

Cook County Advocate

2010 • Vol. 3

News for Chicago Metro Area Families

Caregivers have their say in May for Appreciation Month

In honor of Foster Parent Appreciation Month, we asked Cook County caregivers: What could someone do to make you feel appreciated during May?

“Send me a card and say thank you.” Out of all the years our foster parent group has been doing toy drives for the holidays, this year was the first that I got a real thank you. The therapist for a mother of five called for help with their Christmas. Later, I got a letter from her. That was my first personal thank you, and I actually carry that letter with me.”



“Even though I am going to do it anyway, because that is what the Lord decided I should do, all I need is just a simple thank you.”

*Donsetta, Foster/Adoptive parent
Chicago*

“I do feel appreciated.” I don’t really need anything. I feel that, not only do I have colleagues at DCFS, we are friends and family. You do for your family, and you don’t expect anything for it. I love helping. I feel needed and appreciated. I just enjoy what I do.”



*Gladys, Adoptive and guardianship parent
Richton Park*

“It means a lot when my children are thankful and they recognize how hard it can be raising five kids.” I love it when they say, ‘Thank you for folding my laundry.’ I don’t really need the big showy stuff. It is the little stuff when no one is watching. When they notice stuff that I do.”



*Kate, Adoptive Parent
Chicago*

“Wow! Just a card...A night on the town... Keep the kids for one day...Invite me to lunch or something.” A card makes you smile and gets you to thinking. A card can make you laugh or start crying.”



“The kids (ages 4, 6 and 7) tell me they love me a lot and they want to help me do what I need to. They always follow me around. That makes me feel good. My house used to be empty. Now there is laughter and play in the house all time. I like that. I can’t believe how fast this year has gone.”

*Linda, first year foster parent
Maywood*

Families can find support among fellow caregivers in a nearby group

One of the responsibilities in the Foster Parent Law is to “Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations.” DCFS, private agencies and community organizations sponsor many support groups and associations to assist foster and adoptive parents. The following list can help identify a group that may suit your family. This list will be updated annually. Please contact the Editor at 312-814-6824 with any corrections or additions for next year.

Catholic Charities Adoption/Guardianship Support Groups

Contact: Freda Hardaway at 312-655-8357
Dinner served at 6 p.m. Child care provided.
RSVP required.

St. Ailbe Church

9015 S. Harper Ave., Chicago
(90th & Stony Island)

Meets 2nd Monday 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Catholic Charities Office

651 W. Lake St., Chicago

Meets 2nd Thursday of every month

Catholic Charities Office

1717 Rand Rd., Desplaines

Meets last Thursday of every month

Circle of Parents

Contact: Stacey Saffold or Tracey Saffold at
773-419-4660

Meets first Saturday of the month from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Includes Boy and Girl Scout programs
Sherman Park Library, 5440 South Racine, Chicago

Cook Central DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Jerry Welenc at 773-582-8354
Meets fourth Tuesday of the month at 9:30 a.m.
DCFS Office, 3518 W. Division, Chicago
No December meeting. Training credits available.

Cook North DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Iris Cuevas at 312-328-2535
Meets second Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m.
DCFS Office, 1911 S. Indiana, Chicago

Cook South DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contacts: Chair Angela Barber at 773-578-0079
Gloria Orange-Long of DCFS at 773-371-6115
Meets third Wednesday at 10 a.m.
DCFS Office, 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

Foster Parents, Our Greatest Resource Support Group

Contact: Elisse Worrell at 773-371-6114
Info line at 773-371-6119
Meets second Tuesday from 10 a.m. to Noon
DCFS Office, 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago
For DCFS and private agency families.
Training credits offered.

DCFS Cook South Suburban Support Group

Contact: Adrienne Taylor at 708-210-3578 or Sandra Montgomery at 708-210-3594 or Foster Parent Info line at 773-371-6119
Meets 4th Thursday (Jan., March, May, July, Sept. and Nov.) from 9 a.m. to Noon
DCFS Office, 15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey
For DCFS and private agency families.
Training credits offered.

Grandfamilies Program of Chicago

Contact: Vivian Price at 773-651-8800
Auburn Gresham Senior Suites
1040 W. 79th St.
Meets third Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Chatman (Mathers) Support Group

33 E. 83rd. St
Meets fourth Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Englewood Support Group

Teamwork Englewood
U.S. Bank
815 West 63rd Street, 2nd floor (Halsted)
Meets third Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.



