

Making S'more Memories

Recently, the boys living in our STRTPs went camping at Oceano Campgrounds. Oceano Beach is in front of the Oceano Campground at Pismo State Beach. This is a wide flat sandy beach backed by deep dunes with grass, shrubs, trees, and beautiful flowers to view. There are amazing hiking trails that loops around the Oceano Lagoon right next to the campground where our boys set up their tents. According to the boys, the scenery was breath taking and they enjoyed all the hiking trails to the beach front. Also, the boys fed the marine animals that were in the area. Additionally, the boys did some beach swimming, fishing, sand carb digging, and had several beach camp fires.





FFA Carnival

Wednesday, October 23

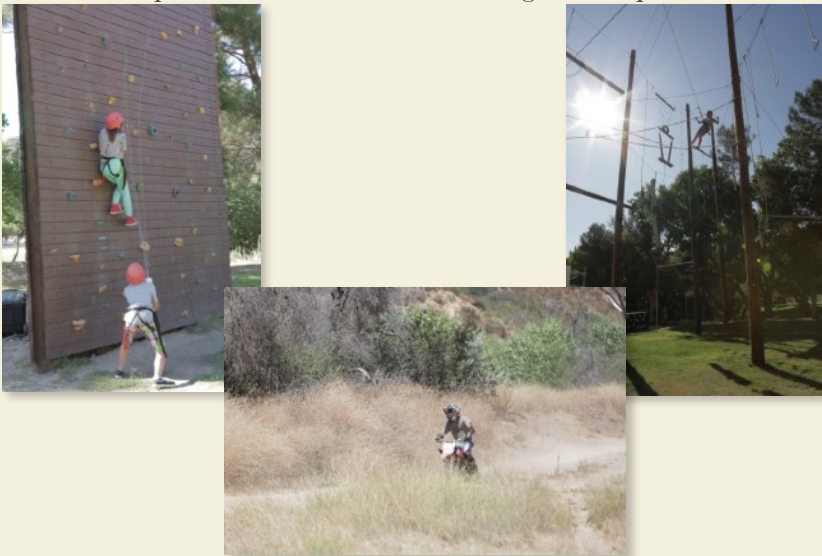
5:30PM

@ KBYH Offices



Adoption Family Camp

On the weekend of August 23rd, thirty-two adoptive families descended onto the Canyon Creek Retreat Center for a weekend of adventure that included a ropes course, climbing wall, dirt bikes, go-karts, archery, arts and crafts, and even a visit from Marley's Mutts. This was the fifth year KBYH offered this event, in collaboration with the Kern County Department of Human Services and the financial assistance of the Children's Home Society of California. Also, thank you to Becky Colaw who provided an excellent training for the parents.



Upcoming Trainings

(please RSVP)

October 9, 6:00PM - 8:00PM:

“Effects of Drug and Alcohol Abuse on Children and Non-minor Dependents” with Mark Dominguez. RSVP 865-2352

December 5, 6:00PM - 8:00PM

“Cultural Competency & Best Practices with LGBTQ Youth” with Jennifer Robbins. RSVP 396-2322

Ongoing Trainings

Mark Dominguez will be offering the following trainings on an ongoing basis (participants must RSVP by the Thursday prior to the training to 661-865-2352):

CPR/1st Aid Recertification (*for anyone who has previously had CPR/1st Aid training*): **First Monday** of every month from 10:00am-Noon and from 6:00-8:00pm.

CPR/1st Aid-Initial Course (*for those who have never had the training before*): **First Saturday** of February, May, August, and November, 10:00am-3:00pm.

ISFC Training/Support Group

Trainings are open to any Kern County approved ISFC Resource Family and include child care (over 2 years old) and dinner. (RSVP to Carrie Wombacher 396-2352)

September 24, 6:00PM - 8:00PM

“Self-Care/Secondary Trauma”

October 22, 6:00PM - 8:00PM

“Confidentiality”

Spotlight: Della J. Freeman

Della Freeman has been the bookkeeper for KBYH since Spring 2000. Della's expertise, wide range of experience, familiarity with non-profit budgets, investment in the success of KBYH, and responsive service have made her an invaluable member of our team. She is often unseen, but provides tremendous support and insight. KBYH would like to thank Della for her years of dedication and service.



