

Wright County Human Services Child Foster Care

February 2014

Wright County Human Services, 1004 Commercial Dr, Buffalo, MN 55313 - 763-682-7400
<http://www.co.wright.mn.us/department/humanservices/childfoster.asp>

STAFF

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Supervisor
763-684-2331

Marisa Ferguson,
Non-Relative Licensor
763-682-7484

Kris Carlson,
Relative Licensor
763-684-2311

Lisa Gertken,
Licensing Investigator
763-682-8934

Tammy Romer,
Office Technician
763-682-7488

Update on staff changes

With many recent staff changes it is important that foster parents know who they are working with. Jill Marzean is now the Supervisor of the Licensing and Resource Unit which includes both Kris Carlson (relative licensor) and Marisa Ferguson (non-relative licensor). Wright County Human Services has also undergone a restructuring of several social service units, including the Child Protection and Family Assessment Units. We welcomed a new director in early 2014, Jamie Schwartz. Please note the attached Human Services Office Phone Numbers for those changes. We look forward to working with and continuing to support foster parents!

New Training Curriculum

We are excited to announce the Resource Family Training Curriculum for 2014.

The new training opportunities are focused on a higher level of education for providers in order to meet the needs of children in care. Attached is a brief description of the new trainings.

“Fostering is the hardest job you’ll ever love.”

~ Unknown

Social Services Expectations for Child Foster Care Placement Communication

In order to ensure positive experiences for children in foster care, Wright County Human Services has developed new expectations to support for foster families. The goal is to improve communication between social workers, foster parents and the agency in order to best meet the needs of the children. The trainings that were held on 1/23/14 for foster parents, reviewed these expectations at length. Please note that all handouts are located at the end of this newsletter as well as on the Child Foster Care website

<http://www.co.wright.mn.us/departments/humanservices/cfcprovidercorner.asp>

At the time of initial placement, foster parents will be receiving the Child Foster Care Placement Information Form. This document will provide you with as much information about the child as the social worker is aware of at the time of placement. This document will be completed by you and the social worker as more information is gathered. We encourage you to discuss with the social worker the means of communication that will allow you to most effectively care for the child. Options may include phone calls, email or text message.

If you are experiencing difficulty in reaching the social worker for you placement, please utilize the Contact Tree and Agency Phone List. The contact tree gives directions on how to most effectively receive an answer to your question or concern. Please note that when calling any worker at Wright County Human Services, you may press zero to reach their Office Support Technician. If that person is not available, please press zero again to reach the front desk. The front desk has the ability to locate the back-up worker for each unit.

“All effective and engaging learning experiences provide frequent and meaningful feedback. Without feedback on whether or not one is getting closer to a goal, progress is unlikely.” ~ Unknown

The communication expectations have been approved by and are supported by Michelle Miller, Social Services Program Manager. Wright County Human Services social workers have also been trained and understand that these are the new expectations.

You are going to be asked to provide feed back on the new expectations through the Evaluation of Agency by Foster Home form. **Please complete this form for each child/sibling group that you currently have in placement and return it by 2/7/14.** These forms will be mailed to you every three months in order to track how communication is improving and how it can be further improved in order to enhanced services for foster children.

“Communication is the real work of leadership”.

~ Nitin Nohria

**SOCIAL SERVICES EXPECTATIONS
for
CHILD FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT COMMUNICATION**

In order to ensure positive experiences for children in foster care, the following expectations will be followed regarding placement support for foster families.

Expectations of Social Workers

At Time of Initial Placement:

- Provide all pertinent information regarding children needing placement to foster care provider. Complete the *Child Foster Care Placement Information Form* and provide this to the foster parents. The social worker will provide the foster parent with any additional information the agency obtains after placement has been made as it becomes available.
- Discuss with foster parents what style of communication will work best for on-going communication (email, phone calls, etc). This discussion may continue throughout the placement.

