Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship®

College opportunities knock for youth in DCFS care

DCFS Scholarship applications due 3/31

DCFS annually provides 48 college scholarships to youth who are currently under the 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 this school year. Scholarship Program Student Applications (CFS 438) are available now. Students should carefully select three individuals (non-family members) to write helpful letters of recommendation. They will need to gather their high school transcript from the school and an ACT/SAT test score report. They will also write a compelling personal statement with the reasons why they are the best candidate for the scholarship. Everything must be submitted by March 31.

A review committee will evaluate the applications and make selections based on academic accomplishments, community service and the personal statement.

Contact the youth's caseworker or call DCFS at 312-814-5959 for more information.

Students planning to attend college will likely apply for financial aid. The first step to qualify 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. The FAFSA student section asks the question "At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?" A youth in foster care or subsidized guardianship can answer yes and would automatically qualify as an independent student. Similarly, youth who left DCFS care through adoption after age 13, can also answer yes and the adoptive parents' income would not factor in the aid decision. Students should talk to their guidance counselors and college financial aid advisors for more specific details.

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 DCFS at 312-814-5959.

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.

Fastweb scholarship search
www.fastweb.com

FAFSA 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

From the DCFS Director

Richard H. Calica

Dear Friends,

Thank you again for your extraordinary dedication to the children of our state. Despite some challenges, 2012 was a year of many successes for child welfare in Illinois, and I am confident that with your continued help, 2013 will be even better.

To keep us all moving forward, lawmakers must restore $25 million in cuts to the DCFS staff budget. Those funds are critical to a reorganization plan which includes: expanding our child abuse investigation teams; reducing shelter stays through new specialists to recruit foster parents; and shortening time in foster care through new permanency staff dedicated to achieving reunification or adoption.

DCFS is also asking lawmakers to restore $13 million in cuts to adoption subsidies for families who adopted through DCFS and counseling, drug treatment and other supportive services for families in our Intact Families Program. These two programs are critical to our efforts to ensure that every child has the safe, nurturing and permanent family they deserve.

I hope you will remind your family, friends, neighbors and elected officials of the importance of the work that you, the department and our nonprofit partners are doing together and urge them to support it.

MOVIN' ON UP: *Youth moving to adulthood*

Under the DCFS Youth and Family Development Office there are several education and employment programs for older youth who are still in DCFS custody. However, youth who achieved permanency through adoption or guardianship are eligible to apply for the DCFS Scholarship program (see page 1) and the Education and Training Voucher is available to youth adopted after age 16. For further information, DCFS has Transition Coordinators assigned to each DCFS region. These individuals can help youth and their families explore different educational and employment resources. Contact them at the nearest regional office or call 312-814-5959.

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 23. 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 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 GED
- Be under court-ordered responsibility of DCFS
- Complete Casey Life 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 at least 20 hours/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 completing 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

From the Editor

Vanessa James

As editor, I typically prefer stay behind the scenes, but at least once a year I figure I should let you see there is a real person, parenting and producing the newsletter.

A dozen years ago, I got a call looking for leads to replace the retiring editor. The search was on for a person who could write and who did foster care. With five kids at home and a demanding public relations career, that cold call opened up a new professional path for me. In the 12 years since, my family has grown through birth, adoption and foster care to independence. We have had some bumpy transitions and celebrated returns home. Now the "kids" are all in their 20's and building lives for themselves. Our oldest daughter by birth is applying to colleges. The baby that was baking when I started this job is almost a teenager.

I share these personal milestones to give you some insight into what you will be reading in the year ahead. The articles we present in the newsletter reflect some of my experiences and so much more. My supervisor and teammates at DCFS have logged more than 90 combined years of foster care and adoption. The regional reporters have all done foster care or have supported foster families for years. Before every issue we put our heads together to determine what there is about foster care and adoption that needs clarifying, what isn't being talked about and what information could make this unique type of parenting a bit easier for families.

