



Alabama Pre/Post Adoption Connections

FALL 2014

ISSUE 38

APAC is a collaborative effort between Children's Aid Society and the Alabama Department of Human Resources to provide education and supportive services to strengthen and empower Alabama's adoptive families.

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Trauma Informed Therapy

- A Parent's Perspective -

The impact of trauma in early childhood has far-reaching effects and has been shown to cause serious physical and psychological harm, even into adulthood. Fortunately, these effects can be ameliorated with targeted treatments and intervention – one of the most powerful being a strong, loving attachment to a forever family. The counseling team at APAC takes a trauma-informed, attachment-focused approach in all of the therapeutic interventions used with families. This approach provides parents with a framework for helping their child, which includes a strong emphasis on attachment, nurturance, empathy and love.



Adoptive parents often struggle to find the best ways to handle their children's complex feelings and behaviors, especially those that are rooted in past trauma. Shanda and Robin Kent are adoptive parents who have worked with an APAC counselor for the past ten months. The family sought services after the adoption of their two delightful little girls, now ages two and three. Shanda graciously volunteered to share her experiences with the hopes of helping and encouraging other adoptive parents.

Shanda explained that the trauma-informed care approach used by the counseling team at APAC made her more aware of the root of her children's behavior so that she could pay attention to the fact that some behaviors were rooted in their early trauma. "It has made me stay more in-tune with them. It has helped me

stop and reflect on their past and realize there is a reason for the behavior that is happening, so I don't get as upset about it," she said.

Attachment is a complex and oftentimes confusing concept. Shanda reported that participating in APAC Adoptive Family counseling has affected her entire family and their attachment to one another in a positive way. "You have to have a different approach in order to build the attachment and make it work. Because you're not so harsh, it helps them build the attachment and make it better. In their past, people had been harsh from day one. That really harsh stuff can make them revert back and make them think you are like everyone else in their past," she explained.

She advises adoptive parents to seek counseling "as soon as you realize that you cannot handle something or at the first sign of something outside of your capabilities." She reports that the APAC counselors have more ideas about what does and doesn't work. "It doesn't just help the kids, it helps the parents too," she said. Shanda encourages parents to keep an open mind and keep trying different things until you find something that works.

References:

www.cestudy.org

www.childtrauma.org

- Layla Neimann, MSW, LCSW
APAC Family Counselor

Empowering Adoptive Families

The purpose of the APAC program is to *support, strengthen, and empower* adoptive families as they navigate the adoption journey. This edition of our newsletter focuses on information that does that very thing by sharing information that can empower adoptive families to be adoption experts and advocates within their own homes and adoption communities. One article is by a parent who approaches parenting by looking at the underlying reasons behind behaviors and then uses a love-based and attachment-focused parenting style. Another section talks about "Trauma Informed Care," what it is and how to use it in parenting. Highlights from APAC's recent workshop, "Creating Sexual Safety in Adoption and Foster Care" is summarized to provide tips for parents who have children with histories of sexual abuse. The APAC Library section highlights resources that our APAC counselors use regularly with families. The camp pictures and quotes in this edition certainly provide a glimpse into the joys of attending Camp APAC. But they also help us understand the impact of adoption camp and the importance of connecting with other children who are in adoptive families. And there is more...



Knowledge is power and this newsletter hopes to inform, inspire and empower you. We cannot underestimate the importance of connecting with other adoptive families and resources to equip adoptive parents with the tools to be the best advocates, teachers, and experts for their children. We are committed to being a resource for you, creating places where you can connect with other adoption resources. Let me encourage all adoptive families to participate in our Adoptive Family Groups and special events. New adoptive parents are encouraged to link up with experienced adoptive families for support.

APAC exists to support, strengthen, and empower adoptive families. Please help us be aware of what is needed, and hopefully we can partner together to make a difference!

- Debra Hawk Finley, MSW, LCSW, PIP
APAC Program Director

Change a Life Through Adoption

*APAC needs your help
recruiting families for Alabama's
"Waiting Children." If you would be willing
to partner with us, please contact us.*

1-866-ALKIDS

New GPS Classes Beginning!

