

Special Needs Adoption Tax Credit Refundable in 2010 and 2011

by Mary Boo, NACAC's assistant director, and Joe Kroll, NACAC's executive director

For the first time since the federal adoption tax credit was created, adoptive families have an opportunity to access the full credit regardless of their tax burden. Now that the credit is refundable for 2010 and 2011, families who have little tax liability—even those with no income—can receive the credit.

Because past adoption credits can be carried forward for five years, families who finalized adoptions from 2005 to 2009 can also benefit from refundability. Families who adopted in 2003 and 2004 may be able to take some limited advantage of the credit but will not benefit from refundability. Those who adopted earlier will not benefit from the credit if they did not take it already.

Families who adopted foster children with special needs (and receive an adoption subsidy) can take the maximum tax credit even if they had no or few adoption expenses. Other adoptive families can take the credit for qualified adoption expenses they have, up to the maximum.

The maximum credit is based on the year the adoption was finalized:

2010 — \$13,170	2006 — \$10,960
2009 — \$12,150	2005 — \$10,630
2008 — \$11,650	2004 — \$10,390
2007 — \$11,390	2003 — \$10,160

The credit can be claimed one time for each adopted child.

For families who adopt children with special needs, this credit makes possible home improvements to accommodate a large sibling group, ramp installation for a child in a wheelchair, treatment options that were previously out of reach, specialized summer camps, and more.

Tax Credit Processing Issues

The IRS has asked for documentation about families' adoptions or their children's special needs, even though some already sent records with their returns. We have also heard the adoption credit may take up to 90 days to process. On a positive note, most people are getting their regular refund while the IRS is reviewing the adoption credit.

If you receive a documentation request, we suggest that you send another copy of the adoption decree (with the official seal visible) and the adoption subsidy agreement, if applicable. Write your name and social security number on every page of the documents you send.

We are trying to determine how far the problem extends. Please e-mail us at taxcredit@nacac.org to let us know if you: (1) have received your adoption credit refund, or (2) have been asked by the IRS for more information. Please also let us know the year you adopted.

If you would like to be kept informed, sign up for NACAC's free e-newsletter at www.nacac.org/signupform.html. ♦

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Twelve-year-old Carson, born July 1998, is an animal lover with a light-hearted personality who likes to joke around. Some of his favorite activities (aside from playing with dogs, cats, hamsters, and other pets) involve listening to pop and rap music, riding his rip-stick, and volunteering at the local Senior Center. He also likes to sing and rap, and plays a number of different instruments including the drums, piano, guitar, and harmonica. In school, Carson attends 7th grade classes and is in the school band. After school, he enjoys going to the Boys and Girls Club where he can play basketball, ping pong, and board games with the other kids. When the subject comes around to food, Carson exclaims, "Hamburgers and French fries; it's all I think about!" Every now and then, he's open to pizza too. As he looks ahead, Carson can envision college in his future, but hasn't decided what he might like to do after that. For now, he really needs an active forever family who can provide him with the unconditional commitment and caring he needs to thrive and succeed. He is open to single parents as well as couples, and should be the youngest or only child in the family. Learn more from Christina Booth in Arizona: 602-930-4663; cbooth@aask-az.org. ♦



Carson

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History of the Tax Credit

Enacted in 1996, the first adoption tax credit was \$6,000 for special needs adoptions and \$5,000 for other adoptions, but families could access only as much credit as they had in expenses and tax liability. When a 2000 U.S. Treasury Department report found that “[o]nly 8 percent of total adoption tax benefits... were for adoptions of children with special needs,” NACAC and others successfully pushed to make the special needs tax credit more accessible.

Starting in 2003, families who adopted foster children with special needs could claim the credit without having expenses, but only up to what they owed in taxes. A 2007 report found that fewer than 20 percent of credits claimed were for special needs adoptions, so NACAC and others proposed making the credit refundable.

Adoptalk

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Comments and contributions welcome!

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Last March, Senator Nelson (D-NE) added to the health care reform bill a provision that extends the adoption tax credit through 2011 and makes the credit refundable for 2010 and 2011.

How to Claim the Tax Credit

NACAC has shared this great news with parents and tax preparers. To help parents determine if they are eligible for extra benefits, NACAC has also partnered with H&R Block. H&R Block is offering:

1. Free Second Look Review—An H&R Block tax professional will conduct a thorough review of prior years’ returns, checking to see if any credits or deductions were missed. You’ll receive advice on what to do if you qualify for additional benefits.
2. Special pricing on filing amended returns (price will vary by office)
3. A \$20 discount on 2010 tax return preparation (see coupon below)

Contact your local H&R Block office and schedule an appointment by April 30 to find out if you qualify for this opportunity. When you meet with an H&R Block tax professional, bring: (1) tax returns starting with the year you adopted or any returns from 2005 to 2009 for which you’d like the second look; (2) the court adoption decree; and (3) adoption subsidy agreements, if any.

To be eligible for the credit, you must:

- Have adopted a child other than a stepchild—Children who receive an adoption subsidy are deemed to have special needs and can take the credit regardless of expenses or tax liability. Families who adopted children without special needs are eligible, but must have expenses.

- Be within the income limits—The credit amount you can claim is limited by income. In 2010, families with a federal modified adjusted gross income above \$222,520 cannot claim the credit; families with incomes above \$182,520 can claim partial credit.

You will need to provide the IRS with a copy of the adoption decree (with the seal visible). Families who adopted a child with special needs must also provide a copy of the adoption assistance agreement. Taxes must be filed by mail.

If You Adopted in 2010

To claim the credit, complete IRS Form 8839 and submit it with your Form 1040. On line 5 of 8839, which asks for qualified adoption expenses, enter \$13,170 if your child receives adoption assistance.

If You Adopted 2005 to 2009 and Took the Credit the Year You Finalized

If you finalized in 2005 or later, claimed the credit that year, and carried forward the adoption tax credit each year, carry forward all remaining credit from your 2009 return to 2010 Form 8839.

If you claimed the credit the year you finalized, but didn’t carry it forward to subsequent years’ tax forms, you’ll need to amend returns for those years.

If You Adopted between 2007 and 2009 and Did Not Claim the Credit

You must amend your tax return for the year the adoption was finalized and any subsequent years, carrying forward the amount of credit that is left over each year. Any credit not taken before 2010 can be used on the 2010 return.

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Internal Use only: For additional tax training on the adoption credit, see **Tax Update (2011 Filing Season)** and search **The Tax Institute—Tax Research** with the keywords **adoption credit**.

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If You Adopted in 2005 or 2006 and Did Not Claim the Credit

Under IRS rules, taxpayers have three years to amend returns to claim a credit. The IRS has written, however, that these older credits can be accessed (go to www.nacac.org/policy/irsletter.pdf).

If you adopted in 2005 or 2006, amend returns starting with the year you finalized. You will lose whatever credit you would have gotten in 2005 or 2006, but you must complete the 2005/2006 returns as if you were getting the credit. Whatever is not lost, you can carry forward to 2007. When you amend your 2007 through 2009 taxes, you can access any credit owed those years. Any amount that remains after amending your 2009 taxes can be refunded in 2010.

If you didn't claim the credit in 2005 or 2006 and had enough tax liability in 2005 and 2006 to use up the whole credit, you will not benefit from refundability.

If You Adopted in 2003 or 2004 and Did Not Claim the Credit

If you adopted in 2003 or 2004, the three-year amendment rule for credits applies and you are less likely to benefit. You cannot carry the credit forward to 2010 when it becomes refundable.

Families who have moderate tax liability might be able to carry forward some credit to 2007, 2008, or 2009, and get a refund based on their tax liability in each of those years. A family with significant tax liability who would have been able to use up the entire credit before 2007 cannot benefit now.

More information about the adoption tax credit is online at www.nacac.org/taxcredit/taxcredit.html. If you have a specific question, e-mail it to taxcredit@nacac.org or call 800-470-6665.

Please note: NACAC is not a professional tax organization and information from NACAC should not be regarded as legal or tax advice.

NACAC was instrumental in making the full adoption tax credit available to families who adopt from foster care. To continue similar advocacy efforts and keep sharing information with other families, we need your support. Please become a NACAC member today or make a tax-deductible donation at www.nacac.org. ♦

Judge Macías Re-Joins NACAC Board

Since 2001, the Honorable Patricia A. Macías has been the Presiding Judge of the 388th Family District Court in Texas. From 1995 to 1999, she was Associate Judge of the Children's Court—during which time the court was designated as a national model court. In addition to garnering accolades for her judicial work, Judge Macías is a nationally recognized child advocate who presents about child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and high conflict custody, as well as judicial leadership and ethics.

