

Greetings from Alaska Center for Resource Families

ACRF provides support and training for foster, adoptive, guardian and relative caretakers in Alaska



UPDATE from the Resource Family Advisory Board

The Resource Family Advisory Board met face-to-face in Anchorage October 11 and 12 to meet with OCS Leadership and to look to what it wanted to accomplish in the upcoming year. Director, Natalie Norberg, along with team members Pam Halloran and Barbara Cosolito met with the Board telephonically and shared updates about the new structuring of OCS Regional Management, the roll out of the new Centralized Commodities program, the Families First Initiative for doing more prevention work with families, changes to the travel budget including a \$800 cap on travel for foster children and cuts to post adoption travel allowances. The Board shared its initiatives with the Director. Kristin Haddox from North Pole was approved to manage the RFAB Facebook page. The Board is still looking for representation from Western Region.

In addition to the ongoing goal to seek resource parent feedback to share with OCS leadership, current initiatives for the Resource Family Advisory Board include:

1. **Promote awareness of a Bill of Rights for resource parents in Alaska** (RFAB provided feedback Representative Ivy Spohnholz at



The 411 on OCS: What Foster Parents Need to Know About the Changes in Travel

The Office of Children's Services is making some changes that include streamlining processes to be more efficient and to take the workload off of busy caseworkers. That includes how they manage the complex job of arranging and paying for travel. OCS is centralizing the functions in the State offices by late January. All travel will continue to be initiated by the case worker and approved by supervisors per required expenditure approval levels. For foster families who are requesting assistance with travel expenses for foster children to attend vacation travel, here's the low down on what foster parents need to know:

- Go through your caseworker who needs to create a request for funds (RFF). The request needs to be approved by the supervisor and

her request to help her efforts to put both the Resource Parent and Youth Bill of Rights into statute.)

2. **Make recommendations regarding licensed foster home investigations** (A FAQs for foster parents has been developed and RFAB is advocating it be given to foster parents whenever there is an investigation of a foster home. There is also discussion of encouraging a mentor program that can support families going through an investigation.)
3. **Promote Regional Support Networks amongst resource parents** (Discussion continues to encourage communication forums around the state between OCS management and staff and with foster parents.)
4. **Help encourage a system of recognition and appreciation for experienced foster parents** (This committee is looking at ways to recognize and appreciate families, including honoring a recently retired family who fostered for 30 years and sending a letter out to families during foster parent appreciation month.)

The Board meets monthly and will meet again face-to-face in Juneau in March. RFAB will meet again with OCS Management and Director Norberg and is hoping to participate in a Lunch and Learn for Legislators. ■

if approved will result in an issued purchase authorization which means you have your approval in writing.

- OCS recently capped vacation travel for the foster child to travel with the resource family at \$800 max airfare per child, 1 vacation per 12 month period, In addition, after OCS approval for the travel has been obtained, resource families must book the travel and request reimbursement after the travel has occurred with the submission of travel receipts and the itinerary. This omits complications related to matching flights. So get written approval for reimbursement and save all your receipts related to purchase.
- Plan ahead! For travel out of state, give at least 4 weeks notice. For out of country travel, plan at least 8 weeks ahead. ■

Safety First! Know Before You Let Go

A reminder to foster families to ask for photo identification of your caseworker when you are meeting for the first time or from anyone who is helping with transporting. Make sure the person who is taking responsibility of your foster child is exactly who they say they are. An OCS employee should not take offense to your caution. ■

Newest member in the Fairbanks ACRF Office



Hi everyone, my name is Gabby Wilkinson and I'm very thrilled to say I will be joining this wonderful organization for the next few months as an intern in Fairbanks. I am almost finished with my degree in Human

Development and Family Sciences from the University of Wyoming. Some of my professional interests include preventative education, resource management, and family centered care. I sought out ACRF as my internship site for many reasons, but the top reason is because anytime I called or emailed they wanted to help me. They want me to learn, gain skills, and know the ins and outs of foster care and adoption. To me, this organization embodies cultural competence, respect, empathy, knowledge, and willingness to go the extra mile. Who wouldn't want to work with ACRF?



