Illinois Families
Now & Forever®

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

Council awards excellent Foster Parent Law plans

Council chair Sarah Olson, Cathy Krieger and Ivan Harrison III of The Children's Place and DCFS Director George Sheldon

The list of polices and procedures around foster care could add up to hundreds of printed pages. However, the essence boils down to the 15 rights and 17 responsibilities that are the foundation of the Foster Parent Law. That law also requires every foster care agency and DCFS regional foster care program to develop an annual Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. The plan must demonstrate how the program upholds the rights and responsibilities outlined in the state statute. The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council reviews each plan every year. When members discover an exceptional plan, they can go beyond the score to nominate it for special recognition in one of three categories:

- Dignity and Respect
- Organization/User Friendliness
- Foster Parent Involvement

On June 17, the council bestowed awards to three foster care programs that submitted outstanding Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. This year the council voted to recognize Lutheran Social Services of Illinois and Arden Shore in the category of Foster Parent Involvement. The plan from The Children's Place stood out in the category of Dignity and Respect.

Outstanding plans rose to the top and earned nominations from council members who spent hours scoring each of the 53 plans submitted this year.

"The period for scoring plans comes in November, right at a time when families are getting ready for the holidays. Then we ask members to travel to interview agencies during the winter months. I appreciate the council's commitment to this important work," said Sarah Olson, chair. *(continued)*

THE CHILDREN'S PLACE values foster parents as professionals on the child welfare team. The management team seeks out the opinions and ideas from caregivers. That open communication has led to changes in polices and procedures.

Add your own voice to your Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan

Every licensed caregiver should receive a copy or be able to view their agency/DCFS region's implementation plan. It contains details on important topics including how the program will:

- provide training
- handle grievances
- conduct financial reimbursements

Implementation plans should be developed with caregivers. Many programs set meetings each fall specifically so caregivers can contribute to the draft. They are due on November 30.

Contact the Foster Parent Law liaison at your agency or DCFS region or the DCFS regional advisory council for more information.

Message from the DCFS Director

Summer is a time to create special memories with your families. The vacations, cookouts and summer camps are normal parts of life that are especially important to a child. I will thank you in advance for the road trips and reunions that you are opening up to children who haven't always been in your home. As they grow and go on to start their own families, these are the touchstones that we all need to remember.

July marked the start of a new fiscal year. The Governor's Office has been supportive of the DCFS mission so the transformation continues. Since the start of the summer I have been on the road, traveling to communities across the state for a series of Town Hall meetings. The reception has been positive and constructive. We introduced both the Child Welfare Strategic Plan and the Transformation Plan, a collaboration with other agencies involved in health and human services delivery in Illinois. Details on both are available on the DCFS website. I invite you to read the outlines and offer your thoughts directly at the email inbox we opened for feedback.

Building strong families and securing better outcomes for children will be the basis for all that we do in the new fiscal year. I am looking forward to sharing that progress with you.

George H. Sheldon
Director

Implementation Plan (cont.)

Award for Foster Parent Involvement
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

(left to right) Chair Sarah Olson, DCFS Director Sheldon, Ruth Jajko of LSSI, foster parent Juan Carlos Arjona, Samella Taylor-Lewis (LSSI) and foster parents Cathy and Jeff Jones

Trainers from LSSI went the extra step to interview new and veteran foster parents to understand foster families' needs across a range of experience. The agency has been "vigilant" about discussing the implementation plan with foster parents.

Award for Foster Parent Involvement
Arden Shore

(left to right) Chair Sarah Olson, Melissa Kinast of Arden Shore, foster parent Jennifer Woods, Jane Lough of Arden Shore and DCFS Director Sheldon

Arden Shore encourages foster parents to develop the implementation plan through a series of input sessions that included child care, dinner and a gift. More than 20 families came in to share their ideas and staff did home visits with 13 more caregivers.

Adoption Advisory Council News

Adoption Advisory Council met in Bloomington for the June meeting.

TARGET Pilot Program

Rachael Kerrick of DCFS presented a new program for families who adopted children who are currently age 12-14. TARGET is a unique approach to preventing disruptions and helping families prepare as teens who have experienced trauma move through potentially difficult adolescent stages. TARGET is offered in the home for both the adolescent and parents. The program is led by specially-trained facilitators over 8 to 12 sessions that include activities to promote positive interaction and discussion.

