Illinois Families Now and Forever®

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

Governor's proclamation on Foster Parent Appreciation Month

STATE OF ILLINOIS

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Proclamation

WHEREAS, each year more than 4,000 children who have been abused or neglected cannot remain with their families safely, and these children need and deserve the temporary safe haven of a family home where they can be protected, nurtured, and loved; and,

WHEREAS, without volunteer foster families, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services would not be able to fulfill its mission to provide for the well-being of the nearly 15,000 children currently in its care; and,

WHEREAS, the Department and its non-profit partners provide a wide range of support to assist foster families to provide a child's basic physical needs and to ensure her educational, emotional, and social well-being, none of which can be achieved without the dedication of foster families; and,

WHEREAS, foster families answer a noble calling to devote their time and energy to children to reunite families when possible, support other permanency options, and create opportunities for a successful launch to adulthood; and,

WHEREAS, foster families provide children with the one thing they need the most, love, which cannot come from a government or nonprofit agency, but only from the heart of another human being; and,

WHEREAS, foster parents change lives in many ways, and they deserve the utmost respect and gratitude for the lasting impact they have in the life of a child, in their communities, and on the future prosperity of this state;

THEREFORE, I, Bruce Rauner, Governor of the State of Illinois, do proclaim May 2015 as ***FOSTER PARENT APPRECIATION MONTH*** *in Illinois, extending thanks on behalf of the people of Illinois to the thousands of Illinois foster families, and encouraging all to consider joining them in their noble service to children, communities, and our state.*

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

Done at the Capitol in the City of Springfield, this TWENTY-SECOND *day of* APRIL*, in the Year of Our Lord, two thousand and* FIFTEEN*, and of the State of Illinois, one hundred and* NINETY-SEVENTH*.*

SECRETARY OF STATE

GOVERNOR

Message from the DCFS Director

Dear Foster Parent,

On behalf of the Department of Children and Family Services and the entire state of Illinois, thank you for all that you do and happy Foster Parent Appreciation Month!

Each year, more than 4,000 children who have been abused or neglected cannot safely remain with their families. During such a traumatic time, these children need and deserve the safe haven of a family home where they can be protected, nurtured and loved.

Without volunteer families like yours, DCFS would not be able to fulfill our mission to provide for the well-being of the children in our care. You all answer a noble calling to devote your time and energies to reunite families when possible, support other permanency options and create opportunities to successfully launch youth into adulthood.

As one of my first outings, I had the privilege of traveling to Alton to speak with foster parents at the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council meeting. I firmly believe that it is my responsibility to listen to the individuals on the front lines, like foster parents and other caregivers. That's the best way for me to find out what we need to do to ensure you have the services and resources necessary to care for our children.

So, in the coming months I will continue to reach out to foster families to find out what's working and what's not as we strive toward the common goal of strengthening the lives of the children in our care.

Once again, thank you and happy Foster Parent Appreciation Month!

National Foster Care Month 2015

Get to Know the Many Faces of Foster Care

Each year in May, Illinois celebrates Foster Parent Appreciation Month, in conjunction with national activities. This is a special time to let families know their efforts are honored. It is also an excellent way to build public awareness for the important work of caring for children who have been abused or neglected.

Visit *https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/* for sample e-mails, graphics and materials to promote foster care in May and throughout the year.

Make May a special foster care month

- Join a foster parent support group and take a friend.
- Pay a visit to the district office of your state legislators. Ask how they will address issues that are important to your family.
- Plan a movie night to watch foster care/adoption-themed movies.
- Serve a cake with candles for dessert and show the kids you deserve a special day.
- Make plans with another foster family to trade an afternoon watching the others' kids. Do something to refresh your spirit.
- Make a list of good parenting decisions you have made lately. Tuck it away for a "rainy day."
- Write a letter to your local newspaper explaining the importance of foster care.
- Pose for a family picture with all the kids who are at home.
- Reconnect with an older youth who was once in your care.
- Meet a couple of foster parent friends over coffee.
- Use social media: Change your profile picture to a foster care graphic; tweet about foster care with a new post (non-confidential) each day; update your e-mail signature.
- Share your own ideas on the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Facebook page.

