



Children and Family Services
Training Center
Department of Social Work
University of North Dakota

Fostering Communications



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Building a Network of People in the Foster Care System

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Starting from Scratch: Building Successfully at LOGH



Faye Foote, Administrator

When Faye Foote was first hired as the Social Work Coordinator at the Lake Oahe Group Home (LOGH) in August 2001, she had not yet paid a visit to the home but she was excited to have the opportunity to work with the youth. On her first day, the Administrator informed her that she (the Administrator) would be going to New Orleans for a week and that Faye would be in charge of the home. And,

oh by the way, the "state" would be coming out to review the files and inspect the home. The first question from Faye was, "who is the state?"

When Rita Weisz, Regional Representative from West Central Human Service Center (aka "the state") came out to LOGH for that first inspection there were compliance problems that needed to be fixed immediately. Faye said she was "clueless" as she watched Rita write many notes. At the exit interview, Weisz explained the problems and left. Soon, the letter came from Rita stating the license for LOGH would be suspended and all Title IV-E funds will stop and IV-E children would have to be removed. The Administrator showed Faye the letter and Faye wondered what to do. At that point the Administrator informed her that she would have to get this all done by yourself because she would be gone for two weeks for Navy Drill training.

From this naive beginning was built a solid program that has continuously maintained all licensing requirements and reviews from the North Dakota Department of Human Services. Faye found stacks of papers on the residents that had never been put into files. She had to develop a file system that would meet the state standards plus insure that the safety and programmatic needs of the residents were being met. She stated, "Rita Weisz was the best teacher. She told me what to do and what we needed." Ten days later, Faye called Rita and

told her she was ready for the review. The warning was still on the table that if the Home was out of compliance, they would lose their license. Considering the number of kids who have benefited from their stay at the LOGH, it would have been a grave tragedy to have had to close the doors.

Foote clearly recognizes that she couldn't have done it alone. Delford Marshall has been an "anchor" for her for over seven years. She said, "I couldn't have done it without him." He has helped in every possible capacity. Shannon Strating is a licensed social worker and carries the title of Social Work Coordinator (Intermittent). Shannon left LOGH but continued to work as Intermittent for the past two years so, all together, Shannon has worked here four years. She provides valuable assistance for the staff and the youth in her social work capacity. Faye's husband, Duane Foote has also been a major resource for the youth by volunteering his time to provide cultural leadership, instruction for yard maintenance and anything else that needs to be fixed. He has been her support when, as she stated, "our kids were without their mom."

When the Administrator position opened, Foote was not in a position to apply because her seven year old son had just been diagnosed with Juvenile Type I Diabetes. This caused her and her family to have, "a whole different look on life." She decided to fill out the application from her son's bedside at the hospital and she had her daughter deliver the application. She stated, "I was not sure if I could handle being an Administrator and Social Work Coordinator at the same time plus having to learn how to take care of my son and I did not want to leave his side for fear of what could happen to him. So I give a lot of credit to my children Sly and Brittnee for being great children and allowing me to help other children with needs, and never complaining because I am always working. Thanks to my husband, Duane, also." She became the Administrator in December 2003.

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From the State Office

By Dean Sturn, Foster Care Administrator



The North Dakota Department of Human Services has instituted the service of having foster care and/or subsidized adoption checks direct deposited into the recipients accounts. There are many advantages to using direct deposit, including: no lost checks or waiting period to replace lost checks; no need to drive to your bank to cash a check; and, usually, less time in getting your money into your hands. Here is more information to help you make the decision to use direct deposit:

Is Direct Deposit quicker than sending a check through the mail?

A general rule of thumb would be that if your check is taking more than two working days to reach you through the mail, direct deposit would give you access to the funds quicker.

What information do I need to provide to start Direct Deposit?

There are three items we need:

Bank Routing Number – This is the first number on the bottom of your check, and is always nine digits in length.

Checking or Savings account number – This is the number following the bank routing number.

Indication if the account is checking or savings.

The easiest thing to do is send us a voided check (or a deposit slip with correct information). Indicate if this is for foster care or subsidized adoption or both.

