

February 2012

Lehigh County Office of Children and Youth Services
Kinship/Foster Care/ICPC Unit
17 S. 7th St.
Allentown Pa 18101

Resource Connections

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Are you a grandparent who has given up your retirement or your own plans in order to take on the diapers, daycare, teacher conferences, driver's education, and everything else that comes along with raising children? Many grandparents today are stepping in to raise their grandchildren when the children's own parents are not able or willing to do so. Across the United States, almost 7.8 million children are living in homes where grandparents or other relatives are the head of household.

Making the adjustment. Often, grandparents take on this obligation when the parents abandon them or when the children can no longer live with them because of the parent's mental illness, substance abuse, or incarceration. Thus, you may have the added burden of caring for children who suffered from abuse or neglect from their own parents. These children may feel insecure and afraid; they may be angry at their situation and even embarrassed by it. It will take time for these children to feel safe and secure. You can encourage these good feelings and ease their adjustment to their new home in a number of ways: Set up daily routines, establish and explain the rules, and build strong communication so they feel they can talk to you about anything.

Finding shared activities. Building new relationships can be difficult. Sometimes, it helps to find things that you can do with your grandchildren to nurture your relationship and to make them feel secure and happy in their new home.

Taking care of yourself. If you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed, and unhappy, you are not going to be able to provide the best care for your grandchildren. It's important that you take care of yourself and not allow yourself to be overwhelmed by your parental responsibilities.

Finding resources. There is a lot of useful free information for grandparents. Much of it is available on the Internet. If your computer skills are a little rusty, you can find help at your public library. Here are some places to start:

AARP runs a Grandparent Information Center, where you can sign up for their newsletter, check their message board, and search for a local support group. www.aarp.org/relationships/grandparenting/

Generations United: runs their own National Center on Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children, which offers information and resources. <http://www.gu.org/Natio991336.aspx>

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Contact Information:

LCOCYS Main Number & 24-hour on call —

(610) 782-3064

Laurie Boucher, Supervisor,
Kinship/Foster Care/ICPC —
610-782-3969



RAISING GRANDCHILDREN: FAMILY ISSUES

My grandchildren's parents are addicted to alcohol and drugs. Is there help for my family?

Abuse of or addiction to alcohol or other drugs (substance abuse) is often called a “family disease” because it affects the entire family. Substance abuse can lead to many other problems, including child abuse and neglect, incarceration, and even the death of a parent. There are many emotions and conflicts when a family member is addicted. You can't control the parent's behavior, but you can do your best to set limits and give your grandchildren security.

- You might want to join a support group for people who have family members or friends who are substance abusers, such as Al-Anon family groups. The confidential meetings help you learn how to cope and be healthy yourself.
- Al-Anon also has groups for children whose parents are substance abusers, called “Alateen” or “Alatot”.
- You might also want to participate in personal counseling from a therapist who can help you and your grandchildren learn how to cope with substance abuse in the family.
- The **Center on Addiction & the Family** (<http://www.coaf.org/family/caregivers>) also has resources on their website to help relatives raising children of parents who are addicted.

Source: Grand Families Guide: Education Issues for Grandparents as Parents. <http://www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/info-08-2011>

ENCOURAGING TREATMENT

If you have tried in the past, you probably know that you cannot force a person into drug or alcohol treatment. Even if the substance abuser is mandated by the court to participate in a treatment program, the decision to make the drastic life changes that will sustain recovery must come from within each person.

While you can't force treatment, you can encourage it. The fact is, an addict will continue to use as long as the consequences of drug use do not outweigh the benefits. It is up to you, then, to see that the addict experiences as many consequences as possible, and as few benefits. Drug treatment providers report that most people say they go into a treatment program not because they wanted to stop using drugs, but because they wanted to stop having to sleep in cars or on building roofs. They were sick of being dirty and hungry all the time. This means that you can play an important role in helping the addict get better. But the kind of help you need to give is denying the basic comforts - a warm bed, a shower, food, and concern. In short: to help, you must refuse to help. It is not until the substance abuser is too uncomfortable that treatment will be sought.

