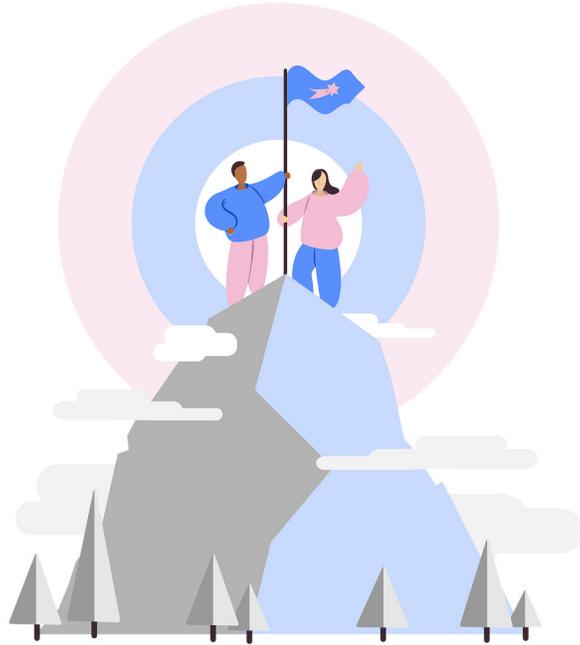




Family Newsletter



10 things needed to succeed as an adoptive parent

By Kelli Ostrosky and Aimee Loudon, MARE Adoption Navigators

Gather dependable friends and family for support and help.

From the first moments a youth is placed until many years down the road, adoptive parents need a second (or third) set of hands on deck. Adding a new member to the family is a huge lifestyle change, especially a youth who has experienced trauma. The level of hands-on help and support required is often more than originally anticipated. Learning the ropes and blending a family can bring extra challenges. However, with a strong support system, a weight is lifted from everyone. Ask for help with additional supervision, childcare and respite, transportation to and from events, homework and other household tasks such as dinner or laundry.

Attend ongoing training to build the parenting skill set.

Basic trauma training is provided through required GROW classes, but ongoing training in trauma is highly recommended to build knowledge through the years. Targeted topics help build the specialized parent skill set to meet the ever-changing needs and stages of a child. Being open to opportunities and actively seeking them out is a trait of many highly successful adoptive parents and can help as youth process their past and work towards healing. Staying ahead of the game and taking trainings not yet relevant to the youth is a great strategy because chances are this information will come in handy later! This proactive step will help lead to a smoother ride on this complex parenting road.

Spring 2022

In this issue:

Page 1 - Ten tips for adoptive parents

Page 3 - Isaieh finds familiarity soothing



Page 4 - Meet her royal highness, Mauriah!



Page 4 - Events and other info

Did you know?

Mare.org has a list of adoption agencies throughout Michigan.

At www.mare.org/Agency-Map, adoptive families can study an interactive map showing the location of agencies across the state. Clicking on one of the "push pins" gives users specific details about the agencies such as address, phone number and counties served.

Families can get similar information at www.mare.org/For-Families/New-to-Adoption/Find-a-Licensed-Agency, which lists agencies by county and includes links to their websites.

Learn more about foster care adoption at www.mare.org.

Engage in post-adoption supports.

Who can help navigate school situations and extra learning supports? Assist with medical coverage questions? Bounce ideas for trauma informed parenting strategies? Post-adoption support programs, that's who! Across Michigan, local communities offer numerous programs to assist with post-adoption. Whether it's an in-person or online support group or community, a virtual group catered to your family's dynamics, specific case management needs and much more. Locating these supports and resources early on is a stress saver.

Grow relationships with other foster and adoptive families.

The saying goes, "no one gets it" like another adoptive parent! Social supports will need to evolve and change after adoption. This is because traditional parenting wisdom isn't always wise in an adoptive household. Trauma-informed approaches are often worlds apart from the advice of a well-meaning best friend or grandparent. Adoptive parents enter into a new culture, one which requires specialized support and friendships. These can be cultivated with other parents who are walking the same path and building their family through adoption. Having an online and in-person adoptive community to feel seen, heard and supported can really make a positive difference.

Build flexibility into work and family life.

Foster youth frequently have



above average educational, social, medical or emotional needs. There will be an increase in needed communications with school, medical and mental health staff and other providers. It can be helpful to have a stay-at-home parent, a parent with a part-time job or flexible schedule and a willingness to change existing overscheduled routines. For parents who don't have a flexible work schedule, secondary care providers such as trusted friends, relatives or paid child care providers can assist when unexpected events arise. Some additional strategies to consider would be applying for family and medical leave when needed or pursuing remote work opportunities.

Sign up youth for clubs, sports or organizations.

Developing interests, skills and strengths helps youth with physical and social growth. In addition, emotional health is improved through a sense of self, belonging, independence and working as part of a group or team. Time developing these skills also gives some needed space for everyone to recharge. Learning what clubs, sports or organizations are available in the community is something parents can do prior to adopting. Many foster youths

do best with less competitive and more individual-focused sports or clubs such as swimming, bowling, art and scouts.

Expand educational knowledge, resources and flexibility.

