

# REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis Intervention • Hope

Aspiranet and Kern County Adoption Support Program



## Hello, REACH families!

While time marches on and we find ourselves in autumn once again, we at REACH will hold on a while longer to our focus upon the Five Protective Factors. For the past three newsletter editions, we have provided an overview of the Five Protective Factors and detailed the Factors of Parental Resilience and Social Connections.

This quarter, we will be focusing on the Protective Factor dealing with Concrete Supports. Families and children have basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and health care. These are concrete things we all need. When families are in crisis, adequate services and supports need to be in place to help a family to stabilize. Adoptive families face universal crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic that turned our collective world upside down, but adoptive families may face crises unique to families formed through adoption, such as adoptive children wrestling with difficult or missing information about their history, search and reunion, or challenges created by anyone in the adoption constellation around the Seven Core Issues of Adoption. Please keep reading, to learn more about Concrete Supports for adoptive families, and please consider attending the monthly Adoption Support Group or Parent Café throughout this coming quarter. We are here for you! Please note we have changed the day and time of Parent Café (see page 5 for details).

We are excited to continue with our new *Adoption Preparation Training* series, which began in August, being held on Monday evenings through October. This series was designed to provide those of you early in the process of building your families through adoption with specialized parenting education as well as to support parents who have adopted children fill in the gaps in what you have learned about the unique challenges you face. The topics these last four weeks include Birth Family, Redefining Family & Preparing Siblings, Normative Adoption Issues & Stuck Spots, and Self-Care & Supports. The link to register (via Event Brite) is <https://tinyurl.com/x7swv3k2>. Please connect with your REACH social worker for a flyer to this series, if you have not already received one.

We are also excited to bring new training to our partnership with Bakersfield College's FKCE program. Patti Kasper will provide an overview of the neurobehavioral model on October 19th entitled *Trying Differently Rather Than Trying Harder*. The Neurobehavioral Model teaches us to look at behavior as being inextricably tied to brain function, which can be altered by exposure to toxins, trauma, or a host of other factors. In the spring, Patti will facilitate a series that will hone your skills in "thinking brain first," and creating an Individualized Environmental Plan for your child. Please see page 5 for details on our upcoming calendar, including support groups and training opportunities.

Sincerely,

The REACH Team

Kern County  
Fall 2021

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### Your REACH Support Team

#### Emma Ruiz

Resource Family Program Director  
er Ruiz@aspiranet.org

#### Carrie Ontiveros

Adoption Supervisor  
contiveros@aspiranet.org

#### Patti Kasper

REACH Social Worker  
pkasper@aspiranet.org

#### Yaneth Arceo

REACH Social Worker  
yarceo@aspiranet.org  
1001 Tower Way, Ste. 250  
Bakersfield, CA 93309  
Ph: (661) 323-1233  
Fax: (661) 323-8090

# Finding Concrete Supports for Your Family

By: Hortencia Munoz Casarez

It's an undeniable truth... parenting is challenging. It really does take a village. We can't raise a healthy, much less thriving family, completely on our own without support and resources. Parents need access to the types of concrete supports, goods, and services that can minimize the stress of difficult situations. Building this protective factor helps ensure that the basic needs of a family are met. Likewise, when families encounter a crisis such as domestic violence, mental illness, homelessness, or substance abuse, adequate services need to be in place to provide stability, treatment, and ongoing support for family members to get through the crisis. Meeting these basic economic needs is essential in preventing families from entering into, or lifting them from poverty and/or adversity.

When parents are faced with overwhelmingly stressful conditions they likely need to seek help, but for some parents, seeking help from others and accessing services is a difficult thing to do. Embarrassment may hinder them from reaching out due to feelings of incompetence or failure. Other parents may not be aware of, or know how to access resources. Other families may have hesitations about accessing services that have societal or cultural stigmas associated with them, such as domestic violence shelters, financial benefits, or family planning. And for many families, language barriers limit their knowledge of, access to, and ability to navigate through the service systems. Thus, when parents ask for help, it's an important step towards building resilience, lessening their adverse experiences and stressors, mitigating the impact of stressful conditions, and raising happy and healthy children.

Every family's needs are different and the need for concrete supports may include:

- Food
- Clothing
- Child care
- Health care
- Transportation
- Legal assistance
- Family planning
- Personal supplies
- Financial benefits
- Parenting education
- Employment opportunities

- Safe shelter, affordable housing
- Mental and behavioral health services
- Access to telephones, computers, and/or wifi
- Access to public education and academic supplies
- Information regarding community services and how to access them
- Culturally-informed services, translation assistance, special accommodations

Following are some suggestions for accessing the concrete supports your family may need:

- Resource fairs
- Support Groups
- Faith-based organizations
- Community bulletin boards
- Schools and college counselors
- Your local Aspiranet REACH office
- Referrals from your therapist or doctor
- United Way and/or 211 (directory of local resources)
- Health & Human Services agencies and social workers
- Make a list of family, friends, and neighbors to contact for support
- Local government and non-profit organizations' social media pages

Your community provides many concrete support services so that when things get tough, you have somewhere to turn for help. Don't hesitate to use the services available to you in order for your family to be the safest, healthiest, and most resilient it can be. Remember, everyone needs a bit of help sometimes, because it really does take a village.

## How Will You Find Supports?

By: Tara Soria

Mr. Fred Rogers once said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" After reading Hortencia's newsletter article on the topic of Concrete Supports in Times of Need, I encourage you to delve into your personal experiences and ponder the following questions:

- What gets in the way of asking for or getting the help you need for you and your family?
- Besides friends and family, who supports you and what difference does their support make?
- Where do you seek academic, social, and emotional assistance for your children?
- When you find “good help” how do you make sure other parents know about it?
- What is the most difficult part of accessing services and what strategies have you learned to make it easier?
- When do you allow yourself to accept help?

As you mulled over these questions, what were your conclusions about the level of concrete supports present in your family’s life? Are there any areas where you feel you could use more support? Oftentimes, it is hard to know

where to go for help or who to talk to. Sometimes it’s even hard knowing what to say or ask for! Something I have found helpful is to write down my questions (or other information) before I call, and have it in front of me for reference. Keeping notes on who you called, the date you called, and what was discussed can be beneficial for future reference. In my experience I haven’t always found the help I was looking for during my first (or fourth) attempt, however, that person often pointed me in the right direction, to someone else that could help. It can surely be a learning process; a learning process that will also strengthen your knowledge and skills in locating the supports you need. Remember, we at REACH are here to help too! You don’t have to do this alone.

*“When parents seek concrete support, it’s a huge step towards building resilience and teaching their children how to deal with life’s difficulties.”*  
 —Family Exchange Center

## What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing By Bruce D. Perry, MD., Ph. D., and Oprah Winfrey Book Review By: Yaneth Arceo, MS

As a survivor of child neglect and maltreatment, Oprah Winfrey has joined with Dr. Perry, a clinician, researcher, and teacher, to advocate for trauma survivors. Together, in their book, *What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing*, they show how individuals who experience trauma can address it and find healing. This book is connected to our current Protective Factor of “Concrete Support in Times of Need” because it gives examples of how people overcome their traumas by receiving the proper resources when needed.

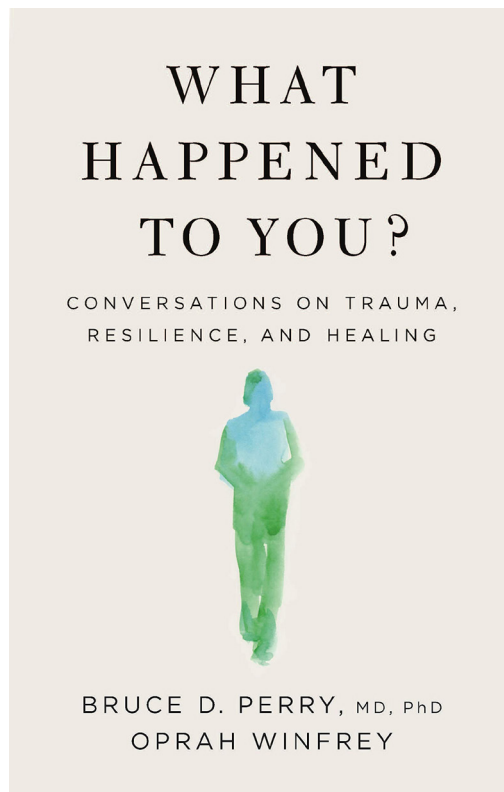
Oprah shares in the book that in her early years, she experienced a great deal of loneliness. Her mother was a teenager when she gave birth to Oprah, and she didn’t have the assets needed to truly meet her daughter’s needs. The majority of Oprah’s childhood was spent with different relatives; most of whom neglected her.

Dr. Perry states our brains are molded by the experiences we have during childhood. As a child, our brain creates thousands of new neurons per second in which every single

experience is registered. These experiences can regulate our brain or cause it to be in constant states of dysregulation.

