

the link




The measure of success

By Lisa Carmel
Birth Parent/Parent Mentor

Every case is unique. Some parents require just a few encouraging words to get them started on the path. Others need a bit of prodding in the right direction. Then there are those that need assistance in pretty much every area of their life. Here is one such story.

Being a parent mentor, I received this assignment in June 2007. This particular mom was very guarded and mistrusting.

Eventually, I won her trust and she opened up to me. Her past was layered with betrayal, abuse and abandonment. By age 20 she was married with three young children. By 22 she had a cancerous tumor removed from her brain and subtle developmental delays appeared. Alcoholism, physical abuse and domestic violence led to the children's removal from her care.

First, mom obtained a divorce. Together we prioritized the remaining items on her "to do" list. She enrolled in the Perinatal Program and attended The Villa for 12-step meetings. Pursuit of her high school diploma came next, but mom began experiencing recurring symptoms from the cancer. Follow-up medical care became priority. This was the most difficult obstacle to overcome. Her complete distrust of men made my presence at checkups and tests vital in the beginning.

The easier tasks were getting food, clothing, bus routes, and presents for the children. Modeling self-advocacy and resourcing techniques were also important. Pursuing housing assistance by following-up with documentation and meeting deadlines led to discipline and persistence. Taking one task at a time was key. Celebrating each accomplishment was nurturing. Acknowledging mom's progress along the way was imperative.

Although mom completed the case plan, reunified with her three children and her case is about to close, she still battles the medical issues. However, now she is the one that follows through with appointments, paperwork and phone calls. She is a single mom, on her way to becoming financially independent and is determined to care for her children with confidence and love. She knows that help is just a phone call away. Do I consider this a success story? You bet I do.

For where there is healing, there is life. Where there is learning, there is growth. Where there is hope, there is possibility. And where there is caring, there is love. Man, I love this job.

Need Support?

The Foster and Kinship Care liaison assists foster and kinship caregivers by providing support, advice and guidance in resolving issues such as foster care payments, Medi-Cal/CalOPTIMA, birth family visitations, social worker communication, and questions about the foster care system. The liaison knows the policies and practices related to foster care and can provide needed information, resources and referrals. Call (714) 704-TALK (8255).

Adoption Assistance Program Age-Related Increase

The Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) rate may increase when a child turns 5, 9 or 12 year old. The rate increase is not automatic and the adoptive family is required to request each increase. The new rate can begin the month after the child reaches an eligible age but cannot be given retroactively and is given from the date of request. To request an age-related increase for your child, contact your AAP social worker who is assigned to your case according to your last name.

Note: children receiving special care rates due to developmental disability issues may actually receive a decrease in AAP funding at ages 5 and 12 per the Orange County AAP rate schedule.

Jackie Goode (A-K) (714) 704-8024
Sarah Kirk (L-Q) (714) 704-8952
Kristen Stits (R-Z) (714) 704-8953

A Home for Every Child

By Pat Hammond
Senior Social Worker

M meet Brianna. Brianna is an attractive, 12-year-old girl with brown hair and brown eyes. She has a happy and outgoing disposition. Brianna is very friendly and quite a talker. She enjoys many typical pre-teen activities such as shopping, listening to music, reading magazines, and watching MTV. Brianna would like to play soccer on a team one day and she also enjoys swimming.

Brianna would like to become a crime scene investigator (CSI) when she grows up. She also likes taking photos, going to the beach and the park.

Brianna is looking forward to being part of a permanent family. She is part of a large sibling set and maintaining some contact with her siblings is important to her. Brianna will bring much joy to a family that is willing to make a permanent commitment to her.

If you have any information which might help us locate a family for Brianna, please contact Orange County Social Services' matching coordinators, Margot Umemoto at (714) 704-8945 or Elizabeth McConnell at (714) 704-8944.



