

Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship®

Calica, national expert with local roots now DCFS director

Richard Calica has advocated for children and strong families for more than 30 years. In December, he took on responsibility for DCFS after Guardian D. Jean Ortega-Piron bridged the gap left by Erwin McEwen's September departure.

Gov. Quinn announced the appointment saying, "Richard Calica's decades of experience in caring for neglected and abused children will bolster our efforts towards building a better future for all Illinois children"

Calica built his career

and national reputation at the Juvenile Protective Association (JPA), serving as Executive Director since 1978. The organization reaches families throughout metropolitan Chicago in communities where resources are scarce and challenges are many.

Calica oversaw the organizations family-centered treatment and counseling programs so JPA could help solve problems before abuse occurred. He also guided the innovative interventions at JPA to ensure the physical and emotional safety of children who had been

abused, neglected or exploited.

"All children deserve the opportunity to grow up in a healthy environment with strong support systems," he said.

Calica has been an architect of those systems on many levels. He chaired the Governor's Task Force on Family Preservation from 1993-1994 under Governor Jim Edgar and, until this most recent appointment, served as chair of the DCFS Risk Assessment Advisory Committee. In addition to "the system-view," he has first-hand knowledge



of the needs of children impacted by trauma. His past experience in private practice as a clinical social worker for youth keeps him focused on the reason the community of caregivers, parents and service providers must stay committed to the task of strengthening families.

Caregivers may qualify for generous adoption and foster care tax breaks

As April 15 gets closer, caregivers should look into tax benefits due to adoption and foster care.

For tax year 2011, the federal Adoption Tax Credit is again refundable. This means that even families who owe no income tax can get the credit as an increase to their tax refund. In fact, anyone who adopts a child should file a tax return for 2011 to claim the adoption tax credit – even if there is nothing else to report or claim on the tax return. The maximum credit is \$13,360. The credit amount for someone who adopted a special needs child in 2011 is the entire \$13,360, regardless of the amount of adoption expenses,

even those covered in the subsidy agreement. A family who adopted a child in a prior tax year and has a carryover adoption credit may get an additional refundable credit for 2011.

There are a few caveats. The amount of credit received is reduced for taxpayers with income over \$182,520. A taxpayer claiming the credit cannot file electronically and is required to attach documents to the tax return to verify the adoption.

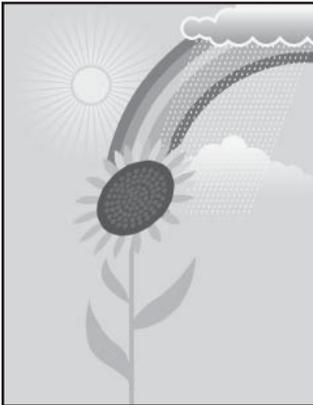
Foster caregivers may be able to claim the Child Tax Credit for youth who where in placement for at least half of 2011. This is also a credit that

can lower the amount of tax owed or increase a refund.

As caregivers prepare for tax season, they can consult a tax professional and look to these free publications at the Web site for the Internal Revenue Service at www.irs.gov: *Pub. 17, Tax Guide for Individuals; Pub. 501, Exemptions, Standard Deduction and Filing Information; Form 8839, Qualified Adoption Expenses; and Topic 607, Adoption Credit.*

The North America Council on Adoptable Children also has printouts with more details on adoption-related tax topics at www.nacac.org.

Register for Caregiver Institute on parenting youth after trauma



**Please Remember:
I've Been Through
Some Things**

Enrollment is now open for the 2012 Caregiver Training Institutes. The theme this year is Please Remember: I've Been Through Some Things. These institutes are designed to help caregivers better understand how to parent children who are exhibiting difficult behavior.

Dynamic workshops and presentations will deliver information on

what to expect through a child's developmental levels, successful parenting techniques and places to go for help. A panel of young people will discuss their experiences while in care to add another layer of realism to the training.

The agenda will include:

- State of the Region address by the DCFS Regional Administrator
- Workshop 1: The Impact of Trauma on the Developing Child
- Youth panel discussion
- Workshop 2: Trauma Focused Practice to Improve Outcomes for Children in Foster Care

The institutes are open to all foster, adoptive and guardianship caregivers. Participants will earn five training credit hours to meet licensing requirements when they sign in on time and participate in the entire session.

