

Advisor

Fall 2011



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Inside this issue

- 2 Hear My Heart Books
- 2 First-Aid and CPR Training
- 3 Update from the Director
- 4 CFFA 2011 Conference Report
- 5 How biological kids are affected
- 6 Helping kids change schools
- 8 The 411 on social media
- 10 The effects of fostering
- 12 Forming a healthy weekday routine
- 13 Celebrating Foster Families
- 13 Don't forget to ask
- 14 Child welfare system renewed
- 14 Reporting expenses made easier
- 15 Solutions for the uneaten lunch
- 15 Crocodile bookmark
- 15 Pumpkin muffin recipe

Hear My Heart Books

Hear My Heart Books publishes literary resources and other empowerment tools that address violence, abandonment, living on the street, gang affiliation, sexual abuse, moving into foster care and other real life circumstances.



HEAR *my* HEART BOOKS Inc.

We call these crisis management tools for children.

These stories are not only for children in crisis, but for all children and for adults as well.

Through the support of our multi-sector professional focus group members who critique and help in the development of the resources, the first story is now available to professionals who work with, and counsel children.

“Jay” has been abandoned by his father, lives in poverty, is responsible for his two younger siblings, and is confused about the value of his father’s gang. Jay struggles with low self-esteem, frustration and anger.

This story depicts empowerment through understanding and acceptance.

The second story will be available this fall:

“Angie” lives with her mom, who struggles with alcohol addiction. Her younger sister has gone to Foster care. Angie is sexually touched by one of mom’s friends. When Angie tells her mom she isn’t believed.

What can she do? How can Angie continue to love and protect her mom and keep herself safe? Who can she turn to for help?

This story portrays sexual abuse and speaks to the issue of trust.

Our objective is to help foster healthy child development and offer children tools that can educate them and teach them life and coping skills. Through storytelling, productive dialogue and interactive activities we hope to raise awareness, educate and build empathy among children, and provide a point of intervention and prevention to those in need.

Fawn Nielsen is a Saskatchewan author who started “Hear My Heart Books Inc.” in 2005 to focus on social issues that affect children and other vulnerable populations. During her years as an emergency care home provider, a foster parent and a group facilitator for adult survivors of abuse, she recognized a huge gap in resources for those living in crisis and/or difficult circumstances. For more information, visit hearmyheartbooks.ca

First-Aid and CPR Training

The Ministry of Social Services and Saskatchewan Foster Families Association are partnering to offer First-Aid and CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) training to all foster families in the province. This training will soon be mandatory prior to approval of any new foster homes and will also be mandatory for all existing foster families. It will be offered at various locations throughout the province, beginning in the fall and winter. Your resource worker will be in contact with you in the coming months to provide further details.

This is an excellent opportunity for foster families as it teaches valuable lifesaving skills which will better prepare and equip us as caregivers!



Update from the SFFA Director, Deb Davies

With Fall upon us, the kids back in school and families adjusting to routine again, the SFFA Provincial office has continued to be busy supporting our members.

Over the past number of months, the Provincial Association has been working in partnership with the Ministry of Social Services to identify education and policies that will better support our members and the children and youth placed in their care. Foster parents play a very important role as part of the professional team, and the SFFA continues to be committed in doing what is needed to support our members.

The week of October 16 – 22 is National Foster Families Week!

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Provincial Office staff, we want to thank you for the commitment made each and every day to the children placed in your care. This year's kick-off to Foster Families Week will be held in Saskatoon on October 17. Please call your Ministry office to inquire as to when events will be held in your area.

THE SFFA NEEDS YOUR HELP! We are actively recruiting volunteers for your region. The SFFA volunteer programs provide important support to our members. SFFA Volunteer training is being held on November 18 & 19 at the Saskatoon Travelodge. This training is for all new and existing SFFA Volunteers. If you are interested in providing support to fellow foster parents in the following programs, please call Paul Bunz, the Caregiver Training Consultant, for more information at 1-888-276-2880.

Please note: All volunteers must pre-register for training with the SFFA Caregiver Training Consultant.

Peer Support

Peer Support volunteers are responsible for facilitating and maintaining an effective communication system between the Foster Families, Social Workers and the Ministry of Social Services. In order to provide effective services for Foster Families, any information a volunteer may receive, as a result of being a Saskatchewan Foster Families Association Peer Support Person, is highly confidential.

PRIDE Team Trainer

PRIDE Trainers are responsible to work together in partnership with the Ministry of Social Services in the delivery of PRIDE training to all Foster Families.

Rate Board Program

Rate Board volunteers work in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Services. The panel determines financial compensation that may be paid to foster families for the extra services provided by Foster parents in providing care to the children placed in their homes.

IMPORTANT REMINDER TO ALL MEMBERS!
In October 2009, the SFFA took on the responsibility of assessing all damages that occur in foster homes by children placed in their care.

To make a claim you must first contact your Ministry of Social Services Resource Worker to report the incident.