Judge Macías' dedication to promoting children's interests is underlined by her membership in many significant national and local organizations. She was a member of the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, and a board member with the National Association of Counsel for Children, the VERA Institute of Justice, National CASA, and the Children's Law Committee within the American Bar Association's Litigation Section. Past president of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Judge Macías was appointed to the Commission on Children, Youth, and Families in 2007 by the Texas Supreme Court. Currently, she serves as chair of the Commission's Education Committee.

Due to her proven leadership and significant contributions to improving out-



Judge Macías

comes for children and families, Judge Macías has received numerous awards from various organizations. The El Paso Bar Association named her Jurist of the Year, and both the El Paso Mexican American Bar Association and Texas State Foster Parent Association honored her as Judge of the Year. She has

also been recognized as a Texas Trailblazer, Public Citizen of the Year, and a Judicial Distinguished Advocate by, respectively, the El Paso Bar Association, the El Paso Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and the Children's Justice Center of El Paso.

As one might expect, Judge Macías' educational background informs her current work. She has a BA in psychology, an MS in child development, and has completed coursework for a doctorate in child and family therapy. She earned her Juris Doctorate at St. Mary's University in San Antonio.

NACAC is excited to welcome back a board member who has achieved so much in her professional career and cares so deeply about children. Judge Macías first joined the NACAC board in 2006, but was unable to continue due to her busy schedule. We are delighted to regain Judge Macías' insight about issues that affect the child welfare community. ♦

Born February 1993, 18-year-old Sierra is a caring teen who loves animals (and insects), and has a flair for creative pursuits. In her free time she enjoys scrapbooking, beading, and making bracelets. Sierra also likes to experiment with colors and styles in her own hair and try on wigs. In the future, she hopes to become a hairstylist. She likes decorating for the holidays too; Christmas is her favorite. When she is outdoors Sierra enjoys riding her bike, going Rollerblading, walking, swimming, and visiting amusement parks. As for food, she's a big fan of pizza, sushi, and "most food with peppers!" Currently in 12th grade, Sierra likes her math class the best. She interacts well with adults who show an interest in her and will flash her winning smile and joke around when she feels safe. Sierra wants to be adopted but worries that her age will discourage prospective parents. She believes a non-traditional family would be the best fit for her, and needs a dedicated parent or two who will love her as she is, make sure she gets the support she needs, and stand by her for life. Will you stand by Sierra? Learn more from Ilona Frederick: 888-835-8802; ilona@capbook.org. ♦



Photo by Linda Pipkin

Sierra

Embrace the Role of Birth Parents in Adopted Children's Lives

by Ellen Singer, LCSW-C and Madeleine Krebs, LCSW-C, © 2011

Ellen is an adoption therapist and educator and Madeleine is the clinical coordinator at The Center for Adoption Support & Education, Inc. (C.A.S.E.) in Maryland. Learn more at www.adoptionssupport.org.

In their 1992 book, *Adoption and the Family System*, renowned adoption experts Ken Watson and Miriam Reitz defined adoption as:

...a means of providing some children with security and meeting their developmental needs by legally transferring ongoing parental responsibilities from their birth parents to their adoptive parents; recognizing that in so doing, we have created a new kinship network that forever links those two families together through the child, who is shared by both.

The statement emphasizes the central role of the birth family in adoption, but many parents find it hard to integrate this adoption reality into everyday life. If they are to promote their children's best interests, adoptive parents must find ways to accept and value birth relatives' significance to adopted children.

Case One—Johnny, age three, was placed in foster care with the Browns due to neglect. They grew to love Johnny and hoped to adopt him. Ms. Marshall, Johnny's birth mother, never missed a visit and grew close to the Browns, but it was obvious she could not keep Johnny safe. Johnny's permanency plan became adoption. When she learned that Johnny could not come home, Ms. Marshall agreed to relinquish her parental rights if the Browns signed an open adoption agreement. Much to everyone's surprise, the Browns refused. They were convinced that the agreement would undermine their parental rights. Would the Browns permit contact without an agreement? They were noncommittal.

Case Two—Siblings Alicia and Brandon were placed in foster care with Mr. and Mrs. Hall after their mother's boyfriend was charged with abusing the children, then ages 8 and 7. When the Halls adopted the children two years later, they agreed informally to maintain contact with the children's birth mother—a woman with whom they had come to feel comfortable. After finalization, however, the Halls moved to another state without leaving a forwarding address.

Adoptive Parents' Attitudes toward Birth Family Members

Like many foster/adoptive parents, the Browns and the Halls struggled with the question of what birth family members meant to their children, and agonized about the role birth family members should have in their children's/family's lives. This issue is just one of many complex forces that come into play during parents' adoption journeys.

While many parents choose to adopt first or to expand their family through adoption, others come to adoption along the painful road of infertility. For many of these deeply disappointed, battle weary, and grief-stricken adults, adoption may be their second or even third parenthood choice. They dream of regaining some semblance of normalcy—of raising children as their friends and colleagues do.

For couples with an infertility history, birth parents signify another potential disappointment. Would-be adoptive parents may empathize with birth parents, but the birth parents' loss is the adoptive parents' gain and emotions are complicated. Whether parents adopt an infant or a child from care, there are nagging concerns: "Will this child return to her birth family?" "Will the birth parents relinquish the child if we agree to an open adoption?" "How long will it take for parental rights to be terminated?"

An infant or child in foster care may have been prenatally exposed to drugs or alcohol or suffered abuse or neglect within his birth family—realities that cast a negative light on birth parents. Pre-adoptive parents may also worry that children will be distressed by a sense of conflicted allegiances; adoptive parents want children to attach and leave past troubles behind.

Though adoptions were open until the mid-20th century, the closed adoption practices and mindset that followed left a damaging legacy. Closed adoption, by severing all ties between the birth and adoptive parents and their child, effec-

tively devalues birth parents and leads some adoptive parents to believe that birth parents should be completely absent in their children's lives. Adoptive parents don't want to have to compete for authenticity, their right to parent, or their right to create a secure sense of family belonging for their adopted child.

Not surprisingly, many parents don't know how to incorporate the birth family's significance as they work to secure the child's place in his new family. Even the most secure adoptive parents fear that they will lose the child's love to his birth parents or never win the child's love at all. Parents also want to protect children from painful feelings evoked by birth parent contact. They cannot fathom how a child can love a birth parent who mistreated him or did nothing to keep him from being mistreated by others.

Through the Eyes of Children

Years of research and practice confirm that adopted children think a lot about their birth parents. In fact, a 2003–2004 C.A.S.E. survey of children transitioning into adoptive homes found that they thought about their birth parents "all the time." Thoughts often involved unanswered questions: "Does my birth mom ever think about me?" "Why didn't my parents come back for me like they promised?" "Where are my birth parents?" "Do I have any new brothers or sisters?" "Am I going to be just like my mom or dad?"

We see grief in their behavior—the anger, the sadness, and the confusion. In counseling sessions, adopted children share how painful it is to keep thoughts about their birth parents to themselves; how they have to hide their interest in reconnecting with birth family members or the fact that they have already made contact. Some youth struggle with loyalty conflicts, accurately sensing how threatened their adoptive parents feel when birth parents are even mentioned.

In *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*, author Pauline Boss explains the dynamics of losing someone's physical presence (like an adopted child's birth parent) but keeping the person psychologically present. She describes the anxiety and confusion that arises from a loss that has no closure. Unless the birth parent dies, an adopted child will experience physical loss, but cannot rule out the possibility of regaining contact with his first family. The

constant and ongoing absence of a living birth parent makes a child think more about that person.

How Adoptive Parents Can Help Their Children

To promote the adoptive family's well-being, parents must let go of fear, mistrust, and anxiety so they can provide the help their children need. Adopted children and teens need parents to guide them as they work to identify, understand, and cope with feelings about their birth parents. Adopted adults repeatedly tell us that as they were growing up, they most valued support, not efforts to protect them from painful feelings.

First, adoptive parents must realize that their children may be deeply distressed by their birth family's absence—even if they were removed due to neglect or abuse. Adopted children who lived for years with their birth family were taken from a familiar setting and familiar people with whom they had some good experiences as well as difficult times. It was all they knew.

In their adoptive family, adopted children need permission to hold on to birth family memories and to share them without fear of reprisal. In addition, to help a child feel good about herself, adoptive parents need to express some genuinely positive validation of her birth family. This is no small task for parents whose children were hurt and traumatized by their birth family, but it is key for positive identity formation.

Second, adoptive parents must learn how to communicate with children about the children's birth parents. They should read, attend workshops, and talk with other parents and professionals about sharing the adoption story with their children—especially when the story involves difficult information about members of the birth family. Betsey Keefer and Jayne Schooler, in *Telling the Truth to Your Foster or Adopted Child*, offer guidelines for these conversations.

In talking with children, parents should carefully distinguish between birth parents as people with good qualities, and the problematic behavior that arose from their poor choices. People who make bad choices are more sympathetic to children than bad people. If they grasp the concept of choice, children should also realize that they are not destined to have their birth parents' problems.

