



Kinship Quarterly

Strengthening Families

April 2015

IN THIS ISSUE: WHAT CHILDREN NEED YOU TO KNOW

What Children Need You to Know

Children who have been abused or neglected need safe and nurturing relationships that address the effects of child maltreatment. You might have questions about your child's experiences and their effects. This newsletter is intended to help you better understand the challenges of caring for a child from their point of view and provide resources for support.

On Kinship

By **Tymothy Belseth**
ETV/Youth Specialist

The best place for children is with their families. Substitute care is sometimes necessary to ensure child safety, but it does not mean that families cannot be kept together. Placing children with relatives, family friends, or people who share a meaningful relationship with the child is a way to keep families together. We know that kinship placements offer many advantages over traditional foster care for the majority of children and youth in substitute care. I believe the reason for the improved outcomes, increased stability, and overall better well-being of children in kinship placements is largely due to the unique bond created by family. Children, especially

teenagers, need stability and a sense of normalcy to thrive. However, children in substitute care often experience instability, trauma, and pain before any CPS involvement. Kinship providers offer comfort and warmth to children when they need it most.

Consider the child's perspective: How would you feel if you were in their shoes? Imagine being told that you could no longer live with your parents and that you were going to be taken away. To make matters worse, you are told that you would have to move in with complete strangers, perhaps to a city which you have never visited and to a home which you have never stepped foot in. Wouldn't you rather live with people you know and trust? Of course you would. Children and youth would answer the same.

There is nothing inherently "bad" about kids in foster care. It is often the case that the actions of others have got them there. But kinship care can greatly reduce their pain.

While it is true that those who go into foster care are eligible for a multitude of benefits, very few take advantage of them. As

someone who works with the aging-out population, I know the system simply does not provide the ideal conditions necessary for success. Placements break down, youth change schools frequently, and many have behavioral problems that are persistent into adulthood, despite the intense level of care offered from psychiatrists, therapists, and especially at residential treatment centers. Overall, kinship offers a degree of normalcy in an abnormal situation. But even the smallest gesture of kindness and compassion can have profound and life-changing implications to those in dire circumstances.

There is nothing inherently "bad" about kids in foster care; it is often the case that the actions of others have got them there. But kinship care can greatly reduce their pain. Kinship works because all of the aforementioned problems are not as prevalent in kinship placements. Youth in these settings experience fewer moves, which means they get to stay in their school longer, and behavior issues are better dealt with by a family member or trusted adult who actually knows the child and doesn't rely on their "file" to describe who they are.

Youth in kinship are eligible for many of the same benefits that foster youth are eligible for, but I would argue that those in kinship are better equipped to use them upon entering adulthood. For foster youth benefits go to the Resource Section of this newsletter.

Good to Know



Developmental Red Flags

By Trellanie E. Bostic
Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)

Child development is a concern of parents of young children, but many parents aren't sure what to expect. We understand that each child develops a little differently but what if a child is more than a little behind in a developmental skill? When should a parent be concerned and what can anyone do to help? Here are some common indicators, or red flags, that a baby or toddler may have a developmental delay.

Socializing — The human brain is hard-wired to connect with other people. For infants, this means their parents and other caregivers. For toddlers, this includes not just adults, but also other children. If a baby doesn't smile when you smile, doesn't look at you when you talk to him, or doesn't like to be held, this could indicate a developmental concern. If a toddler doesn't seem interested in other children, doesn't come to an adult for help, or doesn't notice if there is a new caregiver, this is a developmental red flag.

Exploring — Exploring the environment with hands, mouth, and for older infants and toddlers, through mobility, is important for learning. To explore, babies and toddlers must have both the ability and motivation. If a baby is stiff and can't bend his arms and legs, he may need special therapy services to help him use his body effectively. An infant who is too weak or "floppy" may also have trouble learning to use her body to explore. If an older infant or toddler doesn't seem interested in reaching for toys, or easily gives up trying to get a toy, he may need some help in learning to explore. By five months old, children should be moving from place to

place first by rolling, then by scooting, crawling, and finally, walking and running.

Communicating — Even newborns begin learning the rules of communication. They learn that if they cry, someone will feed them, change them, or comfort them. If a baby doesn't make noises when distressed, or if a toddler is not able to point and use at least a few words to indicate what she wants, these are developmental concerns.

Managing emotions — Babies and toddlers don't usually manage their emotions well, but some extreme emotional responses may be red flags. If a child seems unhappy most of the time, has tantrums that last more than 20 minutes, or doesn't calm down within a few minutes when you try to soothe him, there may be some developmental problems.

If a child shows any of these red flags, the child and family may qualify for Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services. ECI will help parents find ways to help the child learn new skills. Anyone can refer to ECI for an evaluation to see if services are needed. To make a referral and find an ECI program in your area, call the DARS Inquiries Line at (800) 628-5115 or visit www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/searchprogram.asp

Here are a couple links to resources to learn more about ECI and developmental milestones:

- [Texas ECI Family to Family Video:](#)
- [ECI Developmental Milestones:](#)

Help with Caring for Your Child



We all need help caring for our child, whether it's a quick trip to the store or while at work.