Your Resource Worker will then refer you to SFFA Senior Advocate (1-888-276-288) who will ask for a brief description of the occurrence(s) and gather any other information that is necessary for the assessment of your claim. Your information will then be submitted to Barry Fraser, Damage Assessor for the process to begin.

If you have any questions regarding a report of damages or questions concerning damages that have occurred in your foster home, please call Barry Fraser, SFFA Damage Assessor. Barry will be available on Wednesdays at the Provincial Office and can be reached at 1-888-276-2880.

DID YOU KNOW... that you could receive a Referral Fee of \$200.00 for referring new foster homes to the Ministry?

The Ministry shall pay a referral fee of \$200.00 to a foster family who refers a new family. Payment shall be made following approval of the new foster home and placement of the first child.

Procedures

The referent family contacts their resource worker to request payment, following approval and child placement in the home of the new foster family.

- Payment can only be made to one referent.
- The new foster family is responsible for verifying the referent foster family.
- There is no limit on the number of new referrals that a foster family can receive payment for, provided the new families become approved and have accepted placement of a child.

In closing, on behalf of the Board of Directors and the Provincial Office Staff, we would like to say thank you! Thank you to each of you for opening your homes and your hearts in providing a safe and nurturing home for the children in our province requiring out of home care.

Be sure to contact your local to see what events they have planned for the season. There are barbecues, potlucks, Christmas parties and other events



happening around the province, which are a great way to have fun and meet fellow foster parents, foster children and your local and provincial SFFA representatives.

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Discounts for Foster Families

Due to the overwhelming support of Saskatchewan businesses for the Saskatchewan Foster Families Discount Program, the discount list and complete details of the program are available on our website at www.sffa.sk.ca. You will find over 40 businesses offering generous discounts. Remember, in order to receive the discounts, foster families must show their membership card and one piece of identification.

If you know of a local business that may be interested in supporting our program, please call Pam Kostyk at 1-306-975-1580.

Canadian Foster Families Association President's 2011 Conference Report

Our 2011 annual conference – “Building Bridges” was held May 9 – 15th, 2011 in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, hosted by the PEI Federation of Foster Families. Among the 100 plus participants were foster parents – both current and retired, youth workers, social workers and organizational members.

The first of the week the CFFA held their business meetings which included the CFFA Executive meeting, the Board of Director's meeting, and the Provincial/Territorial President's and Executive Director's meetings. During the National Working group a brainstorming session was held in the morning. The Information collected will be used for our National Project, Every Child Matters. Our last meeting to be held was our Annual General Meeting. The Safeguarding committee held several meetings to work on updating of the Safeguarding manual.

Elections were held during our AGM and the Executive remains the same. Mary Smith, 1st Vice President, Sylvia Thompson, 2nd Vice President, Sharon Joyal, 3rd Vice President, Nancy MacFarlane, Treasurer, Connie Mulholland, Secretary, and myself as President. I look forward to working with this Executive in the coming year. I believe we are a great team!!!

A variety of invited guests spoke to the participants throughout the conference. Robert Ghiz, Premier of PEI brought greetings from the Government and welcomed us to PEI, as did the Honorable Janice Sherry, Minister of Communications, Services, Seniors & Labor, and Sharon Cameron, Deputy Minister of Social Services and Seniors.

Many of our evenings were filled with events to get to know each other better, and to have an opportunity to network amongst ourselves. One evening the PEI Federation of Foster Families hosted a “Kitchen Party” where all donned lobster bibs and enjoyed fresh PEI lobster and garlic mussels and all the fixings while being entertained by some local fiddlers. It was a wonderful evening with a chance for all the delegates to have some fun and socialize amongst each other.

Our banquet was held the last evening of the conference. The CFFA presented the PEI Federation of Foster Families with a plaque to thank them for hosting our conference. The draw for the 2 Westjet tickets was held during the banquet and the lucky winner was from the North West Territories.

“Hats off to the PEI Federation of Foster Families Conference Committee for all their hard work. It takes a great deal of commitment and time to put on such a conference. You all did a wonderful job, with everyone feeling right at home and very catered to! Next year's conference is being hosted by the Newfoundland/Labrador Foster Families Association May 28 – June 3, 2012 in St. John's Newfoundland.

Sheila Durnford, President, CFFA

Won't my biological kids be affected by foster care? By Christie Erwin

Yes. I cannot tell you how many times I have been asked this question by well-meaning, concerned people who are wrestling with the thought of becoming foster parents. "Shouldn't we wait until our kids are older?" "Won't this have a negative effect on them?" "Won't they pick up bad behavior, bad language, and just bad stuff in general from foster kids?"

My children have learned at a young age about the inequality of life.

Okay, so this question is a two-edged sword. On one point is the fact that kids who come into foster care have experienced trauma of some kind (through no fault of their own) or they wouldn't be in foster care, and yes, that trauma could manifest itself in unsavory and unwelcome ways. But on the other point is the fact that our biological children will never be the same once they have been intricately involved in the family foster care mission. In fact, it will shape who they become.

