



# Workshop Description

The Casey Family Services  
2011 Parent Conference

Review the enclosed workshop  
descriptions, then register online at:  
[www.caseyfamilyservices.org/2011conference](http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org/2011conference)

# The 2011 Parent Conference

## How to Register for the Conference

Whether you are new to the agency or a longtime parent, this event promises to inform, inspire, and recharge all who attend. The following are instructions on how to register for the **2011 Casey Family Services Parent Conference**:

### Mark Your Calendar

The 2011 Parent Conference is set for Saturday and Sunday, May 21 and 22, at the Westin Boston Waterfront. This hotel is a new location for the event.

### Select Your Workshops

There are two sessions of workshops planned, one on Saturday afternoon (**Session A**), and another on Sunday morning (**Session B**). Please review the available workshops for each session, make a note of what interests you, and then select which workshops you want to attend. We encourage everyone to attend a workshop in each session.

### Registering Online

If you have access to a computer connected to the Internet, you may register online at [www.caseyfamilyservices.org/2011conference](http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org/2011conference). You'll need to type the address into your browser window exactly as it is listed above. Once on the page, click the "Register Now" button.

### Registering on Paper

If you do not have access to a computer and an Internet connection, you are welcome to register by contacting your division. Someone there will help you register over the phone or in person. **Please register online or through your division by Friday, April 8.**

### Plan Your Travel

When you register, Casey Family Services will reserve a hotel room for you. Check with your local division to see if group travel by bus is being planned or if you are responsible for getting to the conference hotel on your own. Regardless of how you travel, please plan to arrive on Saturday morning before noon. Parking at the hotel will be paid by Casey Family Services. A buffet lunch will be provided.

### Need Help with Registering?

If you wonder which workshops are best for you or have questions about the hotel and conference, please contact your social worker for help. They will be glad to assist you. Guests who are not parents and who have questions, please contact Carmen Burgos at 203.401.6904.

## Workshop Opportunities

*This year's conference offers two sessions of workshops: one on Saturday afternoon and another on Sunday morning. Topics cover compelling themes of interest to resource, adoptive, and guardian parents, including the transition to permanence, reunification, and birth family connections, adoption, kinship care, education, the Internet and technology, self care, and clinical issues. Casey Family Services encourages parents to participate in workshops that will help them grow their skills and increase their understanding of the emotional needs of children in their care.*

### SESSION A

#### Saturday afternoon

#### **A1. Birth Family Reconnections: A Leap of Faith and Hopes for Healing**

Bonny Dodson, *Team Leader, Maine Division*

Nancy Larson, *Social Worker, Maine Division*

Many youth in the child welfare system have been cut off from their birth parents, extended family, and other significant relationships. Even after experiencing years of stability and adoption, these youth may still grieve their losses and yearn to know more about their birth families. With information readily available on the Internet, teens – without adult guidance – are finding their families of origin. This training will focus on supporting youth in their efforts to reconnect with birth family using a number of strategies, including family finding, family therapy and teaming, and safety planning. In addition, presenters will address how the reconnection process affects families currently living with the youth.

#### **A2. The Grand Divas: Kin Raising Kin**

Diane Di Donato, *Grand Divas member, Rhode Island Division*

Meredith Lopes, *Grand Divas member, Rhode Island Division*

Karen Murray, *Grand Divas member, Rhode Island Division*

Anna Perkins, *Grand Divas member, Rhode Island Division*

Barbara Rich Turner, *Grand Divas member, Rhode Island Division*

Joyce Sylvia, *Grand Divas member, Rhode Island Division*

Ileana Valentin-Lopez, *Social Worker, Rhode Island Division*

This workshop will introduce adoptive, foster, and kinship families to a support group for kin-care providers called the Grand Divas. The presenters will describe the group's philosophy, strategies, history, and supportive network, as well as their personal journeys through kinship care. Participants will learn about the Kinship Care Navigator program in Rhode Island, and the impact it has had on kinship families throughout the state.

