



# Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship®

## Council honors outstanding Foster Parent Law plans

As the calendar closed on May being designated as Foster Parent Appreciation month, there was still one more celebration in store. On June 8, the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council bestowed awards to three outstanding foster care programs. Each year council members receive and score each Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan that every foster care agency and DCFS regional program must submit. The members follow a tool developed to discern how the foster care programs measure up against the rights and responsibilities outlined in the Law. All 62 plans made the cut as acceptable. For an exceptional plan, council members can go beyond the score to nominate it for special recognition in one of three categories:

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

This year the Council selected two plans that stood out for “dignity and respect” and one for “organization/user-friendliness.” Administrators and foster caregivers from each of the programs came to the Council’s June meeting to accept their award.

“It is important that we recognize the programs that are doing right by foster parents. We appreciate the way they approach their plans seriously, because that means they take the needs of caregivers seri-



### **ASSOCIATION HOUSE: DIGNITY AND RESPECT**

Chair Angela Barber (far L) and Denise Gonzales, DCFS Chief of Staff (far R) congratulated the Association House foster care program, represented by Carlos McFarlane, Supervisor; Roschone Rogers, caregiver; and Tina Leeson, Plan Liaison.

ously,” said council chair Angela Barber.

Attention to detail and the importance of clear expectations were apparent in the plan the DCFS Cook Central Region developed with caregivers. The Council recognized the plan for organization/user-friendliness. The language was concise, to the point and easy to understand. The package was well-labeled and covered all topics thoroughly.

Association House of Chicago rose to the top for the way that the agency communicates with caregivers, including 24-hour contact with agency staff. Caregivers can give their input through quarterly quality surveys. Copies of the implementation plan were hand-

delivered to those who could not attend the meeting where it was presented.

DCFS Northern Region’s plan stood apart in how the licensing staff develops a bi-annual training plan and supports foster caregivers so they get training specific to their individual needs.

“These three programs set the bar for how we expect all of the agencies and DCFS regions to treat families. That bar is high, but that is exactly the level of service that our foster families deserve,” said Director Calica.

The Council will be gearing up for the next round of Foster Parent Law Implementation plans due this fall.

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## From the DCFS Director

Richard H. Calica

As the end of the summer draws near, I imagine that you and your children are preparing for the coming school year.



School is a most important part of every child's life – it is their adult equivalent of work. Children learn many things in school besides the content taught in their classrooms. They learn if adults value them and have the positive expectations that they can succeed. They learn if adults have the hope and belief that they will grow up to be successful and productive. They learn the rules necessary for collaboration with their classmates in games, sports and school projects. They learn if they can have a positive effect on their environment; if they will be valued for succeeding; or if they will be viewed as failures.

In solid, well-functioning families, school is usually the center of the family's universe. Vacations are planned around it. Activities are planned so that there is enough time for studying and homework. Expectations are communicated in terms of acceptable levels of performance and limits are

set on when and if children can play in relation to whether their school work is done. And finally, open school week is the time when children deal with how their teachers view them and what their teachers tell their parents about their performance and worth. Hopefully, underneath all of this, is the basic message that the way to have a positive effect on the world and to succeed is to apply yourself at school and to do the best that you can to learn about yourself, others, and the challenges and joys that each of us deal with in our daily lives; and how to think about and solve problems of increasing complexity.

Your job as foster parents is a most difficult one. You have accepted the responsibility to temporarily care for someone else's child. This child is most likely dealing with past traumas and the aftermath of abuse or neglect along with the pain of being separated from their families. These special issues make the challenges that school presents even more difficult for our children. Please remember that unconditional positive regard, support along with achievable expectations and helping your child find something they value and are good at so that they can have the experience of succeeding are the most important ways you can help them do well.

Thank you for being our partner in caring for these children while we work to assure that they will have a permanent and stable living situation where they are loved, protected, admired and cared for.

### DCFS COOK CENTRAL REGION: ORGANIZATION/USER-FRIENDLINESS

Council Chair Angela Barber (far left) and Denise Gonzalez, DCFS Chief of Staff (far right) celebrated the award winning plan with the Regional Administrator, staff from Cook Central and caregivers who represent the region on the advisory council.



### DCFS NORTHERN REGION: DIGNITY AND RESPECT

Council Chair Angela Barber (far left) and Denise Gonzalez, DCFS Chief of Staff (far right) congratulate John Ellison, DCFS Licensing; Robyn Harvey, caregiver; Debbie Freke, caregiver; Colleen Woolwine, DCFS Licensing; and Frank Navarro, Acting Regional Administrator



## Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan: *What's in it for caregivers?*

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

- provide training
- handle grievances
- conduct financial reimbursements to caregivers
- convey information about the child
- provide needed services

Implementation plans should be developed with caregivers. Many programs set meetings each fall specifically so caregivers can contribute to the draft. Contact your agency's or DCFS region's Foster Parent Law Liaison or DCFS regional advisory council for more information.



# Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin

For the May meeting the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council diverted its regular agenda to allow time to sit down with parents who have or had DCFS cases. This is the third year that council members have split a meeting with the Partnering With Parents summit for the seven birth parent councils outside of Cook County.

The council for foster parents started the day with a business meeting that focused on fleshing out the priorities determined by the Critical Issues Committee. These included strengthening the relationship between licensing representative and caregivers, the increasing time for adoptions to progress to finalization and the need for improved diligent search for potential placements with relatives. The council will develop recommendations and present them as Director Calica requested.

The group took a break in their agenda to join the Partnering with Parents group in a Parent Cafe. The cafe approach is a way allow caregivers to discuss parenting challenges and their feelings about foster care in a safe, non-judging venue. After a series of questions that were led by a facilitator trained by Strengthening Families

of Illinois, there was time to enjoy lunch with parents and caregivers together. Both groups came away with a respect for the other's role and an understanding of the ways their situations are similar.

After lunch, Denise Gonzales the newly appointed DCFS chief of staff, spoke of the administration's focus on realigning the organization, working on the relationships with all the parties that DCFS serves and listening to learn what works and what needs to be fixed. The council looks forward to the outcome of a meeting she agreed to have to discuss the foster parent support specialist program. As a caregiver herself, Gonzales brought a well-rounded perspective to the discussion.



Caregiver Robyn Harvey, a facilitator for Strengthening Families, led a joint discussion during a Parent Cafe.

## *Advice to be ready as students head back to school*

The DCFS Education Advisors have a few reminders to help caregivers get ready for the start of a new school year.

- School districts are required to provide students with copies of school discipline policies and to provide copies of discipline procedures upon request. Be sure to review the policies with the children.
- Contact the education advisor's office in your region for assistance with enrollment, suspension and expulsion issues.
- At any time a child is suspended more than twice in a semester the caseworker and caregiver should meet with the school and develop an Response to Intervention (RtI) plan or revise a behavior plan for

the student.

- Any student who faces expulsion can be ensured legal representation through the DCFS Guardian's Office.
- The application for free or reduced price school meals (commonly referred to as the free lunch form). Students who have an open DCFS case will automatically qualify for free meals. However, once a child moves to adoption, his or her case is closed; there is no longer an automatic qualification.

The education advisors are able to help all DCFS supervised homes and families that have moved to adoption. Call the nearest regional office to get connected. Many private agencies also have education liaisons for their families.

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 September 21 in Bloomington.

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

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## Head back to school with a healthy report from doctor and dentist

As students head back to school with fresh pencils and notebooks, they also need to go in good health with up-to-date dental and medical exams.

### Health Exam forms due by October 15

The state of Illinois requires school children to have a current physical (within the past year) and to be current with immunizations when they are:

- entering an Illinois school for the first time at any age
- starting kindergarten
- entering the sixth grade
- entering the ninth grade

A lead screening is required for young children entering daycare, preschool and kindergarten. Children entering kindergarten or first grade also must be immunized against chicken pox/varicella. In areas of high incidences of tuberculosis (TB) a TB skin test is required as part of the physical exam. Talk with the child's doctor to see what is required.

Completed Certificate of Child Health Examination” forms, signed by the physician, should be given to the school nurse where the child is enrolled. Give a copy to

the child's caseworker, and keep a copy for the home record. According to state law, children who do not have a current physical or shots by October 15 will not be allowed to continue attending school until they have received the care and their record is updated.

### Eye and dental exams required

All students entering kindergarten (or starting an Illinois school for the first time) must also have an eye exam performed by a licensed optometrist or a medical doctor who performs eye examinations. This required examination is beyond the screenings that are often part of a regular physical or are sometimes provided at the school. The Eye Exam form should be turned in to the school by October 15. Students without this exam will not be excluded from school, but report cards could be withheld. Additionally, state law requires that Illinois children in Kindergarten, second and sixth grades have dental examinations by a licensed dentist. Caregivers must present proof of examination before May 15 of the current school year. If not, the school may hold second and sixth grade report cards until receiving proof that the exam took place or will happen within 60 days of May 15. Call the DCFS Office of Health Policy at 217-557-2689 with questions.

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## Whooping cough outbreak calls for more shots

Last fall, there were wide spread reports about an outbreak of whooping cough, otherwise known as Pertussis infection. Young children are especially at risk because they will not be fully immunized until six months of age. Complicating the situation is new evidence that the DPT/DTaP immunization doses completed for younger children weaken after about ten years and require an additional dose. Without an additional immunization, pre-teens and adolescents could be at risk.

