

# Caregiver Connection

September 2009

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

## Tiene Corazón?

September is National Hispanic Heritage Month



September is National Hispanic Heritage Month. Children's Administration would like to say ¡Muchas Gracias to caregivers of Hispanic/Latino heritage for your contributions to the well-being of children and families in the child welfare system!

Hispanic foster parents and relative caregivers are a valuable resource for children in our state. You help Hispanic children maintain connections to their culture and heritage through language, customs, celebrations, food, and familiarity. Hispanic caregivers not only support Hispanic foster children and their families, but they provide safe, stable, and nurturing homes to children of every racial and ethnic background. Non-Hispanic children coming into Hispanic homes will gain from the experience of learning about a culture rich in history, art, colors, flavors, and family!

The Hispanic population is the fastest-growing group in the United States. That trend is true in Washington state as well. As this growth continues, it becomes more and more important to make sure that the families designated to care for children are reflective of the children we serve.

So...¿Quien tiene corazon? Who has heart? Our Hispanic foster families have heart for the work that they do and the children and families that they serve!

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## Linda and Arturo Bedolla ¡Maravilloso, Maravillosa, Gente!



The first time you meet Linda Bedolla, you are immediately struck by her friendliness, sincerity, and positive energy. It is no surprise that Alice Carranza, a child and family welfare supervisor in Toppenish, describes Linda simply as a “wonderful, wonderful person”, ¡maravilloso, maravillosa persona!.

Linda and Arturo Bedolla have been married for 33 years and have been foster parents for 23 of those. Linda had known this was something she wanted to do since she was in foster care herself. Arturo supported her in this goal and they have embarked on the challenging and rewarding journey together.

Before becoming foster parents, they had four birth children. Over time they have adopted one child and taken guardianship of two more. At first they took very young children, but Linda discovered she really had a heart for teen girls so for the past nine years, the Bedollas have cared primarily for adolescent girls. “Linda relates so well to these girls,” says Alice. “She goes out of her way to encourage them and instill in them a sense of belonging.” Linda’s own experiences as a foster youth help her to connect with the young women placed in her home. They really know she understands them and cares about them. The bond that Linda and Arturo form with the girls in their home is the thing that keeps the Bedollas involved in foster parenting. They are helping young women grow and succeed and their lives are enriched in the process.

Linda tells a wonderful story about the time about six years ago when she and Arturo went on vacation. While they were gone, their foster children at the time as well as former foster children came together and did a makeover of their house. They painted and did repairs, making the house sparkle for the Bedolla’s return home. The foster children living there held fund raising activities, like carwashes, to raise money for cleaning and remodeling supplies. That these young people showed the initiative to do something for their caregivers and the community supported their efforts, shows just how highly esteemed the Bedollas are.

The Bedollas say that the most satisfying thing about foster parenting is seeing the girls graduate from high school. Almost all of them have! Currently, one foster daughter is enrolled in the Foster Care to 21 Program and will be going to college in the fall. Linda and Arturo are so proud of her!

Both Bedollas are involved in creating fun times and memories for the girls in their home. Linda always has craft supplies on hand and everyone joins in the fun of creating! This summer, the girls decorated matching T shirts for a big trip over the mountains in August to go to Enchanted Village/Wild Waves. They go camping regularly and Arturo enjoys taking the girls on day trips to interesting places.

Arturo and Linda really know about the Hispanic concept of Corazon – heart...and demonstrate it everyday in their work with kids...

You can too.

## Child passenger safety awareness week – September 12-18th

Traveling safely (and legally) with your foster children

Erin Summa, *Child Safety Educator, Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital*

Car crashes are the leading cause of death for Washington children, which is why Washington state law requires all children to be properly restrained when riding in a motor vehicle. The driver is held responsible, and the fine for using no car seat, the wrong car seat, or using the right car seat incorrectly – is \$124. More importantly, without the proper protection, your foster children could be seriously or fatally injured in a crash.