Far South Support Group

Prayer & Faith Outreach Ministries
944 West 103rd Street (Morgan)
Meets second Thursday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Training and Support Group

Contact: Cara Siebert at 773-884-2211
siebertc@metrofamily.org
Meets first Wednesday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Metropolitan Family Services - Midway Site
3843 W. 63rd Street, Chicago
Open to grandparents or older caregivers raising a child.

Hispanic Association (combines with Northeast Foster Adopt Parent Association)

Contact: Edith Cruz at 773-425-4634

Hull House Association Foster Parent Support Group

Contact: Debra Whitted at 773-374-9451, ext 155
Call for meeting schedule.
8753 S. Greenwood, Chicago

Jewish Child and Family Services Advisory Council

Contact: Noelle Folden at 312-673-2765
Meets every other month on the 4th Thursday at Noon
Alternating locations: 216 West Jackson or the Avalon Library, Chicago

Lutheran Social Services of IL- Adoptive Families Connected

Contact: Elizabeth Thomas-Colwell at 312-949-4852 or Elizabeth.Thomas-Colwell@lssi.org
Meets second Thursday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
611 Randolph Street, Oak Park
Focuses primarily on international and private adoptions.
Street Parking Available. Snacks and childcare provided.
Call to reserve childcare.

Lutheran Social Services of IL Foster Parent Advisory Council

Contact: Shawanda Dixon and Ernestine Robinson at 312-949-4340
Meets first Monday every other month from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (Call to confirm.)
10 W. 35th St., 15th Floor, Chicago

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois-South Open Arms

Contact: Beth Novotney at 773-371-2700
Meets third Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m.
11740 S. Western, Chicago
Child care provided with reservations.
Open to adoptive families and pre-adoptive families.

Metropolitan Family Services Support Groups

Adoptive Parent & Legal Guardian Support Group

Contact: Yvonne Perkins at 773-343-4280
Meets every other Monday at 6 to 7:30 p.m.
3843 W. 63rd. Street, Chicago
Refreshments served. RSVP required.

Metropolitan Family Services Parent Support Group

Contact: Kaneesha Craig at 773-371-3631
Calumet Center
235 E. 103rd St., Chicago
Meets 2nd Tuesday at 5:30p.m. to 7:30p.m.
Child and adolescent groups meets at same time.
Open to foster, adoptive and guardianship caregivers from all agencies

Palos Hills Teen Group

Contact: Mary Pittman at 708-974-2300
10537 S. Roberts Road, Palos Hills
Meets 3rd Tuesday September-May at 5p.m. to 7:30p.m.
Focuses on strengthening family relationships.

New Beginning Foster/Adoptive Parent Association

Contact: Regina & Gladys Boyd at 708-385-6263
Meets first Monday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Fernwood Park, 10436 S. Wallace, Chicago
Children are welcome with adult. Bring a dish.

Northeast Area Foster and Adopt Parent Association

Contact: Donsetta Blakely at 773-778-7445 or cell phone 773-984-7108
Email: chi4949@sbcglobal.net
Meets third Thursday at 10 a.m.
Sherman Park Library
5440 S. Racine Avenue, Chicago



DCFS invites families to State Fair with tickets and transportation

The annual Illinois State Fair is a family-friendly event that DCFS makes extra special with free admission and discounts for food and carnival rides. Among the three DCFS regional foster care programs in Cook County there has been a tradition of traveling down by bus to Springfield on the last Friday of the fair. Plans are underway for the tradition to continue this year on August 20.

While transportation can't be guaranteed for everyone who might wish to ride the buses, in the past the buses have accommodated the DCFS families with licenses supervised by Cook South, Cook Central and Cook North offices, plus some families from private agencies when there has been room. Last year the invitation also included parents of children in foster care.

Foster care providers, adoptive parents and guardianship families must first request tickets to the state fair by completing and mailing the form included on page 9 of this newsletter. Specific details on transportation, including when and where the buses will load will be available after June 30.

Foster parent Mattie Latham has been going to the state fair each year since her children by adoption and birth were just toddlers. Now they are in college.

"The bus is very nice and the children are well-behaved and are entertained with a movie," she said.

