

# Building Connections

## A Newsletter for Resource Families

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### Life on a High Wire

By Wilma Friesema, MFT  
EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.

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All teens traverse the tightrope between childhood and adulthood. Teetering between dependence and independence, immaturity and maturity, conformity and individuality, they often take risks and want premature independence from the rules and precautions their parents and other adults have put into place. Ask any parent: the tightrope years can be hair-raising.

The rope that teens in foster care walk is even more precarious. Their rope isn't stretched tight; it's a wobbly cord of broken promises, instability, abandonment, and trauma that sways in the wind with each change in foster home or school. Without the inner confidence and balance that comes from a secure home life and sense of belonging, traversing the high wire years of adolescence is exceptionally difficult and challenging.

Two Maui resource caregivers, Paulette and George Yoshida, are devoted to helping foster teens navigate their high-wire experience. Paulette and George have fostered over 120 children, the majority of them teenagers. I interviewed Paulette to better understand the experience of fostering teens.

"I've really come to appreciate teens, and see how tough it is for them to make a go of it. They really need help and guidance, they need a mentor," Paulette said. "Being in foster care is a label that follows them into adulthood. They need help breaking through that stigma."

Paulette and George first became resource caregivers when they took in an infant who nearly died. Paulette had worked as a waitress for 30 years, but retired when they took in the baby girl whom they later adopted. George retired a few years later.

What inspired them to continue to take in so many more children, particularly teens? "Taking care of my daughter, seeing the need, makes you feel like you want to do more, you want to help more," Paulette replied. "When teens first come into our home they're so discouraged, they have been let down so many times. They don't trust anyone." Paulette's goal is to help them trust again – a task often easier said than done.

How does she build a trusting relationship with distrusting teens? First of all, Paulette is very clear: being in foster care is not the youth's fault. The teens are in care because of circumstances and treatment that was beyond their control. She does not see them as fundamentally flawed or "bad," but as children who have been treated poorly and who need extra support, guidance, and care. Everybody is somebody, she feels, so it's important to encourage and positively challenge the children in her care.

She also thinks being a resource caregiver is more about listening than talking. "I very seldom get angry, I just try to put myself in their shoes," Paulette shared in her soft, but firm voice. As she listens, she finds letting the young people express themselves enables them to calm down. Their negative behaviors start to drop away, as if the volume on their emotional dial no longer needs to be turned up so high.

She does say having a tough skin and lots of patience helps. Understanding that teens' reactions come from old wounds and past relationships gives perspective to what can be confusing or overwhelming behavior. Jason, a youth who came to live with Paulette, certainly required that understanding and endurance.

"Ours was the 6th placement for him," Paulette said. "He was very talkative and hyper. I was warned he would be difficult, but I saw him as a work in progress."



Continued on pg. 5

## HUI HO'OMALU STATEWIDE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*The Hui Ho'omalua Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) provides support to the resource family community through identifying ongoing needs, facilitating communication and by sharing resources.*

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This newsletter may be viewed on the following websites:

[www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/social\\_services/child\\_welfare/foster](http://www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/social_services/child_welfare/foster)

[www.pidfoundation.org](http://www.pidfoundation.org)

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## OUTSTANDING DHS WORKER!

### Maria Jimenez East Hawai'i CWS Supervisor

It Takes An 'Ohana's Advisory Committee (IAC) joins Hilo resource caregivers in thanking Maria Jimenez for being a strong partner for families, children and youth involved in foster care. She is known for being positive and supportive through difficult times as well as for the special way she has with teens. In fact, her ability to talk with young people, supporting and guiding them in making creative changes, has helped many build a meaningful life.

Maria has a reputation for helping families find things they need, anything from car seats to beds, all while providing positive support and assurances to the families she works with. Families appreciate how quickly she responds to their needs and how sincere she is about assisting children and youth.

Maria clearly cares deeply about ALL people on her caseload and works incredibly hard to do the best for them. That is why we are sending a big MAHALO to her. Maria, we want you to know that you are truly appreciated!



Maria Jimenez

Do you know a DHS-CWS worker(s) that you would like to acknowledge for his/her exceptional work? Share their name(s) with us and what makes them so special so we can let others know how wonderful they are!

441-1125 (O'ahu) ★ 1-888-879-8970 (Toll Free) ★ [RAC@pidfoundation.org](mailto:RAC@pidfoundation.org)

## Prudent Parenting: Common Question

The following is an excerpt from the *Don't Say "NO" Before You "Know"* guide, created by the State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services. The guide presents common questions and answers for Resource Caregivers on how to provide normalcy for children/young people in foster care, so that the children/youth can participate equally with their classmates and peers in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, social, and cultural activities. These Q & A's can be found within the Normalcy Guidelines provided by your DHS licensing worker.

**Question:** Can a child/young person go surfing and/or body boarding, swimming, diving (ocean/water activities)?

**Answer: YES.** The Resource Caregiver or the Child Caring Institution staff will need to know the child/young person's experience and ability to do this activity before they can give their permission. The level of supervision will depend on age of the child/young person and the ability of child/young person to swim.

In Hawai'i, ocean/water activities are very common for families. These activities vary on the level of safety and risk. The Resource Caregivers or the Child Caring Institution staff will need to know and understand the inherent risk and the young person's ability and experience in the particular area to participate in the higher risk activities before they can give their permission.



## Advertise in the Newsletter—Promote Your Business

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## My Experience as a Military Resource Caregiver

by McKinley Rich

It was a crisp, autumn afternoon in Virginia and my phone began to ring. I slid my finger across the screen and put the phone to my ear, "Are you sitting down?" my husband asked.