At a time where everyone is expected to do more with less, this newsletter demonstrates the commitment the DCFS administration makes to all of us. Personally, I find it is a privilege to play a small part in providing this resource to you. I am grateful for the support at the highest levels, the contributions from topic experts and the efforts of the design and production teams. Even more, I thank you for reading, for inspiring new content and for all you do for children.

Have a fabulous 2013 where many dreams are fulfilled or hope continues to flame until they do.

Vanessa

DCFS receives grant for trauma treatment to promote permanency

DCFS has been awarded a federal grant to help improve rates of reunification, adoption and subsidized guardianship for youth who are at risk of long term foster care. The grant is known as the Permanency Innovations Initiative in Illinois (PII, pronounced like "Pie.") PII has the goal to help youth gain control of their trauma-related reactions and form stronger relationships with their caregivers through a trauma-informed therapy, thereby leading to increased rates of timely permanency for youth in care.

The PII project will target youth ages 11-16 in traditional, relative, and specialized foster homes throughout the state of Illinois who, upon reaching the two-year anniversary of entering care, are experiencing mental health symptoms and/or have had at least one placement change. The intervention, Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET), is a strength-based approach to education and therapy for youth, foster parents, and when appropriate birth parents who have been affected by trauma or experience a high level of stress related to being in care.

The PII project will be evaluated in partnership with local universities. About 650 youth will participate in the study. To test the effectiveness of the intervention, half of the youth enrolled in the study will receive the TARGET intervention in addition to services as usual; the other half will only receive services as usual. For those receiving TARGET, researchers will explore whether there are improvements in how youth manage their emotions and behaviors, and whether foster parents improve their skills in understanding and helping youth with emotional and behavioral difficulties. Also, the study will identify if the TARGET intervention results in increased contact between a youth and their parents. One hoped for long-term outcome for this study is to increase the timeliness of permanency for youth.

The PII project will run for the next two years. Foster caregivers with a child who is eligible for the study will be contacted by their caseworker and research staff. Caregiver cooperation and participation is critical. If TARGET proves to be effective, more therapists will be trained to do TARGET in Illinois, and greater numbers of youth in care will be eligible for TARGET treatment in the future.

Caregivers who have questions or would like additional information about the PII project, can contact the PII Project Coordinator, Jennifer O'Brien, by e-mail at j-obrien2@northwestern.edu or by phone at 630-301-8108.

Earned Income Tax Credit and other tax benefits ready for caregivers

The decision to support children through foster care and adoption can bring benefits as tax time approaches. Caregivers may qualify for valuable tax benefits, if the child in foster care meets these requirements:

- is under age 19 or age 24 for students (A child with disabilities qualifies at any age.)
- lived with you for more than half of the tax year.
- related to you – If placed by an authorized agency or by judgment or decree, that child meets the relationship requirement. Relationship also includes grandchildren, as well as siblings, nieces, and nephews.
- child cannot have provided over half of his own support (State board payments are not considered support provided by the child.)

Earned Income Tax Credit

The federal credit for low-income, working families can be as much as $5,891 - $442 for the state of Illinois. To qualify:

- the household income must be under $36,000 - $50,000, depending on family size.
- you must have earned income–usually wages or self-employment. In some cases taxable disability benefits qualify as earned income.

Dependency Exemption

This lowers your income tax, as well as leading to other benefits:

- *child tax credit* – up to $1,000 per child under age 17
- *child care credit* – for working parents
- *education credits* – based on out-of-pocket college expenses
- *head of household filing status* – for unmarried parents

Charitable Deductions

If you itemize deductions – and most homeowners do – you may be able to deduct unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses to care for your foster child.

Adoption Tax Credit

New legislation made the Adoption Tax Credit permanent. An adoptive family can claim adoption expenses up to the maximum amount allowed under the credit $12,650. Families with incomes under $189,710 are eligible for the full credit which then diminishes gradually at higher incomes. However, beginning with the 2012 tax year, it is no longer refundable and can only be used to offset tax liability. In some cases, an unused credit can be carried to future tax years.

Be sure to explore these areas yourself or with your tax preparer. Additionally, the Center for Economic Progress provides free tax preparation services for families with income under $50,000.

