

# Illinois Families Now and Forever<sup>®</sup>

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

## DCFS scholarship helps 48 students attend college

College comes with enough built-in stressors, ranging from grades to roommate conflicts to homesickness. The 48 recipients of the 2013 DCFS Scholarship won't have to add money concerns to that list. More than 200 students applied for the competitive scholarship that is open to youth who are currently in DCFS care or whose cases were closed through adoption or guardianship. The award includes a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees that they can use at one of the nine Illinois state universities or any Illinois junior college. It also provides a monthly stipend of \$451 to offset other expenses, and students can continue the medical coverage.

"There is no way to put a value on how fortunate it is to be able to focus on learning without having to worry about how to pay for school," said Kethan Hedrick, a scholarship recipient in 2009 who is now in law school. He was one of two alumni featured speakers at a July luncheon to celebrate the awardees.



*DCFS sent 48 students off to college with scholarships and a celebration lunch for them and their families held in Chicago.*

### 2013 DCFS Scholarship Recipients

- |                   |                    |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Kenisha Adams     | Jordan Curry       | Matthew Peters     |
| Kyra Amerson      | Jihan Dubose       | Troy Pierce        |
| Jordanne Beaulieu | Heather Giesecking | Margaret Pierson   |
| Ajustice Bernadez | Joseph Godwin      | Mary Presley       |
| Tracy Bohlken     | Julian Grills      | Shannon Rogers     |
| LeeAnn Book       | Sarah Hardin       | Sirnetra Scott     |
| Brittany Britton  | Anthony Hettinger  | Nicholas Sodt      |
| Lamonte Brown     | Albert Hogan       | Cortesha Spencer   |
| Ashley Brown      | Lawrence Holmes    | Dominga Stewart    |
| Marquise Brown    | Emily Johnson      | Brianna Stewart    |
| Dariontay Cobbs   | David Kruse        | Hayley Thomas      |
| Georgia Coleman   | Jessica Kupsik     | Brandon Vandegrift |
| Ashley Collins    | Kaitlyn Lipe       | Raven Warford      |
| Ashley Cook       | Rapheal Mathis     | Michaela Wheeler   |
| Sheryl Coyle      | Andrea McCabe      | Fabian Young       |
| Lorenzo Crim      | Jose Medina        | Savannah Young     |

*Continued on page 2*

## From the DCFS Director

**Richard H. Calica**



Dear Parents,

As foster parents, you have the difficult task of helping your foster children imagine what they would like to be when they grow up, understand what they have to do to get there, and acquire the skills necessary to live as independent adults. Children try out different roles/jobs as they develop. They also identify with those adults who are meaningful to them and try to emulate them. You need to help them express and imagine what their desired future looks like through many ages and phases. Whether you have a child for a

month or several years, getting to know their hopes and fears and helping them to deal with them is part of what we expect of you. Giving them a sense of worth and a confident expectation that they can succeed in life is one of the most valuable gifts you can give a child.

Many foster children will not have natural families to rely on in later adolescence and young adulthood. Their abilities to: balance income and expenses; negotiate leases; take care of their homes, clothes and selves needs to come from YOU. Also, knowing how important and enjoyable school can be is part of what all children need help with. History, literature, mathematics and gym are all about defining and solving problems – personal, interpersonal, physical and computational. Discovering how others have solved problems and comparing that to how your child

solves problems can be a wonderful adventure.

Thanks to foster parents like you, this year DCFS awarded 48 college scholarships to youth in or formerly in DCFS care out of hundreds of applicants. Their academic success, community service and student leadership make them shining examples to each and every one of us. Next year, we hope to double the number of scholarships and see the number of children attending college rise as well. With your continued love and devotion, and continued innovation from the department, we will do an even better job of making the dreams of every child a reality.

Have a great school year,

Richard H. Calica  
Director

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## Scholarships, con't. from page 1

It took a lengthy and thorough review process to select 48 finalists, based on their academic achievements, community involvement and personal successes. Almost all of the recipients came to Chicago for the scholarship luncheon. They began the day with an overview of the scholarship program and instruction on

how to make the most of their college experience. With that done, they enjoyed a meal shared with the family members, caseworkers and mentors who helped them reach this educational milestone. This event is one that the DCFS leadership always looks forward to attending. The Office of Youth and Family Development spends months preparing for a proper sendoff that included school supplies and items for living in the dorms. Now, the 48 scholars are embarking on their college journeys at more than two dozen different campuses.



