



family matters

a newsletter for foster and adoptive families

Published by the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services

Policy News

New Fiscal Policies

Some changes have been made in the ways the per diem for foster parenting is calculated.

- When a child moves from one home to another, the per diem will be paid only to the foster parent at the home where the child spends the night. This is a change from the previous policy, which paid the foster parent for the day the child left as well as the day the child arrived in their home.
- Both the primary foster parent and the respite care provider will receive a per diem payment while the child is in respite care. In the past the policy was not clear on this point. Respite care is designed to give foster parents a needed break from parenting to take a vacation, go to the hospital, or for any other reason.

Changes to Assessments of Foster Children

- The First Placement, Best Placement program is now called the Comprehensive Child and Family Assessment (CCFA).
- From now on, children will have a "Health Check" screening within 10 days after they enter foster care. This will be arranged by their CCFA provider. The children can be screened at their county health department or by any approved Health Check provider. The providers are listed at www.ghp.georgia.gov.
- Health Check includes developmental assessment (mental, emotional, behavioral); a physical exam; immunizations; tuberculosis and blood lead level screening; health advice; and vision, hearing, and dental health screening.
- Family team meetings will be held when a child enters foster care, to find out whether a relative is available to care for the child.
- If a judicial or citizens' review panel decides that an adolescent is ready for emancipation, they may order an adolescent assessment, which evaluates his or her readiness to live independently and educational or vocational needs.

New Grievance Procedure for Foster Parents

A new formal grievance procedure has been established to help foster parents who believe their rights have been violated. This procedure was required by the Foster Parents' Bill of Rights that Governor Sonny Perdue signed into law this spring to strengthen the vital partnership between DFCS and foster parents.

The law covers issues such as non-discrimination, distribution and disclosure of information, financial reimbursement and the right to have input into case planning for children. It also includes a provision for advocates who can provide support to foster parents during Child Protective Services investigations or through the grievance process.

The grievance procedure is a three-step process which begins at the county level and if necessary proceeds to the state division director and the newly created State Mediation Committee.

For more details about the grievance procedure, timeframes, and the forms to use when filing a grievance, see <http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/fosterparents> or call your county DFCS office.



Foster Care Support Foundation, Inc.

“I saw too many invisible neglected children needing things the rest of the world takes for granted everyday.”

Rachel M. Ewald, founder

One of our readers asked us to highlight the work of the Foster Care Support Foundation, Inc. (FCSF), which can help you provide clothing and other necessities for the children in your care if you receive a basic per diem of \$20 or less.

Based in Roswell, Georgia, this organization offers each child five everyday outfits plus one dress outfit, new underwear and socks, new shoes, pajamas, a winter coat or bathing suit in summer, as well as toys and books. Infants can receive a crib, car seat, stroller and other supplies.

Each foster parent can go to FCSF’s distribution center once per season or when they first receive a child in their home. People who live further than 1 1/2 hours drive away can have their clothing order mailed with no shipping charges. “Speaking from experience, the clothes you receive are of good quality,” said our reader.

FCSF helped more than 3,000 children in 2004 and expects to reach over 4,000 next year. The founder, Rachel M. Ewald, is the mother of four biological children and 34 foster children. “I saw too many invisible neglected children needing things the rest of the world takes for granted every day,” she says.

Volunteers from surrounding communities, businesses, churches and schools help run the center and support it with money and supplies. FCSF has no paid staff or employees and receives no government funds, only private donations.

“We can make a difference one child at a time, and all kids count,” says Ewald. You can see Ewald and FCSF at work in the new video “Fostering Hope” (see article this issue), or read about them at www.fostercare.org or call 770-641-9591 or 404-729-3374 to ask about eligibility and how people can contribute.

PLEASE SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Family Matters reaches over 10,000 foster and adoptive parents. We are proud that we can provide you with this information. *However, printing and postage costs are high.*

Please help us cut costs and send Family Matters to you faster.

If you send your **name, zip code and email address** to familymatters@dhr.state.ga.us we will email you future issues. Also, at any time, anyone can read the newsletter on the Web at dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/familymatters.

Bags, Bikes and Bears:

Communities For Children Helps

Remember the trauma of moving? The excitement of your first bicycle? The fun of receiving Valentine's Day cards or gifts? Imagine moving with only a plastic garbage bag for your few belongings, never owning a bicycle, or not feeling loved on Valentine's Day.

Communities for Children (CFC), a non-profit organization sponsored by the management and consulting firm Care Solutions, Inc., conducts three campaigns to address these specific needs for children in foster care.

The Smooth Moves Luggage Campaign helps preserve the dignity of foster care children by collecting and distributing luggage to these children statewide. The December Bicycle Campaign provides bicycles at Christmas time, and Send a Bear to Foster Care provides teddy bears for Valentine's Day. Any Georgia county DFCS office

can send a request to CFC for luggage, a bicycle or teddy bear for a foster care or adoptive child as needed, and DFCS caseworkers make sure the children receive the requested item.

