



California State Foster Parent Association, Inc.

Representing all California Resource Families

“To Touch A Life Forever”

4TH QUARTER 2017 NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 6, 2017

2017 41st Annual Training Conference Wrap Up

Thank you to all who attended and helped with the 41st Annual CSFPA “Riding the Wave of Change Together” Training Conference in Garden Grove last month. The conference was sold out with over 225 attendees, 28 training sessions, an amazing and inspiring performance by former Orange County foster youth, Shea Freedom, an auction that raised close to \$1,400 for college scholarships, an award’s ceremony to honor social worker Lori Davisson from San Bernardino, incredible food and fabulous new friendships. It is heartwarming to hear each other’s successes and challenges. What an important yet often difficult service we provide to the families and children in our communities. Many of the workshops offered are refreshers, but, it is comforting to hear we are not

in this alone and there are strategies and ways we can help the children in our care and ourselves in the process. Supporting each other is essential in being successful caregivers.

It was also informative to hear about how the new State laws are being enacted and how they will effect our lives—for better or for worse! We all hope for better—even if getting there may be confusing. For information regarding the new Resource Family Approval (RFA) process, you can go to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) website at <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Resource-Family-Approval-Program>.

Holidays With Foster Children

Dr. John N. DeGarmo, Ed.D

The Holiday season is upon us. Christmas, Hanukah, New Years, Kwanzaa; these are times that can be extremely difficult for many foster children. During this time of Holiday Cheer, many foster children are faced with the realization that they will not be “home for the holidays,” so to speak, with their biological family members. When they wake up Christmas morning, and are surrounded by people who just may be strangers to them, strangers who are laughing and having fun, it can be a very difficult time for them. It can be a day that is a stark reminder to these children that they are not with their own family. It is during the holidays when families are supposed to be together, yet these children in care are not. They are not with their families, and they may not know when they will see them next. Along with this, foster children also struggle with trying to remain loyal to their birth parents while enjoying the holiday season with their foster family. There are those moments when a child from foster care may feel guilty for experiencing joy and laughter with their foster family, they may feel that they are not only letting their birth mother or father down, they might even be betraying their birth parents and members of their biological family, causing even more grief, guilt, and anxiety within the child during this season of holiday joy. Indeed, this can be a very emotionally stressful time for all involved.



During the holiday time, it is important to address these issues beforehand. Before Thanksgiving, before Christmas, before Hanukah; even before family members and friends come to visit, foster parents need to prepare their foster child ahead of time. Foster parents can best help their foster child by spending some time talking about the holiday. Perhaps the holiday being celebrated in their new home is one that their birth family never celebrated, or is a holiday that is unfamiliar to them. Let the foster child know how your family celebrates the holiday, what traditions your family celebrate, and include the child in it. Ask your foster child about some of the traditions that his family had, and try to include some of them into your own home during the holiday. This will help him not only feel more comfortable in your home during this time, but also remind him that he is important, and that his birth family is important. Even if his traditions are ones that you do not celebrate in your home, try to include some of his into your holiday celebration, in some way and some fashion.

With a little preparation beforehand, this season of joy can be a wonderful time for your foster child, one that may last in his memory for a life time, as well as in your memory, too. After all, the gift of love is one that can be shared, not only during the holidays, but all year long.

Don't Miss A CSFPA Newsletter!

To assist with cost efficiency (printing/postage) and save resources (trees/paper), the CSFPA newsletter will transition to electronic distribution in 2018. We ask that you help us with this change by sending your name and email address to CSFPAnewsletter@gmail.com.

LADCFS, Foster Youth Advocates Reach Landmark Settlement; Statewide Implications Predicted

Foster Child's death spurred three-year legal battle by Bay Area group

On October 19, the Los Angeles Superior Court finalized a settlement in a milestone lawsuit filed by three former foster parents and [Advokids](#), a Bay Area legal advocacy non-profit for California foster children. Filed in August 2014, the suit alleges that the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (LADCFS) regularly failed to provide foster parents and relative caregivers with written notices of court hearings concerning children in their care, as required by law. This includes written notice and an opportunity to object and be heard when foster children are removed from their homes.

Advokids' Co-Director Margaret Coyne said the settlement has statewide implications. "We hope this lawsuit serves as a warning to other county welfare offices in California that foster parents' legal rights must be respected," said Coyne. "Advokids has demonstrated with this lawsuit that it will go the distance and use every legal remedy available when counties in California are not following the laws that were enacted to protect children's lives."

The judgment requires LADCFS employees to begin using a computer program designed to ensure that hearing notices and other forms are sent to current caregivers and their foster family agencies, informing them about upcoming court hearings involving foster children in their care. It also requires LADCFS employees to use an additional computer program to provide foster parents with seven-days advance notice of the agency's plan to remove a foster child from their home unless LADCFS has documented lawful reasons for not sending such notice.

