



Alabama Pre/Post Adoption Connections

SUMMER 2015

ISSUE 41

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.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

A Note from the Director	2
Practicing Self-Compassion	3
Healing with Yoga Calm	4
Teaching Children to be Kind	5
APAC Library	6
Self-Compassion for Professionals	7
TTN/Adoptive Family Groups	8-9
Waiting Children	10-11

Parenting with Self-Compassion

As adults, we all go through hard times. As a parent, what do you do when you fall into a guilt or embarrassment trap? Numerous activities, including yoga and meditation, can help bring us back to self-awareness. However, what we **tell** ourselves - simply changing the dialogue that goes on in our minds - is often more important than what we **do** for ourselves. Learning to let yourself "off the hook" when parenting is known as self-compassion. When you do this, you are also teaching your child that you can make a mistake, learn from it, and recover. This is not about excusing our parental behavior, but it is more about increasing our parenting skills. In the following conversation, we asked an adoptive parent of several children to give us guidance on her experience with self-compassion.



Q: As a parent, do you find yourself feeling as though you fall short and are not successful?

A: Absolutely! Very often. Raising children who've lost so much is incredibly difficult. Our children have so much loss and grief to work through, and they all work through it differently.

Q: When you find yourself reacting emotionally, what do you tell yourself?

A: I do react emotionally at times, but I'm getting better at it! It is a learned skill, and I remind myself often that I am so much better than I was at reacting to the behaviors of our

first, second, third... child. I try to cut myself slack, and I pray. A lot!

Q: When you feel stressed out, what do you do?

A: When I am stressed out, I like to walk outside and just breathe. Immersing myself in a place of quiet helps to re-center and regulate my emotions. I enjoy exercising almost daily, diffusing relaxing essential oils, playing soothing music, reading, touching base with my support system, and utilizing resources on childhood trauma.

Q: When you make a mistake in parenting, is that a teachable moment for your child?

A: Of course, I'm human and I make mistakes more often than I'd care to admit. I do forgive myself, and I use those moments to show my

child how to self-regulate. Our 5 year old and I have a thing we do after her raging subsides, and she is ready to work on "connecting" with me - I say, "I'm sorry I let YOUR mad make ME mad, and I yelled at you". She tells me she is sorry, and we forgive each other. I want her to learn that our relationship is essential to me, that I care about how we interact, and that no matter what happens - I'm not going anywhere.

Self-compassion increases coping skills, reduces physical symptoms, and enhances forgiveness for others. We hope you found our conversation with an adoptive parent helpful in exploring your own self-compassion.

- Kendra L. Alley, MS, LPC
APAC Family Counselor

A note from the Director

Take Care! Take it easy! Relax! Peace! Chill out! These are all expressions people may use to tell us to take care of ourselves. Do we really need special reminders to do that? Evidently so, as self-care is such an important part of healthy living and many of us do not take it seriously.

This newsletter is dedicated to self-compassion and self-care for all. Whether your role(s) are adoptive parent, foster parent, adoptive grandparent, kinship guardian, social worker, counselor, teacher, or other helping professional, these roles are best fulfilled when we recognize that we need to be aware of our limitations, be in tune with our needs, and take deliberate steps toward meeting our needs.

The dilemma lies within the fact that taking care of ourselves is easier said than done! How can we fit it in if we are so busy making ends meet or taking care of others? Well, the reality is that if we do not figure out a way to take care of ourselves to some extent, we cannot provide the best care for others that need our help. A simple analogy is the need to put on your own oxygen mask in a plane emergency before you assist someone else with their mask. Hopefully some of the writings in this newsletter will give you resource options to take care of yourself. Also, remember the many adoptive, foster, and kinship parent support services that APAC provides and consider exploring a way to put on your own oxygen mask first!



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



APAC Photo Contest #apacfamsie

APAC Family + Family Selfie = APAC Famsie

Thank you for being a part of the APAC family! We'd love to see more of you and your beautiful family. We are looking for you on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter! Upload a photo of your family practicing self-compassion or upload a photo showing us how you and your family practice self-compassion. All submissions will be entered into a contest to win a prize that will help in your efforts to be compassionate towards yourself.

