

# Post Adoption Resource Center Newsletter Oakland County

August 2013

## It's That Time Of Year Again...

Though we may be in denial about it, fall is right around the corner, which to most parents means one thing...school is about to begin. For some the biggest stressor is the thought of having to get your child out of bed in the morning, or purchasing school supplies, but for foster and adopted children the back to school routine can bring upon families many more, unexpected, stressors. **The following information was adapted from the article "10 Things to Do Before Sending a Foster or Adopted Child Back to School, A Back to School Check List," by Carrie Craft.**

In her article, Ms. Craft lists ten things that should be done/discussed prior to your foster or adopted child/ren starting school.

### 1. Health

Ms. Craft states "Healthy kids perform better in school" and advises that all physical, dental, and vision screenings be up to date to ensure that your child is in good shape to do his/her best learning." Ms. Craft also notes that it is important to ensure that your child's immunization records are up to date as "immunization records are mandatory in order to enroll any child in school in the

United States."

### 2. Paperwork

Ms. Craft states, "upon enrollment all parents have several forms to fill out. Go prepared and make sure you have everything you need for your foster and/or adoptive child." Some of the items that Ms. Craft suggests having at the time of school enrollment include: the child's immunization record, names and addresses of prior schools the child has attended, the child's social security number, the doctor's name, address, and phone number, your emergency contacts, the child's social worker's name and number (for both foster children and children whose adoptions may be in supervision), and your checkbook for any fees you may obtain upon enrollment.

### 3. Know the Child's Educational Plan

Related to educational plans, Ms. Craft asks, "does the child have an IEP for special education, behavior, and/or speech classes? Foster parents and pre-adoptive parents cannot sign an IEP, only the child's birth parents or an education advocate can sign the IEP or make any changes to the plan, things to keep in mind: As foster parents you should be able to attend parent teacher meetings and conferences, but think first before sharing too

much information, get a release in advance allowing you to sign for special activities the child may want to engage in (i.e. sports, field trips, etc), also as a foster parent you could use meetings such as parent teacher conferences as a time to model for birth parents how to act during these meetings— find out in advance if they can attend these meetings with you."

As an adoptive parent if you are not happy with the services that your son/daughter is receiving at school you can request an updated IEP and the school has an obligation to provide an assessment. Sometimes this can be an up hill battle, but our children's education is the most important tool they will receive in life. If you feel your son or daughter needs additional services at school and you are unsure how to make this request, please contact us so that we can assist you in obtaining the services that your child is rightfully entitled to.

### 4. Practice Address and Phone Numbers

Though this is something that most children learn during Kindergarten, or earlier, a newly placed foster or adopted child may not know this information and may need it in an emergency situation. Before school starts assist your child in memorizing these things and have an index card in the child's back pack with the information until you are positive they have the information memorized.

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We Hope you enjoy this edition of the PARC Newsletter. For more ideas and/or information on preparing your child for the new school year please feel free to contact us at 248-410-0727 or visit [www.parcokland-orchards.org](http://www.parcokland-orchards.org).



# Back to School Checklist Continued...

## 5. Practice the Route to School or to the Bus

Again, for the children that have been placed in your home for some time, this may be a given, but to newly adopted or foster children, they may not know this, and while they may be able to rely on other household members most of the time, it is still important that they know this information in the event they are ever separated or plans get changed. Some things to remember when teaching the child the route is to practice skills with them such as crossing the street, yielding to traffic, stopping at stop signs, locking up bikes, and knowing the correct bus number. Ms. Craft encourages families to make a game out of this learning noting that “most of the children who tell us that they know how to ride a bike safely (if they will be riding their bikes to and from school) in reality do not. Always ask children to demonstrate their skills. Try to make a game out of this, instead of a test. Go on a family bike ride and see how children handle traffic...don't forget the helmets!”

## 6. Attend An Open House or Tour the School Building

Remember that a newly placed child does not know the school they will be attending, even if you have had ten children that have previously attended the school and are confident that the school will do an excellent job, for a newly placed foster or adoptive child this sort of thing could

cause much anxiety. Thus, Ms. Craft advises that parents take advantage of open houses and school tours. It may be wise to enroll a child one day, take a tour, and then have them begin the next day so that they have some time to process the school, the aesthetics, and the new beginning they will have waiting for them.