My heart dropped. What could it be? He had just gotten back from a six-month deployment two weeks earlier. Please tell me he isn't going again. Has someone died? The questions kept brewing in my brain before I had the strength to find a chair. "Yes, I'm sitting. Is everything ok?"

"You're never going to believe this," he said, "but I just got orders and we are moving to Hawai'i!"

"Are you serious? That's amazing!" I retorted, "But please, don't ever scare me like that again."

For the next several months, I dreamt about palm trees, beautiful beaches, learning the Hawaiian culture, and obtaining the golden tan I always longed for as a child. Little did I know that there was so much more for us to discover during our tour in Hawai'i.

Any military family knows that the moving process is all consuming. It took us at least a month before we began to surface above the boxes and packing paper and logistics that come with moving an entire household across an ocean. But, once the dust had settled, we were excited to face our Hawaiian adventure head-on.

That's when we met Mary and Troy. They lived just a few doors down from us on base, with children the same ages as our own. But, in addition to their biological children, Mary and Troy were also serving as resource caregivers. I had never met a military resource family before and was intrigued by the idea of it. I began bombarding them with questions about the licensing process and how foster care intersects with military life. I mean foster care is so unpredictable, so uncertain, so emotionally draining, right? Could my little military family handle it?

And then, as if the answer fell from the sky, I realized that these struggles weren't so foreign to me after all. Aren't we, as military families, experts at handling unpredictable situations—like when orders come through at the last minute? Are we not adept at wading through uncertain waters of pending deployments and imminent Temporary Duty Assignments? Don't we guide our families through all of the emotions that are associated with moves and deployments, however draining it may be? In many ways, the struggles of resource families are the same ones military families face.

Maybe we could handle it, I thought, but is two to three years enough time to make a difference? It was about this time in our foster care exploration that I read this quote by Mother Teresa, "We know only too well that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop were not there, the ocean would be missing something." The words hit me like a ton of bricks. Serving doesn't have to look like a twenty-year investment. It doesn't take decades to love your neighbors well. Mother Teresa's words pierced my heart and reassured me that while our transient lifestyle doesn't allow us to invest long-term in communities, we must not forego the opportunities afforded to us in the short-term.

As much as the frequent moves seem to disrupt our lives as military families, I choose to see them as opportunities for new beginnings. Here in Hawai'i we have chosen to serve as resource caregivers, but when we move away from the island, our service to our new community might look different. The choice to foster while on military orders is a temporary commitment, which allows each family to fully invest in the system for a finite time period. For us, foster care looked like the right short-term opportunity.

In December of 2015 we received our first foster placement. During his time in our care, we dealt with bumps along the way and faced any uncertainty head-on while wondering how long he would remain in our home. But most importantly, through this experience, we have been able to not only enjoy the opportunities Hawai'i has to offer, but also invest in its communities—giving back just a portion of the gifts Hawai'i has given us. Last month we said "good-bye" to our foster child as he went to live with family. I wondered how my boys, ages four and two, would respond. He was very much a part of our family, but I was surprised his departure didn't rock the family boat more. My boys still ask about him, but they aren't distraught. They still include him in family drawings, but aren't grieving. I, on the other hand, have been a bit of a mess at times. Why are they so resilient? Sure, part of it comes from the innocence of youth, but I realized soon after our foster child's departure that the boys talk about him much like they talk about their friends from Virginia. Their experience as military kiddos has prepared them well for this transition. Their ability to love deeply while in the presence of friends, but also transition into a new normal without their friends, is simply a byproduct of being a military brat. I clearly have a lot to learn from my boys.

For many military families, summer is code for PCS season—or moving season to my civilian friends. It is a time of transition and new beginnings. While we are not leaving the island this summer, we are feeling the effects of the change in our family—we are in the foster care transition phase. We are regrouping, reorganizing, and rejuvenating as we prepare to take another placement in the Fall.

While I never imagined that the military life would lead us to foster care, the connection isn't too far off base. After all, in order to serve our nation well, we have to adequately care for our local community. And so, we are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to serve as resource caregivers and invest in the people of Hawai'i for as long as Uncle Sam allows.

*McKinley Rich is a mom to two rambunctious bio boys, an Air Force spouse, a resource caregiver, and a writer/blogger at [www.mckinleyrich.com](http://www.mckinleyrich.com). She enjoys living in Hawai'i and would love to support fellow military resource families in any way she can. She can be contacted at [mckinleywrch@gmail.com](mailto:mckinleywrch@gmail.com).*



## What's the Point of Adopting an Older Teen?

by Chiyomi Chow, LSW

As a recruiter for Wendy's Wonderful Kids, I come across that question quite a bit. Families might think there's no point in adopting a youth when they're on the brink of adulthood. What kind of a difference can really be made? Aren't they already set in their ways?

A youth might also wonder what's the point of being adopted when they're looking forward to their independence. Why do I need a family now?

The answer is that we all need family and when we turn 18 that need doesn't magically disappear. Most of us have heard of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The most basic needs people have are the physical needs of food, water, warmth, rest and the need for safety and security. Youth who age out of care without a family are at a higher risk for homelessness, financial struggles, and unemployment. They may think they can live independently and may even have a job and/or Imua Kakou payments. However, what happens if they lose their job or if they have difficulties in school and end up dropping out? Most young adults don't have extra money saved up to pay for their rent while they look for another job. Where is their safety net?



