

Keeping Information, Data & Services Accessible to All the Families We Serve

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES

## Newborn Months Are a Critical Development Period

From birth to age three, a child's brain undergoes an amazing period of growth and development, producing about 700 new neural connections every second. This period of brain development is referred to as the critical period and is influenced by many factors, including a child's interaction with the environment and relationships with care providers. As resource parents, you play a crucial role in building your baby's brain.



### Learning About the Brain

In order to understand this rapid period of brain development, let's first understand the structure of the brain. The physical layout of the brain can be divided into three major parts. The brain stem, shaped like a narrow branch, connects the spinal cord to the upper brain. It controls reflexes and ensures that automated processes, like breathing and heart beating, keep working without you having to think about them. Behind the brain stem and below the upper brain is the cerebellum. The cerebellum is involved in balance, movement, and coordination. Because of your cerebellum, you can stand upright, keep your balance, and move around.

The third and largest part of the brain is the cerebrum. It sits above the brain stem and cerebellum. While each of the brain's structures plays an essential role, the cerebrum is the area most involved in higher processes like memory and learning. The cerebrum's outer surface is called the cerebral cortex. The folds of the cerebral cortex give the brain its wrinkled appearance and are an important feature of the brain's structure. Although in size it is less than one-fourth of an inch thick, it is where the brain's most advanced activities, such as language, planning, and decision-making, take place.

### The Importance of Neurons

The cerebral cortex is made out of layers of neurons that form an intricate web of connections that carry information from one region of the cerebral cortex to other ends of the brain. At birth, the brain has nearly a hundred billion neurons, as many as in adulthood. As the baby grows and receives a flood of sensory input, neurons get wired to other neurons, resulting in some hundred trillion connections by age three. In fact, during

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### Check It Out!

#### Who To Call?

Do you have a question about support for a child in your care, but don't know who to ask? Learn who contact on page 10. This resource includes information on everything from learning more about support groups to reporting a psychiatric crisis.

Take your test and survey online at: <https://goo.gl/GdR4BM>

Our Fall test winner is  
**Silvia Aguilar**

the critical period at age two and three, the brain creates many more neurons than it needs.

Why would the brain create more neuron connections than it needs? The answer lies in how these connections end up being used during the critical period. Different stimuli and tasks, such as hearing a lullaby or reaching for a toy, strengthen existing connections. The more that connection is activated, the stronger it gets. Connections that are not activated eventually fade away through a process referred to as pruning. Pruning may sound harsh, but it is generally a good thing. The pruning process streamlines a child's neural connections, making the remaining circuits work more quickly and efficiently. Between the ages of one and five, and then again in early adolescence, the brain goes through cycles of growth and pruning.

Experience plays a key role in deciding which neuron connections will strengthen and which will fade. When a child interacts with his or her environment, senses report to the brain about the surrounding environment and experiences. This input stimulates neural activity and strengthens neural connections. Speech sounds, for example, stimulate activity in language-related brain regions. If a child keeps hearing more and more speech sounds, connections between neurons in the language area will be strengthened even more.

## The Role of the Care Provider

Care providers are naturally an important part of a newborn's development process. Not only do infants interact with care providers, but also they prefer interactions with people above all else. They prefer human stimuli—your face, voice, touch, and even smell—to everything else. They are drawn to people's faces and would rather listen to the sound of your voice than any other kind of sound.

Researchers have been able to pinpoint this interaction with infants and children who are talked to, read to, and otherwise engaged in lots of verbal interactions. Studies have shown that children who are actively engaged in conversations have more advanced linguistic skills than children who are not as verbally engaged. Because language is a fundamental part of cognitive development, this simple action of talking and listening to your

child is one of the best ways to make the most of his or her critical brain-building years.

Exposing children to more words would seem simple enough. But language delivered by television, audio book, Internet, or smartphone, no matter how educational, does not appear to have the same effect as when delivered face-to-face by a person.

Below are some examples of concrete ways you can interact with your child to help him or her develop more neuron connections during ages zero to three:

### Narrate and explain activities to your child

For example, narrate activities your child is participating in, such as "You're picking up a big block!" Give him or her time to respond before repeating it again.

### Turn a walk into a learning opportunity

Point out big and small dogs in the park. Talk about the colors of the cars on the street. This kind of interactive learning makes new ideas and concepts stick.

### Respond to your child's communications and cues

See how long you can keep a back-and-forth conversation going. For example, if your child makes a sound, imitate it, then wait for your child to make another sound, imitate it, and so on. As another example, if he or she reaches for a book, ask, "Do you want this book?" Wait until he or she responds, and then ask your child to hand it to you. See if he or she reaches for the book without taking over. See what he or she does with it without taking over. These "conversations" help boost overall development, including social, emotional, language, and even motor skills.

### Give your child time to take in what you did and then copy you

Push a button on the jack-in-the-box, and then wait for your child to do it before you do it again. This teaches your child cause and effect. Seeing that he or she can make things happen similar to how you did it builds his or her self-confidence and encourages your child to want to take on new challenges.