I know this because I am living it! When we began fostering over 17 years ago, we had three children: Chase, 6, Caleb, 3, and Cara, 2. Connor was born a year and a half into the process. These precious ones are now 23, 20, 19 and 15 3/4 respectively. And let me tell you about them . . .

All four of them love kids. Last year our family did a television interview for a local TV station. The reporter asked Chase (who was newly engaged) if he and his fiancé had talked about fostering. He said, "Yes, we'll be foster parents at some point." (That was the first we had heard of it!) Cara and I were talking a few weeks ago and she said, "Well, of course, I'll foster, Mom, it's been my life, why wouldn't I?" Connor has always said he would foster and adopt. Caleb was my only one that I thought might not foster or adopt—not because he doesn't love kids, but because he is an independent guy with a love for foreign missions. He was at home the other day and I mentioned something about foster care in general. He said, "I don't think I will foster, but I definitely think I will adopt!"

My kids growing up to carry on some foster care or adoption tradition never entered my mind and is certainly not the point. The point is foster care affects who our children become. My children have had to open up their hearts and their lives to strangers. They have had to share

their parents with over 45 other children who have floated in and out of their lives over the past 17 years, and have done so graciously and compassionately. My children have learned at a young age about the inequity of life; that things aren't fair and that children sometimes suffer at the hands of their own parents. They have had to learn early about pre-marital sex and unplanned pregnancies and addiction and child abuse. They have watched Jeff and I struggle with the emotions that come with fighting for the very life of a child and they have cried with us when we have lost the fight. They have seen their parents' imperfections and the way in which a merciful heavenly Father can use them anyway. They have joined hands with us in prayer countless times and they joined hearts with us when we all embraced a new daughter/sister. They've been babysitters, diaper changers, drivers, confidants, and shoulders to cry on. They have literally held me up in times when I couldn't hold myself. They have truly poured themselves out so that the children who come into our home are cared for.

Are our kids perfect? No way. They are just kids and now young adults. But, I realize that because of God's call on our lives, they have been given an opportunity; a gift, and they have chosen to enthusiastically unwrap it.

If God is calling you to foster or adopt, take a step of faith and give your children a gift. Will it be easy? No. Will it require sacrifice? Yes. Will it be worth it in the end? Absolutely.

Christie Erwin's deep love for children led her and husband, Jeff, to become foster parents in 1993, for a private, non-profit adoption agency. After fostering for eleven years with the private agency, the Erwin's became foster parents for the Arkansas Department of Children and Family Services in 2004. They have fostered more than forty children over the past seventeen years. The Middle Mom is Christie's story. It is the culmination of years of seeing the heartbreak of children in need and a call for foster and adoptive families who will love, nurture and provide for them. Christie is a 2009 Congressional Coalition on Adoption "Angel in Adoption" award winner. She is the Chairman of the Pulaski County Adoption Coalition and Coordinator of the Pulaski County Heart Gallery as well as a founding member of The C.A.L.L. (Children of Arkansas Loved for a Lifetime). The Erwin's live in Little Rock with their five children.

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Helping kids in care change schools

Children who are in care often face educational challenges that require a great deal of attention and support from foster parents. These children who are traumatized by the abuse and neglect that brings them into the system also deal with the trauma of being removed from their homes. They bring these experiences into the classroom and often find education secondary to their need to deal with the emotional challenges brought about by their life experiences.

In the real world of foster care, an abrupt transition to a new home is frequently a necessity.

Studies show that children with multiple home placements (and thus often in multiple schools) gave a low rate of graduation from high school. Reading levels on average are lower for children in foster care. They need extra support and assistance to succeed in school. Foster parents are faced with the challenge of supporting these vulnerable children during school transitions.

In an ideal world, a child who is placed in new foster home would have the time to adjust to the new physical setting and neighborhood, get to know the family, and learn the new household routines before entering school. Foster parents would have time to guide their new family members through their personal and educational transition into a new school.

In the real world of foster care, an abrupt transition to a new home is

frequently a necessity. This transfer to a new home happens at anytime – including during the school year and on days when the foster parents have to work. Often the families and workers don't have the luxury of time to prepare the kids for the experience of going to a new school. They need to be registered and begin school upon placement in new homes, sometimes within the following day of that placement.



Here are some things you can do as a foster parent to make sure that the school transition is the best it can be.

Preparing for school

- Get to know the local schools and their locations if you are not familiar with them. Most foster parents enroll their child in public schools, but you may also choose a private, parochial or charter school if the child's parents and social worker also think that's a good idea.
- If appropriate and approved by the social worker, invite the child's parent to accompany you to the school. Involving the child's parent from the beginning may help the child make a smooth transition and

helps build respect.

