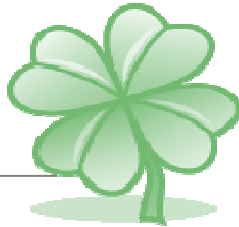




Midwest Foster Care and
Adoption Association
3210 S Lee's Summit Rd
Independence, MO 64055

Phone: 816-350-0215
Website: www.mfcaa.org



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“ When reimbursement rates don't reflect
the **real expenses**
that foster parents face,
it's the **children who suffer.**”

- Karen Jorgensen - Executive Director of the NFPA.



JOIN TOGETHER TO RALLY FOR FOSTER AND ADOPTED CHILDREN

WHEN: 4.14.08/10 a.m.
WHERE: Jefferson City/
Rotunda in Capitol Building

Foster and adoptive families rally in Jefferson City: The Governor recommended a \$2.5 million rate increase. Together, let's rally to encourage the General Assembly to “hit the MARC” with a \$10 million rate increase. Signs will be provided.

Buses and Carpools are being organized by:

St. Louis Area: Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition/800.FOSTER.3/314.FOSTER.3/www.foster-adopt.org

Mid-Missouri Area: Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association/417.538.4362

Kansas City Area: Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association/816.350.0215/www.mfcaa.org



Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter

From the Executive Director's Desk.....

Dear Friends;

March is Social Worker Appreciation Month. This month I've decided to delve into a topic that we spend a whole lot of time thinking about here at MFCAA as it concerns foster parents, but that we've never talked much about as it concerns child welfare workers. That issue is retention.

I can only speak from my own experiences, but I have frequently been thrilled to find that I have accepted a placement of children who have a wonderful, active, concerned and responsive worker. Almost as soon as I take note of my luck, the worker announces that he/she is leaving the position to move on to something else. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

- Challenges Facing Social Worker Retention**
1. High Caseloads
 2. Administrative Burdens
 3. Quality of Supervision
 4. Training Issues
 5. Evening or Weekend Hours
 6. Lack of Resources for Children & Families
 7. Morale



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- Monthly Reminders-7
- March Calendar—8

MARCH BONUS

We found an easy way to SAVE MONEY! Interested?

Surf & Save

Check out the following websites, where you can print free coupons directly from your computer! Find savings on dining out, dining in, services, household products... it's amazing what you can find on the internet!

Couponmom.com: Print Grocery Coupons, Search Grocery Deals by State, Request Free Samples and MORE!

wow-coupons.com/restaurants.php: We counted 30 restaurant coupons the day we found this site!

Valpak.com: Put in your zip code, and get all kinds of coupons and deals available in your area.

Remember that the MFCAA staff is here for you, every hour, every day, every week, all year long! Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have problems, questions or just want to find out more about what we do here.

lori@mfcaa.org
816-350-0125
www.mfcaa.org



When you consider the idea of children's best interest it is abundantly clear that stability is a critical component of all aspects of a child's life. Just as in foster placement, stability in the role of the child welfare worker is imperative in the effort to achieve the best outcome possible for the child concerned. How many times have you all felt a dramatic shift in the dynamics of a case because of the change from one worker to another? How many times have critical pieces of information been missing from the team's 'big picture' because the information was in the mind of the last worker, and never made it to the paperwork that was transferred to the next worker when she left for another job?

Like many of you, I can't imagine any job or calling more important than serving to protect and nurture abused and neglected children. People who choose to devote their time and resources to obtaining college degrees which qualify them to do the work of child welfare, and who take the jobs offered by the Children's Division and its contracted agencies, are people who share that same sense of calling to the mission of these kids that we have as foster and adoptive parents. They know what they are hired to do is overwhelmingly important and valuable, and they are willing to tackle that responsibility for very minimal pay.

So, why then do they leave in numbers that are substantially higher than the number of foster parents who quit fostering each year? Why do they subject the children on their caseload to yet another transition time and time again?

