



ALASKA  
center for  
RESOURCE FAMILIES

# Training Tracks

January, February & March 2010

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

## Welcome to ACRF Alia!



Hello, I am Alia Granda, the new Project Assistant in the Mat-Su ACRF Office! Prior to coming to work in the Mat-Su office I worked for OCS in Anchorage for two and a half years in several capacities, most recently as an Investigations caseworker. During my time at OCS I developed a great respect for resource families and an appreciation for the incredible job they do!

A little about me: I was born and raised in Juneau and although I did spend several years in the Lower 48, I have been back in AK since '96. In May 2010 I will be graduating from UAS with my Bachelor's degree in which I have dual emphases in Communication and Psychology.

My husband, I and our two children (and 6 pets!) currently live in Palmer and are considering becoming a resource family ourselves! I look forward to getting to know more resource families in Mat-Su and around the state and learning all I can from them as well as from my experience with ACRF!

## Bilingual Babies

If you become a foster parent for an infant who comes from a home where English is not the primary language spoken, it is crucial you expose the baby to the sounds of his or her language. Why? Because new research has confirmed what many have suspected: Every language has its own sound and newborns can hear and make all of them. However, they soon begin to lose that ability and by their first birthday are able to hear and repeat only the sound of the language they hear spoken around them.



That means if you are an English speaker and take in a newborn whose parents speak Spanish, Russian, Yupik or some other language, you must make it a priority to keep that child hearing and repeating the sounds of his or her native tongue. If you don't do that and a child stays with you for 11 or 12 months and then returns home, he or she may well have lost the ability to properly speak the birth language.

Don't believe it? Dr. Patricia Kuhl, of the University of Washington, did tests with 7 month old Japanese children from Tokyo and 7 month old American children in Seattle. At that point both sets of children could distinguish the "L" and "R" sounds of English...but by 11 months of age, the Japanese children could no longer hear the difference because those sounds do not exist in their language. Essentially, the brain soon begins to block out the sounds that do not appear in your dominant language.

Imprinting of language is crucial to making sure a child who returns home is not later shunned or ridiculed for not being able to speak the home language correctly or without an American accent. And since language is the primary means for cultural transmission, maintaining the language should assume primary importance as a task of foster parenting these children.

How do you do this if you do not speak their language? The easiest way is to locate language tapes and keep them playing so that the child will hear and imitate the sounds. This is not perfect, but it is far better than nothing.

Tribes often have tapes of Native singing or talking, and there are an abundance of language tapes available in languages such as Spanish or Russian for those children. Cable television often has shows in other languages. ACRF has Inupiat language CDs and videos and CDs in Spanish, all of which can be checked out for home use. An even better alternative is to ask the parents to make a tape or CD of themselves singing and talking to the child.

You and the child don't have to know what the words mean, the child only has to hear the sounds to maintain the brain's capacity for that language. Get the tapes or discs and play them for hours every day—an hour visit three times a week with the parent is not sufficient to maintain language, especially when everyone around you is speaking English. If possible, enroll them in playgroups where the other language is spoken, or find another adult who speaks the language and have the child spend time with that person.

And don't worry that the child will be sacrificing the opportunity to learn English. Studies also show that "Babies raised bilingual—by simply speaking to them in two languages—can learn both in the time it takes most babies to learn one." Furthermore, "being bilingual seems to make the brain more flexible." It is all part of being a culturally competent resource parent.

# Fairbanks Training

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

## ✦ **Adopting Through the Office of Children's Services Orientation:**

Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup> from 6-7:30pm

Wednesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> from 11:30am-1pm



## ✦ **Core Training for Resource Families:**

Core training is required for all new foster parents or for foster parents who have not taken this training.

Thursday, January 14<sup>th</sup> from 6-9pm

Saturday, January 16<sup>th</sup> from 9am-5pm (Lunch will be provided)  
*again on...*

Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup> from 6-9pm

Saturday, March 20<sup>th</sup> from 9am-5pm (Lunch will be provided)

## ✦ **Strengthening Families Through Adoption**

Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup> from 6-9pm

Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup> from 9am-5pm (lunch will be provided)



## Support Groups in Fairbanks

## ✦ **Fairbanks Adoption and Foster Guided Support Group/Training**

This is a relaxing parent forum where adoptive and foster parents are invited to reach out for support while learning information relevant to parenting. For more information contact 479-7307.

**Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>: Tentative Topic: How to Talk with Your Social Worker:** from 6-7:30pm held at RCPC, 726 26<sup>th</sup> AVE, STE 2 in Fairbanks.

**Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>: Tentative Topic: Team Decision Making (TDM):** from 6-7:30pm held at RCPC, 726 26<sup>th</sup> AVE, STE 2 in Fairbanks.

**Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>: Adoption 5 Years Later: Talking to your child about adoption and ideas for handling typical issues as they arise:** from 6-7:30pm presented by Melody Jamieson at RCPC, 726 26<sup>th</sup> AVE, STE 2 in Fairbanks.

## ✦ **Grands Raising Great Children Support Group, Starting January 11<sup>th</sup>**

Meet others who are doing the same thing you are, receive information on available resources and process your feelings in a safe supportive environment. Participation is FREE. Limited supervised children's activities are available during the group – please pre-register if you are bringing your children. This group will meet from 6:30-8:30 pm the second Monday of every month, beginning January, 11<sup>th</sup> at RCPC, 726 26<sup>th</sup> AVE in Fairbanks.

# Juneau Training

**Pre-Registration is Required for the following events by contacting John Bennett in Juneau at 790-4246 or calling 1-800-478-7307.**

## ✦ **Core Training for Resource Families:**

Core training is required for all new foster parents or for foster parents who have not taken this training.

Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup> from 6-9pm and Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup> from 9am-5pm. Held at ACRF Juneau, 9109 Mendenhall Mall RD, STE 6A.

## ✦ **FASD SE Alaska Regional Conference: Embracing the Reality, Celebrating the Passion, and Creating the hope February 18-20, 2010 held at Centennial Hall in Juneau.** Registration is FREE. To register or for more information visit [www.ccthita.org](http://www.ccthita.org) or contact Donna at 463-7169 by Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>.

# Mat-Su Training

Pre-Registration is Required for the following events by contacting Betsy in Wasilla at 376-4678 or email at [bwoodin@nwresource.org](mailto:bwoodin@nwresource.org). Training events will be held at ACRF Mat-Su, 5050 Dunbar ST, STE A2 (off the Palmer/Wasilla HWY, Brentwood Plaza)

## ◆ Adopting Through the Office of Children's Services Orientation:

Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup> from 6-9pm

## ◆ Core Training for Resource Families:

Saturdays January 23<sup>rd</sup> and January 30<sup>th</sup> from 9-5pm. Must attend both days for a total of 16 hours training credit.

## ◆ Strengthening Families Through Adoption:

Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup> from 6-9 pm

Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup> from 9-5 pm



## ◆ ACRF Mat-Su Onsite Training:

### JANUARY 2010

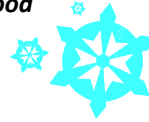
*Speech and Language Impairment, Betsy Woodin* - Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup> Noon-1 pm

*Video Day on Special Needs* – Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup> 9am-3 pm. ACRF will be showing 6 films on Special Needs. Feel free to attend any part of this event.

### MARCH 2010

*Hard to Hold: Attachment Difficulties, Betsy Woodin* - Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> Noon-1 pm

*Video Day on Attachment* - Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup> 9am-3 pm. ACRF will be showing 6 films on Attachment. Feel free to attend any part of this event.



## STATEWIDE TELECONFERENCE TRAINING

Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup>, Noon-1pm

- *Speech and Language Impairments, Betsy Woodin*

Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 7-8pm

- *Alaska Special Education for Parents, Betsy Woodin*

Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Noon-1pm

- *Cutting and Self-Injury in Youth, Aileen McInnis*

Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 7-8pm

- *Reactive Attachment Disorder, Betsy Woodin*

Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Noon-1pm

- *Hard to Hold: Attachment Difficulties, Betsy Woodin*

Wednesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 7-8pm

- *The New OCS Family Contact Standards, Aileen McInnis*

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](mailto:bwoodin@nwresource.org) or call 1-800-478-7307.

