

Illinois Families Now and Forever.®

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

DCFS Scholarship Helps 53 Students Attend College

The annual tradition of sending DCFS youth to college with scholarship support continued for its 51st year. The difference this year is that the total of scholarships jumped to 53, up from 48.

The DCFS Scholarship is one of the hallmark programs that the department offers to ease the transition to adulthood for young people who have an open DCFS case or moved to adoption or guardianship. The scholarship provides them the opportunity to advance their education with a much lighter financial burden. The 53 scholars headed to school with a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees that they could use at one of the nine Illinois state universities or an Illinois community college. They also receive a monthly maintenance grant of \$511 and a medical card.

The road to higher education with the DCFS Scholarship began in January when the application process opened. More than 200 students submitted grades, test scores, letters of recommendation and personal essays. A committee of DCFS staff combed through each application multiple times before settling on the final 53 recipients.

DCFS Guardian Debra Dyer-Webster said, "Sometimes we start reading applications out loud because we are just so impressed. I get so excited imagining their future accomplishments and contributions to the world. This is one of the most rewarding DCFS experiences."



DCFS sent 53 students off to college with scholarships and a celebration lunch held in Chicago for them and their families.

2015 DCFS Scholarship Recipients

Sheridan Atwater	Christian Grills	Kyle Paulsen
Jasmine Babers	Breanna Hale	Shruthi Ramachandran
Adam Batton	Diane Hardy	Debrae Richter-Shea
Anthony Bendy	Tiana Haynes	Tai-Leigh Schlaich
Corrine Berardi	Edward Hogan	Katherine See
Karlyn Boens	Anita Jackson	Jacqueline Sparnicht
Timothy Budzileni	Jessica Jones	Khari Sulton
Kayla Carr	Akeem Kennedy	Amanda Summers
Caitrin Clute	Michael King	Sarah Szremski
Ciaran Clute	Vincent LaPage	Christopher Tsiapas
Thomas Craig	Lorenzo Lawson	Jaelyn Vickers
Chlotte Crim	Sarah MacTaggart	Erika Waldsmith
Thomas Dabney	Sophia Maynard	Melanie Whittington
Sarah Fied	Jeong-Mee Mok-Morrison	Jarvell Williams
Bethany Fosler	Alyssa Moore	Shakendra Williams
De'Von Fulton	Erica Mueller	Charles Williams
Jessika Gaughan	Crishawna Nash	Jessica Williamson
Gloria Gordon	Tony Newell	



Message from the DCFS Director

Dear foster families,

I hope you are having a great fall

and that the school year is going well so far.

Congratulations to all of our scholars, especially the 53 youth who were awarded scholarships from the department. They stepped onto new campuses full of hope and some uncertainty, but knowing they have the financial support of this important program and the backing of the adults who walk with them. I wish them good luck and thank those who had a hand in their accomplishments so far.

Part of making a school year successful for youth in care is allowing those youth to be as “normal” as all of their classmates, ensuring that they aren’t singled out or prohibited from participating in what would be viewed as normal school activities. Sometimes this is easier said than done. I am committed to ensuring that youth in foster care are given the opportunity to have as normal of a childhood as they possibly can, despite the challenges they have and continue to face.

Our goal is to allow foster families to empower our youth to live life like their classmates, neighbors and friends, whenever possible. We are reexamining our policies and our practices to make sure that what we ask of you is reasonable and effective. As one example, now you as a foster parent can sign the permission slip for the school soccer team, rather than going to the DCFS Consent Unit.

There is a lot more ground to cover. My team and I always open to new approaches and fresh ideas and we are having discussions across the state to hear more voices. Thank you for remaining committed and for all that you do for the children of Illinois.

George H. Sheldon
Acting Director

Scholarships (cont.)

The DCFS Scholarship program does even more for students than cover costs. Staff from the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services brought the recipients to Chicago on July 17 for a morning of workshops to launch their college experience successfully. They explained the ins and outs of the program and the requirements to keep the scholarship benefits each year. Students must maintain at least a C average, carry a full load of courses and provide documentation each semester. They don’t have to do it alone. At the



Guest speaker
Steve Pemberton

luncheon, youth connected with others heading to the same campuses. They also joined a network of nearly 300 current students benefitting from the scholarship. Perhaps most importantly they have the support of family and other adults who helped lay the educational and emotional foundation for their college career. Many of those important people came with the students for the celebratory luncheon.

