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# Recognizing Needs of Foster Children

How to Know Where to Go

ASK



About • Special • Kids

Answers for families of kids with special needs

# Why Children Are Removed

Drugs and alcohol abuse are the #1 reason children are removed from their homes.

Neglect, Physical and sexual abuse are the other most common reasons for removal.

# Signs of Neglect

Food hoarding & fear of starvation

Flattened head from lying on back for long periods of time

Crossed eyes from staring at ceiling for hours

Self comforting repetitive behaviors such as rocking, stroking, and thumb sucking, tapping area of the body

People pleasing behaviors

Indiscriminate friendliness

Heightened threshold for pain

Lack of interpersonal bonding and attachment skills

Lack of empathy for others due to lack of a nurturing and attentive care giver.

# Attachment

Bowlby stated “the initial relationship between self and others serves as blueprints for all future relationships.” (Bowlby, 1975)

RAD can be defined as a condition in which children have difficulty forming lasting relationships; From not attaching to parent or caregiver.

# Common Attachment Disorder Symptoms

Superficially engaging & charming

- ⊙ Lack of eye contact
- ⊙ Indiscriminately affectionate with strangers
- ⊙ Not affectionate (not cuddly)
- ⊙ Destructive to self, others and material things
- ⊙ Cruelty to animals
- ⊙ Lying about the obvious

# Common Attachment Disorder Symptoms

Lack of cause and effect thinking

Lack of conscience

Poor peer relationships

Ⓞ Inappropriately demanding & clingy

Ⓞ Triangulation of adults

Ⓞ Presumptive entitlement issues

No impulse controls (frequently acts hyperactive)

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Unspoken messages....

What's behind a child's behavior?

What is the child really saying?

What does the child really need?

## If they disobey, maybe...

They don't understand the sounds and words, because they were neglected as a child (no language exposure/no one talked to them when little)

Or they need to be in control because the adults in their life have always proven to be unreliable.



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If I become easily angered it may be...

I'm terrified and trying to protect myself from a situation that is similar to one I had in the past

I'm frustrated because I don't know how to express my feelings and needs

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If I pull away from your embrace, maybe...

I've been badly hurt by abusive adults and I'm still learning how to trust.

I've never experienced appropriate affection from adults so this is all new and scary to me.

## Drug and Alcohol Exposed Infants

Children whose birth mothers smoked cigarettes, drank frequently or used drugs while pregnant can also present with a variety of challenges.

The use of street drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamines, and heroin or prescription drugs such as pain relievers, antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications while pregnant can cause many infant and childhood defects, disorders and disabilities .

# Tobacco Use

Surprisingly, tobacco use during pregnancy can also cause problems. Babies of smoking mothers may be born early, be small with a low birth weight and have nicotine addiction resulting in jitteriness, trembling and irritability as a newborn.

# Prenatal Exposure Medical Problems

Heart, lung and other organ defects

Stroke or other neurological conditions

Asthma

Cerebral Palsy

ADHD

In order to receive the most appropriate services for your child, it is important to locate medical and mental health professionals that specialize in the evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of infants and children prenatally exposed to drugs and alcohol. Your regional ASK Parent Liaison is available to help you locate resources in your area

# FAS Spectrum Disorders

Alcohol use during pregnancy can result in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders which can cause facial features such as:

- Small and wide set eyes
- Flat nasal bridge and
- Thin upper lips

# Children diagnosed with FAS

Can have the following problems:

- Cognitive impairments ranging from mild to severe
- Trouble processing information
- Difficulty solving everyday problems
- Trouble with following directions
- Difficulty staying on task
- May be immature socially

# Indicators of Drug Exposure

Premature birth

Birth complications

Withdrawal symptoms

Respiratory issues

Neurological defects

Low birth weight and height



# Other Common Characteristics

Impulsivity

Sleeping and feeding problems

Anxiety

Inability to self soothe

Temper tantrums

Demanding attention

# Characteristics Continued

Difficulty waiting for their turn

Destructive behavior

Hyperactivity

Social immaturity

Lying

Difficulty concentrating

# Characteristics Continued

Developmental delays

Speech or language disorders

Cognitive impairments

Poor organizational skills.

Learning disabilities

# Additional Potential Problems

Heart, lung and other organ defects,

Stroke or other neurological conditions

Asthma,

Cerebral Palsy

ADHD

# Finding More Information

In order to receive the most appropriate services for your child, it is important to locate medical and mental health professionals that specialize in the evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of infants and children prenatally exposed to drugs and alcohol. Your regional ASK Parent Liaison is available to help you locate resources in your area

# ADHD – Three Types

**ADD**- no trouble sitting still or controlling behavior but may be inattentive and have great difficulty staying focused on a task or activity

**HD**- this child may be able to pay attention to a task but lose focus because they are impulsive and hyperactive and can't control their activity level or impulsive behavior.

**Combined ADHD** – the child may be in constant motion wiggling tapping feet or fingers, twirling hair, poking others, disturbing others, and also are inattentive and have trouble staying on task.

# ADHD Signs and Symptoms

When children are distressed they can be restless, irritable, or withdrawn and sad

They can also show signs of hyperactivity, distractibility or impulsivity.

ADHD can also be situationally based due to transition from birth family to foster family.

It can be a result of poor nutrition, poor sleep habits, allergies, or medication.

# Inattention....

Making careless mistakes in school work

Inability to pay close attention to details

Difficulty paying attention in task or play activities

Inability to listen when spoken to directly

Difficulty following directions

Avoidance, dislike or unwillingness to do things that involve focus,  
and mental effort

Distracted by noises or objects



# Hyperactivity...

Fidgeting with hands, feet or items or squirming while seated

Inability to stay in one place

Running around or climbing in situations in which it is inappropriate

Difficulty playing or working quietly

Excessive talking

# Impulsivity

Blurting out answers before questions have been completed

Difficulty waiting his or her turn

Interrupting or intruding on others

Difficulty keeping hands to self

Does not look before they leap

# Sensory Deprivation

Sensory processing disorders:

- Over or under sensitive to touch,
- Adverse to many tastes and food textures,
- Distressed by some sounds,
- Instantaneous meltdowns\*

# Melt Downs

For many of these this is not just a temper tantrum. They are difficult for the child to control.

They last longer and are more intense than a temper tantrum and discipline is not appropriate.

The child needs space and time to calm down in an environment in which they are safe.

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## Conclusion

Children who act may appear strong but are surprisingly fragile inside.

They have come to believe that no one understands them or cares about their needs.

We as foster parents need to look beyond a difficult behavior and ask ourselves

# Questions to Ask Ourselves

What is the child really saying?

What does the child really need?

What do WE need to help us support our children in positive, respectful ways so that they feel loveable, worthwhile, capable and responsible?

# There are many ways you can get help:

Talk to your case manager about behaviors

Call your SNAP specialist to access post adoption services

Internet resources

Written resources

# Resources continued...

First Steps

Special Education Co-ops

Resource services

- Supportive services
- Evaluation
- Counseling
- ASK Directory



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# Contact Your Regional Parent Liaison

**1-800-964-4746**

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# About Special Kids (ASK)

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