To find a location, go to: www.economicprogress.org.

Register for DCFS training to promote youth's sexual health

A new training focusing on the sexual health of children and adolescents will be piloted in February. Too often this important topic is avoided because it can be difficult to find the right words or provide accurate information. This new training will make sure that caregivers, parents and staff get trained together on the factors that can affect a child's sexual health. They will learn how to talk openly with children about what is at stake and how to put children on a path toward long-term well being.

The course will be delivered in two three-hour sessions. The training was made possible through a federal grant. To design the curriculum, young people from the Youth Advisory Board, members of the Statewide Foster Care Council and staff who work with youth offered ideas about what the course should cover. It will use the co-trainer model, where the instructors will be a DCFS staff trainer with a foster parent/trainer.

Marion February 2 and 9 at 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Bloomington February 2 and 9 at 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Chicago February 5 and 12 at 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

To register for the course, log in to the Virtual Training Center (VTC) at www.dcfstraining.org or call the DCFS Registration Line at 877-800-3393 during business hours.

Free respite programs ease adoption pressures at home

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

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, Christian, Clark, Cumberland, Coles, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Livingston, Macon, northern Macoupin, McLean, Menard, Montgomery, Moultrie, Piatt, Sangamon and 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

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
Vermilion County

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, Macoupin, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair and Washington counties

Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council recently completed scoring the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. In addition to judging the plans on paper, each year the council, working with the DCFS Agency Performance Teams, actually visits one third of the agencies for on-site reviews. The Council also requires telephone surveys with a set number of randomly selected foster caregivers to give another perspective on how the implementation plan translates into the agency's interaction with caregivers.

This year the council members will conduct reviews at the following private agency and DCFS foster care programs:

Arden Shore Child & Family Services
Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center
Center for Youth and Family Solutions
Chaddock Child and Family
Child Link
Children's Home Association of Illinois
Christian Social Services of Illinois
DCFS Central Region
DCFS Cook County Region
Easter Seals Joliet Region, Inc.
Family Core
Generations of Hope
Envision Unlimited
Hephzibah Children's Association
Hoyleton Youth & Family Services
Jewish Children and Family Services
Lawrence Hall Youth Services
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
Shelter, Inc.
U-CAN
Unity Parenting Services

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 15 in Bloomingdale at 9 a.m.

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

Be Strong Families strengthens foster homes

Foster caregivers can keep their families fabulously strong while they provide care for children in their home. Be Strong Families/ Strengthening Families Illinois is working with DCFS regions, private agencies and foster caregivers throughout the state to support families. Families grow stronger when they focus on the six protective factors:

1. Be Strong & Flexible
2. Parents Need Friends
3. Being a Great Parent Is Part Natural & Part Learned
4. We All Need Help Sometimes
5. Parents Need to Help Their Children Communicate
6. Give Your Children the Love & Respect They Need

Foster caregivers can take part in Foster Parent Cafés and other innovative, transformational and fun trainings. Through these opportunities, caregivers can meet new friends, learn positive foster-parenting techniques, and reinforce their confidence. Find useful information and join the conversation virtually at www.bestrong-fosterparents.com and on the Be Strong Foster Parents page on Facebook. Contact Robyn Harvey at 815-793-5847 or e-mail Robyn@bestrongfamilies.net.

Get digital delivery

Many caregivers have decided to skip the paper and request electronic versions of the newsletter, Illinois Families Now and Forever.

When you move to the online version, you still receive all the same valuable information with more benefits. It comes faster, is easier to file, saves money and protects the environment.

To make the switch, send an email to vanessa.james@illinois.gov (there is a dot before "james") Be sure to include your name and mailing address. We will stop the hard copies and send you an e-mail each time a new issue is ready to read online.

Central Connections

News for Central Region Families

2013 - Vol. 1

Knobloch's foster care experience starts slowly then takes off

It took 12 years for the Knobloch's to build their family through birth, foster care and adoption.