- Obtain any health forms and immunization records from the child's parent or your social worker as soon as possible. They are required for school registration. You may have to schedule physician, dentist or optometrist visits.
- Work with your social worker to obtain the necessary signatures from the parent or legal guardian. Schools vary as to how strict they are about who is able to sign for what activities.
- Learn what forms you can legally sign. Often caseworkers recommend that foster parents cross out "parent or guardian" under the signature line on any form and enter "foster parent" in bold letters with their signature.
- Consult with your caseworker about an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) if the child you foster is in special education.
- Keep copies of all school forms that you sign in a confidential file, as well as any paperwork that you get from the school. Work with the child's parents about signing permission forms and school communications. You can become a mentor for the birth parent, if he or she isn't already very involved with the school system.

Preparing the child

- Practice your name, address and phone number with new children in your home, whether the children are six or 16. Make sure that they have a written copy of your name, address, place of employment, telephone

numbers and any other pertinent information. Put a copy of this information in their backpacks or a secure place for younger children where they know they can find the information.

- Take the child with you to the school when you register, whether he is six or 16.
- Show your child the route to school or the bus stop. If possible, consider taking her to school the first day or two or introducing her to the bus driver.
- If possible, introduce your kids to the teacher, the principal and other school staff before the first day.
- Tour the school with the child and familiarize him with his classrooms, locker, gym, library and cafeteria. Some schools arrange a school tour for older children or have another student show them around.
- Get to know the teachers. Introduce yourself and tell them that you are a foster parent. Make sure they have your contact information, including cell phone and email address.
- If children are in special education classes or have other support teachers, get to know those teachers as well.
- Prepare children for lessons about genealogy and their family history so that they can participate in these lessons in the most comfortable way they can. Share with teachers that these assignments may be difficult for your placement child as well as other children not living with biological families.
- Help children develop an age appropriate story with which



Help children develop an age appropriate story with which they are comfortable.

they are comfortable so that they can respond to questions others may ask.

- Learn what the extracurricular activities are at the school, and encourage the children you foster to become active in one or more of these activities.

Working with the School

- Remember that you are an advocate for the child. Work with the school and communicate with them assertively, while also recognizing the constraints the schools have. Remember that teachers have many other children in their classrooms and their time is limited. However, they may be very willing to give special assistance to children when they are aware of their challenging situations.
- Talk to school librarians and suggest books about foster care and foster children.
- Visit the school for open houses

and volunteer there, if possible. If there is not enough time to bake for bake sales or make classroom treats, buy some snacks to send with your child. Studies show that when parents are involved in the schools, their kids do better.

- Talk with the teacher or guidance counselor about the behaviors of the children that result from their difficult backgrounds without violating confidentiality. Know the guidelines for confidentiality. It often helps to tell teachers information about what some kids in care experience in general, rather than your child specifically. (i.e. Many children in foster care have had multiple placements, making school and friendships difficult for them.)
- Educate classroom teachers and other staff about foster care. Many may know little about foster care and the obstacles kids in care encounter.
- Talk to school librarians and suggest books about foster care and foster children.

With thoughtful preparation and support, you can help ease the transition to a new school when children come to your home. Talk to the children in your care regularly about their school experiences and maintain good communication with school staff.

Reprinted with credit from 'The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center (FCARC)' and 'Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Inc.' The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center (FCARC) began in June 2005 as an important part of the Kids First Initiative.

the 411 on Social Media, Networking and Texting



“I get frustrated when my niece and nephew are tappity tap tapping away in their own worlds,” says Johnnie, a relative caregiver and foster parent. “I feel left out, until I remember that I really wasn’t so different when I was that age. We didn’t have cell phones and computers, but we still had our own worlds and, above all, we wanted our privacy.”

Many parents have opted to set up specific rules and guidelines about internet access for youth in their home.

What exactly is social media anyhow?

Social media is any form of communication between people and the internet. It’s a large list of online activities that include:

- Talking (using Voice Over Internet Protocol or VOIP)
- Sharing media files like pictures and videos
- Social networking
- Video gaming
- Web logs or “blogs”

While many of us are familiar with Facebook or YouTube, in reality, there are too many social media outlets to mention. Focus on the popular websites for now, but know that what’s popular can change quickly, and you always want to stay a little ahead of your kids if possible. (Or

okay, not too many steps behind.)

Popular social technology definitions and destinations

Social Networking websites like Facebook and MySpace are used as ways to communicate, share pictures, music and videos. Facebook has become increasingly popular over the past five years and has millions of users worldwide. It requires users to have an individual e-mail account and be above the age of 13. Once a person has a Facebook account, he or she can “friend” people by accepting requests. The site has several security settings that may hide or not hide each user’s information. For example, in the Spring of 2010, Facebook changed its default settings to make it much easier for people to see other people’s information, but a lot of people weren’t aware of the change that took place. It’s crucial to know how to set and check account settings.

Blogs are basically online journaling websites. A blog is similar to Facebook and MySpace, but is more focused. Think of a blog as an online diary or an extended holiday newsletter. There are privacy settings for blogs so you can control who can view them. Blogs can display pictures, text, videos and links to other sites.

MMOGs (Video Gaming) stands for Massively Multiplayer Online Game.

