Parenting a Child Who Has Experienced Trauma

Trauma occurs when a stressful experience (such as a natural disaster, being neglected, or bullied) overwhelms a child’s natural ability to cope. These events cause a “fight, flight, or freeze” response, resulting in changes in the body as well as changes in how the brain perceives and responds to the world. In many cases, a child’s body and brain recover quickly from a potentially traumatic experience with no lasting harm. However, for other children, trauma interferes with normal development and can have long-lasting effects. Although childhood trauma can have serious, lasting effects, there is hope. With the help of supportive, caring adults, children can and do recover. Consider the following tips:

- Identify trauma triggers. Something you are doing or saying, or something harmless in your home, may be triggering your child without either of you realizing it. It is important to watch for patterns of behavior and reactions that do not seem to “fit” the situation. What distracts your child, makes him or her anxious, or results in a tantrum or outburst?

- Be emotionally and physically available. Some traumatized children act in ways that keep adults at a distance (whether they mean to or not). Provide attention, comfort, and encouragement in ways your child will accept. Younger children may want extra hugs or cuddling; for older youth, this might just mean spending time together as a family.

- Respond, don’t react. Your reactions may trigger a child or youth who is already feeling overwhelmed. When your child is upset, do what you can to keep calm: lower your voice, acknowledge your child’s feelings, and be reassuring and honest.

- Don’t take behavior personally. Allow the child to feel his or her feelings without judgment. Help him or her find words and other acceptable ways of expressing feelings and offer praise when these are used.

- Listen. Don’t avoid difficult topics or uncomfortable conversations. (But don’t force children to talk before they are ready.) Let children know that it’s normal to have many feelings after a traumatic experience. Take their reactions seriously, correct any misinformation about the traumatic event, and reassure them that what happened was not their fault.

- Help your child learn to relax. Encourage your child to practice slow breathing, listen to calming music, or say positive things (“I am safe now.”).

- Be consistent and predictable. Develop a regular routine for meals, play time, and bedtime. Prepare your child in advance for changes or new experiences.

- Be patient. Everyone heals differently from trauma, and trust does not develop overnight. Respecting each child’s own course of recovery is important.

- Allow some control. Reasonable, age-appropriate choices encourage a child or youth’s sense of having control of his or her own life.

- Encourage self-esteem. Positive experiences can help children recover from trauma and increase resilience.

For more information on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), go to https://www.ksdetasrn.org/resources/2157
Prior Written Notice (PWN)

Prior written notice serves as a vehicle of communication between schools and families. It is very important that parents are always well informed about whatever action the school intends to take (or intends not to take) about their child. Through prior written notice, the school can ensure that parents are up to date on what it’s proposing or refusing to do, as early as possible so that parents can participate in the school’s proposed actions or respond to its refusals. Prior written notice must contain a comprehensive description of the action proposed (or refused) by the school system. According to IDEA, the notice must include:

- a description of the action proposed or refused by the school;
- an explanation of why the school proposes or refuses to take the action;
- a description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the school used as a basis for their decision;
- a statement that the parents of a child with a disability have protection under the procedural safeguards and, how the parents can obtain a copy of them;
- sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding these provisions;
- a description of other options that the IEP team considered and the reasons why those options were rejected; and
- a description of other factors relevant to the school’s proposal or refusal.

Parents should also receive prior written notice a reasonable time before the school plans to take (or refuses to take) actions related to the provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to your child. For example, you must receive this notice:

- when the school would like to conduct an initial evaluation of your child;
- when you’ve asked for your child to be evaluated and the school agrees with or denies your request;
- when the school wants to begin or change your child’s identification as a “child with a disability”;
- when the school proposes or refuses a particular educational placement for your child;
- when the school wants to change your child’s educational placement;
- when the school wants to change aspects of the special education or related services that your child is receiving; and
- when the school refuses a request from you, as parents, with respect to the educational services your child is receiving.

