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Foster care, delinquent behavior, and juvenile justice

It's not a happy fact, but resource parents and child welfare professionals need to know: experiencing the trauma of abuse and neglect puts children at greater risk for getting into trouble with the law. Victims of child maltreatment are more likely than other children to be arrested as juveniles (27% vs. 17%) (CWLA, 2002).

Unfortunately, young people in foster care face a strong likelihood of appearing before the juvenile court.

pared to 7% of maltreatment victims not removed from their families.

If they do become involved with the juvenile justice system, youth in foster care may face harsher treatment. Ryan and colleagues (2007) found youth whose delinquency cases originated in foster care were less likely to receive probation than youth not in foster care.

Now please understand: most children in foster care never break the law. But they do seem to be at greater risk of doing so than other children.

Given this, foster parents and kinship caregivers naturally want to know two things:

1. How can I prevent youth in my care from getting involved with juvenile justice?
2. What do I do if a child in my home is charged with a delinquent act?

This issue tries to give you clear, helpful answers to these and other questions about the intersection of foster care, delinquent behavior, and juvenile justice.

Our goal, as always, is to equip you with the knowledge and skills you need to achieve the best outcomes possible for the families and children you care so much about.

Tips for preventing delinquent behavior by Trishana Jones and John McMahon

Children and youth in foster care are capable of accomplishing amazing things. Unfortunately, they can also engage in negative behaviors. This can be challenging, especially when these behaviors cross the line into delinquency.

As a foster parent or kinship caregiver, you know that in the end it is up to the children and teens in your home to control their own behavior. But you can have tremendous influence. This article suggests ways to use that influence to reduce the chances a young person in your home will break the law.

Delinquency

A **delinquent act** is a criminal act committed by a young person under the age of 16. Delinquent acts include drug offenses and crimes by young people against persons, property, and public order.

Delinquent acts by youth, such as theft, assault on others, or property damage, can lead to the young person's long-term involvement in the juvenile justice system and to drug use, dropping out of school, incarceration, adult criminal behavior, and injury.

Four Types of Risk Factors

Because it leads to such bad results for young people and for society, a lot of research has been done to understand the causes of delinquency. In summarizing this research, the National Conference of State Legislatures (2011) concludes that delinquent behavior occurs in part due to the interaction of four types of risk factors:

1. **Individual risk factors** that include antisocial behavior at a young age, poor cognitive development, hyperactivity, and emotional factors such as mental health challenges.
2. **Family risk factors** linked to delinquent behavior include poverty, maltreatment (includes neglect), family violence, divorce, parental psychopathology, familial antisocial behaviors, teenage

parenthood, single parent family, and large family size.

3. Peer risk factors that include rejection by peers and association with peers who break the law and get into trouble. Having a delinquent peer group is the strongest risk factor for delinquency during the pre-teen years.

4. School and community risk factors for delinquency include low commitment to school, poor academic performance, low academic aspirations, disorganized neighborhoods, concentration of delinquent peer groups, and access to weapons.

These risk factors may overlap. In some instances the presence of one risk factor contributes to existence of others (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011). *continued next page*

A Framework for Promoting Youth Well-Being

Exposure to violence and maltreatment, lack of consistent or nurturing relationships, and involvement in foster care or juvenile justice can

YOUTH THRIVE

seriously interfere with a young person's transition to adulthood. To help us promote the well-being of youth who face these challenges, the Center for the Study of Social Policy has developed **Youth Thrive**, a research-based framework focused on:

- Youth resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of adolescent development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Cognitive and social-emotional competence in youth

Taken together, these protective and promotive factors increase the probability of positive, adaptive, and healthy outcomes, even in the face of risk and adversity. To learn more about **Youth Thrive**, go to www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive. Don't miss "Protective & Promotive Factors Defined" on the right side of the page.

Tips for preventing delinquent behavior

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As you read this list of risk factors you will likely see a number—for example poverty and child abuse and neglect—that are common among children and youth in foster care. **Don't panic.** The presence of a risk factor is no guarantee delinquency will occur. Most children in foster care never break the law. However, youth with risk factors do need extra support from those who care about them.

Protective Factors

While there are no magic solutions for preventing delinquency, understanding and building up protective factors is a good place to start. Protective factors are traits or experiences that help counteract risk factors. According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy and the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (2013), these protective factors may reduce the likelihood of delinquent behavior:

- 1. Youth resilience.** "Resilience is the process of managing stress and functioning well even when faced with adversity and trauma" (CSSP, n.d.). Hallmarks of youth resilience include: hopefulness, spirituality, positive view of self, overall positive attitude, trust in others, sense of empowerment, realistic belief in one's ability to succeed, motivation, sense of purpose, positive future orientation, and taking responsibility for oneself.
- 2. Social connectedness.** Connections to people and institutions help youth increase knowledge and skills, have a sense of belonging, and find meaning in their lives (CSSP, n.d.). Signs of social connectedness include: warm, supportive relationships with parents and other adults; friends who disapprove of antisocial behavior; attends religious services; committed to school; does well in school; extracurricular activities; positive school climate.
- 3. Concrete support.** Youth in foster care need concrete support and services that address their needs and help minimize stress. Youth have concrete support when social workers, foster parents, and others take steps to ensure they receive basic necessities as well as specialized academic, psychoeducational, health, mental health, legal, and/or employment services (CSSP, n.d.).
- 4. Cognitive and social emotional competence.** Developing competence in these areas lays the foundation for forming an independent identity and having a productive, responsible, and satisfying adulthood. Signs that youth have cognitive and social emotional competence include: realistic belief in one's ability to succeed, spirituality, personal goals, self-esteem, thinking about consequences of one's behavior, kindness to oneself when confronted with personal failings and suffering, and personal strengths (e.g., hard work, gratitude, respect, integrity) (CSSP, n.d.).

What You Can Do

So if you are caring for a child or youth who has risk factors for delinquency, what should you do?

Connect with your child. Building a strong relationship takes time and effort but pays rich dividends: a caring, supportive relationship with an adult is the single most important protective factor for children who have experienced maltreatment.

Be clear about rules and expectations. In a friendly, clear way, explain to children in your home what you expect of them. Hold family members accountable consistently and respectfully. Respond to misbehavior in a way that is proportionate. For example, unless there is imminent danger, if a child's behavior becomes unruly your first call should be to the child's social worker, not law enforcement.

Build your behavior management skills. Due to past trauma, children in foster care sometimes have difficulty behaving appropriately. Teaching them to manage their own behavior will help them succeed in life and stay out of trouble. There are many resources to help you learn to do this, including this article from *Fostering Perspectives*: <http://fosteringperspectives.org/fpv18n1/Phipps.htm>.



Preventing Youth from "Crossing Over" Adapted from Herz, et al., 2012

Youth in foster care who become involved with the juvenile justice system are sometimes referred to as "dually-involved" or "crossover" youth. To prevent dual involvement, child welfare professionals, foster parents, group care providers, law enforcement, and others should take steps to prevent juveniles from getting arrested in the first place.

For example, child welfare agencies should make an effort to ensure schools know that the youth is in foster care. This will allow school resource officers and other officials to make informed decisions that are in the best interest of the youth and other parties involved.

Avoiding the placement of youth in group homes may also prevent a youth from crossing over to the juvenile justice system. When placement in a group setting is necessary, make sure the home's providers are trained in trauma-informed care and de-escalation approaches, which provide alternatives to calling law enforcement for less serious incidents (p. 49).

Increase your knowledge and understanding of adolescent development. This is particularly important given the recent advances in the fields of neuroscience and developmental psychology. What you know affects how you interpret teen behavior and how you respond. To begin expanding what you know on this topic, see page 3.

Know where your child is and who they're with. Make your home a place your child's friends want to be. This will help you monitor what's going on and get to know the friends.

Don't go it alone. Have frequent, candid conversations with your child's social worker and your licensing social worker about your parenting successes and concerns. This is important. They want to be sure the child is getting his needs met and is staying out of trouble. Supporting you is one of the best ways to achieve these goals.

Be informed, supportive, and present. This is especially important when it comes to your child's school, any therapy or treatment they receive, and extracurricular activities.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurriculars are a good way to support a youth's protective factors and keep them out of activities they should avoid. However, in the past fees have been a barrier to enrolling youth in extracurriculars. Now there are resources out there to help:

- County DSS Agencies.** NC Administrative Code (section 10A NCAC 71R .0907, Foster Care Services For Children), makes it clear that counties "may pay for resource items to support the child's participation in school. Resource items include supplies, special clothes, and fees for membership in school sponsored extracurricular activities." Check with your county DSS to see if resources are available for the youth in your home.
- NC LINKS Program.** If you are a caregiver of a youth age 13 or older in DSS custody, ask your social worker to connect you with the child's LINKS worker—there may be money available to support the youth's involvement in extracurricular activities. To learn more about NC LINKS, go to <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/links/>.
- Local Guardian ad Litem (GAL) offices.** In some districts, GAL volunteers have formed nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations that may have funding available to support the costs of extracurricular activities. Contact your child's GAL or local GAL office for more information.

We hope this information can help you connect youth to extracurricular activities, enriching their potential and keeping them on the right track.

Trishana Jones is the Children and Youth Specialist for the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence. John McMahon is editor of *Fostering Perspectives*.

Adolescent brain development: Implications for parents

Adolescence is a period of rapid growth and development. The release of hormones triggers the physical growth that we can easily observe. However, what we can't see is that the corresponding growth and development in the adolescent brain is equally accelerated. Recent advances in research using MRI has shed light on many of the typical behaviors associated with adolescence, especially risk-taking (Steinberg, 2007). Understanding adolescent brain development provides important information for supporting teens as they navigate this often challenging period of development.

What's happening in the typical brain during adolescence?

During typical development, the brain is streamlining and strengthening the neural pathways to create more efficient systems of communication. MRI imaging has documented that the majority of this streamlining and strengthening occurs in the frontal cortex, the area responsible for decision making and higher level thinking (Casey, et al. 2008). If this is true, then how can we explain teens' impulsive and risk taking behaviors?