Registration opens at 8:30 a.m., with the Saturday program beginning at 9 a.m. and finishing by 3 p.m. Morning refreshments will be served and lunch will be provided for participants. There are no accommodations for childcare at the institutes, and children must not attend. Caregivers who bring children must be asked to leave.

There may be limited funds available through the DCFS regions to reimburse DCFS supervised caregivers for child care or mileage (not lodging) expenses to attend this training. Caregivers should follow normal procedures within their own regions to determine if there is reimbursement before attending. Attendees

from private agencies should contact their agencies in advance to determine whether they can be reimbursed for those expenses. The same training content will be presented at each institute, so plan to attend only one institute, choosing the date and location that is most convenient.

Call DCFS Training at 877-800-3393 to register today, as space is limited.

2012 CAREGIVER INSTITUTES

presented on the following Saturdays

March 3

Concordia University
River Forest

March 10

Four Points Sheraton
Fairview Heights

March 24

Best Western Plus
Galesburg

March 31

Clocktower Resort
Rockford

SAVE the DATE

June 15-18

***National Foster Parent Assn.
2012 conference in Chicago***

Educate. Advocate. Celebrate!

*The National Foster Parent Association
will hold its 42nd Education Conference
in the Chicago area this summer.*

*The Illinois Foster Adoptive Parent Association
will serve as host for a weekend of learning,
networking and fun.*

***Marriott Oak Brook Hills Resort
June 15-18***

*Watch future editions of Illinois Families Now
and Forever for additional information.*

Relatives benefit when licensed for foster care

Taking care of a child during a family crisis that requires DCFS involvement is not an easy task. When relatives caring for children placed with them by DCFS become licensed, they receive the benefits of more training and increased monthly payments to provide for children's needs. DCFS also receives more federal money to support children and families.

During a family crisis, caregivers need to prepare for the realities of caring for children in need of child welfare services. Training will help relative caregivers understand the developmental and emotional stages of the children in their care. By learning in advance what foster parenting can entail, they will be better able

to handle the challenges that may come along.

Relative caregivers can take a six-hour course in class or learn through a new interactive DVD in their home. Many substitute caregivers decide to go on and take the full 27-hour Foster PRIDE series of classes required to be a foster caregiver to non-related children.

When relative caregivers become licensed, they also become eligible for the foster care board rate. This monthly payment is typically higher than the "standard of need" rate for unlicensed relatives. For example, an uncle in Champaign providing care for his 9-year-old nephew could receive \$310 a month at the standard of need rate. After becoming licensed,

he would receive \$435 for the child's clothing, board and personal allowance.

Both DCFS and private agency caseworkers received training on how to help unlicensed relatives become licensed. These relatives have to comply with current licensing standards, including fingerprinting, medical exams and training. In some cases, workers can request waivers to allow an applicant to become licensed, even though they are not in full compliance with a specific licensing standard. Unlicensed relative caregivers should discuss with their caseworkers all of the benefits of licensing, as well as the supports available to help them through the process.

*From
the
Editor*



Vanessa James

For 12 years, I have had the privilege of talking with caregivers through the pages of this newsletter. I say talking because I listen to what I hear caregivers question or complain about. I remember the things that make me wonder, shake my head or sigh with relief. Then I try to wrap words around those moments so that we all can learn from each other.

One crystal-clear lesson is the value of time in how one approaches circumstances. It was 15 years ago that my husband and I became licensed for foster care. We were a young couple with a young child. Before our daughter turned six, she had six siblings over the age of 10 and a new little sister. They say one year in a dog's life is like seven "people" years. We had done what felt like 20 years of parenting in just five.

Here's where perspective becomes important. Now those kids are all "twenty-something" and are out making their way in the world. The lessons I learned, from the mistakes we made and from all the things that turned out alright, are still helping with our two children at home. It is hard to faze me and harder to fool me after all the tricks I have seen. Hopefully you too will benefit from time and experience and will have some stories of your own to share.

Vanessa

Be included in the 2012 directory for caregiver 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, published in May.

Please send the following information by March 30.

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.)

New listings and updates should be sent in writing by e-mail or post to:

Vanessa . James@illinois.gov

Vanessa James, DCFS

100 W. Randolph, 6th fl.

Chicago, IL 60601

MOVIN' ON UP: *As youth transition to adulthood*

FAFSA financial aid form starts off all need-based college funding

The first step in qualifying for financial aid is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form (FAFSA). All assistance based on financial need requires filling out the FAFSA. After completing and returning the application, the student will receive the Student Aid Report (SAR) that lists the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC is what the family is expected to pay, based on their family income, on top of any financial aid that is awarded.