Donations of new or gently used suitcases, large duffel bags, teddy bears or monetary donations can be sent to: Communities for Children, in care of Care Solutions, Inc., 500 Sugar Mill Road, Suite 170A, Atlanta, Georgia 30350.

Communities for Children, established in 2001, is a non-profit organization dedicated to instilling a sense of dignity among foster care children and helping them experience some of the basic joys of childhood.

The luggage campaign distributed over 200 pieces of luggage to children in 2004. About 100 bicycles and helmets were distributed in December 2003 as well as in December 2002.

For more information visit www.communities-for-children.org or call 770-642-6722.

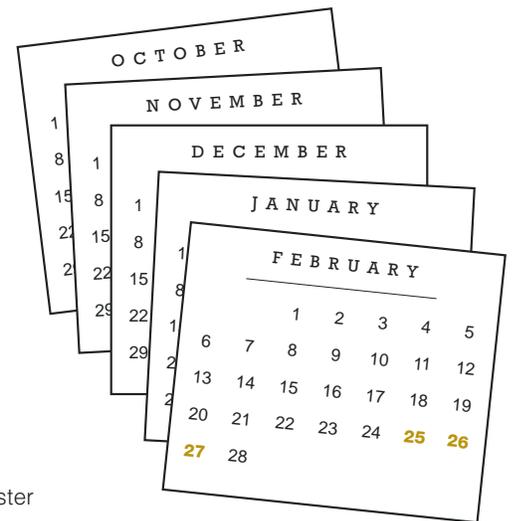
Parents' Association Holding Annual Conference

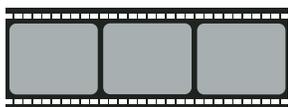
*The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia (AFPAG) – see Family Matters, last issue – is holding its annual conference **February 25 – 27, 2005** on Jekyll Island. This is the largest conference of its type in the country, according to AFPAG President Sharon Carlson.*

This year's conference features workshops on a wide range of issues important to foster and adoptive parents, including childcare, policy changes and working in partnership with support agencies. Parents attending the workshops, the banquet and all the sessions may obtain a total of 16.25 training hours.

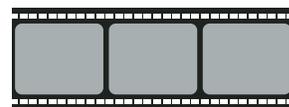
The keynote speaker will be Keith Johnson, who spent six years in foster care himself and founded the "Village Project" that helps young people become productive members of society. He is now program director of the National Family Life and Education Center. Richard Wexler, author of *Wounded Innocents: The Real Victims of the War Against Child Abuse*, will be a special guest speaker.

You can find more information about the conference on the Internet at www.afpag.org, or contact Sharon Carlson at 770-725-4455 or 706-202-6389.





Fostering Hope



A new film: "Fostering Hope, a Call to Care" encourages Georgians to consider foster care and adoption. In addition, for those not ready to be foster parents, the film shows ways people can volunteer to help those who do serve as foster parents.

"Fostering Hope" is a compelling and emotional look at how lives are changed when people answer the call to care. It

includes a conversation with DHR Commissioner B.J. Walker, and interviews with foster and adoptive parents; a former foster child who now serves as a juvenile court judge; and the staff of the Foster Care Support Foundation (see article p.2).

The film, produced by ImageMaster Productions for Georgia's Children and Youth Coordinating Council (CYCC) and

the Georgia Department of Human Resources in association with the First Lady's Children's Cabinet, premiered on Georgia Public Television in November. It is available for screening to any group interested in foster care and adoption. See www.fosteringhope.info/about.html, or call CYCC at 404-508-6573, or ask for the video at your public library.

Help Find Homes for Siblings

There's a special need for more adoptive parents for older children, sibling groups, and children with special needs. These brothers: Kareem, Damian and LyDerice, are very bonded to each other and must be adopted together. They have experienced a great deal of instability both in their birth home and in foster care. As a result, they struggle with feelings of loss and low self-confidence.

Can you or someone you know provide a loving, patient family who can give them individualized attention and support? Anyone interested may call My Turn Now at 800-603-1322 and speak with the regional adoption coordinator for their area.

Kareem (born April 1993) is a very friendly, fun-loving child who enjoys all sports; especially football and baseball, video games and television. He also enjoys school and loves learning. However, Kareem struggles with reading comprehension and math. He is enrolled in special education classes part-time. His teachers say he is an

intelligent student who always strives to do his best. Kareem will require a great deal of individualized attention to ensure that his academic needs are met. Because of his early experiences, he is used to taking on adult responsibilities. Although therapy is helping, he needs a family who will allow him to be a child.

Damian (born December 1996) is a fun-loving, happy child. He is very active and enjoys staying on the go! Damian enjoys playing football and video games. He is affectionate and very open with his feelings. Damian loves school and gets along well with both peers and adults. Enrolled in regular education classes, he has excellent verbal skills. Although Damian does well academically, he needs extra help with his schoolwork.