Another need that people have is the sense of belonging and feeling loved. Often those who have been in foster care have had to move to several different homes without a true sense of belonging or being fully accepted into the family. They still need to know that there are people in the world that want them, need them and miss them when they aren't there. Holidays can be depressing for those without family. Even if they do get invited to a holiday meal, there's a difference between being invited to Thanksgiving Dinner and being expected at Thanksgiving Dinner. When you have family, you're expected there, and you know that people will be disappointed if you're not. You also know that even when you make mistakes, family will forgive you and welcome you back.

There's also so many other ways that being adopted adds to a person's life. When you have relationship problems, you have people to ask advice from. When you get married, you have someone to walk you down the aisle. When you have children, your children have someone to call "Grandma" and "Grandpa." The list goes on.

So, don't think that adopting a teen won't make a difference. As Jessica Good wrote in an article for Adoption.com, "Adopting a 17-year-old isn't about giving them the childhood they never had crammed into one year; it's about giving them a family to turn to for the rest of their life. And we never, ever outgrow the need for a family."

Also Tracy Duncan, who adopted a teenager, shares, "Many teens in the foster care system have had numerous disruptions and rejections in their lives. They may make it very challenging to support them while they 'test the waters' of your commitment to them. However, they all need that port in the storm, someone they can turn to even as they venture out (as all young adults do) to find their own path. Adopting a teenager gives them that place to go to for advice, reassurance, and acceptance. If you can make a commitment to a teenager, you WILL change his or her future--and that helps all of us."

### Adoptive Families Needed Through Wendy's Wonderful Kids

~ Noah ~

Noah is a 15-year-old male Caucasian male who entered care when he was 7 years old. He was originally born in Maryland, but has lived in Hawai'i, Alabama, and Utah.

He reports that he loves animals, is musically talented (can play piano by ear), likes going to the gym and enjoys watching movies. He likes to be active and recently began working at an animal shelter. He has also shown interest in joining the military in the future.

Noah is a resilient youth who currently lives in a residential center. Due to his history of experiencing abuse and trauma, he has difficulties trusting people and has established some maladaptive behaviors. However, he has a strong desire to be a part of a family and has not given up hope.

A forever family for Noah must be patient, consistent, and understand the effects of trauma on a child's behavior. Ideally the family would also have therapeutic training and experience working with youth who have similar needs. Noah needs to be an only child or only have older siblings. He has a large team of support and services that can assist his forever family in understanding his needs.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids seeks to find *good homes for great kids in tough situations*. If you are interested in learning more about Noah and his need for permanent, nurturing connections, please contact Chiyomi Chow, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter, at (808) 540-2552 or by e-mail at [Chiyomi@familyprogramshawaii.org](mailto:Chiyomi@familyprogramshawaii.org).



Forever  
Family

## Life on a High Wire (cont.)

Paulette had a sense of who Jason was underneath his demanding behavior and chose to be very patient. She knew he had been through intense trauma so she just listened— a *lot*. It wasn't easy to be so tolerant with a hyperactive teen whose incessant talking could drive a person crazy, but eventually he talked about the trauma and shared his hurt and anger. That shifted everything.

Given enough time and space, Jason began to feel safe which, in turn, calmed him down. Paulette now describes him as a respectful young man who is easy to be around. He has stopped taking medication and has become more reciprocal in his relationships. He no longer has to be speedy, it seems, to emotionally protect himself.

Fostering teens often means walking with them on their shaky tightrope. While adult maturity provides balance, and love and concern a safety net, there will be moments that feel precarious and unbalancing for everybody.

As hard as it is, the rewards are equally great. For Paulette, seeing teens succeed is a natural high. It provides a deep satisfaction both because she knows she has helped to save a life, but also because helping these youth is what she feels God has called her to do. Her sense of purpose is reinforced whenever she sees her former foster youth surviving and thriving as adults. Plus, she said, "When they trust you, then you've really gained something."

Each year, about 90 youth age out of the foster care system in Hawai'i. They are at extreme risk for homelessness, incarceration, low educational achievement, teen pregnancy, and poverty. On average, one in five foster youth become homeless after the age of 18; only 58% graduate from high school by age 19 (compared to 87% of non-foster youth); fewer than 3% earn a college degree by age 25 (compared to 28% of all youth), and one in four are incarcerated within two years of leaving foster care.

Foster homes for teens are needed throughout Hawai'i. Paulette will tell you that while fostering teens is hard work, life on the high wire is never boring. Every day she and George are guiding steps that lead to a brighter and happier future. Though it is a challenging and intense journey, it is also deeply meaningful and enlivening. For these two resource caregivers, they wouldn't have it any other way.

*\*The names of the youth have been changed to ensure confidentiality.*

## Haley

A poem by Kainalu Keola

*To dream or not to dream, that is the question.*

*Whether it is absolutely foolish to live a life without a dream; or, than to have a dream so extraordinary, it fascinates you and everyone else around you.*

*I shall disagree if she does not believe, but please let me be brief.*

*One dream come true, comes from thee, and thee is a déjà vu.*

*If thee is she then she is astonishing.*

*The poet shall make no mistake as he contemplates.*

*(O how Her elegant voice seduced me speechlessly, making me savor every moment of her presence. Her smile, her laughter, both gentle and sweet. In the wind, her hair blows gracefully, peacefully, at any time of day with every step she takes.)*

*But alas, none of this matters.*

*She and the poet are susceptible in finding true love; that, at a young age, it makes us insecure and lonely.*

*If only, if only; the poet were to be more patient, then maybe; maybe he would refrain from having such absurd thoughts.*

*But nay, he had to confess his likings of her; so that he may, indeed, not ponder over the feeling of captivity that once drove him insane.*

*Now, as the poet shared some of his interpretations of thee at his best, he slowly comes to ease the steam that compelled him.*

*Uncertain and paranoid the poet is in finding her feelings she has for him.*

*Sadly it seems, the poet was destined to distance himself from her to encounter a miracle brought by an angel.*



Kainalu Keola

## RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Looking for a list of therapists?

Check out: [www.therapists.psychologytoday.com](http://www.therapists.psychologytoday.com)

This site allows you to narrow down your search by areas such as specific issues, type of therapy, type of insurance, etc.



## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

How long have you been a resource caregiver? We would like to honor you by printing your name and current years of service in our newsletter. We know you are out there but we need your help. Please send your name and years of service to:

[RAC@pidfoundation.org](mailto:RAC@pidfoundation.org) ♦ (O'ahu) 441-1125 ♦ (Toll Free) 1-888-879-8970

*Mahalo for your dedication and heart for Hawai'i's keiki and families!*

## Mahalo!

Mahalo to **Café 100** in Hilo, Hawai'i for donating a percentage of their ono Super Loco plate sales during the month of July, to Partners in Development Foundation, Hui Ho'omalū Program. Proceeds will benefit East Hawai'i Resource Families!



## Special Training Opportunity

By Judith Wilhoite

"Families who foster sexually abused children face the challenge and rewards of helping their children cope with past traumas. The goal is to assist these children as they learn appropriate ways of relating and to develop a positive sense of control and competence. With safety as a prerequisite, *sexually abused children can heal!*"

Those encouraging words come from Dr. Wayne Duehn, Professor Emeritus of Social Work, University of Texas at Arlington. His vision and passion made him a global leader and innovator in the area of sexual treatment, addressing past sexual abuse and sexual safety issues in adoption and foster care.

Dr. Duehn's knowledge of sexual trauma and his positive message about the ability to heal from it stood out for me when I attended his workshop this summer. He shared that most children who have been victims of sexual abuse can recover from their trauma if the following 2 factors are in place: a strong support system and an educational or therapeutic system that answers the child's question of "Why me?" Children with only one of these factors in place have a lower chance of recovery.

Dr. Duehn relayed that if we focus on a child's behaviors once they come into foster care, we are further victimizing the child for having a brain that is reacting to trauma in a healthy way. Trauma is unexpected, uncontrollable and damages trust, rendering a child with a sense of helplessness. It is imperative that we validate the child's feelings, even if those feelings are wrong. Normal responses to trauma include:

- Shock, disbelief, denial
- Guilt, shame
- Anger, rage
- Grief, sorrow, sadness, loss of control
- Fear, anxiety

It is important for resource caregivers to connect behaviors to the above responses to trauma. Shifting from a "what's wrong with you" to "what happened to you" approach with the child validates the child's feelings and helps them move through the trauma.

I learned so much from Dr. Duehn and you can too, as he is coming to Hawai'i in 2017! A flyer from Family Programs Hawai'i will arrive in your mailbox in the near future with details. As soon as it is available, the info will also be posted on [www.ittakesanohana.org](http://www.ittakesanohana.org). We really hope that you will join us for this opportunity!



## Creating Sexual Safety in Foster Care

By Dr. Wayne Duehn

Current estimates of sexual abuse among children entering foster care range from 75 to 85 per cent. Given this high incidence, resource families must understand the facts of sexual abuse and the roles they play in the healing process. Since sexual abuse is the ultimate betrayal of the adult-child relationship, the primary therapeutic resource available to sexually abused children is understanding, committed resource families who can demonstrate to them that adults can be trusted. Resource families willing to accept the challenge of these special needs children can successfully parent them and become the **central ingredient** of their recovery from past trauma.

### A few words about sexual vocabulary

Although the use of the appropriate sexual vocabulary is recommended, it is important to demonstrate to the child that as an adult you are not shocked by the 'street' terms, have heard them before, and are not intimidated by hearing these terms used. In addition, there are many children in care who have not been exposed to appropriate sexual terminology. Later and when appropriate, the resource caregiver will explain to the child that while they are not intimidated by hearing these commonly used sexual terms, and can comfortably say them too, these words are often used to show disrespect for parts of one's own and another person's body and are often said to exploit, intimidate, groom, victimize, dehumanize, and demean another.



Dr. Wayne Duehn

### Creating sexual safety: (Abridged list)

#### 1. ASSURE THE CHILD OF RESOURCE CAREGIVER'S DESIRE TO PROTECT HIM/HER.

For example: "We want to keep you safe from harm and sexual abuse in this home. You will not be sexually or physically abused here and you will not be able to sexually abuse or hurt anyone else. This includes the dog and the cat. Everyone is safe from harm and abuse in this family—Dad and I, you, the other kids, and our family pets."

#### 2. EXPRESS COMMITMENT TO THE CHILD AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHILD.

For example: "We will talk about these things often, because it is important to us to know how you feel, to understand what happened to you, and to know that you feel safe. Talking about these things will help us make sure that no one ever hurts you again because you are important to us."

Continued on pg. 7



## Creating Sexual Safety in Foster Care (cont.)

### 3. IF THERE ARE OTHER CHILDREN IN THE HOME, DISCUSS EXPECTED AREAS OF SUPPORT AND TENSION.

For example: "All the children and adults in our family are expected to behave in this way and follow these rules about privacy and touching. We need to remind each other about what is OK and what is not OK. If someone isn't following a rule about privacy or touch, it is your responsibility to come and tell us so we can talk about it."