Birth Family Contact

Birth family contact is not a one-size-fits-all model. There is no special time or way in which connections can occur. Especially in adoptions from foster care, birth family/adoptive family relationships can be very complicated and parents may need professional support to navigate potentially rough waters.

Obviously, personal contact with birth parents is not always possible. A parent may be severely mentally ill, addicted to drugs, or in prison. Other birth parents might be so angry that there is no basis for trust between them and the adoptive family. There are, however, still safe options for contact like monitored letters and e-mails, or visits limited to public places or a therapist's office. As people and circumstances change, contact arrangements can be revised.

Because her birth mother had a long history of substance abuse, Mary and her older siblings spent years in foster care. Mary was adopted at age four without her siblings, but her new family kept in touch with the birth family. When Mary turned 14, she asked to see her birth family again. Despite their misgivings, her parents agreed to the request and prepared for the reunion.

After both families spent time together, Mary's parents allowed her to have some alone time with her birth family. When they were alone, Mary's birth mother

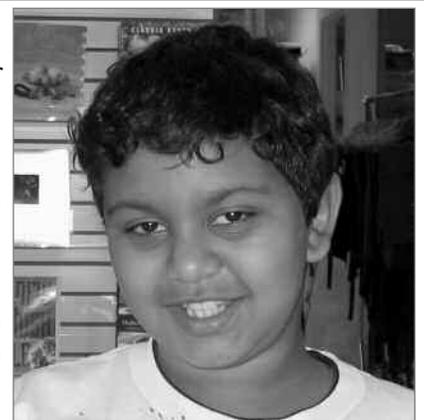
and several of her siblings began to disparage Mary's adoptive parents and tell lies about them. Only one sibling set the record straight.

With help from her therapist, Mary decided that she would continue contact only with the truthful sibling. She didn't feel ready to allow her birth mother and other siblings further into her life for at least several years.

For many children, it is also important to maintain connections with prior foster parents and other adults the child remembers fondly. Adoptive parents should strive to honor their child's prior connections. When possible, parents can help their children reconnect with favorite foster parents, coaches, teachers, or other mentors.

Adoption expert Sharon Roszia, author of *The Open Adoption Experience*, spoke at C.A.S.E.'s 2005 conference for adoptive parents and children. In her keynote address, "Honoring Children's Connections," Roszia reminded the audience that, when it comes to the link between adopted children and birth families, the question is not, "To whom does this child belong?" but "Who belongs to this child?" Adoption does not and should not erase prior relationships; instead, it should be a safe place from which children can make sense of their past and gain confidence about their future. ♦

Twelve-year-old Isaigh, born June 1998, is an engaging youth who enjoys a variety of creative pursuits. He is a fan of many types of music and spends a lot of time with his MP3 player. He also likes to sing, dance, cook, and work on arts and crafts projects like making animal shapes from beads that are fused together with a hot iron. Breakfast is his favorite meal to prepare. During warmer weather, Isaigh likes to ride his bike and go swimming. In winter he goes sledding with friends. Fall, though, is his favorite season because the leaves turn color and the weather is nice. Currently in 6th grade, Isaigh gets along well with his teachers, enjoys computer time, and likes his science class best. When not in school, he likes to play with his pet rabbit. Though he does not know what he wants to be when he grows up, Isaigh has a positive life outlook and his future will present many opportunities for success if he finds the right support system now. Ideally, Isaigh should be the only or youngest child with a single adoptive dad, or in a two-parent family with an involved father. His new family must be able to support continued therapy, and provide him with the love, nurture, structure, and security he needs to heal and plan for a brighter future. Learn more about Isaigh (registration number #3949) by contacting the Massachusetts Adoption Resources Exchange: 617-542-3678; www.MAREinc.org. ♦



Isaigh

Post-Adoption Needs Survey Offers Direction for Continued Advocacy Efforts

by Kim Stevens, NACAC Staff

An adoptive parent and manager of NACAC's Community Champions Network project, Kim Stevens has recently compiled data from NACAC's North American Survey of Adoptive Parents. The survey was designed to gather information about adoptive families' post-adoption service needs and recommendations; below are the preliminary findings.

Part of the adoption process should be to help adoptive parents and children connect with other adoptive families. I don't go to the agencies when I need answers. I go to other adoptive families and find out how they handled the situation.

~ adoptive parent

In September 2010, NACAC began surveying adoptive families in the United States and Canada about their needs, experiences, and advice related to post-adoption support services. More than 1,100 adoptive parents have responded, and one thing is clear: adoptive families must have ongoing and varied supports to successfully parent children adopted from foster care.

Post-adoption support is not new. Adoption advocates, parents, and child welfare professionals have been discussing post-adoption services for decades—from the need for them, to the possible spectrum of aid. NACAC's survey is part of the adoption community's recent effort to more fully understand and quantify the supports and services that will lead to better youth and family outcomes.

Family Demographics

Of the parents who responded to NACAC's survey, 92 percent were mothers and 82 percent were part of a two-parent family. Survey participants' primary reasons for adopting included wanting more children (47 percent), infertility (40 percent), and providing permanence for a foster child already in the home (35 percent).

In total, surveyed parents adopted more than 2,590 children and youth. More than a third of families adopted sibling groups, and more than half adopted transracially.

Of the children, most (65 percent) were adopted from foster care. Another 19 percent were adopted

internationally, and 12 percent were adopted domestically as infants. Fewer than 5 percent of children were adopted by relatives, but NACAC is working with The Kinship Center in California to get more kin respondents.

Most of the children were adopted at a young age. More than half (51 percent) were age 3 or younger, 21 percent were between 4 and 6, and 12 percent were ages 7 to 9. Almost 16 percent were 10 and older.

Children's Needs

More than one-third of families did not report any significant problems for their children in the community, in school, with peers, or at home. The majority, however, identified at least some issues that make life an ongoing challenge.

Of special needs identified, the most common were emotional issues (1,175 children) and behavioral issues (1,124 children). Surprisingly, only 364 children reportedly had fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. This serious and pervasive disorder has lifelong repercussions, and is often underdiagnosed.

As expected, many children reportedly had significant difficulties in school (986

children) or in the community (589 children). When asked what would help with community relationships, 73 percent of parents indicated that a greater understanding of adoption issues—by school personnel and community members—would reduce the challenges their children face.

Most families reported that they needed support in the first year after adoption, but many reported needs arising years after the adoption. As one parent observed, an initial year of support cannot meet the ongoing needs of an adoptive family:

Sometimes kids get over the initial issues, do quite well, and then something comes up that causes issues to rise again....

We've found that...[later on] counseling isn't as available as it is for kids who are newly adopted.

Services Needed

When asked about unmet needs, educational issues topped the list. More than 40 percent of parents reported that their children had unmet educational needs. Finding mental health care providers was also a major issue; 39 percent expressed concern about their children's unmet mental health needs. Only 10 percent of parents stated that their children had unmet medical needs.

What services did parents need but not use? See the chart on page 7 for details:

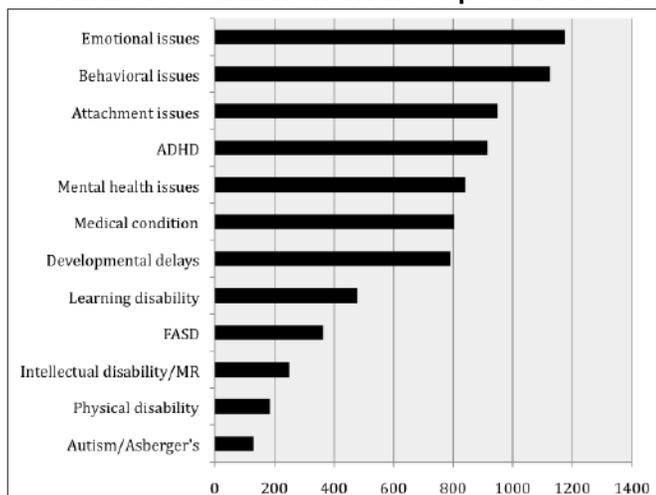
- mentor for child (19 percent)
- family retreat (19 percent)
- support group for child (19 percent)
- community resource information (16 percent)
- respite care (16 percent)

Parents identified four top barriers to accessing these and other services:

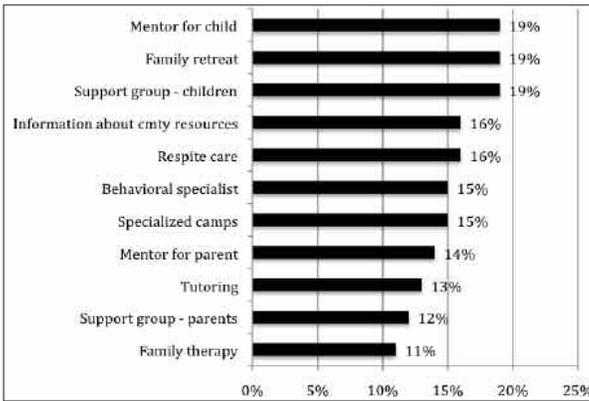
- inability to find needed services (43 percent)
- providers who don't understand adoption (39 percent)
- services that cost too much (33 percent)
- providers who don't accept Medicaid (30 percent)

On a more positive note, close to a third of parents (29 percent) reported that they encountered no barriers to accessing services.