Send information to:

Children and Family Services
600 East Boulevard Avenue, Dept. 325
Bismarck, ND 58505

How soon, after providing you with the information, will direct deposit occur?

This depends on what time during the month we receive the information. Normally your check will be deposited electronically if we receive the information within 14 days of the date checks are issued. Again, there is a process that occurs to test the transaction. It would be best to check with your bank the first month to verify that the check was deposited electronically. You will still receive a printed copy of the remittance advice in the mail.

It is important to remember to forward any banking information changes, including all information noted in #2 above to the Department immediately in order to ensure correct and timely deposits.

President's Corner

By Jon Mielke



Sometimes looking in the rearview mirror gives you a good idea of where you should be going. At least that is what program planners think following last October's state conference. Attendee survey responses were overwhelmingly positive and suggest that a similar format should be used again next year.

With that in mind, work has already started on next fall's conference, which will be held October 1-2, in Grand Forks. Special thanks goes out to everyone who was involved in putting together last year's event and to all those who are working to make the 2010 conference even better. Specific information concerning 2010 dates, hotels, and program topics will be reported in future newsletters. Foster parents may also be interested in knowing that program planners are looking at establishing a site rotation that would move the conference location among the state's four largest cities on a regular basis. The size of the conference limits that number of cities that are capable of hosting the event and moving it among the state's largest cities should give all foster parents an opportunity to participate.

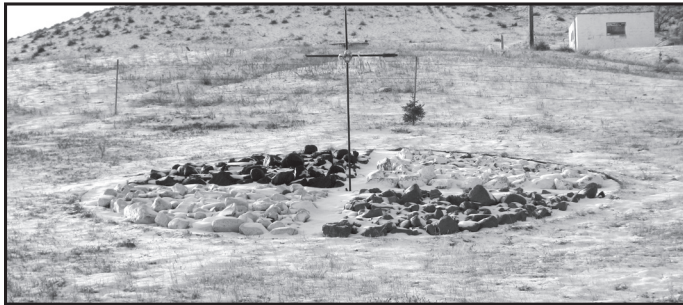
Concerning next fall's conference and annual meeting, please keep in mind that the association typically bestows higher education scholarships to youth who have been in the foster care system and awards to recognize exemplary foster parents, social workers, and agencies. Please keep these scholarships and awards in mind. Nomination procedures will be publicized in future newsletters.

As an organizational matter, the association's bylaws provide that the board of directors is to include a representative of the state licensing agency. This provision has not been adhered to in the past but efforts are underway to invite a representative of the North Dakota Department of Human Services to be a part of the association's board of directors. The association has received strong support and cooperation from DHS and making it a part of the board of directors should strengthen what is already a good relationship. I would also like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that association dues for 2010 are now payable. Anyone who attended last fall's conference is already covered but people who were unable to attend are encouraged to remit their annual dues now. Dues are \$10 per family, \$7 of which goes to the association's scholarship program. Please send your check, payable to the ND Foster/Adopt Parent Association, to Jim Hooge, 8928 88th Street NE, Munich, ND 58352.

Finally, in early January, association president Jill Sherbrooke submitted her resignation for medical reasons. We thank Jill for her past contributions to the organization and wish her well on her road to recovery. We look forward to seeing and working with her in the future.

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LOGH is classified as an eight bed, non-profit, licensed group home serving primarily Native American boys and girls, ages 12-17, from the Standing Rock region. Their funding comes from Federal 638 dollars and Title IV-E funds, in addition to Tribal casino money that helps supplement training and other needs of the staff and residents. They are the only licensed Native American group home in the state of North Dakota. The home sits on 2.5 acres of land adjacent to Lake Oahe, a few miles north of Ft. Yates, ND. The peaceful prairie setting is ideal for working with youth who need to be away from negative distractions so they can focus on their personal care and well-being. The youth and staff take care of all their own yard work, maintenance and home care. The



Painted Rock Medicine Wheel at LOGH

length of stay for a child at LOGH, “could be two days, it could be 10 days, or it could be a year,” Foote stated. Unless a child has been there for only a very brief time, they do not have a problem with children who “relapse” and need to return to the Home. Generally, the case plan is to return the children to their caretaker so they work diligently to make that goal happen. Visitation between youth and their care givers must first occur successfully at the home then gradually be earned for extended time away from the group home or, the caretakers can come to LOGH almost any time for a visit. “If the family is involved, we like them to come out and work with us on a team approach so the child can get home and stay home. Our mission is to get the kids from here to home. No more bouncing around in the system,” Foote stated.

