

Cook County Advocate

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News for Chicago Metro Area Families

Early childhood screens and intervention key to a great start

DCFCS has resources in place to ensure that all young children in care receive developmental screenings. Children entering care for the first time under the Integrated Assessment Program received these important screenings as part of their assessment. If the child needs services for a developmental delay or a social/emotional disorder, DCFS will make a referral for intensive services. Alternatively, the screenings could find that the child could benefit from a referral to an enrichment program.

Even children who show no developmental concerns will later receive a follow-up screening, as required for their age. The service providers often contact foster caregivers directly. When this happens, caregivers should respond and make the child available for all follow-up services. In addition to the mandated screenings, foster parents should continue to watch for potential signs of developmental delay and discuss their concerns with the child's caseworker. Each DCFS Cook region has a developmental screener to work with children from birth to age three. Youth ages three to five receive screenings through their school district.

Cook County also has two Early Childhood Coordinators who support families and workers on developmental issues. Lynnare Deutsch focuses on children up

to age three. She can be reached at 847-745-3065 or lynnare.deutch@illinois.gov. Robin York specializes in youth age three to five. Contact her by phone at 312-328-2047 or by e-mail at robin.york@illinois.gov.

The coordinators can help link caregivers to one of the Child and Family Connection community providers for early childhood intervention.

North Suburban
Clearbrook Center
1835 W. Central Road
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
847-385-5070

Central Suburban
Suburban Access, Inc.
4415 W. Harrison St., Ste. 201
Hillside, IL 60162
708-449-0625

Chicago Southwest
Easter Seals Society
9455 S. Hoyne
Chicago, IL 60620
773-233-1799



Chicago Central/West
Cook Cty. Children's Hospital
1901 West Harrison
Fantus Clinic - Room 209
Chicago, IL 60612
312-864-6575

Chicago Southeast
LaRabida Children's Hospital
950 E. 61st Street
Chicago, IL 60637
773-324-7434

Chicago North
945 W. George Street, Suite 300
Chicago, Illinois 60657
312-942-7800

South Suburban
Easter Seals Society of Metro
Chicago
17300 S. Ozark Ave. North Bldg.
Tinley Park, IL 60477
708-429-8231

DCFS arranges free camp with Chicago and suburban park districts



The S.O.A.R. program has a full slate of free summer activities for children in foster care and for those with open adoption or guardianship subsidies. DCFS has arranged to pay for day camp programs with the Chicago Park District and many suburban park district camps in Cook County. Children age 6 to 16 are eligible. The DCFS Division of Service Intervention, which runs S.O.A.R., has already identified eligible youth and will contact caregivers by mail in March with instructions on how to register for programs.

The DCFS regional offices will be the hub for distributing further information on summer camp. The regional offices will arrange times when caregivers can come to pick up registration packets. DCFS will provide caregivers with forms confirming that the Park District registration fee will be paid by DCFS. Transportation costs are not covered. Caregivers can enroll children at the park of their choosing, as long as there is space.

Caregivers who would like to register their children for one of the

funded programs should take forms provided by DCFS with them when they go to register at the park.

Chicago Park District camps

The Chicago Park District has day pro-

grams running all summer in 190 parks across the city. Before-care and after-care is available in many sites. Parks may offer different programs for different ages, so caregivers should identify in advance the program that they would like. For more details, go to the park district Web site www.chicagoparkdistrict.com.

To use DCFS funding, registration must be done in person. In-person registration begins April 9 and continues through the first week of camp. Camp starts June 27 and most programs run at least six weeks through August 5. DCFS does not guarantee slots at any particular program, so caregivers should promptly handle registration for their children. Many popular park programs do close out quickly.

Cook suburban camps

DCFS is also making payment arrangements for youth day camp programs at some suburban camps throughout Cook County. Caregivers in suburban communities should first inquire

if their park district will accept the DCFS voucher. Then they can take the DCFS-provided forms to the park district program when they register.

