



A Publication of the Alabama Foster Adoptive Parent Association

Connections



Fall/Winter 2008

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MINI CONFERENCES



AFAPA hosted mini conferences in DeKalb, Lee, and Baldwin Counties over the past 2 months in addition board members attended the adoption conference in Jefferson county.





From the President of AFAPA

My hope is that each of you had a wonderful Thanksgiving. I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Our country has gone through some bad times with the financial problems. We have elected a new president who we hope will help lead our country out of some of the problems that we have. It is my belief that our new president will be a friend to the foster & adoptive families and will help to get more legislation passed that will benefit all foster and adoptive children.

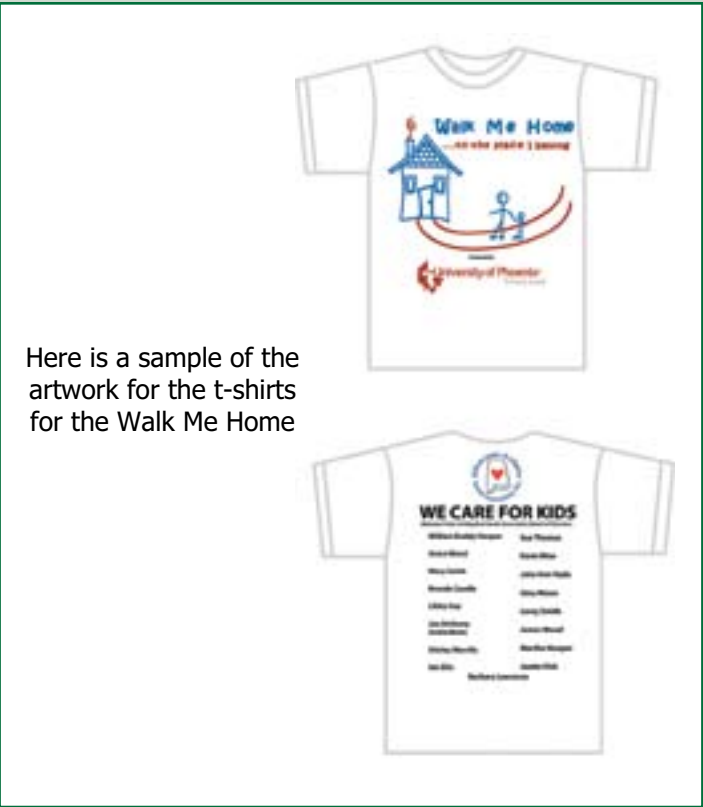
We have had good attendance at the 3 Network training meetings held in the last 2 months. Keep checking the afapa.org web site for information on future meetings. In the mean time contact your AFAPA regional representative if you have training needs in your county. AFAPA board members offer training and have access to workshops that can be of great benefit to you as a foster parent.

I've included the revised policy for The Conflict Resolutions Process in this newsletter. The Foster Care Journals we have been giving out the past 2 years will also be revised with the new policy to be included. You will get a new Journal at the AFAPA Annual Conference or any other training we conduct during the year.

Just an early reminder to put May 14th, 15th, and 16th on your calendar for the AFAPA annual training conference which will be held at Shocco Springs again. Again this year you will have the opportunity to receive up to 10 hours of training. You will have the option of spending 2 nights the 14th and 15th this year. This year will also be an election year for all AFAPA officers and regional representatives. If you would like to be considered for a position on the AFAPA board you may turn in a request to the Chair of the Nominating Committee Joe Anthony for a form to fill out listing your information. Joe is also the Region #1 representative. After all requests have been received by the nominating committee they will select a slate of officers to be presented to the membership. Even if you are not selected by the nominating committee you may still be nominated from the floor during the voting process at the conference. As usual the regional representatives will be selected by a caucus of members from their respective regions present at the conference. To be eligible to be a regional representative you must be a foster or adoptive parent living in the region.

I am pleased to announce that AFAPA now is helping to coordinate donations with individual county associations and or local DHR offices. The past 2 years we have received many inkind donations such as shoes, socks, luggage and other items for foster children. In the future in order to help make sure these items get to the children as soon as possible AFAPA will work with the local foster parent associations and county DHR offices so the items can be donated directly to the counties. AFAPA may still receive some donations that are state wide and we will continue to distribute those as fairly and quickly as we can. There will possibly still be items for distribution at the annual conference.

