Illinois Families Now and Forever®

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

Governor names George Sheldon to head DCFS

George H. Sheldon left Florida for Illinois in February after being named Acting Director of DCFS. Governor Bruce Rauner selected Sheldon for the position after a nationwide search. Sheldon is recognized for leading the turnaround of Florida's child welfare agency.

In 2008, Sheldon took the lead as Secretary of the Florida Department of Children and Families, which at the time was commonly referred to as "the troubled Department of Children and Families." Three years later, a gubernatorial transition report called it the best-run agency in the state. Sheldon expertly weathered $200 million in budget reductions without cutting staff or disrupting services to citizens. He was responsible for a $3 billion budget and 13,000 employees.

In 2011, Sheldon was tapped to tackle child welfare issues at the federal level. President Obama appointed him the Acting Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). At ACF he was responsible for strengthening the agency's focus on early-childhood education, finding better ways to support children in foster care, and led the first nationwide strategic plan for victims of human trafficking.

"Over my career, I have learned that it is those who are actually with the kids that make things happen. I have also learned from the kids themselves, since they are most affected by every decision we make," Sheldon said.

He said he was honored by the appointment and was ready to get to work while awaiting Senate confirmation. ♡

Be on the look-out for recalled products

Each year, throughout the year, the federal government announces major product recalls on cribs, strollers, clothing and children's toys that have caused injuries and even fatalities. It can be easy to overlook the notices or to underestimate the harm that could come. Caregivers have to be proactive to ensure that youth are safe in their homes.

DCFS rules require foster caregivers of children age six or under to check their homes for products listed as unsafe by the Children's Product Safety Act. Caregivers should check the lists and remove any recalled items already at home. It is also important to make informed choices about new items that you purchase or accept as gifts. Be on the look-out for small pieces that could cause choking or long strings that might strangle.

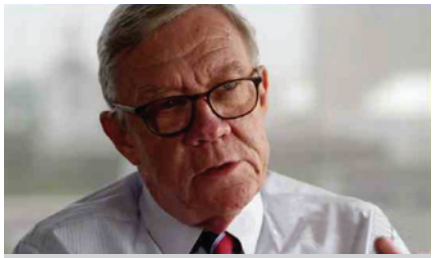
During home visits, the licensing worker will discuss recalls and obtain needed signatures of the safety forms. Ultimately, it falls on the adults in the home to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable young ones. ♡

ONLINE SAFETY RESOURCES

Get tips on preventable injuries to children:
www.safekids.org

Sign-up for email alerts and search for recalled products:
www.recalls.gov

Attorney General's Product Recall Hotline:
888-414-7678



Message from the DCFS Director

It is an honor for me to be asked to serve as the new director for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Throughout my career, I've had the opportunity to serve children and families in a number of different capacities, including as the Secretary of the Florida Department of Children and Families and as the Assistant Secretary for the federal Administration for Children and Families in the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Those experiences have taught me about the importance of foster homes and how critical the services are that our caregivers provide, but I always need to learn more.

Tell me what you think our strengths and weaknesses are and make any suggestions you have to make things in Illinois work better. I'm committed to being open, available and transparent and want to work with you to ensure that you have the resources and services you need.

Again, I'm thankful for the opportunity to join you at DCFS and I look forward to working with you. ♡

Safe driving relies on adults using the right car seat for all ages

The Illinois Law

The Child Passenger Protection Act requires that all children under age 8 be properly secured in an appropriate child safety restraint system. This includes the use of booster seats, which must only be used with a lap/shoulder safety belt.

If the back seat of the vehicle is not equipped with lap/shoulder type safety belts, a child weighing more than 40 pounds may be transported in the back seat without a booster seat, secured with a lap belt only.

The Illinois Secretary of State offers these tips for transporting children in cars.