The American Legion awarded \$300 scholarships to children of veterans: Kenisha Adams, Ashley Brown, Ashley Collins, Joseph Goodwin (not pictured) Andrea McCabe, Troy Pierce, Brandon Vandegraft and Savannah Young

*The DCFS Youth in Scholarship Program is available to youth currently in DCFS care and to those who left department guardianship through adoption or private guardianship arrangements. The purpose of the program is to ensure that those selected have the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree in four years or less. Scholarship Program Student Applications are routinely available in January with a deadline of March 31. Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED by the end of the current school year. Contact the Office Youth and Family Development at 312-814-5959 for more information.*



# DCFS Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council update

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council held its July meeting in Aurora. In addition to the standing items and updates, the council invited several speakers to discuss new initiatives that DCFS has launched.

## Increasing Permanency

In the recent restructuring, there will be renewed emphasis on permanency. Julia Camacho-de-Monzon is heading the Permanency Initiative for DCFS. A group of specialized caseworkers will focus on doing “whatever it takes” to avoid cases getting stalled in foster care longer than federal guidelines. This could be assisting in completing the subsidy packet or navigating the legal screening process. The group will analyze regular reports on how many months children have been in care so they can track cases that need more assistance.

## Measuring CIPP results

The council also offered its ideas about a new evaluation tool that is being designed by the Clinical Intervention for Placement Permanency (CIPP) program. Lee Annes explained that when a child’s placement may require a significant change in level of care or services needed, a CIPP staffing could help clarify the options. Going forward, the cases that have CIPP intervention will also incorporate an assessment of the family’s situation before the interventions and afterward. The council supported having an added layer of accountability and a means of measuring results.

## Joint youth meeting in October

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will meet with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board in October. The adult group will conduct its customary business

starting in the afternoon, then the youth will arrive for the joint meeting that evening. The adult group will then continue their regular agenda the following day. Over the years of conducting joint meetings, the two groups find that they often have similar interests and find value in the ability to discuss different perspectives on a topic.

## Improving adoption outcomes

Cheryl McIntyre, the statewide adoption administrator, briefed the group on changes that have been made to finalize adoptions. New adoption workers have had updated training. McIntyre described the intensive review process to track and intervene in cases that are not moving swiftly toward finalization. Even the logistics for mailing subsidy packets have been streamlined.

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## *Add your input to new implementation plans*

Each year the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council must review each of the foster care programs’ Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. The implementation plans must clearly describe how each foster care program upholds the foster parent rights and responsibilities outlined in the law.

The Foster Parent Law stipulates that the implementation plans demonstrate that caregivers participated in creating it. Typically DCFS and agencies announce meetings in the fall to discuss the previous plan and changes for the new plan, which is due to the council by November 30. The public period for review and comment is

underway as of September. DCFS and private agency programs take any public input into consideration as they prepare the plans for 2013.

All caregivers can review the previous year’s plan. Some foster care programs mailed the plan to licensed homes. Others may have copies available at the administrative offices. If a foster caregiver needs more information about the actual plan or the process for drafting the new plan, each program has a Foster Parent Law liaison. The liaison is the primary contact for matters concerning the Law and how it is enacted at that agency or DCFS region.

*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.*

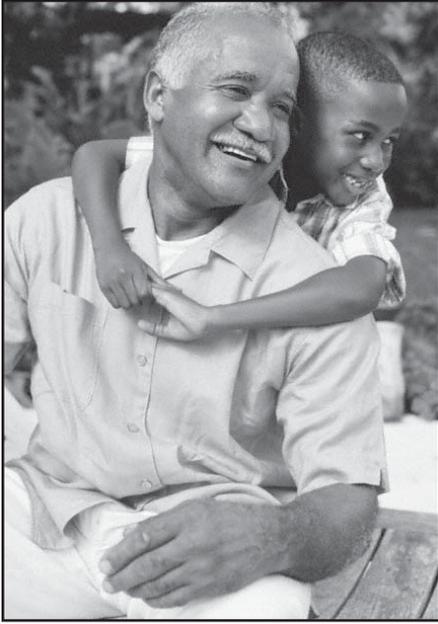
*The council holds open meetings at least six times a year, and more as needed, in locations around the state.*

