

PREPPING Teen’s Responsible Decision Making

September is National Grandparents Month. This issue highlights grandparents and other relatives who are doing double-duty and serving as primary caregivers to children in need.

Between 2001 and 2012, the number of children living in grandparent-headed households in the United States jumped 26%. In Ohio, 233,699 children – 8.9% of the kids in the state—live in homes where the house holders are grandparents or other relatives, according to U.S. census data cited by AARP. The first feature, “Will She Be Like Her Mother”, article in this newsletter is reprinted from the teen issue of **Relatively Speaking.**

Please pass this issue along to grandparents and other relatives rearing teens



is recognized within the *Connecting the Dots from Foster Care to Successful Adulthood* article written by foster care teen, Arthur V. Miller III. Miller recounts his experience at the Connecting the Dots Foster Care conference and how it is beneficial to his fellow foster care friends and him by connecting them to essential resources to help develop into a successful adults.

Also within the newsletter is the *Adolescent Immunization Checklist* where you will find helpful information on the current immunizations vital to our teen’s health.

Don’t forget to check out Ohio PREP Region 9 news with training events!

“It takes a village to raise a child” is an African proverb used to describe the means to raise a child. An extension of this proverb

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Will She Be Like Her Mother?

If you are raising a family member other than your own child, you have most likely experienced disappointment. While some children come to their grandparents or other relatives because their parents have died, most are there because their parents were unable or unwilling to raise them. As a result, many kinship parents, grandparents in particular, talk about the fear they have that the children they have agreed to raise will “turn out bad, too.”

While there are no guarantees, it is possible to help the child in your care create a better life for herself and the children in her future. That dream of a brighter future must begin with you. You must look carefully at yourself, your parenting skills, your emotions, your health and your finances. You must think about your childhood and the childhood of your children.

Remember that sometimes no matter what parents or grandparents do, the children they raise grow up to have problems. They make poor choices. They abuse drugs or get in with the wrong crowd. They have mental health problems.

How to be a Good Listener for Your Teen

When we hear the word communication, what comes to mind? Very likely we think about talking. In fact, it is listening that is the most powerful tool of communication and it is that skill we must develop to enhance our relationships with teens.

To develop the art of listening requires us to take some specific actions. **First, we have to make time available to our teens.** In most homes, communication takes place in very few words as we are walking out the door, during TV commercials or at rushed meals. This does not allow for the focused listening time teens need. What to do? Two approaches are helpful.

The first is to set aside a regular time to talk with your teen. This can be a mealtime or Sunday afternoon walk. Or, you can just call it a talking time. This formal approach may be difficult to begin in the teen years, but may work for some families.

A second approach is to talk with teens when they want to talk. One kinship parent explained that she drops everything when her teen wants to talk. She gives the young man her full attention. She makes eye contact and she sits close by. She nods her head to show she is listening. She does not interrupt. When she does speak, it is to ask questions to increase her understanding of what the teen is saying. This kind of attention helps to create a close bond between the two.

Don't over react to what teens say. Teenagers often think out loud. Sometimes they like to say things just to be shocking. Even if what they tell you are true and are shocking, if you over react it is less likely they will share such information with you in the future. For some kinship parents who grew up in a different time and place, some of what goes on in the life of teens today is very upsetting and confusing. Do the best you can and stay calm.

Don't jump in right away with advice. Sometimes teens just want a chance to air their views. They don't really want to be told how to handle a situation. If you feel you need to give advice, ask if that's okay. Try something like, “May I tell you how I feel about that?” “Do you want my opinion about what to do?” This respectful approach is more likely to get results than offering advice that goes in one ear and out the other.

Try to listen with an open mind. While it may be hard, try not to judge the teen or what she or he is telling you. Keep an open mind. This helps to keep the lines of communication open. While it is very tempting to be critical of a teen's

friends or of behaviors of which you don't approve, stay neutral as much as possible.

Walk a mile in your teen's shoes. Try putting yourself in the teen's situation. Try to see things from your teen's point of view. Try to understand how the teen is feeling.

Don't tell the teen how she or he should feel. Sometimes in an attempt to comfort, we say things like, "Don't be upset by that." or, "You shouldn't be angry because of that." Just listen to the feelings being shared.

Remember, the most important communication skill is listening. Being a good listener takes time, attention, practice and patience. Do yourself and your teen a great service by developing the art of listening. *Keep an open mind while listening.*

Sex and Pregnancy

More than ever, today's teens need information and education about sex, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. Yet, many families continue to believe that providing information to teens about sex is the same as approving that teens have sex. All the studies done in this area tell us that the more information a teen has about sex, the less likely he or she will be involved in an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. It is also less likely that youth will contract HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases.

