



**CHILDREN'S
HOME SOCIETY**
OF MISSOURI

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LifeLines

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Get Cool with School

Research has shown that children tend to do better in school when parents talk often with the school and are involved. It's important for parents to develop a good working relationship with their child's teachers.

Determine with the teacher what is the best way to keep in contact, such as with phone calls, notes or email. Ask the teacher if they can let you know on a regular basis how your child is progressing academically, socially and behaviorally. A parent does not want to be hit with a surprise at the quarterly report card conference.

At the beginning of the year it can be helpful for parents to meet with their child's teachers and talk to them about their child's positive attributes first, such as "my child is energetic, loves math..." But do not leave out the concerns! Let teachers know that your child has a hard time focusing after 10 minutes or that he does not respond well to "no." Inform the teachers if your child has ADHD, OCD, etc. and ask if they would be interested in hearing about how you manage your child's behavior at home. Approach problem-solving in a collaborative manner. If you do not feel your child's needs are being met at school be assertive, however do not display a negative or defensive attitude. You want to work towards a solution for your child and you want to work together as a team.

Ask the school to be considerate of your child's confidentiality as everyone does not need to know that he is in foster care or that his biological parents are no longer in his life.

Keeping in regular contact with your child's school, building positive relationships and working as a team should all help start the school year off on a positive note.

Psych Assessment 101

We believe:

All children are best able to grow to their fullest potential as members of loving and supportive families.

All children deserve a family that is able to meet their emotional, developmental and physical needs.

Children who have been abused, neglected or otherwise traumatized will bring with them to their new families their feelings of hurt and anger, as well as the negative behaviors they use to express those feelings.

Families formed through the adoption process are equal to families created by birth in their love for and commitment to their children.

Families formed through the adoption process face challenges unique to adoptive families.

The challenges and issues faced by foster and adoptive families require specialized skills on the part of the parents as well as the professionals serving the family.

It is essential that the systems and professionals involved in the process of forming families through foster care and adoption be available at all stages of the family's life – prior to, during and after permanency is achieved.

Foster families or adoptive families are often advised to have a psychological evaluation completed on their child. This suggestion may come from a case manager, physician or school. Other times, the parents themselves are the ones who have an inkling that something is just not right and they would like to get a better picture of what is going on with their child. A recent interview with CHS's resident psychologist, Dr. Kate Feder helped to demystify the process.

Dr. Feder explained that assessments are a good way to provide a complete picture to the team that is supporting the child. The team could include parents, teachers, physicians and the case manager. In the case of the older child the shared information may help to relieve the potential anxiety that "there is something really wrong with me!" An assessment is also a way to establish a baseline of performance or functioning; strengths will be highlighted and any deficits can be flagged. Children who benefit from an assessment range in age from approximately four to age 19. Younger children are often funneled into a therapy setting where things can be worked on in a play situation.

After receiving a request, Dr. Feder will meet with the parents and the child for an initial interview. It is important that in a dual parenting situation both parents attend this meeting. Any documentation from physicians, school reports or therapists should be brought in at this time. Information releases will be signed so that Dr. Feder is able to speak with any individual who has contact with the child in a professional setting. At this meeting specific concerns are discussed and it provides an opportunity to see the parent/child relationship in action. Medical, family, psycho-social and academic histories are all explored. Dr. Feder can explain to the child in terms that they can understand exactly what will be happening. Some tools are similar to a paper and pencil test at school, other parts may use imagination, pictures or working on puzzles or games. The parents are also coached on how to talk with the child about the upcoming assessment.

Subsequent meetings of approximate 1-2 hours are then scheduled for the child over a period of 3-4 weeks. This could be longer or shorter based on the number of assessment tools that will be used. The longer assessment process allows the psychologist to develop a rapport with the child and can encourage the child to relax as he or she becomes more comfortable in the surroundings.

After gathering information, Dr. Feder will compile a report of her findings and will again speak with the parents (this time without the child) to explain what was discovered. She will explore strengths and the different elements that may be compounding existing deficits. For example anxiety can impact a child's ability to learn both in and outside of school. She will make recommendations where appropriate.

Sometimes getting some therapy in a consistent, long term relationship will be just what the doctor ordered! She cautioned against a willy-nilly approach to therapy. If therapy is recommended it should become a priority in the child's and parent's life. If a therapist doesn't have the time to meet with a child at a set time on a weekly basis, she suggests that the parents look for someone who can make this commitment to the family. She emphasized that therapy is not always a recommendation. Perhaps a teacher implementing an educational plan via an IEP is the more productive course of action.

