

FDLRS Record

Newsletter for the University of Florida FDLRS-MDC program in Jacksonville

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Let's Talk Adoption

By Maria J. Robles, Ed.S.

Adoption has become both a personal and professional area of interest for me. There are countless reasons why adoption may be chosen for a child or family. It is vital to understand the complexity of adoption and the dichotomy of emotions that come with it. All those involved experience both gains and losses in the process. Within our home, I describe it as “bittersweet.” Experiencing it personally has highlighted the importance of the words we use when talking about adoption. Adjusting our vocabulary, can prove highly beneficial for all and set a foundation of respect. The following table provides a comparison of frequently used adoption language and examples of alternative verbiage to consider using:



Florida Diagnostic & Learning — RESOURCES SYSTEM —

OUR SERVICES

Who we Serve:

- Individuals between the ages of 3 & 22 who have not graduated high school.
- Who are struggling in school and have complicated medical, behavioral, developmental, &/or social histories
- And who reside in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, & St. Johns counties

Services for Families:

- Comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessment, which may include psychoeducational, emotional-behavioral, &/or developmental pediatric evaluations
- Feedback sessions and a report detailing our findings
- Assistance in planning for your child's educational and psychological needs
- Trainings for parents covering a variety of topics

Services for the Community:

- Training/consultations for educators, students, & other professionals
- Educational consultation and support services: This can include collaboration with school personnel to facilitate school placement & provision of services

Instead of This...	Consider this...
Real / Natural Parent	Birth parent / Biological parent / First parent
Own Child	Child
Adoptive Parent	Parent
Adopted child	Child/Son/Daughter
Adoptee	Person or individual who was adopted
Is adopted	Was adopted
Give away / Adopt out / Give up / Put up	Make an adoption plan / Choose adoption / Place for adoption
To keep the child	To parent the child
Unwanted or problem pregnancy	Pregnancy/Unplanned pregnancy
Illegitimate	Born to unmarried parents
Adoptable child / Unwanted child	Waiting Child/Child placed for adoption
Handicapped child / Hard to place	Child with special needs/Medically Complex Child
<i>(These terms are recommended but may not fit all situations. Countless resources are available online that offer suggestions for adoption-friendly language.)</i>	

Adventures in Exceptional Travel: Navigating the World with Special Needs Sidekicks!

By Gwenivere Mauro, M.Ed.

As the weather warms up and travel opportunities increase, planning vacations can come with challenges based on the unique abilities of every child! Whether it's navigating unfamiliar environments or ensuring access to necessary accommodations, careful preparation is key to a successful and enjoyable vacation. Here are some essential tips for jet-setting parents traveling with special needs children this season.

- **Plan ahead:** Research destinations that cater to individuals with special needs. Look for places that offer accessible facilities, sensory-friendly environments, and inclusive activities. Many attractions provide accommodations such as priority access, quiet spaces, and sensory-friendly shows.
- **Create a visual support:** Children with special needs often thrive on routine and predictability. Before your trip, create a visual schedule outlining the day's activities. Use pictures, symbols, or written descriptions to help your child understand what to expect, reducing anxiety, and uncertainty.
- **Prepare for Transitions:** Traveling involves transitions that can be challenging for children with special



needs. Prepare your child for changes in routine, such as airport security, boarding transportation, or switching hotels. Use social stories or role-playing to familiarize them with these processes in advance.

- **Pack Essentials items:** Be sure to pack all necessary medications, medical supplies, comfort items, and any assistive devices your child may need. Consider carrying a sensory toolkit containing items like noise-canceling headphones, fidget toys, or weighted blankets to help your child regulate sensory input.
- **Stay Flexible:** Despite careful planning, unexpected situations may arise during your trip. Stay flexible and adaptable, and be prepared to adjust your plans as needed. Allow for downtime and breaks to prevent sensory overload and meltdowns.