The youth attend school in either Ft. Yates or Solen. Mental health counseling takes place at HIS Mental Health in Ft. Yates or in Bismarck although individual counseling takes place at LOGH. Foote explained, “We focus on basic independent living skills. We work on self-esteem, personal hygiene, cleaning skills, baking skills and education. We are advocates in school, big time! The kids have to do their study time and they have to make sure they are passing their grades; and, make sure if they need help, we’re there to get them help.” She went on to say, “once they get their self-esteem up, and they get their education to match, you kind of have some of the problems taken care of.” After school activities are encouraged as long as their grades are kept up and there are no behavior problems.

She explained, “I always stress that the group home is not an entertainment place and you’re not supposed to love it, you’re supposed to respect it. I never want the

kids to love the group home more than being at home.” She believes the kids do show respect and know they “have to work for everything.” She stated, “I do not reward negative behavior. I’m not a punish person. I don’t like punishment. But, if the kids are going to get in trouble for something, I want them to know why they got in trouble and what they are going to do to change it. It defeats the purpose if they are punished and they never know why they are paying the consequences. I will take entertainment away if their behavior is on the negative side. It’s not something I enjoy. I know that a lot of kids get short changed from a lot of stuff, but I can’t see giving in to the negative behavior and doing a disservice to the kids.”

The general functioning of the home is very much like a big foster home. It has a very “homey” feeling to it. To that end, meal preparation is a very important part of the learning activities at LOGH. The kids take their turn cooking and baking in the kitchen. Foote explained, “We take kids that don’t know how to boil a hotdog, or make jello, or sweep or clean. I like to teach them the old fashioned way because some will not go home to a microwave. We don’t use a lot of box food because they may not have enough money to buy box food so they need to know how to make things from scratch.” She proudly stated, “And, I get some good cooks. They enjoy it. If you want to settle kids down, I always say, ‘bake something.’ I’m a hands-on administrator with cooking and cleaning, so I work right with the kids.” During meals, each person has their own place to sit at the large dining table. The serving dishes are passed around the entire table so everyone gets their portion. If someone asks for seconds, the food is passed around to that person so they can politely serve themselves. Foote explained,

“The reason for this is that some children won’t ask for anything to be passed to them. By this way, the food gets to them one way



Lake Oahe Group Home

or another.” Then the food would continue around the table for the others to also serve themselves if they so desire. Table manners are important and are taught very respectfully at LOGH.

Faye Foote said that the day she started she “walked in blind.” But, to spend just a short time with her will convince anyone that she has a very big heart for children. She’s a very proud person who literally started from scratch, but, with the help of many staff persons, her family, and other supporters, has built a highly successful program at the Lake Oahe Group Home.

Ed. note: Subsequent to the interview with Faye Foote and the writing of the above story, Ms. Foote has resigned her position as the Administrator of the Lake Oahe Group Home.

Directives from the State Office

PI- 09-05: Educational Stability for Foster Youth

The President signed the “Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008” (P.L. 110-351) on October 7, 2008. The law amends Title IV-B, IV-D and IV-E of the Social Security Act. A draft compilation of the revised Social Security Act can be found at <http://www.acf/hhs/gov/programs/cb/index.htm>. This act requires states to ensure that foster youth attend school and that they remain in their same school where appropriate. Or, when a move is necessary, that agencies transfer the child promptly to the new school and that educational records are provided to the new school. The following policy relates to educational stability for foster youth.

Effective immediately, the following assurances must be included in each foster child’s case plan.

