

A Letter from NACAC President Sue Badeau

Each summer, my family makes the trek to the NACAC conference. We make new friends, meet up with old friends, learn valuable information, hone advocacy skills, and recharge our batteries. This organization has been instrumental in the life of our family over the past 30+ years.

I know that NACAC has played a similar role for many of you—whether through advocacy, education, or support. The consistent thread through all of this has been the steady hand of leadership provided by Executive Director Joe Kroll.

After four decades of service to children and families throughout North America, and indeed, the world, Joe will retire next spring. I'd like to share

a few words with you from Joe about his decision:

After 40 years of involvement with NACAC, I am ready to step down as Executive Director. While I am not leaving the field, I will retire from the day-to-day operations of this vital organization. My wife Becky and I are looking forward to traveling and visiting our many friends around the country, spending time in Puerto Rico in the winter, and having even more time with those two wonderful grand-kids. We both look forward to continuing our advocacy, especially where child welfare intersects with issues of social justice.



Spending my career working as an advocate for children and families has been priceless. Few have the opportunity to work in a mission-driven

...continued on page 2

Contents

- 3 *Advocates for Families First Releases Policy Agenda*
- 6 *NACAC's 2014 Award Winners Truly Make a Difference*
- 8 *The 3-5-7 Model—Helping Children Work through Grief*
- 11 *Adoption-Related Resources*
- 12 *Anu Family Services: Innovative Approaches to Achieving Youth Permanence and Well-Being*
- 14 *2015 Call for Proposals*
- 15 *Teens Need Permanency and Purpose*

Michael

Almost 17, Michael is a sweet, outgoing young man who is easy to get along with and respectful of adults. Those who know him best describe him as affectionate, sensitive, and loyal. Michael enjoys Star Wars Legos, video games, and hiking. But one of his favorite things to do is cook, and he helps make healthy meals every day. Michael also likes to make desserts, including brownies (“from scratch, of course,” he says) and decorate cakes. In school, he has a 4.0 GPA and likes all of his classes, especially Junior ROTC. In the future, he'd like to go to college and major in a science-related field. He thinks perhaps a career as a chef or a veterinarian is in his future.

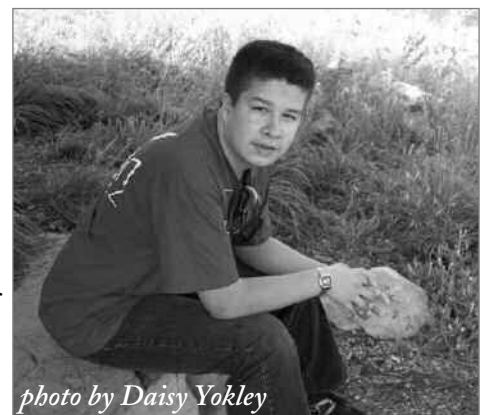


photo by Daisy Yokley

Michael really wants to be adopted and is hoping to find a family before he walks across the stage at his high school graduation in 2015. He'd like the family to help him stay in touch with his two siblings and he'd like to have a dog or other pet. (He likes exotic animals too—like snow leopards and lions—but not as pets!) For more information, contact Torri Cowans at Children Awaiting Parents: 585-232-5110; torri@capbook.org. ♦

Letter from President...

continued from page 1

organization and get paid for it. I want to thank everyone who has supported NACAC during my tenure.

In July the NACAC board launched the search for a new Executive Director, and we encourage you to read the position description and share it with anyone you think might be interested. We will be accepting applications through mid-October and plan a careful and successful transition to a new leader. The job posting is at www.nacac.org/search.html. If you have questions or candidates to recommend, please email me at search@nacac.org.

We have also kicked off a special fundraising effort to help ensure the sustainability of the important work of this organization for years to come. This will culminate in a celebration of Joe's contributions at next year's conference in the Los Angeles area. Stay tuned for more details!

The board is grateful for this deliberate and smooth transition and for your ongoing support. We look forward to shaping NACAC's bright future together.

Sue

Sue Badeau, NACAC President

Adoptalk

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Comments and contributions welcome!

SUE BADEAU, President
JOE KROLL, Executive Director
MARY BOO, *Adoptalk* Editor

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Teens Need Families Too

In this issue of *Adoptalk*, we are featuring waiting youth who will soon be turning 18 to highlight the fact that older youth need families as much as younger children. We hope you will remember that young people who are 16, 17, 18, and older want and need the love and support of a permanent family as they begin to explore their futures. We encourage the child welfare system to continue to recruit permanent families for older youth—both as they begin to move toward the age of emancipation and, if those recruitment efforts don't succeed, after they are out of care. None of us is ever too old for a family! ♦

Theresa, Quarnesha, & Kayla

Theresa, Quarnesha, and Kayla have always lived together and want to stay together in an adoptive family. These sisters love cheerleading, dancing, listening to music, taking silly videos of themselves, hanging out with friends, shopping, and going to the beach.



Photo by Angel Gray

As the oldest, 17-year-old Theresa is a natural leader and a little more outgoing than her sisters. Now in the 11th grade, she's very intelligent and has a lot of goals for her future. A natural entertainer, Theresa loves to make other people laugh and likes to sing and dance. She's currently working on perfecting her back handspring. Her younger sisters are the two most important people in her life, and Theresa does whatever she can to make sure they're happy.

With her winning smile and great sense of humor, 16-year-old Quarnesha lights up a room and attracts friends easily. She listens to others and makes the people around her feel valued. She looks up to both of her sisters, because they have stuck by her through thick and thin and love her no matter what. Now in 10th grade, Quarnesha enjoys writing and drawing. She also has a lot of creativity in the style world and is very good at doing other people's hair. She loves it so much, she thinks she'd like to be a hairdresser someday—possibly even in Paris!

Fourteen-year-old Kayla may be a little shy at first, but once you make a connection with her you've got yourself a friend for life. One of Kayla's defining characteristics is her kind heart and her deep care for others. She has a fierce loyalty to her sisters and her friends, and she tries her best to help them any way she can. Kayla is also quite the artist and fashionista, and when these two strengths are combined—watch out! She has a talent for cosmetics and for creating the perfect outfit, and likes to give advice to anyone who will listen. Kayla's currently in the ninth grade.

These talented girls will thrive in a nurturing, patient family with parents who are engaged in and encouraging of their interests and abilities. Theresa says she sees herself—with her sisters of course—in a funny and outgoing family with a lot of love. For more information, contact Torri Cowans at Children Awaiting Parents: 585-232-5110; torri@capbook.org. ♦

Advocates for Families First Releases Policy Agenda

In mid-June, Advocates for Families First: Enhancing Support and Advocacy for Children in Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Families—a collaboration of NACAC, the National Foster Parent Association, and Generations United—announced a new policy agenda with recommendations for changes at the federal and state/tribal levels.

Our alliance envisions a world where children and youth who need out-of-home care have a family—kinship, foster, or adoptive—who can most effectively help them thrive, meet their needs, and assist them in becoming successful adults. With funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, and Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, we are undertaking policy advocacy, communications and messaging work, and efforts to enhance the support and advocacy capacity of organizations that support foster, adoptive, and kinship families.

