

# Children's Mental Health: Finding Help, Finding Hope

by Terri Keener



How often have you heard that positive mental health can improve one's quality of life? Peace of mind is a natural condition that is available to everyone. The key is identifying what can strengthen our ability to handle the ups and downs of life.

Children, in particular, need to have good mental health if they are going to live up to their full potential and thrive in a life that is filled with promising experiences. It's important to encourage children to have the willingness to do what is best for themselves and the people around them.

There are countless factors that can impact a child's mental health status, both positively and negatively. Children in foster care have special and complex needs which are best addressed by a coordinated team. This usually includes the child, family members, caregivers and mental health and child welfare professionals.

The Department of Family Services (DFS) provides assistance to families and caregivers seeking mental health services through its Family Clinical Services (FCS) unit. FCS assists in facilitating comprehensive assessments and collaborative efforts with the child and others in the youth's

support network to recommend strategies and treatments to promote the youngster's well-being.

Some, but certainly not all, of the services provided by the FCS unit include:

- **Mental Health Assessments** for parents of children who are in the legal custody of DFS.
- **Clinical Case File Reviews** for children who are experiencing placement instability or significant behavioral and mental health symptoms.
- **Clinical Consultations** help child and family teams understand general or specific concerns regarding mental health.
- **Coaching Visitation Program** provides parents the opportunity to practice parenting skills with support and feedback during visitation when working toward reunification.

The aforementioned services are available to all caregivers including birth families, licensed and unlicensed caregivers, fictive kin and foster parents. If you are concerned about the possible effects of childhood trauma or the behaviors of a child in your care, please contact your case manager for a referral to the FCS unit.

**For more information about programs and eligibility, caregivers (birth parents, relatives, foster parents, and fictive kin) may contact one of the following DFS employees:**

- FCS Supervisor Alexa Rodriguez, 702-455-7964
- FCS Assistant Manager Terri Keener, 702-455-7860