

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

Summer vacation is in full swing and over the next few weeks, the countdown for a new school year will begin. Transitioning from the freedom of unstructured and free days can lead to a period of time often characterized as chaotic or stressful for parents and children. The websites centerstone.org and www.thepragmaticparent.com offer the following tips to assist with falling back into the groove of attending a full day of school:



- Develop a bedtime routine during the summer break to help maintain balance and reduce stress. The bedtime routine will vary depending on the age and activity of your child, but everyone needs sleep, because it serves as the body's reset button.
- Unplugging from technology and spending quality time with family and friends can help lessen stress and anxiety.
- Take time out of your hectic schedules to play and enjoy the freedom from time, rules and responsibilities. Playtime has powerful benefit for children and adults by providing life balance.
- Prepare the night before to eliminate rushing around in the morning trying to pack backpacks and make lunches.
- Create a Drop Off and Pick Up zone. This is a designated area preferably near the door most frequently used, where everyone's school gear lives.

The start of a new school year does not have to be chaotic or stressful, with some planning, structure and establishing a daily routine that works for your family preparing for the beginning of a new school year can be one of excitement and fun.

Resource Parent Appreciation Event

The 12th Annual Resource Family Appreciation event was held on May 13th on the virtual platform Zoom. This event seeks to honor our Kern County resource families and the tremendous work they do for our foster youth. The keynote speakers for this event were Mike and Kristin Berry who are authors, motivational speakers, parent coaches and adoptive and former foster parents. The Berry's presentation highlighted the passion they have about reaching out to adoptive and foster parents with the message of hope and transformation. Mike and Kristin also discussed the importance of parents having self-compassion and self-care. The night's events included honoring three deserving resource families and one business/community member for their dedication to making a positive impact in the lives of Kern's foster youth. Resource families in attendance were entered into a raffle and winners were drawn throughout the event. A big thank you to Nothing Bundt Cakes who partnered with the Department of Human Services to provide resource families with gift vouchers for a sweet treat. We hope everyone enjoyed this year's event and we look forward to seeing you again next May!

Melissa's Message



With the new school year fast approaching, please be mindful about foster youth educational rights and making sure these youth are supported in their education. Foster youth have the following educational rights that apply, regardless if the youth attends school in-person or virtually:

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 5th year to complete graduation requirements
 - Under AB 167/216 foster youth who transfer schools after 10th 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 10th 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>.

Support in Distance Learning

As we head into another school year, many youth are still distance learning, including foster youth and it is important that our caregivers have the support to assist these youth in obtaining a quality education. One way in which resource parents can support the foster youth in their home is to reach out to the youth's teachers, to have conversations about what is expected of the students and their progress. This will create a supportive team for the youth and their educational needs. If more assistance is needed, resource parents should contact the youth's caseworker and/or the school administrators to ask about additional services that the school can provide such as their local Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) and Foster Youth Liaison.

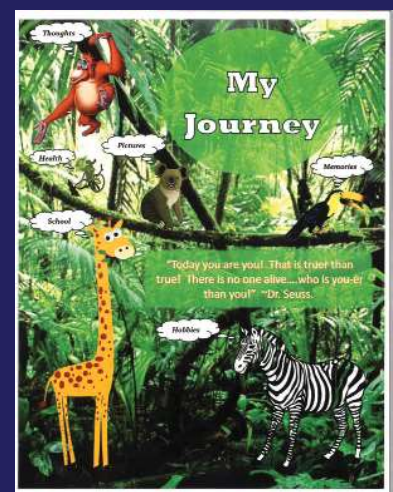


The FYSCP is responsible for providing supportive educational services to help improve positive educational outcomes. Such services include assisting with transfer of health and school records, emancipation training for independent living and ensuring that all foster youth education rights are being upheld, to name a few. This support through FYSCP can also increase placement stability for foster youth. In addition, resource parents can contact the school district's foster youth liaison who can be a direct support for resources that the foster youth can have access to. To find out who the foster youth liaison is for a foster youth in your home or to connect to FYSCP, please contact the youth's social worker.

Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs) are also an effective way to support caregivers and youth in distance and in-person learning. If a foster youth has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the school's teacher, social worker and counselor are vital to the team to offer further support and resources. CFTMs give the opportunity for the whole team, youth included, to have a say in education decisions and what is working and what is not working. Should resource parents want to schedule a CFTM to discuss the foster youth's educational needs, they can contact the primary social worker.

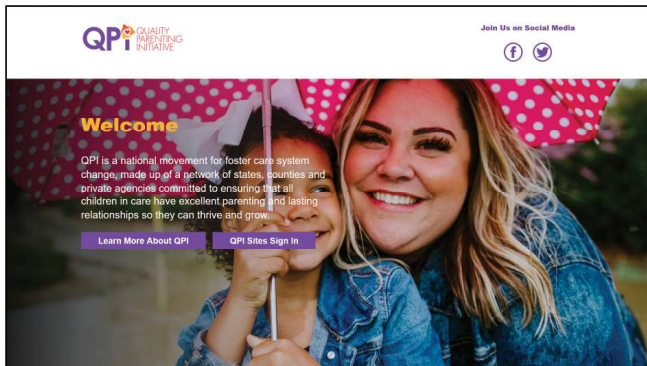
Important Documents for Foster Youth

Documents such as birth certificates and social security cards are widely considered vital in identifying oneself and thus are typically kept in a secure place. For foster youth though, these documents are unfortunately misplaced, lost or not easily accessible due in part to placement changes and the amount of other documents that come with caring for a child in foster care. The Department of Human Services wants to ensure that all important documentation for a foster youth is not only secure but that it travels with them during placement changes. The My Journey Binders can assist in keeping those documents safe and organized. Whether you are utilizing a My Journey Binder or have your own organized method, please ensure that all documents are secure and accessible should a placement change occur or when requested by the social worker.



QPI Websites

What you need to Know



As a Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) county, it is important for Kern resource families to know about the TWO websites that QPI has to offer. QPI's national website site qpi4kids.org has recently been updated to provide a public informational site that gives information about what QPI is, the principles of QPI and how to join the network. Additionally, a members-only site was created to provide information about upcoming webinars, practice exchanges and other events. Members will also have access to presentations from the past national conferences. Members are also provided with a decade's worth of resources comprised of materials from the national office as well as the other QPI sites.

The second QPI website is specific to the participating state. These sites are called QPI Just in Time (JiT) Training websites. These JiT sites offer a broad array of resources for the continuing education of foster/resource families and the staff who support them. Such resources include:

- Training videos to support Quality Parenting
- Training certificates for caregivers who use the videos for their continuing education
- Statewide meeting and training events

To access California's JiT website, visit qpicalifornia.org.



Unusual Incident Report Update

Unusual Incident Report forms are a required form given to all resource parents when a foster youth is placed in the home. An update to this form allows resource parents to document a pregnancy of a foster youth in their care. A reminder that this report needs to be provided to the RFA social worker and to the placement social worker by telephone, e-mail, or fax within 24 hours or by the next business day following the event. Please refer to the Written Directives 11-06(b) for specific information that is required to be reported. Some examples of when to fill out an unusual incident report are:

- The child is scratched, bit, pinched or kicked by another child
- The child is bruised on the shins from being kicked while playing
- When a child runs away
- Truancy
- Pregnancy (newly added)

To obtain an Unusual Incident Report form, please contact your assigned resource family approval social worker.



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