Fostering Communications

Building a Network of People in the Foster Care System

May 2016

Appreciation Central

Each may we are given the opportunity to recognize all of the children in foster care across our nation as well as show appreciation for all of the individuals who contribute to the care and safety of our children. Governor Dalrymple has declared May as "Children's Foster Care Month".

Pictured Above:

Back Row:
Shari Doe, Children and Family Services Decision Director, ND Department of Human Services; Steve Reiser, Director, Dakota Central Social Services District , and Holly Hammarsten, County Licensor, Dakota Central Social Services District.

Front Row:
John Kallberg, McLean County Foster Parent; Govenor Jack Dalyrymple; and Nicole Kallberg, McLean County

State of
North Dakota
Office of the Governor

Jack Dalrymple
Governor

PROCLAMATION
CHILDREN'S FOSTER CARE MONTH
MAY 2016

WHEREAS, strong families are the foundation of our communities and state, providing love, support, and guidance children need in order to succeed; and

WHEREAS, North Dakotans have a long-standing tradition of opening their homes and hearts to children in need of stability and caring surroundings; and

WHEREAS, compassionate foster families play an important role in assuring that children and youth are able to grow and develop in a safe, stable, and nurturing environment until they can be reunited with their families or achieve permanency through adoptions and other lifelong connections; and

WHEREAS, Children's Foster Care Month is an opportunity to recognize the valuable contributions of foster families and everyone involved in the community effort to provide quality foster care; and

WHEREAS, dedicated foster families frequently adopt foster children who cannot return to their birth families, resulting in a greater need for more foster families; and

WHEREAS, foster families, county social services, child welfare professionals, and others involved with foster care deserve recognition this month and all year long for their continued team work and steadfast devotion to the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth; and

WHEREAS, the annual observance of Children's Foster Care Month calls attention to the value of foster care as a temporary service that provides help, healing, and hope to children and youth in our state.

NOW, THEREFORE, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim May 2016, **CHILDREN'S FOSTER CARE MONTH** in the state of North Dakota.

Jack Dalrymple
Jack Dalrymple
Governor

ATTEST:
Alvin A. Jaeger
Secretary of State

600 E Boulevard Ave. • Bismarck, ND 58505-0001 • Phone: 701.328.2200 • Fax: 701.328.2205 • www.governor.nd.gov

Governor Dalrymple's Proclamation can be found also at:
Children's Foster Care Month

Foster Care….
because a child can never have too many people to love them!!!

President Obama's 2016 Proclamation shares the following message:
"During National Foster Care Month, we lift up our Nation's foster children, celebrate the selfless men and women who embrace children in the foster care system, and we recommit to helping more children find permanency so they can feel stable, grounded, and free to fulfill their limitless potential."

2016 Presidential Proclamation for National Foster Care Month

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Upcoming Conferences…

State Conferences

Children's Justice Symposium, Bismarck, ND
July 25-28, 2016
Registration Available: HERE

Family Based Services Conference, Fargo, ND
April 5-7, 2017

PRIDE Link

The PRIDE model we follow is built upon five core competency categories including:

- Protecting and nurturing children
- Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing their delays
- Supporting relationships with birth families
- Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime
- Working as a member of a professional team.

While doing all of these as foster parents, you make the time for the children in your care to feel loved, have a sense of belonging, and in turn, hope that you have made a difference in that youth's life. In honor of May being Children's Foster Care month, it seemed appropriate to share a powerful message from former foster youth, Josh Shipp. His message is a reminder that what you do can make more of a difference than you ever imagined!!! Every Kid is ONE Caring Adult Away from Being a Success Story

Supporting Birth Parent Connections

When asking Foster Parents why they decided to open their home to foster care, most reply with stating they wanted to help children and families, or something along the line of wanting to make a difference in a child's life. One of the most significant ways to have an impact on a child's life is by working with the foster youth's birth parents to rebuild the family. At times, the concept of having contact or building a relationship with your foster youth's birth family may bring to the surface a variety of emotions. The important piece to remember as you feel those emotions is that the birth parent is likely feeling many of those same unclear emotions. The following blog shared by foster mom, Meghan M. Walbert helps to put this into perspective and in turn helps us to remember why this contact is essential in helping the child in our care.

When Two Mothers— Foster and Birth—Meet

Foster parents are taught about how children may feel when experiencing the loss due to being placed in foster care. It is easy to forget that birth parents may go through their own grief cycle, which can impact their ability to work on building a relationship with the foster family. The following handout offers insight into the possible grief process your foster youth's parents may go through as well as ideas of how you can best respond.

Birth Parent's Grief Process

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ONE….

One tree can start a forest;
One smile can begin a friendship;
One hand can lift a soul;
One word can frame a goal;
One candle can wipe out darkness;
One laugh can conquer gloom;
One hope can raise your spirits;
One touch can show you care;
One life can make the difference;
Be that ONE today!!

~Author unknown

Anger 101

Everyone experiences anger, and it is quite possible that the child in your care uses an anger outburst as their "go to" reaction when feeling discomfort, fear, or any other unpleasant emotion. It is hard to remember that a child's brain does not have the ability to process emotions like us adults, especially during a stressful time. Anger can leave people feeling exhausted and defeated, and sadly at times may even leave a person feeling a level of guilt. Whether your child has "a slow-burning fuse or explodes like a firecracker at the slightest provocation, every child can benefit from anger management skills". As caregivers, "we lay the foundation for this skill set by governing our own emotions in the face of an angry outburst. Next time you are dealing with a tantrum from a toddler, or cold shoulder from a teen, put your best foot forward by trying one of these 26 phrases" from Renee Jain.

Phrases to Calm an Angry Child

Summer Time Learning

Summer is a wonderful time to give children a break from the stress of school routines and homework. Summer can also be a great time to focus on other tasks that we don't get time to tend to during the business of the school year. One of those items may be to work on increasing your foster youth's core executive functioning, which sounds like an overwhelming concept, but more doable that you might think. Executive Functions are a set of cognitive skills that help us accomplish tasks, stay calm, and think creatively. The level of our executive functioning can be shown in ones ability to reason and problem solve, to plan and get things done, and how we show self-control. It is understandable that youth who are exposed to adverse experiences resulting from abuse or neglect may have a delay in their executive functioning. This is where you as the caregiver can make a difference. The Center on the Developing Child has developed a 5 minute video that provides an overview that explains Executive Function and why it is critical to develop for a successful life.

Skills for Life and Learning Video

The following link from Harvard University offers a number of wonderful activities to help develop a child's Executive Function.

Activities Guide: Enhancing & Practicing Executive Function

Foster Parent Trainings

Many Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Parents attended our mini-conferences we held this year. The "Festivals of Trainings" were held in each of the four regions offering a Friday evening session followed by a full day of training on Saturday. We plan to offer these festivals again with Fargo and Minot in the fall as well as Grand Forks and Bismarck in the spring. Dates are pending at this time; however, we wanted to let you know that you can plan for training to be provided as it was last year with the Festival of Training to go along with the other regional training opportunities we provide. Please check back to our Training Calendar in August to see what will be offered in your region this coming school year.

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