

UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MAY 2010

Elijah, age 10 is waiting...

UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

QUARTERLY DCFS NEWSLETTER



Jazzmin, age 14 is waiting....

In This Issue

3 Famous Adoptees

A list of celebrities, politicians and athletes who were adopted.

4 Parenting a Child Who Has Been Sexually Abused:

By: Child Welfare Information Gateway

An article to help foster and adoptive parents understand how sexual abuse will affect their child.

9 Lending Library Spotlight

Featuring the book, "Pieces of Me Who Do I Want to Be? Voices for and by adopted teens."

10 Announcements

Upcoming statewide events.

12 Not Black Enough

By: Kevin Hofmann

An article from Kevin's personal life about teaching his child about racial issues.

14 Become Your Child's Case Manager- Don't Just Go With the Flow.

By: Sue Whitney

An article about helping your child develop an Individualized Education Plan.

If you are interested in more information on any of the children featured in this publication, please contact The Adoption Exchange at 801-265-0444.

MAY 2010 EDITION

Kathy Searle, Editor

Lindsay Kaeding, Design Director

To submit articles or for a subscription, call (801) 265-0444 or toll free outside Salt Lake County call (866) 872-7212. This publication is funded by the State of Utah, Division of Child and Family Services. The Adoption Exchange prepares and prints the newsletter and the Division of Child and Family Services mails the publication. The mailing list is kept confidential. One can be removed from the mailing list by calling: (866) 872-7212 or 265-0444 within Salt Lake County.

FAMOUS ADOPTEES

Aristotle - philosopher

Bo Diddley - musician, performer

Charlotte Anne Lopez - Miss Teen USA

Christina Crawford - author

Clarissa Pinkola Estes - author

Crazy Horse - Lakota war chief

Dan O'Brien - decathlete

Daunte Culpepper - football player

Dave Thomas - entrepreneur: founder of Wendy's

Debbie Harry - singer

D.M.C. - hip hop artist

Edgar Allan Poe - poet, writer

Eleanor Roosevelt - First Lady

Eric Dickerson - athlete

Faith Hill - country singer

George Washington Carver - inventor

Greg Louganis - athlete

Jean Jacques Rousseau - philosopher

Jesse Jackson - minister

Jesus - adopted by Joseph the carpenter (Bible)

Jett Williams - country singer and author

Jim Palmer - athlete

John J. Audubon - naturalist

John Hancock - politician

John Lennon - musician

Langston Hughes - poet and writer

Lee Majors - actor

Leo Tolstoy - writer

Lynnette Cole - Miss USA 2000

Malcolm X - civil rights leader

Mark Acre - athlete

Matthew Labordeaux - actor

Melissa Gilbert - actress

Michael Reagan - author, talk show host

Moses - Biblical leader

Nancy Reagan - First Lady

Nat King Cole - singer

Nelson Mandela - politician

Patrick Labyorteaux - actor

Peter and Kitty Carruthers - figure skaters

President Gerald Ford - politician

President William Clinton - politician

Priscilla Presley - actress

Ray Liotta - actor

Sarah McLachlan - singer

Scott Hamilton - figure skater

Steve Jobs - entrepreneur: co-founder of Apple computer

Surya Bonaly - figure skater

Tim Green - football player/commentator

Tim McGraw - country singer

Tom Monaghan - entrepreneur

Tommy Davidson - comedian

Victoria Rowell - actress

Wilson Riles - educator



Flying high describes this engaging and happy fifteen year old. Tyler dreams of becoming a pilot someday. He loves anything connected to aviation, flying, or airplanes. Though soaring the skies is at the top of his wish list, it's not holding the number one spot. Tyler's first and foremost hope is to find a forever family who will love him, treat him respectfully, and be committed to his well-being. Tyler has a great sense of humor, plenty of energy, and loves to laugh and have fun. He is a music fan, likes to be clean and well groomed, and feels it's important to be presentable.

An intelligent and capable eighth grader, Tyler wants to graduate high school and then pursue his career goal. He places a high value on education and wants to succeed in school. A family who is supportive and involved academically would be beneficial in his endeavors.