## 7. Discuss Safe Rides

With regards to this, Ms. Craft says, “Make sure the child (foster or adoptive) knows who they can get in to a car with and who they can not. Remember neighbors, social workers, and close relatives. Teach the children to look for ID/name tags on people claiming to be social workers. Discuss who not to catch a ride from, include strangers and anyone you'd rather not have your child be alone with. It may be difficult but you will also need to discuss getting into cars with birth parents, if the children have supervised visitation or no visitation, the children should not get in to a car with birth family. Talk to social workers about the plan and the best way to discuss this with the children.”

## 8. Practice Opening Lockers

This is appropriate for all children. Get a lock at home and practice/teach your child how to use it so they are not late to class.

## 9. Be involved with the Child's Education and with the School

Number nine brings us back to what was touched on in number three. In addition to it being a great idea for parents to be involved in their children's school (i.e. volunteering for field trips or to come read to the children) it is imperative that parents

pay close attention to how their children are doing in school and to take note and speak up if they feel their children are in need of services that they are not receiving. Many of our children have had multiple moves, have experienced trauma, and have attended a number of schools which all can affect a child's academic performance and behavior. It is imperative to take note of these things and to ask for services prior to the child's behavior becoming out of control or their grades falling to far. Schools have a legal obligation to provide services to qualifying students, however, parents need to ask that these services be put in place, so never be afraid to advocate for your child!

## 10. Create a Cover Story

Ms. Craft says, “A cover story is something that the kids can tell others about why they are in your home. Foster children who were adopted over the summer may have to deal with a new last name and answering questions about why they could not go back home to their birth parents. A cover story can help prepare the children for these questions and give them some tools to make them feel more comfortable answering inevitable questions.” As noted on page one information from this article was adapted from the article **10 Things to Do Before Sending a Foster or Adopted Child Back to School: A Back to School Checklist by Carrie Craft**. If you have any questions or would like any assistance with the items noted in this article please feel free to contact the PARC Program at 248-410-0727.



# An Overview of Reactive Attachment Disorder for

Many of our children suffer from attachment related issues and some of them have even been diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder. For children with attachment issues/attachment related disorders it is difficult to understand these children and at times nearly impossible to know what do with them to help them through their troubled times. The following information has been adapted from the article **An Overview of Reactive Attachment Disorder for Teachers**; This article can be found at the website [http://](http://www.center4familydevelop.com/helpteachrad.htm)

[www.center4familydevelop.com/helpteachrad.htm](http://www.center4familydevelop.com/helpteachrad.htm). This article may be an extremely helpful tool for those parents who are raising children affected by attachment related issues and the teachers who will be educating these children. Please see the website noted above or contact our program for a copy of the full article.

Per the article, “what a teacher may see in the beginning of the school year is a child who is, initially, charming, even seeking to hold their hand, climb in to their lap, and smile a lot. At the onset of their relationship with a child with RAD, many teachers will wonder how the child may have gotten labeled as “impossible,” however, typically, after a few months the child will become suddenly openly defiant, moody, angry, and difficult to handle. Children with RAD may talk out loud in classrooms, do not contribute fairly to group work, or argue to dominate and control the group. They may omit parts of assignments even when writing their names just so that they are in control of the assignment, not you. Children with RAD are in a constant battle for control of their environment and seek that control however they can, even in totally meaningless situations. If they are in control they feel safe; if they are loved and protected by an adult they are convinced that they are going to be hurt because they never learned to trust adults, adult judgment, or to develop any of what you know as normal feelings of acceptance, safety, and warmth. These behaviors and need to be in control stem from a deep feeling that adults are not to be trusted, so the best strategy when you don’t trust someone may be to not do what that person asks you to

do. Another thing that children with RAD may do is inflict self-injuries, seek attention for non-existent/miniscule injuries, and seek to avoid adults when they have a real injury or genuine pain. These children have not learned to accept comfort and care from caregivers because their early experiences have taught them that adults don’t care. “Some of the ways in which the article suggests that teachers deal with these types of children are listed below:

## **1. Begin to understand what this child’s parents must face on a daily basis.**

“Parents of children with attachment issues are often tense and involved in control battles every minute with the child they adopted. Most of these parents adopted thinking that love could cure anything only to realize that normal parenting will not work with these children; these parents are frightened, sad, stressed, and lonely.”

## **2. Call the parents**

Parents of children with attachment issues want to see their children get better and do better and many of the parents participate in therapeutic sessions themselves and/or with the children. Thus, it is advisable for teachers to contact the parents and seek out advice/suggestions that the parents have for managing their child’s behaviors. This will help to build a trusting relationship between the teacher and parent and a consistent environment for the child.