The DCFS Scholarship luncheon highlighted the determination, perseverance and achievements. DCFS acting director George Sheldon congratulated the youth on their hard work. He reminded them that despite the special circumstances that brought them to DCFS, they can now move toward better outcomes, just like “normal” college students. The audience got a glimpse of the future from Steve Pemberton, an executive from Walgreens. The same start to life that he shared with the students eventually led journey from foster care to the corporate boardroom. He described his journey in a way that was inspiring and made their own dreams seem attainable. ♡

APPLICATION PERIOD: JANUARY 1 – MARCH 30

The DCFS Youth in Scholarship Program is available to youth currently in DCFS care and to those who left Department guardianship through adoption or guardianship arrangements. Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED by the end of the current school year. Contact the Office Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information.

Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council held its July meeting in Joliet. In addition to the standing items and updates, the council had several invited speakers to discuss new initiatives that DCFS has launched.

CIPP (Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation)

Lee Annes of DCFS provided an update on the CIPP program. CIPP emphasizes supportive interventions to stabilize foster care placements and maintain relationships. The goal is to reduce changes in living arrangements and moves to residential and group home settings.

In times when a situation escalates to where it seems like a move to another home must be considered, the first step is a CIPP Child and Family Team Meeting. CIPP facilitators work with the family (including children over 12) on concerns and problems with the current family setting. They will help identify new services or other resources to fill in gaps. The trained facilitators will work with caregivers and other adults important in the child's life to create a plan that will address the issues and preserve the placement, when possible.

Facilitators are also very involved with the youth who are transitioning to adulthood. They conduct



Lee Annes, statewide administrator officer CIPP & D-CIPP

discharge-CIPPs (D-CIPPs) to help young people establish a foundation for when their DCFS case closes. These meetings are set for when the youth is 19 and again at three months before discharge.

Caregivers can request CIPP involvement through the caseworker or by contacting the CIPP Intake line at 312-814-6800. The council members suggested that Annes reach out to the management teams at private agencies so they can also encourage CIPP participation for agency-supervised homes as well as those in the DCFS regional programs.

Foster Parent Law Update

The council members prepared for the upcoming round of Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan scoring. The implementation plans must clearly describe how each foster care program upholds the foster parent rights and responsibilities in the outlined in the law.

Gwenn Eyer reported that the "Tips and Tools" emails were sent to the liaisons at each agency and DCFS foster care program. They also discussed strategies to employ so that agencies actively participate in

preparing the plan and sharing the information with caregivers routinely throughout the year.

Add your input to new Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans

The Foster Parent Law stipulates that the implementation plans demonstrate that caregivers participated in creating it. Typically DCFS and agencies announce meetings in the fall to discuss the previous plan and changes for the new plan, which is due to the council by November 30. The public period for review and comment is underway as of September. DCFS and private agency programs take any public input into consideration as they prepare the plans for 2015.

All caregivers can review the previous year's plan. Some foster care programs mailed the plan to licensed homes. Others may have copies available at the administrative offices or on their websites. If a foster caregiver needs more information about the actual plan or the process for drafting the new plan, each program has a Foster Parent Law liaison. The liaison is the primary contact for matters concerning the Law and how it is enacted at that agency or DCFS region.

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council was founded in conjunction with the Illinois Foster Parent Law. Membership consists of caregivers, agency representatives and other experts in child welfare, who are appointed by the DCFS Director.

The council holds open meetings at least six times a year, in locations around the state.

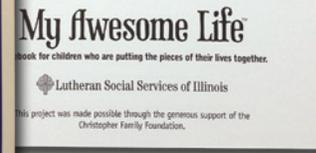
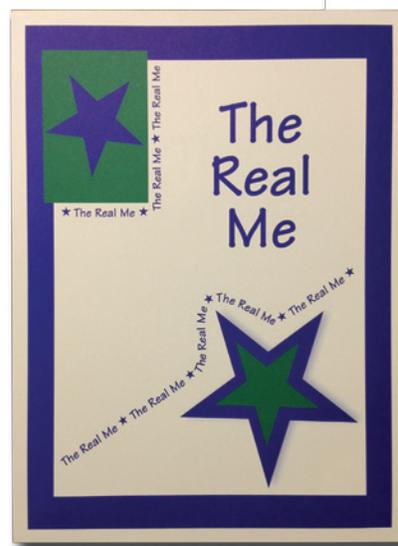
UPCOMING MEETING

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council meets on **November 13** in Lisle at 9 am.

