



## The Hawai`i Foster Parent Association Unveils New Name & Address

We are starting the new year by changing our name from the **Hawai`i Foster Parent Association to It Takes an `Ohana (ITAO)**. We believe this name, along with the tagline “Supporting foster & adoptive families since 1971,” will better capture the essence of our work ~ providing information and resources to *all* in the community concerned with the interests of children and youth in out-of-home care while providing responsible advocacy.

In addition, we will join with the Consuelo Foundation, Family Promise of Hawai`i, Hawai`i Foster Youth Coalition, Hawai`i Immigrant Justice Center, Kids Hurt Too and Learning Disabilities Association of Hawai`i as tenants in the Weinberg Kukui Children’s Center on February 26, 2009. Our new location will allow us to work closely with our fellow tenants, combining our efforts to create better outcomes for children and youth in Hawai`i.

Beginning February 26, 2009, our new contact info will be:



It Takes An  
**Ohana**

Supporting foster and adoptive families since 1971.

245 N. Kukui St., 2nd floor  
Honolulu, HI 96817  
www.ittakesanohana.org  
info@ittakesanohana.org  
Phone will remain: (808) 522-1016

## Youth Attendance at Court Hearings

by Andrea Khoury, JD

*The Hawai`i Court Improvement Project is sponsoring a series of “Hot Topics” Conferences state-wide in January which will include information to help prepare youth for involvement in court hearings. We have updated our Care-giver and the Courts guide with this info and will have it available at these conferences as well as at Family Programs Hawai`i’s state-wide resource family trainings in February. See page 6 for details.*



All I wanted was to be heard and not just dismissed ~ Foster Youth

Historically, youth have not been invited or encouraged to attend their court hearings. However, the trend is changing. In November 2006 the Child and Family Services Improvement Act was passed by Congress. Judges are required in permanency hearings to consult in an age appropriate manner with children about their permanency or transition plans. This Act signals an increase in importance placed on a youth’s voice.

### Benefits of Youth Involvement in their Court Hearings

Attending court benefits both youth and the court. Youth develop a sense of control over the process when they actively participate. They also have the opportunity to understand the process by seeing the court proceeding firsthand. The court learns more about the children than simply what is presented in reports.

### 1. Sense of control

When a youth is removed from his home, he generally has little control over when or why that occurs, where he goes, and what happens to his parents. Important things in his life are taken away, including his ability to make decisions. He generally is placed in a new home, goes to a new school, has to develop new friends, and has new parents and new siblings. All of these events are beyond his control. He is told there will be a court hearing at which a judge, whom he may never meet, will decide if he will return home. Sometimes a child advocate identifies his needs and conveys his best interests to the court. If he is not in court, he may simply be told the outcome and either remain in his foster home or go home.

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## SINGING AS A TEACHING TOOL



**M**usic is a great way to engage young children because it is a natural and enjoyable part of their everyday lives. Children hear music or sing while watching television, riding in the car, at school, and as part of bedtime rituals. We often hear children creating their own songs and incorporating music in their play. Music is a socially engaging way to learn, and especially appropriate for the developmental levels of young children.

The concept of using music to teach is not new. Many young children learn to recite the alphabet by singing the ABCs, and educational television programs for young children, such as *Sesame Street*, use a lot of music in their programming. Researchers have found that music can help children learn multiplication tables and improve early

literacy skills.

Music helps many children break information down into easily remembered pieces or associate it with previously known information, such as a familiar song. One study found that using familiar melodies helped five-year-olds learn phone numbers at a faster rate than using no music or unfamiliar melodies.

Singing with children can be an especially fun and valuable experience. When you sing with young children, you can adjust the speed and volume to fit their abilities. You don't need to sound like a professional singer. As long as you are enthusiastic, young children will enjoy it, and want to sing along.

You can also pair singing with movement or visual aids that stimulate the senses. This allows children to not only hear the music, but also feel and move to the rhythms, and see, touch, and play the instruments.

Singing also gives you lots of opportunities to teach new words to young children. By taking familiar songs (such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," "Frere Jacques/ Are You Sleeping?" "Three Blind Mice" or other songs from your childhood) and changing or adding words, you can introduce new vocabulary in a way that makes it easy for children to follow along.

You can create individualized songs that will engage children and boost their memories. Fill your songs with people (for example, family members, teachers or friends), objects (clothing, furniture, cars or bikes), daily rituals (brushing teeth, bedtime), and special events (holidays, going on a field trip) that are an important part of children's lives.

