RESOURCES FAMILY ADVISORY BOARD INITIATIVES FOR UPCOMING YEAR

The Resource Family Advisory Board is focusing on five initiatives for this upcoming year. They include:

1. Establish a Bill of Rights for resource parents in Alaska
2. Continue Starter Kit Projects to assist resource families with emergency placements
3. Seek resource parent feedback and share with OCS management
4. Make recommendations regarding licensed foster home investigations
5. Promote regional support networks amongst resource parents

RFAB has submitted a draft Bill of Rights to OCS management and will be meeting with them during the face-to-face meeting in Anchorage October 7 and 8. RFAB will also be sharing the concerns brought to them by resource families. During that time, the Board will also be learning more about the “Investigation Process for Complaints Against Foster Homes”. The Board plans on making recommendations to OCS about how to support resource families better during that process. Foster parents are welcomed to contact the board by email with ideas or call in during the Saturday morning “open line” to share suggestions.

At the suggestions of the RFAB, a monthly call in called “Let’s Talk ICWA” was established so foster parents had a regular opportunity to ask questions about the Indian Child Welfare Act. This call in is led by April Stahl, ICWA Coordinator in the Anchorage OCS office, and Danielle Holt, RFAB member and Tribal representative from Kawerak, and meets the first Thursday of each month from 4-5 pm. Check the ACRF Calendar for call-in information.

FOSTER PARENTS—WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Alaska’s Resource Family Advisory Board is meeting in October. Here is your chance to call in with your concerns and ideas about foster care in Alaska. We especially want to hear your input about the investigation process of complaints and allegations brought against foster homes. What are your suggestions and ideas for improving that process?

TWO (2) OPTIONS TO GET YOUR VOICE HEARD:

1. Call in on Saturday, October 8, 2016 between 11am and Noon (toll-free: 1-800-944-8766, participant code: 22460#) Keep your remarks to around 3 minutes. We will try to take your responses in the order they come in.

2. Send in writing by email to akresourcefamilyboard@yahoo.com or by letter to RFAB c/o Alaska Center for Resource Families, 840 K Street, Suite 101, Anchorage, AK 99501.

Audio Classes, Teleconferences and Webinars

Resource Family Training at your Fingertips!

Check out our new tab on our website featuring audio and teleconference trainings of interest to foster families. There are 33 different taped teleconference trainings that you can listen to and earn training credit for including the “Connecting While Correcting” Series and the “Trauma Informed Caregiving” Series. We also list upcoming teleconferences in our Rural Teleconference Training and Support Series that focus on what Alaska foster parents need to know. Here you will find handouts related to the teleconference series as well. Go to www.acrf.org → Self-Study → Teleconference/Audio Trainings.
SELF-STUDY COURSES FOR RESOURCE FAMILIES CONCERNING EDUCATION

SELF-STUDY COURSES:
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Preschool and Elementary Educational Issues (4.0 hours)
- The Internet: What Parents Needs to Know (2.5 hours)
- Education and Youth In Foster Care (3.0 hours)

INFORMATION PACKETS (all worth 1.0 hours each)
- Adoption in the Schools
- Adoption: Child Readiness in the School
- Alaska Special Education Guide for Parent (Spanish version available)
- Bullying and Children
- Cyberbullying
- Helping Students Develop their IEPs
- Helping the Traumatized Child at Home and School
- Helping Your Young Child Emotionally and Socially at School
- Special Education: IDEA for Children Birth to Three
- Special Education: IDEA for Children Three and Up
- Quality Early Care and Education: A Guide for Alaska’s Families
- Teaching a Student with Attention Deficit Disorders (Spanish version available)
- Educational Champion Series: Beliefs, Expectations and Aspirations about Education
- Educational Champion Series: Communication with Child and School
- Educational Champion Series: Preparing for Higher Education