AFAPA's project this spring will be to obtain sponsorships for Walk Me Home to Where I Belong tee shirts from the National Foster Parent Association Project. AFAPA plans to get donations from sponsors in return for names or logos being printed on the back of the shirts. AFAPA will then sell the tee shirts with the money going to sponsor other projects. The shirts should be available by early spring. This is what the front of the shirts will look like. The back of the shirt will have the AFAPA logo and the phrase "We Care For Kids" the sponsors name would listed underneath. If you know of someone who would like to be a sponsor please contact me.



Here is a sample of the artwork for the t-shirts for the Walk Me Home

MEET ALBERT AND BREANNA



Albert was born in June 1991. He very much wants a permanent home and family. He is in the 9th grade (2008-09 school year). He likes going to school and makes decent grades. He does need a little extra help in math. He has a fun personality and is very easy to talk to. Albert likes making jokes. He enjoys dancing and sings

very well. He also likes playing video games, going to the mall and talking on the phone. Albert is very athletic and enjoys basketball. He loves his younger sister and is very protective of her.

Breanna was born in May 1992. She wants a forever family and permanent home. She is also in the 9th grade (2008-09 school year). She makes good grades and likes going to school. She is very easy to talk to once she feels comfortable around you and opens up. She is a very caring young lady. Breanna loves to go to the mall to shop and eat candy. Breanna very much desires a loving permanent home.

Both Albert and Breanna need a loving family that can nurture them and help them achieve their goals and become the man and woman that they are meant to be.

SCHOLARSHIP FOR ALABAMA FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE PARENTS GIVEN BY AFAPA

Join NFPA for one year or renew your current NFPA membership before February 1st, 2009 the cost is \$35 per year. You will become eligible for drawing for a scholarship to attend the NFPA Conference in Reno Nevada the First week of May, 2009.

This Scholarship will pay up to \$1000 for a single parent or up to \$1500 for a couple to attend.

This will cover the cost of registration, hotel, and air travel. Recipients will have to pay for meals and other incidentals not covered with the scholarship.

Recipients of Scholarships must abide by the rules of the AFAPA scholarship policy.

A random drawing will be held February 7th at the AFAPA Board meeting.

Winner will be notified by phone and or email. Copy of new registrations must be submitted to AFAPA and those renewing membership must submit membership number to AFAPA. All must submit proof of payment of membership fees to AFAPA by February 1st, 2009.

A registration form is available online at www.afapa.org or call 1-888-545-2372 to have one mailed to you.

Scholarships are also available directly from NFPA. All NFPA members who are members by December 31st, 2008 may apply for a scholarship directly from NFPA. Check the nfpaonline.org website for more information about this scholarship, only one scholarship per family.

AFAPA President Buddy Hooper being congratulated by National Foster Parent Association President Melvin Gravely for being appointed to the NFPA board as Regional Vice President for NFPA. Also pictured is the former Vice President Sharon Carlson.



REVISED GRIEVANCE PROCESS POLICY

This new Policy will be in new Foster Care Journals that will be given out at Annual AFAPA Conference Conflict Resolution Process (Formerly known as Grievance Process)

1. PURPOSE

In an effort to bring some consistency into the process of dealing with conflict involving foster parents and county departments, the following guidelines should be used to develop a plan to resolve concerns that are brought to the county's attention.

The process utilizes various individuals and groups that can help the county and the foster parent(s) work through and resolve problems and conflicts. All of these will consider applicable policies related to the problem. They will offer guidance to all parties through a process in which they discuss the issues, options and design their own agreement to resolve the dispute. The process:

- Gives everyone an opportunity to be heard;
- Affords everyone an opportunity to develop new ways of dealing with problems;
- Affords opportunities to create working solutions;
- Can improve the retention of existing foster families; and
- Can help eliminate the time and distress of unresolved conflict and possible placement disruption for children in care.