### 4. DEMONSTRATE FAMILY TOUCH PATTERNS IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE HOME.

For example: "Now, if you need a hug or a touch, how can I do that with you? If we are watching TV together on the couch, how can we be close in a way that's OK with you and OK with me? When I put you to bed at night, what kind of a good night do you need to feel safe? Will you remind me if I forget?"

**Family Safety Plan:** Living with and providing services to these children/adolescents presents special problems to their caregivers and professional service providers. These sexually explicit, self-destructive, and provocative behaviors can be frightening and/or create feelings of fear and disgust in others, often resulting in the youth's being moved into successive foster homes, then into one or more group-home placements, and finally into a residential care facility, all of which, in turn, reinforces the child's belief that their badness overwhelms adults. Secondly, it sends a message to the child that sex and erotic behavior is powerful in that adults appear unable to deal with it. Thus, each failed placement reinforces the child's feeling that they are to blame, and they are unlovable and deserving of rejection.

Often, this child may invite further abuse with their eroticized behavior and/or they may act out with other children and youth, in which case they are deemed an abuser. Both responses further lock in the child's sense of sexual power and reaffirms their belief that their only value is as a sexual object. Furthermore, many of these children have had many of their early developmental needs met through sexual activity, and find both somatic and psychic pleasure in this behavior.

It is therefore recommended that at the time of placement (within 48 hours) that the family with the child engage in sexual safety conversations and arrive at a specific family sexual safety plan.

*Below are some suggested wording and rules to include in a family sexual safety plan. These would be put in writing and signed by everyone:*

This agreement is designed to keep everyone safe in this family. All the members in this family have signed this agreement. It lists the rules for living together safely in this family, for respecting the rights of others, and for ensuring the personal safety of everyone. Our signatures on the bottom acknowledge that these rules have been discussed as a family, that we understand these rules, that we will follow them, and that we will help each other to follow these rules.

I understand that:

1. Before I go into another person's bedroom, I must get permission first.
2. If no one is home to give me permission to enter their room, I am not to go into another person's bedroom. Even if I have permission to enter another's room, I will not go through their things. I will not open someone else's mail.
3. When visiting another person's bedroom, the door must be open.
4. If my resource caregiver(s) talk with me in my bedroom, the door must be open.
5. Undressing is allowed only in my bedroom and in the bathroom with the door closed.
6. I will dress appropriately around the house. I will always wear a robe or a t-shirt over my underclothes. I will not walk around with just under clothes or shorts without a t-shirt.
7. Everyone sleeps in his/her own bed.
8. Children do not sleep in the same bedroom with the resource caregivers, unless younger than one year old. Sleeping arrangements while traveling will be discussed with the caseworker prior to the trip.
9. If the bathroom door is closed, there is to be only one person in the bathroom at a time. Specific exceptions to this item are as follows: \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual abuse is the ultimate betrayal of trusting relationships. Because relationships are first learned within the context of the family, the primary therapeutic resource for the sexually abused child is an understanding, safe and committed family who can rekindle the child's trust. For children moving into foster care, developing trust and healthy relationships is an especially difficult task, and these families will need specific supports. Specific suggestions include continuous assessment of the need for referral to outside services for the family (e.g. trauma informed care counseling, educational services, support groups, etc.) and open sexual conversations during each contact with the child and family about prior sexual abuse and current impact on the family. To successfully implement the above recommendations, both staff and foster families will need considerable specialized knowledge of the traumatic impact on the sexually abused child, knowledge of trauma informed care and skill practice in initiating sexual safety conversations and structuring touch contracts and family safety planning.

Families who foster sexually abused children face the challenge and rewards of helping their children cope with past traumas. The goal is to assist these children as they learn appropriate ways of relating and to develop a positive sense of control and competence. With safety as a prerequisite, sexually abused children can heal!

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"Development and Implementation of a Sexually Safe — Trauma Informed Treatment Based Foster Care Program: The Heartland for Children Experience," Presentation with S. B. Ripley, September 7, 2016, at the Florida Department of Children and Family Services 2016 Child Protection Summit, Orlando, FL.

## How to Transform a Placement into a Family

By Patricia D. Wilcox, LCSW

*This article is reprinted with permission from Fostering Families Today. You can see more articles like this at: [www.fosteringfamilies.com](http://www.fosteringfamilies.com). Please note that although this article mentions "foster families" and "foster parents/mother/father", in Hawai'i they are referred to as "resource families" and "resource caregivers."*

The most important thing that our foster kids need is to STAY. These children have often had too many disruptions already. The more times they have to move, the more shame they will feel about themselves and the less able they will be to trust others.

How can foster parents keep and raise these hurting kids? What understanding can help us develop stamina for this difficult job?

### **Two Important Areas of Understanding**

We have to change our understanding of both WHY the child is acting like this, and WHAT WILL HELP THE CHILD CHANGE.

#### **GOAL ONE: WHY**

Why does this child do these bizarre and often dangerous things? We can use trauma theory to understand the adaptive nature of the child's actions. Four important concepts are: expectations of relationships, biological changes from trauma, using behaviors to help you feel better in the moment, and lack of learned skills.

#### **Expectations of Relationships**

Early in life, before they have words, children learn what to expect from other people. Do adults bring comfort, love, attunement, and physical relief? Or, do they bring tension, anger and pain? Or, do they not come at all? A child has needs, and how the adults respond to his needs teaches him whether he matters. A child develops a pattern of expectations about people that stays with him. It takes many repetitions of caring behavior to change. These children have been hurt, and they expect to be hurt again.