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**The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be on October 18 in Urbana at 3 p.m. Call DCFS Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for details.**

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## *Relative caregivers gain more resources when licensed for foster care*



Children who are not able to stay in their homes safely require love and protection, plus support specific to the trauma they are facing. If there is a family crisis that requires DCFS to step in, relatives are the first source asked to help. The children can gain support from the familiarity and the love that a family member can provide. Relative foster care is a critical part of the child welfare system, but it is often complicated. There can be difficult dynamics between family members that have to be sorted out. For several years, DCFS has made extra efforts to give relatives resources by encouraging them to become licensed. Licensed relatives caring for children placed with them by DCFS receive the benefits of more training and increased monthly payments to provide for children's needs. When relatives become licensed, DCFS also receives more federal money to use to support children and families.

In order to be licensed, relative caregivers can take a six-hour course in-class or use the DVD training

course in their home. Training will help relative caregivers understand the developmental and emotional stages of the children in their care. By learning in advance what foster parenting can entail, they will be better able to handle the challenges that may come along. The training was designed specifically to reflect and address parenting situations from the perspective of a relative. Many substitute caregivers decide to go on and take the full 27-hour Foster PRIDE series of classes required to be a foster parent to non-related children.

When relative caregivers become licensed, they also become eligible for the foster care board rate. This monthly payment is typically higher than the "standard of need" rate for unlicensed relatives. For example, a great-aunt from Champaign providing care for her 11-year-old niece could receive \$292 a month at the standard of need rate. After becoming licensed, she would receive \$453 for the child's clothing, board and personal allowance.

Both DCFS and private agency caseworkers receive training on how to help unlicensed relatives become licensed. These relatives will have to comply with current licensing standards, including fingerprinting, medical exams and training. In some cases, workers can request waivers to allow an applicant to become licensed, even though they are not in full compliance with a specific licensing standard.

Taking care of a child during a family crisis that requires DCFS involvement is not an easy task. Becoming licensed will give these caregivers more educational and financial resources.

### **Resources for Older Relatives Caring for Children**

Grandparents and older relatives over the age of 55 raising grandchildren/children are also eligible for services under the Illinois Family Caregiver Support Program.

The five basic services offered to caregivers include:

- Information about available services;
- Assistance accessing services;
- Individual counseling, support groups and caregiver training;
- Respite care to enable caregivers to be temporarily relieved from their caregiving responsibilities; and
- Supplemental services, on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by caregivers. Supplemental services can include assistive devices, home modification, legal assistance, transportation, school supplies and any other gap filling service which attempts to address a short-term caregiver emergency.

#### **Senior HelpLine**

Monday - Friday  
8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. CST

Toll-free within Illinois:

1-800-252-8966,  
1-888-206-1327 (TTY)

Outside of Illinois:

217-524-6911

FAX: 217-524-6968

E-mail: [aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov](mailto:aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov)

**211,919 children under  
the age of 18 are living in  
grandparent-headed  
households**

## *Complete the form for more than a free lunch*

Among the many forms that schools require families to complete, one that is especially important is the application for free or reduced-price school meals (commonly referred to as the free lunch form). Funding from federal resources is often based on the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Additionally, the income information from the applications can determine what programs a school may be able to offer.

Students who have an open DCFS case will automatically qualify for free meals. The form asks for a check mark “if a foster child (legal responsibility of welfare agency or court).” However, once a child moves to adoption, his or her case is closed and there is no longer an automatic qualification. Adoptive parents will have to complete the

form with income information to determine if the family is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch based on income.

Some families choose not to apply, knowing their income will not be eligible. Still, it is important to write that on the form, sign it and return it. From the school’s perspective, every form counts when funding is at stake.