#### **A3. Helping Older Youth Understand and Address Ambiguous Losses and Unconditional Commitment**

Sarah Greenblatt, *Senior Associate Director, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative*

This workshop will explore the range of ambiguous losses including unexplained placement disruptions, abrupt moves, and parental abandonment – experienced by children and youth in foster care –and the

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implications for permanency planning and decision-making. Participants will define ambiguous losses; explore how these definitions apply to the older youth in their care; and identify strategies that help young people process these losses and build stronger relationships with the supportive adults in their lives.

## **A4. How Therapy Supports the Path to Permanence**

Lizabeth Harrington, *Social Worker, Maine Division*

Kate Stawarz, *Social Worker, Maine Division*

Youth moving toward permanence deal with a number of intense emotional issues, including the loss of their birth family, loyalty conflicts related to their birth parents, the grief of not living with siblings, and the intense fear of potentially loving new parents when they have been disappointed by previous caregivers. This workshop will explore the importance for the adults on a child's team to keep permanence as the main priority, working together to create a shared message to the child. Parents will gain a basic knowledge of therapy techniques used to prepare youth for permanence, including the 3-5-7 model, parent-child relationship and trauma work with youth and their families.

## **A5. How to Speak Alien: Invading the Teen World without Invading Teens' Space**

Jennifer McAllister, *Social Worker, New Hampshire Division*

Gwendolyn Whitney-Gill, *Family Support Specialist, New Hampshire Division*

A teen's world today looks and feels much different from the culture of the previous generation. This workshop is designed to unlock the mysteries of what it is like living in a teen's world...how to decipher their language, what is important to teens, how do they feel about parents, relationships, music. What is the impact of the Internet, MySpace, sexting, cyber-bullying, drugs? Through lecture, video, music and roundtable discussion, participants will enter the teen world and come away better equipped to understand their adolescents.

## **A6. Identity and Self Image in Multiracial Foster and Adoptive Families**

Kim Stevens, *Program Manager, Community Champions Network,*

*North American Council on Adoptable Children, Massachusetts*

When children are raised in families outside of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, it is critical to address the need for positive self-image and connectedness. This workshop will feature a montage of videos, music, poetry, and essays by youth relating their experiences, strengths, and challenges, as well as the losses, of being raised outside of their cultural and ethnic communities. This workshop will support adults in becoming better advocates and parents by immersing them in the child's point of view. Discussion of race and racism will be a part of the session.

## **A7. Join the Drum Line**

John Belisle, *Social Worker, Rhode Island Division*

Come experience the joy of drumming and the power of music to heal. Participants will play drums and other percussion instruments and will learn a variety of cultural rhythms. No prior musical experience or knowledge is required – only a willingness to relax, enjoy, and appreciate how music can impact physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

## **A8. Kids Understand Attachment**

Laurie Ekberg, *Social Worker, New Hampshire Division*

Cynthia Hogan, *Social Worker, New Hampshire Division*

This workshop is based on the presenters' past efforts teaching youth about attachment, an experience that helped them realize "kids get attachment." For this session, the presenters will share youth perceptions of attachment, how to elicit what youth know about attachment, and exercises and activities used to facilitate conversations on attachment. Making the concept of attachment accessible to youth helps them figure out their life stories, and better understand their past experiences.

## **A9. Learning About, Understanding, and Caring for LGBTQ Youth**

Dawn LeVasseur, *Social Worker, Maine Division*

Emily Shandorf, *Social Worker, Maine Division*

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are present in the foster care system in significant numbers, yet there is a general lack of knowledge about their experiences and needs. This workshop will offer parents an opportunity to examine their own beliefs and knowledge about LGBTQ youth and to better understand the issues this population faces. Participants will learn the risks and dangers faced by these young people and explore ways to provide safe, nurturing, and supportive environments for LGBTQ youth in their care.

## **A10. Relationship-building Strategies**

Robin Caron, *Foster Parent, Maine Division*

Tammy Fleurent, *Foster and Adoptive Parent, Maine Division*

Cindy Jones, *Family Support Specialist, Maine Division*

Shaun Taudvin, *Life Skills Specialist, Maine Division*

Through lecture, discussion, and short exercises, presenters will focus on helping parents build positive, supportive relationships with all members of a child's team. Participants will share experiences to heighten awareness of two communication choices open to team members when emotions run high: responsible-responding or gut-level reacting. Presenters will offer examples and engage the audience in brainstorming ways to create more successful relationships.