While music is a great way to introduce new words, it can also contribute to children's progress and learning in many different areas. Music supports self-expression, cooperative play, creativity, emotional well being, and development of social, cognitive, communication, and motor skills. Music and singing are a fun and effective way to help young children learn.

*The Hawaii Foster Parent Association offers resources and information to those in the community concerned with protecting the interests of children and youth in out-of-home care, while providing responsible advocacy.*

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**E PŪLAMA NĀ KEIKI** is published quarterly by HFFPA for foster and adoptive parents, foster youth, legal guardians, service providers, friends and supporters of HFFPA. It is made possible through grants and donations.

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Judith Wilhoite, Editor

The comments of individual are not necessarily those of HFFPA.

HFFPA is a non-profit organization registered with the Hawaii State Dept. of Commerce and Consumer affairs.

Web Site Address:

[www.hawaiiifosterparent.org](http://www.hawaiiifosterparent.org)

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## Difficult Behaviors in Keiki Sometimes a Result of FASD

**M**any foster and adopt parents may be living with undiagnosed children & youth affected with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Their child may appear to be healthy but because FASD affected children have permanent brain damage, learning and controlling behavior can present special problems.

### What is FASD?

FASD is a permanent physical disability with behavioral symptoms that occur in those whose mothers drink alcohol while pregnant. It occurs more frequently than many other commonly known birth defects and encompasses more births than children with Spina Bifida, Down Syndrome and Autism combined.

FASD is diagnosed when children display one or more of these symptoms:

- Small size (weight, height, head size),
- Evidence of changes in facial features (small eye openings, thin upper lip, small jaw),
- Evidence of changes in brain function.

FASD is an umbrella term that describes the following diagnoses: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Alcohol Related Birth Defects (ARBD), Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorders (ARND).

### Primary behaviors associated with FASD:

- Impulsive, may not be able to predict outcomes,
- May not understand consequences,
- Memory problems, child has on and off days,
- Needs re-teaching often; child may seem to learn a new task one day and not remember it the next,
- Oversensitivity *or* under sensitivity to touch, hearing, smell and/or sight,
- Slow processing pace, may think and hear slower: “Ten second children in a one second world”,
- Gaps in understanding,
- May take longer to mature: A 14 year old may be developmentally more like an 8 year old.

### FASD Affected Children do Best with:

- **Structure**—a predictable environment where they have choices within clear, well-established routines,
- **Supervision**— enough to keep them out of trouble or danger,
- **Simplicity**—basic direction; easy words,
- **Small steps**—tasks broken into small steps and taught through repetition,
- **Context**—skills taught in a specific context without generalizing from one situation to another.

### School & the FASD Affected Child

School can be an ongoing challenge for those affected by FASD. Many schools are poorly informed about this invisible disorder and punish behavior that a child with FASD cannot control. A teacher may think a child affected with FASD is simply lazy when the child has actual difficulties with one or more of the following: mathematics, reasoning, connecting cause and effect, learning from experience, planning and remembering, decision-making and/or social skills.

Some parents have changed the need identified in their child’s individualized education plan from “behavioral” to “physical.” Behavioral programs with incentives, rewards, and punishments *do not* work for children with FASD.

### Overlapping Diagnoses

There may be co-occurring diagnoses associated with FASD such as:

- Failure to thrive
- Attention Deficit Disorder and/or Hyperactivity
- Speech and Language Disorder
- Learning Disability
- Sensory Integration Disorder
- Reactive Attachment Disorder
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder

People with obvious physical disabilities are given accommodations to support them in life. It is just as important to provide accommodations for those affected with FASD. These accommodations include changes in attitudes and

### FASD Screening Contact:

Dr. Laurie Seaver  
Hawaii Community Genetics  
Kapi’olani Medical Specialists  
1441 Kap’iolani Blvd., # 1800  
Honolulu, HI 96814  
PH: 808-973-3403

### Recommended Reading

*Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders: Trying Differently Rather than Harder* by Diane Malbin

*The Best I can Be: Living with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome-Effects* by Liz & Jodee Kulp

*Damaged Angels: A Mother Discovers the Terrible Cost of Alcohol in Pregnancy* by Bonnie Buxton

*Fantastic Antone Grows Up: Adolescents and Adults with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome* by Judith Kleinfeld, Barbara Morse & Siobhan Wescott

expectations. When the child’s strengths are identified and built upon, many frustrations can be avoided and positive outcomes are more likely.

