

Caregiver Connection

February 2010

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers

Denise Revels Robinson brings her expertise to Washington State



Denise Revels Robinson joined DSHS as the Children's Administration Assistant Secretary in October 2009, bringing 41 years of child welfare experience to our state. She comes to us from Wisconsin.

DSHS Secretary, Susan Dreyfus, also from Wisconsin, had the following words to say about Denise: "I was seeking someone with a proven and passionate commitment to public child welfare. Denise Revels Robinson is that person. Denise understands the function of child welfare within the spectrum of social services and community."

Denise knew that she was destined for this work from an early age. When she was 11, her parents became foster parents and she learned early what a difference a caring adult can make in a child's life. Her values about what it takes to make the child welfare system work are embedded in every conversation and every decision. She speaks often of the importance of dedicated, concerned adults who care for children – foster parents, relatives, and adoptive parents. But at the center of it all is the

child, who is impacted by every action and every decision. "Putting the child in the center allows us to see things differently. With the child in the center, there is a solution for everything," says Denise. Relatedly, Denise places a very high value on foster parents working with birth parents.

Another value is including the caregiver as part of the team. "As direct caregivers, they know about the day to day life of the child. Their input is critical. We need to listen to what they have to say, and we especially need to include them in Family Team Decision-Making Meetings and staffings," says Denise. She adds, "An especially difficult time for children is when they are first entering out-of-home care. The skill and strength of the caregiver during this crucial period makes a big difference to children." Not only are caregivers helping the child to adjust and feel safe, but they are moving quickly to get health assessments and school records, and getting the child reconnected to school, services, and activities.

Denise describes some of her goals for improving out-of-home care here in Washington:

- Safely reducing the number of children in placement
- Keeping children safe at home
- Achieving permanency more quickly
- Increasing supports for relatives caring for children involved in the child welfare system
- Increasing homes and options for teens in care
- Continuing to improve communication with our partners
- Safely reducing the number of children of color in the child welfare system
- Increasing compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act

Denise is excited to get to know you all and hear about your concerns. She sends her warm greetings and appreciation for opening your hearts and homes to children. She looks forward to periodically responding to your issues and questions through the Caregiver Connection. "We can't do it without them," says Denise with a smile.

If you have questions or comments for Denise, please send them to Dinah Martin, 360-902-0740, madi300@dshs.wa.gov. We will share Denise's responses with you all!

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Meet Calvin and Barbara Watts



When you've grown up as the oldest of nine children, you get pretty good at keeping others in line. So when Barbara and Calvin's son was grown and on his own, Calvin was the one suffering from "empty nest syndrome". A wise CA social worker from their church recognized what he still had to give and encouraged him to consider foster parenting. Barbara had her own take on that idea, suggesting that he and the foster children would be comfortable out in the motor home. But it was Barbara who brought up the idea again some time later and they were soon moving down the path of becoming foster parents. That was 16 years ago. They started with just one child... then there were 2... then 3... 4... 5.... They are now licensed for six boys and have four currently in their home.

Calvin describes a scene he has always had in his head – of a big white house and lots of kids and adults playing together in the backyard. Before foster parenting, he didn't really know what that image was about. But now that big white house on two acres in Renton is the Watts residence. The yard includes a basketball and tennis court and the porch includes two white swings where lots of important conversation happens. Calvin says, "These kids aren't bad, but they have issues. What it takes is lots of patience to help them make it through."

Calvin and Barbara see foster parenting as something that involves their whole extended family. The family Christmas brunch draws a large crowd and the kids in Calvin and Barbara's home are thoroughly embraced by all. "Everyone asks ahead of time about desires and sizes and colors. The whole family makes sure the kids get what they want and need." And that's not just for the kids currently in their home! The crowd may include just about everyone who has ever walked through the Watts' door in his journey through foster care. Calvin says that they continue to have contact with almost every child they have cared for. The Watts family just keeps getting bigger and bigger!

That motor home mentioned earlier has been a part of the experience of being in the Watts family. A couple of years ago it hauled 8 kids and 4 adults on a two week vacation to Disneyland and southern California, building memories and attachments.

Maybe the highest compliment came recently when a former neighbor contacted the Watts to say they named their first child Calvin, in honor of that guy who could work miracles with kids.

Barbara and Calvin are now in their 60s, but Calvin says foster parenting is how he stays young. That's a good thing!

You can too.

Dangers of mini-blind cords

There has been much publicity lately about the dangers posed by window blind cords. This article from State Farm Insurance contains some information to help caregivers make good decisions about their window coverings.

The looped cords used for window draperies, vertical blinds, pleated shades, and horizontal blinds pose a serious danger to young children.

According to a study published in a June 1997 Journal of the American Medical Association article, it is estimated that:

- 359 children were strangled by window covering cords from 1981 to 1995, which is equivalent to one strangulation every two weeks.
- Nearly half (49 percent) of the strangulations go unreported.
- Almost all the deaths (93 percent) were children three years old and younger.



Most strangulations occurred when the parents thought the child was safe, such as in their rooms or in their bed or crib.

Two common scenarios were found:

- Infants playing or sleeping in their cribs near windows got caught and tangled in the looped cords of the window treatment.
- Toddlers, while trying to look out a window or climbing on furniture, lost their footing and were wrapped in the cord.

Protect Children From Window Cord Strangulation

- Never place a crib or child's bed near a window.
- Never put a chair, sofa, bench, or bookcase near a window with a dangling cord.
- Get rid of loops on two-corded horizontal blinds in three steps:
 1. Cut the cord above the end tassel (It may resemble a small wooden or plastic "chimble").
 2. Remove the equalizer buckle.
 3. Add new tassels for the two cords that have been created. Slip a tassel onto each cord and tie knots to hold them in place.

Note: The Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) urges to not tie the cords together after cutting them. This will only create a new loop in which a child can become entangled.

- Get rid of loops for two-corded pleated or cellular shades in three steps:
 1. Leave the cord stop in place as close as possible to the headrail, when the blind is completely closed.
 2. Cut the cords above the end tassel
 3. Knot a separate tassel at the end of each cord

Warning: When the shades are raised, a loop will appear above the cord stop. Always keep the cord out of the reach of children.

Childproof vertical blinds, continuous loop systems and drapery cords

These window coverings require looped cords to function. Do not cut the loops. Instead, install a permanent tie-down device to the floor, wall, or window jamb so the cord or chain is pulled tight.

New tassels and tie-downs are available free of charge from the Window Covering Safety Council by calling 1-800-506-4636.

An invitation from WIC to foster parents and children

Dear Foster Parent,

Are you fostering a child under five years old or a pregnant teen? If so, don't miss out on WIC-the Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children! Being a foster parent is a wonderful experience and a big responsibility. We want you to know WIC is here to support you as you care for your foster child.

WIC gives foster children healthy foods, growth assessments and referrals to other services they might need. Good nutrition in early childhood is critical. Over 90 percent of brain growth happens in pregnancy and the first five years of a child's life.

That's where WIC comes in. With WIC you'll get checks to use at your local grocery store for up to \$60 worth of healthy food. Your foster child can receive WIC and food stamps.

Foods from WIC	Amount for a 1 to 5 year old child each month	Amount for a pregnant teen each month
• Milk	• 5 gallons	• 6 gallons
• Cheese	• 1 pound	• 1 pound
• Peanut butter or dried beans/peas/lentils	• 18 oz. or 1 lb. dried	• 18 oz. or 2 lbs. dried
• Eggs	• 1 dozen	• 1 dozen
• Cereal	• 36 ounces/about 3 boxes	• 36 ounces/about 3 boxes
• Juice	• 3 cans frozen or canned	• 7 cans frozen or canned
• Whole wheat bread/brown rice/corn tortillas	• 2 -16 ounce loaves	• 1- 16 ounce loaf
• Fresh fruits/vegetables	• \$6 worth	• \$8 worth

WIC provides formula and baby food for infants under age one. Formula is probably the most costly food item you'll buy. WIC provides seven to nine cans of powdered formula or an equal amount of concentrate each month. You'll need to plan on buying a few cans each month since WIC does not provide all the formula a baby will need. At six months, baby food fruits and vegetables and infant cereal are added.

WIC is much more than food. It's a full-service public health nutrition program. We'll help you with feeding and nutrition questions. Our Registered Dietitians are available if you have a child with special nutrition needs. If you need other help, we'll help you find out where to get it. You and your own children might be eligible for WIC and not even know it!

Check WIC income guidelines below to see. Foster care payments don't count in your income.

WIC Income Guidelines

- Family of 2 earning up to \$2,247
- Family of 4 earning up to \$3,400
- Family of 6 earning up to \$4,553

Washington has over 200 WIC clinics

- It's easy to find a WIC clinic. Just enter your zip code in the WIC Clinic Search Site.
- Or, call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 or visit ParentHelp123 web site.

Getting WIC is easy

- Just call your neighborhood clinic and make an appointment.
- There are no lengthy forms. In fact, WIC takes care of the paperwork for you.

Thank you for being a foster parent. Remember, your foster child has you, and you have WIC.

Kristin Sasseen, *Outreach Coordinator*
 Washington State WIC Nutrition Program
 Kristin.sasseen@doh.wa.gov
 1-800-841-1410, Ext. 3633

Adoption support monthly cash payment

Where to start the discussion

The process of negotiating the monthly cash payment should start with a discussion of child needs and family circumstances. As part of the application packet, prospective parents are asked to complete a worksheet. In completing the worksheet, parents provide the following information:

- Child's special needs and anticipated expense
- Family and community resources
- Family Circumstances

The worksheet guides the discussion and assists the family in thinking about how they will integrate the needs of child and any expense associated into the family's lifestyle.

Regional Contacts

Region 1 – Spokane

- Jan Lammers* 509-363-3383
- Pam Copeland* 509-363-3379

Region 2 – Yakima

- Steve Bergland* 509-225-6500
- Carol Cyr 509-225-6531
(Financial Specialist)

Region 3 – Monroe

- Steve Foster* 360-805-3032
- Linda Richardson* 360-805-3030

Region 4 – Bellevue

- Aaron Washington* 425-590-3072
- Jenne Norris 425-590-3069
(Social Worker)

Region 5 – Tacoma

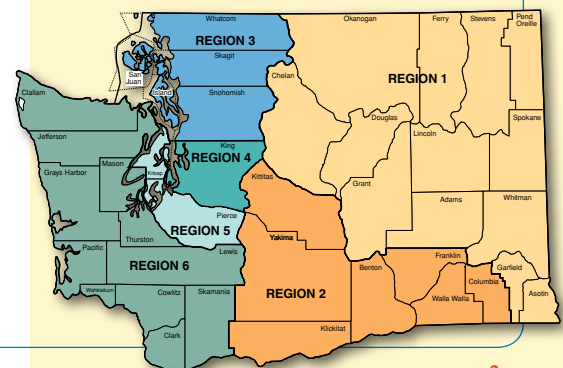
- Cindy Anderson* 253-983-6359
- Laura Davis* 253-983-6281

Region 6 – Tumwater

- Cheryl Barrett* 360-725-6758
- Kim Mower* 360-725-6778

Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682
 (listen carefully to the recorded message)

* Adoption Support Consultants



Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

1624 Team gets ready for 2010

When you look at the front page of this newsletter, you see a column on the right that appears in every issue. The people listed there are very important to you! They are the foster parent representatives to the 1624 Committee! Their job is to represent you and your issues at quarterly meetings with Children's Administration management. At each meeting, they bring the issues identified in the regional 1624 meetings to the statewide table, where they are jointly addressed by the 1624 team. Take some time and get to know these wonderful folks. They are your voice in improving services to children, families, and caregivers. Attend your local meetings, if you can. If you can't, contact them with your concerns and questions. They are there to serve!

A new era for the Caregiver Connection

This month sees the first month of the Caregiver Connection delivered to you electronically. CA is excited to move into the new technological world with you. Each month you will be sent a link to the latest issue. You can also access back issues, if you wish. The link will be sent through the fosterparent listserv. If you have not yet subscribed to the listserv, you can do so at <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?A0=FOSTERPARENTS&X=409D615E152E70433C&Y=madi300%40dshs.wa.gov>.

This move will enable us to get information to you more quickly and efficiently and at much less cost. – an important consideration in these times. The look and content of the newsletter will remain the same, delivering stories and information of use and interest to you all.

A few of you have indicated an interest in staying with the old technology. You may request to continue receiving hard copies through the mail by contacting Dinah Martin at 360-902-0740.