- Assurances that a school age child in foster care is enrolled as a student (or in the process of enrolling), or is a full-time elementary or secondary school student; or, is incapable of attending school on a full-time basis due to the medical condition of the child. If the child is incapable of attending school on a full-time basis, regularly updated information must be included in the case plan that supports this determination.
- The term “elementary or secondary school student” can include youth who are attending school in accordance with the State home school law, or youth who are seeking his/her GED through an independent study program in accordance with State law.
- Assurances that the agency has coordinated with appropriate local educational agencies to ensure that the child remains in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement; or, if remaining in such school is not in the best interests of the child, assurances by the State agency and local educational agencies to provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school, with all of the educational records of the child provided to the school.

PI- 09-07: Sibling Placements

The President signed the “Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008” (P.L. 110-351) on October 7, 2008. The law amends Title IV-B, IV-D and IV-E of the Social Security Act. A draft compilation of the revised Social Security Act can be found at <http://www.acf/hhs/gov/programs/cb/index.htm>. The Act affects many areas in foster care policy. This section of the Act preserves the sibling bond for children by requiring states to make reasonable efforts to place siblings together when they must be removed from their parents’ home, provided it is in the children’s best interests. In the case of siblings not placed together, states must make reasonable efforts to provide for frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction, unless such interaction would be harmful to any of the siblings.

Effective August 1, 2009, agencies shall make reasonable efforts to place siblings in the same foster care, relative, guardianship, or adoptive placement, unless it is determined that such a joint placement would be contrary

to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings. This reasonable efforts finding must be included in the initial court order and subsequent court reviews in addition to the reasonable efforts to prevent removal or to reunify and/or reasonable efforts to finalize a permanency plan.

As a result of this federal requirement, the following revisions have been made to North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) 27-20: (Changes are underlined.)

NDCC 27-20-02-15. “Permanency hearing” means a hearing, conducted with respect to a child who is in foster care, to determine the permanency plan for the child which includes:

- d. Whether and, if applicable, to place siblings in the same foster care, relative, guardianship, or adoptive placement, unless it is determined that the joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings.
- e. Whether and, if applicable, in the case of siblings removed from their home who are not jointly placed, to provide for frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction between the siblings, unless it is determined to be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings.

NDCC 27-20-32.2. Reasonable efforts to prevent removal or to reunify – When required.

1. As used in this section, “reasonable efforts” means the exercise of due diligence, by the agency granted authority over the child under this chapter, to use appropriate and available services. . . . and to maintain family connections.
2. Except as provided in subsection 4, reasonable efforts must be made to preserve families, reunify families, and maintain family connections.
 - c. To place siblings in the same foster care, relative, guardianship, or adoptive placement, unless it is determined that such a joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings; and
 - d. In the case of siblings removed from their home who are not jointly placed, to provide for frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction between the siblings, unless it is contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings.

Documentation in case records must reflect, in detail:

- Efforts to place siblings together when they must be removed from their parents’ home, provided it is in the children’s best interests.
- In the case of siblings not placed together, efforts to provide for frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction, unless such interaction would be harmful to any of the siblings.

PI- 09-08: Requirement for Notice to Relatives of Child's Removal

The President signed the "Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008" (P.L. 110-351) on October 7, 2008. The law amends Title IV-B, IV-D and IV-E of the Social Security Act. A draft compilation of the revised Social Security Act can be found at <http://www.acf/hhs/gov/programs/cb/index.htm>. The Act affects many areas in foster care policy. The following policy relates to the requirement to provide notice to relatives of a child's removal.

Effective August 1, 2009, agencies are required to exercise due diligence to identify and notify all parents, grandparents, and any other adult relative suggested by the parents and grandparents, subject to exceptions due to family or domestic violence, within 30 days of child's removal. The relatives must also be advised of all available options to become a placement resource for the child. The notice shall:

NDAC 27-20-38.3 Rights and duties of legal custodians.