WEB AUDIO (www.acrf.org)
- Special Education Series Part 1: The Basics of Special Education (up to 2.0 hours)
- Special Education Series Part 2: Evaluation and Eligibility (up to 2.0 hours)
- Special Education Series Part 3: The IEP (Individual Education Plan) (up to 2.0 hours)
- Advocating for Your Child in School (1.0 hour)
- Adoption in the Schools (1.0 hour)

Keeping Children in School of Origin: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

A new Federal Law called “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA) is making changes in the way the Alaska Schools work with children and youth in foster care. ESSA is the first major overhaul of federal education law in a decade and for the first time now contain key protections for students in foster care to promote school stability and success. Starting in Anchorage, OCS will be working with school districts to develop policies that assist youth to stay in their school of origin. Policies are being worked out in how they will be applied across the state, but here are highlights about the law.

- Efforts must be made to keep foster youth and children in their school of origin unless there is a clear reason it is not in the best interest of the youth.
- The school system must track children’s achievement and graduation rates.
- To avoid delays in starting school, children in foster care can enroll immediately in a new school even if the child cannot produce normally required documents and school records.
- Education and child welfare agencies must develop plans for providing cost effective transportation when needed to allow student to remain in the same school.

How will this affect foster homes? You are asked to support efforts to keep a youth in his school or origin during foster care placement.

- Prior to accepting placements in your foster home, ask the placing worker about the child’s school of origin. If different from your school zone where you live, talk with the placement worker about transportation options so the child may remain in her school of origin. You will be asked to transport the child if you can and assistance may be given to help you do that. Other options of transportation can also be explored to help the child maintain in school.

- If your foster youth attends a school out of your bus zone, other transportation options that can be explored such as: the resource family can transport and receive gas vouchers; city bus passes for older youth; contracted bus; taxi cab; car pools with other resource families.

Beginning in Anchorage this school year, if a change of school is requested, there must be a “Best Interest Decision Meeting” with the assigned OCS representative, GAL and school representative to discuss whether it is in the child’s best interest. This policy is not yet statewide.

Look to our website for more information about these changes in education policy or contact your local OCS office.

Prior to accepting placement, remember to ask about the child’s school of origin!
EDUCATIONAL GUIDE FOR ALASKA RESOURCE FAMILIES

Did you know that you don’t have to wait until your child is of school age to obtain Special Education services if he or she qualifies? Did you know that children in foster care automatically qualify for free and reduced meals at school, regardless of your income? Would you like a better understanding of the role of computer in the contemporary school setting? Could you use more information on preschools? Do you know how to tell if your high school aged youth is on track to graduate? Find the answers to all your school related questions by visiting our website www.acrf.org by clicking on the Self-study tab and following this path: Publications → Education Guide for Alaska Resource Families or you can contact ACRF to have a copy mailed to you.

This 40-page guide has sections on fundamentals (enrolling your child in school, what parents need to know, listed by grade level, alternatives to public schools, etc); Day to Day School Matters (special education, free and reduced meals, sports and other activities, teacher conferences, computers and school work, homework, transportation, etc); Being Involved and Advocating for Your Child (counseling and guidance, school discipline, keeping records, monitoring attendance and grades, etc); and Additional Considerations (bullying, Indian education, after school programs, tutoring options, etc).

It has an easy to use table of contents, a Frequently Asked Questions section near the beginning and useful Appendix entries, such as: “Who Has the Final Authority?” “Common School Problems,” “Special Education Law,” “10 Ways to Get Ready for Kindergarten,” etc.

Don’t let the school year get away from you. Download this guide and stay on top of your child’s education. You might also be interested in helping to meet your foster parent training requirement by completing some of the self-study courses focusing on education that are listed in this Training Tracks newsletter.

Self-Study: On the Go! Transportation Issues for Resource Families

By Aileen McInnis, Director, Alaska Center for Resource Families

INSTRUCTIONS: Read through the material, complete the questionnaire at the end and return to ACRF for 1.0 Hour Training Credit.

Families these days are on the go! As a licensed foster family, you should know the guidelines and responsibilities around transportation and travel with your foster child. Here are the highlights:

Day to Day Transportation: Routine transportation of a child in care is the responsibility of the resource family. This includes transportation to family visits, medical facilities, school events, social and sports activities, religious activities, shopping, and counseling appointments. If you have a conflict or find you can’t transport a child, work with your caseworker for assistance with transportation or to brainstorm alternatives.

It goes without saying that a vehicle used for the transportation of children should be licensed in accordance with state and local laws. Resource families must have current liability insurance for the transporting vehicle and appropriate child passenger restraint systems. That includes proper car seats for children (rear facing for infants up to 20 to 25 lbs.) and forward facing for toddlers (at least 1 year old and 20 lbs.), booster seats used with lap and shoulder belts for children over 40 lbs., and proper seat belt use for children and youth tall enough to wear them properly. Make sure you are wearing your seatbelt too!

School Transport: In 2016, there will be an increased emphasis on trying to keep children in their school of origin to promote school stability. In Anchorage (and probably soon in rest of the state) there needs to be a Best Interest Decision Meeting before a child can change schools so transportation will be become important to help a child maintain in their home school. If a child is not using public school transportation, it may fall to the foster parent to provide transport or make arrangements to get the child to school. In the past, there has been assistance through some school districts from the Child in Transition or Families in Transitions program (though this transportation support will undergo big changes in December 2016) to help children and youth get to school. Again, check with your caseworker for your options if you are having difficulty with getting children to school to brainstorm options together.

Trips: In-state trips lasting less than 72 hours can be approved by the foster parent who is demonstrating reasonable and prudent parent standard in their decision-making. If you are leaving your home for more than 24 hours, notify your caseworker by email or message but you do not need to secure approval. However, travel involving air flights or ferry travel may require an Authority to Transport a Minor form. Contact your OCS caseworker for the Authority to Transport. Caseworkers may approve this authority for a trip within 100 miles of the child’s placement; for trips over 100 miles, the approval must come from a supervisor.
Self-Study: On the Go! Transportation Issues for Resource Families continued...

Permissions and Notifications: Foster parents can give permission to and arrange for transportation for school activities and field trips as long as the trips don’t take a child away from home longer than 72 hours or out-of-state. Foster parents should make these decisions using a reasonable and prudent parent standard based on the child’s abilities and needs. OCS must approve all out-of-state travel of a child in care. Resource families should request the child’s placement worker to obtain advance permission from the person responsible for the child at least 14 days in advance of any planned out-of-state trips for a child in care. You should allow at least 45 days for travel out of the country. Out-of-country travel demands the approval of the Commissioner of Health and Social Services.

OCS can help assist in getting the documents needed for a passport such as a birth certificate but remember this takes time, so give as much notice as possible when requesting assistance. Passports must be in hand before requesting out-of-country travel. (Note that travel to the Yukon Territory and British Columbia are not considered out-of-country travel so do not require Commissioner approval. Out-of-state travel guidelines would apply.) If travelling out-of-state, make sure to take the appropriate paperwork with you including: the Authorization for Transport of a Minor form, the Consent for Emergency and Routine Medical Care, and the child’s Medicaid Card.

Assistance with Travel: In some situations OCS can assist with the cost of transportation if you wish to take a child on a trip that you have planned with your family. This encourages you to bring your child along with you on the trip, treating him like a regular family member. OCS will consider the request and help pay for (no more than once in a calendar year) transportation costs and partial hotel costs, not rental cars or meals. If you choose this option, plan ahead of time and put in your request early since your caseworker will be using the Request for Funds process to request approval of funds. OCS may make the travel arrangements and pay for them directly or after receiving written approval, resource families may make the arrangements and be reimbursed directly. For OCS making the arrangements or for OCS approval to pay for the transportation for a child in care, here are the general deadlines set up for the calendar year.

Standing deadlines for travel:
- Spring Break Travel - submitted before January 15.
- Summer Travel (May 1 - Sept. 1) - submitted before April 1.
- Thanksgiving Travel - submitted before September 15.
- Christmas Travel - submitted before October 15.

