

If you are interested in submitting an article for upcoming newsletters, or have suggestions on improving the newsletter, please contact Pam Townsend at 661-873-2339 and her email is townsep@kerndhs.com or Melissa Soin at: (661) 873-2382 or email soinm@kerndhs.com.

Ombudsman Corner

As the new school year is upon us, have you begun making plans on how to keep your child(ren) engaged in learning and/or inspired to challenge themselves by participating in extracurricular activities such as choir, sports or student government? Are you wondering what activities you as the caregiver can allow foster children within your care to participate in? The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard may assist you in your planning efforts. According to Welfare Institutions Code 362.05 and California Department of Social Services All County Letter No. 16-31, the reasonable and prudent parent standard is defined as:



“The standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child that a caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the state to participate in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.”

As you begin to prepare for the new school year, keep the following in mind:

- Does this activity seem reasonable?
- Is the activity age or developmentally appropriate for the child?
- Is this activity consistent with the health, safety, and best interests of the child?
- Does this activity encourage the emotional, developmental, or cultural growth of the child?
- Is there anything based upon the child’s history to suggest that this activity would not be appropriate.

Remember the goal of the reasonable and prudent parent standard is to help normalize the lives of foster children. For more information and resources on the reasonable and prudent parent standard, visit: <http://www.fosterfamilyhelp.ca.gov/PG3001.htm>.

Keeping Kids Engaged

With the kids being home due to the Stay Home Order as well as it being summer, daily routines can sometimes become dull and not stimulate their minds. Since the 2019-2020 school year ended with children being taught at home, they could benefit from fun educational activities to not only keep them entertained, but to encourage learning regardless of the setting. Childhood101.com has a variety of educational activities for children of all ages, grades and developmental levels. Choose from learning and sensory activities, play ideas and more. There is even a section called “Family Life” that gives tips on positive parenting and potty training. For more information, fun ideas and printable worksheets, visit www.childhood101.com.

Self-Care for Caregivers

As resource parents, you want to give the best to the children in your care and while that is your number one priority, the Kern County Department of Human Services (KCDHS) would like to make sure that you are being taken care of too. It is all too common that resource parents put their needs at the bottom of the list to focus 100% on the needs of the foster youth. These youth have experienced trauma and at times, you as caregivers can experience secondary trauma in helping these youth cope. Here are a couple of tips to help care for yourself to help make a difference in giving more to others:

- Meditate or have some quiet time (even if it is just a few minutes a day).
- Try to exercise on your own or create a family workout plan.
- Pick up a hobby you are interested in or get back into an activity that you had enjoyed doing.
- Play with your pets (walk the dog, play fetch, play with the cat, etc.).
- Have family time around the dinner table. Ask your kids to tell you one positive thing about their day.

Self-care is often easier said than done, especially for parents, but just remember that the more time you can put for yourself, the better quality of time you can give to those you care for.

Melissa's Message

Decreasing the Likelihood of Homelessness: Keeping Foster Youth in Extended Foster Care

The Kern County Department of Human Services (KCDHS) strives for long lasting permanent relationships for foster youth to provide them with love and support as they grow into young adults. Just because a youth turns 18 does not necessarily mean that they are ready for the world of adulthood and by allowing our foster youth to remain in foster care after they become legal adults, could mean the difference in sending them into the world prepared versus unprepared. One of the biggest challenges foster youth face during this age transition is homelessness. These youth experience a higher range (11%-38%) than the general population. Some of the risk factors that influence these homelessness rates are placement history, running away from placements, having been placed in a group home setting, delinquent behavior and involvement in the juvenile court system, family criminal history and physical symptoms consistent of mental health disorders.



In contrast, foster youth who have had a positive relationship with an adult, who perceived to have social support and who have stayed in foster care into their adulthood are less likely to be at risk for homelessness. The state of California put into law Assembly Bill 12(AB12): The California Fostering Connections Act back in 2012 that allows foster youth to remain in the foster care system past the age of 18 in order to support their adulthood transition and to provide them with the resources to be successful and independent young adults. AB12 allows foster youth to stay in care until the age of 21 and if a youth exits foster care, under AB12 they can re-enter and continue receiving AB12 resources again. The AB12 extended foster care program can help decrease the likelihood of homelessness once our foster youth turn 18, but these youth also need a team to rally behind them and to encourage them to participate in AB12 for as long as possible.

That is where you as resource families play an important role. Just imagine how the world of adulthood seemed to you at 18. Whether you had the support of loving adults or you had to figure out the world on your own, becoming an adult was still overwhelming and our foster youth are feeling the exact same way. The greatest tool we can give to these youth on the cusp of adulthood is our support and encouragement. To let them know that no matter what, we are here to help them up when they stumble and fall and to raise them on our shoulders when they experience greatness.

If you are caring for a teen that could benefit from the AB12 program, please contact the youth's primary social worker. This is a summary of a published report, to review the report, visit <https://www.chapinhall.org/research/cal youth/>

iFoster Phone Program

In today's digital age it seems that almost everyone has access to a mobile phone, but that is not always the case for youth in the foster care system. Boost Mobile and iFoster have teamed up to create a pilot program that provides mobile phones to foster youth called the iFoster Phones for Foster Youth. Foster youth can receive a brand new Moto E6 Smart Phone with an unlimited talk and text plan and 3GB of data per month. The iFoster Phone Program only operates in the state of California, but youth may be able to utilize the Boost Mobile network if available. This pilot program started in December of 2019 and is scheduled to run until December of 2021.

