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Partners

The Newsletter For Wisconsin's Adoptive & Foster Families

A publication of the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families

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Inside

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Partners is published by the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, dedicated to recruiting families for Wisconsin children in foster care and providing support to foster and adoptive families. The *Partners* Newsletter is written and compiled by members of the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families staff.

Teaching Trauma in the Classroom

By: Heather T. Forbes, LCSW

Children are vulnerable. In an optimal environment, they are not expected to experience this vulnerability until later in life when their minds and nervous systems are equipped to handle elevated levels of fear, stress, and feeling overwhelmed. Yet, the key phrase here is "optimal environment." Unfortunately, we live in the "real" world, so children will often find themselves in situations that are far from the optimal and the result can be childhood trauma.

Childhood trauma happens at both the emotional and psychological level and it can have a negative impact on the child's developmental process. During a traumatic event (abuse, neglect, adoption, accidents, birth trauma, etc.), the lifelong impact is even greater if the child believes he is powerless, helpless, and hopeless. When a child experiences one or all of these feelings, he begins to believe the world is dangerous. Repeated experiences of these feelings will create a lasting imprint from which he operates and behaves. A framework based in fear and survival becomes the child's viewpoint of the world around him.

These early life experiences then influence the child's ability to "behave," or more correctly expressed, the child's ability to stay "regulated." Trauma impacts a child's ability to stay calm, balanced, and oriented. Instead, children with traumatic histories often find themselves in a "dysregulated" state, which manifests into a child who does not behave, cannot focus, and/or lacks motivation. It is not a matter of choice or a matter of "good" child verses "bad" child; it is simply an imprint from the child's past history. It's the child's new normal.

When working with children like this in the classroom, the most effective way to work with them is to work at the level of regulation, relationship, and emotional safety instead of at the level of behavior. These children's issues are not behavioral; they are regulatory. Working at the level of regulation, relationship, and emotional safety addresses more deeply critical forces within these children that go far beyond the exchanges of language, choices, stars, and sticker charts.

Traditional disciplinary techniques focus on altering the left hemisphere through language, logic, and cognitive thinking. These approaches are ineffective because the regulatory system is altered more effectively through a different part of the brain known as the limbic system. The limbic system operates at the emotional level, not at the logical level. Therefore, we must work to regulate these children at the level of the limbic system, which happens most easily through the context of human connection.

When the teacher says to a non-traumatized child, "Andy, can you please settle down and quietly have a seat?" Andy has the internal regulatory ability to respond appropriately to his teacher because trauma has not interrupted his developmental maturation of developing self-regulation tools and feeling like he is safe in the world.

Continued on page 3

From the Corner Office

It's that time of year: school's in session, the air is getting crisp, summer activities are at an end, and homework and after-school activities are taking their place. For families, the routines change overnight; mornings may seem more chaotic and evenings are full and busy. For children and youth in foster care, heading back to school may be a challenging time. Some children in out-of-home care may be with new families and they might be starting the year at a new school and in a new classroom. Parents of children who were adopted wonder if they should let schools know about their child's adoption story. Meanwhile, the children wonder what they should share (or not share) with their classmates – and if anyone will ask them questions that they may feel uncomfortable about or don't know how to answer.

As child welfare staff, we sometimes sit on the same fence as parents: wondering about how much information is good to share, questioning if sharing information about a child's adoption story will prejudice a teacher, and contemplating the wisdom of simply following the "wait and see" option – holding off until a clear need to talk about foster care or adoption presents itself.

The reality is that kids will always find things to talk about – and, somehow, they always seem to home in on the difficult subjects. That is one of the reasons why we always encourage you to talk with your children about adoption, foster care, and their personal stories. Each child's story will be different, and the amount and type of information you and the child you have adopted or are caring for are comfortable sharing will vary, as well. Those open conversations at home can give kids practice, comfort, and familiarity with talking about their stories.