Deadline is August 1!

Be sure to hashtag your photo! #apacfamsie

Not on social media? You can email your "famsie" to shaanschoten@childrensaid.org

Find us on social media:

[Twitter@childrensaidorg](https://twitter.com/childrensaidorg) | [Facebook/childrensaid](https://facebook.com/childrensaid) | [Instagram/childrensaid](https://instagram.com/childrensaid)



Tips on Practicing Self-Compassion

As an adoptive parent, often times it's difficult to show yourself some compassion when "you" are the last person on your mind.

There are some days when you may feel like the "Wicked Witch of the West," and you're melting. You are slowly starting to disappear as the person you once knew. You may feel like all you do is look for ways to assist your child(ren) in having the same life experiences as others, while filtering comments from those who judge the parenting decisions you are making. There may be moments when you don't know if you should call the pediatrician, therapist, psychologist, or just Jesus, as you try to figure out how to manage the new behavior you are seeing. We want you to know that APAC understands you! Instead of melting like the "Wicked Witch of the West," we encourage you to show yourself some compassion. One parent simply put it **"You have to also take care of yourself."** Since we know it helps to hear from others in your shoes, below are quotes from other adoptive parents who have learned how to practice self-compassion.

- **"Remember in your life, just as you are instructed to do on a plane... put the oxygen mask on yourself first and then your children."**

- **"You are not weak when you get angry and upset."**
- **"Don't let anyone ever tell you that you are not supposed to grieve. Grieve for as long as it takes. Day by day, week by week and then month by month; the days get better."**
- **"Grieving the losses is not incompatible with celebrating the triumphs."**
- **"Pencil it in on the calendar, never pen. Be flexible."**
- **"It's about progress, not perfection."**
- **"You don't always have to be the cheerleader. It's OK to say, 'This sucks sometimes and it's hard!'"**
- **"You'll need a sense of humor... Fast!"**
- **"Find one thing you love to do for yourself and do it consistently. I.e. take a walk, garden, scrapbook, read in a quiet place or just hang out with some good old-fashioned adults."**

Whatever you do, let it be something wonderfully and simply all for you! One parent stated, **"You're now in a secret world. You'll see things you never imagined: ignorance, rudeness and discrimination. But you'll also witness so many everyday miracles, and you'll know it. You won't think a milestone is just a milestone, you'll know it's a miracle and be present in that moment. You'll treasure things most wouldn't think twice about. You'll become an advocate, an educator, a specialist and a therapist, but most of all, you'll be a parent to the most wonderful child."** In order to be all these things we must remember to give ourselves a break. During these breaks we recharge ourselves and find the ability to press on even on our hardest days.

- Leslie Hales, LCSW PIP
Adoptive Parent





Healing with Yoga Calm®

by Renee Miller

The cries of our son ring so clearly in my mind. “Please don’t let go, Mommy!”

We could time the rages at this point. Every day around 5:30 p.m., it would begin — crying, followed by uncontrollable rage and anger. He and I had learned to sit on the floor with him in my lap, my legs wrapped tightly around his, and my arms bear-hugging his chest and arms. I held tightly and, in the midst of the rage, whispered in his ear, “I am here. I love you. I will never let you go.”

The ending was always the same — he collapsed from pure exhaustion, and I continued to hold tightly as he pleaded in a whisper, “Please don’t let go, Mommy.” With my face stained with tears, I promised him, “I will never let you go.”

As a mom to a biological daughter and two adopted sons, I wanted to do more than hold on. I sought answers to possibilities that would help him find peace in his small body. Through my yoga practice, I had learned to listen to the body and the heart to find a path toward healing. I knew when the body opens, emotions can be released, and the body and the heart grow strong together. I wanted my children to experience these benefits. After researching the best yoga program for kids, I found Yoga Calm®.

