



TRAINING TRACKS

April – June 2012

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

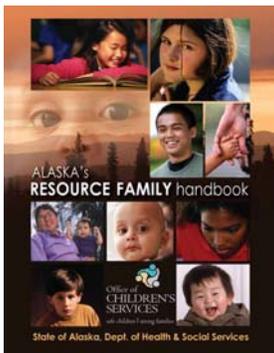
Resource Family Advisory Board News...

The Resource Family Advisory Board has been meeting regularly and discussing priorities identified at their Statewide Gathering in Anchorage in December. These priorities have resulted in several committees working on the following issues:

1. Looking at developing respite opportunities for resource families.
2. Recruiting more Alaska Native resource families.
3. Developing placement starter kits to help resource families be ready when kids come to their homes.
4. Advocating for automatic clothing vouchers for newly placed children.
5. Recruitment of Native members for the Resource Family Advisory Board.
6. Developing a system of ongoing communication with Alaska resource families.

Some progress has been made. In Kenai, Jennifer Showalter and local Girl Scout Groups are constructing 100 starter kits for new placements including pajamas, toothbrushes, and some basics for children and youth being newly placed. If you are interested in getting a similar starter kit project going in your community, contact the Resource Family Advisory Board for more information. The Board is working on developing an email address and web access, but for now, address your questions to OCS Advisor KariLee Pietz at Karilee.pietz@alaska.gov.

Alaska's Resource Family Handbook...



The State of Alaska has rewritten and mailed out the new Alaska's Resource Family Handbook. You should have received a copy – if not, contact your licensing worker, Call an ACRF office, or look it up online at the OCS website under Publications. Alaska's Resource Family Handbook is a guide to help you in the job of meeting your licensing requirements and procedural requirements in caring for children in the custody of the Office of Children's Services. It has been updated and revised and we strongly encourage you to read through it to familiarize yourself with any new and existing expectations of you as a licensed foster parent.

To earn 2.0 hours of training credit, read through the Handbook, and then complete the questionnaire that is included with the Handbook. If the questionnaire was not included with this Handbook call 1-800-478-7307 or you can find a copy at www.acrf.org under the self-study tab. Return the questionnaire to your local ACRF office or mail to ACRF, 815 Second AVE, STE 101, Fairbanks, AK 99701, or fax your completed questionnaire to 907-479-9666. If you have any questions about what you read in the Handbook, please contact your licensing worker for clarification.



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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.

✦ **APRIL:**

Building Families Through Adoption

Thurs. 4/19 from 6-9pm and Sat. 4/21 from 9am-4pm. Must attend both sessions.

Our Children, Our Future: A Conference for Resource Families and Support Family Services

April 30th – May 2nd, 8:30am-4:30pm. Westmark Gold Room, Fairbanks. Call 479-7307 for Registration Form.

✦ **MAY:**

Core Training for Resource Families

Tues. 5/8, Wed. 5-9, Tues. 5/15 and Wed. 5/16 from 6:00-9:00pm. Must attend all four sessions.

✦ **JUNE:**

13th Annual Resource Family Picnic

Sat. 6/2 from 12-3pm. Growden Park. Watch for more details.

Fairbanks Support Groups:

- ✦ **Foster Parent Support Group.** Participation is FREE. Group meets every first Monday of the Month from 6-8pm and the third Sunday of Every Month from 2-4pm, at ACRF, 815 Second Avenue in Fairbanks. Call Rachel at 479-7307 for more information.
- ✦ **Facing Foster Care in Alaska.** Group meets the fourth Monday of every month from 3-5pm (if that is a holiday, then it will be on the Tuesday following). Call Rachel at 479-7307 for more information.
- ✦ **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.
- ✦ **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Support & Discussion Group.** 4/26/12 6-8pm. Planning activities. 5/31/12 6-8pm. Guest Speaker: Judith Kleinfeld. Held at Alaska Center for Children & Adults. FREE Child care provided. Call Jenn Wagaman 456-4003 for more information.

Nome Training:

✦ **APRIL:**

Our Children, Our Community: A Conference for Resource Families

April 23rd -24th call 1-800-478-7307 for Registration Form.