- **Seek Support:** Don't hesitate to reach out for support if you need it. Connect with other parents of children with special needs for advice and encouragement. Consider joining online forums or support groups dedicated to special needs travel to exchange tips and recommendations. Consider setting up an airport tour with agencies that offer this resource.
- **Utilize Airline Resources:** If you encounter any disability-related concerns regarding airline accommodations or services, request a discussion with the airline's Complaint Resolution Official (CRO) or a supervisor. The CRO specializes in matters concerning disabilities during air travel and has the authority to address complaints on behalf of the airline. Learn more about airline CROs at: <https://www.transportation.gov/individuals/aviation-consumer-protection/what-do-if-you-have-problem>
- **Consider Visual Indicators:** Certain disabilities, conditions, or chronic illnesses may not be readily apparent to others. The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower promotes inclusivity, acceptance, and understanding. The Sunflower lanyard signals that individuals may require additional assistance, understanding, or simply more time. Many travel-heavy areas, such as airports, provide travelers with lanyards to signify that extra support may be needed. Learn more about The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower initiative at: <https://hdsunflower.com/us/>
- **Focus on Enjoyment:** Above all, prioritize enjoyment and relaxation for your family. Celebrate each milestone and accomplishment, no matter how small, and savor the special moments together as a family.

Traveling requires careful planning and consideration, but with the right preparation, it can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience for the entire family. By anticipating your child's needs, staying organized, utilizing available resources, and being flexible, you can create cherished family memories that will last a lifetime.

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UF-Jacksonville
FDLRS-MDC serves
Baker, Clay, Duval,
Flagler, Nassau, &
St. Johns County.

Grounding Strategies to Practice Over the Summer

By Elan Santiago, LMHC

Summer is a great chance for families to find extra time to connect and engage in activities. However, summer can also be a time when routines change and new experiences arise. Grounding strategies are a technique used to help individuals focus on the present to reduce distress. Here are a few strategies that may help on those long-distance car rides, restaurant sittings, or everyday changes.

Grounding Strategies:

The 5-4-3-2-1 Technique: This strategy helps children to stay ground through using their senses. Guide the child in:

- Naming 5 things they can see
- Naming 4 things they can touch
- Naming 3 things they can hear
- Naming 2 things they can smell
- Naming 1 thing they can taste

An example may be when out at the beach:

- “I see the waves, seagulls, a dog running around, a sand castle, a shell”
- “I can touch the wet sand, my towel, the water, my beach ball”
- “I can hear the seagulls, people laughing, the waves”
- “I can smell the sunscreen, the snacks”
- “I can taste the salty air on my tongue”

I Spy Game

A person picks an object in sight and says, “I spy with my little eye something that starts with the letter... or something that’s the color...” The other players have to guess what the object is based the description. It helps a child to utilize their observation and thinking skills while also using their sense of sight to stay grounded.

Grounding objects

When out and about providing your child with a small object to carry with them can be comforting. This could be a smooth stone, a small toy, a piece of cloth. If they feel anxious they can hold or touch the object to help them feel secure. This can aid in using the child’s sense of touch to remain grounded.

Incorporating grounding techniques into your child’s summer activities can help them practice managing their emotions and stay connected to the present. Engaging in these strategies with the child will enhance their “buy in” and assist in a child’s wellbeing over the summer.





Winding Down the School Year

By Amy Lane

Somehow, we're nearly at the end of the 2023-2024 school year. How did that happen? Summer break brings many joys, but also many challenges. Getting a head start on summer plans can help ensure a fun summer with minimal stress and a smooth transition into the next school year.

- Talk to your child's IEP team about Extended School Year (ESY) services. IEP teams are required to consider whether a student might lose skills over the summer. While all kids experience a "summer slide," students who disabilities are at risk of losing more than typically developing kids, and the losses may slow down progress in the following school year. Here is a checklist of criteria that teams can use to decide if ESY is right for a particular student: [ESY Checklist](#) . If you think that your student would benefit from ESY, start that conversation soon.

Continued on next page.