Some of the popular games are Crossfire, World of Warcraft, Doom and SimCity. Today’s MMOGs can have thousands of users worldwide playing one specific game online at a time. Often MMOGs are played on computers, cell phones and with video game units like the Xbox, Wii and PlayStation.

Johnnie says she didn’t realize at first that when her kids started to play online video games, they were also “chatting” with other players. That “chat” led to her niece talking (on her cell phone) to a person claiming to be a 24-year-old man in Texas (or possibly a 45-year old woman in Arizona since no one really knows anything about anyone online). This person ultimately told Johnnie to butt out—he was going to marry her niece as soon as she turned 18. “And this,” says Johnnie, “is how today’s world is not at all like the world I grew up in as a teen!”

Instant Messaging (IMing) is a way to communicate with others online. The cool thing about IMing is that you can have online real time text chats (private conversations) with one or more people. IMing can be done within browsers such as Yahoo or with services like Twitter or AOL. Certain websites like Skype let users have conversations using

video calling technology, as well, if you have a video camera. There is a specific IM text language known as SMS language, which stands for Short Message Service. If you understand what LOL means, then you've already encountered this language. BTW (by the way) LOL means "laughing out loud."

Text messaging or texting is a form communication between cell phones over cell phone networks. Texting also uses the SMS language and is extremely popular. Many people find texting quicker and more effective than talking.

Video and picture sharing websites like YouTube, Flickr and Photobucket let account users upload videos and pictures from various electronic devices like cell phones, cameras and video recorders. YouTube is a public website, and users are allowed to watch videos without having an account. To post something on YouTube, however, you need to an account, and that allows you to control privacy settings. YouTube videos can also be shared and cross-posted on other websites.

Twitter is a social networking service that allows users to provide small updates, messages or entries using less than 140 characters using the SMS text language. The messages, once posted, are called "tweets."

Twitter also allows users to cross-post and share on other websites.

Forums and message boards provide places on the internet for people to discuss, meet or ask questions, usually about one main subject. There are thousands of message boards and forums. Some require that you become a member and have a user name and password before joining. Forums and message boards are not done in real time, meaning users have to wait for others to read their message and respond.



Foster care and social media questions

Many foster parents have asked if there are any specific things that they should know about social media, networking and texting. There are a few basic principles that foster families should apply. Here are a few frequently asked questions:

How should I maintain confidentiality about the youth placed in my home on social networking websites like Facebook?

As an approved foster parent, you must always maintain confidentiality

about any youth placed in your home and their family. This means that pictures and any information about the youth placed in your home and their family should never be posted or written anywhere others have access to that information. This is especially important online for social media and social networking sites like Facebook.

If a youth in care owns a cell phone and/or portable gaming device before they came to my home, can they use those items all the time in my home?

If a youth owns something like a cell phone or handheld gaming device, those items belong to the youth and may not be damaged or destroyed.

Are youth in care allowed to have e-mail, Facebook accounts, blogs or YouTube accounts?

Yes, youth in care are able to have online accounts as long as they meet the minimum guidelines for the website. However, foster parents don't have to provide accessibility to the internet in their home. Many parents have opted to set up specific rules and guidelines about internet access for youth in their home.

A youth placed in my home is posting pictures and information about himself on a social networking website. Is this allowed?

Yes, youth in care are allowed to post pictures and information about themselves anywhere anytime they want. Youth in care do not have to follow the confidentiality guidelines that licensed foster parents need to, except when it pertains to other youth in care in the home.



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Am I allowed to develop or use a "Family Internet Safety Agreement" as a foster parent?

Yes! Parents need to stay educated about social media and have some household rules or guidelines for family members. Ideally, members of the youth's team will be part of the agreement, so that everyone is clear about what's allowed and what isn't.

The advantages of social technology

Social technology has provided many of us the ability to be more connected to each other than ever before. For most of our youth, this technology has become a part of

their daily culture, and social media plays a big role in their life as they learn how to develop relationships and their identity.

Johnnie says, "When my niece got into some mischief while on CrossFire, my gut reaction was to restrict all internet and cell phone use. But her social skills aren't very good, and I actually found myself encouraging her to go on Facebook so that she could be 'friends' with the people at school and not be so isolated. They tend to ignore her at school, but Facebook is a kinder environment in some respects." Johnnie goes on to say that she was able to use the CrossFire incident as a "teachable moment."

Some foster parents say a surprising

bonus is being able to connect with their kids' birth parents. "It's been great!" says one parent. "They didn't respond to voice mail and emails, but they always text me right back. I use AOL's instant messenger for my computer to text their phones, and I get the texts back on my computer."

Even though we adults may not "get it," the technology available today will be the building blocks for future applications and social media interfaces.

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The effects of fostering on biological children

While there have been numerous studies done on foster children integrating into new homes and families, there has been little research done on how fostering affects the biological children in foster families. Fostering brings many changes for biological children and preparing them for the changes in the household is essential for healthy adjustment. While foster families are able to offer stability to foster children, instability develops amongst the fostering family. New patterns of behaviour and the unpredictability of placements create uncertainty for the family. Biological children face the increased responsibility of not only working through their own issues, but caring for the foster children and protecting their parents from undue stress.