In addition to not offering comfort, you can tell the substance abuser that you would like him or her to consider treatment. You can explain that treatment is effective, and that life does not have to continue to revolve around drugs or alcohol. Because denial is one of the hallmarks of addiction, anything you say in favor of treatment is likely to be met with some sort of statement like, *"Yeah, sure I use drugs occasionally, but I just do it with friends for fun. I can stop any time I want to."* Your response to this kind of retort might be something like: *"Terrific. I think it's great that you are in control and are able to stop. Why don't you try to stop using drugs completely for 60 (or even 90) days, just to be sure you don't need any professional help. If you find it is too difficult to stop on your own, let's agree now that you will try an outpatient program."* (Continued on page 4)

Family time is valuable and here are some great ways to spend it!

DaVinci Science Center
Daily: 930 am-530 pm
Call for details!
484-664-1002

Ice Cream Lab Little Scoops Literacy Lab
Tuesdays, 1:00 pm-1:45 pm
Free Story Time and More
Walnutport, Pa Call for Info 610-767-3551

Rascal's Allentown Pa
Monday Nights 4 pm-10 pm
Kids eat FREE!

Daily
Lehigh Valley Zoo
Admission reduced until March 31, 2012
Allentown, Pa
610-799-4171

Every Wednesday Morning
Moravian Book Shop
Kid's Story Time
10:30-11am Children ages 2-4
Bethlehem, Pa

Story time, Children's Event
Please join us for some fun stories and activities. Story time is a great way to make new friends!

**Mondays and Thursdays beginning-
February 23, 2012 10:00 AM**
(Ongoing)
Barnes & Noble, Promenade Shops,
Center Valley, 610-791-3261

Family Fun

Let's Learn Together

Story time, Children's Event

Any time is a good time for a story!
Travel to foreign lands, play with wild animals, fly through the skies -- all without leaving the ground! Explore your imagination with our Children's Story time!

Tuesdays 10:30 AM (Ongoing)
*Barnes & Noble, Lehigh Valley Mall
Whitehall, PA 18052, 610-264-0238*

Read Across America

Story time

In honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday and Read Across America Day, Miss Sue will be reading *The Lorax* as well as a number of other Dr. Seuss books.

Friday March 02, 2012 10:00 AM
Barnes & Noble, Southmont Center,
4445 Southmont Way, Easton, PA
18045, 610-515-0376

Lehigh County Bicentennial Community Celebration

**Saturday, March 10, 2012
11:00 AM — 8:00 PM**

**Allentown Fairgrounds Agri-Plex
17th & Chew Sts., Allentown PA
THIS EVENT IS FREE!**

4 Stages to Expanding Your Child's Listening Skills

Infant Stage (0-1 year old)

While reading to your infant, try ringing a small bell or shaking a rattle when you turn the page. This way you can instantly assess your child's hearing. Infants with average hearing will usually turn towards the source of the sound. Another great way is to use hand puppets with the story to encourage listening.

Young Toddler State (Age 1)

Younger toddlers are building their re-

ceptive language and figuring out how everything works. A fun game to reinforce listening is naming parts of the body. Ask your child to point to their "nose" or "knees." This will help them build their vocabulary and listening skills.

Older Toddler (Age 2)

Games like Freeze Dance and Simon Says are fun ways for older toddlers to practice listening. This allows them to follow directions, while still having fun.

Preschooler State (Ages 3-5)

One way to encourage preschoolers to listen is to be a role model and help them practice. When your child is telling a story stop and look at them, and ask questions. When it is your turn to talk to them, they will remember to look and listen to you.

Written by: Shawn Deiter, Lehigh Valley Children's Center

ENCOURAGING TREATMENT (Continued from Page 2)

You might also want to suggest that the substance abuser attends NA or AA meetings in your community for extra support.

If the substance abuser is not able to stop after 60 (or 90) days, then you might say something like:

"When we talked about this three months ago, we agreed that you would try an outpatient program if you needed additional help quitting. I'm glad you're willing to try this route. A lot of people are able to stay off drugs by going to an outpatient program. I know you'll give it your best. But let's agree now that if this doesn't work, or you go back to using again, that you will try an inpatient program."

Encouragement should be the limit of your involvement with an addicted adult. Ultimately, it has to be the substance abuser's decision to go forward. As a concerned family member, you can offer a phone book to look up numbers, or even a few places to call. But that's as far as you should go. You should not do the real legwork – making the first appointment, going to the admissions interview. (It is okay, though, to *go with* the addicted parent to the first intake interview.)

Source: Center on Addiction & the Family, <http://www.coaf.org/family/caregivers>

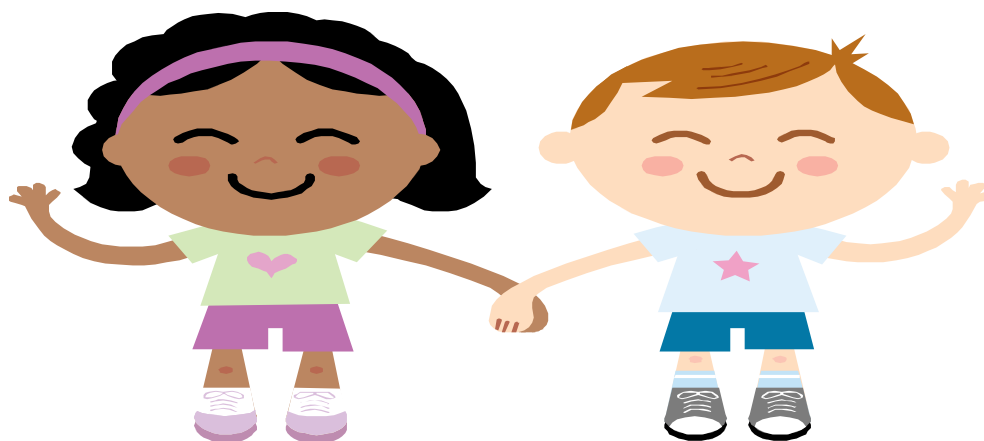
SAVE THE DATE!

**Greater Lehigh Valley Foster Care Coalition
Spring Training**

**Scheduled for
Saturday, April 21, 2012
8:30 AM — 3:30 PM**



Look for more information to follow!



10 TIPS FOR RAISING HAPPIER, HEALTHIER CHILDREN

1. Be warm, loving, and responsive: When children receive warm, loving care, they are more likely to feel safe and secure with the adults who take care of them.
2. Respond to the child's cues and clues: This helps your child feel attached.
3. Talk, sing, and read to your child: All of these help your child's brain make connections it needs for growing and learning now and for learning later on.
4. Establish rituals and routines: Teach your child to know when it's time for bed, by developing routines such as singing a song and pulling the curtains. Daily routines and rituals associated with pleasurable feelings are reassuring for children.
5. Encourage safe new experiences and play: While we may think of learning as simply acquiring facts, children usually learn through play.
6. Make television watching selective: Watch television with your child and talk about what you are viewing. Don't use TV as a baby-sitter.
7. Use discipline as an opportunity to teach: In addition to consistent and loving supervision, teach your child limits. Never hit or shake a child.
8. Recognize that each child is unique: Children's needs and feelings about themselves reflect, in large measure, parents' and caregivers' attitudes toward them.
9. Choose quality child care and stay involved: Visit your child care provider often, and seek someone who responds warmly and understands your child's needs.
10. Take care of yourself: Parents need care too.

Source: Pennsylvania Early Intervention

UPCOMING TRAINING!



Understanding the Legal Process for Kinship & Foster Caregivers

Please join us for information and discussion about the legal process and what it means for you as a kinship or foster care provider.

WHEN: Wednesday, March 21, 2012, from 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM

WHERE: Lehigh County Government Center, 17 S. 7th Street, Allentown, Room 123

PRESENTED BY: Mary McGonigle & Laurie Boucher

RSVP: To Laurie Boucher at (610) 782-3969 or laurieboucher@lehighcounty.org