Call DCFS
Caregiver and Parent Support at **217-524-2422** for details.

It's Never too Late to Start a Lifebook

Lifebooks are a source of healing. They can help children reconnect with people and fill in the gaps of their personal stories.



DCFS recently announced that it will supply lifebooks to support the policy requiring every child in foster care to have his own lifebook. Thousands of lifebooks have been ordered and are now available. Now caseworkers can ensure that this personal token will also be a tool that helps in the transitions through foster care.

A lifebook is a like a living scrap-book but much more. It outlines a child's life with pictures, vital records, mementos and personal expressions. It also has an important therapeutic value for a child while in foster care or when preparing to move to a new placement or adoptive home.

For example, children in the foster care system will often have many questions about how they came into the system. There are often gaps about their birth families and fuzzy recollections of previous placements. Many times they haven't had the simple pleasure of holding on to scrapbooks and memorabilia from childhood. A lifebook can address those needs and also be a therapeutic way to build a stronger emotional foundation for them while in care

and for their future after DCFS care. They provide the framework for filling in relevant details or identifying new questions and child might have.

The lifebooks available through DCFS come in different versions:

- The Guide for My Awesome Life for ages 0 to 12; The Real Me for ages 13 to 18
- Going Home for youth 0 to 12 who are preparing to return home
- My Adoption for youth 0 to 12 who are preparing to be adoption.

The books come with a three ring-binder and pages that can be inserted. For newly opened cases, the permanency worker will introduce the lifebook concept and begin adding to it within 45 days of placement. Caseworkers can help gather the elements that a child might like to include. They can facilitate discussions with the birth family to capture information. Therapists can assist in sorting out questions and potentially troubling answers. Foster parents can be involved in adding photos, mementos and recording events. Often the caregiver is best able to accurately

recount day-to-day events and emotional experiences. As children work through trauma and sort out their lives before and during foster care, caregivers can provide crucial support while developing and updating the lifebook.

Ultimately this book is a "work in progress." The caseworker will make copies of pages and critical documentation to serve as a backup. However, the book belongs to and stays with the child. The goal is to create a collection of information that the youth feels is important and preserve it. Caregivers should help keep it in a safe place or explain why or when a child might want to keep it private. This book should follow the child if there is a move. Meanwhile, adding to it or flipping through it can and should be a regular activity that has long-term benefits. ♥

Fall Flu Season Calls for Flu Vaccination



Getting the flu vaccination in October through December is the primary tool for preventing influenza. Most people over the age of five months can get the flu shot. Some of the symptoms associated with the flu are fever, headache, cough, sore throat, chills and fatigue. Some people are at higher risk of complications from having the flu, such as developing pneumonia. Those people who may be at higher risk for complications are children between six months and five years, pregnant women, people 50 years or older and those with chronic illnesses.

The flu vaccination is available at no charge for children enrolled in Medicaid; children with no health insurance; or children whose health insurance plans do not include vaccinations. For more information about the upcoming flu season, contact the Illinois Department of Health at 217-782-4977. ♡

NEW Requirements for Meningococcal Disease Shot

Schools are requiring proof of immunization to combat meningococcal disease. This contagious bacterial infection can result in neurological disorders, loss of limbs or hearing or death.

With this school year all sixth graders will have to show proof of one dose of the MCV (Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccination) immunization and 12th graders will need to show proof of two doses, unless the first was after their 16th birthday.

Find details at the Department of Public Health website www.dph.illinois.gov.



Illinois State Fair Continues Tradition

DCFS once again offered discounted tickets for entry, food and rides during the Illinois State Fair. DCFS provided \$3 entry and other specials to 830 households. It is one way of showing appreciation to the families who are doing foster care or who have moved to adoption or guardianship.

Families in the Southern part of the state also received invitations to attend the 30th Annual Foster and Adoptive Family Picnic at the DuQuoin State Fair. There, families enjoyed rides, lunch and a relaxing family time with DCFS support staff volunteering to make everything smooth. ♡



The Levengood family gets ready for take-off at the Illinois State Fair in Springfield, Illinois

GET DIGITAL DELIVERY

Many caregivers have decided to skip the paper and request electronic versions of the newsletter, *Illinois Families Now and Forever*.

