



Foster Family Service Newsletter

Foster Parent Mentor Program

by Sandy Hankins

FFS believes that mentoring is a powerful tool for helping other people in our lives. Our goal of mentoring is to connect foster parents with the power of mentoring through peer support, role modeling, mentorship and mutual respect.

On that note, The Foster Parent Mentoring Program is up and running. Life as a foster parent can be stressful for all of us. Mentoring exists for all Foster Parents; it's a line of support when needed. Our objective is a 1- 3 month mentorship timeline for newcomers, and on-going support available when needed for any Foster Parent. Mentors can also share new parenting techniques as well as offer other ideas for support and networking. Mentee's get to learn from others' experiences and mistakes, make new friends, expand their support network and make their foster parent experience even more positive.

The Foster Parent Mentor Program provides a safe environment designed for Foster Parents to get the support they need. It is available for new and experienced Foster Parents to help them cope with the daily challenges of foster parenting. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more, please ask your social worker.



Mentor Program Goals

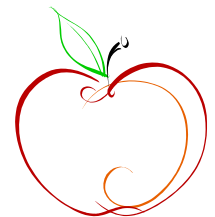
- *Increase the retention rate of foster parents*
- *To help aid in the prevention of placement disruptions.*
- *Have foster / adoptive families become active advocates.*
- *Provide support for new and experienced foster parents.*
- *Provide personal one-on-one assistance.*
- *Provide emotional support.*
- *Acquaint families with resources available to them.*

School's in Session

We have a great publication, "**An Educators Guide to Foster Care**". This is a pamphlet put together by FFS staff with input from local educators. You can obtain this pamphlet through your social worker or download it from www.FosterFamilyService.org, navigate to our "**Resources**" page and scroll to the bottom.

The pamphlet includes:

- *Common Issues Teachers encounter.
- *Suggestions for the Classroom.
- *Space for sharing issues you are working on.
- *Space for sharing how the teacher can help you.
- *Space for contact numbers for you and FFS.



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Wendy Knutson , Editor

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Compliance Corner

One of the many challenges we deal with today is increasingly complex issues the children in our care have. In order to better serve children we have decided to implement two new aspects of our program. The first is The Foster Parent Mentoring Program which is described on page one of this newsletter. The second is a **Clinical Social Work Tool Kit**, which we are implementing this month. The purpose of this tool kit

is to provide our social workers and foster parents with a 'primer' on the most common issues that arise in fostering special needs children. Our hope is that the various topics can be used as guidelines, as well as for a starting point of discussion whenever these issues arise.

The specific areas currently addressed are as follows:

- i. Suicidal Behaviors
- ii. Sexual Behavior Problems

- iii. Run-A-Ways
- iv. Enureses/Encopresis
- v. Temper Tantrums
- vi. Aggressive Behaviors
- vii. Criminal Behaviors
- viii. Educational Problems
- ix. Attachment
- x. Mandated Reporting
- xi. Icebreakers



Good-bye to Our FFS Team Members

The end of August brought the departure of several long-term FFS staff.

Shirley Briggs of our Oroville office has been facilitating adoption home studies since our programs' inception in 3/06. In that time she has been instrumental in finalizing 4 adoptions, but the driving all around Northern CA took its toll. Shirley has accepted a supervisory position with an agency within walking distance of her home in Gridley. Thanks for everything, Shirley, and best wishes in your new position.

Leila Rosner of our S. Lake Tahoe office is preparing to deliver her first child, and plans to be a stay-at-home mother. She has been with us for nearly 3 years, often single-handedly keeping her small office running smoothly. You're going to be the best mom, Leila, and we wish you all the best!

Phebe Lapinig of our Sacramento office left us in mid-August. Phebe was our receptionist/clerk for nearly 3 years, and became the first person in her entire family to graduate from college this past June. She has obtained a

position in her field of international studies at a Sacramento-area Jr. College, where she can put her education in to action.

Cindy Fleskes of our Sacramento office will be starting a job with Yolo County CPS Court Investigations in mid-September. Cindy has been with the Agency since 2003, as a social worker, certifier and supervisor. Living in Davis, her new position will greatly reduce her daily commute, but perhaps more importantly, offer her tremendous learning opportunities. Cindy is a friend, greatly respected social worker, and admired peer. Our loss is Yolo County's gain, and we wish her a wonderful transition in to her new role.

Kate Marsh of our Cameron Park office left the Agency in mid-August after 5 years of service. Kate's ability to maintain every detail of case documentation while simultaneously working placement referrals will be greatly missed.

So Long Girls, we wish you all luck!

We Are Proud To Say... We Have Great Kids & Great Parents Too!

Alex E. in the *Roundtree CFH* made the honor roll during the last quarter of the 2006-2007 school year.

Madison S. of the *Riffey CFH*, has begun attending Head Start and is working hard. She stopped by the office to let us know she is a big girl that goes to school and practiced her al-

phabet with us!

