

NEWS FROM YOUR PEER LIAISON



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I UNDERSTAND...

I AM A FOSTER PARENT TOO

IFAPA recognizes that foster parents often need the perspective of peers during the foster parenting and adoption experience.

I can provide support and assist you with questions regarding:

- Licensing requirements
- Training needs
- Respite care
- Behavior challenges
- Working with birth families
- Confidentiality issues
- And much more!

Hello families! Please remember that this month's Total Thursday (Cedar Rapids support group training) has been cancelled, as no meeting rooms are available at The Four Oaks Bridge for the entire month of January. If you are in need of training, you can always check out any other area support group meetings or IFAPA trainings. They can all be found on IFAPA's website at www.ifapa.org. Go to "trainings" for scheduled classes and go to "support" for support group classes. And remember, you only have to have half of your yearly six credit hours taken in a group setting. The other three credit hours can be taken online. A list of available classes can be found on IFAPA's website under "training." There is a fee associated with the online trainings, but it can be pretty handy since you can do it at midnight if you need to when kids are asleep! (Yes, I have done that.)

And a special note to all those very great dads out there; consider taking your little princess to the Butterfly Kisses dance (see below) Jan. 25. Can you imagine how special your foster daughter would feel if you took her to that! I'm sure you'd even get bonus points because this year's theme is "Frozen."

Janet

Butterfly Kisses

"Let it go" on the dance floor from 1 to 4 p.m. Jan. 25 at the Hotel Kirkwood Ballroom. Junior League of Cedar Rapids will be hosting its 13th Annual Butterfly Kisses, a father-daughter dance, with a new "Frozen" theme based upon the popular Disney movie.

The afternoon activities include a performance by Elsa and Anna from "Frozen," a light lunch, professional photos and lots of dancing to music by Modern DJ. There will be games that include building a snowman, face painting, a snow cone machine and a crafts table as well.

We will have many silent auction items including Four One-Day Park Hopper passes to one of Disney's Theme Parks, and a sunset plane ride for two with complimentary wine and cheese.

Tickets are \$75 per couple, plus \$15 for every extra daughter. Tickets can be purchased at <http://juniorleaguecr.org/butterfly-kisses/>

Proceeds go to a good cause: Junior League's Fostering Strength program that focuses on foster children aging out of the foster care system.



www.ifapa.org

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Understanding the Child's Response to Birth Parent Visits

There are no foolproof ways to guarantee that visits between children and their birth parents will be successful. But knowing about behaviors you might see and taking a few steps to prepare should help.

Before-visit symptoms. Children can be affected knowing that a visit with their birth parents is approaching. Here are some of the symptoms you might see in your child before the visit:

- Nightmares and sleep disturbances
- Unrealistic expectations about how the visit will go
- Anxiety

After-visit symptoms. Children can experience a variety of feelings after visiting with their birth parents. They also might behave in ways that are difficult to cope with. Feelings and behaviors you might see from your child after a visit include:

- Nightmares and sleep disturbances
- Crying, sometimes excessively
- Sadness
- Disappointment
- Acting out
- Anger
- Ambivalence
- Withdrawal
- Anxiety

After-visit support. Suggestions for handling the period after the visit:

- Talk to the child and about how the visit went.
- Let the child talk about how he or she feels about the visit and parents.
- Encourage questions about the visit or foster situation. Answer as honestly as possible.
- Reassure the children about any issues they might be concerned about.
- Ask your child what kinds of activities he or she would like to do at the next visit.
- Explain that you understand it can be difficult to visit parents for a little while and then have to leave them again.
- If possible, let the child know when the next visit is scheduled.
- Spend additional time nurturing the child and showing extra affection. Do this regardless of how the visit went, but especially when a visit does not go well.
- If the child is consistently unhappy or distressed after visits, report this to the social worker.
- Report any suspicion of child abuse immediately.

When a visit is canceled. A canceled visit can be hard on a child. Ways to support the child when it happens:

- Provide additional comforting when visits are canceled, for whatever reason.
- When telling the child about a canceled visit, do not blame. Simply explain that the parent made certain choices, the social worker had to reschedule, etc.
- Assure the child that he or she is not the reason the visit was canceled, he or she did not do anything wrong, and he or she is still loved.
- Try to do the activity with the child that was planned with the parents, if possible.
- Spend extra time with the child.

When to seek professional help. Changes in a child's behavior after a visit do not necessarily mean the visit hurt the child. The change might, for example, mean the child has a secure attachment with the parent and that he or she is upset about having to leave the parent again. However, if the behavior changes are severe or overly disruptive to the foster family, professional help may be necessary, and the situation should be brought to the attention of the child's social worker.

Source: *The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development*

Training Corner

IFAPA Training, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Jan. 24, Cedar Rapids. Topic: "I Don't Get It!" Learning Disorders 6 credit hours. Register at www.ifapa.org or 1-(800) 277-8145.

Total Training (Cedar Rapids Support Group), 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 15 at Four Oaks Bridge, 2100 First Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids has been canceled due to some construction at the site.

Total Training (Cedar Rapids Support Group), 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 19 at Four Oaks Bridge, 2100 First Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids. Training is on Attachment. Childcare is offered, but RSVP with number of children and ages by the Tuesday prior to myself or IKN Kris Millsap at kmillsap@fouroaks.org

IFAPA Training, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Feb. 14, Cedar Rapids. Topic: "Putting the Myths & Misunderstandings on Sleep Disorders to Bed" 6 credit hours. Register at www.ifapa.org or 1-(800) 277-8145.

Save the Date

IFAPA's spring conference: Fostering Hope...Adopting Change will be March 6 and 7 at Adventureland Inn in Altoona. Registration deadline is Feb. 17. Visit www.ifapa.org for details.