Tyler's caseworker feels it is in this young man's best interests to be accepted into a nurturing two-parent home. Tyler has a bright and successful future as a member of a loving family.

If you are interested in Tyler, we urge you to inquire. Financial assistance may be available for adoption related services. For Utah children, only homestudied families from all states are encouraged to inquire.

**For more information on Tyler, contact
The Adoption Exchange at 801-265-0444.**

This is a follow up article to The Myths and Facts About the Unthinkable that appeared in the February 2010 issue of Utah's Adoption Connection. This article will be published in two parts.

Part 1

Parenting a Child Who Has Been Sexually Abused: A Guide for Foster and Adoptive Parents

You may be a foster or adoptive parent of a child who was sexually abused before coming to your home. In some cases, you will not be certain that abuse has occurred, but you may suspect it. You may even be exploring becoming a foster or adoptive parent to a child in the foster care system; many of these children have been abused or neglected – physically, emotionally, or sexually – before coming into care.

What's Inside:

- Educating yourself
- Establishing family guidelines
- Seeking help (*Part 2 will be included in the next issue*)-Editor

You may feel confused, frightened, and unsure of the impact the sexual abuse of a child may have on your child and family. It is important for you to understand that the term "sexual abuse" describes a wide range of experiences. Many factors – including the severity of abuse as well as others discussed later in this factsheet – affect how children react to sexual abuse and how they recover. Most children who have been abused *do not* go on to abuse others, and many go on to live happy, healthy, successful lives. As parents, you will play an important roll in your child's recovery from childhood abuse.¹

This factsheet discusses how you can help children in your care by educating yourself about sexual abuse, establishing guidelines for safety and privacy in your family, and understanding when and how to seek help if you need it.

Educating Yourself

The first step to helping a child who may have been a victim of sexual abuse is to understand more about how sexual abuse is defined, behaviors that may indicate abuse has occurred, how these behaviors may differ from typical sexual behaviors in children, and how sexual abuse may affect children.

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse is defined in Federal law by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. sec. 5106g(4)) as: "...the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children."

Within this Federal guideline, each State* is responsible for establishing its own legal definition of child sexual abuse. For more information, see the Child Sexual Abuse section of the Child Welfare Information Gateway website: www.childwelfare.gov/can/types/sexualabuse

¹ Although the term "parents" is used throughout this fact sheet, the information and strategies provided may be equally helpful for kinship care providers, guardian, and other care givers.

* For Utah's definition see end of article

Signs of Sexual Abuse

If you are a foster or adoptive parent to a child from the foster care system, you may not know whether he or she has been sexually abused. Child welfare agencies usually share all *known* information about your child's history with you; however, many children do not disclose past abuse until they feel safe. For this reason, foster or adoptive parents are sometimes the first to learn that sexual abuse has occurred. Even when there is no documentation of prior abuse, you may suspect abuse because of the child's behavior.

Determining whether a child has been abused requires a careful evaluation by a trained professional. While it is normal for all children to have and express sexual curiosity, children who have been sexually abused may demonstrate behaviors that are outside the range of what might be considered normal. (See table on the following page.) There is no one specific sign or behavior that can be considered proof that sexual abuse has occurred. However, many professionals and organizations agree that you might consider the possibility of sexual abuse when one or several of the following signs or behaviors are present:

- Sexual knowledge, interest, or language that is unusual for the child's age
- Sexual activities with toys or other children that seem unusual, aggressive, or unresponsive to limits or redirection
- Excessive masturbation, sometimes in public, not responsive to redirection or limits
- Pain, itching, redness, or bleeding in the genital areas
- Nightmares, trouble sleeping, or fear of the dark
- Sudden or extreme mood swings: rage, fear, anger, excessive crying, or withdrawal
- "Spacing out" at odd times
- Loss of appetite, or difficulty eating or swallowing
- Cutting, burning, or other self-mutilating behaviors as an adolescent
- Talking about a new, older friend
- Unexplained avoidance of certain people, places, or activities
- An older child behaving like a much younger child: wetting the bed or sucking a thumb, for example
- Suddenly having money