### Washington Law requires:

- All children must be properly restrained when riding in a motor vehicle.
- Children under age 13 must ride in the back seat, whenever possible.
- Children under age 8 or 4’9” tall must ride in an appropriate child restraint (car seat or booster seat) and it must be used and installed correctly.

Take the time to make sure your foster children are riding safely. Assess your current car seats for recalls, damage, missing parts, and age (most expire 6 years after the manufacture date). Every car seat has its own weight / height / age restrictions – check labels and use seats that are appropriate for each child’s age and size. Always read and follow all instructions in your car seat manual and vehicle owner’s manual. If you don’t have them, order replacement copies from the manufacturer.

There is no “one” right car seat. The right car seat for you is one that fits your child, fits your vehicle, fits your budget, and you can use correctly every time. When purchasing a new car seat, consider the following:

- If you plan to use this car seat for more than one foster child, choose a seat that will accommodate a range of sizes for each stage:
  - If you foster newborns / small infants – choose an infant-only seat or convertible seat with low harness slots.
  - If you foster older babies / toddlers / preschoolers – choose a convertible seat with a high rear-facing weight limit (30-40 lbs), high forward-facing weight limit (50-80 lbs), and high upper harness slots.
  - If you foster school-aged children – choose a high-back booster seat with a back that can be adjusted up and down easily.
- Choose a seat that is easy for you to adjust and install. If a seat is hard to use, you are more likely to use it wrong (which is both dangerous and against the law).
- Be wary of used car seats. They can be recalled, expired, damaged, or have missing parts.

If you have questions about car seats, or would like help installing your car seats correctly, consult a Child Passenger Safety Technician in your area. Go to [www.800bucklup.org](http://www.800bucklup.org), and then click on “car seat checks” for county-specific local contacts.

*Erin Summa has been educating families and community groups about car seats for over 10 years. She is a Child Passenger Safety Technician with the renowned Center for Childhood Safety at Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital in Tacoma, Washington.*  
[www.multicare.org/childhoodsafety](http://www.multicare.org/childhoodsafety)

# Ch-Ch-Changes

There's no doubt about the fact that the world of child welfare is ever-changing, and rightly so. We need to continuously learn how to better serve children and support families.

There have been a number of changes in CA policy recently and there are several reasons why they are all occurring now:

- Ongoing improvements related to achieving federal practice standards.
- New Federal regulations passed last fall, called "Fostering Connections."
- Bills passed by our legislature in the 2009 session.

Most of these new policies will be invisible to you, but some may impact you. Here are some of the policy changes that may affect you.

- At the beginning of any new case, social workers must make a concerted effort to identify relatives or other important people with an existing relationship to the children involved. Social workers must have a conversation with parents within the first 72 hours and must notify all known adult relatives about a child's placement into out-of-home care within 30 days. The letter they are sent tells relatives they must come forward within a given time frame or they may lose the opportunity to be a resource for the child later.
- A similar policy change recognizes that a child's existing relationships to people who may not be related but might be a placement resource are important to consider. As a result, "other suitable persons", such as friends of the child or family, are considered at the beginning of a case, along with relatives, before licensed foster care is considered.
- If a child is returning to foster care after returning home, previous caregivers must be given priority for placement, after relatives and other suitable persons. The requirements are that the previous foster home(s) must be willing and available, able to meet the child's needs, and the placement must be in the best interest of the child.
- Social workers must make sure that siblings placed in separate homes have opportunities for contact and visits. And they must document why reasonable efforts to place the siblings together did not work.
- New legislation has been passed to encourage contact with siblings not placed and adopted together. Currently all caregivers are encouraged to maintain sibling contact. It is critical that siblings placed in separate homes have the opportunity to maintain familial bonds.
- Dependency Guardianship will be established differently in the future. A statewide workgroup is currently working on possible new structures for guardianships, including consideration of a subsidized relative guardianship program.