We all want our children to be successful in school – so take the time to help them prepare, not only for math problems, but also for the questions around foster care or adoption issues. Help your kids understand that they can decide how much information to share or not to share at all.

Hang in there as this busy time of the year rolls out!

Colleen M. Ellingson
Chief Executive Officer

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Continued from front page

However, when Billy (the traumatized child) is asked the same question, his response is much different. He takes the long way around the classroom to his seat, he continues to not only talk but projects his voice across the room as if he is still out in the playground, and once seated continues to squirm and wiggle.

Traditionally, we have interpreted Billy as a disruptive child, pasted the label ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) onto him, and reprimanded him for his "naughty" behavior. What we have failed to see is that Billy cannot settle down on his own. His internal system has not experienced the appropriate patterning to know how to be well behaved like his classmate Andy and Billy does not know he is safe in this world, even if he is now in a safe environment.

The brain-body system is a pattern-matching machine. A child with little internal self-control will pattern himself according to his past external experiences. If his past experiences have been chaotic, disruptive, and overwhelming (trauma), he will continue acting this way until new patterns are established. Thus, a child coming into a calm and safe classroom is still likely to be acting as if he is in his previous chaotic and unsafe environment. A child can be taken out of trauma but not so easily can the trauma be taken out of the child. Past patterns of chaos are now the current framework for navigating his world; he knows no different.

The most effective way to change these patterns comes through safe, nurturing, attuned, and strong human connection. For the student in the classroom, it comes through the teacher-student relationship. The reality is, for our traumatized children to learn and achieve academically, science is showing that they must be engaged at the relational level prior to any academic learning.

***Heather T. Forbes, LCSW**, is the owner of the Beyond Consequences Institute. She is an internationally published author on the topics of raising children with difficult and severe behaviors, understanding the parent's reactivity when challenged in the home, and self-development. Forbes lectures, consults, and coaches parents throughout the U.S. and internationally with families in crisis working to create peaceful, loving families. She is passionate about supporting families and professionals by bridging the gap between academic research and "when the rubber hits the road" parenting. Much of her experience and insight on understanding trauma, disruptive behaviors, developmental delays, and adoption-related issues comes from her direct mothering experience of her two internationally adopted children.*

A Place in My Heart Conference

Beyond Consequences in the Classroom: A Trauma-Focused Approach

JOCKEY BEING FAMILY

Saturday, November 8, 2014
9am-4pm

Glacier Canyon Lodge at the Wilderness
45 Hillman Road
Wisconsin Dells, WI

Heather Forbes will be the featured presenter at this year's *A Place in My Heart* conference on Saturday, November 8. We hope you can join us as she talks about her Beyond Consequences in the Classroom: Trauma-Focused Approach for children and youth. You'll find additional information about the conference at https://apimh2014.eventbrite.com. If you have questions, please contact us at 414-475-1246, 800-762-8063, or info@coalitionforcyf.org.

Adoption in the Classroom: Sharing with Your Child's Teacher

As an adoptive parent, you may have struggled with the decision about whether to tell your child's teacher that your child was adopted. Of course, with an international or transracial adoption, teachers may guess that your family was built through adoption. But the question still arises about whether there would be any benefit to talking to the teacher, and what to share if you do decide to have this conversation.

Some parents choose not to talk about adoption with a child's teacher, fearing that the child may be labeled and that any behavior problems might be attributed to adoption, when in reality that behavior may just be part of typical childhood development. Parents who choose not to talk about their child's adoption often feel that their child's privacy is the top priority.

Feelings of grief and loss can come up because of any assignment that asks a child or youth who has been adopted to think about the past. That's why it's important for you, as a parent, to know what assignments will be coming up during the school year.

Other parents decide to tell the teacher their child was adopted so that, if the child brings up adoption, or if classmates ask questions, the teacher will be prepared to support the child. You might ask your child's teacher to let you know if an issue does come up in the classroom or on the playground so you're aware of something your child may need to talk about. A child who was adopted from India was understandably upset when she heard at school that in India, babies were found in dumpsters. The parents appreciated a phone call from the teacher so they could be prepared when their child returned home.

Parents who talk with teachers at the beginning of the school year may do so because they are concerned that some family-based assignments could be difficult for their child. Assignments like autobiographies, family trees, family histories, and lessons that focus on genetics or heredity may be difficult if the information your child needs to complete the assignment is missing, incomplete, or just quite different from information the other students will be sharing.

Feelings of grief and loss can come up because of any assignment that asks a child or youth who has been adopted to think about the past. That's why it's important for you, as a parent, to know what assignments will be coming up during the school year. Talking with teachers can give you a heads-up on when the assignments may be presented in class. It will also give you an opportunity to talk with your child's teacher about possible alternatives to the potentially troublesome homework.

Whether or not you've talked to the teacher ahead of time, you might find that your child comes home with an assignment that's difficult to do because you don't have the kind of information the teacher is looking for.

At this point, you could talk to the teacher and use this as an opportunity to educate him or her about adoption. Your child's teacher might be open to broadening the assignment for all students, not just for your child.

If you decide not to approach the teacher, you can encourage your child to do his or her best with the information you do have. You can also work with your child to complete the assignment in a way that still meets the objective of the assignment, but allows some flexibility. For example your child could share a photo from any time when he or she was younger, even if it's not a baby picture. You could decide together which family to include on the family tree. You can help your child with the difficult parts of an autobiography, deciding together which events to leave out while still giving a verbal picture of the child's life.

If you do choose to talk with your child's teacher, you might also bring up positive, respectful, and affirming adoption language. For example, it's preferable to say a child "was adopted" rather than a child "is adopted." Adoption is a one-time event, not the definition of a person. And if another student asks your child where his or her "real parents" are, the teacher might not be prepared to step in with the appropriate guidance. One parent reported that a teacher told her child that her sisters weren't her real sisters. As you can imagine, this was upsetting to the child and caused some upheaval at home. Please see the chart of positive adoption language included in this newsletter.

Many adoptive parents report that they received an encouraging and supportive response after talking to their child's teacher about adoption. Teachers expressed a willingness to offer alternative assignments and were more aware of positive adoption language. You and your child's teachers want the same thing—a healthy and supportive atmosphere and a positive school experience for all students.

The Individualized Educational Program (IEP) Process – An Overview

As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child, and a team approach is critical to supporting a child's learning. This is the intention behind the **Individualized Educational Program (IEP)** for special education services. By design, the IEP process pulls together educational professionals and parents to ensure consistent and appropriate special education for children who need it. When parents, teachers, therapists, and even the child himself, come together for planning, special education services can reflect a thoughtful, holistic, and individualized approach to educational support, with positive outcomes for the student as the common goal.

For parents who have never been involved in an IEP, navigating the process can be uncertain. It's important to know how you, as parents, can contribute to your child's IEP most effectively. For parents who are presently involved in their child's IEP, challenges may arise or team focus may feel like it is diminishing as the busy school year progresses. It can be helpful to regroup and ensure that the IEP team and services are on track for your child.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD NEEDS SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES?

If you suspect that your child's academic challenges may be related to a disability, reach out to the teacher, school psychologist, or guidance counselor. A medical diagnosis or medications your child may be taking could impact your child's behavior and capacity to learn, so it is important to share this information with teachers. When a medical diagnosis is not present, parents may overlook the notion that their child may have a disability that impacts his learning. A school psychologist or other professional can work with your child to identify whether an educational diagnosis is warranted. If the school feels that your child does not need to be evaluated or if you disagree with the evaluation, you can contact your pediatrician or other professional for an outside evaluation. You can then provide the results of an outside evaluation to the school.

INITIATION OF SERVICES AND THE IEP MEETING

Most often it is teachers who notice when a child is struggling behind developmental landmarks and they contact parents to discuss special education services. But parents may notice signs of struggle as well, and can talk with their child's teacher to initiate a discussion. Once a referral to special education services is made, your child will be evaluated to determine if there is an impairment requiring special education. Parents must give consent prior to any evaluations. Once evaluations are conducted, the initial IEP meeting is held. This is where the IEP team first comes together. The IEP team typically consists of parents or guardians, teachers, special education teachers, and a school psychologist. At times, a principal or assistant principal may be involved, as well as foster parents, school social workers, school nurses, therapists, disability advocates, community social workers, and other specialists. Your child is encouraged to attend the IEP meeting, as well. You, along with the rest of the team, can determine if it is appropriate for your child to attend, based upon his or her age and understanding.

At the initial meeting, the IEP team identifies goals and discusses services necessary to achieve them. An IEP document is then drafted, to reflect the service plan. A parent must provide written consent before special education services can be implemented.

The IEP must be reviewed annually, at minimum, and may be updated and reviewed more often, as needed. Anyone on the team can propose additional reviews and sometimes it is parents calling for an IEP meeting. Re-evaluation of your child takes place every three years, in order to assess disability and appropriateness of special education services.

HOW TO COPE WITH CHALLENGES

As we are all aware, things don't always run 100% smoothly when multiple people get together to accomplish a goal. It's good to be mindful of that and think about ways you can work through challenges that come up. While no one enjoys conflict, avoiding a topic that poses disagreement may mean overlooking important interventions that your child can benefit from. Explain your perspective thoroughly and answer questions honestly.

Beware of making assumptions about how your perspective may be perceived or how others will respond. Usually, teams can work through conflict with patient dialogue and understanding. Cody Sorlie Theis, a special education teacher for the DeForest Area School District, encourages parents to bring their ideas to the table. "We want to support children in the best way that we can, and if it means trying something new, we will explore whether it is feasible."

If a problem persists, talk with an assistant principal or principal. Bring in an external advocate – from a disability advocacy agency, your child's therapist, an in-home provider, or other family member who can support you and your child.

When parents actively participate on their child's IEP team, it can have a tremendous impact on educational outcomes. You, as parents, are a part of the checks and balances process intended to ensure that your child's access to an appropriate education is being upheld. When everyone works together, your child's IEP team can accomplish a roadmap of meaningful interventions necessary to promote your child's ultimate success. And that's a noble mission to be part of!

"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team." --Phil Jackson

WI FACETS offers parents education on their rights and how to exercise those rights effectively. They can also provide individual consult to families over the phone, in person, or at school meetings. The **Wisconsin Special Education Mediation System** can provide the involvement of an external mediator. **Disability Rights Wisconsin**, a statewide disability advocacy agency, may provide additional assistance, especially with regard to assistive technology, frequent suspensions, transition planning, and more.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- "Parent participation in the IEP process is critical," says Carrie Staley, special education teacher for the Madison Metro School District. "There needs to be consistency between the home and school environments and parents provide important advocacy for their child in the planning process."
- "Don't be intimidated by the team of professionals sitting around you. Remember, you are the expert on your child. You have a lot to contribute to your child's education" says Karen Zeuske, parent of Joseph (age nine) from Hartland, Wisconsin. "I take lots of notes, which is a very useful tool. During IEP meetings, I often refer to my notes from past meetings and past copies of IEPs, as well."
- Your child might have reservations about attending her IEP meeting. Imagine being surrounded by teachers, parents, special education teachers you don't know, and maybe even… gasp, your principal! It can be rather intimidating for all of these people to be talking about you and making plans. Your child's voice at these meetings is very important and it can help to talk with her in advance. Tell her who is going to be at the meeting and have a conversation to help her explore her own ideas for the meeting. She might be able to tell you where she thinks she needs extra help. It's important for her to know that she is included in the process and that it's not something being done to her or decided for her.
- If the IEP process seems difficult at times, know that it is intended to be rigorous in order to avoid funneling children into labels. This is in the best interest of your child. If you have any questions along the way (and you will!) ask teachers, administrators, or disability advocates for clarification so that you can be well-informed and an active participant.
- Children with trauma and loss in their pasts can struggle with emotional and attention disorders. Without an IEP in place to address their sensitive needs, a lot of these children can end up with suspensions and expulsions, which can be a vicious cycle resulting in negative outcomes and a rough start to adulthood for your child. An IEP provides advocacy for children with special behavioral needs and assists them in building the coping mechanisms to work through them.

Peer to Peer – How to Help Children Answer Questions about Their Adoption Stories

Children who were adopted don't live in a vacuum. They will come into contact with peers who may ask questions about their adoption story. Children who were not adopted may have trouble understanding adoption. Many children's books and movies present adoption as the result of the death of a parent or involving some sort of wicked adult, both of which can be scary for children. Adoption in real life often involves adult decisions that can also be hard for children, including those who were adopted, to understand. It might be helpful to explain these concepts to your child. Perhaps in doing so you can help them understand why their peers might have questions.

Whether questions about your child's story come up because your family is transracial, as the result of a school assignment, or from kids just talking, it can be a stressful moment for your child. Open communication and practice or role playing might help to mitigate that stress and lead to your child feeling more confident and prepared. You may even have the opportunity to model how to respond when you are asked questions in the store, at a school function, or by members of your family. Questions can and do come up at any time. It can be helpful for both you and your children to be prepared ahead of time.

What kind of questions might come up?

Though you can't predict every situation, here is a list of questions children who were adopted report hearing:

- Do you know your "REAL" mom/dad?
- Why doesn't your mom/dad/brother/sister look like you?
- Why were you adopted?
- What does it feel like to be adopted?
- Do you miss your birth family?

No matter the question(s) they get asked, it can be helpful to let your kids know they have options in how they answer. Giving them choices gives them control of their story. The Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) teaches children that they have four choices when they are presented with a question. C.A.S.E. calls this W.I.S.E. Up*. Children can

- Walk away or change the subject
- Let the person know it is private
- Share a few pieces of information about adoption or
- Educate - share a fact about adoption instead.

While role-playing questions, here are some important skills you may want to include:

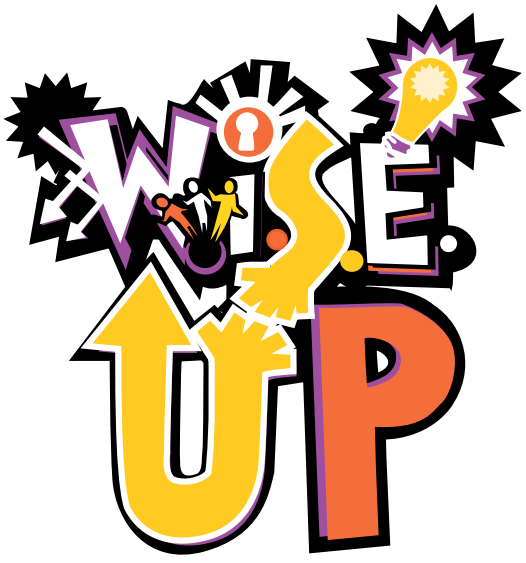
Practicing boundaries. Not everyone needs to know everything about your child's story. Knowing how much to share can be especially hard for children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect, or have seen domestic violence, or drug and/or alcohol abuse.

The difference between secrecy and privacy. Keeping something secret because of shame or guilt is different from keeping it private because you don't feel comfortable sharing. Teaching your children this difference may be particularly hard if they are very young or are functioning at a young age level. It can be helpful to have an example. For instance, you can illustrate the difference by teaching your child that a secret is something like breaking her brother's toy and not telling anyone, while something private could be the fact that she has two sisters who don't live with her all of the time, but who she sees a few weekends every month. It's okay to keep private the information about other family members if your child doesn't feel comfortable sharing that. However, she should tell you if she broke her brother's toy!

Having an out. Let your children know it is okay to stop a conversation, even in the middle of it, if they are uncomfortable. Some children feel that once they open the door to talk about their adoption story, they need to tell everything. It can be comforting to them to know that this is not the case.

