Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

November/December 2017

N F A P A

Holidays With An Adopted Child

by Leslie Culpepper

For many parents, the holidays are always stressful. The heightened expectations, financial stress and packed schedules that most parents experience around the holidays can make this time of year as difficult as it is wonderful. Now consider the impact this additional stress is likely having on your adopted child, who is probably experiencing loss and grief, reliving vivid memories or asking hard-to-answer questions. The holidays with an adopted child can be full of hurdles. As a parent of an adopted child, you must learn to help your child and help yourself through this very stressful time.



Managing Troubling Behaviors

This time of year is emotionally charged, and your child is probably experiencing a slew of hard feelings. Guilt, anxiety, despair, anger, loss. Old memories may be coming to the surface, triggered by the smells, sounds and tastes of the holidays. Take the time to understand what your child is going through. All adopted children experience the holidays differently. Children who spent many years with their birth family and many years in foster care may have happy or sad memories of birth families and old traditions left behind. Internationally adopted children are likely to feel disconnected from their cultural roots, and may have many questions about their birth culture. Those children from open adoptions can experience stress and conflicting feelings about their birth parents and adopted parents. And finally, children who know little or nothing about their birth parents may spend more time reflecting on the birth families they have no memories of. Be observant during this time. Take notice of mood swings, subtle expressions and body language.

Try to understand what your child is going through by initiating discussions. Say things like, "you seem sad," or "you seem frustrated," and invite your child to discuss the problem openly. Point out your observations in a non-judgmental way. This will help validate your child's feelings. If your child is having a hard time grappling with these emotions, make or purchase a blank book where your child can record intense feelings in a way that is private and non-destructive. If your child has a Life Book, take it down off the shelf and look it over together. Talk about the memories, and explore the undesirable thoughts that have been coming to the surface.

To keep the both of you from going crazy, give yourself permission to let the little things slide. Don't try to discipline every single wrong behavior that comes up; only tackle the big things. Forgive your child, and forgive yourself at the end of every day.

Maintaining and Creating Traditions

If your child is the product of an open adoption and you have a functional relationship with your child's birth parents, it is important to nurture this relationship at the holidays. Maybe you'll start a gift-exchange tradition, or an annual winter holiday brunch at your child's favorite restaurant. This will help your child feel like he or she is a part of a stable, healthy family unit. Never subvert the relationship between your child and his or her biological family. When a schedule is made for a visit, stick to it. Avoid any (Continued on page 3)

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3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521
402-476-2273, toll-free 877-257-0176, e-mail: Felicia@nfapa.org
www.nfapa.org.

NFAPA Staff

Felicia Nelsen, Executive Director: 877-257-0176 or Felicia@nfapa.org
Corinne O'Brien, Program Coordinator: 402-476-2273 or Corinne@nfapa.org
Tammy Welker, Northeastern/ Eastern Area RFC: 402-989-2197 or Tammy@nfapa.org
Robbi Blume, Northwestern Area RFC: 402-853-1091 or Robbi@nfapa.org
Terry Robinson Central/Southwest RFC: 402-460-7296 or Terry@nfapa.org
Jolie Camden, Western RFC: 308-672-3658 or jolie@nfapa.org
*RFC=Resource Family Consultant

NFAPA Board of Directors

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Questions? Interested in becoming a member of the Board?
Call NFAPA at 877-257-0176 or 402-476-2273.

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Attention Foster Parents!

Earn Your In-Service Hours While Getting the Chance to Win a Great Prize!

Answer these 10 questions correctly and you will not only earn .5 credits toward your in-service hours, but your name will also be put in a drawing for a prize. For this issue we are offering a $10 Walmart gift card.

There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to ***Corinne@nfapa.org***, send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521 or you can complete the questionnaire online at ***https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NovDecNewsletter2017***. We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. This time of year is emotionally charged and your child is probably experiencing a slew of hard feelings. List five.
2. True or False. Children who know little or nothing about their birth parents may spend more time reflecting on the birth families they have no memories of.
3. Fill in the blank. Remember that they are only accessing their base brain right now, so lecturing or trying to reason with them is _____.
4. Fill in the blank. Having your body go through fight, flight or freeze response often and unnecessarily can be _____.
5. List 2 of the 5 things adoptive parents want teachers to know about trauma?
6. List 3 of the 43 ways everyone can celebrate National Adoption Month?
7. 3 parts of developmental trauma therapists may forget to heal?
8. True or False. Children with developmental trauma act much older than their chronological age?
9. What are 4 things every foster child needs this Christmas?
10. True or False. Foster parents may experience a variety of behaviors and emotions during this time of year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

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(Continued from page 1)

stressful situations by keeping the lines of communication with your child's birth parents open.

For an internationally adopted child, learn the practices of his or her cultural origins. Integrate these cultural traditions into your family traditions, because these cultural roots are now connected to your own family and this should be acknowledged. Make traditional foods, celebrate special holidays and talk about the origins of these holidays with members of your family. Similar advice could be given to families of adopted foster children. Former foster children may have strong personal memories of old times with their birth family, or previous foster families. These roots should not be lost or forgotten but rather brought into the open, and celebrated when possible. Your adopted children should be taught that their memories of the holidays are okay to have.

To strengthen your personal bond with your child, develop some new family traditions together. This will help your child dismiss feelings of being an outsider in a family where traditions may already have been established long ago. For example, create a new holiday ornament, as a family, every year. Light a candle for the joys and sadness's you and your child may be feeling at the holidays, and discuss both openly. Watch your favorite holiday movies together in a "holiday movie night," and make popcorn balls and cookies for the occasion.

Avoiding Problems

Be sensitive to the way your extended family treats your adopted child at family functions. This is especially important in blended families with biological and adopted children. No one wants to think that their extended family treats their adopted children differently, but watch out for behaviors from extended family that may make your adopted child feel isolated from your biological children. If you notice problems, address the issues with your child and with your extended family members. If your child says something to you acknowledging the problem, explain that not all people respond to adoption in the same way. This may be hard for your child to hear, and harder for you to say, but covering or denying the issue won't make it go away. By acknowledging the problem, you show your child that you understand their feelings and that you can face the problem together. Talk to your extended family about these problems. Be firm and stand up for the rights of your child. It helps if you can build up to the holidays gradually. Start talking about holiday plans and traditions early to avoid unexpected problems. Make your holiday plans clear, so that your child knows what to expect. If you can avoid it, stick to your regular daily routines, and don't change plans at the last minute. This is especially important if your child struggles with hyperactivity or anxiety. For a child who is new in your family, practice giving and receiving gifts. This is important because expectations may have been different in your child's previous homes. This way you can avoid embarrassing or aggravating situations, and your child will know what to expect.

