

If you are interested in submitting an article for upcoming newsletters, or have suggestions on improving the newsletter, please contact Cherie Linde at: (661) 873-2327 or email lindec@kerndhs.com or Melissa Bodirsky at: (661) 873-2382 or email bodirms@kerndhs.com.

Ombudsman Corner

Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.
— Nelson Mandela

For most children, school is a place of learning, the anticipation of engaging with friends during recess and becoming more independent. This is not the case for many children in the foster care system. School for them is one characterized by anxiety of having to possibly attend a new school and make new friends or facing academic challenges due to poor attendance and lack of support from family. With the support of a resource parent, advocacy and encouragement, your foster child can succeed in school. Keep in mind that you will be the main one fighting for your child. Children are more likely to succeed when the parent is active in school activities. Therefore, I encourage you to become as involved as possible. Below are some things you can do to help your child succeed in school.



Meet the child's teacher

If you have not done so already, make it a priority to meet the teacher. Let the teacher know that you are committed to helping your child learn. Request that the teacher inform you immediately if a problem develops.

Establish a morning routine

As much as possible prepare the night before, pack lunches, lay out clothes and have the child (ren) fill their backpacks and set them by the door.

Ensure that everyone gets a good night sleep

Although sleep needs for children and adults vary from individual to another, research indicates that lack of sleep impacts one's success in school. According to Sleep.org children age 3-5 generally should get 11-13 hours of sleep; children age 5-10 generally should get 10-11 hours of sleep and children/teens age 10-17 should get 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep.

Ask questions and learn what the school offers

Do not hesitate to ask the teacher, counselor or principal if you become concerned about your child's learning or a change in behavior. Inquire about services available.

Make sure your child does his/her homework

Set up "homework time" in a quiet area of the house at the same time each day (as much as possible). This will help establish a routine and expectation.

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

Treatment Foster Care

Oregon-Kern Behavior Health & Recovery Services

Kern Behavioral Health and Recovery Services is in the process of recruiting foster parents who are interested in fostering young people, ages 11-18, for the Treatment Foster Care Oregon (formerly Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care) program. This is a therapeutic foster care program designed to reunify children with their families and integrate youth back into the community. As a society, we want to foster positive growth for youth. The goal of this program is to increase prosocial behaviors for youth with mental health issues who are at-risk for maintaining placement stability.

This is an intensive short-term (6-9 months) program where foster parents receive special training to provide youth with daily structure and supervision. Foster parents are part of the TFCO treatment team and receive the treatment foster care rate compensation, which is higher than the basic rate. The program offers 24/7/365 support to the foster parent as well daily phone calls, and weekly mandatory foster parent team meetings. The Program Supervisor and Foster Parent Trainer are readily available to answer questions, provide support, and additional training. Therapists work with the youth and family to prepare for the youth's reunification. The youth also have a skills trainer who accompany the youth during the day, teach daily skills, while offering support and respite for

the resource parents. This is a three (3) level program, and when the youth reaches Level 2, the youth begins to have visits with the reunifying party and the visits can become more frequent and longer in duration with the intent of the youth ultimately returning home to their family.

TFCO is an evidenced based program that was developed based on over thirty (30) years of scientific research and implemented throughout the United States, United Kingdom, and Northern Europe. Listed below are outcomes for both boys and girls who have completed the TFCO program. This is not an all-inclusive list. Please visit <https://www.tfcOregon.com/> for additional information.

- Incarcerated 60% fewer days
- Fewer subsequent arrests
- Less self-reported drug use
- Fewer violent offenses
- Ran away three times less often
- Odds of becoming pregnant less than girls in group home

If you would like more information regarding TFCO or information on becoming a TFCO resource parent, please call Heather Garcia at (661) 868-8358. We look forward to gaining a partnership with you!

Pathway to Permanency

A Focus on Older Youth

On June 16, 2018, the Department of Human Services hosted a Pathway to Permanency event to assist relatives, non-related extended family members and non-matched participants in getting the first few steps of the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process completed. This full day event provided our participants with information on how the RFA process works and one on one assistance that helped with the application process. This event in particular focused on placement of our older foster youth population and expressed the need to approve homes that are willing and able to care and support our teens, both in the child welfare system and through the juvenile probation system. Juvenile Probation worked in collaboration with the Department of Human Services to host this event and bring awareness that our probation youth are in just as much of a need for a loving supportive home as our child welfare youth. This event also touched on the topic of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and how our teens are the most at risk to become trafficked. During the event, there was a panel of resource parents and foster youth (both related and non-related) that discussed their experiences in taking placement of older youth. The participants had an overwhelming positive response to the panel member and even a number of participants expressed their willingness to work with older youth. If you have an interest in opening your home to teens, probation or CSEC youth or would like more information, please contact CSEC RFA social worker Estephanie Manzo at (661) 873-2359.

