

FOSTER & ADOPTIVE PARENT ADVOCACY CENTER



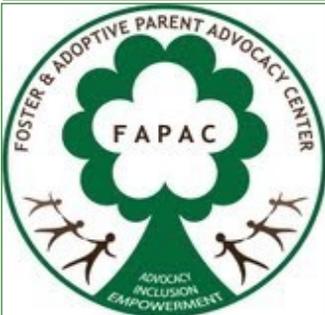
WHO WE ARE
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WHY YOUR SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL

Healing Children by Empowering Families

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WHO WE ARE

History

FAPAC was founded in 2000 by a grassroots effort based upon the belief that through our efforts, DC's foster, kinship and adoptive parent community could combine its skills, knowledge, and compassion to effect systemic reform of our troubled child welfare system. An idea that originated as a discussion in living rooms around coffee tables has evolved into a critical and well-respected stakeholder, combining strong advocacy efforts with an equally strong commitment to partnership and problem solving. Significantly, FAPAC is the only organization whose founding purpose, and still a primary purpose, is to advocate for systemic change and problem resolution on behalf of children and families in the DC child welfare system. Empowering our community of parents in the District and neighboring Maryland to work together on concerns facing our children, FAPAC has been acknowledged as a model of parent support and advocacy.

We are proud of our successes over the years. Because of FAPAC's advocacy, foster parents now have:

- On call crisis intervention so that foster families no longer have to go it alone in emergencies;
- Critical information at placement so that children's needs can be better met;
- Support workers and an Agency Ombudsman to help resolve issues and ensure better services;
- Significantly improved training to learn to meet the complex needs of children in care;
- Post-adoption services to keep families stable;
- And more.....

Our Mission

FAPAC's mission is "to improve the quality of life, well-being, and dignity of children in the District of Columbia by strengthening, supporting, and empowering foster, adoptive, and kinship parents to serve as advocates for their children's needs; building bridges with birth parents; working as an organizational agent of systemic change; and by partnering with other District agencies to provide innovative stabilization services to families at risk."

We provide a combination of system advocacy and individual, group, and family support and training to accomplish our mission. In this way, we assist families to be able to work within the system, as it is, as well as empower them to improve it.

Our Vision

We envision:

- strong prevention programs to keep families intact;
- high-quality, well-trained/supported foster placements when children do need to come into care;
- serious efforts towards reunification and other permanency; and
- meaningful and effective post-permanency services to support children and families and keep them stable and healthy.

As an organization whose staff and board is comprised of many current or former foster and/or adoptive parents, we are both professionally and personally dedicated to this vision.

- ◆ **Systemic Advocacy**
- ◆ **Individual and Group Support**
- ◆ **Training**



SERVICES AND RESOURCES

FAPAC provides:

- Advocacy for policies, practices, and legislation that will improve the lives of our children and families;
- Comprehensive support and training to enable foster, kinship, and adoptive parents to access the services needed to care for children who have experienced neglect and abuse, and the skills needed to serve as advocates for themselves and their peers;
- Tools to build critical bridges between foster parents and birth parents;
- Support and education to help families stay strong and stable so that their children will not have to enter the foster care system.

Our Motto

“If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito.”

~ Bette Reese ~



SERVICES AND RESOURCES



Systemic Advocacy

The founding reason for FAPAC's existence, systemic advocacy is at the very heart of all our work and the venue by which we advocate for improved policies, practices, and legislation to significantly improve services to children and families. Our advocacy agenda is informed by our individual and group work with families, and based upon their real and current experiences and concerns as well as our own years of experience and collective knowledge. FAPAC utilizes a unique dual model of advocacy and partnership with decision-makers that combines raising issues and concerns with an equal attention and commitment to bringing everyone to the table to identify resolutions.

This model has led to FAPAC becoming highly respected as a stakeholder advocacy group and community partner. On this journey, we have been responsible for facilitating many significant systemic changes that have positively impacted the lives of children and families served by the DC child welfare system. Some examples include:

- The launching of the Family Link initiative that helps foster and birth parents to work together on behalf of their children, now a District-wide systemic practice initiative;
- The inclusion of foster parent voices at tables of decision-making about the children in their homes and about agency policy that impacts them;
- Interventions to improve placement stability;
- Significantly increased communication to foster and kinship families to keep them in the loop about important news and policy changes;
- Emergency day care services to allow foster parents to take children in their homes without risking their jobs;
- And more...

SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Individual Group Support

Support for foster, kinship and adoptive parents:

FAPAC's support programs for foster, kinship and adoptive parents provide Individual, group, and peer support to meet the challenges of parenting children who have suffered from abuse or neglect.

Many times, for many families, FAPAC has been the only place for them to turn for guidance and support.

"FAPAC is a very small organization that provides an incredibly large amount of advocacy and support to parents and families that so desperately need it. I can personally remember feeling alone, overwhelmed and having a complete lack of understanding as to where to get help with what I was experiencing."- Foster parent



Individual Support

FAPAC provides families with:

- a listening ear
- mediation of issues with their agencies
- problem solving; emotional support
- referrals to legal counsel, educational advocacy, and other resources.