## **A11. Safely Surfing the Web**

Stephanie Gosteli, *Staff Development and Training Manager, New Haven, Connecticut*

Lyndsey Glass, *Program Associate for Staff Development and Training, New Haven, Connecticut*

The Internet provides a number of tools for the social and educational growth of youth. However, parents may have concerns about how youth use the Internet, specifically around the sites they visit, with whom they are talking, and what they are sharing. This workshop will provide parents with practical information about protecting themselves and their children when using the Internet, checking the history of their Internet browser, and understanding the privacy settings of three popular social networks. The trainers will address issues that arise for foster and adoptive youth when on the web.

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## **A12. Strong at the Broken Places: Resilient Survivors**

Linda Sanford, *National Consultant and Trainer; Author; and Faculty Member, Simmons College Graduate School of Social Work*

The myth of “once damaged goods, always damaged goods” asserts that a survivor of trauma is destined to continue patterns of abuse against themselves or others. Quite to the contrary, most survivors go on to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. Many, in fact, derive their greatest strengths in the very areas where they have been hurt the most, not only becoming strong, but “strong at the broken places.” This presentation will highlight the characteristics that help survivors prevail over trauma and ways to encourage resilience.

## **A13. Tools for Budgeting**

Mary Magri, *Director of Finance, New Haven, Connecticut*

This workshop will provide an overview of budgeting techniques for families and highlight free, computer-based tools for basic financial organization. The presenter will review spending and saving, as well as planning and goal setting for families.

## **A14. Unconditional Commitment**

Pat O'Brien, *Founder and Executive Director, You Gotta Believe!*

This workshop will discuss the need for prospective and current parents of youth in care to become unconditionally committed to the children they care for, particularly teenagers, in order to prevent long-term stays in care or adoption disruptions. The presenter will emphasize that every child in foster care needs a permanent home and that it is unacceptable to have children moved because of a behavior that is displeasing to the parent. The workshop will help participants understand that their commitment is the true source of healing for any child that crosses their paths.

## **A15. Understanding Psychotropic Medication Use in Children and Adolescents**

James Gannaway, *Division Director, Rhode Island Division*

Dr. James E. Greer, *Psychiatrist and Consultant, Rhode Island Division*

Dr. Greer will provide participants with a rationale for the use of psychotropic medication in children and adolescents, as well as specific information about different classes of medications, their uses, potential benefits, and also risks. The workshop will include the participation of a Casey division director who will highlight the necessity and effectiveness of combining medication with structured daily living and talk therapy.

## **A16. The Voice of Youth in Recruiting Families**

Michelle Turbide, *Social Worker, Stone House Associates, Vermont*

Michelle Brannan, *Resource Parent, Vermont Division*

Every youth in the child welfare system has a life story to tell. Case histories detail the events in a youth's past, but reading reports and talking with workers is not the same as hearing from the youth. In this workshop, participants will learn how Casey staff and resource families are partnering with youth to create inspiring recruitment videos for children and teens in need of lifelong families. Presenters will discuss the recruitment challenges they face, describe their approach to sharing information about youth in foster care, and show several examples of their work.

# Family is Forever

## SESSION B Sunday morning

Please note which of the following workshops you would like to attend before completing your online registration form.

### **B1. Are the Kids Okay? Family Connections and Outcomes among Casey Adoptees**

Diane Kindler, *Clinical Director, New Haven, Connecticut*

Diane Purvin, *Senior Research Associate, The Annie E. Casey Foundation*

Wonder how things turn out for adoptive families? Learn the results of a study involving adoptions from Casey foster care, based on interviews conducted with either adoptees or adoptive parents five years after adoption legalization. This workshop will highlight the current family connections of adoptees, what adoptees and adoptive parents had to say about their experiences with Casey during and after the adoption process, and lessons learned about the process of adoptive family formation and how best to support families on that path to permanence.

### **B2. Children Who Act Out Their Pain: Sexual Behavior Problems**

Linda Sanford, *National Consultant and Trainer; Author; and Faculty Member, Simmons College Graduate School of Social Work*

Children who act out sexually can present a challenging and complex diagnostic picture. This workshop will present types of sexual behavior problems, contrasting each category to what would be developmentally usual and expected. The presenter will address the meaning behind children's sexual behaviors and the implications for managing them in the home, school, and community.