## K.I.D.S.

Published bi-monthly for San Francisco County foster parents, resource families, NREFMs and kin care providers. To suggest a topic, submit an article, promote an event, or provide feedback, email Sharon.Walchak@sfgov.org.

### Editorial Staff

Editors: Agnes Balla and Sharon Walchak  
Amabel Baxley, Kimberlee Pitters, Heather Priebe

City and County of San Francisco/Family & Children Services  
PO Box 7988 • 170 Otis Street, San Francisco, CA 94120

Newsletter Website: <http://www.sfhsa.org/1890.htm>

### Helpful Phone Numbers

HSA Operator	(415) 557-5000
CPS Child Abuse Hotline	(800) 856-5553 or (415) 558-2650
Foster Care Ombudsman	(415) 558-2828
Transportation Duty Line	(415) 557-5376
Licensing/RFA/Recruitment Hotline	(415) 558-2200
Free Foster Parenting Respite Service	(415) 861-4060 x3035
Community Services	211
Non-emergency Government Services	311

FCS Agency Directory: [www.sfhsa.org/174.htm](http://www.sfhsa.org/174.htm)

# Margaret Sims

**November's Champion** for Children is Ms. Margaret Sims. For over 13 years, Margaret has supported San Francisco youth with open arms, providing love, support and guidance to the youth who have been in her care.

After talking with a family friend, Ms. Sims said she knew that being a foster parent was her calling. "I wanted to open my home in a big way," she said. "I started working with a local agency and have had over 13 kids in my care since."

Having two biological children already, Ms. Sims felt it was important to provide stability to other children in need. "I have always had kids in my home," she said. "My children's friends were always visiting our home so it was only natural to open our home to more children. My children have accepted all the kids who have been in my care and we became a blended family."

Ms. Sims' decision to keep siblings together demonstrates her deep appreciation for the importance of family. "Since I had the space, I wanted to make sure I kept the siblings together," she said. "I treat all the children who come in my care like my own. I value family and show them the same love I would my own children. I still communicate with the youth who have left my home. One of them actually comes and stays with me every weekend."

Having three teens can often be challenging but Ms. Sims continues to advocate for the youth in her care and juggles communication with PSWs, CASAs, therapists, schools and support counselors without skipping a beat. "I know it's hard for the youth to adjust when they are first placed outside of their home,"



Margaret Sims

she said. "The youth in my care call me Auntie. I believe the auntie role is just as important as mother role and I am willing to do anything I can to make sure they feel like they are a part of my family."

Ms. Sims offers the following advice to new foster parents: "Have patience. Continue to have a lot of love in your heart and make sure you are supportive."

Ms. Sims would like to express her gratitude to Kelly Bunce for all her hard work and support. "Whatever I need, she makes sure the kids and I are OK," says Ms. Sims. "All of the CASA workers are very helpful, too. My family, church, mother and brothers have also supported me as well. It certainly takes a village

to raise children."

On behalf of the Human Services Agency, we thank Ms. Margaret Sims for her continuous support, love and dedication to all San Francisco County youth!

## Support the San Francisco Foster Youth Fund

The San Francisco Foster Youth Fund is registered as a charity with the Community Thrift Store at 623 Valencia Street, San Francisco. Donate your used items in the name of "SF Foster Youth Fund, Charity #160" to support the Foster Youth Fund. Learn more at [www.communitythriftsf.org](http://www.communitythriftsf.org).



## October, November and December Birthday Shout-Outs!

Maria Alvarado	Lula Jackson	Lawrence Orloff
Benjamin Benton	Margie R. Johnson	Maria Orloff
Delrecia Booker	Mary Janice Jones	Jaylene Pascarella
Christopher Brodeur	Gregory Keaton	Ella Reed (Walker)
Sharon Brooks	Yvette K. King	Patricia Smith
Dana Chapman	Christine Koenig	Shawn Smith, Sr
Eric Chapman	Georgina Largaespada	Sylvia Soriano
Julia Cody	Jesse Lee	Sara Swanson
Kathryn Halliburton	Frank Marone	Cheri Toney
Juanita Hennington	Ilsa Miller	Linda Yoakum
Debra Hines	Rochelle Moore	

Use the enclosed survey form to be added to the birthday list.

## San Francisco Foster Parent Association Announcement

### Join Us for Our Bi-Monthly Meetings!

#### Next Meetings:

**Wednesday, February 13, 2017 • 5:30 – 7:30 pm**

**Wednesday, April 10, 2017 • 5:30 – 7:30 pm**

**Light dinner served**

**Contact Lorraine Hanks at (415) 756-5240 for location**

Please join us at our bi-monthly meetings to meet other foster parents. We are a stand-alone and member-run nonprofit organization to empower ALL foster, adoptive, relative and non-relative care providers. Our goal is for all care providers to come together to achieve high-quality care for the well-being of our children and youth. Please call Lorraine Hanks at (415) 756-5240 to RSVP.

# Annual FCS Resource Family Holiday Event: “Home Is Where the Heart Is!”

It was another memorable celebration at the Annual FCS Resource Family Holiday Event: “Home Is Where the Heart Is!” Every year, it is our goal to make sure all children and resource families enjoy the spirit of the holiday season, and this year through the graciousness of our community donors we were able to exceed our own expectations. On behalf of the resource families we serve, thank you to all who made this year our most memorable holiday celebration to date!