Some travel, such as escorting a child to medical services outside of the youth’s community or trips for youth who are visiting family members, will also be paid for by OCS or Medicaid funding and does not fall within the once-a-year limitation of payment for travel by OCS. A foster parent may be asked to accompany a child on such a trip and the foster parent’s travel would be paid for by OCS as well.

Driver’s License for Youth. A youth in foster care who is eligible for a driver’s license under Alaska law can get a driver’s license but there are restrictions around a youth driving. Youth need approval by the OCS Children’s Services Manager, signature of an authorized adult (child’s parent or OCS) and certified proof of insurance or responsible adult who consents to accept responsibility for auto insurance coverage that includes the minor before they can drive while in state’s custody. Note, a foster parent is not considered an authorized adult by the Division of Motor Vehicles and may not sign for a child in custody. Youth in custody are permitted to take Driver’s Education as part of a school or training program, however, they will still need a driver’s instruction permit which will required the signature of an authorized adult (which cannot be the foster parent). Taking a driver’s education course (which may be paid for through Independent Living Funds if approved) may result in a savings on insurance depending on your insurance company and some companies also offer good student discounts.
EARN 1.0 HOUR TRAINING CREDIT IF YOU READ…

On the Go! Transportation Issues for Resource Families

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 202, Fairbanks, AK 99701 or email to acrf@nwresource.org.

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Provider#: ________________________________________________________

Email: ___________________________________________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________________________________

1. Foster parents are asked to promote school stability for children by arranging or providing transportation to a child’s school of origin?
   ____a. TRUE
   ____b. FALSE

2. Air flights or ferry travel may require an _________________________________ to ___________________________________
a Minor form from OCS. (Fill in the blanks)

3. Foster parents can generally give permission to and arrange for normal transportation for school activities and field trips.
   ____a. TRUE
   ____b. FALSE

4. If a trip takes a child away from his home for longer than ________ hours or out of state, foster parents must seek previous approval from OCS. (Choose one)
   ____a. 24
   ____b. 36
   ____a. 48
   ____b. 72

5. The foster parent can be the authorized adult to give the consent at the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for a youth to get a driver’s license.
   ____a. TRUE
   ____b. FALSE

6. Booster seats should be used with lap and shoulder belts for children over _____________ pounds. (Fill in the blank)
CASEWORKER VISIT CHECKLIST FOR RESOURCE FAMILIES

Want to know how to make the most out of those home visits by your child’s caseworker? We’ve put together this checklist to help you be prepared.

First of all, OCS Policy is that the caseworker should be meeting with a child at least once a month and meet with the child where he is living (your home) at least every other month. Caseworker will ask for some time alone to talk with the child so be prepared to make a private space available for the worker and child. The caseworker will also want to see where the child is sleeping and has his things.

Caseworker will want some time to talk with you as well. Bring the Red Placement Packet and any appropriate records regarding the child. Update photo of child if outdated. Remember that these visits will probably be fairly short so be ready and be prepared. Write down your questions ahead of time so you remember to ask. Make notes about what requests need to be follow up on.

Be prepared to talk about:

- **Education:** If the child is school age, how is school going? Any concerns?
- **Activities:** What activities is the child participating in? (Family, Extra-curricular, Cultural, After School, Enrichment)
- **Family Contact:** What contact is the child having with parents? Any sibling visits? Anyone the child should be having contact with?
- **Health, Medical or Therapeutic Needs:** How is the child’s health? When was the last check up? Are you seeing any delays, concerns or health needs? Is child receiving the mental health services he needs?
- **Other Issues:** What do you need to take care of this child? Is there something the child needs? Any permissions, financial requests, or travel authorizations that you need? Any special training, support or resources that would help you care for this child?