The answer lies in the limbic system, a different part of the brain that is also developing during adolescence. The limbic system is responsible for reward seeking and is stimulated by social (peers) and emotional variables (Steinberg, 2007). The limbic system develops earlier and faster than the cortex, meaning that until the cortex can catch up with the limbic system, the desire for rewards and social pressures overrides rational thinking (Steinberg, 2007; Galvan, et al., 2007; Casey, et al., 2008).

The temporary imbalance of development of the two systems challenges many of the traditional strategies used to help teens make good choices. In fact, teens and adults have a similar capacity to distinguish between risky and safe choices. It's just that teens are less able to make the right choice in the moment (Casey, et al., 2008).

What does it mean for parents?

In light of what we now know about the teen brain, foster parents and kin caregivers should focus on ensuring appropriate limits are in place to assist adolescents in making the right choices. Teens need caregivers and society to provide the brakes, while their brain develops brakes of its own (McAnarney, 2008). As Chamberlain (2009a) explains, quality time with healthy adults can make a huge difference:

"While part of adolescence is about seeking

Rather than trying to change how teens view risky activities, focus on limiting opportunities for immature judgment to have harmful consequences (Steinberg, 2007).

new experiences and independence, teens still need lots of quality time with healthy adults to help shape their brains and learn the skills to transition into adulthood. They need the guidance of adults' mature prefrontal cortexes, even more so when they have histories of trauma."

This can be tough, since teens also need opportunities to gain independence and confidence. The following suggestions (adapted from Chamberlin, 2009b) may be useful to parents who seek to find an appropriate balance between safety and autonomy.

- Educate yourself and the teens in your home about what is happening in the teen brain; emphasize the need for increased structures and limits during this period.
- Recognize that talking about good choices isn't enough to ensure teens make those choices.
- Develop clear expectations for behaviors, such as staying in contact when away from the home, access to the internet, driving, dating, etc. Discuss these expectations explicitly with your teens, reviewing them often.
- Limit access to alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs (including prescriptions).
- Know who your child's friends are.

Consider Trauma's Impact

In the last issue of *Fostering Perspectives* we talked about trauma and the impact it has on brain development. Traumatic experiences shape brain pathways, disrupting normal development. For adolescents, this can affect the development of the frontal cortex, further slowing the timing of and capacity for higher level thinking. Traumatized teens are even more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors; their need for structure and support is even greater.



- Remember, in the presence of peers, teens' desire for potential reward can overpower the concept of right and wrong.
- Provide opportunities for structured risk taking by encouraging teens to try new things (sports, music, art, etc.).
 - Help teens learn skills that support independence, such as budgeting and job applications.
 - Whenever possible, allow teens to make decisions and have control over their lives.
 - Support healthy brain development by making sure teens get enough sleep, physical activity, and healthy nutrition.

Adapted from *Children's Services Practice Notes*, v. 17, n. 3 • www.practicenotes.org

Keep the Research on Teen Brains in Perspective

In 2007 Mike Males, a senior researcher at the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, had a strong reaction to news coverage of scientific findings about how teens' "immature" brains made them especially vulnerable to risky behavior.

Males responded with a *New York Times* op-ed piece in which he suggested the aim of our focus on the shortcomings of teens may be to draw attention away from the fact that it's really **middle-aged adults** who struggle with risky behavior and poor choices. As Males put it, "what experts label 'adolescent risk taking' is really baby boomer risk taking." To back that up, he cited statistics about Americans aged 35

to 54, including those outlined in the box below.

Males' central point is that we need to keep things in perspective. Based on the data he presents, it might seem reasonable to worry whenever you're around someone who's middle-aged. But it's not.

Our advice? Resist the temptation to oversimplify or stereotype. As Males put it, "both teenagers and adults display a wide variety of attitudes and behaviors derived from individual conditions and choices, not harsh biological determinism. There's no 'typical teenager' any more than there's a 'typical' 45-year-old."

We agree. If you work with adolescents, chances are you can easily think of teens who have demonstrated remarkable insight, self-control, and good judgment, even when faced with peers who disagreed or other challenging circumstances.

We think we've done a good job sharing information on teen brain development, and we hope you consider it. Science is worth paying attention to.

But we also hope that as you reflect on your practice with teens you'll draw on your own experience and wisdom—and theirs—to identify strategies to help them reach their goals.

Risky Behaviors (and Consequences) among Americans Aged 35-54

- In 2004 there were 18,249 overdose deaths from illicit drugs among this age group, up 550% since 1975
- In 2005 there were 4 million arrests among this age group; this reflects a 200% per capita increase in felonies among the middle aged since 1975
- Highest risk of violent death is among 40-49 year-olds
- In 2005 there were 630,000 middle-agers in prison, an increase of 600% since 1977

Source: Multiple sources cited in Males, 2007



When the police knock at your door ... by Wanda Douglas

If you're a foster parent long enough, chances are one day you will get that dreaded knock on the door by your local police department. Here are a few suggestions if and when that day comes.

1. First Things First

When the police knock at your door, be sure to get the officers' names and badge numbers. At the same time, be mindful that they are a valuable resource to you. It is very important to stay calm so you can explain the details of the issue at hand more effectively. Law enforcement has a short window of time to do their job. If you are honest and cooperative with them, the results will be better for you and your child.

2. Get the Facts

If your child is charged with committing a crime, ask about the charges as well as the penalties for the alleged crime. Listen carefully to the answer. If you do not understand or need more detail, politely ask clarifying questions. It may be helpful to write down details so you don't forget them in the heat of the moment.

3. Know Your Story...

Whatever you and your child are dealing with, be able to explain in clear, precise detail what is happening at that moment. You don't have to discuss the child's entire life history, only what's relevant to your current situation.

4. Know Your Child...

Knowing certain details about your child and what they are likely to do may be very helpful to you and everyone else. For example...

- Is he or she loud? Quiet? Timid? Dangerous to themselves or others? Involved in a gang? A follower? A leader? A runner?
- If your child ran away from home, what would they take with them? For example, a cell phone (know their number), a weapon (knife, lighter, gun—real or fake), drugs, medications, clothes, etc.
- Know your child's diagnosis if he or she has one, what medications they are taking (if any), and why.
- Know names and numbers of friends, family members, or acquaintances they may run to.
- Have a current picture available and know the specifics—age, date of birth, height, weight, eye color, hair color, glasses, contacts, etc. Every detail is important.

5. As Soon as They Leave

After the police depart, finish up your notes to capture the details of what you've learned. Contact your social worker and/or the

child's social worker to let them know what has happened or alleged to have happened. Talk with them about what should happen next and how you can be most helpful.

If the child is in police custody and it is OK with your agency, gather any relevant documents and go to the child. It may be helpful to ask your spouse or another support person to go with you.

6. Later

If your child is accused of committing a crime, be sure you understand the charges as well as the penalties for the alleged crime.

Know your child's rights. For more on this, please refer to page 6 of this issue of *Fostering Perspectives*.

Know how the system works. The article that begins on the next page provides a good overview of NC's juvenile justice system.

Talk to your child's lawyer. Any time a child between the ages of 6 and 16 is accused of committing a crime, they automatically get appointed a juvenile defender. To learn more about working with juvenile defenders, see the interview later in this issue with Eric J. Zogry, NC's state Juvenile Defender.

As things progress, take the time to get to know all the parties involved, including

judges, child advocates, court counselors, probation officers, and others.

Attend all court hearings. Some young people feel—perhaps rightly so—that they receive fairer treatment in court if an adult appears and advocates for them. As one young man put it, "I think they would have gone a little easier on me. But they see that I don't have nobody backing me up—they think, 'He's just a bad kid, throw him in the gutter and forget about him'" (Morris & Freundlich, 2004). Being present and speaking out in court can make a big difference in what happens and how the youth feels.

Conclusion

A crisis in your home involves everyone, not just the child. It is important as parents to get rest and help—without guilt. We have to remember, when the police show up, it is usually after the crisis has escalated beyond our immediate control and we need their help as much as they need ours. They become a part of a team effort. We must work together for the good of our families.

Wanda Douglas is a veteran foster and adoptive parent in North Carolina.

Tips for Advocating for Your Child



- 1. Keep organized.** Put all of the papers that you receive in connection with your child's case in one place (including letters, evaluations, lab results, billing or payment records, and any reports from the police, probation officers, court, lawyers, doctors, and mental health workers).
- 2. Ask to read and request copies of all reports about your child and your child's case.** You may not always be able get a copy of a report. Ask your child's lawyer if you have questions about whether you are allowed to see a copy of a specific report.
- 3. Write everything down.** Write down information from meetings and telephone conversations with your child's lawyer, probation officer, and other juvenile justice system staff. Include the time and date, who you spoke to (and their title), and future meetings or phone calls.
- 4. Attend all meetings and court hearings and arrive on time.** Because of job and family obligations, attending every meeting can be very difficult. However, it is very important that you attend meetings about your child. If you know you will not be able to attend, call or write a letter in advance to explain why you cannot attend; make it clear you want to be involved in your child's case.
- 5. Help others understand your child.** Write down information about your child that will help your child's lawyer, probation officer, the judge, and other adults understand your child better. If your child has a disability, be sure to include information about the disability, how your child processes information, how your child reacts in certain situations, and what help or accommodations your child needs.
- 6. Speak up in meetings to share information about your child's needs, even if you feel uncomfortable or intimidated.** If juvenile justice system staff (for example, a probation officer) or your child's lawyer will not listen to you, you can contact his or her supervisor. In court, you may have to ask your child's lawyer to tell the judge that you would like to speak.
- 7. Always be respectful.** No matter how strongly you feel about your child's situation or the people working with your child, remain respectful when you speak in court or speak to probation staff or other people who are working with your child.

Source: Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health, 2006

NC's juvenile justice system: Overview for foster parents

Adapted from NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services (2005)

The juvenile justice system is separate from the adult criminal justice system. Adults are held fully responsible for their behavior. The laws are different for young people because of their age.

Juveniles in North Carolina

NC law defines a juvenile as someone under age 18 who is unmarried, has not been emancipated (i.e., not legally freed from parental control), and is not in the armed forces.

An **undisciplined juvenile** is a youth between the ages of 6 and 18 who is:

- Absent from school without permission; or
- Often disobedient to, and beyond the control of his/her parents, guardian, or caregivers; or
- Regularly found in places it is unlawful for a juvenile to be; or
- Has run away from home for a period of more than 24 hours.

A **delinquent juvenile** is someone who is at least 6 years old but not yet 16 years old and does something that would be a crime if an adult did the same thing.

Delinquent and Undisciplined Acts

A delinquent act is a criminal act committed by a young person under the age of 16. NC's Juvenile Code (<http://bit.ly/1i6WVUr>) also has its own categories of offenses, which the judge must use in determining which options are available at disposition (sentencing).

Anyone can file a complaint alleging that a juvenile has committed a delinquent or undisciplined act. The intake counselor at the Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice (DACJJ) reviews all delinquent and undisciplined complaints and decides whether they should go to court.

Can a youth be arrested?

The term "arrest" is not used for juveniles. However, under the following situations a juvenile may be taken into custody for up to 12 hours (or longer if on a weekend or legal holiday) without a court order:

1. By law enforcement if reasons exist for the arrest of an adult in the same situation;
2. By law enforcement or a court counselor if there are reasons to believe the youth is an undisciplined juvenile;
3. By a law enforcement officer, court counselor, or DACJJ worker if there are reasons to believe the youth has run away from a youth development or detention facility center; or
4. By a law enforcement officer or department of social services (DSS) worker if there are reasons to believe the youth is abused, neglected, or dependent and would be hurt or they would lose the chance to take the youth into custody if they spent time getting permission from the courts.

How long are juveniles held?

A juvenile accused of being delinquent of certain offenses may be held in secure custody for no more than five days or in non-secure custody for no more than seven days without a hearing before a judge. A youth accused of being a runaway may be held in secure custody for no more than 24 hrs. (72 hrs. on weekends/holidays).

Secure vs. non-secure custody

Secure custody is placement in a detention center and is used for delinquent juveniles and sometimes for undisciplined juveniles who have run away from home. Non-secure custody is placement in a foster home or a similar facility and is used for some undisciplined juveniles as well as juveniles who are dependent, abused, or neglected.

What happens after a complaint is received?

The intake counselor asks questions to determine if the offense can be considered a crime. When possible, the intake process includes talking with the person(s) making the complaint, the juvenile and his/her parent(s) or legal guardian, the victim (if not the person filing the complaint), and others who have information about the juvenile and his/her family (e.g., school, DSS, and others).

How long is the intake process?

It takes up to 30 days to determine whether to file the complaint as a petition and to decide whether the youth needs to go to court or not. A petition is a document that states the facts in the complaint.

What happens after the complaint is processed?

One of the following: (1) the case is closed, (2) the case is diverted, or (3) a petition is filed to bring the case to court. In the most serious cases the intake counselor must approve the filing of a petition if the intake counselor finds reasonable grounds to believe the juvenile committed the offense.

What does "divert" mean?

Divert means to connect the juvenile and the juvenile's family to resources in the community to help them deal with behaviors and problems instead of taking the case to court.

You can be more helpful to youth involved with juvenile justice if you know how the system works.

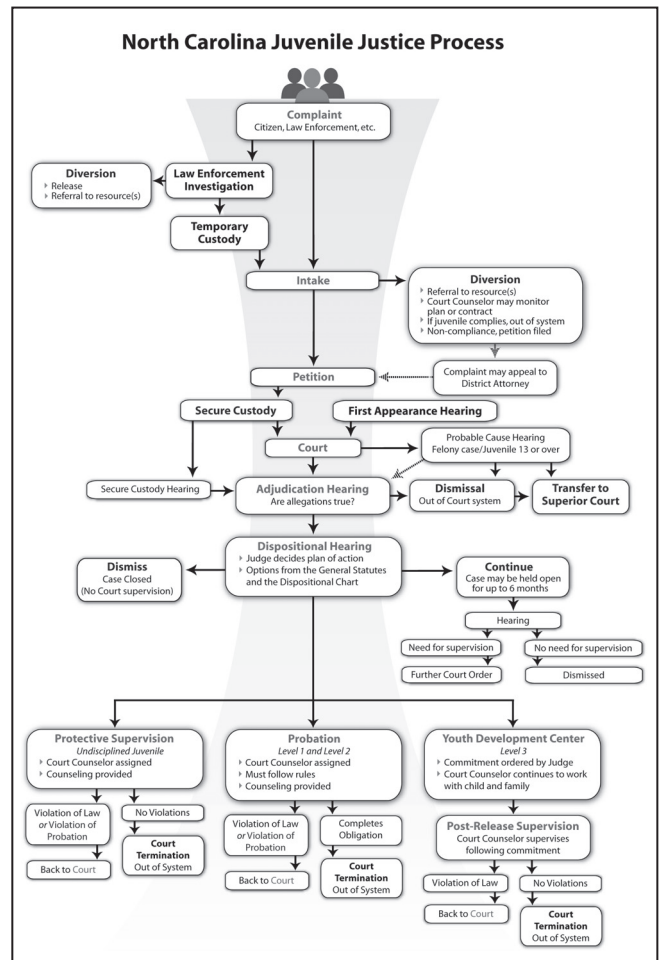
Do the youth and family have a plan when the case is diverted?

The intake counselor, the juvenile, and the juvenile's family may enter into a diversion plan or contract. A diversion plan is a verbal agreement between the juvenile, the parent/guardian, and court counselor that tells what each of them will do. A diversion contract is a written agreement between the juvenile, parent/guardian and court counselor that tells what each of them will do.

The intake counselor can monitor the plan or contract for up to 6 months to determine the youth's progress. If the juvenile completes the diversion plan or contract, a petition is not filed and he/she does not have to go to court. If the juvenile does not complete the terms of the diversion plan or contract, the intake counselor can take the case to court any time within six months.

Can a felony charge be diverted?

Juveniles charged felonies may be diverted from the juvenile justice system unless the offense is specifically classified as non-divertible. Non-divertible offenses *continued next page*



Overview of the juvenile justice system continued from previous page

include murder, rape, arson, any felony drug offense, first-degree burglary, crimes against nature, and any felony that involved willful infliction of serious bodily injury or was committed with a deadly weapon. If the intake counselor finds reasonable grounds to believe the juvenile has committed a non-divertible offense, he/she must authorize the complaint to be filed as a petition.

The Petition (“Filing of Charges”)

How is a youth brought into juvenile court?

If the court counselor approves the complaint to be filed as a petition, the juvenile and his/her parents are notified. The notification is called a summons to appear in court. Copies of the petition are served (given) to the juvenile and his/her parents or legal guardians.

How are juvenile cases handled?

In North Carolina, juvenile cases are sent to the state district courts for hearings. These courts have authority over delinquent and undisciplined juveniles.

What is a juvenile hearing?

This is a court session in which statements and information are presented to a judge. This is to decide if someone has committed a crime. Court hearings are open to the public unless closed by the judge.

What is the hearing procedure in juvenile court?

Juvenile hearings occur in two steps:

1. In the first step, adjudication, the court focuses only on the “facts of the case” and determines whether the juvenile actually committed the offense.
2. In the second step, disposition or sentencing, the court decides what plan of services, treatment, and consequences best meets the needs of the juvenile and the interests of the state.

Is adjudication considered a conviction?

No. The legal effect of adjudication of delinquency is not considered a “conviction” of any criminal offense. This means if a youth with a juvenile record is asked on a job or college application if he/she has ever been convicted of a criminal offense the answer is “NO” because adjudication is not considered a conviction.

Can a juvenile be represented by a lawyer?

In all delinquency cases, a lawyer must represent a juvenile. In fact, according to the North Carolina Juvenile Code, if a juvenile is alleged delinquent for committing a crime, no statement made by the juvenile may be allowed into evidence if the juvenile is under 14 without a lawyer or parent present; for youth 14 or older, law enforcement must offer that the juvenile have a parent or lawyer present before making a statement that would be admissible in court.

What if a youth and his/her family cannot afford a lawyer?

Delinquent juveniles are presumed indigent and are appointed counsel once a petition is filed in court.

Is a juvenile permitted to have witnesses testify on his/her behalf?

Yes. The juvenile’s attorney handles this.

Sentencing Juveniles

What happens if a youth is found to be delinquent?

If a judge finds a youth is delinquent, the judge orders a disposition (similar to a sentence in the adult system). For delinquent juveniles the judge may:

- Place the juvenile on probation;
- Order the juvenile to pay a fine, pay money to the victim, or to perform community service;
- Prevent the juvenile from being licensed to drive a motor vehicle, and/or order the juvenile to spend time in a group home, detention facility, or youth development center.

What happens if a youth is found undisciplined?

An undisciplined juvenile can be placed under the protective supervision of a court counselor.

How does a judge decide what consequences to give?

The disposition (consequences) the judge orders will depend on the seriousness of the offense, the juvenile’s prior record, the juvenile’s needs, and the protection of the community.

What is probation?

Probation requires a delinquent juvenile to follow rules the court sets. On probation, a youth must be supervised by a court counselor. If the youth doesn’t follow the rules (violates probation), he/she may have to return to court. The judge may order a different set of consequences (disposition). This could be detention or the youth development center.

How old must a youth be to be sent to a Youth Development Center (“training school”)?

At least ten years old.

What is protective supervision?

Protective supervision is similar to probation, but is for undisciplined juveniles. A court counselor supervises the juvenile to ensure he/she is following the rules set by the court. The court counselor also offers community services to the juvenile and the juvenile’s family.

Youth Rights in the Legal System

Does a youth have a trial like an adult?

Juveniles have hearings that are similar to adult trials, but they are held before a judge

Adult Outcomes for Crossover Youth

What happens to the crossover population—youth involved in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system—as adults? To find out, Culhane and colleagues (2011) studied youth who exited care between the ages of 16 and 21 in Los Angeles County. They found that crossover youth were more at risk for negative outcomes than (a) youth who exited from a child welfare out-of-home placement or (b) youth who exited from any type of juvenile probation supervision. Crossover youth were:

- More likely to have multiple out-of-home placements and to exit care from a group home.
- Twice as likely to be heavy users of public systems in adulthood, three times as likely to experience a jail stay, one-and-a-half times more likely to receive welfare, and 50% less likely to be employed consistently.
- Twice as likely to receive treatment for a serious mental illness during the first 4 years of adulthood.