Number of Children with a Special Need



Services Most Often Needed but Not Used



What Helps

When asked to assess services they used, parents rated as most useful adoption subsidies (64 percent) and advice and support from more experienced adoptive parents (almost 64 percent). Other top supports were medical care (54 percent), training and education (53 percent), online groups (47 percent), and newsletters (41 percent).

Parent feedback also revealed recurring themes about positive practices and approaches. For example, many parents suggested these actions:

- Encourage all adoption and child welfare professionals to receive in-depth training on attachment and mental health issues and treatments.
- Take the stigma out of asking for help.
- Spend time with other families who share the same experiences; contact can normalize issues families face every day.
- Make information and resources easily accessible for parents.

Recommendations

To help guide our advocacy efforts, NACAC asked parents to rank the top four issues that we should address in the future. The results fall right in line with what we have been working on, with the following most often top rated:

- adoption competency training
- mental health services
- training and education for parents
- educational advocacy and support

Many NACAC results mirror those in *Keeping the Promise*, an October 2010 post-adoption services study published by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. Among its recommendations, the

report asks child welfare professionals and policy makers to:

- Prepare parents to expect challenges and appreciate the benefits of services.
- Educate professionals about supporting adoptive families.
- Identify high-risk children, then provide services and resources.
- Stop cutting subsidy rates and post-adoption services.
- End forced custody relinquishments to obtain services.
- Develop a continuum of services and educate mental health providers.

Where Do We Go From Here?

NACAC is going to use the survey results to inform our ongoing post-adop-

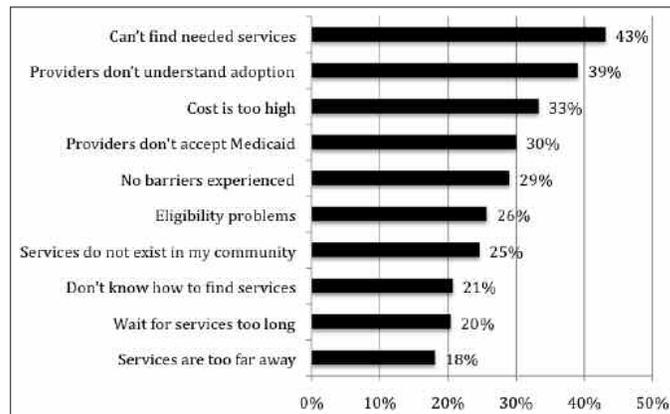
tion advocacy efforts at national and local levels. We will continue to work toward increased U.S. federal support of post-adoption services, both through Adoption Opportunities grants and a dedicated funding stream for post-permanency support.

At the local level we will advocate for increased commitment to adoptive families. For example, our Community Champions Network (CCN)—funded by Jockey International's Jockey Being Family™ initiative—works in 15 U.S. states and Canadian provinces to grow coalitions of adoptive parents, youth, child welfare professionals, providers, legislative and administrative partners, and others. CCN aims to help develop, expand, and sustain community-based and parent-led post-adoption support services.

Please use our survey results and the *Keeping the Promise* report to inform your efforts to ensure that all adoptive families receive the support they need. Contact NACAC to learn more about advocacy strategies. ♦

If you have not taken the survey and would still like to be heard, visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/6BNG7WH and fill out the online form. The survey will be open until July 15, 2011, and we will release final results in August at NACAC's Denver conference.

Barriers to Services



Born in October 1996, 14-year-old Tiffany is an articulate and charming teen who loves animals and has an appreciation for the arts. A former dancer, she still loves performing and says she dreams of becoming an actress. If acting doesn't work out, she would like to become a veterinarian. Tiffany is interested in all animals—from dogs to horses—and spends her spare time reading about veterinary care. Currently in 8th grade, Tiffany is a good student with a lot of potential. She has been on the honor roll and is hoping to attend college. After school, she goes to a local Boys and Girls Club where her favorite activities include two of her strengths: playing basketball and using the computer. When it comes to food, Tiffany's favorite is Chinese. To help her realize the potential she has, Tiffany needs a committed adoptive family (two moms, a single mom, or a mom and dad) who can give her a lot of individual attention and encouragement, as well as all the love, structure, and nurturing she needs. Her new family should also be willing to facilitate contact between Tiffany and two of her brothers who have already been adopted, and help her explore possible connections with newly discovered half-siblings on her father's side. Are you a member of the family Tiffany has been hoping to find? To learn more, contact the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange at 617-542-3678 or visit www.MAREinc.org. Tiffany's registration number is 2157. ♦



Tiffany

Adoption Saved My Life

by Joe Kerin, ©2011

A high school senior, Joe shares below how his adoption two-and-a-half years ago and the influence of his adoptive mother have turned his life around.



A little over five years ago, my brothers and I lost the only life we knew. Our foster care journey started the day my birth mother nearly died at the hands of our very intoxicated father. Our birth parents were carted off to jail, we lost our few belongings, and we lost the only identity we knew. Although that day was the scariest of our lives, it also set the stage for the best day of our lives: the day we got adopted.

Foster care put an end to the days when we had no food to eat, an end to the many acts of domestic violence we witnessed, and an end to the many times we were abandoned for days at a time. But foster care did not and could not fill the emptiness we felt in our hearts because we were not part of a permanent family.

We wanted to be adopted so we could share our successes and failures with someone who loved us unconditionally. We wanted a home where we could create memories of fun things we could do as a family, and most of all we wanted a home to come back to for the holidays. You see, foster homes just can't fill those wants because they are temporary and a foster family is not your real family.

When my brothers and I entered foster care, I was 12 and they were 5 and 2. For more than two years we floundered in the foster care system hoping that one day someone would want us. We were three boys on the wild side, though, so we were shuffled around to five different foster homes. Each home became more restrictive than the previous one.

After a while, I stopped unpacking my bags and stopped trying to make friends since I knew we would be moving on and starting the whole cycle over again. There were days I personally felt like a product for sale that no one wanted. At one point I became very depressed and wanted to give up because I felt no one really cared what happened to us.

No one wanted three boys from the streets and before long, there was talk

about placing us in separate families. The thought of that was like a knife piercing my heart because my brothers and I were all we had—we were the only family we had left.

Shortly before my 15th birthday, we were assigned to a new caseworker who made it her mission to find us a home. With this woman's help, I started to regain some hope. She did everything she could to keep my brothers and me together, but with each family she found, the parents wanted one or two of us but not all three of us. My world began to fall apart again.

Then, one day she told me there was a single lady who wanted to adopt all three of us. This lady even had the same birthday as mine and she was the only lady that my brother Cody let touch his head. There was something different about her; she actually accepted each of us for who we were. Maybe it was the fact that her father lost all his siblings to foster care and never saw them again, that made her understand where we were coming from.

On Christmas Day 2007, we moved into this woman's home. I was very angry, and the first few months were tough. One time I went to a dance with a gang bandanna. The school called my new mom and warned her that there could be serious consequences if I wore the bandanna outside the house. She sternly told me that I was putting myself, my neighbors, and my new family in danger, and that if I didn't clean up I would find myself in jail like my father.

It didn't take me long to choose to straighten up, but I was still angry. Through counseling, I finally figured out that the contrast between life with my new mom and life with my birth parents *didn't* do for my brothers and me. I was really angry at them, but didn't know how to deal with those feelings.

On November 21, 2008 we were adopted into the Kerin family. My mom, Janet Kerin, has showed us how to respect one another, enrolled us in team activities, taught us new skills (like skiing), and guided us down a new life path. She gave

us a second chance at life and it is the most rewarding feeling ever. Adoption has shown us the real meaning of family, the importance of education, and that we can change and become something bigger than we could ever imagine.

In fact, I would even say that my mom saved my life. About a year ago, I called one of my old friends from my last foster home. He told me that every single one of the people I used to hang out with had either dropped out of school, gotten pregnant, or gone to jail. Not one was on track to graduate from high school. If I still lived back there, that would have been my fate too.

To those still in foster care waiting to be adopted, I say: Do not give up and never lose hope. Pray every day that you will find someone like our mom who can show you the world and instill in you the belief that you can become whatever you want to become. Tell your caseworkers that you are very serious about being adopted; don't let them give up on you.

If you are a parent waiting to adopt and have concerns, fear not! My brothers and I were three street boys that no one thought could change and adoption turned our world around.

