



Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship®

DCFS sends 48 youth to college with scholarships

That magical period between high school and college was a dream come true for 48 students who earned the 2012 DCFS Scholarship. They head to school with medical benefits, a \$471 monthly maintenance grant and a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees if they attend one of the nine designated Illinois state universities or an Illinois community college.

The DCFS Scholarship Program is open to any college-bound youth with an open DCFS case or to youth who left DCFS custody through adoption or guardianship. This year more than 325 students applied. The selection committee pored over impressive submissions that highlighted the student's scholastic accomplishments, their demonstrated community involvement and compelling personal statements. After thorough review, the 48 recipients celebrated at a luncheon coordinated by the Division of Service Intervention and the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation. The luncheon was preceded by an informative session to prepare the young people for a successful start to their college careers. Then it was time for the fun. Alhambra restaurant provided a lush landscape for a buffet lunch and an upbeat program.

Director Calica encouraged the students to soak up knowledge and also all the experiences that come with college, even coping with
Continued on Page 2



The 48 recipients of the 2012 DCFS Scholarship Program celebrate the accomplishment at a July luncheon before heading to their new campuses and new academic pursuits.

2012 DCFS Scholarship Recipients

Darrius Atkins	Riviera McCollum
Whitney Berman	Learesi Montes
Ciara Bleichner	Darcie Nettleton
Andrew Cerveny	Shannon Panzica
Shaneka Crawley	Amber Peterson
Daniel Daley	Michael Raab
Stephanie DeLong	Kaylee Randolph
Tasha Doerr	Teona Richmond
Danielle FitzSimmons	Janeya Rivers
Dante Gabourel	Kyle Robinson
Shannon Gaetz	Jarrett Roby
Jacob Griggs	Andrew Semkiw
Bianca Gruns	Ashley Shula
Stephon Harper	Jasmine Smith
Dustin Hicks	Nathaniel Stewart
Clairese Hollis	Chante Summers
Justin Jensen	Anthony Thomas
Myshell Johnson	Deziree Vaughn
Deanna Keller	Luella Villanueva
Thomas Korte	Shamir Villeda Cruz
Allison Mack	Tyisha Wheeler
Sarah Mann	Don Williams
Kimberlee Mathews	Jessica Wilson
Lesla McAuliff	Lucy Wylder

From the DCFS Director

Richard H. Calica



In the nine months that I have been DCFS Director, much has happened in terms of budget and programs and I believe caregivers deserve a candid snapshot of our current condition.

Each state department goes before the state's budget office in the spring to discuss how much money it needs to get the job done. The Governor then presents the overall budget to the state Legislature for approval and funding. However, this simple process often gets complicated by reality. Our state owes \$8 billion in unpaid bills, there's a \$2.6 billion Medicaid problem, and the pensions are grossly under funded. Even as I write this it is impossible to predict where all the dust will settle. By the time you read this, things could have changed significantly.

This is what I can tell you. The DCFS budget that was eventually approved by

the Legislature arrived at DCFS with deeper cuts than I anticipated. I knew I could cut 250 non-critical positions and move those employees to front-line jobs, serving families directly and providing us with adequate staff to do investigations and work with children in foster care. Yet, the budget handed down was slashed by \$50 million more than the Governor's budget proposed. The Legislature specifically targeted a \$27,000,000 reduction in staff salaries. That required a reduction in the DCFS workforce of 375 employees, beyond what was already in play. Thus, in August almost 600 employees received notice that their positions were being eliminated as of September 30.

Our agency has to focus our limited resources on the core, legally mandated responsibilities of safety, permanency and well-being. The positions targeted by the layoff were therefore concentrated in areas outside of those core responsibilities, even though the work done in those jobs may have had a very positive impact on the families we serve. No cuts were made to contracts or staff associated with foster care. At the same time, 200 direct service vacancies will be opened in casework and investigations. There is a very specific

process that the labor union must conduct to move employees into other positions. While the process is precise, it will not be neat and tidy. As it plays out, I can only ask for your patience.