The researchers concluded that providing foster care and transition services to non-minor youth, as well as education and employment services, can result in more positive outcomes for these vulnerable youth.

*Adapted from CB Express, March 2012, Vol. 13, No. 2,
<https://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/>*

and not a jury. Juveniles have constitutional rights similar to adults. These rights include written notice of the alleged offense, a court-appointed attorney, the right to remain silent, and the right to confront and cross-examine any witness against the juvenile. If the offense charged is a crime, it must be proved by the same standard of proof, “beyond a reasonable doubt,” that applies in criminal trials.

Does the legal system protect youths’ confidentiality?

All juvenile records are withheld from public inspection, except by court order. A juvenile’s record can be examined by the juvenile, the juvenile’s attorney, his/her parent, guardian and/or custodian, the district attorney, and the court counselor without a court order. The district attorney can share information found within a juvenile’s file with law enforcement officers, but they cannot copy any part of the file. Others can obtain a juvenile’s record only by court order. A youth’s records may be made available to schools, youth agencies, law enforcement officials, prosecutors, probation officers, victims, and the public only under certain circumstances.

Can agencies share a juvenile’s information with each other?

The Chief District Court Judge decides what information agencies can share with each other concerning juveniles. They can share information that is important to any case in which a petition is filed claiming that a juvenile is abused, neglected, dependent, undisciplined, or delinquent. Also, schools must be notified if a student is charged with a felony offense.

Juvenile Defenders: The child's voice in juvenile delinquency proceedings

By Mellicent Blythe

When a juvenile is charged with breaking the law, he or she is assigned a special attorney called a juvenile defender. I recently spoke with the North Carolina state Juvenile Defender, Eric J. Zogry, to learn more about this important player in the juvenile justice system. (This interview has been edited for style and length.)

Everyone benefits when you cultivate a relationship of trust and honesty.

What does a juvenile defender do? How would you describe the basics of their role and responsibilities?

We consider ourselves client-centered advocates. We're the child's voice to the court. In the delinquency setting, our role as juvenile defender is no different than representing adults in criminal court.

When people see what we do, they may think we're expressing to the court what we think should happen. But that would not be following our ethical duty as attorneys. Yes, defense attorneys counsel their clients about what they think is in their best legal interest, but ultimately it's based on the client's decision how the case is going to move forward.

What are the hallmarks of a good juvenile defender?

The first thing is to make contact as quickly as possible before court to develop a lawyer-client relationship based on trust and honesty. Though it might be a little unsettling to a foster parent or other guardian, the attorney should meet first with the client by themselves and get their perspective on what's going on in their life and the charges against them. After that they should be interacting with the parent or guardian and others important to the child's life. There should be some explanation to the parent about what the attorney's role is, hopefully prior to the discussion with the child.

I understand all this may feel shocking to a caretaker, who may wonder, "Wait a second. This is a 13-year-old. How can you talk to him without me being there?!" But again, that's how it should be—the child is the client.

How does a juvenile defender come into the picture for youth in foster care, and how long does their involvement last?

Any time a child between the ages of 6 and 16 is accused of committing a crime, they automatically get appointed a lawyer. Once the summons goes out, the name of the lawyer should be on that piece of paper. Or it may say the "Public Defender" if there is an office in the county or district.

The length of time they're involved varies widely depending on the offense, whether or not the child is in detention, and the jurisdiction and how often court meets.

How can foster parents assist juvenile defenders?

The foster parent has information that's extremely relevant. Any information they can provide about how the youth is performing in placement, how that's impacting other parts of their life, the foster parent's ability to transport the youth to the hearings and the potential services or programs that the court may order, that's all going to be very helpful.

The court is going to want to hear from the foster parent. But from a defense perspective, be careful. The risk is you may say something that impacts the child in a negative way without realizing it.

For example, I've had situations where a caregiver spends 15 minutes talking about all the child's done wrong, but then ends with only a few seconds on how well the child's doing now. The judge is going to focus on the first part. It may even affect the judge's thinking about whether the foster parent can safely care for the youth.

Think about how what you say might affect the child. Sometimes the best thing to say to the court is nothing, or to be positive. If anything negative comes out, you just never know how that will affect the outcome.

What should foster parents do if they feel their youth's defender is not providing adequate representation?

Contact the defender directly. Say, "We really want to talk to you. We're available to transport the child. Please let us know how we can help." A lot of times the defender is not hearing that.

As a juvenile defender, what do you want from your clients?

Honesty. The thing we hope is to establish that relationship with the client. It benefits everyone when you cultivate a relationship of trust and honesty.

How have the practices of juvenile defenders changed over the years?

Before 1967, juveniles did not consistently have the same constitutional protections as adult defendants. In that year, the Supreme Court ruled in the case *In re Gault* that youth have to be afforded many of the same rights, including the right to an attorney.

In the more recent past, some people thought you had to get a youth into the juvenile justice system in order to receive services. Their approach might have been, "Let's just plead the case, even if we're not sure if the child is responsible for this specific incident. We know the child's struggling, and we want to get services in place."

That doesn't work. If the child believes

they're not being treated fairly, what's the use of getting them services? They won't be invested if they feel the whole thing is a sham.

Thinking about teens' development, we know fairness is a key piece of their belief structure. It may be more important to demonstrate to the child that the system can work, that there is an adult (the juvenile defender) working for them, and that their opinions do matter.

That may have much more of an impact than doing whatever you need to access specific services.

We are working hard to create a trauma-informed child welfare system in NC. Are there similar efforts on the juvenile justice side?

There's a lot of attention on the effect of trauma. We haven't addressed that specifically at the state level. But we really emphasize and recommend that if those issues are key to a child's defense, defenders need to get an expert to properly evaluate the child from that perspective to ensure that the court has that information.

Do you have any messages specifically for DSS social workers regarding "cross-over youth"—those involved in both child welfare and juvenile justice?

The relationship between DSS and juvenile defenders varies widely. It also really varies across counties whether juvenile defenders attend Child and Family Team meetings. I think it's important at the very least for the defender to be aware of what's happening in those CFTs, especially when it affects placement. The worst thing is when a defender gets handed a report five minutes before a hearing. It's really about improving communication.

I think there have been efforts to address cross-over youth, but I haven't seen a comprehensive solution. I would like to see more ongoing discussion about improving communication and simplifying procedures for these kids.

Part of the problem is there are two different courts, all kinds of different meetings, all kinds of different personnel. The bottom line is, it's confusing to the child.

I'd like to see more discussions among all the parties about how we can better serve these youth. The District Attorney's office, juvenile defender, GAL, DSS—we need to work together to achieve the best outcome for every child.



Eric J. Zogry



CFTs can help us build better futures for “crossover” youth

by Jenny King

When a child in foster care breaks the law, they become involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. When we are working with these “crossover” or “dual-system” youth, child and family teams (CFTs) are one of the best tools we have for sorting matters out in a way that is clear, fair, and focused on building a better future for the youth.

CFTs

In **child and family teams** (CFTs) family members and their community supports come together to create and update a plan with the youth and family. The plan builds on the strengths of the youth and family and addresses their needs, desires, and dreams.

CFTs provide a great road map for us to follow when seeking to support and partner with young people in the foster care system. CFTs are both a meeting process and a philosophical approach. They are the real-life application of the following values, which North Carolina’s child and family serving systems have wholeheartedly embraced:

Six Principles of Partnership

1. Everyone desires respect
2. Everyone needs to be heard
3. Everyone has strengths
4. Judgments can wait
5. Partners share power
6. Partnership is a process

These principles nurture best practice in child welfare. They are guideposts, helping direct and remind workers about what child and family teams are.

Family-Centered Principles

Family-centered principles include:

- Families are experts about themselves.
- Families and community members should be partners in determining solutions and making decisions.
- Meetings should be set up in a way that fits with and honors the family’s culture.
- The role of the child welfare worker is to help the family and ensure child safety.

Done right, child and family teams embody these principles, encouraging workers, family, and community supports to learn from young people in foster care. CFTs are a way for youth to teach us who they are and what’s important to them, to provide us insight into how to partner with them and their family system for safety and success.

Start the Ball Rolling

If a child in your home becomes involved with the juvenile justice system, one of the first things you should do is ask for a CFT. That’s right—foster parents and kin caregivers can call a CFT.

Don’t wait to be asked IF you would like to have a CFT meeting or IF you can attend a CFT. Ask for one yourself.

Because they are key partners, foster parents and kin caregivers have the right to have a say in what is happening in the lives of the young people in their care.

Working with Multiple Systems

Asking questions is even more important when more than one system is involved in the youth’s life. Questions help hold everyone accountable. Questions also make each system more aware of how the other is working with the youth. This opens the door to better communication.

Questions caregivers might ask when planning a CFT for dual-system youth include:

- How can I help actively involve this youth in the CFT?
- How can we ensure that everyone working with the youth is at the CFT so they will understand what the youth is supposed to be doing?
- What questions does the youth have about either system?
- Do we have an effective plan to manage behaviors that may put the youth at risk for further trouble?
- Are we sure the youth is receiving appropriate, effective treatment for any mental health issues that may underlie the delinquent behavior?
- How can we coordinate across systems to ensure the youth’s plan meets the needs of both DSS and juvenile justice?
- How can we ensure both courts are kept informed of what’s going on with the youth?

Be Prepared!

While both child welfare and juvenile justice agencies are working to assist your child, their approaches may be very different. Juvenile justice’s focus on the safety of the community and helping to stop delinquent behaviors is more of a “corrections” approach. This can lead to harsher punishments and even incarceration/detention settings. North Carolina is one of the few states that prosecute youth 16 and older as adults.