Below are highlights from the Advocates for Families First advocacy agenda, including all of its goals and many of the federal and state/tribal recommendations to achieve these goals. The complete agenda is available at www.advocatesforfamiliesfirst.org. If you would like to get involved in our advocacy efforts, please contact project director Kim Stevens at 508-254-2200 or kimstevens@nacac.org.

Prioritizing Family Care

Goal A — New and extended families are found, recruited, and supported, especially for older children and youth and those with more complex needs; recruited families reflect the racial and ethnic make-up of the children and youth who need families.

- All children and youth are eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement, with no restrictions based on their birth parents' income.

- Federal funding includes new and periodic opportunities for services that find families for children and youth.
- States and tribes invest additional IV-E funds resulting from the federal recommendation in increased efforts to find, develop, and support families.
- States and tribes fund and implement effective, comprehensive programs to find families for children and youth.

Goal B — Children and youth are more often placed in supported families, and the use of non-treatment-oriented group care is reduced.

- Federal reimbursement for non-treatment-oriented group care is restricted, and the resulting savings are required to be reinvested in recruiting and supporting therapeutic foster, adoptive, and kinship families for children and youth who cannot return home.
- States and tribes reduce the use of non-treatment oriented group care and redirect saved funds to recruit, train and support families for children and youth, and to provide effective in-home and community-based support services.

Goal C — Families are engaged for all children and youth from the moment they become involved with the child welfare system.

- Federal law offers guidance and financial incentives to ensure immediate assessment of viable kinship resources and emergency placement of children and youth in kinship families.
- Federal law eliminates barriers to timely assessment of viable kinship resources, including funding and facilitating an accessible national database for timely, no-cost criminal background checks.
- States and tribes pass policies that



ensure agencies identify and engage extended family members, immediately assess viable kinship resources, use family team meetings to avoid out-of-home placements, and use family finding strategies.

Goal D — Provide children and youth with access to needed time-limited therapeutic residential treatment, without forcing parents to give up custody or be charged with abuse or neglect.

- Federal Title IV-E funding covers necessary, time-limited residential treatment when services cannot be provided to a child or youth within the family or community, as long as the treatment plan includes family involvement.
- Federal Title IV-E rules allow reimbursement of caregivers' maintenance payments when their children and youth are in time-limited residential treatment and the family remains involved in the child or youth's care and treatment plan.
- States and tribes include funding for necessary, time-limited residential treatment in their adoption assistance and guardianship assistance programs. States and tribes ensure parents are not charged with child abuse or neglect solely because they are securing therapeutically necessary out-of-home resi-

...continued on page 4

Advocacy Agenda...

continued from page 3

dential treatment for their children or youth.

Empowering Youth and Family Voices

Goal A — Children and youth are partners in their permanency planning process.

- Federal law provides that youth age 12 and older are actively engaged in the development of their permanency plan and have a chance to choose other members of the planning team.
- Title IV-E allows reimbursement of costs related to technology used to assist youth engagement, as long as the technology does not supplant needed in-person meetings or contacts.
- States and tribes develop policies to ensure children and youth have a voice, a say, and active engagement in decisions affecting their care.

Goal B — Kinship and foster parents have a voice in court and legal decisions.

- States and tribes develop policies to ensure foster parents and kinship caregivers have a voice in legal decisions affecting the children and youth in their care.

Goal C — All children and youth in out-of-home care have the opportunity to participate in age-appropriate activities, and their caregivers have the right to make decisions about children's and youth's participation.

- Federal law provides a reasonable and prudent parent standard that enables foster and kinship caregivers to grant permission for children and youth to participate in age-appropriate activities.
- States and tribes adopt a reasonable and prudent parent standard informed by input from children, youth, and caregivers.

Goal D — Kinship caregivers have the right to make educational and medical

decisions for the children and youth in their care.

- Federal law provides relative caregivers with the right to consent to medical care and educational plans and activities for children and youth in their day-to-day care, regardless of legal custody.

Supporting Families

Goal A — All children and youth entering foster care or experiencing a placement change have periodic and thorough trauma-informed and culturally informed assessments of their needs and strengths.

- Federal law modifies Title IV-E to remove reimbursement limits on case management skills training, including training on how to conduct mental health assessments.
- States and tribes provide funding for trauma-informed and culturally informed assessments and establish court oversight to ensure such assessments happen in a timely manner.
- States and tribes provide services identified as needed during the assessments.

Goal B — All children and youth who are, or have been, in foster care are cared for and thrive in foster, adoptive, guardianship, relative, and birth families that have access to ongoing support services.

- The federal government designates specific funds for ongoing support services for foster, adoptive, guardianship, relative, and birth families, with specific funding available for each type of caregiver.
- States and tribes operate or fund comprehensive, ongoing support service programs for foster, adoptive, guardianship, relative, and birth families.

Goal C — Extended family members who care for children and youth who were diverted from the child welfare system or who did not come to the attention of the child welfare system have access to information, supports, and services they need to ensure the children and youth thrive.

- The federal government makes funds available to states and tribes to provide successful programs to keep children and youth out of foster care and safe within their birth or extended families.
- The federal government preserves existing flexible funding sources that states and tribes can use to offer supports and services for extended family members caring for children and youth such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Children and the Social Services Block Grant.
- States and tribes work proactively with caregiver groups and partner agencies to create effective programs that keep children and youth out of care and safe within their birth or extended families.

Goal D — Foster families and families who adopt or take guardianship of children and youth from foster care have adequate financial support to meet the children's and youth's needs.

- The federal government requires states to use U.S. Department of Agriculture data to determine minimum foster care, adoption assistance, and guardianship rates adequate to meet children's and youth's needs.
- States and tribes use U.S. Department of Agriculture data to determine the minimum reimbursement rates for children and youth in foster care, adopted from foster care, and who left care to guardianship.

- States and tribes take the option to use federal Title IV-E funding to create and operate subsidized guardianship programs for eligible children and youth exiting foster care.

Goal E — All adoptive, foster, and kinship families, and children and youth who are not living with their birth families, have access to an independent advocacy organization to help them advocate for their needs.

- Federal law requires and appropriates funds so states and tribes can support advocacy organization(s) in their state plans.
- States and tribes provide direct funding to nonprofit organizations that advocate for children, youth, and families'

needs in kinship care, foster care, and adoption.

Preparing Caregivers

Goal A — Children and youth are cared for safely by parents and family caregivers who are able to meet their needs, including needs related to their race, culture, ethnicity, and heritage.

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) urges states and tribes to review their licensing standards for any unnecessary barriers to licensing safe and appropriate families. As a resource to states and tribes wanting to revise their standards, HHS recommends the “Family Foster Care Model Licensing Standards.”
- Until “Family Foster Care Model Licensing Standards” are adopted, states and tribes have a written policy for how they will apply individual waivers and variances for non-safety-related licensing standards for relatives, and they apply that policy by granting waivers and variances where appropriate.

Goal B — Caregivers have access to comprehensive, relevant, effective, culturally informed, and trauma-informed training.

- Title IV-E rules allow reimbursement for training for all foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship caregivers raising children and youth who come to the attention of the child welfare system.
- Using Title IV-E, Title IV-B, TANF, and other sources of funds, states and tribes provide culturally informed and trauma-informed training before and after placement for all types of caregivers.