Finally, don't chase the perfect holiday. Keep a sense of humor and be realistic. The holidays with an adopted child can be an enriching experience that ultimately strengthens your family bond, but you must remember to keep a level head and dismiss unrealistic expectations. Remind yourself every day that you and your child can find happiness, even as you experience bumps along the way.

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www.professorshouse.com/holidays-with-an-adopted-child/

A Letter To My Daughters On The Day Of Your Adoption

by Jamie C.

To my daughters on the day of your adoption,

I've called you by that label, that sacred name, "daughter," many times. But today is different.

Today there's no prefix, no subtext, no "sort of but not really" as there has always been before. You're not my foster daughter, I don't love you "like you're my own." Today you are wholly, completely, for forever my daughter.

You were dropped off at our home, dropped into our family, and we chose to love you like a daughter. We chose it even before we had the chance to fall in love with you. But the falling happened. After bursting into our family, you eased into our lives and hearts. The formalities of our state-regulated, court-appointed, "temporary" relationship faded away. We dropped the "foster" from your title, and you simply became "daughter."

When I birthed your brother and sister, becoming a mother and loving them as a mother loves, completely shocked me. One moment they weren't here, and the next I loved them more than life. Today isn't like that.

Today reminds me more of when I married your daddy. I met him. Then I fell in love with him, knew I would spend the rest of my life with him. And then came the day to make it official. Papers were signed, names were changed, ceremonies were had, but I didn't love him any more than I had the day before. He was the same. I was the same. Nothing had changed. But everything had. After that day, we belonged to each other, officially, forever.

Today is our day, my dear, when I take you as my daughter, when I vow to love you forever. Today is our day when nothing and when everything changes.

I believe that, as of today, our family is now complete. That the six of us will be at this "family" thing, just us, forever. As far as I can see, our growing family has finished growing. But maybe I'm wrong. Maybe others will join this little unit of ours. But, I know, I know, that no matter what, we are a family now. Forever.

This day, this adoption day, is one of the happiest days of my life. Today, I become your mother. Today, you become my daughter.

Happy Adoption Day, my dear daughter, I love you.

Love,

Mommy

Reprinted with permission from:
www.fosterthefamilyblog.com/foster-the-family-blog-1/letter-to-my-daughters-on-adoption-day

3 Reasons Not To Vilify My Kid's Birth Mother.

by Kristin Berry

There's often an assumption that since our children are adopted, or have been adopted from the foster care system, their birth mothers must be bad people, or have done some really bad stuff. The truth is, this is an unfair assumption to make about a human being.

We've often wondered how someone, who knows very little about our children, their story, or their birth mother's story, can point a finger and judge. It's not in our DNA to do this to any human being. Certainly not the person who gave our children life. We believe birth mom's should never be vilified. Here are some big reasons why..

Reason #1- Mom's are off limits!

- Yo Momma so dumb it took her 2 hours to watch 60 min.
- Yo Momma so old she was a waitress at the last supper.
- Yo Momma so poor she can't afford to pay attention.

Remember "Yo Momma" jokes? Who doesn't? I have to admit, there is a small part of my humor that is still stuck in Jr. High. There's something about momma jokes. They're funny, clever and a little risky. We all know it's ok to poke fun but most of us will admit that insulting a person's mother is cause for a schoolyard brawl.

More often than not, the conclusions people draw about our children's birth parents are far from funny. They are not flattering and they are often teetering on the line of curious and rude. Unlike momma jokes, the exaggerated insults are assumed to be true. Maybe you are wondering if your comment about a child's birth mother is inappropriate. A good rule of thumb is to return to the middle school way of thinking: You can tease someone about their clothes, you can raz someone about their grades, but do NOT make fun of someone's Momma!

Reason #2- Mom's are part of a child's identity and therefore off limits!

Conversations about my child's birth mother aren't inherently bad. Sometimes questions are great. Some questions or observations just show interest. My kids like to talk about their birth mothers, just like I love to talk about my mother. I love when someone notices that I have my mom's freckles or my dad's blue eyes. My children feel the same way. They love to hear that they have their birth mom's beautiful smile or talent for drawing. All of my children know the good and the bad of their own story. They are also just like you and me. They want to know that they are tied to something good. They do not need you to color their story with your uncalled for vilification.

Reason #3- I will never ask about your mom's baggage because Mom's are off limits!

Did your mother do something bad? Do you want to talk about that right now? Do you want me to discuss every shortcoming your mother has at the next church picnic? No, of course not. Because that's called gossip and it is inappropriate.



You deserve discretion. Your mother is a human and she deserves respect. For some reason foster and adoptive children are not afforded this privacy or this regard. The good and the bad of their story is theirs alone to tell. Do not ask if she was using drugs. Do not ask if she was a "crack-head." If you are about to say or ask something about someone's birth mother, stop and run it through your own head. Picture your own mom as you formulate your thought. If it would insult your mom, don't say it about my kid's mom.

My children's birth mother is not a saint. Neither am I. We both wholeheartedly admit to our own shortcomings. I also know that my children see themselves mirrored in my reflection. They are watchfully creating opinions of their own identity based on what they see reflected in their birth mom, in me and in the world around them. Please remember that when you vilify my child's birth mother you damage my child's tender heart.

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www.confessionsofanadoptiveparent.com

4 Things Every Child In Foster Care Needs This Christmas

This can be an extra rough time for kids separated from their birth families.

By Caroline Bailey

Being in foster care is difficult; especially during the holiday season. Christmas can bring up a whole host of emotions in children and youth who have found themselves caught up in the child welfare system. Foster parents may experience a variety of emotions and behaviors during this time of year. Although these things are expected and understandable, there are things that foster families and others can do to help these kids still have a merry Christmas

Here are four things every child in foster care needs this Christmas:

1. The opportunity to share his or her own traditions, and create new ones.

Christmas is a wonderful time for foster families to seek out traditions that are a part of their foster child's history. Experiencing familiar traditions can be comforting for a child in foster care. If possible, find out from the child's birth parents what they did to make the holidays special. Learning, participating in, and encouraging traditions that are a part of the child's birth family history sends a message that the foster family understands and respects the connection between birth family and child. Foster parents are also encouraged to create new traditions or share special ones with children. This helps in making the child feel welcomed and a part of the family.