## Support Groups in Mat-Su

### Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>: Grandfamilies Support Group

VOA Grandfamilies Project sponsors an informal support group that meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday each month from 11am – 12:30 pm at the CCS Early Learning Office on the Parks HWY in Wasilla September thru May. Call ACRF at 376-4678 for local information or VOA at 1-888-522-9866.



## 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.

# *Self-Study Course: Family Contact and Parent Engagement*

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*Written by Aileen McInnis, Alaska Center for Resource Families Training Coordinator*

Many interactions occur when a family is involved with OCS – with social workers, lawyers, therapists and the courts. But the most important interaction is a family’s contact with their birth child. The goal of OCS is to help parents who have abused or neglected their children make changes that allow their children to remain safely with them. Birth parents need to have contact with their children and the role of resource families will be critical to make this successful.

OCS, through work done by the CINA Court Improvement Project Family Interaction Project, is implementing a policy called “Family Contact” which is part of Parent Engagement. In many ways, Family Contact is already happening through the plan for visitation outlined in the caseplan. Traditional visits tend to be 1 or 2 hours once a week. Family Contact takes interaction between parents and children a step further. Research shows that the best indicator of successful reunification is the frequency of visits and how soon they begin after placement. Family Contact emphasizes more frequent visits, visits in community locations, and careful decisions about how, when and who supervises visits. Family Contact is a way for OCS to encourage contact that is more natural, informal and true to the way that families usually interact. Resource parents will be expected to help in keeping kids connected with their birth parents by thinking creatively about how contact between parents and children can happen, such as inviting birth parents to doctors appointments or school events, allowing phone calls to say good night, or meeting with birth families in community places.

Another part of Family Contact is to look at the need of supervision that is needed for the contact. These levels are called *Unsupervised* (family can be together by themselves in an activity or event), *Intermittent* (there is occasional contact with the supervisor but for the most part family can be together by themselves) and *Structured Family Time* (someone is with the family during the visit and their level of interaction with the family will vary from high to low depending on the need of parent and safety of the child.) These levels are determined by the social worker and outlined in the Family Contact Plan.

## ***Responsibilities of the Resource Family***

The Office of Children’s Services has developed Policy and Procedures in this area that specifies the role of the resource family or other out-of-home care providers. (**OCS Policies and Procedures, Section 6.5.6**) A resource family should:

- Provide regular opportunities for Family Contact and be positive about these efforts. Make sure that children are transported to the visit and be on time for visits.
- Help a child move in and out of visits. Sometimes children need help preparing for a visit. Sometimes children need help after a visit because of upset or strong feelings. A resource parent should help with these transitions.
- Record observations and problems and relay to worker. First, write regular observation in your regular notes about a child’s reactions and participation to visits. Second, if you are the designated supervisor of a visit, file your observation on a specialized form called the Family Contact Observational Report that you should receive from your social worker.
- If reunification occurs, you are encouraged to work with the birth parents to make the transition smooth for the child and are encouraged to provide encouragement and mentorship to the birth family.
- Resource families still retain the right to give our their phone number and address at their discretion. Resource families retain the right to determine if and when contact happens in their home. Resource families retain the right to say that they are not comfortable with supervising a visit.

Even if a child doesn’t have frequent contact at the beginning of a placement, you can still encourage your child to stay connected to his family through activities such as:

- Sending holiday cards to the birth parents or sending school papers, report cards or pictures.
- Encouraging the birth parent to record a story for the child to play at home.
- Sending a notebook to visits to relay important stories or ask questions.
- Asking for pictures of the parent to put in the child’s room.

# Self-Study Course: Family Contact and Parent Engagement cont.

## Helping Children and Birth Parents Stay Connected

- The emphasis on promoting Family Contact means resource families will be more involved with helping children and birth parents stay connected and attached and will be asked to provide opportunities for birth parents to maintain regular contact with their child. Increasing the quality of the time that birth parents have with their children will hopefully move families more effectively toward the goal of long term permanency for a child. ■

This article draws from the soon to be released Understanding Family Contact self-study written by Aileen McInnis, Training Coordinator, for the Alaska Center for Resource Families with the assistance of the CINA Court Improvement Project Parent Engagement Committee and the Family and Youth Services Training Academy SKILLS Training.

## Family Contact and Parent Engagement

### 1.0 Hour Training Credit Questionnaire

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](mailto:acrf@nwresource.org).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Provider#: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Family Contact is currently not happening at any level at this time.  
 a. True  
 b. False
2. One of the roles of resource families is to help a child prepare for contact with his birth parents and help him deal with the feelings he might have after a visit.  
 a. True  
 b. False
3. What are the three (3) levels of supervised contact in Family Contact talked about in this self-study?  
a) \_\_\_\_\_  
b) \_\_\_\_\_  
c) \_\_\_\_\_
4. If a child is not having frequent contact with his birth parent, what is one (1) way that you can help him stay connected to his birth family?

### Stand Up for Our Children: Looking for Alaska Native CASA Volunteers *By Sylvia Berg, Cook Inlet Tribal Council*

More than 2,000 Alaskan children live in the foster care system and many become trapped in the court and child welfare maze, often being separated from their culture and traditional lifestyle. Approximately 60% of children in foster care are Alaska Native or American Indian. We currently have less than 10 Native CASAs in the Anchorage area. This is where you can step in and help by becoming a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer.

The goal of CASA is to ensure that every Alaskan child finds a safe, permanent and loving home where their culture is honored and they are valued members of the community. You do not have to be a lawyer or a social worker to be a CASA volunteer. All you need is a desire to help abused and neglected Alaskan children. You will receive training and support from professionals in the legal and children's services fields to help you through each case.

Will you be the difference for an abused or neglected Alaskan child? For more information about becoming part of the Alaska Native CASA program, visit [www.alaskacasa.org](http://www.alaskacasa.org) or call Valerie Dudley at 269-3512.

## New Self-Studies Available from the ACRF Library

The following new materials are available. Visit or call your local ACRF office in Anchorage at 279-1799 or email [acrf@nwresource.org](mailto:acrf@nwresource.org) to order. Our Self-Study Catalog is also available online at [www.acrf.org](http://www.acrf.org), if you do not have internet access call your local ACRF office or 1-800-478-7307 for your copy today!

**Self-Study DVD:** *Keeping it Real: Supporting the needs of African American Children in Out of Home Care* State of Washington Resource Family Training Center. 2009. (2.0 Hours)

**Self-Study DVD:** *All My Relations: The Indian Child Welfare Act and the Impact of Foster Parenting.* State of Washington Resource Family Training Center. 2009. (2.0 Hours)

**Self Study Course:** *Best Beginning Activity Booklet for Parents in (Y'upik): Birth to 18 months* State of Alaska Best Beginnings Project. *Miklenguut Aygmek Elluarrluki Anglivkallrat: Mikelnguq-Ilu Naanguarlutek Piarkatek Anqerraallranek Ayagluku 18-aanek Iralungellrat Nglekarrluku*

**Self Study Course:** *Best Beginning Activity Booklet for Parents (in Y'upik): 18 to 36 months* State of Alaska Best Beginnings Project. *Miklenguut Aygmek Elluarrluki Anglivkallrat: Mikelnguq-Ilu Naanguarlutek Piarkatek 18-aanek Iralungellranek Ayagluku 36-aanek Iralungellrat Nglekarrluku*

**Self Study Course:** *Best Beginning Activity Booklet for Parents (in Y'upik): 36 to 60 months* State of Alaska Best Beginnings Project. *Miklenguut Aygmek Elluarrluki Anglivkallrat: Mikelnguq-Ilu Naanguarlutek Piarkatek 36-aanek Iralungellranek Ayagluku 60-aanek Iralungellrat Nglekarrluku*

**ONLINE:** at [nwra.yourclassroom.com](http://nwra.yourclassroom.com). Go to <http://www.acrf.org/yourclassroom/instructions.pdf> for more information about Web Learn.

**Web Course:** *Fostering the Sexually Abused Child, Part One: Setting Up Your Home for Safety* ACRF Rural Teleconference Series (1.5. Hours)

**Web Course:** *Fostering the Sexually Abused Child, Part Two: Dealing with Sexually Acting Out Behaviors* ACRF Rural Teleconference Series (1.5 hours)

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