- Keep children in rear-facing safety seats as long as possible.
- Keep children in the back seat at least through age 12.
- Never place a rear-facing safety seat in front of an active airbag.
- A used safety seat may not be safe unless you know the history of the seat and all labels, parts and instructions are present

Newborn-12 months

Children under age 1 and weighing less than 20 pounds should always ride in a rear-facing infant seat or a convertible seat used rear-facing.

Ages 1-4

Children should remain in a rear-facing safety seat until age 2, or until they are at the upper height or weight limit of the seat. When a child outgrows a rear-facing safety seat, he or she may transition to a forward-facing seat with a harness system.

Ages 4-8

Children should be secured in a forward-facing safety seat with an internal harness system until they reach the upper height or weight limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer. When a child outgrows the forward-facing seat, he or she may transition to a belt-positioning booster seat.

Ages 8-12

Children should stay in a belt-positioning booster seat until they are tall enough to properly fit in an adult lap/shoulder belt.

Keep children in the back seat at least through age 12. ♡

For tips on how to select and install an appropriate car seat or to find a car seat inspection site by zip code, visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website www.safercar.gov/parent

"Waterwise" tips and DCFS policy keep kids safe near water

Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death for children ages one to four. DCFS is continually reviewing policies and practices to protect children when they are in pools or around water features outside and in the home.

Safety rules for pools

- Above-ground pools have to have non-climbable side walls at least 4 feet high or must be enclosed with fence that is at least 36 inches away from the pool's side wall, required all the way around the pool.
- When the pool is not in use, steps to access the pool have to be removed or enclosed by a fence.
- All hot tubs have to be fenced, or have a securely-fitted and locked cover.
- Portable pools must be fenced, or be emptied and sanitized daily.

Fences and Barriers to Entry

Fences that enclose pools must have gates that: open out and away from the pool; have a locking device and are designed to be self-closing and self-latching.

All fences must be at least 5 feet in height, without decorative cutouts, indentations or protrusions that could be used as holds to climb the fence.

When a house wall serves as part of a pool barrier, any door or window that provides access to a swimming pool must be equipped with an alarm that sounds for 30 seconds or more within 7 seconds after the door is opened.

Foster homes that had a license or a permit on January 1, 2009 and have had a fence with a minimum height of 3'6" foot will be considered in compliance.

More specific requirements are found in DCFS Policy Guide 2014.14 Swimming Pool and Water hazards in Foster Family Homes.

Training and supervision

Foster care license holders whose homes have pools, hot tubs, ponds, outdoor fountains, decorative water ponds, fishponds or other pools of water must have current first aid and age-appropriate CPR certification.

A foster child of any age using a swimming pool, portable pool, spa, hot tub or other pools of water located on the premises of the foster home must always be within line-of-sight supervision by a foster parent or other adult authorized by the foster parent.

Licensees shall be responsible to keep toxic chemicals related to pool maintenance locked up and inaccessible to foster children.

When a swimming pool is in use, a licensee shall keep a weekly log to record water quality test results and otherwise maintain the pool in a safe and sanitary condition. ♡

Get water wise... SUPERVISE!

Baby pools

- Don't be lulled into a false sense of security because of the shallowness of baby pools. Children should always be supervised in a baby pool.
- Empty the pool right after use and store it upside-down.

Bathtubs

- Never leave a young child alone in a bathtub or rely on a bathtub seat for safety.
- Don't allow children to play alone in the bathroom.

Buckets

- Five-gallon buckets of water pose a threat to babies and toddlers who may topple into them and be unable to get out.
- Empty and store all buckets out of children's reach.

Toilets

- Secure the toilet lid. Curious toddlers could tip headfirst into a toilet, risking drowning.

Ponds, fountains and retention pools

- Be aware of access to water hazards and be prepared in case an emergency response is required. Children require constant supervision around these outdoor hazards.

