

This edition of *Fostering Across Wisconsin* focuses on: The Importance of Family Connections

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*Turn A Life
Around*

Children, no matter their age, long for lifelong, loving connections to others.

Establishing these connections is an important factor in a child's ultimate contentment as an adult. Many children in foster care rely on you as their foster parents for support and encouragement.

However, children in care who have been abused and neglected often need to cast a safety net to provide them with additional connections. Many of these children long for support from a sibling or another important relative who is influential in their lives.

It can be challenging to maintain the child's connections to their siblings, birth family or other important people in their lives.

It's understandable to have mixed emotions and some hesitations when it comes to how they are involved in the child's life, but in the end we all want what is best for our children.

A child is longing for that connection to their past, their present and their future.

There are a variety of ways in which you can assist in establishing and maintaining connections with siblings and other important relatives.

Face-to-face interactions are definitely the most personal and interactive opportunity to empower connections. However, when these types of meetings are not able to occur, there are additional alternatives for your consideration.

One option is to consider social media or email as a means to keep connections. Arranging a video conference with a sibling or family member on Skype or a variety of other video teleconferencing platforms is a way in which family members can establish connections with one another.

This way they can still see each other and talk as though they are

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Perceptions From Youth in Care

I magine for a moment that your whole world changed in an instant. One moment you were at home

and the next, you were placed into foster care. No matter what occurred to warrant this move, you still long for the comfort of your family, your brothers and sisters, your mom and dad, aunts and uncles and your grandparents.

The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center has been fortunate to be involved with the Youth Advisory Council of Wisconsin (YAC). YAC is comprised of current and former youth in care from throughout the state and these are some of their thoughts about the importance of connections:

My sister is still in foster care and I don't know how to contact her. I miss her very much and wish I could reach out to her and give her a big hug.

~

I never knew my dad. I heard he was in jail from my grandfather who I just met. I have plans to meet my dad and I am not sure what to expect.

~


I wanted to see my brothers and sisters while I was in care but that was not always possible and I was sad that we were not able to see one another more often.

~

Even though my parents were not the best parents in the world, they tried and did the best they could. I wish I could have spent more time with them.

Children in care often times will stuff their emotions and act as if it is not important to maintain connections with their families but in reality, they are longing to establish or re-establish positive relationships with family members who are important to them. You play a vital role in helping to establish and maintain this important connection between family members.

Youth Advisory Council of Wisconsin

 If you know of a current or former youth in care who might be interested in participating in YAC, contact Christine Lenske at:
Christine.Lenske@Wisconsin.gov

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in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

Update on the *Turn a Life Around* Foster Parent Recruitment Campaign!

In May we launched a new foster parent recruitment campaign in partnership with SERVE Marketing and the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families.

The campaign has had a tremendous impact raising awareness and interest in foster parenting.

Since the campaign launched in May, we have:

- Increased the number of individuals who inquire about foster parenting by **70%** compared with the same time last year.
- Contacted **589** individuals who inquired and surveyed **211** of them to find out where they are in the licensing process.

- Of the individuals we talked with:
 - 70% were “Still thinking about it”
 - 20% had made contact with an agency
 - 10% were no longer interested.

We are very happy with these results and excited with how well things have gone so far, but we are not done yet. In 2012, we will be looking to continue to promote the campaign and make more tools available so recruitment can be successful statewide. The best recruiters of other foster parents in our state are current foster parents. If you love what you do, please share your stories with us and others.

Thank you and Happy Holidays!

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sitting in the same room with one another. This should not be seen as a replacement for face-to-face contact, but an additional option to allow even more contact.

As a child, you certainly had many questions about where you came from and your family, and a child in foster care is no different. They may be curious because

they don't always have consistent contact with the links to their past on a daily basis.

With your assistance, siblings and other important people in their lives answering their questions and easing their fears, children in care will feel more at ease and more supported in their daily lives.

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Our Tipsheets and Stories

Are you familiar with FCARC's tipsheets and stories? Some of our recent ones include:

Ways to Help Youth and Children in Care, which is a tipsheet to give to someone you know who might want to be able to *help* a child but isn't able to make the commitment to fostering.

Should I or Shouldn't I? Why to File a Complaint or Grievance. Resolving disagreements often ends up to be a good process for everyone—and can be a great learning experience for your kids to see you dealing directly with conflict. This tipsheet will give

you the steps to follow if you decide to file a complaint.

Dreams Do Come True: An Unexpected Journey Into Social Work is the story of Elonna Tompkins' journey from being a child in the foster care system to being a social worker in the child welfare system.

Appreciating the Small Things that People Take for Granted: One Teen's Journey tells the story of one teen's success in graduating from high school, in spite of multiple moves and attending 32 schools throughout his life.

Find these tipsheets, stories and more on our [website](#) under the "resources" tab.

WFAPA provides great opportunities to get together with other foster parents through its spring and fall conferences. They also have an extensive website, newsletter, and network of supportive WFAPA members and other foster parents who can be a resource for you.

The Spring 2012 conference is April 13-15 at the Stone Harbor Resort and Conference Center in Sturgeon Bay. Speakers include Joel Weintraub and Patina Zink. For more information, go to: <http://wfapa.org>.

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