Meanwhile, I have been working diligently to realign the agency's structure so that we can do more than just get the job done. We have to do a better job and do it more efficiently. We have moved resources in ways that make more sense and will lead to better outcomes. We have also lost programs that we simply could not afford to continue.

I know that we all do this work out of passion and with a purpose that cannot be quantified on a balance sheet. Given what we have to work with, I will ask you what I have asked of every DCFS staff member. In the midst of all this, we have to keep focused on serving children and families. With our help, children and families will feel safe and secure, will be able to engage in meaningful relationships, and will be able to work productively as students, parents, and employees. It is our core mission and it is one that together we can accomplish.

Scholarships, con't.

roommates. The words of the Chicago Bears legend Walter Payton echoed in the room as DCFS Guardian D. Jean Ortega-Piron read from his autobiography, "If you believe in something and you work at it, there is going to be hope and there is going to be a way," he stated. The Payton Foundation, the Department and the family members, caseworkers and mentors that supported the students helped make a way for these 48 to start a new chapter in their education life.

To give them a glimpse of what success can look like, two young people who had graduated college with the DCFS Scholarship addressed the audience. Kethan Hedrick graduated this spring after only three years, while caring for his younger siblings as an adoptive parent. He is about to begin law school. Denae Knox, a recipient from 1999, offered advice on putting past negative experiences in perspective and using them to drive you forward. Now on campus, the future shines brighter for 48 fortunate students.

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 of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information.



The American Legion awarded \$300 scholarships to children of veterans: Jacob Griggs, Shannon Panzica, Teona Richmond, Kyle Robinson, Chante Summers, Luella Villanueva and Lucy Wilder.



Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin

The Northern Region hosted the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council for its July meeting in Aurora.

Healthcare changes

The council continued to track the potential impact on families from the recently upheld federal Affordable Care Act and changes to the state Medicaid Program. Vince Champagne from the DCFS Office of Health Services reported that few of the Medicaid changes will directly affect children in care. The Department of Healthcare and Family Services did create guidelines about how to handle pre-approval for patients with more than 10 prescriptions. The good news announcement was that children in foster care are exempt. Staff in the Office of Health Services is available to answer other Medicaid questions at 312-814-5516.

Media Campaign

Caregivers (and the general public) may soon see another phase of the Foster Kids Are Our Kids media campaign on television. Ann Klassman unveiled the newest public service commercials with the theme "Where is the love?" The public service announcements encourage individuals to take an active role in supporting youth in foster care.

Discussion with Director Calica

The Director had frank discussion with the council on the budget situation and the agency restructuring. All direct service is in one place under one administrative structure. "Everything else is to help achieve our core mission of permanency, safety and well being," he said.

He also addressed the layoffs notices that had to be sent to 597 people,

a number much higher than he had planned before losing another \$50 million in the final budget. Many of those receiving notices are union employees so he is reviewing the options for laid off employees. Realistically, service level may degrade some as the dust settles. He is asking everyone to stay focused, remembering the most important job is to care for kids.



The council elected Gladys Boyd as vice chair and Cathy McCoy as chair for the new fiscal year.

Caregivers help craft 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 public period for review and comment begins in September. Typically the DCFS and private agency programs take any public input into consideration as they prepare the plans for 2013. The new plans will be due to the council by November 30.

The Foster Parent Law stipulates that agencies demonstrate that caregivers participated in creating the implementation plan. Typically they announce meetings in the fall to discuss the previous plan and changes for the new plan. The implementation plans must

clearly describe how each foster care program upholds the foster parent rights and responsibilities in the Law.

All caregivers can review the previous year's plan. Some programs mail 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. Caregivers can also contact the DCFS Office of Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for assistance.

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council was founded in conjunction with the Illinois Foster Parent Law. Membership consists of caregivers, agency representatives and other experts in child welfare, who are appointed by the DCFS Director. The mandated positions for caregivers are spread among the DCFS regions.

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

The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be on October 19 in Effingham at 9 a.m.