This makes the involvement of families, supports, and the community highly important for crossover youth. As a caregiver, it is your voice, and the voice of your family, community, counselors, and workers, which can help shift the focus from harsher punishments to accountability and healing—for the youth, for victims, and for the community.

Here are some suggestions that may help you make this shift:

- Ask for copies of—and seek to understand—the laws, policies, and process your child is facing as part of the juvenile justice system. This online document is a good starting place: www.ncdps.gov/div/JJ/JJdiagram.pdf.
- Bring supporters for you and your child to a CFT. This meeting is for your child—you have a right to have support through this process.
- See if the child’s GAL can attend the CFT and/or ask if you can have a family advocate join you and your child at the CFT.
- Become familiar with juvenile justice services offered in your county; a description of these services can be found at www.ncdps.gov/sbc/.

CFTs are one of the best tools we have for sorting matters out in a way that is clear, fair, and focused on building a better future for the youth.

Be Persistent and Patient!

As you seek to understand the systems working with your child, you may initially find your questions go unanswered. Or they may simply generate other questions. Or you may not get the answers you’re seeking. If this happens to you:

- Don’t be deterred. Keep the lines of communication open. Partnership is truly a process. It takes time.
- CFTs are a resource you can use to initiate and enhance your partnerships with agencies. Advocate for the process to slow down enough to involve your youth.
- Ask for a meeting to provide greater understanding of what is expected and going on in the plans for your child.
- Ask for other family members, mentors, and community partners to become a part of the youth’s team to provide resources and ideas for their success.

Conclusion

Asking for a CFT is a powerful first step. If you patiently persist, you may just see tentative exchanges between systems grow to become true teamwork.

In the words of Henry Ford:

*Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.*

Jenny King is Training Coordinator and Trainer for the Center for Family and Community Engagement at NC State University.

To Learn More about CFTs...

Read *Fostering Perspectives*, vol. 16, no. 2 at www.fosteringperspectives.org

Kids' Pages

Words and Pictures by and for Children in Foster Care

Vol. 18, No. 2 • May 2014



Writing Contest

When young people in care get in trouble with the law

Sometimes kids in foster care get in trouble with the law. In the last issue of *Fostering Perspectives* we asked young people to share ideas for what foster parents, social workers, GALs, and others can do to support them when this happens. Here's what they had to say.

Should I Call You MOM?

An excerpt

by Hannah, age 14

Do you remember the day I was born?
Or even the day when we were torn?
I do, but do you?
I love you very much.
But why did you choose drugs and such?
You told me how beautiful I was.
I shouldn't believe you because....
You lie, you steal.
Were you ever real?
Do you mean what you say?
If not, I hope you pay.

You and I have something in common in our past.
Your mom used substances.
So did mine.
You were in Foster Care too.
You see I know this whole thing is not entirely your fault.
In life though we all have choices in what we want our life to be all about.
Even if we have many doubts.
Me, I choose to be successful
And actually make something out of myself.

I wonder what I would be like if you weren't my mom.
Would I still stand strong?
Or am I wrong?
I guess I've reached my decision.
You don't deserve my respect.
And therefore I won't ever ever ever again...
Call you My MOM.

Hannah will receive \$15 for having her work published in Fostering Perspectives.

Brittney, age 13

What can foster parents, social workers, GALs, and others do to support children when they get in trouble with the law? They can help you in school and with homework. They can help you find good friends. They can support you by going to court with you and be on your side. They can get you a therapy appointment. You can be on a football or dance team to keep you from getting in trouble. *Brittney will receive \$15 for having her work published in Fostering Perspectives.*

1st

Sheyanne, age 17

Sometimes youth in foster care . . . feel as if foster parents, social workers, GALs, and others don't support them. [You] could help youth in foster care with different aspects of their life, including life at home, school, and possibly social life and finding a job:

- **Home Life.** DSS can offer help through [extracurricular] activities such as football and piano, etc. They can also offer a safe place to live.
- **School Life.** Teachers help youth by giving them reasons to show up to school and make the right choices. School also offers structure for youth.
- **Jobs.** Jobs can help youth learn responsibilities. This can help youth realize what they need and what they want to do with their life. Jobs also help youth learn time management.
- **Social Life.** This can include "positive" family supports. Some youth in foster care just want to know that someone loves them. Support from the right friends can also help. Having friends that are good role models and support good decisions instead of bad are always good to have.

These are a few of the many ways foster parents, social workers, GALs, and others can help youth stay out of trouble with the law. *Sheyanne will receive \$100 for winning first prize in the writing contest.*

Help youth with different aspects of their life.

2nd

Vance, age 16

In my opinion, some children get in trouble and "show out" simply to get attention. Sometimes all we need is for someone to sit us down and show us we have someone who understands and actually cares about what we are going through.

Like me, for instance. My mother has never really supported me when I needed her to. It seems like every day and every night I lie in bed and think about everything that I've been through. So when I ran away recently—which is not a good thing—my mom finally heard my cries for help. So did my whole family. Finally everyone saw how much pain I was in. Now I have more support than I could ever imagine. I don't care who you are, the best feeling in the world is knowing you're not alone and have people to help you through your struggle, lift you up when you're down, and lend a helping hand.

So from my point of view the main thing anyone can do to help any of us in these situations is to show you care. Go out of your way to show me you got my back, no matter what. It means more than you would think. *Vance will receive \$50 for winning second prize in the writing contest.*

Go out of your way to show you care.

3rd

Sierra, age 16

Adults should take in mind that teenagers in foster care have been through a difficult time; they may act out. If adults would talk to teenagers about their problems and give them support; teenagers would know that someone cares about them. This support may lead to a change of heart.

Adults should think of activities to occupy these teenagers. Adults could show them how to have fun in a positive way. A teenager could express his or herself through sports or activities. An active mind is a healthy mind. Bonding with teenagers will give adults and teens a better understanding of what each person is like. Adults should guide teenagers in foster care to a better future.

Sierra will receive \$25 for winning third prize in the writing contest.

Think of activities to occupy teenagers. An active mind is a healthy mind.



SaySo Update by Lauren Zingraff, SaySo Executive Director

On March 1, 2014, SaySo celebrated its “Sweet 16” at our annual “SaySo Saturday” conference. Held the first Saturday of March,

SaySo Saturday is our yearly birthday party and family reunion. This year 165 attendees enjoyed great workshops, birthday cupcakes, and even dancing during lunch!

SaySo Saturday is also when regional elections are held for the SaySo Board of Directors. The newly-elected Board will join outgoing members in the SaySo Board of Directors Orientation and Leadership Retreat on June 24-26, 2014 in Pinehurst, NC.

SaySo would like to thank all of the youth and alumni who celebrated our birthday with us, as well as the wonderful adult supporters who drove youth to the conference and helped us with chaperoning and lunch.

It was a fun-filled and exciting day from start to finish. We look forward to seeing many of you at SaySo Saturday 2015!

Speaking Out

At right is an article from a SaySo alumna about her experiences. As she shares, feeling unsupported and voiceless was very challenging for her.

SaySo helps young people use their voices in powerful, positive ways to advocate for themselves and others. Our motto is “*Speaking out today, while making changes for tomorrow.*” For more information, please visit our website: www.saysoinc.org.



Afraid I’d Be Lost by Michelle Douglas

What it Was Like Being Involved Simultaneously in the Foster Care and Juvenile Justice Systems

My experience dealing with the foster care and juvenile justice systems at the same time was not easy.

With me being involved in a “dual jurisdiction” case, nobody was sure how to get things done or who to go through without breaking policy rules or breaking the law.

For example, I had a hard time getting final decisions made about when and where I would be placed. Would I live in a level 3 or level 4 placement? Was I approved to move?

The next debate was about who can transport a juvenile and how they can be transported. We also had to work around everyone’s schedule, which made it hard to have meetings.

Nothing was simple and everything took a long time to get done. There was a constant delay of answers and I never really knew what was going on or who I could turn to for clarification. It really put me in a state of confusion. I felt I had no one to talk to and no one was paying attention to how all of this made me feel. It seemed no one took into consideration what I wanted; instead, they focused on what was easiest.

When I was in detention I felt completely

alone. Since I was also in foster care I didn’t have family to visit me. I rarely had visitation. On phone call night I could only call my previous foster parent. But she never answered, nor did she call back. So I went months without visits or phone calls.

When I was in detention I felt completely alone — I went months without visits or phone calls.

Then I was assigned a judge that would preside over both my juvenile court and foster care cases. This made it so much easier. She was able to see both sides of what was going on with me and I was able to develop more of a relationship with her. Even though there were still many rules and policy procedures to adhere to, many things—such as family visits and off-campus day visits from the facility—were approved a lot quicker.

This judge gave me hope. I was afraid I would be lost in the system. She gave me a voice by asking me what I wanted and allowing me to speak for myself in court.

If there is one thing I would suggest, it would be that anyone in dual jurisdiction should have one judge for both cases.

Training Opportunities for Caregivers to Help Teens Transition

Independent Living Resources, Inc. has two opportunities for foster parents to learn more about how to help teens in foster care make smoother transitions.

Volunteer Advocate Academy

The first is an online training program called “Volunteer Advocate Academy” and includes ten modules on how to engage and help teens prepare to transition to adulthood. Visit www.volunteeradvocateacademy.com.

Helping Youths Reach Self-Sufficiency

The second opportunity is a weekend-long seminar called “Helping Youths Reach Self-Sufficiency.” This year this course will be offered October 3 - 5, 2014 in Burlington. Caregivers who attend this event (a) learn about NC LINKS services, (b) expand their ability to give youths in foster care the tools they need to become self-sufficient, and (c) learn to support other caregivers as they do the same for foster youth in *their* homes. Topics covered include assessment, education, employment, decision-making, building-assets, other LINKS-related topics, and how to use youths, other caregivers, and the community as resources.

In addition to these topics, participants also learn to organize and facilitate a two-hour session to inform other caregivers in their area. Participants will have an opportunity to practice facilitation skills at the seminar. Upon returning home, participants (now called “ambassadors”) are expected to facilitate a session to help support other caregivers to teach life skills in the home.

The course is taught by caregivers who walk the talk. Wanda and Tony Doug-

las originally attended this course in 2002 and progressed to become professional trainers. The Douglasses have taught this course since 2009 and find that participants continue to contact them post-seminar to share their experiences. Those experiences run from pure excitement to fear and concern about “doing a good job.”

Ambassadors find that caregivers need information and tools specifically to engage teens in their homes and better understand what they can do to become more self-sufficient. In addition, the Douglasses continue to offer ambassadors tips and suggestions to improve their efforts to share the “life-skills” message with others.

Who can attend? Foster parents who currently foster (or want to foster) teens in their home are encouraged to register.

Cost and Conditions. “Helping Youths Reach Self-Sufficiency” is sponsored by the NC LINKS program and is offered FREE to foster parents. The LINKS program will pay lodging and meals for participants. Prior to registering for the course, attendees must ask their licensing and LINKS worker (or agency worker identified to work with teens) for support to conduct a session for caregivers after the course.

Registration: The seminar begins at 3 p.m. on Fri., October 3 and ends at 1 p.m. on Sun., October 5, 2014. Visit <http://bit.ly/1fK03c1> for a downloadable registration form. For more information, contact Debbie Cornell (Debbie.Cornell@ilrinc.com). **Registration Deadline:** September 5, 2014



Raise the Age: Why it matters

by Mark Maxwell, PhD

Right now if a 16- or 17-year-old in North Carolina commits a crime, they could have a criminal record for life. That's true even if the crime is nonviolent. Today North Carolina and New York are the only states that allow 16- and 17-year-olds to face adult charges if they break the law. A petty crime committed as a youth could prevent someone from getting a job, even many years after they've turned their lives around.

NCFAPA Supports Raise the Age

The North Carolina Foster and Adoptive Parent Association supports efforts to "Raise the Age" of juvenile jurisdiction from age 16 to 18 for youth who commit misdemeanors.

Why? We believe the law shouldn't treat teens as adults because they *aren't* adults. Teens' brains are still developing, which hampers their ability to control impulses and make decisions. According to the *Journal of Adolescent Health* (Johnson, et al., 2009), the parts of the brain responsible for "planning, working memory, and impulse control are among the last areas of the brain to mature; they may not be fully developed until halfway through the third decade of life."

Treating teens who commit misdemeanors like adults is costly both to youth and to society. According to the NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission and the NC Department of Corrections (2006), youth exposed to the adult criminal system are more than twice as likely to be reconvicted of crimes as youth who are punished and rehabilitated in the juvenile system. What's more, Congressional findings in the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 estimated that youth were five times more likely to be sexually assaulted in adult facilities; often they are assaulted during their first 48 hours of incarceration (Parsell, 2012).

Let's keep youth in the juvenile system. This provides more opportunities for rehabilitation, improves public safety, and eliminates unnecessary roadblocks to life success.

"Raising the Age" of juvenile jurisdiction from 16 to 18 will allow us to turn our kids into productive adults while still holding them accountable for their actions.

Legislative Support

In the session that begins in May 2014, the

Should stealing a bag of Doritos from a lunch line limit a youth's potential for the rest of their lives?

North Carolina legislature will consider H725, a bipartisan bill known as "Young Offenders Rehabilitation Act." H725 seeks to raise the age for youth accused of minor offenses.

Brandy Bynum, Director of Policy and Outreach with the advocacy organization NC Child, strongly supports H725. When I spoke to

her she said that a failure to pass the bill would bar youth from access to education and employment by branding them with a criminal record for life. Bynum says that people are often astonished—and rightly so—to learn that North Carolina youth can face adult records at age 16. We need to change this.

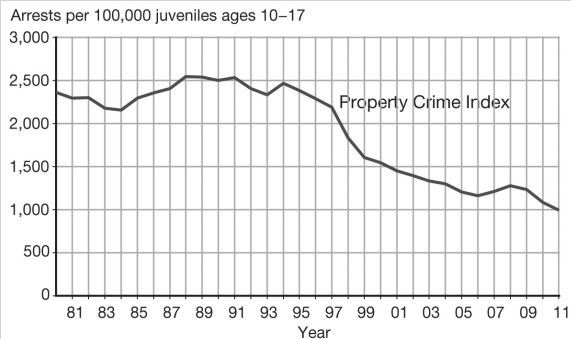
What Can You Do?

The North Carolina Foster and Adoptive Parent Association encourages you to contact your legislator today and ask them to support H725. The bill is up for a third reading in the House this month! If it passes, it will then be in the hands of the NC senate.

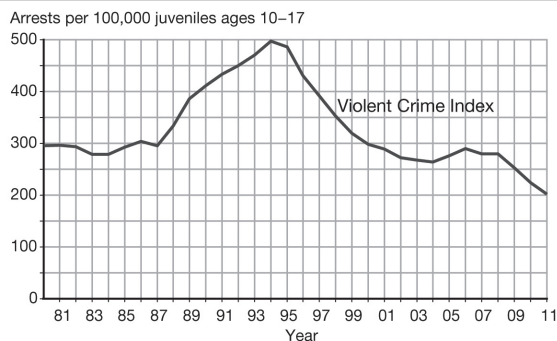
Mark Maxwell is a foster and adoptive father and the proud parent of four boys.

For Many Crimes, Juvenile Arrest Rates Are at Lowest Levels in 30+ Years

U.S. Juvenile Property Crime Index Arrest Rate Fell 22% between 2008 and 2011



U.S. Juvenile Violent Crime Index Arrest Rate Fell 30% between 2006 and 2011



Source: U.S. Department of Justice, 2013

North Carolina Reclaiming Futures

The Reclaiming Futures Initiative in North Carolina is designed to help improve the work among juvenile courts, probation, adolescent substance abuse and mental health treatment, and the community to reclaim youth. The model embodies three major elements: improvement in treatment services for mental health and drug and alcohol use; a comprehensive system of care that coordinates services; and the involvement of the community in creating new opportunities for the youth.

In 2011, NC established a statewide office to support this initiative. The state office is supported by a public-private partnership among the Department of Public Safety, Governor's Crime Commission, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, and The Duke Endowment. The initiative is overseen by an advisory group which includes the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities & Substance Abuse Services; Division of Medical Assistance; Administrative Office of the Courts; Wake Forest School of Medicine; UNC-Greensboro; Reclaiming Futures National Program Office; and our funding partners. The state office works in partnership with local sites throughout North Carolina to provide coaching, training, and evaluation support. Sites include:

- Catawba County
- Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Swain, Macon, Jackson, & Haywood counties
- Cumberland County
- Forsyth County
- Gaston County
- Guilford County
- Halifax, Northampton, Hertford, & Bertie counties
- Iredell, Yadkin, & Surry counties
- McDowell County
- Mecklenburg County
- Orange & Chatham counties
- Rockingham, Stokes, & Davie counties
- Rowan County
- Transylvania & Henderson counties

Improving work among juvenile courts, probation, adolescent substance abuse and mental health treatment, and the community.

For more information about the state office or if you are interested in being a part of Reclaiming Futures, contact Jessica Jones, Reclaiming Futures Project Director at 919-743-8115. <https://www.ncdps.gov/Index2.cfm?a=000003,002476,002735>

Preventing and responding to runaways from foster care

Runaways from foster care are not rare. Preliminary estimates are that of the 423,773 U.S. children in foster care on September 30, 2009, 8,047 (2%) had a “runaway” status (CWIG, 2011).

Most children who run away from foster care return or are found. Typical episodes are short—one study found nearly half lasted less than a week and two-thirds lasted two weeks or less. The same study found that the older the young person is, the longer the runaway episode tends to last (Courtney, et al. 2005).

Youth rarely leave the foster care system permanently by running away. For example, of the 4,707 NC children who entered care in 2008-09, just 13 (or about a quarter of 1%) left the system by running away (Duncan, et al., 2012). Those who do exit care this way are likely to have spent a long time in care (Courtney & Barth, 1996).

What We Know

We never know for sure who will attempt to run from foster care, but we know something about the traits of those who run. The following findings from the research literature are described by Pergamit and Ernst (2011):

- Girls are more likely to run than boys.
- Runaway behavior is not linked to a particular race/ethnicity.
- Runaways tend to have more school problems, higher rates of suicidal ideation, more reported behavioral problems, and more alcohol, substance abuse, and mental health disorders.
- Youth in foster care are more likely to run away the first time if they entered care

due to lack of supervision and less likely to run if they entered due to sexual abuse or physical abuse.

- The more placements they have, the more likely youth are to run.
- Youth in group homes or residential facilities are more likely to run away than youth in foster homes; youth placed with relatives are least likely to run away.
- The older the youth is when entering care, the more likely they are to run away.

A Recent Study

Recently researchers from the National Runaway Switchboard (Pergamit & Ernst, 2011) interviewed 50 foster youth aged 14 to 17 years old. All had run away at least once in the past year. As the box below illustrates, these interviews tell us much about why youth run, how often they run, and where they stay when they're on the run.

Youth in the study suggested ways to improve their experiences in care. In general, they want more opportunities to see their families and stay connected to their neighborhoods and friends. They want to talk to someone who will listen to them, get to know them, and help them work through difficulties. Although this need could be met by a foster parent, many of these teens felt they couldn't talk to their foster parents.

Teens who ran also wanted more support from caseworkers, including more frequent visits where caseworkers spend time listening to youth to hear how they are really doing. Those who were unhappy with their placements felt a move would have helped.

After a Run

What can we do to support runaways after they're back in foster care? Recognize that these youth experienced a disruption in services (medical, counseling, etc.) and may have unmet needs. After a run, social workers should work with foster parents and youth to reconnect youth to services. Connecting youth with school is key.

Prevention

Agencies can help prevent runaways from foster care by:

- Using flexible staffing schedules so workers can meet the child's needs.
- Having frequent, direct contact with children in foster care.
- Recruiting and supporting foster homes in communities from which foster children come into care.
- Strengthening visitation so youth have more contact with their families.

Working with foster parents and youth on conflict management and communication is another key prevention strategy. By teaching skills and being available to families to help them work through difficulties, child welfare professionals make an important investment in strengthening relationships that may make the difference in a youth's decision to run or stay when times are tough.



