

Southern region welcomes early childhood coordinator

Jayne Crader is Southern Region's Early Childhood Services Coordinator, as of August 2005. She and her counterparts



Jayne Crader

in the other DCFS regions are part of the DCFS Early Childhood Program that provides resources and support to enhance the educational potential of young children. Crader's primary responsibility is insuring that all children from zero to five years old who enter DCFS care receive a developmental screening.

Crader is automatically notified through a "tickler" system when a Southern Region child comes into care and requires a developmental screening (outside of the Integrated Assessment Program). First, she contacts the caseworker and informs him or her of the resources available for early childhood intervention. These resources include local school districts, health departments, HeadStart programs and independent providers. Crader has developed a resource database for most counties in the Southern Region. The caseworker then contacts the foster parent

with this information so he or she can arrange for the screening.

Foster parents to young children who came into care before the automated screening started in July 2005 may also observe behaviors that might lead them to wonder about possible developmental delays. Crader suggests that the caregiver first contact their local school district to arrange for a screening.

"Most districts have prescheduled times to conduct these assessments, generally in the autumn and spring. Even outside of that, they are generally very responsive, and can make the necessary arrangements," she said.

If this is not successful, the foster parent should contact the child's caseworker, who will then work with Crader to identify an appropriate resource and communicate that information to the foster parent.

Crader comes to this position with experience both working with caregivers and working directly with children. Her office is located in the Fairview Heights office building.

STAR NET local resources

Caregivers for younger children (0-8) have a unique resource available to them via STAR NET, a federally funded program administered by the Illinois State Board of Education. The focus of this program is early childhood education and special education with an emphasis on those children with special needs.

For parents, the most useful STAR NET opportunities are workshops held at a variety of locations throughout the region. Locations, dates, and topics vary throughout the year. Although some of the workshops are intended primarily for professionals, others are open to any caregiver who has a child in the eligible age range. Workshops include such topics as "Promoting Positive Behaviors," and "Promoting Early Reading Readiness."

Interested parents may contact STAR NET for a list of workshops and other educational/training opportunities and to be put on a mailing list. STAR NET can be reached at the regional office in Belleville, 500 Wilshire Drive, Belleville Ill. 62223, 618-397-8930 or 800-942-7827. Information is also available at www.stclair.k12.il.us/starnet

New steps for kids near meth

For the last two years, a committee of DCFS staff and the Illinois State Police has been working on the Drug Endangered Children (DEC) protocol. Recently the group completed a new curriculum to train officers and DCFS workers on handling situations where children may have been exposed to methamphetamine laboratories.

Training rolled out in December. Meanwhile, directors of child welfare agencies signed Memorandums of Understanding to follow the procedures included in the protocol.

Foster parents should be aware of a new form that they will receive when a minor is taken into custody and placed with them. The form is *The Caregiver's Guide for Care of Children Exposed to Methamphetamine Laboratories*. It informs the foster parent of what to do and what is expected of them as they care for a child after exposure. It also gives them the name of the caseworker, the medical facility that will provide care, and the next medical appointment date. Look for more information coming in the near future, as training in the field continues.

Foster Parent Advisory Council update

The Southern Region Foster Parent Advisory Council held its first meeting of 2006 on January 18 in the Mt. Vernon Field Office. Brenda Owens, Southern Region Integrated Assessment Coordinator, provided members with additional information on the Integrated Assessment (IA) process. Owens described the new tools for a comprehensive assessment for new cases. IA is designed to provide valuable information about the strengths and needs of children and their families as they come into care.

Lori Gray, a Southern Region Implementation Coordinator for the Child and Youth Investment Teams (CAYIT), provided an overview of this program, which is designed to foster team decision-making.

The council will continue last year's practice of rotating monthly meetings among site offices. The Advisory Council selected the dates, times, and locations of the site meetings.

The site meetings provide excellent opportunities to meet other foster parents, receive updates on current issues with DCFS and the foster parent community, and provide input and ideas to the region-wide Advisory Council. Some site meetings also function as regularly-scheduled support groups for foster parents. If you have general questions about the Advisory Council or its function,

please contact Michael Bollman, Council Co-Chair in the Fairview Heights office at 618-394-2137.

Upcoming site meetings:

- April 8 Mt. Vernon at 10 a.m.
- April 10 Cairo at 4 p.m.
- April 24 Olney 1:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Quarterly regional meetings:

- May 17 at Salem/Marion field offices at 1 p.m. with teleconference
- August 16 at Salem/Marion field offices at 1 p.m. with teleconference
- November 1 at Mt. Vernon at 1 p.m. with entire council

OUR KIDS

Sponsor

Bill Peyton, DCFS Southern Regional Administrator

Regional Reporter

Michael Bollman
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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.