### Common Strengths of FASD Affected Children:

- Friendly, loyal, kind, loving
- Curious, determined, willing
- Active, energetic
- Creative, artistic, musical
- Concrete, experienced, learn by doing

When raising an FASD affected child, love is important, but not enough. One needs support, training and to understand that a physical brain injury, not choice, dictates some of the child’s behaviors.

Gigi Davidson contributed to this article. She is the Executive Director of ‘Ohana Komputer and the parent of 20 year old Russian child affected with FASD. Feel free to contact her at 808-523-8191 or [gigid@hawaiiantel.net](mailto:gigid@hawaiiantel.net).

In addition, some information was excerpted from Elspeth Ross’s *FASD Forward* article that was published in the North American Council on Adoptable Children *Adopt Talk—Spring 2008*. You can find her entire article at [www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org).

*Continued from page 1* If the goal of the child welfare system is to do what is in the best interests of the child, the child should have input. When a youth has adequate representation, she is informed of the process and her role. When a youth attends a court hearing, she senses the judge who is deciding her best interests has listened to her. Regardless of the outcome, youth have reported that simply being heard by the decision maker empowers them and gives them a sense of control over what is happening to them. They feel they have a part to play and can influence the outcome.

## 2. Understanding the process

In an ideal situation, the youth has good representation, the social worker regularly communicates with the youth, the birth parents are honest with the youth about the situation, and the foster parents are present in court and openly discuss the case with the youth. However, a youth may not fully understand what is happening without seeing it firsthand. The youth is told that critical decisions are made by a judge in court. Yet, in most instances the youth is not involved in that component of the case.

When a youth attends court, he can ask his advocate questions about what is happening. He hears what the social worker says about his home, school, visitation with parents, etc. He hears what his parent(s) say about their progress. When the judge makes a ruling and discusses why she orders something, the youth hears it and can ask questions.

## 3. Information for the court

Many questions that the court will have about the case may be addressed by the child welfare agency's and child advocate's reports, the parent(s), foster parents and other service providers. However, if the youth is present and the court has a question about how often he has seen his mother or how he is doing in school, the youth can provide the answer.

The youth makes the case more real and vivid for the judge. For example, the court may be deciding whether it is time to change the permanency plan to adoption because the parents haven't complied with the agency's family service plan. If the youth is in court, the court doesn't have to rely on the reports to

see how long the child has been in care. The court can see that the child is getting older and needs permanency in her life. Indeed, the youth may say this directly to the judge. Even if the youth is not verbal, the court can observe how the youth appears and interacts with others.



If the youth is very young and cannot speak to the judge, being present in court will bring the case to life and help show the case is about a human being with wants, needs, desires, and hopes that should be considered. When youth attend the hearing, the court is less likely to focus primarily on the parents' circumstances. When only the parents attend court, the focus is on what they have and or have not accomplished. When the youth is present, there is equal attention on the youth and what the youth needs.

## Role of the Foster Parent

The child's primary caregiver, often the foster parent, plays a critical role in ensuring the child has a meaningful court experience. The foster parent must support the child's involvement in preparation for the court hearing, during the court hearing, and debriefing with the youth after the court hearing.

The Court should presume that the youth will attend the court hearing unless he chooses not to or there is a compelling reason to limit his participation. The Court ultimately decides whether it is in the child's best interest to attend the hearing. The foster parent should have a voice in this decision and should discuss the following with the GAL and the social worker at least two weeks before the court hearing:

1. Any scheduling conflicts the youth has with the hearing, e.g. school, therapy, recreational activities.
2. Whether the youth expressed interested in attending the court hearing.
3. Whether transportation will be an issue.
4. Whether the youth has had any problems seeing parents or anyone else who may attend the court hearing.
5. Any thoughts on how the youth may react to discussions about the case.
6. Thoughts on how the youth may respond to participating in the hearing.
7. Whether any accommodations need to be made for the youth to participate.

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Once it has been decided that the youth will attend the court hearing, the foster parent should help the GAL and social worker prepare the youth. The foster parent should let the GAL know if the youth has questions about what will occur, who will attend, or what to expect.

