

If you are interested in submitting an article for upcoming newsletters, or have suggestions on improving the newsletter, please contact Stephanie Soza (661) 873-2303 or email [sozas@kerndhs.com](mailto:sozas@kerndhs.com) or Melissa Soin at: (661) 873-2382 or email [bodirsm@kerndhs.com](mailto:bodirsm@kerndhs.com).

## Ombudsman Corner

### DID YOU KNOW ...

#### October is National Bullying Prevention Month?

The National Bullying Prevention Month campaign was founded in 2006 by PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center. It was initially held during the first week of October and the campaign seeks to unite communities nationwide and to educate and raise awareness of bullying prevention. In 2010, the campaign was expanded to the entire month. For more information on bullying prevention, please visit <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/nbpm/history.asp>.



Bullying can be expressed physically such as, tripping, shoving, hitting, or taking someone's belongings; verbally such as, name calling, threats or taunting; and socially such as, exclusion, spreading rumors or public ridicule. Bullying also occurs via social media. According to the National Education Center, in 2016 one out of five students reported being bullied. However, children may not readily report bullying. Signs that your child may be experiencing bullying may include reluctance to go to school, increased/decreased appetite, general worrying or sadness. Community-Matters.org offers the following suggestions of things that can be done if your child is being bullied:

- Learn about the issue – The more informed you are the more effective you can be in impacting the problem.
- Walk the talk – By modeling empathy, tolerance and respect in your actions and communication, you impart these values, and influence the attitudes and behaviors of your children.
- Listen without anger and judgement – Establish a safe space, so that they will feel comfortable turning to you in the future.
- Monitor your child online – Cyberbullying is the fastest growing type of peer-on-peer mistreatment today.
- Understand your school's policies-rules, procedures and policies regarding bullying vary greatly from district to district. Speak with school officials and your school board about what policies they have in place and what programs they have implemented to address bullying and cyberbullying.

Contact Monique Hawkins, DHS Ombudsman/Program Director, at 661-631-6188.

# Melissa's Message

With the new school year underway, this article is intended to keep you in “the know” about foster youth educational rights and making sure these youth are supported. Foster youth have the following educational rights:

## 1. *Right to remain in their school of origin*

- The school they attended when they first enter foster care
- The school most recently attended or
- Any school they attended in the last 15 months that they feel connected to.
- Collaboration between the school district, caregiver and social worker/probation officer to develop a plan regarding transportation to and from school

## 2. *Right to immediate enrollment in school*

- A foster youth cannot be forced to attend a continuation school or other alternative education program
- Immediate enrollment and attendance even without the paperwork required to normally enroll
- The previous school must send over the youth's records to the new school.
- Foster youth have the right to participate in any activities available at the new school

## 3. *Right to partial credits for high school students*

- If a school change happens during

the school year, foster youth have the right to receive partial credits in classes they are passing even if they do not finish the class

- The new school must accept partial credits
- Youth have the right to enroll in the same or similar classes that they were previously enrolled in at their last school
- Youth cannot be forced to retake a class or part of a class that they have already completed with a passing grade

## 4. *Graduation rights*

- Foster youth can stay in school a 5<sup>th</sup> year to complete graduation requirements
- Under AB 167/216 foster youth who transfer schools after 10<sup>th</sup> grade who are behind on credits may be eligible to graduate

## 5. *College rights*

- Application fees waived
- Right to receive maximum amount of federal student aid and up to \$5,000 per year from the Chafee scholarship

## 6. *School discipline rights*

- Foster youth cannot be suspended for more than 5 days in a row or more than 20 days in a school year
- Youth have the right to be told why they are being suspended and the right to provide their version of



events and evidence before the suspension happens

- The foster youth's attorney and social worker must be invited to a meeting before your suspension can be extended 5 days and the extension can only happen if expulsion is considered
- Foster youth's attorney and social worker must be notified if expulsion is being considered

## 7. *Right to school records*

- Foster youth have the right to access their school records if they are 16 years or older or have finished the 10<sup>th</sup> grade
- The social worker/probation officer and educational rights holder can also access these records

For more information on Foster Youth Educational Rights, please visit <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/documents/fosteryouthedrights.pdf>

## *FSH Fund for Caregivers*

The Foster Family Home and Small Family Home Insurance Fund (FSH) provides liability insurance coverage for foster parents related to incidents in providing foster care services. The Fund's coverage is to licensed foster family homes (FFH) and resource family approved (RFA) homes. Coverage can pertain to certain valid claims of bodily or personal injury to foster children that occur during the foster care relationship, during the provision of foster care services and during the time, foster children are in the home. The insurance does not cover intentional or criminal acts against the foster children by the foster parents.

To read about additional exclusions, explanation of benefit and coverage or to obtain a claim form, please visit <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Foster-Care/FSH-Fund-Information> or call 1-800-900-3634.

# Placement Preservation Strategy & 14-Day Notice

Children in foster care often suffer repeated trauma moving from one placement to another. Their sense of self-worth and identity suffers with each move as basic needs to feel anchored and a sense of safety and belonging erode. With the passage of Assembly Bill 2247, the legislature set a plan to prevent children in foster care from experiencing trauma associated with unnecessary or abrupt placement changes. Effective January 1, 2019 a dependent youth's placement cannot be changed unless there is an attempt to maintain the stability of the current placement.