Spectrum Wilderness Program

The Southern Region has a contract with the Spectrum Wilderness program, which is located at the Touch of Nature Center in Carbondale. This program accepts referrals of adolescents 13-17 years old to participate in a 30-day stress challenge course in an outdoor environment.

Participants spend the first 15 days backpacking, canoeing, rock-climbing, and learning orientation skills in the Shawnee National Forest. The last two

weeks are spent at more distant locations such as Big Bend National Park in Texas or the Boundary Waters Canoe area of Minnesota. On the trips, youth face additional challenges, including a three-day “solo” experience.

Spectrum is designed to help youth deal directly with behaviors related to self-concept, accountability, mutual responsibility, and trust and respect. It is often considered a “therapeutic” intervention for youth who have difficulties in school, community or traditional placement. However, for adolescents who enjoy the outdoors or personal challenge, the program also presents a unique opportunity for continued growth and improved self-esteem.

Generally, the 30-day sessions start at the beginning of each month. Most of the groups are for boys, though in the summer at least one group for girls is typically scheduled. Referrals must be made through the youth’s caseworker. Foster parents who believe a child in their care may benefit from or enjoy this program should contact the child’s worker. For more information on Spectrum you may also contact Michael Bollman, DCFS Resource Specialist in Fairview Heights, at 618-394-2137.

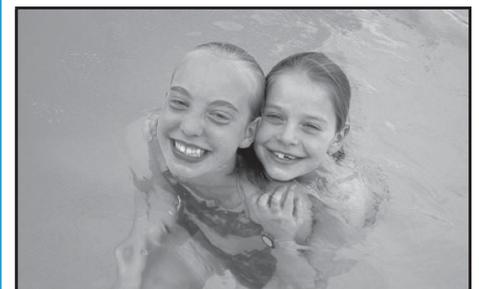
For more details, visit the web site www.pso.siu.edu/tonec/?spectrum.

Summer Camp Options for Southern Region

The Southern Region does not have existing contracts with summer camps in 2006. However, there are procedures to fund camps on a case-by-case basis.

If a foster parent is aware of a summer camp opportunity for a child, he or she should provide the caseworker with basic information such as location, duration, and cost. The worker can request payment for the camp, following DCFS procedures. Bill Peyton, Regional Administrator, has indicated that he can approve eligible payment. In some instances it may be necessary to prove that there are no other resources available for payment, i.e. scholarships or individual grants. Foster parents should be prepared with documentation, if requested.

Children and foster parents served by private agencies can also request payment for camps through their respective caseworkers. Each agency may have their own set of criteria for determining eligibility and/or payment.



Kyle was fighting, lying, refusing to do school work, and being just plain defiant. He was constantly in trouble in school with multiple detentions and finally suspended within the first two months of school. He was causing our home life to deteriorate to the point of feeling like a prison. We were desperate for help...

Kyle has been home from Spectrum one week now, and the transformation is unbelievable. He is loving, respectful, polite, and most important, happy. He still talks about his adventure and things he learned. We are all learning from him now. We are now taking things one day at a time in hopes that Kyle continues to show progress.

Jess and Pam Lattrell

Southern Region Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

There are no Foster PRIDE In-Service training modules scheduled for this quarter.

Marion
618-536-7751

There are no Foster PRIDE In-Service training modules scheduled for this quarter.

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions =
6 training hours

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be relicensed. 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.

Integrated Assessment Training

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

EDWARDSVILLE *Technology Management Ctr.*
April 20 (Thu) 6:30-8:30 p.m.
June 13 (Tue) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Marion
618-536-7751

CARBONDALE *Adolescent Health Ctr.*
May 16 (Tue) 6-8 p.m.

EFFINGHAM *First Presb. Church*
May 2 (Tue) 6-8 p.m.

HARRISBURG *Harrisburg Med. Ctr.*
May 2 (Tue) 6-8 p.m.

MT. VERNON *DCFS Office*
April 18 (Tue) 6-8 p.m.

OLNEY *Location TBA*
May 9 (Tue) 6-8 p.m.

SALEM *Salem Presb. Church*
April 25 (Tue) 6-8 p.m.

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

BELLEVILLE *Catholic Social Service*
May 20 & 27 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
(Sat)

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS *DCFS Office*
June 6 & 13 (Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Marion
618-536-7751

MARION *State Office Building*
April 8 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
June 17 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

MT. VERNON *DCFS Office*
June 17 & 24 (Sat) 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Non-PRIDE Inservice Training

Marion
618-536-7751

Educational Issues Facing the Youth of Today

ALTON *Holiday Inn*
May 16 (Tue) 6:30-9 p.m.

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS *Ramada Inn*
June 1 (Thu) 6:30-9 p.m.

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

ABCs of Substance Abuse for Foster Parents

Date and location to be announced