The foster parent should contact the school to let them know the youth will be absent, why, and get any homework that the youth can do while waiting for the hearing. If the youth is going to miss activities, the foster parent should try to reschedule them. If the youth wants to speak at the hearing or write a letter to the judge, the foster parent should work with the youth and GAL on what to say and how to say it. The foster parent should also help the social worker arrange for transportation or personally transport the youth.

During the hearing, the foster parent should ask the youth whether she wants the foster parent present. At the hearing, the foster parent should:

1. Support the youth.
2. Comfort the youth if she gets upset.
3. Help the youth understand what is going on.
4. Encourage the youth to ask the GAL questions.

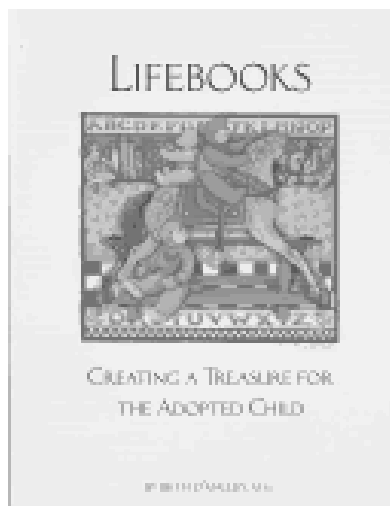
The courtroom can be a scary place and the foster parent is one of the only familiar faces for the youth. The foster parent can help the youth have a meaningful experience in the hearing by simply being present and supporting the youth.

Following the hearing, the foster parent should talk to the youth about what happened. If the youth has any questions, the foster parent should encourage the youth to call the GAL or social worker. If the youth does not want to talk about the hearing, the foster parent should not push the issue.

Child welfare cases are about taking care of youth and doing what is best for them. Youth need and deserve to be a part of that process. A critical component of that process is court hearings. The more guidance foster parents have on incorporating youth into their child welfare proceedings, the more likely the youth will have the opportunity to participate.

*Andrea Khoury, JD, is the director of the ABA Youth at Risk Bar-Youth Empowerment Project and an Assistant Director of Child Welfare for the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues. Visit the Bar-Youth Empowerment Project website at <http://www.abanet.org/child/empowerment/home.html>.*

## Book Review ~ LifeBooks by Beth O'Malley



From Alaska to Australia the word is spreading. Adoptive and foster parents are discovering the enormous value of lifebooks. But then the questions begin. Where do I start? What information should be included? Do I let my child bring it to school?

Beth O'Malley M.Ed. provides the answers to these and more. In her best selling book, *LifeBooks: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child* Beth guides you through the process, step-by-step and page by page as if she were right there with you.

Learn about the difference between a scrapbook or baby book and a lifebook. Or explaining tough truths, dealing with secrets and which pages are essential. Includes lists of hard-to-find lifebook resource websites and sample pages. If you get really stuck, there are three full-length examples in the back section. You may find yourself referring to this book for years.

### **SUPPORT OUR WORK WHILE SHOPPING AT AMAZON.COM**

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## Training and Support Opportunities

### "HOT TOPICS" CONFERENCES

Presented by the Hawai'i Court Improvement Program to help us prepare youth to attend their court hearings plus each island will focus on their own court related "hot topics." **FREE** to all resource families as well as agency & court personnel. Continental breakfast & lunch included. Space is limited, so RSVP to the contact person on your island ASAP.

**Kauai:** January 20, 2009 ~ 8:00 am—1 pm

Where: The Judiciary Multipurpose Conference Room  
3970 Kaana St., Lihue

RSVP to Marilyn Kaohi at (808) 482-2374

**Maui:** January 21, 2009 ~ 8:00 am—4:00 pm

Where: Maui Tropical Plantation  
1670 Honoapiilani Hwy., Waikapu

RSVP to Danlyn Kapaku at

Danlyn.M.Kapaku@courts.state.hi.us or call  
(808) 244-2729

**Oahu:** January 22, 2009 ~ 8:00—3:34 pm

Where: Luana Hills Country Club  
770 Auloa Road, Maunawili

RSVP to Judith Wilhoite at [judith@ittakesanohana.org](mailto:judith@ittakesanohana.org) or call (808) 522-1016

**Hilo:** January 23, 2009 ~ 8:00 am—3:45 pm

Where: University of Hawaii—Hilo  
Campus Center, Room 301

RSVP to Susan Ayala at [susan.m.ayala@courts.state.hi.us](mailto:susan.m.ayala@courts.state.hi.us) or call (808) 934-5777