- **Birmingham**
- **Huntsville**
- **Dothan**
- **Montgomery**

Creating Sexual Safety in Adoption and Foster Care



APAC Trained Therapist Network Speaker
Dr. Wayne Duehn, MSW, PhD, LCSW

APAC recently hosted a series of statewide trainings on “Creating Sexual Safety in Adoption and Foster Care,” led by Dr. Wayne Duehn, a national lecturer and trainer. Dr. Duehn holds a faculty position in the School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Arlington. In addition, he is a consultant to many organizations including the Casey Family Programs, National CASA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters Association, and the National Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers. He is co-author of *Beyond Sexual Abuse: The Healing Power of Adoptive Families* and recently developed a child abuse prevention program for the Department of Defense Dependents Schools, which has been implemented worldwide.

Dr. Duehn’s passion is equipping foster and adoptive parents with the skills and techniques required to effectively parent a child victim of sexual abuse. During the four 1-day trainings, Dr. Duehn presented a training program designed to develop highly skilled workers and foster/adoptive parents in the use of concrete interventions with sexually abused children as they attempt to address the special needs of these children. Dr. Duehn contends that as many as 75-85% of children in out of home placements have been sexually abused and that such abuse is often unknown to the agency or foster/adoptive parents who attempt to help these children. Therefore, learning how to address previous sexual abuse becomes key. Dr. Duehn provided hope by stating that for these sexually abused children, there can be a 94% recovery rate with proper support and education. Recovery was defined as the trauma no longer playing a major issue in the victim’s life and it no longer affecting day-to-day problem solving.

75-85%
of children in
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abused

Below are some highlights from the training:

- ⇒ Foster/adoptive parents can have the most impact on recovery from abuse since they spend the most time with the child – healing comes from the care they receive.
- ⇒ Foster/adoptive parents need to create a safe environment where the child can talk about the abuse, if they choose to do so. These feelings need to be understood and validated.
- ⇒ Foster/adoptive parents should not become overly focused on the child’s behavior and discipline techniques. Acting out can be a normal reaction to traumatic events.

Dr. Duehn maintains that in order for children to work through previous trauma, safety is a prerequisite for healing. He offered practical suggestions for creating sexual safety in the home, which were highlighted through role playing and video excerpts. Below are some tips for creating sexual safety in the home:

- ⇒ Talk openly with the foster/adopted children about your desire for them to feel safe in your home.
- ⇒ Create house rules which include guidelines about individual touch, privacy, clothing, etc. Allow children some input concerning how other family members can show them physical affection (high fives, side hugs, pats on the shoulder, etc.) - Enforce the rules.
- ⇒ Consider a sexual safety contract where all family members sign and agree to the terms.
- ⇒ Consider purchasing an electronic monitoring devices for the home. For a relatively low cost (under \$50), parents can be alerted to children leaving their bedroom at night.

Sexual abuse is a traumatic experience for children and can lead to severe behavioral issues. But with care from properly trained foster and adoptive parents who understand trauma, these children can heal.

- Robbie Shockey, M.S. and Lindsey Gurley, LGSW
APAC Family Support Worker III

CAMP APAC 2014 Annual Report



On June 17, 140 campers, ages 9–18, arrived at our annual Camp APAC, held this year at YMCA's Camp Chandler in Wetumpka, Alabama! The week was filled with a number of outdoor activities like horseback riding, canoeing, kayaking, boating, swimming, the infamous GaGa ball and many other games and events! Amidst all of these outdoor activities, the benefit of Camp APAC extends beyond just the fun and excitement. It provides an invaluable opportunity for campers to be around other children "just like themselves," as well as a tremendous opportunity for socialization and relationship building. Campers were given the opportunity to participate in the "Pieces of Forever" Mosaic Art Project in which campers commented, "It gave us a chance to bond with each other." Another camper stated she liked the activity because, "I was able to show what I felt."

Not only do children benefit from the Camp APAC experience, but parents do as well! It provides a sometimes much needed respite! Take a look at some of the pictures and comments by parents from this year's camp experience, in the Camp Quotes and Photos section! The support that APAC provides adoptive families does not end with Camp APAC. APAC offers adoptive family groups and special events throughout the state that provide an opportunity for families to become acquainted and be supported by one another. Go to page 9 of this newsletter, visit our website or call your local APAC office for more information about our Adoptive Family Support Groups and Special Events! Stay tuned to your mailboxes and email at the beginning of the year for information on Camp APAC 2015.