Achieving Permanency

Goal A — The use of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) is reduced or eliminated.

- Federal law eliminates the use of APPLA as a permanency goal and requires that every child and youth have a permanency goal that includes a permanent legal connection to a family.
- States and tribes develop policies that eliminate the use of APPLA as a permanency goal.

- States and tribes require ongoing court oversight and agency director approval of all APPLA designations and ensure compliance with the identification of a committed adult who will remain engaged in the youth’s life after the age of majority.

Goal B — Children and youth who leave foster care for permanent families have increased support.

- Federal law increases funding for Title IV-B2 and designates specific mandatory percentages for post-adoption, post-guardianship, and post-reunification services while maintaining current designation for family preservation services.
- The federal government requires states and tribes to provide the same level of support and access to the same types of services to a child or youth who has moved on to permanency as the child or youth would have received in a similar level of foster care.
- States and tribes designate a significant portion of their adoption incentive payments and the funds received as a result of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act’s expanded Title IV-E adoption assistance eligibility to fund post-permanency support services to children, youth, and families.

Goal C — Incentives are increased for permanency outcomes for children and youth.

- The federal adoption incentive program becomes a permanency incentive program that rewards states and tribes for adoptions, permanent guardianships, and reunifications, with safeguards in place to avoid the unintended consequence of moving children or youth out of care too quickly, taking children or youth into care unnecessarily, or placing children or youth in unsafe or unstable families.
- States and tribes receive incentives for customary permanency placements for Indian Child Welfare Act-eligible children and youth, as long as the placements are in compliance with one of the preferred placements specified in ICWA.

Goal D — Children and youth are partners in the permanency planning process.

- States and tribes develop policies to ensure children and youth are engaged as partners in permanency planning such as through youth-led permanency roundtables.

Goal E — Youth in care have every possible opportunity for permanent family relationships.

- States and tribes take the Federal IV-E option to extend foster care to age 21 while continuing to ensure these older youth have every opportunity to achieve a permanent legal family before they leave care. ♦

Capacity Building Webinars

Advocates for Families First is offering free webinars for the leaders of organizations that support foster, adoptive, and kinship families. The next webinar, on November 19, is *Hidden in Plain Sight: Accessing Funding for Specialized Youth Permanency Services*.

Previously recorded sessions are:

- Starting and Enhancing Support Groups
- Developing a Youth Speak Out Advocacy Team
- Fundraising for Groups
- Effective Legislative Advocacy Strategies
- Advocates for Families First Policy Agenda
- It’s Time to Take Better Care of Ourselves! (How to Handle Compassion Fatigue and Prevent Burnout)

To learn more, visit advocatesforfamiliesfirst.org (then choose Webinars for Group Leaders from the Capacity Building menu). ♦

NACAC's 2014 Award Winners Truly Make a Difference

On July 26, at the NACAC conference in Kansas City, we honored the following 2014 NACAC award recipients. These individuals and organizations have made tremendous contributions to adoption and child welfare, and we are grateful for all they do.

Child Advocates of the Year

By any measure, **Dr. Ruth McRoy** has had a profound impact on child welfare and adoption through her research, writing, teaching, mentoring, speaking, and other work with practitioners. She has taught at the University of Kansas at Lawrence and the University of Texas at Austin's School of Social Work (where she received her doctorate in social work) and is a professor at the Boston College Graduate School of Social Work. Inspired by her teaching, bolstered by her mentoring, and with her support, Ruth's students have gone on to advance the child welfare field as researchers, educators, and practitioners.



Ruth McRoy

Ruth has authored and co-authored 10 books and 100+ scholarly articles and book chapters in leading social work, child welfare, adoption, and mental health journals and resources. A particular focus of Ruth's research is adoption from foster care and disparate treatment and representation of families and children of color in the child welfare system. Ruth has received multiple research grants to study these issues as well as transracial adoption, openness in adoption, post-adoption services, birth mother issues and outcomes, barriers to adoption and factors that lead to successful adoption, and other topics.

Currently, Ruth serves as lead evaluator for AdoptUSKids, guiding a team at the University of Texas at Austin Center for Social Work Research. She

has also served on the faculty of the Minority Adoption Leadership Development Institute, is a senior fellow and member of the Donaldson Adoption Institute board, and has served as the president of the NACAC board. Ruth is currently a member of the advisory board of the Rudd Adoption Program, the Council on Social Work Education (CWSE) board, and chair of the CSWE Commission on Diversity and Social and Economic Justice. She recently served as a member of the board of directors of the Society for Social Work and Research.

For more than three decades, Ruth has positively affected child welfare policy and practice. As a nominator put it, Ruth "inspires all who come into contact with her to believe that we all have a significant contribution to make to the noble endeavor of assuring safety, permanency and well-being for children."



As a social worker and child welfare advocate for more than 30 years, **Ada White** has helped thousands of children find permanent and loving families. She was nominated for this award by more than a dozen colleagues, who highlighted Ada's tireless commitment to helping people understand and address the complex and unique dynamics involved in adoption from foster care: "She is so often the voice of perspective and clarity about the true needs of children who are waiting to be adopted and of families who adopt children from foster care. She also often helps bring focus back to core concepts in adoption, helping prevent groups from wandering too far away from fundamentals as they explore new trends."



Ada White

Ada served as Louisiana's adoption specialist for 11 years and as foster care manager for two years. For seven years, she was director of adoptions at the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). In these and other roles, Ada has greatly contributed to improving the adoption and child welfare systems and increasing communication within and among states and agencies to remove barriers to permanency. She founded the National Association of State Adoption Programs, creating a forum through which state adoption managers can experience peer-to-peer learning. She also founded or co-created the National Association of State Foster Care Managers, AdoptUSKids (a service of the Children's Bureau), and the Louisiana Adoption Advisory Board—a coalition of adoptive parents, adoptees, and professionals dedicated to improving adoption in their state.

Ada has also been instrumental in bringing about important policy and practice changes. She helped develop CWLA's adoption standards, encouraged states to endorse a consistent pre-adoption home study, improved adoption practice in rural communities, and brought focus to older youth and special needs adoption. In addition, she has long advocated to change legislation to provide adoptees with access to their records.

By reforming policy, teaching others, networking, and providing direct and persistent service to families, Ada's unique legacy to child welfare will last for generations. As one nominator stated, she "blends the qualities of competence and compassion effortlessly as she does what she does best, helping to create families for America's children and youth."

Youth Advocate of the Year

Claudia Felder entered foster care when she was three, and endured multiple placements before being adopted at age six with her younger sister. Four years later, Claudia was returned to foster care where she mourned the failed adoption, devastated by the separation from her sister. While in a therapeutic

foster home, Claudia met a social worker whom she grew to trust and who eventually adopted her.



Claudia Felder

While still a teen, Claudia began advocating for youth in care. Each semester she shared her experiences with social work students so that they would be better prepared to work with youth. Claudia is a founding member of Camp Connect, which helps youth in care explore barriers to committing to adoption, and the California Adopted Youth Advocacy Team, which strives to improve the child welfare system. Claudia's nominator wrote, "Claudia has the courage to tell her story in the public arena, bringing to light the experiences of foster/adopted youth and the need for safe and nurturing families, intended to last a lifetime."

