

RAFFT News

Resource*Adoptive*Foster Families Team
Spotsylvania Department of Social Services

Training News— Turn it Green!

We are more than half way through the calendar year and this is a reminder that the Virginia Department of Social Services requires all foster parents to continue with their foster parent training every year. They ask each foster parent to get a minimum of ten (10) hours of in-service hours of training related to parenting foster children. VDSS prefers for five hours of training to be completed in a face-to-face setting with a trainer, and five hours can be completed on your own such as on-line, movies, books, etc. Once you reach at least 10 hours of training, our case aide, Debbie Laton, fills in your training log in **green** to indicate that you have met the VDSS goal! If your training is still in progress and not completed, your hours are noted in red. A recent review of the master log showed a lot of red on the current log! We need for you to **TURN IT GREEN** and get your hours completed! The first of three fall in-service trainings took place on Monday, 8/26/19, and we had a wonderful turnout to hear some excellent information on The Biology of Stress and Adverse Childhood Experiences. Save the date for the next two classes in the series:

- ◇ **Monday— 9/30/19— 6:30pm-8:30pm-** Attachment, Regulation, & Competency (ARC) Training— Part 1— Understanding Trauma & the Brain
- ◇ **Monday— 10/28/19- 6:30pm-8:30pm-** Attachment, Regulation, & Competency (ARC) Training— Part 2— Tools for Dealing with Trauma Related Behaviors

We hope that you can join us for one or more of these training events!

Other Training Options:

Five of your hours can be completed on your own. Foster Parent College has a wide variety of on-line courses available and you can complete them for free. If you watch a movie or read a book with a child welfare related theme, just send us an email with a short paragraph about it and we will give you credit. Remember that we can often give you credit for community or work trainings that you complete, such as CPR, first aid, multi-cultural awareness, safety, etc. Please call us if you have any questions.



RAFFT

Jan Campbell, RAFFT Training Specialist— 540-507-7824
jan.campbell@dss.virginia.gov

Marilyn Balog, RAFFT Training Specialist— 540-507-7817
marilyn.balog@dss.virginia.gov

Debbie Laton, RAFFT Case Aide- 540-507-7852
debbie.laton@dss.virginia.gov

Spotsylvania Social Services

9019 Old Battlefield Blvd.

P. O. Box 249

Spotsylvania, VA 22553

Fall 2019



Back to School Tips from [Healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

Backpack Safety

- Choose a backpack with wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back.
- Pack light. Organize the backpack to use all of its compartments. Pack heavier items closest to the center of the back. The backpack should never weigh more than 10-20% of your child's body weight. Go through the pack weekly to remove unneeded items to keep it light.
- Remind your child to always use both shoulder straps. Slinging a backpack over one shoulder can strain muscles.
- Adjust the pack so that the bottom sits at your child's waist.
- Pack a separate lunchbox.



The First Few Weeks:

- Many children are nervous about new situations, and foster children have already experienced trauma and loss. Be sure to check in with them often at the beginning of the school year about how things are going. Can they get into their locker? Do they know where everything is located? Do they have someone with whom to eat lunch?
- Make sure that the school is aware that the child is in foster care and that they have your contact information, and the child's social worker name and contact information. Be discreet in discussing their information in front of others.
- Point out positive aspects of starting school, like reconnecting with friends if they are in the same school, or making new ones. Practice how to talk with other students if they don't make friends easily and give them some ideas of things to talk about with other students.
- If possible, connect them to another child in the neighborhood with whom they can ask questions or sit with on the bus if you feel they need some extra support. You can also talk with the school counselor or school social worker if you feel the child needs more support.

Traveling To and From School:

- Review basic safety rules with your foster child about bus stops, car safety, and traffic safety.
- Remind them to wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before entering the bus. If they are carpooling, the car should be completely stopped as well.
- Make sure your child walks where they can fully see the bus driver (which means the bus driver can see them).
- Remind your student to look both ways to see that no other traffic is coming before crossing a street, just in case traffic does not stop as required.
- Remind them that they must follow bus rules by staying in their seats and following rules on behavior and food on the bus.
- If your child has a chronic condition that could result in an emergency on the bus, make sure you work with the school nurse or principal to have a bus emergency plan in place.

Eating During the School Day

- Get children in the habit of eating a nutritious breakfast before school. Check to see if they are able to eat at school or day care if their day starts early due to your work schedule.
- Talk with the child about whether they want to bring their lunch or eat the school lunch.
- Foster children usually qualify for free lunch/breakfast. Check with the school if you want to use this service.
- Pack healthy choices for them and encourage them to make healthy selections for better nutrition.



