Recently, I had the chance to teach a class for children and their parents about their brain learning to do things mindfully. As restrictions were beginning to be put in place around the Covid-19 outbreak, there was some tension around the topic.

In weeks past, we had talked about how our brains work when we are calm and strategies to calm our brains back down when we “flip our lid.” We have made calm-down kits, tried yoga, created art. We tried to eat in a mindful manner, rather than just shoving food in our mouths on the run. We learned about the right and left side of our brains. The right side of our kids’ brains were so excited that school is canceled for the time being, they all agreed gleefully. Then we learned how the left side of our brains was sad because it craves order and structure.

Together with their families, they wrote lists of things they could do together during the coming weeks. They wrote thank you notes to a person who helps keep them calm. Then they made magnetic chore charts to bring order to their brains. While the kids were skeptical, I reassured them that structure and order would really help them.

So how do we do it on a day to day basis in real life?

- Step one, we all need to get enough sleep. Grownups and kids.
- Try eating a meal mindfully together.
- Find a recipe for homemade play dough.
- Teach your kids how to cook something new.
- Check out some awesome yoga videos for kids on YouTube.
- Get outside and get some sunlight together.
- Take time to watch a sunset and count the stars in the sky.
- Slow down.
- Do art.
- Create routines.

Please share what has worked for your family with us on Facebook. It has been inspiring to see people looking out for each other in finding supplies. Let’s share tips, tricks and fun ideas you are trying with your kids. I promise to do the same. Eventually we will all look back on this time.

Will our kids remember adults who slowed down and shared their calm or stressed-out adults who made the world feel scarier?
The Askable Adult:
A project of the Utah Department of Health
By: Tania Tetz, MPH, CHES

Adolescence is an important period for transition from childhood into adulthood. As someone once said, adolescents have a foot in childhood and a foot in adulthood. Contrary to common belief, adults in an adolescent’s life can have a big impact on their behaviors and decisions. Trusted adults are a protective factor against youth engaging in risky behaviors. Adults need to be able to communicate with adolescents in a way that provides a feeling of safety and trust.

In June 2019, the Utah Department of Health Family and Youth Outreach Program received funding from the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University to carry out a social-emotional learning, and askable adult (a trusted and safe adult who youth can confide in or approach with questions) training project.

The project includes training for adults that live or work with youth ages 10-19 and who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

This training will increase the ability of parents and other adults to effectively support youth with disabilities by introducing them to strategies that can increase positive adult-teen communication and eventually strengthen relationships.

The curriculum used for the communications part of the project is TEEN Speak by Dr. Jennifer Salerno. TEEN Speak is implemented in skill-building workshops that foster intergenerational connections and build protective factors in the home and community. The workshops are focused on improving adult-teen communication to reduce teen risky behaviors and build strong family relationships.

The workshops are a total of eight hours in length, which includes four hours of pre-work before attending the workshop and an additional four hours of in-person attendance at a workshop. Workshops may be implemented as a one 4-hour session, two 2-hour sessions, or four 1-hour sessions. The workshops are interactive and provide a series of strategies for adults to try, and then they can share with the group what worked for them. The participants will receive the TEEN Speak workbook and guide free of charge.

For more information on this project, contact Tania Tetz with the Utah Department of Health at ttetz@utah.gov.
The Value of Networking
By: Adriana Gardiner, Retention Services, Utah Foster Care

As human beings, we tend to navigate towards people who are like us. Perhaps they think like us, have similar interest or experiences, parent like us, or have priorities that are similar to ours. This behavior serves the purpose of validating our own experience and views of the world.

As an immigrant who has lived in many different places, I am often on the lookout for other people who have also come from different areas. It validates the awkwardness of just being different, perhaps because we can be different together. It’s peer support.

Being a foster parent is no different. While being a parent is hard, being a foster parent has added specific challenges that only other foster parents understand. Peer support is based on the principle that individuals who have faced and overcome adversity can offer useful information, encouragement and mentorship to others facing similar situations.

We encourage foster and adoptive parents to meet, and befriend other foster and adoptive parents (our Cluster groups and other activities serve this purpose); and to organize or attend playdates where children in care and who are adopted meet and become close to other children who have the same experience. It validates their own world.

Bringing the topic of foster care into our home is also a good idea. It does not necessarily need to be a formal or in-your-face discussion. There are many movies that portray characters who are in foster care. Did you know that Superman was in foster care? So were Spiderman, Buddy the Elf, the cute girls from Despicable Me, the Ninja Turtles, Princess Leia, Po from Kung Fu Panda, and the list goes on.