Politicians need to know that adequate funding for adoption can bring a child off the streets and make him successful. My brothers and I are living examples of how the power of adoption got three budding criminals off the streets of Denver.

I am going to graduate from high school this year and hope to go to college—something that would not have happened on the streets. My 10-year-old brother Cody, once described as “unadoptable and uncontrollable,” is a straight A student in 5th grade, a gifted athlete, and a leader on his football team. My brother Brandon, 7, was labeled as partially retarded, but he is a highly intelligent second grader and also a great athlete. The power of adoption and the love of a mother are transforming us into leaders in our community.

Cody says in his poem, “Adoption is important so please hear us speak!”

I recently read a quote in English class that says, “Losing family helps us to find our family. Not necessarily the family that is our blood, but the family that may become our blood.” I believe that about sums it up for every adopted child. ♦

CAPTA Reauthorization Benefits Children

On December 20, 2010, President Obama signed into law the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010—a five-year extension of the law that encompasses the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act of 1978 (which includes Adoption Opportunities), and the Abandoned Infants Assistance Act of 1988. This reauthorization increases safeguards for children, encourages agencies to explore and track case planning strategies, and strengthens the focus on minority and older child adoptions.

Provisions that offer more safeguards for children include those that specify training for individuals who represent children in court; add newborn FASD diagnoses as a condition that warrants referral to child protective services and formation of a child safety plan; and removes reunification requirements for parents who sexually abuse their children or who must register with a sex offender registry. The Act also mandates that, before placing a child in a foster or adoptive home, agencies conduct criminal record checks on all adults who live there.

New state and agency provisions:

- encourage states to involve family members in case planning, work in concert with domestic violence and substance abuse programs, and use differential response in child maltreatment cases.
- allow state citizen review panels to include “adult former victims of child abuse or neglect” and mandate that Children’s Justice Act task forces include former child abuse victims as well as people who have worked with homeless children and youth.

The reauthorization includes important changes in Adoption Opportunities as well. New language requires the Department of Health and Human Services to reserve 30 to 50 percent of Adoption Opportunities grants for projects that address recruitment efforts (for older children, children of color, and children who have special needs) as well as post-adoption supports to prevent disruptions. If implemented as planned, the new provisions will benefit at-risk children. ♦

HHS 2012 Budget Figures Released

Proposed February 14, 2011, President Obama’s fiscal year 2012 budget would keep most discretionary child welfare funding level, except for increases of \$10 million for Adoption Incentives and \$12 million for Adoption Opportunities. Mandatory funding—for foster care, adoption assistance, and guardianship assistance—would rise \$769 million to accommodate more children who are eligible for federal adoption assistance and more states participating in the guardianship assistance program.

The budget also proposes to bolster performance in the nation’s foster care system. A total of \$250 million is slated to help states improve foster care outcomes. To meet this goal, the Administration and Congress would:

- Create incentives for states to reduce time in foster care; increase permanency through reunification, adoption, and guardianship; decrease rates of foster care maltreatment; and lower foster care re-entry rates.
- Reduce costly and unneeded administrative requirements.
- Use current child welfare policy and intervention research to

help states reduce foster care rolls, more effectively reach families with complex needs, and improve outcomes for abused and neglected children.

- Allow states to test new strategies for improving child outcomes and reward states for efficiently using federal and state resources.

The budget also includes a proposal to ensure that support payments made on behalf of youth in foster care serve the youth’s best interest, instead of offsetting state and federal child welfare costs. ♦

Select Child and Family Program Funding

	'11 Final (in \$1,000s)	'12 Proposed (in \$1,000s)
PROTECTION/PREVENTION		
Child Welfare Services (Title IV-B)	282,000	282,000
Promoting Safe & Stable Families (IV-B, subpart 2, mandatory)	305,050	380,000
Promoting Safe & Stable Families (IV-B, subpart 2, discretionary)	63,300	63,300
Child Welfare Training (IV-B)	27,200	27,200
Social Services Block Grant (XX)	1,785,000	1,785,000
Foster Care (IV-E)	3,929,000	4,500,000
Kinship Guardianship (IV-E)	32,000	80,000
ADOPTION SERVICES		
Adoption Assistance (IV-E)	2,350,000	2,500,000
Adoption Opportunities	26,300	39,000
Adoption Incentive Payments	40,000	50,000
YOUTH SERVICES		
Independent Living (IV-E)	140,000	140,000
Education/Training Vouchers	45,300	45,300
CAPTA/Discretionary Grants	29,000	29,000
Mentoring Children of Prisoners	49,000	25,000

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and American Humane

Fifteen-year-old Deryck (born November 1995) is an imaginative youth who likes to joke around and make others laugh. He is also very serious about being physically fit. Every morning before school, he rises early and runs, lifts weights, and spins rifles. Currently in an ROTC program, Deryck hopes to join the military after high school and work his way up to the special forces. In his spare time, Deryck likes to spend time with his friends at the park, go to movies, or head to the YMCA to play basketball or swim. He also likes to play fantasy video games, eat at Subway, and go camping at the Colorado State Park on Lake Pueblo. Currently in 9th grade, Deryck is a bright student whose favorite class is phy ed. He hopes to be able to support himself in the future, and is very motivated to earn money. To help him reach his goals, Deryck needs a patient, committed, and loving forever family who will support him every day, offer opportunities for personal growth, and help him maintain contact with his birth siblings. Learn more about Deryck from Ilona Frederick: 888-835-8802; ilona@capbook.org. ♦



Photo by Olivia Navarro

Deryck

The North American Council on Adoptable Children

Presents its 37th Annual Conference August 4–6, 2011



Healing across Systems: Interdisciplinary Support for Children and Families

Denver Marriott Tech Center • Denver, Colorado

Nicknamed the Mile High City, Denver, Colorado features amazing natural vistas and one of the most walkable downtown areas in the U.S. Stroll along the pedestrian promenade, visit historic and arts museums, and explore historic neighborhoods. Families can take in the Denver Zoo, the Downtown Aquarium, or the Denver Children's Museum. Rocky Mountain National Park is only 70 miles away.

If you have a personal connection with foster care or adoption, or are a relative caregiver, child advocate, or child welfare professional, this conference is for you. Conference sessions will be held at the Denver Marriott Tech Center.

Accommodations

NACAC has secured discounted guest rooms at the Marriott Tech Center. Conference attendees can reserve rooms August 2 to August 7 at \$139/night (plus 14.85 percent tax).

Link to the hotel website from www.nacac.org or call 800-266-9432 to make your reservation. Room availability ends when the rooms fill or July 9, whichever comes first. Reserve your space as soon as possible. To receive the discounted rate, tell the hotel operator that you are attending the NACAC conference. Also ask about the hotel's guarantee, deposit, and cancellation policies.

Pre-Conference Session

On August 3, Dr. Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph.D. will present a daylong pre-conference session—"The Impact of Trauma on the Developing Child." During the session, he will describe how abuse, neglect, and chaos affect children's brain development. Then he will explain how caregivers and child welfare professionals can decode and address behaviors, help children heal, and weave a therapeutic web around children.

The session cost is \$100/person (and is not part of the full conference registration fee). Registrants who attend both

the pre-conference session and the full conference are eligible for discounted registration fees.

General Sessions

Bruce Perry is senior fellow of The ChildTrauma Academy, a Houston-based nonprofit, and an adjunct professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Northwestern University's School of Medicine. For the last 10 years, Dr. Perry has worked to integrate developmental neuroscience and child development concepts into clinical practices. His work has furthered innovative practices and programs that benefit maltreated and traumatized children. Titled "Bonding and Attachment in Maltreated Children," Dr. Perry's Thursday keynote will explain how childhood trauma affects attachment and what parents can do to nurture children without neglecting their own care.

Friday's general session features an expert panel—including Judge Karen Ashby and Dr. James Henry—that will share views on how child welfare and other systems can collaborate to ensure the best possible outcomes for adopted children who have special needs.

On Saturday, NACAC will present its annual awards luncheon. During the event, attendees will hear the inspirational story of Michele Speilman, the mother of six older children who were adopted from foster care.

Workshops and Institutes

NACAC's comprehensive conference has more than 80 sessions about post-adoption services, therapeutic techniques, parenting children with challenges, recruitment and pre-adoption issues, international/infant adoption, public policy, and more. Many sessions are advanced, so even experienced parents and workers can learn something new. Tentative sessions include:

- Advanced Parenting
- Helping Parents and Professionals to be Super Sleuths in Solving the Mystery of Children's Misbehavior

- Forming Adoptee and Adoptive Family Identity
- Building Coalitions for System Change
- The Role of Kinship Care in Child Welfare
- The Urgency to Recruit at Least One Permanent Parent for Every Emerging Adult in Foster Care
- Can Adoptees and Adoptive Parents Be Allies?
- Trauma-Informed Adoption Practices

Exhibit Space and Advertising

Tabletop exhibits will be set up near the general sessions, workshops, and refreshment breaks. Space is limited so reserve your space early. If you have a product, agency, or service to advertise, space is available in the final conference program.

