



# post adoption PARENT GUIDE

May, 2021 | Issue 2

## Hello Families,

Welcome back! We hope that you and your families are doing well and enjoyed our first newsletter. RISE, Inc has contracted with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare to provide post-permanency services to adoptive and guardianship families. In this month's newsletter, we have included events and information that we hope is beneficial and helpful.

Please visit the Idaho Adoption Resource Exchange (IARE) website ([idadoptresources.org](http://idadoptresources.org)) where you can find out more information about RISE and our services for post-permanency families, as well as information on support groups, training, and other helpful resources.

During the month of May, we acknowledge two important issues, Foster Care and Mental Health. Every year, these two topics are a focus of the month.

Foster Care and Mental Health awareness is important because it



## IARE Staff Update: *Jessica Colson*

We are excited to welcome Jessica Colson to our team as a Case Manager.

Jessica is a Licensed Social Worker who completed her undergraduate degree at Boise State University in 2010. Jessica is currently attending Northwest Nazarene University for her Master's in Social Work. Jessica has worked with a variety of clients throughout the years. Jessica's passion is working with children and families.

allows a chance for individuals, families, and communities to show support to those who have experienced foster care and/or mental health firsthand and learn more about how their experience has shaped their lives. Bringing these topics to the forefront and including them in our conversations by growing our awareness means we're laying the foundation for a more inclusive community in the future.

Jessica's educational goals include obtaining her Play Therapy Certification and continuing to gain more knowledge and skills to help others work through trauma.

Jessica enjoys spending time with her family, friends, camping, crafting, cooking, baking, and has a love for anything Disney!

**"Our greatest natural resource is the minds of our children." - Walt Disney**

If you have any questions or would like to connect with Jacqueline please contact [adoptsupport@mycpid.com](mailto:adoptsupport@mycpid.com)

## Who Is Rise

RISE, Inc is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1987. RISE provides a range of services to adults, children, and families in Utah, Oregon, Arizona, Texas, and Idaho.

RISE provides services such as foster care, after-school and summer programs, early intervention, mental health therapy, behavioral supports, respite, and disability services. RISE, Inc. recently acquired the Idaho chapter formally known as Community Partnerships of Idaho.



# OUR SERVICES

- **Outreach & Advocacy**

- These services will consist of monthly newsletters curated to specialized demographics.
  - Annually, you'll receive a subsidy review letter from RISE.
  - If you're a new family to the post permanency family, RISE staff will periodically conduct check in calls to see if there's anything they can do to support.
  - If you're navigating the juvenile court system or the special education system, and need support, RISE staff will happily assist you.
- **Assessment and Referral Services**
    - These services help families seeking assistance with specific needs (i.e. mental health needs, developmental disability assessments, transitional services, etc.) and are unsure about what resources are available to them.
    - Our staff will work with the family to assess their needs and describe their goals and will work to identify and coordinate appropriate services the family can access. These services are intended to prevent families from disruption, so families should reach out early with their concerns or requests.
  - **Crisis Intervention**
    - These services help families who are in urgent need and experiencing an imminent crisis. Examples of this could be emotional and behavioral outbursts displayed by children after adoption due to trauma history. Services can assist in disruptions in adoptive families where children may have to re-enter care. This may add to the children's already traumatic experiences of rejection, separation, and loss.

# FOSTER CARE MONTH

## May is National Foster Care Month

Foster Care as a Support to Families,  
Not a Substitute for Parents

[childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth](http://childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth)



 Child Welfare  
Information Gateway

 Children's  
Bureau

May is National Foster Care Month!

The *Reflections: Stories of Foster Care Audio Stories* series was developed by the **Children's Bureau's Capacity Building Center for States**. In this series, youth and child welfare professionals speak candidly about the importance of authentic youth engagement including at the individual, peer, and systems levels. We've linked out several videos to watch but there are additional videos available to review by visiting <https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/stories/>

## Andrea & Medina:

These two stories reveal the elements of a trusting relationship between a youth and her attorney. The attorney gained the youth's trust through modeling consistency and reliability. Their relationship developed into a lasting, supportive friendship that helped the youth learn to advocate for herself and her child.



