

# Fostering Communications

*Building a Network of People in the Foster Care System*

January 2014

## Upcoming Conference Information...

ND Family Based  
Service Conference  
March 25-28, 2014  
Fargo, ND

Children's Justice  
Symposium  
July 21-24, 2014  
Bismarck, ND

ND Foster & Adoptive  
Family Conference  
October 3-4, 2014  
Fargo, ND



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## PRIDE Link

The PRIDE Model we follow highlights the competency of “*Supporting children's relationships between children and their birth families*”. The following video from Epic Ohana, Inc. helps remind us that siblings in foster care are likely to have more behavioral challenges along with placement disruptions, if they are separated. “In the United States, approximately 70% of children in foster care have at least one sibling in care. More than half of those children are separated from one another”. This video helps reinforce that efforts need to be made to keep all siblings connected.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9uoqOWHosg>

## Independent Living

Even though it is only January, if you have a teenager that will be graduating this spring they likely feel like they are ready for adulthood. As an adult you know that they will need some assistance as they make their transition to independence successful. Thankfully the ND Chaffee Foster Care Independent Living Program offers:

- \* Strength-based, youth driven, and individualized programming and plans
- \* Direct financial assistance with living expenses
- \* Financial assistance for post-secondary education (Education and Training Voucher Program)
- \* Child and Family Team involvement
- \* Youth stakeholder groups
- \* Regional and State Youth Advocacy Boards
- \* Annual Foster Youth Conference
- \* One-on-one assistance with
  - \* Finding and maintaining employment and housing
  - \* Accessing necessary resources including physical/mental health services
  - \* Pursuing academic and vocational goals

The following “website was designed by a large group of youth from North Dakota’s Youth Leadership Independent Living Board.” The website offers a Regional Map of North Dakota, tips for youth about what they should know when they turn 18, and contact information about various services available in ND. This would be a great site to any teenage youth in foster care.

<http://www.nd.gov/ndyouth/>

The “FosterClub’s Transition Toolkit” is another free tool for developing a youth-driven transition plan, with a team approach. This resource does a nice job of helping explain how without having a “road map” in place the youth’s “transition journey could be in trouble”. This toolkit covers money management, employment, life skills, identity, permanency, education, self-care/health, housing, transportation, and community/culture/social life. These topics are shared with an explanation along with a workbook page.

[http://www.fosterclub.com/files/transition\\_toolkit\\_v3.pdf](http://www.fosterclub.com/files/transition_toolkit_v3.pdf)

*Fostering Communications is published by the UND Children and Family Services Training Center under the sponsorship of the Division of Children and Family Services, North Dakota Department of Human Services. It is intended for all foster parents, foster care providers, and child welfare agencies.*

*Comments should be directed to the Training Center.*

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ONE....



One tree can start a forest;  
One smile can begin a  
friendship;  
One hand can lift a soul;  
One word can frame a  
goal;  
One candle can wipe out  
darkness;  
One laugh can conquer  
gloom;  
One hope can raise your  
spirits;  
One touch can show you  
care;  
One life can make the  
difference;  
**Be that ONE today!!**

~Author unknown



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## Survey

The CFSTC would appreciate you taking just a few moments to complete the survey listed below on **Foster and Adoptive Parent Retention**. The survey results will be utilized for ongoing retention efforts across the state. Your input is very valuable in assessing how well we respond to your needs as foster parents in ND. Thank you for participating in this important survey. Please complete this short survey by February 14th. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Retention2014>

The March issue of Fostering Communications Newsletter will have the final survey in this series of surveys asking for your input on what you would like to have available for your Regional Foster Parent Trainings. These are the trainings you can register off our Training Calendar on the CFTSC website, as noted below:

<http://und.edu/centers/children-and-family-services-trainng-center/calender.php>

## Trauma-Informed

It is important to recognize that children may be traumatized by a number of differing life events, which can vary from witnessing a violent offense to just being removed from their parents care. It is the responsibly of a child's team, including their foster parents to foster care case managers to understand these risks as potential traumatic experiences and do what is possible to help these children placed into our care. The following article by Kim Brown offers some helpful Trauma-Informed responses.

<http://www.focusonyouth.com/pdfs/Trauma-Informed%20Responsive%20Parenting.pdf>

Trauma can leave some children feeling like they will never be safe again. At times, it is hard to establish an environment where a child can feel safe as we aren't always aware of what triggers their past negative feelings. The following article by Laura Phipps, offers three basic suggestions as to how we can help children feel psychologically safe and in turn, these actions will allow them to feel safe. While children are learning to let their guard down, they become vulnerable, which may lead to negative, problematic behaviors. It is important to remind yourself that these behaviors aren't about you, it is a response to the child's past life experiences. It can be hard to know how to best respond to these behaviors. This article also offers three general strategies for responding to a child's problematic behaviors and how we can in turn make them teachable moments.

<http://www.fosteringperspectives.org/fpv18n1/Phipps.htm>



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## North Dakota Foster & Adoptive Association News...



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## A Place to Fit

**By: Jim Hooge, President of the ND Foster and Adoptive Association**

Open the lid on the box. Inside there is a foam insert that has been cut and shaped to hold and protect an object. Though the box is otherwise empty, you can see turns and curves and corners in the foam that tell you what the object looks like. You can imagine what valuable thing is stored in this. It may be a goblet, an ornament, an heirloom, or something else, but you know that it needs protection. Looking inside the lid, you see the top part of the cushion, also shaped. You look around on the table, on a shelf, in a cabinet or somewhere near for the prize itself to confirm your guess. Though you can see the basic shape in the mold, there is far more in color and texture and other subtleties that you understand when you see the whole thing.

This particular metaphor came to mind as we considered the needs and goals of a young man we recently parented. For all of his resistance and struggles with authority, it still seemed that he was desperately looking for that place where he 'fit'. I thought of this picture mostly when I checked on him asleep in his bed. (Doesn't that often seem the best time for us to imagine and hope for the best for our kids?) This young man didn't need to be in that cocoon, that safe place, all the time, but it seemed that he very much needed to know that it existed. We as the parents worked mostly to be consistent, clear, comforting and understandable for him, but we could not replace everything that he was missing.

I think about this picture in visiting with my neighbors and other people from my community; the teachers, the office staff, the janitors at the school, the parents of the other children who are in the classes my children attend, the clerks at the stores we frequent, the families and individuals who are a part of the church we attend, our nearby and distant family members. There are many people that come into contact with our kids and have an influence on their lives. There are many turns and curves and corners in the world around our children.

Sometimes my children interact in a harsh or abrasive way with people or with me, and I with them. Not everything in life is smooth. There are a lot of jagged edges to catch your jacket on. We bump and scrape along.

I have met foster families that seem so amazing at providing the cushion and protective surroundings that are needed. It appears that everything goes smoothly and the conflicts have all diminished. My experience is that to survive and manage takes a lot of support and encouragement and insight from others around us. We do not do the work alone. One of the key supports that provides the 'fit' for my family is in talking, with confidentiality of course, with other foster parents. We have experienced the value and insight of others who have been through similar situations. Sometimes there is advice and good ideas to try. Most often is it helpful to realize that others know that the work, the adventure, is difficult.

Many years ago I started consciously rephrasing a lot of the things in my life. Instead of saying to myself and my children 'we have to...', I changed the statement to 'we **get** to...'. Such a small difference has really helped me to look at a lot of things in life as far more than simply a challenge to me. The things we go through are really an adventure. Where is this amazing place where we fit?

Do Well