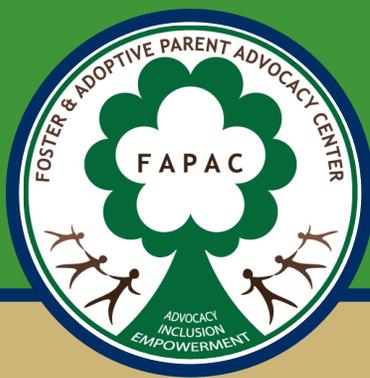


Advocacy News



202-269-9441 office . 202-269-9451 fax . 6200 Second Street, 3rd Floor, NW 20011

Healing Children by Empowering Families  WWW.DCFAPAC.ORG

Empowered Foster Parents Can:

- Access critical services
- Advocate with schools and service providers
- Participate as full team members
- Identify and utilize support networks
- Increase chances for stability and permanency for the children in their homes

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FAPAC News

Support for Kinship Parents!

FAPAC will once again partner with the Post Permanency Family Center (PPFC) to host our popular eight-week FREE support group known as Clinical Rap (CRG). This CRG is for kinship caregivers. We welcome all kinship foster parents, kinship guardians, kinship adoptive parents, and grandparents in the Grandparent Subsidy Program. Dinner and FREE childcare will be provided. This CRG will meet every Wednesday from July 10th-August 28th, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. For information or to register, please call 202-269-9441 and talk to Toni or Marilyn.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

Kudos, Applause & Acknowledgement

FAPAC Gives Thumbs Up!

Thumbs up to CFSA'S Child Welfare Training Academy (CWTA) for starting to develop resource parent **Individual (Training) Development Plans for CFSA parents**. The IDP's will help foster parents to identify and access quality training that meets the specific needs of each family and child. The model for these plans is also being shared with the private agencies. We acknowledge Karen Fenton-LeShore and Joi Reece for this positive improvement!

Thumbs up to CFSA for providing a room for foster parents. Named for the Honorable Eugene N. Hamilton, the Family Resource Center is located in (CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)



Table of Contents

FAPAC NEWS (PG 1 & 4) • KUDOS (PG 1 & 4) • ATTORNEY COLUMN (PG 2) • HOT ISSUES (PG 3)

Attorney Column

By Harvey Schweitzer, Attorney at Law

DC Family Court

The DC Superior Court Family Court Operations Division hears the following types of cases: child abuse and neglect, juvenile delinquency, domestic relations, guardianship, domestic violence, paternity and support, mental health and habilitation, and adoptions. To the greatest extent practicable, feasible, and lawful, cases involving members of the same family are heard by one judge in order to minimize court appearances, reduce the risk of conflicting court orders, and ensure quality decisions based on a full knowledge of the issues affecting the family.

The Family Court has jurisdiction to adjudicate (judge) allegations of child abuse and neglect, including the authority to alter the custodial arrangements of a child, terminate parental rights and take other actions to protect a child's well-being. When it is alleged that a child has been abused or neglected, CFSA must appear in front of a judge within 72 hours of removing a child from his/her parents. An attorney will represent the parent(s) or other adults involved and the court appoints a guardian ad litem (GAL) to represent the child.

The child(ren) in your home will have periodic court hearings while they are in foster care, including a trial to decide if the child has been abused or neglected and hearings to ensure that the child is being treated properly. For example, the judge will want to ensure that the child is receiving proper medical care, visiting with his/her family, and going to school. The judge will also decide whether the child can go home to his/her parents, stay in foster care, live with relatives, or go to an adoptive home. Only a Family Court judge can decide to keep a child in foster care.

The DC Family Court is located in the East Wing on the John Marshall (JM) Level at the Moultrie Courthouse at 500 Indiana Ave, NW and operates Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

The Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

A GAL is an attorney who is focused exclusively on the child's well-being and safety and advocates what the GAL concludes is in the child's "best interest." A GAL advocates for a child from the day he/she is removed from his/her parents' home until he/she is safely reunited with his/her birth parents, living permanently with relatives, or adopted by a family. The GAL's job is to ensure that the child's specific, individual needs are recognized and addressed. GAL's advocate for a child in and out of court – with judges, social workers, schools, and medical professionals.

Why might a child need another attorney to represent them when he/she already has a GAL?

A child client may want an attorney to represent his/her interests if they desire an outcome that the GAL does not believe is in the child's best interest. For example, if a child client insists he/she wants to be reunified with their birth parents but the GAL has concluded that it is in the best interest of the child not to return home, the GAL would be obligated to have an attorney appointed to represent the child so that the child's preference will be presented to the judge. Foster parents should be aware that this is an option in case it is relevant to the needs of a child in their home.



Hot Issues

Issue: Allowances, especially for older youth, have been a hot topic among foster parents for years. Agencies vary on their practices; some mandate that foster parents give large allowances with no criteria for earning them and others have no rules at all. Foster parents often feel that the mandate to give large allowances without any requirements stands in the way of appropriate parenting. However, CFSA has also heard from youth that the great variance from home to home and agency to agency is very frustrating, and can act as an incentive to prefer group care.

What we are doing about it: FAPAC facilitated a conversation between foster parents and CFSA administra-

tion about allowances. We followed up by collecting and presenting input from parents on a CFSA draft allowance policy, including an on-line survey that assesses the current allowance practices of foster parents.

Moving towards success! CFSA is in the process of developing a new policy that will help to create consistency between homes and agencies, while still allowing for foster parent autonomy. Additionally, CFSA is working to develop a financial literacy program for older youth that will include opening bank accounts, budgeting and saving. Stay tuned for the roll out of this policy and new programs in the very near future.

Urban Myth Busting!

Child welfare systems have a lot of "Urban Myths"—that is, deeply held "truths" that are found to be inaccurate. We have added a new feature to our newsletter called **Urban Myth Busting!** We hope this new feature will help clarify some common misconceptions.

OUR FIRST MYTH:

Children in foster care are not allowed to go on sleepovers with friends without their social workers' approval.

THE TRUTH:

In 2006, CFSA implemented an administrative issuance (CFSA-06-3) entitled, Overnight Stays. This policy allows resource parents to approve overnight slumber parties for children in their care as long as the overnight location is within 100 miles of the District of Columbia and the overnight time frame is less than 2 nights. The resource parent has authority to approve such overnights in situations that s/he assesses to be safe and appropriate. The resource parent must still notify the child's social worker of the child's location whenever the child in care spends a night away from the foster home. If the resource parent does not reach the social worker, s/he may leave a voice mail detailing the child's location. A policy tip sheet is also included in this mailing.

(Please note that private agencies sometimes have their own policies that are stricter than those at CFSA. We rec-

ommend that you show this policy to your agency to check and see if it applies to the resource parents in your agency. Please also note that the term "resource parent" in this issuance and other documents refers to all licensed foster, kinship and pre-adoptive parents.)



FAPAC News! (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Shared Parenting

Foster parents who have been around for a while most likely remember when it was seriously discouraged or prohibited for foster and birth parents to have a relationship. In DC and nationally, practice has changed significantly. Many jurisdictions are now working proactively to cultivate relationships between foster and birth parents that result in shared parenting of children in care. FAPAC believes that shared parenting is a valuable goal which must be tailored to meet the unique needs of each child and family, and implemented with clear guidelines, training, and support.

On a very positive note, in a recent FAPAC survey of foster parents, over 75% of those who responded reported having (presently or in the past) some positive relationships with birth parents of the children in their homes. FAPAC is continuing to partner with CFSA to make shared

parenting a reality in DC. For example, by facilitating “icebreaker” meetings between foster and birth parents on a limited basis, we hope to identify concrete forms of support that will encourage a shift towards embracing the spirit and practice of shared parenting.

Training for Newly Licensed Foster and Kinship Parents

In May, FAPAC hosted our first training specifically for newly licensed parents as a way to bridge the gap between pre-service and in-service training. Topics included the placement process, accessing support and services, navigating your agency and working as a team partner, introduction to DC Family Court, and building relationships with birth parents. We look forward to offering this training quarterly. Please check our website www.dcfapac.org for future dates for this valuable training opportunity.

Kudos, Applause & Acknowledgement

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

room 1206 off the lobby in the new CFSA headquarters at 200 I Street SE. We acknowledge Brenda Donald, Debra Porchia-Usher, Ray Davidson and the Foster Parent Support Unit for spearheading this wonderful effort to provide a welcoming space for our families. Please see the enclosed flyer for more information.



Save the Date

FAPAC's 5th Valentine's Day Celebration! Friday Evening, Feb 14, 2014 at the Holiday Inn Georgetown.

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