Placement Expectations of Social Worker:

- Contact the foster parent **within 2 business days following the placement** to discuss the well-being of the children in placement, provide support, and answer any questions of the provider.
- The social worker (placing or on-going) will visit the foster home in person **within the first month after placement**.
- All phone calls and emails from foster parents must be returned **within 1 business day** unless the staff is out of the office or dealing with an emergency situation. If this is not possible, the social worker will request the supervisor or backup worker in the unit return the phone call or email.
- Foster parents will be included in the discussion and provide feedback regarding the child's Out of Home Placement Plan. **There will be mutual agreement between the agency and foster parents regarding the foster parent responsibilities.** The Out of Home Placement Plan will be completed and a copy given to the foster parents.
- Foster parents will be consulted when there is a change in services, particularly in reference to the responsibilities of foster parents. The foster family's schedule will be taken into consideration throughout this planning process.
- The social worker will visit the foster child in the foster home at least **1 time each month**. During these visits, the social worker will meet alone with the child(ren) to discuss any questions or concerns they may be having in a private setting. The social worker will also meet with the foster parents to discuss any case updates or details. In addition to the monthly visit in the foster home, social workers may continue to have visits with children in other community settings as needed.
- Contact foster family **2 times each month (minimum)** regarding the adjustment and well-being of the child in foster care.

**SOCIAL SERVICES EXPECTATIONS
for
CHILD FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT COMMUNICATION
CONTINUED**

- Foster parents may be included in the initial and ongoing determination of a child's Difficulty of Care Points. Foster parents will be given written notice of the determination and of their right to appeal.
- Establish services in a timely manner in order to maintain stabilization of the placement.
- Maintain frequent contact with therapists and all supportive services for the children in care.
- Address any concerns regarding the foster parents' actions directly with the foster parent at the time the issue occurs in order to provide immediate feedback in the context of the situation. Should this area of concern continue after it has been addressed by the social worker, the social worker should discuss the concern with licensing staff. The licensing staff will assist in determining if a licensing complaint should be made. Staff will utilize the Intake and Resource Supervisor for consultation whenever needed. Licensing staff should be informed of any safety concerns immediately.
- Utilize the *Clarification of Roles* document to effectively work with the families we serve. This document clarifies responsibilities of staff within the agency.

Expectations of Foster Parents

- Assess potential placement requests and decide if the placement is a good fit for your family as well as other child(ren) in placement.
- Contact social worker directly to request additional support when needed. This may include more frequent home visits for added support and consultation.
- Utilize the *Contact Tree* should you have difficulty reaching a specific social worker.
- Provide feedback regarding each child's Out of Home Placement Plan. Ensure you are maintaining the foster parent's responsibilities noted in the Out of Home Placement Plan or that have been agreed upon by a child's team.
- During social worker visits at your home, allow the social worker time to meet alone with children.
- Complete the *Evaluation of Agency by Foster Home* form provided at the end of each placement and at the time of re-licensure.
- During placements, the agency encourages foster parents to provide feedback and to communicate their needs and concerns to the social worker, or the supervisor and administration as needed.

Expectations of the Agency

The agency is committed to providing quality care to children receiving foster care services. Financially, this includes timely processing of medical assistance for health care needs and provider payments. The commitment also encompasses a supportive and teamwork approach to meeting the needs of children in our care.

New Department of Human Services Application

Beginning with Providers having their license renewed after March 1, 2014, there is a new state application. You will notice many changes on the application form. Please take some time to read through the application closely. You will note that the application requires your notarized signature. You will only be required to have one application notarized. For example, if you are re-licensed in 2014, when you are re-licensed again in 2016, a notary will not be required. All of our licensors are notaries, and will notarize your application at the time of your re-licensing visit. Please **DO NOT** sign your application until you are in front of a notary. You will be required to show proof of identification. The new application also requires providers to complete a workers compensation insurance verification form.

Please contact your licensor if you any questions when you receive your new application.

Tax Time

In general the majority of child foster care payments are considered reimbursement for services provided and therefore not seen as taxable income.

However, respite care is considered income and needs to be reported at tax time. If you received payment from Wright County for providing respite care and the amount exceeds \$650.00 in a calendar year, you will receive a 1099. If you provide respite care for a child in another foster home, you will generally receive payment from the primary provider, the agency will not be involved. Please discuss these payments with your tax professional.

Please consult your tax professional for more specific information.
Wright County Human services cannot provide tax law advice or interpretation.

<http://www.irs.gov>

<http://taxes.state.mn.us/Pages/index.aspx>

New County Website

Watch out for a new web design for Wright County Human Services! A web designing company is going to revamp the website and make it more user friendly. All the documents that were handed out at the Mandatory Communication Training on January 23rd will be available under the Provider Corner, Communication.

Mental Health Training Requirement

Remember you need 1 hour of mental health training a year. The list of courses that meet the requirements in Minnesota Statutes, section 245A.175 - Children's Mental Health Training for child foster care providers has been updated and can be accessed on the DHS website on the Children's Mental Health Division page:

http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs16_164899.pdf

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SUID) and Abusive Head Trauma (AHT)

At the conclusion of the last legislative session, the terms Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) was changed to Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SUID) and Shaken Baby Syndrome was changed to Abusive Head Trauma (AHT). According to MN Statute 245A.144 licensed child foster care providers must have these trainings before caring for infants or children through five years of age. The training must be at least one hour in length and must be completed at least once every five years.

SUID requirements, including crib sheets:

In February 2012, providers were notified that blankets were no longer allowed in a crib with the infant in your care. Crib sheets are required for all cribs in use, including portable cribs and pack and plays. As this requirement is in the SUID statute (245A.1435) language for infant sleep space, Wright County Human Services is required to recommend a fine if a provider is not using a crib sheet, or is using an inappropriate crib sheet for an infant sleep space. Please ensure that you are using crib sheets on all cribs in use!

“Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

~ Mahatma Gandhi

Clarification of Roles

Licensing and Case Management Social Workers

Licensors

- Monitor compliance of licensing requirements and complete annual evaluations. Provide general support to foster parents.
- Develop an understanding of each foster homes' family dynamics and skills
- Provide training opportunities/resources regarding general topics pertaining to foster care
- Maintain general information regarding the child(ren) in each foster home for matching purposes.
- Initiate calls to foster families about availability for placements
- Explaining the DOC payment process
- Provide foster parents with opportunity to evaluate agency practices both verbally and in writing
- Review state liability insurance coverage
- Recruit new foster homes

Both

- Consult regarding placement requests (emergency, respite, interim placements, etc)
- Support relative and non-relative placements by providing attentive communication.
- Engage the foster family in on-going discussion and evaluation of their roles and responsibilities
- Guide foster parents in preparing for a child to leave their home
- If a foster parent requests a child(ren) to be moved, collaborate to determine if additional supports or services can be implemented to maintain the placement
- Unless there is an issue with health and safety, remove the child within 45 days of the request
- Evaluate placements as a team with foster families (on-going and at the end of placements)

Case Manager

- Complete the Placement Information form and provide to foster family
- Coordinate placement or respite plan logistics
- Assist foster parent s in addressing child's specific needs in their home (mental health, behavioral, medical, etc.). Also coordinate appropriate services for the child(ren).
- Actively involve foster parents in the Out of Home Placement Plan development
- Discuss on-going case plan decisions with foster parent
- Complete monthly visits with the child(ren) in the foster home
- Coordinate visitation plans
- Provide notification of court hearings to all involved participants
- Discuss DOC rates with foster care providers. Provide notification of their ability to appeal DOC determinations.

Contact Tree

If you are attempting to reach a child's social worker, here are some quick tips to help you obtain the information you need.

Non-Emergency Situations

In non-emergency scenarios where you can wait a day or two for a return call, please leave a voicemail or an email message for the social worker.

Need a Response ASAP

If you need a response before the end of the day and you have not received a return call from the social worker, you should take the following steps.

- Call the social worker's phone and press zero when their voicemail message begins. This will route your call to the Office Support Specialist (OSS) for their unit. The OSS will be able to connect you with the back up social worker for the unit. The back up social worker will be able to answer most case related questions.

Emergency Situations

- In emergency situations, please take appropriate action to keep the foster child safe (call law enforcement, go to the hospital, etc).
- Call the social worker's phone and press zero when their voicemail message begins. This will route your call to the Office Support Specialist (OSS) for their unit. The OSS will be able to connect you with the back up social worker for the unit. The back up social worker will assist you in handling the emergency.

After Hours Communication

- For non-emergency situations or questions that could wait until the next business day, please leave a voicemail or an email for the social worker and wait for a response.
- For emergency situations or scenarios where you need a response before the next business day, please call the WCHSA after hours line at 763-682-7400. You will hear a series of prompts and directions. Eventually, you will be connected with the sheriff's office. Explain that you are a foster parent and need to be connected to the on-call social worker. The on-call social worker will be able to assist you.
- Follow up with a call to the social worker to explain the situation and to provide any needed updates.

If Not Receiving Return Calls Consistently

- Please contact the social worker's supervisor to share your concerns and request assistance with improving communication.
- If you do not receive a response from the supervisor within 3 business days, please contact the Wright County Human Services (WCHS) Program Manager, Michelle Miller, or WCHS Director, Jami Schwartz.

Human Services Office Phone Numbers

Human Services Front Desk 763-682-7400 OR 1-800-362-3667 Ext 7400

ADMINISTRATION

DIRECTOR: Schwartz, Jami 682-7411
Gunnerson, Aggie 682-7408

SOCIAL SVC MANAGER

Miller, Michelle 682-7480

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Nelson, Jessica 682-7401
Thompson, Vicki (OSS) 682-7447

