



It's Audit Time-And This One Is Big

This year the audit is scheduled for February 15th and 16th. What makes this one big? Unfortunately, we received citations last year for information not included in the files. We were able to satisfy what was missing, but as a consequence, the auditor is very aware of what to zone in on the following year. If the same problem continues to exist, it puts WFS in the horrible position of having to close foster homes who are not compliant. While we understand that you are busy, that we trust that you have the documentation that is needed (obviously, since we were able to satisfy the citations last year), and that the care of our children is your first concern and that can take a great deal of energy, the state auditors do not have that understanding. The regulations were established for very good reasons, and it is their job to make sure they are met. With that in mind, what do you have to do to make sure your home remains a viable, open foster home?

By now, you should have been given a list of what we need from you, but here is a checklist. We count on your cooperation, as a member of the team. Please send in:

- ◇ Any updated licenses, vehicles registrations, vehicle insurances, and home owner's/renter's insurance. Make sure the registrations are signed.
- ◇ If you have a pet, please send in any updated shot records that have not been submitted to us.
- ◇ If you completed the Mandated Reporting training more than four years ago, please do it again. It must be completed every five years.
- ◇ Spend time with your coordinators to make sure information on the children is updated. If you did not submit verification at the time it occurred, we need:
 - ◇ Verifications for medical, dental, and optical exams.
 - ◇ Copies of court notices, updated immunizations, and progress reports from therapists or other services.
 - ◇ Copies of the children's report cards.
- ◇ During this audit, the auditors will be visiting foster homes and looking for:
 - ◇ No Smoking Signs
 - ◇ Emergency Phone Numbers
 - ◇ Lock boxes for medication.
 - ◇ Guns stored in a locked container; bullets locked separately.
 - ◇ The No Smoking Sign and an area for the emergency phone numbers are on the 2022 calendar. If you did not receive a calendar, please contact your coordinator or call Whitney at 412-342-2339 to get one.

Upcoming Events

FREE COVID TESTS

See page 6

Groundhog Day
February 2, 2022

Valentine's Day
February 14, 2022

Parent Café
February 23, 2022
Details on Page 3

Audit
February 15-16, 2022

Virtual Covered Dish
February 16, 2022
Details on Page 2

President's Day
February 21, 2022

Parent Café
February 23, 2022
Details on Page 2

Conference call
March 10, 2022
Details on Page 2

March 13, 2022
Daylight Savings Time

St. Patrick's Day
March 17, 2022

Parent Café
March 30, 2022
Details on Page 2

TRAINING INFORMATION

WFS Foster and Adoption Training

WFS in Wilkinsburg

Contact Whitney Kelly to register at

412-342-2339 or

whitney.kelly@wfsa.org

March 7, 2022 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Orientation

Who Are the Children?

March 9, 2022 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Who Are the Parents?

Child Development

March 14, 2022 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Grief and Loss

Stabilizing Their World

March 16, 2022 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Abuse and Neglect

Attachment

March 21, 2022 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Parenting

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting

March 23, 2022 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Mental Health

Resources

See Page 11 for information on CPR/First Aid training on line. It must be renewed every two years.

Training

Recertification Training Hours:

PA DHS regulations require 6 hours of annual training. Wesley Family Services' annual Recommendation:

Primary caregiver 20 hours Secondary caregiver 20 hours

Please note: If you are newly certified, you need to begin earning training hours immediately. The hours earned for certification do not count toward your first recertification.

Resource Parent Association Conference Call



Our next conference call is scheduled for **March 10, 2022 at 6:00 PM.**

Resource parents can join the call by dialing **857-232-0155** and entering the conference code **269736** when prompted. We hope more resource families will join in!

Our agenda will include:

- ✧ Results from the audit
- ✧ Upcoming fundraiser
- ✧ Your cares and concerns

Please remember to use your mute button until you are ready to talk if you have kids or critters running around while you are on the call.