The social worker or placing agency is supposed to make specific efforts so the foster youth can remain with the current caregiver. The social worker or placing agency SHALL develop and implement a "placement preservation strategy" in consultation with the dependent child's child and family team (CFT) to preserve the dependent child's placement. The strategy may include, but is not limited to, conflict resolution practices and facilitated meetings (i.e. holding a CFT meeting).

The child and family team can pre-plan a placement change. For example, the team can make a plan to move a child to a family member's home, once that home is approved by the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process. A planned move of this nature would not require a 14 day notice if the team had agreed upon the move. However, once the placement preservation strategy is in place and the social worker or placement agency finds that a placement change is necessary, the social worker or placing agency shall serve written notice at least 14 days prior to the placement change to the following:

- The dependent child's parent or guardian.
- The dependent child's caregiver, including resource families and foster family agencies.
- The dependent child's attorney.
- The dependent child, if he or she is 10 years of age or older.

The social worker is NOT permitted to remove the child between the hours of 9 p.m. and 7 a.m. unless there is mutual agreement between the child, caregivers (current and prospective), and the social worker in the form of a written waiver.

The 14-day notice applies to the placing agency, foster family agency, group home providers and the caregivers once the preservation strategy is in place; however, the

importance of preserving the placement remains in all circumstances, and efforts to maintain placement should be explored by the child and family team.

The county has grievance procedures to review appeal requests from resource parents, birth parents, guardians and children concerning the placement or removal of a dependent youth from a resource home. All worries shall be resolved in the best interest of the child.

There is no right to a grievance review when:

- Removal of a child is for any of the reasons listed where the agency is not required to give notice of intent to remove the child (i.e. the child is in immediate danger or there is a court order, etc.).
- Removal of a child or modification of services resulting from an administrative review panel determination.
- Removal of a child is for direct placement into an adoptive home.
- Any complaint regarding only the validity of a law or statewide regulation.
- Any complaint regarding an issue for which a state fair hearing is available.

As always, placement stability is key and we encourage discussions with the social worker to explore resources and supports that may be accessed for a family in an effort to avoid placement changes.

## *In-Service Training*

Once a resource family is approved, they are responsible for maintaining eight (8) hours of training each year to keep their approval up to date. Families are encouraged to earn the required eight (8) hours of training within an adequate amount of time as to not delay the annual update of the resource family. To acquire a list of annual training classes, dates and times, please visit the Bakersfield College website at <https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/FKCE/schedules> and select the "on-going training" link. Please note that childcare is **NOT** provided for in-service training classes. If you have any questions regarding annual training, please contact your assigned Resource Family Approval Social Worker.



## Resource Family Friendly Business Partnership has Launched!

The Department of Human Services is proud to announce the launch of the Resource Family Friendly Business (RFFB) Partnership program! This new program offers additional support to our Kern Resource Families by collaborating with local businesses to offer discounts on goods and services. Resource families can access these discounts using their RFFB member ID card that was mailed to each approved resource family. A printed directory was also mailed to the families, but a more update directory of participating businesses can be found at <https://www.kcdhs.org/MyRFFB/>.



We highly encourage you to use these discounts. The discounts that the participating businesses are providing are available for your resource family even when a foster child is not currently placed in your home. Most importantly, this program is FREE to resource families!

A heartwarming thank you goes out to the following businesses who are

helping to support our Kern resource families:

*Body Xchange Fitness & Sports Clubs, Cataldo's Pizza, Covenant Coffee, Darrell's Automotive, Don Perico Mexican Grill & Bar, Fresco Mexican Grill, Jersey Mike's Subs, Le Mirage Salon, Max Muscle Nutrition, Papa John's Pizza, Respawn, Rig City Coffee Roasters, Rio Bravo Jiu-Jitsu, Tacos La Villa Mexican Grill, Valley Children's ice Center of Bakersfield and West Coast Barber Shop.*

For questions regarding the RFFB Partnership program, please contact your Resource Family Specialist Melissa Soin at 661-873-2382.

## Family Reunification Day Recap

Kern County Department of Human Services, along with the Kern County Superior Court provide an annual event to celebrate and honor the families that have reunified with their children. This year's event was held at St. Francis Parish Church in Bakersfield, California on June 7, 2019. Our partners in reunification, the Kern County Superior Court, Juvenile Justice Division, submitted 133 families' names, who had successfully reunified through the court process. We invited the families to attend a luncheon to celebrate their hard-earned success. Each parent completed a court-ordered case plan, which educated him or her on the awareness of how to keep his or her kids safe. The parents' hard work and completion of their case plans resulted in their children being able to return home with them.

Families enjoyed a wonderful lunch and received a certificate of reunification presented to them by the Director of the Department of Human Services, Dena Murphy, and Judge Raymonda Marquez. Each family received gifts consisting of household products and a beautiful potted succulent plant. Each child received prizes from several game tables. Our community partners donated household items, board games, blankets and toys. We are grateful for the community partners that made this event a success, which include; the Jamison Children Center, Henrietta Weill Child Guidance, California Teachers Association, CASA of Kern County, Kern County Superior Courts and St. Francis Church.



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