She also uses the travel time for education, by pointing out things along the way and talking about Illinois and the state capital.

Once at the fair, families have a chance see and pet farm animals. They can try tasty treats in the Dairy Barn, which is also home to the life-size butter cow sculpture. There is a vast midway with carnival rides and games. The DCFS tent serves as a home base for a cool drink, popcorn and a free family keepsake photo.

Caregivers who are interested in riding down together by bus should call the Cook South Foster Caregiver Information Line at 773-371-6119 in July. The foster parent support specialists in the office will be handling inquiries.



Regional Administrator's message to Cook Central caregivers

As the Regional Administrator of the Cook Central Region, I am proud to be a partner with the caregivers of our region. We invite you to fully participate in the decisions that affect the children you have committed yourself to serve.

The Cook Central foster parents continue to participate in various training and seminars in order to stay abreast of all the resources and information available to them. These offerings would not be possible without Foster Parents Support Specialists Adrienne Welenc, Alice Couch and Denise Spires, who go beyond the call to assist families.

In May, as we celebrate Foster Parent Appreciation Month, we stand in a transition. The school year is winding down as the temperatures rise. Foster parents, and especially children, look forward with great joy to the coming summer season and all the fun a vacation from school can bring. Our caregivers are skilled in helping our children balance the break while keeping education a priority. With assistance from the Education Advisors, we trust you will find the resources you need to keep children advancing.

The Cook Central foster parents do an excellent job of meeting the needs of children, even during the times when children aren't able to articulate those needs or issues. To our great Cook Central Foster Parents, hang in there as you've done so marvelously over many years. The best is yet to come!



Joyce E. Hall, LCSW
Cook Central
Regional
Administrator

Cook South Suburban support group stays focused on key topics, but with new schedule



The Cook South Suburban Support Group has changed its meeting schedule to meet every other month at 9 a.m. instead of 10 a.m. This change will allow the group to meet for three hours instead of two. Meetings will be on the fourth Thursday of odd-numbered months. The next meeting is May 27 at the DCFS Harvey office at 15115 Dixie Highway.

The South Suburban Support Group allows an exchange of ideas between attending foster parents, some of whom have been fostering for years, and some of whom are new. At each meeting there is typically a presentation complete with handouts or referral information. Caregivers find the speakers to be very knowledgeable about their fields.

At recent meetings caregivers learned about a range of topics including:

- In-service training modules presented by Regional Training Coordinator, Devia Murray-Holmes.
- Families' and Childrens' AIDS Network (FCAN), which provides advocacy for HIV impacted persons, retreats for families and monthly conferences for those dealing with issues around AIDS.
- Adoption and post-adoption discussions of subsidies and adult adoptions, led by Linda Coon, project director for FCAN. DCFS Adoption Coordinator Carol Williams continued the discussion to cover how to talk with children about adoption and adoption-specific training available to adoptive parents.

At every meeting, various DCFS representatives are available to answer questions or assist caregivers. There is also time to network with other caregivers over refreshments. Training credit hours are granted for the education portions of the meetings. All caregivers living in the Cook County south suburbs are welcome to attend.

For more information about the South Suburban Support Group, contact Adrienne Taylor at 708-210-2800 or Cook South Foster Parent Support Lead Support Specialist Carol Lukacek at 773-371-6119.

Questions about training can be directed to the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393.

More information about FCAN is available at the website www.familiesandchildrensnetwork.org. Contact Linda S. Coon at 312-786-9255.

Message from Cook South's Regional Administrator



Challenge is synonymous with Child Welfare. Challenge can be the catalyst for making changes through positive solutions. The challenge for foster parents and staff is to be an active part of the solution. Working as equal members of a professional team has expanded the role of fostering and the commitment needed to support that role. Equally important is that we determine ways for foster parents and staff to operate from a position of mutual respect for each other. Working cooperatively with foster parents is an ongoing goal of Cook South Region. The extent of our efforts can be seen in the regions' commitment to each of the Cook South advisory councils and the many training opportunities for caregivers.

As Regional Administrator, I fully support the efforts of Cook South Region to work collaboratively with our foster parents, and my door is open to their concerns. I welcome working with our foster parents to create positive outcomes for the families we aim to strengthen and the children we strive to protect.

Please feel free to call upon me in May, Foster Parent Appreciation Month, and throughout the year.



