

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange is a program of Judson Center and is funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

To learn about foster care adoption and view photolistings and videos of waiting children, visit our website at www.mare.org.



From the desk of the MCI Superintendent: Quality adoptive family assessments hinge on asking key questions

STORY BY MARY ROSSMAN, LMSW, MCI SUPERINTENDENT

There are a multitude of dynamics involved in achieving a successful adoption, and it is impossible to predict exactly how an individual placement will turn out.

However, adoption specialists can maximize the potential for successful adoptions by devoting time and attention to the actual assessment process. Beyond a narrative of the specifics of a particular family's life, the assessment should attempt to portray the individuals so that readers feel as if they know them (e.g. physical attributes, demeanor, attitude, social skills).

Furthermore, it should not be just a narrative of what is reported to them by the family but an actual assessment. That requires asking probing questions and using insights into what the parents are really like. The "Social History" should reflect what kind of childhood the parent had (was there abuse or other trauma, what kind of parenting did they receive, what do they think of their parent's methods, are there attachment



issues, how do they get along with family members, how did they handle stress in the family?). This can give clues about parents who might be controlling, overly-sensitive, fearful of rejection or easily triggered or who might tend to revert back on their own parents' techniques.

The sections on expectations and discipline of children is not where you simply list the same old methods that everyone recites – time out, take away privileges, send to their room, etc. Instead, the adoption specialist should explain how children are driven by anxiety to do all kinds of self-defeating behaviors, and how patience, tolerance and understanding are the keys to helping them (as well as structure, routine and consistency). And offer the parents some examples of what children might do to see how they would respond (e.g., what would you do if the child gets out of bed every night?).

See **Family Assessments** on page 3

Adoption Awareness Day






With The Detroit Tigers

Enjoy a Tigers game and help the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange with this special ticket package vs. the Houston Astros.



Ticket packages for this game on July 31 at 1:10 p.m. include:

-  Lower Baseline Box, Upper Box Infield or Upper Reserved
-  Detroit Tigers/Adoption Awareness t-shirt
-  \$5 donation to the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange



To order tickets, look for the link at www.mare.org
For further information or to order 15 or more tickets,
please contact Jeremy Hostetter at Jeremy.hostetter@detroitigers.com

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) is a statewide information and referral service for families interested in adopting children from foster care, and for adoption workers looking for homes for these children. The MARE website provides a listing of waiting children in Michigan and of Michigan families interested in adopting children with special needs. There are

approximately 300 youth with no identified family who are waiting for adoption, and approximately 35% are from the tri-county area.

To learn more about MARE, please visit www.mare.org or call 800-589-MARE. MARE is a program of Judson Center and funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.



MARE's Calendar of Events – A Policy Reminder –

MARE would like to take this opportunity to remind agencies that adherence to contractual obligations as well as policy and procedure ensures that the children of Michigan's Child Welfare system will be uniformly served, resulting in opportunities to connect waiting children with forever families.

Section 3., letter g. of the State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Contractual Agreement refers to Mare Related Responsibilities and states: "The contractor shall notify MARE no less than quarterly of planned adoption related events, scheduled or tentatively scheduled for the next quarter. These activities shall include but are not limited to orientations, training dates, workshops, adoption fairs, recruitment activities, post adoption support activities, and guest speakers. The contractor will indicate if the events are open to the public or limited to a specific audience and any costs for family participation."

Please remember to submit your events at least quarterly to MARE's Support Staff, Jerry Balazovich at Jeremiah_balazovich@judsoncenter.org. This can be done via MARE's Calendar of Events Form, through a Contact Us form submission on the MARE website, or by simply emailing your event flyer to a member of the MARE staff.

MARE applauds the efforts of Michigan's adoption workers to find waiting children forever families and welcomes the opportunity to provide information, referral, and support to all those who promote adoption.

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Family Assessments, continued from page 1

Studies show what qualities are needed in families to parent challenging children:

- Basically secure and resilient, flexible and able to adapt to change.
- Ability to see how their own childhoods impact their parenting approach.
- Emotionally skilled at being able to understand children's feelings and motivations.

- Ability to recognize children's needs and how this effects their behavior.
- Ability to think about their own reactions and how they affect the child.
- Capacity for showing and expressing affection and positive reinforcement.
- Ability to acknowledge their own triggers and work to manage them.
- Understanding of how early

trauma affects and delays child's development.

- Willingness to learn new ways of thinking and reacting to children.
- Acceptance of outside help.
- Ability to cope with stress.

Adoption specialists should not only look for these traits but also educate prospective adoptive parents that these are the necessary skills for the job.

Look for more tips and guidance from the MCI Superintendent in future Professional Newsletters!

Helping to prepare youth for Meet & Greets: From beginning to end

It is important that adoption workers, as well as the residential staff who often transport and attend Meet & Greets with the youth work together to make it a positive and productive experience for them.



a conversation with the residential staff person bringing the youth to the event about how to prepare them and about the staff person's responsibilities at the event.

- Many of the families who are present have questions regarding the youth at the event and would like to speak with the youth's actual worker.

- If you see that a youth is struggling to interact, we encourage you to step in and help the child engage with a family. We also expect residential staff to take this same approach with the youth they bring.

Before the event

Important things to consider and discuss with the youth:

- Talk with the youth about some of the fears and anxieties that they may be feeling prior to the event, especially if they have never attended one before.

- Help to normalize those feelings for them.

- Explain to them that this is just a fun day to meet some nice people who are there to meet them.

- If a youth is on the waitlist, it's best to not prep the child unless he or she gets approved to attend and is moved off the waitlist. This will minimize any hurt feelings if the child is not able to attend.

- As the adoption worker for the child, it is your responsibility to have

- Please notify the residential staff as soon as you receive the confirmation email with the Meet & Greet address so they can prepare the transportation in time and study the directions to the event.

- For any adoption worker or residential staff who may be transporting the youth the day of the event, please utilize the travel time to talk more with the youth about their expectations and feelings about the day's event.

During the event

Important things to consider during the Meet & Greet:

- It is best if the adoption worker attends Meet & Greets with the youth assigned to them.

Following the event

Things to consider when following up with the youth:

- During the ride home, it would be a perfect time to follow up with the youth on how they felt the event went and any residual feelings or emotions they could be feeling.

- Check in to see if there were any families who they really thought they may have connected with.

- If, as the adoption worker, you were unable to attend that Meet & Greet, be sure to follow up with the residential staff to see how the event went and discuss any feelings or emotions that attendees may have experienced.

Save the date! Statewide adoption worker conference!!!

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Office of Child Welfare Policy & Programs is sponsoring a statewide adoption worker conference on September 19 and 20 in Traverse City.

The conference will provide train-

ing for Michigan adoption workers to better serve their clients and to provide quality adoption services to children available for adoption. This conference is intended for adoption workers, adoption supervisors, MDHHS adoption monitors, permanency resource

monitors, Post Adoption Resource Center staff, adoption navigators and adoption resource consultants.

Registration information will be provided in a future DHHS communication issuance.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 26, 2016

Wendy's Meet & Greet, Macomb
2-5 p.m.

July 16, 2016

MARE Meet & Greet, Warren
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
* Registration is at 10:30 a.m.

July 17, 2016

Wendy's Meet & Greet, Mount Clemens
2-5 p.m.

July 31, 2016

Adoption Day at Comerica Park
1:10 p.m., Detroit Tigers vs. Houston Astros
Link to purchase tickets: <http://m.mlb.com/det/tickets/info/special-ticket-packages#adoption>

August 6, 2016

MARE Meet & Greet, Midland
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
* Registration is at 10:30 a.m.

August 13, 2016

Wendy's Meet & Greet, Clinton Township
2-5 p.m.

September 24, 2016

MARE Meet & Greet, Grand Rapids
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
* Registration is at 10:30 a.m.

September 25, 2016

Kinship Adoption Festival, Belle Isle
2-5 p.m.

For more information regarding these events please contact Jessica Thompson, MARE Recruitment Specialist: jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org