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

More than just a free lunch with completed forms

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 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; 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 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 Educational Advisors urge caregivers to return the forms promptly so they take advantage of the benefits and avoid possible problems.

State fair tradition continues



The Sally family of Creve Coeur enjoyed discounted fun at the fair.

Attending the state fair in Springfield and in DuQuoin has become a long-standing tradition for foster, adoptive and guardianship families. Families receiving DCFS support came in droves. In addition to reduced rate parking and admission to the fair, DCFS pro-

vided each eligible family member discounted carnival rides and \$3 in free meal tickets. The State’s budget constraints prevented DCFS from sponsoring free bus transportation this year, but families carpoled and otherwise still found a way to make the trip.

At the DuQuoin State Fair, families gathered on Saturday, August 25 for a picnic-setting that included rides, games and food. Local organizations made contributions, and DCFS staff volunteered weekend time to ensure everyone had fun.

This year, DCFS sent out tickets to more than 800 foster, adoptive and guardianship families for Springfield. More than 150 families requested tickets to the picnic at the DuQuoin fair.

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, including breast-feeding mothers.

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 through the Vaccination of Children Program for those 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 Health at 217-782-4977.

Get digital delivery

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

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

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

Cook County Advocate

News for Chicago Metro Area Families

Cook regions send 28 off to college with DCFS full scholarships

This year, 28 students whose cases were served by programs in the three Cook County DCFS regions headed to college with the benefits included in the DCFS Scholarship program. The scholarship includes a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees at one of the nine Illinois state universities or an Illinois community college, 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 Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information on the scholarship program.



Darrius Atkins

Darrius is a graduate of Curie Metropolitan High School in Chicago where he earned a 3.95 GPA on a 4.0 scale. While in high school, he was a member of the National Technical Honor Society, the National Honor Society and the Tech Club. He also was a Freshman Connection

Youth Leader. Darrius is very active in his church where he serves as an ordained and licensed Gospel Minister, Sunday school teacher, choir member, and usher board member. Darrius now attends Morehouse College and plans to major in political science.



Andrew Cerveny

Andrew, of Gregory, Michigan, is a 2012 graduate of Chelsea High School where he earned a 3.46 GPA on a 4.0 scale. In high school, he participated on the track, football, basketball, and bowling teams, and was a member of the concert orchestra, Spanish club, debate team, and the musical

and dance troupe. Andrew worked as a camp counselor and volunteered at various charity functions in his community. Andrew attends the University of Illinois at Springfield to major in legal studies.



Whitney Berman

Whitney graduated from Buffalo Grove High School where she earned a 4.47 out of 5.0 GPA. She was on the honor roll, participated in Concert Choir, Show Choir and the Environmental Club. She also performed in two musicals. Whitney volunteered with the Peer Jury and Reality Theatre

through Omni Youth Services, and tutored special education students at Kilmer Elementary School. This fall Whitney is studying at Southern Illinois University, majoring in social work.



Shaneka Crawley

Shaneka is a graduate of Perspectives High School of Technology in Chicago where she earned a 3.91 out of 4.0 GPA. During high school, Jenna was a member of track and field/cross country team. She was on the honor roll, the Principal's List, and the Director's Society due to

her consistently high GPA. She volunteers through her church, Trinity Ministries of Chicago, helping with the distribution of Thanksgiving food baskets to families. Shaneka is now a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, majoring in psychology.

Daniel Daley

Daniel, of Sherwood Arkansas, graduated from Sylvan Hills High School where he earned a 3.72 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Daniel was a member of his high school's basketball, football, and soccer teams, and participated in the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America Club, the Beta Club, and the Student Government Association. Daniel was an Honor Graduate, received the Award of Merit in Advanced Placement American History, and the Gold Award in Housing and Interior Design. Daniel attends Arkansas State University as a business major.



Shannon Gaetz

Shannon is a 2012 graduate of Wheaton North High School where she earned a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Shannon was a member of the track and field team, the Student Activities Board, and the Pit Orchestra. She was recognized as an Illinois State Scholar and is a member of the National French Honours Society. Shannon volunteered her time as a math tutor and worked as a teacher's assistant. Shannon attends Northern Illinois University and is majoring in business.