As one more reason to fill in the form, consider this warning. Some caregivers have reported that their child received meals at a reduced rate without a form, and then received a bill at the end of the year. The DCFS education advisors urge caregivers to return the forms promptly so they can take advantage of the benefits and avoid possible problems.

## **Fall flu season calls for flu vaccination**

Getting the flu vaccination in October through December is the primary tool for preventing influenza. Most people over the age of five months can get the flu shot. Some of the symptoms associated with the flu are fever, headache, cough, sore throat, chills and fatigue. Some people are at higher risk of complications from having the flu, such as developing pneumonia. Those people who may be at higher risk for complications are children between six months and five years, pregnant women, people 50 years or older, and those with chronic illnesses.

The flu vaccination is available at no charge for children enrolled in Medicaid, children with no health insurance or children whose health insurance plans do not include vaccinations. For more information about the upcoming flu season, contact the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217-782-4977.

## **Illinois State Fair tradition continues**



DCFS once again offered discounted tickets for entry, food and rides during the Illinois State Fair. DCFS provided \$3 entry and other specials to more than 800 households. It is one way of showing appreciation to the families who are doing foster care or who have moved to adoption or guardianship.

Families in the Southern part of the state also received invitations

to attend the Du Quoin State Fair. There, families enjoyed rides, lunch and a relaxing time with other families and DCFS support staff.

Attending the state fair in Springfield and in Du Quoin has become a long-standing tradition for foster, adoptive and guardianship families.



### *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](mailto: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.*



## Tools to handle tricky school situations for adopted children

Parental instinct is to protect children from uncomfortable situations. Particularly in school, there are many things that could trigger confusion or hurt feelings for a child who comes to a family through adoption. While it is impossible to be everywhere all the time, there are proactive ways to manage sticky situations. For example, teachers may not realize how assignments like “family trees” to teach history or genetics can be complicated for a child who was adopted. Even a game to match baby pictures to the present-day snapshot could be difficult if the family doesn’t have a photo.

The magazine *Adoptive Families* addresses six of these typical, yet possibly sensitive assignments in a classic article available for reprint.

The article is called “Tackling Tricky Assignments.” It presents alternative means of accomplishing the teaching objectives, with flexibility around the adoption topic.

The topic of adoption in general is also likely to come up in class or on the playground. *Adoptive Families* also has suggestions for a letter parents might want to write to teachers in advance to explain or elaborate on their family. There is also a handout that could be distributed or discussed at home so children can prepare for how they can handle situations in a new school year.

These and more “clip and save” materials are online at [www.adoptivefamilies.com](http://www.adoptivefamilies.com).

## *Illinois Adoption Advisory Council Update*

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council meets six times a year with the mission to advise DCFS on all matters involving or affecting adoption and guardianship services. The council addresses ways to preserve and expand funding for post-adoption and adoption preservation services, and to improve the permanency outcomes for teens and other children.

The DCFS director appoints all council members. Membership includes adoptive parents and adopted persons, as well as experts in child welfare and adoption from DCFS and other agency partner organizations. All meetings are open.

### **Illinois Adoption Advisory Council 2013-14 Meeting Schedule**

October 4, 2013 at 10 a.m.  
Conference call

November 22, 2013 at 9 a.m.  
Bloomington

February 7, 2014 at 10 a.m.  
Conference call

April 4, 2014 at 10 a.m.  
Springfield

June 6, 2014 at 10 a.m.  
Bloomington

For details, contact DCFS Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422.



## ADOPTION DAY

Celebrating a Family for Every Child

*Make plans now to  
celebrate adoption*

This year on November 23, families and communities will be united around adoption. On that day, hundreds of judges, attorneys, adoption agencies, adoption professionals and child advocates will stand together on behalf of forever families for waiting children. Courts and communities across the country will open their doors on a Saturday to finalize thousands of adoptions of children from foster care and to celebrate all families who adopt.

In addition to finalizing adoptions, the community events throughout November can raise awareness about adoption and encourage others to adopt children waiting for families.

There are many ready-to-go resources that can help families prepare to celebrate adoption throughout the month. Individuals and organizations can plan events, letter-writing campaigns, community marches and countless other activities for November. The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council is planning a celebration and welcomes adoptive parents to get involved. Contact co-chair Elizabeth Richmond at [elizabeth.richmond@illinois.gov](mailto:elizabeth.richmond@illinois.gov).