2. Validation of loss and sadness during the holiday season.

Christmas is supposed to be a time of happy memories and joy. However, for many foster children and youth, this time of year can be especially difficult to navigate. The feelings of sadness, missing their birth families, and wondering if they will get the opportunity to see them at Christmas time might be prevalent in the mind of foster children and youth. To validate their feelings of loss, and not expect them to be happy during the holidays, is one way that foster families and the child welfare community can help children cope during this time of year.

3. Fulfillment of Christmas wishes.

Think back to your own memories of Christmas. Family gatherings, favorite Christmas gifts, and waking up on Christmas morning to rush to the tree to see what Santa left . . . these experiences evokes warm feelings. We know that a gift does not replace the loss a child is struggling with, but gifts and special moments such as seeing Santa, opening up brightly wrapped presents on Christmas morning, and loving interactions within the foster home absolutely helps children and youth feel special and not forgotten.

4. Families.

Simply put: Foster children need families who are willing and able to hang in there with them. There is always a need for more families to actively participate in the foster care system. Thousands of kids around the United States live in residential group home settings and shelters. While some of them are in these settings for a variety of reasons including behavioral, mental health, and medical issues, these settings are far from the life a foster child could experience in a family home setting.

The fact that foster care is needed and necessary in our communities should not fall lightly on anyone's heart. There are far too many children and youth who spend too much time in the system without the hope of reunification with birth parents, adoption, or a future filled with stability. During this Christmas season and other times, please consider how you can get involved in making the difference in the life of a foster child.

Caroline is a mother of three children through adoption and a strong advocate for the needs of children and families involved in the child welfare system in the United States. At the age of eleven (1983), she underwent an emergency hysterectomy in order to save her life. Caroline is the youngest person to have a hysterectomy. Her life has been profoundly affected by infertility. In 2006, Caroline and her husband, Bruce, became licensed foster parents. They were blessed to adopt two of their children through foster care in 2008 and 2010. Their youngest child is a relative of Caroline, and they celebrated his adoption in 2013. Caroline works for a Christian child welfare agency in Missouri. She has been a guest speaker at churches and conferences regarding adoption and is currently working on a memoir about the impact of illness, faith, foster care, and adoption in her life. Caroline is also an avid cyclist and enjoys cheering her children on in their various sporting activities. She shares her experience about foster care, adoption, barrenness, parenting, and faith on her blog. She would love to hear from you! Contact her at barrentoblessed@gmail.com.



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How Developmental Trauma Affects The Whole Family (Also Known As Reactive Attachment Disorder)

By Institute for Attachment and Child Development

When Michelle* came home at the end of a long day, she dropped her purse, slipped off her shoes, and walked toward her bedroom. But on her way up the stairs, she stopped abruptly. Her heart raced—a familiar feeling. She saw that someone had turned a photo of her 12-year-old adopted daughter, Kelly, around to face the wall.

One of Michelle's other children intended to make it clear—he didn't want Kelly to return home. Ever.

Kelly struggles with developmental trauma (commonly called reactive attachment disorder or RAD)—a disorder in which children's brains and development get disrupted by trauma they endured before the age of 4. Children with developmental trauma act much younger than their chronological ages. They're also unable to trust others and attach in relationships.

Kelly temporarily lives in a therapeutic treatment family through the Institute for Attachment and Child Development (IACD). At IACD, Kelly gets the chance to heal and learn how to trust her parents with the help of therapeutic treatment parents, attachment therapists, neurofeedback, and a psychiatrist. Michelle and her husband are also an integral part of the clinical team and take part in weekly therapy sessions.

When Kelly joined their family at age 8, Michelle and her husband didn't know what to expect. They knew Kelly may go through some rough times, but they had no idea how rough. And they certainly didn't expect the whole family to experience trauma along with her.

Because of her early trauma at the hands of her biological parents, Kelly has an innate need to control her environment and push her family away to feel safe. To do so, she created chaos in her family constantly. Kids with developmental trauma fall on a spectrum and each of them are different, of course.

This is what developmental trauma looked like for Kelly in her family—

When Michelle greeted Kelly good morning, Kelly typically responded with something along the lines of, "Pieces of s***. I hate this family." When asked to brush her teeth, start her homework, or any other parental request, Kelly threw a temper tantrum. She punched walls, knocked furniture over, slammed doors, and spit in Michelle's face. Kelly even tried to tear surgical stitches out of Michelle's back. Kelly commonly took things from Michelle's purse or her room. She also made false allegations of abuse toward Michelle out in the community. In the car, Kelly threw water bottles and other objects at Michelle, pulled her hair, and punched windows while Michelle drove. Kelly threatened to kill Michelle and harmed their family pets. In the middle of the night, Kelly often stood at the end of Michelle's bed and stared at her.

Kelly also tried to push her brothers away. She bit and punched herself and blamed her brothers for hurting her. She'd urinate all over the toilet seat and blame them. During family outings, she's interrupt the fun by running away and causing a scene. Or she'd sneak food of which she is allergic into the home and eat it before an event so the family couldn't go out. When her brothers played in the backyard with their friends, Kelly climbed out her bedroom window and threw objects at them from the roof. As the family attempted to fall asleep at night, Kelly typically hit the wall between her and her brother's room over and over and yelled that he was stupid.

Not all children with developmental trauma are as severe as Kelly. Yet, it is important to understand the realities for the children and families who do struggle like they did.



The wounds are still fresh for Michelle and her family.

They all have a long way to go toward recovery. But they have time and a chance to talk now that Kelly is healing too. And to cry. After Michelle talked with her husband and spent some time alone, she felt like she could face her sons the next day. "Okay, who did it? One of you turned Kelly's picture around on the wall," Michelle said to her four sons. "I'm not mad at you but we need to talk through it." Her son Brett spoke up and told Michelle he turned the photo around. "I don't want you to take it down though," said Brett. "I want you to put a photo of you in it instead." Her son wanted his mom back.

