



FAPAC—FOSTER & ADOPTIVE PARENT ADVOCACY CENTER

advocacy news

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Healing Children by Empowering Families  WWW.DCFAPAC.ORG

Empowered Foster Parents Can:

- Access critical services
- Advocate with schools and service providers
- Participate as full team members
- Identify and utilize support networks
- Increase chances for stability and permanency for the children in their homes

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FAPAC news

Welcome back, P.A.T!

On August 3-5 FAPAC will be offering our highly rated Peer Advocacy Training Program. This 19-hour weekend training program assists families to identify, access, and advocate for services for the children in their homes. Back by popular demand, P.A.T. has already filled to capacity. Please call to be placed on the waiting list for this or future sessions.

Healthy Children, Healthy Futures:

A Health and Behavioral Health Conference

FAPAC's first conference, open to all foster, kinship, adoptive and birth families of DC's children, will be held September 15-16. The conference will include many exciting sessions and expert presenters. Pre-registration required. Childcare provided. See flyer for details.

Announcing Our New and Improved Website

FAPAC has just released our new and improved website! The new site will allow us to share additional information and help you to get more involved with FAPAC and our work. The site is still at the same address – www.dcfapac.org. FAPAC gives special thanks to Laura Braceland of LA Braceland Visuals <www.labraceland.com> for sharing her design expertise with us, to Randy Rosso for the development of the site, and to Betsy Rosso <www.rossowriting.com> for writing the text. Our appreciation to a great team!

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attorney corner

Party Status for Foster Parents of DC children

By Harvey Schweitzer, Attorney at Law

In the District of Columbia, foster parents are entitled to an “opportunity to be heard” in court proceedings about a child currently in their home. That means that as a foster parent, you have a right to tell a judge during a hearing about the child’s behaviors and services the child needs and is receiving. Providing this information to the judge will help the court decide what is in the best interests of the child.

However, unless you have been granted “party status,” you may not have the right to hear all information presented in court and may be asked to leave when confidential information is being shared. If a child has been living with a foster parent for **12 months or more**, the foster parent is, upon request, entitled to become a “party” to certain court proceedings. If a child has been living with a foster parent for **less than 12 months**, the foster parents can request party status, but should provide the judge with reasons as to why their becoming a party at this earlier stage is in the “best interests of the child.” The judge will decide whether to allow party status before child has been in the home for 12 months.

A foster parent can request party status by:

- **Verbally requesting party status during a court hearing**
- **Asking the guardian ad litem (GAL) or social worker to make the request**
- **Filing a motion on his or her own**
- **Retaining an attorney to request party status**

If you choose to file a motion on your own, the Self-Help Center, located in room JM-570 of the D.C. Superior Court, can assist you. The Self-Help Center is temporarily located on the 4th floor while their JM space is being renovated. This is a free service. Self-Help Center personnel can explain the relevant legal issues to you so that you can decide what action is best for you and in the best interests of the child.

Becoming a “party” greatly enhances foster parents’ ability to affect the decisions being made about the child. For example, party status allows foster parents to be represented by an attorney and to call witnesses at hearings. However, there are things that you should be aware of when you embark on this process. The Superior Court Neglect Rules require that if you are filing a motion, you must send copies of the motion by mail to the other parties or attorneys in the case. You can get addresses of attorneys by reviewing other documents in the case, by consultation with your child’s social worker or guardian ad litem (GAL), or through assistance from the Self-Help Center. This means that filing a motion will reveal your identify to persons in the case to whom you were previously anonymous. You can ask the judge in your case to keep your name, address, and telephone number confidential, but because of the number of people involved, this is not a guarantee that it will remain confidential. If you have any questions you can call FAPAC at 202-269-9441 and you will be referred to someone who can assist you.



hot issues

Issue: Foster parents are often given conflicting information about procedures and policies that they need to follow.

- **What we are doing about it:** FAPAC is working with CFSA to improve relevance, consistency, and clarity of requirements placed upon foster families.

Issue: Our children, especially our older youth, still move too much!

- **What we are doing about it:** FAPAC hosted a day-long event at which foster parents and social workers gave their recommendations about keeping children more stable in homes. We know that children who move less have a much greater chance to find permanency and otherwise do well. We wrote a report about the recommendations and distributed it widely and are now working with CFSA administration to implement recommendations. Some recommendations can

be easily implemented. Others will require much dialogue and a change in how families are supported. For a copy of the report, please visit our website (www.dcfapac.org) and click on Publications.

Moving Toward Success! After years of families complaining that they were not routinely receiving placement information packets when children were placed in their homes, CFSA has instituted a new process for both public and private agencies that should help. It is now required for an intake meeting to be held in the foster home within 72 hours of a new placement. At that time all workers should be checking to ensure you received the placement package. Please remember to ask for the packet if you have not received it and to walk the chain of command in your agency if your social worker is not successful in getting it to you.

kudos & thumbs up

Thumbs Up to CFSA for its new foster parent learning lab! Located at CFSA, the learning lab is designed to ensure that all foster parents have access to online training. Foster parents can attend approved courses, to include those on www.fosterparentcollege.com and www.fosterparentstest.com/store/index.htm. These classes encompass a variety of topics that include medical related courses; mental/behavioral health related courses; cultural competence related courses; parenting skills related courses, as well as classes directly related to each developmental stage. (Please note that these classes might have a fee.)

Reservations for use of the lab should be made at least three business days in advance. For information about courses or reservations call Aretha Tinch, at 202-727-5015 or Carolyn Lander at 202-727-4798.

Kudos to Child Welfare Training Academy (CWTA) Program Manager Joi Reece and CWTA Administrator Karen Fenton-Leshore for their creativity and partnership in helping to bring new and dynamic foster parent training options to our community.

Good training is a vital way to build your knowledge and skills, share ideas, and receive support from other parents and experts. Yet, agencies often say they have trouble getting their families to attend trainings, and families say the available trainings do not address the critical issues in their homes. We understand from families that if they have children who are difficult to leave with others, training without childcare is very hard to attend. FAPAC encourages foster parents to take an active role in speaking to their agencies about their training needs. You can also encourage them to become an active member of the Resource Parent Training Coalition (RPTC) in order to support your access to a broader range of training options. You can find FAPAC's trainings and trainings of other member agencies at www.dcrptc.org.

Thumbs Up to KidsPeace for investing in a training curriculum called Together Facing the Challenge, an evidence-based curriculum geared at therapeutic foster care practice and outcomes for youth, offered to foster parents in the form of a support group. This course helps therapeutic foster parents to build relationships, set expectations, and use effective parenting tools to enhance cooperation, implement effective conse-

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FAPAC news! (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

FAPAC wins NACAC award!

We are excited to have received the Parent Group of the Year award for 2012 from the North American Council of Adoptable Children (NACAC). We are honored to have been chosen by NACAC for this award, as we hold them in high esteem as an organization. FAPAC will be presented with the award at their conference July 26-28 which will be held in Arlington. Conference information is included in this mailing.

Announcement!

CFSA will be moving! CFSA is planning to relocate its offices during the late summer between August and September. The new location will be 200 I Street SE. The agency has made provisions for a Family Resource room that will be used to provide information and other resources to foster and adoptive parents. CFSA is excited about the

new location and has worked hard with the builder to create a location that will support the needs of the families and youth that it serves.

FAPAC needs you!

FAPAC is here to serve you. However, with a small staff, our success in being able to continue to assist families counts on your support. Please consider making a donation through the "Donate now" button on our website at www.dcfapac.org, by mailing a check to 6200 Second Street, NW DC 20011, or by arranging a regular gift deduction from your paycheck. If you work at or know of a corporation or business that might be interested in learning more about FAPAC to become a sponsor of one of our programs, please call Margie at 202-269-9441. *Every gift helps.*

FAPAC Volunteer Opportunities:

- Give us your perspective by helping us to review CFSA draft policies (by email)
- Ensure that the foster parent voice is heard by serving on workgroups (mostly daytime, FAPAC training provided)
- Roll up your sleeves to assist us in our large mailings (daytime or evening)
- Assist other families through peer support (times flexible, FAPAC training required)

kudos & thumbs up (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

quences, prepare children for the future, teach children to take care of themselves.

Kudos to KidsPeace Regional Manager Diane Sancilio, Program Manager Melody Washington, Family Resource Specialists Kenya Grant-Murphy and Cynthia Agyeman-Anane, and Family Therapist Joy Petway for their commitment to provide KidsPeace foster parents with access to quality training, coaching, and support.



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