Families invited
to State Fair August 13-23 with discounts

DCFS continues the annual tradition of offering caregivers a special invitation to attend the Illinois State Fair. This invitation is for currently licensed homes and includes youth in DCFS care, as well as children by birth, adoption or guardianship living in the home.

Complete and return this page by June 20 and in July you will receive by mail:

- A pass that includes parking and admission for all passengers in the car for one $3 fee.
- One refreshment ticket for each family member, worth $3 in food or drink.
- One ride ticket for each family member that provides unlimited rides for $15 (during designated hours ONLY on August 17-21)

Mail Or Fax
No Later Than June 19, 2015

DCFS Office of Communications
406 East Monroe Street, Station 65
Springfield, IL 62701-1498

Fax: 217-524-0014

Tickets cannot be requested by telephone. Clip, mail or fax this form. It serves as a receipt for auditing and must be returned to DCFS before tickets can be sent. This is the only invitation to the state fair. Please act today if you wish to attend.

Welcome ILLINOIS STATE FAIR Enjoy Your Visit

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Phone _____

Licensed by
(Agency/DCFS Region) _____

There will be ____ Family Members in our Party
(Names) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

To request more than 8 tickets, we will need additional information for verification with the DCFS Inspector General.

Licensing/Subsidy Worker

_____

(Phone No.) _____

We are a licensed foster family, relative caregiver, a guardianship family or have adopted a child through DCFS, and we would like to attend the 2015 Illinois State Fair. We understand that only our foster, adopted and guardianship children and family members who live in our home consistent with DCFS licensing regulations are eligible for these special offers.

(Signature) _____

Clip and return.

Editor's Letter

It is always a treat to be able to "speak" to my fellow caregivers through the newsletter. Those who have been reading it for years know that my family has gone through many transitions. Children that first came to our home as teens in care are now 30 years old. I never would have been able to envision that when we first became licensed. Now we do respite for other foster families and mentor parents.

Encounters with foster families and children keep me grounded in how this newsletter can serve you. The term "knowledge is power" may be trite, but it's true for what we do. I sincerely hope you can use the information in your newsletter to get what you need for the children in your care.

We have changed up the production schedule to keep the news fresh on a reliable cycle. We have also worked hard to make the design easy to read either in print or on-line. I owe a lot to the production team and the regional reporters.

This magazine is the primary way that the department can get news out to all Illinois foster and adoptive families. My goal is that it both informs and inspires. I wish you all the best during Foster Parent Appreciation Month and beyond. ♡

–Vanessa James, Editor

Save-the-date for annual Youth Summits

As the school year comes to an end, this is also a time for older youth to look ahead to their next step in education and life as an adult. To help them in that transition, each year DCFS sponsors Youth Summits in locations across the state.

The four Youth Summits will provide teens who are still in DCFS care (foster care or residential programs) skills to help them successfully achieve self-sufficiency.

The DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services and the Youth Advisory Boards have prepared a slate of workshops on a wide range of topics covering: finances, personal care, education, housing and emotional/social development. There will be guest speakers and information tables to connect youth to resources.

During the youth summit, DCFS will also honor students' academic accomplishments and give special recognition to those who earned a high school diploma or GED or completed a vocational program.

Save the date for the events listed below. More information will be sent directly to families with youth ages 14 to 21 who are still in care. ♡

Cook region
Yusef Watson, 312-848-0853

Northern region
Jessie LaChance, 636-293-8740

Central/Southern regions
Leshonda Rogers, 217-789-2908

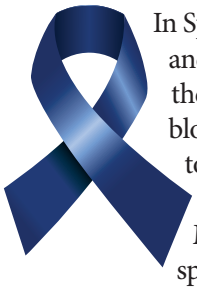
Central Region
Youth Summit
June 26, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Illinois State University
Bloomington, IL

Cook Region
Youth Summit
June 25, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Northeastern Illinois University
Chicago, IL

Southern Region
Youth Summit
June 4, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Kaskaskia College
Centralia, IL

Northern Region
Youth Summit
June 19, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Kishwaukee College
Malta, IL

DCFS spreads the message for Child Abuse Prevention month



In Springfield, Chicago and communities around the state, blue ribbons blossomed like flowers to mark April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. DCFS sponsored a kick-off event at the James R. Thompson Center, where the Westinghouse College Prep Junior ROTC color guard and Sounds of Sweetness, an a cappella group from Walter Payton College Prep, helped set the tone for the event. Acting Director George Sheldon spoke of the need for everyone to look out for and speak up against all instances of child abuse.