Child Birthdays

- Emerald R: 12 years old
- Nalayah L: 4 years old



Resource Parent Birthdays

- Richard Arguello: September 3
- Laura Daniels: September 20
- Susanna Chavez: September 25

KBYH Staff Birthdays

- Ana Landeros: September 15
- Vernetta Carter: September 16

KBYH Staff Anniversaries

- Kathy Irwin: 22 years
- Keisha Davis: 17 years
- Miguel Alvarez: 3 years
- Elvia Alvarez: 2 years
- Bianca Ruiz: 2 years
- Sharon Harman-Fry: 2 years



Foster Child of the Month: Ernie S.

This month we are happy to spotlight Ernie as our youth of the month! Ernie has a contagious laugh, loves history, and is a great conversationalist. Ernie recently attended KBYH camp, where he enjoyed socializing with other youth and the many activities, especially fishing. Ernie enjoys spending time with his ISFC Rehab Specialist, Marina Hernandez, and they recently went to visit the Museum of Tolerance, which was important to Ernie to learn more about his family history. Ernie, age 17, attends Robert F. Kennedy high school in Delano where he is excelling and is excited about the prospect of college in his future. Ernie's Resource Parents, Teresa and Everado Viramontes, are proud and supportive of Ernie as he works towards his goals of independent living.



Resource Parent of the Month: Petrina Williams

Petrina Williams is one of KBYH's oldest resource parents that continues to make a positive impact on the children's lives placed in her home. The Williams Resource home has wonderful qualities which allow each child placed in her home the opportunity to assimilate into the family. Petrina is unafraid of challenges and accepted hard to place children and finds ways to connect with them. Petrina stays connected to the children long after they leave her home or emancipate. Petrina rarely gives a 14-day notice because she believes that every child deserves a chance to be a part of a family. Petrina is actively involved in the educational needs and the mental health of each child placed in her home. She has been involved in wraparound services, attended all IEP's, school conferences and counseling services. Petrina involves each placement in numerous activities and family outings in and out of the home. Petrina is always there when we need her and has provided respite services when needed. Thank you Petrina for opening up your heart and home.

Recommended Practices for Engaging Youth While Missing from Care:

- Reach out to the youth via text, phone, email and/or social media. Remain neutral and focused on their well-being. Be honest, express concern, but refrain from language that is punitive or condescending. Allow youth to have voice and choice in their return, exploring what the youth feels is in their best interest.
- Utilize youth's Child and Family Team (CFT) members to engage and communicate with youth.
- Coordinate communication with the youth's CFT members to ensure the youth does not become overwhelmed by too much communication.
- Create a safe plan for return, broken down by achievable steps, with the youth-leading the plan when ready.
- Consider holding a CFT meeting to create the plan for return, encouraging the youth's attendance, conveying that they will not be forced to come into care as a result.
- Assess for safety. Should there be suspicion that the youth is in danger, or at risk for danger, contact law enforcement immediately.

Recommended Practices for Youth Returning to Care:

- Welcome the youth back by showing genuine happiness and appreciation that they have returned. Be mindful of appearing as though you are judging the youth: specifically, be cognizant of facial expressions and body language, utilize neutral language and do not initially comment on what may have occurred while missing. Identify their return as a success. Returning, whether voluntary or not, was likely very difficult. Verbally acknowledge this difficulty to the youth.
- Focus on the youth and their well-being. Thank them for returning, whether or not it was voluntary. Allow them to assist in determining their own priority needs by asking what their immediate needs are. Offer the youth something to eat, a shower, clothing, medical attention if necessary, and give them time and space to rest even if it does not follow typical sleeping hours. This approach will assist in putting the youth at ease, creating a safe and comfortable environment, and building trust between a youth and their social worker, probation officer, service provider, or caregiver.
- Allow the youth as many opportunities for choice as possible. Exploited youth often have little to no control. Upon returning to care find ways to allow them to make decisions and regain some of the power they have lost.