Smart, safe sleeping protects babies

Sleep suffocation is the leading cause of reported child deaths in Illinois. Most deaths occurred when parents slept with a newborn or infant in their bed, ignoring the advice of the American Academy of Pediatrics and safety experts. The adults unknowingly rolled over and smothered the child. In other instances, parents ignored safety warnings and allowed a newborn or infant to sleep with unsafe covers, on an adult mattress or couch, or on their stomachs, contributing to suffocation. Although the deaths might have been accidental, Illinois law holds parents and other caretakers accountable for creating a substantial risk of injury to a child. This prompts a DCFS investigation that can result in an indicated finding of neglect.

One easy way to remember the best sleep practices is to remember **ABC**. Infants and babies should always sleep:

> "**A**LONE…On their
> **B**ACKS…In a safe
> **C**RIB"

More tips on safe sleep practices can be found at the National SIDS/Infant Death Resource Center (NSIDRC) at www. sidscenter.org. ♡

School readiness makes pre-K vital for 3 to 5 year olds

Early childhood education programs are a vital first step toward getting children ready for kindergarten. It is important that caregivers and caseworkers come together to give children the head start they deserve by enrolling all children who will turn three years old by September 1, 2015 in Head Start or an appropriate early learning program. Most local Head Start agencies conduct open enrollment for the spring.

The Illinois Office of Head Start places a priority on providing comprehensive services to families and children involved in the child welfare system. Children in foster care who meet program age requirements are automatically eligible for Head Start and/or Early Head Start.

Early childhood educational programs include five general categories:

- Head Start or Early Head Start; pre-kindergarten programs for children at risk of academic failure (Pre-K);
- accredited child care programs (e.g. licensed childcare, home visiting programs);
- early intervention services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays; and
- early childhood special education.

In addition to discussing Head Start and early education options directly with the child's caseworker, there are also other resources to help caregivers determine suitable programs for young children. DCFS has staff dedicated to the school readiness initiative who work statewide and in specific geographic regions. ♡

RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION

Contact Mary Beth Corrigan, School Readiness Supervisor-Statewide by phone at 312-590-8036 or by email to mary.corrigan@illinois.gov

Cook County families (only) can also call **Action for Children** to find Head Start and pre-school programs in their areas. This is a dedicated line for Chicago and Cook suburban families caring for DCFS youth. Call 312-823-1334.

To serve the entire state, the Illinois **Head Start Association** maintains a website with a Head Start program locator by zip code at www.ilheadstart.org

Be prepared for the end of the subsidy agreement at age 18

Requests to extend a subsidy until high school graduation or for a mental/physical disability require documentation early.

As youth approach 18, they often look at that birthday as a beginning. But, practically speaking, adoptive and guardianship parents should realize it is often an end to the adoption or guardianship subsidy agreement.

To help parents plan for the transition, six months before the youth's 18th birthday the family will receive a letter from DCFS titled Notice of Intent to Discontinue Subsidy Payments on 18th Birthday. On the youth's 18th birthday, the many benefits in the subsidy, including the medical card, may also end. There are only two specific circumstances where the subsidy could continue beyond 18. Both require preparation and necessary documentation from the family, before the child turns 18.

Complete form to request extension: 30 days to respond

Parents should first watch the mail for the initial notice and respond within 30 days. If a caregiver believes their youth is eligible for an extension of his or her subsidy, select the appropriate extension option and return the form to the subsidy worker listed on the letter. DCFS subsidy workers will make attempts to reach adoptive and guardianship families by phone and mail if the initial letter goes without a response.

If the youth is eligible for a subsidy extension, it is crucial to get the proper coding done early and correctly. For example, parents should be aware that a youth cannot be granted the extension for high school graduation at age 19 and then also receive a further extension to 21 due to a physical or mental disability.

Extension due to disability

The disability extension only applies to a condition that affects the individual's major life activities. If a child is eligible for SSI (Supplemental Security Income from the Social Security Administration) due to a condition that existed prior to the adoption, documentation of that eligibility is sufficient to meet requirements for extension to age 21. In other cases, acceptable documentation would include a copy of a report or letter from a duly licensed or credentialed professional within the last year.