The first time your child is asked a question about his adoption story, it may be a welcomed experience or a challenging one. Encourage your child to process with you or another trusted adult shortly after the incident occurs. Practice may not make perfect, but it can make situations feel easier. And remember that continuing to talk about your child's story together is beneficial. As your child grows and develops, and can understand his story with greater depth, he will learn more about what he is and is not comfortable sharing with others.

**The W.I.S.E. Up!® curriculum was created and provided by The Center for Adoption Education and Support*



Resources

From the Coalition

- Tip sheet: *Helping Achieve School Success*
  wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets
- Tip sheet: *Preparing for Your Child to Go to School*
  wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets
- Tip sheet: *Education & Adoption – Issues to Keep in Mind when Working with Students & Families*
  wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets
- Tip sheet: *Fostering a Child with an IEP*
  wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets

Additional Resources

- A Guide to the Individualized Education Program
  www2.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html
- Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS)
  www.wifacets.org
- Individualized Education Programs
  kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/iep.html
- Beyond Consequences Institute
  www.beyondconsequences.com
- Help for Billy
  www.help-for-billy.com
- Adoption Awareness in School Assignments: A Guide for Parents and Educators
  www.adoptionpolicy.org/Adoption_Awareness_Schools.pdf
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Special Education
  http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_parent
  http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_sbiep
- Wisconsin Special Education Mediation System (WSEMS)
  www.cesa7.k12.wi.us/sped/wsems/indes.htm
- Disability Rights Wisconsin
  www.disabilityrightswi.org
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
  http://idea.ed.gov/

Books

- Adoption and the Schools, by Lansing Wood and Nancy Ng
- What Family Tree? School Issues and the Adopted Child, Curriculum developed by Wood and Norris
- Help for Billy: A Beyond Consequences Approach to Helping Challenging Children in the Classroom, by Heather Forbes
- Every Child Deserves a Chance: A Parent's Welcome to the Special Education Process
- Writing Measurable IEP Goals & Objectives
- Our Labeled Children: What Every Parent and Teacher Needs to Know About Learning Disabilities

Home to Stay: Family Story Fall 2014

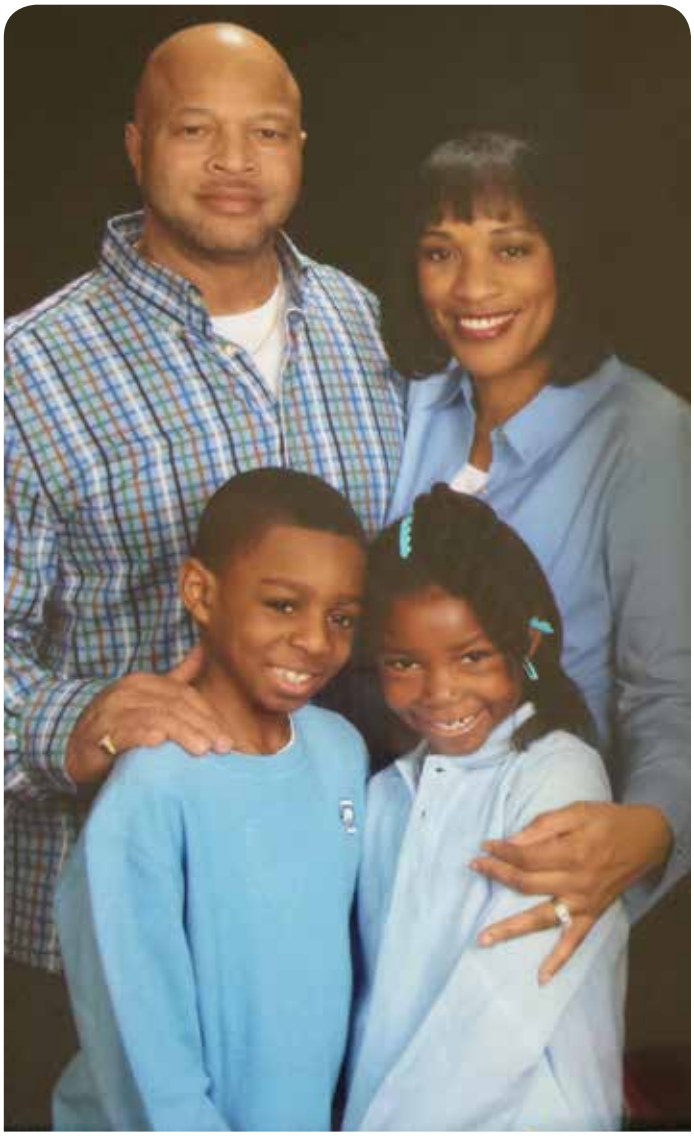
A popular song by musician John Mayer states, "We keep on waiting / Waiting on the world to change." Lori and Fred Kendrick were tired of waiting for the world to change and decided to take action. They heard statistics in the news regarding how many children are involved in the child welfare system in the state of Wisconsin and they decided to become foster parents. They felt that they could offer safety while helping children reunify with their birth families.

