

A HOME FOR EVERY CHILD

A Home for Every Child: an inadequate framework for assessing state child welfare programs

On December 19, 2025, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) released CFSR Technical Bulletin No. 14, the first step in its plan to replace the existing process by which it reviews state child welfare performance with one that is less burdensome and more useful. The replacement is long overdue. But ACF's attempt to reorganize all outcomes under one slogan—A Home for Every Child—is highly problematic. It disregards the need for larger homes for sibling groups and residential treatment for some young people. And it devalues and disincentivizes the central function of child welfare—protecting children from harm.

In an article in The Imprint called Why We Are Putting the PIP on a PIP, Alex Adams, the Assistant Secretary for ACF, explains the shortcomings of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR's), which are the periodic federal reviews of state child welfare systems to assess their performance and ensure they are in compliance with federal requirements. In 25 years, no state has been in substantial compliance with all the outcomes and systemic factors that are evaluated, and every state has been placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). Meanwhile, the administrative burden is heavy. Adams rightly states that "this is busywork—expensive, repetitive, punitive busywork—and it has not improved child or family outcomes." I don't think many child welfare stakeholders would disagree. It is time for the CFSR's to be put out of their misery.

But what will replace the CFSR's? As a first step to a solution, ACF has announced a pilot PIP process that states

can opt to follow instead of the standard PIP procedure. As described in the Technical Bulletin, "this Administration is creating a pilot opportunity for states....to center their program improvement efforts around the A Home for Every Child goal." Interestingly, the goal is not defined in the Technical Bulletin;¹ the definition is found in several other places including a press release stating that "A Home for Every Child sets an ambitious goal of achieving a foster home-to-child ratio greater than 1:1 in every state. The initiative will focus on both sides of the equation — increasing the availability of safe homes through diligent recruitment, prioritizing kin, and improving retention of existing caregivers while reducing entries into foster care through effective prevention and faster pathways to permanency." This sounds reasonable at first, but there are problems with centering program improvement planning around this goal—problems with the concept itself and with the implications of using it as an organizing principle in the assessment and improvement of child welfare performance.

A Flawed Concept

A Home for Every Child as a goal of child welfare seems to make sense on its face. To take a child into foster care when there is no place to put that child seems like folly, and a state that cannot equalize the supply and demand for foster care might need to rethink its rules about when to remove a child. But ACF's definition of that goal—one licensed home per foster child—makes no sense. Many foster homes can accommodate

more than one child, and we need more larger homes to welcome sibling groups. And some young people in foster care need residential treatment before they can flourish in a foster home. For these reasons, child welfare administrators tend to use the concept of "beds" rather than "homes" when counting available placements for foster youth. What matters is not how many homes there are, but how many children can be accommodated in a placement that meets their needs. The two issues of multi-child homes and placements that

[\(Continued on page 11\)](#)

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WALKING THROUGH Grief as a Foster Parent



Experiencing Grief

Coping with the loss of a child in care

As foster parents, you have opened your hearts and home to vulnerable children in need. Often you have welcomed a child into your home who has experienced trauma, abuse, or neglect and you have taken on the large task of teaching them to trust, love, care and become responsible or independent by patterning such behavior for them. Attachment is often inevitable. Placement changes and transitions can be heart wrenching for you, your family, and the child in care. There is no way that separation can be made easy and painless. The following however, are suggestions for making the separation as positive an experience as possible.

For the Child that is Leaving:

- Give them permission to express their feelings
- In addition to accepting a child's feelings, help them to identify them
- Talk straight to the child about why they are leaving and where they are going
- Make a life book or souvenir box
- Share information about the child with the social worker so the best plan can be made for the child's next placement
- Give the child permission to leave you
- Do not let the child "make" your reject them

For Your Biological Children:

- Talk straight with your own children about the move and why
- Give them permission to identify and express their feelings about the move
- Communicate the positive aspects of the change
- Allow your child to grieve

For Yourself:

- Take time to sort out your feelings and think about where they are coming from
- Allow yourself time to grieve
- Talk to someone about your feelings
- Work with the Social Worker and the family to speak about the steps of the transition

- Establish what future contact could look like
- Remember your good times and accomplishments
- Plan time for a trip or a chance to "regroup"
- Make a scrapbook of events and times spent together
- Make an album with pictures of each child you have cared for
- Start a garden in which you add a plant each time a child leaves your home in remembrance of the child

Consequences of Unresolved Grief in Foster Parents:

- Emotional distancing / unavailability
- Anger
- Guilt
- Depression and loss of energy

Who Unresolved Grief can Impact:

- New foster placement(s)
- Other foster kids in the home
- Family members – spouse, partner, children
- Self
- Other relationships

Suggestions of Helpful Things You Can Do:

- Talk about loss
- Accept help and support when offered
- Exercise moderately
- Keep a journal
- Be attentive to maintaining healthy eating and sleep patterns
- Read
- Listen to music
- Seek spiritual support
- Be patient with yourself

How to Support Others Who are Grieving

- Be a good listener
- Let them feel sad
- Do not minimize grief
- Do not be judgmental
- Ask about their feelings
- Acknowledge the pain
- Be available when you can
- Talk openly and honestly about the

- situation unless the person does not want to

You know you are recovering when...

- You can laugh and enjoy being with others
- Taking care of yourself is not only O.K., but it feels good
- The future is not so frightening
- You can handle special days without falling apart
- You want to reach out to others in need or pain
- You now enjoy activities that you had given up
- You can share humorous memories without crying
- Your emotional roller coaster is slowing down
- You can actually see the progress you've made

Caution: Don't get alarmed if you're suddenly feeling the pain of grief again, this doesn't mean you are regressing, these feelings will come up from time to time when you least expect them.

Article taken from *By Foster the City Blog*, posted on December 20, 2023. <https://fosterthecity.org/grief-and-lament/>

What do you call a sleeping bull?



A bulldozer!

CONFERENCE LINEUP

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT (HIPS)

FEATURED SPEAKERS



KARIANNE LESPERANCE



DANIELLE LEMKE



CAPTAIN JOE NAULT

AN INTERACTIVE EXHIBIT FOR PARENTS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENTED BY THE HEALTHY YOUTH COALITION (HYC) OF MARINETTE & MENOMINEE COUNTIES

Overview

This hybrid session, both in-person and virtual, takes place Friday, October 09, from 6:00 pm -9:00 pm CST

The Healthy Youth Coalition (HYC) of Marinette & Menominee Counties' "Hidden in Plain Sight (HIPS)" exhibit gives parents and adults the chance to explore a mock teen bedroom filled with examples of youth substance use. This interactive experience helps raise awareness of local youth drug trends, teaches participants how to identify paraphernalia, and provides an opportunity to ask questions and learn prevention strategies for their child or youth they work with. Tours of the room are conducted by coalition staff and members, and law enforcement personnel.

What You Don't See... Matters.

Step inside a realistic teen bedroom and discover how drugs and alcohol can be hidden in plain sight. This powerful, hands-on exhibit reveals subtle warning signs that many adults overlook.

Why You Should Attend



Recognize the Warning Sign

Learn how everyday objects can conceal vaping devices, alcohol, and other substances — and what clues to watch for.



Understand Current Youth Trends

Get up-to-date information on local drug and alcohol trends, popular products, and youth slang.



Build Stronger Communication Skills

Gain practical strategies to start open, supportive conversations with youth.



Leave with Prevention Tools & Resources

Walk away with valuable community resources and prevention strategies you can use immediately.

Knowledge is prevention. Awareness is protection.

Join us for this eye-opening experience — what you learn could make all the difference.

State Updates

FEATURED SPEAKER



JESSICA NEHMER

Overview

This hybrid session, both in-person and virtual, takes place Saturday, October 10, from 9:00 am -10:00 am CST

Jessica Nehmer, a Program and Policy Analyst with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, will share her insights and respond to questions on the following topics:

- Updates on DCF 56
- Relevant Adoption
- Program Updates

(Conference Lineup continued on page 04)

CONFERENCE LINEUP**The Dark Side of Cyberspace:
The Internet, Smart Phones, and Social Media****FEATURED SPEAKER****ERIC SZATKOWSKI****Overview**

This hybrid session, both in-person and virtual, takes place Saturday, October 10, from 10:15 am -11:30 am CST

While digital technology offers a world of communication, education, and entertainment options for all ages, it also has a dark and dangerous side families and caregivers must be aware of.

This fast-paced presentation takes a deep dive into the cyber exploitation of children, and how it is facilitated by addictive social media, unenforced regulations, artificial intelligence, and much of the culture. A must see for anyone who wants to better protect kids from psychological, moral, emotional, and even physical harm facilitated by technology. Attendees will learn techniques used by predators, the types of kids who are most vulnerable, and the link between the growing victimization of children, pornography and the sexualized culture.

Eric reinforces his message with specific examples of how predators corrupt every platform and device used by our kids to take advantage of them. Eric also shares ideas for parents and caregivers on how to help kids avoid getting hurt, and how to respond when something happens.

Eric combines his investigative expertise with his own personal experiences as a husband and father who protected his kids as they grew up with digital technology, and his current concern of what his grandchildren will face as they get older.

Topics include the latest on potential dangers of social networking apps, as well as disturbing trends of sexting, cyber bullying, and webcam exploitation. Parents/caregivers will be challenged to be role models and protectors instead of "best friends" to their kids. Eric also explains how filters and monitoring software should be used to support their primary mission of raising kids in a safe, caring, and high-tech environment.

Angeline Bouley #1 New York Times Bestselling Author**FEATURED SPEAKER****ANGELINE BOULEY****Overview**

This hybrid session, both in-person and virtual, takes place Saturday, October 10, from 1:00 pm -2:30 pm CST Angeline will be appearing virtually.

Angeline is an enrolled member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. She is a gifted storyteller whose work brings her Ojibwe community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula to life. Before becoming an acclaimed author, she built an impressive career in Indian education at the tribal, state, and national levels.

Her Session Will Explore:

- How her books connect with young people
- ICWA-related challenges and how they shape the experiences of youth in foster care
- Identity, culture, and history and how they influence a young person's mindset

Angeline, an enrolled member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, is a storyteller who writes about her Ojibwe community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. She is a former Director of the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. Angeline lives in southwest Michigan, but her home will always be on Sugar Island. Angeline was born into story-telling people, and was first introduced to the art through generational oral tradition. Yet during her childhood, Angeline struggled with her biracial Indigenous identity. In searching for representation through the stories in books she was reading, she realized that the examples she found lacked depth and true experience.

[\(Conference Lineup continued on page 05\)](#)

Continued from page 04- **CONFERENCE LINEUP** Angeline Boulley #1 New York Times Bestselling Author

It wasn't until her mid-forties that she realized she could write her own experience into existence.

Firekeeper's Daughter is her debut novel, and was an instant #1 NYT Bestseller. The book has been named the Walter Dean Myers Award for Outstanding Children's Literature, the Printz Award, the William C. Morris award for YA debut literature, and was an American Indian Youth Literature Award Honor Book. Called an "Indigenous Nancy Drew" the central character is Native teen who must root out the corruption in her community after witnessing a shocking murder.

Angeline's newest novel, Sisters in the Wind (September 2025), is a daring new mystery about a foster teen claiming her heritage on her own terms.

Known for her warmth, wit, and powerful storytelling, Angeline delivers messages that stay with you long after the session ends.

When Things Get Tough: Who's in Your Corner? FASPP & SAAN: Support, Information & Advocacy for Foster and Adoptive Parents

FEATURED SPEAKER



SHERRY BENSON

FASPP ~ Foster & Adoptive Support & Preservation Program

SAAN ~ Surviving Allegations of Abuse & Neglect

Overview

This hybrid session, both in-person and virtual, takes place Saturday, October 10, from 1:00 pm -2:30 pm CST

Questions? Concerns? Facing an allegation or investigation? Wondering what support is available to you? You don't have to figure it out alone!

Join us for an informative, interactive, and conversation-driven session introducing foster and adoptive parents to FASPP (Foster & Adoptive Parent Support Program) and SAAN (Support and Advocacy After Allegations Network)—two peer-driven resources designed to support families when they need it most.

We'll explore what these programs offer, how to access support, and how experienced foster and adoptive parents can help you navigate challenging situations. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions, share concerns, learn from others, and discover practical resources they can take with them.

What You'll Learn:

- What are FASPP and SAAN, and when should you reach out?
- What support is available when you're feeling overwhelmed, confused, or unsure where to turn?
- What can you expect when facing an allegation or investigation?
- How can peer support help you navigate difficult situations?
- What resources are available to help strengthen and maintain your foster or adoptive family?
- Where can you go for information and support before, during, and after a challenging situation?

Most importantly, bring your questions! This session is designed to be interactive, giving you an opportunity to get answers, learn from experienced foster and adoptive parents, and connect with resources that understand the unique challenges of opening your home to children with complex histories and needs.

Come curious. Come with questions. Leave knowing where to turn when you need support.

FASPP & SAAN: Because foster and adoptive parents shouldn't have to navigate the tough moments alone.

WFAPA's

FUNDRAISING BANQUET

**Buffet, 50/50, raffle, live auction—
Win great prizes, laugh, and cheer!
Support WFAPA—come join the fun!**

**Join us on Saturday, October 10th, at 6 PM
in the Conference Room at the Holiday Inn & Suites Wausau-Rothschild.**

Every penny raised helps WFAPA bring in those superstar guest speakers!

Scrumptious food, fabulous friends, and a hearty dose of giggles!

If you could change something about the foster care system, what would it be?

I recently came across a Facebook post asking the question: "If you could change one thing about the foster care system, what would it be?" The responses were powerful, heartfelt, and thought-provoking. Here are some of the replies shared in the discussion:

That instead of saying they were doing everything in the best interest of the child, that they would actually do it.

Advocacy from a foster parent doesn't mean we're "difficult" or against reunification.

From a foster home perspective?
Time. I feel like I work the system from so many angles (non profit, home finding, supports for foster parents) and I wish I had funds and time to provide the support they're deserving of.
From a foster care perspective? I wish we could align the needs of the child with the timeline of the legal system and ASFA regs better. It would help keep best interest of the child in mind.

Bio parents matter more than the child

That the child's needs and well being are the top priority always!

To stop forcing reunification with birth parents who are unfit and won't do the work to heal and clean up their lives. Sincerely, a former foster kid who had enough of forced relationships with her birth mom.

Accountability for the system and policies

More quality foster families so older youth aren't stuck in congregate care. And especially families with room for sibling sets.

I think most feel the same, it's suppose to be child protective services, not parent protection at the cost of the children... it's the sad unfortunate truth. The children go through so much! And although I fully support safe reunification, I do not support cases being dragged on, at the cost of the children, when it's clear reunification "shouldn't" happen, just so the boxes can get checked. That's tough to see...

Communication and timelines that reflect child's best interest.

That there be immediate resources available to a child on entry - whatever the need - BHIS, therapy, PT, OT, etc. and that child's best interest over grownups years of lack accountability.

Make it mandatory to communicate with Kin right away. Not wait over a year while the children get extremely attached and bonded to the FP.

Make it less about the parents and more about the kids and stop trying to force relationships because of biology when there's literally no relationship.

Better training for homes so that they can take care of medical kiddos and the system stops investigations on medical kiddos. Which may mean a medical system that only sees foster kids.

I'm so tired of hearing "in the child's best interest" when in reality they are saying "what's most convenient for the department".

Foster parent's opinion matters!!

Make everything about the kids best interest!

Stop threatening removal when foster parents speak up and tell you what is happening. Believe them and actually take time to investigate without giving the biological parents notice that you are looking for something or watching.
Reunification isn't always best. Stop making excuses and believing everything the bios say and start believing the actions and patterns.

All the visits, appointments, ext. sometimes the children don't even have a chance to be a kid with all the scheduled SV, CFTs, Therapy, behavioral support evaluations ext.

We are NOT "heros" or "saints"

I would change that currently Foster parents are allowed to dictate sibling contact/no contact and them being allowed to keep kids away from safe biological family. It's a big issue and causes immense trauma. The separation of siblings unless a safety issue should be illegal and foster parents should not be allowed to decide whether siblings can have contact or not.

Reunification not being the goal always.



WFAPA'S CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

OCTOBER 9 - 11, 2026 | HOLIDAY INN & SUITES, ROTHSCILD, WI

FRIDAY: OCTOBER 9, 2026

3:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Registration - Pick Up Your Conference Folder, Drop Off Auction and/or Raffle Items, View Auction and Raffle Buckets, Buy Raffle Tickets, Explore Awesome Freebies for Foster and Adoptive Families!
5:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Hospitality Room - Munchies/Socialize Connecting, Networking, Socialize, Relax, Eat, Meet Foster Folks, and Share Stories
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Hidden In Plain Sight (HIPS) An Interactive Exhibit for Parents & Community Members Presented by the Healthy Youth Coalition (HYC) of Marinette & Menominee Counties. Presenters: Joe Nault, Karianne Lesperance, & Danielle Lemke



SATURDAY: OCTOBER 10, 2026

7:30 AM - 5:00 PM	The registration desk is officially up and running for all your registration needs!
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM	State Updates on DCF 56 and Relevant Adoption Programs Updates Presenter: Jessica Nehmer, DCF- Program and Policy Analyst Advanced Bureau of Permanence & Out-of-Home Care Division of Safety and Permanence
10:00 AM - 10:15 AM	15-Minute Break – It's Time for a Stretch!
10:15 AM - 11:45 AM	"The Dark Side of Cyberspace: the Internet, Smart Phones, and Social Media" Presenter: Eric Szatkowski, Hospital Chaplain and Retired Special Agent who served with the Wisconsin Department of Justice/ Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI)
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Enjoy lunch along with the first of two 50/50 drawings!
1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	Join us for a virtual session featuring Angeline as she explores the significance of her books for young individuals in foster care, particularly Native American youth. She will address the challenges related to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and its influence on the mindset of those navigating the foster care system. Presenter: Angeline Bouley, #1 NYT Bestselling Author, Printz Medal & Morris Award Winner
2:30 PM - 2:45 PM	15-Minute Break – It's Time for a Stretch!
2:45 PM - 4:00 PM	SAAN & FASPP - Surviving Allegations of Abuse & Neglect Presenter: Sherry Benson
4:15 PM - ?	General Membership Meeting: • Updates regarding WFAPA • Elections for the positions of Vice President and Secretary • Meet WFAPA's Board Members • Gather Participant Feedback • Retrieve Your Certificates
6:00PM-10:00PM	Banquet Buffet - Get your raffle excitement here with amazing prizes to win! Join in on bucket raffles and seize another opportunity to hit the jackpot with our 50/50 drawing! Bring your A-game and challenge your pals in a fun showdown at our live auction!

**NEW
UPDATE**



**Savor your dinner,
connect with your fellow crew,
laugh 'til you can't laugh no more,
'cause nights like this are few.**

SUNDAY: OCTOBER 11, 2026

9:00AM-12:00PM	FASPP & Board Members Meeting - Closed to General Membership.
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WFAPA'S 2026 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

PERSONAL INFORMATION PLEASE COMPLETE ONE REGISTRATION FORM FOR EACH PARTICIPANT

First Name: Last Name:

Phone Number: Email:

Home Address: City: State: Zipcode:

County You Are Licensed With: Are you an active member of WFAPA? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this your first conference? ☐ Yes ☐ No

I am bringing a first time attendee ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, Name of attendee:

CONFERENCE SELECTION

Conference Registration includes workshops, hospitality room and meals on Saturday. Complimentary breakfast is available at the hotel. Buffet meals will be served at lunch and at the banquet.

Please select a registration option and specify if you will attend the lunch and supper buffet.

Choose In-Person Conference Type:	☐ \$85- WFAPA Member	☐ \$100- Non WFAPA Member
Choose Virtual Conference Type:	☐ \$85- WFAPA Member	☐ \$100- Non WFAPA Member
Choose Lunch Buffet Type:	☐ \$0- Conference Attendee	☐ \$10- Non Conference Attendee
Choose Supper Buffet Type:	☐ \$0- Conference Attendee	☐ \$20- Non Conference Attendee

Do you have any dietary restrictions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what are your dietary needs?

Conference Completion and CE Information

No childcare is provided for this conference. Because many discussions involve sensitive topics, children are not permitted in training sessions. Infants may attend; however, attendees are asked to step out with fussy or noisy infants to minimize disruptions. WFAPA designates this in-person and virtual conference for 12 foster care learning credits. To earn foster care learning credits, participants must be on time, sign in and sign out, and attend the entire sessions. Partial credit is not permitted. WFAPA's Certificates of Completion will be given out to in-person participants at the end of the General Membership Meeting and emailed to virtual participants within 7 business days of conference completion. Attendees may use the WFAPA Certificate of Completion to verify attendance and apply for continuing education in their jurisdiction. Secure payments can be made with a debit or credit card at www.wfapa.org. For payment by check, please make checks payable to WFAPA CONFERENCE and mail to Tracey Gunn, 715 E. 25th Street, Marshfield, WI 54449. For questions or concerns, contact Tracey at 970-367-6717 or info@gmail.com. There will be a \$20.00 service fee for all checks returned for insufficient funds. I grant permission for WFAPA to use my personal image (photo) and name in any form of media for promotional and any other lawful purposes. WFAPA acknowledges that the images may be used on the organization's website, Facebook, social media, flyers, publications, and that there will be NO payment for the use of the photographs, names or any other forms of media for promotional purposes. This releases WFAPA from any infringement or violation of personal and/or property rights of any sort whatsoever based upon the use of your photo(s), and further acknowledges that WFAPA is not obliged to use the photographs.

System requirements for virtual attendees

If you use a Zoom account that is registered in someone else's name, your attendance will not be recorded and WFAPA will not be able to issue you a certificate of attendance. To ensure you receive proper credit, use a Zoom account associated with the same email address used in your WFAPA registration. You can sign up for a free Zoom account at zoom.us/signup.

Cancellation Notice

A full refund will be given for cancellations if written notice is sent by email to info@wfapa.org at least 8 days before the conference date. Refunds are not available for cancellations made within 8 days prior to the conference date.

Signature:

Date:

WFAPA's Conference is right around the corner!



Reserve your room today!

A block of rooms has been reserved at *Holiday Inn & Suites Wausau-Rothschild* (1000 Imperial Avenue, Rothschild, Wisconsin 54474).

For reservations, please call Holiday Inn & Suites- Rothschild at 715-355-1111 or online at www.ihg.com/holidayinn/hotels/us/en.

You can either reference the block code- FAP or the block name- WI Foster & Adoptive Parent Association.

The last day to reserve your room is September 15, 2026.

A HUGE THANK YOU TO OUR AMAZING DONORS!

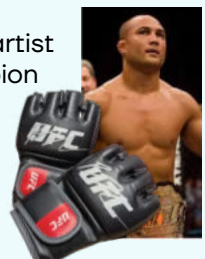
We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all the businesses, organizations, and individuals who have generously contributed items for our upcoming WFAPA Fundraising Banquet on Saturday, October 10th!

Thanks to your kindness, we have an array of **AMAZING prizes, baskets, and items** ready for an enjoyable evening! Your contributions not only add excitement to our fundraiser—they also support the vital work of WFAPA in providing education, resources, advocacy, and assistance to foster, adoptive, and kinship families throughout Wisconsin.

**EVEN MORE
FABULOUS
PRIZES ARE
ON THEIR
WAY!**

Special Thanks to Our Donors:

- Actus Nutrition - \$500.00 Donation
- Kessler's Diamonds - Sterling Silver Time X Eternity Pendant, adorned with a .03CT Kessler 81 Facet Diamond
- Milwaukee Admirals - Four tickets to a 2026 Milwaukee Admirals game
- 4Imprint - \$500.00 Grant towards a product. Every attendee at our October 2026 conference will receive a stylish flip-top water bottle featuring the WFAPA logo!
- Creative Brew - A raffle basket filled with fantastic kitchen goodies that any home chef will adore!
- Boyd Blodgett - A beautiful, handmade cutting board
- Dawn Smith - Homemade pot holders and a kitchen boa
- Dale Christopherson- He donated UFC gloves signed by B.J. Penn, a former professional mixed martial artist and 5th degree black belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. B.J. is a former UFC Lightweight and Welterweight Champion and one of only eleven fighters in UFC history to hold titles in multiple weight classes.



WHY DON'T ELEPHANTS USE COMPUTERS?



Because
they're afraid
of the mouse!



Your Support MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Your donation helps WFAPA support, empower, and advocate for foster, kinship, and adoptive families across Wisconsin. ❤️



YOUR DONATION HELPS:



SUPPORT

Provide resources, education, and emotional support for families.



ADVOCATE

Advocate for policies that promote the well-being of children and families.



CONNECT

Build a strong community of families who understand.



EMPOWER

Empower families with the tools and confidence to thrive.



MAKE AN IMPACT

Every donation, big or small, creates lasting change.

Every Gift Makes a Difference!

Your generosity helps us continue our mission to support foster, kinship, and adoptive families throughout Wisconsin.



THANK YOU

for believing in our mission and investing in our families.



WAYS TO DONATE:



ONLINE

Visit our website at www.wafapa.org and click "Donate".



MAIL

Send your donation to:
Sherry Benson, WFAPA Treasurer
805 1st Street, Menominee, MI 49858



IN HONOR OR MEMORY

Make a donation in honor or memory of a loved one.

Thank you for helping us build stronger families and brighter futures! ❤️

WFAPA extends a heartfelt thank you to Debra Woods for her generous \$50 donation made in honor of Mr. Ed Nugent.

WFAPA extends a heartfelt thank you to Rosemarie Carabino for her generous donation.

Your generous support enables us to keep assisting foster, kinship, and adoptive families across Wisconsin, and we truly value your kindness and dedication to our mission.



Continued from front page - **A HOME FOR EVERY CHILD**

Foster homes with more than one child

As mentioned above, many if not most foster homes can accommodate more than one child. Many children come into care as part of sibling groups, and child welfare agencies hope to place as many of them together as possible. Despite their efforts, siblings are often separated in foster care for lack of homes that can accommodate them. We need more programs like Together California, a new community of 12 homes each built to house up to six siblings with full-time, professionally trained foster parents. Similar programs exist in Illinois, Florida and other states. Such homes could also be offered to relatives who do not have room to take in larger sibling groups. The requirement of one home per child encourages states to focus on assembling as many foster homes as possible, rather than developing programs to keep sibling groups together.

Placements that are not foster homes

Secondly, A Home for Every Child should not include just foster homes. Most experts acknowledge that some children and youth need residential treatment before they can thrive in a foster home. Secretary Adams wrote in *The Imprint* that when the number of foster homes exceeds the number of children needing them, “[c]hildren avoid sleeping in offices or cycling through short-term rentals.” But most of the children sleeping in hotels, offices, short-term rentals, and other inappropriate placements have complex behavioral health needs and have been through many foster homes already. Media reports from California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin document the preponderance of high-needs children among those in unlicensed, inappropriate placements.² In Adams’ own state of Idaho, the child welfare agency under his leadership reported that short-term rentals were until recently used to “temporarily house children with complex needs.” Many of these high-needs young people need residential treatment, maybe for six months or a year, before they can live in a foster home. Otherwise, they will

simply be bounced from home to home until they end up in another inappropriate placement or worse. Unfortunately Adams gives short shrift to the need for residential treatment. He writes in *The Imprint* that “I saw firsthand the power of this ratio [of licensed homes to children] when I ran Idaho’s child welfare system. In just one year, Idaho increased from 74 to 104 foster homes per 100 children—eliminating emergency short-term placements, expanding kinship care, augmenting prevention services, improving licensing timeliness, reducing congregate care, lowering costs, and restoring public trust.” But the press release announcing the end of Idaho foster youth being placed in short-term rentals also credited the opening of a new 16-bed assessment center which “immediately reduced the department’s reliance on temporary housing.” The center is “designed to serve as a homelike setting for foster youth until an ideal placement in a foster home or residential treatment facility [my italics] is located.” Another such center is planned. So reducing the child-to-home ratio may have helped in closing the short-term rentals, but it certainly was not the only factor that allowed these rentals to be closed.

Moreover, Idaho is still struggling to find treatment for the youth with the most complex needs, the Idaho Press reported in October 2024, shortly before the last short-term rental closed. The article concluded that “Many of the youth require residential care for mental health, substance abuse disorder or other behavioral health issues, and there still isn’t enough of this treatment available in the state.” As of December 30, 2025, DHW reports having 173 children in “congregate care,”³ of which 32 were out of state.⁴ If Idaho is like most states, it is the lack of high-quality, trauma-informed residential treatment facilities, rather than foster homes, that is the main cause of the stays in inappropriate placements. The Family First Prevention Services Act defined a new option for providing such care—a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (Q RTP). But based on a recent listing of residential facilities, Idaho appears to have only two Q RTP’s. Having a goal like “A Home for Every Child” provides no incentive to develop the needed therapeutic placements for youth with complex needs.⁵

Equalizing the number of licensed homes with the number of children in foster

care is an arbitrary goal that does not encourage the development of needed resources, like larger foster homes and residential treatment programs. But replacing it with a one-to-one ratio of available placement slots to youth is not a good idea either. A well-functioning system needs a sizable excess capacity, because existing vacancies may not be in the right geographical area or in the right type of placement for a child who comes into care. Moreover, many existing homes and residential treatment programs are probably substandard and should be closed.⁶ A Home for Every Child encourages states to maximize the number of homes, regardless of quality, capacity, or the need for residential treatment.

What about safety?

The ratio of homes to children can be improved in two ways, as ACF has stated: increasing the number of foster homes or decreasing the number of children in foster care. But the latter means taking fewer children into foster care. But the latter means taking fewer children into foster care. An easy way to do this is to redefine “safety” to make it harder to find a child unsafe. It appears that states have been doing this already, driving foster care numbers down to their lowest level in years and raising concerns about children being left in unsafe conditions in states as diverse as Washington, Texas, Indiana and New Jersey. As Naomi Schaefer Riley puts it, “foster care numbers are close to record lows and there are plenty of reasons to think that states are pushing them lower and sacrificing child safety in the process. If the federal government provides them with an excuse to double down on their plans to reduce the number of kids in care, many states will jump at the chance.”

The Technical Bulletin states that A Home for Every Child “provides a unifying construct that reflects the full continuum of good practice in child welfare—from prevention and family strengthening to permanency and post-permanency support—offering a cohesive framework for aligning state efforts with what works.” “From prevention to permanency” conveniently leaves out the screening and investigation of child maltreatment reports. With A Home for Every Child as the metric, the incentive is clearly to reduce entries into foster care regardless of trends in child abuse and neglect.

(Continued on page 13)



Exciting News: Welcoming the Wisconsin Family Connections Center to Our 2026 WFAPA Conference!

The Wisconsin Family Connections Center (WiFCC) is a collaborative initiative formed by merging the former Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center with the Wisconsin Permanency Support Center in an effort to create a more unified service array. WiFCC is managed statewide by the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families and regionally by Journeys Program at Catholic Charities—Diocese of La Crosse.

They offer a wealth of resources, training, and support for families, youth, and professionals involved in foster care, adoption, reunification, kinship, and guardianship.

WHAT WILL THEY BE EXHIBITING?

- Flyers & Informational Materials
- Pens, Stress Balls, & Bookmarks
- Giveaway Basket

Stop by the WiFCC table to chat with the dynamic duo, Kaiya Stevens and Allison Kunkelher! Discover the treasure trove of resources they offer for kids, families, and professionals!



MAMA KASCH'S KITCHEN Beef Enchilada Bake

Prep Time: 20 minutes Cook Time: 30 minutes Total Time: 50 minutes
Servings: 8 servings



INGREDIENTS:

1 ½ lbs ground beef, 1 onion finely chopped, 2 cloves garlic minced, 2 cups enchilada sauce, 1 can 15 ounces black beans drained and rinsed, 1 can 7 ounces diced green chiles drained, 12-14 flour or corn tortillas, 1¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese, 1¼ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese, 1 avocado peeled seeded diced, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, ½ cup diced tomato, ¼ cup chopped cilantro, 1 jalapeno seeded and minced

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9 x 13-inch casserole with nonstick cooking spray for ease in cleaning.
2. Brown ground beef in a large skillet over medium heat. When the ground beef is about halfway browned, add the onion. Cook until the beef is browned and the onion is soft. Reduce heat to low. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute, stirring continuously. Drain any excess grease. Add 1 1/4 cups enchilada sauce, black beans, and green chiles; cook for 1-2 minutes while stirring to combine.
3. Spread 2 tablespoons of enchilada sauce on the bottom of the casserole dish. Layer 1/4 of the tortillas on the bottom, then spread 1/3 of the beef mixture, and 1/4 of each cheese. Repeat these layers two more times. Top with the last layer of tortillas, the remaining enchilada sauce, and the remaining cheese.
4. Cover the pan with foil and bake for 30-35 minutes or until the cheese is melted and the casserole is heated through. Cook uncovered for 5 minutes.
5. Toss avocado with lemon juice. Top the casserole with avocado, tomato, cilantro, and jalapeno.

NOTES:

- Both flour and corn tortillas work for this recipe.
- Cut the tortillas to fit the casserole and overlap where needed.
- Feel free to swap out the toppings for what your family enjoys most. Other garnishes might include black olives, sour cream, green onions, jalapeno pepper, salsa, or shredded lettuce.
- Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. To reheat, remove the casserole from the refrigerator 40 minutes before reheating to bring it to room temperature, cover the casserole with foil, and place it in a 350-degree oven for 20-25 minutes. You can also reheat it in the microwave or toaster oven.

WE NEED YOU!

HELP WITH OUR NEWSLETTER OR WEBSITE

Have you ever wanted to get more involved with WFAPA but wasn't sure how?
Here's an opportunity!

We are looking for volunteers who would be willing to help with or take over our newsletter or website. You do not have to be a foster or adoptive parent to help! If you enjoy writing, organizing information, working with technology, or simply want to lend a hand, we'd love to hear from you.

Whether you can take on the project or just help out from time to time, your skills and time can make a difference! Interested or want to learn more? Reach out to us at info@wfapa.org—we'd love to have you on the team!



Continued from page 11- A HOME FOR EVERY CHILD

Some language in the Technical Bulletin suggests that other factors can be considered outside of the child-to-home ratio. States participating in the pilot must also include in their PIP's "wraparound measures related to safety, permanency, and child and family well-being, such as adverse placement scores." But the next sentence is "Wraparound measures should be chosen such that they will show performance improvement in areas that are expected to lead to improvements in the ratio of homes to child." But, again, the only way child protective services can do that is reducing foster care removals. Clearly, A Home for Every Child does not center child safety.

The leadership of ACF is to be commended for seeking to reduce the burden imposed by the Child and Family Services Reviews. But the attempt to build a new quality review around a simplistic slogan like A Home for Every Child is not adequate for such a complex and serious problem as child abuse and neglect. It ignores the needs for larger foster homes to keep siblings together and for high-quality residential placements.

It also creates an incentive to reduce foster care entries regardless of safety. One hopes that the current pilot will be succeeded by a more comprehensive approach that keeps safety in the forefront and recognizes the diverse needs of foster youth.

Note: After this post was published, Dr. Sarah Font of Washington University in St. Louis reminded me of another problem with A Home for Every Child. Many states rely heavily on unlicensed relatives to care for children who need placements. These states can greatly increase their count of licensed homes simply by licensing these relatives, without actually increasing the number of available placements.

Notes

1. It does appear in the technical bulletin as an adverbial phrase in the following sentence: "In furthering efforts to achieve the 1:1 ratio of licensed foster homes to children in foster care, states will not be required to address every item or practice area identified in the CFSR Final Report." ←

2. In New York, these young people are often sent to residential programs that are not equipped to provide the level of care that they need. ←
3. "Congregate care" is a term used, often pejoratively, to describe placements that are not foster homes. ←
4. Email from A.J. AJ McWhorter, Public Information Officer, Office of the Director | Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, December 30, 2025. ←
5. The Technical Bulletin does say that "The 1:1 ratio does not preclude states from pursuing placements outside of foster homes or from placing multiple children, for example, siblings, in one home but rather is intended to serve as an indicator spanning the full child welfare spectrum." But the meaning of "intended to serve as an indicator spanning the full child welfare spectrum" is unclear. Placements outside of foster homes, or of more than one children in one home, do not count toward the goal of A Home for Every Child as defined by ACF. ←
6. This statement is based on my own personal experience in the District of Columbia and Maryland as well as personal accounts from youth around the country and media reports of abuse and neglect in foster care. ←

Published: January 6, 2026 and taken from site childwelfaremonitor.org at www.childwelfaremonitor.org/2026/01/06/a-home-for-every-child-an-inadequate-framework-for-assessing-state-child-welfare-policy/



Partner With WFAPA Today

Join us in
making a difference.

Show your support for foster and adoptive families while gaining meaningful visibility within a passionate, statewide community.

WFAPA is dedicated to supporting, advocating for, and providing essential resources to foster and adoptive families across the country. While we are proud of the progress we've made, we know our work is far from finished.

With the support of partners like you, we can continue to expand our impact and make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families who need it most.

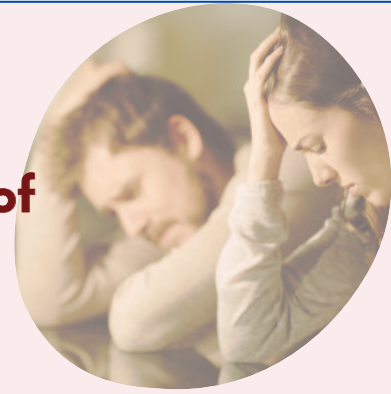
We invite you to become a sponsor of WFAPA. With a one-time annual contribution of \$300 or a monthly donation of \$25, your support directly helps us achieve our mission. As a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, your donation is tax-deductible.

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- Our website – www.wfapa.org
- Our Facebook page – www.facebook.com/wfapa
- Social media channels
- Quarterly newsletters
- Conferences

Your partnership not only supports families—it also demonstrates your commitment to strengthening communities and making a lasting impact.

To learn more, visit www.wfapa.org, click on "Support Our Work," and select "Sponsors."

FASPP**Foster & Adoptive Support
& Preservation Program****SAAN****Surviving Allegations of
Abuse & Neglect****FASPP's Objective: Supporting Foster and Adoptive Parents
Statewide**

FASPP's primary aim is to assist foster and adoptive parents throughout the state with a peer-driven network of support and information. Our goal is to maintain foster and adoptive families by providing the necessary resources. If you're feeling disoriented, in need of information, or under an investigation, our highly trained FASPP and SAAN volunteers can help. They can guide you through a range of challenges and provide you with the relevant information or resources you need. FASPP and SAAN comprises of fellow foster or adoptive parents, making it easier for you to connect and share your experiences.

**Introducing SAAN, a Peer-Driven Support Network for Foster
and Adoptive Families**

SAAN is a support network created by peers, with the aim of reducing the trauma experienced by foster and adoptive families during an allegation, without compromising the integrity of the investigation.

Foster parents open their homes to children, aware that they also bring with them their histories and issues.

Foster and adoptive parents face a higher risk of being accused of wrongdoing. Being investigated is a stressful and unsettling experience for anyone, but SAAN is here to help you navigate the process by providing information and support.

