

*If you are interested in submitting an article for upcoming newsletters, or have suggestions on improving the newsletter, contact Emily Stewart at [stewart@kerndhs.com](mailto:stewart@kerndhs.com) or (661) 873-2303 or Melissa Soin at: (661) 873-2382 or email [soinm@kerndhs.com](mailto:soinm@kerndhs.com).*

## Ombudsman Corner

July is known as a Purple Ribbon Month in honor of Kaitlyn's Law. Kaitlyn's Law passed in 2001 and is named after Kaitlyn Russel, a six-month old who died after being left by a babysitter in a parked care for more than two hours. It is illegal to leave a child unattended in a vehicle. California Vehicle Code 15620 states a parent, legal guardian or other person responsible for a child who is 6 years of age or younger may not leave that child inside a motor vehicle without being subject to supervision of a person who is 12 years of age or older, under either of the following circumstances:

- Where there are conditions that present a significant risk to the child's health or safety.
- When the vehicle's engine is running or the vehicle's keys are in the ignition or both.
- What can you do? Below are a few Safety Tips to keep Children Safe ([www.ocfa.org](http://www.ocfa.org)):
- Make a habit of opening the back door every time you park to ensure no one is left behind.
- Never leave children unattended in or around a motor vehicle
- Leave an important item like a purse or key near the child as a reminder
- Announce and confirm who is getting each child out of the vehicle. Miscommunication can lead to everyone thinking someone else removed the child.
- Always lock your care even in the garage or drive way. If a child is missing, immediately check the car including the trunk.
- If a child is locked inside a vehicle, get him or her out as quickly as possible. Call 9-1-1 for assistance if necessary.

*For more information you can go to [www.Arkidssake.org](http://www.Arkidssake.org), [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org), and [www.kidsincars.org](http://www.kidsincars.org).*

## Clothing Allowance

The majority of foster youth come into care with little to no personal belonging, especially clothing. It is also not uncommon for those youth to have clothing that does not fit them anymore. As Resource parents, you are required to provide age appropriate clothing for youth in your care; monthly payments cover this ongoing need. However there is also an additional annual resource set in place to help.

All foster youth are entitled to a clothing allowance on a yearly basis. The initial clothing allowance will be manually dispersed in conjunction with the first non-emergency foster care payment by the Foster Care Human Service Technician assigned. Annual clothing allowances are automatically issued by the state for each foster child during the month of August, which is just in time to meet the budget demand for back to school clothes.

Having appropriately fitting clothing at the start of a new school year, can help boost a youth's confidence, help them get into a good mindset and worry less on appearance and more on school studies. For more information about clothing allowances, please contact the youth's primary social worker.

# Melissa's Message

## Fire Safety

Independence Day is one of the biggest U.S. holidays where fire safety is of crucial importance. While lighting fireworks is great family fun, it can also be very dangerous. Here are some tips from the Kern County Fire Department to help keep your family safe this 4th of July.

- Always supervise children around fireworks at all times; children should never be allowed to operate any fireworks.
- Use fireworks outside, away from dry grass and flammable materials.
- Operate the fireworks according to the directions on the packaging.
- Light fireworks one at a time, do not try to modify fireworks.
- Have a water source (bucket of water, hose, etc.) or fire extinguisher nearby.
- Only dispose of fireworks once they are completely cooled off.
- In case of emergency, dial 9-1-1.

Remember that firework safety is vital and the Kern County Fire Department carries a zero tolerance policy for use of illegal or modified fireworks and can cite a \$1,500 fine.

We hope that you enjoy the holiday festivities with your friends and family in a fun and safe way. Happy Independence Day!



## Celebrating Family Reunification

This past June we recognized National Reunification Month and took the opportunity to celebrate the safe rebuilding of families.

National Reunification Month is a time to celebrate families and communities, and to raise awareness about the importance of family reunification for children in foster care.

The Kern County Department of Human Services, along with the courts acknowledged the hard work and determination of parents who accomplish the goal of reunifying with their children, as well as the dedicated professionals that support them.

In Kern County, from March 2022 - March 2023 - 248 children reunited with their families. To honor their achievement, our department held a family event at John's Incredible Pizza.

We salute the incredible determination of these families, social workers and partnering agencies who continually support, train and guide families toward becoming stable and committed to keeping their families strong.

## Podcast: The Heartbeat of Human Services

Hey there! Are you looking for a new podcast to add to your playlist? Well, have you heard about the Heartbeat of Human Services? Our podcast, launched in February 2022, and has been gaining momentum with each episode. The name of the podcast was chosen after an internal staff competition, and it couldn't be more fitting. The Heartbeat of Human Services is now in its second season, with episode 14 on the way. And let me tell you, it's a must-listen. During the pandemic, it became more important than ever to offer different communication styles, and this podcast does just that.

In just 20 minutes, you'll learn about valuable resources and hear inspiring stories. Plus, the "Mindful Moment" segment is the perfect way to take a breather and focus on self-care. And if you are on the hunt for a job, the Heartbeat of Human Services has got you covered with their weekly jobs segment. It's a win-win situation. So, what are you waiting for? Tune in to the Heartbeat of Human Services and join the conversation. You won't regret it. You can listen to the Heartbeat of Human Services wherever you listen to podcasts.