– Carla Wilson
APAC Camp Director

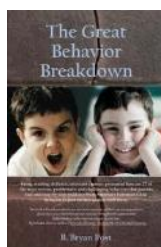


APAC Resource Library

www.childrensaid.org/apaclibrary



APAC Recommends:



The Great Behavior Breakdown

By B. Bryan Post

This book identifies 27 of the most problematic, serious, and challenging behaviors that parents face. Bryan Post breaks down these issues, and provides step-by-step guidance and insight for transforming your family conflict immediately.

counselors corner

The Tip of the



"That's just the tip of the Iceberg!"

Have you ever heard someone make that statement or maybe you have said it yourself? The tip of the iceberg is only about 10% of what we see. The other 90% is hidden under water. What does that have to

do with you and your family you may be asking? Children that have come to be part of your family through adoption, have experienced some form of trauma. Most of the time only the "tip" of the iceberg is visible in our children, seen through their behaviors. The challenge is to have parents understand that what is shown on the surface is being driven by what is underneath.

APAC practices a Trauma Informed Care model which looks at what the child has experienced versus what behaviors the child is displaying. This shift in care can really help children heal from their past trauma, as well as help parents feel less stressed by understanding where the maladaptive behaviors are coming from- a place of survival.

So while on the surface we you may see anger, distraction, or hyperactivity, under the surface there are more complex emotions due to unmet needs such as fear, rejection, and confusion. If, as parents, you can have an understanding of where the surface behaviors are coming from, you can work to help your child replace those maladaptive behaviors, with more appropriate ones.

Here are seven helpful tips for trauma care:

1. **Create a healing environment for the child.** This includes an environment that is predictable, consistent, and orderly. Routines and family meetings can help with this. Sometimes kids do not know what they are feeling. In those cases, you can start labeling your own feelings. "I am feeling pretty frustrated" or "it looks like you are sad". This will help them be able to communicate how they are feeling instead of using negative behaviors.
2. **Remain calm when they are not.**
3. **Model appropriate strategies for managing your emotions.** As parents, you have feelings too! You are not always happy and calm. So when you do get upset, you can model the appropriate way to handle those emotions. You can go on a walk, go to your room, or take deep breaths.
4. **Teach calming strategies to use when they are feeling upset.** You can make calm-down kits with them, teach them bubble breathing, and other relaxation strategies.



7 Tips for Trauma Care

- Create a healing environment.
 - Remain calm.
 - Model calming strategies.
 - Let children have a voice.
- Spend quality time as a family.
- Educate yourself and family on trauma care.

5. **Let your children have a voice.** This can be done by getting their input about things that affect them, such as holding family meetings,
6. **Spend quality time as a family.**
7. **Educate yourself and family on the effects of trauma on children**

There are many things you can incorporate into your home that will be useful. By using these tips you will be able to start melting the "iceberg" and create healing for yourself and your child.

- Jill Sexton, M.Ed, LPC
APAC Family Counselor

CAMP APAC 2014



"He LOVED camp and came away with a more positive image of himself."



"She had a great time, it was a comfort and an enlightenment to be around other adopted kids her age. She doesn't have any kids in her grade that are adopted, and sometimes the questions from other kids bother her. Now knowing that there are other boys and girls in her shoes helped her."



Can



"Our little girl was stepping high when we got her home and she is still remembering special times and certain events that were so much fun as well as the new friends, counselor and support people that she had contact with."

- Adoptive parent speaking of her child's camp experience.



"There are other campers who was adopted just like me and went through what I been through."



June 17 -20, 2014
Camp Chandler, Wetumpka, AL

"Yes, I think my son has expressed more respect and appreciation since coming back and we have certainly felt more connected in a way that is not easy to articulate (not sure of the words to describe it)."



Adoptive Family Mentor

Alabama Pre and Post Adoption Connections, a collaborative effort of Children's Alabama and the Alabama Department of Human Resources have launched a new adoptive family support service. The goal of this effort is to connect adoptive families in need of assistance with more experienced families for phone support and assistance.



If you would like to be connected to another adoptive family please contact your local APAC office.

- Huntsville 256-539-5828
- Birmingham 205-949-2722
- Montgomery 334-409-9477
- Mobile 251-460-2727

866.803.2722

Email: mentornetwork@childrensaid.org
www.childrensaid.org/apac

APAC Webinars

Free Online Training for Parents and Professionals

Upcoming Live Webinar Events

FREE CEU INCLUDED

October:

Navigating Psychotropic Medications in Foster and Adoptive Children

November:

To Search or Not to Search and The Adoption Triad

December:

Trauma Informed Parenting and How to Apply It to Parenting Foster and Adoptive Children

January:

The Impact of Family Violence on Foster and Adopted Children

We equip you where you are! No need to leave your home or office! If you have internet access, you can join our live webinars and receive Social Work, Counseling, and Foster Parent continuing education credits!

For further details and registration information, go to
www.childrensaid.org/apac



Adoptive Family Groups

APAC offers support groups that meet throughout the state, providing education and social interaction for adoptive parents and their children.

Northern Region

Calhoun County-2nd Thursday

6:30-8pm @ Greenbrier Church of Christ, Anniston

DeKalb County-4th Tuesday

6:00—7:30pm @ Fellowship Christian Center, Rainsville

Etowah County-3rd Thursday

6-7:30pm @ Christ Central United Methodist, Rainbow City

Jefferson County East-1st Thursday

6-7:30pm @ Huffman United Methodist, Birmingham

Jefferson County Multi-Cultural-2nd Tuesday

6:30-8pm @ Children's Aid Society, Birmingham

Jefferson County West-4th Thursday

6:30-8pm @ Pleasant Hill United Methodist, Bessemer

Madison County-2nd Monday

6-7:30pm @ First United Methodist, Huntsville

Shelby County-1st Tuesday

6:30-8pm @ First United Methodist, Alabaster

Southern Region

Autauga/Elmore County-4th Tuesday

6-7:30pm @ Glynwood Baptist Church, Prattville

Barbour County-3rd Monday

5:30-7pm @ First United Methodist, Eufaula

Henry County-1st Tuesday

6-7:30pm @ Headland First Baptist, Headland

Houston County-1st Monday

6:30-8:00 @ First United Methodist, Dothan

Geneva County-1st Monday

6:30-8pm @ First Baptist Church, Slocomb

Lee County-1st Thursday

6-7:30pm @ The Big House Foundation, Opelika

Montgomery County-3rd Thursday

6-7:30pm @ Frazer United Methodist, Montgomery

Baldwin County-3rd Thursday

6-7:30pm @ Eastern Shore Church of Christ, Daphne

Mobile County-4th Friday

6-7:30pm @ Regency Church of Christ, Mobile

All groups have parent sessions, child groups, and childcare unless otherwise indicated.

WHY JOIN an apac adoptive FAMILY GROUP?

ADOPTIVE-FAMILY-GROUP
CHILDRENS
ADoption

PARENT THERAPY SUPPORT

ALABAMA-PRE-POST-ADOPTION-CONNECTION

FAMILY GROUP

CHILDRENS ENCOURAGE GROUP

APAC DINNER GROUP

- ✓ Meet people in my same situation.
- ✓ Gain a better understanding of my child's adoption.
- ✓ Get ideas from other parents about adoption issues.
- ✓ Get support from peers and professionals.
- ✓ Provide an opportunity for my child to be with other adopted children.
- ✓ Have a place for my child to discuss matters of concern for him/her.
- ✓ Access all the opportunities available for my family to grow and thrive.
- ✓ Enjoy a free meal!

Alabama's Waiting Children

Zachary, born in February 1999, is a shy, respectful young man. He loves to play with action figures and cars. Zachary loves being outside. He is very good at building objects out of paper and tape. He loves school, especially history and science. He receives special education services to help him with language, speech, and organization skills. His teachers describe him to be polite and friendly.

Edith, born in May 2000, is an outgoing, friendly girl with a beautiful smile. She is very affectionate, charming and likes to please others. She loves to read, draw and color. Edith does well in school. She is in regular classes and has a desire to do well. Her favorite subject is Math. She is a favorite of her teachers.