## **3. Make is perfectly clear in your interactions with the child that you will take care of the child and classroom or activity.**

“Remind the child unemotionally but firmly that you are the teacher and you make the rules. It is also very important for you to get the child to verbally acknowledge your position; do it every day for a while and then use periodic reminders. Structure choices so that you remain in control (be okay with whatever decision the child makes, based on the choices that you provided).”

## **4. You are not the primary caregiver**

It is important for teachers to remember that their role in the child’s life is temporary and they will be left behind as the child moves in to a new classroom; these children need to learn this lesson.

## **5. Acknowledge Good Decisions and Good Behavior/Consequence Poor Decisions and Bad Behavior**

“Remember that these children have difficulty with cause and effect thinking and have to be taught consequences. Normal reward systems like treats and stickers simply do not work, nor do general compliments (ex. “you’re a good boy” or “good work”). There are consequences for good and poor behavior-teach them what those consequences are.” It is also important to be consistent and specific in the good and bad consequences that children receive. Always try to acknowledge both good and poor behavior and specify what the behavior was and follow that up with a positive remark related to that behavior or a consequence (ex. You completed that assignment that was a good choice or you scribbled on the desk, you now need to clean that up). Natural consequences are also a good way to handle children with reactive attachment disorder/other attachment issues. Children feed off of their parent’s emotions, thus by witnessing adults throwing tantrums you are egging the child on to do the same, it is imperative that teachers and parents alike do their best to always remain calm during all situations (as difficult as this can be!) and very matter of factly let the child know what will happen as a result of their behavior (ex. I see you’ve not gotten ready to go, you can wait here in the principal’s office until we get back).

## **6. Remain calm and in control of yourself**

“No matter what the child does, if the child manages to upset you he/she gains control. If this happens, remove yourself from the situation until you are able to cope, the child may push your buttons, but remember, these are your buttons and it is your job as a professional to disconnect the buttons so that the pressing has no effect.

This is just a brief bit from a very valuable article that many teachers and parents could benefit from reading. Again, please contact us at 248-410-0727 for a copy of the complete article. We hope you’ve found it helpful!

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# Orchards

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES



Below are the photos and biographies of two waiting children in Michigan who are looking for their forever families. If you or someone you know may be interested in gaining further information about the featured children, please contact Sarah Ward at 1-855-694-7301.

Cornisha is a fifteen year old, friendly, outgoing, young lady. She is quite outgoing with a soft spoken demeanor. She has a sweet nature about her, which is evident upon meeting her. She likes to write, enjoys singing, has an interest in computers, and loves to go bowling. She also likes to relax at home and play video games. Cornisha's favorite subject in school is science. She works hard at school and wants to be successful, as she would like to be a doctor. Cornisha's has obstacles to overcome with her academic success, but with the right structure and guidance she does well in school and could continue to do well. Cornisha likes to be helpful, especially with younger children.

Cornisha is looking for an everlasting connection to be her family. She is in need of a patient, loving family who can provide with her with the guidance, love, and support that every child deserves. She hopes her adopted family will be nice, funny, and willing to help her with her homework. Cornisha wants to continue on the path to success and needs a family who can help her continue to improve her education and make her emotions. Cornisha also dreams of going shopping with her family and being able to spend quality time with people who love her.



Jason is a thirteen year old outgoing young man. He has an active imagination and great story telling skills. He loves to read and wants families to know that he is a "good reader." He reads chapter books and often enjoys retelling the stories and information he has learned from the book. He loves to learn new things and his mind is like a sponge soaking up knowledge. Jason also likes to draw, play board games, and go to the movies. He dreams of being able to travel and his favorite locations are Asia, India, and California.

Jason is an affectionate child who is incredibly sweet and very polite. He is waiting for an everlasting connection to adopt him so he can be a part of a family unit. He has some limitations and an adoptive family will be able to give him the support and understanding that he needs to overcome these challenges. He hopes to be a veterinarian one day and wants to continue his lifelong quest for knowledge. Jason imagines having a family that will play outside with him. He wants to have a family who will help him learn to express himself, and provide him with the daily routine that he needs.

Jason thrives on positive attention and would do well with a family who has structure and loving, affectionate dynamics. Jason needs an everlasting connection that will be advocates and supporters of him and his dreams.