Danielle FitzSimmons

Danielle is a 2012 graduate of Chicago's Resurrection College Prep High School where she earned a 3.67 GPA on a 5.0 scale. Danielle was a member of the soccer and tennis teams. She was recognized on the honor roll and was chosen to be a Freshman Mentor her senior year. Danielle volunteered through her church as an altar server, and at the Resurrection Retirement Center where she helped retirees with their computer skills. Danielle is studying at Western Illinois University and hopes to pursue a career in law enforcement.



Bianca Gruns

Bianca of Palos Hills graduated from Amos Alonzo Stagg High School, where she earned a 3.71 GPA on a 4.0 scale. During her senior year, she was awarded the "Outstanding Charger" plaque for: well-rounded participation in sports, various bands, academic achievement: having a positive attitude; performing community service and maintaining perfect attendance during all four years of high school. She enjoys playing flute and her guitar. She also volunteers at the Children's Farm, helping young children take care of and understand chickens, goats, rabbits and ducks. Bianca is now a student at Northern Illinois University with plans to major in marketing and finance.



Dante Gabourel

Dante graduated from Kenwood Academy High School in Chicago where he earned a 4.61 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Dante was a member of the varsity tennis team. He also participated in his school's Best Buddies program to mentor autistic children, the National Honor Society, the Kappa League Leadership Institute of Chicago, and served as the news editor for the school newspaper. He completed internship programs with the After School Matters Program and completed community service work in Costa Rica on a study abroad program. Dante is a student Emory University and majors in psychology.



Stephon Harper

Stephon is a graduate of Hope College Preparatory High School in Chicago where he is ranked fourth in his class with a 4.4 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Stephon excelled on the MORE Step Team, served as co-captain of the Debate Team, was on the honor roll and pursued many volunteer activities. He served as the President of Brother to Brother, a club for young men who strive to achieve academic success. Stephon attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as an advertising major.



Clairese Hollis

Clairese from Crete graduated from Crete-Monee High School where she earned a 3.4 GPA on a 4.0 scale. She took advantage of an Early College Program offered to high school seniors. This allowed her to take college courses at Prairie State College, along with high school courses.

Outside of school, she also volunteered for the Media Team with Christian Life Center and worked as a shift leader at Cold Stone Creamery. Clairese is now studying business administration at Northern Illinois University.



Allison Mack

Allison, of Glenview, graduated from Glenbrook South High School where she earned a 3.72 out of 4.0 GPA. She was captain of the Varsity Field Hockey team and she is a nine-time Illinois State Champion and three-time National Champion in Shotokan Karate. She placed numerous times at the U.S. Open and Junior Olympics of karate, landing her on the USA Karate Team. Allison went on to place third at the World Shotokan Karate Championships, which she describes as the “greatest accomplishment of my life.” Allison is studying at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with plans to major in kinesiology or pre-medicine.



Justin Jensen

Justin is a graduate of Plano High School with a 4.42 GPA on a 4.50 scale. While in high school he was an honor roll student, along with participating in baseball, football, and soccer. He was a member of the National Honor Society both his junior and senior years as well as student council. Justin

was also selected as an Illinois State Scholar. He also volunteers at First Lutheran Church of Plano. Justin plans to begin his studies at Waubensee Community College and major in business and/or accounting and marketing.



Sarah Mann

Sarah, from Chicago Heights, is a graduate of Bloom High School where she earned a 4.55 GPA on a 4.0 scale, and was ranked 3rd in her class of 313 students. Sarah is the Administrative Officer in her NJROTC unit; she has traveled on mission trips to Peru and the Dominican Republic. She is an

Illinois State Scholar and was a delegate to the Nobel Peace Laureate Conference in Chicago. In high school, Sarah also participated in the art club and the drama Club. Now she attends Millikin University, majoring in athletic training/kinesiology.