Researchers have found that there are seven issues, beyond the issue of inadequate compensation (which child welfare workers definitely have in common with foster parents), that cause them to decide to quit this work and pursue other opportunities. My hope is that by discussing these issues, we can bring light to the problems within our system and take on the challenge of working with the Children's Division and its contracted agencies to fix these problems in any way that we can.

(1). High Caseloads

Stress and frustration at what is an inherent inability to do a good job comes from carrying caseloads which are too high. State budgets rarely include enough money to adequately fund the positions necessary to maintain a caseload size that is in compliance with recommended standards. Missouri is in better shape in this category than other states because of the addition of the performance based contracting agencies and the expansion of the number of children served by those agencies in recent years. Additionally, and probably more importantly, Missouri adopted a goal more than five years ago to seek and obtain child welfare accreditation by the Council on Accreditation. This accrediting body insists on manageable caseload standards. As a result, with the help of advocates statewide, the legislature in Missouri has appropriated enough funds to provide the positions necessary to accomplish that accreditation. It's happening circuit by circuit statewide, and as we speak, Jackson County is being assessed by national reviewers for their own local accreditation. While workers still don't get paid enough, there are, according to Children's Division administrators, enough jobs to cover the cases of children and families they serve.

(2) Administrative Burdens

According to the General Accounting Office, child welfare workers and their supervisors are often frustrated by administrative burdens such as mountains of paperwork and court and meeting requirements that take up 50 to 80 percent of their time. These burdens, created by the bureaucratization of child welfare social work practice, were ultimately designed to ensure the uniformity of service to all families served. Rules, regulations, paperwork and administration designed to ensure a base line of good practice actually resulted in a 'one size fits all' approach to the work of child welfare. The environment created by this type of approach is stifling and dissatisfying to good workers, who want to do 'real' social work. It is frequently cited as a reason for leaving the job.

(3) Quality of Supervision

Supervisory support can motivate any worker to remain in any job, even when other conditions are less than ideal. In child welfare work, where the job is stressful, and the outcomes of the efforts put forth by workers significantly impact people's very real lives, the importance of good supervision is paramount. Good supervisors guide and consult with workers, they educate workers, they support workers through personal and client related issues. However, even good supervisors can become ineffective when they are stretched with so many other responsibilities that they don't have enough time to be available to their staff. This is one of the situations that exists here in Missouri. Because funding has been diverted to the management of caseload size, even though supervisors appear to be overseeing manageable numbers of workers, they are also handling a plethora of other responsibilities within the agencies they work for.

Additionally, from the outside, it appears that frequently good supervisory staff turnover is as bad as frontline staff turnover. Supervisors who seem to do well are frequently promoted as other positions open up within the agency. Because recruitment for low paying/high stress jobs is not an easy task, replacing those good employees who leave the agency is easier said than done. As a result of a poor pool from which to choose, frequently supervisors who do only a mediocre job are retained because at least someone is filling that seat. Bureaucracy does not reward effective performance in any way other than promotion. That is unfortunate for kids and families.

(4) Training Issues

Initial training for new workers is inadequate to prepare them for the challenges of the job they've just taken on. Frequently supervisors and experienced workers are not readily available to assist new workers with on the job training. In many agencies half or more newly hired workers quit within the first year because of lack of training and support. Additionally, because of time constraints, training that is required and training that might be beneficial but is optional simply takes the worker away from the job they are already overwhelmed in doing. When they return from required training they find their workload has become unmanageable. They begin to resent required training as it makes their job 'harder'. As a result, the worker's batteries are never recharged, as they resist the infusion of new information and ideas.