Their first child in care was a two-year-old boy who lived with the Kendricks for about four months before returning to live with his birth father. This was a positive experience for the Kendricks, as it helped accomplish their goal of reunifying children with their biological families whenever possible.

The second child that they welcomed into their care for the Kendricks were siblings Keylen (now eight) and Keelena (now six), who eventually became part of their forever family. Lori and Fred were initially told that the children would reunify with their birth mother, but as we all know, life can be full of surprises and complications. Although they were not planning to adopt, Lori and Fred have fully embraced their move to becoming an adoptive family. Lori also strongly believes that, "becoming a foster parent is a good way to determine if adoption is right for your family. It allows you to bring a child into your home and get to know them to see if it is a good fit."

For the Kendricks, good fit is an essential part of what makes their family function efficiently. Before becoming foster parents, Lori owned a salon and, "did whatever she wanted to do." Now that they have become parents, Lori says that their focus is on their children; they have become the main priority right now. Lori manages the household during the week and, when she works on weekends her husband takes over that role. They are not only a great team, but also very supportive of one another. She says that when she is "at her wit's end," her husband is ready to take over and vice versa. This bond was especially helpful during the first few years the children were in the Kendrick home. Because they were still in foster care and the adoption had not yet been finalized, Lori and Fred were very limited in the amount and type of information they could share about their children. At that time, it was critical for Lori to rely on her husband and other people who knew what was happening, including the childrens' social workers.

Lori describes their family as active and busy. They like going to the park and to other places where Keylen and Keelana can run, play, bike, and swim. The kids go to YMCA camp in the summer, which they enjoy very much. They are also a loving family and like to have fun and laugh. Because they want them to have a good life and be able to function independently when they are older, Lori and Fred are serious about nurturing and teaching their children. Fred and Lori



hope that someday, the effects of trauma will not be at all apparent in their children.

Although Lori and Fred have adapted well to their new lifestyle, this has not come without some challenges. They did not know much about Keylen and Keelana's history or prognosis at first. However, once they decided to adopt, the family worked with an adoption caseworker who was instrumental in filling in the gaps and finding them services.

Lori says that the teachers she has worked with have been amazing and have really helped her children learn and grow. She is grateful that they have structured their classrooms to accommodate her children's needs, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder/Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD/ADD), impulsivity, speech therapy, and other individualized programs. In addition, the children are sent home with a daily "hug sheet" from their teacher that helps pinpoint

where challenges lie throughout the day. Keylen and Keelana also have goals to achieve, which change as they improve at those tasks.

Lori says that one of the most rewarding aspects of being adoptive parents is seeing their children make strides and achieve goals. When they see this, they know that they are "doing something right."

