

NEWS FROM YOUR PEER LIAISON

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JOHN SMITH
IFAPA Peer Liaison

How to Contact Me:

877-305-3396

712-665-4011

jsmith@ifapa.org

**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!

Dear Parents:

When a child is suddenly taken from his home and family and placed in a foster home, there are bound to be issues of trust. One way for foster parents to gain a child's trust is to create a loving and nurturing environment within your own home. Let your foster child know as early as possible that he is welcome in your home, that your house is a safe one, and that he will not come to harm in your home. Besides letting your foster child know this when he joins your family, it is also important to remind him of this as often as possible. Find opportunities to show your foster child that he is important to you. For some children this might be a new experience, as they may never have been shown they are valued before.

Trust can also be built by continually showing your foster child you care for her. Building a trusting relationship means showing that you are concerned for her well-being--physically, emotionally, mentally, and academically. Showing compassion for your foster child is also an important part of building that trusting relationship, as she needs to know and feel that you care for her. Close relationships between children and adults can be key to helping children and youth avoid risky behaviors.

Trust does take time, and for some foster children it may take a very long period of time. As your foster child adjusts to his new home and environment, he needs time and patience from you. He also needs your compassion and understanding during what is likely a very emotional and traumatic time for him. Remember, he is in a new home with strangers. To him, everything is strange and different--a new home, new food, new parents, new brothers and sisters, and new rules and expectations for him to follow. Add to this a new school, along with new students and teachers, if he has moved from another school system.

It is possible your foster child may act out in a variety of ways as she struggles to understand the sudden changes in her life. She may exhibit outbursts of anger and aggressive behavior, bouts of sadness and depression or may share imaginative stories about her birth family. It is also possible that she may express no emotions at all and seem completely shut off to you. As foster parents it is important that you not take her behavior personally. After all, she is attempting to understand her feelings and cope the best way she can, and perhaps the only way she knows. The way you respond to challenging behaviors can go a long way to building a trusting relationship with the child.

As you foster the children in your home, you are planting seeds that you may never see come to fruition, but always remember you have made a difference in the life of a child in need. You have changed their life for the better. Years after a foster child has left your home, he may not remember your face or your name. Yet that child will remember one thing--that he was important and loved. Thank you for loving children in foster care and for changing the world, one child at a time.

Take Care & God Bless – IFAPA John

(Adapted from Dr. John DeGarmo)

DATES ON DECK

- Friday & Saturday, April 8 & 9, 2016; IFAPA's Spring Conference at the Airport Holiday Inn & Convention Center in Des Moines. Even if you didn't pre-register, you can still register in person at the conference.

(Check the IFAPA website www.ifapa.org and go to trainings, or contact me if you need info about any classes or available trainings)

****Even if you have a two-year license and another year remaining on your license, six hours of training still needs to be completed each licensing year.**

****And, don't forget, if it has been three years since you last took an approved CPR & First Aid training or five years since you took your Mandatory Child Abuse training, you will need to complete these before you can be re-licensed. If you can't remember, touch base with your IKN or DHS licensing workers; they should know! AND, if you are not certain who your re-licensing worker is, contact me and I will help you out.**

****Also, as part of a new federal law, foster parents are now required to complete a Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Training by September 30, 2016. In order to complete this requirement, IFAPA has created a training video which is available on our website. It takes about 30 minutes to complete and you just as well get it done before next fall!**

FOSTER PARENT MILESTONES

Please join me in thanking the following foster parents for their years of service to Iowa's children as this month marks their renewal anniversary. Thank you for your years of dedication!

- 25+ Years: John & Connie Smith
- 15+ Years: Lisa & Donald Klatt
- 10+ Years: Thomas & Dayne Nash; Kiane & Joe Goebel
- 5+ Years: Gail & Neil Halverson



From My Side of the Desk!

Do you think that the governor and the legislature ever thought that the MCO roll out on April Fools' Day may be viewed by some to be a bad joke? Well, it's here, and I hope that each of you has the identification information you need. I am certain that questions may come up and should they, please make certain to let me know. I may have already answered your question to someone else!

Friends of Foster Care grant money is still available! The link with more information is:

<http://www.ifapa.org/resources/Friends-of-Children-in-Foster-Care-Program.asp>

AND REMEMBER: I am just an email/phone call away. I am here for you! If you ever have a question, concern or celebration, give me a call. The conversations which I have with other parents are the best part of my day!

-IFAPA John