Melissa's Message

Resource Parent Perspective

I had the opportunity to interview Eugene Alonzo who is a resource parent and relative to a probation youth. Eugene also is one of the panel members for our Pathway to Permanency events as he has experience working with Child Protective Services and can provide knowledgeable insight on the process. I contacted Eugene and asked if he would mind giving his perspective on being a resource parent and what advice he could offer to our new and existing resource families. Eugene is always happy to help and share his story and thus agreed to answer a few questions. Below is a brief interview that I had with Eugene.



What motivated you to become a resource parent?

I did not want my grandson placed all over or lost in the system.

How has it been a positive experience for you?

The positive experience has been in seeing the difference in our grandson and watching his goals come to life in the choices he sets.

What advice would you give to other resource parents?

The advice I would give is to be their friend first to gain their trust and to be able to communicate with them.

I would like to give a special thank you to Eugene for this valuable insight. His message of stepping up to care for family and being patient and kind is something we all can value and respect. Whether you are a matched (relative/non-related extended family member) or non-matched resource parent, I hope that you can relate to Eugene's responses and I hope that you can take from it a positive outlook on further supporting our child welfare and probation youth.

Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC)

Intensive Services Foster Care or ISFC is a program model of home based family care for eligible children whose needs for safety, permanency and well-being require specially trained resource parents and intensive professional and paraprofessional services. An ISFC resource home will be supported with ongoing Child Family Team Meetings (CFTM's), coordinate with specialized mental health services, respite care, trauma informed competent services and ongoing problem solving and collaborating when barriers arise. Resource families that are interested in becoming an ISFC home will complete specialized training that focuses on intensive behaviors.

Please be on the lookout for more information on ISFC resource homes in future newsletter issues.

Respite Care

Have you heard about respite care or ever thought about becoming a respite care provider? Respite care provides prearranged temporary childcare for the child's caretaker when they are in need of support in caring for the child. Respite care can assist with example situations such as:

- Caretaker needing to travel out of county or state and foster youth cannot accompany them.
- Occasional short-term babysitting needs.
- Support in maintaining placement.

If you are interested in becoming a respite care provider or would like more information, please contact your licensing or RFA social worker.

Public Service Announcement

DHS and the Probation department recently worked with a group of foster and probation teens to develop a new Public Service Announcement (PSA)/commercial recruiting for the specific types of home based care we need – homes for our Child Welfare and Probation Teens! The PSA commercial was running on television, radio, and you can also catch it in the local movie theaters (Delano included). If you would like to watch it on your own time, or even share it with someone you know has considered becoming resource family approved, you can view it on our DHS website at www.KC-DHS.org.

The Public Service Announcement featuring some of our child welfare and probation teens, and the families that care for them, is the product created with direct input from child welfare and probation teens who participated in a focus group. This call for families interested in caring for child welfare and probation teens was developed with the help of our child welfare and probation youth, who participated in a focus group, and are featured in the commercial.

Red Carpet Event

On Saturday, June 23, the families and youth featured in our most recent Public Service Announcement were invited to walk the “Red Carpet” at the MAYA cinemas in Bakersfield. Media also attended this event and helped us celebrate these youth as “stars” in our community, helping raise awareness for the need for families willing to commit to them as Resource Families. This event also featured a few local media celebrities as well. The PSA was shown on the big screen, and several of the youth featured in it were seeing it for the first time.



The “See Me” Public Service Announcement is meant to reach those interested in becoming a Resource Family for a child welfare or probation teen, our greatest category of need.

We are always in need of families willing to open their hearts and their homes to Kern County’s foster teens. The Department of Human Services, along with Kern County Probation, is working to increase awareness of the need for qualified and committed families to help us provide loving, home-based care for teens impacted by Child Welfare and Probation care.

Foster Parent College

Foster Parent College offers free online pre-service training and training on various topics towards annual training requirements of eight (8) hours. Please note that completing the pre-service training online will accumulate to 16 hours, whereas in-person trainings add up to only 12 hours. In-service training topics are available for approved resource families to complete their annual training. Some training topics include Anger Outbursts, Childhood Anxiety Disorders, Children with Autism, Grief and Loss, Running Away, Substance-Exposed Infants, as well as many others to fit your needs. If you would like to know more about Foster Parent College, contact your licensing or RFA social worker.

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