One of the children had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) at the time of placement with the Kendricks due to a learning disorder. Since that time, school personnel have met with the Kendrick family several times a year to evaluate progress and make revisions as needed. Lori does caution that some schools/teachers seem to be more knowledgeable about IEPs than others. She has found that it is helpful to be forthcoming with information about their child and to step in to advocate when necessary. Lori also volunteers in both of her children's classrooms, which helps her be more connected to this part of their lives.

Spending time at her children's school and in the community has led to many conversations about adoption. Lori has received many positive comments from both friends and strangers, but has noticed that there are some misperceptions out there. Lori feels that one of the biggest misconceptions regarding adoption is that love and a secure environment will "fix" everything, regardless of what a child has experienced. Although these things have helped, Lori and Fred have also had to seek out professional assistance and educate themselves in order to help their children cope with past challenges. She also feels that many people believe that young children who enter foster care will not experience as many challenges as children who enter foster care at an older age. Lori wants people to be aware that children who have spent time in foster care may have lifelong challenges, regardless of how old they were when they were removed from their birth home.

Despite some of the challenges, Lori and Fred have discovered that adoption can be extremely fulfilling. Lori says that one of the most rewarding aspects of being adoptive parents is seeing their children make strides and achieve goals. When they see this, they know that they are "doing something right."

The Kendrick family receives enewsletters from the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families, and also received a Home to Stay™ visit in June 2014 to celebrate their adoption finalization. The family appreciated that the backpacks they received during this visit were personalized with items that her children found meaningful. Lori was also pleasantly surprised that Jockey thought about the parents and provided them with a tote bag filled with goodies, including a book for adoptive parents that Lori has been reading. Lori points out that after adoption, families may no longer have access to caseworkers. The Kendrick family recognizes that they can turn to the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families as a resource if they are ever in need of information or support.

The Kendricks are an example of a Jockey Being Family® Home to Stay™ family. Before their Home to Stay visit, personalized backpacks were created for all of their kids, containing books, games, blankets and other goodies to help the family further celebrate adoption finalizations. If you have recently completed an adoption from the child welfare system and would like to take part in the Home to Stay program, please contact us at 414-475-1246 or 800-762-8063.

JOCKEY BEING FAMILY

Positive Adoption Language

The way we talk—and the words we choose—say a lot about what we think and value. When we use positive adoption language, we say that adoption is a way to build a family just as birth is. Both are important, but one is not more important than the other. Choose the following positive adoption language instead of the negative talk that helps perpetuate the myth that adoption is second best. By using positive adoption language, you'll reflect the true nature of adoption, free of innuendo.

Positive Language	Negative Language
Birthparent	*Real parent*
Biological parent	*Natural parent*
Birth child	*Own child*
My child	*Adopted child; Own child*
Born to unmarried parents	*Illegitimate*
Terminate parental rights	*Give up*
Make an adoption plan	*Give away*
To parent	*To keep*
Waiting child	*Adoptable child; available child*
Biological or birthfather	*Real father*

Positive Language	Negative Language
Making contact with	*Reunion*
Parent	*Adoptive parent*
Intercountry adoption	*Foreign adoption*
Adoption triad	*Adoption triangle*
Permission to sign a release	*Disclosure*
Search	*Track down parents*
Child placed for adoption	*An unwanted child*
Court termination	*Child taken away*
Child with special needs	*Handicapped child*
Child from abroad	*Foreign child*
Was adopted	*Is adopted*

Words not only convey facts, they also evoke feelings. When a TV movie talks about a "custody battle" between "real parents" and "other parents," society gets the wrong impression that only birthparents are real parents and that adoptive parents aren't real parents. Members of society may also wrongly conclude that all adoptions are "battles." Positive adoption language can stop the spread of misconceptions such as these. By using positive adoption language, we educate others about adoption. We choose emotionally "correct" words over emotionally-laden words. We speak and write in positive adoption language with the hopes of impacting others so that this language will someday become the norm.

Source: Adoptive Families magazine

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wiadoptioninfocenter.org

An umbrella of services over foster care and adoption; information and referral; recruitment; training, education and support for families and professionals.