To find more information about National Adoption Day activities, events, templates and resources take time now to visit the website [www.nationaladoptionday.org](http://www.nationaladoptionday.org).

## Central Region sends six off to college with DCFS scholarships

This year, six students whose cases were served by programs in the DCFS Central Region headed to college with the benefits included in the DCFS Scholarship program. The scholarship includes a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees that students can use at one of the nine Illinois state universities or an Illinois community college. All recipients also receive a monthly maintenance grant of \$471 and a medical card.

Scholarship recipients were chosen statewide on the basis of scholastic aptitude, a written personal statement and demonstrated community involvement. Next year's scholarship application process begins in January and ends in March. Contact the youth's caseworker or the DCFS Office of Youth and Family Development at 312-814-5959 for more information on the scholarship program.



**Ashley Cook**, of Decatur, graduated cum laude from MacArthur High School, where she was an honor roll student with a 3.92 out of 4.0 GPA. Ashley has been employed at Dynamite Gymnastics since her sophomore year where she works with children to help them learn the fundamentals of gymnastics. She

also volunteers in Decatur Memorial Hospital's Pediatric Unit. Ashley earned multiple honors for perfect attendance at school and for being on the honor roll. She participated in many extracurricular activities, including varsity cheerleading, track and field, and class councils. Ashley attends Southern Illinois University Carbondale and she plans to become a doctor.



**Anthony Hettinger** is a graduate of Arthur Lovington High School, where he ranked fourth in his class and earned a 3.71 out of 4.0 GPA. He maintained high grades while participating in multiple sports including soccer, basketball, track, baseball and cross-country. He developed his leadership skills in

student council, serving as class treasurer and president. Anthony also participated in community activities including working with his church youth group, delivering food for Meals on Wheels and collecting donations for a local food pantry. In the summer he works as a little league baseball umpire and he also works at a local fast-food restaurant year-round. Anthony plans to major in criminal justice at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

**Emily Johnson** is a graduate of Moline High School. She earned a 3.56 out of 4.0 GPA. While in high school, Emily attended the Milwaukee School of Art and Design for a three-week, pre-college program. She is very involved in her church where she teaches Sunday school, helps at a homeless shelter, visits the elderly at local nursing homes and volunteers regularly at a day-care center. Emily attends Augustana College and plans to major in mathematics.



**Mary Presley** is a sophomore at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She was invited to join Phi Eta Sigma, a National Honor Society. She is a member of the African Cultural Association and also volunteers with Habitat for Humanity. Mary is majoring in marketing/advertising.

## Central Connections: Regional News

**Shannon Rogers**, from Peoria, is a graduate of Manual Academy High School, where she earned a 3.57 GPA on a 4.0 scale. She was a three-year participant in Upward Bound and also completed a semester in the University of Illinois Science and Medical Equipment Program. She was the captain of the Scholastic Bowl team, a Key Club member and a volunteer with Salvation Army. Shannon attends Northern Illinois University and plans to major in nursing.



**Brandon Vandergraft**, from East Peoria, graduated from Peoria Christian High School, where he earned a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0

scale. In high school, Brandon was a member of the National Honor Society. He is also a very talented athlete on the golf course and was named to the all-conference team as the top varsity player for his school. Brandon attends the University of Illinois Springfield and will major in physics or mathematics.

**Michaela Wheeler**, of Port Byron, graduated in 2011 from Riverdale Senior High School with a 3.6 out of 4.0 GPA. Michaela is now a junior at Western Illinois University (WIU). While in high school, she received the Quad Cities Salute to Academics Young Journalist Award. Currently, Michaela is on the dean's list at WIU. She also gives college tours, writes for the university paper and is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists. Michaela is majoring in journalism.

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### *The Forgotten Initiative ties up the loose ends for foster care needs*

Foster parents take children at a moment's notice, often opening their home to more children than they anticipated in order to keep siblings together. Being responsive and responsible can sometimes bring complications. The Forgotten Initiative (TFI) is an organization that understands the needs of the child welfare community and also anticipates and responds to those needs.

