

Caregiver Connection

October 2011

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION



This is the first in a two-part series on groups offering support to caregivers of children no longer living with their biological parents. This edition focuses on relative/kinship care and we also profile one of several Kinship Navigators in Washington. Navigators provide relatives with information and referral services and support. Next month, Caregiver Connection features foster parent support groups and liaisons.

Supporting caregivers who support kids

Every week for the past 12 years, a group of adults who never thought they would be parenting a second time around (and certainly not as they approach Medicare age), gather in Olympia. They serve as a sounding board, suggestion center and support system for each other as they care for grandkids, nieces, nephews and other children who can no longer live with their parents.

On a recent Thursday night at the Family Education and Support Services office, 14 of them asked for and offered advice, told stories and talked about what the Kinship Support Group meant to them.

In a separate room nearby, the occasional sounds of kids playing are heard – child care is an integral part of what makes this support group work, its members says. “This group is a lifeline for me and a lot of people and for the children,” said Tammara Newbill. From other support group members, she said she has found advice on some legal aspects of a complex state system. “This place and church are the only places that keep me sane and vertical.”

There is a shared sense of camaraderie in the group that comes from the shared experience of taking care of – in many cases – your children’s children, or other relative kids. There is no sense of judgment or blame – no explanations are necessary.

“Here, people get it,” Tammara said.

Relative care is a large piece of the child welfare system. About 38 percent of children who have an open child

1624 Statewide Regional Foster Parent Representatives

REGION 1 NORTH

Cindy Gardner
rc.gardner@comcast.net
home 509-928-2040
cell 509-714-6961

Kristen Otoupalik
Otoupaliks@yahoo.com
509-244-9957

REGION 1 SOUTH

Mary-Jeanne Smith
smithhomes@hotmail.com
509-876-6245

Victoria Erwin
Victoriaerwin9@yahoo.com
509-386-2423

REGION 2 NORTH

Debra Ellsworth
dkfoster3@gmail.com
360-941-2244

Shala Crow
fosterhearts@hotmail.com
360-220-3785

REGION 2 SOUTH

Tess Thomas
TMT3000@aol.com
206-371-0974

Talya Miller
mytie5683@aol.com
206-786-1491

REGION 3 NORTH

Barbara Holbrook
blynnholbrook@gmail.com
360-649-0414

Elizabeth Griffin Hall
elizanngriffin@aol.com
h: 360-876-7515
w: 253-473-9252

REGION 3 SOUTH

Amy Gardner
michaelamy52@msn.com
360-200-2102

Marci Miess
marcimiess@hotmail.com
360-880-5330

Washington State’s Kinship Navigators

Serving grandparents and relatives raising children

SOUTHEAST WASHINGTON

Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Yakima, and Walla Walla Counties: Catholic Family and Child Services – Yakima
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Mary Pleger,
mpleger@ccyakima.org; 509-965-7100
or 1-800-246-2962

Benton, Franklin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla, and Asotin Counties
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: (Also Spanish Speaking)
Tina Khabir*, tkhabir@ccyakima.org; 509-946-4645,
Ext. 2021

Yakima and Kittitas Counties
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Mary Pleger,
mpleger@ccyakima.org; 509-965-7100
or 1-800-246-2962

Yakama Nation: Yakama Nation Area Agency on Aging
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Karen Cummings*,
kcummings@yakama.com; 509-865-1454

*Funded by Federal Family Connections Grant

CENTRAL WASHINGTON

Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan, Grant, Lincoln, and Adams Counties: Catholic Family and Child Services
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Jennifer Santillan,
jsantillan@ccyakima.org; 1-509-662-6761, Ext. 4557
or 1-800-261-1094

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Skamania, Wahkiakum Counties: Children’s Home Society, Southwest Washington region
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Tammy Bedlion,
Tammyb@chs-wa.org; 360-695-1325, Ext. 4214

EASTERN WASHINGTON

Ferry, Pend Oreille and Stevens Counties: Rural Resources
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Vicki Pontecorvo,
vpontecorvo@ruralresources.org; 509-684-3932
(part-time)

KINSHIP CARE IN WASHINGTON STATE WEBSITE www.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare

Spokane County: Elder Services – Spokane Mental Health
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Angela Andreas,
aandreas@smhca.org; 509-458-7450, Ext. 3007

Whitman County: Council on Aging and Human Services
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Amanda Rich,
coaamanda@qwestoffice.net; 509-397-4305, Ext. 102

PUGET SOUND

King County: Senior Services of Seattle – King County
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Helen Sawyer,
helens@seniorservices.org; 206-727-6264

Lewis, Mason and Thurston Counties: Family Education and Support Services
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Lynn Urvina, KinNavigator@qwestoffice.net; 360-754-7629 or 1-877-813-2828
SPANISH SPEAKING NAVIGATOR: Rosa Venancio,
fessassist@qwestoffice.net; 360-754-7629
or 1-877-813-2828

Pierce County: HopeSparks
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Rosalyn Alber,
ralber@hopesparks.org; 253-565-4484, Ext. 105
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Jesie Holden,
jholden@hopesparks.org; 253-565-4484, Ext. 104

NORTHWEST WASHINGTON

Whatcom County: Northwest Regional Council (AAA)
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Laina Berry,
BerryLS@dshs.wa.gov; 360-676-6749 (part-time)

STATE CONTACT

Hilari Hauptman, Aging and Disability Services Administration, DSHS, Hilari.hauptman@dshs.wa.gov;
1-800-422-3263 or 360-725-2556

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welfare case are being cared for by relatives in what is called “formal” kinship care. However, nearly 10 times that number (approximately 37,000) are living in “informal” kinship care, with relatives without any involvement in the public child welfare system.

Formally or informally, one group member said, there is often a feeling of “sadness, remorse, guilt, or anger” that can be safely and honestly discussed at the support group.

Alan said when he joined, “It was so comforting and it still is comforting for me. We love the group.”

“It’s not so much kinship as friendship,” said Mark Daigneault.

And because the group has been going so long, the kids who come form their own friendships and bonds that are very important to them. Group members say “kids have a support group too.”

“Not coming to kinship – that would be a disaster in my house,” said Robert Webb. He recalls when he first came to the group he was distressed at the situation in which he and his wife Mary found themselves. “All I could do was sit there and cry,” he said.

But then one of the most important parts of the group came to bear on him – honest, realistic discussion.

“They got on my stuff, and I thought ‘how dare you talk to me that way,’ ” he said. But he listened and heard what they said. Through the meetings, potlucks and picnics, he came to have a great appreciation for the people he met weekly. “Now I come to give back to the group. We’re not playing. We’re too old to play. We need to hear reality. There’s no sense leaving with the same problem you came with.”

Not to say that there isn’t laughter. Alan Roddy said he sometimes stammers when he gets frustrated – as he did one night while cooking dinner and stammered while trying to talk to a frustrating child – “all I could say was g-g-g-g,” he said. “She just turned to her brother and said, “g-g-g-g.” The group dissolved in laughter. In one form or another, they had all been there with kids.

There was amused agreement when Mary Webb said, “when you go to play dates (the parents) are all 25.”

Joyce Mallerger facilitates the group and has for years. She and others talked about the training they get on so many topics they can use to help raise children. And she echoed the sentiments about the sense of togetherness.

“In the end, it is the same story,” she said of their common experience. “There is a bond between all of us. You all have become a big part of my life.”

All relatives caring for children are welcome to attend. For information about kinship care support groups in your area: www.kinshipcare.wa.gov

Navigating the system

If you are a relative caring for a grandchild, nephew or niece, you would want someone like Lynn Urvina on your side to help find resources and the support you need.

Lynn is one of a statewide network of Kinship Navigators (see list and contact numbers located in this Caregiver Connection) who help relative caregivers solve problems that range from where to find a crib to the intricacies of third-party custody.

“I love working with people and helping meet their challenges,” said Lynn, 57, who along with her husband Lars is caring for their almost eight-year old granddaughter, whom they have had in their care since she was 11 months old. They live in Lacey. Lynn was born and raised in Olympia.

When they took in their granddaughter, Lynn was a retail manager at Sears, working in the appliance section. She knew little about the task of raising a grandchild, although she and Lars had four kids of their own. She heard about the support group in Olympia and jumped at the chance to participate.

“I knew right away it would be something that would be beneficial for us,” she said. When the Navigator job opened up, she felt she could take on the responsibilities of helping others.

“I get much more satisfaction working with a broken family than working with a broken dishwasher,” she said. “It’s wonderful to be with people who understand why you are doing what you are doing.”

Her granddaughter comes to the support group meeting, and has joined Brownies with some of her friends from the group. “It (the kinship kids group) makes it more normal for them. They get to see that they are not alone.”



Brothers and sisters reunite at Camp to Belong Washington

Sitting on his bunk as Camp to Belong Washington neared its end in August, one young camper in foster care thought about all the time he got to spend that week with his sister from whom he is separated - and how much it meant to him. “I wish I could be adopted by Camp To Belong,” he said.

That sense of longing and belonging was shared by the 101 campers who attended camp in 2011 at Miracle Ranch on Horseshoe Lake in Port Orchard. It was also shared by the 43 counselors and 50 other part-time volunteers who bring these separated siblings together for five days of bonding and sharing, giving them a safe, nurturing and supportive place to reconnect with their brothers and sisters.

“It was the best week of my life,” said counselor Robyn Jones, a state social worker. The mom of a camper with two brothers said, “I cannot say enough positive... to describe the glow that accompanies these boys. The feeling of self-confidence, strength and belonging envelops them.”

2011 was the third year Washington held its own Camp To Belong, reuniting siblings separated by foster care, adoption, relative care or similar situations. “I’m going to go to that camp forever,” said one first-year camper. “It was so good. I’m going to see my sisters every year forever at that camp.”

Camp To Belong began in 1995 by Lynn Price, who learned she had a sister when she was eight years old. Vowing that experience should never happen to any young person, she began a journey that eventually grew into Camp To Belong Washington, a partnership between Foster Family Connections, a private, non-profit organization in Port Orchard and Children’s Administration. Deb Kennedy and April VanGesen are camp co-directors and foster moms with three adopted sibling groups in their large families.

The campers create and wear tie dye shirts and other costumes for Rock ‘N Roll

Training for caregivers

Children's Administration (CA), in collaboration with FPAWS (Foster Parent Association of Washington State), developed a workgroup to identify training improvement needs for caregivers. The Workgroup included representatives from FPAWS, Resource Family Training Institute (RFTI) the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) and other CA staff.

The workgroup identified priorities for improvement based on the fundamental belief foster parents provide better care when they have adequate and sufficient training related to the specific needs of foster children. The workgroup also explored the unique relationship between caregivers and CA staff and recommended a required post-licensing course to address CA's current policy and practices.

The new Caregiver Training Policy will be implemented on October 15th, 2011. **Improvements to the Training Policy will include:**

- Required 36 hour Parenting Plus course within first 2 years of licensing*
- Required 3 hour So You Have Your First Placement course within first year of licensing
- Training hours decreased to 30 hours for second licensing period
- Training hours decreased to 24 hours for third and all subsequent licensing periods
- A total of 12 training hours can be rolled over into next licensing period
- Increased use of foster parent and tribal co-trainers

If you have any questions, please contact your DLR licensor who will be happy to assist you.

*Caregivers will be exempt from taking Parenting Plus if you have previously taken Foster Parent Scope.

Team training

The Office of Training and Development and the UW present: **"Enhancing Relationships through Teaming"**

This exciting half day training promotes greater understanding and stronger relationships between foster parents/relative caregivers and CA social workers. Team up with social workers to:

- Identify the challenges of collaboration teaming.
- Discover which of your skills and resources can support teaming efforts.
- Discuss with your partner ways to enhance your working relationship.

To register, contact your local Resource Family Training Institute (RFTI) Trainer or Shannon Jackson at obsh300@dshs.wa.gov, or (360) 902-7648.

Upcoming Training Dates (all classes are 9:00 am – 3:00 pm)

Region 1:

March 20, 2012 – Yakima

March 21, 2012 – Spokane

June 5, 2012 – Spokane

Region 2:

March 14, 2012 – Smokey Point

March 15, 2012 – Seattle

June 6, 2012 – Sky Valley

Region 3:

January 11, 2012 – Vancouver

January 13, 2012 – Bremerton

April 26, 2012 – Tumwater

May 15, 2012 – Tacoma

REMINDER:
RFTI offers caregiver training days, evenings, and weekends to meet your needs and schedules.



Night. They enjoy a rollicking all-camp birthday party on Wednesday night with cakes provided by Free Cakes For Kids. They play at Carnival/Rodeo Night. They swim, try their hands at archery, row boats and canoes, ride horses, challenge themselves on the ropes course and douse themselves while competing with water balloons.

In short, they get to – just be kids.

Older campers glimpse the possibilities in their future, with educational opportunities available to them. Younger campers learn about serving others – including hearing a soldier in Iraq talking to them via Skype. They learned teamwork from the Miss Foster Care hydroplane crew. They leave with pictures, scrap-books, sibling pillows and blankets where they write messages to their siblings, like this one from a camper: "When you go to sleep tonight, remember I love you."

And they leave with the knowledge they are not alone – they have a camp family – and with the empowering message, stressed during camp, that they get to write the rest of their life story.

"It's magic," said counselor Sam Lippolis of the way camp touches so many lives.

"You cannot visit Camp To Belong without being changed," said a filmmaker, there to capture the magic.

One camper, through tears, spoke for many: "Camp is the best thing that has ever happened to me."



Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County, call the Fostering Together liaison, 206-850-4420. If you live in Region 2 North (counties north of King County), call the Fostering Together liaison 360-220-3785.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

The **Fostering Well-Being Care Coordination Unit** can help answer health-related questions or help you work on health related issues with children/youth in your care. Contact information: 1-800-422-3263 or 360-725-2626 (8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) or e-mail: dhsfwbccu@dshs.wa.gov. Please take care not to include any identifying information about a child unless sent through a secure e-mail account.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State is an all volunteer non-profit association. It is led by experienced caregivers who provide support and helpful services to all caregivers (foster, adoptive, and kinship) in Washington State. In addition, FPAWS advocates for caregivers with Washington's legislative officials, all levels of Children's Administration staff and other community service providers to enhance the child welfare system. Contact FPAWS at www.fpaws.org or 1-800-391-CARE (2273).

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Girl Scouts of Western Washington: Fostering a Future: MeccaYS@girlscouts.org

Women, Infant and Children Program (WIC): www.parenthelp123.org/resources/food-resources

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website: www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out: www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 2,900 people who have subscribed to the List Serve <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

Lieutenant Governor recognizes "Voices of Children" winners

Children being raised by grandparents or other kin were recognized by Lt. Governor Owen, in a ceremony held on Aug. 24 in his office. The Voices of Children program sponsored the 2010 essay contest. Each child was awarded \$100 for their essay, courtesy of the TwinStar Credit Union. From left, above, are winners: Shaylynn of Seattle, Johnathan of Aberdeen, Lt. Gov. Owen, Matt Devlin with TwinStar, Donovan from Ridgefield and Kaylynn from Centralia.



Free parenting tools training in Olympia Parenting with wit and wisdom

DATE: Wednesday, October 5, 2011
6:30 p.m.

PRESENTER: Barbara Coloroso, Bestselling author and parenting consultant

LOCATION: Kenneth Minneart Center for the Arts (Bldg. 21)
South Puget Sound Community College
2011 Mottman Rd. SW
Olympia, WA

PARKING: Free – in Lot A at the college

Free onsite childcare provided for ages 3-12. You must pre-register for child care by calling the Hands On Children's Museum: 360-956-0818 Ext. 0

For more information about this training call: 360-596-5293.

