

FAPAC



Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center

FALL | 2020

DCFAPAC.ORG

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MILLICENT WILLIAMS KUDOS COLUMN

CONGRATULATIONS TO ERICA FULTZ

Erica Fultz was recommended by Lydia Oardin and Dave Akulian for being a great Family Support Worker during the time that she has worked with their family. Erica has been the consummate professional while working with the two different placements Dave and Lydia have had in their home. She has great communication skills and has done a brilliant job at organizing pick-up/drop offs –is always on time, communicating en route her estimated time of arrival and always ensures she has the correct sized car seat for the child. During the COVID pandemic, Dave and Lydia have seen firsthand how well she facilitates Zoom Parent-Child visitation sessions, staying in the background but also encouraging and reinforcing the parent-child communication when needed. Erica has also managed all this while studying part time for her MSW – which she was awarded in May of this year. She is always a calming force amidst the chaos that fostering can sometimes be and has always put the safety and well-being of the child first.

FAPAC TRIBUTE

FAPAC mourns the loss of Robert Preston Robinson, Sr. "Bobby", a beloved member of our FAPAC family, who passed away on July 13, 2020. Many of the families we serve will remember Bobby from his years as the face of the FAPAC office. Bobby is the brother of FAPAC's Deputy Director, Marilyn Egerton. From the first day he came to FAPAC, Bobby was willing to help with anything. He fixed most everything, he carried things, he moved our cars so we wouldn't get tickets, he was the first one there to open the door for us for Saturday events, never wanting us to worry or stress about things he could cover... *he took care of us*. The loving humor Bobby brought to work often brought bright light to very hard days, and the loyalty he had for those he brought close made him an irreplaceable member of our team. **Bobby, we miss you.**



FAPAC NEWS: VIRTUAL OPERATIONS

All FAPAC sessions are currently active virtually and we are pleased that we are continuing to have such strong participation while moving to this platform. We welcome all resource parents of DC children to our monthly Peer Support Group as well as our training sessions. Thanks to CFSA's Child Welfare Training Coalition (CWTA) for partnering with us to offer you sessions that qualify for your licensing credit hours. Each session is announced by email blast so please stay tuned and check your spam if you are missing these announcements! Families needing individual support or advocacy, please continue to reach us at 202-269-9441 or email <info@dcfapac> and we will get back to you promptly.

Until we can meet again in person, we hope to continue to connect with you through these activities.

DONATE NOW

- Margie Chalofsky, Executive Director
- Marilyn Egerton, Deputy Director
- Marianne (Toni) Carr, Operations Manager
- Donna Flenory, Lead Parent Educator
- Candace Chambliss & Tony Rice, Parent Educators
- Marlissa Hudson, Development Consultant
- Harvey Schweitzer, Legal Consultant
- Iris Chou, Accounting Consultant



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RESOURCES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AMID ANTI-BLACK RACISM, RACIAL VIOLENCE, AND TRAUMA

Dominique Parris, Victor St. John, and Jessica Dym Bartlet

The following are excerpts from a publication by **Child Trends**, a leading national research organization focused exclusively on improving the lives of children and youth, especially those who are most vulnerable. Child Trends is committed to ending racism and building an equitable post-pandemic society. To read the article in its entirety please click [HERE](#).

Most Black children in the United States encounter racism in their daily lives. Ongoing individual and collective psychological or physical injuries due to exposure and re-exposure to race-based adversity, discrimination, and stress, referred to as [racial trauma](#), is harmful to children's development and well-being. Events that may cause racial trauma include threats of harm and injury, hate speech, humiliating and shaming events, or any other form of individual, [historical](#), or [institutional racism](#). Children also experience racial trauma after hearing about or witnessing another person's direct experiences, often referred to as [secondary traumatic stress](#) or [vicarious trauma](#). To help protect children from the harmful effects of racial trauma, caregivers must start talking to them about race and racism early—when children are very young and first developing a sense of [racial identity](#).

It is common for caregiving adults to wonder and worry about how they should talk to children about racism and racial trauma. In fact, research suggests that [too few caregivers talk to children about race](#). However, research on racial identity development and anti-racism education offers useful guidance for having these conversations effectively. Below, we outline several steps that caregivers can take to support all children, and especially those who have experienced direct or secondary racial trauma. While the evidence strongly suggests that caregivers need a holistic understanding of how, and in what ways, racial trauma impacts children and youth of all races and ethnicities, the recommendations below focus primarily on anti-Black racism and the racial trauma experienced by Black children and families. These recommendations can provide caregivers with a foundation for speaking with children about racism and racial trauma.