Extension for high school

Youth without disabilities who have not graduated at 18 can ask the high school to provide a letter confirming enrollment and the anticipated graduation date.

Confirmation Letter

At 60 days before the youth's 18th birthday, DCFS will send another letter to the family that confirms the subsidy termination date. It will also include instructions in case a family decides to appeal the decision.

By looking ahead and planning early, the end of the subsidy agreement can be a smooth transition. Parents or guardians seeking an extension should begin gathering documentation well before the child turns 18. All documentation needs to be turned in to the subsidy worker with enough time to confirm the end date and have the case coded correctly before the youth's 18th birthday. Otherwise, the subsidy agreement automatically ends if it has not been approved for an extension.

Caregivers can contact the worker with any questions. The youth's subsidy worker's contact information will be clearly listed on the notification letter. ♡

THE ONLY TWO CONDITIONS THAT COULD QUALIFY FOR EXTENDING THE SUBSIDY PAST THE 18TH BIRTHDAY ARE:

1. Youth with a physical or mental disability that existed prior to the adoption or transfer of guardianship, which affects the child's ability to ever live independently, could, with proper documentation, be approved for an extension until the child turns 21.

2. Youth who don't have a disability, but who are still in high school at age 18 could have payments continue until graduation, but not past the 19th birthday.

Advisory Council Updates

STATEWIDE FOSTER CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL met in March in Bloomington. Michael Ruppe, DCFS Chief of the Bureau of Operations, welcomed the group to the Central Region. He provided an update on recently revised procedures for investigations and plans to develop recruitment plans for specific types of placements.

The council invited several guest speakers from the main DCFS functions to address the group, in addition to the standing business. DCFS Guardian Debra Dyer-Webster gave an update on a new partnership with the Casey Foundation to ensure the safety and well-being of youth in various types of substitute care. Council members also had a "walk-though" of the DCFS Virtual Training Center to explore all of the online resources and courses. ♡

THE NEXT MEETING
of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be April 24, conduced via teleconference beginning at 9:00 a.m. Call DCFS Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for details.

ILLINOIS ADOPTION ADVISORY COUNCIL

The 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 April 10 in Springfield at 10 a.m.

ABE Illinois offers youth health care options after DCFS

When a child's case closes after they leave DCFS foster care after age 18 or when the adoption/guardianship subsidy ends, the medical card also ends. Illinois has implemented the Affordable Care Act to provide young adult options for health care coverage.

The Illinois General Assembly passed legislation starting in 2014 to expand its Medicaid program for low-income adults who live in Illinois. There is a new eligibility group that includes young adults under age 26 who were on Medicaid when they left DCFS foster care at age 18 or later. This group is eligible for Medicaid regardless of income. Additionally, youth who left DCFS through adoption or guardianship can also apply. While they are not part of the foster care group, they may be eligible based on low-income, disability or if they have dependent children.

The state has established ABE, a website designed specifically for customers who may be eligible for insurance under the Medicaid program. It is separate from the "marketplace" for private insurance. Once an application is approved the young person will have medical coverage for preventative care, more serious conditions and interventions for emergency and chronic conditions.

The application takes about 30 minutes to complete. An individual can first check for eligibility or start an application. Caregivers or guardians can start the application on behalf of an eligible young person. The individual can set up an account with a password and then be able to return later to finish or to check the status of the application later.

As the applicant completes the form, there will be prompts to keep the application on track. The agencies keep the information secure and can confirm entries with existing records. Along with the general information, the applicant will answer questions to confirm they were in foster care and should know the name that would have been used with their case.

When the individual is applying for the medical card, there is a 30-45 day period to review the application. Applications for Medicaid can also be submitted by calling the toll- free number 800-843-6154. While the ABE website is streamlined and designed to be easy to use, the DCFS Health Services staff can help with questions. Call 217-557-2689. ♡

DCFS clarifies policy for vaccinations at day care centers

In response to cases of the measles reported in Illinois and other parts of the country, DCFS recently issued a policy guide for daycare centers that are licensed by DCFS. The guide instructs centers to develop a vaccination policy for staff. This is important because infants cannot be inoculated against measles and certain other serious yet preventable diseases until they are older.

