

Don't let your foster child be left behind: The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

By Mitch Kremer,
DCFS Education Advisor

Since its passage in 2001, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has created opportunities for some children in low-performing public schools. But services and funding differ, making it confusing to know exactly what NCLB can provide for your child.

The NCLB is supposed to provide a Public School Choice (School Choice) option for students attending public schools that have not met NCLB standards for two consecutive years. These children are conditionally eligible to transfer to a higher-performing school based on availability. The NCLB is also supposed to provide a Supplemental Educational Services (SES) option for students in public schools that have not met NCLB standards for three consecutive years.

Parents can contact schools directly to determine if their child's school has been identified for school improvement and is required to provide School Choice or SES. Also, before the start of the 2006-2007 school year, schools that must offer either

School Choice or SES are required to mail letters to parents who have children attending those schools.

Public School Choice Process

With Public School Choice, a parent may choose to transfer the student to a higher performing school within the same district, if available, when the child's current school has not met NCLB standards for two years in a row.

- Prior to the beginning of each school year, districts must notify the parents of students in choice schools that they have the option of sending their children to a school in the same district that is not identified for school improvement, including public charter schools.
- Parents have 30 days from the date of notice to decide whether to exercise the choice option.
- Students who transfer to a school not in school improvement will be enrolled in the same manner as all other children at that public school.
- Districts must provide or pay for transportation to a school not in school improvement.



- If there are space or funding limitations, districts must give priority to the lowest achieving children from low-income families.
- If none of the schools in your district have met NCLB standards, there may be inter-governmental agreements with neighboring districts.

Supplemental Educational Services (SES)

SES are defined in the NCLB as tutoring and other high-quality academic enrichment services provided, in addition to instruction during the school day, to increase the achievement of eligible children. A parent whose child is in a low performing school can choose either School Choice or SES, but not both. If School Choice is not available in the

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district, SES must be offered based on available funding.

- Prior to the beginning of the school year, school districts must annually notify parents, identify area providers, and provide a description of the services offered by each provider.
- Parents then have 30 days from the date of notice to decide whether to exercise the SES option.
- Schools must help parents select an SES provider, if help is requested.
- Schools in school improvement status must arrange for eligible students to receive SES from providers with a demonstrated record of effectiveness.
- If there is a space or funding limitation, districts must give priority to the lowest achieving children from low-income families.
- School districts are not required to pay for or provide transportation to supplemental educational services.

Foster parents working with a private agency may contact their agency's Education Liaison for assistance. DCFS Foster or adoptive parents who have questions or need assistance in accessing Choice or SES may contact one of the Northern Region Education Advisors, Rhonda Best at 815-967-3750 or Mitch Kremer at 815-338-1068.

Events around the Northern Region

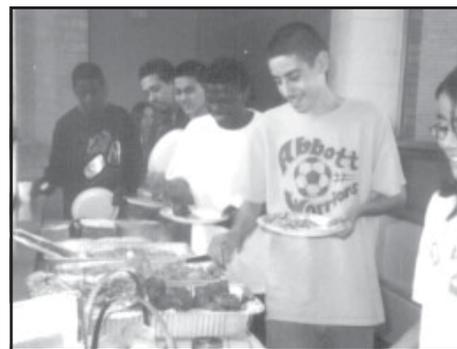
Aurora

On May 19 the Aurora Field Office celebrated during the annual Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner at the Fox Valley Park District Prisco Center. The evening honored all the foster parents who work in partnership with DCFS to protect children from harm and strengthen families.

Foster parents and field staff enjoyed an evening filled with lots of fun, raffles, food donated by local merchants and entertainment provided by the Batavia High School Jazz Combo. One highlight was the testimonial by Shelly Angelos, formerly a youth in care, who now works for Catholic Charities in Rockford.

Elgin

The Elgin DCFS Office hosted the annual Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner on May 4 at the field office. Foster parents and staff look forward to the dinner as a time to come together in a relaxed environment and enjoy one another's company.



Elgin's annual Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner

This year the dinner was preceded by a training on the Foster Parent Law. Foster parents and staff were trained together by John Ellison, DCFS Foster Care Licensing Supervisor from the Glen Ellyn Office. He worked on a team that wrote the Foster Parent Implementation Plan for the Northern Region. The training prompted one of the foster parents to remark that it was the most informative training she had ever attended.

While the foster parents and staff were being trained, additional staff were keeping the foster children entertained with toys and a movie. After the training was over, all came together for a delicious Italian Dinner.

Freeport

Freeport and Sterling DCFS offices held a joint Foster Parent Picnic on May 24 at Krepe Park in Freeport. The picnic gave families an opportunity to enjoy the company of staff and other parents, food and games in the great outdoors.

Glen Ellyn

The Glen Ellyn Field Office displayed their appreciation for foster parents by hosting a High Tea in their honor. On Sunday, May 7, foster parents and their children gathered along with staff at the Glen Ellyn Field Office for homemade desserts, fresh fruit, coffee, tea, and punch.

