



# Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship®

## State celebrates Foster Parent Appreciation Month

From the DCFS Director



May, Foster Parent Appreciation Month in Illinois, comes near the half-year point in my tenure as Director. When I look back on what has taken place so far and what we face, my respect and gratitude for our foster caregivers goes even deeper. I hope all of our families will take some time this month to reflect on the many good things that come from the hard job you perform.

Governor Quinn's proclamation for Foster Parent Appreciation Month stated that, "foster parent caregivers tirelessly tend to children's physical, emotional, material and educational needs, providing them the opportunity to move from the child welfare system to safe and successful lives."

Official acknowledgements are important, but they only go so far. Perhaps the most valuable reward would be the sentiments from someone who can sincerely speak to foster care in a very unique, personal way. This letter from Carissa gets to the heart of Foster Parent Appreciation Month. I pledge to take her experiences into account as we move DCFS forward.

— Richard H. Calica

Carissa Wesley, age 22, described in a letter how she felt when she and her sister were taken into DCFS care. The excerpts that follow speak to the girls' traumatic entry into the system, their placement in foster care with Jeff and Robin Simpson and Carissa's gratitude for a positive foster care experience.

### Initial shock

"My name is Carissa Wesley. On December 16, 2005 my world was flipped upside down. Sitting in Spanish class, my teacher gets a call from the office, letting her know to let me know to grab my things... Well, I get to the office and there sits my principal and a police officer... They go on to say that my biological mother was taken into custody... Anyway, they told me that if family couldn't take me, then we would be placed in foster care. The sad thing was that I had a place to go, but they couldn't separate siblings. So after a failed attempt, they had me ride in the police car to the junior high where my younger sister went to school.

### Welcoming family

When we left the office [the caseworker] took us to the family's home. I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know where Odin was, and it was dark, plus we were out in the country. As we pulled in the driveway there was [sic] cars and lights and a lot of movement. Walking up to the front door, we were greeted by a house full of people. But, from the moment we walked through that door the Simpsons did nothing but make us feel like part of the family.

### Lifelong impact

Yes, I may be out on my own and no longer in care, but they are more of a family than my own has been. I keep in contact with the Simpsons. In fact, Jeff said that when the day comes for me to get married that he would give me away.

My point to all of this is that a good, loving, caring foster home can impact a child's life. Had they not cared the way they did for us then, I'm not sure I would be here writing this letter to you. I've had so many more chances in life, met new people, learned new things, advocated for other youth.

Had I not been placed in a good home the first time, I would have been in a group home waiting for the day I could age out.

You may not see things from our point of view, but I have seen good foster parents lose kids because the real parents "cleaned up," but that rips not only the kids up but the foster parents too. They get attached and it's as if they were losing their own kids. I guess what I'm asking is that you truly see what is going on and see what is best for not only the kids, but the foster parents as well."



# MOVIN' ON UP: SAVE THE DATES

*News for youth as they transition to adulthood*

Older youth are about to embark on a busy season with DCFS. The end of spring brings several special events designed to educate and encourage teens and young adults who are involved with DCFS.

The Division of Service Intervention is celebrating academic accomplishments with a graduation celebration in each DCFS region. Those youth in care or

those formerly under DCFS care who earned a high school diploma or GED or completed a vocational program are invited to attend.

There will also be four Youth Summits that will provide teens skills to help them successfully achieve self-sufficiency.

Save the date for the events listed below. More information will be

sent directly to families with youth ages 14 to 21 who are still in care. Youth who are adopted or in guardianship can also take part in the events by calling one of the support staff below.

**Cook/Northern regions**  
Tony Lawlor, 312-401-5462

**Central/Southern regions**  
Leshonda Rogers, 217-789-2908

### Central Region

*Graduation Celebration*  
June 8, 10a.m. - 3p.m.  
Executive Mansion  
Springfield

*Youth Summit*  
June 28, 8a.m. to 4p.m.  
Miller Park Pavilion  
Bloomington

### Cook Regions

*Graduation Celebration*  
June 29, 12 to 4p.m.  
Location TBA

*Youth Summit*  
June 14, 8a.m. to 4p.m.  
IL Institute of Technology  
Chicago

### Southern Region

*Graduation Celebration*  
June 22 (time TBA)  
Splash City  
Collinsville

*Youth Summit*  
June 21, 8a.m. to 4p.m.  
Kaskaskia College  
Centralia

### Northern Region

*Graduation Celebration*  
June 18, 1 to 4p.m.  
Brunswick Zone  
Aurora

*Youth Summit*  
June 15, 8a.m. to 4p.m.  
Kishwaukee College  
Malta

## Caregiver families invited to State Fair August 10-19 in Springfield

DCFS continues the annual tradition of offering caregivers a special invitation to attend the Illinois State Fair.

