

Family Ties



Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

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Newsletter

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“What Fostering Teens has Taught Me”

by Janier Caban- Hernandez

If you asked six years ago if I wanted to be a foster dad, I would have said, “NO way Jose!” Being a single, Latino male I had no idea what I could offer a child, especially as I generally don’t like little kids. As I was going through the PRIDE (Parent Resource for Information, Development, Education) classes, I became increasingly nervous as I learned more and more about the needs of these children. Could I deliver, am I ready and what about the “what ifs”...?

I was ready to speak to the trainer and drop out, until I befriended four Latino foster teenagers who lived in another foster home. After raiding my refrigerator and asking me to cook them Puerto Rican food, they encouraged me to become a foster father as “there aren’t any Latino men.” All the teens that come to my home are Latinos because from the start, we have something in common: a cultural connection and understanding of the importance of “familia” (family), “respeto”(respect) and “confianza” (“trust”).

Little kids always drove me crazy, but teenagers are an age group that I can talk and negotiate with. What I have learned about living with teenagers, I learned by attending post-licensing training, participating in roundtable discussions with other foster parents and foster teenagers and mostly by talking with the boys in my house (...and at times, “therapeutic yelling” helps!).

I tell the boys that come to my home that:

1. You don’t earn my respect or trust, you only lose it.
2. When you get me upset, you’ll be the first to know and when I get you upset, I want to be the first to know.
3. I’ll make mistakes, so help me out.
4. Help me understand how to use my cell phone, please!
5. Being courteous is never old fashioned.
6. Women like to be respected and not treated as “one of the boys.”
7. I’ll cook dinner, but you clean up.
8. As we need to communicate, I’ll get you a cell phone and pay half the bill, you pay the other half with your chore money.
9. Your education is NOT an option, you HAVE to go to school and if you need school related items, I’ll get it.
10. You’ll get \$10 for every “A” grade.
11. Don’t tell me you are proud of being a Puertorriqueño, show me by your actions and deeds.

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My boys are part of my family. Some have moved out but we still contact each other and when they need help, they know they can call me. Now that I co-facilitate PRIDE classes and open houses, I challenge the participants to consider teenagers, as there is such a need for them to be welcomed to a nurturing and supportive foster home. After all, those cute little kids eventually become teenagers!

Article taken from NFPA News

Maine has many wonderful success stories. Please send us yours so we can use it in future editions of the Family Ties! Thank you, Meagan Stearns.

Community Conversation in Aroostook County

Dear Resource parents, friends and colleagues,

AFFM along with our friends at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Youth and Community Engagement Program at the Muskie School and Community Health and Counseling Services we are once again partnering to bring a Community Conversation to Aroostook County.

As promised when we began this training project in the spring of 2012, we intend to enlarge the population of care providers to include, therapists, educators, and Guardian Ad Litem along with Resource Parents and DHHS staff and other case managers invested in permanency outcomes for youth in care. We are also encouraging youth to attend as well.

We anticipate this event will take place in Presque Isle in July or August. We would like to have your input as to which of the two months, day of the week and hours might be most conducive to your ability to attend. We would need to provide it during day time hours but are able to be somewhat flexible between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. With your input we will confirm based on the most requested month, day and time of day.

We realize school will be out so child care will be a consideration.

Please RSVP as soon as you can so we can finalize details and negotiate a contract with the site. I look forward to seeing you at the next Community Conversation.

Thank you in advance for responding to this request and for all you do for Maine's children.

Kinship Corner

Tips for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren By: Mary Ellen Davis

- 1. Maintain good mental, physical, and emotional health**
- 2. Prepare for and be able to accept inevitable life changes—yours and theirs**
- 3. Understand and accept the differences among individual grandchildren**
- 4. Visit the school and get to know the teachers, the office staff and the PTA**
- 5. Involve yourself in your grandchildren's education at all levels**
- 6. Keep records of and follow up on grandchildren's medical, educational, physical and mental/emotional growth and development**
- 7. Provide grandchildren with and encourage them to engage in healthy, social, age-appropriate activities**
- 8. Assist them to develop healthy social skills**
- 9. Teach the importance of pride (justified self-respect) and the love of learning**

Taken from Fostering Families Today visit www.fosterfamiliestoday.com for more articles about kinship care

Resource Family Support Groups Throughout Maine

Bangor: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets from 6:00-8:00pm the 3rd Monday of every month at 26 Downeast Circle (between Davis Road and Mt. Dessert Drive), Bangor. For more information please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 Please RSVP.

Biddeford: Foster/Adoptive Support. Meets from 9:30-11:00 am the 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month. For more information please contact Meredith Crain at 283-4314. Please call before you come.

Brunswick: Please contact Tammy Cutchen at 208-0939. Tammy also runs the Clothing Garage; give her a call for either service.