1.0 HOUR SELF-STUDY

Licensed foster parents can read the following article and earn foster parent training credit by filling out the quiz and returning it to the Alaska Center for Resource Families, 815 Second AVE STE 202, Fairbanks AK, 99701 or FAX to 1-907-479-9666.

TOPIC: Parenting 911: When Things Get Tough

By Aileen McInnis, Alaska Center for Resource Families

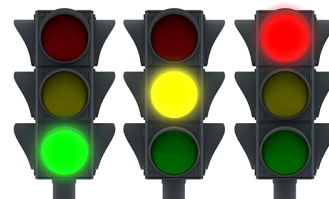
We have something here at ACRF we call “**Parenting 911: When Things Get Tough**” We work with a lot of families caring for kids with really tough behaviors. We encourage our families to think ahead and have a plan for when things get really tough. So take some time and plan what to do if you have a child who is winding out-of-control and you have to use “**Parenting 911**” We use the idea of a city traffic light-- start by considering situations as **green** light, **yellow** light and **red** light situations and plan from there.

Green Light: When Calm, Plan Ahead

It is hard to think when you are upset so do some serious thinking while you are calm. Find some time when you are calm and THINK! Develop a plan and write it down. Practice it like you do a fire drill—especially with your kids. Work on verbal cues with your child and let them know that your first job is to keep all family members safe. Develop a personal Family Safety Plan. When you are calm, take time to gather and write down your emergency numbers. Have a designated notebook to keep everything in one place so you can always find it. Put emergency numbers on your cell phone for easy access (such as under EMERGENCY.)

Things to have in place for your child in one place.

- List of phone numbers (see above)
- Current diagnosis for child
- Folder with all treatment records
- Medications (always have a supply) with directions
- Person on-call to transport the child or to provide a break for the child in their home
- Person on-call to care for other children in the home if one child needs to be taken elsewhere
- Copy of the child’s insurance card
- For foster families—Consent for Emergency or Routine Medical Care



Think about an Ongoing Respite plan:

- For many families, an ongoing respite or “break” plan can provide space and breathing time for kids and parents. Respite should not be punitive but a normal break for families.
- For older children: If possible, have them come up with a friend (with permission to talk to parents) that they can go stay with for a couple of hours or plan for an overnight to get respite.
- Respite for one child in the home can allow for individual parenting time for others in the home.
- Respite should not be a result of crisis, but a couple hours or overnight that is planned for the benefit of the whole family.

Yellow Light: Urgency, Not Emergency

Yellow light means *caution, slow down*. So pay attention when things start to heat up---slow things down, and take action. This is where you should spend most of your time avoiding getting yourself in a Red Light Situation if possible.

- **CALM YOURSELF FIRST!** You cannot control the situation if you don’t have control of yourself. Kick into your thinking mode and don’t get hooked into losing control. Bring the energy in the room down or at least don’t add to it. Don’t take it personally
- Use your language to de-escalate the situation. Control your level and tone. Consciously speak lower, softer and slower.
- Talk to yourself in your head to keep in your thinking brain—don’t flip your lid and join in the chaos. Someone has to remain the adult in the room.
- If the emotion is too heated in the room, don’t try to problem solve or discipline when others are out of control. Focus on bringing down the heat by reassuring others you are listening and care about them even if you are not in agreement. You can come back and work it out when things are calmer.
- Remember your Family Safety Plan— If you and your family can talk about these situations ahead of time, now it’s time to remind yourself and the child what you planned. What’s your internal or external Break Plan? Is it time to use it to prevent things from escalating?