The vaccination policy will establish a way for daycare centers to manage the vaccination status of those caring for young children and prepare a response should there be an exposure risk.

Caregivers should continue to be aware of the immunization schedule, ensure that children receive the required and recommended immunizations and keep the child's Health Passport updated.

Questions can be directed to the child's caseworker or the Office of Health Services at 217-557-2689. ♡

DCFS digital info just a click away

For a fast way to stay connected on child welfare information, turn to the Internet and social media with these DCFS digital resources.

DCFS on the Internet

The DCFS website has a new look and a new address. Now it can be found at www.DCFS.illinois.gov. On the refreshed site are links to publications; DCFS policy, rules and procedures; news on the various advisory councils and back issues of the newsletter, along with many other resources.

DCFS on Facebook

Caregivers can "like" the new DCFS Facebook page to get a feed of DCFS and child welfare-related news. The page is listed on Facebook as Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

DCFS on Twitter

Caregivers can now follow DCFS on the Twitter handle @IllinoisDCFS. Look for tweets regarding upcoming events and links to online articles and resources for families.

DCFS Virtual Training Center

The VTC is the one-stop for training registration and information. Caregivers can also download materials for courses, track credit hours, and link to online courses at www.dcfstraining.org

On-line IL Families Now and Forever

Back issues are available on the DCFS website under Foster Care.

Caregivers can also skip the paper and request electronic versions of Illinois Families Now and Forever. We will email you each time a new issue is online. 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. ♡

BE LISTED IN THE 2015 DIRECTORY OF FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATIONS AND SUPPORT GROUPS

If you lead a support group or association for foster or adoptive families, you can be included in the directory of support groups. Please send the following information by April 15.

New listings and updates should be sent in writing by e-mail or post to: vanessa.james@illinois.gov (there is a dot after "vanessa")

Vanessa James, DCFS
100 W. Randolph, Ste. 6-100
Chicago, IL 60601

Be sure to include:

Name of group

Meeting schedule
(e.g. 2nd Tuesday monthly at 10 a.m.)

Meeting location

Contact name
with phone number/e- mail

Any other notes
(e.g. potluck dinner, child care provided, RSVP required, etc.)

Northern News

News for Northern Region Families

2015 • Vol. 2

Kingmas learn to take care of self to take care of others

Becky and Kevin Kingma.

Caring for hurting children was something Becky Kingma always thought she should do. While attending college at the University of Arizona, she began volunteering at a local children's shelter, which fueled the passion even more. Becky completed foster parent licensing with Youth Service Bureau. She read a lot of books, but nothing prepared Beth like actual parenting. "I didn't know anything at all, " she said.

Becky started out as a single foster parent, juggling her full-time position as a pharmacist. Kevin Kingma watched Beth's dedication to foster care grow as they dated. He jumped all the way in when the couple married in 2013. They recently moved into another home to create more room for children. So far they have been foster parents to five children.

The couple faced some intense parenting challenges in a short time. Building a marriage and a foster family simultaneously was like a merge onto a freeway. They learned to value a strong support system and realized that taking care of each other is crucial in order to take care of children. It was emotionally draining to hear about children's circumstances and traumatic experiences. They found it difficult to find the balance of instilling hope without absorbing the distress. Becky and Kevin's parents have been quite supportive of their decision to foster, which has made a huge positive difference for them. Their local church is also a source of support, fellowship, and direction for them.

"Having support around can help combat the low times. There's someone to maybe bring a meal over or provide a source for baby-sitting," Becky said. She also believes it helps to have an outside perspective so as not to get "sucked into" the craziness of the moment.