"Children are our most valuable resource and we must protect them from any and all harm. But we cannot do this alone, we need everyone to help," he stated.

The public audience members received blue ribbons and prevention information. Additionally, several organizations combined efforts to adorn the trees on Chicago's State Street Corridor with blue ribbons.

At the State Capitol, Acting Director Sheldon led the April 1 kick-off events with US Congressman Rodney Davis, Rep. Tim Butler, 11-year-old author Valerie Eyer and many community partners. The rotunda was decorated with blue ribbons, children's artwork and the pinwheel symbol of the Prevent Child Abuse public campaign. ♡

Valerie Eyer reads from "Why Did We Have to Say Good-bye?," her book inspired by the loss of her baby brother to child abuse. Acting Director Sheldon and US Congressman Rodney Davis listen during the Springfield Child Abuse Prevention Month events.

Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Update

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council continued to stay in touch with local concerns, traveling to Alton for the March meeting. Derek Hobson, the regional administrator, welcomed the council and gave an update on activities in the Southern Region. The region is recruiting more foster homes and administrators are working collaboratively with the 38 judicial districts in an effort to improve permanency outcomes.

Acting Director Sheldon

Newly appointed acting director George Sheldon traveled to Alton to meet the council. He discussed the budget concerns and his intent to bring in more funds though federal reimbursements. He also said that it is important to collectively raise the public confidence in the Department. As he continuities to map out strategies he will listen to council members, other foster parents and youth. He thinks it's important to have kids at the table, noting that they probably know more about this system than anyone. One immediate goal is to focus on ways to "normalize" children's experiences even while they are in DCFS care. Sheldon engaged in a lengthy question and answer period with council members.

George Sheldon (left) acting DCFS Director answered council member's questions.

Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans

The council reported that all foster care programs' plans were scored. Members nominated several plans for awards that will be announced in June. Next, council members will conduct agency reviews, where they visit sites to discuss how foster care programs put the Foster Parent Law into practice. ♡

THE NEXT MEETING
of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be June 19 in Bloomingdale.

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

Adoption Advisory Council news

Permanency Progress

The march toward permanency is on. DCFS is on a mission to complete 1,200 adoption and guardianship cases before the end of the fiscal year on June 30. This effort means streamlining the subsidy process, troubleshooting proactively and working closely with adoption staff and the private sector programs. Cheryl McIntire, statewide adoption administrator, reported steady progress to the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council in April, with over 300 new forever families.

Acting Director Sheldon

The April meeting of the council featured a discussion with newly appointed acting director George Sheldon. He shared with the council some of the challenges and successes he experienced as head of Florida's child welfare agency. There, adoptions soared and the time in care decreased substantially, during recession conditions. He is looking forward to working with the council to see similar results here. He also asked the council to stay involved and to bring him their recommendations for ways to see progress.

National Adoption Month

Even though the season had just turned to spring, the council is looking ahead to the fall celebration of National Adoption Month in November. A committee will be generating ideas for raising awareness through local events. ♡

ILLINOIS ADOPTION ADVISORY COUNCIL

meets six times a year to discuss issues and make recommendations to DCFS regarding the concerns of adoptive and guardianship families. The Council is made up of parents, professionals in the child welfare field and adopted individuals.

THE NEXT MEETING
of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council will be in Joliet on June 5 at 10 a.m.

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

Safe social media

In this age of social media, it can be hard for adults to keep up and keep children safe when they go on-line. DCFS has worked with staff, law enforcement and caregivers to develop the Administrative Policy #28: Social Media/Mobile Technology for Children/Youth in Care. Caregivers play a special role in oversight and in setting reasonable limits. The cornerstone of this important topic is the Social Media Safety Agreement, a "contract" that the youth, foster parent and caseworker sign, for all youth age 10 and over.

