



Catholic Social Services

Ask any child where they would rather live – in “Happy World” or “Yuck World” – and the answer is obvious. Sadly, there are children in our community who inhabit Yuck World and choose to live there. Fortunately, there is a United Way funded service to help.

“Happy World” and “Yuck World” are just two of the tools used by SAFE counselors at Catholic Social Services of Miami Valley. Supporting Adoptive Families Effectively (SAFE) is one of the many programs provided by Catholic Social Services, a United Way Partner Agency.

Brianna came to live with her new family after numerous foster care placements. Like similar children, she struggled with issues of trust and acceptance with her new family. It wasn't easy for her new parents either. It was a difficult transition for everyone. “We need help!” thought Rosemary, her foster-mom.

SAFE counseling helps treat Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD), which can develop in children who suffer trauma early in life. Children who have been abused or neglected and/or had multiple foster care placements can suffer from attachment and bonding disorders. Children with RAD have been deeply hurt by those they depend on. Consequently, they devote a lot of energy to being in control. In ‘Yuck World’, they are in control. They are the gatekeepers and avoid letting anyone get too close for fear of being hurt...again.

After an initial assessment, Brianna and her new family began SAFE counseling. The treatment involves intensive therapy and ongoing attachment counseling, as well as parental training and education. Brianna responded well. Just the improved eye contact was a good indicator. She is doing well and making friends. A year later, Rosemary and her husband adopted Brianna. Initially that stirred up some old behaviors, but they returned to Catholic Social Services for some ‘tune-up’ SAFE counseling and Brianna is back on track.

“She can still be bossy, but she is making friends and learning to cooperate,” said Rosemary. Brianna is a very bright student. She is a member of the Girl Scouts and hopes to play the violin in the school orchestra.

Thanks to their partnership with United Way, Catholic Social Services is helping troubled youngster find the security they need live in a much happier world.