

SAFE



Special Needs Adoption Family Exchange

Presented by Post Adoption Services

Fairfax County Department of Family Services

Volume 17 | Winter 2010

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs

Welcome to the Winter 2010 edition of SAFE. We hope that you have a very happy holiday season!

NEW POST ADOPTION SERVICES SOCIAL WORKER

Tiffany Edwards was promoted recently and will be leaving post adoption services. Julie Bowman will take over all of Tiffany's cases beginning January 1, 2011. Many of you who know Julie, who has worked in the adoption unit for the past four years, are familiar with her diligence and dedication. Though we will miss Tiffany enormously we are very fortunate to have Julie on the post adoption services team.

CHANGES TO THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE TUITION GRANT

The tuition grant program was revised in 2009 and now requires that students must demonstrate financial need. (Code of Virginia 23-7.4:5).

To be eligible for the grant a youth must maintain at least half-time enrollment (with a minimum of six credits) in an eligible academic program of at least one academic year in length, and meet one of the following criteria:

- Be in the custody of a social service agency;
- Be a special needs adoptee at the time they received a high school diploma, or GED;
- Have been in foster care until age 18 and subsequently earned a high school diploma or GED.

Your adoption subsidy worker will provide you with documentation stating that your child is a special needs adoptee.

Please note that this grant is administered by the State Board of Community Colleges and not the adoption assistance program. **All questions regarding the grant should be directed to your local community college.**

FAFSA

The state of Virginia requires students to complete and submit to the U.S. Department of Education the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. The data from the FAFSA is used to calculate an Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

The EFC is not the amount of money that families must provide. Rather it is an index that colleges use to determine how much financial aid students would receive should they attend that college.

Completing and submitting a FAFSA is free whether you file electronically or on paper. Charging students and/or parents a fee for completing and/or submitting the FAFSA is prohibited by law. The form is available at www.fafsa.gov. You can call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) or get help at www.fafsa.ed.gov/faq001.htm

The FAFSA for the school year 2011-2012 will be available January 1, 2011. If a student completed a FAFSA in a previous year, the student is eligible for a FAFSA Renewal form. It is recommended to

complete the renewal form yearly because family circumstances may have changed.

The federal government applies two different standards for students - one for dependent students and one for independent students. Dependent students are assumed to have parental support while independent students do not (www.fafsa.gov).

A student must meet at least one of the following criteria to be declared an independent student for purposes of the FAFSA:

- Be age 24 or older by December 31 of the award year;
- Be an orphan (both parents deceased), ward of court or have been a ward of court until age 18;
- Be a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States;
- Be a graduate or professional student;
- Be married;
- Have legal dependents other than a spouse;
- Be a student for whom a financial aid administrator makes a documented determination of independence by reason of other unusual circumstances.

Note: Not living with a parent or parents' unwillingness to provide information for the FAFSA are not considered special circumstances (www.fafsa.gov).

TAX CREDIT NEWS

Until tax year 2010, the adoption tax credit was not refundable, so many families with lower or moderate incomes who had a low federal tax liability could not take advantage of the credit.

However, starting in 2010, the credit is refundable, which means it will benefit many more families – even those who adopted earlier but didn't have enough tax liability to assess the credit in previous years. For more information visit www.nacac.org or call 651-644-9848.

For 2010, the maximum adoption credit has increased to \$13,170. This amount is phased out if your modified adjusted gross income (AGI) is \$222,520 or more.

To claim the credit, you need to complete IRS Form 8839 in addition to filing your usual IRS Form 1040. You can find Form 8839 at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8839.pdf or by requesting it from 800-829-1040. (For now this url links to the 2009 form. The IRS will post the 2010 form later this year.)

You do not need to document expenses for children with special needs; simply enter \$13,170 for 2010 as long as your child receives adoption assistance.

LOVE AND LOGIC PARENTING COURSE

The six-week Love and Logic® parenting course will be held every Thursday from January 27 to March 3 in the Pennino Building at 12011 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. Classes are free of charge.

The Love and Logic® approach is particularly effective with children who have been abused or neglected.

For more information please call Anne Goldberg at 703-324-7153 (TTY 703-222-8452) or e-mail her at anne.goldberg@fairfaxcounty.gov

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR POST ADOPTION SERVICES WORKERS

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Beginning January 1, 2011
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Fairfax County is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in all county programs, services and activities and will provide reasonable accommodations upon request. To request this information in an alternate format, call Mary Adamchak at 703-324-7660; TTY-322-8452.