# Resource Parent Appreciation

The Department of Human Services' (DHS) annual Resource Family Appreciation Dinner and Training was held on Thursday, May 11th at Hodel's Country Dining. Approximately 200 people attended this event, which seeks to honor those that open their hearts and their homes to Kern County's foster children. A panel of speakers presented their vast knowledge on caregiver and birth parent relationships. This QPI message resonated with many in the crowd. The panel included one birth parent, one kinship parent and two community resource parents. The panel session was filled with emotional stories that pulled at the heartstrings as well as a bit of comedic relief. Three families were also honored for their outstanding efforts in supporting foster youth and one community partner was honored for their continued partnership with DHS. We hope everyone enjoyed the event and we look forward to hosting you again next year.



## *Giving Praise & Positive Reinforcement*

Foster youth face unique challenges and experiences that can significantly impact their emotional well-being and development. Many foster youth have experienced trauma, instability, and a lack of consistent positive relationships. In such circumstances, the importance of praise and positive reinforcement cannot be overstated. It is important that we explore the transformative power of praise and positive reinforcement in the lives of foster youth. These are simple yet powerful tools can make a significant difference in their growth and resilience.

### **Building Self-Esteem and Confidence:**

One of the most crucial aspects of praise and positive reinforcement is their ability to build self-esteem and confidence in foster youth. Often, these children have faced adversity and may have a negative self-image due to past experiences. By acknowledging their strengths, progress, and efforts, caregivers can help foster youth develop a healthier sense of self-

worth. Regular praise fosters a positive self-perception, giving these young individuals the belief in their abilities and the power to navigate life's challenges with increased resilience. Take the time to acknowledge the good in the foster youth in your care. It can be as simple as praising them for getting up and ready on time for school or doing chores around the house. It does not take much, but it makes the biggest difference in their confidence.

### **Encouraging Motivation and Academic Success:**

Positive reinforcement plays a vital role in encouraging foster youth to strive for academic success. Many foster children have experienced disruptions in their education, leading to gaps in learning and reduced motivation. By recognizing and rewarding their academic achievements, both big and small, caregivers and educators can reignite their interest in learning. Praise and positive reinforcement not only motivate foster youth to excel academically but also instill a sense of

accomplishment and pride in their educational endeavors. It is not just about getting A's and B's, but most importantly it is acknowledging the progress a youth has made. Not every student will make the honor roll and that's okay as long as they continue express interest in learning and put forth that effort. Caregivers need to be cheerleaders to keep encouraging youth to succeed.

Praise and positive reinforcement have the power to transform the lives of foster youth. By providing genuine acknowledgment, recognition, and support, caregivers, educators, and agencies can help foster youth build self-esteem, motivation, resilience, and healthy relationships.

These simple acts of praise and positive reinforcement serve as the base for healing, growth, and the development of essential life skills. By harnessing the power of praise, we can empower foster youth to realize their potential and thrive in their journey toward a brighter future.



# Effects of Trauma on Attachment & Trust

Foster youth often face many challenges and adversities, with trauma often being a significant aspect of their lives. Trauma can have profound effects on the development of trust and attachment in foster youth, influencing their relationships, emotions, and overall well-being. Understanding the complexities surrounding trauma and its impact on trust and attachment is essential for caregivers, professionals, and community as a whole, as it shapes the path of these vulnerable individuals' lives.



Trauma can be defined as an experience or event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, leaving them feeling helpless, frightened, or threatened. For foster youth, trauma can result from a range of tough experiences, including abuse, neglect, separation from family, and multiple placements. Such experiences disrupt the sense of safety, stability, and trust that is vital for healthy development. As resource families, you have likely seen the effects of trauma when caring for foster youth and how that trauma can be expressed through behavior.

For foster youth to cope with trauma, they need to form healthy attachments and have a sense of trust with a supportive adult. Trust involves relying on others for emotional support, feeling safe, and believing that people can be dependable and responsive. Attachment, on the other hand, refers to the

deep emotional bond formed between a child and their primary caregiver, influencing their sense of security, self-esteem, and ability to form healthy relationships. Trust and attachment are effected by trauma by impaired attachment, difficulty in establishing trust, and fear of rejection.

These effects would be hard for adults to overcome, let alone youth who are thrust into the child welfare system. That is why it is momentarily important that caregivers be that guiding force in helping youth regain a sense of trust and develop healthy attachments.

To support foster youth, resource parents are educated on trauma-informed care. This approach involves understanding the impact of trauma, creating a safe and predictable environment, and using strategies that

promote trust and attachment. We encourage all resource parents to attend trainings about trauma-informed practices and to utilize these tools within their home.

Another tool is to model stable and nurturing relationships. Having a positive relationship with the youth in your care and encouraging the youth to create other positive relationships, promotes healthy attachment and will serve as a foundation for healing and growth.

Understanding the effects of trauma on trust and attachment in foster youth is vital for effectively supporting their unique needs. By recognizing the challenges these individuals face and providing the support they need, we can help them overcome the lasting impact of trauma and develop into successful adults.

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COUNTY  
HUMAN SERVICES

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