Again, these are only *signs* of a potential problem; they must be evaluated by a professional along with other information. The following organization contributed to the above list and offer more information about behavioral signs of sexual abuse on their websites:

- Stop It Now! www.stopitnow.com/warnings.html#behavioral
- Childhelp@www.childhelp.org
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children www.missingkids.com

Healthy Sexual Development in Children

Children's sexual interest, curiosity, and behaviors develop gradually over time and may be influenced by many factors, including what children see and experience. Sexual behavior is not in and of itself a sign that abuse has occurred. The table on the next page lists some of the sexual behaviors common among children of different age groups, as well as some behaviors that might be considered less common or unhealthy.²

Factors Affecting the Impact of Sexual Abuse

If you suspect, or a professional has determined, that a child in your care has been a victim of sexual abuse, it is important to understand how children may be affected.

² The list is adapted from the Stop It Now! Publication, Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: Facts About Those Who Might Commit it (2005). Additional information was provided by Elaina Gil, Ph.D., RPT-S, ATR, specialist, trainer, and consultant in working with children who have been abused and their families. See the website: www.Fliana.org

All children who have been sexually abused have had their physical and emotional boundaries violated and crossed. With this violation often comes a breach of the child's sense of security and trust. Abused children may come to believe that the world is not a safe place and that adults are not trustworthy.

However, children who have experienced sexual abuse are not all affected the same way. As with other types of abuse, many factors influence how children think and feel about the abuse, how the abuse affects them, and how their recovery progresses. Some factors that can affect the impact of abuse include:

- The relationship of the abuser to the child and how much the abuse caused a betrayal of trust
- The abuser's use of "friendliness" or seduction
- The abuser's use of threats of harm or violence, including threats to pets, siblings, or parents
- The abuser's use of secrecy
- How long the abuse occurred
- Gender of the abuser being the same as or different from the child
- The age (developmental level) of the child at the time of the abuse (younger children are more vulnerable)
- The child's emotional development at the time of the abuse
- The child's ability to cope with his or her emotional and physical responses to the abuse (for example, fear and arousal)
- How much responsibility the child feels for the abuse

It is very important for children to understand that they are not to blame for the abuse they experienced. Your family's immediate response to learning about the sexual abuse and ongoing acceptance of what the child has told you will play a critical role in your child's ability to recover and go back to a healthy life.

Establishing Family Guidelines for Safety and Privacy

There are things you can do to help ensure that any child visiting or living in your home experiences a structured, safe, and nurturing environment. Some sexually abused children may have a heightened sensitivity to certain situations. Making your home a comfortable place for children who have been sexually abused can mean changing some habits or patterns of family life. Incorporating some of these guidelines may also help reduce foster or adoptive parents' vulnerability to abuse allegations by children living with them. Consider whether the following tips may be helpful in your family's situation:

- **Make sure every family member's comfort level with touching, hugging, and kissing is respected.** Do not force touching on children who seem uncomfortable being touched. Encourage children to respect the comfort and privacy of others.
- **Be cautious with playful touches, such as play fighting and tickling.** These may be uncomfortable or scary reminders of sexual abuse to some children.
- **Help children learn the importance of privacy.** Remind children to knock before entering bathrooms and bedrooms, and encourage children to dress and bathe themselves if they are able. Teach children about privacy and respect.
- **Keeping adult sexuality private.** Teenage siblings may need reminders about what is permitted in your home when boyfriends and girlfriends are present.
- **Be aware of and limit sexual messages received through the media.** Children who have experienced sexual abuse can find sexual content overstimulating or disturbing. It may be helpful to monitor music and music videos, as well as television programs, video games, and movies containing nudity, sexual activity, or sexual language. Limit access to grown-up magazines and monitor children's Internet use.