Caribou: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship parent support. Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month at 5:30PM at Caribou Adult Education Building on Bennett Drive in between Caribou Rec and the gas station. Child care is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

Ellsworth: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month from 5:30pm-7:00pm at Bryant E. Moore Community Center 238 State Street Room 108 in Ellsworth. Child care is provided. Please contact Linda Levesque, Downeast Health Services, at 667-5304 or email llevesque@downeasthealth.org to reserve childcare.

Houlton: Adoptive/Kinship support. Meets the 1st Monday of the month at 7 Cow Team Road in Sherman. Please contact Debbie Irish at 365-7133 for more information. This group does not meet during the summer.

Houlton: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship support. Meets every 2nd Thursday of the month from 5:30pm-7:30pm at Houlton CHCS 2 Water Street. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

Lewiston: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets the 4th Tuesday of the month 7:00pm-9:00pm at Lewiston DHHS. Call Deb Hallowell at 783-3291 or 344-5101 or Lisa Cates at 336-3760.

Machias: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 1st Friday of the month 5:30PM-7:00PM at Rose M. Gaffney Elementary School 15 Rose Gaffney Road, Machias. Childcare is provided. Please contact Mindy Kane, Community Health and Counseling Services, at 263-2014 or email MKane@chcs-me.org to reserve a spot for childcare.

Skowhegan: The group meets 5:30-8:00PM every second Wednesday of the month located at Skowhegan Federated Church 13 Island Avenue in Skowhegan. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

South Paris: Kinship Support. Meets 9:00AM-10:00AM every second Saturday of the month, unless noted. Meets at Deering Memorial Church, 39 Main Street, South Paris. Please RSVP to Shelley Newcomb at comb2599@roadrunner.com

South Portland: Kinship support. Meets at 4:30PM-6:30PM at 62 Darling Ave, South Portland. This group will meet every 2nd Tuesday of the month. Please contact Meagan Stearns at meagan@affm.net or call (207) 478-8025 to reserve childcare.

York: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. This group will meet every 2nd Thursday of the month 6:30PM-8:30PM at York Hospital. Please use the Hancock Entrance, group will be held in Ellis Conference Room (on your immediate left). Please RSVP to Meagan Stearns at meagan@affm.net or call (207) 478-8025.

Resource Family Support Network Survey

AFFM needs your thoughts and ideas regarding supports in your area!

PURPOSE:

This survey is being circulated State-wide to all adoptive, foster, and kinship (licensed and non-licensed) families. It will not take long to complete. Your responses are extremely important to us at AFFM. If you have already completed this survey once, either online or during the AFFM conference in April, please do not submit another as it will skew the results.

The Goal of this survey will:

- Directly get your feedback and suggestions to what is needed for support.
- It will help AFFM determine if resource families are aware of nearby support groups that may already exist in your area, and will cue AFFM to do a better job in getting the word out.
- It will help AFFM identify and prioritize what types of support and what areas in the state supports are wanted and needed now.
- It will help AFFM identify barriers that prevent resource families from participating in support groups so AFFM can remove those barriers.
- AFFM wants to identify and reach out to those who want to help build a more complete support network (i.e. large and small support groups, peer to peer mentoring, advocacy groups, personalized support, and providing local area family social events) to benefit all resource families

There are three ways to provide AFFM with your input:

1. **The most preferable method:** Please type in the following link to complete and submit the survey online.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AFFMresourcenetworksurvey>
2. Using this survey as a guide, AFFM staff will complete the survey with you. (You do not have to provide us with your name to remain anonymous.) Just call AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 and let us know you want to fill out the survey.
3. Fill out this survey and mail it back us (Sorry, AFFM is not able to provide return postage).

Professionals and other non-resource parents, AFFM also wants to hear from you! We are always looking for speakers, trainers, and other volunteers to share their strengths and expertise. We ask for your feedback about what you may think is helpful to resource families.

***AFFM has been happy with the feedback received so far. In April, this survey was sent via AFFM's list serve and 82 responses were received. Based on that small sample alone, AFFM is able to provide those families with supports they want and need. Please help us reach our goal of receiving feedback from at least 300 families out of the roughly 4500 plus post adoptive, pre-adoptive, foster, and kinship families who receive this newsletter mailing.*

Resource Family Support Network Survey

PLEASE HELP AFFM UNDERSTAND YOUR OPIONIONS ABOUT THE SUPPORT THAT COULD BE AVAILABLE TO YOU.

Please provide your town and County of where you live, and indicate what type of parent you are. We then will concentrate our efforts on providing the supports you need in those areas.