Myshell Johnson

Myshell from Park Forest is a 2011 graduate of Thornridge High School in Dolton. She earned a 3.75 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Myshell was an honor roll student in high school, and a member of the Spanish Honors Society, the Cultural Diversity Club, math club and Service Club. Myshell

currently attends Saint Xavier University and is majoring in chemistry and mathematics.



Lesa McAuliff

Lesa graduated from St. Charles North High School where she earned a 3.87 out of 5.0 GPA. Lesa enjoys dance and is involved with her high school youth ministry. She volunteered at Delnor Community Hospital for four years, and was a member of the Sports Medicine Club and Health

Occupations Students of America group at school. Lesa is now a student at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and plans to major in nursing and/or social work.



Learesi Montes

Learesi, from River Grove, graduated from North Grand High School where she earned a 3.64 GPA on a 4.0 scale. She received the “Wise Owl Award,” given to students who maintained straight A’s for the academic year. Because of her spirit of academic excellence, Learesi was recently

awarded the Bill Gates Millennium Scholarship. During her senior year, Learesi was the president of the school’s Thanksgiving Food Drive and is well known by many for her dedication and commitment. Learesi is now studying at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a major in nonprofit business leadership.



Janeya Rivers

Janeya is a graduate of Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy in Chicago, where she earned a 3.5 out of 4.0 GPA. Janeya worked in the After School Matters program where she was employed with Sprint Media as a news anchor, producer, and director. Each academic

year, Janeya has received the honor roll award for her academic excellence. Now she is studying at the University of Illinois at Chicago as a science major.



Shannon Panzica

Shannon is a graduate of Elk Grove High School where she earned a 4.47 GPA on a 5.0 scale. In high school, Shannon published two poems and was actively involved with an organization that helps needy children during the holidays and provides gifts for them. She has been on the Honor

Roll and has been acknowledged for her leadership abilities. Shannon is studying elementary education in college.

Kyle Robinson

Kyle is a graduate of Al Raby High School in Chicago where he earned a 3.88 GPA on a 4.0 scale. He was actively involved in the school’s fund raisers, as well as participating in the energy conservation programs. Kyle was recognized and awarded for being one of the ACT Top Scorers in his school. He also worked at his high school in various roles during summer break. Now Kyle is a student at Eastern Illinois University, majoring in engineering and medicine.



Amber Peterson

Amber, from Glenview, graduated from Glenbrook South High School where she earned a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale. While in high school Amber was acknowledged and received awards for her skills in sign language. She was selected by the International Center on Deafness and the Arts

to perform leading roles requiring sign language in a local play. Amber has a strong desire to be a therapist or have a career in industrial and organizational psychology. She attends Southern Illinois University, majoring in psychology.



Jarrett Roby

Jarrett, from Oak Park, is a graduate of Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men where he earned a 4.22 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Jarrett is a summer camp counselor and a tutor. He was the project leader for the Urban Prep Charter Academy Winter Food Drive. Jarrett is a committee

member at the Christ Revival Church Nursing Home. This fall, Jarrett is attending Georgetown University and plans to major in pre-medicine.



Andrew Semkiw

Andrew, from Bartlett, graduated from South Elgin High School (SEHS) where he earned a 3.38 out of 4.0 GPA. While in high school he earned the AP Scholar Award and was the co-founder of the SEH physics club. Andrew also founded the SEHS environment club promoting the

health of the environment in the community. Outside of school, he was employed at Giordano’s restaurant. This fall, Andrew is studying at Northern Illinois University as a physics major.



Shamir Villeda Cruz

Shamir is a graduate of Evanston Township High School where he earned a 3.7 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Shamir received numerous academic awards and was inducted into the National Honor Society. He has been a volunteer life guard and works as a volunteer at a local soup

kitchen. Shamir studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and will major in business management and entrepreneurship.



Nathaniel Stewart

Nathaniel is a 2012 graduate of Homewood Flossmoor High School where he earned a 3.1 GPA on a 4.0 scale. He is an accomplished vocalist who participated in numerous choirs and at multiple vocal competitions. In 2010 he performed in London and Paris with the HFHS Honors Choir.

