

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

March/April 2017

N F A P A

20 Ways to Stand Up and Help Stomp Out Bullying

Toni Birdsong

No one deserves to be bullied. October is National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month and the perfect time to pause and educate your family on specific ways to help stop bullying online and off. Thanks to the Stomp Out Bullying movement, this month is packed with a variety of awareness events and tools to help parents, schools, and young people put an end to this devastating social epidemic.

According to the group, one in six students say they've either been the victim of some form of bullying or, witnessed others being bullied. And one in eight students has experienced bigotry and name calling. But what kind of behavior is considered harmless teasing and what dips into the realm of bullying? Let's take a look:

Different Types of Bullying

Physical Bullying: This is the most obvious form of intimidation and can consist of kicking, hitting, biting, pinching, hair pulling, and making threats. A bully may threaten to punch you if you don't give up your money, your lunch, etc.

Verbal Bullying: Words hurt. Verbal bullying often accompanies physical behavior. This can include name calling, spreading rumors, and persistent teasing.

Emotional Intimidation: You don't have to be insulted or hit to be bullied. Emotional intimidation is closely related to both physical and verbal bullying. A bully may deliberately exclude you from a group activity such as a party or school outing.

Racist Bullying: Making racial slurs, spray painting graffiti, mocking the victim's cultural customs, and making offensive gestures, is all a part of the act of racial bullying. Bullying Prevention

Sexual Bullying: This type of bullying often gets minimized or overlooked but is a problem. Sexual bullying is unwanted physical contact or abusive comments.

Cyberbullying: Because of technology's primary role in our culture, one of the most common kinds of bullying today is cyberbullying. This is when one or a group of kids or teens uses technology (emails, Web sites, social media, chat rooms,

instant messaging and texting) to torment, threaten, harass, humiliate, embarrass or target another person or group of people.



Hazing: Hazing is a ritualistic test and a task involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a gang, club, military organization or another group. This can include physical (sometimes violent) or mental (possibly degrading) practices.

Anti-Gay Bullying: Nine out of 10 LGBT students reported being harassed and bullied last year. Over one-third of LGBT students are physically assaulted at school because their sexual orientation and gender identity are different than those of heterosexual students. Over half of all students report hearing homophobic remarks often at school. More than 30% reported missing at least a day of school in the past month out of fear for their personal safety.

According to a 2014 McAfee study, cyberbullying is on the rise with 87% of youth having witnessed cyberbullying due to appearance (72%) race or religion (26%) and sexuality (22%). Pretty startling is this sad stat: 52% of teens have engaged in offline physical fights because of something that ignited online.

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Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

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Questions? Call NFAPA at 877-257-0176 or 402-476-2273.

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Attention Foster Parents!

Earn Your Foster Parent Credits 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 nichollette@nfapa.org, send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 2431 Fairfield Street, Suite C, Lincoln, NE, or you can complete the questionnaire online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MarchApril2017>. 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. Fill in the blank. Most media sites require your child to be _____ years of age.
2. Fill in the blank. What percentage of kids are harassed online _____%?
3. True or False. The best defense against cyber bullying is a good offense, and that means doing whatever it takes to build and maintain open communication with your child.
4. Define sexual bullying. _____
5. Do you know when the highest rate of child sex trafficking occurs in the United States each year?

6. True or False. Disturbingly, human trafficking generates more than 32 billion a year, which is second only to drug trafficking.
7. True or False. Despite their dreams, only 2 percent of foster youth who graduate from high school enroll in college.
8. Fill in the blank. _____ and the _____ are major reasons why many foster teens so often slip academically.
9. Fill in the blank. The easiest way to submit a written report to the court is by completing a _____.
10. True or False. You may not provide written information to the court.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

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20 ways kids can help stomp out bullying:

According to Stomp Out Bullying, kids can have an enormous impact on the bullying crisis. Whether they know the person being bullied or not, kids can stop standing by and STAND UP! To safely support a victim:

1. Don't laugh
2. Don't encourage the bully in any way
3. Stay at a safe distance and help the target get away
4. Don't become an "audience" for the bully
5. Reach out in friendship to a bullying victim
6. Help the victim in any way you can
7. Support the victim in private
8. If you notice someone being isolated from others, invite them to join you
9. Include the victim in some of your activities
10. Tell an adult if you see bullying or are bullied
11. Encourage your school to participate in Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention
12. Start a peer mentoring group at school
13. Raise awareness of bullying and cyberbullying prevention in your community
14. Teach friends about being tolerant
15. Ask your school to set up a private ballot box where kids who are being bullied can report it anonymously
16. Get someone to sponsor a conflict resolution team
17. Encourage school administrators to adopt Internet-use policies that address online hate, harassment, and pornography.
18. Create events in your school and community to raise anti-bullying Bullying Prevention awareness
19. Create bullying and cyberbullying prevention posters
20. Stand up and do something when you hear someone making jokes or comments about: Someone's sexual identity, someone's family member, someone's weight, someone's choice of dress, someone's skin color, someone's accent, or someone's disability.