Findings from Interviews with 50 Runaways from Foster Care

How often did they run?

One in four ran multiple times.

Placement type

Most ran from a group home; few ran from foster homes; those in kinship placements were least likely to run.

When did they run?

When placements were new, 33% ran within the first 3 months; more than half ran within the first 6 months.

Did they plan?

Not usually. Only a third planned; 66% left on the spur of the moment.

Why they ran

Most common: (1) to be with family and friends and (2) because they disliked their placement.

Conflict and safety

Conflict with caregivers was reported by nearly 25%, and was more likely among youth in foster homes than in group homes.

1 in 6 reported feeling unsafe in their placement; those in group homes were twice as likely to feel unsafe.

Where did they go?

Most (56%) went to their old neighborhood. Very few ran to live on the streets, staying outside (e.g., in a park, an abandoned building, etc.).

Whom did they contact while on the run?

Friends. Many wanted to see family, but sought out friends because they did not want to get parents in trouble or jeopardize reunification. Fewer than 25% called their caseworker; most who did make contact with the caseworker did so when they were ready to return to care.

Why did they return?

Most returned voluntarily because they wanted to be back at their home, go to school, or avoid getting themselves or others in trouble.

Adapted from Pergamit & Ernst, 2011

School Matters

Getting youth enrolled and engaged in school following a runaway episode is essential, as is having foster parents and child welfare and school staff work together to provide educational continuity, stability, and success for foster youth. Ways to help youth stay connected with school include the following:

- Place information about positive academic achievements in youths' case files; they need to experience educational success and be acknowledged for it.
- Provide intensive individual, home-based tutoring to help youth eliminate subject-matter and skill deficiencies and attain grade-level abilities.
- Provide resources to allow youth to participate in after-school activities (e.g., museums, lessons, classes, cultural events) that can promote positive peer relationships and motivate them to be engaged in school and in their academic success.
- Make sure foster parents know the importance of attending school activities of the children in their care; they should participate at school events.
- Allow youth to be active participants in reviewing their educational options and making decisions about their future; this will engender commitment and responsibility for their actions.
- Recruit mentors for youth, including family members, who will encourage and help them define and reach their educational goals.

Adapted from Skyles, Smithgall, & Howard, 2007



Human Trafficking: What foster parents should know

A 17-year-old in foster care runs away to be with her "boyfriend," who makes her work as a prostitute.

Two children are made to work long hours in a restaurant when they should be in school.

Most people know that because of risks to the safety and well-being of children, these scenarios would be of concern to a child welfare agency. What many do not know is that these scenarios also describe possible instances of human trafficking, a serious crime punishable under federal law by up to 20 years in prison (Federal Criminal Code, 18 USC § 1584).

By knowing how to support victims, foster parents can help bring safety and healing to children traumatized by human trafficking.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a form of modern day slavery. According to the Polaris Project (2010) there are two types:

- **Sex trafficking** is recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining a person for a commercial sex act that is induced by force, fraud, or coercion. When the victim is under 18, no force, fraud, or coercion is necessary.
- **Labor trafficking** is recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. Human "trafficking" does not necessarily involve moving people from one country or place to another.

Of the victims of human trafficking, some are U.S. residents and some are non-residents. Almost all have some vulnerability that can be exploited or manipulated by the trafficker (Snyder, 2012).

Sex trafficking victims are often runaways, troubled, or homeless youth (U.S. Dept. of State, 2011). An estimated 293,000 young people in the U.S. may be at risk for being trafficked for the sex trade (Estes & Weiner, 2001).

Trafficking's Impact

There is overlap between child trafficking and child maltreatment. Children involved in sex trafficking are repeatedly abused by pimps, madams, and sex buyers; 95% of teens who are prostituted were victims of prior sexual abuse either by family or close acquaintances (Estes & Weiner, 2001; IOM, 2007). According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, the impact on victims' well-being can be long-term and severe. Physical effects can include:

- Sleeping and eating disorders
- Sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, pelvic pain, rectal trauma, and urinary difficulties from working in the sex industry
- Back, hearing, heart, or lung problems from toiling in dangerous agriculture, sweatshop, or construction conditions

Psychological effects on victims can include fear and anxiety; depression and mood changes; guilt and shame; Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and bonding with the trafficker ("Stockholm Syndrome").

Tips for Caregivers

Caring for young people who have survived sex or labor trafficking is new territory for most foster parents. Here are some tips adapted from the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (2014) to get you started.

Learn all you can about human trafficking, its impact, and how to help children who have experienced it. The National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections offers links to a rich array of information—go to <http://bit.ly/1m14EY3>.

Find a real live support person. Helping a trafficking victim in your care is easier if you have someone experienced you can turn to for insight and advice. Work with your licensing worker and/or the child's social worker to find the right person.

Think physical safety. Some traffickers are violent. Therefore, consider the following with your social worker:

- *Youth may try to reconnect with traffickers.* Explain to youth why this is a bad

Victims, Not Criminals

Children and youth are often seen as juvenile prostitutes or criminals and placed in the juvenile justice system. This is a mistake. Minors are not culpable for crimes committed due to human trafficking. Under the law, children and teens involved in these crimes are victims, not perpetrators.



idea. At the same time, it may be necessary to restrict visitors and monitor calls and electronic communications (texts, etc.).

- **Contact with children's families.** NC strongly supports shared parenting, but special care must be taken when human trafficking has occurred. Some families were directly involved in the trafficking; others may be watched or pressured by traffickers to share the child's information. Discuss contact with family with your agency before it occurs.

Think psychological safety. To recover from trafficking, children must feel psychologically safe. You can help children by:

- Helping them identify things that instill the feeling of safety; eliminate or minimize things that make them feel unsafe.
- Teaching them to understand and manage difficult behaviors. Help them see the links between what they think, feel, and do; help them take control of their actions.
- Helping them develop a strengths-based understanding of their life story. Help children overcome negative or distorted beliefs about their histories by being a safe listener for them.
- Help children understand and manage overwhelming emotions. By providing calm, consistent, loving care, you set an example and teach children to define, express, and manage their emotions.
- Give them opportunities to create, have fun, and play. Celebrate their strengths.

Ensure children get a comprehensive assessment and all services they need. After trafficking a young person might need medical care, academic intervention, legal assistance, or mental health treatment.

Be ready to reframe. Many young people see themselves as strong-willed survivors of trafficking, not victims. They may even be defiant. Use this as a strength to help empower youth and rebuild their self-esteem.

Be a constant, patient presence. Building trust with trafficking victims can take time. Sex trafficking dynamics can cause youth to repeatedly return to a pimp. "Programs working with these youth have learned the importance of being a constant presence for these youth, which means allowing them to return many times" (p. 2).

Red Flags: Possible Signs of Child Trafficking

Labor Trafficking

- Family relationships not clear (may or may not present as formal guardian)
- Child may not be the child of "parent" in the home
 - No evidence of legal guardian
 - Works for "aunt" or "uncle"
- Excluded from family events (e.g., church, vacations, parties)
- Physically exhausted; works long hours
- Child is fearful of family he lives with
- Child is responsible for child care, elder care, or cleaning—often hidden as "chores"

Sex Trafficking

- Excess cash
- Hotel keys
- Chronic runaway/homeless youth
- Lying about age/false ID
- Inconsistencies in story
- Has engaged in prostitution or commercial sex acts
- Any mention of a pimp/boyfriend
- Refers to employer/boyfriend using slang such as "Daddy"

Source: Kaufka Walts, French, Moore, & Ashai, 2011





A reader asks . . .

What are agencies looking for when they conduct home assessments?

What are social workers looking for in my home during a Preplacement Assessment or Mutual Home Assessment?

Great question! First, let's talk about the difference between Preplacement and Mutual Home Assessments.

MHA vs. PPA

A **Mutual Home Assessment (MHA)** is the narrative portion of a foster home licensing application. The purpose of the MHA is fourfold. It helps us to:

1. Determine whether the home meets concrete licensing standards
2. Assure applicants have made an informed decision to become foster parents
3. Identify areas for continued development within the family using the 12 skills (as discussed in TIPS-MAPP), and
4. Learn enough about the family to make effective placement decisions.

A **Preplacement Assessment (PPA)** is the formal written assessment required in North Carolina to be approved as an adoptive family. The PPA determines the family's suitability to adopt while also providing detailed information to make appropriate matching and placement decisions.

While these two assessments have many similarities, there are also some differences in the details and the outcomes. We encourage you to discuss those differences with your licensing or adoption agency.

What We're Looking for

When initiating the process of becoming a licensed foster parent or an approved adoptive family, typically you will have multiple face-to-face contacts and interviews with your social worker, both in and outside of the home. The social worker will speak to every individual in the household, perhaps in a group setting or individually; often they will also interact with your furry family members (that is, your household pets). The social worker will tour the inside of your home as well as the property outside. They will be looking for any safety hazards, the presence of preventative safety measures, the physical space, and the overall atmosphere of your home.

Throughout the assessment process, the social worker will ask you to gather documentation for each individual living in the home. This will include but is not limited to information about medical

history, current health, finances, criminal background, education and employment history, and vaccinations for your furry friends.

The assessment process for both an MHA and a PPA involves a significant amount of physical and emotional investment for a family and can sometimes feel invasive. If you ever have questions regarding the information being requested of your family, please ask your social worker to explain the reasoning behind the request. This will not only answer your questions, but allow for open communication and increased partnership with your agency.

The ultimate goal of an MHA or PPA is for you and the social worker to assess the impact of placing a child in your home, for both that child as well as your family. To make that assessment, social workers must be able to capture in writing a realistic representation of your family dynamics, structure, and function.

They are not looking for perfection in your parenting abilities, family, or home. However, they are looking for families who can safely nurture children in the child welfare system and meet those children's specific safety and well-being needs.

Response by the NC Division of Social Services. If you have a question about foster care or adoption in North Carolina you'd like answered in "A Reader Asks," send it to us using the contact information in the box at right.

fostering perspectives (May 2014)

Sponsors. NC Division of Social Services, the NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, SaySo, and the Family and Children's Resource Program, part of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work's Jordan Institute for Families.

