



Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship®

DCFS assists caregivers who support reunification

Reuniting children with their families has always been an important part of the DCFS mission. Recently the Department announced changes in how it will work to reunite families, putting more emphasis on involving parents with their children while in care. The new policy guide "Permanency Planning Toward Reunification" will affect the role played by parents, supervisors, caseworkers and caregivers for cases new to the system. At some point, many foster caregivers have been involved with the parents of the children in their home. Yet, with the new initiative, there are new expectations and new supports for those providing foster care for children with a reunification goal.



Courteney Whittenburg (left) often comes to see her children with their foster caregiver Regenia Givens. Whittenburg plans meals or helps with homework during her visitation times.

Some of the concepts of Permanency Planning Toward Reunification that may be new to caregivers are:

- *Meeting the parents*, as soon as possible, shortly after case assignment
- *Exchanging information about the child* between the parent, caregiver and caseworker at initial placement and as the case moves forward
- *Shared parenting* to allow the parent to fulfill certain parent-

ing responsibilities while the child is in care

- *Family visits in a family setting*, where the caregiver can support or host visits between the parents and the child
- *Mentoring and modeling with parents*, with the caregiver serving as a respectful helper and role model to parents on the road to early reunification

Not every case will have a goal of reunification and not every

caregiver will be suited to support a family with a reunification goal. However, for new cases, casework will follow the new reunification practice guide. Therefore, caregivers should better understand what is involved and be able to support a child and family where reunification is the goal.

"Because we are shooting for reuniting the family, I have the parents over as often as possible

Continued on page 2



From the Acting Director

Erwin McEwen

With the holiday season quickly approaching, we can look forward to building special memories with our families. In the realm of child welfare, the word "family" can take on many different meanings. Perhaps you started a family with your spouse and children. Over time, you expanded that family with a child who cannot be with his family of origin.

With the same heart that compelled you to open your home to caring for children, I hope that you can also open your minds to working with their parents and the important people in the child's definition of family. This could be a mother or a solo father striving to make positive changes. Family could also mean siblings living in other households, or a paternal grandparent who wants to be supportive.

We at the Department and all of the foster care agencies that work with us have ramped up our efforts to build up children and their families for reunification, when it can be done safely. We have developed new procedures and provided training for caseworkers who will support foster families when return home is the goal. We have established the special service fee to reimburse caregivers for expenses related to engaging parents in family visits or mentoring activities. As you move into the holiday season, please look for ways to spread your family's love in the broadest sense possible.

Reunification, con't.

to help with meals, showers and bedtime. The parents do the children's laundry and supervise them in cleaning their rooms. They sometimes buy food and bring it over to cook for everyone," said a foster parent documenting the family activities she supported.

That type of collaborative parenting can lead to reunifications that are timely and stable. In developing the new practice model, DCFS realized that the expanded role for caregivers would require additional resources, including training, case management and financial supports. Already DCFS and private agency workers have begun training in new reunification practices. They learn which cases are suited for early reunification and which require concurrent planning in case a return home is not possible. Case managers and supervisors also have learned the new procedures they must follow to support the parents, children and caregivers as all work cooperatively toward reunification.

One important new program is the Family Reunification Support special service fee. This is a recently approved reimbursement to caregivers for certain expenses incurred through reunification work with parents. It is not a payment. It is a reimbursement that can cover expenses such as transportation, entrance fees, and food that are part of activities supporting foster children and their parents. To receive the reimbursement, caregivers of children with a reunification goal

must track their supportive activities with the parents and children on the new log sheet (CFS 1042-1 Family Reunification Special Service Fee Log). Activities such as visits in a "family setting" count for reimbursement if the caregiver provides the location, supervision, mentoring or transportation. Other activities could include shared parenting tasks, meeting the caseworker and parents to plan activities, attending a court hearing with the parent, going to counseling with the family or continuing the same type of support after a return home.

