



Illinois Families Now and Forever[®]

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

Governor appoints Bobbie Gregg DCFS acting director

Announced April 29, Bobbie Gregg will be the acting DCFS director pending Senate confirmation. Gregg served as interim director since February.



“Bobbie Gregg is a problem solver who brings a fresh perspective to DCFS,” said Governor Quinn.

Gregg came to DCFS in 2013 as deputy chief for the Bureau of Operations. She brought administrative expertise from the DuPage County Health Department, social work experience while at a human services agency and legal skills gained as an assistant U.S. attorney and in corporate law.

Colleagues in child welfare and members of the legislature noted that Gregg’s legal background and work in the private sector will provide a solid platform to build on DCFS’ past successes and address new challenges.

“We have much work to do. Our mission – protecting children and supporting families – is what unites us. Together we can accomplish great things,” said Gregg.



WHEREAS, each year more than 4,000 children who have been abused or neglected cannot remain with their families safely, and these children need and deserve the temporary safe haven of a family home where they can be protected, nurtured and loved; and,

WHEREAS, without volunteer foster families, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services would not be able to fulfill its mission to provide for the well-being of the nearly 15,000 children currently in its care; and,

WHEREAS, the department and its nonprofit partners provide a wide range of supports to assist foster families in meeting not only a child’s basic physical needs, but also ensure her educational, emotional and social well-being, none of which can be achieved without the dedication of foster families; and,

WHEREAS, foster families answer a noble calling to devote their time and energies to children to reunite families when possible, support other permanency options and create opportunities for a successful launch to adulthood; and

WHEREAS, foster families provide children with the one thing they need the most, which cannot come from a government or nonprofit agency, but only from the heart of another human being: love; and,

WHEREAS, it is impossible to quantify the minute and magnificent ways foster parents change lives, and they deserve the utmost respect and gratitude for the lasting impact they have in the life of a child, in their communities and on the future prosperity of this state; and,

THEREFORE, I, Pat Quinn, Governor of the State of Illinois, do proclaim May 2014 as FOSTER PARENT APPRECIATION MONTH in Illinois, extending thanks on behalf of our the people of Illinois to the thousands of Illinois foster families, and encouraging all to consider joining them in their noble service to children, communities and our state.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Illinois to be affixed.



Dease White

SECRETARY OF STATE

Done at the Capitol in the City of Springfield, this _____ NINTH day of _____ APRIL, in the Year of Our Lord, two thousand and _____ FOURTEEN, and of the State of Illinois, one hundred and _____ NINETY-SIXTH.

Pat Quinn

GOVERNOR

Make Foster Parent Appreciation Month special for all of May

Here are a few ways to make sure Foster Parent Appreciation Month is a special time:

- * Take a look at your rights under the Foster Parent Law and remember there is a state statute to support your efforts.
- * Join a foster parent support group and take a friend.
- * Pay a visit to the district office of your state legislators. Ask how they will address issues that are important to your family.
- * Set a movie night to watch foster care/adoption themed movies. *Despicable Me*, *Martian Child*, *Meet the Robinsons*, *Annie*...
- * Serve a cake with candles for dessert and show the kids you deserve a special day.
- * Make plans with another foster family to trade an afternoon watching the others' kids. Take the time to do something to refresh yourself.
- * Send a card to encourage a foster parent who is having a rough time.
- * Make a list of good parenting decisions you have made lately. Tuck it away for a "rainy day."
- * Write a letter to your local newspaper explaining the importance of foster care. Make the public take notice.
- * Declare a "Good News Only Day." Let someone else field the phone calls from school and settle the squabbles. You'll have to take your turn one day the next week.
- * Pose for a family picture with all the kids who are at home.
- * Reconnect with an older youth who was once in your care.
- * Meet a couple of foster parent friends over coffee.
- * Use social media: change your profile picture to a foster care graphic from the website www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth
- * Tweet about foster care with a new post (non-confidential) each day.
- * Share your own ideas on the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Facebook page: www.facebook.com/IllinoisDCFS.

Illinois focused statewide spotlight on child abuse prevention month during April

In April, the blue bows were prominent as DCFS and its child welfare partners brought attention to the issue of child abuse prevention. The annual honor began with an event in Springfield at the Gus and Flora Kerasotes YMCA on March 31. DCFS Central Region Administrator Cathy Smith was joined by foster parent Jessica Janicki, Angie Sowle of the YMCA, Roy Harley of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois, and representatives of the offices of the Mayor of Springfield and Gov. Pat Quinn. With entertainment from the "Rainbows" class of the Children's House day care, the month of events was off to a festive start.