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Derecho a Recibir una Notificación Previa por Escrito

Los derechos de los padres bajo IDEA incluyen el derecho de recibir de la escuela una notificación previa por escrito cada vez que la escuela propone tomar (o rehuse tomar) ciertas acciones en cuanto a su niño. Específicamente, la escuela debe proporcionar esta notificación previa por escrito a los padres cada vez que:

- propone iniciar o cambiar la identificación, evaluación o ubicación educativa de su niño;
- propone iniciar o cambiar la provisión de FAPE (una educación pública gratis y apropiada) a su niño;
- rehuse iniciar o cambiar la identificación, evaluación o ubicación educativa de su niño; y
- rehuse iniciar o cambiar la provisión de FAPE a su niño.

También deben recibirla un tiempo razonable antes de que la escuela propone tomar (o rehuse tomar) acciones relacionadas a la provisión de FAPE a su niño. Por ejemplo, Ud. debe recibir este aviso:

- cuando la escuela desea efectuar una evaluación inicial de su niño;
- cuando Ud. ha pedido una evaluación de su niño y la escuela niega conducirla; cuando la escuela quiere iniciar o cambiar la identificación de su niño como un “niño con una discapacidad”;
- cuando la escuela propone o rechaza una ubicación educativa particular para su niño;
- cuando la escuela quiere cambiar la ubicación educativa del niño;
- cuando la escuela quiere cambiar aspectos de la educación especial o los servicios relacionados que su niño está recibiendo; y
- cuando la escuela rechaza una petición de los padres en cuanto a los servicios educativos que su niño está recibiendo.
Education Advocate Update: Who Signs Consent for the Release of Records?

Recently we’ve been hearing of several issues and questions regarding who has the authority to sign for the release of and access to educational records. Federal regulations require public agencies (school districts) to obtain parent consent prior to disclosing or releasing personally identifiable information from a student’s educational records to third parties. So, who meets the definition of a parent in Kansas? A parent is defined as:

- a biological parent;
- an adoptive parent (after the adoption has legalized);
- a legal guardian (but not the State if the child is a ward of the State);
- a person acting as parent such as a grandparent, stepparent or other relative with whom a child lives or a person other than a parent or relative who is legally responsible for the welfare of a child; or,
- an officially appointed education advocate.

Please note that the State, including its contracting agencies, may not act as the child’s parent for educational purposes. Simply put, a child’s case manager may not access or sign for the release of confidential personally identifiable information, including educational records.

If you are serving as an education advocate for a student, you are the person who is to sign for the release of educational records. Most times, Families Together recommends the appointed education advocate sign for the release of records to foster parents and case managers. This aids in building a strong team around the student, each understanding the child’s educational needs and programming. Also, it’s important to know that this applies only to third parties. One school district may release records to another school district without parent consent. In alignment with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title I protections, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) and the Department for Children and Families (DCF) recommend that the request for and sending of educational records should occur within one business day between the sending and receiving districts. This is an important protection for kids who are in the custody of the State when they move from one placement to another, assisting in getting the student into school without delay.

REMINDER: It’s time to ask for first semester grades and progress notes if you did not receive them already to track your student’s progress!

For more resources, visit www.familiestogetherinc.org
Workshops

Our workshops, trainings and conferences are offered to parents, education advocates, general educators, special educators, para-professionals, administrators, service providers, and other individuals who care for and about children/youth who have disabilities. For more information and to register, visit familiestogetherinc.org/events/.

Transition to Adulthood

**SHIFT Transition to Adulthood TEC**

This conference is for youth (ages 14-21) who have disabilities and their families. The conference will include resources and the steps to take before and after leaving school including attending college, employment and living as independently as possible. This is a 3-day virtual training.

**All sessions are 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.**

- **March SHIFT**
  - March 1, 2021 – The Road to the Good Life
  - March 2, 2021 – The Road to Careers and Employment
  - March 4, 2021 - The Road to Independence and Interdependence

- **June SHIFT**
  - June 14, 2021 – The Road to the Good Life
  - June 15, 2021 – The Road to Careers and Employment
  - June 17, 2021 - The Road to Independence and Interdependence

**Family Employment Awareness Training**

A 6 session, interactive virtual training designed for families, their young adults who have significant support needs, and the professionals who support them. The goals of FEAT are to increase expectations for competitive employment of the young adult with a disability and increase knowledge of state and federal resources to support the employment of the young adult.