Youth Program

For youth ages 6 to 17, NACAC offers a program with workshops and field trips. Space is limited, so register as soon as forms become available this spring.

Registration and Fees

Full registration includes workshops, institutes, general sessions, Saturday's awards luncheon, a CD of handouts, and a one-year NACAC membership for non-members. One-day rates are also available. The pre-conference session has a separate fee, but anyone who attends both the pre-conference and regular conference is eligible for a discount.

	Early Registration Fees (must be post-marked by July 10)	
	Member	Non-Member
Individuals	\$250	\$300
Parent Couples	\$340	\$410

After July 10, fees increase by \$55.

In April, NACAC will print a booklet with more conference information. Send your name with your mailing and e-mail addresses to info@nacac.org to request a copy. Please indicate if you would like the booklet sent by e-mail or snail mail. If you do not have access to e-mail, call 651-644-3036. ♦



NACAC Launches New Online Advocacy Toolbox

NACAC, with funding from Jockey Being Family™, is proud to offer a new resource for anyone who wants to advocate for adoption—adoptive parents, youth, professionals, and anyone who cares about children and families. The Adoption Advocacy Toolbox, online at www.nacac.org/policy/toolbox.html contains a wealth of advocacy information and useful resources to help you make a difference for foster children and the families who adopt them.

The Toolbox is divided into five main sections; links are on the toolbox cover:

- Advocacy basics
- Sample advocacy strategies
- Post-adoption advocacy toolkit
- Special topics
- Links and newsletters



The first section offers advice about getting started with advocacy—identifying the problem you want to address, collecting data, gathering support, and targeting decision makers. There is also important information about lobbying rules for nonprofit organizations.

The strategies page reminds advocates to remember their audience. Is the goal to raise general public awareness, draw the attention of special individuals, or support pending legislation? For each cause and target audience, the strategy and venue may be different. Some of the most creative and unexpected strategies can make a big impact.

The third link connects to a guidebook, *Advocating for Post-Adoption Support: Tools to Promote Parent-Led and Child-Driven Services*. Among other resources, the guide provides a suggested reading list, talking points about post-permanency supports, relevant state and federal data, and examples of personal stories. Stories can be a key part of making the issue real and accessible for those who know little about parenting children adopted from foster care.

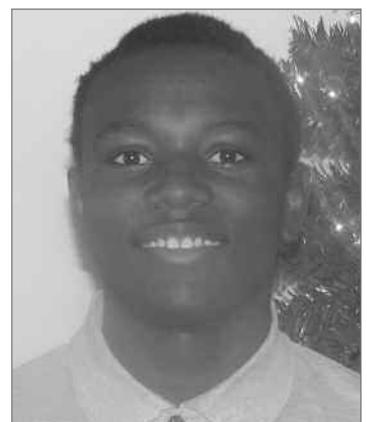
Common issues around which child welfare advocacy efforts center are included in the special topics section. Click on any

of the 24 issues listed—from adolescent permanency to kinship concerns to learning disabilities and educational issues—to view pertinent information and access links to organizations that have more in-depth resources related to each topic.

The final section contains a list of e-newsletters that offer information about current policy issues, best practices, and other useful topics. Links to adoption-related national information clearinghouses in the U.S. and Canada are also featured.

When they first adopt, most parents don't think about advocacy; they simply want to be good parents and meet their children's needs. In the course of seeking illusive supports for their children, however, many parents become fierce advocates when existing rules or service providers fail to adequately serve their children. This is just the sort of passion that can fuel very effective advocacy efforts. Consider what you can do to promote adoption, and check out NACAC's online Adoption Advocacy Toolbox to get started today. ♦

Tall (over six feet) and athletic, 13-year-old Christopher (born January 1998) plays basketball on a school team every week. His shooting skills and defensive abilities make him a valued part of any team. When he's not playing, Christopher likes to follow college and professional football and basketball teams; he's a big fan of Ohio State and LeBron James, even though LeBron doesn't play for the Cleveland Cavaliers anymore. He likes to play video games that involve football or basketball, too. At home, Christopher plays chess every day with his foster parent. By listening and focusing intently, he has gotten much better and has even won some matches. His family also plays board games. At school, Christopher is in 7th grade and doing very well. He especially enjoys his gym and music classes, is very open to singing, and likes to try new instruments. With his friends, Christopher likes to listen to pop and rap music, and trade video games. To make the most of his abilities and talents, Christopher needs a committed, consistent, and caring forever family who can give him plenty of individual attention and direction. He wants a family who will share his interest in sports and sporting events, and take him to amusement parks. Learn more about Christopher from Kelly Walsh in Ohio: 937-276-1710; walshk@odjfs.state.oh.us. ♦



Christopher

Upcoming Webinars

In the coming months, NACAC is hosting several new webinars. Topics will include:

- Why Is My Child Making Me Crazy?
- Transracial Parenting
- Advocating for Post-Adoption Support
- Openness in Adoption
- Adoption Assistance Benefits and Eligibility
- Adoptive Family Preservation

Sessions will be facilitated by NACAC staff as well as other child welfare experts from around the U.S. Webinars cost just \$15 for NACAC members; non-member fees are \$20. To learn more about future online training opportunities, visit www.nacac.org/training/webinars.html. ♦

Respite Program Grants Available

To improve the availability and quality of respite care, AdoptUSKids is offering grants to foster, adoptive, and kinship parent groups who operate community respite programs with local public agency support. The goal is to build sustainable programs. Until July 1, 2011 eligible parent support organizations can apply for a mini-grant (\$5,000) to start a respite program. To learn about eligibility criteria or download an application, visit www.nacac.org/parentgroups/resources.html. ♦

In the News

International News

On January 31, a year after the devastating earthquake, **Haiti's adoption authority began accepting adoption applications for orphans or children who have been relinquished by their birth parents.** In December 2010, President Obama signed into law the Help HAITI Act of 2010—a law designed to smooth the path to U.S. citizenship for Haitian children adopted by U.S. citizens under the humanitarian “parole policy” in early 2010.

Starting March 10, **Ethiopia's Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs will process no more than five adoption cases per day** so it can focus on quality and important strategic concerns. The U.S. Embassy expects that the change will reduce case processing by 90 percent. [U.S. Department of State, 3/9/11]

Michael Gove, Great Britain's Education Secretary issued **revised adoption guidelines that make it easier for white couples to adopt transracially.** Workers, he claims, have kept children waiting in care for the perfect match. Now they must now consider all able parents—regardless of age, race, and marital status—for every waiting child. [*The Daily Mail*, 2/23/11]

Launched February 14, India's new web-based Central Adoption Resource and Guidance System (or **CARINGS**) will **enable prospective parents to access a list a children available for adoption, register to adopt, and track their application status.** The goal is to speed and make more transparent Indian adoptions.

National U.S. News

On the 11th annual **National Adoption Day in 2010 (November 20), families finalized the adoptions of 4,800 children.** Since National Adoption Day began in 2000, the number of children adopted from foster care on the day totals nearly 35,000. [National Adoption Day press release, 11/29/10]

Published January 2011 in *Child and Youth Services Review*, a study suggests that adoptive home studies effectively assess families' history, interests, and motivations to adopt. **Studies fall short in checking references and discussing how**

parents will supervise children and learn about/manage medical and behavioral issues—topics key to preparing parents to adopt from foster care. [“The Intersection of Home Study Assessments and Child Specific Recruitment”]

Signed November 30, 2010 by President Obama, the **International Adoption Simplification Act** restores immunization and sibling age exemptions for internationally adopted children to ease their admission to the United States. Included in the exemptions are youth under age 18 who are siblings of children already adopted by U.S. citizens.

Published in the January 2011 *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, a **study compared assessments of ADHD symptoms among institutionalized international adoptees, international adoptees from foster care, and non-adopted youth.** Differences between the groups were most evident in externalized symptoms; 23 percent of post-institutionalized adoptees met clinical cutoffs, while just 6 percent of fostered adoptees and 3 percent of non-adopted children reached such levels. [“Behavioral and Emotional Symptoms of Post-Institutionalized Children in Middle Childhood”]

A study in *Adoption Quarterly* (Vol. 13, Issue 3&4) that compared children adopted from foster care, privately in the U.S., and internationally, found that **children adopted from care had a higher rate of challenges—ADHD, attachment disorders, and cognitive development/ education issues—than other adoptees.** Social behavior differences were not statistically significant. [“The Well-Being of U.S. Children Adopted from Foster Care, Privately from the United States, and Internationally”]

International adoption rates for U.S. citizens in fiscal year 2010 declined yet again. A total of 11, 059 adoptions—less than half the number in 2004 at the peak of international adoption activity—were completed. The top source countries were China (3,401), Ethiopia (2,513), Russia (1,082), and South Korea (863). Adoptions from Guatemala, the top source country in 2008, only totaled 51.