On April 1, Denice Murray, DCFS deputy director for Regulation and Monitoring, joined with Children's Home+Aid to launch this year's Blue Bow campaign in Chicago. Similar events took place in Edwardsville, East Moline, Carterville and Rock Island. Bows could be found in trees, offices and front yards, highlighting the need to keep children safe.

Background checks now only after 18 years old

At the start of the year, the changes to the Juvenile Court Act changed the age a youth is determined to be an adult from 17 to 18.

In order to bring consistency to DCFS rules, the agency now requires FBI criminal background checks and fingerprints only after the individual's 18th birthday. Families where a 17-year-old youth lives in the home will no longer have to have a fingerprint background check until that child turns 18.

Keep this in mind for foster home licensing. This became effective January 1 and the updates to DCFS procedures are nearly complete.

MOVIN' ON UP: *News for youth as they transition to adulthood*

As the school year comes to an end, this is also a time for older youth to look ahead to their next step in education and life as an adult. To help them in that transition, each year DCFS sponsors Youth Summits in locations across the state.

The four Youth Summits will provide teens who are still in DCFS care (foster care or residential programs) skills to help them successfully achieve self-sufficiency.

The DCFS Office of Youth and Family Development and the Youth Advisory Boards have prepared a slate of workshops on a wide range of topics covering: finances, personal care, education, housing and emotional/social development. There will be guest speakers and information tables to connect youth to resources.

During the youth summit, DCFS will also honor students' academic accomplishments and give special recognition to those who earned

a high school diploma or GED or completed a vocational program.

Save the date for the events listed below. More information will be sent directly to families with youth ages 14 to 21 who are still in care.

Cook/Northern regions

Brianna Pitassi, 773-696-1014

Central/Southern regions

Leshonda Rogers, 217-789-2908

Cook Region

Youth Summit

June 18, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago

Northern Region

Youth Summit

June 20, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Kishwaukee College
Malta

Central Region

Youth Summit

June 26, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Illinois State University
Bloomington

Southern Region

Youth Summit

June 5, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Kaskaskia College
Centralia

Caregiver families invited to State Fair August 8 - 17 in Springfield

DCFS continues the annual tradition of offering caregivers a special invitation to attend the Illinois State Fair. This invitation is for currently-licensed homes and includes youth in DCFS care, as well as children by birth, adoption or guardianship living in the home.

Complete and return this page by June 20 and in July you will receive by mail:

- A pass that includes parking and admission for all passengers in the car for one \$3 fee.
- 1 refreshment ticket for each family member, worth \$3 in food or drink.
- One ride ticket for each family member that provides unlimited rides for \$15 (during designated hours ONLY on August 11 -15)

MAIL OR FAX NO LATER THAN JUNE 23, 2014

DCFS Office of Communications
406 East Monroe Street, Station 65
Springfield, IL 62701-1498
Fax: 217-524-0014

Tickets may not be requested by telephone. *Nothing will be sent to you unless you return this coupon.*

This is the only invitation to the state fair.

Please act today if you wish to attend.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Licensed by (agency/DCFS Region) _____

There will be _____ family members in our party. They are:

To request more than 8 tickets, we will need additional information for verification with the DCFS Inspector General.

Name of licensing or subsidy worker _____ Phone number _____

We are a currently-licensed foster family, relative caregiver, a guardianship family or have adopted a child through DCFS, and we would like to attend the 2014 Illinois State Fair. We understand that only our foster, adopted and guardianship children and family members who live in our home consistent with DCFS licensing regulations are eligible for these special offers.

Signature _____

Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin



The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council met in Alton for the March meeting and conducted business via teleconference in April.

Implementation Plans

The review of the foster care programs' implementation plans was completed. Several plans were nominated to receive special recognition. Council members voted and will publicly commend the recipients at the June meeting. Next, the council continued its in-person agency reviews. This two-layered process ensures that the spirit of the Foster Parent Law is also demonstrated through interactions between the agency and families.

Legislative Issues

The Council keeps watch for bills that could impact foster families.

The legislative committee in March briefed the council members on several ways to follow legislation and be in touch with elected officials. The General Assembly website at www.il.ga.gov allows anyone to identify specific members by district. The progress of bills and committee work can be tracked. It is also possible to watch a live stream of official business.