Preparing your biological children for fostering

Although it wouldn't be possible to fully prepare biological children for all of the changes that fostering might bring, it is important that you provide them with as much information as possible.

What can I do?

Involve all family members in decision making by holding regular family meetings. Encourage everyone to share their feelings and design a family checklist of what will be an acceptable new foster placement. Maintain family roles and preserve family time. Be open and honest



about how fostering might affect the family and the possible behaviours or language the foster children may exhibit.

Sharing their parents

Foster parents naturally focus attention on the foster children in their care because of their specific needs and because it takes time to develop trust and adjustment time to the family. This process is complicated by the reality of the child's past. Besides taking more of the parents' time and attention, there may be a focus on the foster child through participating in outside

activities or purchasing new items for him/her. Biological children may feel forgotten. They may feel frustrated or resentful of the lost attention and may start to withdraw or misbehave to try and regain their parents' attention. They may be reluctant to voice their feelings for fear of a negative reaction from their parents or for fear that they would cause their parents more stress.

What can I do?

Always set aside time alone with your biological children. Try to go on weekly outings with each of them, even if it is to go shopping, run errands or to go for a walk. Encourage your biological children to discuss their feelings, whether they are good or bad. Use respite if possible and consider taking breaks between placements.

Sharing their home

In addition to sharing their parents, biological children must share their home, their toys, their family activities and their friendship. This may or may not be accepted gratefully by the foster child and can lead to resentment from the biological children who have had to open their world to this new child. They may resent the foster child for not being grateful for what is being offered to them. Biological children experience a loss of time and attention from their parents, a loss of possessions and their personal space and even a loss of innocence.

What can I do?

Praise your biological children in the roles they do well and do not burden them with a new role of care for the foster child unless they really want to take on this role. Make sure that your biological children have personal items that they are not required to share. If possible, try minimizing the sharing of bedrooms. Have extra clothes so that your biological children do not have to share theirs. Have a special space in the home where your biological children can escape for alone time. Give each child a special container or space to store items that are important to them. Encourage the children to think of situations where they will be able to keep their identity separate from the new placements in the home such as entering a new grade at school or joining a sports team. Ask your biological children what family traditions and routines are most important to them and adhere to them.

Confidentiality

Biological children are asked to respect the confidentiality

of the children in care yet in turn they often experience a significant loss of privacy. With fostering, there are suddenly strangers living in the home and caseworkers or other officials coming on a regular basis. Many children may feel that in addition to the foster children watching them, others may be keeping a closer eye on them as well. Boundaries may not always be respected, leading to frustration and anger.

What can I do?

Explain to biological children that there are things that you know about them that they wouldn't want others to know and that there would be no reason for others to know and that this is the same for children in care. Talk about behaviours they should watch out for or beware of and the importance of talking to you about them. Have rules about knocking before entering and establish guidelines for the family to respect privacy.

Gains and Losses

Biological children struggle with having a caring attitude as well as resentment toward fostering. Children often equate love with the amount of attention that is given, and new foster placements demand an incredible amount of attention, especially in the initial adjustment period. Biological children may have a picture perfect fantasy of what fostering will be like and the experience of adding a sibling, which may lead to disillusion and disappointment. Conversely, changes in placement may illicit deep feelings of loss and grief for the biological children who have opened their hearts to the children in care.

What can I do?

Provide opportunities for bonding and growing the sibling relationship such as playing games together or doing things as a family. Find things they share in common and remind your children of reasons why they were excited to get a new sibling. Talk about the five stages of grief with your children and seek counseling if your child is struggling with sadness after a placement change. Have a good-bye ritual and keep mementos of the child who is leaving. Remember past foster children throughout the year and take a break between placements to allow time to heal.

This information has been adapted from 'All in the Family Home: The Biological Children of Parents Who Foster' by Judith Heidbuurt.

Form a healthy weekday routine with 3 simple steps:

by Patricia O'Keefe Girbal, Registered Dietitian

The school year is well under way and children need to eat healthy foods and get adequate exercise to maintain good health and do their very best at school. Start following these 3 simple steps now to instill healthy habits throughout the school year.



1 Ideas for breakfast

Studies have shown that children who eat a healthy breakfast are able to concentrate and perform better in school. Parents and older siblings can act as healthy role models by eating breakfast with them. If time is a restraint, switch some of the morning chores to the night before to ensure there is enough time to eat breakfast. Here are some healthy breakfast tips for your child:

- Make a parfait. Layer low fat yogurt with berries and top with granola.
- Pair whole grain cereals, containing ≥ 5 grams of fiber and ≤ 10 grams of sugar, with low fat or fat free milk. Top with fresh or dried fruit.
- Have a special breakfast once a week featuring smoothies, pancakes, waffles, or omelets.
- For smoothies, blend low fat milk with frozen berries and a banana (or any fruit) and blend for 30 seconds.
- Serve unusual breakfast foods once in a while like last night's leftovers.
- Opt for a whole fruit instead of fruit juice (but always choose 100% fruit juice when splurging).

