

NEWS FROM YOUR 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!



www.ifapa.org

April, 2015

Dear Parents,

This past month, I attended trainings and meetings throughout my area. A major point at all the meetings was “foster parents are vital in case management!”

Why is it then that so that so many of my families are telling me that they don’t feel respected or feel like part of a team? Answer: Communication! Communication is key in working with social workers. We now have so many more ways of communicating with each other, you would think communication would be easier. Maybe the question isn’t as much how to work with others but how to communicate with others.

Communication problems can be avoided when we as foster parents and social workers keep a level of respect for each other. What may seem like a lack of respect and unmet expectations can be avoided. To best avoid these problems it is important to establish roles and expectations early on in the relationship. Discuss up front the following with your foster worker and see if it helps in avoiding future problems:

- Find out which method of communication is preferred (phone/text/email/face-to-face)
- Ask your worker how long you should expect to wait for a response
- Ask your worker what they consider a crisis
- Ask your worker how many cases are on his case load

Lack of respect is a problem when the worker is not empathetic to a foster family and has the attitude of “well the foster parent knew what they were signing up for when they chose to be a foster parent.” This makes it appear that that the worker is, in effect, deciding not to have a working relationship with the foster parents. Really the worker is missing out on an opportunity to work in partnership with the foster parents and help problem solve and meet the needs of the foster family.

Lack of respect is a problem when a foster parent feels they are in a crisis and calls their worker for assistance, expecting immediate contact and resolution from their worker. As a foster parent, you are not having respect for the worker. You need to keep in mind that there may be other families in crisis and your worker needs to prioritize these crisis calls. Even though your foster son did get suspended from school for smoking, in another family their young man has just sexually assaulted another child in the home. Which call would you deal with first?

Hopefully, determining right away how, when, and why to contact the worker will help avoid issues and help develop a strong, supportive relationship between foster parent and worker from the get go!

Take Care and God Bless – IFAPA John

NEWS FROM YOUR IFAPA PEER LIAISON

DATES ON DECK

April 7 (7:00-9:00 p.m.) **Confidentiality** at West Central Iowa Support Group in Carroll.

April 7 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) **Topic TBA** at Merville Support Group in Merville.

April 11 (9:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.) **Through the Looking Glass: Life Through the Filter of Personality Disorders** at Stoney Creek Inn in Sioux City.

April 11 (1:30-4:45 p.m.) **Get Me Off This Roller Coaster: Coping Skills for Emotional Intensity Issues** at Stoney Creek Inn in Sioux City.

April 23 (11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.) **Topic TBA** at Fort Dodge Lunch & Learn in Fort Dodge.

April 28 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) **Building Brilliant Brains Through Bonding** at Storm Lake Support Group in Storm Lake.

SUPPORT GROUPS (FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME FOR MORE INFORMATION!)

- West Central Iowa Support Group for Foster/Adoptive Parents (meets monthly (except July & December) on 1st Tuesday of month) – Carroll
- Denison Area Foster/Adoptive Parent Support Group (meets 4th Monday in October, January, March & June) – Denison
- Fort Dodge Lunch & Learn (meets monthly on 4th Thursday of month)
- Merville Support Group (meets monthly on the first Tuesday @ 6:30 p.m.)
- Woodbury Lunch Support Group (meets monthly on 3rd Monday @ 11:00 a.m.) – Sioux City
- Storm Lake Foster/Adoptive Support Group (meets Sept, Oct, March & April)

(Check the IFAPA website www.ifapa.org and go to trainings or contact me if you need info about any classes or available trainings)

APRIL FOSTER PARENT MILESTONES

Please join me in thanking the following foster parents for their years of service to Iowa's children as this month marks their renewal anniversary. Thank you for your years of dedication!

- **20+ Years:** John & Connie Smith
- **15+ Years:** Lisa & Donald Klatt;
- **10+ Years:** Thomas & Dayna Nash
- **5+Years:** Kim & Christopher Holst; Kiane & Joseph Goebel; Gail & Neil Halverson

From My Side of the Desk

I had a couple of great conversations this past month with families who care for little ones. Both talks made me smile and remind me why we do what we do! The first family has two young children of their own and they took in two more, giving them four kids under four. My first thought was "are you nuts?" and my next thought was "Wow!" The other family has grown teen boys and took in two little girls. They have never had girls, so had no clothes. He spoke of how neighbors came to their rescue and brought in clothes. This is why we live in small town Iowa. As for these foster parents (who both work) they are getting reacquainted with sleepless nights and long days! I can't imagine!

As for me, we took care of our grandson for a weekend. I couldn't wait for Monday so I could go back to work and rest!

AND REMEMBER: I am just an email/phone call away. I am here for you! If you have a question, concern or celebration, give me a call. The conversations which I have with other parents are the best part of my day!

-IFAPA John