Additional summer programs

Creativity Camp

Little Black Pearl Art and Design Center will offer a summer program. Students will do painting, drawing, ceramics and performing arts. The creativity camp, located at 1046 E. 47th street in Chicago, is for youth age 7 to 18. It runs weekdays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Labor of Love Academy

This program combines a morning of academics, Bible study and character-building with recreational activities in the afternoon. Labor of Love Enrichment Camp is located at the Third Baptist Church on 1551 W. 95th St. in Chicago.

Ailey Camp Chicago

Ailey Camp offers dance classes in ballet, modern dance, jazz, West African dance, along with personal development instruction and field trips. The group meets in Chicago at the Garfield Park Field House. It is open to boys and girls ages 11 to 14.

For more information on summer programs, contact the S.O.A.R. Program at 312-814-4145. Also, caregivers who use the vouchers should be certain that children will actually attend the camp. If plans change before the session starts, contact the S.O.A.R. office as soon as possible.



Foster Parent Support Specialists make changes to serve families



The Foster Parent Support Specialists that serve Cook Central have changes to announce. Denise Spires has become the Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist. She and Alice Couch have been a team for decades with Adrienne Welenc

who passed away last year. Now the team welcomes Betty Johnson back to their ranks. Johnson is familiar to the families she served on the west side of the Chicago in a previous stint as Foster Parent Support Specialist.

The support specialists work with the families served by the DCFS

foster care program in Cook Central. They are experienced caregivers, who can relate to the situations and challenges that caregivers face. They make themselves available outside of business hours when real life happens. They can assist in securing services, obtaining training and being a listening ear.

Foster Parent Support Specialists are assigned homes in Cook Central Region based on zip code. With the new line up, caregivers may notice some changes in coverage, but the level of commitment will remain the same.

Foster caregivers in the DCFS-supervised program can reach the support specialists at 773-292-7879.



Denise Spires



Alice Couch



Betty Johnson

Cook Central foster care advisory council selects new leadership



The Cook Central region's foster care advisory council was pleased to announce new leadership at the January meeting. Billie Ray Lewis will serve as the president, along with Sandra McGee as vice president, and Dorothy Rosenthal as secretary.

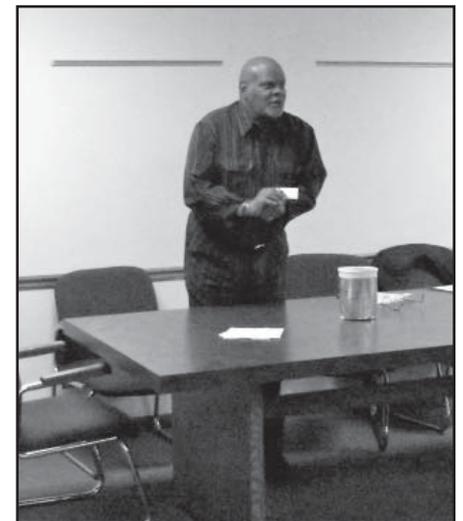
Lewis is a long-time caregiver who also serves as a representative to the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council. McGee also has experience with both foster care and adoption. Rosenthal has guardianship of relatives.

Denise Spires, lead foster parent support specialist, said that she was thrilled to see strong caregivers at the helm. The mix of participants

reflects the diversity of caregivers in the region. The council is open to all caregivers that reside in the Cook Central Region. This includes DCFS and private agency-supervised homes. Caregivers who do foster care, adoption and guardianship can participate.

At each council meeting attendees can learn about new DCFS policies and resources for families. At the January meeting, Lorne Garrett of DCFS discussed the function of the Child Location and Support Unit. Jillian Haygood of Children's Home + Aid described a project developed by teens to express common feelings about foster care from their perspective. Often at the monthly meetings, caregivers can earn training credit hours toward their license requirements.

The council meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in the DCFS office at 3518 W. Division in Chicago.



Billie Ray Lewis addresses the foster care advisory council.



