

Parenting Matters



Quarterly Newsletter

January 2004

For Colorado Parents

Foster Care: A Home Away From Home

Foster care provides children a safe place to live at times when their legal guardians and/or families can't. It is very different when compared to adoption; nevertheless, it is equally significant. In the case of adoption, a family is given full legal custody of a child. Adoption provides a child with a permanent family. Foster care supplies temporary homes for children in urgent situations. Foster parents don't replace the child's parents or family in any way and are there to protect and provide. The key role of foster parenting is to encourage, love and reassure children through a tough time.

Children enter foster care due to various circumstances. Common reasons include parent and/or families' neglect; mental, physical and sexual abuse or drug and alcohol problems. All are extremely damaging to a child's health. Under these conditions, children normally feel angry, confused, hurt and sad. In some cases, a child may have severe emotional, behavioral, physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities. With the aid of foster care these children are able to move on to a better future.



Who, What, Why and How?

WHO can foster:

- In Colorado you must be at least 21 years old to foster a child.
- You may be single, married, divorced or widowed.
- You may already be a friend of the family or a relative of the child.
- You must be physically and emotionally prepared to care for a child.
- You must pass a criminal background check.
- You must have no past history of abuse and neglect.
- You must have no alcohol or drug problems.
- You must have an independent income that provides for your family.

WHAT are your responsibilities? Your responsibility is to provide for a child's...

- physical needs (i.e. food, clothes, shelter, space, health, hygiene and transportation).
- emotional and nurturing needs.
- educational needs.
- recreational needs.
- *Financial support is given to foster parents to use for such needs.

Don't forget...

- you are the disciplinary figure
- to work cooperatively with the foster care agency.
- to work with the child's biological family.

WHY:

- In the United States there are over a half a million children in foster care.
- The number of children in foster care has increased 61 percent from 1984 to 1993; whereas, the number of non-relative foster parents has declined.
- On a yearly basis 18,000 youths will be released from the foster care system for two reasons. Reason one, they become 18 years old. Reason two, they graduate from high school. In turn, most are not financially or physically prepared for the transition into the real world.

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SIDS: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Facts/Statistics:

- SIDS is the term used to define any incomprehensible death in infants aged one year old or younger.
- SIDS is the source of about 2,700 infant deaths a year in the United States.
- Fatalities occur mostly at night and on weekends.
- Since 1994, the number of infant fatalities has dropped 25 percent due to prevention awareness.
- Two to three month olds are at highest risk.
- Premature, low-weight, multiple, and male babies are at higher risk according to scientists.
- Crowded living (poverty), history of smoking and/or having severe anemia increases risk according to scientists. Smokers triple their babies' risk for SIDS.
- The risk is also higher if the mother is under the age of 20.



The root of SIDS is unknown. Various theories have been produced. Soft bedding is a contributing factor. Studies confirm that soft bedding may create a pocket of trapped carbon dioxide in which the baby inhales his/her exhaled carbon dioxide; thus, causing suffocation. A second theory states that having a mild cold or intestinal infection may prompt breathing trouble or circulatory failure; thus, causing possible death. Another hypothesis suggests apnea (a brief arrest in breathing) could cause death. Overheating also contributes to the root of SIDS. Too much heat causes a deeper

sleep, preventing a baby's awakening. Some infants may have an irregularity in their arcuate nucleus, which controls the acts of breathing, heart rate, sleep and arousal in the brain.

Preventing SIDS:

- Breastfeed – breast milk may protect against infections that cause SIDS.
- Keep the room temperature comfortable.
- Place babies on their backs when you put them down to sleep.
- A firm mattress should be used in the baby's crib. Don't allow babies to sleep on waterbeds, beanbag chairs and other soft areas.
- For bedding, use fitted sheets and a light blanket/cover – the baby's head needs to be uncovered. Rid bed of extra pillows, comforters and toys. A one-piece sleeper may be used instead of a blanket.
- Use monitoring equipment that will

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Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Once called venereal diseases, STDs are among the most common infectious diseases in the US. There are more than 20 known STDs today. With that in mind, here are some additional **shocking statistics on STDs:**

- 15 million new cases of STDs are identified each year. At least 65 million Americans (one in five) are considered to have a viral STD.
- Two-thirds of all STD cases arise in people 25 years old or younger.
- Roughly one-fourth of all STD cases occur among teenagers.
- By the age of 24, one in three sexually active persons will have contracted an STD.
- At least one in four Americans will have contracted an STD within their lifetime.

