

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

HAPPY NEW YEAR

We are "Better Together"!

Written by Laura Boswell, Resource Family Advisory Board Member

When partners in child welfare value and respect one another, the children of Alaska benefit. On December 5-7, OCS staff, allies, alumni and the Resource Family Advisory Board came to Anchorage in a collaborative effort to strengthen their partnership, improve communication and develop relationships with the intent to positively change the foster care system. Guiding by the "Better Together" curriculum outline, our facilitators Tess Thomas and Karen Jorgenson walked us through the powerful results possible when stake holders work together. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of good communication between partners including active listening as well as patience and courtesy when dealing with misunderstandings. Everyone present grew in appreciation for the unique work of each individual involved in Alaska's child welfare system.

Though there were plenty of valuable principals for good partnership presented, we also brainstormed specific plans of action bringing theory into practice. We established regional goals such as creating a supply of back-packs filled with necessities for children just coming into care. There was a strong desire to see more recruiting of native homes to become resource families as well as increasing the number of native representatives on the Board. State wide goals included enhancing education efforts regarding regulations for foster homes, encouraging better connection between birth families, foster families and caseworkers and providing support in navigating the system. We hope to see this accomplished via local mentorship, a newsletter and a call list of experienced foster parents.

We were all encouraged to see many partners join the Advisory Board and we celebrated with hugs all around. We extend our thanks to the Casey Family Programs and OCS for sponsoring this event and we are hopeful that this meeting and future collaborations will strengthen our alliance and profit Alaska's children.



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OCS Licensing Requirement for Resource Families...

Licensed foster homes are required to have 15 hours of training per licensing year for a two-parent home and 10 hours for a single parent home. Report all your training to ACRF. To find out how many hours you've completed or to find out ways to complete your training hours, contact your local ACRF office or call toll-free 1-800-478-7307.

Fairbanks Training:

Unless otherwise noted, the trainings in Fairbanks are held at ACRF: 815 Second Ave, STE 101 Pre-registration is REQUIRED, call 479-7307 to register.

◆ **JANUARY:**

Core Training for Resource Families

Must attend all four sessions to fill the Core Training requirement.

Tues. 1/10, Wed. 1/11, Tues 1/17, and Wed. 1/18 from 6:00-9:00pm

Fire Safety

Date and Time TBA

◆ **FEBRUARY:**

Building Families through Adoption

Must attend both sessions.

Thurs. 2/9 from 6:00-9:00pm and Sat. 2/11 from 9:00am-4:00pm

Babies on Track

Children 2 and under are welcome.

Sun, 2/26 from 2:00-4:00pm

Nutrition Insight with Children in Care

Date and Time TBA

◆ **MARCH:**

FASD 101

Sun. 3/4 from 1:00-5:00pm

Emergency Preparedness with Youth in Care

Sun 3/11 from 2:00-4:00pm

Fire Safety

Date and Time TBA

Fairbanks Support Groups:

- ◆ **Grands Raising Great Children Support Group.** Participation is FREE. Limited supervised children's activities are available during the group. Please pre-register if you are bringing your children. **Group meets the second Monday of every month from 6:30-8pm, at RCPC, 726 26th AVE, Suite 2 in Fairbanks.** Call 456-2866 for more information.

Ketchikan Training:

Pre-registration is **REQUIRED**, call John at 790-4246 to register. Location to be announced.

◆ **March:**

Resource Family Training

Wed. 3/7 from 9:30am-2:30pm (Core Training) and from 6:00-8:00pm (Family Contact Panel)

Thurs. 3/8 from 9:30am-1:30pm (FASD 101), 2:30-4:30pm (Cultural Considerations) and 6:00-8:00pm (Trauma Informed Care)

Juneau Training:

Unless otherwise noted the trainings in Juneau will be held at ACRF: 9109 Mendenhall Mall RD, Suite 6A. Pre-registration is REQUIRED, call John at 790-4246 to register

✦ JANUARY:

Introduction to Attachment Disorders

Thurs. 1/19 from 6:30–8:30pm

✦ FEBRUARY:

Core Training for Resource Families

Must attend both sessions to fill the Core Training requirement.