School can be a tough place for a foster youth – from navigating friendships to processing and expressing emotions, interacting with authority figures and keeping track of and completing assignments. Diagnoses may be present such as learning disabilities, ADHD, mood disorders, specific health care needs or more. Some youth may need extra educational supports such as a 504 plan, a behavior plan and/or an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Others may need alternative education placements, a hybrid schedule, a trauma-focused school or homeschooling. Many organizations are available to help with these types of educational supports.

Locate and navigate financial assistance programs.

Adopted youth have many programs available to assist with ongoing needs. Many adopted children qualify for assistance with physical, mental or emotional conditions. Services offered can include things such as orthodontic coverage, durable medical equipment, tutoring, summer

camp and respite care. In addition, older youth are often eligible for grants geared towards youth transitioning into adulthood. Learning about these offerings in advance of the need can help make for an easier time with application and navigation of these programs.

Identify trauma-informed providers.

Medical and emotional support professionals who understand the specific needs of the youth and adoptive family are an absolute must. Support agencies and other experienced adoptive parents can assist in making recommendations for providers of all types: therapists, respite providers, parenting coaches and physicians experienced in working with foster

and adoptive families. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but professionals with specialized trauma training and experience are an invaluable resource.

Focus on self-awareness and self-care.

When adopting a youth, there will be ups and downs as in any parenting journey. However, the intensity and frequency can be different from what many first-time or biological parents experience or what the media portray. It is necessary to dig deep and understand one's own past, culture, traumas, upbringing, needs and triggers as these factors can heavily influence a parent's approach and effectiveness. Youth often have a strong loyalty to their biological families. It is good to

build awareness and understanding of this since it is a common trigger for families. Adoptive families should be open to having appropriate discussions (based on age and situation) with their adopted children and should never belittle biological families. Additional parenting duties reduce time parents have to recharge, so incorporating self-care and building individual identity and interests such as what a parent enjoyed prior to adoption should be an intentional focus.

If you'd like more information about the resources discussed in this article, call the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange at 800-589-6273 and ask to talk to a MARE adoption navigator.

Isaiah finds joy in the soothing simplicity of familiarity

Isaiah is quite a thinker, dreamer and doer.

After all, he wishes to bring Mr. Potato Head and stuffed animals to life, and he wants to become a cartoon character. Maybe Isaiah would be Mickey Mouse because he dreams of traveling to Florida. Perhaps he'd be Emmet from the Legos movies since Isaiah is a Master Builder, and building things with Legos is one of his favorite activities.

If he can't bring characters to life, maybe Isaiah would create them after his wish to become a robot builder comes true. "He likes learning how things work and taking things apart to see how they work," says one of his close adults.

Even without French fries and mac 'n cheese on Isaiah's list of favorite foods, his preferred choices still reveal a kids' dream come true including toast and jelly, chocolate milk, Sour Patch Kids, meat sauce and applesauce.

His wishes and dreams get even bolder and better when it comes to a future forever family. Isaiah wishes for a family who'll play games, play outside and have fun together because "I like to play and have fun," he wants others to know.



Isaiah (C010340)



Mauriah (C010310)

Meet Mauriah, a princess of a girl

Make way for her highness Mauriah. She doesn't have any royal blood streaming through her veins; Mauriah earned her royalty by playing cards. As one of the adults close to her explains, "Mauriah reported that she and her current caregivers enjoy playing the card game Skip Bo together, and that she is the undefeated Skip Bo Queen!" Alas, she doesn't plan to turn that skill into a career when she gets older even if she could. Instead, Mauriah wants to become a real estate agent, teacher, nurse, model or fashion designer.

In a way, she gets practice at the latter two professions by taking an interest in styling hair and doing

nails. Mauriah enjoys dancing, and she says that her favorite after-school activity is participating in dance class for jazz, contemporary music or ballet.

She hopes to add another extra-curricular activity by joining the basketball team. On the weekends, Mauriah entertains herself by watching TV, especially her favorite show, "Find Me in Paris." She hopes to visit Paris because "it seems beautiful," she says.

Mauriah's other wishes include giving to the poor, being happy and finding a forever family. "She wishes to have a nice and caring family who will take care of her," says one of Mauriah's close adults.

Waiting Family Forums

The process of waiting to be matched with a child can be exciting, confusing and frustrating at times. To assist you through this process, the MARE Adoption Navigators host quarterly Waiting Family Forums. Join us and learn

exactly what happens to your inquiries after you submit them; find out what you can do to make the most of your wait time; learn ways to strengthen your inquiries; get tips on how to effectively advocate for your family; and meet other waiting families.

Families who are approved to adopt and those completing their home

Calendar

April 30

**In-Person MARE
Meet & Greet
Bloomfield Township**
11 a.m.-2 p.m.

May 21

**In-Person MARE
Meet & Greet
Stevensville**
10 a.m.-3 p.m.

June 18

**In-Person MARE
Meet & Greet
Holland**
11 a.m.-2 p.m.

For more information, contact jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org or call 734-528-2070.

MARE contact information

Michigan Adoption
Resource Exchange
3840 Packard Road,
Suite 170
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
Toll Free: 800-589-6273
TTY: 734-794-2984
Fax: 734-528-1695
mare@judsoncenter.org

study are all welcome to attend. Look for future Waiting Family Forums on our home page under Events. Pre-registration is required.

If you have any further questions, please contact the MARE Adoption Navigator Supervisor via email at kimberly_wolowski@judsoncenter.org or by phone at 800-589-MARE (6273).