



Kinship Quarterly

Strengthening Families

April 2016

IN THIS ISSUE: STAR HEALTH PART 2

Welcome to the second issue for 2016. In this issue, we will continue to focus on Star Health, in particular, Texas Health Steps and some benefits offered to STAR Health Members. But first, here is some information on the newly created Ombudsman for Children and Youth in Foster Care.

The newly created Ombudsman for Children and Youth in Foster Care will be up and running effective May 2, 2016. This new office serves as a neutral party in assisting children and youth in the conservatorship of DFPS with complaints they may have about the foster care system, their caregivers, or the agencies that they may interact with.

The Ombudsman is dedicated to taking calls from the children and youth themselves while they are still in the conservatorship of DFPS. With permission from the foster youth, the ombudsman may work with staff in any Health and Human Services program to resolve a complaint. If a youth makes a report of abuse or neglect then the ombudsman will stay on the line with the child or youth to aid in making a referral to State Wide Intake so that the allegations can be forwarded to Licensing or CPS for investigation.

A child or youth can contact the Ombudsman for Children and Youth at 1-844-286-0769

Texas Health Steps Offering Regular Checkups for Children in Foster Care

One of the best ways to get well and stay well is preventive care. That's why children and young adults in the STAR Health program can get regular medical checkups at no cost. This is through a program called Texas Health Steps. This program helps members get medical exams, vision and hearing screenings, vaccinations, lab tests and dental exams. There are three main benefits of Texas Health Steps:

- Finding and treating medical and dental problems early.
- Making sure a child gets his or her vaccines.
- Providing health education to keep children and young adults healthy.

Medical Checkups

During a Texas Health Step checkup, the doctor will look at a child from head to toe. The doctor will also see if a child is growing and developing like other children his or her age. These checkups can help catch health problems before they get worse and become harder to treat.

All children who are new to the STAR Health program need a Texas Health Steps

checkup within 30 days of enrollment. These regular checkups should continue through a child's 20th birthday.

A complete schedule for regular Texas Health Steps checkups is below:

- Hospital discharge to 5 days old
- 2 weeks old
- 2 months
 - 4 months
 - 6 months
 - 9 months
 - 12 months
 - 15 months
 - 18 months
- 2 years
- 30 months
- 3 years
- Every year after through age 20

Dental Checkups

Children and youth in foster care should also get regular dental checkups through Texas Health Steps. During these checkups, the dentist will look at a child's teeth and gums and check for any dental problems. The dentist will see if the child is developing like other children his or her age. Children and youth in foster care may also be able to get dental sealants. These could help prevent tooth decay.

All children who are new to the STAR Health program need a Texas Health Steps dental exam within 60 days of enrollment. These should start at age six months and

should be scheduled every six months after that.

Extra Benefits for STAR Health Members

STAR Health members can get extra benefits in addition to their Texas Health Steps checkups. These are called value-added services. These include:

- Extra vision benefits. These include prescription glasses or \$100 toward the cost of any features or frames not covered by Medicaid.
- \$30 every three months for over-the-counter medications through a mail-order program.
- CentAccount. This is a program offering rewards dollars for members who complete wellness visits, dental checkups and other health screenings. This program is for members ages 18 through 20.

Please note that value-added services may have restrictions and limitations.

For more information about Texas Health Steps or any other benefits and services available for STAR Health members, call 1-866-912-6283 or visit www.FosterCareTX.com.

Good to Know



Caring for a young child can be a big responsibility. Children of all ages, including infants and toddlers, are deeply

hurt when they are physically, sexually, or emotionally abused or neglected.

While every child and situation is different, traumatic experiences can be overwhelming to young children and lead to problems in their daily lives. Children may react physically, emotionally, or experience delays in development.

Supporting a child who has experienced trauma can seem overwhelming because so many areas of development may be impacted. The best place to begin is with the relationship.

Let's look at joint attention as an example. **Joint attention** is the shared focus of two individuals on an object. It is achieved when one individual alerts another to an object by means of eye-gazing, pointing or other verbal or non-verbal indications. An individual gazes at another individual, points to an object and then returns their gaze to the individual. Most eight-to-ten-month old children can follow a line of regard, (where the eyes are looking) and all typically developing 11- to 14-month-old children can do so.

Joint attention requires a lot of skills. Two important skills in joint attention are following eye gaze and identifying intention. The ability to identify intention is important in a child's ability to learn language and direct the attention of others.