Signs your child may be a victim of bullying:

1. Looks anxious or upset if he or she receives a new text or alert on their phone.
2. Frequently gets headaches, nausea, or a stress-related illness. He or she increasingly asks to stay home from school or come home early from school.
3. Trouble sleeping and an increase in nightmares.
4. Becomes withdrawn, moody, angry or unwilling to discuss topics dealing with school, friends, or other peers.
5. Deletes or deactivates favorite social networks like Instagram or Facebook.
6. Suddenly loses his or her steady group of friends and refuses to talk about the details or place blame.
7. Decline in grades or a loss of interest in favorite hobbies, sports, or school clubs and activities.
8. Uses negative, hopeless, or suicidal references and may describe feelings as being lonely.
9. May begin to act out feelings of helplessness and frustration by bullying siblings or younger children in family's social circles.
10. Tends to "lose" things like lunch money, electronics, or other expensive things bullies tend to take.

What to do if someone is bullying you:

Tell someone. Encourage your child to talk to a trusted adult. Many tweens and teens keep quiet when being bullied which often leads to more bullying and communicates to others that she is fair game for bullying. Encourage your child to come to you at the first sign of bullying or conflict online. Monitor his or her online circles and assess the tone of her online conversations.

Save all evidence. Print copies of messages and websites. Use the save feature on instant messages and take screen shots of posts or comments on social networks.

Report the abuse to the online platform, to school and/or police. Report the cyberbully to the social network in the Help section. If the perpetrator is another student, share evidence with the school counselor. Report the cyberbullying to the police or cyber crime unit in your area if the cyberbullying contains threats, intimidation or sexual exploitation.

The best defense against cyberbullying is a good offense, and that means doing whatever it takes to build and maintain open and honest communication with your child. While regularly conversing may not prevent cyberbullying, it does help you both effectively face challenges—together—as they arise.

Republished with permission from: <http://www.stompoutbullying.org/blog/?p=530>

For more creative ideas on how to be part of the anti-bullying solution, go to stompoutbullying.org. If you are an educator, parent, or student, you are in a powerful position to make a significant impact on this serious social crisis.

Raising Responsible Digital Citizens

Ross Ellis, founder and CEO, STOMP Out Bullying

Kids and teens live a 24/7 digital life. While it's great for learning, entertainment and communicating with friends, your kids are on every popular social media site.

When you give them the keys to the car you expect them to be responsible drivers. When you give kids and teens a computer, tablet, iPhone or Droid, digital responsibility is a must!

Being as plugged in as they are, they face many challenges. Depending on their age, up to 43% of kids are harassed online. And according to Nielsen, the average teenager now sends 3,339 texts per month.

Digital drama affects youths greatly and it's up to parents to help them understand these challenges and what to do about them. Educate them in knowing that once something is on the Internet, it stays there forever! EVERYTHING leaves a digital footprint.

Kids and teens can and will post anything. Raising responsible digital citizens begins with every parent, ensuring that their children behave responsibly with each keystroke or tap of the screen.

Talk to your children about posting online. Discuss being good "digital friends" by respecting personal information of friends, family and acquaintances and not sharing anything about others that is potentially embarrassing or hurtful.

Encourage them to be digital leaders by ensuring that they use safe and secure practices.

Help to DELETE DIGITAL DRAMA. Empower your children. They may deal with digital situations such as bullying, unwanted contacts or hurtful comments. Help them to develop responsible digital strategies. By not responding to negative posts, blocking a person or reporting bad online behavior can diffuse many hurtful and uncomfortable situations. Agree to work together if these steps fail.

Most social media sites require your child to be 13 years of age. Ensure that younger children do not have social media accounts.

Teach them to:

- *Think before they post*
- *To be kind. If they have nothing nice to say online, they should say nothing at all.*
- *Nothing is private! They should assume that EVERYTHING they do online is copied, pasted and/or shared. If they want privacy, they should respect other's privacy.*
- *Use privacy settings*
- *Do not steal the work of others. Credit them.*

As parents it is imperative that you are not only digitally and Web savvy, but that you also know what sites your children visit, what they share and download and ensure that they engage in positive digital behavior.

Republished with permission from: <http://www.stompoutbullying.org/blog/?p=509>

Legislative Update: Increased Penalties for Sex Trafficking

A bill (LB 289) to increase penalties for human trafficking has been introduced by Senator Patty Pansing-Brooks. This bill that would significantly strengthen Nebraska's laws relating to penalties for human trafficking for both the trafficker and the buyer.

By increasing penalties, LB289 will do two primary things:

1. Empower law enforcement to go after the issue of human trafficking by motivating them to spend resources and pursue criminals engaged in trafficking, and
2. Deter traffickers from coming to Nebraska.

Nebraska has attempted to address this critical issue, however the currently the penalties do not match the severity of the crime. Increasing the penalties for human trafficking in our state will help deter crime and allow Nebraska to get ahead of the issue by reducing the number of future victims and providing better restitution to victims.

In a press release, Senator Pansing Brooks stated:

"The traffickers and purchasers who prey upon and enslave vulnerable individuals and children should be on notice. Nebraska will no longer tolerate their heinous conduct.

The chance of persecution and the severity of penalties will be increased should anyone contemplate abusing Nebraska's most vulnerable again. Not in Nebraska. Not ever."

Nebraska can recognize the severity of human trafficking and minimize this form of modern day slavery by passing LB 289 into law and ensure that anyone engaged in human trafficking in Nebraska will face severe penalties for such an abhorrent crime.

To learn how you can contact your State Senator in support of this bill visit this website: http://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator_list.php

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.

Farmer's State Bank Building, 1320 W. 3rd St, entrance in rear. 6:00-7:30 p.m.