He was also a member of the HFHS football team for four years. Nathaniel studying at Western Illinois University, majoring in broadcasting with a minor in vocal performance.

Tyisha Wheeler

Tyisha, from Hazelcrest, graduated from Hillcrest High School where she earned a 3.8 GPA on a 5.0 scale. Tyisha has been employed for several years. She is highly recognized for her loving, caring and sharing spirit, especially with children. She is a leader and a role model to her siblings and is excited to be the first to attend college in her family. Tyisha is attending Eastern University and plans to major in biology with a concentration in nursing.

Anthony Thomas

Anthony graduated from Chicago’s Gary Comer College Prep High School where he earned a 4.1 GPA on a 4.0 scale. He was a participant in the Summer Science Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Anthony also participated on student council, horizon club, Spanish club, and played on the football, basketball and track teams. This fall Anthony is at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, majoring in business.



Luella Villanueva

Luella, from Chicago Heights, graduated from Marian Catholic High School where she earned a 3.74 out of 4.0 GPA and was a member of the National Honor Society. During high school she was active in volunteering to help the homeless and was also

member of the lacrosse team. Luella is now a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, majoring in veterinary medicine.

Project SOAR art programs cut

Cook County caregivers should be aware that due to budget cuts, the S.O.A.R (Statewide Opportunities for Arts and Recreation) Program has been eliminated. This includes all classes for both the fall 2012 and spring 2013 sessions as well as the summer camp voucher program for the summer of 2013.

Caregivers should contact their child’s caseworker to discuss enrichment options available in the community and how to seek reimbursement for any associated expenses. Children and youth in care should have artistic and cultural endeavors, since they offer opportunities to be involved in their local community, foster personal growth, and self confidence. Please pursue outlets for these opportunities with the caseworker, other caregivers and local resources.

New structure for Cook Region

The Department announced that all of Cook County will be served a one region, rather than three. Regional Administrator Jackie Bright will be responsible for the foster care program in Cook. She previously filled that role for the former Cook North region. After reviewing the number of cases in Cook and the services that families require, the new structure will meet the need more effectively without regional boundaries or redundancies.

The organizational shift should be relatively transparent for foster caregivers. However, notice of changes will be communicated by the casework teams and through other written communication.

Caregiver support during DCFS transition

The new fiscal year in July has necessitated many changes due to the budget. Those doing the everyday, all day work of foster care have needs that won't change. It takes help from others to keep going. As of publication, the advisory and support groups that were housed in various DCFS locations are still valuable and will function in varying degrees during the time of transition.

The South Suburban Support Group that meets at the DCFS

Harvey Office has a meeting set for September 27th from 9a.m. until 12 p.m. Ongoing plans for the Advisory Council and support group that would normally meet at the Emerald Street office are still being worked out. Caregivers can expect to receive information by mail.

The advisory council that met at 3518 W. Division expects to meet again this fall. With that office closing, the group will contact caregivers with new location

information by mail. The advisory council at 1911 S. Indiana met in September and has an agenda set for the second Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m.

The Foster Parent Support Specialists can offer details as they are available, as well as provide interim assistance to those in DCFS-supervised homes. Phone numbers are changing in some cases, so call the Office of Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422.

DCFS closes Skokie for Deerfield

The DCFS Skokie office is closed as of August. Many of the functions that drew caregivers there will now be located in Deerfield at 1755 Lake Cook Rd. The main phone number in Deerfield is 847-948-6700.

Direct casework staff and the investigative teams from Skokie are at the new location. The Administrative Case Review, however, will be at 1911 S. Indiana.

Contact child's caseworker for more information or call the Deerfield main number to make the new connections.

Cook County Education Advisors have new assignments

The DCFS Education Advisors can help caregivers navigate obstacles in the school settings. The new school year brings a realignment of the staff that supports families. The new budget realities brought about changes to the structure reported in the last issue of the newsletter.