#### **Biological Changes from Trauma**

We all have a danger response which keeps us alive by preparing our bodies to fight, flee or freeze when we are in danger. Our children have been in so much danger that they are stuck in the danger response. That means they see danger everywhere, and cannot relax, sleep or play. This is a hard way to live. Also, the lack of early attunement with a caregiver often results in a brain that is not fully developed and not good at planning and organizing.

#### **Using Behaviors to Help You Feel Better in the Moment**

Every one of us has ways that we help ourselves feel better when we are experiencing distress such as eating, shopping, drinking and others. These behaviors work. We feel better. But they have bad effects in the long run. Every troublesome symptom our kids display is their way of solving a problem, of surviving horrible feelings. They can only give them up when they learn new, more positive ways to solve their problems.

#### **Lack of Learned Skills**

Because of the difficulties their parents experienced, because of their moves, our children never learned the basic feeling skills we all need to get through hard times. They did not learn that they have value, and that there are people who care about them even if they are not physically with them. They did not learn how to recognize, name and calm feelings.

#### **Example**

One of the most powerful determinants of how a family responds to behaviors is how they define them. Natalie is a 12-year-old girl who has severe difficulties at bedtimes. She was placed with the Bruce family, and they defined her bed time behaviors as defiance. They had told her to turn out her light and go to sleep, and she kept getting up. The Bruce's case manager asked them to sit in her room, read her a story, and talk with her, and to give her a nightlight. Mrs. Bruce thought this was just being too indulgent; she would never let one of her own kids get away with this. Did Natalie have no respect for her? Besides, Mrs. Bruce said, she could tell that Natalie was enjoying her presence in her room. This was just rewarding bad behavior. The placement was disrupted.

Then Natalie was placed with a single mother, Mrs. Harris. She immediately connected Natalie's bed time behavior with her having been abused and left alone. She started using music to help Natalie fall asleep, and gave her a nightlight. They developed a bed time ritual that they both enjoyed, which included reading a book and then singing a goodnight song to each other. These interventions did not make everything perfect and there were still many other behaviors to deal with, but Natalie gradually began going to sleep more easily.

#### **GOAL TWO: CHANGE**

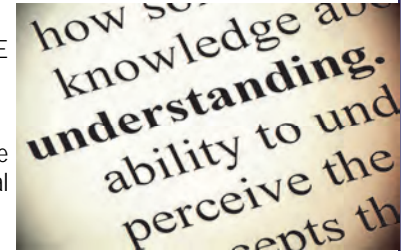
The other crucial continuum concerns what it will take for the youth to heal. Through trauma theory, foster parents can understand that children act better when they feel better. Rewards and punishments do not change children. When their child feels safe, connected, noticed and cared about, she will be able to relax and have more fun. When through everyday acts of caring the child begins to consider a new view of other people, the child will begin to trust, to come to the parent with their worries and concerns, and to ask for help.

We can't expect the parent to re-learn everything society has taught him or her about the value of punishment. But if the parent can believe that every single behavior makes sense in view of the child's history, and that it is fun and connection that will heal, he or she can have more patience with the child.

#### **Foster Parent Vicarious Traumatization**

"I've been a foster parent for 16 years," Michelle said. "And this is the first time anyone has ever asked about how this job affects me."

*Continued on pg. 9*





## How to Transform a Placement into a Family (cont.)

How does this difficult work affect the parents themselves? The definition of vicarious traumatization from Risk Connections® (Sidran Foundation) is:

"Vicarious Traumatization refers to the negative changes in the helper as a result of empathetically engaging with and feeling, or being responsible for traumatized clients." We can see these affects physically, emotionally, in our thoughts, in our sense of safety, in our relationships, our spirituality and our sense of hope.

Foster parents speak of not being able to sleep because of worrying what their child will do. They describe the isolation of being alienated from friends and family who do not understand why they do not just punish the child more severely. A parent described how hard it can be when she has been desperately worried about a runaway foster daughter and then the girl returns and acts mean to her and seems to think her behavior was fine. A father talked about his sadness and frustration while being with his son when a planned visit with the biological mother was canceled due to her not showing up. A mother spoke of how tired she always feels, and how she no longer wants to go out with her friends or even do her favorite scrapbooking because she just wants to sleep. One parent said that for him the hardest thing is not knowing what to do, how to respond, and beginning to doubt himself. A parent highlighted how hard it is not knowing how long the child will be with you. Several parents described the effects on their biological children, who resented the attention taken by the foster child and who at times had themselves been physically hurt. The foster parents feel that only others in this field could understand what it is like.

There are also positive benefits to being a foster parent. Many parents feel that they have become better people because of doing this work. They are more patient, more understanding and more creative. They feel they have become better parents to their bio-children. In fact, many also feel that their bio-children have become better people because of the foster children. Repeatedly parents speak of how much it means that life has a purpose, that they are doing something important, that they are making a difference in a child's life.

The positives do not take away the negatives. They are both real. It is through the intensity of the work that personal transformation happens.

Again and again, the parents tell us how important it was that they can talk about the effect of the work on themselves, with people who understand. We have to make sure that it is not 16 more years before they get an opportunity to do so.