For students who have been in the child welfare system, the major factor for financial aid is the student's status as "dependent" or "independent." As an independent student, the parent's (parent by

birth or foster caregiver) income will not be included in the financial need formula. That typically results in eligibility for more financial aid.

Youth in foster care or subsidized guardianship would automatically qualify as independent students. Alternatively, for youth who left DCFS care through adoption, the adoptive parents' income will be included, unless special circumstances apply. However, guidelines that went into effect July 2009 could benefit some adopted youth. Youth adopted from foster care after age 13 can apply for financial aid under the expanded definition of independent student. Students should talk to their guidance counselors and

college financial aid advisors for more specific details on the criteria.

It is important that each youth complete and mail or e-mail their applications early in the calendar year, in order to secure the maximum benefits. Students can get forms starting in January from their school counselor or via the Internet at the website www.fafsa.edu.gov.

The DCFS Education Advisors can also help families make plans for college. The advisors are assigned to each region. For more information contact the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959.

Internet resources help families sort out financial aid options

These sites are a good jumping off point for students and families to research the college application process and funding sources.

College Board

collegeboard.com
The same organization that runs the SAT exam helps students prepare for and pay for college.

Education Finance Council

www.efc.org
Offers financial aid resources specific to youth in foster care and other special circumstances.

Fastweb scholarship search

www.fastweb.com

Free Application for Federal Student Aid Commission

www.fafsa.edu.gov

Illinois Student Assistance Commission

www.collegezone.org

Minority Scholarships

www.free-4u.com/minority.htm

Orphan Foundation of America

www.orphan.org

United Negro College Fund

www.uncf.org

DCFS Scholarship application open. Complete packet due March 31

DCFS annually provides 48 college scholarships to youth who are currently under guardianship of the Department or who left DCFS guardianship through adoption or private guardianship arrangements.

Scholarship recipients receive up to four consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers to be used at participating Illinois state colleges or universities, a \$471 monthly stipend and a medical card up to age 23.

Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED by the end of the current school year. Scholarship Program Student Applications (CFS 438) are available now. Applications must be turned in by March 31. A review committee will evaluate the applications and make selections based on academic accomplishments, community service and a personal statement.

Contact the youth's caseworker or call the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information.

Teens have help with school and jobs as they approach adulthood



The DCFS Division of Service Intervention is home to many of the resources older youth who are still in DCFS care can utilize as they plan for their futures. That future could entail more schooling or finding a career path. The Office of Education and Transition Services is the hub for education, training and employment programs. Along with several programs, the Division also has Transition Coordinators assigned to each DCFS region. These individuals can help youth and their families explore different educational and employment resources from DCFS and in the community.

The transition programs described below are open for youth still in DCFS custody. This does not include youth who achieved permanency through adoption or guardianship. However, DCFS does open the Youth in Scholarship program to adopted youth (see page 3) and the Education and Training Voucher is available to youth adopted after age 16. For clarification of eligibility, contact the Office of Education and Transition Services.

Youth In College/Vocational Training Program

Students may choose to attend an accredited vocational school, four-year college or community college. They receive a monthly grant in the amount of \$471

provided each month for up to four (4) years. Medical cards are provided to Illinois students until the participant reaches the age of 21. Reimbursement is available for books not covered by financial aid. Benefits are available until the earlier of four (4) years, or the semester of the 23rd birthday.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Be at least 16 years old, and not yet 21
- Be under court-ordered, legal responsibility of DCFS
- Maintain at least a “C” average each semester
- Maintain full time status and submit a class schedule and grades each term

The Employment Incentive Program (EIP)

The Employment Incentive Program is designed to provide financial and supplemental services to help adolescent youth gain marketable skills through on-the-job work experience or through job training programs. Participants receive a monthly stipend in the amount of \$150.00 for a maximum of 12 months and a medical card until age 21.) They may also be eligible for start-up funding of work-related items (e.g., tools, work clothing, etc.). Funding is need-based and limited to a one-time disbursement of up to \$200.00.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Be 17 years of age, and not yet 21
- Have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate
- Be under court-ordered responsibility of DCFS
- Complete Ansell-Casey Living Skills assessment
- Be involved in job training through a certified job skills

training program or be employed for at least one month prior to applying for the EIP and working a minimum of 20 hours per week

Education & Training Vouchers

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program assists youth with post-secondary education related expenses not covered by financial aid grants. Qualifying students can receive payment of up to \$5000 annually for education related expenses such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, uniforms, equipment, and/or transportation not covered by other grants or scholarships. Funding is available until age 21. However, if the student is enrolled in a post-secondary program before age 21 and is making satisfactory progress toward completion of the program, funding is available until age 23.

