



Volume 8 Issue 10

October 2011



**October gave a party;
The leaves by hundreds came -
The Chestnuts, Oaks, and Maples,
And leaves of every name.
The Sunshine spread a carpet,
And everything was grand,
Miss Weather led the dancing,
Professor Wind the band.
~George Cooper, "October's Party"**

**Bittersweet October. The mellow, messy, leaf-kicking,
perfect pause between the opposing miseries of summer
and winter. ~Carol Bishop Hipps**

**Everyone must take time to sit and watch the leaves
turn. ~Elizabeth Lawrence**

Happy Autumn



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HIV and AIDS: What We Need to Know

Last month the Foster Parent Training (3rd Thursday of the month) was moved to a different day and week to accommodate a very special guest speaker. Ms. Angela Wilbon, a Mental Health Therapist at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC, gave a very informative, very energized, presentation on HIV and AIDS in youth. Foster Parents were joined by AFGC staff and management. The goal of the training was to increase our awareness about HIV/AIDS and to enhance our ability to serve medically compromised youth.

Ms. Wilbon gave AFGC an informative packet of information titled: "100 Questions & Answers about HIV/AIDS," created by the New York State Department of Health. The following information was retrieved from that document with the hope that we can continue to ask questions, find the answers, and be better prepared to support and care for youth with HIV/AIDS.

Some Basics...

What is HIV? What is AIDS?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus. A person is HIV infected, has HIV infection, or has HIV disease. These are terms that mean the person has HIV in his or her body and can pass the virus to other people.

HIV attacks the body's immune system. The immune system protects the body from infection and disease, but has no clear way to protect it from HIV. Without treatment, most people infected with HIV become less able to fight off the germs that we are exposed to every day. Many of these germs do not usually make a healthy person sick, but they can cause life-threatening infections and cancers in a person whose immune system has been weakened by HIV.

People infected with HIV may have no symptoms for ten or more years. They may not know they are infected. An HIV test is the only way to find out if you have HIV.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a late stage of HIV disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a person with HIV infection has AIDS when he or she:

- Has a CD4 cell count (a way to measure the strength of the immune system) that falls below 200. A normal CD4 count is 500 or higher.

Or

- develops any of the specific, serious conditions-also called **AIDS-defining illnesses**-that are linked with HIV infection.

Who is at risk for getting HIV?

A person of any age, sex, race, ethnic group, religion, economic background, or sexual orientation can get HIV.

How is HIV spread from one person to another?

HIV is spread when infected blood, semen, vaginal fluids, or breast milk gets into the bloodstream of another person through:

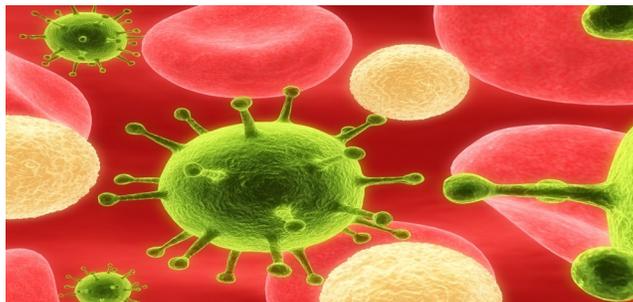
- ⇒ Direct entry into a blood vessel;
 - ⇒ Mucous linings, such as the vagina, rectum, penis, mouth, eyes, or nose; or
 - ⇒ A break in the skin.
- HIV is **not** spread through saliva (spit).
HIV is spread in the following ways:
- ⇒ Having vaginal, anal, or oral sex without a condom.
 - ⇒ Sharing needles, syringes, or works to inject drugs, vitamins, hormones, steroids, or medicines.
 - ⇒ Women with HIV infection can pass HIV to their babies during pregnancy, delivery, and breastfeeding.
 - ⇒ People who are exposed to blood and/or body fluids at work, like health care workers, may be exposed to HIV through needle-sticks or other on-the-job exposures.