The reimbursement amounts follow four levels of activities for each month as the parent is progressing toward reunification. At Level 1, a caregiver who engages the parent in three activities (at least two in a family setting and one could be another eligible activity from the choice list) would be reimbursed \$75. Working with parents in up to 12 activities would result in a \$400 reimbursement. The caseworker, supervisor, parent and caregiver have to sign off on the documentation. Details on eligible activities and documentation are included with the log.

Caregivers to children new to the system with a return home goal should work closely with the child's caseworker to get more information on the special service fee and other resources.

Save the dates for upcoming caregiver institutes and weekend conferences

2008 Caregiver Institutes

The popular Caregiver Institutes are coming soon for a fourth year. The next series will focus on caring for children affected by trauma. Foster, adoptive and guardianship parents will learn how trauma can make a difference in how children learn, grow and relate to others. They will learn skills to better support youth as they cope with trauma in and after foster care. They will also learn how to strengthen their resolve and take care of themselves emotionally.

In 2008, the Caregiver Institutes will take place on four Saturdays between March and April, with sessions running from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. To make it more convenient for caregivers to attend the course, the events will be offered in locations around the state. Registration will be limited by space in each locale, so plan now to attend the institute in your area. Details on registration will be available in January in the next issue of this newsletter.

Cook County, March 1

DCFS Cook South, 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

Central Region, March 15

Embassy Suites, East Peoria

Northern Region, April 12

Holiday Inn, Rockfalls/Sterling

Central Region, April 26

Hawthorne Suites, Champaign



New conferences coming

DCFS recently announced plans for two upcoming conferences for caregivers. This will be an opportunity to spend part of a weekend learning, meeting other caregivers, and recharging the batteries for more parenting. The conferences will offer an afternoon of events on Friday, overnight accommodations, and a day of learning on Saturday.

The conferences will include a wide selection of workshops covering child development, behavior management, Attention Deficit Disorder, services for older youth, the juvenile justice system, and many others. Caregivers will also have an opportunity to meet with the DCFS executive team to discuss hot topics and learn about Department initiatives.

Mark your calendars now for one of the following dates. A full listing of workshops and registration materials will be included in the next issue of this newsletter.

February 22-23

Hyatt Lisle, Lisle

March 7-8

Four Points Sheraton, Fairview Heights

Plan now for caregiver tax benefits

Start gathering receipts and check stubs now. In January, families should receive the free Tax Booklet for Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parents. The Center for Economic Progress develops the guide, which provides practical tax tips and information, specific to foster care and adoption. The booklet is updated yearly and distributed to thousands of Illinois families with foster or adoptive children.

Written in plain language, the booklet walks foster and adoptive parents (and tax professionals) through the steps necessary to claim the maximum tax benefits available to caregivers. Center staff members also provide training seminars and phone consultation to families with questions about claiming their foster children on their income tax return.

The center will mail the booklet to foster and adoptive families by the end of January. If you do not receive a booklet, request one by sending an email to taxtraining@centerforprogress.org or by calling 312-252-0280. To find out about a free tax preparation site near you, refer to your Tax Booklet, visit <http://www.centerforprogress.org/>, or call 312-409-6511 within the Chicago area or 888-827-8511 outside Chicago.

Sibling visits can ease children's trauma during holidays

Mental health experts are beginning to recognize the significance and power of the sibling relationship. It can be longer lasting and more influential than any other, including those with parents, spouses or children. When sibling relationships are severed, the negative consequences can last a lifetime. Keeping siblings together in foster care or at least helping them stay in touch with each other is a priority and requires effort from everyone. DCFS supports sibling connections and offers resources to caregivers who play an invaluable role in sibling visits.

Visitation Requirements

DCFS rules require that sibling visits occur at least two times a month for a minimum of two hours each for all siblings placed apart. Exceptions to twice monthly visits include:

- a court order requiring less frequent or no visitation
- requests by the child for less frequent or no visitation (requires regular counseling)
- risk of physical, emotional or mental harm from the visit (requires documentation)

Visits may also be less frequent for siblings placed in residential care and those siblings placed more than 150 miles from each other. However, visitation may not be reduced based on the unavailability of a visit supervisor or as a form of discipline.