TFI is a nonprofit Christian-based organization that began as a grassroots effort to reach out to those in need. Its founder, Jami Kaeb, was formerly a child welfare worker and she understood the great needs of agency workers, foster parents and adults and children affected by foster care.

TFI's mission is to bring "joy and purpose to the foster care community." The organization starts by learning the needs of

the foster care community. TFI's "First Response Team" publishes a need, such as a double stroller or children's clothes in a specific size, and then shares those needs with members of the faith community. The recipients of the donations may be an intact family, foster family, or a child welfare agency. TFI has mobilized their followers on Facebook with links to inspirational blogs, moving words and prayer, and links to children legally free for adoption.

When TFI was made aware that family visiting rooms in local DCFS offices were often lacking in toys and books and had outdated decor, the organization recruited volunteers to spruce up the rooms. They titled their work "Project Sunshine," and it truly brought sunshine and hope to the staff, children, and clients who use those rooms. Drab walls were adorned with inspirational quotes,

mismatched chairs and tables were replaced with inviting, comfortable ones, and empty shelves were filled with books and toys to entertain visiting families. Since their first "Project Sunshine" at DCFS in October of 2011, several more makeovers have taken place.

Additionally, through the efforts of local churches, "Journey Bags" have been assembled for foster children just entering foster care. Journey Bags are filled with items to make a child's journey a little easier, including school supplies, small toys, clothes and toiletries.

Caregivers may at times feel forgotten but this group reminds them that their efforts are truly cherished. Find out more at [www.theforgotteninitiative.org](http://www.theforgotteninitiative.org) or find them on Facebook: The Forgotten Initiative.

Local TFI chapters can be found in Champaign County, Bloomington, and Peoria, and across the country, from Virginia to Alabama to Arizona.

## New changes in Central Region administration

On August 16 Cathy Smith moved into the role of Central Region Administrator. She previously served as the area administrator for the Peoria/Pekin offices. Michael Ruppe will now serve DCFS as the deputy director for Child Protection.



As site administrator in Peoria she successfully implemented the Family-to-Family initiative funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

“Central region covers a lot of geography and our work touches thousands of families. We have a strong foundation here, and I am glad to have a hand in making things even better,” said Smith.

Smith is a familiar face in the region. She started with DCFS in 1994 as a caseworker in the Galesburg office. She has held many leadership roles in intact family services and child protection. She also has contributed to developing or revising several agency procedures.

Families in the Peoria/Pekin area will continue to have their needs met by their casework teams. Robert Schiffman, who was named the acting area administrator, will provide additional oversight.

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## Local advisory council structure keeps caregivers involved

Central Region’s DCFS foster care program promotes better communication between staff and foster caregivers through quarterly local advisory council meetings. Meetings are held in local offices with staff present to help address concerns or questions foster parents may have. Often caregivers can earn training credit hours because of the valuable information that is shared. To take part in an upcoming meeting, contact the nearest area office. Following is an update on the activities of some of the area councils.

**Peoria/Pekin:** The Peoria/Pekin Area meeting was held in April. The meeting focused on getting ready for summer. It included information on area camps and activities that children could participate in. It was presented by the local park district, and then the DCFS business unit followed with information on how to access DCFS funds. The local HealthWorks nurse also presented on summer safety. The last presentation was on summer-weather tips to care for African-American hair and skin,

which was presented by a local beautician.

The next scheduled meeting for the Peoria/Pekin office will be September 19 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the DCFS Peoria field office.

**Urbana and Danville:** These offices held their quarterly meetings in April and May respectively. The training topic was safety for children. Subjects covered were car seat safety, safety around water, how to properly wear a bike helmet, and summer sun exposure safety. Lead foster parent support specialist Julie Cebulski presented the training in Urbana and foster parent support specialist Darla Knipe presented in Danville. At both meetings, licensing staff reviewed the licensing standards that address pools at foster homes.

On July 11 in Urbana and August 1 in Danville, the local advisory council held trainings on discipline. Both meetings were well attended by staff and caregivers. Each foster parent in attendance received one

hour of training credit. Licensing workers Tim Lappin and Rene Cunigan were present to help review the DCFS licensing standards regarding discipline. During the quarterly council meetings foster parents were encouraged to ask questions or present their concerns to staff or administrators.

The next council meetings will be on October 10 at the Urbana field office and November 7th at Danville field office. The training topic will be the juvenile court system.

**Each of the six Central Region areas convenes a local advisory council. To find the schedule and the minutes for area call the nearest area office or the Central Region Foster Parent Help Line at 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 voicemail.**

## 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 at [www.DCFStraining.org](http://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; and
- 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](http://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 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 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 feel you aren't being treated fairly by DCFS or a private agency?**

If you've already tried to resolve the issue with the caseworker and his or her supervisor and are not sure where to turn, call the Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

### **...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](http://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](mailto:vanessa.james@illinois.gov).

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



Angel (C7785)

**Angel [7785]** Angel, 10, is a creative, outgoing young lady. She loves chatting with her friends, participating in Girl Scouts and receiving one-on-one attention from adults. Although she is a social child, Angel is capable of playing independently and can always find ways to entertain herself. She likes to spend her free time singing, dancing and making up songs.

Angel's foster parent says she is a sweet, loving girl who is willing to help out around the house. She enjoys spending time with people, and likes to interact with guests whenever her foster family has company.



Timothy (C7982)

To be a forever family for Angel, you can provide lots of love and encouragement as she adjusts to your home. You can also support her when she expresses interest in organized group activities. Angel would like to have a mother who is a good cook and a father who is an expert at making ribs. Other children in the home should be older than Angel.

**Timothy [7982]** This young man is curious, inquisitive, and eager to engage adults in conversation. Timothy, 14, is developmentally delayed, but can still hold court on a wide variety of topics. Timothy seeks out adult attention, and does well in school when a teacher is able to work with him one-on-one. In his spare time, he enjoys collecting Pokémon and Bakugan cards, assembling KRE-O toys, and

playing video games. He also likes spending time outside, and is particularly interested in fishing.

Timothy's worker says he can be funny, polite, and a good conversationalist. His helpers say he is able to form attachments and is open to showing affection. Timothy needs a loving, nurturing home. You can establish clear expectations and redirect his behavior when needed. You can also work with specialists who can help you understand and meet his educational needs. Timothy does not have a preference between a two-parent family and a single-parent family. Either way, he should be the only child in his adoptive home.

**Vasha [7686]** Vasha, 13, is a considerate child who likes helping others. She enjoys attending church, participating in Bible study and visiting with her relatives. She also enjoys singing, dancing and listening to music. She struggles with self-control at times, but usually responds well when supervised by consistent, responsible adults.

Vasha's teacher says she is a sweet girl who behaves well in school and tries hard to please others. Vasha's foster parent says she is capable of following rules and behaving appropriately in the home.

Potential parents for Vasha can be loving and supportive, while also providing clear expectations and regular supervision. Once Vasha is adopted,

you can give her plenty of time to adjust to your home. You can also work closely with child welfare professionals to help meet Vasha's medical and emotional needs, and to encourage continued positive behavior. The ideal family would live in the St. Louis area and would help Vasha maintain relationships with her siblings and other members of her birth family.

**[George & Reba 8028-29]** George, 15, is an active young man who goes out of his way to help others. He enjoys hunting and farming, and often volunteers to help out on neighboring farms. His younger sister Reba, 14, is an outgoing young lady who enjoys spending time with her friends. She attends school sporting events regularly, and strives to succeed in everything she does. Both siblings benefit from an Individualized Education Program.

George's worker says he is a helpful young man who likes to get involved in many different projects. Reba's worker says she is a social young lady, and is full of life.

The forever family for these siblings can provide a loving, nurturing home environment. You can stress the importance of education, and make sure their academic needs are being met. You can also encourage George as he establishes his independence, and provide plenty of opportunities for Reba to interact with her peers. Both George and Reba would prefer living in a rural community.



Vasha (C7686)



George (C8028)



Reba (C8029)

 Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI website – [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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Current and back issues of *Illinois Families Now and Forever®*  
are available online in English and Spanish at [www.DCFS.illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.illinois.gov)