AMABEL BAXLEY, MSW, PPC TRAINING SPECIALIST



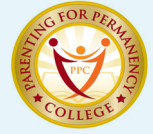
## Parenting for Permanency College Trainings January–March 2017

### Register Today!

To register and confirm training locations, please contact Heather at (415) 938-6555 or by email at hpriebe@csufresno.edu. Please note that if we do not meet the minimum number of attendees for each training we may need to cancel that series.

<b>Jan 2017</b>	RFA Pre-Service Training	January 10-19, 2017 English Tuesday/Thursday Series
	Advanced Resource Training	January 24-26, 2017 English Tuesday/Thursday Advanced
<b>Jan 2017</b>	<b>Spanish</b> RFA Pre-Service Training	January 7-11, 2017 Spanish Saturday
	<b>Spanish</b> Advanced Resource Training	January 21, 2017 Spanish Saturday Advanced
<b>Jan 2017</b>	<b>ABC's of Baby Care</b>	January 25, 2017 English
<b>Jan/ Feb 2017</b>	SA/HIV Infant Program	January 7 to February 15, 2017 English Saturday Cycle
<b>Feb 2017</b>	RFA Pre-Service Training	February 11-18, 2017 English Saturday Series
	Advanced Resource Training	February 25, 2017 English Saturday Advanced
<b>Feb 2017</b>	<b>Spanish ABC's of Baby Care</b>	February 15, 2017 Spanish
<b>Mar 2017</b>	RFA Pre-Service Training	March 7-16, 2017 English Tuesday/Thursday Series
	Advanced Resource Training	March 21-23, 2017 English Tuesday/Thursday Advanced
<b>Mar 2017</b>	<b>ABC's of Baby Care</b>	March 22, 2017 English
<b>Mar 2017</b>	<b>Spanish</b> RFA Pre-Service Training	March 4-11, 2017 Spanish Saturday
	<b>Spanish</b> Advanced Resource Training	March 18, 2017 Spanish Saturday Advanced
<b>Mar-Apr 2017</b>	<b>Spanish</b> SA/HIV Infant Program	March 11 to April 18, 2017 Spanish Saturday Cycle

## Parenting for Permanency College Calendar



### **Parenting for Permanency: A Journey of the Heart**

*Training:* to enhance care providers' knowledge base and skills. *Support:* to elevate care providers' spirits and to create bonds of positive and healthy relationships. Register for English and Spanish Support Groups with Sharon Walchak at (415) 401-4313 or sharon.walchak@sfgov.org. Location for all support group meetings is to be determined.

### **ENGLISH SUPPORT GROUPS**

Held every 3rd Tuesday of the month  
5:30 pm refreshments • 6 – 8 pm meeting

**January 17**  
**Mindfulness Meditation**  
**Presenter: Gwen Mazer**

**February 21**  
**Hair and Skin Care for Kids of Color**  
**Presenter: Karen Cox**

**March 21**  
**Understanding Secondary Trauma**  
**Presenter: Rocio Rodriguez**

### **SPANISH SUPPORT GROUPS**

Held every 3rd Thursday of the month  
5:30 pm refreshments • 6 – 8 pm meeting

**January 19**  
**Self Care**  
**Presenter: Venecia Margarita**

**February 16**  
**Topic TBA**  
**Presenter: Natalia Estasi**

**March 16**  
**Topic TBA**  
**Presenter: Irma Romero**

City College of San Francisco

## FREE CPR & First Aid Training Schedule

All classes are held at John Adams Campus, 1860 Hayes Street, Room 44, San Francisco. San Francisco foster parents MUST register by calling (415) 267-6523 or emailing fcstrain@ccsf.edu. Include the class number of the training session you would like to enroll in. Pre-registration is required; class size is limited.

Class #	Day	Date	Time	Class	Class #	Day	Date	Time	Class
CPR300A English	Sat	1/21/17	9:00am - 1:00pm	CPR	CPR300CSP Spanish	Sat	3/25/17	9:00am - 1:00pm	CPR
FA300A English	Sat	1/21/17	1:30pm - 5:30pm	First Aid	FA300CSP Spanish	Sat	3/25/17	1:30pm - 5:30pm	First Aid
CPR300ASP Spanish	Sat	1/28/17	9:00am - 1:00pm	CPR	CPR300E English	Sat	05/13/17	9:00am - 1:00pm	CPR
FA300ASP Spanish	Sat	1/28/17	1:30pm - 5:30pm	First Aid	FA300E English	Sat	05/13/17	1:30pm - 5:30pm	First Aid
CPR300C English	Sat	3/18/17	9:00am - 1:00pm	CPR	CPR300F English	Sat	6/24/17	9:00am - 1:00pm	CPR
FA300C English	Sat	3/18/17	1:30pm - 5:30pm	First Aid	FA300F English	Sat	6/24/17	1:30pm - 5:30pm	First Aid

## SPRING 2017 SCHEDULE

City College of San Francisco Child Development & Family Studies Department

## Foster & Kinship Care Education

CCSF Evans Campus • 1400 Evans Avenue, Room 107, San Francisco

All classes meet the requirements for Continued Education for Licensed Foster Parents and Kinship Care Providers and specifically meet the mandated 8 hours of Continued Education. Certificates of Completion issued at the end of each session. Please register early by calling Brenda at (415) 452-5605.