When you move to the online version, you still receive all the same valuable information with more benefits. It comes faster, is easier to file, saves money and protects the environment.

To make the switch, send an email to vanessa.james@illinois.gov (there is a dot before "james") Be sure to include your name and mailing address. We will stop the hard copies and send you an email each time a new issue is ready to read online.

Illinois Adoption Advisory Council

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council met in September in Bloomington. Council co-chair Elizabeth Richmond led a discussion of the council's priority issues for this fiscal year. Key initiatives include 1) building links to mental health services after adoption 2) increasing training opportunities for adoptive families and 3) closing gaps in services and resources as adoptive youth approach adulthood. The council updated committees to tackle these issues and made plans to have topic experts present at upcoming meetings.

The council is going to work closely with the the DCFS Post Adoption Unit to coordinate services with the Department of Healthcare and Family Services to better coordinate care using the state medical card. Many caregivers have reported gaps

in coverage as youth approach 18. There have also been difficulties connecting to other public agencies for SSI eligible services.

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council meets six times a year with the mission to advise DCFS on all matters involving or affecting adoption and guardianship services. The council addresses ways to preserve and expand funding for post-adoption and adoption preservation services, and to improve the permanency outcomes for teens and other children.

Council members are all appointed by the DCFS director. Membership includes adoptive parents and adopted persons, as well as experts in child welfare and adoption from DCFS and other agency partner organizations. All meetings are open.



Ruth Jajko, of LSSI, will be leaving the council after two terms.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council will be **Friday, November 13** in Lisle at 9 am.

Call DCFS
Caregiver and Parent Support at **217-524-2422** for details.

Consent Policy Update: Foster Parents Can Sign for Sports Activities



DCFS recently announced a policy change that allows foster parents to consent for a child's participation in athletic programs. This is a change from the requirement to contact the Consent Unit. This change was made to normalize the foster care experience and to make it easier for children in care to join in activities, like baseball or soccer that are

typically part of a youth's social and physical development.

Caregivers are expected to use "reasonable parenting standards" to give permission for athletic programs. This includes considering if the activity is appropriate for the age and development of the child in their home. Caseworkers can be consulted and should be kept informed about the child's activities.

This policy change was announced September 4 in DCFS Policy Guide 2015.14 and went into effect immediately. The full text (and all policy and procedure documents) can be found on the DCFS website at www.DCFS.Illinois.gov under the *About Us* tab.



National Adoption Day November 21

Celebrate your special family and let the broader community know about the joys and importance of adoption.

For resources and ideas to go to www.nationaladoptionday.org



Gerri Mehnert's Rocky Childhood Helps Dreams Come True



Gerri Mehnert (far right) shares her dream home with children by birth, adoption foster care and day care.

Every now and then, it's possible to look back and see that you have fulfilled a dream without even realizing it. This was the case for foster and adoptive parent Gerri Mehnert. Gerri's journey to parenthood did not begin smoothly. However, the twists in that path prepared her to help dozens of young people work through their own challenges.

Gerri's mother died when Gerri was six, prompting her and her three-year-old brother to move to their grandmother's home in Texas. When she became too ill to care for them, the children moved to an aunt and uncle in Illinois. The years following were very difficult. Gerri was abused and spent time in several different foster homes. At only 17 years old she was sent to a group home in Indiana for pregnant teens. She was told she had to give up her baby and soon Gerri found herself on her own in Illinois.

Gerri's firsthand knowledge of coping with trauma forecast itself in a vivid dream she had while still a child dealing with her own loss. Gerri dreamt that she owned a big, two-story white house. In her dream, there were children smiling

at her from every window of the home. Gerri tucked that dream into her memory for nearly 25 years.

As life progressed, she married and started a family. She and her husband began as foster parents when a relative needed care and eventually a permanent home. Gerri continued as a foster parent and provided permanency for two daughters. They adopted three children and she even reunited with the son she had given up for adoption. She closed her foster care license after the adoptions and concentrated on raising her children and her career as the youth pastor at The Vineyard Church in Urbana.

Fifty years have passed since Gerri was left on her own.

Since her retirement from the Vineyard Gerri, now single, decided to foster children again.

Several months after she bought

her current home, realized that she now owned a two-story home that was full of children all of whom felt safe and loved. Her dream became reality and her own life had come full circle.

"I can't imagine not being a foster parent because there are so many kids who need a home," she said.