March 16, April 20, May 18, June 15, 2017

Scottsbluff Support Group: Meets the second Tuesday of the month. Registration is required. Contact Jolie Camden to register.

Regional West Medical Center, in South Plaza Room 1204. 6:00-7:30 p.m.

March 14, April 11, May 9, June 13, 2017

Chadron Support Group: Registration is required. Contact Jolie Camden to register.

Ridgeview Bible Church, 919 East 10th Street. 6:00-7:30 p.m. Contact Jolie for dates.

North Platte Support Group: Meets every other month on the first Thursday. Dinner and childcare provided. Registration is required. Contact Terry Robinson to register.

Nebraska Children's Home Society - 121 N Dewey St #206. 6:00-8:00 p.m.

February 2, April 6, June 1, August 3, October 5, December 7, 2017

Columbus Support Group: Meets the second Tuesday of the month (except June, July and December). Childcare available. Contact Tammy Welker. (Thank you Building Blocks and Behavioral Health Specialists for providing childcare!).

Peace Lutheran Church (2720 28th St.). 7:00-8:30 p.m. January 10, February 14, March 14, April 11, May 9

ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP

FACES-Online Support Group: Every Tuesday 9:00-10:00 p.m. Central Time.

Contact Nicholette at Nicholette@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. Watch our website for further dates or contact NFAPA with any questions. Support only. Contact Whitney Fritzingler at colorlineslincoln@gmail.com to register.

Lincoln Psychotherapy Services (2900 S 70th St #160, Lincoln, NE 68506). 7:00 pm March 22, 2017. For more info: <https://www.facebook.com/colorlineslincoln/>

NFAPA Scholarship

NFAPA offers a \$250 scholarship for an adoptive, foster, guardianship or kinship child, who wishes to further their education beyond high school or GED.

The scholarship can be used for college, university, vocational, job training or online learning.

The scholarship form is available on our website at www.nfapa.org. Requirements and submission instructions are listed.

The deadline for scholarship applications is April 3, 2017.

Foster Parent Recognition

May is National Foster Care Month and each year the Governor has held a ceremony proclaiming May Foster Care Month in Nebraska.

This year the Proclamation will be held on May 10, 2017.

In conjunction with this event NFAPA would like honor foster parents. Do you know a foster family that deserves a special recognition? Please send their name(s), contact information and a brief description of how this family has provided extraordinary care to children in need. Nominations can be sent to: Nicholette@nfapa.org

Growing Up in Foster Care: High School and College Prep

Patricia Campie

High school students in foster care dream of going on to college, just like other teenagers who have never experienced the pain and disruption of growing up without their families' support.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), 400,000 youth are in foster care in any given year. Of these, the Annie E. Casey Foundation reports, 84 percent (more than 300,000) say they want to attend college. Despite their dreams, only 20 percent of foster youth who graduate from high school enroll in college. A research review done by Chapin Hall at The University of Chicago reports that even the most optimistic studies show just 6 percent will earn their bachelor's degrees.

By comparison, 68 percent of American high school graduates enrolled in college in 2014. And 34 percent of 25-to-29-year-olds completed their bachelor's degrees.

What explains this disconnect? And what can be done to close the gap between our foster youths' educational aspirations and college attainment?

Relocation and the trauma of shuffling from home to home are major reasons why many foster teens so often slip academically. A strong connection to school requires a sense of stability and belonging that few of them have.

A Casey Family Programs study of young adults in foster care found that more than half had changed schools seven or more times from elementary through high school. But teachers may not even know that a student is in foster care or how to support a foster youth's unique needs.

Improving the capacity of schools, courts, and child-welfare agencies to help foster youth succeed in school has received much attention. But research suggests that to keep teens moving toward higher education, they need adult role models who can, among other things, advise them about college.

Shouldn't foster parents be filling that role?

The system isn't set up that way. And many foster parents don't have experience with higher education and aren't equipped to provide the academic, emotional, or financial supports their foster youth need to be ready for a future that includes college. To be sure, many foster families are trying to make up for their foster children's lost years of educational progress and the individual learning challenges that often come with the system's disruptions that have delayed academic and emotional readiness for college.

Most foster parents don't have adequate guidance about how to help children catch up. And for children without school-funded Individual Education Programs, the kind of tutoring

and support services often needed are just too expensive. Few foster parents have the background to know how to provide this kind of support themselves, even with all of the good intentions and care in the world.

State and local foster care requirements rest heavily on foster parents' ability to give children a safe, stable, and loving home. Typical requirements: criminal-background screening, sufficient income, basic transportation, the patience and ability to care for a child in need, and a pledge never resort to corporal punishment.

Then there's a long list of housing requirements—from meeting basic fire and safety codes to making sure each child has a separate bed and that there are separate bedrooms for boys and girls. More practical requirements include having first aid kits and written emergency plans and locking up firearms and medicines.

But there is no requirement that foster youth have a place to do homework. No requirement that families provide a supportive learning environment.

Most foster parents attend some mandatory training before receiving children into their homes, but the amount of training varies from state to state. And few foster parents are trained to create a college-going culture at home or to understand high-school graduation requirements or to fill out FAFSA forms for college scholarships.

A foster parent education program in New York City and Los Angeles that AIR is evaluating does train foster parents to prepare their foster children for college. In PrepNOW!, retired professionals from all walks of life work directly with parents so they can better support their children as they apply for and enroll in college. Fedcap, a nonprofit founded in 1935, began piloting PrepNOW! in 2016.