Deanne and Jay Knobloch live in Edelstein, an unincorporated village North of Peoria. Jay is a farmer and Deanne, a former special education teacher, runs a preschool out of her home three days a week. They were licensed for foster care more than a dozen years ago, but only recently have had children placed with them due to several unexpected developments.

Deanne has roots in foster care. As a teenager she would babysit for her aunt, who was licensed for foster care. When Deanne and Jay married, their first baby died at less than a week old and they were told that the odds were one in four that future babies would have the same medical condition. They got licensed with the intent of building their family through foster care. However, after gaining their license, the Knoblochs beat the odds. In the next 12 years, they had four healthy daughters by birth, but did not forget about foster care. When their girls ranged in age from 7 to 14, they had the first child placed in their home. She was an 18-month-old girl who was successfully reunited with her family after four months.

They had started foster care with the understanding that they would not adopt. However, when they received their next child, a three-day-old baby girl, they chose a different path. Her adoption was completed in September of 2012. Now there are five girls in the home, and Jay is resolved with being the lonely male in the house.

The family is still adjusting to the new challenges of having a little one. Their youngest daughter came with many health issues. Deanne said she did not sleep for the first 16 months. The child had an immature nervous system, tremors, ear infections, and a sensitive digestive system, which contributed to her restlessness. They are also anticipating other medical conditions that may not appear until she is older. Deanne said that they have a great extended family and that Jay has been her rock in helping her meet all of the baby's health requirements.

There are also other important needs to attend to. Their new daughter has eight siblings who are or were in DCFS care. It was complicated managing visits with her birth mother and other family members. The Knoblochs admit that they had "emotions all over the board," as the mother's case worked its way through to the eventual termination of parental rights. Meanwhile, they also were in close contact with four of the siblings. Now that their daughter's case is closed, visits are no longer required, but Deanne and Jay believe it is important to continue the contact. They are committed even as the other children also transition to permanent families.

Even though the Knobloch's plan for foster care initially stalled and then took some unexpected turns, they aren't looking back. Deanne and Jay recommend that to be a good foster/adoptive parent "you need to be flexible, loving and open-hearted. Educate yourself and be an advocate for your child, even if it means standing up to other people."

Customer 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 calls can be about issues or concerns that caregivers have not been able to resolve through normal channels. 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 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.

Holiday festivities spread fun to families across Central Region

There was plenty of holiday fun happening across the Central Region as staff from many DCFS offices celebrated with the families they support. What follows is a sampling of the spirit of giving.

The administration would like to thank all of the staff volunteers who donated their time and effort to plan each of the holiday events. The numerous donations of gifts and food from the community is very appreciated as well.

The Urbana field office hosted an open house for children on December 29. There were gifts and goody bags given out by Santa Claus. Local court personnel, CASA, and community organizations donated cookies and gifts for the kids. Punch and snacks were also served.

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The Rock Island Field Office sponsored their second Annual Holiday Open House for foster families and community partners (police departments, state agencies in the area and private agencies). Over 35 family guests and community partners attended. Staff in the office participated in a door decorating contest. Guests voted on doors that were decorated as ginger bread houses, Santa's workshop and even a Christmas tree with presents.

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A Christmas party for the Springfield area children and their foster families was held on December 8. The children received a present from Santa. There was face painting, balloon animals and lunch provided.

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The Quincy field office Christmas Party for foster parents, staff, and children was held at the Quincy Senior Resource Center on November 30. There were 130 in attendance. The food and gifts for children were donated by the Quincy Exchange Club.

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Staff in the Carlinville/Jerseyville field office hosted a Christmas party on December 1, and it was a tremendous success. There were 42 in attendance including foster parents, youth and staff.

***

Bad weather with heavy fog couldn't stop the holiday fun in Jacksonville. Nearly 30 children, caregivers and staff made it to the Holiday party on December 7 to enjoy food and fun.

Central Transition Coordinator preps older youth for adulthood

Gail Simpson, one of four DCFS Transition Coordinators, is responsible for providing information to Central Region youth as they transition out of care onto the path to adulthood. She also shares information with workers, foster caregivers and others, regarding the various programs available through the DCFS Youth and Family Development Office.