At that moment, Michelle grew even more confident that she had done the right thing. She had sent Kelly to live outside the home because the rest of her family needed to heal too. "It was our love and parenting that set Kelly off," said Michelle. "The more I tried to meet her needs and parent her, the more violent she became with the family and the more traumatized we as a family became. It was a vicious cycle."

Michelle isn't alone. Many parents adopt their children

without prior knowledge about developmental trauma. Even if they've heard of it, they often don't have help or resources necessary for their families. Friends, family, and even clinicians tell adoptive parents that their children just need time to "settle in", that love will heal, that they need to learn more parenting techniques, or that their children will simply grow out of it. Meanwhile, their families fall apart.

3 parts of developmental trauma therapists may forget to heal—

1. The primary caregiver—Due to early abuse and neglect, children with developmental trauma fear parent figures—particularly the primary caregiver. They push away those who try to get the closest to them emotionally. The primary caregivers become "nurturing enemies" and often develop their own trauma as a result.

2. Parental relationships/marriages—One way children with developmental trauma push away primary caregivers is through "splitting" relationships. Marriages and other relationships typically suffer greatly as a result.

3. Other children—Parents tend to spend most of their time and energy on their children struggling with developmental trauma. In the meantime, they may fail to notice the difficulties their other children experience in the process.

"It is not reasonable, healthy, or effective to simply explain why the child does what he does to his family."

Clinicians may miss the realities of a critical component of developmental trauma—that the biggest triggers for children battling the disorder are family and love. So, the family and the love also need a chance to heal and recuperate. It is not reasonable, healthy, or effective to simply explain why the child does what he does to his family. They are also experiencing trauma.

This complex and bewildering disorder requires a complex and comprehensive approach to keep families together. "When children fall on the moderate to severe spectrum of developmental trauma, their homes are in crisis mode" says Forrest Lien, Executive Director at the Institute for Attachment and Child Development. "The children need to learn how to heal with attachment specialists outside of their own homes, yet in a home environment. Meanwhile, the rest of the family members can also heal and get their own therapy. At that point, the children can return home to healed and stronger families in which they can all thrive."

**all names in this article have been changed to protect identities*

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NFAPA Support Groups

Have you ever thought about attending a support group? NFAPA offers support groups to foster, adoptive and kinship families! This is your chance to gain understanding and parenting tips through trainings, discussions and networking with fellow foster families.

This is a great way to meet other foster/adoptive families in your area! In-service training is offered at most support groups for those needing credit hours for relicensing. Up to date information with each support group location will be on the calendar page on our website at www.nfapa.org. Support Groups will be cancelled for inclement weather.

Contact a Resource Family Consultant for more information:
Jolie Camden (Panhandle Area): 308-672-3658
Tammy Welker (Columbus): 402-989-2197
Terry Robinson (Central/Southwest Area): 402-460-7296
NFAPA Office: 877-257-0176

IN-PERSON SUPPORT GROUPS

- **Alliance Support Group:** Meets the third Thursday of the month. Registration is required. Contact Jolie Camden to register: 308-672-3658.
  Famer's State Bank Building, 1320 W. 3rd St, entrance in rear.
  6:00-7:30 p.m. | November 16, December 21, 2017
  December 21 is a carry in dinner. Please contact Jolie for more information.
- **Scottsbluff Support Group:** Meets the second Tuesday of the month. Registration is required. Contact Jolie Camden to register: 308-672-3658.
  Regional West Medical Center, in South Plaza Room 1204.
  6:00-7:30 p.m. | November 14, December 12, 2017
  December 12 is a carry in dinner. Please contact Jolie for more information.
- **Chadron Support Group:** Registration is required. Contact Jolie Camden to register: 308-672-3658.
  The Refuge, 132 W 3rd Street.
  6:00-7:30 p.m. November 7, December 3, 2017
  * December 3 is a carry in dinner/party.
  Please contact Jolie for more information.
- **North Platte Support Group:** Meets every other month on the first Thursday. Dinner and childcare provided. Registration is required. Contact Terry Robinson to register: 402-460-7296.
  Nebraska Children's Home Society , 121 N Dewey St #206.
  6:00-8:00 p.m. | December 7, 2017
- **Columbus Support Group:** Childcare available.
  Contact Tammy Welker at: 402-989-2197.
  Peace Lutheran Church, 2720 28th St.
  7:00-8:30 p.m. | November 14, 2017

ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP

- **FACES**-Online Support Group: Every Tuesday 9:00-10:00 p.m. CT
  Contact Felicia at Felicia@nfapa.org to become a member of this closed group.
  Meets weekly to discuss issues foster parents are facing. Support only.

TRANSRACIAL SUPPORT GROUP

- Parenting Across Color Lines: This group supports and strengthens racial identity in transracial families. Support only.
  Children welcome to attend with parents.
  Newman United Methodist Church, 2242 R Street, Lincoln.
  7:00-8:30 pm | November 27 & December 11, 2017.
  Family Event/Pot Luck on December 11, 2017--RSVP required.
  Contact the NFAPA office to register for Family Events or any questions. 402-476-2273
  For more info: https://www.facebook.com/colorlineslincoln/

Our 2018 Support Groups will be on our website soon! Be sure to mark your calendars.

Waiting for a Forever HOME!

The following are children available on the Nebraska Heart Gallery.



Names: Lizabella and Jose

Born:01/12/2015, 02/24/2016

Lizabella is a beautiful and caring young girl. Due to an injury, Lizabella has many special needs. She is able to roll over to her side and will let you know when she needs something by her cries. She has a specialized wheelchair that helps her to be mobile. Lizabella has a sweet demeanor and especially enjoys cuddling with her caregivers. She attends many specialized therapy appointments to assist her in reaching her potential.

Jose is a rambunctious little boy who is full of life and always on the go. Jose likes being outside, playing in the water and being around animals. Jose finds enjoyment in chasing his dogs and watching the horses. Jose is a great help in the kitchen and likes to mix things together and add the ingredients to recipes. Jose is often dancing to music. Jose needs to be adopted with his sister, Lizabella.

Connections: Lizabella and Jose have many important relationships in their life that they will need support in maintaining, including extended family and foster families.

