

Kent County Resources for New Foster Parents

Congratulations on getting your foster license! Welcome to the wild world of fostering, the best and hardest thing you will ever do. This resource list was put together by seasoned foster parents and includes all the local resources that we wish we knew about when we were just starting off on this journey. Best of luck to you!

Some things you should advocate for with each placement

- Request a referral for a trauma assessment from your caseworker to help understand the impact of trauma on the children in your care and to know what other services to advocate for.
- If appropriate, set up a meeting with the bio-parents and start to build that relationship. Ask questions about their kids, send regular notes and pictures to help them get a glimpse of how and what their children are doing.
- Make sure that the daily rate of care (DOC) that you are receiving for the children in your care fits the level of need. You can advocate for an increased rate or even Enhanced Foster Care or SED waiver depending on the level of need.
- Get your kiddos into therapy and make sure that it's a good therapist who understands and works with trauma.
- Get yourself a therapist too. Seriously. It's so helpful to have a space to process your own secondary trauma.
- Find a reliable, safe, and regular source for respite. At least every other month. If you don't have friends or family to fit this need you can ask your agency to help connect you with another foster family.

Training Resources

Michigan State University Online Child Welfare Courses

Large offering of online courses related to trauma, foster care, etc.

<https://socialwork.msu.edu/CE/Online-Child-Welfare-Courses>

These are books/resources that have been helpful for our own growth and development in supporting our children's healing:

- "Easy to Love", "Difficult to Discipline", "The Connected Child" all by Karyn Purvis, very focused on building safety and trust. Also check out <http://empoweredtoconnect.org>
- "The Great Behavior Breakdown" by Bryan Post, formerly a child in foster care, now an foster/adoptive dad, really gets at the underlying reasons behind behaviors. Also check out www.postinstitute.com
- Celebrate Calm by Kirk Martin, very action oriented ideas of how to help 'hyperactive' or 'oppositional' kids at www.celebratecalm.com
- "To Have Hope" by Stacy Manning. Also available are online support groups and coaching for foster/adoptive parents. Check out www.tohavehope.com
- "Building the Bonds of Attachment: Awakening Love in Deeply Troubled Children" by Daniel Hughes attachment focused treatment at www.danielhughes.org
- "The Explosive Child" by Ross W Greene, focuses on collaborative problem solving approaches for children with reactive/explosive temperaments. Check out www.livesinthebalance.org
- Trying differently rather than harder by Diane Malbin, for parenting children with FAS. Check out www.fascets.org
- "Brainstorm" and anything by Daniel Siegel, really helps in understanding the science behind trauma
- "The boy who was raised as a dog" and anything else by Bruce Perry, expert on trauma in children. Check out www.childtrauma.org
- "Beyond Consequences" by Heather Forbes, focused on parent interventions to build trust and safety. Also check out www.beyondconsequences.com
- "Nurtured Heart Approach" by Howard Glasser-focuses on igniting greatness in the child and on what's going on right at the moment. Also implemented by Annie Lange <http://childrensuccessfoundation.com>
- "Wounded Children, healing homes: How traumatized children impact adoptive and foster families" by Jayne Schooler
- "Trauma Stewardship" by Laura VanderNoot Lipsky - Book on how caring for traumatized people can impact us as caregivers, and how we can address this impact.

General resources for all ages

Closet of Hope

Provides clothing, coats, backpacks, toys, diapers, formula, meals, etc. to foster and adoptive families. Open Mondays 11am-2pm and Wednesdays 6-8pm, also by appointment for special needs. Before you go, you need to complete an application and bring ID and proof of need (such as foster license) www.familiesofpromise.org/closet-of-hope
616-613-6770 or FOPClosetofHope@gmail.com
Located at Kentwood Community Church: 2950 Clyde Park Ave SW Wyoming MI

Court Appointed Special Advocates of Kent County (CASA)

You can request a volunteer who will investigate, facilitate, advocate and monitor services for children in foster care. CASA volunteers present first-hand information and observations in court to help judges make the very best decisions about children's futures.
<https://www.casakentco.org/>

West Michigan Partnership for Children

Facilitates and oversees foster care services for all foster care agencies in Kent County. Can be a useful source to try to advocate for special resources, funding, or considerations.
<https://www.wmpc.care/>

Museums for All

Many museums throughout the US have free or discounted admission for any families that have a WIC or EBT card. In West Michigan that includes Impression 5, Grand Rapids Children's Museum, UICA, and the Air Zoo. In Chicago it includes Shedd Aquarium, Museum of Science and Industry, Field Museum, Art Institute, Alder Planetarium, etc. Check out the full list of participating museums here: <https://museums4all.org/>

Grand Rapids Public Library 'Check It Out' Program

Provides free passes to local museums, zoos, and botanical gardens, as well as free tickets to performing arts and sports events. Must have a GRPL card and 'check out' the passes or tickets at a local GRPL branch.
<https://www.grpl.org/about/using-the-library/checkitout/>

Kent County Support Groups

Most agencies host their own support groups as well, check with your licenser for agency specific information

Adoptive Family Support Network

Great community of other foster and adoptive families. It is a closed group so you request to join and then are admitted.
<https://www.facebook.com/AdoptiveFamilySupportNetwork>

Kinship Care

1st teen Monday (for example, if a there was a Monday Oct. 12 or Mon. Oct.19, the meeting would be on the 19th. 12 is not a teen) of the month 6-8pm
Location: St. Andrews Episcopal 1025 Three Mile Rd. N.E. Grand Rapids, MI. 49505
Contact: Sharon Briggs, Facilitator at 616-954-1991x7716 or sharonbriggs@cherryhealth.org

West Michigan FASD Parent and Self-Advocates Group

Meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month from 7:00-8:30pm *Group does not meet in December.
Westminster Presbyterian Church, 47 Jefferson Ave. Grand Rapids
Contact: Sandy Kezenius 616-648-9259 sandnkez@hotmail.com or Corry Tait (616)648-9259 taitville@comcast.net or Barbara Wybrecht (616)485-8665 or bmwybrecht@gmail.com for more information.

