

Between Families

Fostering child to child relations

Children face challenges each day and often these are compounded by being a foster child — they face stressors that other children may not have experienced. The trauma of being removed from their parents and home, adjusting to a new family and confusion about the system are just a few of these most easily seen. Deeper than this can be situations of separation from siblings, friends and social supports that may now be lost. These losses and changes can present an extra challenge to foster children when they are faced with teasing or bullying behaviors by other kids.



Bullying or teasing is more front and center in the parenting eye than ever before. Schools have developed programs to help combat it. Communities have rallied around supports and programs to help prevent it. Parents have seen articles and reports about how to work with their children on it. Still, a foster parent has to think about this in a different and broader light due to the special circumstances foster children experience. Luckily, there are some common basic things to help youth who experience teasing or bullying.

First, listen, listen, listen. It is important for the child to relate the story in their words and completely with as little interruption as possible. You are hoping to gain information about the what, where, why and who of the situation. By listening, you get to take in all the information and begin to process what is occurring.

Second, pull out key information from the story as it is told. What was the situation that started the incident? Where did it occur? Why (in the thoughts of the child) did it happen? Who was involved? How did the child react to the situation? Understanding the child's reaction during the incident helps you formulate ideas and strategies, but it is most important to not appear to pass judgment or reflect blame from this information. You are looking for ways to help the child in future situations.

Third, you can begin to work on prevention strategies. Understanding that every child is different, having options for them is important. Also, understand that setting rules and expectations is critical to any strategies used. Most schools have bullying programs that define ways children are to respond if bullied. Make sure you know these and perhaps even have them on hand at your home.

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The great thing about these programs is their guidelines can be effective in most settings. Typically, all programs cover some basic strategies such as

- Ignore the bully completely. By denying the offender a reaction, he may stop.
- Assert yourself by informing the bully of her actions by replying in a strong but calm manner, "That is mean to say. Stop it."
- Question the comment in a manner such as, "Why would you want to tell me ... ?" or even a simple, "Really?"
- Involve an adult if the situation is persistent or has any overtones of physical threat to it.

Finally, practice, practice, practice. Much like the first part of listening, it is crucial to engage the child and practice strategies provided by the school or program. Repetition, even just with you, will help build the child's confidence to use it when needed. It also helps the child control their own reactions and feelings about the situation. By expressing and understanding his anger, frustration, shame or whatever emotions the child may be experiencing, he can better control them in the moment. This also helps your child avoid behaviors which could get them in trouble if they acted on those feelings.

As a foster parent, you have the front row to growth and development of your foster children. It is an amazing place to be, but also a challenging one. Understanding and assisting children to know how to deal with teasing, when it crosses the line into bullying or dangerous areas and planning with the youth to cope are the things you can do by being there for them.

Always look before you lock

As we move into summers hot months, we want all families to be mindful of the issues related to children and your autos.

Heatstroke is the leading cause of non-crash-related auto fatalities for children 14 and younger. Parents have to be aware and always in the moment to help protect children from this risk. Risk factors include caregivers who aren't used to driving kids or whose routine suddenly changes. Please be sure to take action to prevent these terrible tragedies from occurring by following these tips from safecar.gov

Tips to avoid child heatstroke **Always look before you lock**

- Always check the back seats of your vehicle before you lock it and walk away.
- Keep a stuffed animal or other memento in your child's car seat when it's empty, and move it to the front seat as a visual reminder when your child is in the back seat.
- If someone else is driving your child or your daily routine has been altered, always check to make sure your child has arrived safely.



Keep in mind a child's sensitivity to heat

- In 10 minutes, a car's temperature can rise over 20 degrees.
- Even at an outside temperature of 60 degrees, the temperature inside your car can reach 110 degrees.
- A child dies when his or her body temperature reaches 107 degrees.

Understand the potential consequences of kids in hot cars

- Severe injury or death
- Being arrested and jailed
- A lifetime of regret

What to do if you see a child alone in a car

- Don't worry about getting involved in someone else's business — protecting children is everyone's business; besides, "Good Samaritan" laws offer legal protection for those who offer assistance in an emergency.
- Don't wait more than a few minutes for the driver to return.
 - If the child is not responsive or is in distress, immediately:
 - o Call 911.
 - o Get the child out of the car.
 - o Spray the child with cool water (not in an ice bath).
 - If the child is responsive:
 - o Stay with the child until help arrives.
 - o Have someone else search for the driver or ask the facility to page them.