It is also possible to pass HIV through sharing needles for piercing or tattooing.

Parents should talk with their children about HIV and AIDS for many reasons, including:

- To make sure their children are getting accurate information that is appropriate for their age; and
- To help their children learn skills to reduce the risk of becoming infected with HIV and protect

(Continued on page 3)



AFGC Prepares for COA Reaccreditation

AFGC was accredited by The Council on Accreditation for Services to Children and Families in November of 2007. We are gearing up for our reaccreditation this fall.

Randall O'Toole, LCSW, Director of Clinical Services, is coordinating the re-accreditation process for the agency. Randall is a volunteer peer reviewer for COA, and reviews other agencies for accreditation. Randall reminds our staff and management that the COA process is both an indicator of quality services for clients and referral sources; and also an opportunity for the agency to really focus on our processes, procedures and work to ensure best practice, ethical and efficient work, and a focus on outcomes.

Staff are busy reviewing program policies and procedures and files to ensure that we have maintained the quality that was noted in our first accreditation. We also want the reviewing team to note the growth in both our treatment services and administrative functions.

The following strengths were noted in reference to our service in our Final Accreditation Report in 2007.

Social Development and Enrichment Services for

Children and Youth (Teen Living Program):

AFGC has established the Teen Living Program (TLP) for youth after school and in the summer. The program is based on a level system that allows youth to work into their senior group and GATE program. The process enables the youth to be well-prepared for discharge from the program. Excellent groups for the youth.

--Julie Hood

Foster Care:

The program has a strong licensing department with thorough development of the homes. The youth are well matched with the homes, and the agency provides strong wrap services. These strengths make for higher stability in the homes. The agency is able to provide case management, therapy and group activities for the youth.

--Julie Hood

Because we set such a high standard during our first accreditation, AFGC was allowed to participate in a "Focused Accreditation" for this re-accreditation. We plan to be as successful during this re-accrediting process.



(Continued from page 2)

themselves later in life.

Parents should look for chances to discuss HIV and AIDS directly with their children before their children are sexually active or experiment with drugs. A good way to approach the subject is to ask children what they are learning about HIV and AIDS in school. Or, parents can use news articles or stories on television, radio, or in the newspaper to start a conversation.

Parents should learn the facts about HIV and AIDS before talking with their children. Health departments, school health teachers, clinics, physicians, AIDS-related community organizations, libraries, and the Internet are good resources.

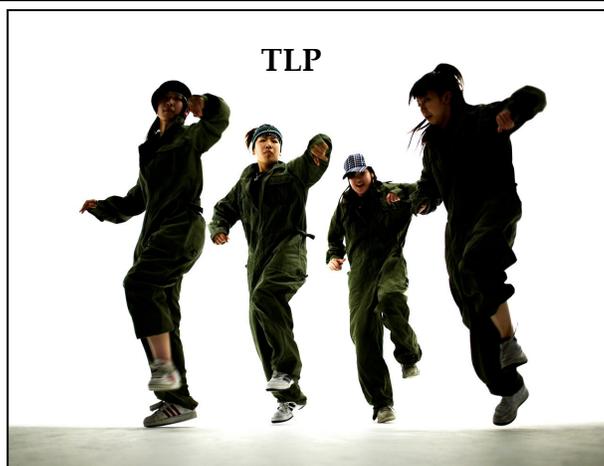
Call the National AIDS Information Clearinghouse at 1-800-458-5231. The New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute and the State Office of Children and Family Services have published a manual, *Caring for Children with Special Needs*. The manual provides parents, foster par-

ents, and other caregivers with information and support to meet the challenges of raising children with HIV. It is available online at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/hiv aids/child/index.htm> or call (518) 474-9866 to request a form to order a print copy of the manual.

To request a copy of 100 Questions & Answers about HIV/AIDS, please contact your child's AFGC case manager or foster home case manager.

