



TRAINING TRACKS

July – September 2012

ACRF provides support and training for foster, adoptive, guardian and relative caretakers in Alaska



akresourcefamilyboard@yahoo.com

Thanks to Jennifer Showalter Yeoman's Girl Scout Troup in the Kenai/Soldotna area for assembling 100 starter kits for children and youth coming into foster care. Each kit included simple items like a toothbrush, pajamas, and

other toiletries and is meant to help youth have the basics they need when they come into care. These packets were presented to OCS at the Kenai Out-of-Home Care Conference on May 4th. Jennifer is a member of the Resource Family Advisory Board (RFAB) and initial starter kits is one of the goals set by RFAB to encourage as service projects in local areas. Contact the RFAB if you are interested in spearheading a project in your area.

The goal of the Resource Family Advisory Board is to strengthen and improve support for resource families and the State of Alaska Office of Children's Services (OCS) as we partner to care for Alaska's Children. And we want to hear from you! We have members from all the different regions and are trying to build up participation and communication. Check out the goals of the Advisory Board at their website at <http://www.acrf.org/advisory/rfabsite.html> and contact individual board officers with ideas or questions. Or send an email directly to akresourcefamilyboard@yahoo.com. This is a good way to get your voice heard!

Mat-Su Health Funds Healthy Family Outreach Project

Many thanks to the Mat-Su Health Foundation for their grant to ACRF to share information about developing health family habits. Through this grant, we were able to send a copy of the book "Be Well" and a copy of the DVD "Fit Kids Club" to families in the Mat-Su Borough. A follow up survey to families included feedback that some families watched the DVD and some families did not, but for those who did, comments included that some of the changes families made included: *increased activity, eat healthier, started dancing more, better food choices and more physical activities, tried to get to the Alaska Club more frequently, offer better snacks-not-not processed..., we did indoor aerobic exercise for children in the winter using the DVD, exercising more and eating better foods.*

We congratulate these Mat-Su families for making some good steps toward healthier families! Adults who have experienced multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences* or ACEs are at higher risk for physical health problems as well as mental health challenges, so the better habits we can instill in children, the better off they will be in adulthood. That especially applies to children in foster care. (Find out more about the ACEs study at <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>.)

The grant also allowed ACRF to generate some extra funds to add to our lending library and self-study training materials, with a focus on materials promoting emotionally and physically healthy families. These materials will be available in our library by the end of summer. We appreciate the support of the Mat-Su Health Foundation and their commitment to promoting health in the Mat-Su Valley.

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OCS Licensing Requirement for Resource Families...

Licensed foster homes are required to have 15 hours of training per licensing year for a two-parent home and 10 hours for a single parent home. Report all your training to ACRF. To find out how many hours you've completed or to find out ways to complete your training hours, contact your local ACRF office or call toll-free 1-800-478-7307.

Fairbanks Training:

Unless otherwise noted, the trainings in Fairbanks are held at ACRF: 815 Second Ave, STE 101. Pre-registration is REQUIRED, call 479-7307 to register.

◆ **JULY:**

Adopting Through OCS

Tues. 7/24 from 11:30am-1:30pm.

◆ **AUGUST:**

Core Training for Resource Families

Wednesdays 8/8- 8/29 from 6:00-9:00pm. Must attend all four sessions.

Adopting Through OCS

Tues. 8/21 from 6:00-8:00pm.

Building Families through Adoption

Mon. 8/27, Tues. 8/28 & Thurs. 8/30 from 6:00-9:00pm. Must attend all three sessions.

◆ **SEPTEMBER:**

Adopting Through OCS

Tues. 9/25 from 11:30am-1:30pm.

Music Therapy

Date/Time TBA

Fairbanks Support Groups:

- ◆ **Foster Parent Support Group.** Participation is FREE. Group meets every first Monday of the Month from 6-8pm and the third Sunday of Every Month from 2-4pm, at ACRF, 815 Second Avenue in Fairbanks. (NOTE: No FPSG on holidays) Call Rachel at 479-7307 for more information.
- ◆ **Facing Foster Care in Alaska.** Group meets the fourth Wednesday of every month from 6-8pm (September meet is 3rd Sun, 2-4pm). Call Rachel at 479-7307 for more information.
- ◆ **Grands Raising Great Children Support Group.** Participation is FREE. Limited supervised children's activities are available during the group. Please pre-register if you are bringing your children. Group meets the second Monday of every month from 6:30-8pm, at RCPC, 726 26th AVE, Suite 2 in Fairbanks. Call 456-2866 for more information.
- ◆ **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Support & Discussion Group.** Held at Alaska Center for Children & Adults. FREE Child care provided. Call Jenn Wagaman 456-4003 for more information.
- ◆ **Family to Family meets the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 3:00pm.** The location changes each month, email Rachel at ghanft@nwresource.org if you would like to be added to the F2F list. For more information about what Family to Family is please refer to this web page: <http://aecf.org/majorinitiatives/family%20to%20Family.aspx>.

Juneau Training:

Unless otherwise noted the trainings in Juneau will be held at ACRF: 9109 Mendenhall Mall RD, Suite 6A. Pre-registration is REQUIRED, call John at 790-4246 to register

◆ **JULY:**

Movie Night: "Adopted"

Thurs., 7/12 from 6:30 -8:30pm

Juneau Training continued:

✦ **AUGUST:**

Movie Night: "How Difficult Can This Be?"

Thurs., 8/9 from 6:30-8:30pm. This video addresses difficulties and distractions children experience in school.

✦ **SEPTEMBER:**

Introduction to Attachment Disorder

Wed., 9/5 from 6:30-8:30pm.

Introduction to Special Education Law

Thurs., 9/6 from 6:30-8:30pm.

Talking to Kids about Foster Care and Adoption

Wed., 9/19 from 6:30-8:30pm.

Core Training for Resource Families

Thurs., 9/27 from 6-9pm and Sat., 9/29 from 9am-5pm. Must attend both classes to complete the Core requirement.

Juneau Support Groups:

✦ ***Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group*** meets on the last Wednesday of each month from 6:30-8:00pm at the old Moose Lodge, 8335 Old Dairy Rd in Juneau. Call TJ Arnold for details: 209-0516.

✦ ***Our Time Group for parents and caretakers of children with special needs*** meets every Monday from 6-8pm at Aldersgate United Methodist Church, 9161 Cinema Dr. in Juneau. Call Lori King for details: 463-6103.

Mat-Su Training:

Unless otherwise noted, the trainings in Wasilla will be held at ACRF: 5050 Dunbar ST, STE A2 (off the Palmer/Wasilla HWY, Brentwood Plaza). Pre-Registration is required for the following events by contacting Betsy at 376-4678 or bwoodin@nwresource.org.

✦ **JULY:**

Video Day: Film on Transracial Adoption

Thurs., 7/26 from 9:00am - 2:00pm

✦ **AUGUST:**

Video Day: Film on FASD

Thurs., 8/2 from 9:00am - 2:00pm

✦ **SEPTEMBER:**

Video Day: Film on Culture & Identity

Thurs., 9/6 from 9:00am - 2:00pm

Core Training for Resource Families

Must attend all six sessions to fill the Core training requirement.

Mondays beginning 9/10-10/15 from 6-9pm

Core Training for Relative Placements

Must attend all three sessions to fill the Core training requirement.

Thursdays beginning 9/20 - 10/4 from 9am-Noon

✦ **OCTOBER:**

Video Day: Film on Childhood Trauma

Thurs., 10/5 from 9:00am - 2:00pm

Core Training for Seasoned Foster Parents

Must attend both sessions to fill the Core training requirement.

Tues, 10/16 and Fri, 10/19 from 9am-1pm

Adopting Through OCS

Mon., 10/22 from 6-9pm

Rural Teleconference Training

Families may participate by dialing 1-888-626-7441 and when asked enter the code: 9939775#. For more information email Betsy at bwoodin@nwresource.org or call 1-800-478-7307.

Tuesday, July 24th, Noon-1pm

- *How Foster Parents Can Work with Tribes, Guest Presenter: Tara Pickett*

Tuesday, July 24th, 7-8pm

- *Understanding Team Decision Meeting Part 2, Guest Presenter: Jamie Kokoszka*

Wednesday, August 8th, 7-8pm

- *Trauma*

Tuesday, August 14th, Noon-1pm

- *Understanding the Home Study, Guest Presenter: Tami Jo Monson*

Tuesday, September 11th, Noon-1pm

- *FASD Diagnostic Teams, Guest Presenters: Genevieve Casey and Diane Casto*

Wednesday, September 12th, 7-8pm

- *Substance Abuse*

Tuesday, October 9th, Noon-1pm

- *Adoption in the Schools, Guest Presenter: Christie Reinhardt*

Statewide Autism Spectrum Disorder Support Group

First Tuesday of EVERY month from Noon-1pm. Dial 1-800-315-6338, follow voice prompts, then enter code 2272#

Online Training:

Check out ACRF online courses at www.ACRF.org

Click on the Self-Study tab and choose from taking an online interactive course, a written course that is printable, or an audio course.

1.0 HOUR SELF-STUDY

Licensed foster parents can read the following article and earn foster parent training credit by filling out the following questionnaire and returning to the Alaska Center for Resource Families.

Transitioning Children for Adoption: Planning and Preparing for a Solid Family Future

By Brenda Ursel, Alaska Center for Resource Families

You can feel the excitement! You have been chosen as an adoptive family and are preparing to receive the child into your home. In this excitement, there is a natural desire to move quickly. But family and teams need to resist this temptation. Research shows that abrupt transitions are a key factor in adoption disruptions and the risk of disruption increases with the age of the child. Traumatized children already feel helpless and at the mercy of a system. Often major decisions *about* them are made *without* them and no one has bothered to explain what is going on. Children have strong feelings about their lives and deserve to know what is happening to them and why. They need to have time to process and say goodbye to the people and places important to them. Do not assume that just because the child has been in custody for a long period of time that they understand the reason they were removed or why they can't return home and are being adopted. Preparation is the key for long, stable successful adoptions. This article will help families and teams prepare and move a child in a gentle, therapeutic manner.

What Children Need to Know: A study in *About Adoption* found that only eleven percent of adoptees had all the information they wanted prior to their adoption. Children need to answer the following questions to prepare for a move to a new family. (*Note: These questions are adapted from Darla Henry's Book: The 3-5-7 Model available for loan through the ACRF Lending Library.*)

- 1. Who am I?** Help the youth identify the important people in their life. Help them discover their likes, dislike and what is important to them. Find out what they believe about themselves. Do they think they are a gift or a burden? For help in answering this question with you, check out ideas and activities at www.darlahenry.org/ or contact ACRF for resource ideas.
- 2. What happened to me?** Help the youth understand their history, why they entered foster care and how they came to be available for adoption. Lifebooks are a great tool to guide this process. Go to www.ifapa.org for free downloadable lifebook pages.
- 3. Who are these people?** Develop a family profile, or create a DVD to introduce your family to the child. This does wonders to alleviate anxiety and fears and helps the youth feel respected and engaged in the process. Contact ACRF for templates or visit www.ourchosenchild.com for ideas
- 4. Where am I going and how do I get there?** Get a PLAN! As part of your profile, include pictures of your home and neighborhood and the youth's room. Answer questions such as; what school will the youth attend? How long until they move in? What are your family's rules? Routines? What do you like to do? This will help the youth prepare and adjust to the idea of moving into your home with your family. Remember two principles when preparing a child to move. The first is to **Cultivate Connections**. Maintain contact with importance people in the child's life. Get the blessing, verbal or written of the birth parents, former foster parents, teachers, etc. Allow the child to take a camera to school and take pictures. Invite the current foster parents over for dinner. Do special goodbye activities at home and school to acknowledge the change and the losses in the youth's life.

Foster familiarity. We all are comforted by what is familiar. Minimize additional moves or changes for the child. Keep the same routines, foods, activities, social connections, and personal items. Keep the same doctors, therapists and other professionals consistent. Doing this will help the youth feel more "at home" in your home.

No Band Aid Approaches: Often, a band-aid approach is used to moving children. We think, "The faster, the less painful." One quick motion, boom, it is done. While this works well for band-aids, it is devastating for children. Abrupt moves bring children into their new families in a state of shock and grief. All the unresolved feelings, confusion and anger will interfere with the attachment of the child to the new family. No one, neither adults nor children, likes to grieve with strangers. Children should never move in with strangers.