During one-on-one and group meetings over six weeks, mentors build parents' core competencies:

- *Learning about the child-welfare system and the challenges of youth transition*
- *Valuing education and developing the ability to communicate this value to young people*
- *Finding ways to motivate youth to attend college*
- *Understanding the college-readiness process*
- *Navigating the college-application and financial-aid processes*
- *Understanding critical supports that college freshman need*

AIR is evaluating the program's effects on college and career readiness. Evaluation results are expected in 2018.

Transitions to Adulthood: Succeeding in College

The excitement of those first weeks of college—new people, more freedom, a new community—are often overshadowed by

homesickness and trouble balancing a new social life with new academic and financial demands.

All students feel the pressure, but it's even harder for those leaving foster care. Many leave college before completion for financial and emotional reasons.

Financial barriers often increase as foster students age and fewer scholarship opportunities are available. And since many foster youth do not begin to stabilize their lives (and start their post-secondary education) until an average age of 26, it is no wonder that only 3 to 10 percent of foster youth earn undergraduate degrees compared with 34 percent of 25-to-29-year-old non-foster care young adults.

Besides financial challenges, foster youth who "age out"—too old to receive housing or other supports from the child welfare system—often have trouble finding affordable places to live near campus, transportation to get to classes, or a case manager to help them navigate the financial aid process.

The deadline for aging out varies by state, but typically it's when the foster child turns 21. But in states that have fully adopted and are implementing the federal Fostering Connections Act, aging out can come as late as age 26, an important support for college completion.

Thirty-nine states offer assistance to aged-out foster youth. State-offered services range from tuition waivers at community colleges to outreach programs at universities that work directly with local child welfare systems to support successful transitions to college.

California cares for more than 50,000 foster youth each year, more than any other state, offering specialized support programs for students from foster care. For example, Sonoma State University's Educational Opportunities Program gives foster youth assistance with admissions, financial aid, campus orientation, and academic and personal advice. Its Summer Bridge program is mandatory for all incoming former foster youth. Such programs can mean the difference between college readiness and dropping out freshman year.

Michigan's Fostering Futures scholarship program is more typical of the college-related support offered nationally to foster youth. Michigan awards modest scholarships—less than \$5,000 per year—paid by federal sources, such as the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, or from the state, or private foundations. To qualify, students need to initiate requests for Chafee funds before age 22.

Such modest resources are an essential minimum for a foster youth's successful journey from college enrollment to graduation. But many new collegians may also need ongoing guidance and support from a foster parent or other adult to address emotional and other support needs. Research is limited on college success among foster youth—and based largely on cross-sectional studies and surveys of foster care alumni (i.e., foster youth who are now adults).

The available research suggests that a stable, caring, and trusted educational advocate can contribute importantly to a

foster youth's college success, just as they do when these youth are in elementary, middle, and high school. Youngsters who live in supportive homes just prior to attending college and whose foster parents have college experience benefit from steady guidance as parents share beliefs, attitudes, practical skills, and values that promote educational and life success.

In sharp contrast, a childhood of moving from home to home and school to school leaves scars and can impede success.

Whether foster children are learning to crawl, walking into their first classroom, or running from part-time jobs to high school exams, a safe and stable home—along with access to resources that promote educational engagement—is necessary for success from kindergarten through college.

Yes, new state and federal programs and laws afford foster youth with greater opportunities to succeed in college. But, problems still dog state child welfare systems. Chief among them is lack of financial backing to ensure that every foster child who qualifies for college has a fair chance of earning a degree.

And the degree is not the end. It's the beginning of a career, financial independence and building a lifetime of stability.

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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/nfapaexitssurvey>



Waiting for a Forever HOME!

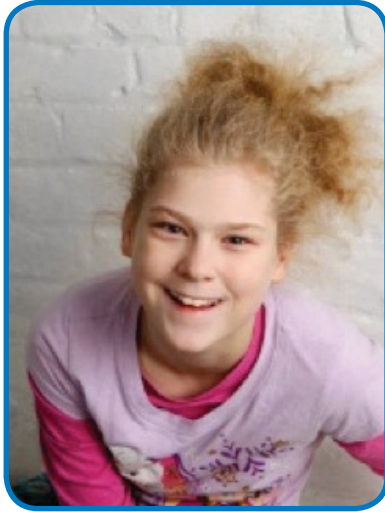
The following are children available on the Nebraska Heart Gallery.

Name: Samara

11 years old

Samara is an energetic and loving young girl. She loves being outdoors and you can usually find her riding bikes, playing on the playground, or helping care for animals. If not outside, Samara is often found exploring her creativity with art or fashion-she loves painting nails and shopping! On a rainy day, Samara also enjoys snuggling up to watch a good movie. Samara is anxious to find a loving home that will be patient and willing to learn about her unique needs. Samara would do best in a home as an only child or with few siblings.

Connections: Samara needs to maintain a relationship with her grandparents.



Name: Nate

11 years old

Nathaniel, or Nate as he's called, is an artistic, and energetic. Like most boys his age, Nate loves superheroes, especially Spiderman. He loves to use his creativity to draw his favorite superheroes and create stories for them. He also likes building and crafting and he can construct robots, cars, and more out of just paper and cardboard.

Nate enjoys playing board games and video games with friends his age, but also thrives from one-on-one attention from people he cares about. Nate has a vibrant personality and is very well liked by those around him. He is intelligent and learns new things easily. Nate is protective and takes pride in his role as a big brother.