**All sessions are 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.**

- **Spanish FEAT**
  - April 20, 2021 – Session 1
  - April 22, 2021 – Session 2
  - April 27, 2021 – Session 3
  - April 29, 2021 – Bonus Family & Youth Session
  - May 4, 2021 – Session 4
  - May 6, 2021 – Session 5
  - May 11, 2021 – Session 6

- **July FEAT**
  - July 8, 2021 – Session 1
  - July 13, 2021 – Session 2
  - July 15, 2021 – Session 3
  - July 20, 2021 – Bonus Family & Youth Session
  - July 22, 2021 – Session 4
  - July 27, 2021 – Session 5
  - July 29, 2021 – Session 6

Telehealth

**Telemedicine: The Fab 4**

Tips to access health care, improve experiences with healthcare, reduce stress, improve communication, and improve quality of life.

- **March Fab 4**
  - March 16, 2021
  - 6:00 p.m.

- **April Fab 4**
  - April 15, 2021
  - 6:00 p.m.

Education Advocate

Families Together will offer four training opportunities to become an education advocate this school year. Trainings are being offered virtually. Interested persons should notify Becky at becky@familietogetherinc.org to be put on our notification list.

Contact Us

**Topeka**

topeka@familietogetherinc.org
785-233-4777
1-800-264-6343

**Wichita**
wichita@familietogetherinc.org
316-945-7747
1-888-815-6364

**Garden City**
gardencity@familietogetherinc.org
620-276-6364
1-888-820-6364

**FamiliesTogetherInc.org**
IEP Q & A

Q: What starts the 60-school-day timeline for evaluation?

A: The 60-school-day timeline for evaluation begins when the agency receives written parental consent to conduct the initial evaluation. When an agency receives a parent’s request for an initial evaluation of their child, the agency must provide the parent with a Prior Written Notice (PWN), either proposing to conduct the requested evaluation or refusing to conduct the requested evaluation. The 60-school-day timeline cannot be delayed by unreasonably delaying a response to a parent’s request for an initial evaluation. Under most circumstances, the Kansas State Department of Education considers 15 school days to be a reasonable time in which to respond to a parent’s request for an evaluation. Any delay in excess of 15 school days in responding to a parent’s request for an evaluation with a PWN will require a reasonable justification for the delay. It is recommended that the date the parent’s request for evaluation is received is noted somewhere in the student’s education records.

Q: What is required to successfully meet the 60-school-day timeline for evaluation?

A: If the student is eligible, the timeline is successfully met when the IEP is implemented. If the student is not eligible, the timeline is successfully met when the PWN is given to the parents indicating that it has been determined that a child is not eligible for special education or related services.

From the Kansas Special Education Process Handbook

Please note- requests can be made in writing as well as by email communication.

Staff Spotlight

How long have you been with Families Together?
I have been here 1 year this month!

What programs do you work on?
I work mainly on the Education Advocate program working with and assigning volunteers to help children who receive special education services and are in custody of the state of Kansas. I also work with the PTI program assisting parents with navigating the special education process.

Tell us about your family!
My husband and I have been married for twelve and a half years. We have 4 wonderful children (2 that have IEPs) ages 21, 20, 17 and 13. One of my favorite parts of being a mom is encouraging and supporting each of my children in finding their individual strengths and passions. We are all unique and that deserves to be celebrated!

When you’re not serving families, what do you like to do?
I love watching my youngest play soccer, gardening, reading, hiking and camping with the family.

What do you like most about working at Families Together?
I remember how overwhelming it felt when I first started navigating the special education world with my own children. I love being able to help other families who are feeling the same way. Also, working with the Education Advocate program I love being part of the team that helps children in state custody receive a free and appropriate public education.
Welcome to the Families Together, Inc. Newsletter

Families Together, Inc. provides assistance and guidance to help parents and youth become partners in decision-making. Our non-profit is the Parent Training Information Center as well as the Family-to-Family Health Information Center for Kansas.

What’s Inside?

In this edition of our newsletter, we look at ways to help children who have experienced trauma. We highlight our programs and how Families Together, Inc. can help you and your children. You’ll also find information about our upcoming workshops and trainings.

Want to stay up-to-date?

Consider subscribing to our newsletter electronically! Not only will you receive the biannual newsletter, you will also receive our biweekly Monday Memo which is full of relevant articles and resources.

You’ll also help us save trees and reduce printing costs! Let us know you’re interested by emailing topeka@familiestogetherinc.org.