Current and former foster youth between the ages of 13 and 26 who have been in care on or after their thirteenth birthday are eligible for iFoster Phones.

If a participant in this program turns 27 during the program, they can still keep their phone and service for the duration of the pilot program. For foster youth ages 13 to 17, a signature is needed from the youth, the social worker and the caregiver, attorney or other guardian designee on the application. A Ward of the Court or County Dependency letter is also required and iFoster recommends that the youth complete the iFoster Phones for Foster Youth digital literacy course. For foster youth ages 18-20, a signature from the youth and their social worker is needed on the application. A Ward of the Court or County Dependency letter is also required and the digital literacy course is also recommended.

The application can be found online via the iFoster.org website. Youth will need to create a free iFoster account to help manage the application process. Once

the youth completes the application and gathers the above mentioned required approvals, they can submit the documents via email to the iFoster team. The application will be reviewed and if approved, results will be posted on the youth's iFoster account. The phones will ship within 1-2 days of approval.

An alternative program for young foster youth ages 5-12 years old is also available to help with the disruptions that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. This program is a 3 month prepaid plan with unlimited voice, text, data and hotspot capabilities.

For more information please visit the Frequently Asked Questions page at <https://fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/276/2020/04/iFoster-Phones-for-Foster-Youth-FAQs-Moto-1.pdf> or speak to the youth's primary social worker.

Kudos Korner

This issue's Kudos Korner goes out to a very dedicated resource parent who opened her heart and home to a baby that will forever live in her heart. Here are the kind words from a social services supervisor about this resource parent with the heart of gold.

"If I could clone her, I would. She is one of the easiest and selfless caretakers I have ever worked with. After weeks of searching for a caregiver for a medically fragile child, with a deceased mother and unknown father, this resource parent was contacted and agreed to placement. This resource parent met us on a Saturday and immediately set to work by examining all of his medical equipment and ensuring she had everything she needed then picked up the baby at Memorial hospital. She kept KCDHS updated with all of his care. In a short time, he had to be hospitalized, as he was unstable. This case required KCDHS to think out of the box as the child was in the hospital and we would normally end placement but the resource parent REFUSED to give up placement.

Despite not being paid, she visited the child every day for several hours at a time and befriended the nurses and social worker staff. Maybe it is her background in nursing, or her kind heart, but she would not let go of this child.

When the child went home with hospice in this resource parent's house, she opened up her home to the biological grandparents and set to work arranging a funeral through her church. She also was mindful of her own well-being and reached out to her church community as well as hospice to ensure that the child was almost always held and doted on. Unfortunately the child passed away, but did so with all the love and support surrounding him from this resource parent."

Words cannot give enough heartfelt gratitude to this resource parent. Her kind heart knows no bounds and for that KCDHS honors and truly appreciates her dedication to Kern's most vulnerable children.

A Message from the Bakersfield College Foster & Kinship Care Education Programs

Greetings Resource Families!

We realize that our situation with the shelter in place order by Governor Newsom, the practice of proper social distancing to flatten the curve on the spread of COVID-19, along with home schooling our children continue to cause considerable stress and anxiety at times. Remember that we are in this together! As we continue the new norm of navigating our world with online services, we are presented with challenges that are sometimes beyond our control.

Bakersfield College (BC) is not an exception as they also worked through the challenges of converting all classes and support services for 37,000 students and about 1,200 employees to an online environment. BC's Foster & Kinship Care Education Program is committed to continue providing opportunities for caregivers to meet their training requirements by converting all training courses from in-person to a safe and secured virtual platform using ConferZoom with videoconferencing application that participants can easily connect with using any electronic device (i.e. smart phone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computers). ConferZoom has allowed us to deliver live trainings with real time engagement between the instructors and participants, allowing participants to interact and ask questions just as they would during the in-person trainings.

Some positive outcomes to the virtual training platform include families being able to connect in the comfort of their own homes, families from outside of Bakersfield are able to join because distance is not an obstacle, and

families not having to arrange childcare for their children to come to an in-person training.

Feedback we have received from families:

- *"I really enjoy the training being on zoom, where we can be in the presence of our home and complete our hours."*
- *"We were able to learn via a new and different platform, which was incredible!"*
- *"Being able to interact online and seeing one another was great!"*
- *"We were able to talk to teachers from the class in real time and they helped me a lot with my doubts. Excellent (Que podíamos hablar con los maestros de la clase en tiempo real y me ayudaron mucho en mis dudas excelente)"*

We plan to continue offering trainings online and when the shelter in place order has been lifted, we will re-evaluate the ability to offer both in-person and online trainings, while continuing to follow safety measures to protect our participants and trainers. If you have not participated in a virtual training already, I encourage you to do so!

As we move forward with planning the summer and fall schedules, we would love to hear how to better serve you. Feel free to contact us: BCFKCE@bakersfieldcollege.edu or Araceli.navarro@bakersfieldcollege.edu.

Stay positive, stay healthy!

— *Bakersfield College Foster & Kinship Care Education Program*



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