### NEW: Tdap shot for upper grades

Any child entering sixth grade must show proof of receiving one dose of Tdap (defined as Tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis) vaccine regardless of when they

may have had their last DTaP, DT or Td dose. Also, this school year, students entering grades seven through 12 who did not already receive a Tdap after their 11th birthday are required to receive one Tdap dose regardless of the interval since the last DTaP, DT or Td dose.

### Adult immunizations recommended

In light of the pertussis outbreak sweeping the country, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that adults receive a Td or Tdap immunization every ten years. DCFS encourages adults who are caring for children talk to their physicians about how to stay up to date with immunizations for their own health and that of children in the home.

*New cuts to the Illinois Medicaid program passed at the end of May. Some changes will directly affect children qualified for Medicaid. These include:*

- Utilization controls on durable medical equipment (DME) e.g. oxygen, diabetic supplies, nebulizers
- Utilization controls on home health services, such as limits on approved in-home nursing hours or reimbursement rates and periodic re-evaluation based on medical necessity
- Limit adult and children's prescriptions to four per month; can be increased based on prior authorization or other specialty drug/condition exception
- Prior approval on wheelchair repairs
- Limit on incontinence supplies – from 300 to 200 per month

*For more information concerning these changes, contact the DCFS Office of Health Services at 217-557-2689.*

## Central Region Education Advisors on call to settle school issues

With the start of a new school year on the horizon, Central Region caregivers should know they have a powerful resource ready to help with education issues. Through a partnership with Northern Illinois University, the DCFS/NIU education advisors advocate for youth in care and also work with adoptive and guardianship families.

The Education Advisors can assist with the assessments and Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for special education. When there are behavioral issues, they can work out an intervention with the school. They can answer caregivers' questions and attend school meetings with them. They will help caregivers and caseworkers obtain appropriate educational services for the children. They also will help

caregivers plan for education after high school.

With the background of working in or with schools before joining DCFS, Education Advisors know how to navigate the system. They understand school issues including special education, attendance policies, discipline and a host of other concerns. They recognize and empathize with the frustrations and needs of both the education and child welfare systems, making them invaluable advocates. They advocate effectively because they know what children have the right to expect from schools. Since every school can have a slightly different way of doing things, it helps to have an Education Advisor sitting beside the caregiver as you both advocate for the student.

### DCFS Education Advisors for Central Region

Mary Chepulis  
DCFS Springfield Sub-region  
217-782-4000 or 217-557-3985

Deseree Edwards  
DCFS Peoria Sub-region  
309-671-7952

Ann Wells  
DCFS Champaign Sub-region  
217-875-6568

The education advisors are able to help all DCFS supervised homes and families that have moved to adoption. Call the nearest regional office to get connected. Many private agencies also have education liaisons to support their families.

## *Personalized brochure helps teachers appreciate what makes a child so special*

Jamie Capitelli, a parent who also works with the Child and Family Connections organization in Peoria, spent time thinking of ways she could introduce her special needs child to her new teacher. She came up with a very successful and creative idea that other families may find useful. She created a brochure all about her daughter, Hannah, that helped personalize her and helped the teacher to understand more of who Hannah is.

The brochure describes Hannah as a girl who likes to sing, is determined, and friendly. She needs verbal prompts and a praise system to be successful. She is involved in soccer and an after-school program. There is also a section of the brochure where parents can ask questions of the teacher. In Hannah's case, some of the questions were about how Hannah would be tested

and what modifications she might need. Hannah's brochure has helped her teachers understand more about Hannah, anticipate her needs, solved some issues before they became problems, and contributed to a positive partnership between parent and teacher.

Capitelli is now leading a workshop at Child and Family Connections to help other parents create a brochure about their child. There are several worksheets that can help caregivers figure out what the brochure should say. It could include pictures of your child and family in a brightly colored brochure. Computers are available so everyone can leave with a finished product.

All caregivers may attend the workshop. Contact Jamie Capitelli at 309-999-7002.

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## Grant brings new services to Livingston Co.

Livingston County was one of three counties in Illinois to receive a grant from the Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation. The grant brought together a collaboration of service providers now known as the Livingston County Children's Network (LCCN).

The LCCN established its vision that "families across Livingston County will utilize and value a comprehensive continuum of services to promote children's social and emotional development which will, in turn, effectively reduce the at-risk behaviors and strengthen relationships."

LCCN can work with foster families on several fronts. The organization can arrange intensive, effective mental health services in a setting convenient for the family.