The lawsuit was initiated after the tragic death of two-year-old Tori Sandoval in 2011, which spurred the caregiver community into action. Tori entered foster care at birth, and after 10 months, she was moved to the home of foster-to-adopt parents Kelli and Terry Sedgwick. After eight months of caring for Tori, LADCFS failed to give the Sedgewicks a legally-required written notice about an upcoming court hearing where the court was to consider whether Tori should be returned to her biological parents. "I had repeatedly warned Tori's attorney, social worker, and supervising social worker about my concerns for Tori's safety should she be returned to her troubled biological parents," Kelli Sedgwick explained. "Yet we received no court notifications. We were the ones caring for Tori day in and day out. We had the most information about Tori, yet we had no say during the critical hearing when the court was deciding Tori's fate." Less than one year after Tori was returned to her biological parents, she was found dead of starvation and physical abuse at their hands.

Jan Sherwood, Co-Director of Advokids, reports that since Tori's tragic death, Advokids' free legal hotline has continued to receive calls from foster parents and caregivers throughout California who do not receive the legally required notifications of court hearings concerning the children in their care. "L.A. County and the state of California face an alarming foster parent shortage," said Sherwood. "It's critical that we treat foster parents and relatives with respect if we wish to attract good people to care for the state's neediest children."

There are more than 55,000 children in California's foster care system, and more than one-third of these children are located in L.A. County. The lawsuit is titled *Advokids et al. v. Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)*. For more information, visit Advokids.org.

Here's What's Happening Around the State....



Valley Region

Marylud Baldwin, VP Valley Region

Our region was very busy preparing for and participating in the CSFPA conference Oct 12-14. Thanks are due to everyone from our region who helped make the conference a success: Shelly Best, conference co-chair, Kay Crockell and Shirley Babbitt, silent auction coordinators, and all those who donated items for the auction, helped monitor sessions, and assisted with registration. I am so thankful for all your help in making the conference a success.

North Coastal Region

Sheri Justice Cook, VP North Coastal Region

I am working on coordinating a meeting with my Region's associations and caregiver representatives in March. I will be reaching out over the next few weeks to find a date and time that will be most accommodating for the majority. If you don't hear from me, please contact me at beniciascook@prodigy.net. We have had these meetings in the past and found them quite informative and helpful. I am hoping either the first or last Saturday in March will work. I look forward to meeting with everyone and hearing how things are going in each county—especially with the transition to RFA.

Northern Region

Nadine Fleek, VP Northern Region

Our region representatives met in Redding in September. There were representatives from Shasta, Tehama and Siskiyou counties in attendance. Some concerns that were discussed were processing issues with the new RFA conversion time frames. The one year (2017) requirement of having a placement to avoid having to go through all of the training is a hardship for many caregivers who can't currently take additional placements. We talked about inquiring with the State to extend the deadline.

Central Region

Carrie Myles, Central Region VP

I would like to thank Shelly Best and Mary Lud for their friendly based conference and informative workshops .
Chapter 70: My visit to your chapter was very entertaining, as Lisa and I shared information. It's always challenging recruiting new members, as so many chapters struggle with this. We all are looking for new ways and ideas.
Chapter 35: Meets quarterly due to many members living in various counties and distance away. President Rosemary has a good donation drive going.
Chapter 22: Is continuously doing their good work and has requested some material from the Conference.
Chapter 13: Hosted a tour for their children and parents of the new Golden 1 center this September. All agencies are welcome to join our association. We are up to 44 members .

LOC level of care effective date has been moved to 2/1/2018. More information can be found on ACL 17-75. It's always a pleasure meeting and talking with all of you! Thanks for all you do.

Wishing all families a "grateful" and Happy Thanksgiving!

Membership and Insurance

Mary Haghenbeck, Membership/Insurance Chair

All chapters must renew their memberships in January. Please keep an eye out for the paperwork that will need to be completed and returned. All members need to renew their memberships in January as well. We look forward to seeing everyone on our 2018 membership list. We're here to support you and the awesome care you provide to California's children and families in need.



Join Us



Important Legislation for Children in Foster Care!

SB 233: Caregiver Access to Youth's Education Records

Clarifies that caregivers have the right to access their child's current and most recent education records in order to help address their child's educational needs, monitor their academic progress, and ensure the child is receiving the educational services they need. SB 233 also provides a technical statutory alignment with the Rules of Court, requiring Child Welfare case plans to include necessary educational contact information in the child's health and education summary.

SB 213: Criminal History Exemptions

SB 213 allows children to be safely placed with relatives in a more timely manner. It streamlines the criminal history exemption process for prospective caregivers and simplifies criminal history law by aligning the state and federal government lists of non-exemptible crimes. Federal and state lists of non-exemptible crimes currently overlap to create a complex and confusing criminal exemption system that creates unnecessary delays in placing children in foster care with relatives and limits the number of placements available for youth in foster care. Placement with any person who has been convicted of a serious or violent felony and convictions dealing with drugs or alcohol, assault and battery, child abuse or neglect, or violence will continue to be prohibited without exception.

AB 1164: Establishing the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program

The bill is no longer in the legislative process because the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program was approved as part of the 2017-18 budget. The governor approved \$31 million in the state budget to create the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program. With this funding, counties will be able to provide caregivers and parenting youth with immediate access to up to six months of crucial child care services. The program will also provide child care navigators to help families develop long-term child care plans. Lastly, the program will provide funding to deliver trauma-informed training to child care programs for better service to foster youth. ****Counties Must Opt In** Please contact your county welfare director about opting into this program. ACL 17-109 (<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/ACL/2017/17-109.pdf?ver=2017-10-30-114206-567>) was released October 27, 2017 informing counties of amount allotted and providing information for opting in. Counties have until November 30, 2017 to opt in.**

AB 1006: Foster Youth Permanency

This bill will require permanency findings in the court report for children who have been in foster care for an extended time; training for social workers on permanency services, and will require information to be provided to prospective adoptive families regarding mental health treatment information.

SB 12: Foster Youth Financial Aid Assistance

This bill will require the student aid commission to work with CDSS to verify a student's status as a foster youth to aid in the processing of a student's financial aid and will expand financial aid consulting services to foster youth.

Caregiver Day at the Capitol

Caregiver Day at the Capitol is Tuesday, January 30, 2018 8:30 am - 5:30pm.

All foster & kinship parents, resource families, and families who have adopted or have become guardians through foster care are welcome to attend! The event is FREE and will include training and meetings with legislators. If you are interested in participating in this event, please contact Patricia Negus at 909-730-0311 or via email at patnegus@msn.com.

Caregivers for Foster Youth Eligible for California Paid Family Leave (PFL) Benefits

PFL provides benefits to eligible workers who need to take time off work to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a new child.

Bonding with a New Child: For new mothers *without* a prior pregnancy-related disability claim, new fathers, registered domestic partners, or **foster care or adoptive parents**.

To qualify for PFL benefits, you must meet the following requirements:

- Be covered by State Disability Insurance (or a voluntary plan in lieu of State Disability Insurance) and have earned at least \$300 in your base period from which deductions were withheld. The length of time worked at your current job does not affect eligibility.
 - Submit your claim *no sooner* than 9 days, but *no later* than 49 days after your family leave begins.
 - If required by your employer, use up to two weeks of any earned but unused vacation leave or paid time off prior to receiving benefits.
- Serve a 7-day, unpaid waiting period before benefits begin for each claim within the 12-month period. (The waiting period is being eliminated in January 2018).
 - For bonding claims only: Provide documents to support a claim for bonding with a new biological, adopted, or foster child.

You may not be eligible for benefits if:

- You are receiving Disability Insurance, Unemployment Insurance, or workers' compensation benefits.
- You are not working or looking for work at the time you begin your family care leave.
- You are not losing wages.
- You are in custody due to conviction of a crime.

For more information, visit edd.ca.gov/Disability.

2018 CSFPA Board Members

The 2018 CSFPA Board Members are listed below. Welcome to the new board members and thank you to those continuing in your current positions. Are volunteers are invaluable!

President	Patricia Negus Contact: patnegus@msn.com or president.csfpa@gmail.com ; Tel: 909-628-4023
Vice President	Nadine Fleek Contact: memories_95503@yahoo.com or vicepresident.csfpa@gmail.com ; Tel: 530-937-3246
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Regional Vice Presidents

North Coastal Region	Sheri Justice Cook Contact: beniciascook@gmail.com or vpnorthcoastal.csfpa@gmail.com ; Tel: 707-747-5329
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Valley Region	Shirley Bobbitt Contact: Bobbitt777@sbcglobal.net or vpvalley.csfpa@gmail.com ; Tel: 559-307-3881
Southern Region	OPEN



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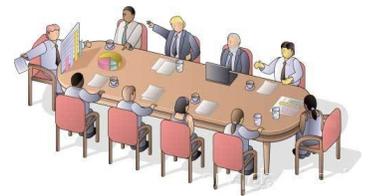


Our main focus is to address issues of foster parents, guardianship and adoptive parents, as well as kinship placements which now includes over 55% of all children in out-of-home placements in California.

Upcoming Quarterly Trainings and Meetings

The 2018 CSFPA quarterly meetings/trainings will be held on the following dates:

January 12 and 13; April 27 and 28, July 20 and 21 and at the Annual Training Conference in October. The first 3 quarterly meetings will be held at the Hilton Hotel Arden West in Sacramento. Please contact Kay Crockell, CSFPA Secretary at crockellkay@yahoo.com for more information.



All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) National Conference

is January 16 & 17, 2018 at the JW Marriott New Orleans.

To register, go to <http://www.cvent.com/events/5th-annual-qpi-national-conference/event-summary-13f9a505014d4e1886ccdc7e533c3987.aspx?i=d2011162-961c-4d5a-acb6-192727a81a75>

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Carol Ihlenburg, Newsletter Chair at CSFPANewsletter@gmail.com.

If you have an item you'd like considered for inclusion in the newsletter, please submit to the same email.