*What town do you live in? _____

*Which County do you live in? _____

*Are you a(n) (Please checkmark all that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Adoptive parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Licensed Kinship Parent
<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Non Licensed Kinship Parent

LARGE (REGIONAL) RESOURCE FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP

Would you like to participate in a resource families support group? (includes adoptive, foster, licensed and non-licensed kinship families)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe
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If no, why? (Include any barriers that may prevent you from attending a group at this time)

PEER TO PEER SUPPORT

Would you like to be matched with an experienced family with similar needs to provide you with peer support?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe
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If you would like to be matched with an experienced family, but can't right now, please explain why.

SMALL (COMMUNITY) RESOURCE FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP

Would you like to participate in a small support group setting involving a few families living in your area?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe
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If no, why? (include any barriers that may prevent you from attending a group at this time)

PEER TO PEER SUPPORT

<p>Would you like to be matched with an experienced family with similar needs to provide you with peer support?</p>	<p>___ YES ___ NO ___ Maybe</p>
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If you would like to be matched with an experienced family, but can't right now, please explain why.

SMALL (COMMUNITY) RESOURCE FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP

<p>Would you like to participate in a small support group setting involving a few families living in your area?</p>	<p>___ Yes ___ No ___ Maybe</p>
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If no, why? (include any barriers that may prevent you from attending a group at this time)

SUPPORT TYPE OPTIONS

Not everyone feels supported in the same way. Your responses to these options will give AFFM a better understanding of the types of support that are most useful to you and to your area.

Large Group Setting: Participants are from surrounding communities. Provides on-site childcare, opportunities for education and training, receive feedback and suggestions to address your concerns and questions from a varied population of resource parents. If is usually offered 1-2 times per month and can be facilitated by a resource parent(s) or a professional in the field.

Small Group Setting: Participants are usually from the local community. It provides a place to receive feedback and suggestions to address your concerns/questions from other members. Participants can be a mix of foster, adoptive, or kinship OR could be made up of a specific type of resource family. It is more likely that the group meets in a home environment. Child care may or may not be an option. The group meets as often as it wants.

Peer to Peer Match: Provides support to address specific needs/issues. Support is likely to be via phone, email, or could be in person based on availability. The "Mentor" would receive some training to provide support and would consult with AFFM staff on a consistent basis. The mentor would be a volunteer of AFFM.

An advocacy Group: A group of resource parents whose primary purpose is to identify specific issues (within DHHS, school, legal, etc) and work to identify possible solutions.

Personalized Support: Directly receiving support from AFFM, or other agency that has the expert knowledge for your specific issues.

An area social event: A free fun social family event or activity planned in your area.

*Which of these support options is most appealing to you? Please rank them from (1) most appealing to (6) least appealing option

<p>___ The large group setting:</p>	<p>___ An advocacy group:</p>	<p>___ Peer to Peer Match</p>
<p>___ The small group setting</p>	<p>___ Personalized support</p>	<p>___ An area social event</p>

Are there any other types of support that would be helpful that haven't been identified?

Please provide AFFM with some insight to why you ranked them this way?

Please mark next to all the topics you most would like to discuss with other parents.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strengthening parent-child relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual acting out	<input type="checkbox"/> changes to laws/policies
<input type="checkbox"/> Behavior of children	<input type="checkbox"/> Anger/destructiveness	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Needs
<input type="checkbox"/> Adolescent needs & behavior	<input type="checkbox"/> School related problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Need for financial help
<input type="checkbox"/> reactions of family and friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal issues	<input type="checkbox"/> need for material goods
<input type="checkbox"/> navigating DHHS and other systems	<input type="checkbox"/> The process to adopt	<input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship
<input type="checkbox"/> Age appropriate child development	<input type="checkbox"/> working with Birth families	<input type="checkbox"/> Allegations
<input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse/exposure	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitioning children	<input type="checkbox"/> Self care
<input type="checkbox"/> Permanency		

Others?

What else should AFFM know about providing support to resource families?

A strong support network is something this state has needed for a long time, but AFFM can not do it alone. AFFM needs help from you.

If a parent group was formed, would you be willing to help?

<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate/lead a group	<input type="checkbox"/> Greet and welcome newcomers	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan group meetings/activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Host a group in your home	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare the room before and after	<input type="checkbox"/> Take a leadership role
<input type="checkbox"/> Make telephone calls	<input type="checkbox"/> Share childcare responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide refreshments/small meal
<input type="checkbox"/> Transport another parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Become a Peer to Peer mentor	<input type="checkbox"/> (other) _____

Is it okay for AFFM to contact you about your responses? AFFM wants to make sure that your needs are being met. We also can use as many volunteers as we can get to help with this effort. If we can contact you, please provide your contact information

Name: _____	Email: _____	Phone: _____
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Thank you!!

Your responses are very important to us at AFFM. If you have additional comments about how we can help meet your personal needs or how you can help AFFM in meeting other's needs, please call

1-800-833-9786. We would be glad to talk with you.

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