In developing the guidelines that work for the child and the household, there are some over-arching concepts to keep in mind. In general, youth still under DCFS care are allowed to have social media accounts if they meet the site's age requirements. If they have their own phone, computer or tablet, they can access those accounts as outlined in the agreement. If they are using the foster parents' gear, access to it can be limited.

Confidentiality is primary, so posts and pictures cannot provide information that would identify that the child is in DCFS care. They (and the caregivers) cannot share details on their location, court proceedings or private information such as addresses or medical information. It is also critical that youth understand the ramifications of cyberbullying, sexting and other illegal online activities, including exploitation.

Youth in foster care should have "normal" experiences, but they may also need additional direction to navigate the on-line world. ♡

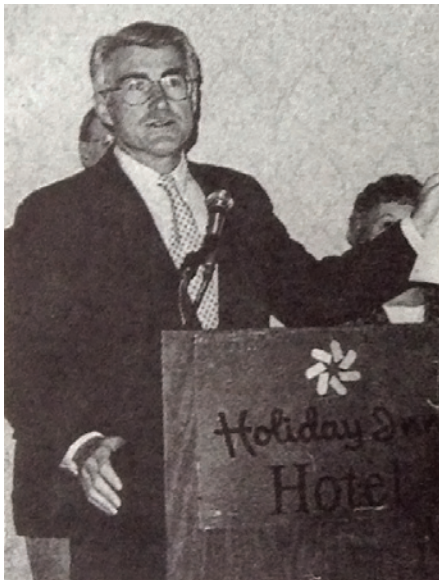
Foster Parent Law hits 20-year mark

Twenty years ago, foster parents witnessed the result of tireless statewide outreach, public hearings and legislative debate. On June 3, 1995, Governor Jim Edgar attended the foster parent conference and announced that the Foster Parent Bill of Rights was codified in the Foster Parent Law, which he had just signed.

> *"The General Assembly finds that there is a need to establish public policy regarding the role of foster parents.*
>
> *The General Assembly establishes this statement of foster parents' rights and responsibilities, which shall apply to all foster parents in the State of Illinois, whether supervised by the Department of Children and Family Services or by another agency under contract to the Department of Children and Family Services to provide foster care services."*
> *(Source: P.A. 89-19, eff. 6-3-95.)*

The statement of 15 rights still helps foster parents, agencies and DCFS regional foster care programs know what role foster parents will play on the child welfare team. It highlights the consideration they can expect to receive as part of a team working together to care for children. The statement of 17 responsibilities helps prospective foster parents know what will be expected of them before they decide to become foster parents and gives current foster parents a clear understanding of the general expectations of the agency or DCFS region.

The Foster Parent Law is a good starting point to avoid or to resolve issues between caregivers and other members of the child welfare team. Additionally, the Law requires agencies to have a grievance process specific to the rights and responsibilities listed in the Foster Parent Law.



Gov. Jim Edgar announced the Foster Parent Law at the 1995 Foster Parent Conference in Peoria (archive photo).

Each agency and DCFS region prepares an annual Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan that demonstrates how the rights and responsibilities are incorporated into practice. Programs are required to involve caregivers in drafting the implementation plan and to make the plan available for review. Many foster care programs send copies of the implementation plan directly to caregivers. Others have the plan ready as requested.

Caregivers with questions about the Foster Parent Law or implementation plans can contact their agency or call DCFS Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422. ♡

Know your Foster Parent Law rights and responsibilities

Caregivers have the right to:

1. Be treated with dignity, respect and consideration
2. Be provided pre-service and appropriate ongoing training to improve skills
3. Be informed on how to receive supportive services from the agency
4. Receive timely financial reimbursement commensurate with child's service plan
5. Be provided a clear, written understanding of the plan concerning the child's placement and how it will support his family relationship and cultural identity
6. Fair, timely and impartial investigations of licensing complaints
7. Receive additional information to assist in the care of a child while in placement
8. Receive specific information from DCFS and private agencies listed in Children and Family Services Act and the Child Care Act of 1969
9. Be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings in order to participate in case planning and decision-making
10. Be provided, before placement, with any information a caseworker has that is pertinent to the child's care and the permanency plan
11. Receive written notice of any change in a child's case plan or of plans to terminate the child's placement, along with the reasons for the change or termination
12. Timely notification of court hearings and right to intervene or request mandamus
13. Be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parents re-enters DCFS care
14. Access the existing appeals process with the assertion that the appeal will be free from acts of harassment and retaliation.
15. Be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and the rights for foster parents when reporting misconduct by child welfare personnel