In the book, Dr. Perry shares the story of a boy named Sam. Sam was physically abused by his father and was removed from his father’s care by Child Protective Services. While Sam was in foster care, he started to receive the help he needed to thrive. However, at one point his behavior changed. No one could find a reason for his behavioral changes until Dr. Perry met Sam’s dad, and noticed his father and Sam’s new teacher wore the same cologne. For Sam, the smell brought up negative memories of when he was abused by his father. After the teacher started using different cologne, Sam’s behavior improved. Dr. Perry understood Sam’s trauma and his expertise was the concrete support that allowed Sam to be successful in the classroom.

Oprah states we all can learn positive regulation strategies and recapture balance. People want to believe we can be resilient and can recover from our traumas without receiving



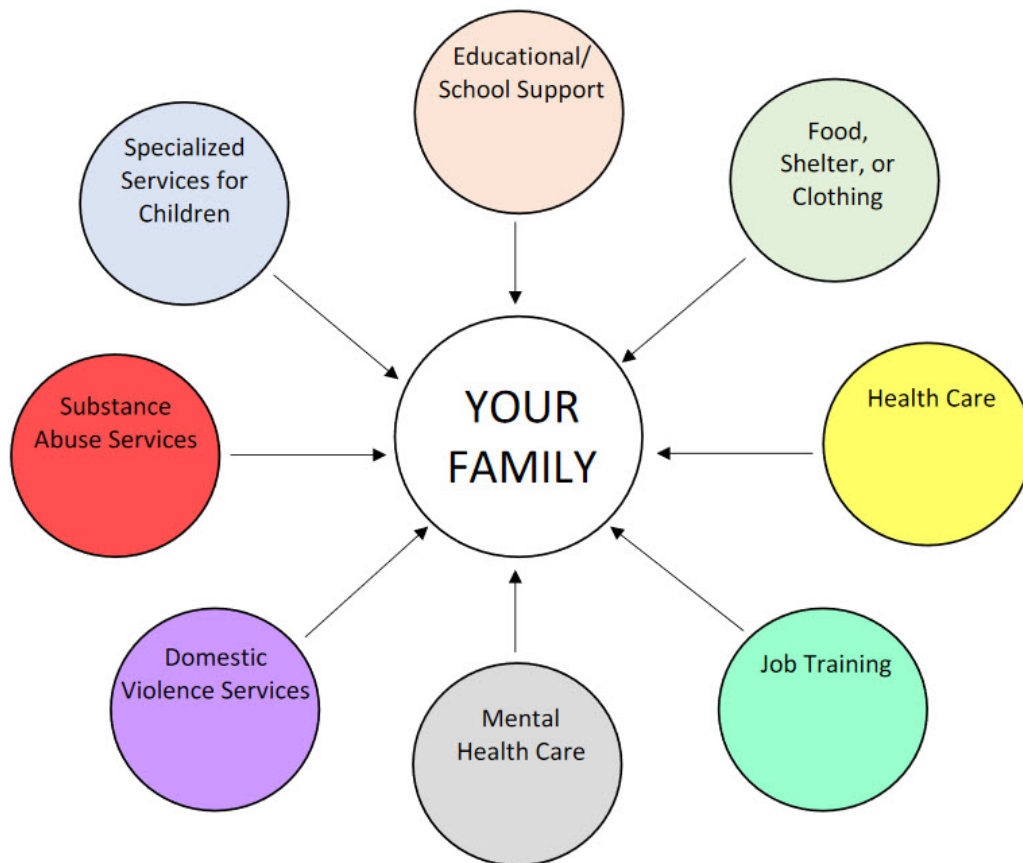
help. In reality, once our experiences are connected and start making sense for us, we discover that acquiring the proper support helps us heal. *What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing* helps us understand that children who come from difficult backgrounds need support. Not just temporary, but throughout their lives, to help them find strategies to heal from their trauma. Receiving support from professionals who understand a traumatized brain can make the difference.

On a closing note, we all need concrete support to help us overcome trauma, thrive, and help others.

Having the ability and willingness to ask for help can create change for an individual and the entire family. Requesting or finding concrete support can be challenging when families do not know where to begin or feel they need to solve their challenges on their own. If you feel the health and well-being of your family are at risk because of a lack of resources and support, the REACH program is here to guide and walk alongside you. Please contact your REACH program for additional information and resources.

## Circles of Concrete Support Activity

This activity is intended to help you identify a person, agency/program, or a source that is a concrete support for your family during times of need. List the names of anyone who represents who you would contact during each particular need.