Exceptions to the visitation policy are few because separating siblings in foster care or through adoption adds to their emotional burden and trauma. Visitation helps minimize further trauma to a child already struggling with the separation and loss of their parents. Often, children who are abused or neglected by their parents will have stronger ties to their brothers or sisters. They may have learned very early to depend on and cooperate with each other to cope with their problems.

Foster parents see the compounded trauma of children separated from their siblings up close. Fortunately, this is one area where they can take the lead to make things better. DCFS and private agencies encourage foster parents to be involved in sibling visits.

"I think people forget that kids might act better if they got to see their siblings," said Mamie Tabb, a caregiver who juggles visits between six siblings, ages 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. They are spread from the South Side of Chicago to the southern suburbs to the western suburbs. Tabb saw how devastated the children were when they lost contact with two siblings after their adoption into another family. She spends countless hours and gasoline making sure the others could maintain contact.

"I want them to be in each other's life—just like family," said Tabb, who believes that it is worth the extra effort.



Reimbursement Available

Often foster parents that do help children have sibling visits may not realize they can be reimbursed for supervising the visits and transporting children to visits. Sometimes they just do not fill out the documentation, thus missing the reimbursement.

A foster parent who hosts an overnight or weekend visit in their home can be reimbursed \$100.00 for supervising the visit. Supervising shorter visits is reimbursed at \$25.00 an hour, up to four hours. Reimbursement is capped at a maximum of \$100 per month. Foster parents who take a foster child to a visit or pick up a sibling for a visit, can receive reimbursement for transportation. The mileage reimbursement rate is 48.5 cents per mile (as of July 1). The maximum amount for transportation reimbursement is \$50 a month. Many foster parents look at the reimbursement as a way to set aside extra funds for movies, dinner out or other fun activities for the next visit.

Emotions run high during the holidays

The child's caseworker can help foster parents complete the simple process for reimbursement. The worker can bring the Form CFS 315 and fill it out with the caregiver to document the visit(s). Alternatively, the caseworker can fill out the computerized form from his or her office. The form does need a foster parent's signature so the worker can mail it to the home or bring it out on the next visit. The caseworker will also need to fill out form CFS 906-4 Special Service Fee and Payment Extension Form that initiates the reimbursement.

Reimbursement for sibling visitation is only available for visits between siblings in foster care. After adoption, visitation is often still beneficial, but it is not mandated. As with most things, the adults involved have to find a solution that works for the families and the children involved. If a foster parent is unable or decides not to host sibling visits or transport a child to sibling visits, their support for the workers and the youth is still important. Caregivers send a powerful and lasting message to the children under their care by how they protect and nurture important relationships.

Foster parents with questions about sibling visitation should contact the child's caseworker.

The holiday season can intensify feelings of longing for children in the foster care system because it emphasizes the separation from their birth families. Often, these children create memories of idealized parents or imagine a life before foster care that was only happy. Although this often does not match their real experiences, this type of imagination is common and serves as a kind of emotional protection for them. However, when they face the reality of their situation, some children will exhibit sadness and significant emotional distress caused by separation from their families during the holidays.

Often, older children are more vulnerable to intense feelings of sadness and anger during the holiday season because they have more memories of the rituals and traditions of their families during the holidays.

It is important to provide a supportive environment for children who may be saddened during the time of year that brings so much joy to others. Failure to acknowledge the feelings may cause them to be more acute. It is often helpful to create a bridge that connects the family of origin, either literally or figuratively, with the foster family to compensate for the feelings of separation that occurs during this time.

Following are a few suggestions for caregivers to bridge the gap between for a child who is away

from his family during the holidays.