Heather, born in November 2001, is a shy, quiet young girl. When she becomes acquainted with others she is very happy and loving. Heather loves to ride her bike, swing and play ball. She really enjoys school. Her favorite subject is Math. Heather receives special education to help in all subjects and with speech. She has several friends in school and is a favorite of all her teachers.



Jeffrey is a smart and energetic boy born January 1999. He is very hands on, motivated and enjoys electronics. He is interested in how things work and likes to take things apart and figure out how to put them back together. He does well in school especially in a small classroom setting. He is a "people pleaser" and likes to contribute to household responsibilities. Jeffery relates well to younger children and would also benefit from an older male sibling to be a positive role model. Jeffery is working on developing more appropriate social skills so he can build more friendships in the future. He is very likeable and enjoys receiving attention to show him that he is loved and needed. He wishes to have a two-parent household that is active in church. Jeffery needs structure as well as someone to take the time to teach him the needed independent living skills so that he can be a successful adult. Jeffery longs for a forever family.

Caitlin, born January 2003, is a friendly, playful, and pleasant child with a gigantic heart. She loves playing with friends, especially at school. She likes cheerleading and dress-up. She also enjoys riding her bike and watching movies. Caitlin needs a family that can help her with honesty and respect of other people. It is felt she will do best in a family with no other children. She also needs someone who will be patient and understanding to redirect her at times. Caitlin wants a home that is loving and nurturing. She is very excited about the possibility of being adopted, and she welcomes the idea of meeting new people and having a safe, stable, and nurturing home.



Visit www.heartgalleryalabama.com to meet more kids waiting to be adopted or to inquire about any of the kids you see here.

Brendan was born in January 2001. He loves to eat even though he can be a picky eater. Brendan loves to have room to roam and is a pleasant child to be around. He is very observant and pays attention to everything and everybody. Brendan needs a forever family that can help him reach his fullest potential and can attend to his lifelong special needs. He receives special education services to assist him academically. He enjoys watching television and one of his favorite shows is SpongeBob. He loves the sunshine and likes to spend time outside. Brendan's primary method of expressive communication is through pointing and showing what he wants. He responds well to picture cards when completing tasks. Brendan would benefit from having a two-parent family with siblings as he interacts well with smaller children.



Aaliyah, born in December 2000, is an active teen who likes to play basketball, softball and run track. She is currently a starting player on the basketball team at her school and is a very good player. She likes music (gospel, Rap and R& B). Aaliyah has high hopes of being a lawyer as well as going to the WNBA. She is a good student in school and makes excellent grades. Aaliyah describes herself as nice, kind, helpful and caring. She can be quick to react and would benefit from a patient family. Aaliyah loves her sister and values their relationship very much. Aaliyah can be quiet and shy but speaks what's on her mind at any given time. Aaliyah is a Spongebob fan.



Alexis, born in July 1998, likes praise and hip hop dancing. Alexis would like to be a beautician when she grows up and to own her own hair salon. She describes herself as outgoing, respectful and trustworthy. She has high hopes of visiting Hawaii one day. Alexis likes Hello Kitty and Scooby Doo. She likes Physical Science and Cosmetology classes. Alexis feels a need to fit in and would benefit from a positive peer group. She also likes to run track and has been on the team at a prior school.

She likes to be the center of attention and could use a family that will help boost her confidence so that she can improve in school.

Demonta, born January 2003, has a very nice smile. He is quiet and shy upon meeting new people, but once he acquaints himself with you he will extend conversation. Demonta is well mannered, respectful, and giggles when he is happy. He loves football, and he enjoys playing outside and riding his bike. His dream is to become an NFL player and be rich. Pizza is his favorite food, and his favorite restaurant is O'Charley's. Communication is vital in creating and maintaining a relationship with Demonta. He needs someone who can help him improve his communication skills, build self-esteem, and self-confidence. He is helpful and can complete projects/tasks with little supervision. Demonta is unique in his own way and developing a responsive relationship with him as well as spending quality time with him can help to uncover his gifts.





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Mobile Area

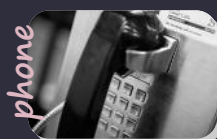
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