Name: Sadie

13 years old



Sadie is a vibrant young lady with a bold personality. Her favorite things are Pop music, playing with dolls, doing puzzles and taking care of the household pets. Sadie is very family oriented and has strong relationships with the important people around her. Sadie might be shy at first when she meets new people, but once she warms up, you'll see her nurturing and humorous side shine. Sadie excels both at home and at school with a structured, supportive environment. Sadie would thrive in a home with children her age or older siblings. Sadie requests a family that will stick with her through the good and bad days.

Connections: Sadie will need support in maintaining the important relationships she has with some of her biological family members.

For more information on these children or others on the Heart Gallery please contact Sarah at:
Email: scaldararo@childsaving.org
Phone: 402-504-3673

Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association
N·F·A·P·A

Membership Drive

The Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association empowers, supports, and advocates for Nebraska families by promoting safety, permanency, and well-being of our children. Your membership supports the important mission of NFAPA. There are several membership levels to accommodate everyone in the foster care, adoptive care, and child welfare community.

NFAPA offers four annual membership levels; Single Family ($25), Family ($35), Supporting ($75) and Organization ($150). In order to enrich NFAPA's mission, we are offering a new membership program – Friends of NFAPA. This membership level is billed $5 monthly.

To join, simply mail in the membership form included in this newsletter or visit www.nfapa.org. Your membership will ensure that Nebraska's most vulnerable children will have their greatest chance at success!

NFAPA BOARD POSITION OPENINGS:

The following positions are vacant on the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (NFAPA) Board of Directors.

- Western Service Area Representative (Southwest & Panhandle)
- At Large Board Member

If you are a current or former foster and/or adoptive parent and have a desire to serve an organization that empowers, supports and advocates for Nebraska families please submit your bio to Felicia Nelsen, Executive Director, at Felicia@nfapa.org. Please contact Felicia at 402-476-2273 with questions.

43 Ways Everyone Can Celebrate National Adoption Month

Whether you are pursuing adoption, currently fostering, or simply a supporter of the cause, everyone can be a part of National Adoption Month. If you are interested in in being involved, read on for a list of suggestions.

- If you're considering adoption or fostering:
- Reach out to a family you know who has adopted or fostered to learn more about their experience.
- Attend an Adoption Month activity in your area.
- Read up on this year's Adoption Month initiative "We Never Outgrow the Need for Family" and discuss how an older child could fit into your family. Be sure to check out this illustration.
- Join a support group for potential adoptive parents. If there isn't one in your area, start one.
- Check out The Archibald Project, and learn how this orphan care advocacy group is changing the world through storytelling.
- Sign up online for adoption newsletters or e-magazines.
- Start a blog that shares your journey towards adoption or fostering.
- Connect with other families through online forums to discuss your experience and share support.
- Check dates for the national, state, and local National Adoption Month proclamations, and mark your calendar.
- Start an adoption baby book, photo album, or journal to share with your future child one day.
- Watch videos of other families discussing their adoption experience.
- Attend an adoption finalization of a friend or family member.
- Check out books from the library on adoption or foster care parenting.
- Research the different types of adoption, and discuss what method would be best for your family. their experience.
- Attend an Adoption Month activity in your area.
- Read up on this year's Adoption Month initiative "We Never Outgrow the Need for Family" and discuss how an older child could fit into your family. Be sure to
- Go online and look at photolistings of children waiting for future families.

If you are an adoptive parent or foster parent:

- Start an Adoption Month family tradition. Pick a special activity, like going out to dinner, having a picnic in the park, or taking a day trip to favorite spot, and make it an annual celebration.
- Offer to meet with families considering adoption or fostering to discuss the process and share your experience.
- Check out adoption positive storybooks from the library and read them to your kids.
- Look for National Adoption Month activities or meet-ups in your area, and attend as a family.
- Start a family blog to spread awareness of adoption or foster care.
- Read or watch the National Adoption Month proclamations as a family, and talk about it together.
- Connect your child with an adult mentor who has been adopted or lived in foster care.
- Send a care package to your child's birthparents.
- Attend an adoptive parent support group meeting. If there isn't one in your area, start one.
- Re-tell your child his or her adoption story, and spend time going through baby books, photo albums, and other memorabilia from that time.
- Cook a traditional meal from your family's or child's heritage. Learn the unique spices, ingredients, and techniques, and create a secret family recipe together.
- Organize a community meet-up or play group for foster or adoptive families to connect.
- Tell your children about your own childhood. Talk about traditions you had with your parents and memories from when you were young.
- Watch an adoption themed movie together.

If you want to support adoption and foster care:

- Share National Adoption Month Information with friends and family or on social media.
- Support and encourage friends or family who may be considering adoption or are going through the adoption process.
- Mentor a child who is aging out of the foster care system.
- Reach out to elected officials or candidates. Send letters urging them to support National Adoption Month, ask them to speak at events, or invite them to community gatherings.
- Post adoption positive articles or links on your social media site.
- Teach the children in your life what adoption is. Encourage them to ask you questions, and have a conversation on how to talk to kids who are adopted.
- Contribute a financial donation to a family who is adopting internationally.
- Volunteer with CASA to support children in foster care.
- Ask your local library to showcase adoption positive books for the month.
- Organize a drive or fundraiser to support Child and Family Services or another adoption/foster care agency in your area.
- Invite a child who has aged out of the foster care system to spend Thanksgiving with your family.
- Sponsor a child overseas (be sure to find a reputable organization).
- Encourage your place of employment to offer adoption benefits to employees.
- Start a blog featuring other families who have adopted or are fostering (with their permission) to spread awareness.
- Raise awareness of kids waiting to be adopted by sharing videos online or with friends and family.

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adoptionnetwork.com/forty-three-ways-everyone-can-celebrate-national-adoption-month

Adopted Child Syndrome - Causes, Effects And Ways To Prevent It

by BHAVANA NAVULURI

Adoption is a great alternative for parents who aren't bestowed with or do not want to go through the process of having their biological kids. But nurturing adopted children is not easy as they could come with a psychological baggage. Adopted child syndrome (ACS) is something that could be expected in such children, in various measures. The syndrome is limited to a few adopted children, but it is likely that most of them have one or more of the symptoms.



MomJunction tells you the reasons for an adopted child to acquire this syndrome, its effects, and the ways to avoid ACS in your child.