From the Streets to the Campus Halls

By Carlos Cano
Senior Social Worker

A year ago, I received a new referral for Truancy Court. I met the family in the courtroom's hallway and literally had to step in among step dad, mom and son. They were in each other's face trying to get in as many jabs before entering the courtroom. Mom relentlessly scolded her son for staying out all hours of the night doing drugs and hanging out with hoodlum, gang friends and son shot back that they were the reason why he acted out and they were the stupid ones. Somehow, I knew this case was going to be a doozy.

The Truancy Court team attempted to reach out to Byron, but his behavior only got worse. Fortunately, Byron's mother never gave up. She heard on the radio about a hard-core drug rehab center in the heart of Compton called Grupo Renacer. She knew Byron would not go willingly and asked me for help. By the grace of God, we were able to get Byron into Grupo Renacer.

I knew this place was tough. We arrived to find a large man standing in front of a steel door; the only way in and out of the facility. Byron was placed in a room with a woman who had been using Meth for over 10 years. She was going through severe withdrawals. Throughout the first week, Byron witnessed this woman going through her withdrawal. He did not want to be there and cursed me for getting him into the program.

To everyone's amazement, Byron did well. Watch-

ing the woman's withdrawal made him think about where his life was headed if he continued using Meth. This was his life's turning point. After spending three months at the facility, Byron graduated, kicked his Meth addiction and had more regard for his parents. Grupo Renacer changed his life.

We enrolled Byron in the Sunburst Youth Academy and he surpassed everyone's expectations. Byron went from earning straight F's and running with his gang to earning straight A's and training for a marathon. He also appreciated and thanked his parents. Sunburst gave Byron and his family new life. He earned the Academy's most academically improved award along with a \$500 scholarship.

Byron continues to excel and his parents are proud of his progress. Byron talks to kids at the Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) and has been a spokesperson for Sunburst. He is determined to study engineering at UCI and will do whatever it takes to get into the program. In the meantime, Byron works at a local restaurant in Santa Ana and plans on righting the wrongs from before he turned his life around. Wow, this kid will go places!

Transitional Planning Services Program

By Irene Briggs
Senior Social Services Supervisor

The program prepares youth for self-sufficiency and independence once they leave the dependency system. Because of the current financial situation, we have become very creative and inventive in assessing and developing partners to assist youth in identifying and working toward their goals. All of our work with community partners is driven by three main goals: youth permanence, education and employment.

In 2008, Transitional Planning Services was able to secure funding for scattered site apartments for 60 youth and 10 for host families. In August 2009, some additional beds will open at the Tustin Family Campus site for youth requiring a higher level of supervision after emancipation. To apply for these THP+ beds, youth must be 18 to 23 years old and have emancipation from SSA or Probation. This program is a support program in that it allows youth to live safely while they demonstrate a commitment to work and school. This 24 month program provides a learning environment to safely transition from the foster care system.

With the reduction in contracts for permanency and independent living coaches, we have restructured service delivery. We will be working more closely with foster families and group homes to ensure their help with teaching independent living skills at an earlier age. Activities such as menu planning, food shopping, cooking, banking, and taking the bus may be taught well before emancipation and will only help to promote future self-sufficiency.

We are in the formative stages of the Youth Advisory Board. This group meets monthly and is open to all current and former foster and probation youth. The agenda is created by the youth with a focus on identifying opportunities to make changes in how we, as an agency, prepare youth for independence and self-sufficiency. If you want more information on this group or to refer a youth, please call Yvette Aguayo, senior social worker, at (714) 940-5648.

Transitional Planning Services is constantly evolving, as are the youth we serve. We know to be successful we must identify solutions that work more efficiently and meet the needs of a changing environment. For more information on our plans and activities, please call Irene Briggs at (714) 940-3968 or Bob Malmberg at (714) 940-3935.

Permanency

We have well documented success stories involving youth of all ages who have been connected with relatives and friends that are able to offer a permanent relationship, otherwise missing in their lives. For years, research has shown that resiliency in youth is very much related to the presence of one or more constant adults in their life. Youth with this permanent connection are more likely to set and achieve goals, reduce self-destructive behaviors and develop behaviors consistent with self-sufficiency.