### SUPPORT GROUPS FOR FOSTER, ADOPT, GUARDIAN AND KINSHIP FAMILIES

*Provided by Family Programs Hawai'i (FPH)*

When: Monthly ~ different dates and locations on each island. Cost: *FREE* ~ Includes dinner & childcare for children ages 3-12. Find info for the group closest to you at our website, [www.hawaiiosterparent.org](http://www.hawaiiosterparent.org); at FPH's website, [www.familyprogramshawaii.org](http://www.familyprogramshawaii.org); or by calling (808) 545-1130 on Oahu or (866) 545-0882 from neighbor islands.

### FOSTER, ADOPT, GUARDIAN AND KINSHIP PARENTS IN COURT TRAINING

We are excited to be collaborating with Family Programs Hawai'i to bring resource families the most current information available regarding you and the courts. Our updated *Caregivers and the Courts* guide will be available and distributed by local presenters, Annabel Murray and Katie Bennett. Watch your mail or check our website for dates and locations soon.

### 'OHANA IS FOREVER CONFERENCE:

#### "WORKING TOGETHER FOR OUR TOMORROW"

When: *March 30, 2009*

Where: *Ala Moana Hotel*  
410 Atkinson Drive,  
Honolulu

Cost: *Free*

Speakers include:

Honorable Leonard P.

Edwards, Superior Court Judge (Ret.), Santa Clara County, California

Gloria Tumbaga, M.D. Candidate, John A. Burns School of Medicine, Foster Care Alumnus  
Foster Youth Panel



Topics include:

Permanency for Hawaii's Foster Children & Youth Caregivers and the Court

Facilitating Reunification *and more!* Check our website for more details as the date gets near.

*Limited number of scholarships available for DHS families who care for children from the child welfare system. Call Deb at (808) 522-1016 to register.*

### STATEWIDE ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR FOSTER & RESOURCE FAMILIES

When: Dates and locations on each island beginning April 23rd and running to May 14.

Cost: *FREE*

We are happy to announce that we are collaborating with both Family Programs of Hawai'i & the DHS to bring Dr. Kimo Alameda to you as the guest speaker at this year's annual conference. Dr. Alameda will focus on the importance of helping Hawai'i's keiki in out-of-home care stay connected to their culture. Watch your mail or check our website for dates and locations soon.

### 23RD ANNUAL SPIN (SPECIAL PARENT INFORMATION NETWORK) CONFERENCE

When: *April 25, 2009*

Where: *UH Campus Center, Honolulu*

Cost: *\$20, limited parent scholarships and airfare available*

For info, call 586-8126, email [spin@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:spin@doh.hawaii.gov)

## Great Resources Available for Foster & Former Foster Youth

### DHS HIGHER ED BOARD PAYMENT OF \$529 A MONTH FOR UP TO 5 YEARS

Former foster youth age 18 to 26 that turned eighteen under the placement of or where adopted from Hawai'i's DHS system may be eligible for DHS Higher Education Board Payments of \$529 a month for living expenses while attending vocational training or college. To check eligibility, call (808) 832-5300 or (808) 255-8365. Youth have until their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday to apply.

**DEADLINE for youth between 22 and 26 years old is JUNE 30, 2009!**

### EPIC `OHANA CONFERENCING YOUTH CIRCLES

Youth Circles help foster youth clarify their goals and identify supportive people and resources to help them create the life they want. These are free and available to all foster youth ages 16 through 24, for however many times they may need it. To schedule call (808) 358-2222 on Oahu or (866) 636-1644 from neighbor islands.



“Building a foundation for life after foster care”

eXcel, a new Family Programs Hawai'i (FPH) program, helps high school seniors in foster care to successfully prepare for college or vocational training. This new program focuses on career and interest exploration, setting goals, and learning life skills. eXcel helps students with the application process and completing financial aid and scholarship applications. FPH recognizes that resource parents are often the biggest support foster youth have in addressing various issues during their senior year. eXcel can help make this time easier for youth and families by working together through this process. For more information, please contact Jennifer Cilfone at FPH at 521-9531, ext. 297 or online at: [www.FamilyProgramsHawaii.org](http://www.FamilyProgramsHawaii.org).