What Is Adopted Child Syndrome:

Adopted child syndrome is a condition that is a result of various psychological and emotional hardships an adopted child undergoes. It represents the characteristics that are uniquely related to their adopted status, such as attachment disorders, lying, stealing, inability to accept authority, and violent behavior.

Social worker Jean Paton, who was herself an adoptee, was the first to study ACS in 1953.

The term, coined by David Kirschner in 1978 in his paper Son of Sam and the Adopted Child Syndrome, is not accepted in the professional community but has been researched by several psychologists to understand the causes and effects of the condition on children.

Causes Of Adopted Child Syndrome:

Apple Inc. founder late Steve Jobs was an adopted child. Though highly successful in life he has often referred to "unresolved pain" of rejection and abandonment due to adoption. Here are a few reasons why adopted children could develop this syndrome.

1. Abandonment and Loss:

Lonely children develop a feeling of being abandoned by their mother.

In the book Being adopted: The lifelong search for self, researchers David M Brodzinsky, Marshall D Schechter, and Robin Marantz Henig say that children, if adopted within six months of their birth, would grow similar to a natural child. However, psychotherapist Nancy Verrier in her book The Primal Wound says that a child develops a bond with its mother from the womb itself.

"Bonding doesn't begin at birth but is a continuum of physiological, psychological, and spiritual events which begin in utero and continue throughout the postnatal bonding period.

"When this natural evolution is interrupted by a postnatal separation from the biological mother, the resultant experience of abandonment and loss is indelibly imprinted upon the unconscious minds of these children, causing that which I call the 'primal wound'."

2. Trauma Of Separation:

The orphaned and abandoned children carry the trauma of separation from their biological parents. He may not remember the trauma but can feel it subconsciously.

Though they may not be able to communicate the trauma, there is an innate fear that their adopted family would leave them one day.

The fear of separation from the new family may not allow them to develop a normal behavior.

3. Secrecy Of Parents:

The adopted family might not tell the adoptees details about their natural parents. The very fact that they have been adopted could be hidden if the adoption takes place early in a child's life. However, once they come to know about it, the children might want to know more about their original family.

Sometimes, even the adoption agencies would not have details about the biological parents of adoptees, and this mystery creates frustration in the child.

4. Differences In Ethnicity:

If the adopted family is from a different origin than the adoptee, the child could find it difficult to adjust. Their color, descent, practices may all be different. For instance, if an American family adopts an Asian origin child, the cultural differences would be so profound that the adoptee may grow up into a confused teenager.

5. Genetic Differences:

As they grow up, the adopted children observe that their physical features, preferences, and intellectual abilities are different from those of the others in the family. This could cause alienation as there is none who resembles him physically or psychologically, leading to the syndrome.

This also puts him under pressure to follow in the footsteps of his foster family, however difficult it might be.

6. A Feeling Of Guilt:

As the adoptee turns into a teenager, he feels guilty of not giving enough to his adopted family. He is overburdened by a sense of gratitude. Added to this, his eagerness to know about his original family may make him think that he is doing injustice to the family that has adopted him.

7. Burden Of Being The 'Chosen One':

The adoption agency and the people around tell the adoptee that he is the 'chosen one' by the family, with an intention to make him forget about his past and merge into the new setup. It could also make the adoptee come out of the feeling of being abandoned.

However, overdoing it could make him feel that the family is being charitable by adopting him, thus developing negative thoughts and mindset in him.

8. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder:

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) includes a range of physical and neurological defects in the baby due to the excessive consumption of alcohol by the mother when she is pregnant. Children with this condition may look normal but certain parts of their brain remain undeveloped. This leads to negative behavior in them. Such children need immense support from their adopted family.

Symptoms Of Adopted Child Syndrome:

Children cannot be expressive enough to share their trauma with their foster parents. It is important for the parents to look out for any behavioral issues.

According to a study, adopted children have double the chances of contracting mental health problems than normal children. They could develop psychological problems such as:

- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Identity crisis
- Anxiety
- Feelings of grief and rejection
- Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Conduct disorder
- Major depressive disorder
- Separation anxiety disorder

Another study has found that 14 to 15 out of 100 adoptees have the chances of having ODD or ADHD. This is twice as much as the non-adoptees getting these conditions.

Effects Of Adopted Child Syndrome:

If adopted early in their life, adopted children grown similar to other kids. In the US, nearly 120,000 children are adopted every year. There are currently more than 2.6 million adopted individuals in the country. Most of them lead a normal life.

However, various studies have found that the incidence of psychological disorders is more in adopted children than normal ones. Here are some effects of ACS.

1. Developmental Delays:

Adopted children could reach physical and emotional development milestones late. They may not be able to do things that kids of their age usually do, or they may think and behave younger than their age. Developmental delays could manifest in the form of:

- Eagerness to grab attention or rewards
- Inability to socialize
- Difficulty in learning motor skills

2. Eating Disorders:

Their pre-adoption life makes children anxious eaters. They may have grown up under circumstances where there was a scarcity of food. This could lead to:

- Overeating
- Under-consumption due to problems in eating certain foods such as solids
- Hoarding of food
- Stealing food

3. Attachment Issues and Reactive Attachment Disorder:

The neglect and negative environment early in their life could lead to attachment disorder or reactive attachment disorder (RAD) in adopted children. This could be the result of they being abandoned, uncared for, and unloved. This will make children withdraw from others, avoid eye contact, be uninterested in playing, and be indifferent to affection, among others.

You can recognize RAD in adopted children through these signs and symptoms:

- They **do not like being touched and physical affection** as they see them as a threat to their well-being.
- The children **control their emotions** to avoid being helpless. But they are disobedient, defiant, and argumentative.

- As they suppress their feelings, it manifests in the form of **anger** which they exhibit through tantrums or passive-aggressive behavior.
- Children with RAD could be **affectionate with strangers** but do not display the same emotions towards their adopted parents.
- They avoid the feelings of **guilt or regret** as their conscience is underdeveloped.

4. Alcohol And Drug Abuse:

As teenagers, adopted children could get drawn to alcohol and drug abuse, in the absence of proper care from their foster parents.

If the biological parents are addicted to these habits, and the environment in the adopted family is not cordial, the risk of adoptees getting addicted doubles.

Virginia Institute for Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics director Kenneth Kendler says: "For an adoptee, having a biological parent with drug abuse who did not raise you doubles your risk for drug abuse."