When asking for help to care for your child, consider the following:

- **Does this person *really* want to watch my child?** Family members and significant others often feel like they can't say no. It's important to have an honest conversation up front. If they do not feel comfortable caring for your child, it's far safer to ask someone else.
- **Is this person good with kids? Can they meet the needs of my child?** It is important to think about the caregiver's knowledge, ability, patience, and experience with caring for children before you leave your child with them.
- **Is this person capable of handling the job?** Your choice in caregiver needs to be able to meet the demands of caring for a child. Are they physically able to care for your child while you are away? Are they on a schedule that will meet the needs of your child or is it during a time when they may be sleeping or needing to take care of something else? Are they going to be flexible if you need them to help care for your child longer than expected?
- **Do they know how to handle crying?**
 - For healthy infants, crying is a common occurrence, especially during the first 12 weeks of life. Between two and six weeks of age, a baby's crying steadily increases and can put a lot of strain on parents.
 - Sometimes even adults need a timeout. If you are getting stressed out or overwhelmed, be sure to ask for help!
 - NEVER SHAKE A BABY! Shaken Baby Syndrome is the result of violently shaking young children. Injuries can include brain swelling/damage and even death.

Additional tips, resources and support:

- [HelpandHope.org](#)
- [Facebook.com/4MyKid](#)
- Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline
1-800-252-5400
[TxAbuseHotline.org](#)



Please visit us at
www.facebook.com/TexasKinshipCaregivers
and don't forget to like us!

Community Engagement



Above: Region 6 Kinship Relatives as Parents Conference (Houston)

Over 70 caregivers attended the conference in Houston. Light breakfast and lunch was provided as well as many informative workshops, such as Nurturing a Growing Mind, Public Benefits for Kin Parents, Parenting the Traumatized Child, & Legal Matters for Kinship Caregivers. Special thanks to Angie Grindon with Volunteers of America for coordinating the conference.

Region 8- 1st Kinship Festival (San Antonio)



The 1st Kinship Festival was October 25 at Comanche Park with about 400 people attending. Children enjoyed food, games, prizes and a Halloween costume contest. There were 20 community resources at the event that gave out prizes and candy.



Caseworkers donated awesome baskets to raffle to families.



Special appearances by Ronald McDonald, T-Bone from the Rampage, McGruff from the San Antonio Police Department, Mickey Mouse and others.

LINKS TO RESOURCES

- ❖ [Texas Youth Connection](#)
- ❖ [TX Youth Connection Facebook](#)
- ❖ [ETV Program & Services](#)
- ❖ [CASA for Children](#)
- ❖ [iFoster](#)
- ❖ [Youth Scholarships!!!!](#)

INTERNET SAFETY TIPS FOR TEENAGERS

The internet can be a good way to chat with friends, do research for school, and lots of other things. But it can also be a dangerous place.

- Never give out personal information about yourself or your family.
- When in chat rooms, social networking websites and even instant messaging, remember, not everyone is who they say they are.
- Predators will post a fake picture to pretend to be someone else. Do not plan to meet anyone you have met on the internet without first checking with your parents, as you could put yourself in grave danger.
- If someone harasses you online, do not respond. Tell your parents and contact your internet service provider.
- Predators attempt to lure you through the use of the internet. This is a danger to your personal safety and you should take precautions.

ADVICE FOR PARENTING TEENAGERS

- **Give teens some leeway**
Giving teens a chance to establish their own identity, giving them more independence, is essential to helping them establish their own place in the world.
- **Talk to teens about risks**
Whether it's drugs, driving, or premarital sex, your kids need to know the worst that could happen.
- **Keep the door open.**
Don't interrogate but act interested. Share a few tidbits about your own day and ask about theirs.
- **Let kids feel guilty**
Feeling good about yourself is healthy. But people should feel bad if they hurt someone or did something wrong. Kids need to feel bad sometimes. Guilt is a healthy emotion.
- **Choose your battles wisely**
- **Invite their friends for dinner**
- **Decide rules and discipline in advance**
- **Discuss "checking in."**

Be a positive role model!

Kinship Worker Spotlight

Vanessa Hernandez, Region 8



From Supervisor Brandi Young: "I met Vanessa Hernandez after starting in the Kinship Program on June 1, 2013. When I had my first unit meeting with the group, they all explained how in the past, they had partnered with Casey Family and had a festival for all the kinship caregivers and children. The unit seemed extremely passionate and stated that they would love to do the event again for their families. Shortly after this meeting, we were informed that the Kinship program was expanding. Due to her experience and amazing work ethic, Vanessa was called upon to assist in being a mentor for the new workers. Without hesitation, Vanessa accepted the assignment and worked over the next few months to ensure that her mentees were trained regarding the "ins and outs" of Kinship.

With all the new changes and additional staff, we decided to have an all-kinship meeting so that all the staff could get to know one another. It was at this meeting that the past festival was brought up again. After approval, it was decided that Kinship could hold a festival. It was at this time that this worker-driven engagement began. Vanessa headed the festival committee along with juggling her workload, as well as her responsibilities of the other committees (Cultural Committee; Worker Advisory Committee; Training Counsel) that she was actively apart. Vanessa ensured that fundraisers were conducted in order to raise the money needed to complete such an event. With the help of her fellow Kinship co-workers and community partners, we were able to hold the first Kinship Festival in October of 2014. Over 400 people attended the event. When the event was complete, Vanessa announced at the next all-Kinship staff meeting that she would head the committee again to make the next festival a greater success than the first. Vanessa has been hard at work (with the help of her fellow committee members) in completing fundraisers already this year."

Kinship
Quarterly
Strengthening
Families



We all have the
power
to stop
child abuse.



Report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, the elderly, or
people with disabilities at
(800) 252-5400 or www.txabusehotline.org.



TEXAS

Department of Family
and Protective Services