Wed. 2/15 from 6–9pm and Sat. 2/18 from 9:00am–5:00pm

Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders

Thurs. 2/23 from 6:30–8:30pm

Juneau Support Groups:

✦ *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group* meets on the last Wednesday of each month from 6:30–8:00pm at the old Moose Lodge, 8335 Old Dairy Rd in Juneau. Call TJ Arnold for details: 209-0516.

✦ *Our Time Group for parents and caretakers of children with special needs* meets every Monday from 6–8pm at Aldersgate United Methodist Church, 9161 Cinema Dr in Juneau. Call Lori King for details: 463-6103.

✦ *Mental Illness Support Group for Members and Caregivers* meets every Thursday from 6–7pm at Juneau Family Health and Birth Center, 1601 Salmon Creek LN. No registration, It's free, just show up.

Mat-Su Training:

Unless otherwise noted, the trainings in Wasilla will be held at ACRF: 5050 Dunbar ST, STE A2 (off the Palmer/Wasilla HWY, Brentwood Plaza). Pre-Registration is required for the following events by contacting Betsy at 376-4678 or bwoodin@nwresource.org.

✦ JANUARY:

Core Training for Resource Families

Must attend all six sessions to fill the Core training requirement.

Mondays: 1/23, 1/30, 2/6 from 6:00–9:00pm and Saturdays: 1/28, 2/4, 2/11 from 9:00am–Noon

✦ FEBRUARY:

Video Day: Films on Parenting

May attend any part of this event.

Fri. 2/2 from 9:00am – 2:00pm

FASD 101

Held at LINKS Parent Resource Center on PW Hwy

Fri. 2/10 from 10:00am – 2:00pm

Adopting through OCS

Mon. 2/13 from 6:00 – 9:00pm

FASD 201

Held at LINKS Parent Resource Center on PW Hwy

Fri. 2/17 from 10:00am – 2:00pm

Core Training for Relative Placements

Must attend both sessions to fill the Core training requirement.

Tues. 2/21 and Thurs. 2/23 from 9:00am–1:00pm

Rural Teleconference Training

Families may participate by dialing 1-888-626-7441 and when asked enter the code: 9939775#. For more information email Betsy at bwoodin@nwresource.org or call 1-800-478-7307.

Tuesday, January 10th, Noon-1pm

- *Childhood Health and the Responsibility of Resource Families, Shirley Pittz, ECCS Program*

Wednesday, January 11th, 7-8pm

- *Grief and Loss, Dawn Adams, OCS SC Adoption Specialist*

Wednesday, February 8th, 7-8pm

- *Self-Injurious Behavior*

Tuesday, February 14th, Noon-1pm

- *Youth Depression and Suicide*

Tuesday, March 6th, Noon-1pm

- *Fostering Teens, Brenda Ursel, ACRF Adoptive Family Support Specialist*

Wednesday, March 14th, 7-8pm

- *Involving Youth in Planning for their Future, FFCA*

Statewide Autism Spectrum Disorder Support Group

First Tuesday of EVERY month from Noon-1pm. Dial 1-800-315-6338, follow voice prompts, then enter code 2272#

Statewide Online Training:

When Your Child Turns Three: Moving from an IFSP to an IEP
Another great FREE workshop from Stone Soup Group!

January 23rd and again on February 13th
11:00am-Noon

Presented by: Carla Abild, Parent Training & Information

To join this workshop register at:

<http://transition011612.eventbrite.com>

Mat-Su Training Continued:

✦ **MARCH:**

Adopting through OCS

Mon. 3/5 from 9:00am - Noon

Building Families Through Adoption

Must attend all four sessions.

Mondays: 3/19 & 3/26 from 6:00-9:00pm and **Saturdays: 3/24 & 3/31** from 9:00am-Noon

Video Day: Films on Attachment

May attend any part of this event.

Thur. 3/22 from 9:00am - 2:00pm

ONE HOUR SELF-STUDY

Engaging in and Encouraging Cultural Diversity in your Home

By Rachel Hanft, Family Support Specialist

When asked to describe the culture you come from, what is the first thing you tend to think about? Probably, like most of us, you think of your racial and/or ethnic origins. Think about culture again. What do you come up with? Do you think of music, holiday traditions, Family events, historical markers in your Family ancestry? Now think about the culture of others. Perhaps language, art, food and music come to mind. Culture, in all intents and purposes, is that distinctive element that makes each of us who we are and that which makes us unique in this world. Culture is something that we have, no matter where we are on this planet. Yet, culture can be so easily lost. When taking youth into out-of-home care, we must be ever attentive that the child is in a state of grief or loss. By having some piece of their culture or any knowledge of the child's roots, the shared insight can have amazing impacts on the child's ability to cope with the uncertainty he or she is experiencing.

As a part of everyday living, you can have diversity awareness and cultural knowledge well before a child-in-care comes into your home. It begins by honoring yourself and your culture. Give thought and acknowledgment of where you came from and how you came to where you are today. Then, share it with the immediate family members in your home. From this, you will easily be able to develop and discuss the values that define your family from another's (respect, honesty, accountability, work ethic). Family values are embedded in your culture. It just takes a moment of family discussion to give them meaning. This mindful activity gives you a foundation to understand the differences and unique characteristics that make us each individuals. From our values and culture we engage in life and conduct ourselves according to our traditions. In "A Return to Wholeness: A Resource Guide for Personal Growth", Cookie Rose discusses the importance of celebrating life through rituals and ceremonies. "A ritual can be as simple as how you get ready for the day and everyday routines and how people are treated. Family Identity is expressed through these rhythms. These can extend from the family identity out into the community and become part of the culture...A Ceremony is usually an activity that marks a special occasion like a birthday, wedding, holiday or funeral. These traditions can give us stability by defining who we are and states "this is how our family handles this occasion"...Rituals and Ceremonies are something we can start or reintroduce when it's important enough to us to make it happen." Take another moment with your family and discuss your traditions, rituals and ceremonies. Give them meaning by voicing them with your family; give them life by passing them on and explaining the "why" of their being a part of your culture.

As the parent figure in your home, you have the role and responsibility to properly expose your family to the differences and uniqueness of individuals in our world. It is your job and privilege to teach your children about the culture of others. This will most likely include discussion about racism and prejudice. This may be difficult, as the topic of racism can be uncomfortable. By being open to discussing an uncomfortable topic, such as racism, with your family, they will be able to develop clearer thinking and exploration into the cultures of others. In the December 2011 Scholastic Parent & Child Magazine, Rebecca Barrera wrote an article entitled "A World of Difference." In this article Barrera explains very simple ways to foster knowledge and understanding of other cultures with your children:

Engaging in and Encouraging Cultural Diversity in your Home continued...

Learning about Differences

- *Don't sweep your child's questions or comments under the rug-* Make sure you understand what they are asking and then answer honestly with age-appropriate conversation, even if it means telling them you will have to get back to them.
- *Make an example of yourself-* Modeling is a great way to express and reflect your attitude toward differences in people. This includes your choice of friends, social engagements, books, music, toys, etc.
- *Listen in on your child's conversations-* If you overhear your child talking about gender roles, identity and racial differences, help them clarify their understanding of what they are talking about with a quick chat after they are done playing.
- *Address racism and prejudice head-on-* Again, with age-appropriate conversation, discuss with your child how name-calling is wrong and how it can be hurtful.
- *Introduce new languages and cultures-* Rent movies with subtitles, such as "Kiki's Delivery Service" (in Japanese). Label objects in the house with both your first language and another language that is of interest to your family.
- *Give your child opportunities to interact and make friends with different people-* Story time at the library, park outings, attend local festivals, farmer's market, performing arts, WIEO, etc.

Introducing Your Child to the World

- *Explore a variety of maps and globes-* Children love colorful illustrations. Playing with maps and globes can be an easy, fun and educational activity. Whether it's online, in-hand or on a globe map activities can be short or long in duration. If you ever get maps in the mail or out of a magazine, they are perfect for your child's use. Hang them in your child's room. Have a wall collage of different maps.
- *Read stories from different countries-* Stories are a way of sharing culture, ideas and feelings without having to get scientific (Folktales, legends, myths).