Bethel Training:

✦ **MAY:**

"Looking for Answers" Bethel Out of Home Care Conference: A Training for Resource Families

May 14th – 16th call 1-866-478-7307 for Registration Form. A LIMITED amount of Travel Scholarships may be available for foster parents to attend; deadline to apply is April 27th.

Kenai Training:

✦ **MAY:**

Fostering Futures, Building Skills: Kenai Peninsula Out of Home Care Conference

May 3rd from 8:30am-5pm. Solid Rock Bible Camp. A LIMITED amount of Travel Scholarships may be available for foster parents in Homer and Seward to attend. Call 1-866-478-7307 to find out if you qualify.

Core Training for Resource Families

Fri. 5/4 from 6-9pm and Sat. 5/5 from 9am-5pm. Gilman River Center, 514 Funny River RD, Soldotna. Call 1-866-478-7307 to register.

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

✦ **MAY:**

Understanding Suicide: Building Intervention Skills

Thurs. 5/3 from Noon -1:30 pm and again from 6:30–8pm. Presented by Chris Cairns, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Pre-Conference Session: Core Training for Resource Families

Wed. 5/16 from 9am–5pm. Held at the Baranof Hotel. Lunch provided. Call 1-866-478-7307 to register.

Southeast Alaska Regional Resource Family Conference

Thurs. 5/17 – Fri. 5/18/19 from 8:30am–4:30pm. Held at the Baranof Hotel (Gastineau Room) 127 North Franklin, Limited travel scholarships are available until May 1st, call 1-866-478-7307 for more information.

Building Families Through Adoption

Must attend both sessions.

Wed. 5/30 from 6-9pm and **Sat. 6/2** from 9am-5pm

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.

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.

✦ **APRIL:**

Adopting Through OCS

Mon: 4/23 from 6–9pm

Core Training for Seasoned Foster Parents

Must attend both sessions to fill the Core training requirement.

Tues: 4/24 and **Wed: 4/25** from 9am–1pm

Core Training for Resource Families

Must attend all sessions to fill the Core training requirement.

Tues: 4/24, Thurs: 4/26 & Fri: 4/27 from 9am–Noon

✦ **MAY:**

Core Training for Resource Families

Must attend all sessions to fill the Core training requirement.

Thurs: 5/10, Thurs: 5/11 from 6-9pm and **Sat: 5/12** from 9am–Noon

Video Day: Film on Generational Trauma

Thurs. 5/17 from 9:00am - 2:00pm

Core Training for Resource Families

Must attend all sessions to fill the Core training requirement.

Tues: 5/22, Wed: 5/23 and **Thurs: 5/24** from 6–9pm

✦ **JUNE:**

Video Day: Films on Active Parenting

Thurs. 6/7 from 9:00am - 2:00pm

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, May 8th, Noon-1pm

- *Disabilities and Advocacy*

Wednesday, May 16th, 7-8pm

- *More on Disabilities and Advocacy, Guest Presenter: Tami Eller*

Tuesday, June 12th, Noon-1pm

- *Cultural Appropriateness, Rachel Hanft and Linden Staciokas, Fairbanks ACRF*

Wednesday, June 13th, 7-8pm

- *Understanding Team Decision Making Part 1, Making, Jamie Kokoszka, SC TDM Facilitator*

Tuesday, July 24th, 7-8pm

- *Understanding Team Decision Making Part 2, Jamie Kokoszka, SC TDM Facilitator*

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#

Online Training:

Check out ACRF online courses at www.ACRF.org

Click on the Self-Study tab and choose from taking an online interactive course, a written course that is printable, or an audio course.

Foster Parent Appreciation Month

May is not only time to finish up the school year and put out your hanging baskets, it is also Foster Parent Appreciation Month. In Alaska, on average, there are about 1700 children each month residing in out of home care settings. Foster parents open their hearts and homes to these children and not only keep them safe, but provide the love and nurturing that all children need. While the dedication and commitment to vulnerable children is year around, it is in May that we officially recognize the family members, foster parents, volunteers, mentors, community members, professionals and policy makers who help Alaska's children and youth in foster care find permanent homes, connections and well-being. On May 1st, the Governor signs an official Foster Parent Appreciation proclamation to "encourage all Alaskans to recognize and appreciate the dedication and achievements of foster parents in their communities." During the month, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, the Office of Children's Services, State agencies, child welfare advocates, foster parent organizations, and private officials sponsor and hold special events highlighting foster parents and honoring their dedication. For information on your area's events, you can contact your local ACRF office. In addition to the public events here are some professional things you can do during May to show your appreciation.