This time of her life has given her the opportunity to foster with different expectations. She has provided respite for numerous families and has been very involved in helping children reunite with their birth families. Gerri said that after a recent reunification case, she was pleased that in her role, she "made a difference for the mom, as well as the kids."

Julie Cebulski, DCFS foster parent support specialist, put to words the widely accepted opinion held by caseworkers and Gerri's fellow caregivers.

"Gerri is gifted with patience, love and a nurturing nature. We always feel our kids are feeling safe when they are with Gerri," said Cebulski.

When you look at the big, two-story house with grandchildren, children in day care, and youth in foster care, that opinion and Gerri's youthful dream are confirmed. The rooms are full and the children are (often) smiling. ♡

Central Region Sends 12 Off to College with DCFS Scholarships

This year, 12 students whose cases were served by programs in the DCFS Central County region headed to college with the benefits included in the DCFS Scholarship program. The scholarship includes a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees at one of the nine Illinois state universities or an Illinois community college, a monthly maintenance grant of \$511 and a medical card.

Scholarship recipients were chosen statewide on the basis of scholastic aptitude, a written personal statement and demonstrated community involvement. Next year's scholarship application process begins in January and ends in March. Contact the youth's caseworker or the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959.



Sheridan Atwater, from Petersburg, is a 2013 graduate of Havana High School where she earned a 3.81 grade point average on a 4.0

scale. While in high school, she was a member of the National Honor Society, Bradley Honor Choir, Drama Club, Girls H Club and Phi Theta Kappa. Sheridan was on the President's List at Spoon River College for maintaining a GPA above 3.7. Sheridan now attends Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, majoring in elementary education.



Jasmine Babers graduated from Rock Island High School where she earned a 3.81 out of 4.0 GPA. In high school,

she was a member of the National Honor Society, class president, newspaper and yearbook editor, and was involved with several sports teams. Jasmine also served on local and national philanthropy boards and volunteered her time with several organizations including

Teens for Jeans and the Child Abuse Council. She received many awards based on her leadership, service and volunteer work. Jasmine is studying business at Western Illinois University.



Thomas Craig, from Springfield, is a graduate of Glenwood High School. He earned a 3.79 GPA on a 5.0 scale. While in

high school, he was a member of show choir and concert choir. He earned special recognition in piano performance and had the honor of performing in the All-State Honor Show Choir and District Choir. Thomas volunteered his time as a show choir camp counselor and on the clean-up crew at Springfield Muni Opera and Prairie Archaeology and Research. Thomas is a student at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, majoring in pre-law and music.

Breanna Hale graduated from Chrisman High School. While in high school, she was a member of Academic Honors Society with a 3.84 out of 4.0 GPA. She participated in "WYSE" ecology team, basketball, track, cross country,

cheerleading, "FCA." "CAMA," Teens' band and 4-H. She earned honor roll recognition, received various awards for her athletic achievements and was named to the ILMEA All-District Band. She volunteered at Save a Mutt Animal Shelter, Pleasant Meadows Nursing Home, the Red Cross Blood Drive and the Salvation Army. Breanna is studying pre-physical therapy at Eastern Illinois University.



Erica Mueller, moved from the Central Region to St. Louis. She graduated from Lutheran High School North where she

earned a 3.88 GPA on a 4.0 scale. While in high school, Erica participated in band, jazz band, Girls' a capella group, Concentus select choir, varsity track, varsity basketball, and TREND. She was inducted into the National Honor Society and the Missouri Scholars Academy. She also received honors in basketball and track. Erica volunteered her time with Faith in Action, Vacation Bible School, and Sidewalk Sunday School. Now Erica is a student at Concordia University in Chicago.

continued

Scholarships (cont.)



Crishawna Nash of Peoria graduated from Richwoods High School in 2014 with a 3.35 GPA on a 4.0 scale. While in high school,

Crishawna participated in track and field and cross country and was inducted into the National Honor Society. She participated in the Society of Women Engineers, tennis club and running club while in college. Crishawna volunteered at Tri County Urban League, George Washington Carver Center and with the tornado relief program in Washington, Illinois. Crishawna is continuing her studies at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and is majoring in mathematics and engineering.

Tony Newell is a graduate of Peoria High School. While in high school, he earned a 3.75 GPA on a 4.0 scale and participated in football, weights, track, cross country, intermural basketball and the Pride Team. Tony earned honor roll recognition all four years of high school and was inducted into the Senior Honors Association and the Sterling Merit Honors program. He volunteered his time with Haitian Heart, Peoria Zoo Halloween and Pen Pals and raised money for Peoria High needy students. Tony is studying civil engineering at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Shruthi Ramachandran graduated from Normal Community West High School where she earned a 4.78 out of 5.0 GPA.

She participated in Fellowship of Christian Athletes club, Random Acts of Kindness club, and tennis club. Shruthi was inducted into the National Honor Society and was awarded the sportsmanship award her junior year on the tennis team. She also volunteered her time with several community and church organizations. Shruthi is a student at Cedarville University, majoring in social work.

Debrae Richter-Shea is a graduate of Central High School in Champaign. In high school, she participated in basketball, “Pink Out” games to raise money for breast cancer research, and Generation Next, which is a homework club that supports students’ interest in going to college by with keeping up with their classwork. Debrae earned a 3.31 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She was awarded Senior Scholar Athlete Award and was acknowledged by the Big Twelve High School Conference for her GPA. Debrae attends Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and is pursuing a double major in art and elementary education.



Katherine See, from Assumption, graduated from Central A&M High School where she earned a 2.78 GPA on a 4.0

scale. In high school, she participated in band, jazz band, track, art club, NJROTC, cross-country and served as a library aid. Katherine received awards for perfect attendance, honor roll, and student of the

month, along with several honors for band. She volunteered with several activities through her church, community and school. Katherine is now a student at Richland Community College, majoring in English.



Jacqueline Sparnicht is a graduate of Urbana High School where she earned a 4.14 GPA on a 5.0 scale. Jacqueline was a member

of her high school diving team, basketball team, choir, and cheer-leading squad. She participated in Fellowship of Christian Athletes and African American Club. She earned the “Rising Star,” “Helping Hands” and “Outstanding Junior” awards in choir and received an academic monogram for maintaining a 4.0 GPA. Jacqueline was also named Choir Queen and Homecoming Queen. She volunteered her time at her church. Jacqueline is studying at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with plans to major in music or social work.

Amanda Summers graduated from Quincy Senior High School with a 4.08 out of 4.0 GPA. She was a member of the National Honor Society, student council, Key Club, and soccer team. She earned a place on the high honor roll and has her black belt in Taekwondo. Amanda has been volunteering her time through various clubs. Amanda is a humanities major at the University of Kansas. ♥

Central Region Training

DCFS has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the region.

To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center (VTC) anytime at www.DCFStraining.org. Click on any of the links under Training Schedule to access course descriptions, in-service training and Educational Advocacy Training or call the DCFS Registration Line at 877-800-3393 during business hours.

The Virtual Training Center (VTC) is your tool to:

- See training news and general information
- Check available trainings
- View/Print your training transcript
- Register and take on-line courses

DIGITAL TRAINING MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE



As we move into the digital age and aim to use fewer printed resources, DCFS Training has made many PRIDE materials easily available on the home page of the Virtual Training Center at www.DCFStraining.org.

Anyone may print the materials or download them onto almost any electronic device and bring their device to training class. Trainees who have no digital access should speak with their trainers when they arrive in class, so we can accommodate everyone.

Who do you call when...?

...A child in your home is having a psychiatric crisis that may require hospitalization? Call the CARES line at 800-345-9049. However, if a child is a danger to himself or others, call 911 first. The CARES line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

...You want information on becoming a foster parent or on adoption? The Adoption Information Center of Illinois (AICI) can answer your questions and connect you with a licensing agency. The toll-free number is 800-572-2390. AICI also maintains information about the children who are featured in the newsletter.

...You have questions about your board check? Call the DCFS Central Payment Unit at 800-525-0499 if your check comes from DCFS. If your check comes from a private agency, contact the agency.

...You need to report a child missing or have information about a youth who has run away? To report information on missing youth call 866-503-0184. The toll-free number is available 24 hours a day every day of the week. If you feel the child is in danger, call 911 first.

...Your adoption or guardianship is final but you have questions about the subsidy? Call the subsidy worker assigned to the case or the Adoption Support Line at 866-538-8892 or 312-808-5250 so you can be connected to the right individual for help.

...You feel you aren't being treated fairly by DCFS or a private agency? If you've already tried to resolve the issue by going up the chain of command with

the caseworker and supervisors, then call the Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

...You need to seek expense reimbursement for property damage or bodily harm caused by a child in foster care? Let your caseworker know you intend to submit a claim to the Foster Child Damage Reimbursement Program. Refer to DCFS form CFS851 or contact the office at 312-814-7294.