Connections: Nate needs to maintain contact with his siblings.



For more information on these children or others on the Heart Gallery please contact Sarah at:

Email: scaldararo@childsaving.org

Phone: 402-504-3673

Girl Scouts: Spirit of Nebraska

Girl Scouts Spirit of Nebraska is the largest girl-serving organization in the state with more than 21,000 members. We have 6 service centers, 6 camps, and 1 outdoor education facility, and serve more than 92 Nebraska counties and Carter Lake, Iowa. Our organization is, and has always been, grounded in the Girl Scout Promise and Law. With the support of committed adult volunteers, activities are girl led so that each girl's leadership potential can bloom. Girls become members of Girl Scouts first, then they choose their pathway; Individual Girl Scout, troop, camp, events, series, travel... Girls can do it! When a girl becomes a member of Girl Scouts, her membership will follow her where-ever she goes.

Girls gain:

- *Self-confident*
- *Strong and Compassionate*
- *To respect herself and others*
- *Make good decisions*
- *Be open to new challenges*
- *Use her skills and talents to make her world a better place*



As a Girl Scout, your daughter will grow into her best self.

Foster and adoptive parents, in the past year Girl Scouts received

funding from a private donor that shares your same passion for underserved girls. This funding will provide each foster care girl and recently adopted girl in Nebraska with a free membership and other free/low-cost camp opportunities. Troop experience is encouraged but not necessary for a beneficial membership. Girls and guardians can choose to enroll as an Individual Girl Member. This gives another level of flexibility without sacrificing the Girl Scout experience. Registration is easy and FREE. Contact Danielle Smith to get started or ask questions. You can reach Danielle at dsmith@girlscoutsnebraska.org or 402.875.4358.

What do girls do in Girl Scouts?

Go to www.girlscoutsnebraska.org to read more.

Contact Danielle Smith for more information and to get your girl registered TODAY!

402.875.4358 | dsmith@girlscoutsnebraska.org
8230 Beechwood Dr. | Lincoln, NE. 68510



Making the Commitment to Adoption

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

Register online at

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

North Platte Fire Station #3

3501 West 2nd Street

North Platte, NE

April 28, 2017: 6:00 p.m. -9:30 p.m.

April 29, 2017: 8:00 a.m. -5:30 p.m.

The Spaulding program is offered to prospective adoptive families. Spaulding training offers families the tools and information that they need to:

- Explain how adoptive families are different
- Importance of separation, loss, and grief in adoption
- Understand attachment and its importance in adoption
- Anticipate challenges and be able to identify strategies for managing challenges as an adoptive family
- Explore the lifelong commitment to a child that adoption brings

What is the Nurtured Heart Approach[®]?

Join us for a training

May 6, 2017

9 am - 4 pm



with Kim Combes,
Director of Combes
Counseling and
Consultation

Mid Plains Community College
Wood Building #206
1101 Halligan Drive
North Platte, NE 69101

Kim Combes and wife Diane are adoptive parents of five. Kim has been in the human service arena in various capacities for over 25 years working with a myriad of severely emotionally disturbed children and their families.



The Nurtured Heart Approach[®] is a set of core methodologies originally developed for working with the most difficult children.



We hope to show you how utterly easy it is to not only improve your situation with a challenging or difficult child, but to transform the child through the awareness that their intensity is actually the source of their greatness.

Register online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NurturedHeart>

Court Appearances and the Importance of Documentation for Foster Parents

Your role as a foster parent is to provide the court with current and accurate information regarding the child(ren) in your home. As a foster parent, you should be receiving notice of the hearings and it is important that you attend. You have more relevant information than almost anyone else because of your constant contact with the child. Judges are required to make very difficult decisions that have a major impact on the lives of children and their families. They want as much information as possible before they make these decisions and they value information provided by foster parents.

You may provide written information to the court. Any information that you provide will be shared with all parties on the child's case. If you choose to submit a written report, you can provide it to the Clerk of the Court two weeks prior to the hearing. Foster Parents may be required to testify about any information reported on the form.

The easiest way to submit a written report to the court is by completing a Caregiver Information Form. The Caregiver Information Form is made available in many courtrooms and an annual letter is sent to caregivers from the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative. **To obtain a Caregiver Information Form visit:** <http://www.fcro.nebraska.gov/pdf/Resources/Caregiver-Information-Report-Form.pdf>.

The following is tips for providing the court with a written report.

- *Report should be typed or written very clearly.*
- *Keep it short and well organized by using headings.*
- *Present only facts, never opinions.*
- *Focus your attention on giving firsthand information about the child and not opinions about other people involved in the court process.*
- *Describe behaviors you have observed in the child.*
- *Present information about the child's needs.*
- *Make sure to include any of the child's successes.*
- *The date the child came to your home.*
- *A brief description of the physical and emotional condition of the child when the child came to your home.*
- *Doctor visits or hospitalizations since the last court hearing, and the results of those visits.*
- *Any medications the child is taking and the dosages.*
- *Any adverse reactions the child has had to medical procedures or medications.*
- *A brief description of the child's physical development and any developmental delays you have observed.*
- *Visits to the dentist since the last court hearing, and the results of those visits.*
- *The child's grade in school and whether the child is performing at grade level.*