Parent Cafés

There will be a Parent Café every month on the last Wednesday of the month. Parent Cafés are a great chance to meet other resource parents and share some of your experiences. The next Parent Cafés will be February 23, 2022 and March 30, 2022 from 6:00PM to 8:00PM via ZOOM. Contact Shana at shana.orlic@wfsa.org to register.



Virtual Covered Dish Training

The next scheduled Covered Dish Training will be February 16, 2022. The training will be Things That Go Bump in the Night, which will address children's fears, the impact of trauma on those fears, and ways to lend the child support. But is it only children who experience fear? Join us and see.



Resource Parent Association Updates



On December 8, 2021, the Resource Parent Association met for the bi-monthly conference call. All of the resource parents certified through Wesley Family Services are a part of this association and are eligible to participate in these calls. Twelve people participated in the call.

Colleen provided an update on the candle sales and thanked those who participated for their commitment to the association. The final profit for the candle sales was \$773.34. Five current resource families, one former resource family, and five staff participated in the sales.

AFFIRM trainings were discussed. It was emphasized that Allegheny County supports this training and will eventually choose placements based on the resource parent having the training. If they do not receive the training, they can still get placements from other counties. The training schedule was discussed in terms of how it is now much more flexible and available. There were questions from resource parents concerning their own participation in the program. Romaine addressed those concerns and explained how training credits are recorded. Participants were encouraged to register far in advance as competition for the spaces spanned all of the agencies who are contracted with Allegheny County.

The upcoming audit was discussed. Resource parents were reminded that licenses, registrations, insurances, medical exams, and mandated reporting had to be up to date in their files. They were also reminded about turning in the children's medical, dental, and optical forms; MARS forms; and report cards. They were reminded of the need to schedule appointments on time. Several resource parents had questions about documentation which were answered. Resource parents were reminded to sign their registrations and schedule their medical appointments so that they could get a TB test.

Resource parents were reminded to talk with their coordinators about rescheduling family visits based on the days the office is closed or if they had traveling plans for the holidays.

The meeting was opened to the resource parents for questions and concerns. Jamie questioned if the children will be mandated to get the COVID vaccine. Judy reminded her that birth parents had medical rights and would have final say, unless the courts gave rights to the county.

Judy asked about the yard signs. She was told she could get one. Colleen let her know that the signs were in, but it had been discussed on the last call that the resource parents would be given signs in the spring.

Jamie talked about picking up resource parents from an agency that may be closing their program. We talked about how resource parents who are dissatisfied with their agency or who have no agency can approach Wesley Family Services.

On January 20, 2022, the Resource Parent Association met for the first time in 2022. Five families, six staff and the new intern attended.

Those in attendance spoke positively about the Angel Tree gifts and their holidays in general. One resource parent mentioned that she is continuing to use a gift from the past. Colleen explained the gnomes and why they were included (see page nine).

Annette discussed the upcoming audit. She talked about needed documentation and stressed the resource parents' responsibility to schedule appointments for the children on time. Also emphasized was the need to be seen every fifteen days. It cannot always be a ZOOM visit, only due to illness in the home. Resource parents were given the list for needed documentation concerning their files, such as income statements, clearances, physicals, insurances, and registrations (see page one). Every file must contain these documents per regulations. Annette informed the resource parents that WFS is given one day notice as to which files are being pulled. There will be home visits this year; therefore No Smoking Signs, Emergency numbers, and fire escape plans must be visible. A reminder was given to post the calendars.

Resource Parent Association Updates (continued)

Additionally, fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors must be functioning. Annette also explained the interview process. For anyone who needs a carbon monoxide detector, a resource parent shared that Kiddie is a brand that has a ten year battery.

Meet and Greet were discussed. They entail inviting people into your home to host time for someone to come in and talk about foster care. They can be virtual as well. It was mentioned that a resource parent can achieve this with only three or four people invited. WFS will assist in hosting the event. WFS also has materials and posters that can be used in the community. As part of the social media campaign, resource parents were asked to request WFS to be one of their contacts on Facebook so that posts can be shared. Annette added that the bus ads were successful.

