

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 children, visit our website at www.mare.org.



A guide for discussing adoption with adopted youth

Adoptees and professionals stress the importance of discussing adoption early and often with youth.

It's an ongoing discussion that should occur throughout a youth's lifetime instead of a one-time, sit-down talk at a certain age. It is beneficial in many ways – including physical, emotional and mental health – for youth to have a good understanding of their adoption, so don't wait for them to ask. If they have questions, answer them honestly and appropriately.

The voice of adoptees

For families, adoption is a positive and exciting time filled with hope and joy. For adoptees, it is not always the case, especially as they get older and process their adoption at a deeper level.

They may feel a great loss associated with their adoption and may wonder who they resemble, whose personality and temperament they have, why their biological family couldn't raise them and whether termination of parental rights was somehow their fault. They may think and worry about their biological relatives even if they have never met them.

That's why it is important for adoptive parents to let their children know they are always there to answer their questions in an open, non-judgmental, non-reactive and honest way. Adoptive parents do have resources to help in books written by adoptees, online support groups such as "I Am Adopted" on Facebook as well as MARE's Match Support Program.

Be cautious about sharing their stories

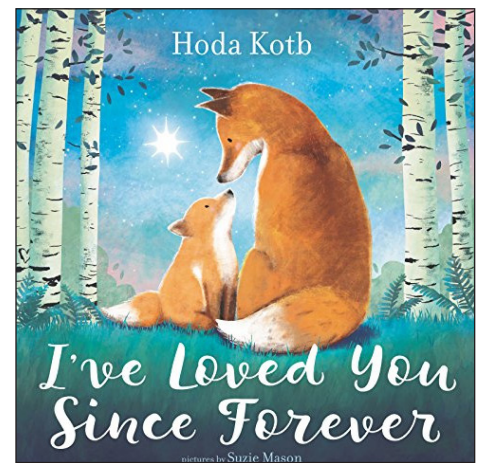
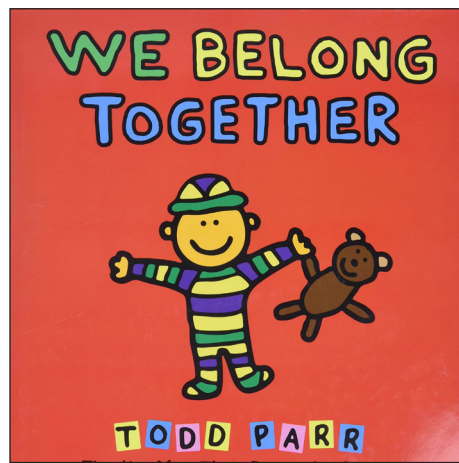
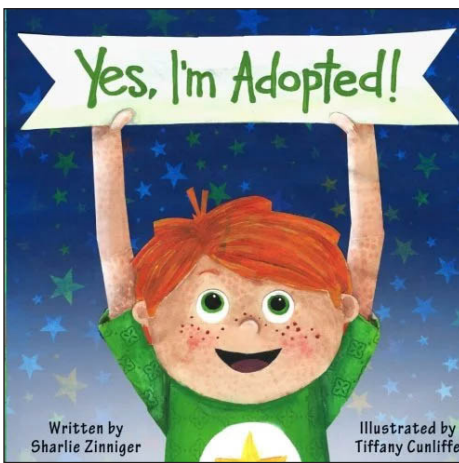
Let youth know you'll protect their privacy, and guide them about when to share their personal information and to whom. Understand that it is their story to share or keep confidential, not yours. Sharing pictures, updates, celebrations and more should be carefully considered with the youth's input.



Positive adoption language

Be aware that adoption language has evolved over the years with the guidance of adoptees and professionals to reflect a more positive, person-first experience instead of the process-focused approach years ago. Instead of a youth "put up" or "given up" for adoption, the current language involves adoption plans made for the youth or the youth being placed

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for adoption. Avoid terms such as “real mom” and “real dad” and instead refer to “birth mother” and “birth father.”

Family connections

It is a common fear of adoptive parents that their youth will want to seek information and potentially even meet their birth family someday. While this is a valid concern, some level of contact may be appropriate. Sometimes relationships with birth

relatives can help youth understand and feel connected to their past, and it can even provide a positive support for them. If these connections aren't possible, pictures and life books can also help. Finally, as their youth become adults, adoptive parents need to consider when and how they may help provide information and aid in their youth's quest for biological family connections. Again take the time to be honest and forthright with your youth, and be aware that help and guidance are available from groups such as the Post Adoption Resource Center.

Helpful resources

Links for tips on guiding your adoption discussion:

<https://www.americanadoptions.com/blog/5-tips-for-talking-to-your-child-about-their-adoption/>

<https://www.americanadoptions.com/blog/teaching-children-about-adoption/>

Helpful links for having an honest, early, positive adoption discussion:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/adoption-and-foster-care/Pages/Respectful-Ways-to-Talk-about-Adoption-A-List-of-Dos-Donts.aspx>

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/how-to-tell-your-child-theyre-adopted#4>

7 Core issues in adoption: It is important to have a good understanding of the issues which can impact adoptees. Follow this link for more info:

<https://www.nacac.org/resource/seven-core-issues-in-adoption-and-permanency/>

Helpful books on adoption: Books are a great way to introduce the concept of adoption and different types of families. Reading books can begin in infancy and throughout the toddler years. It can be a great way to first introduce the concept of adoption and different types of families. There are also books and workbooks available online for older children as well.