Other Questions to Consider Asking:

- **Important Hearings:** What important court hearings or meetings are coming up that I should put on my calendar or be aware of? Are there administrative reviews coming up? If yes, what do you need from me to share about the child at that review?
- **Permanency Goals:** What’s the plan for permanency? Has it changed? What can you tell me about the long range plan for this child? Have relatives been identified for placement?
- **ICWA/GAL:** If the child is a tribal child or covered under ICWA, do you know who the tribe is and know how to contact the ICWA worker? If the child is a tribal child and you are not an ICWA preference placement, is OCS looking for ICWA placement for the child? Who is the Guardian ad Litem for the child and how can he or she be reached?

By all means, let the caseworker know what you need to provide for the child. Send an email after the visit with a reminder of any requests made during the visit. But it is also a good time to give your caseworker a pat on the back or an encouraging word of support as well. Building a relationship with the caseworker can come back to benefit you and the children in your home in the future.
Classes held at ACRF
815 Second AVE, STE 202
Call 479-7307 to register

Core Training for Resource Families held Sept 1, 8, 15, 22 from 6-9pm
Building Families through Adoption held Sept 7 & 8 from 6-9pm and Sept 10 from 9am-3pm
FASD 101 held Sept 12 from 10am-2pm
Adopting through OCS held Sept 28 from 1:30-3pm

Connecting While Correcting held Oct 8 from 9am-3pm
Motivations for Adoption held Oct 27 from 6-8pm

Adoption 101 held Nov 3 from 6-8pm
Adopting through OCS held Nov 9 from 1:30-3pm
Building Families through Adoption held Nov 16 & 17 from 6-9pm and Nov 19 from 9am-3pm

Core Training for Resource Families held Dec 1, 8, 15 & 22 from 6-9pm

Grands Raising Great Children Support Group
There are limited supervised children’s activities available during the group. Please pre-register if you are bringing your children. Group meets the 2nd Monday of every month from 6:30-8:00pm at RCPC, 726 26th Avenue, Suite 2 in Fairbanks. Call 456-2866 for more information.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Support & Discussion Group
Please refer to http://www.acca-ilp.org/fasd for more information.
JUNEAU TRAINING CALENDAR

Circle of Security
PARENTING SERIES

Dates: Sept. 7 through Oct. 26 (8 Wednesdays)
Times: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Presented by: Julie Peters and John Bennett
Sponsored by: REACH Infant Learning Program and Alaska Center for Resource Families
Cost: FREE! Food and Childcare provided by Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC)
Location: 1945 Alex Holden Way, Juneau, AK 99801
Who should attend: Parents of young children including babies and toddlers
How to register: Contact Julie Peters at 907-723-6305 or jpeters@reachak.org or Contact John Bennett at 790-4246 or jbennett@nwresource.org.
Call NOW class is limited to 8 persons.

FREE CHILDCARE AND DINNER WILL BE PROVIDED AT ALL SESSIONS

At times all parents feel lost or without a clue about what our child might need from us. Imagine what it might feel like if you were able to make sense of what your child was really asking from you. The Circle of Security® Parenting™ program is based on decades of research about how secure parent-child relationships can be supported and strengthened.

Learning Objectives of the Training:
- Understand your child’s emotional world by learning to read the emotional needs
- Support your child’s ability to successfully manage emotions
- Enhance the development of your child’s self esteem
- Honor your innate wisdom and desire for your child to be secure

This cartoon explains what the Circle of Security program is all about. To watch go to...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wpz8m0BFM8

Classes held at ACRF
9109 Mendenhall Mall RD STE 6A
Call 790-4246 to register

Core Training for Resource Families held Sept 22 from 6-9pm and 24 from 9am-5pm
Adopting through OCS held Sept 27 from 6:30-8:30pm

Building Families through Adoption held Oct 13 from 6-9pm and Oct 15 from 9am-4pm

Core Training for Resource Families held Dec 7 from 6-9pm and Dec 10 from 9am-5pm
Adopting through OCS held Dec 14 from 6:30-8:30pm

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group
This group meets on the last Wednesday of each month from 6:30-8:30pm at the Old Moose Lodge, 8335 Old Dairy Road. Call TJ Arnold for details: 209-0516.
Adoption Learning Path