Adolescent Programs News

In the Teen Living Program, we have developed a new group schedule for the new group session. The new group session will begin on October 3, 2011, and it will continue through the end of December. We want to share what these groups will be so that you will know what your teens will be working on, and so that you may have the opportunity to build upon some of these topics at home with your teens. As you know, group counseling is a large component of the day in the Adolescent Programs. The groups listed below are designed to address treatment issues, promote independent living skills, as well as the development of coping skills and healthy relationships. The topics were developed with both teen suggestions and current treatment needs in mind.



TLP Groups

Process Group: teens share treatment issues and have the opportunity to offer and receive feedback from peers and staff.

Independent Living Skills: Teens will continue to develop their skills in a variety of areas including meal planning, laundry, transportation, and money management.

What's News: Teens will participate in activities and discussion around current events in order to increase their understanding of the world in which they live and how we are all affected by the actions of others.

Teambuilding: Teens will participate in activities designed to increase cooperation, leadership skills, and communication.

Sounds of Music: Teens will learn the history of music, genres, its purpose in different cultures, and how it can be used as a form of expression.

The Art of Expression: Teens will use a number of forms of artistic expression to explore, reflect and process their feelings about self, family, and relationships.

We hope that the TLP teens enjoy the groups and learn. Also, we welcome any feedback or suggestions about the groups from you, as foster parents, and from the teens. This will allow us to continue to develop a program that is responsive to the needs of our teens and effective.

Again, thank you for all you do for our teens in Adolescent Programs.....



Guiding Adolescents Toward Empowerment

**From: Ellie Cunanan, LMFT,
Assistant Director of Clinical Services
GATE and GATE Prep Update**



Teens in our GATE Prep program have a chance to attend Process Group on Wednesdays, as well as to have individual therapy and case management. On Fridays, the focus is on developing independent living skills through a variety of hands on activities in the community. Teens build on their foundational knowledge and begin to take practical steps toward independence. Some of the community based activities may include the following:

- Driver's License & Permit
- Visiting the Department of Motor Vehicles
- Job Hunting
- How to Buy/Lease A Car
- Visit South County Skills Source Center -
- Apartment Searching
- Visiting a Credit Union -
- Personal Care -
- Insurance
- Employment Duties
- Banking

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONGRATS! We would like to congratulate the GATE Prep group members who have made progress on their goals over the past 10 weeks. They celebrated their progress with a luncheon at TGI Fridays. Please join us in congratulating them and encouraging them to continue working on their personal socio-emotional and independent living goals.

We have recently developed a Financial Stipend Agreement for our youth participating in the GATE and GATE Prep programs. This document outlines the specific details that the case manager, foster parents, and youth have agreed upon on how and when this monthly stipend is disbursed. All participants in the GATE and GATE Prep programs should have one of these agreements in their file. Please inquire about this with your youth's case manager.

This month's Foster Parent Training will be on the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment. As part of our ongoing ef

orts to help the teens and young adults in our care to develop and maintain independent living skills, it is helpful for us to have them take objective assessments/tests, so that we can determine which areas they need more support, as well as identify areas in which they show strength and proficiency. The Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) is one such test which inquires about a child's skill level in different areas of independent living, such as housing, money management, self-care, career planning and social relationships. The ACLSA also has an assessment for caregivers to take, to provide additional information about the child's skill levels in different areas. We look forward to seeing you all at this training, which will provide an overview of the assessment, as well as a discussion on how to use the results to begin talking with your youth about how they might build their knowledge base and skills in independent living and how you, as foster parents, might help them with that.

We wanted to let you know about the upcoming independent living events:

The Fairfax County Skill Source Center at the South County Building will be hosting a workshop on October 18, 2011 from 6:30-8:00 pm, entitled "Getting on the Right Career Path". This workshop is part of an ongoing effort to get teens involved in job readiness training and connected to employment specialists. Please contact your case manager or Ellie Cunanan at 703-425-9200 if you would like to attend this event.