Prepare yourself before you talk to children.

Caregivers should first acknowledge and reflect on their own beliefs, biases, and experiences with racism. White caregivers should gain a deeper understanding of their own [White privilege](#). Both Black and White caregivers can educate themselves about [Black history and racism](#) so they can accurately relay relevant concepts and information to children. Caregivers of every race should educate themselves on race and racism and make the pursuit of new knowledge an ongoing activity.

Speak to children in age appropriate ways.

Use language that children understand (e.g., fair vs. unfair) and define terms that may be unfamiliar. Be honest and factual in discussing individual differences like skin color, hair texture, and color. Acknowledge that people are treated differently based on the color of their skin and that these different standards are unfair. Talk about how unfairness and racism are part of the history of Black people in this country, and how the histories of people from different races (e.g., Black, Hispanic, Native American, Alaska Native, White) differ in the extent and type of discrimination endured or privilege afforded. Shaping these conversations in age-appropriate ways means that caregivers can (and should) start these conversations [early in a child's life](#), when shame, fear, anxiety, and [bias](#) are first learned. Continue talking to children about race, racism, and White privilege on an ongoing basis, beginning in the preschool years. When children are very young, easy-to-understand explanations of 'fair' vs. 'unfair' are more appropriate than sharing graphic stories of police violence. However, as children grow older, they are likely to be exposed to such stories from other sources, so it's best to provide them with truthful information that emphasizes what can be done to combat racism in the future and how they can participate in that effort.



Listen carefully to children and validate their experiences and feelings.

It can be important for adult caregivers to share their own experiences and beliefs about racism with children, but it's equally important to encourage them to express their opinions and feelings and ask the questions that are on their mind. Younger children may focus more on how events will affect them and those they love in the present, whereas older children may be more focused on the broader contexts of racism, such as what's happening in their community and the world, and how they can make a positive difference. Children of color, especially, are likely to show or talk about their distress after witnessing or experiencing racism. Caregivers can validate their emotions and reactions by letting them know that it's okay to feel the way they do and that others likely feel the same way. It's also essential to find out what children know already and to correct misinformation. Caregivers can support Black children by listening to their experiences of and opinions about racism, and helping them think about how they might manage related situations and feelings. Caregivers can

help White children identify and talk about racism they have witnessed or participated in, discuss how they can work against such discrimination, and how they have benefitted from White privilege.

Focus on hope, positivity, and taking an active role in making the world a more equitable place.

Tell children stories (both real and fictional) and include the reading of books with main characters who are Black; share stories that promote racial pride in Black children, triumph in the face of adversity, and the contributions of Black people to our nation's growth and history. Encourage children to take an active role in fighting racism and making their voices heard. For example, children can make personal commitments to treat people fairly regardless of their race or ethnicity, celebrate the strengths of our nation's diversity, become more educated about combatting race and racism, and engage in their community through activism, voting, and support for those who have been affected by racial inequities and racial trauma.

Children Finding Joy



How to Select Back-Up Providers, Babysitters, and Sleepover Approval

We are aware that there remains confusion and mixed messages about babysitting, back-up providers, and the ability of foster parents to approve sleepovers with friends. This synopsis provides the baseline accepted practice at CFSA. Please note that private agencies sometimes have their own policies that may be stricter than CFSA's, especially for homes that are located in Maryland and have to follow COMAR regulations.

The following are key points from the CFSA policy on Temporary Supervision of Children in Foster Care, Overnight Stays, and the CFSA Quick Reference Guide, *Travel with Resource Parents and Overnight Stays*:

1. For occasional situations, the resource parent may select an individual 16 years or older to babysit. This substitute provider does not need to be certified or licensed but must be someone in whom the resource parent places trust due to interactions and experiences.
2. Resource parents must ensure that babysitters are well-informed of critical information such as allergies, medical conditions, behavioral needs, etc. In addition, foster parents are responsible for posting emergency numbers including 911 and local numbers for police, fire departments, poison control, foster parent's cell, and other important info.
3. Any regular or daily substitute care must be provided by a licensed day care provider, a licensed resource parent, a certified substitute care provider, or the equivalent according to the jurisdiction where the supervision will occur.
4. For regular or daily substitute care in the home, a discussion must take place between the social worker and the resource parent regarding the child's individual needs and development of a suitable plan for the child's care during the time the resource parent is not going to be at home.
5. A child 8 years of age and younger must not under any circumstance be left unattended or allowed to self-care for any period of time.
6. No child under the age of 16 shall care for another child without an adult in the home.
7. Foster parents may approve overnight slumber parties for children in their care as long as the overnight location is within 100 miles of DC and the overnight time frame is less than 2 nights. The foster parent may approve such overnights in situations that they assess to be safe and appropriate.
8. The foster parent **must notify** the child's social worker of the child's location whenever a child in care spends a night away from the foster home. If the resource parent does not reach the social worker, s/he may leave a voice mail detailing the child's location.

To read the policies in their entirety, please visit CFSA's online policy manual at <http://cfsa.dc.gov> or FAPAC's website at <http://dcfapac.org>. If you ever have any questions or concerns regarding policy, please feel free to contact the Policy Unit at cfsa.policies@dc.gov.

Advocacy Tip!

Keep yourself informed ---read the things you get from your agency and FAPAC in the mail or by email; and attend meetings, trainings and support groups. Check out CFSA's on-line policy manual. The easiest way to access it is to put "policy manual" in the search bar on CFSA's website <<http://cfsa.dc.gov>> so you will have access to accurate policies. They may be hard to digest, but at least you will know where they are. Some relevant policies are also posted on FAPAC's website <www.dcfapac.org>.



CFSA Announcements

New Feature: Ask the Director



FAPAC is introducing a new feature in our newsletter called “**Ask the Director**”

Please submit your questions for CFSA Director Brenda Donald to margiec@dcfapac.org

LaShawn Lawsuit Update

Dear Resource Parents:

In June, CFSA informed Federal District Court Judge Thomas Hogan, the Court Monitor, and Plaintiffs’ Counsel that it’s time that CFSA exits the *LaShawn A. v. Bowser* class action lawsuit. Over the summer, parties came together one last time to reach a mutual agreement on exit commitments and timelines, and CFSA is excited to share that Judge Hogan has preliminarily approved a settlement agreement to exit court oversight next spring.

2020 has been a challenging year, but with this announcement, CFSA is turning the final corner in moving out from under the cloud that has been hanging over our heads for 31 years. **The perseverance and unwavering support of our resource parents, staff, and District and community partners have gotten us to this moment.** With your continued commitment, that cloud will dissipate with the end of *LaShawn*.

I look forward to speaking with our community more about this milestone over the coming months, and it is my hope that we’ll all be able to celebrate together soon. **Many thanks for all of your support in getting CFSA to the final leg of our Relay to the Finish Line!**

Truly,

Brenda Donald
Director, CFSA





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CFSA Policy Updates

CFSA's Policy Team has been working closely with internal Agency partners and external stakeholders on new guidance on a number of important topics. It's all available and searchable on CFSA's [Online Policy Manual](#), but you can find highlights below. If you have any ideas for new guidance, or questions about what is already out there, feel free to reach out to the Policy Team at cfsa.policies@dc.gov.

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting (RPP)

The Reasonable and Prudent Parent (RPP) standard is terminology that came out of recent federal and local legislation aimed at promoting normalcy for youth in foster care. Over many months, CFSA has been working with external stakeholders to develop guidance for resource providers and social workers alike around RPP. We've developed policies to empower resource providers to make some of the decisions that parents make every day on behalf of their children, like [signing waivers of liability](#) that allow children to participate in fun activities, or giving children permission to [travel with a school group or have sleepovers with friends](#), or determining whether it is okay to [leave the child home alone unsupervised](#). This is guidance that we can use to help all of the children in our care feel normal and more at-home while they are living in foster care.

Placement Matching Policy – Update

The [Placement Matching Policy](#) describes how placements and matching occur for children when risks to a child's safety and/or well-being require removal from home, or when children require another placement arrangement. CFSA first seeks to place the child, and all siblings if there are any, with kin. Under all circumstances, CFSA strives for placement in the least restrictive and most family-like setting with the first placement being the best placement. Having safe and stable placement options are integral components to meeting CFSA's goal of establishing safety, permanency and well-being for children in care. When removal is necessary, CFSA pursues a deliberate placement process to match the child to an appropriate resource provider, including a relative placement if possible. The policy contains the following updates:

- Specific steps regarding conducting a planned placement vs. an unplanned placement.
- Specific tools including clinical assessments in conjunction with an automated placement-matching system.
- Information of the best practice steps and considerations involved with placing a child.
- Guidance on the requirement to conduct a placement disruption staffing once the clinical team is aware of a potential placement disruption or within 30 days after a placement disruption occurs."

Permanency Practice Policy – Update

The [Permanency Practice Policy](#) describes the processes for achieving permanency at each stage of child welfare system involvement. Establishing permanency for children involved in CFSA is the cornerstone of good social work practice. Permanency broadly encompasses maintaining children safely in their home, as well as focusing on achieving permanency through



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reunification, adoption, and guardianship. All direct service staff, regardless of where they work in the Agency, have an important role to play in helping children to achieve permanency. The policy updates include:

- The title of the policy document has been changed from Permanency Planning to Permanency Practice to reflect the multitude of roles, tasks and responsibilities that are required when helping children achieve permanency.
- Business processes were created to provide guidance on how to conduct case planning activities and permanency goal changes.
- Information regarding the role of [assessments](#) including the following formal assessments: (i) Child Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale [CAFAS]; (ii) Preschool Early Childhood Functional Assessment [PECFAS] and (iii) Caregiver Strengths and Barriers Assessment.
- Information regarding the importance and need to engage kin in every aspect of permanency practice.

BOND Program Summary

The **Bridge, Organize, Nurture, and Develop (BOND) Program** is CFSA's new "hub" model for engaging and supporting resource parents through peer networks led by experienced and committed BOND parents. Services offered via the BOND program include but are not limited to peer support, resource parent networking and respite services. DC CFSA resource families are assigned to a BOND Squad of 10-12 peer resource parents. Each Squad has an assigned BOND Lead Family, with an experienced and committed resource parent who will provide leadership of the Squad. The BOND Lead Family's role is to provide peer support to assigned resource families, coordinate special activities and provide or assist with coordinating respite care. The BOND Program is led by ReNay Newman, (BOND Program Coordinator), who is a social worker that has been working in the Resource Parent Support Unit at CFSA for the past 13 years and has a total of 20 years of experience working in Child Welfare. As BOND Coordinator she is dedicated to supporting and managing the BOND Program by providing instruction, ongoing assessment, and coaching to Lead Parents and they mentor resource parents assigned to their squad. ReNay Newman's contact information is: 202) 715-7778 (office) <Renay.Newman@dc.gov>

Birth parent and social worker visits: Reiterating CFSA practice standards

With the goal of honoring the importance of in person contact between children and parents while also holding the need to keep children, families and staff as safe as possible from COVID-19, CFSA has developed guidance that helps move to more in person contact between children as well as social workers and children. To best move forward with all perspectives heard, CFSA and FAPAC have been in constant communication about this process, and hope that our teaming and communication is a model for how social workers and resource parents can come to communicate.

Please know that we understand that there can be no one-size-fits-all for determining which cases have in-person visits. Household composition (for birth families, your families, and the social workers' families) and individual health make every case different. We also know that every case is at a different place in its permanency journey: for some, in-person contact will make the difference between languishing in care and reunifying, but it won't move the needle on permanency for others.



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As a result, we need to hear from everyone involved in the care of the children and youth and make plans individually and flexibly as circumstances change. Collaborative, judgment-free conversations are the expectation at every level, and when there are impasses, management will get involved. We are all in this together, and we truly believe that we can come up with a plan that everyone feels comfortable with, and that provides comfort and some sense of normalcy for the children and families who are at the center of all of this. If you have concerns and issues with the process that you are not able to work out within your team, you can contact Margie Chalofsky at FAPAC margiec@dcfapac.org and she will help you to elevate it in the most productive way. Social workers will be elevating their concerns to Tamitha Davis-Rama, Permanency Administrator, and together we will try to problem solve resolutions. [Please click here for updated guidance about visits.](#)

Remote sites for participating in Court hearings for people who need access to technology:

[Please click here for more information.](#)

Resource Parents, FTMs and Family Engagement: Everything You Need to Know!

Resource Parents are central to CFSA's mission of achieving permanency for children and families. They are the primary support for children in foster care, responsible for their daily well-being and also for helping them manage trauma and find stable footing. As a result, Resource Parents' insights are invaluable to the team. We have developed a Tip Sheet that explores Resource Parent roles in Family Team Meetings and other engagement efforts.

[Please click here for more information](#)

