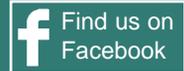




Friends

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A Publication by the Friends of the Children's Justice Center of Maui • April is "Prevent Child Abuse Month"

A Kinder, Gentler Juvenile Courtroom



Paul Tonnessen
Executive Director

Processing juvenile offenders who have been previously victimized and traumatized through the Juvenile Justice System.

More often than not children who have been previously or currently abused are being brought before our Judges in our judicial system due to the unhealthy actions they have chosen. Unfortunately, what these children lack is the ability to process their trauma in healthy ways which in turn brings them into the system. When a judge looks at their charges, it does not tell them that this could or may be consistent with a child who's been a victim of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. Over 6 years ago I started meeting with the Maui Judges, Prosecutors, Police Juvenile Division and an array of other entities who will be part of the process on addressing the juvenile offenders.

The advisory group is called "Ku Like" and helps address some of the challenges these victims face in not being able to process their trauma in healthy ways but or even disclose it.

According to The National Child Traumatic Stress Network children who come to the attention of the juvenile justice system are a challenging and undeserved population, with high rates of exposure to trauma. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network has developed resources to help juvenile justice professionals (including judges, attorneys, law enforcement, probation officers, front line residential staff, and mental health personnel) understand and provide trauma-focused services to these youth, create trauma-informed juvenile justice systems that are effective, and ensure the safety of youth, family members, staff, and community.

Youth who move between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, are often involved in both concurrently and are disproportionately girls and minorities.

Findings from a study in Seattle, Washington, included the following:

1) Two-thirds of youth referred for an offense during the year had experienced some form of child welfare involvement;

2) The likelihood of at least some history of child welfare involvement is greater for youth with prior offender referrals;

3) 6 in 10 youth referred as first-time offenders had at least some history of child welfare involvement;

4) 9 in 10 youth previously referred for an offense had at least some history of child welfare involvement;

5) First-time offenders with records of multi-system involvement have much higher recidivism rates than youth without child welfare involvement;

6) Youth with an extensive history of child welfare involvement were referred for an offense three times as often as youth with no child welfare involvement;

7) Youth with no child welfare history were less likely to be referred for a new offense within 2 years (34%) than youth with extensive child welfare involvement (70%);

8) Greater proportions of females and minority youth were found among youth with more extensive histories of child welfare involvement.

When a child hears kinder, gentler words coming from the bench I believe it allows them to feel a sense of compassion coming from the Judge rather than just a punitive response.

Mahalo to our judges in being both fair and wise.

I am thrilled at the potential for the Juvenile Justice System trauma informed movement to expand. The impact on the outcomes of the courts in how they treat victims who are also offenders can be far-reaching.

By educating those within our juvenile justice system and society in general we can provide much needed information and wisdom into how to deal with the many difficult decisions that they face each day. I am so appreciative of our Maui Judges and all of those working within our Juvenile Justice System.

They deeply care about these children and are looking at the current research as a decision-making influence in how they administer justice to help those who have been abused and are unable to process their trauma in healthy ways. By using diversion programs in our courts such as Maui Police Department's POI (Positive Outreach Intervention) and their Kalo Program we are able to take a much more holistic, educational and empathetic approach to these children.

Mahalo,

Paul Tonnessen
Executive Director

Who are the Friends?

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The Friends of the Children's Justice Center of Maui (FCJC) is a private, non-profit corporation, founded in 1989 by a non-partisan group of community and business leaders concerned with the social welfare of children and families who have been traumatized by abuse and severe neglect.

The Mission of the FCJC has three parts.....

To provide assistance to abused and neglected children in Maui County. We do this by receiving requests from over 25 social services agencies and other professions for services or items that will help with the healing of the child. These services could be for education or tutoring, counseling, medical, transportation, social activities, sports activities, after-school programs, self-esteem issues, school needs and everything in between.

Promote prevention of child abuse and neglect.

We accomplish this task by creating and distributing a 16-page supplement in the Maui News about child abuse and neglect prevention; by producing and distributing DVD's on "Mandated Reporting" and "Shaken Baby Syndrome"; by participating in several community-wide forums such as "Keiki Fest"; by distributing two newsletters annually; and by participating in the 2009 PREVENT Institute, the Ho'oikaika Partners prevention committee, the Hanai Coalition for foster children and the Hawaii Children's Trust Fund Prevention Campaign.

To support the Children's Justice Center of Maui. The CJC is part of the State Judiciary, and is the safe and nurturing facility

where suspected victims of child sexual abuse and extreme physical abuse are brought for an interview and possible forensic examination.

We provide funds for training of the police and social workers who are involved in those interviews; snacks for the children being interviewed; snacks for the meeting participants; stuffed toys for the children; and support supplies for the office.