*Click the play button to watch the video >>>*



## Jackie and Ronnie:

These two stories show how nonjudgmental, active listening and relatability builds rapport and trust. They showcase how opportunities to laugh and talk about real-life situations helped a youth and his attorney develop a mutually rewarding relationship.

*<<< Click the play button to watch the video*



## Mara's Story:

Mara is a happy, inquisitive, animated 9-year-old girl trying to enjoy summer with her two dads, adoptive parents Daniel, a high school English and film teacher and Anthony, a data analyst.

Like the rest of the country, Mara's summer looks different this year, but not just because of the COVID-19 pandemic. She finally has a place to call home with Anthony and Daniel after a long, emotional journey through several foster care homes on the road to

permanent placement.

Mara was referred to Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) in 2018 in the hopes of finding a home that would meet her complex needs as she progressed in age. WWK is part of a 10-year permanency initiative that is a collaboration between the Children's Home Society of Washington (CHSW), Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, and the Department for Children, Youth and Families in Washington State. Since the launch of the initiative, CHSW has served more than 289 children, matched 141 children pending adoptions, and assisted in facilitating over 35 adoptions.

Mara entered the foster care system in 2014 and experienced many placements in foster and group homes. During her time in care, Mara excelled in school and took an interest in helping others while working with various members of her case management team to address behavioral issues and trauma-related stress.

Daniel and Anthony first met Mara in May 2019. Longing for a family of their own, the couple had considered adoption for some time prior to finding Mara. They felt an immediate draw to her when they came across her profile online. "We always talked about adoption as something in the future," Daniel said. "One day we just said, 'why not now?' Mara was our first inquiry; it was serendipitous."

Her profile underscored that an ideal placement would be in a home supportive of her gender identity because it would allow for the family to help her explore with a deeper level of empathy, noting that she often depicted herself in drawings as a girl and expressed on several occasions that she was a girl. During this process, she came out as a transgender girl. "We were drawn to her from the moment we found her profile online, and we were completely taken by her once we met in person," Daniel said. "We are excited to be able to provide a loving, safe home for her to thrive in as she grows up."

Christy, Mara's CHSW WWK adoption recruiter affectionately refers to Mara as an intelligent, spunky young girl whose infectious spirit positively impacts everyone she meets. As part of Mara's care team, she provided support for Mara and her now-adoptive parents every step of the way, including adoption preparation work leading up to the adoption finalization.

Based in Idaho, Daniel and Anthony traveled to Washington state to meet the child who would ultimately become their family. Due to complications around the COVID-19 pandemic, the finalization of the placement and adoption took longer than expected. "The hardest part about the process was the wait," Daniel recounted. "After Mara came to us for the trial period, it was an excruciating wait for her to return. Every time we spoke with her, she asked when she could come back, and we just weren't sure how long it would take given the pandemic. We were all anxious to be together again."

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted other organizations in maintaining services, WWK continues to operate in this virtual environment, where recruiters are meeting with children and youth via phone calls and Skype, and actively looking for permanent placements. At the beginning stages of the pandemic in March there were 210 children enrolled in the program; from March through May, 17 children were matched with pre-adopt families and 16 adoptions have been finalized.

Mara loves to play dress up, proclaims every color of the rainbow is her favorite, and enjoys spending quality time with her dads, playing games, exploring the outdoors, watching shows and being a family. Her dads ensure Mara remains connected with her grandmother, who spent Christmas 2019 with them in Idaho. Mara's adoption finalized in June 2020. Daniel and Anthony sought to make the moment memorable by compiling a video with messages from her case workers and select friends and family.

## Here are some key facts about foster care:

1. There are **over 423,000 children and youth in foster care**. Over half have a case plan goal of reunification with their parents or primary caregiver.

