



Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter

Letter From the President & CEO

Dear Friends,

This month we'll finish our series on foster care rates. Over the last two months we've published articles which have highlighted the inadequacy of Missouri's reimbursement rates to foster parents and discussed the many efforts we've made, in working with child advocates and the state, to raise and protect these inadequate rates. Today I'll share with you what we, and other advocates, are working on to compel the necessary change in Missouri's foster care rates.

Last year I attended a national training in which efforts to increase inadequate foster care rates around the country were discussed. Because this was a national training, the information presented reflected the experiences of many different states (all of which have been impacted by the same economic recession we've faced here in Missouri). While many states have had to contend with decreased general revenue, and some have made the heinous decision to reduce payments on behalf of abused and neglected kids; there are also other states where despite the recession, the state is making a commitment to moving reimbursement rates to a level which reflects their desire to adequately care for their abused and neglected kids.

And because many states have dealt with legislatures which cannot act quickly to make the changes necessary, especially in a time when many worthwhile issues compete for scarce funding, there is a new movement afoot to use legal advocacy to provide the impetus necessary to make funding for abused and neglected children a legislative priority.

In 2002, the Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies (MCCA) filed a lawsuit on behalf of Missouri's residential treatment providers (a group of their members). This lawsuit alleged that the state of Missouri determined its board and care reimbursement rates paid to those treatment centers on behalf of Missouri foster children placed there for treatment in an arbitrary way. The rates were determined based on what the legislature assigned to the line item in the budget for their care. There was no correlation between the rate paid and the actual costs associated with caring for the children in those facilities. The federal law, which provides funding to states to assist with the costs of providing foster care services, requires that the rates paid to foster care providers be based on the actual costs of providing that care. Missouri was found to be violating that federal law. MCCA won that lawsuit and entered into a plan with the state to change the process for determining rates for the care provided to foster children in residential treatment. The settlement of that case (which only impacted foster children in treatment centers and not foster children in foster homes) is still not final, but it did establish a nice framework for other legal advocacy.

In 2007, Children's Rights (a legal advocacy group out of New York, which previously assisted in both Jackson County, Missouri's Consent Decree case and the 2005 federal court lawsuit which overturned a Missouri effort to means test adoptive families prior to providing adoption subsidy assistance to abused and neglected children) worked with the University of Maryland School of Social Work and the National Foster Parent Association to come up with a strategy by which to determine the costs of providing care to abused and neglected children for every state in the nation. These costs, and the formula used to determine the costs, were based on the actual costs of providing care and were adjusted for rural vs. urban, and for the costs of living in each area of the country. The report on the findings was published as "Hitting the MARC: Establishing Minimum Adequate Rates for Children". This groundbreaking work established a baseline that states could use to measure their rate structure in comparison to the actual costs that foster families were incurring. And for the first time, a methodology for determining adequate rates was widely available.

In 2009, The California State Foster Parent Association, the California State Care Providers Association, and Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting, using the MCCA decision as a guide, filed a similar lawsuit in the state of California on behalf of foster parents providing foster home care to abused and neglected children. Their suit, like the MCCA suit, alleged that the state was in violation of federal requirements in determining its foster care rates.

Rather than basing its rates on the actual costs of providing care, the state was determining its rates based on budgetary decisions made in the California legislature. Like the MCCA case seven years earlier, the California suit was successful. The state of California entered into a settlement agreement with the Foster Parent organizations through which a rate increase plan was determined.

Because of this history of successful legal advocacy, advocates from many other jurisdictions in the United States, in which foster care rates are woefully inadequate to address the needs of abused and neglected children, have begun to seek out legal partners in order to obtain findings which will force the state to enter into a plan to move rates to an adequate level.

As the advocacy voice for Missouri's foster and adoptive families, MFCAA is pursuing a similar legal advocacy strategy that we anticipate may effectively address Missouri's foster care rates. We anticipate that over the course of the next year, with legal advocates working to help us with this goal, we may see movement toward the adequate rates that Missouri's kids and families deserve. You can expect to read more in the MFCAA newsletter and in the Missouri press about this advocacy effort in the coming weeks. While legal advocacy is not very fast, it is effective.

As a society we know that it is within the context of family that our young people learn everything which impacts not only their futures, but collectively- all of our futures. So it is only natural that when we work to address the tragedy of child abuse, the only place where restoration and healing can happen is within the context of a family. In Missouri hundreds of families quietly do the work, each day, of addressing the tragedy of child abuse, and helping kids heal. We are very hopeful that our upcoming legal advocacy will result in rates which adequately reimburse these remarkable foster parents for the care that they provide to Missouri's most vulnerable children.

Sincerely,



Lori Ross



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 Mary at 816-350-0215.

On-site Training—On-site Trainings are held at MFCAA, in the 2nd building on the far LEFT of the drive.

Please park in the paved lot (continue past the training building, and follow the drive as it curves right), then walk to the training building (for more info call 816-350-0215). Childcare is provided during both training sessions, for children ages 3 and older who are potty trained.

ON-SITE TRAINING SCHEDULE:

Sept 16th - Don't Poke the Bear! - Grey Endres, Clinical Director – Gillis When tempers are flaring, you're in the middle of a crisis because your child is having a meltdown and you are tired...what can you do to de-escalate the situation? Grey tells us not to poke the bear!