-US rates of curable STDs are higher than in any other developed country and higher than some undeveloped countries.

-Costs to treat STDs are estimated at \$8.4 billion a year.

Key points to keep in mind:

- STDs are on the rise due to sexual activity starting at an earlier age, persons marrying later in life and divorce occurring more often. The risk of getting an STD increases with the number of sexual partners a person has over his/her lifetime.
- They affect everyone, not just the few. Men and women of all ages, backgrounds and wealth are susceptible to STDs. However, women, teenagers, the poor and some minorities have a higher chance of having an STD.

-In some instances, STDs cause no symptoms, especially for women. This allows for a person to unknowingly pass the disease(s) along to others. It is recommended to periodically test for STDs.

-STD health problems have a tendency to be far more serious for

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Parenting
Matters

Published quarterly by Partners in Parenting
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New Drugs of Abuse: Foxy & AMT

Foxy and AMT, club drug knockoffs of ecstasy, are gaining popularity across the United States - Especially, in the states of Arizona, Oregon, Illinois, Florida and a handful of other states. Both of these synthetic substances produce hallucinogenic effects that are more intense than Ecstasy. They are part of a class of chemical compounds known as tryptamines.

A look into these two dose dependent hallucinogens...

FOXY (Methoxy Foxy)

Chemical name: 5-MeO-DIPT

Appearance: Capsules with powder that is brown, green, orange, pink, gray or tan. Tablets that are purple in color and embossed with a spider or alien head logo.

Effects: Diarrhea, nausea, severe anxiety, 3-6 hour high (6-10 mg)

AMT (IT-290)

Chemical name: alpha-methyltryptamine

Appearance: Capsule with orange or off-white powder

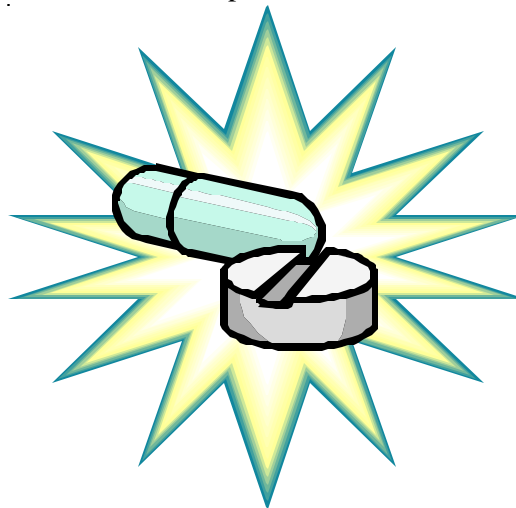
Effects: Energy increase, empathy, visual patterns, nausea, headaches, vomiting, jaw clenching, 12-24 hour high (20 mg)

Currently, Foxy and AMT are not listed in the Controlled Substances Act of 1970 as controlled substances. Persons purchasing them (chiefly via Internet) and/or selling them may be prosecuted under federal and state laws. However, they are sold legally for scientific use.

-Sources:

Donna Leinwand, "Dangerous club-drug knockoffs surge," *USA Today* (July 23, 2002)

"Trippin' On Tryptamines - The Emergence of Foxy and AMT as Drugs of Abuse," www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/intel/02052/02052p.html (October 2002)



👍 Thumb Sucking 👎

Thumb sucking - A habit many have experienced at some point in childhood. Many babies begin this habit during infancy and continue it into toddlerhood. They find comfort in their thumb, as they do with various other objects and people and allows them to calm themselves when they are tired, sick, anxious or bored.