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- Send thank you notes or personalized letters of appreciation to foster parents, kinship families or volunteers. And who wouldn't feel appreciated receiving a plate of homemade cookies or a pot of soup!
- Feature a foster parent or a volunteer in your company or school newsletter or on your website. Just remember to respect the need for confidentiality, and don't show photos of kids in care or mention their names.
- Add a "May is National Foster Parent Month" and logo (download at <http://www.fostercaremonth.org>) to your email signature. You can also add links to the AdoptUSKids Alaska foster parent page <http://www.adoptuskids.org-for-families/state-adoption-and-foster-care-information/alaska> or to ACRF www.acrf.org/.
- Become a Facebook friend of "May is National Foster Care Month" or The Alaska Center for Resource Families.
- Donate books or materials to your school library that show the diversity of families, "Little Miss Spider", by David Kirk, "A Mother for Choco" by Keiko Kasza or "Horton Hatches the Egg" by Dr. Seuss for younger kids. Or put up a display in the library or classroom of classic children's books that have foster or kinship families; *Paddington Bear*, *Heidi*, *Tom Sawyer*, *The Secret Garden*, and *Harry Potter*. Even Superman grew up in a foster/adopt home!
- You can always show your appreciation for special foster parents in your life by taking them out for lunch. Or involve your whole family and invite a foster family you know over for a special dinner or a fun family movie night.
- If you are a foster parent give yourself a pat on the back and ask to see the dessert menu! YOU DESERVE IT!!!

Fit Kids Project Funded by the Mat-Su Health Foundation



Thanks to a generous donation from the Mat-Su Health Foundation Target Wellness Grant, the Alaska Center for Resource Families was able to send each Resource Family in the Mat-Su Valley a wellness packet including a Fit Kids Club DVD to use for fun and fitness and a copy of the "Be Well" book along with a self-study sheet to earn foster parent training hours. These materials are also

available for loan to other foster parents through the ACRF Lending Library, call 1-800-478-7307 or 479-7307 in Fairbanks to check these items out. Many thanks to the Mat-Su Health Foundation for promoting the health of their community!



1.0 HOUR SELF-STUDY

Stinky, Smelly and Unkempt: Issues of Hygiene for Children in Foster Care

By Aileen McInnis, Alaska Center for Resource Families

It's a tough issue for foster parents. What if the teenage girl in your home refuses to shower? What if your foster son urinates in his bed every night and you suspect it has something to do with his past history of sexual abuse? What about your foster daughter who doesn't take care of herself during her menstrual cycles and is made fun of at school? It is delicate at best to talk to someone about her smell or appearance. And why would a youth let himself stink anyway? Especially an adolescent who is supposed to care so much about what peers think? There are many reasons why a youth lacks in hygiene. One simple reason is he was never taught the basic skills of regular washing, taking care of "the stinky parts," and wiping after using the toilet. Some of it may be age appropriate behavior. Little boys and dirt usually go together! They don't like to take baths and get clean. When kids hit puberty, they perspire more and may smell more as a result. For some youth, the answer might be a remedial hygiene lesson, done matter-of-factly but kindly, without ridicule. Setting up a regular routine may help in this area and visual reminders and lists can help keep a kid on track. The underlying issue is education and basic hygiene and toilet training because they may not have been taught the first time around.



In this quarter's column of *Foster Talk*, two experienced foster parents offer some ideas to address this issue with kids. So let's talk about why they might show this behavior in the first place. What are some of these reasons?

Sexual abuse – Kids who have been sexually abused use body odor and hygiene as a way to ward off predators. If they soil their clothes, don't bathe, or don't change clothes, they will eventually become offensive smelling. This will keep people at a distance. People who don't get close can't abuse them. Being unattractive on the outside may be a sign of how she feels on the inside. It keeps people away from hurting her and makes her unattractive to others so she won't get hurt/taken advantage of sexually. Many sexually abused children have no one to protect them so they try to find ways to protect themselves. Some of them come to believe that if they and their surroundings smell, they will be safe from trespassers. So *safety* and *protection* is the underlying issue.