For many parents and kinship parents, talking about sex to teens is very difficult. The ability to talk to teens about sex probably reflects our own comfort level with the subject. We may have grown up in a family that didn't talk about sex. We may have had unpleasant sexual experiences in our own lives. We may just be shy about the subject. The reason for the difficulty is not important. What is important is that teenagers have all of the facts they need so they can make informed decisions about their lives.

A discussion about sex needs to include the idea of consequences. Communicating information about consequences to teens can be tricky.

Trying to get a teenage girl to understand that a baby will not be able to offer her the love she longs for can be hard. Trying to get a teenage boy to believe that under the law he will have to financially support any child he fathers is tough. It is hard for teenagers to fully understand and accept consequences. The reason for this is partially explained by newly discovered information about brain development. Until recently, it had been thought that in most ways, the human brain finished growing and changing earlier in childhood. Studies have now shown that the brains of teenagers are still growing and changing. They do not yet have fully developed adult brains. That is one reason why consequences can be so difficult for teens to understand.

Your family values and beliefs about sex should be included in any discussion about sex and relationships. Despite what the teen in your care might say, teens really do care what the important adults in their lives think and believe. They really do want to hear from you.

There is a lot of information available at your library, doctor's office or school. The prevention of early sex, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy are subjects too important to ignore.

Reprinted from *Relatively Speaking*

Connecting the Dots from Foster Care to a Successful Adulthood

By: Arthur Vincent Miller III



What happens when a child has no place to call home? This is a question that I have asked myself several times, while being in and out of foster care. My name is Arthur V. Miller, named after my uncle. I was born into a loving family despite the

absence of my dad on April 19th, 1990 but like most families there were problems. In the beginning of the year of 1998 my uncle whom I was close to was shot and killed and I had to experience my first loss with no one to help me handle it. Due to my behavior change in school, Montgomery County Children Services (MCCS) had gotten involved and on February 13th, 1998 it was decided that I would be a part of the foster care system. Out of the five children my mother had I was the first to be placed in care.

Where are the lines to connect the dots for young people in and from foster care? Can I find connection with my biological family – or through people who can relate to me and what I have experienced in the foster care system? My foster care experience was originally expected to only last one month but, thanks to the continuing investigation of MCCS on my family, they found it best to keep me in care. I initially had a hard time coping in several foster homes, and I did not find the correct environment that I could call home until I was 16 years old.

I came to the home of a loving married couple I considered to be angels named Alma & Lamont

Turner. They lived in Dayton, Ohio and had been foster parents for over 20 years and currently had 2 other foster children living with them. A loving home, people I could call family, a place where I did not feel alone and video games to match - what more could a kid ask for... I am now 22 years old and still in contact with The Turners and their family. Even today their family and they themselves treat me as a relative, blood or not. After meeting them I never felt alone again!

These are the connections I want for my brothers and sisters in and from foster care. And this is why I advocate for more opportunities like the Connecting the Dots conference, that focus on uniting counties and foster care youth from all over Ohio. The 2012 Connecting the Dots Conference for Foster Care Teens and Young Adults took place on Friday, August 3rd in Columbus, Ohio. This conference was made possible by the favorable response of ODJFS Director Michael Colbert to the Top Five Asks expressed by the Ohio Youth Advisory Board. Ohio YAB Facilitators played a key role in conference-planning; Lisa Dickson served as Lead Facilitator, with the ever-amazing Doris Edelmann doing lots of work behind the scenes.

The primary purpose of the Connecting the Dots Conference was to connect Ohio foster care teens/young adults with Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Permanency and Youth Voice in Court. Conference Registration was free, due to support from ODJFS, PCSAO, and the Ohio Youth Advisory Board. Archie Griffin's Keynote was made possible due to Director Colbert and the ODJFS Office of Families and Children. ODMH and the ENGAGE initiative funded the entire cost of audiovisual materials for this event.

The 200 youth who attended the Connecting the Dots Conference not only got the chance to meet, explore, and befriend other young people of similar experiences, but also attend

workshops to prepare them for the adult life that lies ahead... The event as a whole was focused on building the knowledge and resources of youth in and out of foster care, while empowering them to want to do and be better in society.

The youth who attended the conference had the opportunity to browse through over a thousand clothing donations, as part of the Suits for Success initiative. To prepare for the Suits for Success area, Clothing Drives had been held at Ohio State Bar Foundation, the Ohio Attorney General's Office and the ODJFS Office for Workforce Development, Office of Unemployment Compensation, and Office of Families and Children. Many young people left the conference with full-piece suits and other professional attire that they could use in seeking future employment.

When it comes to the 2012 Connecting the Dots Conference for Foster Care Teens and Young Adults, it is the youth perceptions regarding the day went that are most important. Here are some quotes from youth evaluations:

Please keep this going, I love every bit of it. I feel and see that even people that don't know me would like to see me succeed in life, and that gives me all the tools I need to keep my head up and stick to my road of success.