Caregivers have the responsibility to:

1. Communicate and share information with the child welfare team
2. Respect the confidentiality of information about the child and his family
3. Advocate for children in the care of the foster parent
4. Treat the child and his or her family with dignity, respect and consideration
5. Recognize their individual and family strengths and limitations and to utilize appropriate supports as appropriate
6. Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations
7. Assess their ongoing training needs and take action to meet those needs
8. Strategize with agency representatives to avoid placement disruptions and support the child if disruption occurs
9. Recognize the impact of foster care on relationships and take steps to minimize stress as much as possible
10. Positively promote the benefits of foster parenting
11. Know the role, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the child, and the child's own family
12. Know and fulfill their role as a mandated reporter and know policies regarding allegations that foster parents have committed abuse or neglect
13. Know the purpose of and to participate in Administrative Case Reviews, client service plans and court proceedings
14. Know the child welfare agency's appeal process
15. Maintain accurate records
16. Share information about the placement with subsequent caregivers/parents
17. Provide care that respects the child's cultural needs supports the relationship between the child and his or her own family

Cook County Advocate

News for Chicago Metro Area Families

2015 • Vol. 3

Message from the Regional Administrator

I appreciate that foster parenting is perhaps one of the most challenging and most important aspects of the child welfare. Providing the safest and most nurturing home environment possible for a child that experienced trauma is a core value of fostering. Foster parents respond to the calling to care for children, to take them into their homes, and to transition them into the next phase of their lives–sometimes for weeks, and sometimes for almost the child's entire childhood. Many would describe this as a ministry or calling because what is given in the fostering process is certainly not financially compensated in full; and comes, at times, with many trials, tribulations and tears.

However, the intrinsic rewards can make all the turmoil worthwhile. Foster parents experience many firsts with a lot of the children in their homes, from a simple birthday party to school graduations. Our children are very often so traumatized they do not know how to show appreciation. But Cook County foster parents do not expect verbal expressions of "thanks" and are savvy enough to know it's the twinkle in a child's eye, a sideways grin, changed negative behavior or an unsolicited offer of assistance, that often indicates appreciation. It is no surprise older youth often seek out former foster parents for advice and connectedness.

Cook County was subdivided into three distinct regions prior to 2012 and each previously held separate foster parent celebrations. I am excited that May 2015 will mark the first year for a Cook County Regional Foster Parent Appreciation event to honor and thank foster parents in the DCFS program for their selfless devotion to children. I am fortunate to have these incredible individuals as part of my team. Our partner agencies throughout Cook County are equally enriched by their foster parents' commitment and involvement.

All foster families are to be commended and celebrated for their dedication to children every day of the year and not just for the month of May. ♡

– Arlene Grant-Brown,
DCFS Cook County Regional Administrator

Building Strong Families

In Chicago and surrounding communities, families have come to depend on the Be Strong Families "Parent Cafés" and other events for learning, support and camaraderie. Parent Cafés are open discussions about the foster care experience, led by a trained facilitator. Foster parents get to meet each other, de-stress, talk and earn two hours of training credit.

The discussions center on the protective factors that research shows to be necessary to keep families strong and reduce risk factors that would threaten their success. In plain language they boil down to:

- **Be Strong and Flexible**
- **Parents Need Friends**
- **Being a Great Parent Is Part Natural and Part Learned**
- **We All Need Help Sometimes**
- **Parents Need to Help Their Children Communicate**
- **Give Your Children the Love and Respect They Need**

Be Strong Families conducts cafés at locations throughout Cook County and the state. To join an upcoming Foster Parent Café, contact Robyn Harvey at *robyn@bestrongfamilies.net*

4TH ANNUAL FAMILY REUNION

Be Strong Families will host a free celebration for young people who grew up in foster care. At the *We Are Family! 2015 Alumni Family Reunion* they can reconnect and meet new family!