Complete and return this page by June 22 and in July you will receive by mail:

- A pass that includes parking and admission for all passengers in the car for one \$3 fee.
- 1 refreshment ticket for each family member, worth \$3 in food or drink.
- One ride ticket for each family member that provides unlimited rides for \$15 (during designated hours ONLY on August 13-17)

### MAIL OR FAX NO LATER THAN JUNE 22, 2012

**DCFS Office of Communications**  
406 East Monroe Street, Station 65  
Springfield, IL 62701-1498  
Fax: 217-524-0014

*Tickets may not be requested by telephone. Nothing will be sent to you unless you return this coupon. This is the only invitation to the state fair. Please act NOW if you wish to attend.*

There will be \_\_\_\_\_ family members in our party.

Number of vehicles \_\_\_\_\_ (limit 2)

(If requesting more than 8 tickets, please print the name and phone number of your licensing or subsidy worker.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Foster Home supervised by:  DCFS  private agency

Post Adoption/Guardianship:  yes  no

Name of Agency/DCFS Region: \_\_\_\_\_

Worker's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*We are a licensed foster family, relative caregiver, a guardianship family or have adopted a child through DCFS, and we would like to attend the 2012 Illinois State Fair. We understand that only our foster, adopted and guardianship children and family members who live in our home consistent with DCFS licensing regulations are eligible for these special offers.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



# Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council traveled to Effingham for the March meeting.

**Foster Parent Law:** The council concluded the evaluation process for the 2012 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. Several plans were nominated for special honors. Representatives from three foster care programs will join the June meeting to receive awards. Meanwhile, council members continued the on-site reviews at agencies to gauge the plans' impact on caregivers and staff.

**Television campaign:** The council had an opportunity to weigh in on the next installment of the public service commercials for the "Foster Kids Are Our

Kids" television campaign. Anne Klassman of Voices for Illinois Children said that the organization would consider recommendations the council made as it prepares for public roll out.

**Priority issues:** At the start of the year, Director Calica asked the council to look into ways to enhance the relationship between caregivers and the staff that support their efforts. The council formed a committee to address that need and will also develop a set of other critical issues.

**Elections:** Council members set the ballots for chair and vice chair. Results from the vote will be announced in June 8 meeting so terms can start in July.

*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 June 8 at 9 a.m. in Downers Grove.*

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



## *New phone line for post-adoption info calls*

Caregivers who have moved to permanency through adoption or guardianship can find answers to questions and information about services by calling a new phone line that serves the entire state.

The new phone line to the Call Center is 1(888) 96 ADOPT. This is the number to use with questions about the subsidy, to get approval for additional services and to provide updates to contact information or other changes.

The centralized system was first piloted in Cook County and many

**Post-Adoption & Guardianship  
toll-free phone line  
1-888-96-ADOPT  
(1-888-962-3678)**

benefits came to light early in the process. Calls can be directed to the right subsidy worker who can respond. Calls are also tracked to improve response time and to ensure that the matter is resolved.

"We are very pleased with the level of service and responsiveness that the new system provides our caregivers," said June Dorn, DCFS Statewide Adoption Administrator.

The direct line phone numbers for the subsidy workers are still in place. However, the new central number will come in handy if you do not know the exact individual who may be of help or if you have a general question about services after the adoption or guardianship.



*The DCFS Office of Caregiver and Parent Support and the DCFS Office of training presented the 2012 Caregiver Institutes. The theme was "I've Been Through Some Things," and focused on helping caregivers support children affected by trauma.*

*The six-hour sessions included panel discussion with youth, interactive presentations and time for networking. The four institutes served hundreds of families throughout the state.*

---

# Foster Parent Law defines caregivers' rights and responsibilities

Before 1995, the rights and responsibilities for the individuals providing foster care were not clearly defined. Without a clear job description, caregivers, agencies and DCFS had struggled in placing caregivers' rights and responsibilities within child welfare policy. It took a lengthy, coordinated effort from individual caregivers, foster care advocacy organizations, legislators, and child welfare personnel to bring about the Foster Parent Bill of Rights. That document provided the foundation for the Foster Parent Law, signed on June 3, 1995.