"But we also found an important role for environmental factors. If you have an adoptive sibling – with whom you have no genetic relationship – develop drug abuse that also doubles your risk for drug abuse. A bad environment can augment the effect of genetic risk for drug abuse."

5. Inclination Towards Crime:

According to a study by psychologist David Kirschner (1992), "A disproportionate number of adoptees commit generic homicides. Also, a disproportionate number of multiple and serial killers are adopted."

An FBI estimate shows that most of the 500 serial killers in the US are adopted kids.

A previous study by Mednick, Gabrielli, and Hutchings (1984) shows that:

- 13.5% adopted boys become criminals if neither the biological nor adopted parents are criminals.
- 14.7% sons turn out to be criminals if the adoptive parents are criminal but the biological parents are not.
- The figure is 20% if the biological parents are criminal but not the adoptive parents.
- If both biological and adoptive parents are criminals, approximately 24% sons qualify as criminal.

How To Avoid Adopted Child Syndrome:

Adoption can make a huge difference to abandoned children who have experienced a tough life and rejection in their young lives. As foster parents, you have to put in extra effort to make the kids settle down in a new environment of care and love. Here is a guide to avoid ACS in the child:

1. PLACE Attitude:

Attachment psychologist Dan Hughes has come up with the acronym PLACE, which stands for being playful, loving, accepting, curious, and empathic to your adopted kid.

Playful: Be playful with the child as this would help him realize his self-worth and relax. Fill in your free-time with some games or fun activities with the kid. Do not withdraw playfulness as a punishment for his misdemeanor.

Playfulness need not necessarily be playing games but also a simple ruffling of his hair, winking at him, cracking a joke, or smiling at him. This would increase the interaction between you and the child, which could be beneficial to him.

Loving: You should be the first person to bring love into the relationship and your adopted child will eventually follow you. Understand that he is too young and frightened to adjust to the environment instantly.

Hold his hand, hug him, have a sweet talk with him, show him that you care for him. Give him time to understand you and help him build that faith in you.

Accepting: Accept the child the way he is. That is the first step to mold him in the way you want. Remember that he has come from a different situation, where his biological parents are unknown to him, and he grew up among strangers. He may not be well-groomed or behaved.

Share your expectations gradually, after he settles down in your family.

Curious: When your child does something unacceptable, do not admonish him immediately. Instead, be curious to know why he did that. Let him know your curiosity by asking questions aloud. It will make him understand that he was wrong, and give him the confidence to talk to you about it.

Empathic: Empathize with your child. If he is finding it difficult to read or write, tell him that you understand his difficulty. Sit with him and make him learn his lessons, instead of getting furious or disappointed with him. Being empathic will help you gain his trust. But empathy needs to be genuine and not flippant.

2. Permanency:

Adopted children are scared of losing people around them as they have experienced the loss early in their lives. Your child may not like to leave you or may get cranky if you are away even for a short time, as he is afraid of losing you.

It is for you to build that sense of permanency in him.

- Make him understand that you are with him permanently even if you are not around for a few hours or days.
- Play peek-a-boo or hide and seek with him, whereby he cannot see you for a few minutes.
- Build this feeling of permanency in him by the time he starts going to school.

3. Constancy:

Constancy is related to permanency as it gives children stability and resilience. It makes them realize that your angry

reaction in a particular instance is because of his misbehavior but not because you hate him.

- Develop constancy in him by being pleasant even while reprimanding him for his behavior. He will understand that you are not happy with what he has done.
- If he disappoints you, talk to him openly without hurting his sensitivities. Tell him what your expectation was and why it was not met.

4. Reduce Stress And Anxiety:

Adopted children have high levels of stress due to their past. You need to carefully avoid adding any more stress or anxiety with your behavior.

- Be calm and make yourself available to him to reduce his levels of anxiety.
- Make things predictable for him so that he need not have to guess.
- If he does something wrong, let him know the consequences immediately, without making him wait anxiously for the 'punishment'.
- Identify his stress areas and mitigate them.

5. Build Self-Esteem:

Self-esteem is usually low in adopted children as they feel ashamed of themselves for no reason. Develop self-esteem in him by making him feel important. Play with him, appreciate his new milestones, and applaud him for his achievements.

6. Discipline Positively:

- Avoid giving commands to the child, such as, "I want you to do this," "You have to stop being like that," and so on. Instead, give him choices of 'this or that' and let him choose. This works well for both your child and you.
- Replace punishments with logical consequences, so that he understands that doing 'this' will lead to 'that'. For example, he will know that if he spills milk, he will end up cleaning it.
- Keep your bouts of anger short, for around 60 seconds, and have calmer conversations for a longer time.

7. Encourage Socializing But Supervise:

Help your kid to come out of his cocoon and socialize with his classmates and neighbors. Take him to a park and let him play with other children. Let him realize the fun in mingling with other kids.

However, he needs your supervision. Ensure that he is not hurting anybody or is being bullied by the other children. Explain him the ways to be amicable yet assertive.

Medical Assistance For ACS:

It is difficult to detect ACS in your child, as you may mistake his misdemeanor or reclusive behavior as an act of defiance or displeasure.

Be alert to recognize the symptoms of ACS as timely medical intervention can bring your child out of it.

Even if you take him to an expert, the psychotherapist could simply treat the symptoms instead of looking deep into the cause. Therefore, it is important for you to tell him that the child is an adopted one. This will help the doctor look into that angle as well and understand the larger picture.

Psychotherapy helps in removing the feeling of guilt, anxiety, and other negative feelings in your child.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do some foster parents hide the adoption truth from their children?

There could be a sense of insecurity among the adoptive parents that the children may leave them once they know about their biological parents. They do not want their kids to do this after spending years of love on them.

While the children may want to know more details about their biological parents, they would rarely leave their adoptive parents.

However, the trend is changing, and the adoptive parents are now more open to their children. They are willing to share facts with kids to avoid any communication gap later in their lives.

2. Are adopted children violent towards their parents?

There have been cases in the US where adopted children murdered their foster parents for monetary or emotional reasons. But it cannot be generalized with a majority of kids. It depends on the environment at home and the love and affection you share with your adopted children.

3. How soon can an adopted child accept his new parents and family?

This differs with each family, but usually, children take around six months to settle down in the new atmosphere. However, it depends on you to make the kids feel at home. Create a reassuring atmosphere at home for them to accept the changes in the shortest possible time.