For the past three years Claudia has served as a youth mentor and support group co-facilitator for Children's Bureau of Southern California. In this role, she helps support and advocate for older youth who are reluctant to commit to a permanent plan and where "she brings credibility, safety, and hope to a room of skeptical youth." Claudia aspires to be a social worker—to mentor, support, help, and advocate for youth in care. We know she is already making a tremendous difference for many youth.

Corporate Award for Special Achievement in Adoption

Since 2002, St. Louis, Missouri-based KSDK NewsChannel 5 has made extraordinary efforts to find permanent families for children in foster care. The station has put its full support behind the weekly *A Place to Call Home* segment, featuring children in foster care who need a family. All of the station's anchors participate, and each segment airs four times during the week. Each is also featured prominently on the KSDK website (www.ksdk.com/features/place-to-call-home/).

Each segment shows a child or sibling group doing a favorite or wished for activity—rock climbing, recording music, or baking in a cupcake bakery—with the activity arranged by KSDK. Anchors respectfully engage and interview the children whose personalities shine through as they talk about their hopes and visions of family. More than 200 featured children have been adopted or are being adopted.

In addition to *A Place to Call Home*, KSDK provides support for the Little Wishes campaign to provide holiday gifts for children in foster care. Because of the station's promotional support, more than 30,000 St. Louis-area children have received gifts through the program.

Parent Group of the Year

To help bridge the gap they experienced in post-adoption services, in 2009 two facilitators and two families founded the **Post Adoption Support Group at Adoption Network Cleveland**. The group has grown steadily and now serves about 60 families, with an average of 25 attending each support meeting. This resilient coalition of engaged and determined parents hosts professionally facilitated



Group staff/leaders (clockwise from top left) Patricia Hill, Jesse Jean, Ayanna Abi-Kyles, & Robert Gibbons)

monthly meetings for adoptive families that provide a mixture of presentations, discussion, and support. While parents learn and share, teens meet in their own group and childcare is provided for younger family members.

The group also runs a helpline, hosts family activities and outings throughout the year, and advocates at the Ohio state legislature for improvements in adoption policies. Group members regularly present about adoption issues and volunteer in other Adoption Network Cleveland programs. The group's nominator adds, "We are grateful to be a part of this loving group. We continue to be amazed at the spirit and determination of these families." ♦

Isaac

Seventeen-year-old Isaac is an active, fun, and friendly young man who likes to be the center of attention. He is bright and has an excellent memory, which helps him do very well in his favorite subjects of math and science. He loves to go out to eat (and will eat almost anything), spend time with family, and have one-on-one time with others in his life. He likes pets, especially dogs.

Family is very important to Isaac, and he would very much like to be adopted by a family where he would be the youngest or the only child. He would like his adoptive family to understand that he has relationships with biological family members that he wants to maintain. For more information, contact Torri Cowans at Children Awaiting Parents: 585-232-5110; torri@capbook.org. ♦



The 3-5-7 Model—Helping Children Work through Grief

by Darla L. Henry

A social worker, trainer, teacher, and consultant with extensive experience in child welfare, Darla established and authored the 3-5-7 Model©. She is president of Darla L. Henry & Associates, provides training and consultation nationally and internationally, and teaches master's of social work courses for Temple University. For more information, contact Darla at office@darlahenry.org or 717-919-6286.

Children and youth in the child welfare system want a life free of pain and full of love. If possible, most want to live with their parents. We in the system cannot discount or minimize the power of love between children and their birth parents. While parents may have had inadequate parenting capacity, most have loved their children and have conveyed this love to their children in some way. Acknowledging these basic facts—and the resulting grief children experience at the loss of their parents—is the basis for helping children prepare for permanency.

A Series of Losses Results in Grief

The losses children experience don't begin at the point of referral for abuse, neglect, or dependency. Many children are in care because their parents struggle to cope with their own traumatic backgrounds and are challenged by substance abuse and domestic violence. These challenges compromise parents' ability to meet their children's needs, which contributes to the first loss for their children—the lost opportunity for normal child development. When early nurturing needs are inconsistently met, infants may experience feelings of abandonment and rejection, and these feelings will show up again each time the child or youth have experiences reminiscent of their early challenges.

Over time, children and youth in troubled families may experience other losses if their parents have difficulty building and sustaining healthy relationships. Many parents also have deeply embedded grief and loss of their own, with generational losses in

family systems where parents' needs were not met and now they have the inability to parent safely. Children and youth then lose solid relationships and normal childhood experiences.

The ultimate experience of loss occurs when children and youth enter foster care. Although foster care often ensures a safe environment, children frequently experience the move into care as a loss from their permanent family.

With all of these losses come significant grief. The child welfare system must support children's and youth's work to grieve their losses. And we must ensure that professionals and parents understand how grief and loss affect children and youth and may lead to challenging behaviors. We must approach the behaviors caused by grief as normal, not as a pathological diagnosis.

Addressing Grief

As child welfare professionals, foster parents, and adoptive parents, our first role is to respond as the comforter to children's grief, establishing a feeling of safety. When we start where the children are, we listen to their perceptions and experiences of life events and can begin to help them heal. All of our interactions with children and youth in the system must be guided by the understanding that we must address grief as we work toward permanency.

Without efforts to address their grief, children often experience divided loyalties between the many adults and parenting figures in their lives. When we acknowledge that they are loved by their parents, but that those parents

may have poor parenting abilities, we make it easier for children to accept the possibility of being parented by others. We must start where the children are—missing their families—and give them opportunities to grieve these losses so that they engage in tasks for integrating all family relationships into their lives. Permanency can then be achieved through reunification or adoption or guardianship.

As professionals and families, we cannot “fix” children and youth. But we can help them do their own grief work effectively. When encouraged to tell their stories, children and youth, in time, will integrate biological, foster, and adoptive families into their lives.

So how do we support grief work for children and youth and their families? It is not talk therapy and is not initially a cognitive process. In fact, a simple inquiry into their feelings may leave teens feeling interrogated. Youth are often reluctant or unable to share with professional strangers who ask probing questions but aren't able to provide relief from the pain and hurt they are experiencing. When we try to get them to talk about abuse or their parents' shortcomings, young people often become defensive in an effort to protect the parents whose loss they are grieving.

Foster and adoptive parents can provide an environment that supports children in grieving their losses by helping them understand what has happened to them and get ready for permanency. Every moment counts for the child who is grieving. They are often missing their birth families and are fearful of the unknown before them. They need adults to acknowledge that they are in pain. By affirming children's losses, adults support children as they address and resolve their grief. Through this process, adults also create the foundation of establishing healthy relationships through permanency.

The 3-5-7 Model©

The 3-5-7 Model is designed to help professionals and parents work with children and youth to address these issues of grief and loss. It is an evi-

denced-informed, guided practice approach that supports the work of children and parents in grieving their losses and rebuilding their relationships in an effort to achieve well-being, safety, and permanency. The model incorporates theoretical underpinnings from child development, attachment, separation and loss, trauma, family systems, and relationship development.

The 3-5-7 Model has several beliefs at its core:

- Human beings grow, heal, and develop a sense of self in relationships.
- Relationships are a continual process that give rise to both hurt and wholeness.
- Healing is a relational process honoring the whole person—life story, life experiences, traumas, strength, and resiliency.
- Children, youth, and families have the ability to resolve their needs if provided the support and time to do so.