Saturday, June 27 at 12 - 4 pm
Douglas Park Community Center
1401 S. Sacramento Blvd.,
Chicago, IL 60623

Registration details are at *www.bestrongfamilies.net* under the events tab.

Appreciate the strength in numbers at a local support group

Foster care is not a solo effort. It takes a team. Sometimes the most valuable team members can be those fellow foster parents who can truly understand and share their experiences. Many of the agencies in Cook County and the DCFS regional foster care program sponsor support groups and associations to keep foster families connected and informed. Below is a list of groups that have asked to be part of the annual round up. Find a meeting near your home and begin building your network. ♡

Circle of Parents

Contact: Stacey Saffold
773-419-4660

Meets 1st Saturday 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Sherman Park Library
5440 South Racine, Chicago

Cook Central DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Billie Ray Lewis
773-968-6572

Meets 4th Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.

DCFS Office,
1701 First Ave.,
Maywood

No December meeting.
Training credits offered.

Cook North DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Edith Cruz
312-328-2064

Meets 2nd Tuesday at 10 a.m.

DCFS Office,
1911 S. Indiana,
Chicago

Cook South DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Angela Barber
773-371-6444

Meets 3rd Tuesday at 10 a.m.

DCFS Office, 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

DCFS Cook South Suburban Support Group

Contact: Angela Barber
773-371-6444

Meets 4th Thursday of odd numbered months 9 a.m. to Noon

DCFS Office
15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey

For DCFS and private agency families.
Training credits offered.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Training and Support Group

Contact: Bryana Fishman
773-884-2200

fishmanb@metrofamily.org

Meets 1st Wednesday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Metropolitan Family Services - Midway

3843 W. 63rd Street, Chicago

Open to any grandparent or older caregiver raising a child.

Hispanic Association

(combines with Northeast Foster Adopt Parent Association)

Contact: Edith Cruz
312-328-2064

Jewish Child and Family Services Advisory Council

Contact: Larisa Banike
312-673-2742

larisabanike@jcfs.org

Meets quarterly.

Call for details.

Lutheran Social Services of IL Foster Parent Advisory Council

Contact: Joan Singleton-Lee
312-949-4862

Meets last Thursday every other month

May, Jul., Sep.: 6 - 7 p.m.

Nov., Jan., Mar.: 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

10 W. 35th St., 12th Floor, Chicago

New Beginning Foster/ Adoptive Parent Association

Contact: Regina & Gladys Boyd
708-385-6263

Meets 1st Monday

6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Fernwood Park

10436 S. Wallace

Northeast Area Foster and Adopt Parent Association

Contact: Idalyia Jones
312-328-2063

Meets 3rd Thursday at 10 a.m.

Sherman Park Library

5440 S. Racine Avenue, Chicago

Northern Illinois Foster/ Adopt Parent Association

Contact: Desiree Benbenek
847-948-6771 or 847-870-1234

Meets quarterly.

Open to all foster and adoptive parents in the north end of Chicago, and the suburbs from Evanston to Buffalo Grove, and to Streamwood.

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

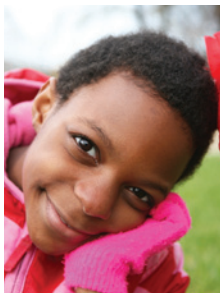
...You need to find a phone number for a caseworker? Call the main switchboard in Chicago at 312-814-6800 or the State Operator at 312-793-3500.

...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 888-96-ADOPT.

...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

A family for me: Call 1-800-572-2390 for more information

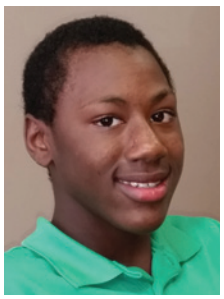


Joyanna

This outgoing young lady loves spending time with people. Whether she's singing, dancing, or playing with her siblings, Joyanna, age 10, likes to be in the middle of the action. Her enthusiasm extends to school as well, where she does well academically and regularly volunteers to answer questions in class. During her quieter moments, she enjoys playing cards (especially Uno) and video games (especially Wii Sports).