Several important youth programs have recently been enhanced. The Life Skills Program was revamped to ensure that older youth have practical information to prepare for adulthood. Youth at age 14 should begin the process by taking the Casey Life Skills Assessment. Next, life skills courses are provided by the social service agency SICCM. Youth with open DCFS foster care cases will learn financial planning, health and personal care, educational success and career planning in preparation for their life after DCFS care.

In addition to these programs Simpson can help youth (in foster care or post-adoption) with school matters, the DCFS scholarship program and employment opportunities. She can be reached at 217-524-2525 or at gail.simpson@illinois.gov.

For additional growth and leadership development, all youth between 14 and 21 can participate in a Youth Advisory Board. The Central Region Youth Advisory Board, which hosts monthly meetings, promotes youth empowerment, self-advocacy and information exchange. Anyone interested in learning more should contact LeShonda Rogers of Primed for Life at 217-789-2980.

Much more information on transition resources for older youth is at the DCFS-sponsored website www.youthincare.illinois.gov.

Free day respite for school suspension available to Peoria families

The Day Respite Program provides support free of charge to Peoria families who have a child, ages 7 to 16, that needs to serve an out-of-school suspension. The program is located at Forrest Hill United Methodist Church and provides a safe and structured environment for students. Program hours are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The program provides:

- Two hours of homework assistance each day to allow students to keep up with school assignments.
- Community service opportunities to help students learn leadership skills and the importance of giving back to the community.
- Aggression Replacement Training classes that help students learn empathy, anger control, and character education.

Students should arrive between 8 and 8:30 a.m. each day and should bring a sack lunch. Students should not bring toys, video games, cell phones or other electronic items. Caregivers should always call ahead of time, as there is a maximum capacity of 15 students and space fills up quickly.

For further questions, or to enroll a student, contact Kris Bachler at 309-682-4621 or 309-264-4604. You may also send an email to kbachler@familycore.org.

FAMILYCORE
Day Respite Program
Forrest Hill United Methodist Church
706 E. Forrest Hill
Peoria, IL 61603
Phone: 309-682-4621

New reporter for Central Region

With each issue of Illinois Families Now and Forever, we make a point of including news about local resources, events and information. That news is available because of the regional reporters.

Julie Cebulski recently was appointed to be the new Central Region Reporter. Cebulski is a Foster Parent Support Specialist, working out of the Urbana office. As an experienced caregiver, she has an in-depth understanding of the types of stories families need.

Anyone can call the regional reporter with story suggestions about:

- foster parent association news and schedules
- local training notices
- features on foster families and community members working for children
- photos
- ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.

Julie Cebulski
Phone: 217-621-6347
E-mail: cbulskij@yahoo.com

Be included in the 2013 directory for 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 in the Foster Parent Appreciation Month issue.

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

Central Region Training

The DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the region. To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center (VTC) anytime at www.DCFStraining.org. Click on any of the links under Training Schedule to access course descriptions, in-service training and Educational Advocacy Training or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during business hours.

The Virtual Training Center (VTC) is your tool to:

- See training news and general information
- Check available trainings
- View/Print your training transcript
- Register and take on-line courses
- Download course materials to use in class or to access after training

DIGITAL TRAINING MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE

As we move into the digital age and aim to use fewer printed resources, DCFS Training has made many PRIDE materials easily available on the home page of the Virtual Training Center at www.dcfstraining.org.

Anyone may print the materials or download them onto almost any electronic device and bring their device to training class. Trainees who have no digital access should speak with their trainers when they arrive in class, so we can accommodate everyone.

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 in 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 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.

...Your adoption or guardianship is final but you have questions about the subsidy?
Call the subsidy worker assigned to the case or the Adoption Support Line at 888-96-ADOPT so you can be connected to the right individual for help.

...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 find a phone number for a caseworker?
Call the main switchboard in Chicago at 312-814-6800 or the State of Illinois Operator at 312-793-3500.