The program is first being piloted with families in Cook County and in parts of Central region. DCFS will contact potential families by mail to see if TARGET is the right fit.

The TARGET pilot is a research study conducted by the National Quality Improvement Center for Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation (QIC-AG), Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, and several private agency partners. It is made possible through a grant that will evaluate a number of interventions for families after adoption in several sites in the United States.

Members of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council are participating in work groups to shape and monitor the program.

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 Friday September 9 in Springfield.

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

Statewide Foster Care Council Update

Partnering with Parents

In May the council participated in the Partnering with Parents Summit, in addition to its regular agenda. This gathering brought together members of the councils outside of Cook County that represent parents involved in the DCFS system or those whose cases have been closed. The birth parents and the foster parents have come together each year to discuss their shared experiences with the child welfare system.

Election results

At the June meeting the nominating committee announced results of the recent election. As of the July start of the state fiscal year, Mark McDaniels, a foster parent representing Southern Region, took over as chair of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. Donna Gregory of Northern region serves as the vice chair. Outgoing chair Sarah Olson will remain on the council for one additional year as the immediate past chair.

Membership updates

The council recognized the service of five members who reached the end of their terms. New candidates are currently being identified and will be appointed by the DCFS Director.

Cathy McCoy (Northern Region), Kurt Kallas (child welfare expert) and Edith Cruz (Cook North) are three members whose terms on the council have ended. Not pictured: Michael Simpson (Southern Region) and Irma Dixon (Cook North)

Keep an eye on new policies that impact foster care

Launch of Transformation Plan

DCFS is one of 13 state agencies that are joining efforts under the Health and Human Services Transformation banner. The agencies will collaborate to find solutions to complex human services issues. The HHS Transformation Team will focus on prevention and public health, pay for value and outcomes rather than volume and services, make evidence-based and data-driven decisions and move more individuals from institutions to community care to keep them more closely connected with their families.

To see a recap of the Transformation Plan that was delivered at the June 22 Town Hall, go to www.illinois.gov/sites/hhstransformation

DCFS Director George Sheldon spoke with Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council members at the June meeting.

Family First federal legislation could bring more funds to help more families

New legislation named Family First Prevention Services Act of 2016 made swift progress through the House of Representatives on June 21 and (pending Senate approval and Presidential signing) will open new avenues for DCFS to fund programs that preserve families through prevention services and rebuild families through permanency after foster care.

Beginning with the October 2017 start of the federal fiscal year, state child welfare programs will be able to receive federal matching funds for substance abuse services, mental health services and in-home parenting programs. Additionally, states will also be able to claim reimbursement for supporting relative caregivers who have not obtained a full foster care license. The proposed bill would also create an interstate case tracking system to coordinate foster care to adoption transitions between different state authorities. For more information on the proposed legislation or to track its progress, go to www.govtrack.us and search H.R. 5456. The website also has a feature to receive email updates regarding this and other legislation.

HHS Transformation

Transformation Team

Governor's Office

Department on Aging

DCFS

Department of Corrections

Dept. of Health and Family Services

Department of Human Services

Dept. of Innovation and Technology

Department of Juvenile Services

Department of Public Health

Department of Veteran's Affairs

IL State Board of Education

IL Criminal Justice Information Agency

DCFS Policy Updates

All DCFS policy guides, rules and procedures are available on the DCFS website at **www.dcfs.illinois.gov** in the *About Us* section.

Here is a list of recent policy changes that may affect foster families. For more information online: **cfpolicy@idcfs.state.il.us**

Policy Transmittal 2016.06 - Fictive Kin Rules, June 2016
Revises Rules 300, 301, 304, 309, 315, 316, 328, 337, 338, 359 and 402. Amends the Child and Family Services Act and Child Care Act of 1969 to expand the definition of "relative" to include "fictive kin" and step-grandparents for placement purposes. Previous foster parents could be considered fictive kin.

