



Fostering Across Wisconsin

Live Deeper. Love Wider. Leave Bigger.
Become a Foster Parent.

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**** Go to
Pages 3 and 4
for more
resources on
this topic.**

AGING OUT AND ON THEIR OWN

Do you remember being 18, feeling sure of yourself, but then quickly realizing how much you really had to learn? For youth in foster care, there is even more for them to learn and take care of than for other teens preparing to live on their own. This edition of *Fostering Across Wisconsin* provides you with resources and ideas to help youth who are aging out of foster care make the transition a little smoother, with less anxiety, and, hopefully, more successful.

Foster parents and agencies are required to develop transition plans with youth to help prepare them for living on their own when they turn 18 or graduate from high school. Here are some things you can do to help any youth who is transitioning out of foster care to live on his or her own:

- ❖ **Decide what kind of support you can offer.** One of the most important factors for positive youth development is a stable, caring relationship with an adult. Discuss whether he or she can come back to your home. If so, talk about what that will be like and what you expect; think about how you will react to a youth's mistakes, what your limits are, and discuss it with him or her. If you are not able or willing to have the youth come back to your home, work with the youth's case workers and therapist, if he or she has one, to outline what resources are available in the community. Many youth will return to their birth families, so helping them cope with what may have been a dysfunctional family may assist them in the long term.
- ❖ **Work together to identify resources he or she may need and how to access those resources.** Remember that these youth are in the process of learning how to navigate the world around them on their own. Encourage your foster child to discuss his or her transition plan with service providers, medical professionals, academic and community resources, and other important people in his or her life.
- ❖ **Work together to fill in any gaps in his or her life book.** This information is critical to a youth's sense of identity. It helps establish a solid history of where he or she has been. If you are willing, keep copies of important life book information for him or her.
- ❖ **Help gather last-minute household and personal items needed** and connect the youth with resources that can provide any items he or she may have overlooked.
- ❖ **Become an advocate for youth transitioning out of the foster care program.** Help policy and decision makers understand what it is like for youth aging out of the foster care program. For more research and resources about youth aging out of foster care, please visit the Department of Health and Family Services Independent Living web site at: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/children/IndLiving>



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Allegations of Abuse and Neglect . . . Another Look

This article addresses the delicate topic of allegations of child abuse and neglect against foster parents. As we know, it is critical to take a child's allegations seriously and take steps to assure the safety of all children, especially those who have been removed from their families due to child abuse and neglect. What about the occasions, however, when the allegation is less than accurate or not true?

The reasons why children make inaccurate allegations against their foster, adoptive, birth parents or other professionals may not be easy to understand. Simply saying "He is a liar, or she is an attention seeker" fails to recognize what children may be seeking from the important adults in their life. Children may make allegations that are inaccurate for a variety of reasons (see box below). When the important adults in their lives take time to pay attention, ask questions, and seek solutions, large therapeutic gains can be made, and further false allegations can be minimized.

Common "whys"

- Confusion about positive and unconditional attention.
- Believe it is a way to go home or to get moved from a placement.
- Angry with the rules and consequences—seeking revenge.
- In the past this behavior has gotten a lot of attention.
- Symptomatic of a more serious mental health condition- delusions or paranoia.

Regardless of the reasons behind them, allegations against anyone are significant and have potentially lasting consequences. If they are true, the people involved need specific treatment services to address the effects of the abuse or neglect. If the allegation does not have any truth to it, then there are other treatment needs that need to be addressed. We know it is critical for children to receive treatment for abuse and neglect, and children who do not receive help or appropriate interventions regarding allegations may start to use this as a coping mechanism for when life becomes challenging.

Bottom line? Kids need to feel safe and need to find appropriate and healthy ways to express their very important feelings. The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center has information about finding therapists, books, and resource materials and other information to assist with this area at wifostercareandadoption.org or at 1-800-947-8074.

Foster Parent Support Resources in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (WFAPA) works hard to support and advocate for the needs of foster and adoptive families by operating a website with information about the creation of local chapters, publishing a quarterly newsletter, hosting two conferences every year, and working across the state on behalf of issues that are important to foster parents and foster children.

