

## Uncertainty, the Only Certain Thing in Life

One has to look no further than the daily news to understand that we live in a very uncertain world. We listen to the latest terrorist attacks, the fluctuating stock market and stories on global warming. We tend to absorb the information, file it away and be about the day. Yet for some, this type of “c’est la vie” approach does not work in their intimate, personal lives. Parents can often fret over the uncertainty of their children’s lives, especially when they did not have a hand in those first years of development. For parents and their children, the uncertainty of life can become debilitating. Uncertainty can be fear producing and we can thank our brains for being hardwired to get caught up in the anxiety of not knowing. Fearing the unknown and being on high alert kept the caveman alive in a dangerous world. But living on high alert does not work as well in the modern world. We need to learn to override our emotions about uncertainty in order to live in the present and not worry about the future. Failure to do so can lead to a life without joy.

There are any number of approaches that can work for both parents and their children who find that they ruminate about the possibilities and then stress contemplating the worst outcomes. For some parents, a six-year-old stealing a sucker from the checkout line puts the child on a trajectory of prison before he even reaches adulthood. These types of projections in combination with decisions based on things parents don’t know, can be trip hazards in fulfilling our roles. A more productive approach would be to list the things that are known for certain and those that are unknown, and then decide based on only what is known. Additionally, learning to trust your gut when making decisions is something that can be cultivated.



Sometimes we become our own worst enemies because we seek perfection in our parenting roles or expect our children to live up to unrealistic expectations. This mindset is damaging to everyone’s ego. Perfection in humans is unattainable because we are all fallible. Rather than focusing on what we or our child have failed to accomplish, we need to consider all the things that we did accomplish.

Uncertainty is a close cousin to change. The space between the “now” and the “not yet” is a concept known in psychology as “liminal space.” The word “liminal” comes from the Latin word, “limens” which means “threshold.” It is a time when the tried and true has been pulled away and a new life rhythm has not yet emerged. Learning to embrace the growth that comes with liminality is more than difficult. However, if parents and children can learn to place hope in the future beauty that can come from the challenges of today, patience can be found to endure the process of life and change. Flexibility is an important ally when faced with uncertainty, and sometimes, though it may sound contradictory, making a variety of plans ahead of time can help increase flexibility.

“What ifs” can be fuel on the fire of stress or worry, or can be the catalyst for making contingency plans in the event that a “what if” does happen. The key is not to be mired down in the “what ifs.” Having some contingency plans can be

comforting, with the knowledge that if the “what if” happens, you’ll be able to survive it. If you are reading this article, you have made it this far in life – you have more stamina in meeting life on its terms than you give yourself credit. Remember that the parent and the child will make mistakes and most mistakes are not terminal.

Life’s “shoulds” and “must bes” can lead to disappointment. Uncertainty is an uncomfortable place to be and we try to control or eliminate it, but it is not possible. If a parent thinks that their adoptive child with an above-average IQ should be going to college, they will be extremely disappointed when the child falters and returns home before the end of the first semester. The parent needs to move from “this situation is unacceptable,” to “this situation is less than desirable, and in fact, tolerable.”

If we learn to stay in the moment, time cannot be spent worrying about the uncertainties of the future. We can habituate or become used to the uncomfortable feelings of uncertainty. Just trying to fix the discomfort of uncertainty is bound to make the feelings of fear worse. Fixation on problems of uncertainty just prolongs the stress or uncomfortable feelings of the unknown.

Being present in the moment, (not thinking about where you need to be in the next five minutes, five hours or five days) is one way to preempt the stress of uncertainty. Stress reduction can be as simple as concentrating on your breathing for several minutes. It is a practice that can be developed and utilized in most any situation, removing the possibility of worrying about all that is uncertain.

Remember that life’s periods of challenges and uncertainty is the human condition. It actually helps us grow in our capacity as human beings. Try to embrace the inevitability of uncertainty and change; lose the illusion of control. Breathe deep. . .and try to enjoy life and all of its uncertainties.

## **Worksite Mentoring Program for Adolescents**

FamilyForward’s Worksite Mentoring program serves St. Louis area youth ages 16-21 who are in the process of aging-out of the foster care system or who live in some other non-traditional home setting. The program provides these young people with mentors who offer Job Readiness Training (JRT), help secure full- or part-time employment, and assist them in completing their education. Job Readiness Training (JRT) is typically a five-day process (Monday through Friday) with hours from 3:30 to 6:30 pm. Training topics include soft skills, conflict resolution, job application process, resume writing, and interviewing. Transportation for youth is provided by FamilyForward to the JRT site via cab service.



After youth complete the JRT process, they are referred to corporate partners for an opportunity to interview. Corporate partners are companies who have agreed to interview youth when they have appropriate job openings at their companies. In addition, they also agree to have a representative from the company act as a worksite mentor. The worksite mentor will give participants positive feedback, as well as suggestions that could improve their professional and social skills. Success in the program is measured by youth participants completing the JRT and being highly motivated to work while continuing their education. The part-time employment experience could potentially lead to a full-time job or more lucrative employment with the corporate partners. Mentors provide a fundamental resource for the adolescents in developing a relationship with a caring adult.

FamilyForward’s Worksite Mentoring program offers this training opportunity to teen parents receiving Temporary Assistance, youth who meet the eligibility criteria (they have experienced other difficult life challenges) and who are supervised by the St. Louis Family Courts. All youth must complete job readiness preparation and education or be willing to attend classes conducted by Missouri Mentoring Partnership. There is no fee for services. All interested youth must complete a referral form to be considered for the program. For additional information, contact Mohammed Witherspoon at [MWitherspoon@frcmo.org](mailto:MWitherspoon@frcmo.org) or 314.534.9350 ext. 259.

# House Bill 1599 – Missouri Adoptee Rights Act

By Laura Winters, Adoption Specialist

After years of adoptees advocating for expansion of their rights, Missouri Adoptee Rights Act (HB 1599) was passed in August 2016. This piece of legislation provides an avenue for adoptees to request and obtain a non-certified copy of their original birth certificate. It also allows birth parents to communicate their preferences regarding the release of their identity and desire for contact with their birth son or daughter.

Children's Home Society of Missouri, now FamilyForward, was established in 1891 and has assisted birth families and adoptive families with adoption planning since that time. The practice of adoption, openness between birth and adoptive families, search, and reunion has changed significantly over the years. It continues to evolve as reflected in this new law. Here is what adoptees and birth families need to know to go about getting further information.

What adoptees need to know:

- Any adoptee born prior to 1941 may request a copy of his or her original birth certificate beginning August 18, 2016.
- Adoptees born after 1941 may request the original birth certificate beginning January 1, 2018.
- Family members of the adoptee cannot request the birth certificate.
- The birth certificate is for genealogical purposes only and will be marked as such. It cannot be used to establish identity.
- Birth parents may file a Birth Parent Contact Preference Form indicating they do or do not wish to be contacted. If they do not wish to have their identity released, their names will be redacted from the birth certificate before it is released to the adoptee.



What birth parents need to know:

- Birth parents may state their preference for contact with the adoptee, at any time, by submitting a Birth Parent Contact Preference Form.
- Birth parents may choose not to be contacted. If so, their name will be redacted from the birth certificate prior to it being released to the adoptee.
- Birth parents may choose to be contacted by an intermediary. You can designate the intermediary.
- Birth parents may choose to be contacted directly by their birth son or daughter.
- Birth parents may submit a Medical History Form in addition to the Contact Preference Form.

For more information:

Bureau of Vital Records  
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services  
PO Box 570  
Jefferson City, MO 65102  
573.751.6387  
[VitalRecordsInfo@health.mo.gov](mailto:VitalRecordsInfo@health.mo.gov)

Walk-in customer service hours are 8:30 am – 4:30 pm CST. Telephone customer service hours are 8:30 am – 4:30 pm CST, Monday through Friday (excluding state and federal holidays).



safer, healthier relationships  
for children and families

1167 Corporate Lake Dr  
Saint Louis, MO 63132-1716  
314.968.2350

[familyforwardmo.org](http://familyforwardmo.org)

## **STAFF INFORMATION**

### **Intake Coordinator**

Heather Fjone, LCSW  
314.968.2350 ext. 258

### **Program Manager, Education and Training**

Gail Knipshild, MA  
314.968.2350 ext. 234

### **Chief Program Officer**

Rachel Neukirch, LCSW



## **About FamilyForward**

To better serve the community, Children's Home Society of Missouri and Family Resource Center officially united to become FamilyForward on April 1, 2017. Together, the agencies have 169 years of experience helping children and families.

FamilyForward is a movement and the name for the merged entity of two of St. Louis' most accomplished, leading-edge non-profit organizations. FamilyForward is the direction for hope and for new opportunities to build safer, healthier relationships for children and families.

FamilyForward provides therapy, coaching and education, foster care and adoption, trauma assessment and psychological evaluation, therapeutic preschool, and care for children with developmental disabilities. Visit **[familyforwardmo.org](http://familyforwardmo.org)** for more information.

## Educational Opportunities for Adoptive and Foster Parents

*Each session counts as training toward your licensure requirement. Sessions are provided at low or no cost to all foster and adoptive parents. Registration is required.*

### **Psychopharmacology**

Wednesday, July 12, 2017

6:00 pm – 9:30 pm (note longer class time)

This training goes beyond the basics and takes an in-depth look into the drugs that are routinely prescribed for children in the foster care system. In order to be a solid advocate for children in your care, a parent needs to have a good understanding of prescribed drugs and how they work on the nervous system. Small and large group activities will make this complex topic memorable.

### **Stop Bullying Now!**

Thursday, July 20, 2017

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Parents will learn the prevalence of bullying in the school and community, symptoms of a bullied child and the perpetrator, prevention and intervention, and how to build resiliency in the child. The training will cover advocacy and partnering with schools.

### **Sensory Processing and Integration**

Thursdays: July 27 and August 3, 2017 (attendance is required on both dates)

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Difficulties with sensory processing are often confused with behavioral problems and children who have been adopted or in foster care are at a heightened risk to experience these challenges. Learn about Sensory Processing Disorder – what it is, signs and symptoms, suggested ways that parents and teachers can help, and resources in the area. This **two-part training** provides parents with hands-on experience.

### **Trauma and Its Impact in the Classroom**

Monday, August 7, 2017

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

This class reviews the impact of trauma on a child's neurodevelopment and how it relates and manifests within the school setting. Practical tips for providing a trauma sensitive environment are covered. Parents are encouraged to invite their child's teachers to attend.

## **FamilyForward Parenting KIDS (Kids In Difficult Situations)**

Wednesdays: August 9, 16, 23, 30, September 6, 13, 2017

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Six-week class looks at the reasons behind the behaviors exhibited by children who are in foster care or have been adopted. Looking through the “trauma lens,” parents learn ways of being proactive in their discipline while building the parent/child relationship. Understanding that there is not one “right” technique, the series looks at the work of a number of professionals in the world of child development, with an emphasis on the basics of relationship building and regulation. This **six-week class** is an excellent introduction to trauma informed parenting and beneficial for all parents who are struggling with children who have trauma histories.

## **Importance of Sibling Practice**

Fridays: August 18 and 25, 2017, 9:30 am – 1:00 pm (note longer class time)

-or-

Mondays: August 21 and 28, 2017, 6:00 pm – 9:30 pm (note longer class time)

This **two-part training** covers the Children’s Division approved curriculum from the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections at the Hunter College School of Social Work. The training concludes with a mock staffing using a decision making matrix for the placement of siblings in foster care. This training is required for all foster parents.

## **Defining Crisis and Planning Interventions**

Monday, September 18, 2017, 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

-or-

Tuesday, September 26, 2017, 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Parenting children with histories of abuse and neglect can put families at risk of facing a crisis at some point. Knowing what is considered a crisis can better prepare the family for that day. Understanding de-escalation techniques and safety plans empowers parents to confidently handle the chaos and stress that naturally occurs during a family crisis.

## **Trauma 101**

Thursday, September 28, 2017

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

When a child is abused or neglected, it can affect every aspect of the child’s development – physical, emotional, social, psychological, and behavioral. Class focuses on the reasons for delays and challenges. Material covered is from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and is required for all foster parents for licensure. Neurobiology of trauma is introduced.

To register for training, contact Heather at

314.968.2350 ext. 258 or [heatherf@chsмо.org](mailto:heatherf@chsмо.org).

Location: 1167 Corporate Lake Dr, Saint Louis, MO 63132-1716