Eligibility:

- Youth for whom DCFS is legally responsible or who aged out of care at age 18 or older OR
- Achieved permanency at age 16 or older through either subsidized guardianship or adoption

Questions about eligibility or referrals can go to the youth's caseworker or the Office of Education and Transition Services (OETS) at:

(Chicago) 312-814-5959

Additionally, each region has an Education and Transition Manager. Contact information for them is available through the OETS office or the local DCFS regional office.



Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin

The November meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council brought the group together with its counterpart, the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council. Each year during National Adoption Month the two councils join forces to discuss topics that often overlap.

Services for Older Youth

At this meeting, Kevin Walsh of the Division of Service Intervention presented information on the education services the Department

provides for older youth. His overview included the High School Education Plans, Youth in College Program and the DCFS Scholarship program. Handouts and details on these and other programs are available on the DCFS-sponsored Web site developed for youth approaching adulthood at www.youthinca-reillinois.gov. The Division also has Education and Transition Managers covering these topics in the DCFS regions. Contact the nearest regional office or call 312-814-5959 for more information.

Education Advisors

Members of both councils were interested in hearing about the Northern Illinois University/DCFS Education Advisor program. This group of experts can provide caregivers (DCFS-supervised homes only

and all post-adoption or guardianship families) direct support on school concerns.

Yasmina Sefiane described how caregivers can work with Education Advisors on school related concerns including Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), the implementation of Response to Intervention Plans, confidentiality and disciplinary processes.

There are Education Advisors assigned to each DCFS region. The Division of Service Intervention can connect foster homes served by DCFS foster care programs and adoption/guardianship families. Call 312-814-5959 for details. The private agency foster care programs also have designated Education Liaisons to assist the families they license.

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council was founded in conjunction with the Illinois Foster Parent Law.

Membership consists of caregivers, agency representatives and other experts in child welfare, who are appointed by the DCFS Director. The mandated positions for caregivers are spread among the DCFS regions.

The council holds open meetings at least six times a year, and more as needed, in locations around the state.

The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be on February 17 at 9 a.m. in Joliet.

Call the Office of Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for details.



Education Advisor Yasmina Sefiane explains school policies the foster care council.

The Illinois Adoption Council helped host an Adoption Day celebration in Cook County, following the joint meeting with the foster care council. On Saturday, November 19 more than 75 caregivers gathered at the DCFS office at 6201 S. Emerald in Chicago for workshops on services and resources for youth and families that achieve permanency through adoption.

Along with the important information that was shared, the caregivers also received encouragement in their parenting efforts. As 40 children stayed busy with special activities, the adults could network with each other and celebrate November as Adoption Month in Illinois with cake and specially-donated items.



Respite programs can ease pressure that can come with adoption



The decision to care for a child comes with many emotional costs that adoptive and guardianship parents willingly pay. However, the cumulative toll of meeting high-end, special needs can mount over time. At some point, parents may feel they need a break, or a period of respite, without the constant responsibility of day-to-day parenting.

Research done by the Center For Adoption Studies at Illinois State University showed that a segment of adoptive families was on the brink and that periods of respite could bring them back from the edge. Some families reported feeling like “prisoners in my own home” because children’s behaviors were so difficult to manage for normal activities. The study found that three to six hours of respite once or twice a month went a long way in improving family stability. It recommended that the respite providers be trained and experienced in working with children with special needs. The care also needed to be consistent and predictable.

DCFS funds respite programs through the Adoption/Guardianship Preservation Programs. Several community agencies also provide some form of respite. The forms and delivery of respite vary by program. For example, Healthy Families Chicago does in-home respite and group activities for both children and parents. In central Illinois, The Baby Fold sponsors Camp Take-a-Break, a weekend camp for children staffed by teachers from a local therapeutic day school. In southern Illinois, Matthews and Associates will arrange to take children out on field trips, so

they can have “normal kid” social experiences.