If you have any questions in the following areas, please reach out to the designated individuals via email or phone:

- **Norma, Chairperson (Advice on general & allegations)**
Phone: (920) 922-9627
- **Melissa (Focuses on fostering younger children)**
Phone: (608) 333-6650
Email: lovedalemelissa@gmail.com
- **Lauri (Advice on general/adoption)**
Phone: (715) 816-4152
Email: lthorssen@gmail.com

**We're thrilled to shine the spotlight on
ALLISON ROMENS**

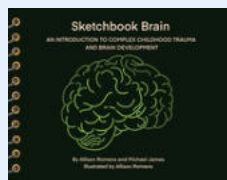
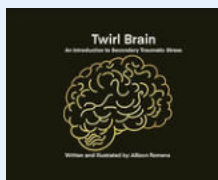
We are excited to welcome Allison Romens as a vendor at our 2026 WFAPA Adoptive & Foster Parent Conference! Allison is an elementary teacher, librarian, entrepreneur, writer, and illustrator, as well as a mother to five special-needs children, four of whom were adopted from foster care. With experience caring for more than twenty foster placements, Allison understands the unique experiences, challenges, and trauma that children in foster care may face. She is passionate about supporting children and families and is actively involved in the foster care and mental health communities.

ALLISON'S BOOKS

Allison's books are a resource and a conversation starter for children, caregivers, and professionals on the journey toward healing and strong, connected futures. Through her beautifully illustrated children's books, Allison helps children and adults better understand trauma, brain development, and the ways children process their experiences.

Allison's newest book, *Puppy Brain: Foster Care & Reunification*, was released in August 2026 and will be showcased at our upcoming Conference in October. *Puppy Brain* is written with trauma-informed brain science woven in with the presence of Brain Buddy to inform the audience of what is happening in the brain as we go through Manuel's time in care.

Stop by Allison's table to meet her, explore her books, and learn more about these meaningful resources for children and families!



WFAPA's Board Elections Coming This October! Make Your Voice Heard!

WFAPA will be holding elections for the positions of Vice President and Secretary at our Annual Conference, October 9–11, 2026. We encourage members to become involved in shaping the future of our organization by nominating themselves or another qualified individual for these important leadership roles.

Nomination forms can be found on page ____ of this newsletter or downloaded from our website. Completed nomination forms should be emailed to our Nomination Chair, Lauri Thorssen, at info@wfapa@gmail.com.

If you have questions about the nomination process or the responsibilities of either position, please contact Lauri at 715-816-4152.

Vice President

The Vice President serves a vital leadership role within WFAPA and must be an active board or committee member. Responsibilities include:

- Assisting the President in carrying out organizational duties.
- Assuming the responsibilities of the President during the President's absence, except for signing contracts unless approved by the Board of Directors.
- Performing duties assigned by the President or Board of Directors and those outlined in the WFAPA bylaws.
- Serving a two-year term, with a limit of three consecutive terms, or until a successor is elected.



Secretary

The Secretary plays a key role in maintaining organizational records and communication. Responsibilities include:

- Recording and maintaining minutes from Board of Directors meetings and general membership meetings.
- Composing communications as directed and approved by the President and Board of Directors.
- Maintaining records of all correspondence and ensuring copies are provided to the President.
- Performing duties assigned by the President or Board of Directors and those outlined in the WFAPA bylaws.
- Serving a two-year term with no limit on the number of consecutive terms.



WFAPA's strength comes from the dedication and commitment of its members. If you are passionate about supporting foster and adoptive families across Wisconsin, please consider serving in a leadership role or nominating someone who would be an excellent representative for our organization.

We look forward to receiving your nominations and seeing you at the conference this October!

Nomination Form

FOR THE TERM OF: _____

For the office of: ☐ President ☐ Vice President ☐ Secretary ☐ Treasurer

Individual Being Nominated:

Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Number of years as a WFAPA member? _____ Number of WFAPA's Conferences attended in the last four years? _____

Statement of Acceptance:

Should I be elected to the position for which I was nominated, I accept the position of:

☐ President ☐ Vice President ☐ Secretary ☐ Treasurer

Signature of Nominee

Date

Please attach an article of introduction on a separate sheet of paper. Therefore, it is advisable that you provide additional information about yourself, as you feel appropriate, including your goals for the position and/or the Association. You may want to include such information as:

- Number of years as a foster parent and number of children currently in placement.
- Past/Current positions held in local and state foster parent association(s).
- Education (high school, college, special foster parent related training).
- Past/Current positions held on other associations (social, civil, volunteer, etc.).
- Social Achievements/Awards Received.
- Other information you think may be important for the voters to know.

Individual Being Nominated:

Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Mail nominations to: Lauri Thorssen, PO Box 122, Bennett, WI 54873 or email: info@wfapa@gmail.com. Nominations may also be turned in at our Conference. Please make a separate copy for each person you wish to nominate.

Thank You to Our Sponsors

At WFAPA, we believe that strong families build strong communities—and our incredible sponsors help make That possible.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the generous organizations, businesses, and individuals who partner with us to support foster and adoptive families across Wisconsin. Your commitment fuels our mission and helps us provide vital resources, education, and connections for families who open their hearts and homes to children in need.

Because of your support, WFAPA is able to:

- Host meaningful conferences and events
- Provide valuable training and educational opportunities
- Strengthen a statewide network of foster and adoptive families

Your partnership is more than sponsorship—it is an investment in children, families, and brighter futures. Together, we are making a lasting difference in the lives of those who need it most.



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5604 Medical Circle
Madison, WI 53719

Phone 608-233-9204
Fax 608-233-9710

Sherry Benson,

LCSW, LMSW-Clinical, CCTP, Adoption Competent Therapist, Certified Family Mediator, Certified Coercive Control Specialist, Certified Reunification Therapist, Certified Custody Evaluator

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www.alphabetshuffle.com



Thank you for standing with WFAPA and supporting the important work we do together. Interested in becoming a sponsor and making an impact? Email us at info@wfapa.org to learn more.

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If you wish to reach out to one of our board members via email, please send your message to info@wfapa.org and make sure to address it to the relevant chair.

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