

If you are interested in submitting an article for upcoming newsletters, or have suggestions on improving the newsletter, contact Emily Stewart at steware@kerndhs.com or (661) 873-2303 or Melissa Soin at: (661) 873-2382 or email soinm@kerndhs.com.

Ombudsman Corner

Summer has arrived early this year. I don't know about you but summer is one of my favorite seasons of the year. I so enjoy a relaxing day at the beach, a picnic in the park or family barbecue in the back yard. This means more time in the sun. Did you know that UV Safety Awareness is recognized during the month of July? UV stands for ultraviolet light and it mainly comes from the sun, whereas it also comes from tanning beds and sun lamps. UV light can be harmful; as it may cause vision problems and damage to the eyes, suppression of the immune system, and premature aging of the skin and skin cancer. So as we prepare to spend more time in the sun, let us remember the importance of protecting our eyes and skin. Below are some tips from the American Cancer Society on how to protect yourself and family from the sun:

- Babies younger than 6 months should be kept out of direct sunlight and should wear hats and protective clothing.
- Cover Up: cover up by wearing shade-protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts, pants, hats and sunglasses for eye protection.
- Stay in the Shade: Try staying out of direct sunlight between 10 am and 4pm.
- Use sunscreen: it is recommended that you choose a sunscreen with protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher.

DHS Hosts Resource Appreciation Event

The Department of Human Services' (DHS) annual Resource Family Appreciation Dinner and Training was held on Thursday, May 12 at Coconut Joe's Banquet Hall. Approximately 150 people attended this event, which seeks to honor those that open their hearts and their homes to Kern County's foster children. Dr. Danisha Keating, author of "From Foster to PhD" was the guest speaker for the evening. Dr. Keating's story of her experience in the foster care system as well as becoming a relative caregiver for her siblings emphasized the resilience that helped her achieve success. Dr. Keating also pushed the message of allowing and supporting youth to create their own success, no matter what form that looks like. In addition to Dr. Keating's speech, three families were honored for their outstanding efforts and one community partner was honored for their continued partnership with DHS. We hope everyone enjoyed the event and we look forward to hosting you again next year.



Melissa's Message

Resource Family Friendly Business

The Department of Human Services would like to remind our resource families about 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 is mailed to them once they are approved. 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 entirely FREE to resource families!

A heartwarming thank you goes out to the following businesses who are helping to support our Kern resource families:

Camelot Park Bakersfield, 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, Wendy's and West Coast Barber Shop.

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



Purple Ribbon Month

July is Purple Ribbon Month. The county of Kern declares July Purple Ribbon Month to remind families and caregivers of the dangers of children left alone around motor vehicles. Over 1,000 children have died in hot cars nationwide since 1990. Even the best of parents or caregivers can unknowingly leave a sleeping baby in a car, resulting in injury or even death.

There are a few things you can do to prevent hot car deaths. First, never leave a child alone around a motor vehicle. Secondly, place your purse or keys in your back seat near where your child is buckled in. Thirdly, have another parent or caregiver check-in to make sure you dropped off your child at daycare or school. For more tips about keeping your children safe, visit KidsandCars.org.



Getting to Know ISFC

Written by Administration Coordinator Tony Robertson

In this month's edition of Getting to Know Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC), we are going to focus on how the County of Kern is working to meet the needs of ISFC in placing foster youth with complex needs in resource homes. One of the areas in which Kern County is continually developing is the capacity for Resource Parents who are interested in ISFC services and resource parents who are willing to accept the challenge of accepting placement of youth with behavioral and mental health needs. Kern County has a specialized placement unit comprised of social service supervisors and social service workers solely dedicated to placement of children either newly entering foster care or due to placement disruptions. One of the tools Kern County uses to address this area of need is the Level of Care (LOC) protocol. The LOC process is used to help identify children that are in need of intensified services.

LOC provides resource parents with additional financial resources to ensure the appropriate level of care for foster youth. The LOC protocol matches the individual care and supervision needs of foster children with the level of support provided by a resource parent.

To facilitate ISFC services to resource parents, Kern County has contracted with Foster Family Agency, Kern Bridges Youth Homes (KBYH), Inc. KBYH is accredited through the Council on Accreditation (COA), an international accreditation service that accredits over 1,600 private and public organizations and programs that serve more than 7 million individuals and families in the United States, Canada, and overseas. The program has since served over 34 ISFC youth and currently has 18 ISFC youth in placement. In collaboration with KBYH, Kern County will coordinate the delivery of services including but not

limited to referrals for mental health, education and health services. Each foster youth in the ISFC program will have the full support of the KBYH ISFC team.

Should you choose to care for a foster youth that requires ISFC services, you and the youth will be surrounded by a team of professionals that will assist you in meeting the needs of the youth. Whether it is through counseling/therapy, assisting with appointments or providing you with additional training, the ISFC Kern Bridges team will be at your side every step of the way. The ultimate goal is to provide you with the tools necessary to ensure the success of the program and the support for the foster youth.

For more information regarding the ISFC program, please contact Melissa Soin at (661) 873-2382 or soinm@kerndhs.com.

Foster Youth Clothing Allowance and Clothing Inventory Form

It comes as no surprise that a majority of foster youth that you as resource parents care for, come with little to no personal belongings, most typically including clothing. It is also not uncommon for those youth to have clothing that does not fit them anymore. Resource parents are required to provide age appropriate clothing for youth in their care; monthly payments cover this ongoing need. However there is also an additional annual resource set in place to help. All foster youth are entitled to a clothing allowance on a yearly basis. The initial clothing allowance will be manually dispersed in conjunction with the first non-emergency foster care payment by the Foster Care Human Service Technician assigned. Annual clothing allowances are automatically issued by the state for each foster child during the month of August, which is just in time to meet the budget demand for back to school clothes. For more information about clothing allowances, please contact the youth's primary social worker.

It is important for resource parents and/or youth ten years and older complete a clothing inventory form. A clothing inventory form is required to be completed at time of placement, every three months during placement and when the child leaves your home. Documenting the belongings of each foster youth in your care ensures that those belongings are not lost and remain with the child.

Sentimental items such as baby blankets, stuffed animals or photos may be the only thing these youth have that remind them of home and it is our responsibility to make certain that those items stay with them to provide the youth with a level of comfort when adjusting to new environments.

For questions regarding the clothing allowance or if you are in need of clothing inventory forms, please contact the foster youth's primary social worker.

Foster Youth Educational Rights

As caregivers for foster youth, it is important that you understand and help to support their educational rights. Foster youth often face many challenges when it relates to their education, thus the implementation of these specific rights to ensure that all foster youth have access to receive a quality education. The Foster Youth Educational Rights are listed below; should you have any questions, please contact the foster youth's primary social worker.

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

KERN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

100 E. California Ave., Bakersfield, Ca. 93307

PO Box 511, Bakersfield, Ca. 93302

Recruitment Phone (661) 631-6204

Resourcefamilies@kerndhs.com

Fax (661) 633-7077

www.co.kern.ca.us/dhs/FosterFamilyResources/

