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► Anger & Lying

- Runs September 7th – 28th
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The Connections staff wants to hear from you. What do you like about this monthly newsletter? What would you like to see more of? Are the articles helpful?

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They Did What? Trends in Foster Care Incidents

By Michael F. Quinn M.A. SSW Fair Oaks Office

In October of 2008, I attended a Southern California foster care conference featuring members of Community Care Licensing (CCL) division of the State Department of Social Services, the people who provide oversight for private foster and group home agencies operating throughout our state.

A keynote speaker from the CCL Legal Division informed the several hundred in attendance of recent incidents involving foster care agencies, including foster parents and agency staff, that ultimately wound up being reviewed for administrative action by a battery of CCL lawyers. When an unusual incident in private agency residential care is brought to the attention of the CCL legal staff it is due to the serious nature of the incident, and is investigated to help legal staff understand how issues are evolving.

There are some examples of recent trends in issues and incidents that bear mentioning. These include:

- A foster parent in Southern California posted pictures of herself on MySpace.com that included shots of the provider holding a foster child while dressed in gang attire and flashing gang hand signs. One picture had the foster mother holding a marijuana pipe and a handgun.
- A Central California-based foster family agency social worker didn't check in on a provider who was bedridden from a debilitating illness. The foster mother turned her daycare and foster care child supervision duties over to two teen foster girls who gave grapes to a daycare child as a snack. The child nearly suffocated from a single grape that blocked his

windpipe and he has permanent brain damage as a result.

- A Northern California-based foster father was arrested at an airport in Miami, Florida for possession of drugs. A routine search of the man's laptop computer revealed a marijuana growing operation at his California foster home.
- A Southern California dual-licensed care provider had combined daycare, foster care, biological, and adoptive children under the same roof, for a total of 27 children.
- A Northern California agency social worker was arrested for armed robbery.

While recognizing that unusual incidents involving foster children occur daily in California (the sheer number of kids in care guarantees this reality), those listed above revolve around two common themes: improper use of technology and poor oversight.

It's not just immature adolescents who are using cell phones, laptops, and personal websites for inappropriate or illegal ends, it's adult care providers! As a technology (see tool) is incorporated into our society, sadly, it's oftentimes used to further both positive and illegal agendas. For every advance in communication technology, it seems there likely will be advances in bad human impulses finding their way online or onto portable hard drives.

Other incidents revolve around a familiar industry theme; poor agency oversight. This is why agency staff must inquire who is living in a foster home and determine if there are any changes in the family composition.

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Label the Behavior, Not the Child



Have you ever heard yourself telling your child to “be good” when he leaves for school? What exactly does that mean? You might know in your mind what you expect, but does your child?

Instead of labeling your child as “good” or “bad,” try labeling the behavior instead. That message tells your child that he is a good person, but some of the behaviors he chooses may not be so good. Separate the child from the behavior. Target the inappropriate actions, not the child.

So the next time you plant a going-out-the-door kiss on your little one’s cheek, try saying, “Remember to raise your hand before speaking in class.”

Care-Free Cooking – Meat-free Chili

- Ingredients:**
- ▶ 1 14-ounce can black beans
 - ▶ 1 14-ounce can kidney beans
 - ▶ 2 4-ounce cans chopped jalapeno or Anaheim chilis (jalapenos are hotter)
 - ▶ 1 bell pepper
 - ▶ 3 cloves of garlic, with the papery skin peeled off
 - ▶ 1 onion
 - ▶ 1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes
 - ▶ 1 14-ounce can stewed tomatoes
 - ▶ 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 - ▶ 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
 - ▶ 1 tablespoon chili powder

- Directions:**
1. Chop the onion, bell pepper, and garlic into small pieces.
 2. Put 2 tablespoons oil into a large pot. Turn heat to medium and add the onion, bell pepper and garlic. Cook until onion is soft.
 3. Stir in the rest of the ingredients. Turn the heat up to high and bring to a boil. As soon as it boils, turn heat down to medium and cook for 30 minutes.



Leftovers can be used in burritos, to top a cheese omelet, or to top a baked potato.

Recipe from “Chew with your Mouth Full: The Art of Feeding Your Face” available on www.SocialLearning.com. The cookbook was written for young adults who may be short on cooking experience and cash.