- While a social worker/probation officer must make a mandated report, cross report, or investigate further upon suspicion a youth has been exploited while missing from care, it may not be immediately necessary to understand the details of what may or may not have transpired while a youth was missing from foster care. Ask the youth if they are ready to discuss their experiences while missing from care. If necessary, allow the youth sufficient time before approaching them for additional information about what occurred while they were away, and allow them to disclose their experiences when they are ready. By not immediately discussing, it allows the youth time to decompress, feel welcome, establish a sense of safety and most importantly not feel pressured to share something they may not be ready to discuss. This approach will avoid triggering the youth and instead allow them to acclimate to return. This will also assist in strengthening the relationship between the youth and social worker/probation officer/service provider/caregiver; building trust and encouraging more open communication.

- Identify the best person to engage with the youth in these moments. Ask whether the youth has a preference. Encourage others who have been involved in the youth's life to make contact if the youth communicates that it would be helpful. Natural supports may be effective in supporting the engagement of the youth. Natural supports are those that are not a part of a formal child serving system and are a part of the family's informal support. They may include extended family, friends, coaches, neighbors, etc.

When discussing the circumstances of their absence from care, remain objective, non-judgmental, open and engaged. Ask open ended questions to identify motivations for leaving, or concerns for what the youth may have experienced while missing from care. Similarly, focus on their return and determine what may have motivated them to come back. If their return was not voluntary, ask what may help them remain in care longer moving forward. Be realistic, clear and concise. Phrase questions with terms that are understandable for the youth. Utilize solution-focused questions that empower the youth to determine their needs and what may motivate them to stay. For example, "Can you tell me about a time when you almost left, but didn't? What was different then versus this time?" Reframe their negative comments. Acknowledge a youth's strengths and positive choices, even in the action of a negative decision.

- Contact youth's treatment team and notify of return so services may resume as soon as possible, including during nontraditional business hours. Consistency and structure are vital in stabilizing the youth.

- Contact the local law enforcement agency, NCMEC and any other appropriate authorities/parties to inform of youth's return, in order to avoid any unnecessary traumatic experience should the youth encounter law enforcement when they are not missing from care.

- Ensure any protective custody warrants issued in either dependency and/or delinquency court while youth was missing are recalled.

Recommended Strategies to Prevent Youth from Leaving Care:

- Ensure you have a relationship with or know the important people in a youth's life, including family, friends, significant others or mentors. Keep track of their contact information. If a youth is often leaving to be with them, find appropriate ways to help a youth remain connected with those individuals while in placement. Ensure the caregiver/placement provider understands the importance of these relationships and supports the youth's engagement with them. If the support person lives farther away, determine whether resources can be provided to allow in-person visits with the youth, or whether methods of video conferencing can be used, (i.e. Skype, Facetime, Google Hangout, etc.).
- Coach caregivers/placement providers on how to create a supportive environment, utilizing the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard. Assist them in creating house rules that are developmentally appropriate. Recognize that it is normal for youth to desire time with their peers, freedom and independence. Build this into their daily life. Determine whether a curfew extension, planned activities with friends and planned time for the youth to spend with themselves in a private space would help.
- Coach caregivers to pay attention to particular times of day that may be harder for youth. Does the youth need more support or attention during those times? Make changes accordingly. For example, perhaps a youth is accustomed to being out on Friday evenings. Plan an outing or activity together with youth to help them feel busy and fulfilled during this time, including whomever is important to the youth when possible.
- Identify the youth's interests and functional strengths and build them into their case plan and life. Connect them to activities that support those interests. If youth have a difficult time identifying their interests and strengths, utilize the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment tool to work with the caregiver to identify these potential strengths and expose youth to other new experiences and opportunities.
- Support caregivers in keeping the youth balanced. Be cognizant of services overload and allow the youth to have healthy, fun experiences. Boredom can be a vulnerable place for most adolescents. Assist caregivers in keeping youth busy in activities that are of interest to them without overwhelming them.
- Identify triggers which may encourage a youth to leave and when a youth is likely to encounter these triggers. Co-create a safety plan (see below) with the youth, identifying alternatives to leaving. For example, contacting a trusted adult or friend, taking space, listening to music or simply just getting out of the house.