- a. Specify that the child has been or is being removed from the custody of the parent, or parents of the child;
- b. Explains the options the relative has under federal, state, and local law to participate in the care and placement of the child, including any options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notice;
- c. Describes the requirements and standards to become a foster family home and the additional services and supports that are available for children placed in that home; and,
- d. Describes how the relative of the child may enter into an agreement with the department to receive a subsidized guardianship payment.

The agency must provide this notice in a manner that reasonably ensures the relative has understood the notice. This could mean providing notice in a language the relative is fluent in. Or, the family's case manager may have to go over the written notice in person with the relative. If an individual has a visual impairment, the notice may need to be written using large print or Braille.

It is not required to provide notice to relatives that are identified beyond 30 days of the child's removal. However, agencies can consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether notification would be appropriate.

If a relative fails to respond to the initial notice, the relative may not have the opportunity to participate in the care and placement of the child.

PI-09-19: Content of Monthly Case Worker Visitation of Youth in Foster Care Placements

Guiding Principle: Section 422(b)(17) or Section 424(e)(2) of the Social Security Act requires that all youth in a foster care placement must be visited each and every full month that they are in care, with the majority of those visits taking place in the youth's place of residence.

Effective immediately, during each monthly visit, the youth's safety, well-being and permanence should be assessed and addressed by the worker. An entry should be made into the youth's case activity log outlining progress or concerns related to the three main areas noted above. This face-to-face visitation and whether or not the visitation took place in the youth's residence should also be entered into the FRAME system.

Key Elements of Visitation: Each visit should be tailored to address current issues that the youth is experiencing. The following are some examples of subjects that could be covered in each of the three noted areas that must be addressed during every visit. This list is given only as a brief outline and is in no way meant to exhaust the topics that could/should be covered during the visitation:

Safety Examples:

- Does the youth feel safe in the placement? Why or why not?
- Does the youth have resources whom they can contact if they are not feeling safe? Does the youth know how to contact them, i.e., case worker, parent, trusted adult?
- Is the living environment free from hazard and is it habitable?

Permanence Examples:

- Does the youth know the goals of their treatment plan/placement?
- Can youth describe permanency goals and how to accomplish them?
- Is there contact via telephone, e-mail, Polycom, letters, visitations, etc. with family and other important people in their life?

Well-Being Examples:

- Has there been illness or injury since the last contact?
- Is the youth receiving adequate nutrition, sleep, space, privacy, therapy, recreational time and educational services/activities?
- Has there been a change in emotional state since last contact?
- Have there been any changes in medications since last contact?

YOU ARE A MARVEL

By Pablo Casals

"Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe, a moment that never was before and never will be again. And, what do we teach our children in school? We teach them that two and two make four and that Paris is the capitol of France. When will we teach them what they are? We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the world there is no other child exactly like you. In the millions of years that have passed, there has never been a child like you. And, look at your body – what a wonder it is! Your legs, your arms, your cunning fingers, the way they move! You may become a Shakespeare, a Michelangelo, a Beethoven. You have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel.

And when you grow up, can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel? You must cherish one another. YOU MUST WORK – WE ALL MUST WORK – TO MAKE THIS WORLD WORTHY OF ITS CHILDREN."

Independent Living

By Dawnita Nilles

'Tis the Season

You guessed it – tax season is upon us!! If you have teenagers in your home please have them call any employer they worked for in 2009 to update their address for the W-2 to be mailed out.

Also, be sure to use tax season as one of those teachable moments that I mentioned a while back. The 1040ez form is very user-friendly and youth should be completing it, as much as possible, on their own.

Even more critical than having them do the taxes on their own is to use this time to teach them how very important it is to SAVE THEIR TAXES AND W-2's!!!! Give them a large envelope, have them put all the documents inside it and then talk about why it's important to save them. Some reasons relevant to them is that if they are planning to go to college they will need to give the college a copy of their taxes and they will also need them to fill out their financial aid forms. Additionally, many programs they may access resources through (such as job service) sometimes require last year's income information.

Once they have this envelop with important documents you can also talk with them about the importance of saving pay stubs!!

Enjoy your tax season!!

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