Mary Rauktis from the University of Pittsburgh will be doing a follow-up on the study she began last year. It is about the effects COVID had on the children's education. She wants to do a second round to follow up with interviews (original families and the newer families) now to see the impact of the flow of virtual versus in-class learning.

Brooke Kaminski was introduced as a doctoral student at Chatham University. Her focus is on trauma. She may be providing online education for resource parents to potentially participate in. Resource parents were asked to keep an eye out for an email regarding those very soon.

Future trainings were promoted. Kristina talked about the Parent Café, scheduled for January 26 and the one for February 23, 2022. They will be from 6:00 to 8:00PM. Each quarter, a day session will be offered for those who cannot make the evening café. March will be the next one. Teen Triple P begins in February. It focuses on working through challenges in raising teens. There will be a Non-covered Dish Training on February 16. The training will be Things That Go Bump in the Night.

Colleen talked about the upcoming Fundraiser. We will be working with Pittsburgh Popcorn. One resource parent mentioned that they may be having difficulty with a couple flavors. Information will be sent in February,

Resource parents' concerns were addressed. Kristina did the AFFIRM training via fast track and shared that it worked out well. Jenny Baker signed up twice for AFFIRM but has never received a confirmation. Kristina offered that it may have come to her as a junk mail.

Jim Allan asked if we had reviewed the film packet he sent. No one was aware that one was sent. It is two animated films. One is *Allison and the Magic Bubble* (done before *ET*). The other is a Christmas story about the star of Bethlehem-*Star for Jeremy*. He said they can be used at any time. The Christmas film won a bronze recognition. Children will receive a free animation cell if we do this as an activity for them-Jim will donate them.

Nicole asked Annette-if a child has an in-person visit (parent has COVID or has been exposed) what is the policy? Do they have to quarantine? New OSHA Policy was talked about. If a parent says they tested positive, but have no symptoms, they will have a ten day span where visits are virtual. There is no guarantee they will go back to in person following that time frame. If a parent becomes symptomatic, the visit is still suspended until they have three days as non-symptomatic. Parents will be screened by staff, but not tested. If they are living with someone who is positive, the ten day rule still applies.

Kristina was looking at blended service coordination. Annette checked the site. Kristina wanted to know how WFS did it. Annette provided Kristina with a contact-Kristina Truitt. Julie Cawoski provided the contact information for Kimberly Romito (724-895-8262).



Additional training is provided through the Training Co-op which is composed of fourteen local adoption agencies. You are welcome to register for any of these classes. When you have completed the class, please submit proof of attendance so that we can credit the training to your annual training requirement.