...You have questions about your child's medical card? Call 800-228-6533.

...You need to find a phone number for a caseworker? Call the main switchboard in Chicago at 312-814-6800 or the State Operator at 312-793-3500.

...You are having family problems with an adopted child? Contact the Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program that serves your area. Call the Adoption Support Line at 866-538-8892 or 312-808-5250.

...You are having a hard time getting services for your child at school? Most private agencies have an Education Liaison, and each DCFS region has Education Advisors who can help. Call your agency or nearest DCFS office to be connected to the right educational resource for your area.

...You have an idea for an article in the newsletter? Email vanessa.james@illinois.gov at the DCFS Office of Communications.

A Family for Me: Call 1-800-572-2390 for more information



Marvin, 15, is a young man who is always willing to lend a hand. He is a respectful child who enjoys helping others. He is also very independent, and capable of taking

care of himself. Marvin is intelligent, but he sometimes needs to be reminded to apply himself at school. His favorite hobby is playing video games – if there's a game controller anywhere nearby, it won't be long before he finds it!

Marvin's worker says he is a loving, lighthearted child who enjoys playing games, being active, and spending time with people he knows and trusts.

The forever family for Marvin is one that can provide a loving home environment. You can spend plenty of time with him, and encourage him to form meaningful bonds with members of your family. You can also work with professionals who can help you understand, and meet, his emotional needs. Marvin says, "I want a family that likes games and is active." [8146]



Carlos If you're looking for someone to chat with, Carlos, age 14, is the one! This young man is very caring and outgoing, and he LOVES to engage in conversations

with people. Carlos is also very athletic and enjoys playing sports and participating in other activities, such as the junior high dance team and track team. He shares a close relationship with his coach and gets along really well with his teammates.

Carlos' teachers all have fabulous things to say about him. They report that they

love having him in their classes and feel very invested in him. He is bright and very articulate with details. Carlos has a lot of potential if he can be in a structured and caring environment. He works better when he is monitored and knows that someone is watching him. Carlos gets involved in whatever he is doing and always wants to do a good job.

Potential parents can provide a loving and stable home for Carlos, and assure him that he is a permanent part of your family. You can be patient with him as he adjusts to your home. Carlos needs to be able to openly communicate; the ideal family for him would be caring and willing to take the time to talk to him about how he is feeling. They will also need to allow him to be active and involved in extracurricular activities. Carlos wants to be a "normal" kid who does things that teenagers like to do, such as playing sports and going to the mall. He does not pick on kids and is never disrespectful, so he would do just fine with other children in the home. [8293]



Cam'ron Meet Cam'ron, the next American Idol! This young man loves to sing, and he is very good at it. He is a very sweet boy, with a good sense of humor. Cam'ron

does well in school, and has even made the honor roll. He is really into cars and enjoys building things using LEGO pieces. He is friendly, and makes friends easily. Cam'ron is 13 years old.

His caseworker says that Cam'ron is very loving and caring. He is very smart, and makes friends easily.

The right family for Cam'ron will show patience and understanding as he transitions into his new home environ-

ment. Cam'ron would benefit from a family that has experience working with or understanding children exposed to significant trauma. The family can also work with professionals to understand and meet his emotional, behavioral, and educational needs. Cam'ron says he would like, "a very nice family who is active." [8288]



Aaron, 15, is a very personable and intelligent young man, with a wonderful sense of humor. He enjoys writing, drawing, and listening to music.

Aaron loves action figures! Two of his favorites are Spider-Man and Batman. It has also been reported that Aaron is a huge fan of the "Star Wars" movie series.

Aaron's caregivers say he works very hard at developing and maintaining positive relationships with adults and peers. They also say he loves making people laugh.

To be a forever family for Aaron, you can provide a nurturing home environment. You can set clear boundaries, offer structure, and create realistic goals. You can also exhibit patience and understanding as Aaron gets acclimated to his new environment. Aaron would benefit from ongoing contact with his older sister, including phone calls and emails. [8283]

If you are interested in adopting one of the children featured here, or learning about other children who are waiting to be adopted, please call the Illinois Center for Adoption & Permanency at 1-800-572-2390 or visit the iCAP website at www.illinoiscap.org. ♥



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