Going forward, the Education Advisors will assist only families with open DCFS cases that are supervised by the DCFS regional foster program. Youth whose cases closed through adoption or guardianship will have to utilize other resources in the community outside of DCFS. Caregivers supported by private agencies can continue to work with the Educational Liaisons that the individual agencies may provide. These changes are necessary to allow the program to continue to

serve a large segment of DCFS youth and their foster caregivers.

Education advisors serving DCFS-supervised homes

Cook South - Chicago's South Side and South Suburbs
Yasmina Sefiane 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago, IL 60621
708-338-6750 yasmina.sefiane@illinois.gov

Cook Central - Chicago West Side and Western Suburbs
Arlecia Brown 1026 S. Damen, Chicago, IL 60612
312-793-3217 arlecia.brown@illinois.gov

Cook North - Chicago North Side and Northern Suburbs
Donnis Briscoe 1911 S. Indiana, Chicago, IL 60616
312-328-2607 donnis.briscoe@illinois.gov

Cook County Training

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

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

- See training news and general information
- Check available trainings
- View/Print your training transcript
- Register and take on-line courses

Lending Library Update

Due to reduced human and dollar resources the DCFS Lending Library has limited capacity to ship materials to caregivers. Although we will continue to ship as we are able, we need to avoid depleting these resources before the end of this fiscal year. Therefore, we are asking that caregivers go to www.dcfstraining.org and view the recently-updated lending library catalog. Find resources you wish to use and please go to your local library to order them. Most libraries can get materials from other libraries if they do not have them in their own stock.

To receive credit hours to meet licensing requirements, caregivers should complete and return the Training Credit Approval Form (TCAF). The Office of Training recently re-evaluated the eligible credit hours for items in the updated Lending Library catalog. The TCAF will reflect the credit hours. In-class and on-line courses will continue to receive credit based on the approved clock hour.

Join research to build family bonds

DePaul University seeks foster families to participate in a research project called the Strengthening Relationships Program. The goals of the project are to:

- find the best method to build positive relationships between the child and foster caregiver
- determine the most effective way to improve children's ability to listen and follow directions
- Find the best ways to increase adult's behavior management skills

The program is open to children in foster care who are between ages two to five and who will live with the caregiver for the next six months.

If selected, there will be three home visits, and some families may have in-home therapy sessions. Participants will receive snacks and gift cards at the end of the eight-week program. Contact Christina Danko of DePaul University at 773-325-2059 or cdanko1@depaul.edu.

Training course materials now available online

As the Department has fewer printing resources available and moves into the digital age, the Office of Training has responded by making more materials available online. Caregivers can easily access many PRIDE materials on the home page of the Virtual Training Center at www.dcfstraining.org. Anyone may print the materials or download them for ready access on their mobile device during class. For most courses, individual sets of printed materials will no longer be given to all participants. However, those who do not have electronic access should speak with their trainers when they arrive to class, so they can be accommodated.

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 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.

...You feel you aren't being treated fairly by DCFS or a private agency?

If you've already tried to resolve the issue by going up the chain of command with the caseworker and supervisors,

then call the Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

...You have questions about your child's medical card?
Call 800-228-6533.

...You are having family problems with your adopted child?

Contact the Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program that serves your area. Call the subsidy worker in the nearest regional office or the toll-free number to the subsidy unit 855-548-5505.

...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 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.



Illinois Families Now and Forever

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Purpose: To help busy families more effectively parent children currently or formerly in DCFS care. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

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

Illinois Families Now and Forever is published six times a year, bi-monthly, and mailed to licensed foster parents, unlicensed relative caregivers, adoptive and guardianship families receiving subsidies. An electronic version is sent to all DCFS staff, and private agency staff.

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Department of Children and Family Services©

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Department of Children & Family Services
100 West Randolph - 6th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60601

PRESRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
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SPRINGFIELD, IL
PERMIT NO. 763

Inside this issue:

- Pages 1-2 DCFS Scholarship recipients head to college
- Page 3 Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin
- Page 4 Protect against flu with shot this fall
- Pages 5-11 *COOK COUNTY ADVOCATE*: Regional News

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