Post Adoption **SUPPORT**

## Use of the cost free number

Adoption Support has one phone number that you can call to reach any of the seven offices. The number is 1-800-562-5682. To find what you need we offer this advice:

- Listen carefully to the recorded message to decide what number to enter.
- There are three (3) choices:
  1. Regional Adoption Support Program Specialist. They are the people listed above who manage your case. When you press 1 for this menu, you will be asked if you know your regional number. The regional numbers are: 1 (Spokane); 2 (Yakima); 3 (Monroe); 4 (Bellevue); 5 (Tacoma), and 6 (Tumwater). Press the number of the region in order to reach the specific office. If you do not remember your regional number, stay on the line and someone will help you.
  2. Adoption Support Program Manager in Olympia (for general information) – press 2 for this second choice
  3. Moving to another state and needing assistance in obtaining medical in your new state of residence – press 3 for this third choice.

## Regional Contacts

### Region 1 – Spokane

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

### Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland\* 509-225-6500  
Carol Cyr 509-225-6531  
(Financial Specialist)

### Region 3 – Monroe

Steve Foster\* 360-805-3032  
Linda Richardson\* 360-805-3030

### Region 4 – Bellevue

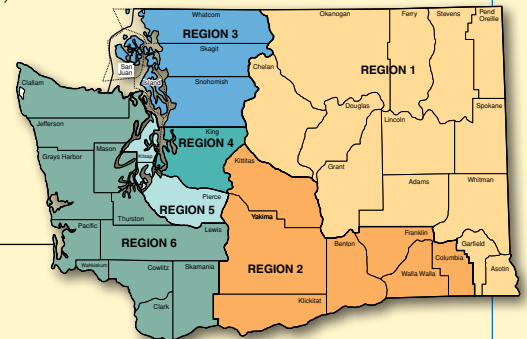
Aaron Washington\* 425-590-3072  
Jenne Norris 425-590-3069  
(Social Worker)

### Region 5 – Tacoma

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

- The Foster Care to 21 program is continued, allowing foster youth to remain in your home and attend college or other training, if they desire. The level 1 foster care rate applies to those enrolled in Foster Care to 21.

While we can anticipate additional changes as the result of the economy, we can't be sure exactly how we will all be impacted. Some changes which may occur include:

- Foster care rates are not affected, however; contracted service providers will experience a reduction in payment rates.
- CA is developing standards for the length and frequency of parent-child visits. There are efforts to achieve some consistency across the state and come to an agreement with the court systems regarding how often children should visit with their parents and for how long each visit should last.
- CA is exploring ways to achieve efficiencies in foster care employment childcare. Working foster parents will not necessarily lose childcare, but CA will look at situations where we are currently paying for care when it may not be appropriate.



## 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](http://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](http://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.

## Preparing for college

It may be the beginning of a new school year, but it is already time for those youth who are seniors this year to be making plans for after high school.

Youth who plan to continue their education will want to take action right away. As their foster parent, you will want to talk to them and help them explore next steps. Support them in researching all their options for achieving their educational goals.

A good place to start is on the website: [www.independence.wa.gov](http://www.independence.wa.gov). There is considerable information on this site to help you plan together. Youth can access applications to apply for the following financial aid resources:

- The Educational and Training Voucher Program
- The Governors' Scholarship for Foster Youth: this scholarship is for high school seniors and the application deadline is November 10th.
- The Passport to College Scholarship Program

Applying for these resources require youth to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This application is always free and youth should complete the application as soon as possible after January 1 for the upcoming academic year. To complete the FAFSA go to: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>.

Want more information about each of these programs? See contact information below:

### Educational & Training Voucher Program

Email: [etvwash@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:etvwash@dshs.wa.gov)

Phone: 877-433-8388

### The Passport to College Scholarship Program

Email: [passporttocollege@hecb.wa.gov](mailto:passporttocollege@hecb.wa.gov)

Phone: 888-535-0747

### The Governors' Scholarship

Email: [info@collegesuccessfoundation.org](mailto:info@collegesuccessfoundation.org)

Phone: (425) 416-2000