This past year, the FCJC:

- Served 800 children with funding for direct services.
- 1,612 children with Christmas gifts
- Over 24,000 households with our annual 16-page prevention newspaper supplement
- 3,000 readers through two newsletters
- 8,000 children and parents reached through community events
- 500 new parents given Shaken Baby DVD

And we do all of this with one paid staff person and many dedicated volunteers. We receive no Federal, State or County funding. Our funding comes from the Bradley and Victoria Geist Foundation, the Teresa Hughes Trust, Hyundai Championship Golf Tournament and companies and individuals through several fundraisers during the year.

We invite you to learn more about us and to help us through a tax deductible donation. If you have questions, call 986-8634, email us at info@mauicjc.org or visit our website at www.mauicjc.org.

Mahalo for your support!

Your donation is 100% tax deductible as allowed by law.

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"A bed is a big comfort during a traumatic time."

Children in Maui County enter foster care for dozens of different reasons, including physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, parental substance abuse, lack of supervision, abandonment, lack of housing, parental illness, behavior problems, emotional rejection, severe parent-child conflict, and numerous others.

In these situations, they are removed to be kept safe while their parents work towards providing a safe home. But no matter the reason for removal, and despite oftentimes extreme levels of dysfunction and abuse in their family home, children still long to be with their parents. This separation is very painful for them. Leaving family means leaving behind their identity. In their hearts, they fear that their parents are forever gone, and some grieve for them as if they had died.

It's no wonder children arrive at their foster home fearful, confused, and deeply hurt. Imagine being removed from your birth parents home, separated from family, and taken to live with strangers.

Imagine feeling like no one cares about you, like a throw away. Many of our former foster youth have expressed that they felt that way often in their lives. It's heartbreaking to us that anyone, much less a child, would ever feel like no one values or cares about them.

Because every foster child entering care is in crisis, what they experience during their stay in a home can have a big impact on their future. The core of our mission is to assist children in healing from the effects



of the types of abuse and neglect mentioned. One of the most common ways we do this is by providing children with beds of their own. To be placed in a foster home, each child must have their own bed. Oftentimes we have compassionate, caring people willing to foster a child, but they lack an additional bed and the expense of a new one prohibits them from taking action.

This is where the FCJC steps in. Our ability to take quick action is essential to providing the child with as smooth a transition as possible. When needed, a new wooden bed frame is delivered with a mattress, bedding and pillows on the very same day the request is received. One of our biggest requests is for bunk beds because sometimes foster parents are willing to take in an additional child, but lack the floor space for an additional bed. Now imagine how much better it would feel to know that someone cares enough about

you to provide you with a beautiful new bed. Why do we provide such a nice bed? In some homes, a child's bed is really the only space they can call entirely their own.

This year we are pleased to announce that during our "Raise the Paddle" our community of generous donors came together to provide funds for an additional 45 beds to help the children we serve transition smoothly, feel cared about, and begin their healing process.

Mahalo nui loa for helping us help children heal.

Sheila Haynes
Board President



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How to Help a Victim of Sexual Abuse

If someone you care about is sexually assaulted, you may feel angry, confused, and helpless. There are several things you can do to help in the healing process and provide the support your loved one needs.

- Believe the victim/survivor unconditionally. Accept what you hear without judgment.
- Reinforce to the victim/survivor that it is not his or her fault. Sexual assault is NEVER the victim/survivor's fault. It is important not to ask "why" questions, such as "Why were you in that area at that time?" that suggest that he or she is to blame for the assault.
- Understand that you cannot control how the victim/survivor feels or "fix" the problem. Everyone reacts

differently to sexual assault and heals at his or her own pace. It is important that you not assume you know how he or she is feeling-almost any reaction is possible and completely normal.

- Be a good listener and be patient. Let the victim/survivor know you are there for him or her when he or she is ready to talk. When and if the victim/survivor does want to talk about the assault, do not push for information. Let him or her tell you what he or she is comfortable sharing in his or her own time.
- Help the victim/survivor regain a sense of control over his or her life. During a sexual assault, power is taken away from the victim/survivor. Support decisions and choices the victim/survivor makes without passing judgment. Try not to tell the victim/survivor what to do; instead, assist by

presenting options and resources for him or her to make the decision that is right for him or her.

- Respect the victim/survivor's need for privacy. If needs to be alone, respect that decision.
- Do not suggest that the victim/survivor "move on" with his or her life and forget about the rape. The victim/survivor needs the opportunity to work through the trauma of the assault and begin the healing process.
- Respect the victim/survivor's right to decide whether or not to report the assault to the police.
- Remember to take care of yourself- seek support if you need it. You will be better able to support the victim/survivor.

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Recognizing abusive behavior in yourself

Do you feel angry and frustrated and don't know where to turn? Do you see yourself in some of these descriptions, painful as it may be? Do you feel angry and frustrated and don't know where to turn? Raising children is one of life's greatest challenges and can trigger anger and frustration in the most even tempered. If you grew up in a household where screaming and shouting or violence was the norm, you may not know any other way to raise your kids.