The Foster Parent Law clearly defines 15 rights and 17 responsibilities for all Illinois families who provide foster care to children in DCFS care. The statement of rights helps foster caregivers, agencies and DCFS regions know what role caregivers will play on the child welfare team and the consideration they should receive. The statement of responsibilities helps caregivers know what will be expected of them and gives a clear understanding of the general expectations they should have of the foster care agency or DCFS regional foster care program.

The Foster Parent Law also established the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council to advise DCFS about foster care issues. The council also has the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the Foster Parent Law.

Details and the full text of Foster Parent Law are included in the Foster Family Handbook. Caregivers can also request their foster care program's annual Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan to see how it upholds the Law. The DCFS Office of Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 can provide further information.

## Caregivers have the right to:

1. Be treated with dignity, respect and consideration
2. Be provided pre-service and appropriate ongoing training to improve skills
3. Be informed on how to receive supportive services from the agency
4. Receive timely financial reimbursement commensurate with child's service plan
5. Be provided a clear, written understanding of the plan concerning the child's placement and how it will support his family relationship and cultural identity
6. Fair, timely and impartial investigations of licensing complaints
7. Receive additional information to assist in the care of a child while in placement
8. Receive specific information from DCFS and private agencies listed in Children and Family Services Act and the Child Care Act of 1969
9. Be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings in order to participate in case planning and decision-making
10. Be provided, before placement, with any information a caseworker has that is pertinent to the child's care and the permanency plan
11. Receive written notice of any change in a child's case plan or of plans to terminate the child's placement, along with the reasons for the change or termination
12. Timely notification of court hearings and right to intervene or request mandamus
13. Be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parents re-enters DCFS care
14. Access the existing appeals process with the assertion that the appeal will be free from acts of harassment and retaliation.
15. Be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and the rights for foster parents when reporting misconduct by child welfare personnel

## Caregivers have the responsibility to:

1. Communicate and share information with the child welfare team
2. Respect the confidentiality of information about the child and his family
3. Advocate for children in the care of the foster parent
4. Treat the child and his or her family with dignity, respect and consideration
5. Recognize their individual and family strengths and limitations and to utilize appropriate supports as appropriate
6. Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations
7. Assess their ongoing training needs and take action to meet those needs
8. Strategize with agency representatives to avoid placement disruptions and support the child if disruption occurs
9. Recognize the impact of foster care on relationships and take steps to minimize stress as much as possible
10. Positively promote the benefits of foster parenting
11. Know the role, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the child, and the child's own family
12. Know and fulfill their role as a mandated reporter and know policies regarding allegations that foster parents have committed abuse or neglect
13. Know the purpose of and to participate in Administrative Case Reviews, client service plans and court proceedings
14. Know the child welfare agency's appeal process
15. Maintain accurate records
16. Share information about the placement with subsequent caregivers/parents
17. Provide care that respects the child's cultural needs supports the relationship between the child and his or her own family

## First-time parent finds her path through foster care and adoption

Marilea Stone grew up in a large family and envisioned a large family for herself. When her life did not follow the expected course of marriage and children, she decided on another path to share her life with children. That hope became reality through foster care and adoption.

Stone lives in Chillicothe and is now a part of a large extended family. She adopted two siblings from a group of nine. She has also cared for another sibling and may adopt. The other brothers and sisters are in adoptive homes or foster

homes that are moving toward adoption, so there are many branches on her new family tree.

“Marilea was young and had never parented before. It was a rude awakening. She has really grown as a single parent,” said her licensing worker Tamera Purham.

The growth came despite some setbacks along the way. The first children placed in her home could not stay long term after it was discovered that one child had high-end specialized medical needs. The children moved to another home. Fortunately, Stone did not lose hope, as there were more children in her future.

“Marilea is truly dedicated,” Purham said. “She bought a house and a van to accommodate the children she was caring for.”

Marilea says that she has received enough support from the system, but her main frustration is the system moving too slowly. If the goal is for a child to return home, she says she is on board. But, when a child needs to be adopted, that is when

she sees what she feels to be slow movement in the system.

Staying open minded is Stone’s recommendation to new foster parents. Dealing with children’s needs is time consuming. If you are planning on adopting, she stressed, it doesn’t happen over night. If the children are returning home, she says that you need to prepare yourself for the move. Still, she believes the rewards of foster care and adopting are special, “especially when you know that a child coming out of a troubled environment can now be raised in a good home.”

