoptive parents in becoming more familiar with the common triggers for foster care-related crises and ways to prevent or alleviate crises. CWIC also has new and exciting materials that will enhance foster/adoptive parenting skills and relationships with youth and the critical issues they face.

Resources for Foster Parents Working with Attachment Issues.

To assist foster/adoptive parents in supporting the child through the attachment process, *Children with Disrupted Attachment* is a great new resource. In the four-disc DVD series, therapists Margaret Blaustein, Alexandra Cook, Richard Kagan, Vivienne Roseby and Thomas Young describe the impact of disrupted attachment, ways that children see themselves and interact with others, and how adults can respond most effectively. They explore such topics as setting limits, avoiding power struggles, providing structure and building a trusting relationship. The presenters emphasize the importance of understanding what drives children’s behaviors rather than simply reacting to them. They provide concrete suggestions for containing negative behaviors and improving adult-child interactions.

Resources for Foster Parents Working with Anger Issues:

In this new Foster Parent College DVD, *Anger Pie: Antecedents, Bias/Behavior, Consequences*, Dr. Rick Delaney discusses the ABCs of behavior in relation to anger outbursts in 5-to 10-year-old children. Understanding the antecedents, bias/behaviors and consequences of challenging anger behaviors can help parents anticipate, successfully handle and diminish anger outbursts. Also discussed are the impacts of child maltreatment on behavior, early warning signs of anger, the consequences of anger, healthy anger and when to seek professional help.

Resources on Parenting Adolescents:

*Parenting Adopted Adolescents: Understanding & Appreciating Their Journeys* is a book that includes tips on how to deal with your child’s challenges. This book highlights critical issues that teens face, including foster care, loss of birth family, sexuality, abandonment, homelessness, depression, etc. Parenting strategies and suggestions on how to manage tough situations that may arise in the family are included.

New Books and DVDs Now Available:

- *Helping Your Child Cope with Name Calling, Ridicule, and Verbal Bullying: Easing the Teasing* (Book)
- *Breakthrough Parenting for Children with Special Needs: Raising the Bar of Expectations* (Book)
- *Invisible Girls: The Truth about Sexual Abuse* (Book)
- *The Boy Who was Raised as a Dog* (Book)
- *Childhood Trauma: A Parent’s Guide* (DVD)

A special toll-free number . . .

877. 886. 6707

. . . is provided for CPS staff and foster and adoptive parents. CWIC books, DVDs and videos are mailed to your home or office, along with a stamped envelope for easy return.

Please specify if you are interested in receiving foster parent training hours, and a test and evaluation will be included with the book or DVD. Once completed and returned, foster parents will receive a letter of verification of training hours earned.

Your calls are important to us.

We look forward to hearing from you!

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Learning Objectives

• The participant will learn common triggers for foster care-related crises.

• The participant will discuss ways to prevent or alleviate foster- and adoption-related crises.

• The participant will describe different coping strategies that can help foster parents prevent stress from escalating.

• The participant will identify the importance of family meetings.

Learning Activities

Activity One

All behavior your child displays is related to foster care.
(Circle the best answer.)

True   False

Name four common triggers for foster care-related crisis:

1. ______________________________  2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________  4. ______________________________

Activity Two

Parents can prevent or alleviate foster- and adoption-related crises. List and describe at least three generalized survival skills for foster parents:

1. __________________________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________________________________

Activity Three

Fill in the blank: Even when exposed to ______ ______ of ________, foster parents can prevent crisis through effective______ ________.

List four coping strategies that can prevent stress from escalating into a crisis:

1. __________________________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________________________________

4. __________________________________________________________________________________
Activity Four

Your child’s progress will not always be consistent.
(Circle the best answer.)

True    False

Family meetings are good opportunities to teach children about:

1.__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
2.__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
3.__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Evaluation

Trainer Child Welfare Professional Development Project, School of Social Work, SFA  Date ___________
Name (optional)___________________________________________________________

Newsletter presentation and materials:

1. This newsletter content satisfied my expectations.
   ___Strongly agree   ___Agree   ___Disagree   ___Strongly disagree

2. The examples and activities within this newsletter helped me learn.
   ___Strongly agree   ___Agree   ___Disagree   ___Strongly disagree

3. This newsletter provides a good opportunity to receive information and training.
   ___Strongly agree   ___Agree   ___Disagree   ___Strongly disagree

Course Content Application:

4. The topics presented in this newsletter will help me do my job.
   ___Strongly agree   ___Agree   ___Disagree   ___Strongly disagree

5. Reading this newsletter improved my skills and knowledge.
   ___Strongly agree   ___Agree   ___Disagree   ___Strongly disagree

6. What were two of the most useful concepts you learned?
   _____________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________________

7. Overall, I was satisfied with this newsletter.
   ___Strongly agree   ___Agree   ___Disagree   ___Strongly disagree

Comments:______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
complete listing of DVDs in the Foster Parent College series.

In addition, the 13th Annual Foster and Adoptive Training Conference was a tremendous success! Participants came from over 18 counties in East Texas, and the conference was again very highly rated by those that completed evaluations. The Youth Leadership Conference also was held in conjunction with the conference; children and teens alike had a great day of fun and learning! Special thanks to Mike Williams, Region 5 Foster Parent Council representative, for serving as chair of the conference planning committee and to CPS staff, foster parent associations, private placing agencies, child welfare boards and SFA students for their dedication and support of the conference. The SFA School of Social Work is proud to be part of this partnership!

Other educational opportunities offered through CWPDP include Title IV-E stipends for CPS employees to obtain Master of Social Work degrees and for social work students who are accepted into the program and commit to work for CPS. Specialized education in child welfare is also integrated throughout the master’s and bachelor’s social work curriculum.

Most importantly, CWPDP strives to support your parenting efforts and to support CPS administration and staff in protecting children. Our staff is honored to be a part of your many accomplishments!

New DVDs in the Foster Parent College Series:
- Positive Parenting 2
- Positive Parenting 3
- RAD Reactive Attachment Disorder
- Culturally Competent Parenting
- Child Safety & Supervision

From all of us in the CWPDP we appreciate your continued patronage. If you have any questions or would like to receive additional resources, please do not hesitate to call our toll-free number. We look forward to hearing from you soon!
REACHOUT NEWS

Fall 2010

Earn One Hour of Foster Parent Training

Child Welfare Professional Development Project
School of Social Work, Stephen F. Austin State University