1. Talk about holiday traditions that the child remembers from their home. See what makes sense to incorporate in some form in your family's holiday plans.
2. Use the holiday vacation time to host a sibling visit.
3. Ask the child about different holiday dishes that their families enjoyed during the holidays. Ask them to help prepare them or share your excitement about preparing them.
4. During a visit with parents or siblings, take a picture to display as part of your holiday decorations.
5. Help the children create holiday cards for their foster and birth siblings and mail or deliver them.
6. Create or select a special ornament that represents the child's family and display it with the other decorations in the foster home.

There are numerous, creative ways to bridge both families to create feelings of comfort and joy during the holiday season. The most important suggestion is to listen. Children often will let you know what they need if you listen closely enough. Although feelings of longing and sadness can surface during the holiday season, feelings of happiness and joy are contagious.



Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council bulletin

Recap of recent meetings

The Council joined forces with the Statewide Youth Advisory board for its September meeting in Peoria. Ron Moody of DCFS addressed concerns about foster parent and youth involvement in the Administrative Case Reviews. Both youth and adults felt there sometimes could be barriers to both participating in these important case-planning meetings.

Members of both councils formed a new joint sub-committee to explore additional supports for youth after emancipation. The councils also heard about progress in Southern Region to support youth who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning their sexuality (LGBTQ). The adults discussed the need for more resources and information to allow them to effectively serve LGBTQ youth in care. The councils also heard from the author of a new book "Jason, Ward of the State", by Mary J. Peterson, chronicling a youth's long-term connection to a teacher as the youth makes his way through the child welfare system.

At the October meeting in Alton, in addition to the regular business, council members had a refresher course for scoring the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. Members will review and score plans submitted by all agencies and the six DCFS regions providing foster care programs.

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council shared its November meeting with the Adoption Advi-

sory Council. The two groups discussed several topics that have impact on families in both arenas. Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich's proclamation of November as Adoption Awareness Month was read into the minutes to congratulate the adoptive families present at the meeting. The group also heard about new initiatives from the Department's Acting Director Erwin McEwen.

New members join Council



Ronald Davis and his wife, Claudia, have been foster parents for 24 years. They have also adopted two children. From their home in Belleville, they continue to provide support and respite for many of the children who have been with them. Davis joins the council after serving two years with the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council.



Sheila Jones is a Program Coordinator for Catholic Charities in Peoria, where she assists and trains foster care supervisors. She has worked in the human service field for approximately 25 years and in child welfare for the past 13 years. She joins the council as a child welfare professional.



Willie Miller represents Southern Region. He has been a foster parent for nine years and works as a DCFS Foster Parent Support Spe-

cialist. Miller is also a pastor and runs Community Outreach, a service for low-income families that also serves foster parents.

Pamela Seals, of Decatur, has been active in the DCFS Central Region advisory council. She and her husband Greg have been foster parents for 14 years. Until 2005, they lived in Nevada where Seals was an advocate for foster families in the southern part of the state.



Rosie Starks has been a foster parent for 11 years. She participates in the grievance committee in the Cook South Region. She also facilitated support group meetings at Metropolitan Family Services and is a parent group leader with the National Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC).



Steve Steinhardt joins the council in a joint position with the Child Welfare Advisory Council. He serves as an agency professional from Catholic Charities in Belleville, with 20 years of experience.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council is Friday, January 18 in Springfield at the Ramada Limited North. The meeting begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m. Call the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422 for more information.



IL Adoption Advisory Council Update

By-laws changes prompt new adopted members

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council from its inception has reflected a broad range of opinions by involving adoptive parents, adoption-agency professionals and adult adoptees from all regions of the state. The council in September changed the by-laws to seat three adult adoptees from Cook County and three adopted persons from regions outside of Cook County, rather than one from each DCFS administrative region. Now, the by-laws are clearer and recruitment is easier. Already two new adult adopted persons are being considered for membership.