Caregivers willing to go the distance to find support in numbers

Cook South Support Groups

Foster Parents, Our Greatest Resource Support Group

Contact: Elise Worrell
773-371-6114
Info line at 773-371-6113

Meets 2nd Tuesday
10 a.m. to Noon
DCFS Office
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

For DCFS and private agency families. Training credits offered.

Cook South DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact:
Angela Barber 773-578-0079

Meets 3rd Wednesday
10 a.m.
DCFS Office
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

DCFS Cook South Suburban Support Group

Contact: Adrienne Taylor
708-210-3578
Sandra Montgomery
708-210-3594
Foster Parent Info line at
773-371-6113

Meets 4th Thursday (January, March, May, July, September and November)
9 a.m. to Noon
DCFS Office
15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey

Weather challenges during the winter could not keep caregivers away from the Harvey office's Cook South Suburban Support Group. The January meeting focused on maintaining connections that children have to both their caregivers and their families. Caregivers can have a positive, long-lasting impact on children when they weave them into the fabric of the foster caregiver's family. This could be done by taking them to family reunions and other gatherings. Even when a child is not going to stay in the home, they can take memories of family life with them.

Adoption Supervisor Carol Williams spoke about life books as a valuable tool to promote connectedness with the foster parent and other important people. The life book is a therapeutic resource that can help children work through trauma with the caregiver, caseworker or therapist. As youth preserve photos and document important milestones in their life, they can bond with the adult that is helping them. As an example, one foster parent described how she took pictures with her six adopted children and their worker and GAL so they would know later who had helped them become a family.

There was a lengthy discussion about how and when to tell a child that they are adopted. The consensus from the group was as early as possible in a way that takes the child's development into account. How you tell the children they are adopted can make all the difference in their reactions. Caregivers can also add more details as the child is ready. The DCFS training course on Adoption Certification has many details

on how to approach the topic. The DCFS Lending

Library also has books that can help a caregiver sort through this important matter.

Adrienne Taylor, who coordinates the group, is also a Licensing Supervisor. She led the group in an update of news and helpful reminders:

- Everyone in the foster home who will transport children must have their driving records checked each year. Drivers will need to provide their license number and auto insurance information. Any issues are reported to licensing.
- When a new child comes to your home be sure to get a copy of the 906 Payment Authorization document. It ensures that the child is properly assigned to that foster home.
- Illinois Families Now and Forever ran a "Checklist for New Foster Care Placements." in 2011 Volume 1. Copy it many times and use it.
- When preparing to file taxes, remember that recent changes allow a caregiver to claim a child in foster care as a dependent, if the child lived there for at least 6 months of the tax year (183 days).



Cook South LAN Liaisons can link caregivers to local resources

Recently a Cook South family with six children was robbed of everything the thieves could carry away, including Christmas presents and clothing. A foster family had a fire in their apartment and lost everything. A high school senior was blocked from graduation for owing school fees that should have been waived in the first place. In all of these situations, the Local Area Network (LAN) was able to assist those children.

A LAN is a group of varied community stakeholders that includes representatives from the Illinois State Board of Education, DCFS, social service organizations, businesses, and individuals. They come together to develop offerings that meet the needs of the families in that locale. The state is divided into 62 LANs to address social services and mental health needs.

In the Cook South Region, three DCFS LAN Liaisons can help link foster parents, adolescents, parents, adoptive families and others to resources in the community. Ron Wynne, Elise Worrell, and Gerald Strezo do their very best to resolve issues when the normal channels

and all other avenues have been exhausted.

In each LAN, there are generally three standing committees that provide structure and guide decisions on how to intervene effectively to help each child. The Steering Committee provides leadership and governs the LAN. The Family Centered Services (FCS) Committee oversees funds for educational programs that focus on youth who are at risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion. The Wrap Committee oversees a separate funding stream to support provisions for children that not covered by other available resources.