The intent of this process is not to remove the authority from the local DHR office to handle problems within the county or to be punitive in nature. This process gives foster parents and the local office an opportunity to be heard when problems arise and when all parties cannot come to an agreement or acceptable resolution to the problem.

Larger County offices may have more supervisory levels to be considered in developing a chain of command for handling problems, concerns, and issues. Each county office should use the information contained in this document as a guide in developing a local process that will be effective and efficient in handling these matters on the local level. County Departments should inform individuals making a CRT referral of their county's chain of command (in writing). The chain of command might include, as an example: worker, service supervisor, program supervisor, program manager, child welfare administrator, assistant director, and county director.

2. GENERAL GUIDELINES

If you have questions regarding this process, call 334-242-9500 and ask for the Office of Permanency.

The Conflict Resolution Team (hereinafter known as the CRT) as selected by the State DHR Commissioner will include: two (2) County DHR representatives (Director or supervisory level); with two (2) designated alternates; two (2) foster parent advocates, with two (2) designated alternates; and two State DHR/Office of Permanency Staff.

The entire process, from initial contact with the county office until a referral is made to the Conflict Resolution Team should take no longer than 30 days. If the solution is ongoing and all parties are satisfied with actions being taken, referral to the State CRT should not be initiated.

Timely response (see time frames set forth in the local process section of this policy) from the County DHR office is crucial to the process. Failure to respond to complaints timely may result in earlier referral of complaint to the State CRT.

Foster parents, including relative caregivers, and DHR staff may all utilize this process in an attempt to resolve conflicts.

Examples of possible items for referral include:

- Problems with communication between line worker and the foster parents; lack of courtesy, partnership, respect, professionalism in communication demonstrated by failing to return telephone calls, failing to listen to concerns, etc.
- Lack of responsiveness to requests by the foster parent or staff in addressing needs of children.
- Removing children without due notice according to applicable policies and standards.
- Issues of potential safety risks to children.
- Failing to follow policies.
- Failing to arrange needed services for the child and/or foster family.
- Failing to schedule an ISP team meeting when requested.
- Situations where the local foster parent association or State DHR staff has identified trends in actions by the county that would be appropriate for CRT review, but individual foster parent(s) have not made a CRT referral. One example, SDHR Family Services consultant staff note repeated instances of lack of partnership between staff and foster parents. They may ask the State CRT to review and make recommendations.
- Situations where the local foster parent association or DHR staff has identified trends in actions by the county foster parent association or their representatives that note repeated instances of lack of partnership between foster parents and DHR staff.
- Closing a foster family home by DHR. This process will serve as the appeals right referred to in the Foster Parent Bill of Rights Act for foster parents whose foster home is closed by DHR. This process does not serve as an appeal for foster families approved by agencies other than DHR. Note: The requirement for 30-day review at county level may be waived in situations involving closure of a foster home.
- Failing to abide by the provisions of the Foster Parent Bill of Rights.

The guidelines specified herein do not apply if the party filing the CRT referral considers a report urgent. This includes concerns that involve safety of a child. In these situations, the party with the concern can make immediate contact with the individual(s) that he/she feels will provide timely response to the situation. This may include local DHR staff (see chain of command), foster parent or staff liaison(s), Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association (AFAPA) Advocates or Regional Representatives or State DHR personnel (i.e., State liaison or the program manager of the Office of Permanency). If the resolution in this manner is not acceptable to the individual making contact, the appropriate referral should be made to the Conflict Resolution Team in such situations to ensure that this process is initiated.

Issues/instances which make CRT referrals inappropriate include, but are not limited to:

- When a court case is pending in regard to the situation;
- When a CA/N is pending and the subject of the CRT referral is part of the CA/N investigation. Note: Having a pending child abuse/neglect investigation (CA/N) does not preclude a foster parent from filing a grievance on issues unrelated to the CA/N;
- When a foster parent does not agree with the permanency plan developed by the ISP team.
- Recommendations related to personnel actions are pending or have been made.

The party making the CRT referral must complete a referral form and submit to the local DHR and maintain a copy for their personal files.