### TALK TIME TUESDAYS AT EVANS CAMPUS

Jan. 17	Jan. 24	Jan. 31	Feb. 7	Feb. 14
10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm
How to Prevent Allegations	Child Abuse, Neglect & Reporting	Grief & Loss / Effects of Removal & Placement	Multi-culturalism in the Foster Care System	Activities Promoting Positive Self Esteem

Feb. 21	Feb. 28	March 4 (Sat)	March 7	March 14	March 21
10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm
Helping Children Manage Disappointment	Child Development	Sexually Abused & Exploited Youth	Effective Communication	Collaborating w/ CWW	Activities Promoting Attachment & Bonding for Children

### ADOLESCENT WEDNESDAYS AT EVANS CAMPUS

Jan. 18	Jan. 25	Feb. 1	Feb. 8	Feb. 15
10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm
Helping Youth Resolve Conflict	Educational Support For Children In Placement	Working with Probation Kids and the Law	Discharge & Emancipation	Understanding AB12

Feb. 22	March 1	March 8	March 15	March 22
10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm	10 am - 1 pm
Familial Effects of Drugs on Children	Tips On Behavioral Management	Effects of Domestic Violence On Youth	No Class Meeting- At State Conference	Self-Discipline

# Happy Birthday, Assembly Bill 490!

Enacted in January 2004, California's Assembly Bill 490 (AB 490) created the Educational Rights and Stability for Foster Youth Act. This legislation laid the groundwork for a number of educational rights for foster youth in the California school system. Its provisions require local school districts, county social service agencies and other professionals to support educational stability and equality for foster youth.

When foster youth experience frequent school transfers, they face numerous obstacles to academic success. Frequent school changes can lead to prolonged absences, placement in inappropriate classes, lost and outdated school records, lost school credits, and failure to obtain needed support services. School transfers may also result in educational disruptions that reduce foster youths' ability to connect with teachers, mentors, and peers, and force them to forego participation in extracurricular activities. As a result, many foster youth suffer academically and are unable to be part of a community.

Studies have shown that California foster youth attend an average of nine different schools throughout their time in foster care. The Institute for Higher Education Policy has estimated that it takes four to six months for a child to recover academically from the disruption of changing schools. In addition, foster youth struggle socially when they are forced to repeatedly make new friends at new schools that they have no idea how long they will attend. This transient feeling may eventually result in youth feeling disconnected from school altogether.

While much work remains to be done to improve the academic success and stability of California foster youth, AB 490 fought to address some of these challenges by creating the following rights for foster youth:

## Educational Equality

Foster youth are entitled to have access to the same academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all students.

## School Stability

Foster youth have the right to stay in their school (called "school of origin") for the remainder of the school year even if their placement changes.

## Immediate Enrollment

Foster youth have the right to be immediately enrolled in a new school if they have to change schools, even if they are missing academic or medical records normally required for enrollment, or owe fees or materials to a previous school.

## Preference for Mainstream School

Foster youth are entitled to attend a regular education program



unless the student has an individualized education program (IEP) requiring a different educational placement, or it is determined that it is in the student's best interest to attend a different educational program or to remain in the school of origin.

## Expedited Record Transfers

Foster youth are entitled to timely transfer of records. The law says that the placing agency has the responsibility of notifying the school of the child's last day. The new school must request records within two business days of the child's arrival and the old school must then also transfer the records within two business days.

## Credit and Grade Protections

Foster youth have the right to receive credit for the coursework they have completed. Schools must award foster youth with credit for full or partial coursework completed at another school. Additionally, foster youths' grades cannot be lowered due to absences caused by a change in placement, court hearing, or other court-ordered activity.

## Foster Youth Liaisons

Foster youth are entitled to receive help from local education liaisons. Education liaisons are to ensure a child's proper school placement and enrollment, and to assist with the transfer of grades, credits, and records.

Contact Gloria Anthony Oliver, San Francisco HSA Education Liaison, for questions or more information at (415) 557-5305.

# Completing FAFSA for 2017-18 School Year

The **Free** Application for Federal Student Aid, more commonly known as FAFSA, is the form that families fill out to apply for federal grants, loans, and work-study funds for college students. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Education and provides more than \$150 billion in student aid each year to more than 13 million students paying for college or a career school.

FAFSA can be difficult to navigate, and this can be especially true for resource families. For the purposes of filing a FAFSA application, a resource parent, legal guardian, or relative is not categorized as a parent unless that person legally adopted the student. Under these circumstances, a youth applying for FAFSA is considered an independent

student if he or she was in foster care at or before turning 13 years old. An independent student should not provide parents' information on the FAFSA and should instead fill out the form with his or her own information.

If a resource parent, guardian, or relative legally adopted the youth, they are considered to be parents in the same manner as biological parents. In this case, the parents should include their own information on the FAFSA form.

