

FOSTERING COMMUNICATIONS

Building a Network of People in the Foster Care System

May 2023

Upcoming State Conferences

North Dakota Indian Child Welfare and Wellness Conference
July 25-27, 2023
Sky Dancer Casino & Resort
Belcourt, ND
Details to come

ND Behavioral Health and Children & Family Services Conference
October 24-26, 2023
*Pre-Conference on ethics October 23
Bismarck Event Center
Bismarck, ND
Virtual & In-Person
More Details to come



Children and Family Services Training Center
Department of Social Work
University of North Dakota

May is National Foster Care Month

This year's theme for 2023 National Foster Care Month has been designated "Strengthening Minds, Uplifting Families." Specifically, this year's national theme challenges everyone involved in the provision of foster care to focus on the mental well-being of foster children as diligently as we focus on their safety and physical health. This theme continues to align with North Dakota's Children and Family Services mission of "Safe Children-Strong Families."

This month we want to show appreciation for the dedication and hard work to all those involved in taking a culturally responsive and holistic approach in providing foster care. This includes; relatives, foster care providers, custodial agencies, juvenile court, child welfare professionals, community service providers, and other partners involved with the child welfare system. The collaboration and teamwork of all these entities is essential to ensure the safety, permanence, physical well-being, and mental well-being of children in care.

Cory Pedersen, Director of Children and Family Services stated, "Foster care serves as a temporary safety service for children and families used to strengthen and support the family and make a difference for a lifetime." Pedersen went on to note, "National Foster Care Month is a time to recognize the dedication of all those involved in the child welfare system. In addition to ensuring the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in foster care, this year's theme surrounding mental well-being is both timely and important. Recent data has shown that young adults who have successfully transitioned out of foster care pointed to strong behavioral health support as being a vital link to their successful transitions."

On any given day, North Dakota has 1,450 children in foster care, with over 900 licensed foster care providers and numerous relative caregivers opening their homes to provide a safety service to children in need of out of home placement. 40% of the children in ND foster care are currently placed with their relatives or known kin. Agency case managers immediately seek to identify relatives or known kin as soon as they are aware of the need to place a child out of their home. Relatives and licensed foster care providers are a support to maintain child safety, meet daily needs, and engage in family connections until reunification or other planned permanent options can occur.

1450 Children in Foster Care	Public Agency Custodian
78%	Human Service Zone
20%	Tribal Nation (IV-E only)
2%	Division of Juvenile Services

If you know of anyone interested in learning more about becoming a licensed foster care provider, please encourage them to contact us by calling 1.833.FST.HOME (1.833.378.4663). For information about how a licensed provider can offer respite care or emergency shelter care, contact the CFS Licensing Unit at 701.328.2322 or by emailing: cfslicensing@nd.gov.



PRIDE LINK

The National Foster Care Month theme, "Strengthening Minds, Uplifting Families", and May being Mental Health awareness month it is a perfect time to take a closer look at the importance of meeting mental health needs of children in foster care as it relates to the PRIDE competency, "Protecting and nurturing children". Mental and behavioral health is the largest unmet health need for youth in foster care, and ensuring their mental health's needs are being addressed impacts the overall well-being for both the child and youth as well as their families. The data tells us children and youth in foster care experience higher mental health challenges as compared to those not involved in child welfare. And children and youth in foster care who represent minority populations, i.e., Native American, Black, Hispanic etc., as well as children and youth who identify as LGBTQIAS+, have even higher rates of significant mental health needs compared to the general population. To read more key facts and statistics regarding mental health for youth and children in foster care please click on the link below.

National Foster Care Month: Key Facts & Statistics

It is important to normalize taking care of our mental health as we would for physical health, and as a caregiver one of the ways we can do that is to know what to look for and to have conversations with children regarding mental health. *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's* (SAMHSA) link "For Parents and Caregivers of Children" provides warning signs to look for that may indicate if your child is struggling and provides questions that may help in starting conversations with your children regarding mental health. Click on the link below for this resource.

SAMHSA-For Parents and Caregivers of Children

The above links stress the need for us to acknowledge the importance of one's mental health; however, we understand that as a caregiver it can feel awkward or even unnatural to start conversations on this subject. *On Our Sleeves* created conversation starters through Operation Conversation that includes a variety of different conversational resources, such as conversations cards for Talking about Feelings, Coping Strategies and Mental Wellness, as well as Conversation Starters for when you are concerned. To access these conversation resources as well as additional resources from *On Our Sleeves*, please click on the link below then provide your name and email address to download the material.