Back to School Sleep Advice for Children



Getting enough sleep is critical for a child to be successful in school. Children who don't get enough sleep have difficulty concentrating and learning as well as they can. The National Sleep Foundation has the following suggestions for you:

1. If bedtime was relaxed over the summer, work them into the new schedule slowly to get them back on track.
2. Keep a regular bedtime even on weekends. This makes sure kids and teens are getting enough sleep. It also keeps their circadian rhythm.
3. Your kids should have a relaxing bedtime routine that is age appropriate to help them wind down.

Even babies and young children absorb signals and steps for a routine before bed each night.

4. Create a sleep environment that is cool, quiet, dimly lit, and comfortable.
5. Have your child turn off electronic devices well before bedtime and keep electronics out of the bedroom. The blue light emitted from the screens of electronic devices can delay the release of melatonin, increase alertness, and reset the body's internal clock. (See more in article below.)
6. Limit caffeine later in the day and after dinner.

"The optimal amount of sleep for most younger children is 10-12 hours per night. For adolescents (13-18 years of age), the range is 8-10 hours of sleep per night."



More on Electronics and Sleep Patterns for Teens

It can be very difficult to get kids to stop watching TV or using their electronic devices before bedtime, but according to the National Sleep Foundation, there are several compelling reasons to try. During the teen years, their circadian rhythms (their internal clocks) are already shifting naturally, causing them to feel awake later at night. When you are trying to get them to go to sleep earlier and they tell you they aren't tired, they often don't feel tired because of that shift in their internal clock to later. Most teens' natural clocks shift to feeling sleepy later and wanting to also sleep later in the morning. This often doesn't coincide with school schedules where high schools start early and elementary schools (where early risers go) start last. This sleep deficit in some teens can lead them to want to sleep in on the weekends to try and catch up. This leads to sleep-deprived and poorly rested teens who have essentially given themselves a mini case of jet lag.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, our bodies naturally start releasing melatonin (a hormone that helps your body know when it's time to sleep and wake up) a couple of hours before bedtime. Melatonin reaches its peak levels in the middle of the night. The blue lights from electronic screens such as phones, computer screens, tablets, etc. have a short wavelength that can delay the release of sleep-inducing melatonin. Light from fluorescent bulbs, and LED lights can produce the same effect. That blue light exposure shifts everything later, taking longer to fall asleep and interrupting sleep in the morning when the alarm goes off.

Sleep experts recommend having a digital curfew for kids and have them power down their electronics, including the TV and hour or two before bedtime. If they are finishing homework and can't stop, try dimming the brightness of the screen or installing an app that warms the colors on the screen.



Staffing Updates

In August, we said goodbye to Ahuna Johnson, our Deputy Director of Spotsylvania Social Services. She left the department to pursue a career as an attorney. We wish her all the best in this new chapter in her life! We are also saying goodbye to Foster Care Worker, Shelissa Lewis, who left our agency the end of August for a position that is closer to her family. We will miss her positive spirit and we wish her all the best! We are happy to share that Marcia Valle, Foster Care Worker, has been promoted to a second Senior Foster Care Worker position, along with Christy Payne, Senior Foster Care Worker.

We have had some recent weddings in foster care! Brittany Shaw is now Brittany Mitchell and Katie



McManama is now Katie Chappell. Congratulations, Brittany and Katie!! We also welcomed a new foster care worker, Niveka Boswell, on 8/26/19. We are so happy to have her as part of the foster care team. Two new foster care workers will be hired soon. We will share that information with you once they start.

New Policy Updates

There are some new updates in state foster care policy that became effective in July 2019. Below is a summary of some of the updates that impact foster children and foster parents, as well as reminders of some of the existing policies in place:

- **Positive drug screens and visitation-** If a birth parent has a positive drug screen prior to a scheduled visit with their child, a supervisor, the deputy director or the director will meet with the parent to assess whether there are any safety concerns for the visitation to move forward. Because some drugs stay in one's system for a long time after using (ex. THC in marijuana), a parent may be able to safely visit with their child. The type of drug for which they test positive will also be taken into account. Any signs of being impaired by use of an illegal substance will still result in the visit being cancelled. Supervision of all visits during the first six weeks of a case will continue as before.
- **KinGAP-** A new kinship guardianship assistance program has been established to allow another permanency option for youth in foster care. When a goal of return home and adoption have been determined not to be appropriate, the program allows relative foster parents to continue to receive financial support through maintenance payments. This only impacts placement specific relatives in cases that meet the requirements of policy.
- **Credit freezes for foster children-** Agencies will be required to place credit freezes for all foster children who have been in care for 6 months and who are under the age of 16. This will prevent anyone who has access to the foster child's social security number from applying for credit cards in the foster child's name.
- **Psychotropic Medication Consenter (PMC)-** All agencies will designate a PMC of a supervisory level or higher. This person will receive training on psychotropic medications and will review and consent to all psychotropic medications prior to a child taking the medication. This is to assure that agencies are monitoring and conferring with medical personnel about what medications are being prescribed to a foster child.