Oct 7th - Understanding Subsidy and Post Adoption Support - Lori Ross, President/CEO – MFCAA

This is a topic that affects 100% of our lives and the work we do. We will listen to our very own Lori Ross, explain how subsidy works and what services are available to you once you have children in your home.

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September 2011

Recipe of the Month

Crockpot Carrot Chicken

From lotsofkids.com

6 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
1 medium head cabbage, quartered
1 pound carrots, cut into 1" pieces
water to cover
4 cubes chicken bouillon
1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
1/4 teaspoon Greek-style seasoning
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/4 cup water

Rinse chicken and place in slow cooker. Rinse cabbage and place on top of chicken, then add carrots. Add enough water to almost cover all. Add bouillon cubes and sprinkle liberally with poultry seasoning. Add Greek seasoning to taste (as you would salt and pepper). Cook on low for 8 hours OR on high for 4 hours.

To Make Gravy: When you're nearly ready to eat, pour off some of the juice and place in a saucepan. Bring to a boil. Dissolve cornstarch in about 1/4 cup water (depending on how thick you like your gravy). Add to saucepan and simmer all together until thick. If desired, season with additional Greek seasoning. Serve gravy over chicken and potatoes, if desired

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Annual Gala A

The Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association's Forever Families Gala rose to new heights this year! The event was held in the ballroom of the InterContinental Hotel on the Country Club Plaza on Saturday August 20th where nearly 350 guests and supporters gathered. A VIP reception in the Pavillion was well attended by sponsors and table hosts. Jackson County Executive Mike Sanders and his wife Georgia, State Representative Paul LeVota, the evening's Master of Ceremonies, State Representative Jason Holsman, their wives, and Independence School District Superintendent Jim Hinson were among the invited guests that visited with featured speaker Nathan Ross and MFCAA President and CEO, Lori Ross. Board members, major supporters, and MFCAA staff filled the room.

Pianist, Grace Gulilly entertained in the foyer as guests arrived offering a nice ambiance, and Kansas City area favorite, Havilah Bruders sang deep, bluesy, jazz during the not-so silent auction.

With some light-hearted political humor as guests were seated for dinner, Jason Holsman introduced Kansas City Mayor, Sly James who offered opening remarks that went to the heart of the event, the need for a village to raise our children. He recalled a childhood story of when a young boy in his neighborhood had been admonished for bad behavior by a woman who lived next door. "You're not my mother!" the child defiantly retorted. "I'm your Momma today!" she forcefully replied. The room hummed with the recollection of our own "neighborhood Mommas". The Mayor introduced Nathan Ross with glowing comments and his favorable impression of the articulate young man he'd just met over dinner. Nathan confidently stood at the podium and recounted his early life of unconscionable abuse by his birth mother and her boyfriend; a case known as one of the worst in Kansas City history. Nathan spent the next half an hour speaking to a spellbound audience of his childhood experience; the trauma, resilience, his tentative and youthful hope and his plans for the future. His story engaged every heart in the room. No other sound was heard as the audience was held in rapt attention. At the conclusion of his impactful presentation, Nathan received a standing ovation led by the Mayor of Kansas City.



Randy and Lori Ross, MFCAA President/CEO

MFCAA Executive Director, Lori Ross followed with a description of programs and services offered by MFCAA that support the work of dedicated foster and adoptive parents. Children need the healing that only a 'forever family', can provide. Teresa Laidaker, MFCAA Board president, presented the Outstanding Community Partner Award to Alan Denzer of Farmland Foods, Inc. for their very generous involvement in our annual Ribs 4 Kids fundraiser. Farmland, known for quality products, in partnership with McGonigle's Market, is responsible for the most successful fundraiser in the organization's history. The family of Pam Anderson accepted a posthumous Lifetime Achievement Award for Pam's dedication to children and families as a Jackson County Children's Division caseworker for more than 19 years. Pam was remembered as a gentle spirit whose whole heart was in her work. She was respected and appreciated by co-workers and loved by the families she served. She said her work was her mission and she devoted her life to it.



Malcom and LaVerne Inniss, Ryan Keller and Teresa Laidacker, MFCAA Board President .

Auctioneer Don Collet, livened the room with his entertaining style that resulted in a successful live auction. The evening's favorite item, a framed Chief's jersey autographed by Tony Gonzales, four tickets on the fifty-yard line, and four Kansas City Strips for the tailgate party, provided spirited bidding. Two lucky winners went home with their raffle items, a 50 inch flat screen television and an iPad2. Congratulations to all!

At the end of the evening, Jason Holsman, touched by what he had heard that night, said he was heading home to hug his children and issued a challenge that each person in the room commit to some level of involvement, through volunteering, mentoring, or providing financial support.

The gala planning committee is grateful to those who volunteered and are already looking at ways to make next year's event even more spectacular!

Huge Success!

Thank you ...

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Erin and David Woods, MFCAA Board Member and
Representative Jason and Robyn Holsman



Kansas City Mayor Sly James and Nathan Ross,
featured speaker

Special Thank you:

Jason Holsman
Kansas City Mayor Sly James
Nathan Ross

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