Families who feel they could benefit from a brief stint of respite service should contact a provider from the list below. The agency will do an assessment and determine eligibility and availability.

Cook County

Catholic Charities

312-655-8430

Chicago Family Health

773-768-5000 x 1065

Healthy Families

773-257-0111 ext 132

Metropolitan Family Services

708-974-5815

Northern Region

CHASI Rockford

815-962-1043

Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, Winnebago and Whiteside counties

McHenry County Mental

Health Board

815-788-4371

McHenry County

Metropolitan Family Services

630-784-4861

DuPage Grundy, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will counties

Lutheran Social Services

815-936-9166

Kankakee County

Central Region

The Baby Fold

309-454-1770

Champaign, Clark, Cumberland, Coles, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Livingston, Macon, McLean, Moultrie, Piatt, Shelby counties

Catholic Charities

815-223-4007

LaSalle, Bureau, Putnam, Marshall and Stark counties

Cornerstone

217-222-8254

Adams, Brown, Calhoun, Cass, Green, Hancock, Morgan, Pike, Schyler and Scott counties

Family Core

309-682-4621

Peoria, Tazewell and Woodford counties

Family Service Center

217-528-8406

Christian, Menard, northern Maucoupin, Montgomery, and Sangamon counties

One Hope United

217-345-6554

Coles, Cumberland, Clark, Douglas, Edgar, Shelby and Moultrie counties

Lutheran Social Services of IL

309-671-0300

Bureau, Fulton, Henderson, Henry, Knox, LaSalle, Logan, Marshall, Mason, McDonough, Mercer, Peoria, Putnam, Rock Island, Stark, Tazewell, Warren and Woodford counties

Project Success of Vermilion County

217-446-3200

Iroquois and Vermilion counties

Southern Region

Matthews and Associates

618-988-1330

Alexander, Clay, Crawford, Edwards, Effingham, Fayette, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Johnson, Lawrence, Marion, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Richland, Saline, Union, Wabash, Wayne, White and Williamson counties

CHASI-Granite City

618-452-8900

Bond, Clinton, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair and Washington counties

More than 20 years of care and still counting for Tofts

Michael and Paula Toft of Bloomington decided in 1989 to become licensed for foster care. Their initial motivation was to provide a home for Michael's cousin. The Tofts' three children by birth were ages 7, 9, and 11 at the time. After more than 20 years, it is difficult to say what keeps them going, except that foster care is their way of life.

"It's been a roller coaster ride," Paula stated, "but we have chosen to stay on it. Despite the challenges...we are a family, and we chose this life way back when."

They have made a home for more than 50 children. With six adoptions, their crew ranges in age from 8 to 34. Experiencing foster care up close led their oldest daughter to become an attorney. Early in high school, she wrote a paper foreshadowing this career path. She decided then she wanted to become educated in family law to help children and families. Now she is a State's Attorney, prosecuting abuse and neglect cases in the Chicago area.

Their daughter's career is not the only one to be



shaped by foster care. Michael recently retired from long-time service at the U.S. Post Office. Now he is a full-time dad to a full house. Paula has worked as a licensing worker for Catholic Charities for more than five years, after working eight years as a DCFS foster parent support specialist.

As a support specialist, Paula was able to assist other caregivers, sharing her own experiences, both good and bad, to help others succeed in foster care. There have been some disappointments that could have broken some families apart. Where there were frustrations, those typically had more to do with the "system" than the kids themselves. They

have cared for many specialized and treatment level children. That comes with complications that require an especially high level of support from the child's agency.

Support, combined with

patience and compassion, can lead to great rewards. Michael and Paula feel they have chalked up some real successes. For the most part, they say their kids have become wonderful, productive people.

"Michael and I have been able to weather the storm for the sake of children," Paula said.

Paula said sometimes it could be something insignificant that keeps them going – a kind word from a child or an appreciative word from a parent. They credit their faith and family support with being able to cope and keep going.

Peoria-area mentors ready to help

Children who need some extra attention and direction from a caring adult can turn to the "Goodwill Guides." Goodwill Industries in Peoria sponsors this mentor program. The program focuses on youth ages 12 to 17 who are at risk of juvenile delinquency, poor school performance or dropping out of school. Youth may have disabilities or mental health issues or may face homelessness, family instability or substance abuse.

