Dear Families,

In this time of extreme uncertainty, change and stress, we thought this would be a good moment to review who we are, who we have been and what we offer going forward.

Adoption Journeys was created through a government grant in 1997, in response to the lobbying efforts of adoptive families who found they needed specialized support throughout the life cycles of their adopted children and their families. Since that time, in five offices across the state, we have been supporting adoptive and guardianship parents through direct clinical work, various support groups for parents and youth, fun “respite” events to bring families together and many other strengths-based ways of helping (see a description of our services HERE). We are a welcoming community, and are committed to social justice and anti-racism.

This year, the global pandemic has brought further stress and challenge to families, and has called on us to offer our support in new ways. We are now meeting with parents online in order to provide direct support, guidance and hopeful new directions. We are offering parent and youth support groups and parent webinars online. One of the surprise benefits of this moment has been the ability to bring people together who would usually be too distant geographically, as well as a new ability to take advantage of the offerings of other regional offices. And, along with some new online social gatherings such as sing alongs and Pictionary, we are finding safe ways to meet in-person outdoors, and to experience the grounding and reassurance that uniquely comes from in-person community.

During this time, we have found that some of the guide posts we have used with families throughout the years, are even more significant and (hopefully) helpful now:
- when overwhelmed or anxious, make the world small and close;
- tend to your nervous system state and to your senses as the first priority;
- focus on connection and relationship over correction and “good behavior”;
- prioritize basic safety, security and wellbeing over academic progress (we know this is an extra struggle now);
- acknowledge and embrace the big feelings, in order to move through them as they arise, especially grief.

Like many of you, we are feeling our way through this time of strife and learning new things about ourselves and how we can be of service. But our values and focus remain the same: to honor the strengths in adoptive and guardianship families, and to offer flexible, family-centered support. Please know we are here, and be in touch as needed for any part of our services.

Warmly,

Nancy Solow, MSW, LICSW
Regional Manager
November is Adoption Awareness Month

In recognition of this designated time to reflect on adoption, we invite you to view and discuss three very special short films with us.

Join Adoption Journeys on 3 Thursday evenings in November for a short film and parent discussion.
Each event will run from 7:30-8:30 p.m.

We have created three mini documentary films which are free and open to the public for use by individuals, families, schools, clinicians, social service agencies and anyone seeking to raise awareness about adoption identity and relationships impacted by adoption. These honest portraits bring to light the varied narratives of those touched by adoption, underscoring the aspects of adoption identity that don’t often get talked about, but should. Please follow the link to listen to the words of people in adoptive families as they reflect on their joy, fear, grief, hope, anger, love and longing. Go to http://child-familyservices.org/florence/ to view the films anytime.

November 5th
Our Many Voices: the lived experience of adopted youth

November 12th
We Are the Lucky Ones: Voices of fathers in adoptive families

November 19th
Siblinghood in Adoption: Things we don’t often talk about

We hope you will join us for one or all of these films. Please RSVP to your local Adoption Journeys office to receive the link to participate in any of the three evenings in this special series honoring the many voices and experiences of adoptive family life.
Going a Little Stir Crazy?  
Boredom Buster Baskets to the Rescue!

A collection of small surprises for everyone just when you need it most, delivered right to your doorstep.

When leaving the house is less and less of an option, Adoption Journeys delivers! We will pack up a stash of treats and cool activities to infuse a little surprise into your day. Baskets will be dropped off in mid-November. Supplies are limited, so we will accept “reservations” first-come-first-served. Sign up now!

**Deadline is November 16th to reserve a basket**, but supplies are limited, so send in your request ASAP. Recipients must be currently registered with Adoption Journeys. Please send the following information to Lisa at lmintz@cfservices.org.

- **Names and ages (of kids) of everyone in your household.**
- **Daytime phone number**
- **Street Address**

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**Important Administrative Notes from your Adoption Journeys Office**

**When there is a fee for our events:** For those of you registering for upcoming events and programming that require fees, we are now requiring that all checks be made out payable to **Child & Family Services**, our parent agency. This is a new requirement and it is effective immediately. We realize we are still old-fashioned in our request for paper payments and we appreciate your support in remembering this update. Thank you!

**Recently we have also changed our consent paperwork requirements.** As many of you may realize, we will now need an annually updated signature on your general consent to participate in our programs as well as signed event-specific permission forms and consents for telehealth for each family member. When possible, we will send the paper event-specific forms ahead of time once we receive your registration. If you receive them by mail, please sign them and bring them with you to the event. You may scan and return most documents by email. (A scan app for your phone is cheap and make this easy!) If you ever have any questions about forms, please be in touch with us as we understand that it can be confusing and overwhelming, especially if you are new to our program.

Thank you for all your help and cooperation!

Nancy, Lisa, Maya, and Micki
FORTS are for EVERYONE!
Create your own magical fort for a cozy family night!

We will deliver (to your doorstep) lots of fun supplies and ideas for you to create your dream fort. We will “zoom in” for a tour of your cool hideout, and stream some Pixar movie shorts to watch together. So join us for forts and shorts! Now, more than ever, we can all use a quiet corner all to ourselves. Get creative!

Friday, November 13th, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
RSVP required by Nov 9th. email: lmintz@cfservices.org

Tents, dens, tree houses, attic hideouts, lookouts, and forts of all sorts are a universal need; a chance to build a tiny home away from home. Forts have always been an important part of child development and now more than ever, we could all use a quiet, comfy space to shield us from the outside world. If you need inspiration, CLICK HERE for a great article about why forts are important for us all! “In quarantine, all our needs are amplified. Fort-building can help kids process this unnerving new reality on their own terms — through imagination and most importantly, control.”
Sunday Afternoon
Winter Song Sing-Along Concert!
Calling all winter songbirds
to join our song leaders, Annie Patterson and Peter Blood

Sunday, December 13th
4:30-5:30 p.m. on Zoom
Pre-registration is required, but singing talent is not!

Adoption Journeys is pleased to once again offer a unique brand of sing-along concert for your family. Annie and Peter will sing and play their instruments to accompany you in a joyful winter concert. And we will all learn the words together!

Meet our Song Leaders!
Annie Patterson & Peter Blood, creators of the popular songbooks Rise Up Singing and Rise Again, have played a central role in helping to create a quiet revolution of group singing in the U.S. They have spent decades honing their skills as performers and song leaders at schools, churches, conferences, folk clubs and festivals across the U.S. and abroad. Groups in all these settings have treasured their uncanny ability to choose songs that are fun and inspiring. Annie & Peter are adoptive parents and live in Amherst, MA. More about Annie & Peter’s work: www.riseupandsing.org

RSVP by December 4th
to Lisa at lmintz@cfservices.org
Adoption Journeys

GROUPS FOR ADOPTIVE PARENTS AND YOUTH

Adhering to local guidelines and for the safety of our community, our groups will temporarily utilize an online format.

If you are interested in participating in any of the programming below, please contact us to receive more information about how we will stay connected.

Groups for Parents

Single Parent Group - Online. Connection and support just for adoptive parents who are parenting solo. This group welcomes single caregivers of any age, parenting children of any age. Meets alternating Tuesday evenings 8:00-9:00 p.m. Contact Lisa for dates and details: lmintz@cfservices.org.

Parents of children of any age - Online. Support for all adoptive parents raising children of any age. This open group often features guest speakers monthly, and meets on alternating Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.. You are welcome to join anytime! Contact Maya for dates and details: mrcolt@cfservices.org.

Parents Raising Children of Color - Online. A Friday morning discussion group. Come share, listen, celebrate and learn with other parents facing similar challenges in connection to raising children of color and/or being a transracial family. Contact Maya for upcoming dates and details: mrcolt@cfservices.org.

Groups for Youth

Youth Adoption Group - Online. An activity group designed for youth ages 10-12 with fun games, crafts and relaxed discussions about identity, family and adoption. Contact Micki for all the details and to register for the next session: mmcinnis@cfservices.org.

To participate in any of our groups, please call or email the Adoption Journeys office to register.

“The most powerful buffer in times of stress is our social connectedness.”

Dr. Bruce Perry
Adoptive Parents of Color (APOC)
State-wide Support Group

Next Group Meeting, Nov. 11th, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

We are responding to the times, and taking advantage of the opportunities this pandemic and Zoom offers us, to gather adoptive parents of color together across the state during this racially-charged and socially distant time. Meetings will be facilitated by Maya Rege-Colt, Taisha Alexis, and Susan Botzko, all Adoption Journeys social workers of color working at offices in Florence, Worcester, and Lawrence.

Why join these meetings?

1. Connect: This group provides an opportunity to overcome isolation and network with other parents as well as share different anti-racism resources and coping strategies.
2. Validation: This support group will be filled with people who share similar struggles regarding racism and parenting, and can validate your experiences.
3. Encouragement: We hope this support group will be a safe place where we can offer encouragement and brainstorm solutions that relieve feelings of distress and loneliness - and offer hope.

To register or for more information, email Maya at mrcolt@cfservices.org

Anyone else struggling to stay in their upstairs brain?!

While stress levels are high, it can be easy to expect our kids to respond better than the adults around them. Understanding more about how our brains work is the first step to identifying the tools that help when things get tough.

Author Jessica Sinarski, LPCMH explains how healthy brain development is relationship-dependent, and how repair to traumatized brains occurs in relationship to caregivers. For a bit more calm and less frustration in this difficult time, cuddle up with a warm cup or tea and watch a free 1-hour webinar for parents. Adoption Journeys highly recommends it!

It's a Brain Thing!
Follow this link for a Free Webinar with Jessica Sinarksi
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUtLZE1UB8g
Adoption Journeys Newsletter
A seasonal update of our programming for adoptive families living in Western Massachusetts

Look Inside for Fall Programming

- Boredom Buster Baskets for all ages
- Parent and Youth online Groups
- Forts for Families
- Video Discussion Series for Parents
- Winter Songs Sing-Along