Typically, this work is done over the phone; however, in some situations, FAPAC may accompany families to meetings with their agencies, or even occasionally to court.

Peer Support/Rap Group

A monthly drop-in peer support group facilitated by FAPAC staff, provides a safe place to share about concerns and challenges and enhances parenting skills through its confidential, safe, and non-judgmental environment. Time may be carved out to specifically discuss participants feelings around, and experiences with, shared parenting between birth and resource parents. Additional issues of concern may include impact of fostering on other family members and relationships, challenges in dealing with children's trauma, help in accessing services, and many others.

SERVICES AND RESOURCES (CONTINUED)



Support for DC's Parent Community:

FAPAC's Support programs offer Family Stabilization groups for the general parent community. The purpose of these groups is to build peer relationships, supports, and parenting skills so that DC's families remain stable and strong.

Families Growing Stronger Together (FGST)

A comprehensive long-term parenting education and support program offered to parents who are 25 years of age or under, or ANY parent who is parenting a child between the ages of 0 - 6 years of age. FGST works with all parents—those who are not child welfare involved as well as those who are—to build protective factors and to facilitate family strengthening and positive parent-child relationships.

"As I walked down a dark path of fear and uncertainty, they became an out-stretched hand through the light at the end of my tunnel." - FGST participant.

FAPAC also partners with other community organizations to host programs to meet needs of their specific client groups based upon our FGST model.

SERVICES AND RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

Training

FAPAC provides training opportunities to address the needs and concerns of the District's foster, kinship, and adoptive parents. As a small organization working to make a large impact, FAPAC works to build collaboration between organizations and to build capacity in our broader community. Therefore, we host trainings that meet the needs of our community, and are not being addressed by others.

Introduction to Shared Parenting and Advanced Shared Parenting

These courses are designed to help foster parents build stronger partnerships with birth parents to minimize the trauma of children being placed in care. *Target audience: Foster, kinship, and adoptive parents, social workers, and other organizations working with children in care*

Navigating the DC Permanency Process

This course is designed to give parents an overview of the District's legal process and their role within this system. Participants learn how to understand and participate in the court process; the hierarchy upon which permanency decisions are made; and current guiding court and legislative decisions. This course is hosted in partnership with the Children's Law Center. *Target audience: Foster, kinship, and adoptive parents*

Peer Advocacy Training (P.A.T.)

P.A.T. is designed to reach foster parents to advocate for the needs of the children in their home and to assist and support other parents who may be intimidated by the system. An intense 19-hour weekend training program, P.A.T. is a highly regarded training conducted by practitioners who are experts in their respective fields. *Target audience: Foster, kinship, and adoptive parents*

I'm Licensed---What's Next

This day-long workshop is designed to bridge the gap between pre-service and in-service training to provide DC specific information and resources in order to assist new families as they begin their foster care journey. *Target audience: New foster, kinship, and adoptive parents*

Other Trainings

FAPAC has a full roster of training workshops that we offered at previous times when our families could not find them accessible elsewhere. These included but are not limited to:

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders;
- Trauma informed Behavioral interventions;
- Depression and Anxiety in Children and Adolescents;
- Developmental Stages of Children/The Impact of Neglect and Abuse
- Healing Invisible Wounds: Children Exposed to Violence

One of our successful advocacy efforts has been towards enhancing and expanding the training capacity offered by DC Child and Family Services Agency and other partners to DC's foster parent community. As we are committed to continually meeting the changing needs of our community, we removed trainings from our schedule when they become accessible to our families elsewhere. Additional training modules are offered based upon community need and request.

WHY YOUR SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL



Every day

- Foster parents give of their time, hearts, and resources to help children who may be placed in their homes in the middle of the night with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Many come with scant medical and background information and have limited prospects for long-term attention to their critical needs.
- Foster parents lift their voices to advocate for children with special physical and emotional needs to ensure they receive the specific resources needed.
- Foster parents shape the lives and build the character of those in care, guiding children to become productive citizens of your cities.

Don't they deserve your support?

As a very small organization with a large and diverse scope, partnerships and support are critical to enabling us to reach our mission. In the past few years, much of our funding has come through project-specific grant and contract funds, leaving gaps between what we are funded for and what we actually DO. For example, our individual assistance services and our systemic advocacy are both critically needed, not offered by any other organization, and funded solely through general operating funds. Additionally, some of our support programs are funded by grants that don't cover all the expenses of the program, so we must continually seek additional support in order to keep them at the high quality FAPAC is known for.

Your support is critical to our day-to-day ability to continue to make our significant and critical impact on families. Your support will allow us to continue to focus on strong and effective programs, allowing FAPAC to build a strong infrastructure and the flexibility to increase our capacity to meeting the needs of children and families.

"Somehow, this "little engine that could" was able to provide me training, resources, and advocacy that have had a long-lasting and indelible effect on my life and the lives of my two adopted children." Adoptive parent

From all of us, and on behalf of our families, thank you for your consideration.