If your child has touching problems (or any sexually aggressive behaviors), you may need to take additional steps to help ensure safety for your child as well as his or her peers. Consider how these tips may apply to your own situation:

- **With friends.** If your child has issues with touching other children, you may want to ensure supervision when he or she is playing with friends, whether at your home or theirs. Sleepovers may not be a good idea when children have touching problem.
- **At school.** You may wish to inform your child’s school of any inappropriate sexual behavior, to ensure and appropriate level of supervision. Often this information can be kept confidential by a school counselor or other personnel.
- **In the community.** Supervision becomes critical any time children with sexual behavior problems are with groups of children, for example at day camp or after-school programs.

In any case, keep the lines of communication open, so children feel more comfortable turning to you with problems and talking with you about *anything* – not just sexual abuse. Remember however, that sexual abuse is difficult for most children to disclose even to a trusted adult.

For more information about developing a safety plan for you family, see:

Create a Family Safety Plan

Stop It Now! www.stopitnow.org/downloads/SafetyPlan.pdf

Sexual Behaviors in Children	
Preschool (0 to 5 years)	
Common: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual language relating to differences in body parts, bathroom talk, pregnancy, and birth • Self-fondling at home and in public • Showing and looking at private body parts 	Uncommon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of sexual acts • Sexual contact experiences with other children • Masturbation unresponsive to redirection or limits • Inserting objects in genital openings
School Age (6 to 12 years)	
Common: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions about menstruation, pregnancy, sexual behavior • “Experimenting” with same-age children, including kissing, fondling, exhibitionism, and role-playing • Masturbation at home or other private places 	Uncommon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of explicit sexual acts • Asking adults or peers to participate in explicit sexual acts
Adolescence (13 to 16 years)	
Common: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions about decision-making, social relationships, and sexual customs • Masturbation in private • Experimenting between adolescents of the same age, including open-mouth kissing, fondling, and body rubbing • Voyeuristic behaviors • Sexual intercourse occurs in approximately one-third of this age group • Oral sex has been found to occur in 50 percent of teens ages 15 and older. 	Uncommon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual interest in much younger children • Aggression in touching others’ genitals • Asking adults to participate in explicit sexual acts

For a more complete list, or if you have any questions or concerns about your child’s sexual behaviors, call the Stop It Now! toll-free helpline at 1.888.PREVENT (1.888.773.8368).

Utah's Definition of Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse/Exploitation

Citation: Ann. Code § 78A-6-105

Sexual abuse means:

An act or attempted act of sexual intercourse, sodomy, incest, or molestation directed toward a child
Engaging in any conduct with a child that would constitute an offense under any of the following terms, regardless of whether the person who engages in the conduct is actually charged with, or convicted of, the offense:

- Any sexual offense
- Child bigamy
- Incest
- Lewdness or sexual battery
- Lewdness involving a child
- Voyeurism

NEED IDEAS TO KEEP YOUR KIDS BUSY THIS SUMMER

Check out the Child Care Resource and Referral web page <http://www.childcarehelp.org/>

Every Spring Child Care Resource & Referral ~ Metro compiles a Summer Activity Guide to assist you in arranging quality summer programs for your children. There are a variety of programs listed. Some offer full-time as well as part-time schedules, some focus on the development of a specific skill, while others are one-time classes and activities that may require children to be accompanied by a parent or guardian (such as public libraries or swimming pools). If you are unable to find one specific program to meet all of your needs for the entire summer, you may consider enrolling your child in several programs that each run for a part of the summer.

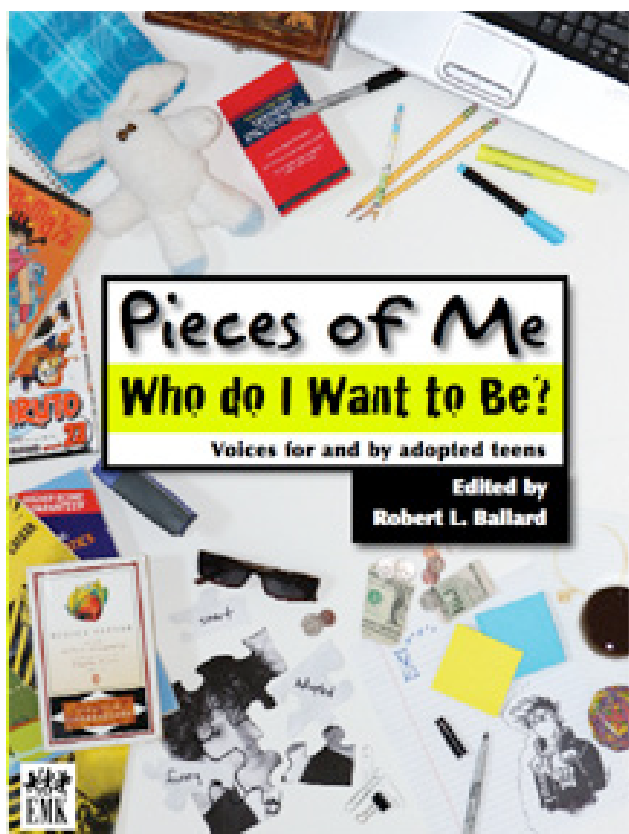
If you would like to view the Summer Activity Guide go to

http://centralpt.com/upload/353/11136_SummerActivityGuide2010.pdf.

If you would like one mailed to you please call 801-326-4400.

Lending Library Book Spotlight

PIECES OF ME WHO DO I WANT TO BE? VOICES FOR AND BY ADOPTED TEENS



Pieces of Me is a collection of stories, poems, art, music, quotes, activities, provocative questions and more – all for the young adopted person who wants to figure out his or her story but doesn't know where to begin.

It is a book of voices, from ages 11 to 63, speaking honestly and authentically about what it means to be adopted. Most are adoptees from around the world some are transracial, some are international, some are from foster care, some are young, some are old. There are a few adoptive parents, birth parents, and professionals who share themselves as well.

This book represents a series of experiences, expressions, feelings, hurts, hopes, dreams, and struggles from a wide range of individuals. Some will make you laugh, some will make you cry, some will make you happy, some will make you feel less alone, some will offer advice, and some will just share. All of them are like us, figuring out where the Pieces of Me fit in with Who do I Want to Be.

Organized around the idea of putting a puzzle together, there are five major sections – Gathering the Pieces, Stolen Pieces, Fitting the Pieces, Sharing the Pieces and Where do These Pieces Go? – All offering hope, encouragement, empowerment, and a sense of not being alone. Although it was conceived for the young adopted person, there are universal themes of healing, hope and struggle that resonate with all of us. And if you are an adoptive parent, birth parent, or professional who works with adopted and foster kids, you will find a glimpse into their world. So, find a copy of this book. Open it, it doesn't matter where. Just open it up and start to find the Pieces of Me Who do I Want to Be?

(Much of the information above was taken from the book cover.)

Check out this book and many others online at www.utdcfsadopt.org.



REGISTER NOW
www.utahadoptioncouncil.com
Early Bird Price ends May 4th.

UTAH ADOPTION COUNCIL
ANNUAL ADOPTION CONFERENCE
MAY 12TH AND 13TH 2010
SOUTH TOWNE EXPO CENTER
SANDY, UTAH

Touchstone Therapy Center Conference

Facilitating Healthy Attachment with Foster/Adopted Children

Location: Venues to be announced. Please check the website.

www.touchstonetherapyinc.com

Ogden, UT
Friday May 14, 2010

Salt Lake City, UT
Friday September 10, 2010

8:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Registration at 8:00 a.m.

Price: \$139.00.

Early Bird Price: \$125.00 if registered by April 30, 2010 for Ogden: by August 27, 2010.

7 CEU's for professionals. Training hours for foster parents.

\$150.00 at the door.

Check out website for specific details.



May 29th, 2010 • Murray City Park

Distance: Family Walk/Run 5K
 Start Time: Registration & check in begins at 7:30
 8:30 Race Start
 Entry Fee: \$20.00 Individual \$50.00 Family of 3 or more
T-Shirts are free to all participants registered before May 21st, 2010
 Sign Up: MAIL: The Adoption Exchange
 975 E Woodoak Lane, Suite 220, Murray, UT 84117
 ONLINE: www.adoptex.org
 DAY OF: At Pavillion 5

Race will be un-timed. Prizes will be given to 1st and 2nd place winners.