On Monday, October 17, 2011, between 6:30 and 8:00 pm, Arlington County Department of Human Services will be hosting an event for youth and parents. The topic of the presentation will be Social Media. On Monday October 24, 2011, Arlington County DHS will be hosting another event for youth and parents, entitled Permanency and Youth. Both of these events will be held at the Arlington County Department of Human Services Building, located at 2100 Washington Boulevard, Lower Level, Arlington, VA. Please contact your case manager or Ellie Cunanan at 703-425-9200 if you and/or your youth are interested in attending.

In the Spotlight:

THE GRGAS FAMILY

Alexandria, VA



Paul and Tami Grgas and their six year old son, James, have just completed their certification as treatment foster parents. AFGC extends them a big Congratulations and a hearty WELCOME. They are recent transplants from Nebraska where Paul was last stationed. Paul is retired from the Air Force, recently completed a Master's of Business Administration and is working as a contractor for the DIA. Tami wears several hats. The one she is most proud of and enjoying the most is being a stay-at-home mom to James as well as his homeschooling teacher. She somehow finds the time to work as a home-based jewelry consultant, and sing in their church's Praise and Worship Band too! The family is very active in their church (ask them about the financial planning workshops they are attending at their church). James is a very bright, cheerful young man. He attended every single pre-service training night with a smile on his face! He recently shared that he is currently reading the fifth book in the Harry Potter series and he loves everything about "Cars" the movie. The Grgas' feel very passionate about providing a loving and safe home for youth in need. They are very motivated, very energized, and look forward to getting to know their fellow treatment foster parents.

A BIG SHOUT OUT TO:

Dawn Gresham, Adolescent Programs Counselor II for her work on uploading The Foster Parent Newsletter to the AFGC website!! Thanks, Dawn!

CHECK IT OUT!!

Maleka Walters, Therapist/Case Manager for completing her licensure process.

She is Maleka Walters, MS, LMFT (Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist) Congratulations!!

Nikkiah Wyatt, Adolescent Programs Clinical Supervisor: Best wishes on her upcoming nuptials!

NEW (FAIRLY NEW) HIRES:

Kathleen Rose, AFGC's Accounting Specialist, Jason Sauler, Adolescent Programs Counselor I Welcome!

NEW CLINICAL INTERNS:

Allison Bitterman and Ashley Stright Welcome!

NEW AND NOT SO NEW ADOLESCENT PROGRAMS RELIEF COUNSELORS:

Sterling Tobias, Chrissy Reardon, Stacie Saunders, and Tony Camp Thank You!



**Earn Training Credits by reading the Newsletter.
Take advantage of this opportunity to make sure
you satisfy the 24 hour per year requirement.**

Read this month's newsletter, answer the following questions and return to either Kesha Taffe or Mary Laigle. The fax number is 703-425-9206.



Earn your Training Hours

HIV is the acronym for: _____

AIDS is the acronym for: _____

A person with HIV infection has AIDS when he or she has a CD4 count that falls below: _____.

T or F A person can become infected with HIV from saliva (spit)?

T or F A person infected with HIV may not show symptoms or know they have the virus for ten years?

T or F It is not possible to pass HIV through sharing needles for piercing or tattoos?

HIV is spread when infected _____, _____, _____, or breast milk gets into the bloodstream of another person.



TRAININGS ON TAP FOR OCTOBER:

Thursday, October 20th 7-9pm Foster Parent Training:

Independent Living/Casey Life Skills Assessments

Pre-Service Training for Prospective Foster Parents in October:

Wednesdays 6-9pm, October 12th, October 19th, October 26th, and Saturday 9am-1pm October 29th

Name: _____



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CREDIBILITY • INTEGRITY • ACHIEVEMENT

October 2011

October 10th Columbus Day, AFGC offices closed

October 12, 19, 26, 29 Pre-Service Foster Parent Training 6-9pm

October 20th 7-9pm, Foster Parent Training

Web sites that offer Foster Parent Training Certificates:

www.Fosterparenttraining.com

www.fosterparentcollege.com

www.Fosterparents.com