### HAWAIIAN COMMUNITY ASSETS TO OFFER FREE YOUTH FINANCIAL EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

As we talk with former foster youth to learn what we can do to better prepare them for life after exiting the child welfare system, one of the constant needs they express is “Teach us to how to handle our money.” That is why we were very excited when we learned that Hawaiian Communities



offer free financial education workshops statewide for both foster youth ages 14 – 18 and resource parents. The workshops will feature lessons on strengthening the local economy, employment and paychecks, budgeting and saving, maintaining bank accounts, building and

Assets (HCA), a non-profit that helps communities achieve and sustain economic self-sufficiency, has a new program that will do just that!

using credit, planning for financial emergencies, preparing for post-secondary education and homeownership, reaching life goals, entrepreneurship, and more.

HFPA, Kids Hurt Too and the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition are developing a partnership with HCA to

Stay tuned for information regarding future financial trainings for both foster youth and resource parents.

## DEALING WITH THE MELTING ADOLESCENT BRAIN

I asked my readers to send me stories about their kids doing things without thinking. One mom wrote, “For years my oldest son has pretended to walk into walls and fall down. So, I didn’t think anything when we left the library and he proceeded to run straight at our van and shout, ‘Oh no! I’m going to hit it!’ However, instead of throwing up his arms at the last moment and bouncing off as I’ve seen him do a thousand times, the kid flew face-first into the driver’s side window. At first, when he stood up with blood running down his face, he had this stunned look. Then he screamed, ‘Ow, ow! My nose! Ow!’



Later, I asked him why he face planted into the side of the van. He said that he thought the driver’s side window was rolled down, so he figured it’d be fun to dive through the window instead of opening the door....”

If you have a tween or teen in your house, you’ve probably experienced similar incidents, maybe dozens of times!

Scientists have recently discovered reasons for such antics--the synapses in adolescent frontal lobes

(where organizational, logical thoughts are processed) begin to disconnect at about age 10 or 12. Experts could give you all sorts of data, but I’ll make it simple: their brains are melting. It’s not some sort of conspiracy against adults, it’s a physiological fact.

### **A Special Caution**

While all adolescents endure “melted brains” to some degree, foster teens have even greater challenges, because they may have missed out on the crucial nurturing and attachment that occurs in functional families. You must recreate, as much as possible, those early bonds, as you take the place of the disconnected brain. In order to do so, I recommend that you (1) rely on a Power greater than yourself and (2) keep ( or develop) a sense of humor.

People who laugh survive everything from cancer to hurricanes much better than those who stress out, get angry, or plunge into depression. In fact, laughing produces serotonin, a natural endorphine that helps you feel good. Conversely, anger and stress produce cortisol, a chemical that raises your blood pressure and increases your heart rate. The greater the anger, guilt or other negative emotion, the greater the production of cortisol. To heal a melted brain, reduce the level of stress-producing chemicals and increase the level of contentment-producing chemicals.

### **Specific Strategies for Parents of Teens**

Over the past 40 years, I’ve developed five specific ways to manage kids in the throes of melted brains: (1) Don’t take the behavior personally, (2) Stay calm, (3) Be consistent, (4) Set clear boundaries, and (5) Establish appropriate consequences. These five concepts will help you deal with almost every situation that comes up. In some cases, you may need to call in therapists, social workers, and/or the police, but most adolescents will respond to these five principles.

The first two points, “Don’t take behaviors personally” and “Stay calm” are the most important. The angrier you get, the more defiant your kid will become. Anger never really accomplishes much and usually gets in the way of a solution.

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The third point, “Be Consistent,” means that you don’t change your mind from one day to the next; your kids can count on the family rules being the same. Such consistency gives them security as they bounce through the ups and downs of Adolescence. However, please note that consistency does not mean rigidity—that’s why thinking things through in advance is so important! Figure out how certain actions impact behavior and help your child form healthy pathways, to reconnect his brain’s CEO and get it functioning again.

My last two adolescent parenting points are that you have to “set boundaries” and “establish clear, reasonable consequences” when those boundaries are violated.

Too many of us tend to wish that our kids would just “do what’s right” without our being forced to monitor them all the time. After all, they should realize that life will be easier if they graduate from high school and secure some sort of professional training. They ought to know that swiping lawn ornaments or vandalizing a rival school’s campus is illegal and could lead to fines and/or time in juvenile detention. But they don’t understand—their low-functioning brains are stuck in the present and have slight capacity for abstract, analytical thinking. For this reason, you must write down your house rules and ensure your teen abides by them.

