**Kid’s Net Services**

■ **Kid’s Net Connection / Helpline: 1-800-486-3730 –** The Kid's Net Connection is a Helpline

available from 5 pm to 9 am on weekdays and 24 hours per day on weekends and holidays. It will

connect you with an experienced staff member who will provide information and support services to

you and your family. Call the Kid’s Net Connection for help with:

– an acting out child

– a child who was not returned from a visit with the birth family

– an escalating conflict within the family

– trouble finding emergency numbers

– an unexpected visit from a birth parent

– any additional questions you have or support you need when the Department is closed

■ **Campership Program –** Kid's Net has limited funding to provide camperships (normally two

weeks of day camp) to foster children living in Department foster/kinship/pre-adoptive homes.

Funding is approved on a first come first served basis. Parents should contact the Kid's Net Regional

Director in early spring to begin the process of identifying and contracting a camp.

■ **Short-term Childcare –** Planned, short-term, day and evening childcare is available for

foster/pre-adoptive, and kinship families. Childcare is available to attend foster care related business,

to provide needed respite, and to meet other needs that impact the overall stability of the family.

Short-term childcare is not designed to meet work-related needs. Biological and adopted children

may be included in the child care arrangements. Childcare is provided by qualified family childcare

providers in locations throughout the state under contract with Kid's Net. Childcare requests should

be directed to the Kid's Net Program Director. As much advance notice as possible is requested.

■ **Respite –** Family respite is a planned time-out or vacation for Department foster/pre-adoptive

families. Everyone needs a break from parenting every once in a while, and respite is an important

way to prevent burnout and disruptions. Families can receive up to ten days of paid respite each year

after they have been active foster/pre-adoptive parents for six months. Under certain circumstances

(e.g., family emergencies or planned respite to promote placement stability for a special needs child),

families with less than six months service may be eligible for respite care with the approval of the

Department's Family Resource or Adoption Worker and the Kid's Net Regional Director. Paid respite

means that the family providing the respite will be paid at the basic foster care rate while the foster/

pre-adoptive family continues to receive their regular reimbursement.

Because foster and pre-adoptive children are in the Department’s custody, the Department must

approve respite providers. Because of the shortage of foster homes, it can be difficult to find existing

foster/pre-adoptive homes that are available to provide respite. New foster/pre-adoptive parents are

urged to talk to people in their network of relatives and friends even before they receive their first

placement and identify someone who is willing to support them by providing respite. If the potential

respite provider is willing to complete a limited evaluation (including a CORI check) they can be

approved to provide respite in the home of the foster/pre-adoptive family. If the respite provider is

willing to participate in a somewhat more extensive home study, they may be approved to provide

respite in their own home.

If the family requesting respite has not identified a provider, Kid's Net and the Department will

attempt to identify another foster/pre-adoptive family who is available to provide respite. Respite by

foster/pre-adoptive families will be provided in the respite home.

All respite placements must be approved by the Department and the Kid's Net Regional Director, four

weeks in advance. Requests for family emergencies will be accommodated whenever possible.

■ **Family Resource Liaisons (FRL) –** FRLs are experienced foster/adoptive/kinship parents in each

Area Office who offer information, support, and mentoring to other parents. FRLs are available to:

– talk about how to handle issues unique to foster, adoptive, or kinship parents such as birth parent

visitation or coping with grief when children leave your home

– help parents resolve problems related to the Department such as delays with payments or

problems with Department staff response

– provide information and support for parents who are involved with 51A allegations

and investigations

– provide information about the Department of Social Services, Kid's Net, and resources such as

PACT, training, respite, support groups and local community services

Contact your Kid's Net Regional Director or your Family Resource Unit to get the name and telephone

number of your FRL.

■ **Massachusetts Alliance for Families (MAFF) –** Foster, adoptive, kinship and guardianship

parents have formed an association, the Massachusetts Alliance for Families (MAFF) which is supported

by Kid's Net. MAFF is an advocacy organization which works for improvements in the foster care

system that will benefit children and the families who care for them. Each Region has a Regional

Chapter that meets at least once a year. The Regional Chapters also elect representatives to the

MAFF Statewide Board. The Board meets regularly to identify issues that concern foster, pre-adoptive

and kinship parents and to plan advocacy with the legislature, the Department, or other systems that

impact foster care. The MAFF/Kid's Net Council, which consists of MAFF Board members, the

Department of Social Services Commissioner, Department staff working with the foster care system,

and representatives from other agencies, also meets three times a year. The Council serves as a forum

to discuss issues directly with the Department and other systems that impact the foster care system.

MAFF hosts an annual conference for parents and Department staff. Membership in MAFF is free and

open to all foster, pre-adoptive, kinship and guardianship parents as well as anyone interested in

improving the foster care system. To get more information or to become a member look for registration

forms in the Village Exchange newsletter, go the MAFF website at **www.kidsnetmaff.org,** or

call your Kid's Net Regional Director.

■ **The Village Exchange –** The MAFF/Kid's Net newsletter, is published quarterly. It provides information,

about the activities of MAFF and Kid's Net, foster/pre-adoptive care issues, and other helpful

information of interest to foster, pre-adoptive and kinship parents.

■ **Training –** Kid's Net provides training and regional mini-conferences for foster/pre-adoptive and

kinship families with topics ranging from dealing with behavioral issues, health and safety concerns,

legal issues to navigating through the child welfare system. Kid's Net also offers opportunities to

attend courses in CPR and First Aid. Kid's Net regularly sends out schedules with the dates, times and

locations of the training available in your area.

■ **Kid's Net Regional Director –** Call the following numbers to reach your Kid's Net

Regional Director:

– Boston: 617-983-5800

– Southeast: 508-586-2660

– Metro: 508-651-7070

– Northeast: 978-682-9222

– West: 413-734-4978

– Worcester: 508-753-2967