CP Investigation

Droneck, Jennifer 682-7421

Hagemann, Dana 682-7448

Staehnke, Molly 684-4518

Family Assessment

Baltich, Grace 684-2314

Bemboom, Julie 684-4525

Brown, Katie 682-7451

Meyer, Natasha 684-8421

Truancy

Clouthier, Kristi 682-8925

Dorf, Robin (CA) 684-2339

Meyer, Natasha 684-8421

Minor Parent

Chiglo, Tamara 682-7497

PSOP

Tesmer, Ali, PSOP 763-412-9044

FAMILY SERVICES

Charbonneau, Marianne 682-7395

Tobin, Linda (OSS) 682-7898

Child Protection Ongoing

Hartman, Kari 682-7455

Jakes, Samantha 684-8434

Reynolds, Stacie 682-7471

Szarke-Peura, Julie 684-8431

Adoption

Kirkpatrick, Brandi 684-2318

Rositas, Lynnne 682-7443

Skills

Hartneck, Ryan 682-7498

Stach, Jenelle 682-7957

Therapists

Hoglund, Nichola 682-7444

Rehwaldt, Erik 682-8924

Treichler, Christine 684-2323

Kinship

Cohn, Kim 684-4521

Child Welfare

Wimmer, Jane 682-7918

Supervised Visitation

Larsen, Tina (CA) 682-7508

Licensing & Resource

Marzean, Jill 684-2331

Romer, Tamara (OSS) 682-7488

Licensing

Black, Nesa 682-7489

Carlson, Kris 684-2311

Gertken, Lisa 682-8934

Ferguson, Marisa 682-7484

Family Group Decision Making

Beard, Michelle 682-7446

MENTAL HEALTH

Erkens, Diane 682-7402

Trebesch, Mona (OSS) 682-7452

Achman, Lori 684-2337

Hans, Charity 682-7503

Hayen, Molly 682-8930

Johnson, Julie 682-7649

Kraus-Kathy 682-7502

Nelson, Deb 682-7483

Olson, Joan 682-7897

VanBeusekom, Jill 682-7503

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Swanson, Debbra 682-7900

Block, Margo (OSS) 682-7470

Davis, Julie 682-8928

Eittreim, Julie 682-7473

Heshiser, Rhonda 684-2322

Holverson, Bob 682-7478

Meyer, Nichole 682-7472

Ovall, Sherry 684-8927

Ristinen, Amy 684-4520

Topeff, Jessalin 682-8926

Vollbrecht, Brandy (CA) 682-7941

Wilson, Amanda 682-7477

INTAKE/ASSESSMENT

Kramer, Richelle 682-7445

Davis, Laurie (CA) 682-7914

Intake

Porras, Michelle 682-7481

Baker, Erin 682-7449

Mental Health Professional

Peterson, Tammy 684-2321

FISCAL/TECHNOLOGY

McNamara, Jane 682-7519

FAK Training Schedule 2014

January 9th

[Introduction to Mental Health for Resource Families](#)

February 6th

[Understanding and Building Attachment](#)

(Part 1)

March 13th

[Understanding and Building Attachment](#)

(Part 2)

April 1st

[Diffusing Crisis Situations Safely and Sanely](#)

(Part 1)

April 22nd

[Diffusing Crisis Situations Safely and Sanely](#)

(Part 2)

May 8th

[The Significance of Substance Abuse on Families](#)

June 12th

[Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence](#)

August 7th

[Sexual Abuse](#)

September 11th

[Effects of Caring on the Family](#)

October 9th

[Permanency Issues for Families](#)

November 20th

[Working with Adolescents](#)

(Part 1)

December 4th

[Working with Adolescents](#)

(Part 2)

Information on upcoming trainings can be found on line at www.co.wright.mn.us
Licenses and Certificates
Child Foster Care

Please RSVP for FAK Trainings to:

Marisa Ferguson

763-682-7484

or marisa.ferguson@co.wright.mn.us

FAK Trainings are held at the Buffalo
Government Center
from 6:00 pm ~ 9:00 pm

Message From The Social Services Manager

Today I was doing a web search of foster care and foster parents and came across an article noting all the Foster Parent Responsibilities. Needless to say there were many! Some of them were the expected parental-type duties: provide nourishing meals, attendance at school, listen non-judgmentally to the child's feelings, etc. But then there were all the items that are above and beyond the typical parental tasks: never speak negatively about the child's family, implement behavior management plans from therapists, communicate to all team members, notify the agency/team of any vacation or holiday plans, meet all training requirements, etc. As you read this, you are likely nodding and thinking that and about 100 other things. Bottom line, we both agree you do an incredible amount of work to provide for a caring, nurturing, positive environment for children who have likely never experienced such a home. What I want to say to all of you is that we can't fully appreciate or understand what it is like to be a foster parent, but what I do know is that what you do is incredibly important to one of the world's most precious commodities; Children.

The family is the foundation of our society. Your role as a foster parent is daily demonstrating to these kiddos how family looks, acts, responds to pain and joy. You are rewriting what they have experienced into what is true. Love, care, kindness, trust, respect, honesty, quality relationships, and the list goes on. Thank you. It's not much, but it is heartfelt and honest.

We've had a rough past few years. That has been obvious. But what I would like to focus on is how we can move forward to a more positive future. A number of meetings, trainings, discussions have taken place, but we have more work to do. You have my assurance that we realize there are improvements to be made and will continue in this vein until we both agree we are "there." One very important piece of this puzzle is communication. Please continue to communicate with us the needs and suggestions for improvement. The only way we'll be successful is if we work as a team. Again, thank you.

Michelle Miller, MSW
Social Services Manager

Ideas, Thoughts, Comments?

Do you have anything you would like to see covered in the next Child Foster Care newsletter?
Do you have any questions for the licensing team?

We are looking for newsletter topics and would appreciate any ideas you have. Please contact Marisa or Kris with ideas, thoughts, or comments.