Parties making a CRT referral are not considered to be in violation of confidentiality as long as they follow guidelines as provided in this Conflict Resolution Process Policy document. All participants at a Conflict Resolution Team meeting will be required to sign a statement indicating they agree to abide by agency confidentiality policies. Care should always be taken to mention only case situations, not case (child or family) name(s). Care should also be taken to avoid discussion with other individuals not listed in the policy as this is considered a violation of the rules of confidentiality. It is not a violation of confidentiality to provide the information requested in the State CRT referral to the Office of Permanency. Before a county director or their designee refers or discusses the referral with the local foster parent liaison or other liaisons or advocates with the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association, they should obtain the consent of the person(s) making the CRT referrals. Foster parent liaisons (county and/or with AFAPA) should sign a confidentiality agreement prior to any discussion of particular cases or home situations.

Parties making a CRT referral (whether a foster parent or staff) should never feel alone in the process of making a referral and the Department should ensure that every source of support for the individual is arranged. Caution should be taken to prevent this from becoming the agency versus the foster parent. Foster parents and staff are considered partners in the planning for children and have the right to have their opinions and concerns heard and have the right to be considered as a valuable part of the ISP (treatment) team. If requested, the foster parents and/or staff member making a CRT referral should have support from the DHR staff liaison, the foster parent liaison, and/or other foster parents selected by the local association, if requested. The foster parent may also call AFAPA at 1-888-545-2372 to request assistance from a Regional Representative or Advocate. Additionally, DHR staff may ask for support or assistance from applicable staff at State DHR (Family Services consultants or supervisors; District Administrative Specialists, etc.)

Actions taken by the Department when a CRT referral is made shall never be retaliatory or punitive in nature. No person who makes a CRT referral will be discriminated against, threatened, or retaliated against in any way for filing such action.

If the grievance is concerning an office within State DHR, the local DHR office or the foster parent should send the initial complaint to the appropriate Division/Office at SDHR (see Form Section). If, within 30 days, there has been no resolution to the problem, the paperwork can then be forwarded to the Office of Permanency.

An ISP team meeting, which includes the individual making the CRT referral, may be required at any point in the process in an effort to reach resolution if concerns or conflicts are about services or support needed by the child and/or foster parent.

Providers of care to children in DHR custody can use this process whether the placement is in a regular (traditional) foster family or therapeutic foster home setting, related foster care or related care. However, this process is only to be used to resolve disputes between

DHR and the foster parent(s). It is not applicable to disputes between therapeutic foster parents and their approving/licensing agency and does not apply to the closing of a therapeutic or other foster home licensed/approved by an agency other than DHR. This process is not intended for providers of group residential care.

Local CRT referrals should be filed in the applicable county involved in the issue as identified by the individual making the referral. However, technical assistance and support will be provided to the foster parent(s) by the county that approves their home. If the foster parent is a therapeutic foster parent, they should make their CRT referral with the county holding custody of the child. These foster parents may choose liaisons from this same county, the county in which they reside (if different) or they may ask their therapeutic agency to assist and support them in making the CRT referral.

3. THE PROCESS

Each county shall have the flexibility to review and attempt to resolve conflict in a manner that works for their county. Each County DHR shall develop a local Conflict Resolution protocol. The protocol shall be submitted in writing by the County Director or designee to the staff liaison to the State Conflict Resolution Team. When the state team receives a referral they will refer back to the county's protocol on file to determine if the county has had an opportunity to review the referral. The county's protocol should also be provided in writing to all of their foster families as well as staff and supervisors with foster care responsibilities.

Reports of all grievances received and reviewed locally shall be provided to the local Foster Care Advisory Council for quarterly review. Members of the FCAC are also subject to agency confidentiality policies and shall be required to sign a confidentiality agreement before they meet or receive information about local issues. Please refer to on-line documents (administrative letters and memoranda) for Memorandum dated March 16, 2004 that provided for the establishment of Foster Care Advisory Councils.

a. When a Foster Parent Makes A Referral

The following description is how to make a CRT referral when other methods for resolving the issue satisfactorily have failed. If alternative methods, through the chain of command, have not been utilized, the party making the referral will be directed back to the appropriate party on the chain of command.