Fortunately Becky and Kevin have personalities that lean toward looking for the best. Beth says her strengths are being able to connect with others, and assist with whatever someone needs in a given moment. She describes Kevin as patient and able to perceive the big picture without getting bogged down in "crazy" details. Together they look for ways to make good memories with the children. They are a very active family and enjoy being involved in physical activities such as biking, swimming, being at a beach and rock climbing at a local gym. The children are enrolled in horseback riding and tap dancing classes.

Becky said, "It's such a privilege to be their mom." That privilege extends to six-year-old Jacob, who was adopted through foster care, and a nine-year-old girl, currently placed with their family. They also have visits with one of the girls (and her mom) who had been with them in foster care.

As their family has grown, Kevin and Becky have grown together as a couple. They have learned to support one another and to discern what the other needs in order to persevere. Becky jokes that she looks for "lots of caffeine!" She does take time off to be alone, to go to the gym or to be with friends. They also purposely give the other spouse a regular night off. Finally, sometimes they let some things wait until the next day in order to get a good night's sleep. Learning how to read your own body and giving it what it needs can help you be the best parent possible, they agreed. ♡

Benefits of summer camp and activities require planning now

Camp and activities such as dance and art can be important for a child's social development. However, since the best summer day camps and overnight camps tend to fill fast, now is the time to make plans.

Caregivers' costs for enrichment programs may be eligible for reimbursement under Rule 359 for DCFS-supervised foster families. For private agency foster families, the policy can differ from agency to agency. Every agency receives funds for "nonrecurring expenses" such as camp for some children. Ask the child's caseworker about the camp policy for children at that agency. Adoptive and guardianship families typically have to cover these expenses within the household. Some camps do offer income-based financial assistance. Before registering for a program, be sure to understand the funding process and be sure to get any needed approvals in advance.

Finding the right camp

With funding cleared, the search for the right camp for a child can take off. Talk to other caregivers for recommendations. Check the community park districts. Area churches may have a youth camp or a youth group that plans summer activities. (Be sure to ask about parent permission for a religious program).

When evaluating camps, inquire about the counselor-to-camper ratio and the counselors' skills and certifications. Many camps do serve special needs children. Camp personnel should be able to outline their provisions for medication, accommodations for disabilities and behavior management procedures. ♡

STEPS TO FOLLOW

Caregivers whose licenses are supervised by the Northern Region foster care program should work with the child's caseworker to:

1. **Identify the right program**
2. **Confirm that the program is eligible for reimbursement under Rule 359**
3. **Obtain written approval**
4. **Pay for the camp in advance**
5. **Submit the expense for reimbursement**

Rule 359 caps annual camp expenses at $260.35. Other enrichment activities will be evaluated for the appropriate prevailing rate. The caseworker can assist with the approval and the reimbursement.

Learn more about supporting connections between siblings

DCFS recently launched a new training prepared specifically for children and youth in foster care that have brothers and sisters who are also (or used to be) in foster care. The training provides information on the new law for sibling rights and the new policies and procedures. In child-friendly terms, the course explains the importance of sibling relationships and the ways the adults involved in a child's life will support the connections between sisters and brothers.

The training takes about 10 to 15 minutes. It is available on demand on the DCFS Virtual Training Center at *www.dcfstraining.org*. It is included under the public content so children will not need to have a VTC account. ♡

NORTHERN REGION FOSTER CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Northern Region Foster Parent Advisory Council is designed as a conduit for the exchange of information and a platform to foster changes in practice and policy.

The council has two co-chairs, representing DCFS-supervised homes and homes licensed through private agency partners. The council meets the first Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. at the DCFS Aurora office, located at 8 E. Galena, on the 3rd floor.

Northern 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

Marshae

Get ready to have fun, because 10-year-old Marshae is a happy, energetic child who loves being around people. She is very talkative, and can hold a conversation with anyone. When she is not socializing, Marshae enjoys playing board games and video games, dressing up, and playing outside. She is a quick thinker and is always coming up with new and creative ideas.