### **B3. Everything You Wanted to Know about Learning Disabilities but Didn't Know How to Ask**

Jaffa Kessler Davies, *Founding Partner and Director of Educational Services, Delta Consultants, Inc., Rhode Island*

This workshop will answer the questions parents may have about the challenges their children face in learning, such as: What are the common signs and symptoms of learning disabilities, or How do you determine if an evaluation is appropriate? Participants will gain an awareness of the evaluation process and how to prepare for successful school meetings. In addition, Dr. Davies will explain the accommodations, modifications, and interventions that support learning success.

### **B4. Faith and Fostering**

Lamond Daniels, *Team Leader, Bridgeport, Connecticut, Division*

Mary Harris-Miller, *Team Leader, Bridgeport, Connecticut, Division*

For many foster and adoptive parents, faith is at the core of why they raise children from the child welfare system. Faith motivates and sustains their everyday efforts and interactions. The presenters will lead a panel of Bridgeport parents as they explore the role faith has played in their lives as foster and adoptive families and discuss the challenges that foster care can pose to persons of faith. Panelists will share their experiences in embracing youth from different or very limited faith backgrounds.

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## **B5. Family Finding: How Youth are Connecting with Birth Family**

Sheila Fitzgerald, *Team Leader, Massachusetts Division*

Sara Martel, *Social Worker, Massachusetts Division*

Many foster and adoptive youth yearn to know their roots, to understand where they've come from, and who played a role in their history. They want to connect with their birth family members, with or without our knowledge. Birth family members may also want to reconnect, but may be ambivalent about connecting to foster and adoptive families and interacting with agencies. Through this workshop, parents will discover how youth are finding birth family on their own and will explore ways to support their youth in safely staying connected with their birth families. The presenters will address how reconnection with a youth's birth family affects not only the young person, but the entire family system.

## **B6. Forging Strong Relationships with Teens**

Noah Baerman, *Foster and Adoptive Parent, Hartford, Connecticut, Division*

Kate Ten Eyck, *Foster and Adoptive Parents, Hartford, Connecticut, Division*

T.J. Michalski, *Social Worker, Hartford, Connecticut, Division*

If you are, or will be, the parent of a teenager, you will somehow have to make peace with many things, including sex, Facebook, moodiness, drugs, text messaging, laziness, obnoxious rap music, and stubbornness. The presenters will tell the story of their experiences, successes, and struggles in bonding with the teens they have parented. This workshop will address how to distinguish between behaviors that are dangerous and warrant intervention from those that are ultimately harmless, how to realistically assess your ability as a parent to change or control your teen's behavior, and how to help your teen grow into his or her own person.

## **B7. Foster Parents as Coaches: Making a Difference in Recruitment**

Leslie Kelly, *Foster Parent, Maine Division*

Rana O'Connor, *Resource Coordinator, Maine Division*

Historically, far more people inquire about foster parenting than actually complete the licensing process. This workshop will present how the Maine Division addressed this issue by using foster parents as coaches. Current foster and adoptive parents provide a personal, immediate response to individuals who are interested in foster parenting. With two years of experience, the presenters will discuss how the approach works, expectations and supports for the volunteer coaches, and outcomes.

## **B8. Reunification in a Permanency World**

Erin Murphy, *Social Worker, New Hampshire Division*

Gwen Whitney-Gill, *Family Support Specialist, New Hampshire Division*

As members of a youth's permanency team, foster parents help develop and support a successful reunification plan. This workshop will offer ways to become more effective reunification foster parents and advocates for youth and their biological families. Through examples of actual reunification cases and the use of concrete tools to enhance skills, participants will understand how to remove barriers and help maintain ongoing connections.

## **B9. Sensory Diets: Using the Senses to Promote Emotional Well-Being**

Bob Hagberg, *Deputy Director, Rhode Island Division*

Patrecia Zebrowski, *Occupational Therapist and Consultant, Rhode Island*

This workshop will present information on Sensory Diets, an innovative approach to improving emotional and behavioral health. When a child is on a sensory diet, his or her schedule and environment are controlled to provide the right sensory “inputs” that a person’s nervous system needs to stay focused and organized throughout the day. Participants will learn how sensory diets benefit children who have challenges with emotional regulation and gain a greater understanding of how to implement this strategy in the home environment.