Contact Us. *Fostering Perspectives*, c/o John McMahon, Family and Children's Resource Program, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social, CB# 3550, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3550. Email: jdmcmaho@unc.edu.

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Newsletter Staff. John McMahon (Editor); Mellicent Blythe (Assistant Editor)

Mission. *Fostering Perspectives* exists to promote the professional development of North Carolina's child welfare professionals and foster, kinship, and adoptive parents and to provide a forum where the people involved in the child welfare system in our state can exchange ideas.

Disclaimer. The opinions and beliefs expressed herein are not necessarily those of the NC Division of Social Services or the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

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References. See the online version of this issue for references cited in this issue.

What's the Difference between Custody, Guardianship, and Adoption?

Custody, guardianship, and adoption are legal arrangements for the care of children. Each is established by the court when for some reason children's parents cannot care for them.

Custody is when a person or entity (such as a county department of social services) is responsible for the care and well-being of a child and has the legal authority to consent on behalf of the child, but the child's parents maintain their parental rights. Custody can be restored to the parents by the court if the parent proves capable of caring for the child.

Guardianship is when a person is responsible for the care and well-being of a child and has the legal authority to consent on behalf of a child. Under a guardianship arrangement the child's parents maintain their parental rights. However, courts overturn guardianship only if it is determined the guardian is no longer capable of caring for the child or maintaining their safety.

Adoption is the process by which an adult becomes the permanent, legal parent of a child. Adoptions can occur through relinquishment, termination of parental rights, or consent to adoption by a birth parent. Adoption severs the previous legal parent-child relationship and creates a new legal parent-child relationship between the adoptee and adoptive parent. Sometimes children who have been adopted also maintain contact with their birth family. This is called an "open adoption."



To learn more about custody, guardianship, adoption, or other terms related to children in foster care, see "Terms You May Want to Know" in the appendix of *A Family's Guide to the Child Welfare System* (<http://www.cwla.org/childwelfare/fg.pdf>), or visit the federal Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov).



Help us find families for these children

For more information on these children or adoption in general, call the NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 <www.adoptnckids.org>

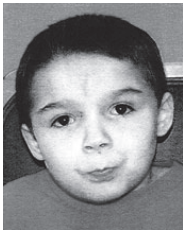


Danielle (age 12)

Danielle is a loving child who bonds with caregivers. She responds well to one-on-one nurturing and enjoys playing games, swinging, coloring, and collecting stuffed animals.

Danielle is in a specialized education setting and is well liked by her teachers. She's close with her younger brother and sister, who were recently placed in a pre-adoptive home. Continued contact with her siblings is very important to Danielle.

Due to the attention she requires, it would be best if Danielle were the only or youngest child in her forever family. She will do best with a family that is patient, has appropriate expectations, easily gives affection, and is willing to continue sibling contact.



Karston (age 8)

Karston is a beautiful little boy who is energetic, happy, curious, and very intelligent. Karston likes balloons, bubbles, cause and effect toys that vibrate, Matchbox cars, and putting items in a box and dumping them out. He loves macaroni and cheese and French fries.

Karston has autism and was born with congenital deafness and no functional hearing; hence he is non-verbal but is able to communicate with

movements, gestures, pictures, and limited sign language. He has met all of his gross motor developmental stages and has already mastered many self-help skills. He can play independently and has a good attention span. He loves to play outside on a playground, visit parks, and experience new places.

Karston lives and goes to school at the same center. There he is working on completing tasks in a work station. He is learning to use his communication board, gestures, and signs, and to stay in one place and work left to right. He is not currently identifying any letters of the alphabet or pre-reading skills. He does enjoy looking at pictures in books. He is able to make marks on paper with crayons or a pencil, but is not demonstrating any writing skills. He continues to make progress with shapes, patterns, games, and independent play.

Karston responds well to caregivers who are patient, set limits, and give praise and rewards. Consistent routines and schedules are important. A family who is familiar with sign language or willing to learn would be ideal for Karston. Karston's forever family also needs to understand that he will need lifelong assistance and care. A family open to contact and visits with his maternal grandmother would be a plus.

Troy (age 14), Lela (age 12), and Caitlin (age 13)



Troy is polite, funny, charming, and often goofy. He likes to be complimented and to be the center of attention. Troy describes himself as athletic, adventurous, and outgoing. He is protective of his younger sisters. He loves to swim and play football and basketball. He loves trying new things. "The Longest Yard" is his favorite movie. His favorite subject in school is math; he'd like to be a professional football player when he grows up.

Lela (she goes by "MacKenzie") is more quiet than her siblings, but not shy. Polite and even-tempered, she describes herself as pretty, kind, and athletic. She gets along well with others. MacKenzie enjoys cheerleading, volleyball, and swimming. Her favorite movie is "Alvin and the Chipmunks." Like her brother and sister, her favorite subject in school is math. She would like to be a lawyer when she grows up.

Well-mannered and happy, Caitlin likes to be treated with respect and spoken to calmly. She likes to stand out as an individual, but to be a part of the group at the same time. She gets along well with her peers. Pretty and determined, Caitlin loves cheerleading, volleyball, and swimming. Her favorite subject in school is math; she'd like to be a social worker or hairstylist when she grows up.

Troy, MacKenzie, and Caitlin understand and are prepared for their plan of adoption. They will benefit from a family that supports their participation in the activities they enjoy. Troy would like a family that communicates without yelling. They have recently resumed contact with their birth mother, so they would like a forever family that supports ongoing phone contact with her to the extent possible.



LaDuffy (age 6)

LaDuffy is a very active and playful child. He is affectionate and expressive. Though he struggles with verbal communication, he tends to understand instruction very well. LaDuffy has a great smile and is a sweet boy.

This young man enjoys time outside, kicking balls, and running. However, close supervision is extremely important at all times—LaDuffy will take off from his caregivers very quickly when outside.

LaDuffy has a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum – Severe. He will start the new school year on regular schedule; this may be adapted to a modified schedule if needed. At school LaDuffy has an Individualized Education Plan which addresses some areas he needs to make progress in. Items on his IEP include: match common objects to pictures and identify or label colors, numbers, or letters. He is beginning to use toys functionally, but he still needs adult support to do this.

LaDuffy will benefit from a stable, structured home environment. He will need unconditional love and support throughout his life. LaDuffy responds well to firm direction, such as being told "no" when he gets too excited. LaDuffy would benefit from having other children in the home. He needs a strong male for one-on-one support and guidance.



Rahshie (age 14)

An active young man, Rahshie is outgoing, energetic, smart, and sometimes outspoken. He enjoys playing basketball and video games, going to movies, and reading comic books. His favorite types of music are pop and rap. His favorite foods are hot dogs and fried chicken.

Rahshie enjoys school, where his favorite subjects are science and math. He wants to go to college. When he grows up he'd like to be an entrepreneur and own his own business selling shoes and clothing. He has started to study entrepreneurship to prepare himself, including reading a book about the topic.

Rahshie does best in a home where he is the only child. He thrives on love, nurturing, and stability. He needs a family where there are rules and consequences, structure, and positive reinforcement. Also, Rahshie needs a strong male figure who can display the actions needed to become a successful man. His forever family should be open to continuing contact with his siblings.

Writing Contest

First Prize: \$100 • Second Prize: \$50 • Third Prize: \$25

If you are under 18 and are or have been in foster care, please send us a letter or short essay in response to the following question:



They say that having at least one adult that you feel close to, trust, and can really depend on can make a big difference when you are in foster care.

If you have a person like that in your life, tell us a little bit about them and why they're special to you.

DEADLINE: August 5, 2014

E-mail submissions to jdmcmaho@unc.edu or mail them to: Fostering Perspectives, Family & Children's Resource Program, CB#3550, UNC-CH School of Social Work, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3550. Include your name, age, address, social security number (used to process awards only, confidentiality will be protected) and phone number. In addition to receiving the awards specified above, winners will have their work published in the next issue. Runners-up may also have their work published, for which they will also receive a cash award.

Seeking Artwork and Other Writing Submissions

Submissions can be on any theme. There is no deadline for non-contest submissions: submit your work at any time. If sent via U.S. Mail, artwork should be sent flat (unfolded) on white, unlined paper.

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Get in-service training credit for reading this newsletter!

Enjoy reading *Fostering Perspectives* and earn credit toward your relicensure. Just write down the answers to the questions below and present them to your licensing social worker. If your answers are satisfactory, you'll receive 30 minutes of training credit. If you have questions about this method of gaining in-service training credit, ask your worker.

In-Service Quiz, FP v18n2

1. This issue defines a lot of important terms. Define these two: (a) delinquent act and (b) crossover youth.
2. Name four things that reduce the likelihood of delinquent behavior.
3. Describe what happens in a typical brain during adolescence and what this means for how we should parent teens.
4. This issue encourages foster parents to attend court if a young person in their care is charged with a crime. Why?
5. If a young person is charged with a detainable offense in North Carolina, what is the longest amount of time they can be held in secure custody without a hearing before a judge?
6. What are the hallmarks of a good juvenile defender?
7. What challenges did Michelle Douglas face when she was involved with the juvenile justice system? What gave her hope?
8. What is "Raise the Age" and why does NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association think it is important?
9. Name four things that Pergamit and Ernst learned from interviewing 50 youth who ran away from foster care.
10. What are the differences between custody, guardianship, and adoption?

The North Carolina Child Treatment Program

Effective Mental Health Treatment for Children and Families

Established in 2006, the North Carolina Child Treatment Program serves children, adolescents, and families coping with serious psychological

trauma or loss. Its faculty has trained a network of community-based mental health clinicians to provide effective, evidence-based treatments.

One such treatment, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), is designed to:

- Reduce negative emotions and behaviors, especially those related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and sexual reactivity
- Correct unhelpful thoughts that make healing difficult
- Provide caregivers with the support and skills they need to help their children move past trauma and loss.

For more information, go to www.ncchildtreatmentprogram.org or call 919-419-3474, extension 300.

To find a therapist in your area, go to www.ncchildtreatmentprogram.org