### SUMMARY

Foster parents can give children the essential gift of stability if they understand why the children are acting the way they do and what will help them change. Trauma theory teaches that: children learn expectations of relationships, neglect and trauma change our brains and bodies; we all use behaviors to help us feel better in the moment that have negative consequences in the long run, and when children grow up without attuned parents they do not learn important skills. Paying attention to the experience of the foster parent in doing this difficult work is crucial in supporting their stamina. Foster parents do some of the most important work in the world. We must use all of current scientific knowledge to support them.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Patricia D. Wilcox, LCSW, vice president of strategic development at Klingberg Family Centers in New Britain, Connecticut specializes in treatment of traumatized children and their families. She created the Restorative Approach™, a trauma-and relationship-based treatment method. She is a Faculty Trainer for Risking Connection® and an Adjunct Faculty at the University of CT School of Social Work. She travels nationally to train trainers on trauma-informed-care, specializing in improving the daily life of treatment programs. She was the 2011 Connecticut Social Worker of the Year. She is the author of Trauma Informed Care: The Restorative Approach published by NEARI Press.

There may be times when you, as a resource caregiver, have a question or concern and are not sure where to go for help. We will be presenting scenarios in each newsletter as a way to highlight different situations and suggestions on "Who Ya Gonna Call?"

# Who Ya Gonna Call?

It's a Saturday morning and your doorbell rings...Publishers Clearing House staff are there to congratulate you on winning their sweepstakes! You think that this must be a joke since nobody from Hawai'i ever wins but after carefully scrutinizing the situation, you realize that it's true! You get on the phone and tell your realtor that you're ready to purchase the home of your dreams so you can take in more foster youth! As it becomes certain that you will have a new address, you remember that you're supposed to notify someone if you move... but who? Pull out your handy dandy "Who Ya Gonna Call" list that was in the January 2015 Building Connections Newsletter and look under *Moving*. Contact your child's Social Worker and your Licensing Social Worker to share with them the great news.



Did you know...

## RESOURCE FAMILY BASICS

Certain foster care payments are excludable (non-taxable) from gross income. Resource caregivers may also be able to take advantage of the dependent exemption. Resource caregivers should contact the Internal Revenue Services, State of Hawai'i Department of Taxation, or a tax accountant for more information and assistance regarding such tax matters.

You can find this information under the *Federal Tax Benefits* section on the Resource Family Basics document. This is just one example of the wealth of information you can find in the Resource Family Basics to help resource families! Learn about different financial assistance, services, and resources, that are available and so much more! Go to the website below to see all that it has to offer!

<https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/RESOURCE-FAMILY-BASICS-with-signature-082516.pdf>



## Welcome to FPH's Resource Family Support Services Corner

By April Lum, RFSS Family Resource Specialist

Resource Family Support Services (RFSS) is funded by the Department of Human Services

### Ask the Warm Line



April Lum

I recently received a call from a caregiver who asked: *"Is it necessary to have contact with the child's birth family?"* This question can stir up many emotions for caregivers. You may feel scared, nervous, or even uneasy about meeting the birth family, especially for the first time, and you're not sure what to expect. Or, perhaps the child's parents are your own family members and you have a strained history. Maybe finding a time and place for a visit is a barrier. Whatever the situation may be, we can agree that we all want what is best for the child. In many situations, helping to maintain a child's relationship with their biological family is extremely important.

A few years ago the annual conference for resource families titled "Best of Both Worlds: Resource & Birth Families Working Together for Children" highlighted some of the emotions that get stirred. We also learned the benefits of maintaining a relationship with the birth family.

- As resource families we have to be aware of and willing to work through our own struggles such as anger towards the birth family, fear that the birth family may sabotage the relationship we've developed with the child, judgments on the birth family who has a different lifestyle than we do, or unclear expectations of what we expect from the birth family and what the birth family expects from us.
- Consider the struggles birth families may be dealing with such as envy or resentment; they may be unsure how to relate to resource families, feelings of guilt or grief, or a sense of hopelessness because they have no control over the situation.
- Recognize the sources of struggle the child might be going through such as feelings of being punished because they are away from their family, having no control, identity as a foster child, conflicting values and lifestyles between birth families and resource families, and torn loyalties.

Benefits of resource caregivers and birth families working together:

- There is solid evidence that reunification may occur more quickly.
- The birth family is more likely to make a permanent change because you are there to support them and help them practice.
- If reunification is not possible, birth parents may relinquish custody to the resource family.
- The resource family experiences personal growth.
- Reduces negative affects for the child of being in foster care.
- Less self-blame by the child.

To hear more about working together with birth families, including the liabilities of working together, guidelines to produce beneficial services to children and their families, and optimizing family interaction, the "Best of Both Worlds: Resource & Birth Families Working Together for Children" is available through our DVD lending library. Please call the Warm Line at 545-1130 (O'ahu) or 1-866-545-0882 (toll-free) if you are interested in borrowing this DVD. Resource families can earn four DHS approved hours for your relicensing. Additional resources can be found at [www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/resources-foster-families/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/resources-foster-families/)

### November is National Adoption Month so it's time to celebrate!

**Who's Invited:** ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

(no friends or extended family members please)

**Where:** ICE PALACE HAWAII

4510 Salt Lake Blvd. B6 Honolulu, HI 96818

**When:** SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20

**Time:** 6:30pm-9:00pm

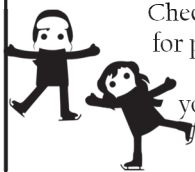
**Cost:** FREE!!!



Adoptive families may register online at  
<http://bit.ly/NADEvent>

Check the flyer or call Rae at 527-4925  
for password or for more information.

Space is limited and  
you must be registered to attend.



### 'OHANA REWARDS

**Want to know how you could receive a \$200.00 gift card?**

Would you like your name to appear in a future RAC newsletter?

