

NEWS FROM YOUR PEER LIAISON

DECEMBER



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IFAPA Peer Liaison

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I UNDERSTAND... I AM A FOSTER PARENT TOO

IFAPA recognizes that foster parents often need the perspective of peers during the foster parenting and adoption experience.

I can provide support and assist you with questions regarding:

- Licensing requirements
- Training needs
- Respite care
- Behavior challenges
- Working with birth families
- Confidentiality issues
- And much more!



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THE HOLIDAY BREAK CAN BE A GREAT TIME TO MAKE SOME CHANGES

A token economy system is a type of [reward system](#) that can provide a great incentive to help children of all ages learn to manage their behaviors better. Although sticker charts can work for younger children, older children can be motivated with token economy systems. Whether you want to get your child to [do his chores](#), [manage his behaviors at school](#), or [get his homework done without having to nag him](#), reward systems can be an effective discipline tool.

How Token Economy Systems Work: Choose up to three behaviors to address at one time. It can be helpful to pick a behavior that your child is already doing well, one behavior that needs a little improvement, and one behavior that your child is struggling with. Reward your child with a chip or token whenever you see the desired behavior.

It's best if you can physically hand a token to your child whenever he earns one. This provides some immediate gratification and reinforces his positive behavior. Help kids find a way to keep track of their tokens. For example, help your child decorate a special box or can to store his tokens.

Allow your child to exchange the tokens for rewards. Keep your child motivated with an appealing reward menu with a variety of items. Offer items with a wide array of point values so children can either exchange their tokens for smaller rewards immediately or save them up for a larger reward. Build excitement by talking frequently about what your child is hoping to earn what he wants to spend his tokens on.

There are plenty of [rewards that don't cost money](#). They can include things such as picking what to eat for dinner, going to the park, or getting to stay up later. Get your child involved by allowing him to give input into what rewards he would like to earn.

How to Create a Token Economy System: Keep the reward system simple. Don't try to address more than three behaviors at a time.

Also, try to frame the desired behaviors in a positive way. For example instead of saying "don't hit your sister" use "keeping your hands to yourself." State what behavior you want to see so you can reward the good behaviors with [positive consequences](#).

You may need to break the day down into smaller chunks of time as well. For example, "keeping your hands to yourself before school" and if the child manages to avoid fighting with his sister before getting on the bus, he earns a token. For some kids, waiting all day to earn one token can seem impossible and they will lose interest fast.

Token economy systems are one of the most effective discipline tools. If it isn't working to change your child's behavior, don't give up or get rid of the reward plan altogether. Often, just a few small changes can make a big difference in helping your child change his behavior.

Common Concerns about Giving Kids Rewards: Sometimes parents are concerned that reward systems are actually bribing their child. There's a difference between a reward and a bribe. Rewards are given after the behavior. Bribes are given before. We live in a world where we are all motivated by rewards. Most people go to work to earn a paycheck. Rewarding kids for their hard work is the same idea.

The other most common concern from parents is that they should not have to reward their child for things they should be doing anyway. It's important to keep in mind that kids sometimes need extra help with certain behaviors. A reward system is a tool to help fine tune those things that need some extra attention.

Also, you won't have to use the reward system forever. Usually the rewards can be replaced with [praise](#) in just a few months. Once the child has mastered a new skill, they won't require ongoing rewards for it.

More from [About.com](#)

NEWS FROM YOUR IFAPA PEER LIAISON

Support Group Happenings

NCIFAPA Support Group

- *This support group meets Quarterly. **No meeting in Dec. or Jan.**
- *Watch the newsletter for upcoming information!
- *Tues., February 10, 2015, at DHS Liberty Room , Mason City
- * 6:30 pm Social Time and Snacks, Training 7-9 pm(2 hrs credit)
- *Training Topic to Be Announced
- * Contact Christie McGuire for questions 855-929-2005

HHWW Foster/Adoptive Parent Support Group

- *This support group will be on **WINTER BREAK** for December, January , and February! Trainings **will resume** in March 2015
- *Watch the newsletter for upcoming information!
- *Contact Julie Schroeder for more information at 515-291-3029

Ames Foster/Adoptive Support Group

- * We **will not** be having a **DECEMBER** support group meeting
- ***Our next meeting** will be Thursday, Jan. 8th, 2015
- "Creating and Maintaining Healthy Boundries"-2 hours credit
- * 6pm -8pm @ Cornerstone Church-56829 US HWY 30, Ames
- *Childcare **WILL NOT** be offered at this meeting
- *Contact Christie McGuire for more information at 855-929-2005

Fort Dodge Lunch and Learn

*Holiday Lunch is Cancelled For December!

- * Next meeting will be on Thursday, January 22 , 11:30-1:00
- * Grace Lutheran Church in Fort Dodge, watch for details!
- *Contact Julie Schroeder for more information at 515-291-3029.

MARSHALL COUNTY SUPPORT GROUP

- *New Hope Christian Church-3901 S. Center, Marshalltown
- ***NO DECEMBER MEETING**, support group resumes in Jan. 2015
- *training TBA
- * Contact Mindy Speake for more information at 515-291-1292.
- *Child care is offered-donations accepted.

WINTER TIDBITS

Future Activities

Save the Date: IFAPA's Spring Conference will be held on March 6 & 7th, 2015 in Des Moines.

Would You Like An Answer To Your Questions?

For NSA counties:

DHS Supervisor Natalie Clapp has set aside **every Wednesday** from 3:00-4:30 pm for you to call in and ask any questions you may have about the foster/adoptive care system. Call 319-292-2327

IFAPA TRAININGS

Remember no trainings are scheduled for the month of December. Watch for the Winter Training Schedule 2015 & get registered.

Touching Base

I will be checking in with each of my families quarterly by mail, email, or phone calls. Can't wait to chat!

My New Email

cmcguire@ifapa.org