The multi-accredited and award-winning Yoga Calm Program was created by Jim and Lynea Gillen in 2000. Jim has more than 30 years of experience as a registered yoga instructor at the highest level recognized by Yoga Alliance, while Lynea is a licensed counselor and registered yoga instructor. Together, they created the Yoga Calm Program to address the needs



of children Lynea saw in her special needs classroom. Simply put — it worked!

As an innovative child education method, Yoga Calm reduces stress and engages both body and mind for optimum learning. Based on five basic principles — stillness, listening, grounding, strength and community — it helps children develop emotional intelligence, communication skills, trust and empathy and fosters healing. Yoga Calm works with a wide range of students, including those struggling with ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, anxiety and other behavioral/emotional challenges. The physical elements are safe for and accessible to people at all skill and fitness levels.

Today, I am a certified Yoga Calm instructor, have registered with Yoga Alliance at the 200 Level and have taught Yoga Calm in a classroom for one year. Through my company, Montgomery Integrative Health LLC, I am honored to be able to provide the gift of Yoga Calm as an offering of hope and support to children and the supportive adults who refuse to let go.

- Renee Miller

Adoptive Parent / Yoga Calm Instructor
www.MIHealthLLC.com



counselors corner

Self-Compassion and Affirmations Teaching Children to Be Kind to Themselves

"The art of being yourself at your best is the art of unfolding yourself into the personality you want to be. Learn to love yourself, be gentle with yourself, to forgive yourself, for only as we have the right attitude toward ourselves can we have the right attitude toward others." - Wilfred Peterson

Self-compassion means showing yourself kindness and understanding when you are having a difficult time. Self-compassion involves 3 things: 1) self-kindness – understanding and being non-critical, 2) common humanity – recognizing that personal inadequacy is something we all feel at times, and 3) mindfulness – allowing oneself to recognize and observe thoughts and feelings.

5 Ways to Foster Self-Compassion:

1. Teach children the truth about "the good life". Life is made up of "ups" and "downs". Part of growing up is learning how to accept the "bad".
2. First, help children identify what they are feeling. Help them recognize that others feel the same way at times. Identify short and long-term actions that may help the child feel better. Teach and model the language of self-compassion to your children. For instance, "Martha, you were very kind to share your toy with your little brother."
3. Assess the underlying cause of the behavior. Accept your child for who they are. Never allow a child to confuse their actions with their self-worth.
4. Shape future behavior, rather than punish the past. Help build habits that will serve the child in the long run. Extreme punishment can teach children to be self-critical.
5. Be a good role model. Model self-compassion rather than self-criticism. Be mindful of your thoughts and feelings regarding your own shortcomings.

Children's Exercises to Increase Self-Compassion:

- **Self-Hug** – Help children recognize how they feel when someone else hugs them. Have them practice hugging themselves to remember how much they love themselves when they feel bad.
- **Appreciation Journal** – Have children write down different things they appreciate about themselves.
- **Help a Friend** – Have a child pretend someone came to them with the exact same problems or feelings they have. Have them write down what they would say to help the friend feel better.

Positive affirmations are phrases used to help children feel better, create positive attitudes, and achieve desired goals. Affirmations help children build self-esteem. Empowering affirmations are always stated in a positive way. Affirmations work best when we are very relaxed. Include a mental picture which evokes emotions to go with the affirmation. Repeat affirmations often during your day. Use different ways to affirm: read it, write it, visualize it, and speak it.



*I am not alone in this.
I am loved.
I am good at...
I am a good influence on others.
I can do anything I set my mind to.*

- Kendra L. Alley, MS, LPC
APAC Family Counselor

APAC Resource Library is now online!

Visit our website or drop by our local APAC office to browse the vast collection of resources, or call our library directly to reserve items by phone.

- ✓ **DID YOU KNOW?** You can view a complete list of adoption related library resources, search by topic or keyword, and easily reserve favorite items through our new convenient website.
- ✓ **DID YOU KNOW?** Resources will be mailed to you in a convenient postage paid mail bag right to your door! APAC's resources consist of Books, DVDs, CDs, Webinars as well as children's resources.
- ✓ **DID YOU KNOW?** Foster Parents can receive certificates verifying items checked out from our library, that may be applied to continuing education requirements by DHR worker.