One experienced adoptive parent says, “Is this your first time with a blow up? Then keep it in perspective. This might be your new normal.” Children who have been traumatized may have a pattern of overreacting or seeking chaos. Develop the skills you need to not take it personally and to determine which battles to fight. You got this!

Red Light: Emergency!—Safety is Your First Priority

Red Light situations mean that the situation is so heated up that someone is going to get hurt or is putting themselves or others in danger. Always remember, *Safety is Your First Priority*.

- Avoid putting your hands on a child or youth to overcome, grab, fight him, or restrain him in an aggressive way. Know that physical interaction is going to escalate the situation. If you have to use force to prevent a child from hurting another child or himself, use just enough physical contact to stop the interaction then release as soon as you are able. “Hands on” usually escalates the situation & increases the chance of physical harm to you or the child so avoid it if possible.
- Continue to use your de-escalation skills—talk slowly and reassuring, avoid raising your voice, give positives when a child shows compliance or self-control, give gentle simple commands and use the child’s name (Put the lamp down, Sammy. Come sit on the couch. We can work this out. Take a deep breath with me.) Don’t lecture or threaten.
- If serious physical threats, impending harm, or weapons are involved, direct other out of the room (if needed into a locked room). Call 911 or law enforcement for assistance if necessary.
- Some hospital emergency rooms also have a psychiatric emergency service that you can contact by phone for guidance. (Did you put this number in your phone?)
- Call your local OCS Office using whatever after hours emergency protocol you have or try calling the statewide Intake number at **1-800-478-4444 for guidance**.



Reach out to ACRF or other agencies to find therapeutic resources and assistance.

Parenting 911: When Things Get Tough

If you read the above entitled article and want foster parent training credit applied to your training requirement, fill out the following questionnaire and FAX it to 1-907-479-9666, mail to ACRF, 815 Second AVE STE 202, Fairbanks, AK 99701 or email to acrf@nwresource.org.

Name: _____

Provider#: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

1. The best plan for emergencies is to wait to see what you are dealing with and hope you can figure it out as you go.

_____ TRUE

_____ FALSE



2. Select and circle the most appropriate categories for each of the following strategies.

EXAMPLE: Think about an ongoing respite plan.	GREEN LIGHT	YELLOW LIGHT	RED LIGHT
Avoid putting hands on child when he is escalated and out of control.	GREEN LIGHT	YELLOW LIGHT	RED LIGHT
Use your language to de-escalate a situation (two answers)	GREEN LIGHT	YELLOW LIGHT	RED LIGHT
Gather up Information about your child and put it in one place.	GREEN LIGHT	YELLOW LIGHT	RED LIGHT
Develop a Family Safety Plan.	GREEN LIGHT	YELLOW LIGHT	RED LIGHT
Contact law enforcement or OCS on call if someone is going to get hurt.	GREEN LIGHT	YELLOW LIGHT	RED LIGHT

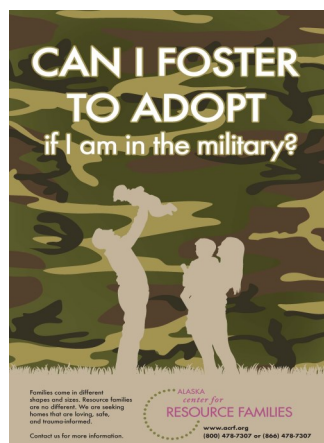
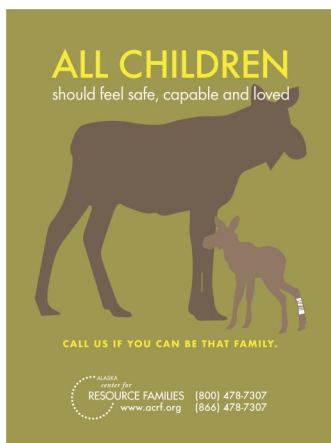
3. Give two (2) examples of what is meant by "use your de-escalation skills."

a) _____

b) _____

STATEWIDE RECRUITMENT PROJECT

ACRF has developed 7 new recruitment flyers. Watch for them in your area! Here are a couple samples...