(5) Evening or Weekend Hours

Many workers report that they simply cannot continue to do the work of child welfare because the work spills over into their evening and weekend time. They have families and lives outside of the agency, but those things which are most important to them end up taking a back seat to the needs of a crisis situation or a workload that is unmanageable without the extra time beyond normal work hours. This is an area in which we can certainly relate as foster parents. Frequently the work of caring for children in foster care intercepts our time at the office or derails previously made plans or takes our attention away from our other children. That is a very difficult part of choosing to work within the child welfare system. However, I believe that it is an issue that would present less of a problem if other areas of concern were in order.

(6) Lack of Resources for Children and Families


Many workers become frustrated with what they believe is an inability to provide appropriate resources to the children and families that they are trying to help. In many cases, this is an appropriate frustration. Treatment for substance abuse that includes a living component for Mom and kids together is rare. Options for placements that are stable for children with multiple and complex behavioral issues are slim. Resource issues are a problem. On the same page, it is extremely frustrating to work very hard toward a hoped for outcome and not be able to achieve it. One of the harsh realities of child welfare work is that sometimes families don't improve their circumstances, no matter what you offer them. Sometimes kids don't heal from their combination of mental illness, trauma and instability. In the real world, there are not always, and sometimes are not often happy endings. It's hard to keep doing a job this hard without seeing many positive outcomes. Again, this is an area where we, as foster parents, can relate.

(7) Morale

Within agencies, frequently workers report feeling undervalued. Feeling undervalued can be the result of some combination of many of the factors previously discussed. Low pay, heavy workloads, lack of resources, policies that tie workers' hands can add up to a general feeling that one is not appreciated and the job being done doesn't really matter. Morale is another issue that is strongly tied to the ability of the supervisor to effectively guide and respond to the worker. We have found here at MFCAA, that often improving morale among foster parents is as simple as being able to listen and truly hear what they are saying when they need to be heard. Morale is an area where we, as foster parents, can definitely contribute positively or negatively to the worker's feelings. We need to remember to notice the positive actions we see, and comment on those to the worker and to those who supervise the worker. We need to appreciate extra efforts on behalf of our kids and we need to use not only professionalism, but also kindness, in our interactions with workers even when we disagree.

Ultimately the goal of improving retention of child welfare workers is essential to achieving the outcomes our kids and families need. Human service work is about human relationships. Child welfare workers are not interchangeable any more than foster parents are. Workers who remain on the job have the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to provide effective case management to the same kids and families we serve. As foster parents, we need to recognize that we can and should play a part in the retention of good child welfare workers. Take the opportunity this month to begin to show the workers in your lives how valuable they are to you.

Sincerely,

 , MFCAA Executive Director



Support Groups for New
Foster and Adoptive Parents
- **NOW FORMING**

Being a foster or adoptive parent can be an incredibly fulfilling responsibility, but it is often very difficult at times. This holds to be true especially for those who are new to the experience. MFCAA is sponsoring a support group for these individuals who are new to this unique arena of parenting. Being based in a casual, laid back setting, new foster or adoptive parents can meet together to share experiences, get helpful parenting tips, or offer suggestions to help others through their new life journey. Don't miss out on this great learning and sharing opportunity. Call today to sign up for this great support!

If you are interested, contact Justin Newkirk at
816-350-0215 or justin@mfcaa.org

RIBS FOR KIDS CELEBRATION

Please Mark Your Calendars!
Saturday/May 3, 2008/7:30a-6p

It's almost that time of year again! Soon we'll be grilling on the porch and relaxing in our lawn chairs. Kick it off at McGonigle's Market *on May 3rd, with the best ribs you'll eat all year ! Eat 'em hot, or take 'em home for later... however you get your ribs, you'll help contribute to MFCAA, and the kids and families we serve. (*McGonigles: 1307 W 79th St)

This is the 5th Anniversary
of **Ribs for Kids**. Bring
your friends and make Ribs
for Kids '08 another record
breaking fundraiser!



Skate Party!