Foster Home Recruitment

The council asked for an update on the new resource recruitment effort. The supervisor from Southern Region explained the statewide focus to bring more licensed foster homes to specific areas. One key objective is to ensure that youth can stay connected by having more local placement options, avoiding disruptions to school, family and cultural ties.

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 in Bloomington on June 13 at 9 a.m.

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

Foster Family Handbook updated for 2014 online

The 2014 edition of the Foster Family Handbook is now available to read online or download to a device for reference or to print. This valuable resource was completely refreshed to reflect the latest policy and practices. It was also redesigned to be easier to read and to search relevant topics.

Foster families will find the new version an important tool to stay informed about child development, child welfare services and practical tips for caring for youth during and after their time in DCFS care.

The DCFS Office of Professional Development, Parent and Caregiver Support coordinated the

overhaul of the book and designed it to be an online resource that can readily be updated with future policy changes.

In order to conserve resources, it will be available on the DCFS Virtual Training Center (VTC) at www.dcfstraining.org and on the public DCFS website at www.DCFS.illinois.gov. DCFS will have a limited number of hard copies available for foster parents who have no means to access the Handbook online. Those individuals can contact the regional training manager or call the DCFS Registration Unit at 877-800-3393.

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.

Foster Parent Law defines caregivers' rights and responsibilities

Before 1995, the rights and responsibilities for the individuals providing foster care were not clearly defined. Without a clear job description, caregivers, agencies and DCFS had struggled in placing caregivers' rights and responsibilities within child welfare policy. It took a lengthy, coordinated effort from individual caregivers, foster care advocacy organizations, legislators, and child welfare personnel to bring about the Foster Parent Bill of Rights. That document provided the foundation for the Foster Parent Law, signed on June 3, 1995.

The Foster Parent Law clearly defines 15 rights and 17 responsibilities for all Illinois families who provide foster care to children in DCFS care. The statement of rights helps foster caregivers, agencies and DCFS regions know what role caregivers will play on the child welfare team and the consideration they should receive. The statement of responsibilities helps caregivers know what will be expected of them and gives a clear understanding of the general expectations they should have of the foster care agency or DCFS regional foster care program.

The accompanying Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Law established the council to advise DCFS about foster care issues. The council also has the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the Foster Parent Law.

Details and the full text of the Foster Parent Law are included in the Foster Family Handbook. Caregivers can also request their foster care program's annual Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. Call DCFS Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for further information.

Caregivers have the right to:

1. Be treated with dignity, respect and consideration
2. Be provided pre-service and appropriate ongoing training to improve skills
3. Be informed on how to receive supportive services from the agency
4. Receive timely financial reimbursement commensurate with child's service plan
5. Be provided a clear, written understanding of the plan concerning the child's placement and how it will support his family relationship and cultural identity
6. Fair, timely and impartial investigations of licensing complaints
7. Receive additional information to assist in the care of a child while in placement
8. Receive specific information from DCFS and private agencies listed in Children and Family Services Act and the Child Care Act of 1969
9. Be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings in order to participate in case planning and decision-making
10. Be provided, before placement, with any information a caseworker has that is pertinent to the child's care and the permanency plan
11. Receive written notice of any change in a child's case plan or of plans to terminate the child's placement, along with the reasons for the change or termination
12. Timely notification of court hearings and right to intervene or request mandamus
13. Be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parents re-enters DCFS care
14. Access the existing appeals process with the assertion that the appeal will be free from acts of harassment and retaliation.
15. Be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and the rights for foster parents when reporting misconduct by child welfare personnel

Caregivers have the responsibility to:

1. Communicate and share information with the child welfare team
2. Respect the confidentiality of information about the child and his family
3. Advocate for children in the care of the foster parent
4. Treat the child and his or her family with dignity, respect and consideration
5. Recognize their individual and family strengths and limitations and to utilize appropriate supports as appropriate
6. Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations
7. Assess their ongoing training needs and take action to meet those needs
8. Strategize with agency representatives to avoid placement disruptions and support the child if disruption occurs
9. Recognize the impact of foster care on relationships and take steps to minimize stress as much as possible
10. Positively promote the benefits of foster parenting
11. Know the role, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the child, and the child's own family
12. Know and fulfill their role as a mandated reporter and know policies regarding allegations that foster parents have committed abuse or neglect
13. Know the purpose of and to participate in Administrative Case Reviews, client service plans and court proceedings
14. Know the child welfare agency's appeal process
15. Maintain accurate records
16. Share information about the placement with subsequent caregivers/parents
17. Provide care that respects the child's cultural needs supports the relationship between the child and his or her own family



Illinois Adoption Advisory Council update

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council held its April meeting in Springfield.