Brian L. of the *Huber CFH*, has been showing off his math skills in summer school and came home with **2 Certificates of Achievement in Math!**

We are impressed with **Jennifer K.** of the *Bridges CFH*. Jen-

nifer is on track to graduate in December and she's hoping to enter the local **Transitional Living Program (TLP)** to further strengthen her independent living skills by living on her own. **Jennifer, we know you will go far!**

 <input type="checkbox"/>
Mail Your Good News to: wendyk@fosterfamilyservice.org

Please Welcome to Our FFS Team...

Margaret "Maggie" Venegas started in our Sacramento office as the Agency-wide administrative coordinator. Maggie has many years of FFA experience, is fluent in Spanish, and looks forward to helping with certification, screening placement referrals, and many, many other essential functions necessary to keep FFS on track. Welcome, Maggie; go forth and organize, organize, organize!
Phyllis Smith will be starting in mid-September as a new social worker in our Sacramento office. Phyllis has more than twenty years of professional experience in foster

care and group homes. She comes to us from another local FFA. We feel very fortunate that she has chosen to join our team.
Lady Moore starts as a new social worker in our Cameron Park office. Lady has several years of experience in foster care, homeless services, and HIV/AIDS. She has a commitment to delivering the best child-centered services as possible, and we look forward to her starting on **S e p t e m b e r 1**.
Mardi Juhl is returning to our Agency in September as our coordinator of certification & training. As many readers know, Mardi was for-

merly our training coordinator for several years, and stepped away from foster care a few years ago to explore other interests. Fortunate for us, she realized that her expertise—in particular, preparing foster families to serve the many special needs presented by children in care—is a special gift that she has perfected over the years and wishes to share with FFS. Mardi will be implementing a specialized training curriculum that targets the unique needs of older children, children with more severe behavior and emotional problems, and sibling groups.

The Welcome Mat Is Out For...

The Lopez Family Home
The Nelson-Blue Family Home



We are always interested in certifying new homes. If you know of anyone who may be interested have them call their local office.

Potential Foster Parents can call one of our offices or find a [Pre-Application](#) at our website:

www.fosterfamilyservice.org

Foster Family Service Office Numbers:

- Sacramento (916) 487-2111
- Cameron Park (530) 676-6226
- Lake Tahoe (530) 544-2111
- Stockton (209) 644-8631
- Santa Rosa (707) 528-2115
- Oroville (530) 533-1576

Notes From Our Director *John Johnson M.S.W., Psy.D*

What a busy time for all of us with school-age children...getting them set with new clothes, school supplies, and adjusted to getting up and going first thing can be a difficult transition for all kids. For kids in foster care it can be even more challenging, as children with special needs often respond negatively to changes in their daily routine.

I encourage our foster parents to be mindful of this, and to prepare in advance. It can be most helpful to start having your children go to bed and rise according to the school schedule, at least one week prior to school actually starting back up. Also very helpful is to take your child to their school and walk around at least 2 or 3 times prior to the first day of school, so they can re-acquaint themselves with the layout and their specific schedule. Finally, it may be invaluable to schedule a meeting with your child's teacher(s) within the first few days of school, to alert them to the dependency status and special learning and/or behavior needs of your child. Just be mindful that foster parents don't have "educational rights," i.e. you can advocate for your child's learning needs, but only the county social worker has the legal authority to initiate an IEP or other formal educational accommodations.

Lastly, I want to re-state my absolute admiration to our foster parents across the entire Agency. We like to use this newsletter as a time to offer positive input and to recognize good deeds. What is usually not discussed are the many difficult trials our families endure. For instance, in August we had two families that were investigated by CCL as a result of allegations levied against them by children formerly in their care. In both instances these families had all the children in their care—biological and foster—temporarily removed until the allegations could be resolved. Yet another family underwent a CCL investigation for how they responded to extreme behavior outbursts of the foster children in their care. All three of these families are honest, caring, skilled foster parents, for which we have no reason to believe serious wrongdoings occurred. Even with this said, however, our staff have been discussing these situations and exploring future strategies with CCL.

What we've gleaned from these unfortunate and trying situations is, first, that we and our foster parents must always be mindful of supervision, i.e. if we have a child in placement that could potentially levy a false complaint, be sure to provide careful supervision, even while in and around the home and your family is all present. The second thing we've learned is that some of our parents can benefit from learning more strategies for de-escalating children's temper tantrums. It can be considerably less challenging to de-escalate a 5 year old who is small and can be contained safely in their bedroom than a 16 year old who is big and unruly. Please remember that regulations prohibit restraining or hitting foster children, and that yelling often feeds a child's rage. And also remember to simply call the Agency for support, and to call the Agency whenever you've taken an action with a child that could in any way be misconstrued as violating personal rights

Upcoming Trainings

Cameron Park	Working on Picnic plans! We will contact our families with more information
Sacramento	Saturday, September 15th 11am-3pm there will be a Swim Picnic. Watch your mail for details. FFS will provide food and drinks. Please bring a dessert. You will receive 3 training hours for this fun event!
Stockton	2 trainings available this month 5:30 to 8:30: September 5th , Licensing Regulations and September 19th The Dependency Process
Oroville	September 19th , Education Law AB40/ October 24th , County Speaker regarding Health and Education.