Education

Since education is a cornerstone of financial independence, we have been working very closely with the Orange County Department of Education to track school progress at an early age and to find better ways to advocate and intervene with the school districts to assure that youth obtain credits necessary for high school graduation. If graduation is not the plan, then we must work towards educational goals that will encourage future independence.

Employment

The hope for our youth is for them to be willing and able to seek and maintain employment and eventually move towards financial independence. Vocational assessments are offered to all transitional aged youth, after which they are referred to area work centers for further assistance with job finding and development of skills to secure and maintain employment.

Mileage Reimbursement

January 1, 2009, the rate for mileage reimbursement was reduced to \$0.30 per mile. Orange County licensed foster parents are eligible at this time for reimbursement for some expenses that occur during specific activities related to your role as foster parents. The mileage claims must be completed and sent within 90 days that the expense occurred. Contact Joanna Hussey at (714) 704-8255 or e-mail Joanna.Hussey@ssa.ocgov.com for more information.

Foster Care Auxiliary

May is Foster Care Month

The Auxiliary wishes to extend a thank you to each family caring for a child in need. You are truly the hope and inspiration for these children who need someone to nurture them. The gift of a loving family is the most generous and will never be forgotten.

Annual Foster Family Picnic

All Orange County licensed foster parents are invited. Mark your calendars for Sunday, September 20 in Garden Grove. It's going to be great! More details to follow.

Camp to Belong for Siblings

Siblings who are separated can get together for a wonderful week at camp, July 20 to 25. Call the auxiliary for more information and to get an application.

Become a Member

Visit our web site or call to learn more about the Auxiliary and what we have to offer. Member families can take part in the monthly new item distribution, monthly support groups and baby gear loaner program.

Also posted on our web site are current sales at the thrift store, newsletters and our video. Visit www.youtube.com and look for Foster Care Auxiliary - OC.

Shopping or donating at the Foster Care Auxiliary Thrift Store helps foster families in Orange County. Thank you for your support.

Foster Care Auxiliary of Orange County

Contact: Kathy Harvey

(714) 778-3383

333 S. Brookhurst St., Anaheim 92804

E-mail: FosterCareAux@yahoo.com

Web: www.FosterCareAux.com

Camp to Belong is coming to Orange County. The nonprofit camp is for brothers and sisters who are placed in separate foster, kinship and/or adoptive homes and gives them an opportunity to enjoy time together, maintain sibling connections and build life-long memories in a fun setting.

Over 38 percent of children in out-of-home care in Orange County are separated from at least one of their siblings. The reality of sibling separation is the reason Lynn Price founded Camp to Belong International fourteen years ago.

Camp to Belong Orange County is made possible by the Eddie Nash Foundation and the Foster Care Auxiliary of Orange County.

The inaugural session will be held July 20 through July 25 at the Outdoor Education Center in the city of Orange, near Irvine Regional Park.

Camper applications are currently being accepted. To request an application and for more information, contact Kathy Harvey at (714) 778-3383, e-mail Kathy@eddienashfoundation.org or visit www.camp belongoc.org.



Lending a Hand in Time of Need

By Adena Davis & Elaine Wilkins
MSW Interns

Kevin's mom has to undergo surgery which requires a hospital stay and two months at a rehabilitation center. Kevin's mom is worried who will care for her son because the only other option is Kevin's nana who lives far away and cannot care for Kevin due to her own health issues. As a Voluntary Placement caregiver, can Kevin and his mom count on you to lend your care and support?

Children and Family Services' Voluntary Placement program serves as an alternative to involving children and their parents in mandated court procedures. The program needs caregivers willing to aid families experiencing challenges. If you would like to get involved as a Voluntary Placement provider or want more information, please call Suzanne Grahovac, program manager for Placement Coordination Services, at (714) 935-7056.

Wraparound Services Gives Family a New Beginning

Sometimes, it does take a village to support a family through difficult times. Fortunately, for one mom and daughter, their village included Wraparound and Family Preservation Community Services (FPCS).