- *The dates of any school conferences you have attended, and the results of those conferences.*
- *Any educational testing the child has had, who administered the testing, and the results of the testing.*
- *A brief description of the child's behavior in your home.*
- *Any services the child is receiving to address behavioral difficulties, the service provider and frequency.*
- *A brief description of how the child expresses his/ her needs and feelings and how s/he calms herself or himself.*
- *A brief description of the child's eating and sleeping patterns and any difficulties the child has in these areas.*
- *A brief description of any special activities the child participates in (Scouts, music lessons, church groups, etc.) and how often the child participates in them.*
- *A brief description of any talents, interests, hobbies, or skills you have observed in the child.*
- *The dates of visits/family interaction between the child and the parents or other family members.*
- *If you supervised the interactions, a brief description of the behaviors of the child and the other family members present at the visits. Carefully describe only the behavior and do not offer your opinion on the reason for the behavior.*
- *A brief description of any arrangements for sibling visitation.*
- *The dates of any telephone contacts between the child and the child's parents or other family members.*
- *All in-person and telephone contacts between you and the child's social worker.*
- *All in-person and telephone contacts between you and the child's attorney.*
- *All in-person and telephone contacts between you and the child's CASA volunteer.*
- *A brief description of any additional services you believe would benefit the child and why.*

Below are tips on attending and if needed, to testify in court.

- *Always show respect and courtesy for everyone in the courtroom.*
- *Arrive at least 15 minutes before the scheduled court time.*
- *Be prepared to wait. Juvenile courts are busy and hearings do not always start on time.*
- *Before you enter the courtroom, turn off your cell phone.*
- *Do not chew gum, eat or drink anything in the courtroom.*
- *Dress professionally (as you would for a job interview).*
- *Come organized and prepared.*
- *Always stand when the judge enters the room.*
- *Tell the truth.*
- *Speak loudly and clearly.*
- *Testimony must be spoken so it can be recorded in the court record. Do not nod or shake your head in answer to a question.*
- *Be serious, calm, polite and sincere, even if you are challenged or criticized.*
- *Wait until a question is completed before you begin your answer.*

- *Listen carefully to the question and make your answer directly responsive to it.*
- *If you do not understand a question, ask the lawyer for clarification.*
- *If you do not know the answer to a question or can't remember something, just say so. Do not guess at an answer.*

Attending court and sharing information about the child in your home is an important responsibility of a foster parent. You play a vital role and can provide an impact in the life of the child in your home.

Helping Your Child Reduce Self-Harming Behavior

By Margarita Tartakovsky, M.S.

Self-harm, or inflicting physical harm onto one's body to ease emotional distress, is not uncommon in kids and teens. In fact, according to clinical psychologist Deborah Serani, PsyD, in her book *Depression and Your Child: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers*, about 15 percent of kids and teens engage in self-harm. There are many forms of self-harm, including cutting, scratching, hitting and burning. Many kids and teens who self-harm also struggle with depression, anxiety, eating disorders, physical abuse or other serious concerns or psychological disorders.

These kids "don't know how to verbalize their feelings, and instead, act them out by self-injuring," Serani writes. Kids might self-harm to soothe deep sadness or other overwhelming emotions. They might do it to express self-loathing or shame. They might do it to express negative thoughts they can't articulate. They might do it because they feel helpless.

Research has found that self-harm is an addictive behavior. "Clinical studies link the role of opiates. When a child self-harms these feel-good endorphins flood the bloodstream. The rush is so pleasing that a child learns to associate self-harm as soothing, instead of being destructive," Serani writes.

Self-harm is called non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) because there's no intention to commit suicide. However, as Serani cautions in her book, self-injury can lead to deliberate suicide.

If you notice signs of self-harm, take your child to a therapist for a professional evaluation. A therapist will determine whether self-harm is suicidal or non-suicidal by administering a suicide assessment (and ascertain if other concerns are present). They'll also teach your child healthy techniques for dealing with painful emotions or situations.

In addition to taking your child to see a mental health professional, there are other ways you can help them reduce the urge to self-harm. In *Depression and Your Child*, Serani lists these valuable tips.

1. Create a coping kit.

Put positive and uplifting items in a shoebox or another container, which your child can use when they get the urge to self-harm. This can be anything from a journal to art supplies to upbeat music to photos of friends, family or their heroes. Include anything your child finds calming or inspiring.

2. Model positive imagery.

Visualizing a beautiful, serene place is a great way to reduce anxiety or painful emotions. When you practice positive imagery in front of your child you help them strengthen these skills. Serani suggests talking aloud as you describe a soothing landscape – like a beach – or positive memories of a place you've been to. Use vivid details in your descriptions.

3. Talk about triggers.

Help your child better understand the types of situations and stressors that trigger their negative feelings. As Serani notes, "If it's a test coming up in school, a social event or a dentist appointment, talk about how the days leading up to it can feel stressful." This helps your child be prepared and have the necessary skills at their disposal. Also, talk about your personal triggers and the healthy ways you cope.

4. Suggest using less severe behaviors.

If the urge to self-harm is still present, Serani suggests "using less severe activities," such as "holding an ice cube, tearing paper, shredding a sheet, snapping a rubber band, sucking a lemon peel and pounding a pillow."

5. Suggest engaging in physical activities.

According to Serani, the rush of adrenaline in physical activities, such as running, dancing and playing chase with their pet, actually produces the same chemical surge that self-injury does.