Joint attention is important for many aspects of language development including comprehension, word production and word learning. Socio-emotional development and the ability to take part in normal relationships are also influenced by joint attention abilities.

The development of joint attention may be negatively impacted by a traumatic experience.

Typically developing infants seek out relationships with caregivers by establishing eye contact. Infants impacted by a traumatic experience may avoid eye contact, which can then impact the development of joint attention. However, joint attention is a skill that can be taught. By teaching a child joint attention we can have a positive impact on the child's social/emotional development, the acquisition of language, and the promotion of the child's cognitive development.

What else can we do to support development? As much as possible, expand

the circle of caring relationships. Our littles ones need sustained patterns of caring, responsive relationships. In addition to parents, siblings, other relatives, friends, neighbors, and child care providers are examples of people who may be able to provide the relationships.



Another intervention is wellness-promoting routines and practices. Consistent, predictable routines such as bedtimes and mealtimes help young children learn to manage their energy levels and their emotions, and promote trust.

Children who regularly get physical activity tend to have a more positive body-image, better health and quality of life, and more positive family and peer relationships.

In summary, building strong relationships with young children can support their social/emotional development, communication skills, thinking skills, and exploration and play skills.

Tips for a Safe Spring

Walking and Biking Safety

- Younger children are learning to become independent. They enjoy walking, riding bikes and playing outside, but they don't have the judgment to cope with traffic by themselves yet. Learn to keep your kids safe when they are on the move.

Sun Safety for Babies

- Keep babies younger than 6 months out of direct sunlight. Move your baby to the shade under a tree, umbrella or stroller canopy. Dress babies in lightweight clothing that covers the arms and legs, and use brimmed hats.

Water Safety

- Provide touch supervision, meaning that an adult is within arm's reach anytime your young child is in or near water.
- At the beach, stay within the designated swimming area and ideally within the visibility of a lifeguard. Be aware of rip currents. If you get caught in a current, don't try to swim against it. Swim parallel to shore until clear of the current.
- Be aware that pools may have unsafe drain systems. Supervise children closely.

Resources

- www.facebook.com/TexasKinshipCaregivers
- [Star Health](https://www.starhealth.com)
- <http://www.texashomevisiting.org>
- www.helpandhope.org
- www.MCH.org
- www.sightandsoundreading.com/
- www.dfps.state.tx.us/Adoption_and_Foster_Care/Kinship_Care/
- www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/default.asp
- www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Child_Safety/default.asp

Kinship Worker Spotlight - Laura Doty, Region 3 - Denton County

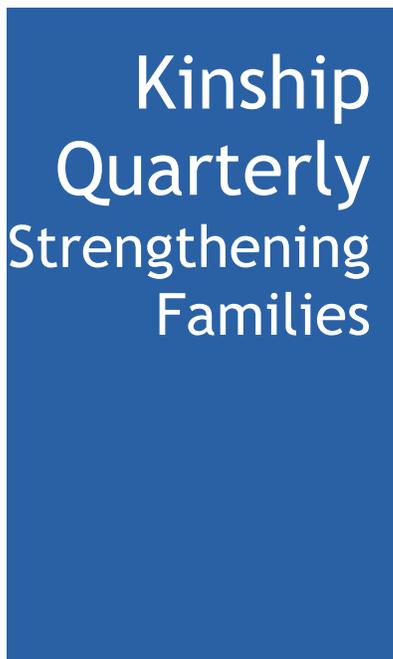
Submitted by: Kristy Douglas, Kinship Supervisor



Laura Doty has been a Kinship worker since 2007, serving primarily Denton and Wise counties. She has 17 years tenure with the agency and has worked in Investigations, Family Based Safety Services, Conservatorship, Foster and Adoptive Home

Development and as an On-the-Job Training supervisor. She has a master's degree in social work and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to her position. Laura is a leader within her unit and serves as acting supervisor for her unit. She is a respected team player and routinely assists co-workers both inside and outside

her program. Laura goes above and beyond on a daily basis to ensure the needs of her kinship families are met quickly, often working evenings and weekends to accommodate their schedules. She is reliable and has a strong work ethic, always ensuring that tasks are complete according to expectations. Laura is passionate about her work with kinship families and children and is a great advocate for them. She is a pleasure to supervise and is very deserving of being recognized in the Kinship Spotlight. Thank you for all that you do, Laura!



**Report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, the elderly, or people with disabilities at
(800) 252-5400 or www.txabusehotline.org.**