I initially developed the 3-5-7 Model to prepare children and youth in the foster care system for adoption. Now it is being used to help all types of families build a committed relationship with their children, whether through reunification, extended family parenting, guardianship, or adoption. The model can be used at various times, from intake to permanent placement and beyond, and can be woven into family search and engagement and family group decision-making activities.

In recent years, the child welfare system has begun to pay a lot of attention to family engagement approaches. But we don't pay as much attention to, or offer sufficient training on, the underlying issues of grief and loss that family members are often dealing with—losses such as loss of control, loss of dignity, loss of security, loss of identity, and loss of belongingness in a family. These issues of grief and loss can have a substantial impact on the family engagement process. Using the 3-5-7 Model in the context of family work helps children, youth, and parents recognize and grieve losses, so

that the trust, security, and openness needed for successful family engagement will be more readily achieved.

The 3-5-7 Model can be used by anyone who interacts with children, youth, and their families in support of their grief work. With training and coaching, caregivers are able to respond in the moment to behaviors as responses to loss, affirming the importance of the child's feelings and the caregiver's availability to support them as they express their feelings. The model ensures caregivers understand their role as comforters of grief. Professionals using the model engage children and youth in activities that support their grief work.

The Model's Core Components

The model is based on three tasks, five conceptual questions, and seven skills. Professionals and caregivers use the seven skills and a series of concrete activities to help children answer the five questions and thus accomplish the three tasks.

Three Tasks

The model's three tasks determine where each individual child or youth is and what she needs to do to reconcile and grieve losses and move toward rebuilding relationships. The tasks

help children and youth:

1. Understand the events of their lives and reconcile the losses they have experienced (clarification)
2. Rebuild relationships in their lives and understand they can be members of more than one family (integration)
3. Visualize belonging to a permanent family (actualization)

Five Questions

Through a series of specific activities and techniques including lifebooks, life maps, life/loss lines, and collages, professionals using the model help children and youth explore the answers to five conceptual questions that address specific issues (noted in parentheses below):

1. What happened to me? (exploring issues of loss)
2. Who am I? (identity)
3. Where am I going? (attachment)
4. How will I get there? (relationships)
5. When will I know I belong? (claiming and safety)

Seven Skills

The model identifies seven skills or interpersonal abilities that guide the

...continued on page 10

Jakeal

Jakeal is a motivated, goal-oriented young man who plans to graduate high school and attend college at UCLA. About to turn 18, he is likeable, mature, religious, self-confident, sensitive, and talkative. Jakeal's interests include socializing with friends on his phone or through social media and attending church and youth group. He participates in ROTC in high school and has considered joining the military, in addition to his college plans. He loves music and would like to pursue music production.

Jakeal would greatly benefit from the love and support of a committed family who could be there for him as he transitions into adulthood. The ideal family for Jakeal would provide encouragement and guidance so he can achieve his many goals. For more information, contact Torri Cowans at Children Awaiting Parents: 585-232-5110; torri@capbook.org. ♦



3-5-7 Model...

continued from page 9

efforts of professionals and caregivers to support the work of children, youth, and their families. These are:

1. Engagement
2. Listening
3. Recognizing that behaviors indicate the pain of losses
4. Affirming and responding to these behaviors from a grief perspective
5. Remaining present to the expressions of grief and responding in the moment
6. Creating opportunities for the perception of safety within the relationship
7. Recognizing that grief work and relationship building can be done only by those who have experienced the losses

While working through these tasks and questions (*see box at right for an example of the model in practice*), children and youth may experience anxiety, regression, physiological symptoms, denial of feelings or events, confused attachments to rejecting or unreliable parents, rebellious behaviors, delayed expression of feelings, self-blame for being in placement, and conflicting loyalties to all parent figures in their lives. Using the model and its various activities and techniques, professionals and parents can help children and youth respond to these reactions and move toward resolution of the painful events and relationships of their lives.

Using the Model

The 3-5-7 Model is currently being used or introduced in about 25 places in the U.S. and Canada. Mississippi, Arizona, Delaware, North Carolina, Alaska, and many California communities have integrated the model into their family finding efforts. A federal project using the model to help teens address pregnancy, parenting, and pregnancy prevention is completing its third year in Clark County (Las Vegas), Nevada. Overall, the programs

identify positive outcomes in helping children and youth engage in grief work and understand their life events.

Those interested in implementing the model can receive training, coaching, implementation strategies, and evaluation and outcome studies. Other tools available to support implementation include a readiness continuum, readiness inventory, skills development guide, pre- and post-tests for children and youth, a resource parent curriculum, and a group development program. *The 3-5-7 Model© Workbook: Supporting the Work of Children, Youth and Families Toward Permanency* provides ideas and activities for professionals helping children and youth become ready for permanency. The book, *The 3-5-7 Model©: A Practice Approach to Permanency*, provides information on how programs have imple-

mented activities, such as lifebook work, safety nets, and life maps.

Training programs are a minimum of three days, depending on agency size and needs. Coaching and consultation help agencies ensure fidelity to the model and support for practicing the model.

Conclusion

As we are challenged by the difficult task of successfully achieving permanency for children and all of their families, we need to be vigilant about children's pain. Children just want adults to make the pain go away. As professionals and caregivers, we must prevent additional losses (by reducing moves and honoring birth family members) and accept our role of addressing ongoing grief and providing comforting relationships. ♦

Annie's Story: The Model Helps a Child Address Grief

Annie is an 11-year-old whose worker used the 3-5-7 Model. In their first session, which started with clarification, Annie talked about the home where she was neglected and abused. She drew a picture of the home and asked her worker to take a picture of the back of the house. Ten days later at their next session, the worker noticed Annie was agitated and restless. She didn't want to do activities, but agreed to a short walk. After that, the worker showed Annie the pictures she had taken of her former home. Annie looked at them intently and then shared that an outside room in the back was where she and her sister had been locked up. It had been very cold, and they often stayed there for hours. Annie was cautious about sharing her memories, but she did say that her mother had rolled her in a rug and sat on her, which made it hard to breathe. When Annie's father showed up, mom let her go. Annie told her worker that she had never told this story to anyone. It happened when she was four years old, and she remembered being very scared. The worker assured Annie that she would never be locked up in a cold room or sat on again. Annie wanted to loosely put these pictures, not glue them, into her lifebook. Annie then wanted to play Candyland. She had done difficult and challenging work during this session and needed a break.

In subsequent sessions, Annie looked through pictures from former foster and group homes. She identified the event or person in the picture and described how each person had helped or not helped her and what relationships continued to have meaning for her. As she explored the content of these pictures, she added them to her lifebook. These activities also address the second task—integration. As Annie clarified events and people associated with her experiences, she reflected on who was there to meet her needs and with whom she associated feelings of safety.

Reviewing the pictures with her worker provided Annie an excellent opportunity to discuss her journey to better understand who she is and how her current feelings now make sense because of these experiences. Through this process, Annie had also begun the third task—to actualize with whom she might see herself having a family relationship. ♦

Adoption Related-Resources

Books

The Girl Behind the Door: A Father's Journey into the Mystery of Attachment *John Brooks. 2014.* Following his daughter's tragic death, a father documents his subsequent, years' long exploration into adoption and attachment issues to share the information that came too late to help his family.

