

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 or Melissa Bodirsky at: (661) 873-2382 or email bodirsm@kerndhs.com.

Ombudsman Corner

It is hard to believe that it has almost been a year since my assignment to the Ombudsman office. I have enjoyed reestablishing relationships with seasoned care providers and fostering new relationships. As I continue in my role as Ombudsman, I look forward to assisting you in resolving issues or concerns that may arise.

As Ombudsman, my objective is to:

- Listen to your concerns
- Document your complaints/concerns
- Gather all relevant information regarding the matter
- Remain neutral and objective and keeps information confidential
- Formulate possible resolutions
- Makes recommendations to the Department of Human Services
- Gives feedback on actions and recommendations to every complainant

In addition, I am interested in listening your ideas of how to improve the services provided to the families and children in Kern County. Your dedication and love towards the children placed in your homes is greatly appreciated. The role that you play in working with the Department of Human Services to keep our children safe, supporting family reunification and preparing them for independence is indispensable.

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



May Resource Parent Appreciation Dinner Save the Date!

This year's annual Resource Family Appreciation Dinner will be held on May 2, 2019. The month of May is Resource Family Awareness month and this dinner is a way of showing our appreciation to all our resource families in caring for Kern County foster youth. This event also provides valuable training where our resource families will receive a certificate for two hours of training. Please be advised that due to limited seating, this dinner is an adult only event.

Melissa's Message

Foster Youth and Internet Use

It has become more and more apparent that social media and internet use is significant in most family's lives. We stay connect to people and places through social media. Assembly Bill 2448, which amends Welfare and Institutions Code 362.05, was passed by the State of California to state that all Child Welfare and Probation foster youth shall be entitled to age appropriate extracurricular activities including internet use.



While it is a foster youth's right to be involved in extracurricular activities, including access to computer technology, it is also important to keep these youth safe while online and the new law states that caregivers are to use reasonable and prudent parenting standards concerning technology use in their household. When a foster youth is placed in your home, they will be expected to follow the household rules but should be treated just as fairly as any other child in your home, thus making the

foster youth feel like they are a part of your family. It is important to explain your rules of internet use to the foster youth and to respect their rights, as this will help build an understanding of what is expected from you as the caregiver and what is expected of the foster youth in your care.

For more information about this new law, visit https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB2448

In Need of a Formal Dress?

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has received a generous donation of formal dresses from Garces Memorial High School and would like to give the dresses out to any foster youth in need. With Prom season approaching, expenses for this momentous occasion can add up and DHS would like to lessen that expense by providing dresses to our foster youth. The dresses vary in color, size and style and are on a first come, first serve basis. Arrangements to view and receive the dresses can be made by contacting Resource Family Specialist Melissa Bodirsky at (661) 873-2382.

YES! Conference

The fourth annual Youth Empowering Success! (YES!) Conference will be held on March 8, 2019 at Bakersfield College. Foster youth, caregivers and community agencies participate in this event to support Kern County's foster youth. This full day conference addresses barriers that foster youth face and create solutions that will increase their success in school and in becoming young adults.

Caregivers Have a Voice in Court

Caregivers Have a Voice in Court
The JV 290 Caregiver Information Form allows a caregiver of a foster youth to present their observations about the youth at a court hearing. As a caregiver, and a crucial person on the child's team, you have firsthand knowledge of how the foster youth is doing in your home and at school. It is important for the court to be aware of all aspects of the child's well-being in order to make informed and appropriate decisions concerning the care of the child.

Completing the JV 290 allows you as the caregiver to provide feedback directly to the court. This form and the instructions on completing the form should be provided to you with the review hearing notice or by the child's primary social worker. Please understand that the factual information you provide about the child's behavior and needs will be included with the report and made available to all parties involved.

For more information on the JV 290 form, please contact the foster youth's primary family services or court services social worker.



National Adoption Day 2018

Each year during the month of November, Kern County Department of Human Services (KCDHS) celebrates the wonderful gift of adoption for our foster youth who find their forever home. National Adoption Day was held on November 16, 2018 at the Kern County Juvenile Courthouse. This day celebrated youth and their adopted families with carnival games, food, crafts and entertainment.

KCDHS Adoptions unit as well as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers and Foster Family Agencies such as Child Net, Koinonia and Kern Bridges volunteered to set up, run the booths and assist families throughout the day. Volunteers from Adoptions and Resource Family Approval dressed as Disney Princesses and Princes to take photos and interact with the children. The Incredibear from John's Incredible Pizza Co. and the mascot from the Bakersfield Condors were also on hand to interact with the families.



Each child that was adopted received a special bag with a book, blanket and teddy bear. All four courtrooms at the Juvenile Courthouse were busy with processing adoptions and approximately sixty adoptions were finalized that day either at the Juvenile Courthouse or through private adoption at the Family Law Division in downtown Bakersfield. The Department of Human Services would like to thank all our volunteers, partnering agencies and families for making National Adoption Day 2018 such a magical event!



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Understanding ICPC

Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) is an agreement among most U.S. states and territories authorizing us to work together to ensure that children who are placed across state lines for foster care or adoption receive adequate protection and services. A foster youth may have relatives who live in another state who would like to apply for placement of the child via the ICPC process. An ICPC request is initiated after the disposition hearing by the foster youth's primary social worker and can take an average of three to six months. Only when the applicant's home is approved through regulations by their residing state, will that home be considered for placement. In exceptional circumstances, a child can be placed out of state with a relative who has not been fully approved/licensed via emergency placement if it is deemed to be in the best interest of the child. The approval is valid for six months and if placement is not made with the out of state relative within that time, their approval is voided.

It is important to remember that The Kern County Department of Human Services makes every effort to keep foster youth connected with their family and when in the best interest of the child, place them with their relatives. For more information about the ICPC process, please contact ICPC Social Worker Madia Alvarez at (661) 873-2430.

RFA Conversion Deadline Update

The deadline for all licensed and relative/non-related extended family member (NREFM) homes to convert over to Resource Family Approval (RFA) has been extended to December 31, 2020. If you are still a licensed or Relative/NREFM home and want to continue caring for foster youth or if you do not want to move forward with the RFA process and would like to forfeit your license, please contact your licensing social worker. Your licensing social worker eagerly awaits to hear from you and will happily assist you.

Placement Notice Update

With the beginning of spring comes changes and updates. New legislation concerning placement change for foster youth has been updated. Assembly Bill 2247, which was added to the Welfare and Institutions Code section 1610.7, states that prior to making a change in placement of a dependent child, the social worker shall develop and implement a placement preservation strategy in consultation with the Child Family Team (CFT) members during a Child Family Team Meeting (CFTM).

In addition, if a placement change is needed, a notice of fourteen (14) days shall be served to the foster youth's caregiver. This update has changed the notice from seven (7) days to fourteen (14) and states that placement changes cannot occur between the hours of 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. except by mutual agreement from the foster youth (10 years or older), caregiver, prospective caregiver and placement social worker.

Other exceptions to the 14 day notice include if the child's health or safety is at imminent risk OR if the foster youth and the CFT members unanimously agree to waive the requirements. Assembly Bill 2247 does not apply to non-minor dependent foster youth or a planned placement decided upon by the CFT and in the child's case plan. This new update goes into effect after the disposition hearing and once the child becomes a dependent of the court. The Department of Human Services strives to decrease the number of placement changes foster youth go through by working with the families to maintain stability.

For more information about this update, visit https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB2247



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