MFCAA invites all foster and adoptive families, and their friends, to enjoy our first ever Family Event. We may be skating in the month reserved for the luck of the Irish, but you don't need to find a pot of gold to enjoy this party... 34 CENTS gets you in and gets you rolling! The catch is, you must **WEAR GREEN!**

When: Saturday, March 15, 7p-9:30p

Where: B&D South Skate Center
13903 E. Noland Court
Independence, MO

Who: Members and Friends of MFCAA*

Why: To have a fun event for foster and adoptive families!

How Much: \$.17 to get in the door
& \$.17 to rent skates (\$.34 per person)
...but only if you're wearing green!

*This event is open to the public, so plan to arrive early.

ONLY 34¢

Help MFCAA... save money!

We are very happy to provide this printed newsletter for our members and friends who prefer to hold it, write on it, or hang it on their fridges. However, if you prefer to keep your mailbox free of clutter, please let us know that you would like to

RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

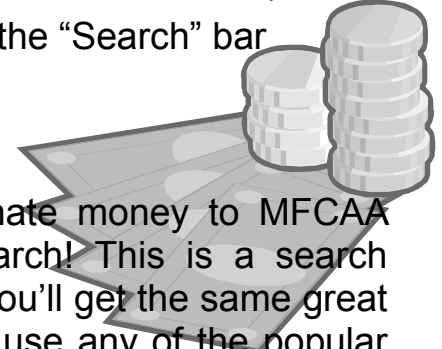
We'll save a stamp and send you a newsletter email every month.

>Email shandra@mfcaa.org, and say, "Send me the e-newsletter!"

>Or visit mfcaa.org, go to the Contacts page, fill out the form, and in the Comments Box write "Newsletter please!"

Donate money to MFCAA... easy and FREE!

1. Go to GoodSearch.com
2. Choose Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association (under "Who do you GoodSearch for")
3. Start your search in the "Search" bar



GoodSearch.com will donate money to MFCAA every time you do a search! This is a search engine run by Yahoo, so you'll get the same great results you get when you use any of the popular search engines.

Meet The MFCAA

THE MFCAA STAFF HAS NEARLY DOUBLED IN THE LAST YEAR,
AND NOW INCLUDES 7 FULL-TIME AND 2 PART-TIME EMPLOYEES.

Lori Ross. x15
Executive Director/Advocacy

Tammy Spears. x14
Program Manager/Advocacy

Linda McNicholas. x13
Development Director

Teresa Williams. x20
Program Manager/Advocacy

Suzen Ruis. x16
Program Manager/Respite,
Lawyers for Kids, Christmas

Becky Hughes. x19
Volunteer Coordinator/Food Pantry
& Clothes Closet

Justin Newkirk. x22
Program Manager/Group Therapy
& Training Questions

Shandra Chapman. x10
Office Manager

Kim O'Dell. x11
Office Assistant

Main Phone: 816-350-0215



To get to MFCAA:

From I-70, take the Lee's Summit Rd Exit and go North, drive for about a mile (you can look for Crackneck Rd) and we are located on the West side of the road (across from a park), on the Drumm Farm campus. We are part of a collection of houses set back from the road. If you take the drive and stay to the right, MFCAA is the second of two buildings on the right side.

We are located at 3210 S Lees Summit Rd

Monthly Reminders



Foster Parents are required to maintain a certain number of training hours in order to keep their licenses, and ALL parents can use additional tools to care for the children in their homes. MFCAA provides two great resources for “parent training.”

Resource Library

MFCAA has a lending library with video tapes, dvd's, cd's and books that can be checked out and used for outside training hours. Call Tammy at 816-350-0215.

On-site Training

March 7: Handling Stress, with speaker Joe Beck/MFCAA @ 6:30p

This course will focus on dealing with the stress that comes along with being a parent, and ways to manage it in a healthy way. A focus will also be on recognizing the stresses that our children may encounter and ways that we can help manage strains of daily living.