Caseworkers, parents, caregivers and school personnel can refer youth for services within the LAN where the child resides. Community members can also attend monthly meetings to stay informed about local resources. To determine the specific LAN for a residence, consult the list or contact a LAN Liaison. Caregivers can also call the Cook South Foster Parent Support and Information Line at 773-371-6113.



**DCFS LAN Liaisons can help caregivers connect to community resources.
Pictured: Elise Worrell, Ron Wynne and Gerald Strezo.**

DCFS LAN Liaisons for Cook South

Ron Wynne 773-371-6112
LANs: 53, 82, 86, and 87

Elise Worrell 773-371-6114
LAN: 77

Gerald Strezo 708-210-3063
LANs: 56, 84, 85

Open: LAN 79

LAN 53
Bloom, Bremen, Rich, Thornton townships

LAN 56
Calumet, Lemont, Orland, Palos, Lower Stickney, Worth Townships

LAN 77
Archer Heights, Bridgeport, Brighton Park, Chicago Lawn, Clearing, Gage Park, Garfield Ridge, McKinley Park, New City, West Elsdon, West Lawn community areas

LAN 79
Englewood, West Englewood community areas

LAN 82
Avalon Park, Burnside, Chatham, Greater Grand Crossing, South Shore community areas

LAN 84
Auburn Gresham, Washington Heights community areas

LAN 85
Ashburn, Beverly, Mount Greenwood community areas

LAN 86
Morgan Park, Pullman, Riverdale, Roseland, West Pullman community areas

LAN 87
Calumet Heights, East Side, Hegewisch, South Chicago, South Deering

Alternative School Network helps students “drop back in” to school

School for some teens is an unwelcoming place that holds little incentive to get them to attend or to stay until graduation. Unfortunately, when young people drop out of high school, they may be free of the “hassle” of school, but they hamper their chances to live independently in the long-term. After they leave school they may come to feel differently, but realize their options are limited. DCFS is focusing resources to make sure those students who want to return to school can have another chance. The Alternative Schools Network reaches out to youth who have dropped out of school, been expelled or are at risk of missing out on their diploma. The schools in the program will work with older students to get them back on track for a diploma and provide practical life skills.

In the Chicago area, the Alternative Schools Network maintains 17 neighborhood schools. Youth who have been adopted or moved to guardianship can apply to schools in the network. However, for youth who still have open DCFS cases, the Alternative Schools Network offers the Youth Scholars, Skills and Service (YS3) program. This program is open to young people ages 16 to 21 who are in DCFS foster care, group home or independent living programs. The YS3 program combines in-class instruction with after school courses in life skills, leadership, financial literacy and social/cultural development. On top of the instruction are added layers of support through mentoring, tutoring and counseling.

As students work their way toward their diploma, they can also earn money to continue their education. For each computer-assisted course

a young person completes in the after school program, they receive \$250, of which \$200 goes into a scholarship account. Students also earn \$2 per hour for the time they spend in the after school programs, which also gets deposited into their account. After students graduate and enroll in college or some other type of vocational training, they can draw down from the funds accumulated in their scholarship account plus an additional \$600 award.

Because of the many moves these young people made, they often have educational deficiencies. But when they finally have stability and incentive, they can do well. Typically, the schools in the Network are small schools in neighborhood settings that operate like their own mini-communities. Students attend classes during the school day and participate in the after school activities. Adult mentors are available to assist youth. The mentors go beyond role models and accompany youth to court, or go to doctor’s appointments and help with schoolwork. There are also services for students who are parents.

Alternative Schools Networks have nearly 250 openings for DCFS youth. A caseworker must complete the referral for the DCFS programs; however, caregivers, counselors and others can start the process. Enrollment is on a rolling basis so there is no need to wait. Call 773-728-4030 for more information.

Alternative Schools Network

Ada S. McKinley
2929 S. Wabash

Antonia Pantoja (Aspira)
3119 N. Pulaski

ASA Academy
4651 W. Madison

Bronzeville
4622 S. King Dr.