- Families in which both parents work often scramble for places for their children to go during long summer days. Summer camps fill up quickly, particularly ones that will accept children who have exceptionalities. Keep an eye on our newsletters for links to summer camp lists. JAX4Kids keeps a comprehensive list: JAX4Kids Summer Camps. Bright Feats also maintains a comprehensive resource directory for kids with special needs: Bright Feats.
- All of us have heard the warning: Drowning is the leading cause of death for kids with autism. There are many programs who teach kids with disabilities to swim all over northeast Florida, and you are strongly encouraged to access those programs. While it's critical that children know how to swim, it's also critical that families don't trust them to do it. Even if you know that your child is able to swim, never leave them unsupervised around a pool or at the beach (or in the bathtub). Panic causes us to forget the things we know how to do when we are happy and relaxed, and your child may not be able to remember to use their swimming skills if they are afraid.
- Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities – If you are exploring educational options outside of the public school system, be sure to get on the notification list for the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities: Notification List Registration. Those dollars ran out very quickly this school year, so it's smart to get ahead of the curve for next year if you're giving any thought to private school or homeschool. Ultimately, you may decide public school is the best place for your student, but being on the notification list will give you more choices.

Lastly, remember we're open all year 'round. If you have questions, or if any of us at the FDLRS Multidisciplinary Center can be helpful to you, please reach out.

FDLRS-MDC/CARD Satisfaction Survey

Here at FDLRS-MDC we continue to look for creative ways to meet individual and family needs. Please consider taking a moment to complete a short survey. We hope to use the feedback to tailor our services, group offerings, and training opportunities to best meet our constituent's needs. We look forward to hearing from you.

Use this QR Code to take our quick survey:



Self-Improvement September!

by Emily Perry, LCSW

September is Self-Improvement Month; a time to improve yourself, set new goals, and eliminate the negative things in your life that are holding you back. Below are 3 quick tips for a renewed September!



whether you are working on a short- or long-term goal.

1. **When setting goals, be smart about them.**
 - S – Specific.** Think about your goal: “Who, what, where, when, and why.” Keep track of these points in a planner or journal so you can refer back to them later.
 - M – Measurable.** How will you know whether you have met your goal or not? As you go along, keep track of your progress.
 - A – Attainable.** It’s okay to have lofty goals, but believing in your ability to achieve them is essential to making them attainable. To keep moving forward, you need to believe in yourself.
 - R – Realistic.** Without a realistic goal, you won’t be motivated to act. In other words, areas outside your control (such as time, space, and people) will not affect you.
 - T – Timely.** Plan your timeframe and/or deadline clearly,
2. **Learn how to manage your time effectively.**
 - **Do a time audit.** Spend a week or two tracking your time. If you are aware of where you are spending your time, you can identify areas where you can make improvements.
 - **Set goals and priorities.** Are there any short- and long-term goals you want to achieve? Prioritizing your tasks will be easier once you know what your goals are.
 - **Plan your day.** Schedule your daily activities to accomplish all the tasks you need to do, relax, and have fun.
 - **Set deadlines for yourself.** By doing this, you can stay on track and avoid procrastinating.
 - **Break down large tasks into smaller ones.** As a result, they will seem less overwhelming and more manageable.
 - **Eliminate distractions.** Make sure you turn off your phone, close your email, and find a quiet

place where you can work.

- **Take breaks.** To avoid burnout, it is essential to take breaks throughout the day. Try moving around or stepping outside to get some fresh air.
- **Delegate tasks.** To stay focused on what's important, delegate tasks to others.
- **Learn to say no.** When you are faced with requests consuming your time and energy, don't be afraid to say no.

- **Reward yourself.** Celebrate your accomplishments when you reach your goals. You will be able to stay motivated if you do this.

3. Pick up a new hobby.

Journal, volunteer, try a 30-day challenge, join a book club- Whatever speaks to you. You can even use my favorite tactic: the power of positive peer pressure! Enlist a friend to help keep you accountable or create a competition to keep you motivated.