6. Be compassionate about setbacks.

Stopping self-harming behavior isn't easy, and it'll take time. Your child may have setbacks. The best approach if a setback occurs is to offer nonjudgmental support. "Research shows that shame, criticism, or overreaction when parents see a wound causes children to withdraw back into self-harming behaviors," Serani writes.

Again, if you think your child is self-harming, make an appointment with a therapist for a professional assessment, and support them in practicing healthy coping strategies.

Overcoming self-harm isn't easy, but, with effective intervention, your child can stop these behaviors and get better. The key is to get help.

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Parenting a Child Who Has Experienced Abuse or Neglect: How Can I Help My Child Heal?

Knowing the possible effects of child abuse and neglect is a first step. This section explores some strategies for helping your child or youth overcome these traumas, including some techniques for discipline that can help prevent future abuse or retraumatization.

Building Resilience and Promoting Protective Factors

Resilience is a child or youth's ability to cope, and even thrive, following a negative experience. This is not an inherent trait but something that has to be developed and nurtured.

Some of the ways you can help your child build resilience include:

- **Build strong connections** with friends and family that can support children during challenges and teach them to think about and consider other people's feelings.
- **Allow children to feel their feelings.** Teach them how to describe those feelings, and commend them for expressing feelings of hurt or sadness without acting out.
- **Be consistent.** If you say you'll be there, be there. If you say you'll listen to concerns, listen. This will help to teach your child that people can be trusted.
- **Be patient.** Children's reactions to trauma vary as widely as the types of trauma one can experience. There isn't a one-size-fits-all solution.
- **Express your support.** Express love and support for your child verbally and physically. Express your love through words, notes, and hugs.
- **Teach your child the importance of healthy behaviors.** Have open and honest talks about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, smoking, and sexual promiscuity. Teach your child the importance of eating properly and exercising.

Experiencing abuse or neglect doesn't mean your child will develop poor health or negative well-being outcomes. When caregivers and parents foster protective factors—circumstances in families and communities that increase the health and well-being of children and families—it may lessen the negative effects of maltreatment (Pizzolongo & Hunter, 2011). A strong and secure emotional bond between children and their caregivers is critical for children's physical, social, and emotional development, including their ability to form trusting relationships, exhibit positive behaviors, and heal from past traumas.

The healing process is not always a clear, straight path, and it takes time. Some things you can do to help your child heal include:

- *Address the child's physical safety first by letting him or her know that no one will physically lash out. This will help the child create feelings of trust and open up to psychological and emotional healing.*
- *Address the past as the past. Help the child identify elements of his or her current life that are different from the past. Use this as an opportunity to discuss new boundaries and expectations to encourage feelings of belonging and attachment (The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center, 2012).*

Building a Strong Relationship With Your Child

A child's earliest relationships are some of the most important. Attachment is the sense of security and safety a child feels with caregivers and is important for your child's physical, emotional, mental, and psychological development. It is formed through consistent, positive affection and emotional interactions. The issues and challenges most caregivers face with children who have experienced maltreatment is the result of a break in attachment during the first 3 years of life (Keck & Kupecky, 2002).

To foster a secure relationship with a child:

- **Be available.** Provide consistent support to build feelings of trust and safety.
- **Offer comfort.** Support the child when he or she is upset, modeling appropriate displays of affection and building the child's self-esteem.
- **Be respectful.** Let your child know that you will keep him or her safe.

Resources for building resilience and promoting protective factors

The APA's Parenting After Trauma: Understanding Your Child's Needs: A Guide for Foster and Adoptive Parents: <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacyand-policy/aap-health-initiatives/healthy-foster-care-america/Documents/FamilyHandout.pdf>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network offers a training curriculum, Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A Workshop for Resource Parents: <http://www.nctsn.org/products/caring-for-children-who-have-experienced-trauma>

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WHAT ARE YOU DOING THIS SUMMER?

How about hanging out with your siblings for a weekend of fun, adventure, and connection at Camp Catch-Up? Together, you can enjoy everything camp has to offer: canoeing, ropes courses, water activities, hiking, and more – *and it's completely free!*

Quality time + adventures with your siblings? You gotta be there. You can choose from two weekends, depending on what's closer:

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HALSEY, NE

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SUNDAY, JUNE 18.

EASTERN NE CAMP
NEBRASKA STATE 4-H CENTER
GRETNA, NE

FRIDAY, JULY 14 -
SUNDAY, JULY 16.

Ready to apply? Have your parent or guardian go to campcatchup.org to apply online or download, print, and submit your application. Just visit campcatchup.org/be_a_camper.html. (Note: Younger campers can attend on a case-by-case basis.)

1. Must be 8 years old by the first day of camp. Younger siblings are accepted on a case by case basis.
2. Have at least one sibling not residing with the camper also attend camp.
3. Have the ability to understand the purpose of camp.

Transportation will be offered at designated sites across the state.

Question? Contact Alana Pearson at 402-380-4552 or apearson@nebraskachildren.org.