Other new members include:



DeAudrey Davis serves as the Director of the Adoption Information Center of Illinois (AICI). Previously she

worked in foster care for eight years. At AICI, she leads programs to match waiting children and support prospective adoptive families.



Dr. Robert Bloom is the Executive Director of Jewish Children and Family Services. The agency has trans-

sitioned from primarily serving Jewish families to include DCFS cases and then to its selection as one of only a few agencies contracted to provide specialized services.



Pat Kelso, of Chatham, adopted her daughter in 1998. For 10 years, she has been active in the Ball Chatham

School district as a parent coordinator in the pre-kindergarten program. She also teaches parenting classes and is trained to support at-risk families with young children.

Councils laud Adoption Month

The Adoption Advisory Council shared its November meeting with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. The two groups discussed several topics that have impact on families in both arenas. The councils heard about new initiatives from Acting Director Erwin McEwen. Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich's proclamation of November as Adoption Awareness Month was read into the minutes to congratulate the adoptive families at the meeting.

The next meeting of the **Illinois Adoption Advisory Council** will be on Friday, February 1, in Bloomington at the Eastland Suites. Meetings begin at 10 a.m. For more information, contact the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.



More post-adopt services rolling out

At the October meeting of the Adoption Advisory Council, members heard news of progress in post-adoption and guardianship services. Under the new initiative Maintaining Adoptive Connections, families have new avenues to resources, explained June Dorn, Statewide Post-Adoption and Guardianship Administrator.

Years after an adoption or guardianship is completed or as youth get older, a family's needs may change. DCFS recently began outreach to adoptive families with children 13 and/or 16 years old in Cook County and in the Aurora area. Child welfare workers with the Adoption Preservation and Assessment Linkage (APAL) program received training and initiated contact with families with older children. Workers can come to the home to do an assessment and then direct the families to services that may be needed.

Additionally, five agencies have established four new programs to serve post-adoption and guardianship families. Jewish Child and Family Services, South-Central, Healthy Families and CHASI/Family Focus have each designed programs to serve Cook County families that encounter difficulties after adoption or guardianship. Families in need of services can be referred to the programs though the APAL visits.



Adoptive benefits improve

Adoptive families often hear the expression "just like you gave birth" tossed around, but it is not always applicable in life-altering situations. That will change in one important circumstance. Starting January 1, adopted children of those who hold public positions in Illinois will now receive the same benefits as birth children if a parent dies.

Survivor's benefits are provided to children if a parent dies in the line of duty or after having served in a "pension eligible" position. House Bill 49 amends 15 pension codes for many public positions including General Assembly members, firefighters and police. Some municipal codes previously denied benefits to adopted children.

Private sector employers also are making changes to their benefits packages that result in good news for adoptive families. According to a report by Hewitt and Associates, about 45 percent of 916 employers surveyed for its 2006-2007 report said they provide employees with adoption assistance other than leave. In 2000, only 34 percent did. Of the 412 employers providing adoption assistance in 2006, 408 reported placing a dollar limit on benefits provided. Adoption benefit maximums ranged from \$500 to \$10,630; the average was \$4,016.

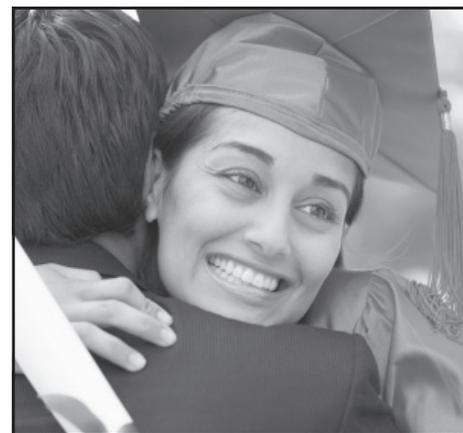


More college aid for adopted students planned with new law

New federal legislation signed in September will make more college financial aid resources available now and in coming years. The government announced the College Cost Reduction Act of 2007 highlighting increased Pell grants and lower rates on student loans. Yet, almost lost among the fanfare was news of particular importance to adoptive families. The definition of an "independent" student was modified so that it will include youth who left the state care by adoption after age 13.

The definition of independent or dependent is crucial because when a student is considered "independent" for financial aid purposes, the parents' income does not have to be factored into the financial aid need analysis. In most cases, this works to the youth's advantage since lower family income typically results in more financial assistance. As families fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) they should look for the question which asks if the applicant is "an orphan, in foster care or a ward of the court at any time when the individual is 13 years of age or older."

Previous language restricted independent status to youth under state care until 18, effectively leaving out adopted youth. Youth who remained in foster care or those who moved to subsidized guardianship could already apply as independent students and as such could anticipate more



financial aid. Some youth (and prospective adoptive parents) avoided adoption because they feared losing out on education resources. This change addresses that barrier and opens up access to educational opportunities. It becomes effective on July 1, 2009.

President George Bush signed the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (HR 2669) on September 27. It provides increased funding for Pell Grant awards, raising the maximum award to \$7,600 for the 2008-09 academic year. The Act also modified many student loan regulations concerning interest rates, payments and forgiveness guidelines. Many of those benefits are already in effect or will be shortly. Meanwhile, adoptive families with high school students should keep in mind the change in the independence definition as they look ahead to college.

To see a copy of the legislation go to the Web site called THOMAS, which is maintained by the Library of Congress at <http://thomas.loc.gov> and search for H.R. 2669.

STATE OF ILLINOIS



Proclamation

WHEREAS, adoption is a rewarding and enriching experience for individuals and couples who want to provide children with a stable, loving family environment; and

WHEREAS, Illinois is recognized as a national leader in finding permanent homes for waiting children, placing more than 50,000 foster children into adoptive and subsidized guardianship homes since 1997; and

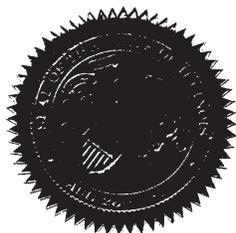
WHEREAS, largely because of its success in adoption recruitment, Illinois has become the first state in the nation to support more children in permanent adoption guardianship placements than in substitute care; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the Child Care Association of Illinois, the Adoption Information Center of Illinois, the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, the Chicago Bar Association, and the many Illinois child welfare agencies and adoptive parent groups all encourage families to consider adopting a child in need of a home; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of children in Illinois are still awaiting adoption:

THEREFORE, I, Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim November 2007 as **ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH** in Illinois, and encourage all families to consider adopting a child into their family.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Illinois to be affixed.



Deese White

SECRETARY OF STATE

Done at the Capitol, in the City of Springfield,
 this SEVENTEENTH day of OCTOBER, in
 the Year of Our Lord two thousand and
 SEVEN, and of the State of Illinois
 the one hundred and EIGHTY-NINTH

Rod Blagojevich

GOVERNOR



Illinois Celebrates
ADOPTION

November is
**Adoption
 Awareness Month**

Thousands of families and individuals have chosen to create new families through adoption.

Please join us this month and all year long, as we celebrate and support adoptive families.

Schools, faith organizations, community groups - and you - can make a difference in the life of a child by offering encouragement and support to adoptive families.

For more information,
 call 800/572-2390
 or visit
www.adoptinfo-il.org



Tell it like it is

Families Now and Forever wants to hear the real deal on caring for children from those who know best...YOU!

Here's what you had to say about the question: *What do you do to keep your child's family of origin involved in the winter holidays?*

My daughter goes to see her family on Christmas, too. It can be a drag to get her dressed and have to leave the house. But it makes her happy.

Angela, foster and adoptive mom

My kids go to visit their family on the holiday. Their dad picks them up. Last year I let them go there on Thanksgiving and I got them for Christmas. So he gets some holiday and I get some holiday, too.