Adoption policy and practice

The council submitted a list of priority issues around policy changes and adoption practices to Cheryl McIntire, DCFS statewide adoption administrator. Luann Gab from that office came to update the council on progress. McIntire has instituted a full tracking system to aid in timely completion of subsidy agreements. From the moment a subsidy is sent to be reviewed, it is tracked.

Additionally she formed an Adoption Workgroup of DCFS and private agency adoption-related staff, mostly supervisors, who come together every other month. Their goal is to evaluate policy, make

changes to improve practice, and address any problems that come up to reduce delays and errors. Representatives of the Illinois Adoption Council will also be a part of the work group. The group is recommending ways to decrease common, delay-causing errors through additional training and automation. It is also developing the means to have more consistency in adoption practices throughout the state, despite the judicial jurisdiction.

Medical insurance transitions

The implementation of the Affordable Care Act opened up new resources for some young adults in care or who were in care. It also raised questions about specifics around coverage. The council invited Jamie Ursch from the Department of Healthcare and Family Services to discuss the

new programs and how they relate to young people who have been adopted from DCFS care with the state medical card as part of the subsidy. She answered some questions and explained that procedures were still being developed for some situations, for example when there is a gap between the end of the subsidy and eligibility for an individual plan. She took away a list of follow up items and will return for another council meeting.

Training curriculum review

The adoption advisory council continued to review the latest round of proposed changes to the PRIDE pre-service curriculum. Members of the council are involved in the workgroup tasked with revamping PRIDE. The council also discussed the adoption conversion course that is required when moving to adoption from foster care. One suggestion under consideration is to make training materials available after completing a course. The training subcommittee will continue to follow these topics.

Call Adoption Support Line: 855-548-5505



The Adoption Support Line has expanded capacity to serve callers statewide through one toll-free number at: 855-548- 5505.

The Adoption Support Line allows all adoption-related calls to come to a centralized location. Trained responders with adoption experience will be able to answer questions or direct calls for follow up.

All calls will be assessed on an individual basis and documented to forward on to the assigned caseworker or supervisor if needed.

Staff can also handle the types of calls that do not require follow-up. These could be requests for numbers to field offices, replacement Medicaid cards or making con-

nections to educational advocacy resources.

When a caregiver calls about an intense issue that requires immediate attention or crisis intervention, he or she can immediately get referred to Adoption Preservation providers or connected to an adoption supervisors without delay.

The Adoption Support Line has extended hours so caregivers can call outside of the regular business day. Operating hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Monday through Thursday) and 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays.

Calls requiring a normal response will be routed to the assigned worker and supervisor for follow-up to occur within 24 business hours.

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council meets six times a year to discuss issues and make recommendations to DCFS regarding the concerns of adoptive and guardianship families. The Council is made up of parents, professionals in the child welfare field and adopted individuals.

The next meeting of the Illinois Advisory Council will be on June 6 in Bloomington at 10 a.m.

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

Cook County Advocate

2014 - Vol. 3

News for Chicago Metro Area Families

DCFS administration marks Foster Parent Appreciation Month



May, which is Foster Parent Appreciation Month, is a special month for all of you who give your heart and your homes to children in need. But it is also special for me, the staff who work with me in the DCFS foster care program and our partner agencies in Cook County. It is special to us because we have you. It is special to us because

you do the parenting work 24/7/365 and you do it with heart and soul. You keep our children safe; you nurture them; you give of yourselves to help improve their young lives. For that we are forever grateful.

Your parenting work is endless; it is difficult; and it is rewarding. We thank you for doing what you do. This month, during Foster Parent Appreciation Month in Illinois, we will think about the important work you do, and we will try extra hard to demonstrate our appreciation of you and for you.

Since the restructuring of the region, we have maintained three active foster care advisory councils for all families on the north side of Chicago and in the suburbs to the North, West and South. I encourage everyone to come to a meeting. My staff and I also need to shine the spotlight on the foster parent support specialists who serve the DCFS-supervised foster homes in Cook County. The families who call on them, especially when it seems there is nowhere else to turn, benefit from the dedication and knowledge of the DCFS support specialists.

For all the foster parents of Cook County, my personal wish is that you take care of yourself and enjoy the company of the children with whom we are all blessed, especially during Foster Parent Appreciation Month. Thank you all.

Arlene Grant-Brown,
Cook County Regional Administrator

Children's Advocacy Center to double capacity to serve abused kids



DCFS staffers Micheal Ruppe and Valerie McDaniels (right) participated in the groundbreaking ceremony at the Children's Advocacy Center expansion project.