Tickets On Sale Get Yours Today - Eventbrite

Family Care Council Area 4 —educate and empower—

Keynote Speaker:
Director Taylor Hatch,
Agency for Persons with Disabilities

apd
agency for persons with disabilities
State of Florida

The Arc of the St. Johns

The Arc Jacksonville

8th Annual
Connecting the Dots Conference

CONNECTable THE MORRIS CENTER Unlock Learning Potential FDLRS/Crown Serving Clay, Duval, Nassau Counties **CARD** University of Florida - Jacksonville **UFHealth** UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA HEALTH

Provides support for individuals with intellectual and developmental differences at any age and their caregivers, including vendors, resources, and local speakers.

Friday, October 11th, 2024
8:30 am - 3:30 pm

*Registration opens in September

The Schultz Center
4019 Boulevard Center Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32207

POPIN For more information, contact ConnectingTheDotsJax@gmail.com Florida Health

Creating a Personal Emergency Profile for Your Child

by Brett Walden, MPH

Creating a personal emergency profile for a child with a disability is crucial to ensure their safety and well-being during emergencies. Such a profile provides first responders, caregivers, and medical personnel with critical information about the child's specific needs, medical conditions, and communication preferences, allowing them to offer appropriate and timely assistance. In emergencies where every second counts, having immediate access to this detailed information can significantly reduce stress and confusion, ensuring that the child receives the best possible care and support tailored to their unique requirements.

Key factors to include in a personal emergency profile should encompass the child's medical needs, including diagnoses, medications, and any known allergies. Additionally, contact information for primary caregivers and primary care doctor should be listed. The profile should also detail the child's communication abilities and preferred methods, any behavioral triggers, and effective

The image shows a green emergency profile form template. It features a white cross icon in a circle at the top left. Below it are four rows of information fields, each with a small icon: a calendar for 'DATE: _____', a person for 'NAME: _____', a house for 'ADDRESS: _____', and a person with a cane for 'PHYSICAL'. To the right of these fields is a large dashed box labeled 'PLACE PHOTO HERE' containing a green silhouette of a person. At the bottom right, there is a field for 'TRACKING FREQUENCY # (if applicable)'. The entire form is enclosed in a green border.

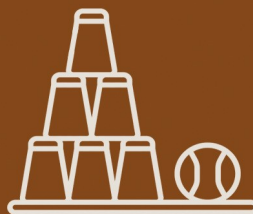
calming techniques. It's essential to include a current photo of the child for easy identification.

To ensure the information remains accurate and helpful, the profile should be updated regularly, ideally every six months, or immediately following any significant changes in the child's health or care routine. The recommendation is to have a photo of your child each morning with the outfit visible so first responders, law enforcement, and your neighborhood know exactly how your child looked on that day. Regular updates ensure that all details remain current and actionable, providing a reliable resource during emergencies.

If you do not have a personal emergency profile form, please feel free to reach out to Brett Walden at brett.walden@jax.ufl.edu to request a form.

FALL FAMILY FUN

Oct. 3
5:30-8:00 pm



A fun event for families to visit our center and indulge in Fall related activities and games. We welcome all disabilities and promote inclusivity. The UF Health Neurodevelopmental Pediatric Center houses the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD), the Florida Diagnostic Learning and Resources-Multidisciplinary Center (FDLRS-MDC) and the Neurodevelopmental Pediatric Clinic. We will have a variety of vendors present, games, arts & crafts, snacks and a raffle.

THIS YEAR: Families will have an opportunity to leave their "imprint" for our upcoming partnership with Deck the Chairs of Jacksonville Beach. We want to include our families in the design of our chair and are excited for this upcoming holiday event!

So please come out and enjoy! Costumes are welcome and encouraged. Looking forward to seeing you!

Questions?
904.633.4332
Terry.Lee2@jax.ufl.edu

Register online using the following QR Code or visit:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/uf-health-fall-festival-tickets-976645160967>

Location: 6271 St. Augustine Rd., Suite 1, Jacksonville, FL 32217

