

## Tip Sheet

### Normalcy & Social Media

Use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and Snapchat, just to name a few, has become common place in today's culture. Social media provides a highly interactive means to connect with others near and far. While foster parents can post photos of children placed in their care, there are some restrictions on what can be shared. Care and prudent parent standards should be applied in sharing on social media to ensure the safety and confidentiality of our foster youth.

#### Confidentiality requirements:

- All information as it relates to child abuse records and clientele is privileged and confidential.
- Protected Health Information (PHI) is health information that relates to a person's medical or behavioral health, healthcare received or its payment. If information identifies or provides a reasonable basis to believe it can be used to identify an individual, it is protected health information.
- PHI should not be used or disclosed when it is not necessary to carry out a specific function that is authorized by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

#### Normalcy:

- Allows **children** (with permission of caregiver) to use social media unless it is otherwise prohibited by safety plan, child placement agreement or court order.
- Allows **foster parents** to post photos of children placed in their care without identifying their full name or identifying them as foster children.

#### Dangers of using social media:

- Once information is out there on social media, you have little control over who sees it. Photos and information can easily be shared beyond your intended audience. Location of photos are often easy for users to identify, placing foster children in potential danger.
- You may inadvertently share information that places the child at risk for harm.
  - The child's family members may be able to anticipate where you will be and show up unexpectedly.
  - Your personal information may be accessible to the child's family members
- Your social media timeline is like a scrapbook of your life and an invitation to be stalked.
  - "Checking in" shares your patterns and provides clues to your location, routines, and patterns.
  - "Friends" list lets others know who your family, friends and acquaintances are.
  - Anything you do on social media could be used against you in a court of law (this includes things you may have removed).
- Children using social media may have an unrestricted avenue for contact with parents or others, even when a court order has restricted contact.
- Children using social media may have access to adult content, be a target for predators, participate in sexting and be subject to bullying.

#### Tips for foster parents:

- Check and update your privacy settings often.
- Think about what you are posting, it may share more than you intended.
- Routinely monitor social media usage by children in your home.
- Teach children about use of privacy settings, to "block" bothersome users, to only accept "friend" requests from known and safe people, and refrain from sharing personal information.