**Action Plan:** When you have completed your circles, identify one concrete need that, if met, will lighten your burden. Now, take the first step in reaching out for support!

**Identify your most significant need:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Steps taken to meet this need:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Support Groups & Events

## October

### 21 Parent Cafe

10:00 - 11:30 am

### 26 Adoption Support Group

6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

## November

### 18 Parent Cafe

10:00 - 11:30 am

### 23 Adoption Support Group

6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

## December

### 16 Parent Cafe

10:00 - 11:30 am

### 28 Adoption Support Group

6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

## Adoption Preparation Trainings

Mondays, 6:00-8:00pm  
through 10/25/21, via Zoom

The REACH program is pleased to offer **Adoption Preparation Training**, a free online training series to strengthen families built through foster, kinship care and adoption and for the professionals who support them. This trauma informed training series includes concise modules on topics relevant to the complexities and challenges children and caregivers experience throughout the various stages of permanency and adoption.

The remaining trainings in the series are:

**Birth Family** 10/4/21

**Redefining Family and Preparing Siblings** 10/11/21

**Normative Adoption Issues/Stuck Spots** 10/18/21

**Self Care and Supports** 10/25/21

To register for one or all of these trainings, please register here: <https://tinyurl.com/x7swv3k2>. You will receive a link each week to join that week's training.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, REACH Kern County continues to identify creative ways of bringing services to REACH families. We will continue to keep you informed of our services and provide information on trainings and events.

## Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)

Friday, 9/17/21, 8:00am-12:00pm via Zoom

TBRI is a parenting practiced developed by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross out of Texas Christian University to be used with "children from hard places," children who have experienced trauma, typically in the form of abuse or neglect. This program is high in both structure and nurture and focuses on connecting with, correcting, and empowering children. This training will discuss the principles of TBRI and engage in activities that will help you be a more trauma-sensitive caregiver. This training provides practical ways for you to engage with your children and help them to heal from their histories. To register for this training, please call (661) 395-4991 or email [BCFKCE@bakersfieldcollege.edu](mailto:BCFKCE@bakersfieldcollege.edu).

## Trying Differently Rather Than Trying Harder: Overview of the Neurobehavioral Model

6:00-8:00pm via Zoom

Nothing happens without our brains. Our brains work behind the scenes, without our conscious awareness. Traditional approaches, based on Learning Theory, assume that all brains function the same way. The impacts on the brain function by various pre-and post-natal events are not taken into account. The neurobehavioral framework allows us to explore our child's unique brain strengths and challenges, and to view behavior as symptoms of brain-based differences. This overview will introduce this powerful shift in our understanding of behavior. To register for this training, please call (661) 395-4991 or email [BCFKCE@bakersfieldcollege.edu](mailto:BCFKCE@bakersfieldcollege.edu).

## Bakersfield College Foster & Kinship Care Program

Bakersfield College Foster and Kinship Care Program offers training of interest to foster and adoptive parents at no charge.

For a complete list of classes, visit the FKCE website at

<https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/FKCE/schedules#rfat>

Register for classes by calling the registration line

661-319-1836 or BC Program Manager at 661-395-4737

## Bakersfield Aspiranet

1001 Tower Way, Ste. 250  
Bakersfield, CA 93309  
Phone: (661) 323-1233  
Fax: (661) 323-8090

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### REACH and Kern County Adoption Support Services

**Resource:** We provide 1) telephone support and referral to local services 2) referral to local adoption related community trainings 3) linkage to local therapists with experience working with adoptive families 4) lending library and website access 5) quarterly newsletter which includes book reviews, and relevant adoption related information.

**Education:** Educational support groups and meetings are regularly held and offer a variety of topics pertinent to adoption. In addition, access to the lending library and website offer many opportunities to learn more about adoption and the impact of adoption on all members of the adoption constellation (adoptive parents, adoptees and birth family).

**Advocacy:** We are here to help navigate common issues facing adoptive families. We assist adoptive parents with advocating for the assistance needed in working with educational, legislative and community partners to best meet their children's needs.

**Crisis Intervention/Case Management:** Participants are eligible to receive short-term therapeutic services, free of charge, by master's level social workers who are trained and experienced in adoption-related issues. Families are also eligible to receive in-home case management services as needed.

**Hope:** We utilize our agency values of Respect, Integrity, Courage and Hope (RICH) to guide our work with adoptive families. Our goal is to promote safe, healthy and stable adoptive families through access to our services.