- I really liked the connecting the dots conference because I know there is other people out there like me
- I enjoyed myself and I'm glad that I came. A lot of teens should come.
- I think every course I did was great and I think they should be repeated next time
- I received the right help
- I feel more confident about my future
- I would like to come to these each year
- I would be glad to come back next year and be one of the speakers and put forth my ideas to reach out to children that grew up like me

The event ended with the voices of youth. Youth participants on the Youth Panel and during the Youth Speak-Out shared encouragement with their brothers and sisters of the foster care system. Things like this encouraged several people to say: "I can't wait to see you next year" to other youth – indicating that they felt at home and that, in this case, they were not alone.

Foster care youth are often judged based on statistics or hasty generalizations – but the truth is, we're pretty cool. Similar to teens or young adults who have not been through the system, we are planning for our future and looking for a place to call home

Arthur Vincent Miller III is an inspirational youth that attended the Connecting the Dots Foster Care convention. The primary purpose of the Connecting the Dots Conference is to connect Ohio foster care teens/young adults with Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Permanency and Youth Voice in Court. Conference Registration was free, due to support from ODJFS, PCSAO, and the Ohio Youth Advisory Board.

A Guide to Adolescent Immunization

Back to school for many parents and kids includes purchasing school supplies, figuring out transportation, packing lunches etc. However, it also includes making sure your children immunizations are up to date.

With the advent of new vaccines and recent recommendations from the **Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices** (ACIP), adolescents also represent a new age group for immunizations. In addition to annual vaccination with the influenza vaccine and catch-up vaccinations with vaccines initially dosed in childhood, the ACIP currently recommends routine vaccination at the preventive health visit at age 11 to 12 years with 3 vaccines: the MCV4 vaccine, the HPV vaccine, and a booster of the Tdap vaccine. Catch-up vaccination is recommended for these vaccines for those 11 to 18 years of age (MCV4 and Tdap) and females 13 to 26 years of age (HPV).

Vaccinations can be administered concurrently with other vaccines and can provide additional health benefits. For example the HPV vaccine protects against HPV types 16 and 18 which have been associated with cervical, vaginal/vulvar, penile, anal and oropharyngeal cancers.

It is vital for teens to receive their annual vaccinations. Financial Assistance is available to qualifying families that need immunizations for their teens.

- Entitlement program for children from birth to 19th birthday (Medicaid, underinsured or uninsured patient are eligible, and American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- Provides FREE access to all vaccines recommended by ACIP (Clinician designated as VFC providers can administer vaccines free of charge)
- VCF website has information for providers

and parents

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vcf/default.htm>

Additional resources on immunization can be found with the American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC Adolescent Immunization web pages.

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Categories	Vaccines	Description
Routine	HPV	Human Papillomavirus
	MCV4	Meningococcal conjugate vaccine
	Tdap	tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis
Catch Up	Influenza	
	HBV	Hepatitis B Virus
	Inactive polio	
	MMR	measles, mumps, and rubella
Risk or Activity Based	Varicella	
	HAV Pneumococcal	Hepatitis A Virus

Ohio PREP Regional 9 News!

Upcoming Instructor Training Events

Our trainer the trainer workshop is one day 8 hour training. Below you will find dates for our upcoming PREP trainings.

September 21, 2012

November 16, 2012

January 18, 2013

January 19, 2013

March 19, 2013

April 26, 2013

June 21, 2013

July 19, 2013

To register for training or have questions, please contact Rekha Voruganti (Education coordinator) at 614-355-0759 email: Rekha.voruganti@nationwidechildrens.org

Region 9 Steadily Increases Number of PREP Trainers

Region 9 conducted its fourth train the trainer workshop August 17 2012 at nationwide Children's Hospital Surgery Center located in Westerville Ohio. Agencies that participated in the PREP training were: Youth Advocate Services, Fairfield County Independent Living, United Methodist Children's Home, Foster care Connection, SAFY and the Village Network. In addition, five counties were represented. This is great news as we expect to expand PREP Youth workshops to all 9 counties.

Agencies and staff represented form the training includes:

Youth Advocate Services: Edward Miner

Fairfield County Independent Living: Joshua Komives, Stephanie Jackson

United Methodist Children's Home: Kendall Bernstein

Foster Care Connection: Pam Meyers

SAFY: Kristy Dervries

The Village Network (Delaware, Knox, Licking and Franklin Agencies): Stacey Gilley, Melanie Sauls, Sherry Fisher, Nichol Archer, Jenny Gottfried, Stephanie Britton, Phillip Krave and Brigitte Hufford



Pomegranate House Recognized for their commitment to PREP



The Pomegranate Health Systems was the first agency to commit to the region 9 PREP team. This month we recognized PHS for their completion of their first year. This past year PHS currently has 8 trainers and has provided the curriculum to 59 youth! We commend PHS for their efforts and are appreciative of their continual support.

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