February	Title	Location	Time	RSVP
02/05/22	Trauma Informed Care \$25.00 fee	Auberle ZOOM Training	9AM-3PM	FPDocuments@aubarle.org
02/08/22	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)	Pressley Ridge ZOOM Training	6:30PM- 8:00PM	ldamico@pressleyridge.org (the first letter is a lower case L)
02/09/22	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)	Auberle ZOOM Training	6:00PM- 8:00PM	FPDocuments@aubarle.org
02/16/22	The Twister: Crisis Management	Auberle ZOOM Training	6:00PM- 8:00PM	FPDocuments@aubarle.org
02/21/11	The Do's and Don'ts of Sticker Charts	Wesley Family Services ZOOM Training	6:00PM- 8:00PM	Samantha.maggio@wfspa.org
02/32/22	Parent Café	Wesley Family Services ZOOM Training	6:00PM- 8:00PM	shana.orlic@wfspa.org
02/26/22	CPR & First Aid	Auberle 1101 Hartman Street McKeesport, PA 15132	9:00AM- 3:00PM	FPDocuments@aubarle.org (There may be a fee)
March	Title	Location	Time	RSVP
03/03/22	Cultural Humility: Transracial Parenting	The Children's Home of Pittsburgh ZOOM Meeting	6:30PM- 8:30PM	mgarbark@chomephg.org
03/05/22	Triad's Relationships: Birth parents, their kids, and foster parents	Adoption Connection ZOOM Training	9:00AM- 3:00PM	sgavel@adoptionconnectionpa.org
03/09/22	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)	Auberle ZOOM Training	6:00PM- 8:00PM	FPDocuments@aubarle.org
03/12/22	Trauma Informed Care \$25.00 fee	Auberle ZOOM Training	9AM-3PM	FPDocuments@aubarle.org
03/15/22	Coaching Boys Into Men- Perversion of Domestic Violence	Wesley Family Services ZOOM Training	6:00PM- 8:00PM	Ryan.reitz@wfspa.org
03/16/22	Ball in the Box	Auberle ZOOM Training	9AM-3PM	FPDocuments@aubarle.org
3/26/22	CPR & First Aid	Auberle 1101 Hartman Street McKeesport, PA 15132	9:00AM- 3:00PM	FPDocuments@aubarle.org (There may be a fee)
03/30/22	Parent Café	Wesley Family Services ZOOM Training	6:00PM- 8:00PM	shana.orlic@wfspa.org

AFFIRM Training

AFFIRM training is a requirement for all resource parents who are open to taking children of any age from Allegheny County, as children recognize their sexual or gender identity at different ages.

To Register: Go to www.tinyurl.com/AFFIRMCaregiver

Session Dates		Time
February 2, 9, 16, 23	ZOOM Training	6PM to 8PM
February 1, 8, 15, 22	ZOOM Training	Noon to 2PM
February 12, 19	ZOOM Training	10AM to 3PM
March 7, 14, 21, 28	ZOOM Training	6PM to 8PM
March 12, 19	ZOOM Training	10AM to 3PM
April 5, 12, 19, 26	ZOOM Training	6PM to 8PM
April 21, 22, 28, 29	ZOOM Training	8AM to 10AM



AFFIRM classes are required by Allegheny County. Be aware that if you do not have the AFFIRM training, you may not be able to take an Allegheny County placement. You will continue to be eligible for placements from other counties.

AFFIRM classes have limited enrollment, and, as all of the agencies who contract with Allegheny County are requiring their resource parents to take these classes, the classes fill up quickly. ***Please register early.***

FREE COVID TESTS

Below is the link for ordering At-Home Covid Tests:

<https://www.covidtests.gov/>

Simply open the link and follow simple instructions.

Staff News

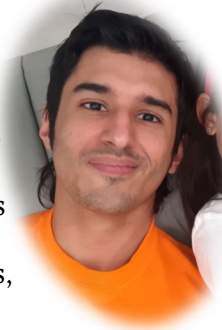
Brooke Kaminski is a third-year doctoral student in occupational therapy at Chatham University. She holds a bachelor's degree in child development with minors in communication studies and disability studies from West Virginia University. Brooke is originally from Wheeling, West Virginia but has lived in Pittsburgh for the past three years while attending graduate school. Brooke is currently completing a fourteen-week research project within the foster care and adoption department at Wesley Family Services. The emphasis of her research is how trauma impacts mental health in children and adolescents within the foster care system. Brooke enjoys exercising, spending time outdoors, and trying new restaurants and coffee shops.



Brooke Kaminski

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Jose Gonzalez is a Master's in Social Work student at California University of Pennsylvania. His experience has mostly entailed working with immigrants and refugees. He is excited to broaden his skills through this internship. He hopes to not only help as much as possible, but to also learn from the community of families and professional here at Wesley Family Services. In the bit of free time that he has, Jose very much enjoys running, hiking, and generally staying active. My future career goals are to go on and earn a doctorate, before becoming a professional counselor.



Jose
Gonzalez

Keilyn Dillard attends California University of Pennsylvania and is a new intern in foster care. She also recently was hired as a new case aide. She looks forward to meeting the families and the children as she continues in her positions as an intern and case aide. Keilyn said she is just happy to be a part of the team.



Keilyn
Dillard

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Chris Slay has chosen pursue another opportunity, and we wish him well. Chris was a coordinator and worked well with the families and children.



Chris Slay

Looking for Recruiting Venues!

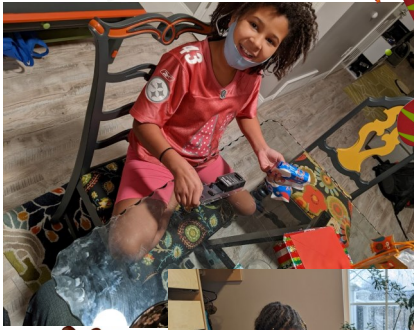
PLEASE send us any upcoming activities in your neighborhood. Romaine or Dan can get in touch, and we may be able to set up a table to recruit families just like you! If the event occurs, you will receive a \$50 bonus!



March 13, 2022



Happy Holidays



WE ARE FAMILY!



On January 21, 2022, Lynn Kaskie became the forever mom of Grey. Grey joins his now official big brother, Rylan, whom she adopted in November 2019.

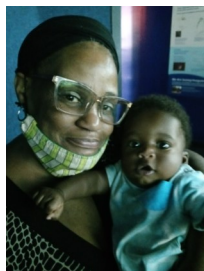


GNOMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

We missed the Holiday Social this year, but still wanted to bring you some holiday cheer. You may have noticed the gnomes in your Holiday package. Why gnomes? It's been a year of challenges and, because whimsy can lift the spirit, we found that gnomes were believed to be household spirits who were responsible for the care and prosperity of the a farm or family. From the very beginning, gnomes have been considered good luck charms, representing a small race of humanoids who live underground and have been around for centuries. The history of gnomes are tied to Christmas as gift givers. Unlike elves, who live at the North Pole, gnomes pop out of the forest and walk through the front door with their gifts (sounds like your coordinators). They are also tasked with various chores around the home, and might act out when the humans didn't cater to their little gnome needs (sounds like the kids!).



Annette and Colleen enjoyed making these for you. Whether you received a gnome who looks more human or one who is more fanciful, it represents our wish that you have a year filled with good luck. Don't count on them doing chores-Colleen has had them for years and thinks they have formed a union which prevents them from participating in manual labor!



In Sympathy

Our sympathy is extended to Josh and Tammy Griffin for the loss of Tammy's mother, Doreen Graves, on December 27, 2021. Ms. Graves provided tremendous support to Josh and Tammy, often taking the "night shift" as their foster child had difficulty sleeping as an infant. Tammy described her mother as a remarkable woman. She truly took on the role of Grandma, and will be very much missed.



OOPS! The last newsletter identified Steve Pawelczak and Judy Rauch as adoptive parents of Charleigh. This was an error as Charleigh is still in the foster status. Steve and Judy are working toward Charleigh's reunification with her birth parents, but are willing to be a permanent resource for her, if needed.

Birthdays!

February

Gianna D. 2/1

Avamarie B. 2/2

Ashley P. 2/3

Tyrn K. 2/7

Sabry A. 2/11

Marlee E. 2/14

Jonae C. 2/14

Destiny W. 2/16

Christion N. 2/17

Ashley R. 2/17

KaRee H. 2/17

Matthew B. 2/17

Wyatt N. 2/17

Kiera H. 2/26

Maurice B. 2/26

Nathan P. 2/27

March

Nathan R. 3/2

Mylia M. 3/3

MaryAnne W. 3/4

Nicholas W. 3/6

Kaleb S. 3/7

Mahaley A. 3/7

Kristina T. 3/9

Terri H. 3/9

Joshua T. 3/14

Lamar H. 3/14

Shawn M. 3/14

Dayvon W. 5/15

James G. 3/15

Kenneth H. 3/16

Jeremiah T. 3/19

Hope G. 3/20

Chemay S. 3/28

Brian N. 3/30



New Resource Families!

Jon and Amanda Simmen Bob and Carol Averso

Samantha Dix

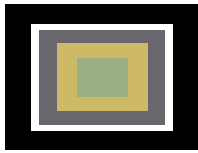
Mike and Amanda Wahlen

Kristina Truitt

Evan and Tracy Weaver

Christopher and Julie Carlisle





Resources

- ♥ Financial Empowerment for Youth Who Have Aged Out of Foster Care - <https://www.moneygeek.com/financial-planning/resources-for-foster-youth-aging-out/>
- ♥ Families Like Ours is a Facebook group for LGBTQ parents. The group does camping, pot lucks, and gatherings. The children in the family can readily identify with families just like theirs. The woman who runs the group was involved in working with the ACLU to legalize same sex marriage in Pennsylvania.
- ♥ The recent approval of booster vaccines for all children between the ages of twelve to fifteen is excellent news for our students, families, and schools. AHN and UPMC are both offering booster appointment shots on their vaccine scheduling sites. Pharmacies such as Walgreens and CVS are also scheduling booster appointments for this age group. You can also check in with your child's pediatrician to see if they can provide a booster in their office.
- ♥ Alpha Iota Alpha Christian Sorority, Inc. is a non-denominational, non-collegiate sorority that has a vision to influence, empower, and support youth in education and spiritual development. If this fits into your beliefs, check them out at <https://alphaiotaalpha.org/>
- ♥ Need a Phone List form for the refrigerator? Go to http://www.familyshoppingbag.com/img/view-print.php?img=Emergency_Chart_984035.png
- ♥ The 412 Youth Zone is operating virtually. Youth Zone staff continue to provide services to members throughout the community, and by phone, text, and social media. The clinic is currently open by appointment Tuesdays and Thursdays each week, and members can schedule appointments by calling 412-615-4038. Check out their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/412YouthZone/> for updates to programming and important resources.
- ♥ AFN Foster Parent of Teens Support Group: This support group is held every other month from 6pm to 8pm. It is located at the Allegheny Family Network office on 425 North Craig Street in Pittsburgh. This is an open group who welcomes all foster and adoptive parent of teens. Dinner is provided. Please register by calling Linda Mitchell at 412-290-9190.
- ♥ The Allegheny Self Care Initiative offers free hair care, hair products, and training in hair care for children, youth, and resource families involved in the foster care system. The programs also offer activities to increase self-esteem and self-awareness. For more information involving youth between the ages of twelve to 21, contact Kymberly Harper at 412-722-1404 ext. 240 or email her at kharper@wardhome.org. For children under twelve, contact Daria Segers at 412-282-8022.
- ♥ Don't forget that CPR/First Aid must be updated every two years. If you have been certified by an instructor, you are permitted to renew on line (as long as we have a copy of your initial cards in your file). One great resource is <https://www.nationalcprfoundation.com>. The normal price is \$20.95. There are several options for training, so be sure to choose the one that includes both CPR and First Aid.
- ♥ Free diapers and pull-ups are available through Life Works of Western Pennsylvania, 1323 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219 on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10:00am until 2:00pm. Contact Sheilah (412-606-1392); Florence (412-606-1652); or Deborah (412-609-3456).

people Helping People



FUN PAGE

Winter Scavenger Hunt

Take a walk through your neighborhood or at a local park and see how many of the items below you can find. Good luck and stay warm!