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE!

Friends of Alaska CASA is currently offering CASA eligible youth (*youth in state or Tribal custody*) grant and scholarship opportunities in the following areas: • **Mini-Grants** (*up to \$500 per year per youth*); • **Camperships** (*up to \$500 per year per youth*); and • **Annual Dickison and Rudisill Educational Scholarships**, (*up to \$1,000 per year per youth*).

Who May Request Funds & How Can Funds Be Requested? Any CASA, GAL or Tribal representative is eligible to submit funding request on behalf of a CASA eligible youth. Additional scholarship information and electronic forms may be found on the FAC website. Emailed questions are welcomed. Go to www.friendsofalaskacasa.org or contact info@friendsofalaskacasa.org.

FAIRBANKS AREA TRAINING CALENDAR

Unless otherwise noted, all classes held at ACRF, 815 Second AVE, STE 202
Call 479-7307 to register

FEBRUARY:

2/18 from 1:30-3:30pm: *Adopting through OCS*

2/27 from 6-9pm and 2/29 from 9am-4pm: *Building Families through Adoption*

MARCH:

3/11 and 3/18 from 6-9pm: *Core Training for Resource Families: Role of the Resource Family & Fostering Connections*

3/17 from 1:30-3:30pm: *Adopting through OCS*

3/21 from 9am-3pm: *Core Training for Resource Families: Becoming a Healing Home*

APRIL:

4/21 from 1:30-3:30: *Adopting through OCS*

4/23 from 6-9pm and 4/25 from 9am-4pm: *Building Families through Adoption*

MAY:

5/13 and 5/20 from 6-9pm: *Core Training for Resource Families: Role of the Resource Family & Fostering Connections*

5/16 from 9am-3pm: *Core Training for Resource Families: Becoming a Healing Home*

5/19 from 1:30-3:30: *Adopting through OCS*

5/29 from 8:30-4:30: *TBRI: Trust-Based Relationship Intervention. Location to be determined. Watch for flyer.*

JUNE:

6/16 from 1:30-3:30: *Adopting through OCS*

**FOSTER
PALOZA
DATES:**

February 8, 11am-12:30pm

March 14, 11am-12:30pm

April 11, 11am-12:30pm

May 9, 11am-12:30pm

June 13, 11am-12:30pm



Supervised & Community Visits

\$3 per person admission
(supervisors/members free)

2nd Wednesday of each month
5-7pm

Call 347-7060 for more
information.

THANK
YOU!

The ACRF Fairbanks Office would like to send a big thank you out to the Fairbanks Community for their recent contributions to the ACRF Starter Kit Program. No children should come into foster care with a trash bag for their personal belongings. The Golden Heart community has helped make sure that does not happen.

Thank you to **True North Church** in their duffel bag drive during the holiday season!

Thank you to **Girl Scout Troop 31** for the 31 duffels and backpacks you made with funds you raised!

Thank you to the **Stingray Swim Team** for your amazing diaper bag donation during the holiday season; families were thrilled at the thought of a few extra essentials for the littles in their care.

Thank you to the **Fairbanks North Star Borough School District NEA-AK Education Support Staff Association** for being a catching point and collecting gently used suitcases and duffels for children and youth in transition.

Your efforts and donations are invaluable and we can't thank you enough!

MAT-SU AREA TRAINING CALENDAR

FEBRUARY:

2/18, 2/19, 2/24 & 2/26 from 6-9pm: *Building Families through Adoption*

Held at the Mat-Su ACRF Office, 5050 Dunbar St, STE A2. To register call 376-4678 or email jschroll@nwresource.org.