Outstanding care providers

Kansas care providers of the month Jason and Tiffany Wiske

Jason and Tiffany are care providers in southeast Kansas. This couple goes above and beyond to support the youth living in their home, being strong advocates for the kids as well as for themselves. Jason advocates for biological parents as an attorney and together, the Wiskes assist greatly in reunification. Youth placed in their home have a great success rate as a result of the excellent care they provide. This duo is excellent at meeting the needs of both children and families. The Wiske's biological children are also very open and welcoming to new youth in the home, and they all participate in community activities together.



Oklahoma care providers of the month Tasha Blue

Tasha is a single foster parent with two jobs. When Tasha signed up to foster, she only wanted one placement between 3 and 9 years of age. However, seeing a need, she recently took placement of four boys ages 8, 10, 10 and 10. All four boys came from another TFI home that moved out of state. The boys had been placed together in this home for no less than seven months and had developed a bond like brothers. Though only two of these children were related, Tasha accepted placement of all four to keep them together and lessen the trauma of losing those connections. She is always organized and on point with what she needs, what the children need and getting it all done. She has proven herself to be a true treasure to the TFI team.



Compliance corner

Meeting the needs of children in care is never an easy task. The required TIPS-MAPP or DT training for all prospective foster and adoptive families helps teach ways to accomplish this task. Embedded in this required training is information regarding the cultural, ethnic and religious needs of children in care and how foster parents plan to meet these particular needs. Though most foster parents are open to exploring and participating in other cultural, ethnic and/or religious activities that are important to their foster children, it is sometimes easier said than done as it may conflict with foster parents' own values, morals and beliefs. If this situation should arise, then the foster parents should consider enlisting support, guidance and feedback from their foster care worker. Situations such as these may be uncomfortable, but remember, the goal of fostering is to meet the child's needs, not the foster parents' needs. A case in point — if a foster child celebrates a holiday such as Christmas, Easter or Hanukkah, the foster parents are expected to support the child's participation in the respective holiday whether or not the holiday is in line with foster parents' beliefs. If foster parents find they cannot adhere to this expectation, then they may need to explore other ways to help children in need.

Recruitment moment

At TFI, having a group of knowledgeable foster and adoption families allows us to provide placement stability for youth in foster care throughout the state. Continuing to actively recruit and train foster and adoptive families within our agency will help ensure we have families to provide for children in need of care in our local communities. Giving these families ongoing support, development and training so they can feel competent in caring for youth will better equip them to access appropriate and high-quality services and advocate for their children's needs.

It is important to begin preparing our families to foster or adopt with the pre-licensing training and for it to extend to the home becoming licensed and taking their first placement. Each phase of the process should increase the family's ability to meet the needs of children in foster care. When placing a child with a family, it is important for the worker and family to recognize the need to continuously help

the family develop their skills and capacity to meet that child's specific needs. Partnering with our families to determine the additional information, parenting strategies and other support that will help them feel confident and capable about parenting the child is one of the best services our agency can provide!

Without you, we are unable to provide homes to children in need of care. But we need your help in finding more homes for these children. As most are aware, many children are placed away from siblings, families and communities when they enter foster care. By recruiting more homes willing to provide a home to these children, we will help keep children close to their families and communities while improving their chances of permanency. There are more children in custody in the state of Kansas than ever before, your help is needed! If you know someone who would be a good foster parent, contact your local TFI foster care worker.

Thanks for all you do for children and families!

Oklahoma news

Foster parent retreat

We are excitedly preparing for the Oklahoma foster parent retreat! We look forward to you joining us July 17 and 18 in Norman.

Home pools

Please let your worker know if you have added a pool to your home, even if just a wading pool. It is important we review with you the water safety plan to remain in compliance.

Home assessments

Reassessments of your home are due annually and require you have an updated medical form for everyone in your home (not including foster children). Your worker should provide the forms to you about 90 days before the reassessment is due. Other items such as renewed driver's license, insurance verification and pet vaccinations will also need to be provided.

Need for foster homes

There continues to be a huge need for foster homes in Oklahoma. Please encourage your friends and family to become foster parents. Refer a family who becomes a home, and you will receive a \$500 bonus when the home accepts their first placement. Be sure they list you as the referral source when they call us.

Happy anniversary

5 years

Matt & Shelly Bradford

1 year

Mark & Heather Arnold
Joseph & Ashley Dodson
Joe & Lori Flanagan
Gayle Pulley
Barbara Taylor





217 SE 4th St
Topeka, KS 66603
800-279-9914 | tfifamilyservices.org

Foster Parent Retreat **2015!**

Norman, Oklahoma, July 17-18
Wichita, Kansas, Aug. 14-15
Overland Park, Kansas, Aug. 28-29

For the most current calendar for Kansas Children Alliance Training,
go to childdally.org/training.html

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After hour emergencies, please call 877-921-4114.

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FOSTER
hope
FOSTER
love
FOSTER
cure