Marilea, who is a manager of a Subway restaurant, has realistic expectations for her children. “Life isn’t handed to you,” she said. “I want my kids to know that you need to work for things.”

That same work ethic applies to being a successful parent.



Marilea Stone and members of her growing family.

**“You need to be strong willed, be able to handle stressful situations with kids and be family oriented.”**

**Fostering is not about money. It will change your life.”**

– Foster Caregiver  
Marilea Stone

“You need to be strong willed, be able to handle stressful situations with kids and be family-oriented,” Stone said.

“Fostering is not about money. It will change your life. You need to have determination to follow through and be willing to persevere.”

## Message from Robert Blackwell DCFS Central Region Administrator

### May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month

For the past few weeks I have been anticipating my charge to deliver a message on the importance of the Caregivers of Central Region. So many aspects of providing care to “other people’s children” flood my mind that it can make a body dizzy.

The challenges caregivers face in opening their minds, hearts and homes to children whose lives hold deep suffering and, too often, dark secrets are many. Children, at the same time, just want someone to care about them. They don’t yet appreciate that mom and dad had worries about the rent and holding on to a “dead-end” job or that both parents have struggled off and on with substance abuse. These children only know that they want someone to care about them, just them. Caregivers face the tremendous and daily challenge to help these children work through their issues and meet them at their most sacred of places, the place where someone cares about me, and just me.

It strikes me that the bond that heals our children and that sets caregivers

apart from the rest of what is such a harsh and unforgiving world is the “right relationship.” The relationship between the caregiver and child creates the magic of a child’s transformation from pain and fear to trust and hope. In this important connection there is care and nurturance by the caregiver to the child. This care moves the child beyond control and distrust to a relationship of mutual trust, freedom and hope. This trust helps the child to see himself or herself worthy of not just the love of the caregiver, but of loving themselves enough to love and begin to trust others.

It is “right relationship” that forms the foundation of the caregiver/child’s bond and experience. It is this bond and the child’s experience that convinces them that someone truly cares about me, just me. This is the “grace” that ultimately saves the children.

And so, in my attempt to inspire you as Caregivers, we are once again instead, inspired by you.



## 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.

## Teens approaching adulthood get help planning for future after high school

After the excitement of spring graduation ceremonies dies down, the reality of college and work set in. DCFS Transition Manager Pat Palmer has scheduled sessions each month to help older youth begin to answer questions about life as an adult. The DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services has programs to help pay tuition, provide medical insurance, help pay for work uniforms and address other needs that come up as young people get established.

Appointments are available the third Monday of every month at the DCFS Peoria Field Office, 2001 N.E. Jefferson, in Peoria. Contact Palmer by phone (847)-888-7637 or by [patricia.palmer@illinois.gov](mailto:patricia.palmer@illinois.gov).

Most programs are available for youth who are still in DCFS care. There are some programs for youth who moved to adoption. Palmer can discuss eligibility details and other resources with the student and his or her caregiver. Young people who live in other parts of Central Region can contact the nearest regional office to connect with a Transition Manager.

**CORRECTION:** Central Connections Volume 2 incorrectly listed the phone number for the Vermilion County Complex Service Planning process. Families that are struggling with children’s intensive emotional or behavioral issues can call the Vermilion County Mental Health Board at 217-443-3500 or the Complex Service Coordinator at 217-474-1431.

---

## Central Region families find strength in numbers within groups

One of the responsibilities in the Foster Parent Law is to “Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations.” DCFS, private agencies and community organizations sponsor many support groups and associations to assist foster and adoptive parents. The following list can help identify a group that may suit your family. This list will be updated annually. Please contact the Editor Vanessa James at [vanessa.james@illinois.gov](mailto:vanessa.james@illinois.gov) with any corrections or additions for next year.

### Circle of Support

Contact: Elizabeth Richmond at 309-671-7919  
[elizabeth.richmond@illinois.gov](mailto:elizabeth.richmond@illinois.gov)  
Meets monthly. Call for schedule and location.  
Serves Peoria–area foster, adoptive, guardianship and relative caregiver families.  
Approved training credits. Call to register.

### DCFS Central Region Foster Care Advisory Council

Meets quarterly in various offices throughout the region. Call the Central Region Foster Parent Information Line for details at 866-368-5204.

### H.A.P.P.Y. FF Hancock-Adams-Pike Parent and Youth Foster Families

Call for schedule.  
Contact: Ron Eitel at (217) 885-3224 or by e-mail to [Rontammy1@earthlink.net](mailto:Rontammy1@earthlink.net)

### Healing Birth Family Support Group

Contact: Mary Wake at 309-671-0300 Ext. 285 or [mary.wake@lssi.org](mailto:mary.wake@lssi.org)  
Meets 3rd Thursday of the month at 6:00 p.m.  
3000 W. Rohmann, West Peoria

### Keeping the Promise- The Baby Fold Adoption Preservation Program

Contact: Stacy Parton at 309-454-1770  
[sparton@thebabyfold.org](mailto:sparton@thebabyfold.org)  
Serves families receiving adoption preservation services with Keeping the Promise.

### Land of Lincoln FAPA

Contact: Cindy Backstein at 217-498-8774 or [backstein@mchsi.com](mailto:backstein@mchsi.com)  
Call for more details.  
Serves Sangamon County

### Lutheran Social Services of IL- Adoptive Families Together

Contact: Susan Goble at 309-786-6400 x228  
Meets third Thursday from 6 - 7:30 p.m.  
At Trinity Lutheran Church 1330 13th Street, Moline  
Also meets on Saturdays in Galesburg. Call for details.  
Childcare is available with reservations. Snacks provided.

### Recruitment Development and Support (RDS)

Contact: Joyce Loy at 309-794-3575  
Meets third Tuesday at 9 a.m.  
DCFS Office, 500 42nd Street, Rock Island

### South Central Illinois Adoptive Parents Association (SCIAPA)

Contact: Karen deCastro at 217-793-9646, [www.sciapa.org](http://www.sciapa.org)  
5004 Manhattan Dr., Springfield  
Serves families in Sangamon, Christian, Macon, Montgomery, Morgan and Menard counties.

---

## Central Region Caregiver Training

### MAY/JUNE

Understanding and promoting  
preteen and teen development  
(6 Hours)

Bloomington  
Champaign

Module 2: Using discipline to  
protect, nurture and meet  
developmental needs (6 hours)

Springfield

*DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the Central region.*

*To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center (VTC) anytime at [www.DCFstraining.org](http://www.DCFstraining.org) or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during business hours. In addition to classroom courses, caregivers can also take advantage of videos, books and online training.*



## Illinois Families Now and Forever

Pat Quinn, Governor  
Richard H. Calica, DCFS Director  
Published by: DCFS Office of  
Caregiver and Parent Support

Editor: Vanessa James  
Phone: 312-814-6824  
Fax: 312-814-4131  
E-mail: [vanessa.james@illinois.gov](mailto:vanessa.james@illinois.gov)

Sponsor: Robert Blackwell, DCFS  
Central Regional Administrator

### Regional Reporter

Sam Saladino  
Peoria Field Office  
2001 NE Jefferson  
Peoria IL 61603  
Phone: 309-671-7921  
Fax: 309-671-7923  
E-mail: [Samuel.Saladino@illinois.gov](mailto:Samuel.Saladino@illinois.gov)

Graphics: Jenny Florent  
Produced 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, adoptive and guardianship families receiving subsidies. An electronic version is sent to all DCFS staff, and private agency staff.

Material may not be reprinted in whole, in part or in any form whatsoever without permission from the Editor or DCFS. Opinions expressed by experts writing articles are no substitute for professional answers or opinions about a family's or child's specific situation. Consult a competent professional for answers to your specific questions.

Department of Children and Family Services©

Illinois Families Now and Forever  
Vanessa James, Editor  
Department of Children & Family Services  
100 West Randolph - 6th Floor  
Chicago, Illinois 60601

PRESRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
SPRINGFIELD, IL  
PERMIT NO. 763

### Inside this issue:

- Page 1 Illinois Celebrates Foster Parent Appreciation Month
- Page 2 Movin' on Up: Upcoming Events
- Page 3 Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin
- Page 4 Your Foster Parent Law Rights and Responsibilities
- Pages 5-6 *CENTRAL CONNECTIONS*: Regional News
- Page 7 Central Region Foster Parent Group Directory  
Central Region Training Information

Current and back issues of *Illinois Families Now and Forever* are available online in English and Spanish at [www.state.il.us/dcfs](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs)