

Caregiver Connection

June 2009

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers



Autism

AWARENESS, ADVOCACY, AND ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE CARE

Autism has been in the news lately, for several reasons. One is the recent Supreme Court decision denying the association between vaccines and the onset of autism. Another is the rapid increase in the number of diagnoses of autism.

Autism is a complex developmental disability that causes problems with social interaction and communication. Children with autism are likely to have problems with "social intuition", that is, the ability to relate to other people. They tend to have "an obsessive desire for the maintenance of sameness." Simply put, they do not like change!

Children with Autism may have verbal and non-verbal communication abnormalities. These could include robotic, repetitive, or lilting tone of speech, or failure to respond to non-verbal cues, such as eye contact, smiling, or pointing.

Because people with autism can have very different behaviors or symptoms, health professionals think of autism as a "spectrum" disorder – a group of disorders with a range of similar features. Based on their strengths and weaknesses, people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) may have mild or serious symptoms. Related to ASD, you may hear terms like classic autism, Aspergers Syndrome, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS). You may also hear about related conditions such as Fragile X Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, or Rett's syndrome. People with ASD may also have other health issues, such as gastro-intestinal problems or poor motor skills.

There is a great deal of concern about the link between common vaccines and Autism. Some parents associate autism with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR) or with the mercury preservative, Thimerisal. Many studies have been done in response to these concerns and none have found any association between vaccines and autism. Most scientists think that the association comes about because the onset of autism typically happens at the same age as vaccines are usually given, around ages 1 to 3 years old. In the United States, vaccines given to very young children have not contained Thimerisal since 2001. This is the evidence that convinced the Supreme Court to rule against the families in the recent lawsuit.

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Foster Parenting

You can too.

Meet the Castanare Family

Henry and Diane Castanare have been married for 14 years and have been foster parents for 16. Between them, they have six birth children, all grown and raising their own families. The Castanares have adopted one child, Cody, and currently have three foster children in their care. They are Octavia, 9 years old, Vicente, 10 months old, and Ferdinan, 5 years old. Henry retired from a shipyard in Kitsap County in 1993 and Diane has been employed as a cook in a retirement home for the last 21 years.

They became foster parents because they had a “big house” and a love for children. Both Henry and Diane are from very large families and just enjoy taking care of children. They enjoy all ages of children, although Diane has a big heart for infants, especially medically fragile. Several of the children they have cared for over the years have aged out of the system, but come back to visit with them and still call them “mom” and “dad”.

The Castanare family enjoys camping, fishing, boating, movies, and swimming. Every year they take a special vacation with their foster children to Fort Warden. They want to build those special memories. Along the line of making memories, Diane makes a special blanket for each child who comes into their care. Part of their routine is that Diane reads to each child before bed every night. Those blankets and books are well used!

They have never doubted their skills as parents to their own children and to foster children. They both believe they have made a difference in children’s lives and feel a great deal of pride for the work they do. Diane states “We don’t do this for the money. Children need love, structure, consistency, understanding, and a place they can call home. Children need love and they all deserve a forever home.” The Castanares are committed to creating love, structure, and consistency for some very deserving children.

You can too.

TELL US YOUR FAMILY STORY

The feature families you are meeting are your neighbors and community members. Just like you, they are making a difference in the lives of children throughout Washington State. If you are a foster parent, guardian or relative caregiver and would like to share your story, please contact Dinah Martin 360-902-0740 or email madi300@dshs.wa.gov.

Continued from front cover

Rates of Autism have increased dramatically over the past several decades. In 1950, when autism was initially recognized as a condition, the rate of diagnosis was 1 in 20,000 children. In 2008, the rate was one in every 150 children. Several things have contributed to that rise in diagnoses. Most significant is the change in how ASD is diagnosed. The diagnosis now includes many socially-related abnormal behaviors that previously would not have been recognized as autism. Also, early intervention has resulted in children being diagnosed at a younger age. Additionally, some disabilities that previously were classified as “mental retardation” are now included in ASD. The result of these changes is many more diagnoses. Scientists really don’t know if there has been an actual increase in the number of children with these disorders.

A lot of the current research is studying genetics and ASD. Several genes have already been identified as contributing to the possibility of ASD.

There is no definitive, single treatment for ASD. However, there are a variety of interventions that may improve your child’s functioning. You will want to seek the advice of a medical professional experienced with ASD to plan a course of treatment. You will probably find yourself talking to speech and occupational therapists. Physical therapists may work with your child on motor skills and balance. Your local school system can start when your child is 3 years old to work with you on issues related to school behavior and performance. Your child’s doctor may also prescribe medication to deal with some of the symptoms of ASD.

If you are caring for a child with ASD, you will want to arm yourself with information and help! The following are some resources here in Washington State that you will find useful:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/mch/Autism/guidebook.htm>. The Department of Health (DOH) has some great resources! The link above will take you to a wonderful guidebook on autism, or go directly to a really great DOH statewide resource guide:

<http://askgeorge.wa.gov/doh/query.html?col=doh&style=sow&nh=7&q=-site%3Awww.sboh.wa.gov+-url%3Awww.doh.wa.gov%2Fsboh&origin=D&OH&qp=&qt=autism+lifespan+resource+tree>.

The University of Washington is a leader in autism research and has an autism center in Tacoma that provides clinical services and support: <http://depts.washington.edu/uwautism/>.

If you’d like to know more about what is happening on a national level, try the National Institute of Health at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/autism>.

Calling all young artists!

The Seattle Art Museum and community partners, including DSHS are sponsoring the Many faces of Family Poster Project.

Help Seattle Art Museum (“SAM”) to celebrate how diverse our families can be. Who takes care of you? What does your family look like?

Deadline for entry is June 27th, 2009. For entry form and complete guidelines, contact Adell Richardson at Raid300@dshs.wa.gov.

“We Are Family” event a success

Thanks to the Mariners for a great night of baseball on Friday, May 1st. A good time was had by all!



Flu facts

With all of the talk in recent weeks about flu, there are some important things to know:

SWINE FLU

Swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is normally found in pigs. There are many such viruses and they rarely infect humans. The virus currently causing human illness is a new type of swine flu that has developed the ability to infect people and be transmitted from person to person.

Although this new virus is called "swine flu" it is not transmitted from eating pork products. Like other respiratory diseases, it is spread from person to person through coughs and sneezes. When people cough or sneeze, they spread germs through the air or onto surfaces that other people may touch.

PRECAUTIONS AND SYMPTOMS

Infection occurs when the virus gets into someone's airway and lungs. However, it isn't yet known how easily the virus spreads. As with any infectious disease that is spread through the human respiratory system, health officials recommended the following precautions:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it;
- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective;
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people;
- If you get sick, stay home and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

These are the same precautions that should be taken to stop transmitting all influenza viruses and other viruses that are transmitted from the respiratory tract. Human symptoms for this new type of swine flu are similar to the symptoms of the regular "seasonal" influenza that happens each year. Symptoms include fever, cough and sore throat. In addition, fatigue, lack of appetite, runny nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea have been reported.

TREATMENT

There is currently no vaccine to prevent swine flu, but there are medications to help treat it. These medicines are generally used to prevent serious flu complications such as pneumonia and work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms). Whether a person with influenza needs to take one of these medicines is a decision that must be made by the patient and their health care provider.

MORE INFORMATION

- Washington State Department of Health
www.doh.wa.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

Post Adoption **Support**

July Adoption Support Checks

YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE YOUR JULY CHECK until after July 6th. WHY? Adoption Support checks are paid one month ahead. For example, your check for June will come around the end of May. Every year the beginning of the new fiscal year affects the payment of adoption support benefits. This is because the Department's new budget year does not begin until July 1st 2009. No funds set for payment in July can be spent before July 1st. The 4th of July holiday also adds to this delay. If you have any further questions, please contact your adoption support program manager listed in this section.

Book Nook

BOOK TITLE

Questions Adoptees Are Asking

AUTHOR

Eldridge, Sherrie

PUBLICATION YEAR

2009 by NavPress

ABSTRACT

After recounting a traumatic reunion with a birth mother, this book draws on interviews with 70 adoptees ages 7-77 to answer questions about adoption.

If you have any books you would recommend for adoptive parents, please contact Lonnie Locke by e-mail at lolo300@dshs.wa.gov. or 1-800-562-5682. Please provide the name of the book, the author, and a content summary.

Regional Contacts

Region 1 – Spokane

Jan Lammers* 509-363-3383
Pam Copeland* 509-363-3379

Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland* 509-225-6500
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(Financial Specialist)

Region 3 – Monroe

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Region 4 – Bellevue

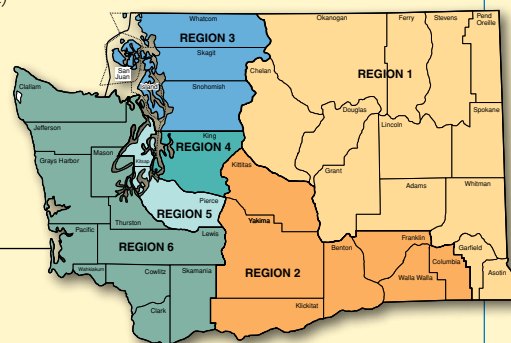
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(Social Worker)

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Cindy Anderson* 253-983-6359
Laura Davis* 253-983-6281

Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett* 360-725-6758
Kim Mower* 360-725-6778



Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682

(listen carefully to the recorded message)

* Adoption Support Consultants

Is it time to renew your foster care license?

We appreciate your hard work and dedication with our children and hope you will renew your license and continue to be a valuable resource to children.

Please contact your licenser BEFORE your license expires to let CA know if you intend to renew your foster care license.

Division of Licensed Resources plans to mail relicensing packets 120 days before license expiration. The earlier you submit the paperwork, the earlier we can complete the relicensing and ensure no disruption to placements or payments.

If you have any questions please contact Robbie Downs, Foster Care Licensing Program Manager, at 360-902-8005

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 206-605-0664 and in any county from Snohomish County north, call 360-510-7601 or 360-863-6530.
- 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.

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: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

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.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:
<http://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:
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 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.

Famlink news

Children's Administration's new Child Welfare Automated Information System went live February 1st 2009. This new system is called FamLink. The system has been a challenge for all aspects of our business.

As a provider of services for Children's Administration and a valued partner in our work, you may have noticed some changes in the way payments are made or the information you receive. Here are some important points to remember as we move forward:

- Children's Administration is able to pay providers for all authorized services. If you are told payment cannot be made, that person does not have the current information. For the most current information, contact the Fiduciary Specialist in your area. A list of the Regional Supervisors of the Fiduciary Specialists is available at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/FiduciaryContactList.pdf>.
- FamLink provides monthly authorization information to SSPS. Providers continue to receive authorizations, invoices and payments from SSPS.
- The most visible changes for providers are changes in the names and number of SSPS services and the timing of Social Service Notifications (also known as Authorizations). More information on these changes is available at http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/about/imp_famlinkImpact.asp.
- If you have not received payment for authorized services within the usual timeframes, please contact the Fiduciary Specialist in your area. A list of the Regional Supervisors of the Fiduciary Specialists is available at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/FiduciaryContactList.pdf>

Additional information is available on the CA website at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/general/index.asp>.

High school graduations

Many of our foster youth will be graduating from high schools across the state in June. Congratulations to each one of them for their hard work and dedication in achieving this milestone. Thanks also go to the foster families, social workers and educators that have supported these young people in achieving their dreams. Next month we will share with you the stories of two of our graduating seniors. If you know one of our foster youth who is graduating this year – make sure to tell them "Congratulations".