Request free online access today!

For more details contact our library

www.childrensaid.org/apaclibrary

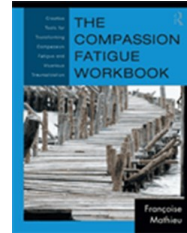
1-800-489-1886

APAC Recommended Resources:

- ⇒ When Helping Hurts - Preventing & Treating Compassion Fatigue
- ⇒ Vicarious Traumatization
- ⇒ Integrating Trauma-Related Care into Family Preparation & Support
- ⇒ Webinar: Secondhand Trauma
- ⇒ Webinar: Stress Management

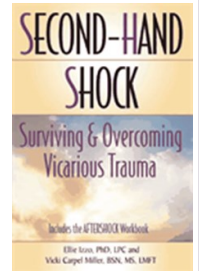
Compassion Fatigue and the Caregiver

This workbook is full of accessible, compassionate tools and information that will provide immediate relief for every helper.



Second-Hand Shock

This book offers acknowledgement and hope to millions of helping professionals through a method of recovery called The Rapid Advance Process created and used by authors with their own clients. Once you recognize the warning signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma, you will find relief as you work through the workbook.



Change a Life Through Adoption



visit our website:

www.childrensaid.org/apac/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

You deserve it, too! Yes, you!!!

This newsletter is filled with articles, tips and techniques for self-compassion and how to employ its use as a family. But what about you as a professional? Day in and day out we, as professionals, spend our time, energy and skills empowering others to be their best self, but rarely find time to do the same for ourselves. Self-compassion in its basic form is having kindness (compassion) towards yourself- acknowledging when we feel inadequate, self-critical or that we have failed; being moved/ impacted by those feelings, then acting to dispel those notions of failure, criticism and inadequacy while encouraging and uplifting ourselves, as we do for the numerous people we serve.

In the article, "A Little Self Love Goes a Long Way," Social Justice Solutions staff writer references Kirstin Neff, a leading psychologist in the study of self-compassion, who says, "Where self-criticism leaves us powerless and distraught, self-compassion is at the root of empowerment, learning, and inner strength. With self-compassion, we value yourself not because we've judged ourselves positively and others negatively, but because we are intrinsically deserving of care and concern just like everyone else. Self-compassion means treating ourselves as we would a friend. Rather than berating, judging, or adding to a friend's despair, we listen with empathy and understanding, encourage them to remember that

mistakes are normal, and validate their emotions without adding fuel to the fire."

Each year APAC, in collaboration with the Alabama

Department of Human Resources, hosts the Permanency Conference which is designed to not only take time to help professionals sharpen their tools needed to be effective in this field, but to also be intentional about creating a space for workers to enjoy themselves and to remind them to be compassionate towards themselves as they do this work. This year's keynote, Heather Forbes, spoke on "Finding Happiness," which is a key component of self-compassion. She explained there are key factors to happiness, some of which include our interpretation of a situation. We have to change our interpretation and cultivate optimism- there's always another reason. She stressed the importance of finding and creating space for humor throughout our day, as she passed out rainbow clown wigs while playing, "I like to move it." In addition, we have to practice acceptance. We can't fix others; we do the best we can and that's it. One other critical piece of advice she shared was to practice speaking affirmations over ourselves, "be the computer programmer of your mind."

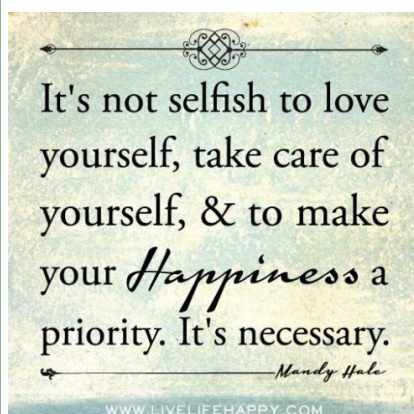
We encourage you (professionals) to practice some basic steps for self-compassion such as:

- Have tactics for tough times
- Boost your positivity ratio
- Get a good balance between work and life
- Detox your negative thinking patterns
- Be realistic in your reasoning
- Practice mindfulness

As referenced above, "you are intrinsically deserving of care and concern just like everyone else!"

For more on Heather Forbes see the ad in this newsletter regarding her upcoming visit to an area near you.

- A. Kai Mumpfield, LCSW, PIP
Southern Region Coordinator
Permanency Conference Coordinator



Alabama Pre/Post Adoption Connections presents:



Helping Families Heal

Effective Strategies
for Moving Beyond Trauma



Heather Forbes

Owner of the Beyond Consequences Institute
Internationally published author

Birmingham July 23

Montgomery July 24

8-9am: Check In

9-4:30pm: Training
lunch on your own

Register online:

www.childrensaid.org/apac

FREE TRAINING

APAC Webinars

Free Online Training for Parents and Professionals

Upcoming Live Webinar Events:

- **July:** Working with Adolescents
- **August:** Extended Family and Adoption
- **September:** Loss in Adopted Children
- **October:** : Adopting Older Youth Part 1
- **November:** Adopting Older Youth Part 2

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

Cullman County-1st Monday

6-7:30pm @ Antioch Baptist Church, Cullman

DeKalb County-4th Tuesday

6:00—7:30pm @ Rainsville Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 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 @ Huntsville First United Methodist Church, Huntsville

Shelby County-1st Tuesday

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

Southern Region

Autauga/Elmore County-4th Tuesday

6-7:30pm, Prattville

Henry County-1st Tuesday

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

Houston County-1st Monday

6-7:30 @ 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 @ 3 Circle Church, Fairhope

Mobile County-4th Friday

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

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

see what adoptive families are saying about networking and connecting with other families...

"I love this group!"

"This is my second visit, still new to the program"

"I find this group is very informative"

"Enjoy the fellowship"

"I enjoy talking in group, the information helps me with my sons."

"We enjoy the group"

"We find it helpful"

"Wonderful group, greatly appreciated"

"Thank you, the girls enjoyed it and we enjoyed our time " (regarding respite event)

We encourage you to get involved in an APAC Adoptive Family Group
or to recommend to the families you serve that they get involved in an APAC Adoptive Family Group.

Alabama's Waiting Children

Jamiaya, born December 2002, Shamyia, born August 2004 and Kamiyon (Millie) born July 2012, are a beautiful sibling group of three who are hoping to be placed together through adoption. They are currently separated and only seeing each other through visitation. These girls need structure and routine with a family that is patient but consistent. They would do well in both a 2 parent family as well as a single female household.



Jamaiya is described as laid back and happy. She enjoys dancing and hip hop music. She enjoys video games and watching TV. Jamiaya is a picky eater and doesn't like veggies, seafood or anything with onions. She loves macaroni and cheese! She enjoys church and is involved in the youth group. She has seasonal allergies but they are controlled.

Shamyia is friendly, outgoing and doesn't meet a stranger. She makes friends easily and is not a picky eater. She enjoys all types of foods and loves pizza! She enjoys cheerleading, step team, playing basketball and going to the park. She enjoys church as well and loves Sunday School. Her favorite holiday is Christmas!

Kamilyon (Millie) is a precious girl who smiles all the time! She enjoys playing with baby dolls and is very friendly! She is starting to make sentences and is working on being potty trained. She is a sweetheart!

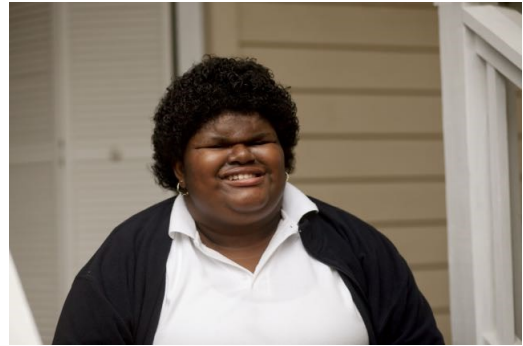


Jessica, born August 2005 loves school and playing with her friends during free time and at P.E. Her teachers describe her as always smiling, a hard worker and loving to learn new things. Jessica has cognitive delays and is in a multi-handicapped classroom setting. Jessica enjoys going to the zoo and likes all kinds of animals, especially dogs. Her favorite food is hamburgers and she loves going to McDonald's. Jessica enjoys playing hide-n-seek, kick ball and riding bicycles with her friends. She enjoys going to church and says her favorite part about church is singing. Jessica's caregiver describes her as loving and caring. Jessica thrives with a consistent daily routine.



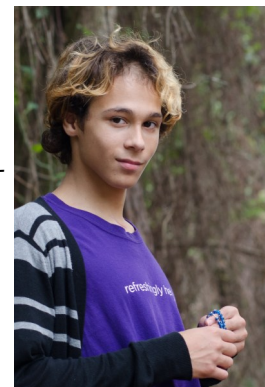
Visit www.heartgalleryalabama.com
to meet more kids waiting to be adopted or
to inquire about any of the kids you see here.

Ethel was born July 2000. She is a sweet girl who likes to be called by her middle name which is Ree. She attends the 8th grade and her favorite thing to do in school is color. Ree likes to have a very laid back and quiet environment. She prefers to not be in crowds of people with noise. She enjoys church but the choir sounds are difficult for her to be around so she attends sporadically. Ree has been in her current home 2 years and has adjusted very well to this single parent household. She likes to be a helper, enjoys movies and playing games on the computer. She loves her baby dolls and stuffed animals and sleeps with one every night. She can participate in all self-help skills with supervision to ensure things are done correctly. She enjoys eating out, shopping and loves animals. As long as she is kept busy she is usually very content.



Jacob, born August 1998 enjoys playing basketball, participating in school and church activities as well as community activities. Jacobs likes to watch television and play video games. Jacob enjoys assisting his foster parent with the sound system at the local church they attend. Jacob does well in most subjects in school but needs motivation at times to keep his grades from falling. Jacob is well liked by his teachers and peers. Jacob is working on showing appreciation when things are given to him and also working on "earning" privileges instead of expecting things to be handed to him. Jacob will do well in a home with a father that is proactive in interacting with him. The "ideal" home would be one where the parents praise and encourage Jacob but will also discipline him, as needed, using appropriate consequences. He needs parents that will help him develop independent living and coping skills to become a productive adult.

Charles, born August 1998, is a talented young man. He has a great sense of style. He enjoys fashion and has a great sense of style. He would like to be a cosmetologist and one day have his own salon. He is very creative. He writes his own music. He can sing and dance. Charles also enjoys helping others and wouldn't mind being a therapist one day. Charles' favorite subject is Science and favorite holiday is Thanksgiving. His favorite food to eat is pizza and restaurant is the Cheese Cake Factory. He also enjoys swimming, playing video games and gymnastics. Charles would like to have a family that is non-judgmental, loving and understanding.





CHILDREN'S AID
SOCIETY

2141 14th Avenue South

Birmingham, AL 35205

P: 866.803.2722

F: 205.933.8152

E: cas@childrensaid.org

W: www.childrensaid.org

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1873
BIRMINGHAM, AL

Connect With APAC

Central Office & Northern Region Birmingham Area

2141 14th Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35205

P: 205.949.2722

F: 205.933.8152

TF: 866.803.2722

Southern Region Montgomery Area

500 Interstate Park
Suite 508

Montgomery, AL 36109

P: 334.409.9477

F: 334.409.9474

TF: 866.944.1044

Mobile Area

572 Azalea Road,
Suite 101

Mobile, AL 36609

P: 251.460.2727

F: 251.460.2729

TF: 800.489.1886

Huntsville Area

P: 256.539.5828

F: 256.536.9497

TF: 888.539.5828

Wiregrass Area

P: 334.409.9477

F: 334.409.9474

TF: 866.944.1044

APAC Adoption Services Help Line

866.803.2722



[twitter.com
/childrensaidorg](https://twitter.com/childrensaidorg)



[facebook.com
/childrensaid](https://facebook.com/childrensaid)

www.childrensaid.org/apac