

# 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!



www.ifapa.org

## Social Media & Internet Safety

How do we keep our kids safe online? What websites are our kids even visiting? What apps are our kids using? Parenting in the age of technology can be challenging. Technology like Internet and social media change the way children communicate. It changes the way they develop relationships with peers. Know what your kids are doing online!

Here is a list of popular social apps kids are using:

- Twitter** – a microblogging app limited to 140 character messages called “tweets”
- Instagram** – social media with 15 second photo and [video sharing](#)
- Snapchat** – messaging app with a time limit before text or picture “disappears”, includes photo filters
- YouTube** – video uploading platform with sharing capability in a “channel”
- Musical.ly** – performance and video sharing of lip synced songs – [some lewd songs](#)
- Live.ly** – a portion of Musical.ly that [allows for live video feed](#)
- WhatsApp** – messaging (text, audio, video and photos) – [uses address book](#)
- GroupMe** – messaging (photos, videos, calendar links) – [risk of adult themes](#)
- YikYak, uChat** – brief, local chats with a claim of anonymity – [bullies, live video, lewd](#)
- Tumblr** – combo of blog and Twitter, streaming scrapbook – [public, easy explicit access](#)
- Kik** – text messaging within the app – [stranger danger, tied to crimes, in-app ads](#)

Technology Tips for Parents:

- Most social media sites have a minimum age of 13.
- Set firm ground rules for use and stick to them.
- Require your child to share usernames and passwords for all social media accounts. Beware of children setting up multiple accounts!
- Frequently check their devices and accounts for inappropriate content.
- Check privacy settings on the apps and Internet browser. Set to the strictest level.
- Frequently check the history on Internet browsers to see what sites have been visited and when.
- Have your child turn in electronics at night/bedtime.
- Monitor your child’s friend list within any social media account. They should only have friends they know.
- Limit screen time.
- Be a good example and teach manners with regards to how and when to use electronics.
- Communicate with children. Teach them to never share personal information online or to agree to meet someone they don’t know.

**Be Smart – Build Security – Be Safe**

# NEWS FROM YOUR IFAPA PEER LIAISON

## How to Survive the Holidays with Foster/Adoptive/Relative Placements

My husband and I have been fostering for 21 years. The holidays can be a very stressful time when you are dealing with children in out of home care. Some children have big triggers that come up during the holidays, and some children aren't used to the way you and your family deal with the holidays. Some families don't know exactly how to handle this time of year with gift giving and festivities. Some of the things that you choose to do will be a personal preference, but there are a number of things that you should do no matter what.

1. Treat the children in your home as any child in your home. Treat them like they are part of your family, because they are. Like your own children, get them gifts that represents their interests. If you get a placement right before Christmas, please find a way to provide them with some items to open along with everyone else. If you need to, check with local charities for help in obtaining gifts and ask your family and friends to help if need be. Most people really want to help during this time of year.
2. Remember that you are GIVING them gifts. What this means is, if they leave your home, they should be able to take these gifts with them.
3. Santa—whether or not you celebrate Santa or not, it is important that you figure out if your foster child does or not. If they do they may be worried that Santa will not be able to find them since they aren't at home. Have them write Santa a letter to let him know where they are. Some kids may not have ever had Santa come. It is not your place to tell the child that Santa is make believe. This is something that should come from their birth family. Remember, the goal is to have them return home and it will be important that they return home with their belief intact. If you feel it is necessary to tell them anything, please confer with the birth parents first.
4. Communicate with the birth family about visits during the holidays. Make sure if you have travel plans that you include planning for visits as well. If you have out of state travel plans, remember that you must get prior approval before traveling out of state with foster children.
5. Plan something to do during the break from school. When you have things planned, even if you don't end up doing all of them, it helps everyone not feel so bored. Have the kids help plan things to do. This will be a good opportunity to find out from them what they have done in the past and how you can incorporate some of their traditions. Keep in mind, this could also cause some triggers. Here is a list of some of the things you can do:
  - Make cookies or cupcakes
  - Make a craft, maybe even something they can give to their family members
  - Watch holiday movies
  - Go Christmas shopping
  - Go sledding
  - Build a snowman
  - Go to a play or community event

## 5 Ways to Reduce Holiday Stress

- 1) *Redefine traditions - Often times we continue holiday traditions because that is what we grew up doing. Maybe we want to continue these traditions and maybe we don't. The pull you feel between maintaining tradition and the anticipation of potential difficulties may cause you more stress. Don't be afraid to redefine tradition.*
- 2) *Be assertive -You know how long your children can tolerate a gathering and what their accommodations may be. Let everyone know, ahead of time, how long you will be staying. Leave when you said you would. Be assertive when asked to "stay just a little longer".*
- 3) *Accept help - No one says you have to do it all. Holiday decorating, baking, potlucks, gatherings, social events and more can wear you out! If people offer to help, accept it. Don't be afraid to opt out. You don't have to do it all to have happy holidays.*
- 4) *Don't abandon healthy habits - Get enough sleep. Get exercise. Stress eating will only make you feel tired and irritable. Have healthy snacks and get regular exercise.*
- 5) *Take a breather - Make time for yourself. Spending 15 minutes alone, without distractions, reduces stress and is refreshing.*

