



Family Support Services OF NORTH FLORIDA INC.

SERVING FOSTER PARENTS AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS



Foster care changes designed to reduce trauma

Foster care in northeast Florida is changing. A pilot program in Duval and Alachua counties, funded by the Casey Family Programs Foundation, is underway for the next year to consider ways to keep children in their homes rather than to remove them.



Jim Adams, CEO, Family Support Services of North Florida, Inc.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology did studies which determined that the trauma suffered by children removed from their homes had a more detrimental effect on the children than some of the abuse or neglect they encountered.

MIT figures show that 44 percent of children who entered foster care were arrested at least once, compared to 14 percent of those children who stayed with families; 56 percent became teen mothers, compared to 33 percent; and 20 percent of children held a job at least three months compared to 33 percent of children who stayed with families.

"This is in no way an indictment of the work of our foster parents," said FSS CEO Jim Adams. "A child in eminent danger or where there has been serious abuse still will be removed and placed in a safe and secure environment. But what this study shows is that we must make an attempt to avoid the trauma of removal."

However, what this new approach does is to provide intensive services parents need in the home to ensure a child can remain there safely. Case workers visit weekly. Comprehensive programs are in place for domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health issues, and physical health issues.

The program is voluntary to parents, but they realize that if they do not take the help, they are at risk of losing their children.

A child removed will be put on a fast track to permanency, where that is reunification, legal guardianship or adoption but if they do not comply with the program, they may lose their parental rights. With the new program, a child removed from his or her home will be placed under faster schedules for reunification, legal guardianship or adoption.

News Briefs

FSS continues operations in Nassau

Family Support Services (FSS) has been awarded the contract to be the lead agency for child protective services in Nassau County. The \$2.7 million annual contract is currently being negotiated with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF).

FSS had taken over the contract on an emergency basis Sept. 1. The agency was also granted a new five-year contract with DCF for child protective services in Duval County.

Surf's up

DCF's Rick Terry and his son, Daniel, are planning the second annual Surf Camp for foster children from 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, June 14 at Jacksonville Beach. The camp is free and lifeguards will be there. However, the camp is limited to 40 participants. For more information, call Debbie Campbell at (904) 521-5628.

Learn to compute

The last set of computer classes before school

starts in the fall is planned for mid-July at FCCJ. If you are an adult who does not know how to use a computer or do not have a computer, or a teen who hasn't yet been to FCCJ to learn how to apply for jobs online, how to prepare a resume or how to fill out college applications, please call Debbie Campbell as soon as possible at (904) 521-5628

Try a money camp for kids

Money may grow on trees at the Kash Kids Money Camp. The third annual financial literacy camp for kids 9-18 will be held at CREDI, 600 Eaverson St., Jacksonville, 32206.

Camp dates are June 16-Aug. 6. Camp hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Wednesday. Before care is available at 7 a.m. After care is available until 6 p.m. The \$20 per day charge includes before and after camp care, breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. There is a nonrefundable \$25 registration fee.

Registration deadline is Monday, June 21. Go to www.kashkids.com and complete the

registration form. You can print the form and mail it with payment to Kash Kids/Attn. summer camp registration, P.O. Box 18761, Jacksonville, FL 32229. For information, call Twyla Prindle at (904) 710-6529 or email info@kashkids.com.

Parents support groups meet

The Greater Jacksonville Foster Care and Adoptive Parent Assn. will meet at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, June 26, at St. Johns Presbyterian Church, 4275 Herschel St.

The Northeast Florida Foster and Adoptive Parents Assn. will meet at 6:30 p.m. Monday, June 9, at the Northwest Brank Library, 1755 W. Edgewood Ave. There will be a special presentation on the Individual Education Plan process for participating in exception student education.

The Nassau County Foster and Adoptive Parents Assn. will meet at 6 p.m. Thursday, June 19, at the Florida Baptist Association on U.S. 17 North in Yulee.

If you would like to submit a story idea, calendar item or ask Jim Adams, FSS CEO, a question, please email mary.hurst@fssnf.org.



A SPECIAL MOTHER'S DAY

400TH ADOPTION CELEBRATED 421 to date breaks record

There have been adoptions galore in Duval County this fiscal year. So many in fact, that at 421, Family Support Services, its partnering agencies, and the Circuit Court system have broken a state record.

Friday, May 9, was a very special adoption day at the Duval County Courthouse. The ceremonial, wood-paneled

courtroom was filled with balloons, flowers, gifts, hugs and emotional tears—and lots of media.

Judge David Gooding performed the 400th adoption of 17-year-old Rodney Bennett by his grandmother Catherine Graves. In and out of foster care for years, Rodney and his grandmother reconnected on Independence Day 2007 at 1:30 a.m. after Rodney's other grandmother brought him to meet her.

"I love my baby," she said. "And there's nowhere else he belongs."

Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp also used the occasion to announce Gov. Charlie Christ's Adoption Initiative "Explore Adoption."

FSS CEO Jim Adams said the purpose of the celebration was to bring awareness to the ease of public adoption.



BICYCLE SAFETY TIPS

Familydoctor.org suggests the following bicycle safety tips for you and your children:

Avoid riding at night
Always stay alert and look out for anything in the way

Teach children hand signals

Wear a well-fitted helmet, elbow and knee pads, and padded gloves

Children younger than 10 should not ride in the road

Wear sports sunglasses to stop bugs and dust from getting in your eyes
Get a comfortable bike seat

If you fall off your bike and hit your head, see a doctor even if you don't think you've hurt yourself.

All Things Behavioral... Tantrums

Children, like it or not, have tantrums. Flailing and screaming gain attention and desired items or activities.

To help your child, model calm behavior when you are prevented from having what you want. Praise your child for behaving similarly.

To prevent tantrums, minimize attention to inappropriate displays of anger. Offer choices, especially among two evils, e.g., homework and chores. Prepare your child for undesired activities. For example, rehearse appropriate behavior the child might need to accept being denied a favorite dessert.

When tantrums start, redirect the child to other activities, other people, a different room, or other items—and don't give in. If the child is out of control, remove the child to a safe place that has few interesting items and activities. Once the child is calm resume activities. Minimize attention during this time. Later, you can talk about the tantrum as a means to teach a better way to act.

If a child's tantrums are extended or severe, consult a Behavior Analyst. The Behavior Analysis Services Program helps caregivers to teach children to talk about emotions and choose better behavior. To enroll in our classes (free!), please contact your Foster Parent Liaison at (904) 421-5800.

Got a question? Email davelee@ufl.edu
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