Mental Health Resources

Kent Children's Mobile Crisis Line

24 hr crisis response team for children experiencing an emotional or mental health crisis (do not always serve children in foster care if other services are involved).

616-333-1000

Network 180

Community mental health for Kent County, they are the gatekeepers for most mental or behavioral health support services for those with Medicaid.

790 Fuller Ave NE, Grand Rapids MI 49503

616-336-3909 or 1-800-749-7720

<https://www.network180.org/>

Community Family Partnership

The CFP is a network of child-serving public systems and community partners working together with youth ages 5-17 with Serious Emotional Disturbances involved in multiple child service systems and their families to increase access to effective, coordinated mental health services and supports by using a System of Care framework. Includes wrap around and parent support partner services.

<https://cfpsystemofcare.org/>

There are many local agencies and therapists who specialize in foster care/adoption/trauma. Some of those are:

www.familiesforevercounseling.com

<https://www.kohleycounseling.com/>

<http://debh.org/>

<https://www.healthforlifegr.com/trauma-informed-counseling-center/>

Resources for birth to preschool

WIC program

As a foster parent, you are eligible for WIC if you have any children in your home under the age of five.

WIC consists of nutrition benefits that are loaded onto a card you can use to purchase formula, fruits and veggies, cereal, cheese, milk, bread, pasta, yogurt, etc. Through WIC you also have access to nurses and dieticians who will monitor your children's health and development.

Call the scheduling number (616-632-7200) and you can be scheduled at any of the following locations:

Main: 700 Fuller Ave NE

South: 4700 Kalamazoo Ave SE

North: 4388 14 Mile Rd NE

Sheldon: 121 Franklin St SE

Childcare Assistance through DHHS

As a foster parent, as long as all adults in the home are working or in under-grad school, you qualify to get all or part of the cost of childcare for foster children in your home to be paid by the state through Child Development and Care subsidy (CDC) through DHHS regardless of your income. Some pro tips in applying: only fill out the required information, do not include your income as it does not matter as a foster parent, you will need to get proof of need (such as a letter from your employer with the amount of hours worked per week).

To apply create an account here: <https://newmibridges.michigan.gov/>

Childcare locator for Kent County

Helpful website to search for daycare centers or in-home daycare. You can search by type, location, age, hours, etc.

Pro tip: after the initial search you can also filter by which locations accept the Child Development and Care subsidy by checking the CDC box under funding sources.

To search go to: <https://www.greatstarttoquality.org/finding-child-care-preschool>

Head Start for Kent County

Children in foster care are given priority in their admission criteria. M-Th school week, half or full day available at most sites. Available for ages 3-5 years, various locations in Kent County.

To apply go to: <https://www.hs4kc.org/>

Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative

Another option for childcare and preschool. ELNC has various community sites throughout the Grand Rapids area and children in foster care are given priority in admissions.

For birth to age three: <https://www.elncgr.org/ehs/>

For three to five: <https://www.elncgr.org/preschool-programs/>

Infant Mental Health Program

Home-based supportive counseling for children 0-5 as well as their families. Experienced working with children in foster care, many therapists will work with the foster parents as well as bio parents.

Arbor Circle (their program is called Infant and Toddler Developmental Services): 616-456-6571 or

earlychildhood@arborcircle.org

DA Blodgett St. Johns (their program is called Early Childhood Attachment): 616-774-3801 or <https://dabsj.org/what-we-do/counseling/early-childhood-attachement>

Early On

Provides early intervention services for developmental delays, can include speech, PT, OT, etc. Foster parents can self refer, does not need to go through agency: <https://www.1800earlyon.org/>

Resources for elementary/school age

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Michigan Alliance for Families

Provides information, support, advocacy, and education for families who have children (birth to 26) who receive or may be eligible to receive special education services.

<https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/>

Kent School Services Network (KSSN)

Provides access to resources, family support services, and counseling for students at KSSN-participating schools (elementary, middle, and high schools).

<https://www.kentssn.org/>

Resources for adolescents

Grand Rapids Center for Community Transformation

Provides a variety of services to youth who are in foster care and those who have aged out of care, including: employment, vocational training, GED, case management, life skills classes, and mentoring.

<https://www.grcct.com/>

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<https://www.kentssn.org/>

Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative

Brings together community members, public and private agencies, and resources that are critical to enhancing the success of young adults who are transitioning or have transitioned from the foster care system.

Krystle Williams 616-204-0384 or WilliamsK35@michigan.gov

Health Transitions Program

Lifeskills program and has peer mentors matched with the youth. Request referral through Network 180.