Attachment issues – Kids who don't feel loved or don't want to get too close to someone use hygiene much the same way as the sexually abused child. They don't want to be hugged or kissed because that means this person cares about them, and that is scary. If people care, they might start to care and when that has happened in the past they have been physically or emotionally hurt. Rather than risk that pain again, it's safer to keep everyone away. So *trust* is the underlying issue.

Control issues – Sometimes very pleasant children can have odd behaviors like hiding soiled underpants or smearing feces or peeing in the corner. There can be several reasons for this including warding off people with their behavior; a passive-aggressive approach to repressed feelings and anger (I can't tell you I am mad but I can do something to get back at you); or control battles with the parent. Can you make a child bathe or use the toilet? Well, not really. Children and youth may have had battles and control issues from their previous homes and foster parents may unwittingly repeat them. The underlying issues include helping children *communicate anger and aggression* in appropriate ways, teaching the use of *language to name the feelings* and helping children *feel some control* over their lives.

Emotional issues – Some children have psychological reasons of why they let themselves smell or come across as dirty or unkempt or put on a ton of weight. Your youth may be conveying their inner feeling rather than talking about them. They may be telling you that they feel gross and disgusting, or unclean. Some youth might be depressed, and truly don't care about how they look or don't have the energy to take care of themselves. All the good smelling shampoo in the world is not going to help until that underlying state of depression is relieved. Depressed people might need coaxing to complete basic tasks. So underlying mental health and well-being are the issues here.

Alan Corrick, Fairbanks resource parent, mentions **Developmental Issues**. "It's VERY important to determine if there are any special needs issues involved, cognitively or developmentally, in the hygiene problem. If there are, as with all special needs/developmental delays, your response is structured to the stage the child is at, up to supervising the child taking care of their body routines (being very parental). If there are no developmental issues, make sure there are no mental health issues either, as lack of hygiene can also be an indicator for various mental health conditions." He continues, "In the parents who have approached us on these matters, roughly a third have had one of these two situations going on with their children and were not looking at the cleanliness/offensiveness problem as a symptom of special needs or mental health."

A large part of dealing with this issue is figuring out the reasons behind it. Face it, until safety, security, and trust is established, it is difficult to suddenly convince a child that wiping your stinky parts is something you need to do every day! Look for the reasons behind the behavior why a child insist on sleeping in a bed soaked with urine or why a teen might refuse to shower to the point she repels people with her smell. If the reason is one of protection or fear, consider these ideas:

- * * Try to find out specific fears of the child. Help the child talk about these fears.
- * * Give the child alternative ways of feeling safe, especially at night or when most threatened.

Stinky, Smelly and Unkempt: Issues of Hygiene for Children in Foster Care continued...

- * * Let the child know you are going to keep him or her safe and demonstrate it by showing locks, how to summon you at night, etc.
- * * Use this issue as a way to express parental care and concern and to protect the child from comments from other children and possibly even adults. This is a chance to grow your relationship and help a child learn that you are there to keep him safe and take care of him.
- * * Children with a history of sexual abuse who are showing this level of fear would benefit from seeing a therapist to help work through the issues.
- * * Talk to all your children about how to use the bathroom and clean up afterwards and what your basic hygiene routine is. Be straight forward and factual, but don't compound existing shame through yelling or criticizing or ridiculing a child into compliance. Further shame could make things worse.



A child or youth needs you to parent, which means caring enough to take the time to teach and understand, and having the patience to help a youth trust you. Life as a foster parent may not always smell like a rose, but it is important work nonetheless. ■

IDEAS IN THIS SELF STUDY COME FROM: *Wetting and Soiling*, Foster Parent College; Training by Linden Staciokas, "The Scoop on Poop"; <http://thunderpie.net/adoption-how-to-handle-hygiene-issues-sensitively-in-older-child-adoption.html>; and <http://fost-adopt.adoptionblogs.com/weblogs/hygiene-issues>; and personal correspondence with foster parents Alan and Cheryl Corrick.