Long Pinecone



Snowman



Empty Bird's Nest



Animal Tracks



Short Pinecone



Feather



Squirrel



Icicle



Berries



Boot Print



Puddle



A Bird Feeder



Sled



Acorn



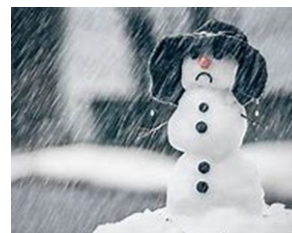
Frozen Leaf



Twig

Helping Children Beat the Winter Blues

It should be no surprise that a 2021 survey conducted by Save the Children revealed that children have been greatly affected by negative feelings which were a result of COVID and the disruption of their lives. The changes in the way children socialize, wearing masks, losing their extracurricular activities, and remote learning are plenty for a child to deal with. While there has been some return to normal, many children (and adults), continue to be subject to missing out on many things because they have to quarantine due to having COVID or having contact with a person who tested positive to COVID. Some businesses and all medical facilities continue to mandate wearing masks. Schools revert to remote learning without much warning based on staffing and the number of children affected by COVID. Combine all of these situations with shorter days, lack of sunshine, confinement indoors, and dark mornings and you have the likely combination for children to be affected by the “winter blues.” For our children in care, add one additional level—their trauma. It only stands to reason that a child who already has reason to feel sad or depressed would be even more likely to be affected by winter.



The “winter blues” are often confused with Seasonal Affective Disorder. The “blues” come from the shortening days, earlier bedtimes, and waking up while it is still dark. Seasonal Affective Disorder is a type of depression that follows a seasonal pattern. It normally develops in a person’s 20s, but is sometimes present in those a bit younger. As many as 3-4% of children and adolescents may suffer symptoms. People with Seasonal Affective Disorder withdraw socially and no longer enjoy things that they previously viewed as fun. They crave comfort foods (pasta, breads, and sugar) and forgo healthier options, which leads to fatigue and weight gain.

What can be done for a child who is experiencing the blues? The old saying that honesty is the best policy applies here. It is important that children’s feelings have validation, but there are times they are not even sure why they feel the way they do. Talk to them about the weather changes, just as you talk to them about how things change with moving into your home, new schools, or even the results of court. Explain that, depending on the weather, daily schedules may change, school may be delayed, or visits can be canceled. Some of this may be due to COVID, but some of it may also be due to the season.

Knowing change is coming is one thing, but you will also need to prepare them for the possibilities for how it will affect their lives. Normalizing changes can help your child cope better. If there is a chance a visit is going to be canceled, talk about having contact by phone or a ZOOM visit. If that cannot occur, have a plan for an alternative activity with them. Many schools are not canceling classes now if the weather is inclement, but they will do remote learning. This means losing contact with friends; therefore, you can talk to them about phone calls with friends after school or a play date if the friend lives locally.

While it is inconvenient for everyone, COVID related restrictions are in place to protect the majority of the people. Help your child understand the restrictions that may be in place at social gatherings and indoor events. The most recent version of the virus is highly transmittable, and schools and businesses are choosing to handle restrictions (or a lack of restrictions) in a way they feel is best. To a child, this means there is no consistency for expectations. For a parent, it can be difficult to explain why the rules in various places differ, especially with a child who needs to be able to depend on consistency.

When something is taken away—put something else in its place. In terms of the winter blues, it means that you may need to get creative with winter activities. Just because it is cold, it does not mean children cannot play outside; they just need to dress for the weather. Maybe they cannot ride their bikes, but building igloos can be a great deal of fun. You can also go



sled riding or create a winter scavenger hunt. Teach them to enjoy each season for what it offers. Try to spend some time outdoors every day. A study conducted at Aarhus University of Denmark found that there was a consistent association between higher levels of outdoor activity during childhood and a lower risk of developing mental health disorders later in life. It also showed that a loss of human-nature interactions can present a health risk as well as reduce an

appreciation for natural environments, which creates a negative feedback loop. *

It is also important to teach children how to stay safe outside. These are the “common sense” rules that apply to winter. Last month’s training talked about how to dress, but there is much more to consider. That being said, dressing in bright colors or clothes with their favorite characters can pick up a child’s spirits. Another “rule” is to use sunscreen. UVB rays can be more damaging in winter than in summer. Direct sunlight, as well as sun reflected off the snow, can cause sunburn. Additionally, just because a road is closed to traffic, it may still be not safe for play due to the ice on the roads and the chance that someone may ignore the closure. Another rule that resource parents are aware of is to use caution around fires if a fire pit is being used. It is also important to use the right equipment for the activity. Helmets should be worn for snowboarding or ice hockey, and should be considered for skiing and sledding. Finally, stay hydrated. The dry winter air can cause children to lose more water through their breath. Keep them supplied with water, soups, and warm drinks.