Books are also a powerful tool that support having meaningful and thoughtful conversations. Consider making room in your library for books that are about foster care. A Mother for Choco by Leiko Kaska; I’ve Loved You Since Forever by Hoda Koft; Tell Me Again About The Night I Was Born by Jamie Lee Curtis, Stellaluna by Janell Cannon, and The Cow That Laid an Egg by Andy Cutbill are great examples.

And then we, our kids, and our friends play, read, and live in a world where we are not different because we are part of the foster care system. And can move on to being different due to the other things that truly matter.

FIND MORE RESOURCES ONLINE
utahfostercare.org/eastern
CLUSTERS, WHAT ARE THEY?

Clusters are peer groups for foster, adoptive, and kinship families who meet together on a monthly basis for support & required training.

Learn more, online!

GRAND CLUSTER
Audrena  (435) 210 - 1963

SAN JUAN CLUSTER
Kaitlyn      (435) 459-0452

CARBON/EMERY CLUSTER
Dawn           (435) 340-0084
Janarie  (435) 820 - 6162

UINTAH BASIN CLUSTER
Jessica   (385) 414-1619

How Can We Help?

Because we want to keep everyone safe and healthy and are in a time of social distancing, I know this is a crazy time and many are feeling confused and scared.

It’s hard to calm the anxiety of our children when we ourselves are feeling so anxious.

In a short video on KSL’s Studio 5 website Dr. Matt Townsend shares his four ways to decrease the fear and anxiety in your household. He shares how we can calm down and focus on safety:

• Focus on influence, not concerns.
• Act on anxiety, don’t just talk about it.
• Get informed, not obsessed.
• Serve those in need.

To watch the video go to: https://studio5.ksl.com/4-ways-to-minimize-stress-and-maximize-safety/

Please take care of your families and keep loving those little ones. Know that we are here to support you. Make sure you are on our Cluster group, email us to add you, if you aren’t. If you need anything, message, call, or email your Cluster facilitator or us!

Adriana Gardiner
adriana.gardiner@utahfostercare.org
(970) 314-0361

Uintah Basin Cluster: Jessica (385) 414-1619

Kobi Prettyman
kobi.prettyman@utahfostercare.org
(435) 636-0210

Carbon/Emery Cluster: Janarie (435) 820-6162 & Dawn (435) 340-0084

Joel Redd
joel.redd@utahfostercare.org
(435) 261-2368

Grand County Cluster: Audrena (435) 210-1963
San Juan County Cluster: Kaitlyn (435) 459-0452
Hey families, I just want to remind you again of our online training and let you know I am here for you if you need some extra support during this time of social isolation. Below is the link for your questions about the current rules surrounding in-service training. Feel free to reach out to me at les.harris@utahfostercare.org or (435) 219-0561 if you need a shoulder to lean on or some answers.

https://utahfostercare.org/blog/message-for-current-foster-families/

Below is a list of available classes. To access the online classes go to https://utahfostercare.org/training-for-parents/inservice/.

- **Calming Anxiety in Children** | 45 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **SAD: Seasonal Affective Disorder** | 57 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Secondary Trauma** | 55 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Understanding Sensory Processing Issues** | 44 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **RAD: It May Not be What You’ve Heard** | 60 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Working with the School System** | 47 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Understanding Addiction** | 37 Min (0.5 Credit Hour)
- **Caring for the Sexually Reactive Child** | 61 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Maintaining Healthy Relationships** | 55 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Toileting Problems: Encopresis & Enuresis** | 59 Min (1 Credit Hour)

- **Effective Discipline** | 43 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Bullying: Key Players & How to Address the Role Your Child Plays** | 59 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Goodbye Rituals: Ideas on How to Say Goodbye** | 62 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Effects of Childhood Trauma on Brain Development** | 93 Min (1.5 Credit Hours)
- **Discipline Strategies: A Focus on Children with Trauma** | 50 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **What Kids Need to Succeed** | 66 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Assisting Biological Children** | 78 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Building Trust-based Relationships: The Color Code** | 66 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **The Shame We Carry** | 48 Min (1 Credit Hour)
- **Managing Emotions & Behavior** | 61 Min (1 Credit Hour)

In addition, you may check with your RFC for movie, documentary and book suggestions.

**TO GET CLASS CREDIT...**

Once you have watched one of the webinars listed above, please send an e-mail to your trainer (find them in the staff directory) stating the title of the video, the presenter, the date and time you listened, as well as three ideas you took away from the training that you intend to use with children in your home. This will guarantee that you will receive the appropriate credit for renewal hours for licensing.

**Important:** If you are watching a video as a couple, each of you must send an e-mail with the required information.
Uintah Basin News

FROM BEGINNING TO END

We met at the last pre-service training session in February to talk about cultural differences, eat yummy food brought by all the participants as a way to share family traditions, graduated foster families, and celebrated a birthday! This month we also celebrated the Logans as they legally welcomed their son into their family. Through beginnings, happy endings, and lots and lots of work in the middle.

Carbon/Emery News

Foster Mom of the Year. Karen Sitterud was selected as the Foster Mom of the Year 2020. Karen and her husband Kirk have been foster parents in Emery County for over 40 years and have provided care for over 210 children. During that time, they have helped many children return home to their families and have adopted several who could not safely reunify. Currently they are helping children who are awaiting placement with other members of their family. Karen opens her home and heart to children with a variety of needs and struggles and treats them all like her own. She has been an important part of the team to help prepare the children and kinship placement for the transition to their home.

The Sitterud's love helping children in our community and have influenced many lives. We thank them for their service.
Coronavirus Message

The latest message for currently-licensed foster families from the Utah Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS):

To our valued foster and kinship families,

First, a big thank you for surviving an unprecedented time of homeschooling, pandemics, and earthquakes! You never cease to amaze us with your professionalism and commitment to the children we serve together. As we continue to work to support the safety and wellness of our communities and prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus), I wanted to reach out to you all and share updated information and reassurance that your concerns are important to us and we want to assist in answering any questions you may have.

If you have any health-related questions on COVID-19, we encourage you to contact your primary care provider or call the Utah Coronavirus Information Line at 1-800-456-7707 or visit coronavirus.utah.gov.

DCFS OFFICES

Our offices are open and have staff available. Electronic communication is preferred whenever possible. If you need to call an office you can go to our location map at our dcfs.utah.gov website for contact information.

CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS

CFTMs are an important tool for communicating with children, foster families and parents as we work to address individual cases and any barriers or changes due to COVID-19.

Decisions on whether to hold CFTMs remotely will be brought to the team and be dependent on each case and any unique considerations.

CHILD WELL VISITS AND TELEHEALTH

Due to the current COVID-19 outbreak, routine medical and dental exams will be reduced or delayed.

Fostering Healthy Children Nurses will be monitoring this closely and document (in activity logs) health and mental health exams being delayed due to precautionary measures associated with the current COVID-19 outbreak.

Foster parents and caregivers should call their primary care provider to address any immediate foster children health concerns.

IMMUNOCOMPROMISED CHILDREN OR FAMILY

Coordinate with primary care providers, fostering healthy children nurses and the Child and Family Team on specific steps to address the child’s safety and wellbeing.

If you or a family member fall into this category, please take additional precautions regarding contact in order to promote their health. Engage the Child and Family Team as needed.

RESPITE FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Foster parents unable to care for children due to work and school cancellations should reach out to the caseworker and RFC for assistance in finding solutions for respite.

In order to expedite respite resources, the Office of Licensing has approval to complete Utah-only name based checks in limited circumstances if live scan is not an option. Follow-up fingerprints should be completed when live scan prints are available again.

REIMBURSEMENTS

There are no interruptions to foster parent reimbursements. Workers will be able to continue to approve reimbursements remotely.

PARENT TIME

It is critical for children and their parents to maintain relationships with one another and their support systems in order to reduce trauma for children and parents. Communication between children and parents SHOULD NOT be suspended due to this pandemic. Parent-child visitations should be held remotely (Google Hangouts Chat, Skype, FaceTime, phone calls, etc.) unless the age of the child, or other extenuating circumstances, would limit the effectiveness of electronic communications to maintain or create a parent-child bond.

Workers are encouraged to work with the Child and Family Team, including AAG, GAL and Parental Defense to utilize creative solutions in preserving parent time.

Continued on page 10
Coronavirus Message con't.

If the team determines that in-person visits are critical due to the unique circumstances of the case, the following safety measures should be followed:

All parties shall follow CDC hygiene guidelines by washing hands before and after visitation and using hand sanitizer frequently.

If parent time occurs in a visit room, the visit room will need to be wiped down with disinfectant before and after.

If parent time occurs elsewhere, the visitation group should be socially distanced from others not participating in the visit, and any indoor space should be disinfected.

