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NJ ARCH Features:

- Website
- Lending Library
- Warm Line
- Training Workshops
- Events/Conferences and More



www.cafsnj.org

SPOTLIGHT ON ADOPTION AND KINSHIP LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP (AKLG) CLINICAL SERVICES

Access to compassionate, effective therapy can be life-changing for families. In this newsletter, we are highlighting the meaningful work of the AKLG Clinical Services program, which supports families across New Jersey. Through insights from Program Directors, Clinicians, and families, we take a closer look at this program and the difference it makes.

Q&A with Program Directors and Clinicians

Q: What makes this program different from traditional therapy models?

A: Unlike traditional therapy where the focus is primarily on the child, this model begins with caregivers. Program Directors emphasize that rather than focusing on “fixing” the behaviors, the model helps caregivers understand and work with what’s driving the child’s behavior. Raising a child with loss, broken attachments, and trauma is really hard, often times exhausting, leaving caregivers feeling burned out, and burdened by feelings of shame and inadequacy. The AKLG program shifts the narrative by helping caregivers understand their

child’s trauma and provides therapeutic support to strengthen their ability to build empathy and ultimately trust and connection with their child.

Q: What impact have you seen?

A: Program Directors have seen caregivers depersonalize challenging behaviors, increase their confidence, and respond with greater empathy and connection. This shift has brought deeper connection for many families. For many caregivers, it’s the first time they truly feel heard and supported.

Q: What does a typical session look like?

A: Sessions take place in the home or sometimes in the community and are designed to be flexible for the families’ needs. Clinicians may meet with caregiver(s) alone or caregiver (s) and children together, depending on the family’s needs and readiness. Sessions are two hours every week for about a year. While the program does require a commitment, there is flexibility and clinicians accommodate the family’s schedule.

Q: What would you say to families who are hesitant about therapy?

A: Clinicians address caregivers’ hesitation with validation. “Trying something different can be hard!” Clinicians reported that many caregivers have said that they were surprised by how different this experience feels than other services, systems, and therapies. It’s a space where caregivers and families feel safe, supported, and free from judgement. Oftentimes, caregivers look forward to the weekly session.

If you live in NJ, your children are under 20 years of age and placed with your family through NJ’s Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), you may be eligible for free counseling. For more information, contact the program coordinator at 551-224-2711 or email at:

AKLGprogram@cafsnj.org



Did You Know?



INTERESTED IN BECOMING A RESOURCE (FOSTER) PARENT ?

DCP&P is currently recruiting Resource Parents and Treatment Home Parents. Both programs especially need parents who are:

- Racially/culturally sensitive, and open to accepting children from diverse backgrounds
- Open to caring for children who have experienced trauma, and often have increased behavioral/mental health/medical needs
- Open to caring for sibling groups, and maintaining connections with siblings who cannot be placed together
- Willing to care for older youth (13-17) who need caring adults who will help them learn life skills, and successfully transition into adulthood.
- Open and affirming to LGBTQIA+ children and youth
- Willing to partner with DCP&P, courts, the treatment team, community partners, and ideally the child's family, to support reunification

For more information on how to become a NJ foster parent, please contact 800-222-0047 or visit <https://www.nj.gov/njfosteradopt/foster/>

DCP&P WAITING CHILDREN



Aashyia
Born 3/2012

Meet Aashyia! Aashyia is very creative and a talented artist. She can be shy at first but will warm up to you once she's comfortable. Like any typical teenager, her favorite hobby is sleeping along with playing video games (Roblox) and drawing. Science is Aashyia's favorite subject in school, but she isn't sure yet what career she will pursue in the future. She is too busy enjoying her teenage years! Aashyia is a big animal lover and says that her favorite is the Capybara. She would love to find a family who has pets. Aashyia would benefit from a structured, two-parent household with older siblings who can be positive role models. Aashyia does have siblings that she continues to have contact with, and she would like to maintain these relationships after adoption.

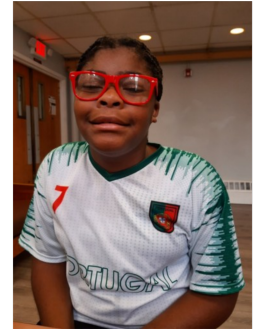
To learn more about Aashyia, please contact Richa Rodier at Richa.Rodier@dcf.nj.gov.