Their guest speaker for the event was Corporal Randy Groh of the DuPage County Sheriff's Office. Corporal Groh informed parents and children about the dangers of the internet. He discussed guidelines for parents to follow regarding their children's internet use, and he informed parents of dangerous programs on the Internet. He then talked to the children about how to properly use the Internet and explained actions they should avoid in order to have a safe experience.



Girl Scout Troop 574 entertained children at Glen Ellyn's Foster Parent Appreciation High Tea.

During the event, Girl Scout Troop 574, led by caseworker Larissa Rico from the Glen Ellyn Field Office, donated their time to do activities, crafts, and face painting with the many children that attended. At the end of the event, each family left with a gift bag, and a lucky raffle winner took home a planter of tulips.

Kankakee

Child & Adolescent Local Area Network (LAN) 26 of Kankakee County sponsored a Kids Carnival in honor of Foster Parent Appreciation Month.

The free event was held on May 5 at the Community Resource Center. Kids Hope United, Catholic Charities, DCFS, Regional Office of Education, Garden of Prayer Youth Center, and the Illinois Coalition for Community Services planned and coordinated the event.

There were games with prizes for youth from age 3 to 18. Face painting, a raffle, a performance by Garden of Prayer Youth Center's African Dance Group and food rounded off the fun. Foster parents Robert and Shirley Strand were recognized for their 25 years of foster care and adoption with Catholic Charities.

Rockford

Foster Care Alliance held its 16th Annual Walk-A-Thon on Saturday May 20. The Walk is in honor of National Foster Care Month and to raise awareness in the community. The Walk started at the Riverview Ice House in Rockford and ended at Zeke Giorgi State of Illinois Building. Along the route, there was entertainment, games and fun for all. Foster parents, youth, elected officials and other people in the community participated.

Later in the month, the Winnebago/Boone Foster Care Alliance gave out Recognition Awards to youth in the areas of: Personal Growth, Academic Achievement, Artistic Achievement, and Athletic Achievement.

Congratulations graduates!

The Northern Region celebrated the 2006 graduates on Wednesday, June 21. The celebration was held at the Fox Valley Park District Prisco Center in Aurora. The Prisco Center opened its doors to more than 40 graduates from throughout the Northern Region.

The graduates were honored and recognized during this great event by their families, friends and staff. Graduates expressed that they had a great time during the event, which included dancing to music played by a professional DJ. The guest speaker for the event was Richard Baker. Free prizes and gifts were given to graduates and to some of the attending family members. The graduates also were presented with a special graduation shirt that displayed the theme for the graduation event—"Reaching for the stars." Regional Administrator Debbie Palmer-Thomas was very happy to be part of this celebration. She said she is very proud of the 2006 graduates, and she wished them continued success in their life.



Amber Heffner of the Northern Region Youth Advisory Board congratulates the 2006 graduates.

Northern Region Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Modules

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Licensing and child welfare staff are invited to attend the training if they inform the college of their attendance a week prior to the training.

College of DuPage Area 630-942-2903

Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

AURORA Comfort Suites City Ctr.
Sept. 13 (Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
Sept. 16 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

WAUKEGAN
Sept. 28 (Wed)
Sept. 30 (Sat)

JOLIET
Sept. 21 (Thu)
Sept. 23 (Sat)

Ramada Inn
6:30-9:30 p.m.
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Catholic Charities
6:30-9:30 p.m.
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

College of DuPage Area 630-942-2903

MONTGOMERY Community Christian Church
Sept. 23 (Sat) 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

GLEN ELLYN College of DuPage
July 24 & 31 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

ROMEORVILLE Comfort Suites
Sept. 9 (Sat) 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Integrated Assessment Training

This new, two-hour in-service training was created to answer caregivers questions about the Integrated Assessment Program.

College of DuPage Area 630-942-2903

GLEN ELLYN College of DuPage
Sept. 11 (Mon) 7-9 p.m.

Rock Valley College Area 815-921-2010

ROCKFORD Rock Valley College
Sept. 5 (Tue) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Child and Family Team Meetings

This instructor-led on-line training is designed to help caregivers understand how a CFTM helps the family and ensures a permanent home for the child; how to prepare for a meeting; what happens between team meetings; and when team meetings are no longer needed in a case. **To register** for this three-hour training, foster parents may call the DCFS Registration Unit in the Office of Training at 877-800-3393. Participants may also register to attend CFTM-C training at computer labs in Springfield and Chicago by calling the same number.

*Aug. 16 (Wed) 8:45 a.m. - 12 p.m.
On-line and Computer Lab
227 So. 7th, Springfield

Aug. 19 (Sat) 8:45 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Aug. 30 (Wed) 6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

*Sept. 15 (Fri) 12:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.
On-line and Computer Lab
6201 So. Emerald, Chicago

Sept. 19 (Tue) 6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Sept. 23 (Sat) 8:45 a.m. - 12 p.m.

*Two classroom trainings have been scheduled for those foster parents who do not have computers or only have dial-up service.

Rock Valley College Area 815-921-2010

ROCKFORD Rock Valley Coll.
Aug. 12 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Northern News

Regional Reporter

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Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.