Safety Planning Around Leaving Placement:

The dynamics of sexual exploitation are complex and have wide impacts on a youth's mental health. For youth who have been sexually exploited, leaving placement is often an aspect of their recovery process. In some instances, youth may feel compelled to return to an exploitive situation. Some must return due to threats of violence or coercion, while others may desire to return because of a sense of familiarity and normalcy.

While leaving placement inevitably poses risk, it is difficult to prevent altogether. The harm reduction approach, identified as a promising practice for serving youth abused through commercial sexual exploitation, aims to reduce the impact of risky behaviors over time, rather than to immediately eliminate them completely. A harm reduction approach understands that youth may leave placement, and rather than attempting to stop a youth from leaving altogether, it places emphasis on the young person being the central driver in reducing their own self-harm. It also recognizes the service provider's role is to engage

and connect youth with services that will ultimately achieve safety and stability. For more information regarding the harm reduction approach and its strategies, please reference ACIN I-59-18.

Utilizing a harm reduction approach, social workers/probation officers can work with a youth to determine steps both the adults in the youth's life, as well as the youth should take in the event they do go missing from care. Social workers/probation officers can include these steps in a safety plan for the youth if they leave care. For the purposes of this ACIN, the term safety plan is defined as a plan put in place to ensure the safety of the youth is maintained in a given situation, as well as the responsibilities of the youth and CFT for ensuring that plan is implemented and maintained. For more information regarding the use, design and function of safety plans, please reference ACL 17-107. Below are strategies for engagement around safety planning for when a youth may leave care:

- Discuss desire for youth to stay in placement, as well as the understanding that a youth may decide to leave. The reality of a youth leaving placement is high. Have honest discussions with the youth about this and how they can maintain their own safety while missing from care. This does not mean that leaving placement is encouraged or condoned, but instead meets youth where they are, encourages openness and builds trust. This will go a long way in terms of engagement and their progress in healing; helping build safe behavior.
- Ask the youth how they define safety, and use their definition to assist in developing safer behaviors and making safe decisions. Be mindful that their definition will influence their choices.
- Safety plan around leaving placement and how youth may reduce harm while missing from care including: Ensure they have emergency contact information and the locations of various community resources.

- Work with the youth to identify one person they may be willing to check in with while absent from care, whether this is via phone, email, or social media. Ensure the youth understands their social worker/probation officer must also be able to communicate with the identified person (assuming the identified person is in fact not the youth's social worker/probation officer).
- Provide youth with a small bag containing hygiene products, safe sex materials, bus passes and/or a first aid kit. Preventing leaving may be difficult but utilizing opportunities to help them reduce the impact of potentially unsafe choices will continue to build safe behaviors.
- Identify a plan, person and location youth can reach out to when ready to return. Develop contingency plans for these should an emergency arise.
- Discuss reality of what youth may engage in during their absence from care. How does the youth feel safety can be maintained during these activities? For example, if they will be engaging with purchasers do they know how to access contraceptives?
- Keep current photos of the youth to provide to law enforcement and/or NCMEC when a youth runs away.
- Monitor the youth's social media accounts and user names. Sometimes a youth's posts will give indications of who they are with, where they may be, or alert if they are planning to leave placement. Monitoring these can lead to locating the youth. Provide the account names to law enforcement.
- Pay attention to warning signs that a youth may be considering leaving placement. Utilize the youth's support person, and/or CFT, to engage the youth and determine what can be done to prevent them from leaving placement. Be mindful that some youth may not want to leave placement but are pressured and/or threatened to leave by an exploiter or peers.