Serinity
Born 8/2012

Serinity is an outgoing, sweet young lady who impresses those around her with her charm and intelligence. She has overcome a lot of adversity in her short life and has started working on her personal goals while focusing on herself. A lover of music, Serinity's favorite musical artist is NBA Youngboy. She enjoys expressing her own creativity by decorating her room with photos, poetry, and quotes. Family is very important to Serinity, and she shows this by printing out photos of her family members and putting them up around her bedroom. She hopes to one day participate in either a cheerleading or softball team.

Serinity is incredibly resilient but will require caregivers who are patient and willing to learn. She will thrive in a home with structure and consistency as she grows up and maneuvers her way through adolescence. Serinity should be the only child in the home. For more information on Serinity, please email exchange specialist Melinda Stevens at Melinda.stevens@dcf.nj.gov.



Scarlet
Born 3/2012

Scarlet is a personable and considerate young lady with a vibrant spirit. She describes herself as funny, kind, and affectionate. She has interest in fashion, shopping, baking, and learning how to swim. Scarlet also enjoys a wide range of music, which reflects her eclectic taste. When spending time with Scarlet, one can expect an engaging and fun experience. She particularly enjoys a competitive game of UNO, where she demonstrates good sportsmanship. Additionally, she loves to take on the role of a DJ, selecting her favorite songs to set the atmosphere. Scarlet is learning Spanish so she would flourish with a Spanish-speaking family. Scarlet has expressed that her ideal family would be a mom, or mom and dad. She would like to have younger siblings, and she is open to pets as well.

To learn more about Scarlet, please email exchange specialist Kenyatta Johnson at Kenyatta.Johnson@dcf.nj.gov.



APPRECIATION FOR FOSTER FAMILIES AND STRENGTHENING SUPPORTS

As May marks **National Foster Care Month**, it offers a meaningful opportunity to recognize and thank the individuals and families who open their homes and their hearts to children in need of care.

Foster parents and kinship caregivers step into roles that are both deeply rewarding and, at times, incredibly complex. They navigate new routines, unfamiliar systems, and the emotional needs of children who may be carrying loss, uncertainty, or trauma. They show up day after day with patience, flexibility, and compassion, often without knowing exactly what each day will bring.

This month, we pause to acknowledge that commitment. But appreciation alone is not enough. One

of the most important things we can do during May and throughout the year is ensure that families are not doing this work alone.

Support can take many forms. It can look like access to reliable, easy to understand information. It can mean opportunities to connect with other caregivers who truly understand the experience. It can be a training that builds confidence, a conversation that offers reassurance, or simply knowing where to turn when questions arise.

For many families, especially those new to foster care or kinship caregiving, the need for guidance does not end after a child is placed in their home. In many ways, it is just beginning. Having consistent, responsive support can make a meaningful

difference in how families navigate challenges and sustain stability over time.

At NJ ARCH, we are continually reminded that strong families are built not only through commitment, but through connection. When caregivers feel supported, children are better supported too.

This Foster Care Month, we extend our sincere gratitude to all foster and kinship caregivers. Your dedication matters. And just as importantly, we reaffirm our commitment to walking alongside you, offering resources, connection, and support every step of the way. Reach out to our warmline at warm-line@njarch.org or call us at 1 (877) 427-2465 for support and resources.

SUPPORTING FOSTER FAMILIES ACROSS NEW JERSEY

Foster parenting comes with both rewards and challenges, and having the right support can make all the difference. embrella, a New Jersey-based non-profit, provides a wide range of services to help foster families feel prepared, connected, and supported.

Through free training and education, caregivers can build skills and better understand the needs of children who have experienced trauma. Family Support Advocates offer guid-



ance and help families navigate the child welfare system, while support groups create opportunities to connect with others who truly understand the journey.

embrella also provides practical assistance, including funding for extracurricular activities, school needs, and enrichment opportunities like camps. Programs

such as the Bag Project help ensure children entering care have essential items and a sense of dignity from the start.

By combining emotional support, education, and tangible resources, embrella helps foster families not only manage challenges, but thrive. Be sure to check out their upcoming event, *The Otter Wears Prada*, listed on the last page of this newsletter. For more information about embrella visit www.embrella.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

EnlightenMENT is a peer to peer mentoring program created to authentically engage with and support youth dealing with a range of experiences in the foster care system. Youth are matched with a peer navigator that will offer advice, guidance, and empowerment strategies with a genuine approach. Navigators that meet you where you are and ARE HERE FOR YOU!

Essex, Union, Hudson, and Morris (starting July 1- Passaic, Bergen, Hunterdon, Sussex and Warren):

Children's Aid and

Family Services

Phone Number: (201) 261-2800

Email referrals:

peer2peer@cafsnj.org

Mercer, Monmouth, Middlesex and Ocean:

Children's Home Society

Phone Number: (609) 802-5213

Email referrals:

p2preferral@chsofnj.org

Atlantic, Burlington and Camden

Oaks Integrated Care

Phone Number: (609) 953-6800

Email referrals:

p2preferrals@oaksintcare.org



NEWS IN NEW JERSEY



New Jersey's Governor Mikie Sherill announced in April 2026, the expansion of Family Connects NJ program to the remaining counties of NJ, including Union, Hunterdon, Morris, and Warren.

When implemented, New Jersey will become the first state in the country to offer free, universal home visits by registered nurses for all families welcoming a newborn. Whether by birth, adoption, or as a resource parent or kinship caregiver, this service is available to support you.

For more information, visit Family Connects website:

www.familyconnectsnj.org



LEAVING HOME ISN'T ALWAYS EASY: SUPPORTING YOUR ADOPTED YOUNG ADULT

May is a time of celebrations: caps and gowns, graduation parties, and conversations about "what's next." It can also be a time when parents find themselves quietly wondering and worrying: *Is my young adult ready? What does the next step look like for them?*

If you're feeling this way, you're not alone. The path to independence isn't always a straight line, and many young adults today take more time to find their footing. For adopted youth, this stage can come with added layers.

As adopted young adults move toward adulthood, they may be working through questions about identity, belonging, and personal history. Experiences of grief and loss can make big life changes, like leaving home, starting col-

lege, or entering the workforce, feel especially overwhelming at times.

You might notice your young adult wanting more independence one day, and needing extra support the next. This can be confusing, but it's a common part of the process for many adopted young adults.



It can help to gently shift expectations. Independence doesn't always happen on a set timeline, and progress is often gradual. Small steps like building daily living skills, exploring work or school options, or taking on new responsibilities are all meaningful and worth recognizing.

Staying connected continues to matter. Your steady presence, gentle encouragement, and openness to listen will provide stability during this time. Simple check-ins and reminders that they are not alone can go a long way.

You don't have to navigate this stage on your own. Additional supports such as counseling, educational or vocational programs, and trusted adults can make a difference. It's important to take care of yourself during this time. This is a transition for you as well, and it's natural to have mixed feelings.

The road ahead may look different than you expected, but that doesn't mean your young adult isn't moving forward. With time, patience, and continued connection, they can build a future that works for them.

NJ ARCH VIRTUAL FAMILY STORYTIME SERIES RETURNS

In celebration of National Adoption Month this November, NJ ARCH is proud to announce our **2nd Annual Virtual Family Storytime Series**, a program centered on connection, belonging, and the power of shared stories.

Last year's inaugural series brought adoptive families and children from across New Jersey together in a meaningful virtual experience. Children shared artwork and drawings directly with authors, while families connected through stories that reflected the joy,

complexity, and uniqueness of their adoption journeys. For many families, the series offered a powerful opportunity for children to see themselves represented in stories and for families to feel connected to a broader community of shared experience.

Participant feedback captured the impact of the series:

"What a wonderful program."

"All three authors were exceptional and brought with them so much needed kindness."

"We are very grateful that we got to see ourselves in others!!"

"It was so lovely to see participants popping up on the screen."



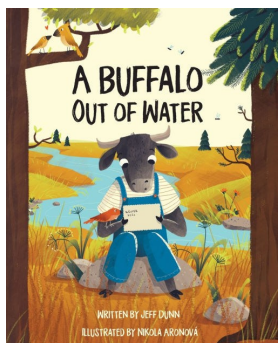
We are grateful for the response and look forward to continuing this tradition of storytelling and connection. Be on the lookout for more information about this year's **Virtual Family Storytime Series** this November!

NATALIE'S LIBRARY CORNER

Hello Readers,

Our free lending library is always growing and this month we are excited to share two new books ready to be borrowed and loved. Visit our lending library: njarch.org/library

Happy Reading!
NJ ARCH team

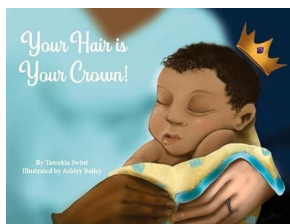


A Buffalo Out of Water

written by Jeff Dunn, an adoptive dad of two boys. This heartfelt story is brought vividly to life through incredibly beautiful illustrations. It follows Wade, a young water buffalo, as he journeys to understand his adoption story. It explores feelings of grief and loss that adoption brings for adopted children. This book offers a gentle and meaningful exploration of identity, a

sense of belonging, and connection to birth and adoptive families.