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Parenting a Child Who Has Been Sexually Abused: Establishing Family Guidelines for Safety and Privacy

There are things you can do to help ensure that any child visiting or living in your home experiences a structured, safe, and nurturing environment. Some children who have been sexually abused may have a heightened sensitivity to certain situations. Making your home a comfortable place for children who have been sexually abused can mean changing some habits or patterns of family life. Incorporating some of these guidelines may also help reduce foster or adoptive parents' vulnerability to abuse allegations by children living with them. Consider whether the following tips may be helpful in your family's situation:

- **Make sure every family member's comfort level with touching, hugging, and kissing is respected.** *Do not force touching on children who seem uncomfortable being touched. Encourage children to respect the comfort and privacy of others.*
- **Be cautious with playful touch, such as play fighting and tickling.** *These may be uncomfortable or scary*
- **Help children learn the importance of privacy.** *Remind children to knock before entering bathrooms and bedrooms, and encourage children to dress and bathe themselves if they are able. Teach children about privacy and respect by modeling this behavior and talking about it openly.*
- **Keep adult sexuality private.** *Teenage siblings may need reminders about what is permitted in your home when boyfriends and girlfriends are present. Adult caretakers will also need to pay special attention to intimacy and sexuality when young children with a history of sexual abuse are underfoot.*
- **Be aware of and limit sexual messages received through the media.** *Children who have experienced sexual abuse can find sexual content overstimulating or disturbing. It may be helpful to monitor music and music videos, as well as television programs, video games, and movies containing nudity, sexual activity, or sexual language. Limit access to grownup magazines and monitor children's Internet use. In addition, limit violent graphic or moving images in TV or video games.*
- **Supervise and monitor children's play.** *If you know that your child has a history of sexual abuse, it will be important to supervise and monitor his or her play with siblings or other children in your home. This means having children play within your view and not allowing long periods of time when children are unsupervised. Children may have learned about sexual abuse from others and may look for times to explore these activities with other children*

if left unsupervised. It will be important for parents and caretakers to be cautious but avoid feeling paranoid.

- **Prepare and develop comfort with language about sexual boundaries.** *It will be important for you to be proactive in developing and practicing responses to children who exhibit sexual behavior problems. Many parents feel uncomfortable addressing the subject so they ignore or avoid direct discussions. For example, some parents are able to say, "Your private parts belong to you, and it's okay to touch them in private." Some parents hesitate to give this kind of permission, believing it's sinful behavior. In those cases, you might want to deliver different messages. When children have been abused, you can say, "Just like it was not okay for so-and-so to touch your private parts, it's not okay for you to touch other people's private parts." You might also give clear directives, "We don't use that language in this house," if it's offensive, or "I'd like you to use different words so that we can really hear what you're saying." Because there are so many differences in the messages parents want to convey to their children, it is useful to prepare ahead and be proactive.*

If your child has touching problems (or any sexually aggressive behaviors), you may need to take additional steps to help ensure safety for your child as well as his or her peers. Consider how these tips may apply to your own situation:

- **With friends.** *If your child has known issues with touching other children, you will need to ensure supervision when he or she is playing with friends, whether at your home or theirs. Sleepovers may not be a good idea when children have touching problems.*
- **At school.** *You may wish to inform your child's school of any inappropriate sexual behavior; to ensure an appropriate level of supervision. Often this information can be kept confidential by a school counselor or other personnel.*
- **In the community.** *Supervision becomes critical any time children with sexual behavior problems are with groups of children, for example, at day camp or afterschool programs.*

Keep the lines of communication open, so children feel more comfortable turning to you with problems and talking with you about anything—not just sexual abuse. Remember, however, that sexual abuse is difficult for most children to disclose even to a trusted adult and that, ordinarily, children do not volunteer information about their sexual development.

For more information about developing a safety plan for your family, see: Create a Family Safety Plan Stop It Now! http://www.stopitnow.org/family_safety_plan

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Sex Trafficking

Ivy Bloom, DHHS Program Specialist

Victims of sex trafficking include a broad range of populations such as missing and homeless youth, youth in the foster care system, refugees, and LGBTQ youth. Many of these youth who are trafficked have interacted with the child welfare system at some point in their lives.



SEX TRAFFICKING

50% of all trafficking victims are children

888-373-7888
NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

Visit www.humantraffickinghotline.org for more information

One common characteristic of youth who have been recruited for sex trafficking, is their history of child abuse; which includes mental, physical, and sexual abuse. Often youth who are abused in the home suffer from psychological issues that draw them to, or make them susceptible to traffickers who recognize their low self-esteem caused by feeling neglected or abandoned by their families. Given that traffickers do target highly vulnerable youth, foster parents and service providers should be made aware of the dangers of trafficking and work on closing the avenues available to traffickers in recruiting youth for commercial sexual exploitation.

Traffickers use elements of power and control to recruit such as:

- *emotional violence*
- *isolation*
- *physical violence*
- *economic dependence*
- *purposeful manipulation*
- *sexual violence*

Traffickers not only use power and control, but they pretend to be a boyfriend or significant other, using feigned affection and manipulation to elicit commercial sex or services from the youth. Many times this works because the youth has not felt cared about or loved.

Some key indicators that a youth may be in a trafficking situation include the following:

- *The youth is being controlled by another person*
- *Threats have been made against the family members of the youth*
- *The youth has an excess amount of cash or multiple cell phones*
- *Possession of hotel keys*
- *Inability or fear to make eye contact*
- *Not enrolled in school*
- *Homeless youth*
- *Sleeping or living separately from family*

Foster parents and service providers have an opportunity to help protect these youth by building a rapport, creating normalcy for the youth within the foster family, creating positive attachments and meaningful relationships, teaching the youth problem solving skills and how to reconcile after disagreements.

Be positive and don't give up on the youth, it's so important to work with these youth to keep them in a safe and stable placement. By listening, understanding, caring for and about the youth will help them to feel Love and Hope.

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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
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