For More Information, Call 265-0444
 or visit us online at www.adoptex.org

Race Course

Race will begin at Pavillion 5 and will follow the Vita Course back around to the Circle. Course will be completed twice.

Water

Water will be provided following the race.

Online Registration

You can register online at www.adoptex.org by clicking on the Utah tab at the top of the page. Payment accepted by credit card.

Release and Waiver (Please Read)

I know that running is a potentially hazardous activity. I should not enter and run unless I am medically able and properly trained. I also know that although police protection might be provided, there could be traffic on the course route; therefore, I assume the risk of running in traffic. I also assume any other risks associated with running in this event including, but not limited to, falls, contact with other participants, and the effects of weather and conditions of the road. I understand I am solely responsible for my own safety while traveling to and from or participating in this event.

Knowing these facts and in consideration of your acceptance of my entry, I hereby for myself, my heirs, executors, administrators, or anyone else who might sue on my behalf covenant not to sue, and waive, release, and discharge the sponsors or contributors to this event, any race officials, volunteers, the city and police agencies, their representatives, successors, or assignees from any and all claims of liability for death, personal injury, or property damage of any kind or nature whatsoever arising out of, or in the course of my participation.

This release form and waiver extends to all claims of every kind or nature whatsoever, foreseen and unforeseen, known and unknown. The undersigned further grants full permission to use any photographs, videotapes, motion pictures, recordings or any other record of the event for any purpose. Minors will be accepted with a parent's signature. The undersigned acknowledges that he/she has read the foregoing release and waiver, understands it and executes this waiver and release of his/her own free will, with full knowledge and understanding of the effects of it.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ Zip Code _____
 Home Phone _____ T- Shirt Size _____
 Email _____

If Registering as a Family:

Family Team Name _____

Name	Age	Male/Female	Shirt Size

Signature _____

Date _____

Not Black Enough

By: Kevin Hofmann



Each day is a treasure to be home in my office when my sons come home from school. The first to burst through the door is my 14 year old. There are days when he bursts through the door and there are days when he barely pours across the threshold. There are days when he will spend five minutes telling all about his day, his interactions with friends, and these strange creatures called girls. Then there are days when all I get is a deep (his voice has changed and that's a whole different topic all together) groan which in the teenage world translates into "Hi, Dad."

Over the last week it seems all I've been getting is groans and caveman grunts and when I ask what's wrong, I get, "high, ghdhg" which means "nothing." Over the past 6 months I have become very fluent in teenage gibberish.

After awhile the caveman-speak gets REALLY annoying and I am tempted to demand he tell me what's bothering him. Instead, I know he will tell me when he's ready. I know the bro-code. Men will talk when they are ready.

My wife does not, however, have a subscription to the bro-code, nor does she have the official rule book. Her approach is to question/interrogate him until he cracks like spring ice under a 350 pound man.

His issues are typical teenage issues but one issue is something I can really relate with. He is having a hard time with a group of blacks in his school. This group doesn't think he's "black enough."

He goes to a diverse school and his friends are really of every race and background including several black kids. My son is light skinned like me. We often joke and say we are the "high yellow brothers." I have learned

growing up in the black community there is a struggle with racism in our own race. There is a split between those who are BLACK and those who are “not black enough.” There is also a split between light skinned and dark skinned blacks and the prejudices involved between them. (That is the topic of another blog.)

I was an offender of this in-race racism in college. I questioned those blacks around me that were better able to assimilate to their white environment. I too wrote them off as not ‘black enough.’ I have also been on the other end of the spectrum and have also been accused of not being black enough because I talk “white” and don’t dress a certain way.

This used to bother me just as it does my son. To be charged by your peers as being “too white” is painful and the fact that my son is genetically just as black as those leveling the charges makes it sting even more. It is painful because it screams, “You are not one of us.”

My fear was always that if I wasn’t accepted by blacks, and I wasn’t white then I would fall in the gap between the two never really fitting in with either. My bigger fear was that neither would want me as part of their group. Then what would I do?