- Local attempts to resolve conflict must be made. State CRT referrals may only be made after local attempts to reach resolution have failed. Foster parents should contact the County Director or their designee, preferably in writing, to try to resolve the pertinent issue(s) prior to initiating a Conflict Resolution Team referral if they have not been able to resolve the issue at lower level of supervision. Note: The requirement for 30-day review at county level may be waived in situations involving closure of a foster home.
- CRT referrals shall be in writing.
- Written CRT referrals should be submitted to the county director who shall disseminate a copy to each person on the chain of command.
- The CRT referral shall be acknowledged in writing to the party making the referral within five (5) days of receipt. Once acknowledged, strategies for working toward resolution of conflict shall be developed and periodic (but no less than monthly) updates provided to the individual making referral. Updates shall be provided in writing. If parties on the local level can agree to strategies toward resolution the referral will remain at the county level as long as satisfactory progress is being made. The individual making the CRT referral will determine satisfactory progress.
- At any point during the process after the CRT referral has been made, a consultant from State DHR can be contacted for assistance.
- When resolution is reached at the local level, the County Director shall follow-up in writing with the person making the referral to confirm agreement to resolution.

- New issues identified require a separate CRT referral.
- If after 30 days of working with the county on the CRT referral, the person making the referral does not feel there has been timely response or a satisfactory solution is possible, the referral can be elevated to the State CRT. Lack of timely response or satisfactory solution includes: no acknowledgement, no plan, or no required status reports. If at any point during the 30-days the county director reports no local resolution is likely, the referral can be elevated to the State CRT at the request of either party.
- The form or other documentation requested by CRT Staff Liaison should be mailed to:
State DHR – Conflict Resolution Team
Office of Permanency – Family Services Division
Alabama Department of Human Resources
50 Ripley Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

b. When A Referral is Made Against a Foster Parent

Often times a county may have concerns about their own foster parent that deal with the quality of care the family is providing to the children in their home. In these situations careful consideration should be given to determining if a policy, standard or approval issue exists and if it does, the county's resource worker/unit should address the issues with the family. However, there may be times when a DHR staff person believes there are issues around communication, partnership, support of the child/family case plan, etc. that have gone unresolved when worked one-on-one (worker to foster family). In these situations, the concerned staff may ask the County Director (through appropriate chain of command) to have the county conflict resolution protocol accessed for examining and resolving these concerns or conflicts.

Other times that the local CRT protocol may be accessed to address concerns a staff person has with a foster care provider may include, but are not limited to:

- State office consultant, QA team member, etc. may review a record and see concerns that need to be addressed.
- A foster care worker in one county has a child placed in the foster home of another county and has concerns about foster family.

Of course, alternative methods of resolution through the chain of command as described earlier should be utilized first. If these alternative methods prove to be unsuccessful, CRT referrals may be made. If a CRT referral is made steps bulleted above in (a.) when a foster parent makes a referral should be followed.

Documentation of local review process shall be maintained in the resource file for the foster family involved.

C. State Referrals

When the CRT Referral is forwarded to State DHR, the Office of Permanency, Staff Liaison to CRT, will record it on the referral log.

The Office of Permanency will notify the foster parent and the local DHR office, via a form letter that the CRT referral has been received. On this same form letter, the liaison will request copies of records and other documentation be sent to the SDHR Office of Permanency and will establish a deadline for providing requested documentation. In addition, the State CRT members will be notified that a referral has been received.

Upon preliminary review of the case by the staff liaison, assistance from appropriate SDHR Consultants may be requested (if the consultant has not already been involved in reviewing the case/situation). The consultant may be asked to review the record or interview parties as indicated. This should be done within five working days of the date the staff liaison receives the State CRT referral.

If the consultant has already been involved in reviewing the case, a report of their consultation will be forwarded to the Office of Permanency within two working days of the request. If the consultant

has not already reviewed the case, the consultation should be completed within ten working days of the request and then a written report shall be provided within two working days of the consultation.

Other information that may be necessary for a complete review of the CRT referral includes, but is not limited to: current and prior ISP's, medical, psychological or other assessments or summaries, CA/N files, foster family home records, dictation from child/family record, reports from Quality Assurance Committee reviews, court orders and/or reports. A list of needed information will be requested by the state liaison. The county office shall redact records prior to providing them to SDHR so that only information pertinent to the CRT referral will be shared with team members.

