

National Reunification Month Celebrating Reunifications

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Celebrating Reunifications Chauncey Strong
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History of Reunification Month

Celebrated in June each year, National Reunification Month recognizes the people and efforts around the country that help families to stay together.



History of Reunification Month

National Reunification Month began in 2010 as a single day—June 19 (during Father's Day weekend).

Early collaboration among a number of national organizations, including the ABA Center on Children and the Law, Casey Family Programs, National Association of Counsel for Children, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the National Center of State Courts, the Foster Care Coalition, Rise magazine, and Judge Connie Cohen from Iowa.

These groups joined together to let States know that reunification is important and worthy of celebration. In 2012, the initiative's leaders decided to focus on June as Reunification Month.

In 2015 the work of Mimi Laver, Scott the Trowbridge and their student interns from the ABA Center on Children and the Law, was so excited I wanted to get involved and support their efforts. Also a huge appreciation to Shante Bullock who created the original artwork.



History of Reunification Month

Guiding principles have remained central:

- Reunification with family is the preferred outcome for children who must be removed from their homes and placed in foster care.
- For most children in foster care, reunification with their family is their best option for a permanent and loving home.
- Every year, thousands of children are successfully reunified with their families.
- All children need the care, love, security, and stability of family unity—including parents, siblings, grandparents, and other extended family members—to provide a solid foundation for personal growth, development, and maturity.
- Reunification takes work, commitment, and investment of time and resources by parents, family members, social workers, foster parents, service providers, attorneys, courts, and the community.



History of Reunification Month

Reunification Heroes

One special aspect of the month is honoring Reunification Heroes from around the country. These heroes are parents, lawyers, and case workers who have gone above and beyond in the reunification process.



History of Reunification Month

State Reunification Events:

Another important part of Reunification Month is the state and local events that will happen in June. 29 states have conducted at least one event over the last few years, and most of these have held multiple events.

The celebrations ranged from picnics honoring families, to rallies on the steps of State capitols, to substantive forums and Reunification Proclamations.

2020 National Reunification Month Website

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/project-areas/national-reunification-month/

Reunification Heroes from around the country. You can send stories/pics from state/local events and reach out to people who were reunified to send stories of their experiences.

Mimi.Laver@americanbar.org

This year's special feature:

Lifting Up Youth Voices

We Are The Lucky Ones

Three youth from Legal Services of New Jersey's Reunified Foster Youth Program share their powerful reunification stories.



2020 National Reunification Month Website Resources

COPING WITH VISITS DURING COVID-19:

Parent-to-parent support for handling separation during the pandemic

Foster Care as a support to families: The Children's Bureau memo highlighting the importance of working towards safe and successful reunification.

**Icebreakers: Tapping into the Power of Families
Supporting Families**



2020 National Reunification Month Website

State Updates

VA: VDSS Permanency Matter's Newsletter on Reunification. A spotlight on Dads and reunifications.

LFSVA Visit Coaching Program that supports reunifications

<https://lfsva.org/blogdennisvisitcoaching/>

GA: Georgia Makes Family Reunification a Statewide Priority with New Reunification Manager Position Samantha Walker, LMSW. This year Georgia will be virtually celebrating Reunification Heroes via social media and DFCS webpage. They are also sending out weekly tips for supporting reunification to include partnerships between birth and foster families; reunification for older youth; and agency partnerships with birth families. Some regions are preparing gift baskets to deliver (safely, of course) to families who have successfully reunified.



Resources

- Mimi Laver, JD, Director Legal Representation ABA Center on Children and the Law-- : Mimi.Laver@americanbar.org

National Reunification Month

- https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/project-areas/national-reunification-month/
- History of National Reunification Month
- https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/child_law_practice/vol-35/june-2016/celebrating-national-reunification-month/
- www.facebook.com.aba.CCL.
- LFSVA Visit Coaching Program <https://lfsva.org/blogdennisvisitcoaching/>

Thank you for all you do for children and families.

Keep celebrating Reunifications!!



Strong Training and Consulting
Building **Strong** Families Together!

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