I remember in college for a creative writing class I wrote a story called, Whited Out. It was a story about a black teenager who moved from the city where he was surrounded by people who looked like him to a rural all-white town. I described his first day of school in this all white environment where he was not accepted by anyone and he didn’t know how to handle it. At the end of the day he went home, went in to the garage, closed the garage door and turned on the car. His solution to not fitting in was to kill himself. When his parents found his lifeless body in the car, death had changed his skin color, he was now more gray than black or white. On his lifeless face he wore a partial smile.

I know is was a like hokey but that story told a lot about how I was feeling in college and it vividly brought to life my fears; fears that I never put to rest until I was in my 30’s.

One day while wrestling with where I fit in, it occurred to me. I was most comfortable around middle class blacks. It may sound horribly classist to say it but while with this group I feel the most at ease. Here I have the culture I love so much and I don’t get the questions about being black enough. As I get older I find more of my peer group gravitates to this group and finally that’s all right.

The great news is I figured it out. Being a part of the “black and strong” crowd didn’t make or break my survival. Finding where I fit in did and once I understood that, what the “black and strong” crowd said or thought no longer mattered. The better news is I can share this with my son and provide him with a detour that will eliminate 15 to 20 years of searching.

About the author:

Kevin Hofmann is an accomplished writer and public speaker who has a passion for adoption and especially transracial adoption. He is an adoption advocate and enjoys sharing his experiences as a biracial transracial adoptee to help other adoptive families. Hofmann lives with his wife and two sons in Toledo, Ohio. His book, *Growing up Black in White* (due out in March 2010) is the poignant memoir of a mixed-race child adopted by a white family in Detroit during the country's turbulent times of racial unrest, and the joy of embracing his identity. To find out more information about the book and view other articles on adoption visit his blog, *My Mind on Paper* at: <http://mymindonpaper.wordpress.com>

BECOME YOUR CHILD'S CASE MANAGER

By Sue Whitney, Research Editor, Wrightslaw

WILL AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) HELP MY CHILD?

"Our child was evaluated for Kindergarten, but no one even looked at the assessment. By midyear, he was having difficulty in school. The principal and kindergarten teacher told us he may have neurological problems and couldn't perform basic skills. His neurological evaluation showed he had hypotonia (low muscle tone) causing dysgraphia. The school wrote a 504 plan for 30 minutes of OT per week. Now, in 1st grade, we're told he needs more intervention and they want to develop an IEP for him.

Will an IEP help? Does the school just want to get an aide in the classroom? We believe our son is 2e. Will categorizing him prevent him from a future honors track? Does an IEP benefit or hurt our son? Seems like a series of mistakes by the school. Should we resist the school proposal or just "go with the flow?"

SUE'S RESPONSE- BECOME THE CASE MANAGER

You and your husband are the people primarily responsible for your son's health care and education, so **do not ever feel that you must turn this decision making process over to someone else.** This may be a source of your confusion and anger. If things feel out of control, then take your control back. However, the only person you control is yourself. You will need to learn more about the process, disability, evaluations, child development, curriculum, and goal writing before you feel more in control. The school is running their own agenda. And so are you. That is inevitable.

Once you again resume the position of "case manager," as you did before he started school, you will feel more informed and in control.

- Learn to become a team member and work with the other members of the IEP team. Once the team splits off into factions the focus comes off the child.
- Write a letter requesting a complete copy of your son's education file. Then keep it up to date.
- Follow all the neurologist's recommendations.

Allow the School to Develop an IEP and Educate Your Child

If the school has determined that your son needs an IEP, they have also determined that he has a disability that affects a major life activity and is severe enough to require specialized instruction. So by all means, allow them to do their job and educate him. This decision would have been made based upon evaluations.

Understand Evaluations

Make sure you understand what the evaluations say and what the evaluator's recommendations mean. Read this article on Tests and Measurements. http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/tests_measurements.html

Address Goals

The IEP has educational and functional goals. That is what you need to address. You need to be looking at how an aide will participate in your son's mastery of the curriculum.