On Our Sleeves: Operation Conversation

Lastly, the US Children's Bureau created a guidebook for caseworkers, foster parents, and other caregivers of youth in foster care who have experienced trauma. The guidebook touches on topics for youth (preteen-young adult) related to mental health that includes understanding trauma, understanding different treatments, seeking help, monitoring and supporting progress, as well as links to additional resources. To download and review please click on the link below.

Supporting Youth In Foster Care In Making Healthy Choices

LGBTQ+ Month

June is LGBTQ+ month and according to a 2019 study the number of children in foster care who identify as LGBTQ+ was found to be 30.4% compared to 11.2% of youth not in foster care. According to *Children's Right LGBTQ+ Youth In Foster Care Fact Sheet* from January 2023, the study also revealed that 44% of children in foster care who identified as LGBTQ+ report that they were removed, ran away or were thrown out of their home for reasons directly related to their identify. Foster Providers can make a difference by supporting these youth in their homes, and the *Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents* provides ways foster providers can support LGBTQ+ youth in care, as well as common misconceptions, ways foster providers can create a safe home environment, and more. Click on the link below to access the complete guidebook.



Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents

Sometimes it is the small things that can make the biggest impact, and this can be true for a child who identifies as LGBTQ+ needing to feel safe in a foster home. Laura, Foster Parent Partner, created a short video showing some of the simple things a foster provider can do to help create a safe space for LGBTQ+ youth.

Foster Parent Partner: Showing foster child they are in a safe place for LGBTQ+ youth



Recruitment & Retention

National FC Month: "Strengthening Minds, Uplifting Families"

During National Foster Care Month, not only do we celebrate the providers and professionals that dedicate their time to supporting families, we also honor the children and families navigating the foster care system. In addition, throughout the month of May, extra effort is placed on spreading awareness about foster care related issues. This year's National Foster Care Month theme focuses on "Strengthening Minds, Uplifting Families".

Based on feedback collected by the Children's Bureau from families and young adults who experienced foster care, prioritizing a child's mental health is equally as important as assuring their physical health and safety needs are being met while in foster care. When solid mental health supports are readily available for children with a trauma history, success rates will increase in foster care and beyond. Personal storytelling can be impactful in spreading awareness and creating change. Here are two stories shared by the Child Welfare Information Gateway that reflect on the positive difference that can be made when mental health and self-care is prioritized.

Climbing Toward Mental Health
A Process of Learning

Former North Dakota Youth Testimonial

Isaac Terry, a young adult who aged out of foster care in North Dakota, shares about what was most helpful to him as teenager in foster care, which included access to mental health resources.

North Dakota Former Foster Youth Testimonial- Isaac Terry

Virtual Training Opportunities!

CFSTC offers monthly virtual training as part of the Recruitment & Retention contract with the North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services. One hour of education credit is offered to licensed foster care providers who attend. Kinship homes are also welcome to participate! Watch for monthly fliers sent through email that will include details on upcoming training opportunities! If you have questions, or need access to the monthly flyer, please reach out to your Licensing Specialist, Case Manager, or CFSTC!

Virtual Foster Care Panels

Do you know somebody who is interested in fostering?

Attending a Virtual Foster Care Panel is a great place to start! Keep an eye on the UND CFSTC Facebook page for upcoming dates, and consider sharing with friends, family, and through social media!

Please watch for emails or CFSTC's FB page for June's Virtual Foster Care Panel opportunity!



Are you interested or know someone who may be interested in becoming a foster parent?

Please call the Toll Free Inquiry Line @
1.833.FST.HOME
(1.833.378.4663)

And speak with Recruitment & Retention Specialist, Carissa Cox.



UPCOMING Virtual Training:

06.06.23

6:00-7:00 p.m. CST

Education Opportunity

Topic: "Sweet Dreamzz Program: Navigating Bedtime Frustrations"
Trainer: Tiffani Alston Gill

Did you miss Gaelin Elmore's presentation, "Be the Difference: Belonging is the Key to Unlocking Potential" on May 22nd? You can watch it [HERE](#) for a limited time.

UPCOMING Virtual Open Chat Sessions:

06.02.23

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. CST

06.12.23

4:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m. CST

Session details come by email from CFSTC. Please reach out if you would like to attend and have not received an email invite.