...You are having family problems with your adopted child?
Contact the Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program that serves your area. Call the Adoption Support Line at 888-96-ADOPT.

...You are having a hard time getting services for your child at school?
Most private agencies have an Education Liaison, and each DCFS region has Education Advisors who can help. Call your agency or nearest DCFS office to be connected to the right educational resource for your area.

...You have questions about programs for youth approaching adulthood?
Contact the Transition Coordinator that serves your area, by calling the nearest DCFS regional office. The Transition Coordinator can advise on programs such as life skills training, preparation for higher education and employment assistance. Details on these programs can also be found at the Get Goal'd website www.youthincare.illinois.gov.

...You have an idea for an article in the newsletter?
Each region has reporters to help gather local news. The names and contact information are listed on the back page of each edition. You can contact the Editor, Vanessa James, at 312-814-6800 or send an e-mail message to vanessa.james@illinois.gov.

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

Nazon (7664)

Alias (7949)

James (8015)

Darius (7975)

Nazon [7664] Nazon, 13, is a bright young man who does extremely well in school. He is gifted at math and has an excellent memory for dates and times. When he's not doing schoolwork or playing video games, Nazon enjoys learning about automobiles. He knows the name of almost every car on the road and wants to become a mechanic someday. In the meantime, he is content to play with his collection of toy cars and trucks.

Nazon's worker says he is an upbeat, engaging young man. She adds that he has a positive attitude and is curious about the world around him.

To be the forever family for Nazon, you can be caring and patient with him. You can establish clear, consistent boundaries for him. You can also provide him with plenty of positive attention, making sure to praise him whenever he does a good job or meets your expectations. Nazon would like to join a family that includes "a mom and dad who live in a house," preferably in an urban area. He should be the oldest child in his adoptive home.

Alias [7949] Alias, age 11, is an active young man who enjoys riding his bike, playing sports, and spending time with other active family members. He can be very loving, as long as he is surrounded by people who care about him. He needs a family that will love him unconditionally, and that will remain patient with him as he adjusts to his new home. Alias' teacher says he is a joy to have in class. His worker says he thrives when he is surrounded by loving, caring people.

Potential parents will be able to provide a loving, stable home environment for Alias. You can establish clear boundaries, but also display patience with him as he tests those boundaries. Alias would like to join a family that does things together, such as bike riding and other outdoor activities. Other children in the home should be older than Alias.

James [8015] This young man brings new meaning to the phrase "multi-tasking!" Ten-year-old James likes to keep himself busy at all times by playing, laughing, talking, and interacting with others. He becomes distracted easily, but usually responds well to redirection. James prefers to play inside, and is especially partial to toys, including Transformers and LEGO pieces. He has been diagnosed with autism, and can become overwhelmed when confronted with loud noises or other excessive stimulation.

James' worker says he is an outgoing child who is both friendly and well-mannered. He has a wonderful imagination, and can entertain himself for hours on end.

To be the right family for James you can provide a loving, caring home environment. You can monitor his behavior and provide redirection to help him stay on task. You can also learn about autism, so you can become an effective advocate for him, both educationally and emotionally. The ideal family would include children who are roughly the same age as James, and would also help him maintain relationships with his siblings, including regular visits.

Darius [7975] Darius, age 13, can be shy and reserved at first, but he is still able to form attachments with others. He is a fan of sports, and enjoys watching football and playing basketball with his friends. He also enjoys playing video games and listening to music. Darius has trouble concentrating at times, and also needs to be reminded to clean up after himself, but he is generally cooperative, both at home and in school.

The staff members at Darius' school say he is well-behaved. His worker says he is usually quiet and well-mannered.

The forever family for Darius is one that can provide a loving home, and assure him that he is a permanent part of your family. You can be patient with him as he adjusts to your home. You can also work with professionals who can help him understand his emotions and develop appropriate coping techniques. Darius says he wants to live in a stable home. Other children in the home should be older than Darius.

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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Address Changes: Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change office addresses or request staff copies through the Editor.

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Current and back issues of Illinois Families Now and Forever are available online in English and Spanish at www.state.il.us/dcfs