CCA Academy
1231 S. Pulaski

Charles Hamilton Houston
9035 S. Langley

Community Youth Development Institute
7836 S. Union

Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos
2739 W. Division

Howard Leadership Academy
7647 N. Paulina

Jobs For Youth
50 E. Washington #400

Latino Youth
2200 S. Marshall

Olive Harvey
10001 S. Woodlawn

Prologue Learning Center
640 W. Irving Park Road

Sullivan House
8164 S. South Chicago Ave.

West Town
2021 W. Fulton

Westside Alternative
839 N. Central

Winnie Mandela (Prologue)
7847 S. Jeffrey



Make plans for summer jobs in Chicago, Cook County and beyond

Youth Ready Chicago

Youth and young adults who live in Chicago can apply for summer employment and volunteer positions through the Youth Ready Chicago Program. The program provides work experience to young people ages 14 to 24 in a variety of settings. Individuals may find themselves working in one of the city's parks, public agencies, leading corporations or nonprofit organizations. The City of Chicago also sponsors After School Matters, a youth employment program that includes the popular high school offerings science37, sports37, tech37, words37 and the nationally recognized gallery37. These paid, outside of school activities focus on the arts, academics and sports.

There will undoubtedly be more applicants than there are opportunities available, so it is best to apply early. The online application and many jobrelated resources can be found on the program's Website at www.youthreadychicago.org.

Applicants must:

- Be a resident of Chicago
- Be age 14-24
- Have experience working within their school or community
- Apply online
- Have parental or guardian signature if under 18 at the time of application

Applicants are selected for interviews and placed in opportunities based on their qualifications and on how well their applications match the needs of participating partners.

There are many employment avenues for youth living in Cook County. The DCFS booklet Youth Employment and Training Programs outlines many local and statewide programs, including:

Added Chance Program

This is an employment program for youth ages 16 to 20 served by DCFS who live in Cook County. Contact Doreen Sorenson at 773-342-4243.

Hire the Future

This is a statewide program of the IL Department of Employment Security. Students work in manufacturing, financial, transportation, trade and service industries. Contact Roderick McNeese at 312-793-6835.

IL Employment and Training Centers

These service centers comprise a statewide network to help job seekers with pre-employment training and job placement. To find the nearest service center, call 888-FOR-IETC and ask to speak to the coordinator for youth employment.

Job Corps

This national program has offices in Chicago, Joliet and Golconda. Job Corps provides education and training for students ages 17- 24. Students can learn a trade, get a high school diploma or GED and receive help getting a job. Call 800-230-JOBS for more information.

The DCFS Education and Transition Managers are available to help. Call 312-814-5959.

Cook County Advocate Regional Reporters

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

Cook Central ~ Clyde Thompson
773-292-7700 office
773-292-7861 fax
Clyde.Thompson@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

Cook Region Caregiver Training

DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across Northern Region. The listing below can help caregivers plan for their training needs. To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center (VTC) anytime at www.DCFStraining.org or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours. In addition to classroom courses, caregivers can also take advantage of videos, books and online training.

April

Module 1
Module 8
Module 9
Child Trauma
Educational Advocacy
Reunification

May

Module 2
Module 5
Module 8
Module 12
Educational Advocacy

June

Module 7
Module 9
Module 12
Child Trauma
Educational Advocacy
Teen Attachment in Foster Care

In-service Training modules (scheduled periodically in classroom sessions or available on DVD)

Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk (12 hours) The focus of this module is how to build self-esteem in children; how kids act when they need recognition, power, freedom, enjoyment and to belong; and 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 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 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (9 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 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 before 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 hours) Foster parents learn everyone’s role on the team, 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 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 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 hours) In this training caregivers learn how fostering children can affect family relationships, how to minimize stresses that can result and how to find available supports.

Module 10 – Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families (15 hours) Foster parents will study the risk factors for chemical use, abuse, and dependency. They will understand relapse and recovery and be able to acquire skills necessary to be an active member of the team to support parents’ recovery.

Module 12 - Understanding & Promoting Pre-Teen and Teen Development (6 hours)

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