Recognizing that you have a problem is the biggest step to getting help. If you yourself were raised in an abusive situation, that can be extremely difficult. Children experience their world as normal. It may have been normal in your family to be slapped or pushed for little to no reason, or that mother was too drunk to cook dinner. It may have been normal for your parents to call you stupid, clumsy, or worthless. Or it may have been normal to watch your mother get beaten up by your father.

It is only as adults that we have the perspective to step back and take a hard look at what is normal and what is abusive. Read the above sections on the types of abuse and warning signs. Do any of those ring a bell for you now? Or from when you were a child? The following is a list of warning signs that you may be crossing the line into abuse:

How do you know when you've crossed the line?

- You can't stop the anger. What starts as a swat on the backside may turn into multiple hits getting harder and harder. You may shake your child harder and harder and finally throw him or her down. You find yourself screaming louder and louder and can't stop yourself.
- You feel emotionally disconnected from your child. You may feel so overwhelmed that you don't want anything to do with your child. Day after day, you just

want to be left alone and for your child to be quiet.

- The daily needs of your child seems impossible. While everyone struggles with balancing dressing, feeding, and getting kids to school or other activities, if you continually can't manage to do it, it's a sign that something might be wrong.
- Other people have expressed concern. It may be easy to bristle at other people expressing concern. However, consider carefully what they have to say. Are the words coming from someone you normally respect and trust? Denial is not an uncommon reaction.



Mahalo

Thank you to the Friends of the Children's Justice Center of Maui for providing hope and healing for our community's keiki in need.

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How the Friends changed my life!



when she looked at me. For example, every time I would make a mistake she would say that you're going to grow up to be just like your father, about how he abused her and how I would become the same person. She talked about how dumb she thought that I was, and spoke degradingly about me even to my friends. Even through all of this, I knew my mother as a wonderful woman who loved me and my sister, just had a really hard time showing it. I knew my mother only wanted the best for me and my sister because she always tried to put us in clubs or programs that could offer what she probably felt she couldn't offer us.

Unfortunately, as I got older, I started hanging out with the wrong crowd. By my early teens I was introduced to

marijuana, alcohol and cigarettes and quickly became addicted. I loved doing it with friends to the point where I was numb to my problems around me. Over the years it escalated to more dangerous drugs such as methamphetamine, which changed my life drastically.

I stopped going to school, was less involved with my family, and became reckless. I soon dropped out of school and was caught up in the court system. I was sent to a drug rehabilitation program on the island of Oahu called Bobby Benson. I then ran away with some other boys from that island. After being caught as a runaway by the police I was sent to the Kapolei Juvenile Detention Facility. After my court hearing, I was sentenced to the Kanehoalani Safe Home for Boys on Maui where I was fortunate enough to meet Paul Tonnessen, the Executive Director of the Friend of the Children's Justice Center. That's where things really started to turn around for me for the better.

I never knew it was possible that anyone could understand us troubled teens in the boy's home so well, but Uncle Paul sure seemed to. He always reminded us about how amazing we truly are and how we were only being held back from the trauma that happened to us in our past. There were things in our lives that we didn't know how to deal with alone, and the only reason why we were there was because no one took the time to help us before. They gave us consequences after consequences but never seemed to question why we were doing what we were doing. Uncle Paul made it clear to us that if there was anything the Friends

of the Children's Justice Center could do to help us that they were more than willing to do so. Of course most of the boys and I never believed him at first because we all were thinking the same thing. "Why would this white guy that probably grew up with a silver spoon in his mouth want to help us like he said he would, he doesn't even know us?". He continually would prove to us that he was a man of his word.

He would tell us his back story and what he had to overcome from his own childhood. He personally made me feel like if he could be where he's at right now and have gone through what he has, that the sky was the limit for me. Uncle Paul and the Friends of the Children's Justice Center have honestly done so much for me and so many others. For example, the Friends completely paid for my driver's education course, they also bought me a laptop to support my photography and film production dream. Through the Friends they have also helped me find jobs when they knew I really needed one. They also directed me to different beneficial resources for advice and guidance. Uncle Paul and the Board Members from the Friends of the Children's Justice Center have been such a blessing in my life and countless other children's lives who need help. Most of the people from the Friends aren't originally from here but they are sure "Ohana to me".

Anonymous

Growing up in Wailuku was tough. I lost my father at the age of two. The years between the ages of two and nine were the worst for me. I always felt like I would never amount to anything. During that time while my mother was under the influence, she often spoke her mind of how she saw my father in me

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Mahalo For All Your Service! - Outstanding Community Leader Retires



Outstanding Community Mental Health Leader 2018: Jeny Bissell, a nurse for over 30 years, co-founded the Ho'oikaika Partnership Coalition with a mission to continuously expand public knowledge and use of the five protective factors to further the goal that every child in Maui County will live peacefully, free from any type of abuse or neglect.



*Outstanding Community
Mental Health Leader*

JENY BISSELL

Jeny Bissell, R.N., B.S.N., Supervisor Family Health Services Division Maui District Health Office State of Hawaii Department of Health is retiring. She has been with the Department of Health since 1988. Her retirement is well deserved, and she leaves us with a legacy of showing all of us the importance of collaboration to have the greatest impact in meeting the needs of those less fortunate within our community.

She may claim that all she wants to do now is relax and enjoy life with her children and grandchildren on the mainland. Well, we all know that to be untrue, for wherever Jeny goes, she will become a big part of and make a difference in her community.

Life is full of challenges and Jeny can never resist a challenge. We are quite sure that she will soon be doing something new and exciting. We don't know what that is. In fact, Jeny may not yet know. However, we are sure she will develop new hobbies, skills, or maybe a new career, and find satisfaction and enjoyment in so doing. She may, for instance, decide to cycle from coast to coast or start teaching a parrot to talk. Jeny, being the kind of person she is, will find her satisfaction in joining some community organizations to begin helping others.

Whatever Jeny chooses to do, we hope that she will enjoy good health and happiness. We also hope that she will have happy memories of her years here on Maui that she dedicated to making a difference in the lives of those in need. Our entire community will truly miss her.

Jeny has spent a good part of her life in Hawaii instilling the "Protective Factors" into our community. She has touched the lives of thousands of people through her tireless efforts to enhance and enrich the lives of those in need. It is retirement time for her and our Maui Community wants to wish her well in her new adventure.

In 2008, Jeny, along with the Friends of the Children's Justice Center, Neighborhood Place Wailuku, and Maui Family Support Services created Ho'oikaika Partnership. Their vision was to bring community partners together to have a greater impact in the lives of our community members struggling to find much-needed resources to improve the quality of their lives. Due to their vision, today Ho'oikaika Partnership is a coalition of more than 60 Maui County agencies and individuals committed to preventing child abuse and neglect in our community.

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Islands of Hope-Maui Promotes Collaboration to Support Families

By: Karen Worthington, IOH Coordinator



Tonight, more than 375 keiki on Maui will go to sleep without a good night kiss from mom or dad. These children are in foster care, which means the state has removed them from their parents' care because of abuse or neglect.

Many of these children would not have needed foster care if their families had participated in supportive services before reaching a crisis point. However, despite Maui's wide array of services, many families that would benefit from support don't connect with services before a crisis. Helping families access and engage in the right services at the right time will reduce the foster care population, which is the goal of Islands of Hope-Maui (IOH).

A Research-Based Collaborative to Support Families

Just over a year ago, IOH was created to reduce the number of children needing foster care and the number of children reported to Child Welfare Services. IOH is a collaboration of Maui Child Welfare Services (CWS), Casey Family Programs (CFP), and Ho'oikaika Partnership. *(See the sidebar on next page to learn about these three partners).* Believing that we are all stronger when we work together, IOH promotes and facilitates collaboration to respond to the needs of children and families in our community.

IOH grew out of a two-year study conducted by CFP and CWS about how to better serve families reported to CWS. To implement the study's recommendations, CFP and CWS invited Ho'oikaika Partnership to join a steering committee, which then created IOH. The name is a local twist on CFP's national "Communities of Hope" initiative. CFP facilitates the creation of Communities of Hope, which are local collaborations building on community strengths and using data to keep children safe and make families strong.

Sharing Information Where Families Gather

The two-year research project that led to the creation of IOH highlighted the strength of Maui's broad social services safety net for families. The study concluded, though, that families would be better served if the following improvements occurred:

- Better communication among service providers
- Improved coordination of services
- For families, more information about available services
- Easier access to services, especially before a crisis occurs

The research project pointed out that most families don't know about supportive services available to them. IOH decided that accessing social services should be as easy and natural as going shopping. So they partnered with Queen Ka'ahumanu Center (QKC) to create a resource center kiosk near the children's play area at QKC.

The resource center kiosk is a one-stop shop where visitors can learn about more than 100 programs, all designed to strengthen and support families and reduce their stress. For example, at the kiosk, visitors can find information about:

- SNAP or WICK (financial help to buy food)
- mental health supports and services for children, youth, and adults
- substance abuse treatment options
- crisis assistance
- County and State funds available to help pay for childcare
- education and employment opportunities
- help for people facing eviction or experiencing homelessness
- services for people with disabilities
- services and supports for the elderly and their caregivers
- safety and parenting tips for infants and young children
- snacks and books for children

Volunteers from the 60+ Ho'oikaika Partnership organizations staff the kiosk several hours a week. The volunteers help kiosk visitors find information and access services.

Strengthening Providers to Strengthen Parents

A second IOH initiative focuses on providers of parenting education services. The research study suggested improvements to parent education programs to better prevent the need for foster care. In response, IOH created the Maui Parenting Project, which provides coaching and training to parent educators.

Parent education services are an important support for families at high risk of child abuse and neglect for two reasons. First, managing a household and parenting children are learned skills that many parents have never had an opportunity to learn. A parent educator helps parents obtain the knowledge and skills needed to raise children who are physically, emotionally, and psychologically healthy.

Second, parent education is one of the most common services CWS refers families to if the family would be best served by a community organization rather than CWS. This means that parent educators have the potential to help hundreds of families keep their children safely at home.

When CWS receives a call about a family, CWS intake workers screen the case and determine whether any intervention is needed. If intervention is required and there are no safety concerns, the family is referred to programs run by community

organizations. One of the programs is usually parent education or parent support services. Participation in programs is voluntary, so service providers must be skilled in quickly engaging families and showing them the benefits of participating.

Parent educators cover topics ranging from caring for a newborn infant to effective communication with teens to managing a household budget and preparing healthy meals. Parenting education may be provided in the parents' home by a home visitor or in a small group or class. Some programs are based in Native Hawaiian values and others apply models used across the country.

The Parenting Project believes that enhancing parent educators' skills in family engagement will result in more parents benefitting from these services, which will reduce the number of children placed in foster care.

Improved Systems = Fewer Child Victims

IOH works to create better futures for our children and families. The initial strategies focus on improving Maui's safety net to prevent child abuse and neglect. Future strategies will continue to improve the many systems with which families interact, thereby improving the overall health of our community. When communities are healthy-safe, supportive and filled with opportunities--children thrive.

For more information, visit the islandsofhope-maui.org or email islandsofhopemaui@gmail.com

Three organizations form the Islands of Hope-Maui Steering Committee

Maui Child Welfare Services Section: Maui CWS, a branch of the Social Services Division of the Hawaii Department of Human Services, serves the islands of Maui, Moloka'i, and Lana'i. CWS receives all reports of child abuse or neglect in Maui County, provides case consultation and assessment, and provides crisis intervention on behalf of children in need of immediate protection. CWS programs (primarily provided through contracts with local providers) include family strengthening and support, child protection, foster care, adoption, independent living and licensing of resource family homes, group homes and child-placing organizations. Annie Reinecke is the Maui CWS Section Administrator, and the four Maui CWS units employ 43 people.

Casey Family Programs: Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families across America. The mission is to provide and improve - and ultimately prevent the need for - foster care. CFP provides strategic consulting to Hawaii's Child Welfare Services Branch through a strategic consultant assigned to Hawaii.

Ho'oikaika Partnership: Ho'oikaika Partnership is a robust coalition of more than 60 Maui County agencies and individuals. Ho'oikaika Partnership started in 2008 and its mission is to continuously expand the knowledge and use of the Five Protective Factors to all those that touch and shape the lives of the children in Maui County to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect. The coalition is facilitated by a small group of Core Partners.

FY 2016 Calls to CWS

In State Fiscal Year 2016, the CWS intake hotline received 22,767 calls. Those calls resulted in 777 cases of confirmed abuse or neglect (a case may have more than one child). During the year, 1,251 children were placed in foster care.

Total calls to State DHS Intake Hotline	22, 767	100%
No intervention needed	17,692	78%
Assigned for Intervention	5,075	22%

Of the cases assigned for intervention:

Intervention by CWS	2,194	43%
Referred to Community Programs	2,881	57%
Totals	5,075	100%

Source of data: DHS, Management Services Office, "CWS Intake Stats at a Glance"

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Aging out of the Foster Care system 18 and on your own

Turning 18 or 21 for your typical American means newfound independence. Whether it's going off to college or having a first legal drink, most young adults eagerly await these milestone birthdays. But for more than 20,000 young adults in this country, turning 18 or 21, is not a celebratory event. Depending on the state in which they live, young adults in foster care "age out" of the system at either 18 or 21. Essentially, aging out is the process that occurs when youth must leave the foster care system because they were never adopted and are too old to stay in care.

The statistics are devastating. By age 26, only three to four percent of youth who aged out of foster care earn a college degree. One in five of these youth will become homeless after turning 18. Only half will obtain employment by 24. Over 70 percent of female foster youth will become pregnant by 21, and one in four former foster youth will experience PTSD.

The problems associated with aging out of foster care also affect the communities these youth live in. A 2013 study by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative showed that, "on average, for every young person who ages out of foster care, taxpayers and communities pay \$300,000 in social costs like public assistance, incarceration, and lost wages to a community over that person's lifetime. Do the math and you can conservatively estimate that this problem incurs almost \$8 billion in social costs to the United States every year."



The dire social and economic effects of the aging out process, whether we realize it or not, touch each one of us. The solution to this problem can be found through the efforts and resources provided by individuals and a host of institutions like families, churches, corporations, nonprofit, and the government. As is true for most public justice issues, there is a unique role for both the government and private and public institutions to play to ensure that aging-out youth have the chance to flourish. Individuals and families can play a significant role in helping foster children by considering adopting older youth in the child welfare system. In 2015, there were 427,910 children in foster care. There are an estimated 350,000 Christian churches in the United States. If only one to two families from each of those churches fostered or adopted just one child, there would no more foster care system, and every abused and neglected child in the country would live with a family.

However, fostering and adopting is not the only way to help. Individuals can volunteer for mentoring programs for foster kids. One such program is the San Diego Foster Youth Mentor Program, which trains mentors to help foster youth navigate adulthood. Another option is volunteering to be a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). CASA programs are located around the country and volunteers ensure that children in care do not get lost in the complicated legal and social services systems. This is especially important for youth in foster care who need to make sure they are receiving the benefits they are entitled to, like education vouchers for college, before and after they leave the system.

Corporations can donate financial resources to programs that help foster youth, but they can also offer internships and training programs for these youth. Businesses can help young adults in foster care acquire skills and experiences that could lead to full-time employment.

Nonprofit also play a key role in helping foster youth enter adulthood. The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, mentioned earlier, does a variety of things to help youth in the foster care system. It advocates for policies that help young adults transition out of care, provides financial training and literacy, and sponsors neuro science research to ensure programs developed for foster youth are effective. Another initiative, Covenant House, provides housing and government advocacy for homeless foster youth.

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Continued

Several universities have started programs specifically for foster youth. For the few young adults that leave foster care and make it to college, significant challenges await them. Often they cannot afford textbooks, have no place to go over holiday breaks when the school closes, and find the college system difficult to navigate. The California State University system provides holistic services to youth who have left foster care and entered college. The services help "current or former foster youth with admissions, financial aid, housing, orientation, advisement, counseling, life skills, employment and career planning to ensure their success through graduation." For example, foster children in Texas are entitled to a tuition waiver that covers their college education.

Finally, the government, while it cannot replace a family, plays a critical role in helping foster youth. The court system is often a scary place for kids in foster care, but judges can make a crucial difference in the lives of foster youth. In Harris County, where Houston, Texas, is located, judges started a special Child Protective Services ("CPS") court for foster kids. One judge in Harris County started a class called Preparation for Adult Living. Every few months, youth in the foster care system join the judge, with pizza and soda, to learn critical skills for adulthood.

The only way to combat the seemingly insurmountable problems foster youth face as they leave the child welfare system is a combination of programs and social support offered by families, churches, nonprofit, and the government. Only with an integrated

approach can foster children get the support they need to transition to adulthood successfully.

At his last court hearing before aging out of foster care, Noel Anaya, who spent 20 years in the system, read a letter to the court. His words were poignant and worthy of repeating:

"Walking into court for my very last time as a foster youth, I feel like I'm getting a divorce from a system that I've been in a relationship with almost my entire life. It's bittersweet because I'm losing guaranteed stipends for food and housing, as well as access to my social workers and my lawyer. But on the other hand, I'm relieved to finally get away from a system that ultimately failed me on its biggest promise. That one day it would find me a family who would love me."

Children who enter foster care have often been abused and/or neglected, and failed by the parents who were supposed to care for them. Unfortunately, for many of the youth leaving foster care, they have been failed twice-by their biological families and by the child welfare system that was also supposed to care for them. These kids, who have often languished in the foster care system for years, deserve better. Each of us has a role to play to ensure these youths do not have to experience failure again and again as they exit the child welfare system.



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Mental Health and Foster Care Series: Preventing Suicide in Foster Youth

By: Dr. Kalyani Gopal



SUICIDE...the very term conjures gory pictures of young desolate individuals with no hope ending lives not yet lived. Families are torn apart by suicide as the self-blame, recriminations are met with silence as to the question Why? Every single day we lose 12 youth to suicide, and there is an average of 25 suicide attempts for each completed suicide. Youth between 10-24 years of age are at the involved in suicide, the risk factors, protective factors, warning signs, the case studies I was involved with, and how we can prevent suicide in foster youth. Involved in suicide, the risk factors, protective factors, warning signs, the case studies I was involved with, and how we can prevent suicide in foster youth.

Foster youth are 3-5 times more likely to commit suicide than same age peers, two and a half times more likely to think about possibly committing suicide, and four times more likely to make a suicide attempt (source: National Center for Prevention of Youth Suicide).

Q. How do you recognize that someone is likely to commit suicide?

A. Early warning signs of suicide include the following subtle signs:

- Withdrawal and isolation, and alienation, i.e., inability to reach out for help due to poor coping skills
- Saying that life has no value or this earthly existence is meaningless
- Odd behaviors and sudden changes in behaviors that are high risk or dangerous
- Personality changes, social relationship changes, sleep disturbances, nightmares, lack of social acceptance, self loathing
- Obsessions with thoughts of death and dying, focus on music that is violent or reflecting death themes
- Loss or death of loved one, such as an idolized parental figure

4/5 suicides are usually preceded by warnings by the person who is planning to commit suicide and often these are not taken seriously.

A. There are multiple risk factors. These can be classified as: major, minor, idiosyncratic, synergistic, dynamic and/or culturally relevant.

The most cited ones are:

- Previous suicide attempt
- Strong family history of suicide
- Strong family history of severe depression/severe mental illness
- Bullying
- History of child sexual abuse
- Lack of access to help, isolation
- LGBT youth (bullying and discrimination)
- Access to lethal weapons
- Engaging in high-risk behaviors
- Substance abuse/dependence
- Loss of family contact, support and connection

Continued

- Poor impulse control and low frustration tolerance
- Feeling stuck, trapped, or caged with no hope of escape
- Communicating about suicide: Journaling about suicide or writing about it, or talking to friends

Q. What are the protective factors?

A. Protective factors include dimensions of personality, resilience, life experiences, and genetics. Within these categories major protective factors for foster youth include:

- Determination to succeed
- Refusal to accept the norm
- Positive self-esteem
- Strong support system: family, friends, biological connection
- Willingness to accept society
- Academic achievement
- Sense of optimism
- Involvement in sports and other activities
- Peer support and acceptance
- Limited access to lethal weapons
- Religion and spiritual practice
- Sense of having personal control
- Support through mental health and other services

Q. What are the ways in which foster parents and families can prevent suicide in youth?

A. The main areas of intervention by foster /adoptive / biological families lay in those of making the child feel wanted, feel they belong and feel they are important to your family. Ways in which this can be achieved are:

- Use I statements and say how glad you are that they are around

- Express love and emotion about having the youth in your family
- Ask for their opinion, views, and even if you disagree, allow independence of spirit and opinion
- Be watchful and mindful of access to alcohol, drugs and illicit activities: often these are ways to escape from traumatic memories
- If the youth seems "out of control" try to find the cause - in foster care, it is more often about escaping from pain and grief than about wanting to be defiant or being mentally ill
- Talk and be there for your young person.
- Talk to teachers, peers and welcome friends into your home so that you get to know whom they are hanging out with
- Promote school activities, sports, drama, art, and community activities. The more youth are involved in positive activities the less likely they are to engage in negative self-talk
- Increase importance in the family system by providing positive roles and realistic expectations, and giving leadership opportunities.
- Involve youth in family decision making, helping in improving communication amongst family members and openly talking about suicide, depression and feelings of isolation and alienation from society.

Above all, accept the youth for whom and what they are; you cannot take away their memories, but you can provide happier events that leave positive memories for the future. Each positive memory is a mental health bank for healthier self-esteem and self-worth.



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Connecting With Your Teen



room in your schedule for special times when you can, but also take advantage of routine activities to show that you care.

Tips to keep in mind:

- **Have family meals.**
If it's impossible to do every night, schedule a regular weekly family dinner night that accommodates your child's schedule.
- **Share "ordinary" time.**
Look for everyday opportunities to bond with your teen. Even times spent driving or walking the dog together offer chances for your teen to talk about what's on his or her mind.
- **Get involved, be involved, and stay involved.**
Go to games and practices when you can. Ask about homework and school projects. Look for chances to learn about your teen's latest hobby.

- **Be interested.**
Make it clear that you care about your teen's ideas, feelings, and experiences. If you listen to what he or she is saying, you'll get a better sense of the guidance and support needed. Get to know your teen's friends and their parents, too, when possible.

- **Set clear limits.**
Teens still need your guidance, but you can involve your teen in setting rules and consequences. Make sure consequences are related to the behavior, and be consistent in following through. Choose your battles. Try to provide choices in the matters that are less important.

Your words and actions help your teen feel secure. Don't forget to say and show how much you love your teen!

What's Happening

Many teens spend less time with their families than they did as younger children. As they become more independent and learn to think for themselves, relationships with friends become very important. Sometimes it may feel like your teen doesn't need you anymore. But teens still need their parents' love, support and guidance.

What You Might Be Seeing

- Normal teens ...
- Crave independence
 - Question rules and authority
 - Test limits
 - Can be impulsive
 - Make mature decisions at times, and childish ones at others

What You Can Do

Simple, everyday activities can reinforce the connection between you and your teen. Make

Maui Resources for Information and Assistance

Child and Family Service -Crisis Response; prevention and education/parenting/ sex abuse treatment Maui 877-6888
Molokai Branch 808 567-6100
24 Hour Hotline 873-8624

Department of Human Services (CPS)-Maui Section 243-5143 Intake 888-380-3088 Molokai Unit - 808 553-1703 / Lanai Office - 808 565-7102

Maui Police Department
244-6400 or 911

Aloha House 579-9584
Child & Adolescent Outpatient
Mental Health Services 249-2121

Aloha United Way - 24-hour information
& referrals Phone: 211

ATV (Molokai) - TROs/anger management
-all ages 808 553-3202

Aloha House - Outpatient substance abuse treatment & mental health services 579-9584

Big Brothers/Big Sisters - Provides 1-on-1 mentoring 242-9754

Catholic Charities 875-2984

Children's Justice Center - Maui 244-7926

Community Clinic of Maui - Medical outreach services 871-7772

It Takes An 'Ohana
<http://ItTakesAnOhana.org>
Support for those who care for children and youth affected by foster care

DOH-Family Guidance Center
- Mental health services for children 243-1252

DOH Family Health Services 984-2136

DOH Public Health Nursing 984-8206

Hale Ho'omalua - 24-hour hot line & women's shelter on Molokai 808 567-6888

DHS-Income Maintenance - Financial, medical, and food stamps 984-8300

Family Life Center
877-0880

Good Beginnings
270-5557
Hui Malama Center - Tutoring GED programs and youth services center
244-5911

Imua Family Services - Children with developmental delays 244-7467

Ka Hale A Ke Ola Homeless Resource Center
242-7600

Lanai Integrated Service System (LISS) Operated by PACT, services primarily to DHS families for counseling, visitation, & family strengthening 808-565-9191 pacthawaii.org

Lanai Women Helping Women
808-565-678

Lanai Community Health Center
808-565-6919

Legal Aid Society of Hawaii- Civil (not criminal) legal assistance to low income persons 244-3731
Malama Family Recovery Center - Substance abuse education & treatment-women 877-7117

Malama Family Recovery
Women-specific outpatient and residential substance abuse treatment that targets pregnant and parenting women.
808-877-7117

Maui AHEC Child Sexual Abuse Crisis Response - Molokai 553-3623

Maui County Catholic Social Ministry
244-8106

Maui Economic Opportunity - possible rent/utility help & child day care program 249-2990

Maui Family Support Services - In-home family strengthening services, Teen pregnancy prevention and support Program, Early Head Start, Healthy Start and Fatherhood Initiative Program
242-0900

Maui Food Bank 877-4357

Maui Humane Society 877-3680

Maui Youth & Family Services - Adolescent programs 579-8414 Molokai 808 553-3907

Mediation Services of Maui - Custody/dispute resolution 244-5744

Molokai Community Health Center
808-553-5038

Molokai Community Services Council
553-3244

Molokai Family Support Services-Family strengthening services, 0-5 yr. olds 808-553-3276

Na Hale O'wainee
Lahaina Homeless Resource Center
662-0076

Neighborhood Place Of Wailuku 986-0700

Ohana Makamae 248-8538

PACT- Violence intervention services (men, women & adolescents), mental health services for public school students
244-2330

Pact-Ulupono Family Strengthening Program
244-2330

PATCH - Child care provider referrals
242-9232

Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center - Services for children of Hawaiian ancestry 242-8888
Molokai 808 553-5989

Salvation Army - Possible rent/utility help for homeless 871-6270

Victim Witness assistance Program - Court-related services for victims 270-7695

Women Helping Women - Shelter & help for women victims of domestic violence and their children 242-6600

Nationwide Resources for Information and Assistance

Child Help National Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-4-A-CHILD or 1-800-422-4453 www.childhelpusa.org

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
1-800-843-5678, missingkids.org

National Center for Victims of Crime
1-800-FYI-CALL or 1-800-394-2255
www.ncvc.org

National Children's Alliance
1-800-239-9950 www.nca-online.org

National Organization for Victim Assistance -800-TRY-NOVA or 1-800-879-6682 www.try-nova.org

Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center
1-800-851-3420 TTY 1-877-712-9279
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html

Children's Defense Fund
1-800-233-1200 www.childrensdefense.org

Darkness To Light 1-866-367-5444
www.darkness2light.org

National Clearinghouse On Child Abuse & Neglect Information <http://nccanch.acf.gov/>

Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

Prevent Child Abuse America
www.preventchildabuse.org

Annie E. Casey Foundation. Serving children and families.

Child Abuse Prevention Network
www.child-abuse.org

Child Welfare Information Gateway
www.childwelfare.gov

Connect for Kids.
www.connectfor kids.org

Faith Trust Institute
www.faithtrustinstitute.org

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline
www.loveisrespect.org

Parents, the Antidrug
www.theantidrug.com

Safe Kids.com Internet safety for kids
www.safekids.com

US Dept of Health & Human Services
www.os.dhhs.gov

Children's' Defense Fund
www.childrensdefense.org

Connect For Kids
www.connectforkids.org

Delta Society
www.deltasociety.org

National Center For Victims Of Crime
www.ncvc.org

Child and Family Web Guide
www.cfw.tufts.edu

Center for Diseases Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention

National Child Traumatic Stress Networks
www.NCTSN.org

National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome
www.dontshake.org

Joyful Heart Foundation
www.joyfullheartfoundation.org

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