Dianne Bradie-Baskin
Cook South
Regional
Administrator

Message from Cook North's Regional Administrator



In recognition of Foster Parent Appreciation Month, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude for your commitment to foster care. You have clearly partnered with the Cook North staff as a team focused on making positive changes that are in the best interest of children and families. Together, we are moving forward to ensure that our children have permanent homes through planned reunification, adoption, and subsidized guardianship.

As foster parents, you make a tremendous contribution, and it is imperative that you are treated with dignity and respect at all times. As Regional Administrator, I am available to you for support and to resolve any issues you may encounter.

On behalf of the regional staff, I would like to thank you for your ongoing support and services. Without hesitation, you've continued to work with regional staff to ensure that our youth/children receive the care and nurturing offered in a family setting. We are continuing to include foster parents in our community outreach projects. As Family Advocacy Centers develop, we invite you join us in partnering with the Centers as we continue to reunify our children with their families. You are an integral part of our community, and will always have a significant role in child welfare practice as we continue to ensure that children in care are placed in a healthy and safe environment.



Jackie Bright
Cook North
Regional
Administrator

Cook North Advisory Council invites caregivers to have a say

Cook North Region's Foster Parent Advisory Council meets the second Tuesday of each month at 1911 South Indiana from 10 am to Noon. The Council was established to provide support to regional foster parents by sharing information and providing training on child welfare practice for caregivers. Members of the regional administration are also available in the meetings to address any issues or concerns of foster parents.

In recent meetings caregivers learned how to enroll youth in free camps offered through the Chicago Park District. There was also training on behavior management for children and adolescents, and a briefing on pre-school readiness.

In addition to the policy and issues information, the council members established a workgroup that will coordinate the development of region's Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan for 2010.

Cook North welcomes all caregivers living in the region to join the council so that all receive important information to support the foster care experience.

Family Advocacy Centers help before children come into care

Cook North Region is currently establishing a partnership with the local Family Advocacy Centers. These centers support families outside of the formal child welfare system.

Caregivers are invited to join representatives from the regional management and members of the Regional Permanency Enhancement Initiative Action teams in working with the family advocacy centers. The purpose will be to develop professional relationships, and plan joint activities that will support and empower the families in their communities. The partnership will include periodic joint meetings that will focus on strategic planning, support, and service referrals. This summer there will be visits to the Family Advocacy Centers that serve Cook North Region.

Cook North foster parents are a critical piece of transitioning children back to their families of origin, and regional staff welcomes caregiver's participation. More information on the Family Advocacy Centers will be presented at upcoming meetings of the Regional Foster Parent Advisory Council.



Finding free summer fun in Cook County, indoors and outside

A trip to one of our world-class museums will beat the summer heat and keep the learning going this summer. Many of Chicago's most popular museums have standing free days. There are also acres of free outdoor fun in the surrounding suburbs of Cook County.

Chicago Children's Museum on Navy Pier

700 E. Grand Avenue
312-527-1000
www.chicagochildrensmuseum.org
Free Thursdays 5–8 p.m.
1st Monday Each Month for ages 15 and under

Chicago Field Museum

1400 S. Lake Shore Dr.
312-922-9410
www.fieldmuseum.org
Free 2nd Mondays 9-5
plus: June 2 & 3, Aug 24

Chicago History Museum

1601 N. Clark Street
312-642-4600
www.chicagohistory.org
Free: Mondays

DuSable Museum of African American History

740 E. 56th Place
Chicago
773-947-0600
www.dusablemuseum.org
Free Sundays

Notebaert Nature Museum

2430 N. Cannon Drive
773-755-5100
www.chias.org
Free: Thursdays

Museum of Contemporary Art

220 E. Chicago Avenue
312-280-2660
www.mcachicago.org
Free Tuesdays
The Art Institute of Chicago
111 S. Michigan Avenue
312.443.3600
www.artic.edu/aic
Free Thursdays 5–8 p.m.

