Orchards Children's Services

Post Adoption Resource Center Newsletter Oakland & Macomb County

Teens, Tech & Mental Health: A Guide for Families

Managing technology, screen time, and mental health is one of the biggest challenges in modern parenting. For adoptive, foster, and kinship families, however, setting digital boundaries comes with a unique set of challenges.

Technology affects all kids, but youth who have faced early hardships, foster care, adoption, or brain differences are often extra vulnerable online:

Attachment & Safety Risks: A deep desire for connection can make youth more vulnerable to toxic online communities, grooming, or predatory relationships offering a false sense of belonging.

Searching for Identity & Origins: Adoptees and kids in foster care often use social media to search for biological family or roots. Unguided contact can lead to secondary loss, emotional overwhelm, or safety issues.

Executive Functioning & Self-Regulation: Trauma, prenatal exposure, or conditions like ADHD impact the brain's ability to pull away from addictive algorithms, making self-control much harder.

Nervous System Overload: Youth with sensitive nervous systems can easily be triggered into fight-or-flight responses by intense gaming, rapid notifications, or negative interactions.

What Parents Can Do Today:

1. Shift Focus from "Time Spent" to "Quality & Timing"

While overall hours matter, research shows that how and when tech is used has a far greater impact on mental health than total screen time alone.

- Nighttime Tech is the Biggest Threat: Late-night screen use disrupts sleep quality and emotional regulation, heightening anxiety and mood swings.
- Passive vs. Active Consumption: Mindlessly scrolling social feeds negatively affects mental health far more than active, creative, or collaborative use (like co-gaming).

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For more information on the Post Adoption Resource Center please contact us at

313-530-9746

Or visit our website at

PARC-orchards.org

Orchards Children's Services

Provided by Orchards Children's Services, Funded by MDHHS

Teens, Tech & Mental Health: A Guide for Families

2. Proactive Steps Over Punishment

Restricting devices out of fear often backfires, driving kids to hide their digital lives. The episode advocates for a collaboration-first model:

- Model Habits First: Kids watch how parents use their own phones far more than they listen to strict rules.
- Define Your Home Tech Culture: Establish explicit family norms, such as keeping phones out of bedrooms overnight and maintaining screen-free meals.
- Co-View and Co-Play: Engaging with the media your child loves builds trust and keeps communication open.

3. What to Do When Something Goes Wrong

If your child encounters harmful content or faces an online incident (like cyberbullying or unwanted contact):

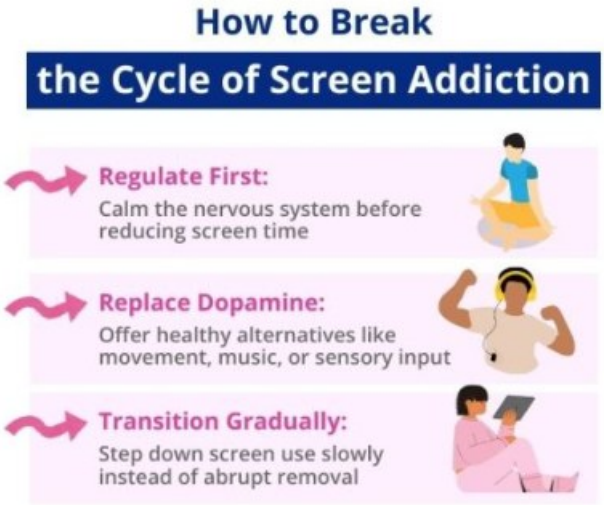
- Avoid Immediate Confiscation: Taking away their device right away causes kids to hide future problems out of panic.
- Lead with Curiosity: Open conversations calmly ("I see you're upset. What happened, and how can we handle this together?").
- Seek Professional Help When Needed: If an online event leads to lasting changes in sleep, mood, or real-world isolation, consult a trauma-informed therapist.

Managing screens isn't about total elimination, it's about teaching self-regulation, building resilience, and protecting the parent-child relationship so youth feel safe turning to you when the digital world becomes overwhelming.

**Information expanded from: Child Welfare Information Gateway -Tweens and Teens & Brittany Anderson*

*If you would like to enroll in a free course through Jockey Being Family, please reach out to PARC and we can help get you set up!

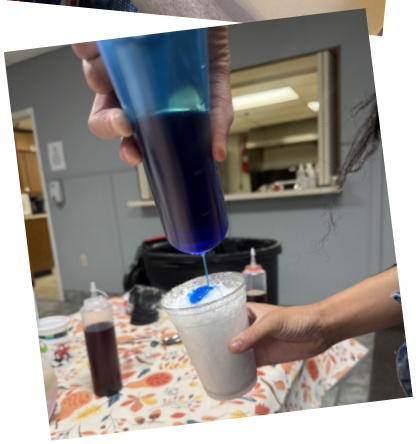
The course covers practical strategies for engaging in healthy conversations about screen time, device use, and content that tweens and teens consume. The course includes discussion about benefits and negative impacts that kids experience, as well as how to protect and prepare tweens and teens to approach social media, gaming, and device use responsibly.