My copyrighted Point System will help you set boundaries and award consequences. The Point System was originally developed for our special needs foster home; we took behaviorally challenged adolescents who were one step away from the criminal justice system. However, within a short time, I realized that the System worked even better with basically normal children.

### **Definition of The Point System**

The System involves three different number evaluations that must be written down at least once a day: (1) attitude in general, (2) environmental responsibility (picking up after yourself), and (3) performance on assigned chores. Each of these categories are rated on a scale of 1 - 10, with 10 meaning “Couldn’t Be Better.” The System can be as complicated or as simple as you want to make it—whatever fits with your personal style. Writing things down in some fashion

allows you to avoid being at the mercy of your emotion/hormone driven teen.

To use the Point System successfully, be concrete, make the rewards worthwhile, and tie rewards to activities. The System works because it focuses on positive conduct. When kids get attention for certain behavior, they repeat it. But the System isn’t easy to set up or maintain; it’s not a magic bullet. I wish it were!!!

A full explanation of the Point System is available in my book, *Loving Firmness: Successfully Raising Teenagers Without Losing Your Mind*.

### **Show Unconditional Love**

I repeat, don’t forget that you love your mouthy, rebellious, sullen, etc. youth. *The more unloving a kid acts, the more he or she needs to know that you’re in it for the long haul.* Teens, with melted brains, must rely on the certainty that Mom and Dad are vigilant and on the job. You’ll find that your teens may object loudly but are secretly comforted by the fact that you’ll keep them from doing something totally stupid. You can’t stop all stupidity but you can help lessen its severity.

Hold that thought the next time your child intercepts her midterm report card that shows she’s failing English or pushes the car out of the driveway so he can start it without waking you up. Take a deep breath, tell your kid who’s flunking that you love her, pause, then point out that the phone, the internet, the TV, and her iPod are off limits until she brings a note from her English teacher.

And here’s the hard part—make sure that you confiscate the iPod and that the internet, the TV and the phone are where you can see them. Keep the car locked and the keys under your pillow.... Otherwise, you’ll find yourself constantly battling your teen. It’s kind of like kid-proofing your house when said child was a toddler. Always choose the simplest, most straight-forward course.

*Corrie Lynne Player, with her husband, Gary Player, is the mother of nine children and grandmother of 31. She has made children and family issues her life's work. She wants to reassure parents that they should enjoy their children and not worry too much. You can find her at [www.corrielynneplayer.com](http://www.corrielynneplayer.com). Her latest book, *The Everything Parent's Guide to Raising the Adopted Child*, has just been released and can be purchased through our website: [www.hawaiifosterparent.org](http://www.hawaiifosterparent.org).*

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**THE STORY BEHIND OUR LOGO**



In 1996, foster parent Cid Newsome created the association's logo. Cid always liked Hawai`ian quilts & thinks of them as a natural representation of family. She chose to use the hibiscus in the design because it is the state flower. Instead of the traditional leaves, Cid created a design featuring two boys & two girls. She says, "I chose to include children in the design because foster parents are taking care of the children of Hawai`i. In a way, we are "quilting" them into our family. Foster children become an integral part of our family & the quilt design represents the ability to take pieces (different people) & patch them together to make a whole. Children and flowers are both represented in Hawai`ian by the word pua.



**Hawaii  
Foster Parent  
Association**

**E PŪLAMA NĀ KEIKI  
HFPA Newsletter  
76 N. King St., Suite 201  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817**

*This newsletter is supported, in part, by the*

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## Foster Parents ~ We Need Your Help!

The Hawai'i Department of Human Services (DHS) has been working hard to improve the system and has asked us to help them find out how well the policy for notifying foster parents of court hearings is working. Will you please help by answering the questions below by Feb. 13, 2009? Return survey to: **HFPA, 76 N. King St., #201, Honolulu, HI 96817** You may also take this survey on-line at [www.hawaiifosterparent.org](http://www.hawaiifosterparent.org).

Are you regularly notified of your foster child's court hearings? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If you answered yes above, by what method were you notified? <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail <input type="checkbox"/> U.S Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Fax
If you are being notified of court hearings, how much lead time are you given? <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Days <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Week <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Weeks
Is your social worker supporting your attendance and participation at the court hearing? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Additional comments:

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**Mahalo for your Kokua!**