RECENT PROPOSALS out for public review and/or comment: (comment periods have time limitations) ***Proposed amendments to Rule 309 - Adoption Services for Children for whom DCFS is Legally Responsible, May 31, 2016***
Adds and amends definitions and adds parties in a civil union as persons who may adopt

Proposed revisions to P300.120, P301.210 and P301 app A - Family Visit Planning
Revised to state the reasons to restrict visitation when a parent demonstrates dangerous behavior and DCFS files a Critical Decision to limit the Visitation Plan. Calls for including documentation and presents guidelines to share information with necessary persons.

Our Kids

News for Southern Region Families

2016 • Vol. 3

DCFS Southern Region Town Halls open the door to discussion

Director Sheldon and Regional Administrator Lori Gray at the Mt. Vernon Town Hall

At the July 8 and 9 DCFS Town Hall meetings for Southern Region, Director Sheldon addressed audiences of community members, staff, elected officials and parents. The meetings in Mt. Vernon and East St. Louis were two of five held statewide. They were designed to give individuals an opportunity to ask questions about the Illinois Child Welfare Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and make recommendations based on the needs specific to the area.

"Historically, the child welfare system of this country was developed without talking to kids. That needs to be the beginning of any fundamental changes," Sheldon said.

One initial change is to end the use of the word "wards," a change welcomed by the children who are in foster care.

"These are kids. They need the same care and consideration as all children," said Sheldon.

He said that the individuals who do foster parenting should be trusted to use sound judgment to make childhood "normal" during foster care. That could mean eliminating cumbersome paperwork and providing resources and training.

"We have to make foster parenting a welcoming experience. We need to have foster parents be the ally of the birth parent and not the adversary, and we have to be there for the foster parents," Sheldon said.

The strategic plan is a draft and is open for feedback. It is available for review at *www.DCFS.illinois.gov* and comments can be sent to *dcfs.strategicplan@illinois.gov*. ♡

DCFS celebrates recent graduates and provides resources for young adults

Youth practice skills in finance workshop

Youth were at the forefront at the annual Southern Region Youth Summit on June 2. Nearly 170 youth came to Kaskaskia College for a day-long workshop on resources to help them prepare for adulthood. The Office of Education and Transition Services also honored this year's graduates from high school, college and vocational programs. Graduates celebrated at Splash City Water Park on June 5. ♡

DuQuoin State Fair FREE fun for families

On Saturday, August 27, the DuQuoin State Fair tradition continues for foster, adoptive and guardianship families in the Southern Region. For more than 30 years, DCFS and a broad range of community partners will present a picnic for foster families. It is open to all families whose licenses are supervised by DCFS or by private agency foster care programs, as well as unlicensed relative caregivers.

The picnic will begin at 10:30 a.m. and last until 12 p.m. Foster families will enjoy free lunch and other treats. There will be games for the children and rides on a miniature train. Meanwhile, the adults can pass the morning relaxing with their children and networking with other families. Invitations were recently mailed. Contact the local DCFS office for details.

Southern 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 and print your training transcript
- Register and take on-line courses

DIGITAL TRAINING NOW AVAILABLE

DCFS Training has made many PRIDE materials available online at:

www.dcfstraining.org

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 Illinois Center for Adoption & Permanency (ICAP) can answer your questions and connect you with a licensing agency. The toll-free number is 800-572-2390. ICAP 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.

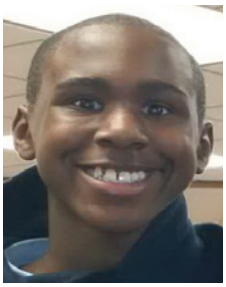
... The police request to interview or a child under DCFS care is detained by police? Call the DCFS Guardianship Administrator Office at 312-814-8600 if between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., if after 4:30 p.m. or before 8:30 a.m. call the 24-hour Child Intake and Recovery Unit at 866-503-0184 to notify DCFS and discuss possible legal assistance.

...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 the newsletter? Email vanessa.james@illinois.gov in DCFS Communications.