Healthy snacks are a very important component to a child's healthy diet. Snacks provide the energy a growing child needs between meals.

2 Planning healthy school snacks

Healthy snacks are a very important component to a child's healthy diet. Snacks provide the energy a growing child needs between meals. Healthy snacks can be a great way to add fun and flavor to your child's lunch box. Here are some ideas of simple and healthy back to school snacks:

- Dip it. Pair cherry tomatoes or cucumber slices with your child's favorite dip. Try hummus, applesauce, or salsa.
- Spread it. Pair grapes or apple slices with nut butter, such as almond or peanut butter.
- Cube it. Children love finger foods so try cubing honeydew, sweet potato, or watermelon for easy snacking.
- Skew it. Make fun snack kabobs by skewing cubes of low fat cheese with grapes on pretzels sticks.
- Discover it. Expose your child to new foods as snacks, such as edamame or sugar snap peas.
- Mix it. Create a trail mix by combining different nuts and seeds with dried fruit. Try almonds, sunflower seeds, and dried apricots.



3 Staying active throughout the school year

Regular physical exercise makes it easier for your child to maintain a healthy weight, which allows them to move with greater confidence and skill. Exercise also plays an important role in helping your child sleep better, which can impact their academic performance. It is recommended for children to be active at least 60 minutes daily.



- Establish a routine, just like reading a book before bedtime, and set aside special time for staying active.
- Let your child help with household chores, such as

raking leaves, watering plants, or walking the dog.

- Integrate physical activity into daily life. Encourage active spur-of-the-moment physical activity, such as dancing to music. When outside the home, try walking instead of driving or taking the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator.
- Turn a family activity into a learning experience.
- Go on a nature hike and discover different trees, birds, and flowers.

Regular exercise makes it easier for your child to maintain a healthy weight, which allows them to move with greater confidence and skill.

- Visit a local farm and learn about seasonal fruits and vegetables.
- Set up a mini scavenger hunt in the backyard and invite the neighbourhood children over.
- Limit screen time to no more than 1-2 hours per day.
- One of the best things a parent can do to help improve their child's health is to be a positive role model. Whether it is staying active or eating a healthy diet, children can be influenced by behavior and, luckily, they can pick up some of your healthy habits.

Celebrating National Foster Family Week: October 16-22

As National Foster Family Week is celebrated in your Province, the Canadian Foster Family Association (CFFA) would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank all foster parents and families in the Province. Your commitment and dedication throughout the year to foster children and youth in your community and opening your homes providing children and youth with a safe, caring and nurturing home environment is so very important.

I hope that you will have the opportunity to take part in the recognition events planned in your community. These events provide a special time for you as foster parents to be recognized and thanked for your incredible work throughout the year.

On behalf of the Canadian Foster Family Association, thank you for making a positive difference in so many young people's lives. Take a moment to give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done.

Enjoy your special week!!

Sheila Durnford, President, CFFA



Don't forget to ask!

Foster Parents often wish they had asked more questions before accepting a child into their home. The list below is designed to assist you in your discussion with the Ministry. (All questions do not apply to all placements.)

- Why is this child being placed?
- What is the child's understanding of the reason for placement/separation from his family?
- What are the child's previous placement experiences?
- What is the family situation—parent's names?
- Where are the parents?
- Will the parents visit? Where? How often?
- Are there siblings? Where are they?
- Will there be pre-placement visits?
- What is the plan for the child? Length of placement?
- What is the child's legal status?
- When was the child's last physical?
- What is the child's health? Allergies? Medication? Last dental check up?
- Who is the child's doctor? Their medical number?
- Is religion important to the child?
- What school and what grade does the child attend?
- Are there school problems?
- Does the child have any special behavioural problems? Habits?
- If this child has been sexually abused, is he at risk to himself/others?
- What will help the child feel at home? Favourite food, comforting toy?
- Will there be a clothing grant? Are the child's clothes adequate/appropriate?
- When will the social worker visit/call?
- Who do I call after hours?
- What do you (social worker) expect of me (foster parent)?
- Will I receive the form Confidential Information for Foster Parents Regarding Child Placement?

Province works with partners to renew child welfare system

The Government of Saskatchewan today signed two historical Letters of Understanding (LOUs) with its partners from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) and the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan (MNS) pledging to renew the child welfare system.

“These letters confirm that we will work together as partners to change the child welfare system for the long-term well-being of First Nations and Métis children and all other children—a commitment that I am proud to be a part of,” Social Services Minister June Draude said.

“The greatest gift a parent receives from the Creator is a child, therefore we must cherish this gift through providing necessities for life, mentoring, education and protection,” FSIN Vice-Chief Lyle Whitefish said. “It takes a community to raise a child. Furthermore, with the willingness of this current provincial government we will forge a brighter future for our children and future generations.”