Reports and Briefs

The Roundtable

National Resource Center for Adoption. Volume 27, Number 2. 2014. This issue is dedicated to adoption post-permanency. Articles include the latest research in post-permanency continuity, predictors of college success for former foster youth, and whether legal permanence translates to relational permanence. www.nrcadoption.org/pdfs/roundtable/V27N2-2014.pdf (after October 1, visit spaulding.org)

The Biological Embedding of Child Abuse and Neglect: Implications for Policy and Practice

Social Policy Report, Volume 28, Number 1. 2014. The Society for Research and Child Development's recent quarterly report outlines current research on child abuse and neglect; its long term physical and mental effects; the value of interdisciplinary coordination in both the prevention and intervention of child abuse; and the importance of timely and integrated treatment services in diminishing the effects of abuse. www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/spr_28_1_final.pdf

Disproportionality Rates for Children of Color in Foster Care

Steve Wood, MS, Alicia Summers, PhD. May 2014. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges has released a bulletin using FY2012 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and 2010 U.S. Census Bureau data to show national and state disproportionality rates for children of color in foster care as compared to the rates from 2000. While still overrepresented, the national rates for African American children decreased.

Nationally, disproportionality also decreased for Latinos but increased for Native American children. www.ncjfcj.org/resource-library/publications/disproportionality-rates-children-color-foster-care-fiscal-year-2012

Child Welfare 360°: Attending to Well-Being in Child Welfare

Traci LaLiberte, PhD, Tracy Crudo, MSW, LISW, & Heidi Ombisa Skallet, MSW, Editors. 2014. This issue of *CW360°* explores the relationship and implications of well-being in trauma-informed child welfare practice and the importance of addressing unresolved trauma to achieve better outcomes for children, youth and families. http://cascw.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/CW360_Spring2014_WEB.pdf

Shaping Tomorrow with Today's Minds: Applying Updated Solutions to an Outdated System

This report shares the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's 2014 interns' personal experiences with foster care and makes policy recommendations in areas such as mental health screening and assessments; immigration and child welfare; fostering resilience through trauma-informed

training; and improving education outcomes. <http://ccainstituteblog.org/2014/07/30/2014-foster-youth-interns-release-their-report-to-congress/>

Child Welfare Policy Primer: A Guide for Advocates, Policymakers, and Others Interested in Child Welfare Policy Reform

State Policy Advocacy Resource Center. 2014. A good resource for those new to—or just learning about the federal role in—child welfare, this primer provides an overview of the federal child welfare system; identifies important trends; notes key organizations, advocates, and other resources; and defines common terms. <http://childwelfare.sparc.org/child-welfare-policy-primer-a-guide-for-advocates-policy-makers-and-others-interested-in-child-welfare-policy-reform/>

Website

National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids

The NRCDR has launched a new website to assist state and tribal child welfare administrators, leaders, and managers in implementing diligent recruitment programs. The site offers ideas from the field, publications, and other resources to help child welfare systems recruit, retain, develop, and support foster, adoptive, and kinship families. www.nrcdr.org ♦

Mentisha

Seventeen-year-old Mentisha is described by her friends as compassionate and kind, and she loves to help others. A talented singer and writer, Mentisha enjoys poetry and is proud to be in the school choir. She likes all kinds of music, but Beyoncé is her favorite artist. In her free time, Mentisha likes to ride her bike or go on walks. One of the things that makes her happiest is being around her sister, and she would like to stay in contact with all of her siblings. Now in 12th grade, Mentisha hasn't decided on her future career path, but knows she'd like to continue her education and thinks being a journalist, poet, or nurse might be a good option.



photo by Maria Gair

Mentisha really wants a family who will provide her with support, love, and security—who will take care of her, understand how she feels, and go on walks with her. She hopes to find her forever family before her 18th birthday next June. For more information, contact Torri Cowans at Children Awaiting Parents: 585-232-5110; torri@capbook.org. ♦

Anu Family Services: Innovative Approaches to Achieving Youth Permanence and Well-Being

by Amelia Franck Meyer, MS, MSW, LISW, APSW

Amelia is the Chief Executive Officer of Anu Family Services, which provides treatment foster care, parent coaching, kinship treatment foster care, and intensive permanency/trauma services. Amelia has spent 25 years learning from the children and families she serves and is a sought out national and international speaker and author. For more information, contact Amelia at afranckmeyer@anufs.org or on Twitter @afranckmeyer or 877-287-2441 or visit www.anufs.org.

For 22 years, Anu Family Services has been providing innovative solutions to help create permanence, safety, and well-being for children and their families in Wisconsin and now in Minnesota. Committed to reducing the number of children who are being raised in out-of-home care, Anu believes every child deserves a permanent family, preferably their birth family, whenever safely possible. Anu is committed to reducing entries into out-of-home care and helping youth who are already in out-of-home care find permanent connections with kin or close family connections (fictive kin) to heal their trauma.

Setting a Big Goal

In 1992, Anu was founded as a treatment foster care agency, and in 2006, Anu renewed its commitment to its belief that every child deserves permanent, loving, stable connections and families. As part of this renewed commitment, we set a BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) inspired by Jim Collins' book, *Good to Great*: to be the last placement, prior to permanence, for 90 percent of the children and youth we serve. To accomplish this goal, we enlisted the support of the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW) to help us develop, identify, and pilot models and tools. For example, in an effort to determine whether Anu made an impact on youth who were discharged before achieving permanence, Anu worked with CASCW to develop the Youth Connections Scale, a tool to measure the quality and quantity of youth connections. This evidence-

based tool is free, youth-driven, and brief (<http://cascw.umn.edu/portfolio-items/youth-connections-scale/>) and can be used by anyone in practice, supervision, and evaluation.

When we began to address our goal in 2006, 38 percent of Anu's youth were going to legal permanence when they left our care. That percentage has been as high as 70 percent in the last few years. At Anu we believe we have the know-how to get 80 to 90 percent of our youth to permanence; however, the funding for treatment foster care services does not cover the intensive permanence services or other supports needed to achieve these outcomes. Foster care funding covers maintenance costs (food, clothing, and shelter), and Medicaid covers treatment in the form of therapy and related medically necessary services. However, Anu's Intensive Permanence Services program involves grief, loss, and trauma interventions and exhaustive searching and building connections for youth, which are not services covered in the foster care reimbursement rates.

Providing Healing Homes

In 2012 with the help of the Otto Bremer Foundation, in an effort to increase the percentage of youth discharged to permanence, Anu began a pilot project to develop Healing Homes. Healing Homes are treatment foster homes with families who are specially trained in trauma-informed parenting, grief and loss, and the importance of connections. Youth in these homes often receive

integrative healing interventions such as equine therapy or eye-movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) in addition to, or instead of, traditional therapy or treatment. Healing Parents are trained in grief, loss, and trauma and other new interventions, and staff recruit potential parents who work in healing fields such as massage therapists, nurses, chiropractors, and yoga instructors. Healing Parents' approach to care is one of connecting and compassion. They understand it's not about fixing what's wrong with kids—it's about understanding what happened to create such pain-based behaviors, and responding with trauma-effective interventions. They understand it is our collective task to create psychological safety to help children and youth heal their trauma and relieve pain. This work is necessary before connections can be fully realized.