APRIL:

4/11 and 4/18 from 9am-5pm: *Core Training for Resource Families*

Held at the Mat-Su ACRF Office, 5050 Dunbar St, STE A2. To register call 376-4678 or email jvonbrandt@nwresource.org.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Support Group

There's a new Foster Parent Support Group in the Mat-Su Valley. Would you like a chance to get together with other foster and adoptive parent to share information, resources, ideas, make connections and talk with other people who are experiencing similar issues? This is a group of parents that want to support and learn from each other.

Please RSVP: Donna 907-570-4412

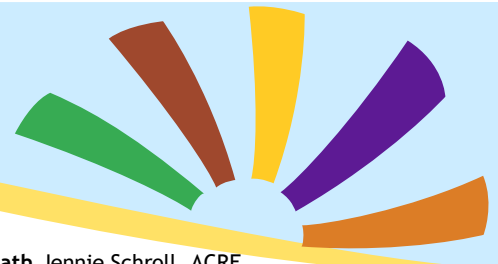
SOUTHCENTRAL REGION Thank You

The ACRF Mat-Su office would like to thank supporters of our Foster and Adoptive Parent Support Group beginning in the Mat Su Valley which includes, donations and grants by **United Way of Mat-Su, Bishop's Attic 11,** and the **Palmer Elks Club**. Thanks to individual donors to the Mat-Su Holiday Party for foster families and children in December including **Mike & Christy Andrews, Loren Beskow,** and **Bill & Sue Cheeseman**. That was a fun event!

A big thank you to the **Langston Family Foundation** for a grant to help us print Core Training for Relative Caregiver workbooks to use with rural families and for a grant to help us visit rural communities in Southcentral for recruitment and training purposes.

Thanks to all the folks who helped with the Mat-Su Adoption Day in December and the Adoption Celebration in January! We had a Dino-mite time! A big thank you to **Dianne Olsen, Attorney,** for her continuing support of November Adoption Events both in Anchorage and in Mat-Su. Thanks to supporters **Mark Lackey and family** and thanks to volunteers such as **Cecily Skoog-Moore** (all those cupcakes) **Haley Hall,** and the **Valley CASA Program Volunteers**. Thanks to **Deb Lestenkof of Debs Creative Paws** and **Tara Pickett** who helped with the Paint Nite and Alcohol Ink fundraisers, and all the folks who attended. Thanks to donors of lovely pillows and blankets for the families including **Pillows for Kids Foundation, Knit Witz of Chugiak, Eagle River Senior Center,** and the **Valley Quilters' Guild**. A big thanks to **Dawn Adams** for tons of planning, shopping, and coordinating for the courthouse event and the adoption celebration.

Rural Teleconference Schedule January to June 2020



Wed. Feb. 12th, Noon-1pm	<u>Helping Foster Children Navigate Grief and Loss Due to a Death</u> Jennie Schroll, ACRF
Tue. Feb. 18th, 7-8 PM	<u>Session 2. Staying Sane: It's Not Always about Putting the Kids First: Caretaker Resilience</u> Kimberly Mouriquand
Wed. Mar. 11th, noon-1pm	<u>Youth Employment</u> Regina Davis, ACRF
Tue. Mar. 17th, 7-8pm	<u>Session 3. You Got That Where? Finding What Your Children Need: Concrete Support</u> Becca Whitman, OCS
Wed. Apr. 17th, Noon-1pm	<u>The Science of Adopted Parenting: A discussion and review of Arleta James book</u> Brenda Ursel, ACRF
Tue. Apr. 14th, 7-8pm	<u>Session 4. Friends and Family: Why Positive Connections Matter: Social Connections</u> Jodi von Brandt, ACRF
Wed. May 6th, Noon-1pm	<u>Autism: Signs, Diagnosis, and Supports</u> Kimberly Mouriquand, featuring Aimee Smith with the Alaska Autism Resource Center
Tue. May 12th, 7-8pm	<u>Session 5. My Great-Aunt Ida Said...Child Development and Cultural</u> Becca Whitman, DJJ
Wed. Jun. 17th, Noon-1pm	<u>Facebook Guidelines for Foster Parents—What Can You Share? What Can You Not Share?</u> Aileen McInnis, ACRF
Tue. Jun. 16th, 7-8pm	<u>Session 6. Your Child Did WHAT?!? Understanding Children's Social and Emotional Needs Children's Social/Emotional Competence</u> Lori Markkanen, RCPC

Call 1-800-944-8766, Participant Code 26867#
Check www.acrf.org Training Calendar for Handouts or PowerPoints



STATEWIDE: Let's Talk ICWA First Thursday of the Month from 4-5pm

This telephonic event is designed specifically for foster and pre-adoptive parents across Alaska to learn about ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) and to have a chance to get your questions answered. Each session will start with a brief discussion of a specific topic related to ICWA and then be opened up for questions or concerns about what ICWA means and does in Alaska. **Foster and pre-adoptive parents are encouraged to call in and participate. Co-Sponsored by the Office of Children's Services and ACRF**

TO PARTICIPATE: Please pre-register to email amcinnis@nwresource.org or for information call 1-866-478-7307. On the day of call 1-800-944-8766, when asked use Participant Code: 22460#. You may hear silence or music before the teleconference begins. Resource parents can receive credit for attending.

RURAL TRAINING CALENDAR

SAVE THE DATE: April 30

Kenai Peninsula Out-of-Home Care Conference

Conference to be held at Solid Rock Bible Camp in Sterling. Look for more details in the upcoming month. Hope to see you there!

MAY 6-7, 8:30am-4:30pm

Knowing Who You Are held in Utqiagvik

The KWYA workshop provides a framework for participants to identify and explore racial and ethnic identity in order to understand how one's race and ethnicity impacts personal and professional interactions. During the Tribal State Collaboration Group meetings in 2008, an agreement was made to train all State and Tribal child welfare workers in the KWYA process. KWYA is embedded into OCS practice as an ongoing effort to address racial disproportionality in the child welfare system.

What is the Purpose of Knowing Who You Are (KWYA)? KWYA is designed to positively impact well-being outcomes for youth through the integration of learning experiences that provide participants with awareness, knowledge, skills, tools and resources to engage and support youth in developing a healthy racial and ethnic identity.

The KWYA AK process is a 3-part process that must be completed in the following order:

1. **Complete the Handbook & Quiz** (PDF & link will be emailed to you)
2. **Watch the online introductory video** (unit 10 of the Participant Handbook. The link will also be emailed to you)
3. **Attend the two-day workshop. *Participants must commit to attending to the full 2-day workshop.**

WESTERN REGION Thank You!

ACRF would like to thank the **Salvation Army of Alaska** for their generous donation of diapers, wipes and formula for Bethel and the Western Region Office. Families with infants and toddlers will greatly benefit from this donation and the OCS Caseworkers are thankful for the support they can provide families.

Northwest Resource Associates
Alaska Center for Resource Families
815 Second Avenue Suite 202
Fairbanks, AK 99701

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Consider Supporting ACRF By Doing What You Do Every Day!

There are many ways to support Alaska Center for Resource Families just by shopping as you normally do, or by choosing to shop at these locations and selecting us as your Non-Profit of choice.

Link your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to Alaska Center for Resource Families and you still earn reward points and ACRF receives a donation!

Shop at smile.amazon.com and when you choose Northwest Resource Associates as your charity, ACRF will earn while you shop, at no additional cost to you!



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Rachel Hanft, Trainer/Family Support
Dee Dee Keyser, Resource Coordinator
Julia Holmes, Project Assistant
Regina Davis, Rural Outreach Coordinator
Melody Jamieson, Adoption Support
Gabby Wilkinson, Intern

Mat-Su Regional Office

Jodi von Brandt, Trainer/Family Support
Jennie Schroll, Adoption Support

Anchorage Regional Office

Aileen McInnis, Director
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