**All you need to do is help us find more homes for  
Hawai'i's keiki in foster care!**

If you can refer, help, cheer, and see your referral to the finish line  
to become licensed,  
you could earn a **\$200 gift card** of your choice and be listed here as an  
'Ohana Rewards recipient!

Gwen Bresslauer  
Marcia Buratti  
Ralphielyn Gaston  
Sylvia Gosnell  
Leah Ho

Call Hui Ho'omalu today at 441-1117 or  
1-888-879-8970 (toll free) for more information!

# Calendar of Events

## O'AHU

- Oct 27 (Thurs)** **Central O'ahu Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. 'Aiea United Methodist Church. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245 by 10/20.
- Nov 4 (Fri)** **Windward Resource Families Support Group:** 6:00pm-8:30pm. Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center - Ko'olau Poko Unit. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245 by 10/28.
- Nov 18 (Fri)** **Wai'anae Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Mā'ili Learning Center. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245 by 12/10.
- Nov 20 (Sun)** **National Adoption Month Celebration at Ice Palace:** 6:30pm-9:00pm. A fun evening of ice skating for adoptive families. For more information, call the Warm line at 545-1130.
- Dec 4 (Sun)** **2016 Holiday Party:** 10:00am-2:30pm. Special party of resource, guardianship, and adoptive families at Neal Blaisdell Center Exhibition Hall. For more information, call the Warm Line at 545-1130.
- Dec 15 (Thurs)** **Central O'ahu Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. 'Aiea United Methodist Church. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245 by 12/8.
- Dec 23 (Fri)** **Teen Day XIV:** An event to lend a guiding hand to current and former foster youth ages 14 and older. 11:00am-4:00pm. Ronald T.Y. Moon Kapolei Courthouse. RSVP to ITAO at 540-2543 by 12/16.

## MAUI COUNTY

- Oct 20 (Thurs)** **Maui Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Location TBD. RSVP toll free to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 10/13.
- Dec 15 (Thurs)** **Maui Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Location TBD. RSVP toll free to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 12/8.

## KAUA'I

- Nov 17 (Thurs)** **Kaua'i Resource Families Talk Story Time:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Lutheran United Church. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 11/10.

## EAST HAWAII

- Nov 12 (Sat)** **Hilo Resource Families Support Group:** 12:00pm-2:30pm. Haili Congregational Church. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 11/4.

*\*\*If you have access to the internet, please check the calendar at [www.FamilyProgramsHawaii.org](http://www.FamilyProgramsHawaii.org) for any additional or updated events.*

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Part-time Co-trainers Needed.** *Resource Caregivers/Former Foster Youth in Kaua'i and O'ahu* are needed to co-train new Resource Caregivers in the HANAI curriculum. Your experience is invaluable to a new family just learning about providing foster care. Come and share what you've learned/experienced over the years with others!!! Trainings are generally held intermittently on some weekday evenings and some Saturdays. Training and compensation provided.

**Part-time Child Care Providers needed in East Hawai'i, West Hawai'i, Maui and O'ahu** to provide child care (i.e., during trainings), in the evenings and weekends on an occasional basis. Training and compensation provided.

**Part-time Recruitment Assistants needed in West Hawai'i and O'ahu** to staff various recruitment booths and share information with potential applicants about the need for additional Resource Caregivers. Training and compensation provided.

### HUI HO'OMALU

*A Program of Partners in Development Foundation*

See [www.pidfoundation.org/about/careers](http://www.pidfoundation.org/about/careers)

Email resume & application w/cover letter to: [HR@pidfoundation.org](mailto:HR@pidfoundation.org) or fax to 440-6619

PIDF is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer

*PATCH publishes a quarterly newsletter -- Training Tracks, to inform the community of our upcoming trainings around town, and provide the latest child care news and information to professionals and the public. PATCH offers over 100 FREE child care workshops open to all caregivers such as family child care, preschool and infant and toddler staff, before and after school care programs, parents, resource caregivers, medical professionals, babysitters and informal child care. Please visit our website for the latest news and training schedule:*



[www.PatchHawaii.org](http://www.PatchHawaii.org) or contact your local PATCH office

O'ahu: 808-839-1988 ♦ Maui: 808-242-9232

Lāna'i & Moloka'i: 1-800-498-4145 ♦ Kaua'i: 808-246-0622

Hilo: 808-961-3169 ♦ Kona: 808-322-3500





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Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817-2433

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## Statewide Resource Advisory Committee

2040 Bachelot St.  
Honolulu, HI 96817-2433

441-1125 (O'ahu)  
888-879-8970 (Toll Free)

Fax: 441-1122

E-mail:  
RAC@pidfoundation.org

*The concept for the Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) was created by the Department of Human Services (DHS) as a means to support the resource family community. Hui Ho'omalua facilitates this committee comprised of adoptive parents, resource caregivers and various community agencies, all dedicated to providing services and support to Hawai'i's keiki and the resource families who care for them. The purpose of the RAC is to identify ongoing needs, facilitate communication, share resources, provide information through a statewide calendar of events and a quarterly newsletter and report on local projects and other topics of interest to benefit Hawai'i's resource families.*

*This committee, the newsletter and many of the represented agencies are supported and funded by Department of Human Services contracts.*

### RAC Committee Members:

*Catholic Charities Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalua*

*Department of Human Services*

*EPIC, Inc. 'Ohana Conferencing*

*Family Court*

*Family Programs Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalua & It Takes An 'Ohana*

*Resource Caregivers*

*Adoptive Parents*

*Hawai'i Foster Youth Coalition*

*Partners in Development Foundation—Hui Ho'omalua*