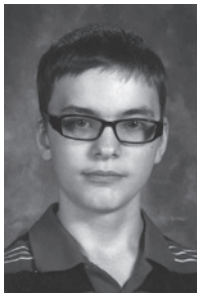
Marshae's worker says she is a sweet, well-mannered young lady. She is very bright and loves to learn. Marshae seeks attention on a regular basis, and sometimes needs to be reminded of the difference between positive and negative attention. She is an affectionate child with the ability to express her feelings towards others easily.

To be the right family for Marshae, you can spend lots of time with her. You can work with doctors and nurses to make sure her ongoing medical needs are met. You can also help Marshae maintain relationships with the important people in her life, including her current foster parent. Marshae reports that she would like a family with a "mommy and a daddy." The ideal family would include a strong female role model, and may include other children as well. A St. Louis-area family is preferred, so Marshae can continue to see her long-time medical providers. **[C7891]**

Fantasia This young lady is sensitive, expressive, and full of life. Although Fantasia, age 8, is non-verbal and struggles with limited vision, she is still able to communicate by making noises, holding her eyes open to see visitors, and reaching out to touch those who are near her. She enjoys playing with tactile toys, including soft toys that she can squeeze and hard toys that she can chew. Fantasia is developmentally disabled, and requires constant attention from trained medical professionals. She uses a wheelchair for mobility, and receives nutrition through a feeding tube.

Fantasia's teachers say she is a joy to have in the classroom. Fantasia's worker says she is an enthusiastic child who entertains herself by moving her body whenever she hears music.

Fantasia's forever family is one that can provide Fantasia with lots of love and affection. You can encourage open communication by responding to her non-verbal requests. You can also work with doctors, nurses, and other professionals to ensure Fantasia receives the care and attention she needs. Fantasia would benefit from regular visits with important people in her life. **[C8030]**



Kevin If there's a professional wresting show on TV, Kevin age 14, will want to sit down and watch. If there's a professional wrestling event coming to town, Kevin will want to attend. This young man is a huge fan of the wrestler John Cena, and has decorated his room with dozens of WWE posters, magazines, and action figures. Kevin is developmentally delayed, and while he sometimes struggles to remain on task, he is generally friendly, capable, and independent. He maintains regular contact with his birth mother and older sister, a practice that should continue as he transitions to a new family.

Kevin's teachers say he has made significant strides over the past two years in terms of his focus, his behavior, his social skills, and his ability to work independently.

Potential parents to Kevin will be able to help him stay organized and on task by giving him prompts, reminders, and time limits, and by stressing the importance of his daily routine. You can provide plenty of opportunities for him to play with children his own age. You can also work with various professionals who can help you understand, and meet, his educational, social, and academic needs. The ideal family would consist of two parents living in a rural community. **[C8104]**

Yazury, Yaretzi and Yaenel

Yazury

Yaretzi

Yaenel

Yazury, 13, is a social butterfly who loves spending time with others. Whether she's playing volleyball, shopping, dancing, or doing hair and makeup, Yazury likes to be in the middle of the action. She enjoys school and does well academically. Yaretzi, age 10, is a very sweet and friendly young lady. She loves art and dance, and interacts well with others. Yaenel, 8, is energetic, playful, and thoughtful. She is a curious child who loves to be a part of everything and just enjoys life. She likes school and loves interacting with her peers. All three girls enjoy spending time with family, friends, and one another.

Yazury's caseworker says she has a very sweet disposition. Her teacher says she is a joy to have in the classroom. Yaretzi's caseworker says she is a joy to have in the home and loves pitching in to help others. Her teachers have nothing but good things to say about her. Yaenel's teachers say she is a ball of energy and enjoys being a helper.

The right family for these three is one that can provide a stable, loving, forever home. You can remain patient while giving them time to adjust to their new, permanent family. You can also help them maintain close and meaningful relationships that are important to them. Yazury, Yaretzi, and Yaenel would like to join a family that attends church, is active, and likes to have fun. **[8235-38]** ♡

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

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