Learning Through Play

- *Play traditional Games from other cultures-* You are familiar with "Duck, Duck, Goose", Hide and Seek, Capture the Flag? Try looking online or at the library for ideas of games from other countries.
- *Hold your own world music festival-* On a family night have different music from different countries to share with the family. Attend the Athabaskan Fiddler's Festival. Purchase an album with international Holiday music to play during the Holidays season.
- *Gather a box of international items for pretend play-* Local toy stores will often have imported toys from other countries, like carved dolls from Germany.

Making Memories

- *Explore through the arts-* Attend performing arts from your local concert association. Historical Museums have a lot of local culture to share, as well as guides to help you and your family gain an understanding of the importance of cultural preservation.
- *Experiment with new foods-* Have your children choose a country, read a book about a different country together, then go out dinner at that type of restaurant or find a recipe online to try at home.

Even if you do not have children in your home, most or all of these activities are possible to do with your household members or by yourself. It only strengthens and opens your mind to the differences we have in each of us. When we recognize those differences head-on, we become better prepared to work with others, especially children that come into care. Not to mention, we discover the wealth in culture that abounds in this world. Even if you do not have a strong sense of where a child-in-care may be coming from, just being open to differences and making it possible for the child to share in his or her culture, could have resounding effects on the child's ability to appropriately handle their time in care. .■

ONE HOUR SELF-STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Engaging in and Encouraging Cultural Diversity in your Home

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 101, Fairbanks, AK 99701 or email to acrf@nwresource.org.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Provider#: _____

1) Before a youth-in-care arrives, name two things you can do to prepare your home for diversity awareness and knowledge in other cultures. (Fill in the Blank)

a) _____

b) _____

2) A) What is a ritual that is a part of your life? In your family? In your community?

B) What is a ceremony that is a part of your life? In your family? In your community?

C) What are some of the activities, decorations, food and people who are included?

D) What are some values that help define yourself? Your family? Your community?

3) What is an important role and responsibility you have as the parent figure in your home?

4) Name two ways you can engage with your family to learn about differences in cultures.

a) _____

b) _____

5) It isn't necessary to discuss uncomfortable topics, like racism or prejudice, when encouraging cultural diversity in your home.

_____ a) True

_____ b) False

New Library Items available from ACRF

Self-Study Course: The Holiday's and Kids in Care (1.0 Hour)

Self-Study Course: Fostering Pregnant and Parenting Teens (3.0 Hours)

Available at the Fairbanks ACRF Library!

Call 479-7307 or 1-800-478-7307 to check it out

Check-out period for Books and DVDs is two weeks

Web Special:

ACRF Special Education Series

The ACRF Special Education Series was first broadcast in Anchorage as a webinar to outline the information resource families need to know if they have a child in special education. Topics include ***The Ten Basic Steps of Special Education, Evaluation & Eligibility, and The IEP.*** Go to <http://www.acrf.org/Audio.php> Topics will be added as they are broadcast so be sure to check back periodically for the new series.

#1: The Basics of Special Education (1.0 Hour),

#2: Evaluation and Eligibility (1.0 Hour)

#4: The IEP (The Individual Education Plan) (1.0 Hour)

This series is presented by Christie Reinhardt, ACRF Family Support Specialist. Includes Handouts, Questionnaire and an additional optional assignment to further your knowledge and give you an extra hour of training credit.



Fit Kids Club Fundraiser

ACRF is doing a fun fundraiser that will also encourage physical health and family fitness. (Just in time for New Year's Resolutions!) We are teaming up with the Beach Body Fitness site with the help of foster parents Jennifer Ungerecht and for every fitness DVD or fitness product you purchase through Team Beach Body, ACRF gets a percentage to put toward programs supporting foster and adoptive families. We especially suggest the Shaun T's Fit Kids Club workout for kids – a fun dance DVD! To help in this fundraiser. Go to <http://www.teambeachbody.com/AlaskaCenterRF> and click on shop. Search for any adult fitness DVDs or put Fit Kid's Club in the search engine. You don't have to be a member to purchase any materials but you will need to set up an account when you check in. For more information about these products, contact Jennifer Ungerecht at beachbodyninja@gmail.com.

Look for our Health Holiday Challenge starting in January, where ACRF earns a \$ for every pound lost by participants. Keep us in mind!

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