If the weather is such that going outside is not a good idea, bring the outside inside by opening the blinds and curtains, leaving sunlight to flood a room. It can be very beneficial if a child can experience direct sunlight for at least ten minutes a day, whether indoors or outside. Take time to exercise indoors, even on cloudy days. Exercising (sit ups, running in place, jump rope, etc.) with children can be fun and healthy for both of you. If you are not fond of structured exercise, have a dance party in the living room. Physical activity helps children give a vent to all the pent-up energy they have. This results in a calmer child in your home. Definitely a win-win situation.



When your child’s energy has been spent, take time to play board games, do arts and crafts, or read stories. Keeping a child’s attention on interesting activities prohibits them from focusing on the shortened days.

Maintaining good health through good eating habits and regular medical check-ups is important. Get the flu and COVID vaccines for you and your child, if recommended by the primary care provider and approved by the entity that has medical rights.

But what if you believe your child has Seasonal Affective Disorder? There is no definitive cause, but research is showing that the disruption in the sleep-wake cycle where fewer hours of daylight cause an increase in the hormone melatonin, which generally peaks during darkness and helps promote sleep, may be a factor. The sleep-wake cycle does not match up with the light and dark times of the day. Increased daytime melatonin can contribute to symptoms of depression. As a result, you will see a child who is sadder than what their life situation (tests, friend conflict, etc.) should cause. Grades may suffer, they may sleep more and not want to get up in the morning, and they are more irritable than usual. If that is the case, it may be time to consult a mental health professional to see if therapy or medication may be needed.

* Kristine Engemann, Carsten Bøcker Pedersen, Lars Arge, Constantinos Tsirogiannis, Preben Bo Mortensen March 12, 2019 Residential green space in childhood is associated with lower risk of psychiatric disorders from adolescence into adulthood. Can be found at <https://www.pnas.org/content/116/11/5188>

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Training: Helping Children Beat the Winter Blues

Complete and return this form to Whitney Kelly for 1 hour training credit

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. In addition to all of the changes everyone has had to endure due to COVID and weather changes, children in foster care have the added challenge of dealing with their _____.

2. “Winter blues” are brought on by _____, _____, and _____.

3. ____ T ____ F Seasonal Affective Disorder can only affect people twenty years of age or older.

4. ____ T ____ F It helps to normalize a child’s feeling and have open discussions with them about how the changes in the weather can affect their lives.

5. List two ways you can help a child prepare for changes in their routine that may occur due to weather or COVID

6. ____ T ____ F Since the rules surrounding COVID protocol are universal, it is easy to explain to a child why the rules are in place.

7. List three activities you can do *outdoors* to keep your child interested and entertained.

8. ____ T ____ F Sunscreen is not necessary in the winter; sunburn only occurs in the summer.

9. List two safety tips for outdoor play.

10. List three activities you can do *indoors* to keep your child interested and entertained.

11. ____ T ____ F It can be very beneficial if a child can experience direct sunlight for at least ten minutes a day, whether indoors or outdoors.

12. ____ T ____ F Maintaining good health through good eating habits, regular exercise, and regular medical check-ups helps to keep the “winter blues” away.

13. Research is beginning to show that Seasonal Affective Disorder may be caused by a disruption in the _____ cycle.

14. ____ T ____ F If you believe your child is suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder, it may be beneficial to consult a mental health professional.

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