On February 23, the **USDA announced that it is expanding nutrition assistance for foster children.** Any child placed into care by a state or court is now categorically eligible for free meals in all USDA child nutrition programs. The categorical eligibility will make program enrollment much easier.

An article in the February 2011 *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* **compared children in kinship care to those in foster care.** Three years post-placement, children with kin were more likely than those in foster care (71 to 56 percent) to have a permanent caregiver, and half as likely to have social problems or use mental health services. Kin providers, though, were far more likely to be poor, half as likely to receive financial support, and seven times less likely to have peer support or respite care. [“Health Outcomes and Family Services in Kinship Care”]

National Canadian News

To promote child welfare in Canada, **adoption advocacy and child welfare groups formed the National Adoption Action Network.** NAAN is a national working group made up of the Adoption Council of Canada, Adoption Council of Ontario, Canadian Coalition of Adoptive Families, Adoption Support Centre of Saskatchewan, adoptive parents, adoptees, and others. Learn more at www.canadiancoalitionofadoptivefamilies.ca.

Titled “The Emerging Relationship between Adopted Chinese Infants and Their Mothers,” a **Canadian study of attachment development** found that Chinese children (adopted, on average, at 13 months) were initially more inhibited than non-adopted peers. After six months, however, the reported rate of inhibited behaviors was about the same for both groups of children. [*Children and Youth Services Review*, Vol. 32, No. 12]

State News

Alaska

In early March, **Alaska's Supreme Court ruled that tribes share jurisdiction with the state in most child custody cases.** Federally recognized Alaska tribes that exercise their “inherent sovereign jurisdiction” to initiate adoption proceedings should receive “full faith and credit” from

In the News

the state. Last October the U.S. Supreme Court refused to accept the state's appeal of a ruling upholding a tribal council's authority to oversee tribal adoptions. [*Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, 3/7/11]

Colorado

State officials are investigating what happened to two Colorado brothers who were adopted from foster care in 2000 and last seen alive in 2001 and 2003. The adoptive parents, who moved to Texas in 2005, allegedly falsified records to keep receiving subsidy payments for the boys and claimed, when approached by investigators in January, that both boys had run away. [*Denver Post*, 3/14/11]

Florida

Fallout continues since twins adopted from foster care were found in January—one dead in the bed of a pick-up, her brother coated in toxic chemicals in the front seat. Advocates believe the tragedy could have been prevented if multiple agencies had shared reports about the children's parents, and the abuse hotline had prioritized calls placed before the girl was killed. The Department of Children and Families plans to add investigators, reclassify abuse reports from schools as urgent, and ensure that private agencies review the status of children in their care. [*Miami Herald*, 3/14/11]

Governor Scott has proposed to cut the Department of Children and Families' budget by \$179 million—a cut that would eliminate 1,849 agency positions. Due to past cuts, Florida's spending on at-risk children is already lower than 40 other states, and new cuts will hardly allow DCF to handle the rising number of help line calls about children. [CBS4, 3/9/11]

Indiana

Through a settlement reached between the state Department of Child Services and the Indiana Association for Residential Child Care Agencies (over budget cuts) DCS is using cost-based rate setting for child welfare service providers. For the rest of 2011, DCS will reduce payments to agencies that serve children through foster and residential care by no more than 5 percent. [wthr.com, 2/21/11]

Massachusetts

U.S. District Judge Michael Ponsor ruled on February 28 that Children's Rights'

case against Massachusetts' child welfare system can move ahead as a class action law suit. The suit, known as *Connor B v. Patrick*, charges the Department of Children and Families with violating children's constitutional rights by placing them in unstable placements and failing to ensure that they are safe and well. [Children's Rights press release, 2/28/11]

Michigan

In a ruling issued December 2010, the state Supreme Court declared that a father or mother can be ordered to pay child support, even if their parental rights have been terminated. The case involved a couple whose children were removed due to their parents' drug abuse. After the parents divorced, the mother regained custody but the father lost his rights when he failed to reunify with the children. "There is no indication," the opinion reads, "that the duty of support is conditioned on the retention of parental rights." [*The Detroit News*, 12/22/10]

Nebraska

Signed by Governor Heineman on March 10, a new law allows those who are adopting a child from foster care to read the child's Department of Health and Human Services case file. Senator Gwen Howard, who introduced the bill, says the change will help prepare parents for a child's behavioral and health problems and enable them to set up appropriate services sooner. [NECN, 3/4/11]

Eric, who turned 14 last June, is a sweet youth with a ready smile who likes to read and has an affinity for music. In the past he has sung at school and church, and in the future he can picture himself as the lead singer in a band—a band he would call "Krazy Guys." He has even figured out how the band will get from show to show: "We wouldn't travel in a jet because I don't like heights. We would have an RV or travel in a bus." When he listens to music, Eric enjoys rap and rock groups like Linkin Park, System of a Down, and Metallica. When he takes a break from music, Eric enjoys reading fantasy stories, watching cartoons, shooting baskets at the park, playing video games, and helping out around the house. At school, where he is in 8th grade, Eric likes his reading, math, and science classes the best. If he could go anywhere, France, Italy, and Disneyland are top on his list. Italy might be the best match for his appetite, since he really likes pizza, lasagna, and spaghetti. Eric sincerely wants to find a family he can call his own. He is looking for a caring and supportive parent or two who will help him maintain contact with a younger brother who has already been adopted and will be "just a family to come home to." To learn more about Eric, contact Christina Booth: 602-930-4663; cbooth@aask-az.org. ♦



Eric

Nevada

Governor Sandoval's budget reduces funding for Nevada's Division of Child and Family Services and shifts some duties to counties. In the next two years, counties could face a \$26 million drop in funding. Clark County (Las Vegas) is slated to lose \$14.8 million in state general funds, \$11 million from Clark County Family Services. The state is also offsetting revenue cuts by reducing block grants and eliminating funding for county juvenile camps, youth parole services, and treatment. [*Las Vegas Sun*, 3/4/11]

Ohio

An agreement between the National Center for Adoption Law and Policy and the state has revived Ohio's waiting child website (adoptionphotonlistingohio.org/) at least until the end of 2011. Budget cuts closed the site more than a year ago, but NCALP officials were able to convince the state to pay the Center less than \$2,000 per month to operate a site that lists Ohio foster children who are available for adoption through county children services agencies.

Texas

House Bill 1, the governor's proposed budget, slices 13 percent (\$2.2 billion) from programs related to child protection and investigations, foster care and adoption, child abuse and neglect prevention, and family violence services. Cuts would

...continued on the back cover

Adoption and Foster Care Resources

Unless otherwise noted, resources can be ordered from online or local booksellers.

Guidebooks and Reports

Charting a Better Future for Transitioning Foster Youth

Published by the American Bar Association Commission on Youth at Risk. 2011. Derived from a Summit on the Fostering Connections to Success Act, this report contains advice about helping youth in care to more effectively cross the divide between childhood and adulthood. Topics center around older youth permanency, legal processes, housing, education, jobs, health, and foster youth in the delinquency system. Link to a copy at www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law/projects_initiatives/youth_at_risk.html.

The Fleecing of Foster Children: How We Confiscate Their Assets and Undermine Their Financial Security

Produced by the Children's Advocacy Institute and First Star. 2011. This new report shows how states divert nearly \$200 million in Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits for children in care to state coffers. To prevent the loss of support to youth aging out of care and cases of identity theft, the report details legislation that would ban states from redirecting benefits away from children for whom they are intended. Access at www.caichildlaw.org/Misc/Fleecing_Report_Final_HR.pdf.

Funding Permanency Services: A Guide to Leveraging Federal, State, and Local Dollars

Published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2010. This guide provides information to help states and local governments find and access child welfare funding. It describes how to maximize Title IV-E reimbursements, generate savings for community-based services, access Title IV-E training dollars, and leverage federal dollars to fund a continuum of permanency services. Find online at <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/ChildWelfarePermanence.aspx>.

Guidelines for Family Group Decision Making in Child Welfare

Published by American Humane. 2010. Developed with help from family group decision making (FGDM) practitioners, system developers, academics, family members, and child advocates, these guidelines describe FGDM, values that underpin the practice, and critical components. The resource provides directions

for FGDM coordinators, referral processes, meetings, and follow-up. View at www.americanhumane.org/assets/pdfs/children/pc-fgdm-guidelinespdf.pdf.

Meeting the Education Requirements of Fostering Connections: Learning from the Field

By Margaret Flynn-Khan. 2010. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 created a mandate for educational stability among children in foster care. This report highlights how leaders in child welfare, education, and the courts can promote educational success, and offers examples of efforts currently underway to meet the education mandate. Access at www.financeproject.org/publications/FCWG_EducationLessonsLearned.pdf.