In the end, assessments can be an invaluable tool in helping our children to become the best they can be.



Educational Opportunities for Fall 2011 Adoptive and Foster Parents *(Each session counts as training toward your licensure requirement)*

Impact of Abuse and Neglect on Child Development: When a child is abused or neglected, it can affect every aspect of the child's development—physical, emotional, social, psychological. Discussion focuses on the reasons for delays and challenges.

DATE: Wednesday, Sept. 7

TIME: 6 to 9pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

Ready, Set, Fly! : This training focuses on the unique issues involved with preparing adolescents to live on their own. It is mandatory training for any foster parent interested in providing for teens.

DATE: Saturday, Sept. 10

TIME: 9 am to 3 pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

Transracial Parenting in Foster Care and Adoption: Parenting a child of another racial heritage brings with it additional challenges and opportunities. In this two-part class, activities include video-based training regarding ways to prepare to better meet the cultural needs of children and a panel discussion with other parents.

DATE: Wednesdays, Sept. 14 & 21

TIME: 6 to 9pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

Career Training—Classes fulfill the training requirement for Level B Foster Care Licensing. Parents will look at the special issues that arise when children are coming out of a residential or hospital setting with a significant psychiatric diagnosis and the accompanying risks and safety issues that will occur.

DATE: Saturdays, Sept. 17 & 24

TIME: 9 am to 1:30pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

Attachment Disorders: Children who have not received proper care during the earlier parts of their lives and who have separated from the people familiar to them are at higher risk for developing attachment issues. Participants learn the basics of how attachment develops and how it can be impacted by negative circumstances.

DATE: Monday, Sept. 19

TIME: 6 to 9pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

CHS has 2 training locations!

CHS
9445 Litzsinger
Brentwood, MO
63144

~or~

Family Nurturing Center
Deer Creek Center
3202 Laclede Station Rd.
Maplewood, MO
63143

To Register:
(314) 968-2350, ext. 234
or
gailk@chsmo.org

PASTA-Parenting A Second Time Around-Education and support group setting is geared toward grandparents or other adult relatives who have accepted the challenge of parenting their grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc. With facilitators, the participants' interests determine common topics discussed in a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

DATE: Monday, Sept. 26, Oct. 3, 10

TIME: 6 to 9 pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

Discipline Methods for Children with Special Needs: Discussion focuses on ways to effectively handle difficult behaviors such as lying or aggression, as well as ways to begin to teach children such things as empathy and the importance of honesty.

DATE: Wednesday, Sept. 28

TIME: 6 to 9pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

Understanding the Effects of Sexual Abuse: Parenting a child with a history of sexual abuse can be frightening—from responding to the child's acting out behavior to dealing with emotions. Discussions focus on the best ways to minimize the trauma and help your child heal. This is a two-week class—attendance is suggested at both weeks.

DATE: Wednesdays, Oct. 5 & 12

TIME: 6 to 9 pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

Behavior Training: Six week course meets the training requirements for Level A Foster Care Licensing. Classes explore the impact of trauma on the developing child. With greater insight into the reason behind the behavior, parents are better able to respond appropriately to challenging behaviors.

DATE: Mondays, Oct. 17, 24, Nov. 7, 14, 21, 28

TIME: 6 to 9 pm

LOCATION: Deer Creek

Parenting Teens in Foster Care or through Adoption: Parenting teenagers is a challenge under any circumstances—the moods, the attitudes, the hormones! When a child is in foster care or is adopted, additional challenges exist. Groups learn ways to address behavioral challenges, talk to teens about their histories, and what services are available to help them and their families surviving these tumultuous years.

DATE: Wednesdays, Nov. 2 & 9

TIME: 6 to 9 pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

Holiday Stress: Many children in foster care have experienced chronic stress since a young age so the holidays only adds to it. Find out what makes holidays stressful for our children and how we can make it easier for them to live through them.

DATE: Monday, Nov. 14

TIME: 6 to 9 pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

Talking About Adoption: Most children who have been adopted have questions about where they came from. Many parents struggle with how and when to answer these questions. Included in the discussion are introducing the topic of adoption and helping children celebrate their unique stories.

DATE: Wednesday, Nov. 16

TIME: 6 to 9 pm

LOCATION: Litzsinger

A common complaint among parents is getting kids to bed and to sleep. Setting the stage for sleep is a good start. Try following these suggestions; it may take several weeks to see a change in behavior.

- Keep the TV off after dinner.
- Read to your child before bed.
- Talk with them quietly in their room.
- Set a routine; children should have the same sleep environment every night.
- Keep TV's out of their room.
- Keep their room cool, quiet and dark. If they need a nightlight, place it in a low socket.