The Goodwill Guides are mentors who work with the youth that other programs may not be equipped to serve. They can help with schoolwork, offer skills training and provide outlets for community service and recreation.

Contact Elizabeth McCombs at 309-369-9884 of Goodwill Industries of Central Illinois for more information.

Central Region Advisory Council connects caregivers in person and by teleconference

The Central Region Advisory Council has both in-person and teleconference meetings set for the first half of the year. Meetings are open to caregivers with the DCFS foster care program and those families served by private agencies.

To participate in any or all of the teleconference calls please call the Central Region Foster Care Help Line at 866-368-5204 to register. On the day of the call caregivers will use a free call in number and pass code (888-251-2909 pass code 4250015#). Agendas for these calls will be available shortly before each call. The goal of the calls is to give caregivers an opportunity to hear about DCFS programs, upcoming events and changes in policies and procedures.

In-person evening meetings will move among locations across the 50 counties that make up the Central Region. Postcards will be sent out to both DCFS and private agency homes that provide foster care in the area where the meetings will be held. Registration information will be available on the postcards.

Call the Central Region Foster Care help line with questions at 1-866-368-5204.

February 22
(teleconference)
10 to 11:30 a.m.

March 22
(in-person evening meeting)
6 to 8 p.m. in Carlinville

April 11
(teleconference)
10 to 11:30 a.m.

April 26
(in person evening meeting)
6 to 8 p.m. in Lincoln

May 17
(in-person evening meeting)
6 to 8 p.m. in Jacksonville

June 20
(teleconference)
10 to 11:30 a.m.

Central Region Service Line

The number for the DCFS Central Region Foster Parent Customer Service Line is 866/368-5204.

This toll-free line is operational Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., excluding state holidays. The line is equipped with voice mail. The goal is to have a response time of 24 to 48 hours for all calls. This is not set up to be an emergency response line. If a caregiver has an urgent request, it is best to call the field office or the after-hours number. The calls can be about issues or concerns that caregivers have not been able to resolve through normal channels.

The Customer Service Line is designed for calls from foster families whose licenses are supervised by DCFS Central Region. Agency-supervised homes should work directly with the agency that monitors their license.

Get all the news without the paper

Illinois Families Now and Forever will soon be available for digital download. Caregivers who prefer to enjoy the newsletter electronically can participate in a pilot program, starting in 2012.

Households that opt for the online version of the newsletter will still have access to all the information contained in the mailed copy. However, the digital version will be more convenient, more timely and more eco-friendly.

DCFS is committed to providing families the information you need in a way that is efficient, preserves resources and safeguards future funding.

To sign up for the electronic newsletter, send an email to the Editor at vanessa.james@illinois.gov.

CASA looks out for the child's interests

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. CASAs are specially trained volunteers and are assigned to cases of abused and/or neglected children by the juvenile court judge. The CASA speaks exclusively for the best interest of a child throughout the juvenile court process. The CASA volunteer: searches for information; reviews records; and interviews parents, teachers, neighbors, foster parents and, of course, the child. After completing this process a CASA makes recommendations to the judge.

There are CASA programs in many Central Region counties. In Sangamon County more than 100 children benefit from CASA. Caregivers can request a CASA be assigned to represent a child placed with them through the caseworker. For more information go to www.illinoiscasa.org.

Central Region Caregiver Training

DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the Central Region. The listing below can help caregivers plan for their training needs. To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center (VTC) anytime at www.DCFStraining.org or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours. In addition to classroom courses, caregivers can also take advantage of videos, books and online training.

The new year brings many new developments from the DCFS Office of Training. There is a new in-service course: "Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma." The 5-session class is packed with vital information for caregivers to help them in understanding children and responding effectively to challenging behaviors. It covers more advanced materials than the four-hour "Child Trauma for Caregivers."