One of Anu's Healing Homes is the Huff* family. About a year ago, a sibling group of three elementary school-aged children was placed with the Huffs. After the children were placed, we quickly discovered that, despite their young ages, the children were the most traumatized children with whom our team members had ever worked. As we began to hear about the extent of the children's abuse, we could understand why they displayed the behaviors and outbursts the foster parents were seeing.

As a Healing Home, in response to challenging behaviors, the Huffs pulled the children in (through the use of time-ins, expressions of heartfelt gratitude for behaviors they wanted to see more of, and other trauma-informed parenting interventions), instead of pushing them away (through the use of time-outs, punishment, or other interventions that disconnect the youth physically or emotionally). This focus on connecting allowed the children to feel safe, loved, and heard and did not exacerbate their relational trauma the way disconnecting does. Any breach in a caregiver's love, affection, or presence is terrifying to a youth with relational

*Name has been changed.

trauma. The Huffs were able to talk daily, if needed, with their Anu Permanency Specialist to brainstorm effective interventions, process the youth's reactions and responses, and build new skills and ideas for their new toolbox of trauma-informed interventions.

When the Huffs saw little progress in traditional talk therapy, the team decided to try more integrative healing practices. The children started equine-assisted therapy, which ended up being extremely effective. They made gains in just three months and addressed grief and trauma that they hadn't touched in their previous therapy. Due to the psychological safety the children felt from the Huffs and the integrative trauma-focused therapy in place, the children began to heal. They felt safe and loved with the Huffs, and developed an incredible amount of trust in them. As a result, they allowed the Huffs to adopt them. While their healing will be a lifelong journey, they know they will always have their Mom and Dad to support them when they are reminded of the unsafe part of their lives. The Huffs continue to use their healing techniques and support to help their children overcome new obstacles and address triggers that come their way.

Integrating Healing Practices and Intensive Permanency Services

In 2012, Anu began to offer its Intensive Permanence Services program to youth living in other agencies' foster homes, group homes, residential centers, and juvenile detention centers. Intensive Permanence Services is a unique combination of grief, loss, and trauma work that combines Darla Henry's 3-5-7 Model (see page 8) with an exhaustive search using the Six Steps to Find a Family and Family Search and Engagement models developed by Mardith Louisell. After multiple unresolved losses—especially in caregivers—youth's brains turn off their ability to connect. This intensive service helps heal that relational trauma and helps children regain the ability to connect.

In nearly a decade of research and evaluation, we have learned that this grief, loss, and trauma work must be done for connections to stick. The goal of this service is to allow youth to grieve their losses and heal their trauma while an exhaustive search is done for those they have loved and lost through multiple out-of-home placements. This service is also offered as an intensive trauma service for youth who already have permanence, but are struggling with challenging behaviors after their adoption.

Anu also offers trauma-informed parent coaching, which teaches parents and caregivers how to parent traumatized youth in a way that does not further extend their trauma the way some other parenting techniques can. For example, many parents take things away from youth (loss of privileges or punishments). The youth we work with have already lost everything important to them, so punishment and loss of privileges can further exacerbate their trauma. On the other hand, healing parents give lots of attention to those behaviors they want to see more of, and very little attention to those they do not want to see again. It's the "water the flowers, not the weeds" approach to parenting.

In Anu's Parent Coaching program, parents receive coaching without the child being present, and the healing is put where it belongs—in the hands of the parents. Parents then use the healing interventions with their children, which strengthens their bond. This service is offered in person in Wisconsin and Minnesota or through video conferencing or teleconference anywhere in the world for any type of family. In addition, Anu certifies parent coaches in this trauma-informed model of parenting through a 10-month virtual course, which includes one in-person trauma-focused weekend in Minneapolis. (Learn more at www.parentingmojo.com.)

Finally, Anu is working to promote youth well-being through a partnership with the University of Minnesota's Center for Spirituality and Healing (CSH). Together, the University's CASCW and CSH are

working with Anu to create a youth-driven tool to identify indicators of well-being and intervention strategies for youth, parents, case managers, therapists, teachers, and others, to help restore balance and well-being with youth. Anu also uses a model of healing that incorporates these four components to promote well-being:

1. Grieving — 3-5-7 Model
2. Connecting — Family Search and Engagement models
3. Protecting — Present Moment Parenting model (developed by Tina Feigal)
4. Healing — using a variety of evidence-informed and promising practices in integrative healing

Used in combination, these interventions have provided hope and healing where other interventions have not succeeded and in some cases, may have exacerbated the youth's trauma and pain-based behaviors. New information has shown enhanced ways to intervene with youth who have experienced trauma, and we hope to spread the news that there is hope for very challenged youth through healing and connection.

Anu's interventions have garnered significant recognition in the past several months, including a national award from the Center for the Study of Social Policy: The Youth Thrive Award for Exemplary Programs; a Regional award from the Bush Foundation: The Bush Innovation Prize; and two local awards from the Twin Cities Business Journal: Eureka! Innovation Award and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits Mission Innovation Award (finalist).

In spite of these accolades, our work is not done yet. We at Anu are still working to achieve our big, hairy, audacious goal of achieving permanence for the youth we serve. We hope you will join us in embracing this challenge and ensuring that all children and youth have the opportunity to heal from the trauma they have experienced and to have healthy, lifelong relationships. ♦

2015 Call for Proposals

NACAC's 41st Annual Conference

Long Beach, California • July 29–August 1, 2015

NACAC is seeking presenters to help parents, professionals, and advocates gain skills and knowledge in adoption-related topics at its 2015 conference. NACAC encourages adoptive and foster parents, child welfare professionals, adoptees, birth parents, former foster youth, researchers, therapists, and other child advocates to submit workshop proposals for the conference, which will be held July 30–August 1, 2015 (pre-conference sessions July 29), in Long Beach, California. Workshops will be either 90 or 120 minutes; some three-hour workshops may be offered.

Guidelines

Sessions may have up to three presenters. Presenters who are NACAC members do not need to pay registration fees, but are expected to donate their time and expenses as a contribution to waiting children and the adoption community.

Proposed presentations should address one of the topics listed at right. Follow the format below, provide a detailed outline, state what participants will gain from the presentation, and submit by October 15, 2014. Please submit no more than five proposals.

NACAC makes final selections after board members, staff, and conference

Submit proposals by October 15, 2014

By e-mail: Send PDF or Microsoft Word documents to conference@nacac.org

By mail: NACAC Conference, 970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106, Saint Paul, MN 55114-1149

By fax: 651-644-9848

Questions? 651-644-3036, conference@nacac.org

committee participants review proposed workshops. We will notify prospective presenters about final session decisions by mid-February 2015.

NACAC is not responsible for verifying the originality of submissions, and cannot be held liable for presenters' copyright infringements or other ownership rights violations.

Presentation Information

Please use the following outline:

- Workshop title
- Topic and length: Indicate length of workshop, and list the number and name of the topic area in which your session would best fit.
- Level: Determine a level of intermediate or advanced—intermediate sessions have basic information on a subject area with practical applications; advanced sessions present up-to-date research or content for attendees who already have a strong basic understanding of the issue.
- Description for registration brochure: Descriptions should be 25 to 75 words in length, and give conference attendees a sense of what to expect from the presentation. NACAC will edit descriptions for length, content, and clarity.
- Content: Suggest your intended format (lecture, open discussion, panel) and outline the material you plan to present. You may include handouts you would distribute.
- Intended audience: List parents, social workers, teens, etc., and include prior knowledge needed, if any.

Lead Presenter

- Name, title, affiliation
- Address, e-mail, day and evening phone numbers
- Experience/brief bio

Other Presenters (no more than two)

- Name, title, affiliation
- Address, e-mail, day and evening phone numbers
- Experience/brief bio

Topics

Choose the topic area of the presentation you are proposing:

1. Adoption Agency Management
2. Advocacy and Public Policy
3. International Adoption
4. Issues in Adoption Therapy
5. Kinship Care and Birth Family Connections
6. Older Children and Youth Issues
7. Parenting Adopted Children
8. Parenting Children with Special Needs
9. Post-Adoption Services (including parent support groups)
10. Preparing for Adoption (for parents)
11. Race, Culture, and Diversity in Adoption
12. Recruitment and Pre-Adoption Services
13. Supporting Children and Preparing Families

To learn more about topics, visit the conference section of www.nacac.org.

Audio-Visual Equipment

List audio-visual equipment you need.

NACAC does not provide LCD projectors or computers, but will provide a screen and cart if you let us know that you are bringing a projector.

Please note: NACAC will not provide paper handouts to attendees. If presenters are willing, we will post handouts on the NACAC website before the conference so attendees can print paper copies. Speakers can bring paper handouts if they choose. A few weeks before the conference, staff will provide lead presenters with the number of people registered for each session so they can estimate quantities to print. ♦

Teens Need Permanency and Purpose

by Catherine Sanders

Catherine has spent years in foster care and is becoming a strong advocate for other children and youth who are or who have been in care. She spoke at the Advocates for Families First briefing mentioned on page 3.

I came into the system in 2008 when I was 13 years old. At that time, my case plan was reunification. I knew from the start that I didn't want to return to my biological mother. I constantly told my workers and everyone else involved in the case that, but no one seemed to listen to me. Instead they just tried to facilitate visits and send us to family therapy. Those in charge had set the goal, and it stayed that way until I was 17 years old. Then I was told my plan was APPLA—or Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. Even though I wanted real permanency with my present family, no one even mentioned the word adoption to me or suggested it was possible. They just talked about my aging out of the system and how to prepare for that.

In May, I attended a youth advocacy training hosted by NACAC. There I realized adoption was attainable. I listened to youth from around the country and Canada talk about being adopted after they were 18. I couldn't believe it. I thought to myself, why didn't anyone talk to me about this after all these years? As soon as I heard this revelation, it changed so much for me.

All I had ever heard about was aging out and whether I was saving enough for my future. I was asked what my plans were for work and college, and told I should think about getting a certificate rather than finishing my undergraduate degree. There were periods where I was completely stressed out, depressed, and anxious because of the constant questions about what I would do next. It was as if everyone was sucking the oxygen out of my lungs. I even had thoughts of suicide because I was so deeply afraid I would become a statistic—

suffering terrible problems like many youth who age out of care.

I had been with my family for four years when my goal was changed to APPLA, with a goal achievement date of October 2015 when I will turn 21 and would age out of care. Now I have been with my family for almost seven years and still have heard nothing about adoption. With an APPLA goal, there is supposed to be a compelling reason why no permanent family is being recruited for me. But when I saw my court report, there was nothing written about why they weren't trying to help me get adopted.

After I attended the training in May, I wanted to talk with my aunt and uncle, who are my guardians, about adoption. I didn't want to do it alone, so I asked a recruiter at my agency to come with me. My aunt and uncle were as surprised as I was to learn that adoption after 18 is possible.

I want you to know where I'm headed. I'm starting my junior year of college and have a 3.4 GPA. I plan to get a bachelor's degree in mass communications. I will use this degree to be a motivational speaker, using my voice to give light to others in my position. I want to motivate those who believe that there is no sun after the rain, because I personally know how that feels. I also aspire to be a newscaster or an actress.

If I were a social worker, I would do my best to understand each child, and find out what she wants in her heart. Even if she's close to aging out, I would still go over the other options—adoption, guardianship, and kinship care—not just APPLA. This is espe-



Catherine (right) and her parents

cially important if a child has been with her family for a long time, like I have. You can't just push the child into aging out. You can't just keep asking, "What are you going to do after you age out? What are you doing to prepare for aging out?" It's too stressful. Other kids have the opportunity to live with their parents until they're ready for adulthood. Why can't I have that? I'm human too.

If I were a policy maker I would make policies that direct the child welfare system to do these things:

- Do what's best for the child, not what's easiest for the system.
- Remember that workers and administrators get to go home at the end of the day, but kids have to live in the system 24/7.
- Make sure you find homes that are beneficial to the children.
- Find the right place in the beginning so kids don't have to keep going from place to place.
- Never put a child in a residential program just because you don't have another plan. It's scary and can really hurt them and expose them to things that aren't necessary for them to see. Lots of kids in these programs have serious challenges—it is not right to put those of us who don't need such care into that environment.
- Talk to children and youth so they know about all the possibilities for them.
- Keep working to find real, perma-

...continued on page 16



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Teens Need Permanency...

continued from page 15

ment families for kids, even when they are teenagers.

I am not a case number in black ink on white paper. I am filled with purpose, and that purpose is what has allowed me to find meaning in every struggle I have endured. My purpose has given me the power to push through years of emptiness, confusion, and depression. John F. Kennedy once said, "... effort and courage are not enough without purpose and direction." I believe this quote relates to my story in a way because every child put on this earth has a purpose, but it doesn't begin to manifest without direction. Every child in the system needs a proper, permanent direction, and together we can ensure that they have it. ♦

Stay in Touch

Keep in touch with NACAC by following us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NACACadoption or Twitter at [NACAC_adopt](https://twitter.com/NACAC_adopt). ♦

NACAC Membership

NACAC needs member support to work effectively on behalf of children who wait. All members get *Adoptalk*, as well as discounted conference, webinar, and advertising rates. Enhanced parent group, organizational, and national/corporate members also get discounts for multiple members/employees, as well as NACAC publication discounts. Join today!

MEMBERSHIP TYPE <i>(check one)</i>	ONE-YEAR RATE	THREE-YEAR RATE
Individual/family	<input type="radio"/> \$45 US/\$50 Cdn	<input type="radio"/> \$115 US/\$130 Cdn
Parent group	<input type="radio"/> \$45 US/\$50 Cdn	<input type="radio"/> \$115 US/\$130 Cdn
Enhanced parent group*	<input type="radio"/> \$200 US/\$220 Cdn	<input type="radio"/> \$515 US/\$570 Cdn
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National/corporate*	<input type="radio"/> \$1,000 US/\$1,100 Cdn	<input type="radio"/> \$2,600 US/\$2,850 Cdn

Name _____

Organization _____

Address *(check one)* Home Work _____

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