Core Training for Resource Families
Sept 15 from 6-9pm and Sept 17 from 9am-5pm

Relative Core Training
Sept 20, 22 & 27 from 6-9pm OR Oct 4 & 6 from 9am-1pm

Building Families through Adoption
Oct 13 from 6-9pm and Oct 15 from 9am-5pm

Adoption through OCS (held at OCS in Wasilla) Oct 20 from 6-9pm

Unless otherwise noted, Classes are held in the Brentwood Plaza Suite A2

Preregister by calling 376-4678

STATEWIDE RURAL TELECONFERENCE TRAINING

Sept 13, 7-8pm:
Infant Safe Sleep Practices, Part 2, Betsy Woodin, ACRF & Sabra Anckner, RN, BSN
Perinatal Nurse Consultant, WCFH, DHSS

Sept 21, Noon-1pm:
The FASD Diagnosis, Aileen McInnis, ACRF & Barb Chambers, Parent Navigator, FASDx

Oct 11, 7-8pm:
Dealing with Difficult Behavior in Your Elementary School Aged Child, John Bennett, ACRF

Oct 12, Noon-1pm:
Finding Permanency, Betsy Woodin, ACRF and Dawn Adams & Tara Pickett, Wasilla OCS SCRO Adoption Unit

Nov 9, Noon-1pm:
Knowing Who You Are, Rachel Hanft, ACRF

Nov 15, 7-8pm:
5 Questions Youth in Foster Care Must Answer before Adoption, Brenda Ursel, ACRF

Dec 6, 7-8pm:
Adoption and the Holidays, Ruth Post, ACRF

Dec 14, Noon-1pm:
Applying the Reasonable & Prudent Parent Standards, Aileen McInnis, ACRF and Barbara Cosolito, OCS

Youth Mental Health First Aid
Sept 13 & 14 from 9am to 1pm, sponsored by LINKS. This is a FREE 8 hour training.

ACRF is presenting the following classes for resource families, school, agency staff and the general community:

FASD 101
October 11 from Noon to 4pm

Paper Tigers Movie/ACES Training
November 17 from Noon to 3pm

Held at LINKS
3161 Palmer-Wasilla Highway

Parent Support Group held 2nd Monday each month, 6-7pm at LINKS. Contact Amber at 373-3635 for more information.

The Survivors of Suicide Meet at the Turn A Leaf Thrift Store bldg. in the conference room from 7-9pm, 400 N Yenlo in Wasilla every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month.

Mom2Mom Dad2Dad meets the 1st Monday of each month from 10:30am-Noon at the Alaska Attachment & Bonding office. Call 376-0366 for more information.

Foster Parent Support Group Vickie is helping facilitate AGAPE, which is a faith-based network of foster and adoptive families that meets at Palmer Church of God on the 2nd Thursday night monthly from 6-8pm. Bring finger food to share, childcare is provided if arrangements are made, call 863-2144 for more information or email agapeak@att.net.

Grandparent Support Group meets 2nd Saturday from 1-3pm, relative caregivers and their children can enjoy activities and snacks. 4th Friday from 10:30am-Noon this is for relative caregivers only (no children) to plan Saturday activities and provide support for eachother. Held at Turn A Leaf Community room next to the thrift store, 404 N Yenlo in Wasilla. Contact David Carry at 1-888-522-9866 or grands@voaak.org or Rozann Kimp-ton 376-4678 or rozann@mtaonline.net.
Consider Supporting ACRF
By doing what you do every day!

There are many ways to support Alaska Center for Resource Families just by shopping as you normally do, or by choosing to shop at these locations and selecting us as your Non-Profit of choice.

Link your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to Alaska Center for Resource Families and you still earn reward points and ACRF receives a donation!

Shop at smile.amazon.com and when you choose Northwest Resource Associates as your charity, ACRF will earn while you shop, at no additional cost to you!

Visit us at www.acrf.org