4. How do I support a child with reactive attachment disorder (RAD)?

As the child with RAD is already under stress, you need to take care of not venting or showing your frustration on him. Here are a few tips to parent a child with RAD:

- Do not lose your patience, however annoying the situation may be.
- Create a fun environment at home, and develop a sense of humor in the child.
- Have realistic expectations from the child, and celebrate

his successes.

- Stay positive even if the child ignores your overtures. Keep trying and he would recognize your efforts sooner than later.
- Seek help from your family and friends.

5. What care do I take if I have adopted a child with Down syndrome?

There are several adoption agencies which exclusively deal with Down syndrome children. If you are planning to adopt a child with this condition, here are a few tips for you:

- Prepare yourself for the situations that could arise due to the child.
- Acquire as much knowledge as possible about the condition, to prepare yourself.
- Share your intentions with your family and friends and take their advice.
- Estimate your finances as a child with Down syndrome needs additional medical attention.
- Plan his future, know about the various options he can have, and foresee his requirements as he may need your support even after growing up.

An adopted child usually comes to his new home with several apprehensions. He also has a bitter past to carry. It is for you to make him shed that burden and lead him into a bright and promising future.

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www.momjunction.com/articles/adopted-child-syndrome_00375730/

No Longer Fostering? We Would Love To Hear From You.

We are interested to learn about families leaving foster care and the reasons behind their decision. This information can assist us to advocate for future policies to support foster families. If you are a former foster parent, please take a moment to provide feedback on your foster care experience.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nfapaexitsurvey

New NFAPA Board Members

Please welcome the following new board members!

New NFAPA Eastern Service Area Rep: Joey Gaines

A bit about me!

I am a mom, a wife, a veterinarian, and a volunteer. I am excited to serve on NFAPA in my area. I have been a foster parent for 13 years, along with my husband, Adam. We have had a variety of kids in our home, ranging from infant to aging out teens. We have 2 biological, 3 adopted out of foster care, and currently 2 foster kiddos. I am very interested in helping teens learn to gain independence and succeed once they age out of the system. I also believe it is important to work together with bio parents to help them improve and work to reunification and open communication to present a united front in co-parenting the kids. We are foster parents through Boys Town. I would love to be of help to anyone and/or seek answers or help when needed for anyone!

New NFAPA Northern Service Area Reps: Kyle and Spring Younts Dahl

The Dahl's currently live and home school out on a small farmstead in Pender, NE. They have 4 sons and one spunky daughter! It was soon after their second sons' birth that the Dahl's felt the call that is was time to get involved personally with foster care and adoption. In May of 2014 they answered the middle of the night call to take in a very young sibling group. They were blessed with the opportunity to adopt these 3 precious children two years later.

"Dr. Spring" Younts Dahl holds a PhD in Animal & Food Sciences from Texas Tech University and a MS in Animal Science/Meat Science from Michigan State University. Spring's educational background "came home" when her children had serious health issues related to food sensitivities. Spring is grateful to have the opportunity to work from home since starting a family.

Kyle holds advanced degrees in law and agricultural sciences from the University of Nebraska and Texas Tech University, respectively. Kyle has over 10 years' experience practicing law in both public and private offices and is a former Assistant Attorney General for the State of Nebraska. Kyle currently owns and practices through Dahl Law Offices, L.L.C. in Wayne, NE.

Upcoming In-service Training

Facilitated by the Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association
Sponsored by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

The Kinship Connection-For Relative & Kinship families

Monday, November 20, 2017 from 9 am – 4 pm: Omaha
Registration is required.
Register online: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TKC-Omaha_Nov2017

This six hour training will provide Relative & Kinship families with training on the following topics:

- The Legal Process
- Trauma & Attachment
- Behavior Management
- Loss & Grief
- RPPS/Respite
- Safety
- Redefined Roles
- Permanency Options for Children & Youth

Youth Mental Health First Aid-For Foster Parents

Saturday, January 27, 2018 | 9:00 AM –4:00 PM
Region 6 Behavioral Health
4715 S 132nd St. Omaha, NE

Registration is required.
Register online: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YMHFAinservice

Earn 6 hours of in-service credit

Youth Mental Health First Aid reviews the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in adolescents ages 12-18. It emphasizes the importance of early intervention and covers how to help an adolescent in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge. This non-clinical course will help caregivers better understand typical adolescence, how to address basic suicide ideations and verbalizations, understand and use the MHFA Action Plan





Both groups learned a lot skills used to help recognize when our youth are hurting and need intervention. Sessions were 8 hours and can be used toward foster parenting CEU's. If you are interested in the next 8 hour class to be held in Omaha in January, just look in the back of this newsletter for registration information. The class is limited to 30 slots, so move fast; you will learn so much information to help a foster child in your home.

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JOIN NFAPA ....your support will enable NFAPA to continue supporting foster parents state-wide!

Benefits

- Ongoing trainings/conferences at local and state level
- Networking opportunities with other foster families, adoptive families, and relative caregivers
- Opportunity for all foster families, adoptive families and relative caregivers to be actively involved in an association by serving on committees and/or on the Executive Board
- Working to instigate changes by alertness to legislation affecting the child welfare system
- An advocate on your behalf at local, state and national levels
- 25% of membership dues goes toward an NFAPA Scholarship

Thank you for your support!

Please mail membership form to:
NFAPA, 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D
Lincoln, NE 68521.

Questions? Please call us at 877-257-0176.

NFAPA is a 501c3 non-profit organization comprised of a volunteer Board of Directors and Mentors.

Name(s): _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

I am a Foster/Adoptive Parent. I have fostered for _____ years.
(circle one)

I am with _____ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

- ❑ **Single Family Membership** (a single foster or adoptive parent), $25
- ❑ **Family Membership** (married foster or adoptive parents), $35
- ❑ **Supporting Membership** (individuals wishing to support our efforts), $75
- ❑ **Organization Membership** (organizations wishing to support our efforts), $150
- ❑ **Friends of NFAPA,** $5 billed Monthly

My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

- ❑ Gold Donation, $1,000
- ❑ Silver Donation, $750
- ❑ Platinum Donation, $500
- ❑ Bronze Donation, $250
- ❑ Other, $ _____