To find out more about WFAPA, visit their website at www.wfapa.org. For more information about other support groups, associations, and resources available in Wisconsin, contact us at 1-800-947-8074. We can provide you with information about the resources closest to you.

****SAVE THE DATE****

WFAPA SPRING CONFERENCE

April 13-15, 2007, Holiday Inn, Manitowoc, WI



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Life Books: What They Can Mean to Youth Aging Out of Care?

Many of us spend time remembering what we did when we were little and what we looked like as kids. Parents and siblings often trade stories of family events and gatherings and laugh over old pictures. Imagine having been in foster care and not having those pieces of yourself to share with your children or loved ones later in life.

Life books help children and youth in foster care connect their past and present. Working with children to record the events from their lives in a life book gives them a sense of who they are, where they came from, and what they have been through. For youth who age out of the foster care program, a life book may be their only connection to past significant life events and faces and names of family members and other significant others they may have lost connection with.

Life Books Often Contain

- ❖ Snapshots of the child, relatives, friends, and pets
- ❖ Pictures of places that were or are meaningful
- ❖ Growth charts
- ❖ School records and achievements
- ❖ Descriptions of likes and dislikes
- ❖ Origin of the child's name
- ❖ Special stories from child's past and current history
- ❖ Family tree
- ❖ Explanations and descriptions of previous placements

At the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center, we have helpful materials to assist with the creation of lifebooks for youth of all ages. Some recommended resources include:

- **Chill & Spill** (therapeutic guided journal/lifebook), Steffaine Lorig & Jeanean Jacobs
- **My Foster Care Journey**, Beth O'Malley, M.ED
- **My Lifebook Journal**, Therese Accinelli
- **"Life Story Book Resource Center"** a website dedicated to helping with the creation of life books at: <http://www.idahowednesdaychild.org/misc.php?id=lscraft>

Tax Time

As tax time is upon us, we want to let you know about the resources out there that can give you assistance regarding tax information. At the Resource Center, we have copies of documents we can send to you, so please feel free to contact us. We also suggest the following links:

Internal Revenue Service
www.irs.gov/taxtopics

North American Council on Adoptable Children
http://www.nacac.org/pub_taxcredit.html

National Foster Parent Association
<http://www.nfpainc.org/ref/taxes.cfm?page=5>



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Focus on 56: Foster Parents and Reporting Abuse and Neglect

While foster parents may not be listed as “mandated reporters” in Wisconsin Statutes, they are required to report child abuse or neglect as a requirement of their foster care license.

Section HFS 56.05(1)(c)5. and 6. require foster parents to immediately notify the supervising agency if they have reasonable cause to believe any of the following:

- That a foster child has been abused or neglected; or
- That a foster child has been threatened with abuse or neglect; and
- That it is likely that a foster child will be abused or neglected

These requirements apply to any foster child with whom a foster parent comes into contact, regardless of where the child is placed. Foster parents don't need to report past abuse that is already known to the agency, such as if the abuse or neglect caused the child to be removed from his or her family. If a foster parent has questions about abuse or neglect that a child discloses and whether or not the agency is aware of the abuse or neglect, the foster parent should talk with their licensing and supervising agencies.

For some foster parents, the supervising and licensing agencies may be different. Talk with your licensing agency if you are unsure of who the contact person is from the supervising agency.

Recommended Resources for Working with Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Money Talks: A Video-Based Curriculum for Teens on DVD: Managing Money

By Lee White, Caesar Pacifici and Mary
Ditson (R8002)

Taking It to the Streets – Daily Living Skills (A Fun, Relational Curriculum for Youth To Actively Experience Their Community)

By Judy Osterhage 2004 (V4734)

Taking It to the Streets – Life Skills

By Judy Osterhage 2004 (V4733)

Out On My Own...Now What Tips & Insights So You're Not Left Hanging in the Real World

By Joe Kathler 2004 (V4739)

I'm Getting Ready....I Can Do It

By Marian Latzko 2001 (V4769)

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