April 4: Bullying, with speaker Kealey Williams/MFCAA @ 6:30p

- Many kids are impacted by bullying in many aspects of their life experience. This course will focus on how parents can help a child who is being bullied and what to do with a child who is a bully to others.

Looking Forward.... There is NO May training.

Clothes Closet

It's time to get rid of those old dance dresses! It's hard to let go of the memories, but you don't need the dress to remember the good times. Give someone else the chance to make wonderful memories. Contribute to the Prom Boutique by bringing your dresses, shoes and accessories to the Clothes Closet before March 10th.

MFCAA's clothing closet provides clothing, shoes, coats, toys, high chairs, car seats and more to our members. Clothing closet hours are from 10 AM to 2 PM on Tuesdays & Fridays.





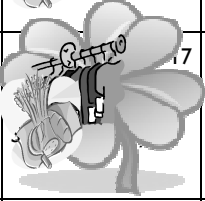


Curious how 2500 of these newsletters get printed, folded, labeled and sent out the door each month? Our staff works hard to make this happen, but in the end, it's volunteers who make it possible. We aren't too proud to clean a toilet, but when our days aren't long enough to fit everything in, we appreciate the volunteers who are willing to do a little scrubbing and sweeping. In every way, volunteers help this organization run. Bringing in a can of food? Stay and help us hand it out. Have a few extra hours each month? Help us fold a newsletter or two. Whatever time you can contribute, we WILL appreciate! Contact Becky at becky@mfcaa.org or 816-350-0215.

Food Pantry

Ever buy a can of corn, then get home and realize it's creamed corn? Or buy a new snack food and have your kids politely inform you that they tried some the other day at a friend's house and it's gross? Don't let these items crowd your shelves, bring them to the MFCAA food pantry!

Our food pantry is available weekly on Tuesdays and Fridays for picking up bread and other special items. Members are allowed to have a food pantry appointment to obtain canned goods, cereals, hygiene items, frozen goods and other food items once each month. To schedule an appointment, or for information on donating to the Food Pantry, contact Becky at becky@mfcaa.org or 816-350-0215.



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
MARK YOUR CALENDAR.... RIBS FOR KIDS IS TWO MONTHS AWAY! May 3rd/McGonigle's Market/Benefiting MFCAA Get more info at www.mfcaa.org and in the April newsletter					February 29	1
2		3	4	5	6	7 March Training
8	9		10	11	12	13 Prom Boutique 3p-7p
14	15	16		17	18	19
20	21	22	23 Easter Sunday	24		25
26	27	28	29	30		31

MARCH 2008 CALENDAR

Don't Forget...



All teen guys and girls in foster care are invited to a Prom Boutique, planned especially for them! All items in the boutique are offered at no cost.

Prom Boutique

March 13&14, 3p-7p
 Wood Chapel United Methodist Church
 4725 NE Lakewood Way
 Lee's Summit, MO 64064

Please RSVP:*

Sonia.L.Clogston@dss.mo.gov

* include: attendee's name, DCN #, date/time of attendance, & person bringing him/her

Update...

Respite Program: Up and Running!

Please call or e-mail Suzen (suzen@mfcaa.org) if you are interested in being a respite care provider or if you are in need of respite care for your foster or adopted children. Please let us know as far in advance as possible when you will need care, as this will give us a better opportunity to find a provider. We maintain a respite provider referral list, and we will make every attempt to find you a qualified respite care provider. We are also actively recruiting respite providers for both foster and adopted children. The more respite care providers we have on our referral list, the more likely it is we can find good respite providers for you. If you know of anyone you think would make a good respite provider, ask them to call us and we will send them a packet of information about our program. Foster and adoptive parents are the best recruiters we have! Last, if your adoption contract does not include a respite subsidy, please let us know. We can help you try to amend the contract. - Suzen Ruis, Program Man-

**Need a Respite Provider?
 Interested In Being A Respite Provider?**

Contact Suzen
suzen@mfcaa.org
 816-350-0085