Focus on Your Child

Do not speculate about what an aide might do to benefit other people. Why do you care what the school is getting, or not getting, out of this? Do not make this an issue about guessing at other people's agendas. They are largely irrelevant if you know how to do your own job of knowing what your son needs and securing it for him. Why waste the time finding out?

R - DON'T JUST 'GO WITH THE FLOW'

Focus on your son. **Will he be prepared for second grade or not?** That is the question. You say you believe your son is "2e". If you mean twice exceptional, disabled in one area and gifted in another, how do you know? This information comes from evaluations, not a belief. Find out, but what does it matter? The IEP is supposed to make sure he learns the curriculum and is prepared for second grade.

Preserve the Right to Special Education

Your first step is to understand the process, the evaluations, and to possibly get additional evaluations from private sector specialists. Without seeing the evaluations that have already been done, and the educational program that is in place, then I cannot tell you anything about that.

By all means, accept at least part of the first IEP in order to preserve his right to special education.

- Do read this book, Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy, 2nd Edition. (If you buy it used online make sure you get the Second Edition)
- Do read the procedural safeguard notice from your state
- Do re-read the file and all evaluations
- Consider hiring an advocate for a while to walk you through the process

These are links to directories of advocates.

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates <http://copaa.org/find/index.php>

Wrightslaw Yellow Pages for Kids with Disabilities <http://www.yellowpagesforkids.com/help/ut.htm>

National Disability Rights Network <http://www.napas.org/>

Education-a-Must <http://www.education-a-must.com/advocates.html#UT>

Avoid Getting Off Track

Going with the flow is never the way to go. Consulting with private sector specialists, possible additional evaluations done by private sector specialists, and learning the process would be the way to go.

Anytime you feel yourself focusing on how you will control another person, rather than on what you will set in place to accomplish your goal, know that you are off track.

Good luck.

SUE

Meet Sue Whitney

Sue Whitney of Hollis, New Hampshire, is the research editor for Wrightslaw. <http://www.wrightslaw.com/>. Sue is the co-author of Wrightslaw: No Child Left Behind (ISBN: 1-892320-12-4) that is published by Harbor House Law Press. In Doing Your Homework, she writes about reading, research based instruction, No Child Left Behind, and creative strategies for using federal education standards to advocate for children and to improve public schools. Her articles have been reprinted by SchwabLearning.org, EducationNews.org, Bridges4Kids.org, The Beacon: Journal of Special Education Law and Practice, the Schafer Autism Report, and have been used in CLE presentations to attorneys.

Copyright © 2002-2009 by Suzanne Whitney.



PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
P A I D
SLC UTAH
PERMIT 4621

975 E Woodoak Lane, Suite 220
Salt Lake City, UT 84117

Visit us online at www.utdcfsadopt.org

CALL YOUR POST-ADOPTION SPECIALIST

Northern Region:

Aubrey Myers (801) 395-5973

Salt Lake Region:

Linda Vrabel (801) 832-9744

Western Region:

Am. Fork/Eagle Mtn.
Rachel Jones (801) 434-7181

Provo/Heber
Dan Wheatley (801) 368-5123

Spanish Fork/Nephi
John Worthington (801) 362-9388

Southwest Region:

Rick Clements (435) 867-2271
Angie Morrill (435) 896-1263

Eastern Region:

Blanding /Moab Al Young (435) 678-1490
Price/Castledale Greg Daniels (435) 636-2367
Vernal/Roosevelt Fred Butterfield (435) 722-6561

Health Care Reform Law Expands Adoption Tax Credit

Public Law 111-148, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, was signed into law on March 23, 2010. Section 10909 of the Act extended the adoption tax credit for one more year (to December 31, 2011) and expanded the program in two ways: For tax year 2010, the amount of the credit was increased from \$12,170 to \$13,170. The credit was made refundable for all types of adoption for tax years 2010 and 2011. Because the adoption tax credit will be refundable, families who have smaller tax liability will now be able to benefit from the credit for adoptions finalized in 2010 and 2011.

The IRS has not yet released any guidance on the change. North American Council on Adoptable Children will update its tax credit fact sheet later this spring.

www.nacac.org