<https://www.parents.com/parenting/adoption/parenting/books-about-adoption-for-kids/?>

Post Adoption Resource Centers (PARC) are available for every county across the state. They can assist with any post adoption issue or need, provide support groups and more. They will work with any family who has adopted, it does not have to be a foster care adoption to participate in their agency offerings. Follow this link to find the agency near you: https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971_7116_63826_63829---,00.html

Meet MARE's new youth specialist

Gabrielle Kampsen's stint at a daycare center sparked an interest in working with kids that eventually led to her joining the staff at MARE as the new youth specialist.

She replaces Jennifer Brooks, who's taken a new position with MARE. Like Jennifer, Gabrielle looks forward to working with foster youth and helping match them with forever families. You'll see her at MARE Meet & Greets and Grant Me Hope and MARE video shoots.

In the meantime, take a few moments here to get to know Gabrielle better.

Tell us about your background

I graduated in spring from Eastern Michigan University with a bachelor's degree in social work. I'm planning to go for my master's degree, so I'm not quite done yet. I have a very big family that includes three sisters, six nephews and two nieces, and I'm very close to my family. I am engaged and have been with my fiancé for about three years.

What draws you to social work?

I kind of circled the idea for a long time because people initially told me not to go into social work for

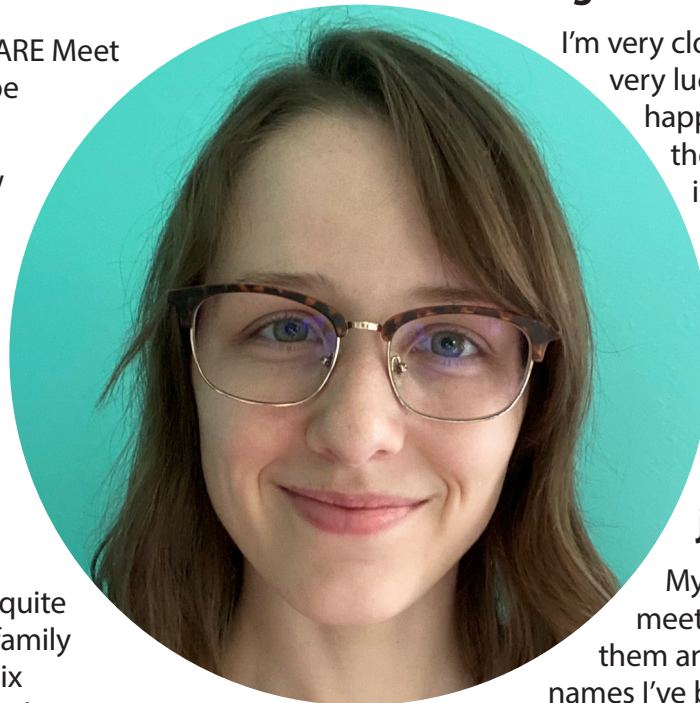
a variety of reasons. But I just knew I wanted to do something where I was helping people. I love being useful, and I love serving others, so after trying nursing and teaching, I returned to social work because that's where my heart is.

Why were you interested in becoming a MARE youth specialist?

I'm very close with my family, and I feel very lucky and want to make that happen for others. One aspect of the position that I love is interacting with the youth. I think they're so much fun, and they have so much to offer, so that's another reason I was very excited to get this position.

What satisfies you most about your job?

My favorite thing is getting to meet the youth, getting to see them and putting a face with the names I've been seeing on the computer screen. Getting to hear their stories – seeing their hope and resilience – has probably been the most satisfying for me.



Contact Gabrielle at 734-794-2926, ext. 23257 or gabrielle_kampsen@judsoncenter.org

Calendar of Events

September 23

Virtual MARE Meet & Greet
5:45-7:30 p.m.

October 23

In-Person MARE Meet & Greet
Sterling Heights
10:45 a.m.-2 p.m.

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

MARE contact info

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

Worker Recommendations

Is it necessary to be only child in home

No Yes

Is an LGBTQ affirming home necessary?

No Yes

Is a 2 parent home necessary?

No Yes

Is it necessary to be youngest child in home?

No Yes

Is a smoke free home necessary?

No Yes

Is a pet free home necessary?

No Yes

Child Behaviors

Child Behaviors: A Closer Look

For us to better understand the child, please take a minute to go through this list please give more detail.

Physical

N/A

All Physical

Cerebral Palsy

Blindness

Deafness

Diabetes

Encopresis

Emotional

N/A

All Emotional

ADHD

Alcohol / Substance Abuse (Youth)

Cruelty to animals

Destroys property

Feeding or Eating Disorder

Frustrated by “missed fields” messages? Here’s how to stop them

MARE recently introduced new fields that workers need to complete when preparing a youth for photolisting, and we’re regularly answering questions about them.

“I get several questions about missed fields every week,” says MARE Adoption Worker Liaison Martha Kaczala.

Those “missed fields” messages can appear when workers omit answers to the Worker Recommendations questions about the type of family who would be a good fit for a youth. Those questions include whether the youth needs to be the only or youngest child in the home and if a

two-parent family is necessary.

Another “missed fields” message can occur when workers miss the Child Behaviors tab, which is an extension of the youth’s functioning levels for physical/medical, emotional/behavioral, development/cognitive and education/learning levels.

These new fields were instituted to give MARE adoption navigators and other adoption workers an idea of the types of families who would be a good match for a youth. If you experience any problems with these fields or have any questions, contact martha_kaczala@judsoncenter.org or 734-528-2007.

After a virtual event last year, we’re back with a live – and free – Michigan Heart Gallery Grand Opening Sept. 18 at the Emagine Theater in Royal Oak.

We’ll have more details to come, but you won’t want to miss it!!! So mark the calendar and follow us on Facebook, on Twitter and on Mare.org for more info. The tentative time is 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. See you there!!!

SAVE THE DATE Michigan Heart Gallery Grand Opening!



Saturday, September 18, 2021