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That being said, no one can justify 27 children under one roof, that's a bit too many! The CCL speaker speculated that the downward trend in the economy has resulted in many new foster care applicants who see an opportunity to house needy relatives or ensure income levels via taking foster or daycare children into their homes.

What will the recent incidents described lead the oversight agencies to recommend?

Regulations are in the works to prevent dual licensing of providers (daycare and foster care). So is a system for monitoring any changes in the criminal background status of care providers and agency staff members. Plus, more mandated paperwork is likely to ensure that agency social workers visit foster and daycare facilities as mandated by agency charters.

Finally, the incidents reaching the CCL Legal Division underscore that foster and residential group home care is a dynamic industry reflecting changes in our society in terms of technology and the struggle to use it responsibly.

As the former district attorney and CCL Legal Department representative summarized it, all those forces combined are what keep "CCL lawyers gainfully employed."

Mr. Quinn has been a social worker and foster family agency supervisor for 25 years in residential foster care and group home settings. He has authored handbooks for foster parents, group home staff, and private agency caseworkers and is a contributor to the Foster Parent College online training catalog. He is currently a Supervising Social Worker for Nepenthean Homes FFA in Fair Oaks, California.

Opportunities

Advanced Parenting Workshops are back! Enroll now for September workshops on Anger and Lying. Workshops begin September 7.

Yes, you CAN reprint articles from this newsletter. Please notify us of your plans, and on the article state the story is "Reprinted with permission from Foster Parent College *Connections*." Email Lisa at press@northwestmedia.com.



Submit your nominations for Champions for Children. This regular column profiles foster parents, advocates, social workers, foster care alumni, etc. Please email a sentence or two about your nominees, along with their contact information, to Lisa at press@northwestmedia.com. Thanks.

Refrigerator Quote:

***Stop comparing your family to other families.
You are comparing your "insides" with other peoples' "outsides."***

– From "Wounded Children, Healing Homes" available at www.SocialLearning.com

September Word Find Fun – Hang this page on your fridge for your children’s enjoyment.

Fall is just around the corner. Here is a poem about Fall and most words in the poem are hidden the puzzle for you to find.

Fall

Crisp air changes leaves
To orange, brown and red
They fall, days shorten
Soon birds will have fled

Word Key:

- ▶ Crisp
- ▶ Air
- ▶ Changes
- ▶ Leaves
- ▶ Orange
- ▶ Brown
- ▶ Red
- ▶ Fall
- ▶ Days
- ▶ Shorten
- ▶ Soon
- ▶ Birds
- ▶ Fled

F	V	D	X	X	S	U	A	S	F	J	W	L	J	O	L
E	M	P	I	C	E	T	O	Y	A	P	Y	D	T	R	S
L	P	J	F	R	G	O	R	A	L	I	M	I	N	O	Q
O	J	S	D	A	N	F	B	D	L	G	W	V	X	X	S
W	M	R	I	Z	A	E	H	G	E	V	P	T	T	B	W
D	E	L	F	R	H	N	T	A	O	O	R	W	M	M	B
D	S	R	X	B	C	H	W	R	P	U	W	P	Z	U	C
A	U	I	U	N	T	P	I	O	O	R	A	N	G	E	M
L	E	A	V	E	S	F	N	Q	R	H	X	D	Y	K	S
O	R	D	D	Y	J	S	D	R	I	B	S	A	Y	J	H

Kids Krafts – Fabulous Pillowcase

For this nifty craft, you’ll use permanent fabric markers to decorate a pillowcase that you can take with you anywhere you go. Have fun!

Here’s a hint: put a piece of cardboard inside the pillowcase so that while you are drawing on it the ink won’t leak through to the other side of the pillowcase.

What You Will Need:

- ▶ A clean plain pillowcase, white or a pale color
- ▶ Cardboard that fits inside the pillowcase
- ▶ Permanent fabric markers



How To Make It:

1. Put the cardboard inside the pillowcase.
2. Draw whatever you want on the pillowcase. You can put your name on it, too.
3. If the package for the fabric markers recommends ironing over your art to “set” the ink, please ask a grown-up to help you.
4. When it’s time to wash your pillowcase, wash it separately in cold water with gentle soap. That will keep your art looking nice longer.
5. Here’s another hint: these make nice gifts, and the winter holidays are closer than they appear!