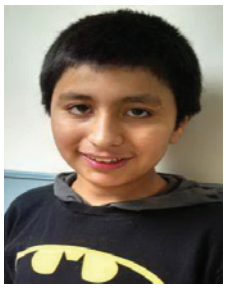
A Family for Me: Call 1-800-572-2390 for more information



Fernando, at age 13, may be young, but he recognizes the importance of close family relationships. He is especially close with his younger siblings, and spends a lot of time playing with them, checking in on them, and striving to set a good example for them. Fernando is very social, and enjoys laughing, joking, and talking with others. When he is not being a social butterfly, Fernando enjoys delving into a good book, especially history books. Every weekend he goes to the library to get new books. He is on the track team at school and enjoys being outside. Fernando's other interests include Star Wars, music, church, cartoons and figurines.

Fernando's teachers state that he is an overall good kid. They feel that he is very helpful and respectful to adults and enjoys helping out as much as he can. Fernando's foster parent says that he is a good boy and that he is very helpful and he is well behaved at home and in public.

The right parents for Fernando would be able to spend plenty of quality, one-on-one time with Fernando. You can encourage him to recognize and acknowledge his emotions, and to find healthy outlets for his occasional frustration. You can also work with professionals who can help you understand and meet his medical and emotional needs. Fernando would benefit from continued, ongoing visits with his siblings and his Big Brothers/Big Sister mentor. Fernando will be happy just being part of a family he can call his own. He is very family oriented and would flourish in a loving family that he can feel confidence in. *[8139]*



Jair likes to go by the name **Alex**. He is a 13 year old who likes playing outside and playing basketball. He also enjoys playing cards, reading, and building things with LEGO pieces. Alex enjoys passing around a football with others as well as practicing basketball dribbling and shooting. He also likes to watch movies and play with remote controlled cars. Alex stated that his favorite toys are his Batman Car and his personal DVD player.

Alex uses appropriate manners most of the time. He like to start up conversations with others by saying 'Hello' and asking them how their day is going when he sees them. Alex likes to know the schedule for the day and he likes sticking to it. He also likes to ask a lot of questions for clarification. He shares well with others and is willing to help peers or caretakers when asked. Alex keeps a neat and orderly room most of the time. In school, Alex does a great job and does very well academically, getting mostly A's and B's on his report cards. He has made strong bonds with his teachers and has not received any negative reports from school.

Alex wants his adoptive family to be "smart, nice, kind, and helpful." He would like the family to have a TV, Netflix, an XBOX, a clean home with nice rooms. He would prefer a family with a dog or a cat. Alex states that he wants "a family with no other kids or with a brother who is older." The family should also be familiar or open to parenting a child with medical needs and developmental delays. *[8361]*

Marion is your typical 14 year old boy who loves to play sports and video games. His favorite sports are football and basketball. Marion is also very creative and artistic. Not only does he love to do art projects, he loves admiring artwork as well. Marion enjoys spending time with his friends and peers. He is said to be a fabulous role model for other kids. Marion likes one-on-one attention and positively responds to directions.

People who know him say that Marion is extremely helpful around the home and the classroom. He is always there to help when asked. His room is always the cleanest and his bed is always made, which makes him a great role model for other children. Marion can easily become impulsive and may not think before acting out.

To be a forever family for Marion, you can provide a loving and stable home. Marion is a teenager with behavioral and emotional disturbances but he wants to be adopted and have a family. He longs for a mom, a dad, and siblings (younger and older). He also loves animals and would love a home with pets. Marion would like a family that likes to do fun activities like go out to eat, go to sporting events, etc. The family for Marion needs to understand that counseling and medication will be needed and be willing to do these services. *[8325]*

Ariel, 11, is a bright young lady who has a passion for drawing and singing. Ariel's current foster parent says she does a good job at following instructions. She always helps out and does her fair share responsibly. In school, Ariel is passing all of her classes. Her strengths in the classroom include working well with others, willingness to try new things, engaging herself, and putting forth a lot of effort.

Potential parents can provide Ariel with a structured and supportive home environment that will allow her to thrive. Ariel describes her future adoptive family as caring, loving, respectful, patient, understanding, and a lifetime commitment. The family must also be open to allowing Ariel to maintain contact with her siblings. *[8364]* ♡

ILLINOIS CENTER FOR ADOPTION & PERMANENCY

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

Illinois Families Now & Forever®

Bruce Rauner, Governor

Published by

DCFS Office of Communications

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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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Department of Children & Family Services
100 West Randolph - 6th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60601

PRESRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
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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 #33 – July 2016 – 3,064 copies