LyDerice (born October 1997) is a sweet child. He enjoys fishing, playing with his miniature toy cars and trucks, video games and sports. He is enrolled in regular education classes. His teachers say he is

an intelligent student. At times, he displays disruptive behavior in the classroom and struggles to focus on his schoolwork. Although medication is helping, LyDerice will need additional assistance to ensure that he reaches his academic potential.



Working with Our Children

This is the second part of a two-part article. Part I focused on accepting things about ourselves so we can help our children change. If you missed Part 1 you can read it on the Internet at www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/familymatters

Change is hard, especially when you do not choose to change. Changing when you feel alone, abandoned and adrift is almost impossible. Why do people finally change a behavior or attitude? We finally change when it is too painful or too uncomfortable to keep up our old behaviors.

Sometimes, we change because we are blessed with a coach, a person who believes in us no matter what – a coach who sees us as talented, beautiful, smart and lovable. Foster parents have to be that coach AND set up a system where the cost of doing things the old way is more uncomfortable for the child than for the parent.

The best approaches for discipline for children in foster care all share key principles:

- The parents have to choose their battles very carefully.
- You cannot make a child do anything.
- The parent has to become a consultant.
- The child has to earn privileges in order to succeed in your home (and life).
- The child has to care more than you care about his or her behavior.
- The focus has to be on behavior rather than attitude (which cannot be measured).
- No matter what the child does, your relationship with the child is the key element to being a successful foster parent.

Let's take homework. You cannot make children complete their homework but you can make their life very uncomfortable if

they continue to not complete their homework.

Consult with your children's teachers and your children to gather information and ideas about what is expected and needed to get the homework completed.

It is OK if a child refuses to help create a homework plan. Just explain that you understand that creating the plan is just "too hard" for the child, so the adults will do it. Select the details that must be accomplished for homework to meet your goals (neat, completed, put away in the book bag and so forth). Set aside a quiet spot for homework and provide supplies (pencils, dictionary, paper).

Decide what privileges the children will receive for completing homework based on your program. For example, they can use the television, computer or video games only after homework is completed. If they fail to finish the homework, remind them **in a calm and matter-of-fact tone** that they have the right to choose to leave their homework undone **but** they have not



earned the right to watch television, use the computer, or play videogames. The children should not be given time-out or excluded from any other family activity. They can play with friends as long as you can supervise and confirm that they are not watching television, using computers or playing videogames. **Remember, it is not your homework!** Give the children a hug and go on with your evening plans.

Conscious parenting is hard work. Parents have to design mini-programs to address targeted challenges. You cannot make a child want to initiate change, but children do not have to want or like doing their homework or any other task. They have to complete their task because they do not earn privileges unless they finish their work – just as adults usually do not get paid or earn vacation time before we complete our work.

Our children need our guidance to successfully live in the world. We need to be their coach and cheering section.

Wendy Haus Hanevold, PhD.

Resources:

Parenting with Love and Logic, by Jim Fay and Foster Cline;
Transforming the Difficult Child, by Howard Glasser;
Attachment in Adoption, by Deborah Gray.



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Car Safety Seats

Georgia law requires that all children under 6 years old ride in a child safety seat while they are in any motor vehicle. DFCS will reimburse you for the cost of your foster child's safety seat. However, if the child leaves your care the seat must go with that child.

It's important to choose a child safety seat that fits the child and fits the vehicle. It's also important that you use the seat safely, at all times. Here are some tips for choosing the right seat:

Always check to see that the child safety seat you are buying has a label saying that it meets all federal motor vehicle safety standards. That is more important than the price of the seat. In fact, the price tells you little about the seat's ability to protect your child.

The easiest child safety seats to use have front harness adjustment and a narrow base that's easier to fit into the vehicle. Look for a five-point harness system instead of a three-point harness or a tray shield.

It's not a good idea to buy a second-hand child safety seat that you might find at a garage sale or thrift store. You won't know whether or not it was in a crash that damaged the seat. You can buy good new child safety seats at discount stores as well as specialty baby stores.

The DHR Division of Public Health offers training about buying and using child safety seats at foster parent conferences and other events. You can find a useful guide to choosing the child safety seat that is best for your child's height and weight, at www.health.state.ga.us/programs/injuryprevention/carsafety.asp. For more information contact your county health department or email your questions to injury@dhr.state.ga.us.

The purpose of Family Matters is to strengthen the relationship between resource parents and the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR); supplement foster and adoptive parents' training; and keep parents up to date about new

policies and services. It is published by the DHR Office of Communications, for the Division of Family and Children Services.

Please send us your comments and ideas for articles you would like to see in Family Matters

to Barbara Joye, DHR Office of Communications, Two Peachtree Street NW, Suite 29-426, Atlanta, GA 30303 or brjoye@dhr.state.ga.us.

Please also let us know if you do NOT want to receive future issues.