PARC in the Community

PARC moved the Macomb and Southfield parent supports groups to the park for the summer months and the newest support group that was added in Wayne County has been growing!

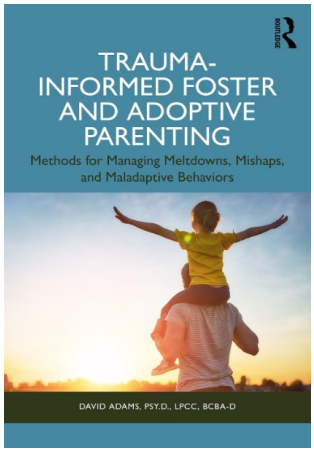
In August, PARC held a Back to School Bash to help our families kick off the new school year on a high note. Those who attended enjoyed hair cuts, glitter tattoos, DIY snow cones and slushies, pizza, and most importantly, backpacks stuffed with school supplies! We loved seeing so many bright smiles and are excited to watch our students shine throughout the upcoming school year.



In September, Erin Douglass led a parent training on "aging out," guiding parents through the resources, independent living supports, and community programs available to children as they turn eighteen. It was a great opportunity for parents to learn, ask questions, plan ahead, and gain confidence for the journey ahead.

PARC has several things in the works for the upcoming months, be sure to keep an eye out. As always, if you have any ideas or suggestions, please feel free to reach out!

Suggested Read



Trauma-Informed Foster and Adoptive Parenting: Methods for Managing Meltdowns, Mishaps, and Maladaptive Behaviors — Author: David Adams

When challenging behaviors arise, understanding the "why" behind them makes all the difference. Written by a psychologist and adoptive parent, this practical guide offers evidence-based strategies for navigating high stress moments, from meltdowns and defiance to lying and food hoarding. Grounded in attachment and brain science, it includes real world scripts and actionable tools to help you respond with empathy while maintaining connection and structure at home.

Valuable Resources

ATTENTION FOSTER & ADOPTIVE FAMILIES IN MICHIGAN!

Styles 4 Kidz, in partnership with and proudly sponsored by the **Adoptive Family Support Network**, is bringing you two amazing opportunities to grow your confidence in caring for your child's textured hair.

STYLES 4 KIDZ™
HAIR CARE WITH HEART

TEXTURED HAIR 101 BASIC HAIRCARE – ONLINE

Saturday, September 19th

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EST

Join us online from the comfort of your home!

Learn the **foundations of textured hair care** – everything you need to know to keep your child's hair healthy and thriving.

TEXTURED HAIR 102 HANDS-ON – IN PERSON

Saturday, September 26th

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM and 3:30 PM – 5:30 PM

In this workshop, you'll **practice several basic hairstyles** that you can easily do at home to keep hair moisturized, neat, and looking great!

Don't miss this chance to build confidence, gain practical skills, and connect with other families!

REGISTER TODAY – SPACES ARE LIMITED!

AFSN — ADOPTIVE FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK — SAFE • CONNECTED • SUPPORTED

D.A. BLODGETT ST. JOHN'S

Orchards CHILDREN'S SERVICES

To register, scan the QR code

Upcoming Meetings, Trainings & Events

ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

When: 2nd Tuesday of the month **Time**: 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Where: 24901 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 500, Southfield, MI 48075
Facilitator: Betsy Thomas

WAYNE COUNTY PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

When: 3rd Tuesday of the month **Time**: 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Where: Bethel Assembly of God 2984 Fort St., Lincoln Park, MI 48146

MACOMB COUNTY PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

When: Last Wednesday of the month **Time**: 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Where: New Life Presbyterian Church -11300 19 Mile Rd., Sterling Heights, MI 48314

TRUST-BASED RELATIONAL INTERVENTION® (TBRI) - 2 DAY TRAINING

Flourishing FAMILIES
OFFERING HOPE & HEALING TO FAMILIES AFFECTED BY CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

When: Saturday, October 3, 2026 **AND** Saturday, October 10, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Where: Orchards Children's Services - 24901 Northwestern Hwy., Suite 601, Southfield, MI 48075

Facilitators: April Ficklin, M.A. & Kandice Hunt, M.Ed.

★ *Please keep an eye out for updates via email and social media! Connect with PARC at:*
Website: parc-orchards.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/OCSPostAdoptionResourceCenter
Email: parcocs@orchards.org