1.0 HOUR SELF-STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Stinky, Smelly and Unkempt: Issues of Hygiene for Children in Foster Care

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 acrif@nwresource.org.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Provider#: _____

1) Name three (3) reasons why hygiene might be a problem for some kids in foster care/

a) _____

b) _____

b) _____

2) Name two (2) things you could do if you have a child who might have hygiene problems because of fear issues.

a) _____

b) _____

3) Hygiene issues might be related to developmental delays

____ a) True

____ b) False

4) The most important part of dealing with this issue is figuring out _____. (Fill in the blank)

FOSTER TALK

How do you handle hygiene issues in teens? We know that often youth who have been hurt do this to keep others away, but what have you found that will be effecting in helping them learn some good hygiene habits, and stick to it?

Valerie Gaston Gilligan

Bribery! It doesn't have to be monetary, for example in our house the kids are only allowed to play video games on the weekend, however if you need a shower that must be done first. Or you can have x amount of time on a non-video game day after you've taken your shower. This has worked for me with preteen boys. Not sure what would work for girls.

Alan and Cheryl Corrick:

Determine if there are any special needs issues involved, cognitively or developmentally, if yes, structure your response to the state the child is at, such as supervising the child taking care of his body routines (being very parental). If no developmental issues, make sure there are no mental health issues either. Lack of hygiene can be an indicator for various mental health conditions. Consult and work with your mental health provider. About one third of kids fall into this category.

If the issue is lack of awareness or lack of priority, it is often solved by getting the MANAGED input of others to raise awareness or make it a priority. The key to this is WHO and HOW: Often, the parents/foster parents' input is discounted, so teachers, coaches, friends, youth leaders, teammates, etc. observations are given more weight. Peers are the most effective, but they need to be the most "managed" to insure kindness with honesty (the Bible calls it "truth in love"). In our experience, this is another third of kids with poor hygiene (many more boys than girls in this category).

The third is the tough one, kids who are CHOOSING to not bathe/stay clean and be physically offensive as a STRATEGY either to express rebellion/anger or to push people away from or personify their negative image of themselves. We've seen limited success until there is substantial progress in healing the hurt or resolving the anger. Most of that success has been through incentivizing the hygiene process: extra privileges, rewards, etc. tied to very specific performance (e.g. showered every day this week, changed clothes daily, etc.) It is a stopgap measure until genuine healing/resolution takes hold.

OTHER IDEAS:

Develop a nightly ritual around bathing so the child knows what to expect and stick to it. Children find structure relaxing. Do not discuss your older child's hygiene issues with your other children or with other adults. Many children adopted at an older age expect adults to be untrustworthy. Demonstrate that you can be trusted.

Modeling and persistent persuasion might help. Take your teen with you when you have your hair cut or buy makeup or soap products and casually ask if they need anything but don't press. Have a pretty overnight toiletry bag with fun samples in cute little bottles for visits. For younger teen girls who are still figuring out the hygiene thing, it might be helpful to help her get some good smelling toiletries or nice bath gels, or bubble baths, soft towels or a bathrobe.

NEW Self-Studies in the ACRF Lending Library?

Self-Study Course: **Social Stories** (1.0 Hour)

Information Packet: **Caring for Kids: The Facts About Sexual Abuse** (1.0 Hour)

Information Packet: **Caring for Kids: Child Sexual Development and Sexual Behavior Problems in Children** (1.0 Hour)

Information Packet: **Caring for Kids: Coping with the Emotional Stress of the Legal Issues** (1.0 Hour)

Information Packet: **Caring for Kids: Understanding and Dealing with Acquaintance Rape** (1.0 Hour)

Book: **Our Own: Adopting and Parenting the Older Child**, Trish Maskew

Book: **Perfect Targets: Asperger Syndrome and Bullying: Practical Solutions for Surviving the Social World**, Rebekah Heinrichs

Book: **Parenting Your Adopted Child: A Positive Approach to Building a Strong Family**, Andrew Adesman



To order any of the above materials call 1-800-478-7307 or in Fairbanks call 479-7307.

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