

LifeLines

Volume 12, Issue 1 | Winter 2019



safer, healthier relationships
for children and families

The Slave Up the Street

January is recognized in the United States as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. Unimaginable to many of us, human sex trafficking has become a national crisis. According to research conducted by Human Trafficking Search, it is estimated that at least 60% of the children who have been exploited in human sex trafficking have been in foster care because of abuse and neglect. The National Institute of Justice reports that people who have been sexually abused during childhood are 28 times more likely to be arrested for prostitution than their non-abused peers. Many of these are trafficking victims. When a trauma-informed approach is lacking, victims end up being arrested rather than receiving the support necessary to heal. We can all take steps to break this cycle.



How It Happens

As protectors of children from hard places, it is important that we are all informed about sex trafficking: how it happens, what it looks like, and how to prevent it. The most common characteristic among victims is homelessness. For children in foster care, this usually becomes the case when a child runs away, ages out, or is in an institutionalized setting with no family structure present.

Human Trafficking Search indicates that many traffickers lure children into the commercial sex trade with tactics that involve manipulation, violence, and intimidation. Once involved in trafficking, kids often do not see a way out. Sadly, the average life span of a child slave is only seven years; many die from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and other health complications.

What It Looks Like

Traffickers prey on children who are desperate for attention, have low self-esteem, and poor boundaries. Boys and girls are both preyed on by traffickers, though girls are targeted more frequently. In describing the ways that traffickers draw in victims, we will refer to the victim as a female, with the understanding that victims could be of either sex.

A common approach used by traffickers is the “boyfriend technique” where an older male (late teens, early twenties) pretends to be in a relationship with the intended victim. He proceeds to shower her with gifts and attention, then lures her into selling herself. He may tell her he is in financial trouble, asking her to consider stripping to help him out. Alternately, he might introduce her to drugs, take advantage of her when she is in an altered state, and convince her to sell her body. If she is resistant, he may assault her himself or allow her to be raped by others to break down her resolve.

Some traffickers trap victims through kidnapping, rape, and intimidation. These children are beaten into submission and threatened. Traffickers will also threaten to harm friends or family members of the victim to keep them in submission. They solicit on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Craigslist, sometimes under the guise of a job interview. Other times, they will utilize a loyal victim, referred to as the “bottom bitch,” sending her out to recruit other victims and convince them that they can make a good living selling themselves. Friends and acquaintances who are already involved in trafficking can be highly influential in recruitment. Trafficking victims are often so brainwashed by their captors that they truly believe they are helping others by making them a part of the human trade.

Most victims of trafficking are lured in when they are in early adolescence (11-13 years-old for boys and transgender girls, 12-14 years-old for girls). Youth who identify as LGBTQ+ are more likely to find themselves homeless leaving them at elevated risk. So how do we help protect our kids?

How To Prevent It

It is important to talk with kids about trafficking before they hit early adolescence and become prime targets. Inform them of the tactics that are commonly used. Traffickers frequent places that are popular with youth, so adequate supervision is key. If you observe that a relationship is becoming controlling or isolating, investigate and separate the child from the person.

When you are out and about with kids, challenge them to be observant and ask them to tell you about the details of where they are and what is happening around them. Also let kids know that if they find themselves in a situation where they are being harmed, it is important for them to take notice of details so that they can report what happened and help bring the perpetrator(s) to justice. Above all, let kids know that they can come to you to tell you about any action taken by someone else that makes them feel uncomfortable and reassure them that being assaulted or harmed is never their fault, even if they are hurt by another youth.

The sad reality is that trafficking is nearly invisible if we do not know what to look for. It is hard to imagine that there is likely a child being held as a sex slave just up the street. Now that you know the signs, be aware and inform others if you see something suspicious. Reports can be made 24 hours a day to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 1-800-THE LOST. Take action and share this information with those around you so that they can help prevent this trend from continuing to grow.

National Center
for Missing and
Exploited Children

1-800-THE LOST



Honoring Diversity

What is a universal sign of respect? It seems that we could all agree that giving time to something or someone is the best way to honor another. However, as the old saying goes, “birds of a feather flock together.” Take some time to reflect on your circles of friends and acquaintances. How many of them share the same basic culture and worldview that you do? Perhaps a good way to honor diversity is to intentionally seek out others who are not so very much like we are. It also involves seeing diversity in a broader light and going beyond age, race, and religion to include things such as life stage, marital and parenting status. The more time we spend with those who are different from ourselves the more we come to see the value in each individual.

LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care

Foster care is a system that utilizes an abundance of letters and acronyms for short-hand. Many of you have mastered their use: TPR, CA/N, ICPC, BM, BF, STARS, and GAL. If the acronym LGBTQ in the article’s title stumps you, it is time to acquaint yourself with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ). Read on!

As a foster parent, just because you have not had a child openly identify as LGBTQ does not mean you have not parented one who identifies as such. Statistics seem to indicate that anywhere from five to ten percent of the general population identifies as LGBTQ. It would stand to reason that the same percentage is found with youth in the foster care system, however, it might even be higher. Some youth have been kicked out of their homes due to parents not accepting their child's identity or orientation. Social services directed toward serving runaways or homeless youth acknowledge to a greater extent the LGBTQ population they serve than those working in child welfare. Of homeless children, 52% have had some involvement with the foster/adoptive care system at some point in their lives.

Foster parents have an important part to play in accepting and nurturing youth who identify as LGBTQ. To parent these children effectively it is important that foster parents start by examining their values and the source of their beliefs. You may believe myths about the population that need to be dispelled. Children and teens will not disclose their gender identity or sexual orientation if they do not feel emotionally safe in your home. If after careful examination of your own values and beliefs, you still feel that being gay or lesbian is unacceptable, then you should report to your caseworker that you are not interested in parenting a child who already identifies as LGBTQ or foster older children who are in the significant developmental stage of identity formation.

Youth who identify as LGBTQ are at higher risk for bullying, depression, anxiety, exploitation, and discrimination. Foster parents need to be aware of these risk factors and help to advocate for the child to receive fair treatment and assistance within the community. To effectively fulfill their responsibilities as foster parents, adults need to be prepared for the time when a child in their care comes out as LGBTQ. One of the most challenging experiences is working with a child who is actively transitioning from a male to female identity or vice versa. Parenting transgender youth will require additional skills for the parent to ensure that the youth is not isolated or segregated from others.

To further explore the requirements of a parent who cares for LGBTQ youth, this winter FamilyForward will present a curriculum called Reaching Higher, developed by the National Center for Child Welfare Excellence. This two-part class is a training that will examine a parent's beliefs, the myths surrounding the LGBTQ community, and provide numerous "What to Say, What to Do" activities for those inevitable moments that can catch parents off guard. Topics covered in the activities include: affirming engagement, promoting safety, sleeping arrangements, boundaries, promoting healthy sexual development, advocacy, coming out, and transitioning.

For those interested in expanding their knowledge base, register for the Reaching Higher class. FamilyForward's inaugural presentation of this training was provided to a group of seasoned foster parents who whole-heartedly endorsed the training as a potential requirement for all foster parents!





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Our Vision

FamilyForward leads the community in providing innovative solutions for advancing safer, healthier relationships for children and families.

Our Mission

FamilyForward moves vulnerable children in the direction of hope by delivering comprehensive therapeutic and educational services to support biological, foster, and adoptive families.

Visit familyforwardmo.org/publications to read LifeLines online.

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.

Please note that all classes are for adults only. Children are not permitted in the classroom as training content is often not appropriate for them. Please arrange for childcare in your home as children cannot be left unattended in the lobby or hallways of the building. Thank you for helping keep your children safe.

The Road to Recovery: Supporting Children with IDD Who Have Experienced Trauma

Mondays: January 7 and 14, 2019 | 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

This curriculum is from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and explores the impact of trauma on children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The IDD population is at a higher risk of abuse and neglect and it is a misperception that these children cannot benefit from the traditional resources available to typically developing children. Defining common disabilities, exploring the stress response, protective factors, safety plans and accessing appropriate assessments and therapy will all be topics of discussion.

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions

Thursday: January 24, 2019 | 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

This training is an introduction to Dr. Ross Greene's approach formerly known as collaborative problem solving. Instead of viewing kids as displaying challenging behavior, we will consider whether parental expectations exceed the child's capacity to respond adaptively. Understanding that some kids lack skills to handle certain demands and expectations, the expectations that cannot be met are then viewed as unsolved problems. Caregivers will learn to work with their children to solve problems in a non-punitive, non-adversarial, relationship-enhancing manner.

Sensory Processing and Integration

Mondays: January 28 and February 4, 2019 | 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Difficulties with sensory processing are often confused with behavioral problems. 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 a hands-on experience.

Trauma 101

Wednesday: February 6, 2019 | 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. Training covers the 12 Core Concepts of Understanding the Traumatic Stress Response and focuses on the reasons for delays and challenges based on the neurobiology of brain development. This introductory course covers the mandatory articles required for all foster parents.

FamilyForward Parenting KIDS (Kids In Difficult Situations)

Thursdays: February 21, 28, March 7, 14, 21, 28, 2019 | 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Children with histories of abuse and neglect tend to exhibit very difficult behaviors such as chronic lying, stealing, aggression, difficulties with eating, and/or sleeping. Trauma-focused parenting is discussed with an emphasis on the impact of trauma on brain development. Ensuring a child's physical, emotional, and psychological safety is paramount to decreasing behavioral issues and "re-wiring" the brain for appropriate behavioral responses. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) curriculum is utilized and supported with additional material/videos from professionals in the field of developmental trauma. 18 hours of class time is covered over six consecutive weeks. This is one of FamilyForward's most popular classes and can be a game changer for parents.

Reaching Higher – Caring for LGBTQ Youth

Mondays: March 11 and 18, 2019 | 6:00 pm – 9:30 pm
(Please note the longer class time)

Ten to twenty percent of the foster care population identifies with the LGBTQ+ community. Whether you know it or not, chances are that you have parented a child who identifies as such. This curriculum was developed by the National Center for Child Welfare Excellence for the purposes of improving the level of care for LGBTQ+ youth. After assessing their own values and beliefs, and learning basic information, parents will engage in fast paced "What to Say, What to Do" scenarios to develop practical skills. This 7-hour course occurs over two sessions.

Crisis Management

Wednesday: March 20, 2019 | 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Parents will learn what qualifies as a crisis, the signs of escalation in their children and methods to de-escalate the dysregulated child. The development and use of safety plans for the home will be discussed. Police Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) and protocol for engaging their assistance will be introduced.

**Our calendar of trainings
can now be viewed ONLINE!
familyforwardmo.org/events**

(All classes are still held at our
Creve Coeur location)



Register for Training

Contact Gail at 314.968.2350 or gail.knipshild@familyforwardmo.org



Our Location

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