



Support. Education. Local Events.  
*for Adoptive Families*



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The PARC newsletter is published quarterly. Please direct questions and comments to [parcnewsletter@bethany.org](mailto:parcnewsletter@bethany.org)

Bethany Christian Services is a nonprofit, private social services agency with more than 115 offices located in 36 states. In addition, Bethany offers social services to children and families in 15 countries.



[www.bethany.org](http://www.bethany.org)

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## School's Out!

By Kim Waldie, BSW PARC Case Manager

*“No school in June!” This is a famous saying in my house. Once the warm weather hits, there is very little I can do to get my kids motivated for anything but fun!*

This summer, we at the Post Adoption Resource Center are hoping that you get time to enjoy the beauty and fun of summer in Michigan. We also hope you get some personal time to re-energize yourself and your family.

What we love most about summer is the break from the daily routine of packing lunches, putting away backpacks, and battling homework every evening. Unfortunately, if you're raising a child with special needs, you understand that changing the routine and losing consistency can create havoc for kids. Who hasn't planned a wonderful family event and had a child's melt-down put a damper on the activity?

On top of that throw in the additional sensory stimulation that summer brings (think fireworks, sand, sunscreen, bugs/bug spray, or large crowds) and you know there can be challenges ahead!

One thing that can help is building some predictability and learning into the summer months to offer some consistency. Also, regardless of what the sunlight tells us, earlier bedtimes are still a parent's best friend! Tired, sleep-deprived, children will struggle even harder to regulate through summer activities.

In this issue, we offer a few simple ideas to help you cope with the extra sensory challenges of summer. Most of what we share with you comes from other parents, like yourself, who've learned through trial and error better ways to do things.

If there is a better way to enjoy Michigan summers, we're willing to share it!

## Fun Facts

**Popsicles were accidentally invented by an 11-year-old boy in San Francisco in 1905.**

**Did you know that watermelons are not a fruit, but a vegetable instead? They belong to the cucumber family of vegetables.**

**AVAILABLE SERVICES**

**Working with your adoptive family:**

- Support of a PARC specialist in your home
- 24-hour crisis availability
- Short-term emergency intervention
- Family-centered plan
- List of supportive regional resources

**Connecting you with community services:**

- Liaison for adoptive families to other service providers
- One-on-one assistance accessing services
- Comprehensive resource guide

**Getting you the information you need:**

- Daily phone access
- Timely responses with information
- Connection to resources

**Supporting your family:**

- Monthly group experiences
- Quarterly training

**Sharing even more:**

- PARC website with suggested books/articles on adoption
- List of community resources
- Calendar of adoptive parents' events and trainings
- Adoptive family newsletter

**Family Feedback**

*"PARC gives our large family opportunities we generally would not take."*

*"My PARC workers have been a godsend. I could not have asked for a more understanding and supportive staff."*

*"PARC has been a great help! Workers are empathetic, kind, and helpful!"*

# Sensory Integration Activities

Sensory integration activities can prompt the brain to process sensory information more effectively, helping the child respond more appropriately to the environment.

**CREATING A SENSORY CORNER**

A "sensory corner" can provide stimulation to the under-responsive child, sensory input for the sensory seeking child, and a safe retreat for the sensory defensive child. Block off a corner of a room and use soft furnishings with a variety of textures. A big comfy bean bag provides wonderful deep pressure and a snuggly effect, which can be very calming. Some children find a lava lamp or fish aquarium soothing to look at, and others appreciate having headphones with which they can listen to soft soothing music. A sensory box in the corner filled with objects that have different textures and weights can be useful for your child.



Offer a variety of objects (smooth wood, velvet, squishy textures, and stretchy objects) until your child discovers their favorites. Fiddling with or touching these objects could be soothing for an overstimulated child, or calming for a child who is wound up and sensory seeking.



**PROPRIOCEPTIVE ACTIVITIES**

Proprioceptive activities are excellent sensory integration activities for kids who are always craving movement and crashing into things, or can help stimulate a lethargic child. Heavy work activities can help your child to really "feel" their muscles and joints. Let your child carry groceries, sweep the yard, dig in the garden, or do any other activity that works their muscles. Jumping on a trampoline and climbing on playground equipment also gives good proprioceptive input. If your child struggles to sit still to listen to a lesson, then try a stress ball to squeeze, chewing gum, or a special chew toy to give proprioception input.



**VESTIBULAR SENSORY INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES**

Most movement activities will stimulate the vestibular system in the inner ear, which helps the body to know how it is moving and how fast it is moving. Depending on intensity, vestibular activities can be stimulating for an under-responsive child, or calming for a sensory seeking or over-responsive child. Trampolines, rocking horses, swings, roundabouts, or slides are all good vestibular activities.



**ORAL-MOTOR ACTIVITIES**

Some children chew excessively on clothing, pencils and other inappropriate objects. They are usually seeking tactile and proprioceptive input through their mouths, perhaps to help themselves concentrate or to reduce anxiety. Blowing bubbles in a bowl of water with a straw, drinking thick milkshakes through a straw, or chewing gum can help meet a child's oral-motor needs.

When we think about summer, the first things that come to mind are the favorite things our own senses have recorded over the years: warmer weather, flowers, sunshine, etc. Picture yourself sipping lemonade in the garden while butterflies and bumblebees fly happily around you. But what happens when your child steps into the same world? Your happy summer moment can quickly transform into a chaotic event.

Sensory processing issues can be tough to identify, treat, and live with during any season, but summer brings its own unique set of challenges. One thing we understand is that every child is different and there are challenges when the sensory system is struggling to do its job. But whether it be over-stimulation or sensory-seeking, these struggles can set the stage for difficulty.

### *So, what can a parent do?*

First, I think it's important to honor the child's struggle. What might be a wonderful experience for your brain, may be something completely different for a child who's CNS (Central Nervous System) is not properly handling the input. For my youngest daughter, even a simple thing like brushing her hair every morning causes an uproar. While I don't understand what she is feeling, I try hard to honor her with empathy and consideration.

### *Here are a few survival tips that may help make a sensory-smart summer:*

**SWIMSUITS** can put kids into sensory overload, especially when they are wet and caked with sand. Try out new bathing suits at home; have children wear a swimsuit in the bathtub first to prevent meltdowns (yours and theirs) at the beach. Avoid rough or ruffled swimsuits. Many kids with sensory issues like the simple feel of a Speedo-type swimsuit.

**SWIMMING** can be relaxing for our sensory system, but over-chlorinated water may be an issue for kids who struggle with smells. Using goggles or masks may help reduce irritation with chlorine smell.

**FIREWORKS** should be fun, unless you are a child who struggles with filtering noise, crowds, or chaos. Sometimes ear protection and an isolated (though hard to find) spot can get you through. Or, you may decide your best option is a baby sitter for the child at home. Either way, plan ahead and realize it's okay if they aren't ready for fireworks!

**SAND.** Probably all of us have a love-hate relationship with sand, but some kids just can't get past it. Bring a sensory-friendly blanket or an individual beach tent for children to get away from sand irritation. If they can't handle sand or rocks on their feet, try swim shoes or just an old pair of comfortable shoes they can wear in the water. Also, bringing clothes for them to change into after swimming may help you all survive the drive home!

**PARADES.** I confess I have an unusual dislike for parades. The people, the noise, and the heat end up sending my already over-active brain into high gear. This is where Ben Franklin was right, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." What things might your child need to help cope with unusual stressors before, during, and after the parade? Carry a sensory-friendly kit with you (sunglasses, hat, ear protection, water, fidget ball, weighted toy) to calm him/her or minimize irritants.

**SUNSCREEN AND BUG SPRAY** are a must in the summer, but sometimes kids struggle with the smells or touch of traditional spray. Avoid buggy times of the day or cover the skin and give them



a hat. If sprays are a battle, try insect repellent bracelets, sunscreen wipes, or a sunblock stick. Also, put sunblock on at home before you hit the beach.

**CLOTHES.** No matter how warm it is, some kids will insist on wearing long sleeves and pants in the summer. If they refuse traditional summer wear, provide them sensory-soft and breathable options that keep their skin covered, but cool. We found lots of sensory clothing websites online that help kids find alternatives to uncomfortable clothes.

**NEW ACTIVITIES** can present challenges. Not sure if a picnic outside will be fun? Try it in the backyard first. Take that hike in the neighborhood before you invest an entire day and money at a National Park.

**CARNIVAL RIDES** are exciting for most children, but for kids who are sensory-seekers, keep an eye out for signs of trouble: flushed face, increased heart rate, or general agitation. Spinning rides can quickly overload the sensory system. Taking frequent breaks and keeping kids hydrated may help.

Whatever you do, keep it light, keep rested, and most of all, keep your summer sense of humor so you can enjoy a break, too!

## Quotes to Inspire You

"I wonder what it would be like to live in a world where it was always June."

—L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of the Island*.

# local events & training & family activities

All three Post-Adoption Resource Centers have many family fun events planned for summer, as well as support groups and trainings. Please check your Post Adoption Resource Center region's Facebook page, watch for monthly calendars, or give us a call to find out what is available near you.

**Region 2:  
Northern Michigan**  
231-421-6500  
[parctc@bethany.org](mailto:parctc@bethany.org)  
[www.facebook.com/  
PostAdoptionResource  
CenterOfNorthernMI](http://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI)

**Region 3:  
Central Michigan**  
231-924-3390  
[www.facebook.com/  
PostAdoptionResource  
CenterCentralMichigan](http://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan)

**Region 4:  
Western Michigan**  
616-224-7565  
[parcgr@bethany.org](mailto:parcgr@bethany.org)  
[www.facebook.com/  
PARCRegion4](http://www.facebook.com/PARCRegion4)

## Benzie County

**Benzie Area Historical Museum**  
6941 Traverse Ave, Benzonia, MI 49616  
231.882.5539

[benziemuseum.org](http://benziemuseum.org)

## Isabella County

**Spray Park at Island Park**  
Summer Hours: 9:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.

[www.mt-pleasant.org](http://www.mt-pleasant.org)

## Mt. Pleasant Discovery Museum

Follow them on Facebook to find when they will host the next free admission Discovery Day

[www.mpdiscoverymuseum.org](http://www.mpdiscoverymuseum.org)

## Kent County

### Grand Rapids Art Museum

General admission is FREE on Tuesdays all day long, and on Thursdays from 5–9 p.m.

### Kent County Recycling and Education Center

See what happens to your bottles, cans, jars, and paper after they leave your house! Open every Monday from 2–6 p.m., tours are FREE and open to all ages.

## Midland County

### Alden B. Dow Museum of Science and Art

The Post Adoption Resource Center is offering families the use of our 2017 membership to the Alden B. Dow Museum of Science and Art in Midland. We are excited to share this membership, allowing you to fit the experience into your schedule, at no cost to families. Please contact Mahrah for more details.

### MIDLAND Spray Parks

Features are motion activated and operate dawn until dusk June 1 – October 1.

[cityofmidlandmi.gov](http://cityofmidlandmi.gov)

## NO COST & LOW COST FAMILY FRIENDLY SUMMER FUN

**Kid's Bowl Free**  
[www.kidsbowlfree.com/](http://www.kidsbowlfree.com/)

**Visit a local farm or u-pick farm.**  
[www.pickyourown.org](http://www.pickyourown.org)

Find more FREE activities near you, Google: **101 free things to do in Michigan**

## Montcalm County

### Anderson & Girls Orchards

9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.  
2985 N Sheridan Rd, Stanton, MI 48888  
989.831.4228

Visit their barnyard animals.

[www.andersonandgirls.com](http://www.andersonandgirls.com)

### Lakeview Farm Country Cheese House

7263 Kendaville Rd, Lakeview, MI 48850  
Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.  
989.352.7779

See over 20 varieties of cheese made daily with Amish cow milk. Viewing glass allows children a birds eye view including samples of cheese curds. The gift shop allows for purchasing cheese including gift boxes for shipping.

[info@farmcountrycheese.com](mailto:info@farmcountrycheese.com)

## Muskegon County

### USS LST 393 Friday Night "Movies on Deck"

FREE family-friendly movies start right after sunset (June through August). Bring your own chairs. Snacks available for sale.

[www.lst393.org](http://www.lst393.org)

## Newaygo County

Fremont Cinemas wants you to join them for special pricing events. Watch [www.facebook.com/fremontcinema](http://www.facebook.com/fremontcinema) for more details.

## Ottawa County

### Cappon House & Settlers House Museums

228 West 9th St. Holland, MI 49423  
616.796.3329

Step back into the nineteenth century world with Holland's finest Italianate house. Open May–October, Friday and Saturday Noon–4 p.m.

## Roscommon County

### A.E. Seaman Mineral Museum of MI Tech

1404 E. Sharon Ave, Houghton, MI 49931  
906.487.2572

[www.museum.mtu.edu/](http://www.museum.mtu.edu/)

## Saginaw County

### Castle Museum of Saginaw County History

500 Federal Ave, Saginaw, MI 48607  
989.752.2861

[www.castlemuseum.org](http://www.castlemuseum.org)

## Wexford County

### Carl T. Johnson Hunt and Fish Center

and Heritage Nature Study Area  
Mitchell State Park

6087 E M-115, Cadillac, MI 49601

Check with Michigan Department of Natural Resources or call 231.770.1321 for information and hours.

[www.michigandnr.com](http://www.michigandnr.com)



Bethany Christian Services is committed to supporting adoptive families through the lifelong, rewarding journey of adoption.

### REGION 2

Bethany Christian Services  
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Ste 2  
Traverse City, MI 49686  
231-995-0870

[www.bethany.org/traversesecity](http://www.bethany.org/traversesecity)

Charlevoix, Emmett, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Antrim, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Leelanau, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Roscommon, Ogemaw, and Iosco counties

### REGION 3

Bethany Christian Services  
6995 West 48th St  
Fremont, MI 49412  
231-924-3390

[www.bethany.org/fremont](http://www.bethany.org/fremont)

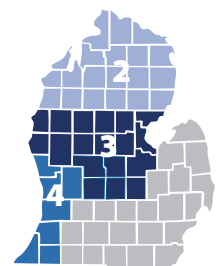
Mason, Lake, Osceola, Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Isabella, Midland, Bay, Montcalm, Gratiot, Saginaw, Ionia, Clinton, and Shiawassee counties

### REGION 4

Bethany Christian Services  
901 Eastern Ave NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616-224-7565

[www.bethany.org/grandrapids](http://www.bethany.org/grandrapids)

Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties



[postadoptionrc.org](http://postadoptionrc.org)

other suggested websites: [www.adoptivefamilies.com](http://www.adoptivefamilies.com) [www.adoptioninstitute.org](http://www.adoptioninstitute.org)