Joyanna's worker says she is a caring child who enjoys helping others, and goes out of her way to assist younger children.

To be the right family for Joyanna, you can provide a stable, loving home for her. You can remain patient as she adjusts to her new, permanent family. You can also help her maintain relationships with her siblings, including regular visits. Joyanna would like to join a family that is "nice" and "likes to have fun." Other children in the home should be older than Joyanna. *[7743, Cook County]*



Timiony

Tim, 12, is an outgoing, funny, kind-hearted young man. In his spare time, he likes to play video games, surf the web (especially Google Earth), play board games with his peers, and play outside. He enjoys being active and participating in activities such as dodge ball, basketball and kickball. Tim is very well-mannered and helpful when it comes to doing chores and following directions. He has a very close bond with his siblings and enjoys the time he gets to spend with them.

Tim's worker states that he is great kid, and fun to be around! He is helpful, understanding, and can hold a great conversation. Tim can do most chores by himself with little or no help; he really strives to please the adults around him. Tim also does well in school, but sometimes struggles to remain on task.

Tim's forever family will give him the love and support he longs for. The family will need to assist Tim in certain areas, such as reading. It is best for the family to be gentle, yet firm, with Tim. He requires structure and does not do well without it. It is also important that the family supports the strong bond that Tim shares with his siblings, and ensures that he maintains contact with them. *[8271, Downstate]*

Kayleigh While some teenagers complain of being "boooooooored," this young lady always manages to find something to occupy her time. Kayleigh, 15, is a vibrant adolescent who enjoys listening to music, reading, running, camping, and spending time outdoors. She is a social child who has many friends, thanks to her engaging personality. She is ready and eager to join a forever family.

Kayleigh's worker says she is smart, kind, funny, and caring. Prospective parents for her will be able to provide a stable, loving home environment. You can include her in lots of fun family activities. You can also provide plenty of encouragement as she pursues her social, artistic, and academic interests. Kayleigh would like to join a rural family that "likes to spend time outdoors and do things." She adds, "I want a family who will be there for me as I will be there for them." Kayleigh should be the only child in her adoptive home. *[8103, Downstate]*

Isaiah Isaiah, 13, is a sweet, affectionate young man. He can be very loving, and has formed meaningful attachments with a variety of people. Isaiah likes spending time outside, and spends much of his free time riding his scooter or playing basketball. He also takes swimming lessons, and is looking forward to participating in Special Olympics as a bowler. Isaiah is developmentally delayed, and sometimes struggles to express himself appropriately. He would benefit from a family that seeks to understand and meet his cognitive and educational needs. Isaiah's worker says he is very helpful and likes to please others.

Isaiah's forever family would be able to provide a loving home with plenty of structure. You can remain patient with Isaiah, and help him process his emotions when things don't go his way. You can also work with various professionals who can help you address Isaiah's educational, medical, and emotional needs. Isaiah wants to join a two-parent family, but would also be happy with a one-parent family. His ideal home would include a backyard, a bicycle, and possibly pets. Isaiah should be the only child in his adoptive family. *[7861]*

Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI website – 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 Now and Forever®

Bruce Rauner, Governor

Published by

DCFS Office of Professional Development

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Graphics: Bert Tijerina
Printed by: DCFS Print Shop

Purpose: To help busy families more effectively parent children currently or formerly in DCFS care. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

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

Illinois Families Now and Forever® is published six times a year, bi-monthly, and mailed to licensed foster parents, unlicensed relative caregivers, and adoptive and guardianship families receiving subsidies. An electronic version is sent to all DCFS and private agency staff.

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Department of Children and Family Services©

Illinois Families Now and Forever
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100 West Randolph - 6th Floor
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PRESRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SPRINGFIELD, IL
PERMIT NO. 763

Illinois Department of DCFS Children & Family Services

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Current and back issues of Illinois Families Now and Forever® are available online in English and Spanish at www.DCFS.illinois.gov

Printed by Authority of the State of Illinois
DCFS #000 – May 2015 – 9,572 copies