FPCS assisted the daughter to transition from a residential treatment center back to her mother's care. A county therapist was concerned the daughter would slip back into substance abuse and suicidal tendencies once she was back home, but her "support team" didn't let that happen. Wraparound and FPCS worked diligently with the mom and daughter to establish their relationship on solid ground. They are now enjoying a relationship based on love, communication and trust while promoting the daughter's sobriety and acknowledging mom's need to know that she can financially support her family.

With the help of Wraparound and FPCS, the family found informal and formal support through community involvement (teachers, neighbors, family therapeutic providers, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon) which helped them feel more confident in reaching their family goals and vision which includes the daughter celebrating four months of sobriety and mom's accomplishment of finishing a professional certificate program and completing a paid externship which alleviated some of the financial stress.

Mom and daughter continue to strengthen their relationship and future by attending support groups. The daughter will graduate from high school in June and plans on taking college courses. Because of the team's hard work and dedication to equip this family, mom and daughter will graduate from Wraparound and step into a new world of independence.

Excerpts taken from an article submitted by the Family Preservation Community Services program and Lynn Kleist, Health Care Agency liaison.

As Of February 28, 2009, Wraparound Orange County Has Received A Total Of 1838 Referrals*

Referred by:
Health Care Agency 295
Probation Department 452
Social Services Agency 1091
Total: 1838

*Wraparound began July 1, 2001

Family to Family Strategy Meetings & Workgroups

Child Welfare Services Redesign Planning Council

Oversees all Family to Family strategy groups. Notes strengths and concerns, establishes redesign goals and looks at resources to accomplish goals. Meets the first Thursday of the month from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at Orange-wood Children's Foundation, 1575 E. 17th St. in Santa Ana.

Recruitment, Development & Support (RDS)

Recruits, trains and supports foster/adoptive parents and relative caregivers. Meets the fourth Thursday of the month from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Children & Family Services, 800 N. Eckhoff St., Room 1304, in Orange.

Self Evaluation Team (SET)

Collects, analyzes and interprets child and family outcome data to spot progress and determine where changes in policy and practice need to be made. Meets the first Thursday of the month from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Children & Family Services, 800 N. Eckhoff St., Room 1304 in Orange.

Team Decision Making (TDM)

Placement decision meetings that involve foster parents, caseworkers, birth families, and community members. Meets the first Thursday of the month from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Children & Family Services, 800 N. Eckhoff St., Room 1304 in Orange.

Educational Outcomes

Improving educational outcomes through increase in communication, collaboration and partnerships with schools and other stakeholders. Meets the third Wednesday of the month from 10 a.m. to noon at 1337 Braden Court, Room 108 in Orange.

Eliminating Racial Disproportionality & Disparity (ERDD)

Examines over or under representation of minority children in foster care compared to their representation in the general population. Meets the second Wednesday of the month from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at 1300 N. Grand Ave., Bldg. B Room A-B in Santa Ana.

Independent Living Program Transformation Breakthrough Series Collaborative/Extended Team

Targeting education, employment and permanency outcomes for 85 foster youth residing in six zip codes within Santa Ana. Rapid intervention is provided with the goal of replicating services throughout the county. Meets the fourth Wednesday of the month from 8:30 a.m. to 10 at 744 N. Eckhoff St., Room A1131 in Orange.

Parent Leadership Task Force (PLTF)

Builds leadership capacity of successfully reunified parents and enhances child welfare services practice. Meets the first Wednesday of the month from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at 744 N. Eckhoff St., in the cafeteria, in Orange.

Parents Taking Action (PTA)

Former Children & Family Services parents who have successfully reunified with their children. They hope help other families to successfully reunify. Meets the First Friday of the month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at 744 N. Eckhoff St., in the cafeteria, in Orange.

For more information about the meetings, contact Raquel Amezcua at (714) 704-8090 or Pam Paulson at (714) 704-8743.