If anyone involved in the scheduled in-person visit is sick, the visit must be rescheduled.

Consider the most frequent electronic parent-child communication that is feasible in order to help maintain connections, especially if in-person visitation is not occurring.

If the parent does not have access to technology necessary for effective electronic communication, DCFS offices can be utilized to assist parents with electronic communication (wifi, computers, etc).

VISITS

Home visits and private conversations with foster children can be conducted remotely (Google Hangouts Chat, Skype, FaceTime, etc.) if the safety and wellbeing of the child can be effectively assessed. Remote practices should reflect the following:

• That the child/youth has access to an electronic device that will allow them to visit with you in an area of the home where they can have a private conversation

• That a healthy relationship between the foster child/youth and the caseworker can be effectively developed or maintained through electronic communication.

• That more frequent and ongoing remote communication to assure placement and child needs are being met is important if the child has been in the home less than a month and electronic communication is determined to be appropriate.

• That any concerns regarding possible disruption from the placement can effectively be managed through electronic communication.

• That an in-person assessment of the family home must be made if a child is transitioning from foster care to a trial home placement.

If you have children beyond your office’s local community who need an in-person visit, please request a courtesy visit and/or ongoing worker in that area at least through the end of March 2020. CWA to CWA email coordination is sufficient; full courtesy casework request protocol is suspended at this time.

If a child is placed in a congregate care setting that already has staff monitoring their care, all visits should be completed electronically unless there are extenuating circumstances related to safety.

COURT HEARINGS

The courts have provided the following information:

As a way for the courts to do their part to social distance and keep everyone safe, they will be contacting workers, attorneys and other parties on whether any changes in court hearings will occur over the next couple weeks. Up-to-date information can be found at https://www.utcourts.gov/alerts/.

In order to support all of you in our shared mission of keeping children safe and strengthening families we are also sharing the Utah DCFS COVID-19 Reference Guide, https://docs.google.com/document/d/112Vf4Vjx3fPaASbfDC68HT2YTgKtPkOLqQ8BwwwDw/edit, which we created to support our workforce in maintaining safety and meeting the unique challenges created by this pandemic. This document should not be printed as it is regularly being updated and should be accessed only electronically.

It has a lot of information that you as foster parents won’t be interested in, but is a good reference for you to be aware of so that you know what our caseworkers are working off of. It includes all of the items referenced in this email, and updates will occur in the online document. So, check there for evolving practices as needed. I hope each of you may find moments of solace and self care this weekend.

We appreciate all that you do on behalf of kids!

Kindest regards,

Diane Moore, DCFS Director
Can We Help?

During this time of homeschooling for all, do you find that an extra Chromebook would be helpful? Perhaps an online tutoring program? Are there other needs for a child in foster care in your home? Utah Foster Care has the Wishing Well Fund for that!

The Wishing Well Fund is provided by the generous support of private donors, in order to help state-licensed foster parents pay for common childhood activities or to purchase needed items not covered under state funding for the children placed in their care. Foster parents may request up to $300 per child annually using this online form www.utahfostercare.org/wishingwell.

Parent's Night Out:
Presented by The Adoption Exchange

Please contact Brandie Naylor to RSVP and with any questions you may have: bnaylor@adoptex.org. These classes are for adoptive and prospective adoptive parents.

April 17; 6:00-8:00pm  Sensory Processing Disorder
May 15; 6:00-8:00pm  Complex Developmental Trauma
June 19; 6:00-8:00pm  Adopting Teens

Foster parent in-service training hours are available.

Classes will be online, as needed, due to COVID-19.

WISHING WELL FUNDS

Utah Foster Care has funds available to meet the special needs of children in foster care when DCFS is unable to meet these needs. These funds are limited.

Contact Your Regional Office for More Info:

Northern Region
Maegen Bernardo
(801) 392 – 1114

Salt Lake Valley Region
Tina Porter
(801) 994 – 5205

Western Region
Heidi Naylor
(801) 373 – 3006

Eastern Region
Adriana Gardiner
(970) 314 – 0361

Southwest Region
Diane Fillmore
(435) 656 – 8065

Please Remember:

• Dispersal of funds can take up to four weeks
• Checks are mailed to the foster parent’s home address
• Funds are for children in foster care ONLY
• Items covered by the reimbursement or by Medicaid are not eligible

A Word on Vacations:

• A child in care can receive vacation funds once in their lifetime
• Vacation funds are restricted monetarily & may not cover all costs

April, 2020 & May, 2020
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UTAH DIVISION OF CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES