

# SAAN

## Surviving Allegations of Abuse and Neglect

SAAN is a peer driven support network, the purpose of which is to minimize the trauma of foster and adoptive families while undergoing an allegation without compromising the integrity of that investigation.

Foster parents welcome children into their homes who bring their histories and issues along with them. For this reason, foster and adoptive parents are at a higher risk of some day having an allegation against them.

Undergoing an investigation is a stressful and scary situation for anyone, whether or not the allegation is substantiated.

SAAN is here to provide information to support you throughout the investigation process.

# FASPP

## Foster & Adoptive Support & Preservation Program

FASPP is a peer driven volunteer network designed to help YOU. FASPP's mission is to meet the needs of foster and adoptive parents statewide through a network of peer driven support and information which will help to preserve foster and adoptive families.

FASPP is an outreach of the SAAN program which is connected to WFAPA. FASPP and SAAN are made up of fellow foster or adoptive parents. These highly trained volunteers are here to help you navigate the frontier that is foster care and adoption.

The program is designed to give the caller an accurate timeline of events during an investigation, a connection to someone who will listen, and an opportunity to vent your emotions without fear of incrimination/judgment.

FASPP is not a legal entity, and no legal advice will be given by the volunteers. FASPP can also offer avenues to explore in regard to training, conferences, and tip sheets.

# CONSEQUENCES OF ALLEGATION

Many falsely accused foster parents have said they felt treated as if they are guilty even before an investigation begins. Family members, neighbors, and people in the community who are aware of the allegation often prejudged them. Accused foster parents are cut off from the support of their social worker and other agency or county staff.

For some, friends drift away, they lose their job, and the respect they had in their community is gone. Innocent people report feelings of guilt. Some become depressed and pull away from all of their support systems. Some leave their support groups or give up foster care because of the suspicions they feel from others.

False allegations of abuse and neglect disrupt family life and can rock the stability of even the strongest foundations. Allegations not only affect the accuser and the accused, but also spouses or partners, other children in the family, extended family members and friends. They are difficult to endure because they can cause the removal of children from the home, public shame and humiliation, added stress in a family and more. The stigma still follows the accused even when the allegation is proven false.

**Please note: This brochure is for information only! If you need legal advice about a child abuse or neglect investigation or charge, contact an attorney to represent you.**



Visit Our Website  
[www.wfapa.org](http://www.wfapa.org)

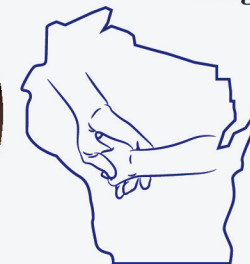


# SAAN FASPP

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## Foster & Adoptive Support & Preservation Program

"It's the worst thing that's ever happened to me," said a foster parent who had a false allegation against them.



# WFAPA

Wisconsin Foster & Adoptive Parent Association, Inc.





## HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF FROM ALLEGATIONS?

Foster and adoptive families who have lots of children, including children of different races, and who have been fostering for a long time are at greater risk of being reported for alleged abuse. All families who care for children with special needs face some risk, and every parent can take steps to keep situations from turning into allegations.

You can never fully protect yourself from allegations of abuse and neglect. However, here are some ideas for minimizing the risk of an allegation of abuse and neglect:

- Know your limits. If you are not comfortable handling children with certain challenging backgrounds and behaviors, don't set yourself up by bringing such children into your home.
- Learn all you can about each child before placement. You have a right to know about previous abuse and allegations.
- Understand and follow all laws and regulations related to foster care and adoption.
- Make sure that men and boys in your house are never alone with a girl who has been sexually abused. Proactive precautions are very important in this situation, especially at the beginning of the placement.
- Give each sexually abused child his or her own bedroom. I know this is difficult, but why put another child in your home at risk? If a child's boundaries have been invaded, he or she needs to re-learn proper boundaries.
- Be crystal clear about rules for dress, privacy, touching, etc. Caregivers must agree on house rules, boundaries, and consequences. Each child comes from a different culture of parenting, sexuality, sleeping habits, dress, touch, and more, and will need to learn what is appropriate.
- You should document your notes in a spiral notebook with the date on each entry, and keep it locked in a cabinet (for confidentiality reasons).
- Keeping a spiral notebook shows that you haven't changed any entries, whereas notes on a computer are not as credible since information could have been changed, added, or deleted.



Document sexual acting out in writing. Send reports to the child's social worker and therapist. Then, if another incident comes to light, the worker and therapist can see that there might be a pattern to the child's acting out that perhaps relates to past experiences.

- Document behavior patterns. When a child enters your home, use a calendar to record changes in the child's behavior; inappropriate words or actions during birth parent visits; the child's behavior following visits; the cause of scratches, bruises, or other injuries; and any patterns of behavior that seems to follow specific events or times of the year (like anniversaries of certain past events).
- Participate in a support group. As foster and adoptive parents of children with special needs, we need to share the struggles and joys that are a part of our lives with those who can empathize and support us. We need folks who can laugh and cry with us and really understand foster and adoptive parents' journey.
- Reserve personal time to reduce stress. Know what really pushes your buttons and establish a calming plan. Make plans for a weekly – yes, weekly – time away from the children. Take care of yourself; you are the child's greatest gift!

## CONTACT OUR TEAM of Volunteers

Feel free to reach out to our volunteers listed below for emotional support, advice, and resources.

**Norma, Chairperson - (920) 922-9627**

**Advice on General and Allegations**

**Melissa - (608) 333-6650**

**Focuses on Fostering Younger Children**

**Lauri - (715) 816-4152**

**Advice on General and Foster**



## DEFINITIONS

- **Allegation:** A statement made that a foster parent has abused or neglected a foster child. An allegation is just that. The allegation needs to be investigated to see if it is supported by facts.
- **On Hold:** A home is placed "on hold" after an allegation of abuse or neglect is made against the foster parent, pending the outcome of the investigation. A foster home that is placed "on hold" cannot have children placed in it until the "hold" is taken off. This action is standard practice, taken to protect all parties, and does not indicate belief or disbelief of the allegation.
- **Investigation:** Studying all the facts related to an allegation.

### Maltreatment Findings in the Initial Assessment:

- **Substantiated** is used when there is a preponderance of evidence that the child was maltreated. This means it is more likely or probable that maltreatment occurred than not.
  - A maltreater has the opportunity to request an agency review a substantiation determination before it becomes a Final Determination, which could affect employment or licensure.
- **Unsubstantiated** is used when there is not a preponderance of evidence to demonstrate that a child was maltreated or unsafe or the evidence indicates that the harm suffered does not meet the statutory definition of abuse or neglect.
- **Unsubstantiated/Critical Sources of Information are Not Available** is used only when critical sources of information, such as observation of or interviews with the child and parent, necessary to complete the initial assessment cannot be obtained.