“We want all Métis children and youth to reach their full potential and be supported by healthy and safe families and communities as they grow and learn,” President of Métis Nation-Saskatchewan

Robert Doucette said. “This Letter of Understanding will acknowledge the joint dialogue and decision-making process we must undertake to begin acting on the general and systemic issues related to the safety and well-being of Métis children and their families.”

In addition to signing the LOUs, Minister Draude also provided an update on the response to the Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Panel’s report and announced plans to develop a flexible response pilot in Saskatoon.

“The child welfare review was extensive and made 12 recommendations to government,” Draude said. “We are taking those recommendations very seriously. They, along with these new partnerships, form the basis of our high-level plan to move forward and address key recommendations from the panel’s report.”

The Child Welfare Transformation Strategy, part of the Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda (see attached background), will guide the change in child welfare focused on the themes of working differently, prevention and renewal.

“In addition, the flexible response model we will be piloting in Saskatoon is another important step

in protecting our children, supporting their families and transforming the current system,” Draude said.

Flexible response recognizes that “one size fits all” does not work in response to child maltreatment situations. The model allows for different responses to reports of child abuse and neglect depending on the level of urgency and severity. The goal is to support more families to safely care for their children. The model will be better suited to concerns about child neglect, which currently make up 70 per cent of the caseload in Social Services, and will allow for a better response to more serious child protection cases.

“Establishing partnerships between the province, FSIN and MNS is a critical first step in the transformation of Saskatchewan’s child welfare system, and signals commitment by all parties to real and positive change,” Draude said. “The next steps will involve developing detailed plans with our partners, as the fundamental change we envision must be a shared responsibility.”

For more information, contact:

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Reporting expenses made easier

The Ministry of Social Services (MSS) has revised the Caregiver Expense Form and created a Babysitting & Daycare Monthly Reporting Form. The Ministry has re-designed the expense form in an effort to expedite payments, as well as making it easier for caregivers to report expenses. The Babysitting & Daycare Monthly Reporting Form has been created for use in processing monthly child care expenses to replace a handwritten service provider (i.e. daycare) invoice. It is not needed if the service provider provides a pre-printed invoice form.

The pilot locations in Saskatoon and Nipawin in April and May were successful with very positive feedback. As a result, the new forms will be implemented in each service area and scheduled to roll out from September to November, 2011. Each foster family will initially be provided with the new forms prior to the implementation date in their area. The old expense form currently available online will be updated to the new form. After the scheduled implementation in each area, the old forms will no longer be used by the Ministry so any old forms should be destroyed. The roll out dates of the new forms in each area are: Northeast – September 19, South – October 11, Northwest – November 7, and Center – November 21.

Solutions for the uneaten lunch box by Anne Kolker MS, Registered Dietitian



If you do pack a nutritious lunch and find it barely touched or realize that the cafeteria lunch is ignored because your daughter is starving when she gets home from school, relax. Children like to be social and get out and play, ignoring their stomachs. Studies have shown that schools who schedule recess prior to lunch have less plate waste (i.e., more food is consumed after playtime). You could become an advocate for your school and work with the PTO to change the lunch period. However, this is a big task and could really be an uphill battle.

The easiest thing to do is just offer these healthy lunch ideas at home for a healthy after-school snack. Rather than threaten them to eat their school lunch, just serve up healthy snacks when they get home (grapes, sliced peaches, nectarines, low-fat mozzarella cheese sticks, etc). They may not grab the orange, but if you have it peeled and ready on the plate when they arrive, you may be surprised that they want more. Offer grapefruit with sprinkled sugar along with a grapefruit spoon (kids get a kick out of utensils like this).

Crocodile Bookmark

Nobody could be scared of this crocodile! Made out of craft foam, your children will be keen to get reading so that they can make use of this craft!



You will need:

- Green craft foam
- Black pen
- Wiggle eyes
- Glue

Instructions:

Cut out a rectangle about 3cm by 12cm from green foam. Cut out another rectangle about 3cm by 5cm, shaping this one into the crocodile's face (use the photo as a guide). Put a strip of glue at the top of the first rectangle and stick on the face. Glue on two wiggle eyes. Use the black pen to draw on the face markings.

October 16 – 22 is Foster Families Week

A time to recognize the amazing foster families in our province for the quality care provided to children and youth in need.

Pumpkin Muffins & Cream Cheese Icing

Ingredients:

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 3 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 1/2 cup canola oil

Directions:

In a large bowl, combine the flour, pumpkin pie spice, baking soda and salt. Beat the eggs, sugar, pumpkin and oil; stir in dry ingredients just until moistened. Pour in 24 greased or paper-lined muffin cups. Bake at 350° for 20-22 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool 5 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks.

Cream Cheese Icing:

- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar



Yum, tastes like a cupcake, but called a muffin meaning you can eat it for breakfast! They're great for freezing too—in case your don't need 24 at one time?



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