FEBRUARY

Adoption Certification	Bloomington, Decatur, Rock Island/Moline, Springfield
Educational Advocacy	Bloomington, Champaign, Peoria
Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma	Macomb, Rock Island/Moline
Child Trauma for Caregivers	Bloomington, Springfield
Module 12	Springfield

In-service Training Modules (scheduled in classroom sessions and available on DVD)

Module 1 – Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk (12 hours)

Module 2 – Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs (9 hours)

Module 4 – The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (9 hours)

Module 5 – Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families (9 hours)

Module 6 – Working as a Professional Team Member (9 hours)

Module 7 – Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity (6 hours)

Module 8 – Promoting Permanency Outcomes (9 hours)

Module 9 – Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family (6 hours)

Module 10 – Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families (15 hours)

Module 12 – Understanding & Promoting Pre-Teen and Teen Development (6 hours)

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 on the back page of 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 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 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.

...You are having extreme family problems with your adopted child? The Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program can provide in-home counseling and case services to help hold a family together. To find the program that serves your area call Cook County Post-Adoption/Guardianship Unit at 855-548-5505 or the subsidy worker in nearest DCFS regional office.

...You have an idea for an article in the newsletter? Each region has a regional reporter to help gather local news. The names and contact information are listed in the regional section of each edition. Or you can contact the Editor, Vanessa James, at 312-814-6824 or send an e-mail vanessa.james@illinois.gov.

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



Kimberlynn (C7887)

Kimberlynn [C7887] Get ready to smile because Kimberlynn has a great sense of humor. At 15, she has a sharp wit, and likes to laugh and joke with her friends. She is also very smart, and has a good understanding of herself and her surroundings. Like many teenagers, Kimberlynn values her privacy. She has difficulty accepting hugs or positive feedback, but still appreciates it when adults are honest and authentic around her. In her spare time, she enjoys singing, listening to music, and watching scary movies.

Kimberlynn's worker says she has a great personality and shows a lot of potential.

To be a forever family for Kimberlynn, you can provide a loving, understanding home environment for her. You can establish clear rules for your home, and articulate the consequences for not complying with those rules. You can also support Kimberlynn as she navigates adolescence and matures into an adult. Kimberlynn would like to join a family that appreciates her sense of humor. She would also benefit from ongoing visits with her sister. Other children in the home should be older than Kimberlynn.

Jessica [7916] Jessica, 11, is determined to overcome any obstacle in her way. She has a sweet, caring personality, and is curious about the world around her. Her hobbies include listening to music, dancing, playing with dolls, and playing dress-up. Jessica wears several medi-

cal braces and has experienced seizures in the past, but can still keep up with her peers and perform daily tasks. She is considered legally blind and is learning to read Braille, but can still see with the help of glasses.

Jessica's foster parents say she is sweet, thoughtful, and lovable. Her teachers say she has an engaging personality and that she provides encouragement to classmates and school staff members alike.

Potential parents should be able to display patience, commitment, and understanding as Jessica adjusts to her new, permanent home. You can work with doctors, teachers, and other professionals who can help you understand and meet her medical, educational, and emotional needs. You can also provide encouragement and praise as she strives to meet your expectations. Jessica wants to join a family that is "nice" and that will take time to play with her. She would also benefit from continued, closely supervised, visits with her brother.

Latrice [C7840] Latrice, 14, is an outgoing child who enjoys playing sports and spending time with her friends. She also has a creative side, and can often be found writing poetry or practicing the guitar. She has trouble following rules at times, but she is also helpful around the house and often volunteers to cook or do household chores.

Latrice's teacher says she is

an independent learner who gets along well with other students. Her foster parent says she is a good child who appreciates any opportunity to play basketball with her friends.

Latrice would benefit from a family that can help her develop strong communication skills so she can express her feelings appropriately. Latrice should be encouraged to enjoy her childhood without taking on too many adult responsibilities. She would also benefit from ongoing visits with her siblings.

Andre [C7765] Andre, 11, is an honest and expressive young man who is always able to tell you what is on his mind. Although Andre can act out at times, his overall behavior is good. He interacts well with his peers and is always willing to share with his fellow students. Andre loves to stay active and spends a lot of time playing basketball, baseball, and football. He also likes to paint, draw, and watch television.

Andre's worker says he is a likeable child and a hard worker. He does well with his day-to-day tasks, given gentle reminders from the adults in his life. Potential parents for Andre can provide a loving, structured home with well-defined rules and boundaries. You can work with Andre's teachers and support staff to ensure he receives the educational and emotional support he needs. Andre says he would like to live with a permanent family.



Jessica (7916)



Latrice (C7840)



Andre (C7765)



Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI Web site - 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

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are available online in English and Spanish at www.state.il.us/dcfs