If you have any questions about any of these new policies, please discuss them with your foster care worker or contact us.





Policy Reminders

- **Medical screenings**– When a child is placed in your home, you are required to schedule a screening doctor appointment within **30 days** of their placement and a dental appointment within **60 days**. Prescribed psychotropic medications will also be reviewed by a PMC (see information on a PMC under article on New Policy Updates on page 4.)
- **Children and foster children turning 18 years of age**– When a child of a foster parent turns 18 years of age, we must run background checks within 30 days of their 18th birthday. This includes criminal background checks, child protective services screens, and a sworn statement. *This also includes foster teens who turn 18.* We don't have the information on all of the foster children's birthdays, so **please contact RAFFT whenever your child or a foster child who is placed with you is getting ready to turn 18.**
- **Change in household composition or circumstances**– Providers should inform us as soon as possible, but no later than 45 days before a significant change in their household:
 - ⇒ **A child turning 18 years of age**
 - ⇒ **A new adult entering the household**
 - ⇒ **A household member leaving the household**
 - ⇒ **A change in the marital status of the provider**
 - ⇒ **A significant change in the health status of the provider**
 - ⇒ **A change of address (a move)**
 - ⇒ **A substantial change to the residence (such as adding a swimming pool)**

Foster Care Statistics

Current statistics for Spotsylvania DSS as on 8/1/19 from state reporting system:

Children in care: 133 (now 123 following some adoptions)

Male: 61%

Female: 39%

Race:

- White– 68%
- Black– 26%
- Multi-race– 5%

Ethnicity-

- 12.8% Hispanic

Goals:

- Return home- 17.3%
- Relative placement– 19.5%
- Adoption– 39.1%
- Permanent Foster Care– 9.8%
- Independent Living– 10.5%
- APPLA (Another planned permanent living arrangement– 1.5%
- To be determined– 1.5%
- No goal entered– .8%

Time in foster care:

- Average– 20.42 months
- Return home– 15.19 months
- Placement with relatives– 15.29 months
- Adoption– 27.93 months
- Permanent foster care– 18.7 months
- Independent Living– 16.44 months



KIDS PAGE

Crepe Paper Laser Maze



What you need:

- Crepe paper rolls
- Painters tape

How you do it:

Create a criss-cross maze by taping crepe paper streamers back and forth between walls at varying heights. The object of the game is to navigate the maze by going over, under, and between the streamers without pulling them off the wall. The person with the fastest time wins.

Taken from: itsalwaysautumn.com on Pinterest

Leaf Art



What you need:

- Construction paper
- Glue
- Googly eyes
- Lots of leaves!

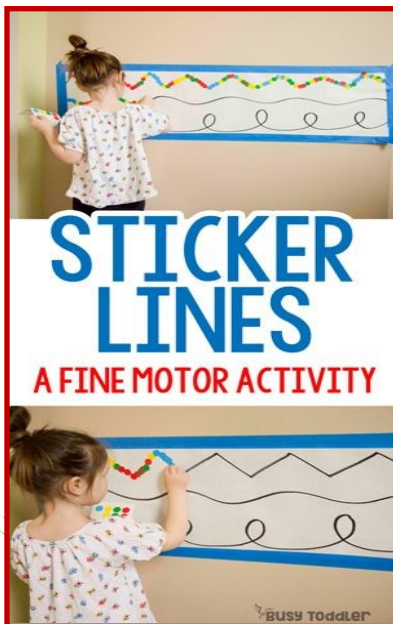
How you do it:

Use your imagination or follow the pictures to create animals, flowers, etc. as shown.

Taken from: mommysbabylove.blogspot.com on Pinterest



Follow the Trail



What you need:

- Long strips of paper
- Painter's tape
- Marker
- Lots of stickers!

How you do it:

Affix paper to surface with tape. Draw different pattern trails for the child to follow. Have them fill in the trail with stickers. You can also set a repeating pattern of shapes or colors for the child to follow.

Taken from busytoddler.com on Pinterest