But, when is enough, enough?

Children usually cease this habit between the ages of two and four. Some children substitute thumb sucking with nail biting, lip biting and/or pencil chewing. All activities are equally harmful. A parent should be concerned if it continues after the age of four. The problem becomes serious, due to incoming permanent teeth, around the

age of six. Worst case scenarios include displaced teeth, which may need orthodontal treatment. This problem and others can be avoided by you and your child.

How you can help, if they can't help themselves?

- ☞ Help your child express his/her feelings and listen to him/her.
- ☞ Try to recognize what is causing the need for comfort.
- ☞ Give your child plenty of time to relax; thus, preventing your child's frustration.
- ☞ Present examples of friends who have quit sucking.
- ☞ Keep his/her hands and mouth occupied with activities, toys, small snack, etc.

☞ If needed, give your older toddler an incentive to kick the thumb sucking. Be cautious, they may start back up for an additional incentive.

☞ Don't punish or pressure your child in any way; it will have a reverse effect. Doing so may make the habit worse.

By upsetting your child, he/she may feel more need for security (their thumb).

☞ Ask your pediatrician or dentist for advice.

-Sources:

Web Dental Office, "Dental Advice for children: Thumb sucking," <http://users.forthnet.gr/ath/abyss/>

Shelley Butler and Deb Kratz, Raising kids: "Thumbs, fingers and pacifiers - Field guide to parenting," www.familyfun.go.com

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HOW:

- Contact your local foster care agency.
- Attend an informational meeting hosted by your county department.
- Apply by filling out a Foster Care application.
- Take training classes.
- Complete a home assessment.

-Sources:

Foster Club|USA|Statistics youth in foster care, "Foster Youth-Information & Statistics," FYI3.com

"Frequently Asked Questions about adoption and Foster Care / Colorado's waiting children," www.changealife4ever.org

"Becoming a foster parent," fosterparenting.com

"Foster Parent Responsibilities," www.fosterparents.com

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alert you if your child stops breathing for a period of time.

- Stop smoking - Smoking during and

after pregnancy increases the risk of SIDS as does the use of sedatives or general anesthesia.

-Sources:

The Disney Encyclopedia of children's health, "Sudden infant death syndrome," www.familyfun.go.com

Rachelle Vander Schaaf, "Preventing SIDS," *Parenting*, www.parenting.com (Sept. 1999)

Lorie Parch, "SIDS Alert," *BabyTalk*, www.parenting.com (August 1999)

"Steps to take to prevent SIDS, *Alaska Parenting*, <http://familyfun.go.com>

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women than for men. They can spread to the uterus or fallopian tubes, thus causing pelvic inflammatory disease, which can lead to infertility and tubal pregnancy. Cervical cancer may also arise. If a woman is pregnant, STDs have the chance of being passed from the mother to the baby before, during or after the birth. This can lead to the possibility of the baby being permanently disabled or dying.

-STDs can be treated successfully if diagnosed early on.

The best prevention:

- ◆ Have a monogamous relationship.
- ◆ Practice safe sex with a condom.
- ◆ Don't use intravenous drugs and/or don't use non-sterile needles when injecting drugs.
- ◆ Practice abstinence.
- ◆ Educate yourself on the potential, serious and long-term consequences of STDs.
- ◆ Know your body. Know the symptoms of various STDs. Visit your doctor, local health department or clinic for regular checkups and advice on STDs.

-Sources:

Planned Parenthood, "Fact Sheet Sexually Transmitted Infections," www.plannedparenthood.org

The Med Guide, "Sexually Transmitted Diseases Statistics," www.themedguide.com

1 up Health, "Sexually Transmitted Diseases," www.luphealth.com

Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating. Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.



Produced by PARTNERS IN PARENTING (PIP) A joint project of CSU Cooperative Extension and Red Rocks Community College with funding from the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division and CSAP.

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