The Golden Rule: Most people are resistant to abrupt change. If someone tries to move us against our will, we may become defiant or oppositional. Think about it – we get annoyed if we see someone sitting in our usual seat in church or in our seat at a training class when we come back from a break. "That is MY spot!" we protest. If this is how we feel about small changes, why would it be okay to subject kids to major life changes with minimal information, and no preparation? We often console ourselves with statements such as they are young, they won't notice, they don't understand, or they should be happy to get a wonderful family. Then we are surprised with children become angry, depressed and defiant! As you are planning to transition a child into a new placement or into your home, ask yourself, "If this was me, how would I like to be treated?" What would I want to happen?" Remember the Golden Rule. Treat the child with the same consideration, gentleness and respect that you would need if you were vulnerable and making such a huge change in your life. ■

For more ideas and activities about transitioning children and youth into adoptive placements, contact Brenda Ursel at bursel@nwresource.org.

1.0 HOUR SELF-STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Transitioning Children for Adoption: Planning and Preparing for a Solid Family Future

If you read the above entitled article and want foster parent training credit applied to your training requirement, fill out the following questionnaire and FAX it to 1-907-479-9666, mail to ACRF, 815 Second AVE STE 101, Fairbanks, AK 99701 or email to acrf@nwresource.org.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Provider#: _____

1) _____ is a key factor in adoption disruptions.
(FILL IN THE BLANKS)

2) One thing that strongly influences the success of a placement is how well the child is _____.
(FILL IN THE BLANK)

3) Explain what is meant by the "band-aid" approach to moving children and why it is devastating to children.

4) List the two (2) things you need to do to help a youth adjust to your family

a) _____

b) _____

5. Children are resilient and will bounce back from abrupt quick transitions.

_____ a. TRUE

_____ b. FALSE

NEW Materials in the ACRF Lending Library

Book: *Kinki Creations: A Parent's Guide to Natural Black Hair Care for Kids*

Book: *The Ethics of Transracial Adoption*

Book: *I'm Chocolate, You're Vanilla: Raising Healthy Black and Biracial Children in a Race-Conscious World*

Book: *Positive Discipline for Teens* Revised 2nd Edition

Go to <http://www.acrf.org/Audio.php> to find the following audio courses to be posted in July.

Audio Course: *Involving Youth in Their Caseplanning* (with members of Facing Foster Care in Alaska) 1.0 hour Training Credit

Audio Course: *Talking to Youth About Their Disability* (with Tami Eller) 1.0 hour Training Credit

To order any of the above materials call 1-800-478-7307 or in Fairbanks call 479-7307.

Northwest Resource Associates
Alaska Center for Resource Families
815 Second Avenue Suite 101
Fairbanks, AK 99701

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

New Training Waiver for Relative Providers

By: Kathy Ensor, Foster Care Program Coordinator

The Office of Children's Services has implemented a new policy and procedure that allows licensing staff to request a training waiver for relative providers on a case-by-case basis under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. Alaska regulation requires licensed foster parents to complete 10 hours of training for a single parent foster home and 15 hours for a two-parent foster home.

All licensed foster homes, both relative and non-relative are expected to meet the training requirements for foster homes. Taking the Core Training for Resource Families is expected for all families, and the Alaska Center for Resource Families has both regular Core and Kinship Care Core options available for relative families. This provision allows licensing workers flexibility in assessing the training requirement when working with licensed caregivers who have only provided care for related children in the past licensing period.

The training waiver applies only for the specific relative child(ren) placed in the home during the license period under review. It does not apply if the relative provided care to a non-related child even though they may also have had related children in care.

As a part of the assessment the licensing worker consults with the child's caseworker to determine if a training waiver is appropriate. If it is found the family demonstrated their ability to meet the relative child's needs without completing the required training hours during the past licensing year, the licensing worker will complete a waiver request on behalf of the licensed relative caregiver. A statewide waiver committee will review the waiver request. If approved, the licensing worker will send the family a letter notifying them that a waiver for training hours is approved with the beginning and ending dates. This process is completed at conversion from provisional to biennial license, the annual review, and biennial renewal.

Approval of the training waiver for a past licensing period does not exempt licensed relative caregivers from complying with the training requirements during their next license period.

If you have any questions about this waiver, please contact your licensing worker.