## **B10. Stand against Bullying: Parents as Partners in the Process**

Darryl C. Green, *Social Worker, Baltimore Division*

Bullying is a long-standing issue for schools and communities, but recent media reports have increased attention to this problem. This interactive workshop will examine the life of a student, a school, and a case that made history. The presenter will educate participants about bullying issues, clearly define bullying, and offer strategies that help parents to combat bullying in their child’s school and community. Participants will learn child bullying statistics, signs that your child may be a bully or is being bullied, and tips on how to deal with bullying.

## **B11. Take a Break, Catch Your Breath: Yoga, Breath, and Other Forms of Self Care for Busy Foster Parents**

Heather Lahti, *Deputy Division Director, Maine Division*

Jennifer Morrison, *Yoga Instructor, Maine Division*

This workshop will provide an opportunity for parents to unwind and learn effective strategies for dealing with stress. Foster and adoptive parents lead busy, often stressful lives and usually have limited time to care for themselves. This workshop will help parents take a break and catch their breath by experiencing gentle and easy yoga stretches, breath work, and meditation. Additional strategies for self care will be discussed. Please dress in comfortable clothes and be prepared to relax and smile. You do not have to be a pretzel to participate!

## **B12. Therapy and the Use of Psychotropic Medications for Children and Youth**

Dr. Bernard Gordon, *Psychiatrist and Consultant, Maine Division*

Parents play a critical role in helping the children and youth in their care achieve and maintain emotional well-being. Given their complex histories, foster and adoptive children often pose unique challenges to accurate diagnosis and treatment. Dr. Gordon will discuss the process of formulating a plan of care that includes both therapy and psychopharmacological interventions. He also will explain the benefits and risks of common psychotropic treatment, such as antidepressants, anti-anxiety, and antipsychotic medications.

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## **B13. Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Treatment: Hope for Hurting Kids**

Mary Ann Poff, *Social Worker, Maine Division*

Karen Repasky, *Social Worker, Maine Division*

The trainers will present a brief overview of Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Treatment (TF-CBT) and research supporting its effectiveness. Using case examples from their practice, presenters will illustrate the 10 clinical modules of TF-CBT and explain how modifications are made to individualize and adapt the treatment for youth and their parents. Parent participants will be able to determine if TF-CBT is an appropriate intervention for their youngster, and be provided resources for further exploration of the TF-CBT model along with ways to locate a trained therapist.

## **B14. Understanding and Supporting Children the Mandt Way**

Tim Geels, *Certified Instructor in the Mandt System®*, Virginia

Parents may become overwhelmed in their efforts to deal with challenging behavior used by their children. These behaviors are more frequent and intense with children who have experienced trauma. This workshop will provide information regarding the impact of trauma and how trauma affects the neurodevelopment of children into adulthood. The presenter will demonstrate how children use behavior to cope with their traumatic experiences and how these coping mechanisms then become lifelong behavioral challenges. This interactive workshop will give participants an increased understanding of how parental responses can increase or decrease challenging behaviors, and will provide tools to support parents in teaching children how to manage their behavior in more acceptable ways.

## **B15. “What I’ve Learned from My Journey”: Voices from Youth in Foster Care**

James Gannaway, *Division Director, Rhode Island Division*

Natasha Vargas, *Consultant, Rhode Island Division*

Barbara R., *Adopted Youth, Rhode Island Division*

Richard M., *Alumni and Adopted Adult, Rhode Island Division*

Tasia, *Foster Youth, Rhode Island Division*

Tyisha, *Foster Youth, Rhode Island Division*

William P., *Foster Youth, Rhode Island Division*

Meet courageous young people – who live or have lived in the Rhode Island foster care system – as they share stories of tragedy and triumph. The youth will provide clarity to commonly discussed themes, such as behavior management, interruptions in attachment, reconnection with birth families, and relationships with foster and adoptive parents. Using examples from personal experience, the youth will share their recommendations to social workers, foster and adoptive parents for how to work with young people who may present with challenging behaviors and or a desire to seek out their family of origin.

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