Multi-State Study on Psychotropic Medication Oversight in Foster Care

By Laurel Leslie, Thomas Mackie, Emily Dawson, Christopher Bellonci, Diana Schoonover, Angie Mae Rodday, Munya Hayek, and Justeen Hyde. 2010. Authors examined 47 states' and the District of Columbia's policies about psychotropic medication use among children in foster care. The report lists state policies, challenges states face and innovative solutions; and links to tools, web sites, and other organizations' policy statements and guidelines. Access at www.tuftsetsi.org.

My So-Called Emancipation: From Foster Care to Homelessness for California Youth

Published by Human Rights Watch. 2010. Findings in this report come from interviews with 63 young adults who graduated from California's foster care system to homelessness. Key failures included the state's lack of realistic emancipation plans, young adults' inability to afford or secure housing, and the absence of training about basic living skills. Download at www.hrw.org/node/90219.

Relative Foster Care Licensing Waivers in the States: Policies and Possibilities

Produced by CLASP and the ABA Center on Children and the Law. 2010. This report reviews waivers and licensing, and provides more detailed information about state waiver provisions, general versus specific waivers, and factors that states consider when addressing waiver requests. A guide about writing waiver requests and states' responsibilities are

also included. Link to the report at www.clasp.org/issues?type=child_welfare.

Severe Attachment Disorder in Childhood: A Guide to Practical Therapy

By Niels Rygaard. 2010. In this guide, a theoretical base underpins practical daily treatment options to help children with attachment disorder as they pass through different developmental stages. Sections focus on adoption issues, ways to teach attachment-disordered children, sexual abuse, and examples from real life.

Nonfiction

Facing the Rising Sun: Perspectives on African American Family and Child Well-Being

By Oronde Miller. 2010. An adoptee and child welfare professional, the author wrote this collection of essays to explore both the problems inherent in America's child welfare system, and the need for personal and professional activism to promote African American families' welfare. Ultimately, the message is one of hope. Order online at <http://ifcwb.com/publications/facingtherisingsun.html>.

Fostering Nation? Canada Confronts Its Childhood Disadvantage

By Veronica Strong-Boaq. 2010. Covering child welfare practices from the 19th to the 21st century, *Fostering Nation?* explores the evolution of Canadian fostering initiatives as they have served and ill-served children and families. It also offers a history of how badly life unfolded for the disadvantaged aboriginal population.

From Child Abuse to Foster Care

By Richard Barth, Mark Courtney, Jill Berrick, and Vicky Albert. 2010. Through a synthesis of the California longitudinal foster care study, this resource clarifies the link between the child welfare system's performance and outcomes for children after an initial abuse report is filed. Beyond the regional import, the book provides a comprehensive picture of children's path through child welfare as a measure of the system's effectiveness.

A Home for Every Child: The Washington Children's Home Society in the Progressive Era

By Patricia Susan Hart. 2010. Founded in 1896 to place neglected, abused, and homeless children into foster and adoptive homes, Washington Children's Home

Adoption and Foster Care Resources

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Society is an early example of modern adoption practice. In this historical read, the author illuminates social, cultural, and political factors that affected children, parents, and those who pioneered institutions devoted to child welfare.

The Impact of Attachment

By Susan Hart. 2010. In three sections, the author explores factors that form or disrupt a child's ability to attach. Part I describes children's normal development through appropriate infant-parent interactions, Part II considers relational disorders that affect neurological development and impair attachment, and Part III suggests environmental/family therapies and therapeutic approaches to ameliorate attachment disorders.

The Road to Evergreen: Adoption, Attachment Therapy, and the Promise of Family

By Rachael Stryker. 2010. As Americans adopted more and more institutionalized children from Eastern European orphanages in the 1990s, parents and clinicians noticed serious attachment disorders later called reactive attachment disorder (RAD). Research and interviews with adoptive families inform the author's description of RAD treatment in Evergreen, Colorado, and the disconnect between family life and the best ways to care for post-institutionalized children.

The Search:

A Memoir of an Adopted Woman

By Titia Ellis. 2010. The author was five when her parents told her a secret: she was adopted. She accepted the startling news but began to question her identity when a life crisis sent her looking for answers about her birth family. This book recounts her difficult journey to find the truth behind the secrets.

Understanding and Working with Parents of Children in Long-Term Foster Care

By Gillian Schofield and Emma Ward. 2010. This book shares birth parents' stories: why their children entered care, how they handled court, and how they maintained identity as a parent. Incorporating parent and worker suggestions, the book offers a best practice model for serving children's best interests by honestly exploring challenges and suggesting ways in which workers can effectively navigate relationships with birth parents.

Children's Books

I Dreamed of You

By Anna Zaltz. 2010. Intended for young children who were adopted, this cheerful story lets children know how much they were loved before they joined their family. Light-hearted text and illustrations present an affirming message. *Ages 4-8.*

Janey Is Adopted

By Heather Teteak-Berg. 2010. Janey, an eight-year-old girl in foster care, is trying to figure out what adoption means. Compared to children who were adopted as infants, her perception of adoption—if it's good or bad and what it means to her life—is quite different. *Ages 4-8.*

Sweet Moon Baby

By Karen Henry Clark. 2010. Like a lullaby, *Sweet Moon Baby* tells how a Chinese baby travels from birth parents who wish for her a better life, to adoptive parents who dream of times they will share. A turtle, peacock, monkey, panda, and fish guide the baby's basket down a moonlit river to her new parents. *Ages 4-8.*

Online

Child Welfare Outcomes

Launched by the federal Children's Bureau, a new website at <http://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/data> offers Child Welfare Outcomes Reports data for 2006 to

2009. The site features a report builder where users can select specific states, years, and data, and have the results displayed in a graph, table, or map.

Grandcare Support Locator

The American Association of Retired Persons Foundation has a new database at www.giclocalsupport.org to help parenting grandparents and other relative caregivers find services and support. Using their zip code, visitors can search for local child care, health care, respite care, support groups, and newsletters.

iFoster Knowledge Center

Based in Truckee, California, the site <http://ifoster.org> aims to help individuals and agencies cover foster children's basic needs by offering group discounts at major retailers. Site members can access discounts at Target, Office Depot, Macy's, Dell, Costco, Barnes&Noble, AT&T, and many other places.

Voice for Adoption

Voice for Adoption (VFA) develops and advocates for improved adoption policies. The new site, at <http://voice-for-adoption.org>, has tabs where visitors can study VFA's history, current projects, and advocacy and policy work. It also features links to VFA's advocacy agenda, news updates, scheduled policy calls, and current child welfare legislation. ♦

Put Marquez in a sports car, and his excitement and enthusiasm will infect everyone nearby. Born October 1999, this 11-year-old has a cheerful, upbeat, and engaging personality, especially when he is the center of attention. His favorite hobbies include learning about cars—mostly sports and luxury cars—and singing. While he likes pop and R&B music, Marquez is most at home with gospel and will tune the car radio to his favorite station so he can sing along. He is a talented singer and entertainer. Currently in 5th grade, Marquez likes his math class the best, and is considering careers as a caseworker or a bus driver; he thinks it would be great to drive kids to school for nine months and have summers off. To win him over with food, prepare chicken, rice, and gravy, or chicken fingers and fries. Marquez can also be very affectionate. Recently, when his caseworker did not get any treats on a movie outing, he insisted on sharing his goodies with her. He really likes animals too. Marquez sincerely wants to be adopted by a family that loves him, can give him lots of positive attention, and will help him maintain contact with an older sister. He will thrive in a home with caring parents and older siblings who can look out for him. Learn more about Marquez from Ilona Frederick at Children Awaiting Parents: 888-835-8802; ilona@capbook.org. ♦



Marquez



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limit payments to foster and adoptive parents and eliminate day care funding for relative caregivers—a move, says an official in Collin County, that will create a serious shortage of foster, adoptive, and kinship parents. [*Plano Star-Courier*, 3/6/11]

West Virginia

On March 12, the West Virginia legislature approved **Senate Bill 35**, a measure that raises the non-family adoption tax credit from \$2,000 to \$4,000 per child. The credit applies to children under age 18 who were adopted into a family that is not related by blood or marriage. Governor Tomblin is expected to sign the bill.

Wisconsin

The state's latest progress report about Milwaukee's child welfare system contains good news. The number of children maltreated in foster care is at an historic low, the number of children in foster care has declined, caseloads are smaller, and visits between workers and children in care are up. Though challenges remain, Children's Rights' senior litigator praised the state-run Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare for making "tremendous progress transforming its child welfare system." [*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 3/13/11] ♦

NACAC Mission: *NACAC promotes and supports permanent families for children and youth in the U.S. and Canada who have been in care—especially those in foster care and those with special needs.*

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