Oriental Museum

1155 East 58th Street
Chicago
773-702-9514
Admission is Free. Suggested Donation \$7.00 for adults, \$4.00 for children under 12

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Explore bike and walking trails; native plant and forest habitats; 27 lakes, ponds or quarries; and six nature education centers throughout the Cook County Forest Preserve. Site maps and trail maps can be found at www.fpdcc.com

Lake Katherine Nature Center & Botanic Gardens

7402 W. Lake Katherine Drive
Palos Heights, IL 60463
708-361-1873
Location boasts 3.5 miles of hiking trails, 20-acre Lake Katherine, Navajo Creek, a waterfall, forested areas, prairies, arboretum and a wetland restoration project. Free.

Irons Oaks Environmental Learning Center

20000 South Western Ave.
Olympia Fields, IL
708-481-2330
The 37-acre nature preserve offers programs in environmental

educations, adventure education, corporate training and outdoor recreation. Hiking Trails are open daily. Free.

Lincoln Park Zoo

2200 N. Cannon Dr.
(Fullerton Ave. at Lake Shore Dr.)
in Chicago
773-742-2000
Free admission everyday.

Cook County Advocate Regional Reporters

Cook North ~ Joann Niemuth
847-745-3048 office
847-745-3066 fax
Joann.Niemuth@illinois.gov
8140 N. McCormick, Skokie, IL 60076

Cook Central ~
Merrylee Guge-Jorgensen
773-292-7700 office
773-292-7861 fax
Merrylee.Guge-Jorgensen@illinois.gov
3518 W. Division, Chicago, IL 60651

Cook South ~ Rod Mulford
773-371-6402 office
773-371-6409 fax
Rod.Mulford@illinois.gov
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago, IL 60621

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
- Ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.



Cook Region Caregiver Training

Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All caregivers are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. The descriptions below will allow you to decide which classes fit your family's needs or circumstances. Advance registration is required for all classes. In addition to the slate of classroom courses, caregivers can also take advantage of Digital Pride modules on CD and the full offering of Lending Library materials.

For the most up-to-date and complete schedule information for classes offered in your area, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center anytime at www.DCFStraining.org or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours.

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

This module focuses on building self-esteem in children. It covers how kids act when they need recognition, power, freedom, enjoyment, and a feeling of belonging. Caregivers will learn how to listen to what kids say and not what we think they say.

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

This workshop provides practical information to foster parents about how to use effective discipline techniques such as I-messages, natural and logical consequences, time out and how to catch kids being "good" and what to do to encourage positive behavior.

Module 3 & 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (9 training hours)

Participants learn to differentiate normal from problematic sexual behaviors in children and youth, signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and ways to help sexually abused children recover.

Module 5 - Supporting Relationships between Children and Their Families (9 training hours)

This training focuses on helping foster parents learn how to help kids attach to caregivers and at the same time stay loyal to birth families. Caregivers learn about how to prepare and support children for and after visits with the birth family and how to share the parenting role with birth parents.

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

Foster parents learn team members' roles, when and how to be an advocate for children, what conflict is and their own

personal style for managing it, and how conflict can be a "win - win" situation for everyone involved.

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

Culture includes traditions, values, customs and history. What "culture" means to a child's self-esteem, how to manage cultural diversity in a foster home, how to discuss sensitive issues with children and how to help a child record his or her history are topics covered in this module.

Module 8 - Promoting Permanency Outcomes (9 training hours)

The focus of this training is on families who have children in care and supporting reunification of the children and parents.

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

In this training, caregivers learn how fostering children can affect family relationships and how to minimize stresses that can result. They also learn about the supports that are available.

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

Foster parents study the risk factors for chemical use, abuse, and dependency and understand relapse and recovery and be able to acquire skills necessary to be an active member of the team to support recovery in birth parents.

Module 12 - Understanding and Promoting Preteen and Teen Development (6 training hours)

This new course assists caregivers to identify developmentally appropriate ways to best

promote healthy development for preteens and teens who have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma. This six-hour module will help foster/adopt caregivers understand teen brain development and the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens. Participants will learn specific strategies that caregivers can use when fostering teenagers in the day to day life of the foster family.

The Teen in Foster Care: Supporting Attachment (6 training hours)

Attachment and the Teen in Family Foster Care will help foster/adopt caregivers to understand how early attachment experiences have impacted the teen's development. The training covers the teen's perspective on how the accumulation of loss, separation and trauma impacts his or her beliefs, feelings, behaviors and relationships. Participants will learn specific tips for helping manage behaviors that develop over time from the teen's adaptive responses to trauma, grief and loss.

Educational Advocacy

6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.