At the end of the book, Dunn offers some helpful and insightful tips for families and friends about adoption. This book would be great for a transracial family, international adoption story and for children in elementary school.



Your Hair Is Your Crown

written by Tamekia Swint, is a joyful, affirming story that celebrates natural hair and the importance of self-love. With engaging illustrations and a strong, positive message, it encourages children to take pride in who they are.

The story reflects the cultural significance of hair within Black culture, where hair is often seen as an expression of identity, history, and pride across all stages of life.

For families formed through adoption and kinship, especially those parenting transracially, this book offers a meaningful way to begin conversations about identity, representation, and culture. It is a helpful reminder of how important it is for children to see themselves reflected and celebrated. This is a warm and accessible read that supports positive self-image while also helping caregivers continue to grow in understanding and connecting to their child's experience.

* A special note from the author *

*"I wrote **Your Hair is Your Crown** as a tribute to the many adoptees and children in care who have sat in my chair and touched my heart. Thank you to NJ Arch for helping share this message with families, because every child deserves to wear their crown with confidence."* Tamekia Swint, Founder of Styles 4 Kidz NFP, Author, Hair Stylist, and Hair Educator

See resource information below.

CONNECTING THROUGH BOOKS

Books can help children feel seen, understood, and connected. Reading together also creates opportunities for meaningful conversations in a gentle, natural way.

Here are some helpful tips for you:

- * Let your child lead the conversation and share at their own pace.
- * Ask simple questions like, "How do you think the character felt?"
- * Remind children that all feelings are welcome and normal.
- * Celebrate stories that reflect different kinds of families and experiences.
- * Revisit favorite books, familiar stories often bring comfort and connection.

Sometimes the most meaningful conversations begin with a story shared together.



FEATURED RESOURCE:

Styles4Kidz

To provide high-quality, compassionate hair care education and services for kids with textured hair in foster care and transracial adoptive or biracial families.

For more information visit:

styles4kidz.org

Resources for parents:

- Hair Care Workshops (in person and virtual)
- Parent Advocacy Groups
- Online Training Platform



Resources for kids:

- Salon Services
- Workshops for Teens
- Group Home Services
- Sponsor-a-Kid

NEW JERSEY ADOPTION RESOURCE CLEARING HOUSE

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AND FAMILY SERVICES

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AWARD



AWARDED THROUGH
THE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
IN WASHINGTON, DC IN 2005

NJ ARCH

The one-stop

resource

for those touched

by adoption.

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NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

AND

NOVEMBER 21ST IS NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY!

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: WWW.NATIONALADOPTIONDAY.ORG

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL KINSHIP CARE MONTH

Touched by Kinship Care?

Visit www.kinkconnect.org or call our warm line at 877-KLG-LINE (877-554-5463) to speak to a warm-line specialist or for more information. We are here to help.



UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Looking for a conference or training?

We've highlighted several upcoming events below for professionals and families, available both in person and virtually. Visit our NJ ARCH Events page for a full calendar of additional trainings, events, and supports. njarch.org/events

June 24-26, 2026: National Adoption Conference: Washington, DC. For information visit: <https://adoptioncouncil.org/ncfa-conference/>

July 23-26, 2026: 3rd Annual BIPOC Adoptees VOICES Multi Day Conference: Portland, OR. For information visit: <https://www.bipocadoptees.org/event/3rd-annual-bipoc-adoptee-voices-conference/>

September 25-27, 2026: Men Having Babies (MHB) Surrogacy Conference & Expo, NYC. For information visit: <https://menhavingbabies.org/surrogacy-seminars/ny/>

October 21-22, 2026: Family Rising Adoption & Foster Care Annual Conference: VIRTUAL <https://wearefamiliesrising.org/families-rising-adoption-and-foster-care-conference/>

November 14, 2026: CPFA (Concerned Persons for Adoption) 12th Annual Family Conference: For more information visit: www.cpfanj.org

Don't miss this event!

The Otter Wears Prada Designer Bag Bingo & Couture Tricky Tray

**Saturday, June 13, 2026
4:30 pm
West Trenton Ballroom**

All proceeds benefit *embrella*. *Embrella's* mission is to embrace, support, and advocate for children, youth, and families within the child welfare community. For more information, visit: <https://give.embrella.org/event/the-otter-wears-prada-designer-bag-bingo-and-tricky-tray/e766745>