Bedtime Blues

Avoid caffeine (including chocolate) and heavy snacks. A light snack including protein may help induce sleep, as will warm milk. Set a bedtime and be flexibly firm about it. If they have dance class or a ball game, of course they will go to bed later. If you can maintain the schedule on most nights, their bodies will adapt and be ready to go to bed. Many children are allowed to stay up too late and get past the point of being ready to sleep.

The sleep recommendations are 10 ½-18 hours for 0-2 months, 14-15 hours for 2-12 months, 12-14 hours for 1-3 years of age, 11-13 hours for 3-5 years of age, 10-11 hours for 5-12 years of age and 9-9 ½ hours for teens.

Tell your child to go to bed, not "go to sleep". Give them a time limit to read or listen to quiet music. Telling them to "go to sleep" is a sure fire way to keep them wide-awake. Giving them some choices about 20-30 minutes in their room may help induce sleep. Every child is different and has different sleep needs. A good source for additional information is sleepforkids.org. Now, go catch some zzzz's!

Grandchildren can be a source of great joy in the life of a grandparent. Relationships can be formed that span the generations and provide a child with a family connection that doesn't place the usual demands on the child. Who doesn't remember a time when as a kid they knew that they could get a cookie even if they didn't eat their dinner. Grandparents were meant to spoil their grandchildren, right?

But, what if grandma and grandpa now have to become the rule setters? Dynamics shift when the grandparent now has to set the boundaries and hand out discipline for a child who misbehaves. It can be tricky for the adult and the child to navigate this transition. For this reason, this ever-growing population of grandparents parenting for the second time, have to work at building a deep and meaningful relationship with their grandchild. The adult is now responsible for creating a shared history with the child. A good way to do this is to spend time just talking with the child, sharing stories about what growing up was like in the "old days." An older child could act as a reporter and interview the grandparent about their life. Children love to hear about what grandpa did in the war or grandma's first date with grandpa. The child gets to develop a family history that could otherwise be lacking when the birth parent has dropped out of the picture. Gaps need to be filled in the child's story and what better way do to that. Meal times can be a particularly good time for story sharing. Gathering around the table, without the noise of television can open avenues of conversation with children.

Join other grandparents every second and fourth Thursday of the month from 9:30-11:30AM to share and support each other on their parenting adventures. See what one set of grandparents had to say about the group:

Just a note to say thanks for all you do!

We have been associated with you folks at Children's Home Society for a few years. Hard to believe the time has flown by! Your team has so much knowledge in this "kinship" area that I think you could publish a book on any subject. You have led us and sent us to places that we had no idea that that kind of help was there for us just for the asking. You have the experience to lead us in the right direction for help not only with our grandchild, but also with our natural child, the parent of our grandchild.

Thanks again, and we will see you soon,

Jim & Gerry

Kinship Connection



CHILDREN'S HOME SOCIETY

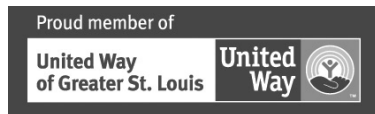
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www.chsmo.org

*Improving the Quality of
Life for Children in Need
Since 1891*



Children's Home Society of Missouri offers a continuum of help to foster and adopted children as well as children growing up in the care of their grandparents or other kin, especially those affected by abuse, neglect and other developmental traumas.

Individual and Family Counseling

Families are eligible for counseling services from a licensed counselor or social worker with experience in the needs of children who have been abused or neglected and who have now joined a new family through adoption or other means. Medicaid is accepted and a sliding fee scale is available.

Call (314) 968-2350, ext. 241 or ext. 223 for more information.

Therapeutic Group Services

Therapeutic groups are designed to meet the needs of children with histories of trauma, institutional life, abuse and neglect, or other challenges that make social interaction, school functioning, and family life difficult. These groups are limited in size and have two clinically-trained professionals at each session. Please call (314) 968-2350, ext. 241 for additional information or to register.

Trauma Assessment and Psychological Evaluation Services

Services are available for any child in foster care, who has been adopted, or who lives in a guardianship/kinship situation. Evaluation is provided by doctorate-level mental health professionals specifically trained in the administration and evaluation of standardized profiles. The focus is placed on gathering a "whole" picture of the child by incorporating past events, living situations, genetic information, and current functioning. Medicaid is accepted and a sliding fee scale is available.

Call (314) 968-2350, ext. 243 or ext. 223 for more information or to schedule an appointment.