Depending on the nature of the referral, other steps may be taken by the Office of Permanency prior to bringing the referral to the conflict resolution team (CRT). Some of these steps may include:

- Request an ISP team meeting immediately be held to look at the issue(s) in question with specification as to which parties should attend the meeting. The ISP team should address steps necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the child which might include: suspension of visitation; change in visitation location; safety measures to ensure careful monitoring of the case, temporary suspension of the placement until safety measures are in place, etc.
- Obtain a review of the case from the Office of Child Welfare Consultation staff and submit recommendations to the County Director and the Conflict Resolution Team.
- Request that local Quality Assurance Committee review the case record and interview pertinent parties and make any recommendations to the State CRT.
- Other evaluations or assessment as deemed necessary.

All information should be reviewed and fact-finding completed by the staff liaison to the State CRT within 15 business days of receiving the referral unless the CRT permits an extension of no more than five business days to gain further information. The State CRT will review the referral at their next standing monthly meeting.

1. Documentation of the state review process will be maintained by the State DHR liaison to the CRT.
2. In addition to review of records as described above, the State CRT shall conduct in-person interviews with appropriate DHR staff and supervisors as well as the foster parent involved in the CRT referral except in extreme circumstances. Those being interviewed should give consideration to CRT members and shall make arrangements for their own child care during their interviews with the team.
3. Once the meeting is completed and the State CRT has developed recommendations, meetings to the minutes will be typed and routed to CRT members for editing and/or approving. The minutes will contain a description of interviews conducted, committee's overall observations or assessment of the situation and recommendation. The team members will have five days to review the minutes and provide changes, corrections, or statement of approval to the staff liaison. Within five business days the liaison will then draft a letter to the county director for review and approval by the Director of Family Services. Once the Director has approved the letter, the same will be presented to the Commissioner for his/her approval and signature. The person making the referral will be notified when the committee's recommendations are forwarded to the Family Services Director and again when forwarded to the Commissioner. Once approved and signed by the commissioner, the staff liaison will send originals to the county director. Courtesy copies of the letters will be provided to:
 - a. Party making the referral to the State CRT;
 - b. Director of Family Services;
 - c. Deputy Commissioner for Children and Family Services;
 - d. Deputy Commissioner, Field Administration;

- e. District Administrative Specialist for county in question;
 - f. Program Manager Office of Permanency;
 - g. Members of the State CRT; and
 - h. Others as indicated and appropriate.
4. The commissioner will have the final word on the disposition of the CRT Referral. If action by the county is outlined in the recommendations, the County Director shall prepare a written response to the recommendations including their plan for implementation or justification for any other action to be taken. This letter and plan shall be sent to the staff liaison of the State CRT within two weeks of receiving the Commissioner's letter. If no further action is recommended, the letter will be directed to the person making the CRT referral with a courtesy copy to the county directors and others as listed above.

Note: The State CRT cannot make changes to the child/family case plan. Recommendations for review and possible changes in case plans should be taken to the ISP team for consideration and action. Result of said ISP shall be included in the county's response to the Commissioner and Office of Permanency.

The CRT has no authority to recommend disciplinary action against an employee and no recommendations of disciplinary action should be made in the CRT report. The Department, under the rules of the State Personnel Board, is responsible for assessing the CRT's conclusions and recommendations to decide whether personnel action is warranted and/or appropriate.

5. State CRT liaison will follow up with the individual making the CRT referral after the plan of action is received from the county. This follow-up will be in the form of a feedback loop form. The feedback loop will assess:
- a. If parties believe the State CRT throughout the process heard them.
 - b. If the State CRT was responsive to the needs of the party making the referral.
 - c. The quality of the working relationship between county department, staff and/or foster parent involved (better, worse, same).
 - d. If the foster parent intends to (wishes to) continue being a foster parent now that the CRT process has been carried out.
 - e. If the County Director believes that the foster parent can continue in a positive working relationship with the Department (if the referral was sent by the County staff).
 - f. The completed/returned feedback loop forms will be shared with the State CRT at the next monthly meeting after they are received. Courtesy copies of the feedback loop form will be shared with those listed in the courtesy copy reference made above.