For the younger children they perform early childhood screenings and provide any developmental services that maybe required for children up to age five. LCCN can connect foster families to medical and mental health providers that can encourage positive parenting practices. All have been trained to offer these classes on an individual basis, developed around the individual needs. Additionally, youth in foster care who are involved with the juvenile court system within Livingston County will be screened for mental health needs and provided case management assistance.

To learn more about the services available through LCCN, Livingston County residents can call 815/844-7708 or send an email to [mandy@lcmhb.com](mailto:mandy@lcmhb.com).

## 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.*

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## DCFS foster care programs honor caregivers across region in May

The month of May spurred many the child welfare professionals to go beyond their stated duties to show appreciation to caregivers through events and activities. Following are recaps of some of the Central Region foster care programs' events.

### Bloomington

Staff from the Bloomington field office sponsored an appreciation dinner for the foster families they serve. Caregivers and children gathered at the Heartland Community Church in Normal. There were activities to keep the youth entertained and they enjoyed a kid-friendly meal. Meanwhile, the adults dined and heard remarks from a youth formerly in care who is now a caseworker. Also

a childcare provider delivered a musical tribute to honor the caregivers.

### Peoria

Peoria foster families extended the celebration of Foster Parent Appreciation Month into June with a picnic. Foster caregivers and their children shared a feast with DCFS staff. The event included donated gift baskets and entertainment for their children. The entire sub-region deserves thanks for the time and effort they put forth to make families served by DCFS in the Peoria area feel special.

### Springfield

Caregivers and caseworkers spent time together at a May celebration.

The staff that supports the foster care program in the Springfield sub-region volunteered many hours to plan a celebratory dinner to honor caregivers. Along with the food and fun activities, caregivers appreciated the opportunity to be together in a relaxing environment.



*Families line up for food at the Peoria Appreciation Picnic*

## Central Region Training

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.

## DCFS Lending Library closed for redesign until Fall 2012

The Lending Library is unavailable as of July 1. This break will allow the Office of Training to revamp the program and roll it out fresh this fall. Meanwhile, caregivers may find many of the DCFS Lending Library books in their local libraries. Contact the Central Regional Training Manager, Sharva Hampton-Campbell at 217-278-5563 for more details on other training options and ways to earn training credit hours.

## A family for me: Call AICI at 800-572-2390 for more information



**Andre [7765]** Andre, 11, is an honest and expressive young man who is always able to tell you what is on his mind. Although he can act out at times, his overall behavior is good. Andre interacts well with his peers and is always willing to share with his fellow students. He loves to stay active and spends a lot of time skateboarding, playing basketball, and playing football. He also likes to paint, draw, listen to music, and attend church.

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. The forever family for Andre would be able to provide a structured home for Andre, complete with well-defined rules and boundaries. You can spend lots of time with him, and assure him that he is loved. You can also work with Andre's teachers and support staff to ensure he receives the educational and emotional support he needs. Andre would like to join an active family that has a dog and enjoys spending time outside. He should be the youngest child in his adoptive home.



**John [7944]** John, 13, is a sociable young man who enjoys helping others. He has struggled with following directions in the past, but has made significant strides in this regard to the point where he does not usually have to be asked to do something twice. John is also an active child who likes playing sports and recently earned a yellow belt in karate. In his spare time, he enjoys playing video games.

John's teachers and helpers both report that he has made significant improvements in his behavior, and is generally positive, responsive, and independent. Potential parents for John should be patient with John, and willing to demonstrate your commitment to him on a regular basis. You can provide lots of structure and supervision, and redirect his behavior when necessary. You can also make sure John maintains contact with members of his birth family, including his sister, grandparents, and aunts. The ideal family would consist of two parents who live in central Illinois. Other children in the home should be older than John.



**Latrice [7840]** Latrice, 15, 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. Latrice 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. The right family for Latrice is one that can also 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.



**Marshae [7891]** Get ready to have fun, because Marshae is a happy, energetic child who loves being around people. She is very talkative, and can hold a conversation with anyone. Marshae, 7, seeks attention on a regular basis, and sometimes needs to be reminded of the difference between positive and negative attention. When she is not socializing, she enjoys watching television, riding her bicycle, and playing outside.

Marshae's worker says she is a bright child who loves to learn. Prospective parents should be able to spend lots of time with Marshae. You can work with doctors and nurses to make sure her ongoing medical needs are met. You can also help Marshae maintain relationships with the important people in her life, including her current foster parent. The ideal family would include a strong female role-model. Marshae should be the only child in her adoptive home or, if this is not possible, the youngest child. A St. Louis-area family is preferred, so Marshae can continue to see her long-time medical providers.

Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 800-572-2390, or see the AICI Web site – [www.adoptinfo-il.org](http://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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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.

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