For the 2017-2018 academic school year, students and their families can submit their FAFSA application as soon as October 1, 2016. This is a big change from past years when the earliest date for filing FAFSA was January 1st prior to the start of the new school year.

Families will complete FAFSA based on their "prior-prior-year" income instead of prior-year income. This means families applying for aid for the 2017-2018 school year will use their 2015 tax returns when they apply. Because of this change, most families will no longer need to estimate their income for the year that just ended to file FAFSA as they did in the past.

The new October 1st date for submitting the FAFSA application aligns with the start of the college admissions season. In this way, families start the process sooner and have more time to weigh their options for school.

For more information about completing the FAFSA application, visit the Federal Student Aid site: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa>.

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 **Licensing Regulation**

## What's a HEP?

The **Health and Education Passport**, commonly referred to as a HEP, is a file containing a child's health and education history. The HEP is part of a child's permanent medical record and follows the child wherever the he or she goes. If a child is placed with a new resource family, the new resource family will receive the HEP. If a child returns to his or her biological family, the HEP also goes back to the biological family.

The HEP includes information about a child's health, dental, and education providers, the child's grade level performance, school record, immunization records, list of allergies, the child's known medical problems, current medications, past health information, developmental and mental health history, and any other

relevant, important mental, dental, health, and education information.

While Public Health Nurses enter health information into the child's HEP and Social Workers fill out education information for the child's HEP, it is everyone's responsibility to ensure the child's HEP remains up-to-date. Parents should take the passport to all medical, dental, and educational visits pertaining to the child. Remind teachers, doctors, dentists, mental health care providers, vision care providers, and other providers of the child's HEP so that they may review his or her educational and medical history.

Health providers may complete a Form 1132-C: CHDP Medical and Dental Forms at the time of your child's medical appointment. Provide any updated health

records (for example, the Form 1132-C) to your assigned Public Health Nurse and any updated educational information to your Social Worker. Care providers may request an updated HEP at any time from their Social Worker or Public Health Nurse.

The HEP serves an important purpose. As Michelle Barbary, RN, MSN, PHN, FCS Nursing Unit Charge Nurse explains, "The HEP allows a child's available medical and educational history to be captured in one document without the need to sift through records. It also allows health professionals and care providers to be on the same page about referrals and/or services a child received or may still need. This is why it is important to keep the HEP up-to-date."



# Common Questions from Resource Families

**Whether** you're a seasoned pro or just starting out, resource families have questions. Here is your opportunity to get them answered. Send us your questions and we'll provide you with our best advice.

My child is struggling academically in school but the school counselor said that because my child is not flunking, he isn't eligible to be tested for learning disabilities to receive services.

By law, schools are required to identify and evaluate all children who may have disabilities, including learning disabilities. The law, called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is the primary federal program that authorizes state and local aid for special education and related services for children with disabilities.

According to this law, children who receive passing grades but still struggle academically qualify to be evaluated for learning disabilities. To determine if a child is eligible for special education and related services, the school is required to do a comprehensive psychoeducational evaluation.

Federal law gives parents and care providers the right to request an evaluation of their child. You should request this evaluation in writing. Your letter does not have to be complicated. Simply state your concerns about your child's learning issues and request an evaluation be conducted. In most school districts you can give this letter to your school principal or school psychologist. This will start a mandatory time period in which the school must do an evaluation. For detailed information about your rights and what to expect, visit [www.courts.ca.gov/1106.htm](http://www.courts.ca.gov/1106.htm).

My child seems really sad and doesn't get excited or happy very much. I'm wondering if she could be depressed but I'm not sure how to tell.

According to Dr. Robert Hendren, former President of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco,



“normal sadness comes and goes and usually clearly relates to an incident. Clinical depression is like a dark cloud hanging over the child, and there's often a pervasive feeling of gloom, irritability and loss of interest.”

For children, it may be even more difficult to identify depression. The biggest difference between symptoms of adults and those of children is that while adults are usually sad and withdrawn, children are easily aggravated and may have irrational outbursts, says Dr. Hendren. “Children might not recognize that they are feeling depressed,” he says. “Often, they don't know how to identify this feeling and put it into words.”

If you suspect your child is depressed, talk to your doctor as soon as possible.

I want my child to be involved in more activities in San Francisco, but I don't want to spend a lot of money. Do you have any ideas for where I can take my child?

San Francisco has a wealth of resources for families with children, but the trick is knowing where to look. SFKids is a website funded by the City and County of San Francisco's Department of Children,

Youth, and Their Families and offers resources to parents on children's events, afterschool programs, and information on neighborhood parks and pools. You can search the site for events by neighborhood, season, and even age. Visit the website to access these resources and to sign up for the SFKids online newsletter: <http://sfkids.org>.

The San Francisco Public Library keeps an on-going list of activities and events in San Francisco free for children of various ages. The list includes information about San Francisco walking trails, museums, and music events. Check out the list here: <http://bit.ly/2hvLPU9>.

In addition, the San Francisco Public Library offers free children's programs at its various library branches. The activities range from story time, homework help, and afterschool films, to holiday crafts. Review the list here: <http://bit.ly/2gLdPnh>.

Consider also checking in with your local community center, church, or YMCA for additional children's activities.

*We want to hear from you! This is a new section of the newsletter, so send us your questions.*

## Resource Families Reach Out

The Human Services Agency is here to support resource families. Here are just some of the services, programs and staff who can answer your questions.

**I want to enroll my teen in the Independent Living Skills Program.** The San Francisco County Independent Living Skills Program (SF ILSP) is a program for current and former foster youth, Kin-GAP youth, and probation youth ages 16-21. Youth may join SF ILSP by referral through their child welfare workers, probation officers, and community partners, or may self-refer. Contact SF ILSP at (415) 230-3980 for more information, or check out their website at [www.sfilsp.org](http://www.sfilsp.org).

**I have a question about SafeCare.** SafeCare is effective in helping improve parent/child relationships and in maintaining child safety and well-being. Contact Deborah White, Home Director of Epiphany Center, at (415) 567-8370, ext. 4222.

**I have questions about the Kinship Guardian Assistance Program.** Caregivers caring for a relative child who is currently or was formerly a dependent of San Francisco County can contact LaDonna Powell at (415) 861-4060, ext. 3019.

**I want to learn more about a topic discussed during my support group session. Who should I contact?** For questions about topics presented at the support group meeting, contact Sharon Walchak, Public Health Nurse, at (415) 401-4313 or contact her by email at [Sharon.Walchak@sfgov.org](mailto:Sharon.Walchak@sfgov.org).

**I am feeling frustrated and overwhelmed and need to talk to someone about dealing with my kids.** Parenting is one of the toughest jobs in the world! We are here to listen, understand and help. SFCAPC Talk Line offers 24 hours per day, 7 days a week hotline for



parents and care providers of children and youth in San Francisco. Call us at (415) 441-5437.

**I have a question about receiving payment.** The Eligibility Worker (EW) is the person who can support you in resolving payment issues. If you don't know who your EW is, contact your PSW, Public Health Nurse, or RFA worker and they can tell you who your EW is.

**I have an idea for an article in the newsletter.** We are happy to take ideas and suggestions for KIDS newsletter. Please contact Sharon Walchak at (415) 401-4313 or [Sharon.Walchak@sfgov.org](mailto:Sharon.Walchak@sfgov.org) to share your idea.

**I need assistance in getting in touch with my PSW.** If you need assistance contacting your PSW or for any issue you don't know who to call, contact Arlene Hylton, Resource Family Liaison, at (415) 557-5067.

**I've been taking my child to the doctor a lot lately and I'm running out of forms. How can I get more?** Your public health nurse will be happy to

send you additional forms. She can also help you make any necessary medical or dental appointments and answer any questions about your child's medical or dental history. If you don't know who your Public Health Nurse is, call the Nurse of the Day (NOD) line at (415) 558-2656 and the NOD will tell you.

**My child is having a psychiatric crisis that may require hospitalization.** Call (415) 970-3800. This line is available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. However, if a child is a danger to himself or others, call 911 first.

**I am experiencing family violence.** If you are experiencing family violence, the Department of Public Health has put together a list of resources that may be able to help. Visit <http://www.leapsf.org/pdf/family-violence-resources.pdf>.

**I need to report child abuse.** If you suspect that a child in San Francisco is being abused or neglected, call the San Francisco Hotline at (415) 558-2650. You may also call the Family and Children's Services (FCS) hotline at (800) 856-5553 to make a confidential report 24 hours per day.

# Understanding the Quality Parenting Initiative

“Unless we change the way we interact with foster families and relative care providers and see them as partners, we will never have enough homes to care for children in foster care, and therefore we will likely never be successful at re-engineering our child welfare system,” says Greg Rose, Deputy Director of Children and Family Services Division in the California Department of Social Services.

The traditional model of supporting resource families assumes that parents understand the burdens that come with having a child in their care. This type of model creates a disconnect between the reality of caring for a child and the expectations of what it means to be a “good parent.” In reality, not all families are fully ready for the challenges that come with having a child in their care, especially not right off the bat.

The Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) model of parenting bridges the gap between the expectations of parenting and the reality of challenges that come with taking on a parenting role. QPI starts by first learning more about circumstances of resource families, as well as what motivated them to become resource parents, their expectations and needs. QPI then builds supportive

services and resources around these needs in order to better recruit, support, and retain quality resource families.

QPI first began as a multi-session discussion to develop a consensus on what parenting expectations should be and to thoroughly examine whether policies and practices support the fulfillment of these expectations. Agencies used this approach to provide an easier way to talk about the challenges that come with parenting and how to better recruit resource parents. This is how, many have said, QPI varies from other support service approaches for parents.

QPI is a different approach to supporting resource parenting because it does not impose a predetermined set of best parenting practices. Instead, the QPI model works with families to develop new strategies and practices to that better apply to their circumstances. The primary goal of QPI is to ensure that children have effective, loving parenting. The best way to achieve this goal is to enable the child’s own parents to care for him or her. If that is not possible, agencies must ensure that the resource or relative families caring for the child provide the loving, committed, skilled care both in the short term and to reach the child’s long term goals.

Through all this, QPI aims to rebrand foster care, not simply by changing a logo or an advertisement, but by changing the expectations of and support for care providers. The key elements of the process are defining the expectations of care providers, clearly articulating these expectations and then aligning support services to make those goals a reality.

When successful, QPI gives care providers a voice on issues that affect the children they are caring for and the support they need to care for the child. Agency staff and resource families work as a team to support the child. Care providers receive the support and training they need to work with children and know what is expected. Agencies rely on care providers and children’s feedback to guide recruitment, licensing, and placement reform. Resource parents and children alike are now encouraged to participate in meetings and help lead pre-service training.

When these changes are accomplished, the new brand of foster care becomes the basis for developing communication materials and designing integrated recruitment, training and retention systems.

*Look to this section in future issues to learn more about QPI and the initiatives taking place.*

## RESPITE/CHILD CARE PROGRAM

You may have heard of Family Support Services before, but did you know that they have expanded their respite/child care services to Contra Costa, Alameda and San Mateo Counties?

The Respite/Child Care Program is a free service available to all San Francisco certified resource parents and foster parents. The Respite/Child Care Program largely provides emergency respite care, most

often outside of a family’s home at licensed family day care homes day or night, including the weekends. Services can also be provided during the day in a family’s home by one of the program’s Family Support Specialists.

All care providers are trained to provide services for children with special needs. Services are available when adult care providers just need a break.

If you are interested in free respite care, contact (415) 861-4284 to speak to a Respite Childcare Coordinator directly. The intake process is short so parents can receive free respite care quickly. If you have any questions about the Respite/Child Care Program, contact a coordinator at the above phone number or contact N. Bruce Williams, Family Support Services Respite/Child Care Program Director, at [bwilliams@fssba-sf.org](mailto:bwilliams@fssba-sf.org).

# Be Ready for Snacks

Kids are often hungry throughout the day and looking for things to snack on. Instead of choosing chips, sodas, or cookies, help them make healthier choices by trying these tips:

- Kids are more likely to eat healthy snacks if they can easily see them. Keep a bowl of fresh fruit on the kitchen table.
- Remind your kids that healthy foods give them energy to play hard.
- Kids are hungry right when they get home from school or right before dinner. Having sliced fruits and veggies already prepared makes it easy to feed them. Try prepping them in the morning as you're making breakfast.
- Limit sugary beverages so kids are more likely to eat their fruits and veggies.
- Bring healthy snacks with you, such as a small bag of nuts, carrot sticks, or a piece of fruit, if you'll be out for long periods.

Try new vegetables and recipes! EatFresh.org has hundreds of healthy, easy, and tasty recipes, and tips for selecting, preparing and storing produce. Visit your local farmers' market for affordable seasonal produce like citrus, winter squash, and greens.



## Kale Chips

Time: 15 minutes

1 bunch kale *washed and dried*

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

¼ teaspoon seasoning (*onion powder, garlic powder, black pepper, etc.*)

Nonstick cooking spray

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Line 2 baking sheets with aluminum foil and lightly spray with nonstick cooking spray. Set aside.
- Separate leaves from center ribs of each kale leaf. Discard ribs. Tear leaves into small pieces. (This is a great task for kids!)
- Lay leaves on prepared sheets, sprinkle with vegetable oil and toss. Sprinkle with seasoning.
- Bake 3 to 5 minutes. Remove tray from oven and turn over each leaf. Cook another 3 to 5 minutes until crisp but not charred.
- Transfer leaves to plate and serve. Serves 4.

*Adapted from A Fresh Twist on Healthy Recipes by the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch. Leah's Pantry supports cooking healthy, nourishing meals. Learn more at EatFresh.org or by emailing [info@leahspantrysf.org](mailto:info@leahspantrysf.org).*

 **Activities for All**

# Manage Holiday Stress with Children's Yoga

As the holiday season approaches, many of us begin to look forward to spending time with family and friends. However, for children who were removed from their birth families, the holidays can be a difficult emotional time. Yoga practices can offset holiday stressors by providing a moment of pause amidst all the activity. Using breathing techniques integrated with physical postures, yoga builds coordination and concentration while promoting self-awareness and self-esteem. Try the following yoga poses and games with your child during this holiday season.

## Simple Yoga Breath Exercise

1. Take a deep breath in and hold it for a count of three.
2. Breathe out forcefully, like you're blowing out a candle.
3. Repeat this for five cycles of breath.

## Flying Bird Breath

1. Stand tall, with arms at your sides, feet hip-width apart, and imagine being a beautiful, strong bird. Pretend to prepare to fly by inhaling and raising your arms ("wings") until your palms touch overhead. Keep your arms straight.

3. Exhale slowly as you bring your arms back down to your sides, palms facing down.
4. Repeat in a steady motion with each breath. Inhale as you raise your arms and exhale as you lower your arms. As you repeat these motions, close your eyes and imagine flying in the sky during the pose.

## Loving Kindness Meditation

1. Find a comfortable seated position or lie down.
2. Close your eyes and think about someone you love.
3. Hold them tight in your heart and continue to think about that person as you breathe in and out for five cycles.

## Yogi Says/Red Light, Green Light Yoga

Use yoga practices to play traditional games. In Yogi Says, players do the yoga poses that the Yogi tells them to do if the instruction starts with "Yogi says." If the Yogi doesn't use "Yogi says," players do not do the pose. For Red Light/Green Light Yoga, the Stoplight starts the game by calling "Green light!" and other players then use yoga poses to move forward, holding the yoga pose during "Red light!" times.

# K.I.D.S. Newsletter

## Survey Questions for Winter 2016 Newsletter

Complete the test and survey questions to be entered to win a gift.  
You can also fill out the test and survey online at: <https://goo.gl/GdR4BM>

1) Have you attended any of the Foster Parent Quarterly Meetings? Yes  No

2) If yes, what went well or what could be different?

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3) What topics/concerns would you like to discuss at the Quarterly Meetings?

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4) Please write a question about something you have struggled with in your time as a care provider. We would like to use your question in the Ask Kids advice column (don't worry, we won't use your name!).

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5) Would you like the newsletter in Spanish? Yes  No

6) Would you like to STOP delivery? Yes  No

To be added to the newsletter birthday list, write your name and birthday in the comment box below.

### Comment and Suggestion Box

Please print your name below. If your name is selected in the monthly newsletter drawing, you must provide the following information to be contacted.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Foster Parent     Relative Caregiver or NREFM

## Test Questions for Winter 2016 Newsletter

Complete the test and survey questions to be entered to win a gift.  
You can also fill out the test and survey online at: <https://goo.gl/GdR4BM>.

To be eligible for the monthly drawing we must receive your test/survey by the 10th day of the month after you receive the newsletter (Winter's test/survey deadline is February 10th). You must complete BOTH the test and survey questions to be entered into the drawing. You can earn 0.25 Educational Licensing hours if you complete and return the test questions in the enclosed prepaid postage envelope. Please make sure you write TK12 on the envelope next to the Worker No.

1) The more a care provider talks and interacts with his or her child, the more connections the child's brain will develop. T  F

2) About how many new neural connections does a child's brain produce in the first three years of his or her life?

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3) A child's brain produces only as many neural connections as it needs to operate basic automatic processes, such as breathing and heart beating. T  F

4) Children prefer being stimulated from watching TV over anything else, including stimuli from human interactions. T  F

5) Describe three specific examples of how you can interact with your child to increase his or her neural development.

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## Test Answers from Fall 2016 Newsletter

1) Burns are classified three ways. TRUE

2) SPF 30 or higher is better to protect against sunburns. TRUE

3) Children should bathe in water that's 120 degrees or higher. FALSE

4) Blisters from the sun should be popped. FALSE

5) Putting ice on a burn is the best remedy. FALSE

# Substance Abuse/HIV (SA/HIV) Infant Program

The Substance Abuse/HIV (SA/HIV) Infant Program is a 36 hour training series designed to provide learning opportunities for Resource Families of children ages 0-5 who have medical concerns or diagnosis (e.g. alcohol/drug exposure, HIV positive, asthma, failure to thrive, etc).

## 2016-2017 Trainings:

- *September 13-October 11*-(Tuesday & Thursday from 5:30-9pm plus Saturday, 10/8-9am-5pm)
- *January 7-February 11*-(Saturdays from 9am-5pm)
- *(Spanish) March 11-April 8*-(Saturdays from 9am-5pm)
- *May 16-June 15* -(Tuesday & Thursday from 5:30-9pm plus Saturday, 6/10-9am-5pm)

### **Doctors, nurses, therapists and other experts provide extensive insight and instruction on topics such as:**

- Child Development
- Nutrition for Infants and Young Children
- Dental Health
- Child Car Seat Safety
- Caring for Children with Mild and Chronic Illnesses and Diseases
- Asthma
- HIV/AIDS and Universal Precautions
- Early Intervention
- Foster Care Medical Care, Access and Advocacy
- Addiction
- Effects of In-utero Drug and Alcohol Exposure on Infants & Children

Upon completion of the series, Resource Families are better equipped to provide specialized care focusing on the unique medical needs of babies, toddlers and young children. Primary goals of the program include:

- Providing an overview of the many aspects of caring for fragile and special needs infants/children
- Connecting care providers to important community services that will support their work with children
- Increasing the pool of trained Resource Families who can care for the complex needs of these children now or in the future

**This training is free of charge. Childcare stipends may be provided for SF Resource Families including Licensed Foster Parents and R/NREFMs.**

### **For more information, contact:**

Sharon Walchak, SA/HIV Infant Program  
Public Health Nurse  
415-401-4313 or [sharon.walchak@sfgov.org](mailto:sharon.walchak@sfgov.org)

### **To register, contact:**

Heather Priebe  
415-938-6555 or [hpriebe@csufreno.edu](mailto:hpriebe@csufreno.edu)

This series is mandatory for all City and County of SF HSA-FCS Resource Families who care for children 0-3 years of age. Participants must have either started or completed the series within the first four months of having a child(ren) placed in their home.