A Special Thank You to our friends at Heart Gallery for supplying us with photos of the children in need of adoption.



To see more of Alabama's waiting children
(and to hear their voices) please visit
www.heartgalleryalabama.com

MEET TORSHA

Torsha, born August 1998 is in the 4th grade in school. She does fairly well in school but needs extra help for a non-specified learning disorder. She enjoys playing with Bratz® dolls, skating and riding her bike. She also likes playing with her Easybake® oven. Torsha is good about making things such as cards or drawing pictures to make other people smile. She can be very loving and affectionate. She likes to have lots of attention. For this reason she would probably do best in a home without other children. She also needs a family that can help her maintain connections with her siblings.



Portrait provided courtesy of
www.heartgalleryalabama.com



Jo Bob Ray former President of AFPA wins door prize at foster parent training in Rainsville

November 19 2008

Mr. Buddy Hooper, President
Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parent Assn.
1091 County Road 1659
Cullman, Alabama 35058

Dear Buddy:

As the newly appointed Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources, it is with great pleasure that I write this letter. Foster and adoptive parents are the foundation of our System of Care, and I know this because of the many years I have been working with the Department of Human Resources and with foster and adoptive parents. Our foster children need stability, proper care, guidance, love, and permanency in order to be normal, healthy, happy, and emotionally secure children. I am thankful that our foster parents provide the supports and level of care our children need.

I am especially proud that we have a strong foster and adoptive parent association such as AFAPA in Alabama. Your organization and I share a strong commitment to all foster children in our state. While DHR is diligent in securing safety for children, permanency is also a paramount concern. Resource recruitment for children awaiting adoptive families and permanency for all foster children are top priorities for me.

I look forward to working with you and AFAPA in my new role as Commissioner. Please contact me if I can assist you in any way.

Yours truly,

Nancy T. Buckner
Commissioner

NTB:cl



Buddy Hooper President AFAPA recently met with DHR Commissioner Nancy Buckner to discuss partnership between AFAPA & DHR.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION & DEADLINES TO REMEMBER

Meeting for Local County Association Presidents, DHR Directors, State DHR Staff, and Legislators
December 12th, 2008
Embassy Suites Hotel Montgomery, Al

February 1st, 2009 deadline to apply for AFAPA Parent scholarship to attend NFPA Conference
Reno, Nevada.

February 1st, 2009 deadline to turn in nominations for AFAPA officers

AFAPA Board meeting February 7th,
Drury Inn Montgomery, Al

March 1st, 2009 deadline to apply for AFAPA student scholarship see website for details

AFAPA annual conference May 14th – 16th, 2009
Shocco Springs

Attention Foster & Adoptive parents: If you are interested in adopting a child outside your county you must have your home study on file at the state office, this also applies to children listed in this newsletter. Check with your county and state DHR to verify your home study. If the plan is for you to adopt a foster child be sure their medical information is up to date as this can sometimes slow down the process, ask the worker to verify medical information is current.

Need help or information contact the AFAPA toll free number 1-888-545-2372

Check AFAPA website for current information and upcoming events www.afapa.org



AFAPA Board members at Step Up 4 Kids Rally



Step Up 4 Kids Rally at the State Capitol



Governor Riley signs Adoption Month Proclamation during National Adoption Month. AFAPA President Buddy Hooper sharing how AFAPA members adopt most of the foster children who are adopted through DHR.



FEDERAL TAX BENEFITS HIGHLIGHTS

Federal Tax Benefits Highlights, prepared by the National Foster Parents Association.
Visit www.NFPAonline.org to view full guide.

GENERAL RULES

Taxable Income

If a foster parent receives taxable payments, the agency issues a Form W-2 or 1099-MISC to both the foster parent and the IRS. The income must be reported on the tax return. Consult a tax professional for proper reporting on your tax return.

A foster parent or caregiver may receive a Form W-2 if they are considered a household worker. A household worker performs work in or around your home.

Non-Taxable Income

As foster and adoptive parent and kinship caregiver, most payments received are excluded from taxable income and are not reported on a tax return.

Foster-care Payments: Payments received from a state or a qualified foster care placement agency for providing care to qualified foster individuals in your home.
§IRC 131— Difficulty-of-care payments: Additional payments that are designated by the state as compensation for providing the additional care.

Dependency Exemption

Dependents of a taxpayer who meet a four-part test may be claimed as exemptions and listed on the front page of the tax return (Form 1040 or 1040A).

Tests to Be a Qualifying Child

1. The child must be your son, daughter, stepchild, eligible foster child, brother, sister, half brother, half sister, stepbrother, stepsister, or a descendant of any of them.
2. The child must be (a) under age 19 at the end of 2007, (b) under age 24 at the end of 2007 and a full-time student, or (c) any age if permanently and totally disabled.
3. The child must have lived with you for more than half of the year (6 months and a day).
4. The child must not have provided more than half of his or her own support for the year.

Social Security Numbers

The IRS is very strict in requiring that a dependent or a qualifying child must have a valid Social Security Number (SSN).

Earned Income Credit (EITC):

To be your qualifying child for EITC, a child must be your:

- Son, daughter, stepchild, eligible foster child or a descendant of any of them
- The child must be under the age of 19 at the end of 2007
- The child must have resided in the taxpayer's home for more than six months.
- Maximum investment income - \$2,900

Charitable Contributions

You can deduct expenses that meet both of the following requirements:

- They are unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses to feed, clothe, and care for the foster child
- They must be mainly to benefit the qualified organization

Adoption Tax Credit

The law permits adoptive parents to claim a credit against their federal tax for up to \$11,390.00 for tax year 2007. The adoption of a "Special Needs" child does not require the taxpayer to have qualifying expenses. If state determines child to be special needs, keep that documentation.

Child Tax Credit

A qualifying child for the Child Tax Credit must meet the following requirements:

- The child must qualify as the taxpayer's dependent
- The child must be under the age of 17 at the end of the year
- The child must be a citizen or resident of the U.S

MEET JIMIE



Jimie was born in May, 1993 and currently in the 9th grade (2008-09 school year). Intellectually, Jimie is quite bright and capable of understand complex

theories and concepts, but sometimes needs help with homework. His career goal is to be a veterinarian. He is astutely aware of the academic requirements for his occupational goal and is very motivated to reach his goal.

He worries about his future and needs permanency. Although he's small for his age, Jimie is very athletic and competitive. He likes playing video games, pokemon cards, billiards, go-carts, tennis, and anything outdoors. He responds better to staying busy and always having fun activities available to him. Jimie is someone who is very gentle with animals and inspires those around him to share that quality with him.

Unfortunately, Jimie was often put in the adult care giver role in his family and now feels the need to take care of his mother and siblings. Jimie is currently participating in joint counseling with both of his brothers (John and Johnathon) so they can work through some of the hurtful things they have experienced together. This will help them reach their ultimate goal, which is to find a big happy family together.

Photo provided courtesy of www.heartgalleryalabama.com

MEET JOHN

John was born in March 1994. He is an energetic young man who enjoys playing video and board games, participating in sports and other outdoor physical activities. He likes learning new skills and games. John is great at things that require critical thinking. He is very well-mannered and sociable. John has a way of being engaging during conversations and unforgettable after you talk with him.



John is a sweet boy, but often allows fun boyish horseplay to lead to fighting. He tends to get into mischief when he is bored, so he definitely needs to be in a home with a log of fun things to keep his mind busy and occupied.

John is participating in group therapy with his brothers and is making a lot of progress in many areas of his life. John longs for a sense of belonging and hope to one day be placed with his brothers Johnathon and Jimie so that they can be a family again. He deserves a family that will love him for who he is and let him develop a sense of identify as a teenager.

AFAPA awarded 3 scholarships to foster parents to attend the NACAC conference in Columbus, Ohio August 13, 2009. One scholarship was awarded at each of the AFAPA mini conferences. The winners were Gary Holcomb Marion County, Mamie Horace Russell County, and Tonya Perkins Mobile County





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