Ruby Lee, Chicago

In general, children that we are doing foster care for usually go back to their families. If that can't happen, they make phone calls. At our house we start opening gifts at 8 o'clock and go until 2 in the afternoon. If we have permission from their caseworkers, we invite their parents over, too.

Rev. Childress, Chicago

I invite the parents. I help the kids send cards or call and talk to their family.

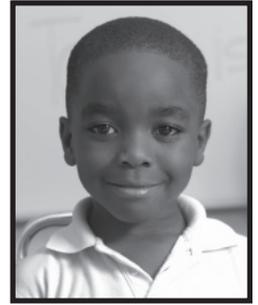
Valerie Wilhoit, Calumet City

I have one child with an open adoption. We send cards and pictures to his mom who is out of state. We had to stop contact with one family member. One daughter has siblings with another family who stopped the contact. We keep connected to two foster kids, 10 years after they were adopted by another family. It is a struggle like any other relationship to make the plans work. I think you should keep contact if it is safe.

Marie, Farmer City

The new question is: *Do you think having a pet in the home makes a difference when caring for children?*

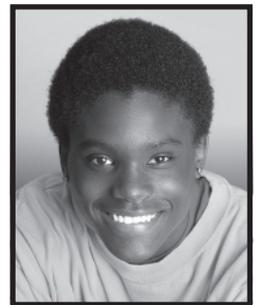
You can contact me with your response by e-mail at Vanessa.James@illinois.gov or by phone at 312-814-6824.



Denzel (7559)



Jared (7622)



Jesse (7603)



Desirae (7623)

Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390.

A family for me

Jared [7622] Jared, 10, is a cheerful young man who gets along well with others. His favorite activity is fishing with his foster parents. He also enjoys playing with toy cars and watching cartoons. Jared uses a wheelchair to go from place to place. While he has difficulty speaking, his comprehension is good, and he can nod "yes" or "no" to many questions.

Jared's worker said he is sweet and respectful. He waits his turn to interact with others, and he's always willing to help with his care. Potential parents for Jared would be loving, patient, and supportive. They would have plenty of time to attend to Jared's care. A family in central Illinois is strongly preferred, so Jared can remain in contact with his siblings and grandparents after he is adopted.

Desirae [7623] Desirae, 11, is a playful young lady with a great sense of humor. She loves to meet her friends at the park, and they laugh, sing, and jump rope

together. When she comes home, Desirae likes to watch *Dora the Explorer* on TV. As a big fan of the show, she has *Dora* games and dolls and knows the words to many *Dora* songs. For dinner, Desirae enjoys all kinds of foods, but her favorites are spaghetti and pizza.

Her worker said Desirae thrives on individual attention and affection. Her teacher said Desirae does a good job of asking for help when she needs it. The prospective parents to Desirae would be patient, kind, and understanding. Desirae said she'd like to join a family that will love her forever.

Jesse [7603] Jesse at 14 is a fun-loving young man who is well liked by his classmates. His passion is music, and he dreams of becoming a hip-hop star. Jesse is also very athletic and his favorite sport is football.

His foster parent and teachers said that Jesse is charming and respectful. He loves going to church each week. The forever

family for Jesse would provide love and encouragement, as well as a structured daily routine. You can help him maintain contact with his birth relatives. An Illinois family is preferred.

Denzel [7559] Denzel, 8, is a warm and friendly young man. He has a gift for creative expression, both verbally and through artwork. When he's not socializing or sitting at the drawing table, Denzel likes to play basketball. His energetic nature and love of competition help him succeed at all kinds of athletic activities.

His worker said Denzel is curious and likes to take the initiative to do things on his own. His teachers and foster parents said Denzel is a talented artist and very caring. The forever family for Denzel would be loving and supportive, while also providing helpful boundaries and limits.



Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI Web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org if you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted.



*Illinois Families
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Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

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Address Changes: Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change office addresses or request staff copies through the Editor.

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