2. Juvenile and family court systems can **influence whether children are reunified with their families** or reenter care.
  3. Meaningful and appropriate **involvement of youth in their court hearings** and case planning greatly benefits all participants and leads to more favorable outcomes for families.
  4. **Competent legal representation** for parents is associated with the achievement of timely reunification.
  5. A strong support system of professionals and family can help young people address the challenges they face during their transition to adulthood. Virtual engagement tools can be used to establish and maintain that support system by **enhancing connectedness** for all involved.
  6. In addition to supporting brain development, **encouraging young people to be active participants** in planning their own lives supports the development of leadership skills, improves self-esteem, and helps form critical social connections.
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# MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

May is

# MENTAL HEALTH MONTH



Since 1949, May has been recognized as mental health awareness month. Every year millions of Americans face the reality of living with mental or behavioral health issues. During May, many work to bring awareness to mental health and to help reduce the stigma that many endure. NAMI (National Alliance of Mental Illness) has put together a 2021 Awareness Event Guide. [Click here](#) for additional information.

Empower Idaho wants to change the conversation about behavioral health to one of compassion and understanding. Empower Idaho team coordinates educational activities, both online and in-person, and advocates on behalf of adults with behavioral health conditions and their family members with the purpose of helping to improve the behavioral health delivery system of Idaho. They offer Behavioral Health Education Activities, Behavioral Health Awareness Campaigns, Advocacy,

# YOU ARE NOT ALONE

**Awareness Events  
May–July 2021**

Guide for NAMI Partners and Ambassadors



Resources, and Support, Information on Mental Health Parity and Rights, and Community Partnership Building. [Sign up for the Empower Idaho newsletter here](#) to stay tuned about upcoming free educational opportunities, job openings, and behavioral health news!

Additionally, Empower Idaho has created a local toolkit and information about Mental Health Month and how Idaho is participating in creating awareness.

[Empower Idaho Toolkit CLICK HERE](#)

[Empowering Idaho Awareness Campaign CLICK HERE](#)

## *The following events are occurring here in Idaho throughout the month.*

**May 1-8, 2021: NAMI North Central Idaho Virtual 5K Walk**  
- [Click Here for more information](#)

**May 4, 2021 at 6 pm: Resilient Idaho: Hope Lives Here - Webinar - Register**

Join us for a special presentation of the documentary Resilient Idaho: Hope Lives Here followed by a live discussion on mental health awareness with special guests Dr. Julie Wood, Medical Director of Optum Idaho, Christina Cernansky, president of NAMI Idaho, and Amber Leyba-Castle, NAMI Idaho Young & Well coordinator. The evening will be hosted by Nicole Sanchez, writer, narrator, and one of the producers of Resilient Idaho: Hope Lives Here. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions during the event via chat.

**2021 Idaho Mental Health Month Art Exhibition - Friday, May 21, 2021 6 pm to 8 pm - Online, [Register](#)**

We invite you to attend the 2021 Idaho Mental Health Month Art Exhibition honoring the mental health journeys of Idaho artists. Artists will have the opportunity to speak about their pieces and share their experiences and relationships with mental health. The online event format will provide the opportunity for people throughout Idaho to attend the exhibition from the comfort and safety of their own homes.

**SAMHSA's National Prevention Week: May 9-15, 2021**

[Click here for more information](#)

A United Day of Hope - NAMI, May 22

Support your local community, your hometown, and maybe even

the hometown of someone you love — it's all possible this year. Choose any number of virtual walks (some offer in-person components), lace up your shoes, and join the best and the brightest mental health advocates in the country

**Click here** for more information and to find a full list of 2021 NAMIWalks Your Way events.

Here is a **participant guide** to show you how to take part in NAMIWalks from virtually anywhere.

## Here are additional key facts about mental health:

- Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable.
- While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on the mental health of people of all ages, and now more than ever it is critical to reduce the stigma around mental health struggles that commonly prevents individuals from seeking help.
- Knowing when to turn to friends, family, and co-workers when you are struggling with life's challenges can help improve your mental health.
- Living a healthy lifestyle and incorporating mental health tools to thrive may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes.
- Seeking professional help when self-help efforts to improve your mental health aren't working is a sign of strength, not weakness.