Directory

FOSTER CARE INFORMATION LINE

(888) 871-KIDS (5437)

CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES RECEPTION

(714) 704-8000

(714) 935-7584 (emergencies & after hours)

ADMINISTRATION

Ingrid Harita
Social Services Director

Mike Ryan
Children & Family Services Director

Anne Bloxom
CFS Deputy Director

Ray Gallagher
CFS Deputy Director

Nathan Nishimoto
CFS Deputy Director

Martiza Rodriguez-Farr
CFS Deputy Director

Gary Taylor
CFS Deputy Director

FOSTER & ADOPTIVE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Tricia Budris, Program Manager

Cheryl Alexander, Supervisor
(714) 940-3964

Roylyn Burton, Community Program Specialist
(714) 940-3976

*Juan Herrera, Recruiter/Trainer
(714) 940-3972

Sharon Landis, Recruiter/Trainer
(714) 940-3923

*Yazmin Leal, Staff Specialist
(714) 704-8828

*Lorena Rodriguez, Information Line
(888) 871-5437

Lynn Young, Recruiter/Trainer
(714) 940-5692

FOSTER & KINSHIP CARE LIAISON

*Joanna Hussey (714) 704-TALK (8255)

LICENSING

Jim Deming, Supervisor
(714) 940-3965

Melinda Avventino (714) 940-3944

Sheri Bocci (714) 940-3938

*Nena Casis (714) 940-3943

*George Reyes (714) 940-3939

**Lianne Vu (714) 940-3942

*Angelica Zikoor (714) 940-3937

BIRTHDAY GIFTS FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

Mona Gustafson (714) 679-2438
Call for an appointment

EMERGENCY SHELTER HOME (ESH)

*Estela Ahuero (714) 935-7102

TRANSITIONAL PLANNING SERVICES PROGRAM

*Irene Briggs, Supervisor (714) 940-3968

Ilan Wolf, Supervisor (714) 940-3946

FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAM

Mary Jane Fryberger (714) 940-5633

MULTIDIMENSIONAL TREATMENT FOSTER CARE (MTFC)

Dr. Mary Eason, Program Supervisor
(714) 940-3924

Terry Maher, Program Supervisor
(714) 940-3928

Michelle Medina, Recruiter/Trainer
(714) 940-3957

Denise Odom, Recruiter/Trainer
(714) 940-3974

SPECIAL MEDICAL PROGRAM

Pam Young, Placement Coordinator
(714) 704-8533

Mary Ewart, Medical Intake Coordinator
(714) 704-8531

Cindy Hutchison, Medical Intake Coordinator
(714) 704-8531

TIME OUT FOR PARENTS (TOPS)

New Alternatives, Inc. (714) 245-0045

WORKING CAREGIVER CHILDCARE PROGRAM

*Margaret Lopez-Krill (714) 704-8087

FOSTER & KINSHIP CARE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Saddleback College
Pat Dumas, Director (949) 582-4884

FOSTER CARE ADVISORY BOARD

Sallie Miller (714) 848-2558
Karen Templeton (714) 556-5250

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

Fountain Valley
Sallie Miller (714) 848-2558

Huntington Beach/Parents of Teens
Jessie Damerval (714) 848-0347

Single Parents (Male/Female)
Cynthia Bradbury (714) 843-6835

Foster Care Auxiliary/Anaheim
Kathy Harvey (714) 778-3383

Orange/Spanish Support
*Joanna Hussey (714) 704-8255

ORGANIZATIONS

California Children's Services (CCS)
(714) 347-0300

CalOPTIMA
Liaison (714) 246-8864
Member Services (714) 246-8500
Claims Department (714) 246-8885

Child Health & Disability Program (CHDP)
(800) 564-8448

Denti-Cal (800) 322-6384

Foster Care Auxiliary of Orange County
(714) 778-3383/www.fostercareaux.com

Orange County Mental Health
(714) 834-5015

Vision Services Plan (800) 877-7195

*Spanish Speaking

**Vietnamese Speaking

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