The Chicago Children's Advocacy may be familiar as the little pastel colored building near Cook County Juvenile Court. The kid-friendly center is where some of the most difficult child welfare work takes place. Located at 1240 S. Damen Avenue, the center is the

hub for investigations of child sexual abuse in Chicago. Under one roof are specialized teams that include the following public agencies: DCFS, Chicago Police Department, Cook County Health and Hospitals System and the Cook County State's Attorney's Office.

The CAC takes a holistic approach to meeting the emotional needs of the children and the families that are affected by abuse. By the end of the year, construction should be complete on an 18,000-square-foot expansion. The expansion will double the center's capacity to provide mental health services for children who have been sexually abused and add dedicated space for hosting community trainings. It will also improve the quality and number of child and family-friendly areas for clients and ensure that the physical space is designed to be trauma-informed. This will allow all of the team members to work together effectively as they both investigate reports of abuse and care for children.

Families find strength in numbers with support groups in Cook

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, Vanessa James at vanessa.james@illinois.gov with any corrections or additions for next year.

Circle of Parents

Contact: Stacey Saffold at 773-419-4660
Meets the first Saturday of the month
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Sherman Park Library
5440 South Racine, Chicago

Metropolitan Family Services - Midway
3843 W. 63rd Street, Chicago
Open to any grandparent or older caregiver raising a child.

Hispanic Association (combines with Northeast Foster Adopt Parent Association)

Contact: Edith Cruz at 312-328-2064

Cook Central DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Billie Ray Lewis at 773-968-6572
Meets the fourth Tuesday of the month
9:30 a.m.
DCFS Office
1701 First Ave. Maywood
No December meeting. Training credits offered.

Jewish Child and Family Services Advisory Council

Contact: Larisa Banike at 312-444-2090
Meets quarterly on Saturdays
10:30 a.m. to noon
216 West Jackson, Chicago

Cook North DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Edith Cruz at 312-328-2064
Meets the second Tuesday of the month
10 a.m.
DCFS Office
1911 S. Indiana, Chicago

Lutheran Social Services of IL Foster Parent Advisory Council

Contact: Joan Singleton-Lee at 312-949-4862
Meets the first Monday of every other month
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
10 W. 35th St., 15th Floor, Chicago

Cook South DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Mercedes Ball at 773-371-6142
Meets the third Tuesday of the month
10 a.m.
DCFS Office
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

New Beginning Foster/Adoptive Parent Association

Contact: Regina or Gladys Boyd at 708-385-6263
Meets the first Monday of the month
6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
10436 S. Wallace at Fernwood Park

DCFS Cook South Suburban Support Group

Contact: Adrienne Taylor at 708-210-3578
Meets the fourth Thursday of odd numbered months
9 a.m. - noon
DCFS Office
15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey
For DCFS and private agency families. Training credits offered.

Northeast Area Foster and Adopt Parent Association

Contact: Cecil Garner at 773-241-0821
Meets the third Thursday of the month
10 a.m.
Sherman Park Library
5440 S. Racine Avenue, Chicago

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Training and Support Group

Contact: Bryana Fishman
773-884-2200 or fishmanb@metrofamily.org
Meets the first Wednesday of the month
10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Northern Illinois Foster/Adopt Parent Association

Contact: Desiree Benbenek at 847-948-6771 or 847-870-1234
Meets quarterly
Open to all foster and adoptive parents in the north end of Chicago, and the suburbs from Evanston to Buffalo Grove, and to Streamwood.

Cook County regional councils provide a platform for discussion



DCFS Cook South Advisory Council

The Cook South Regional Foster Care Advisory Council met in April. Caregivers discussed the Foster Child Damage Reimbursement program. The program helps foster parents recoup financial losses from injury or property damage that is directly connected to foster care.

Caregivers who experience a loss should immediately notify the child's caseworker that a claim needs to be filed. The caseworker will view the damage and request that a claim form be sent directly to the caregiver. The foster parent will complete the claim form, have the child's caseworker sign it, attach all pertinent receipts and other supporting documents, and have the caseworker make a copy of everything for the caregiver before they mail it to the foster child damage reimbursement program coordinator.

The Cook South regional advisory council meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m. at 6201 S. Emerald in Chicago.

South Suburban Support Group

Families living in the south suburbs and looking for camaraderie and learning opportunities can join the South Suburban Support Group, sponsored by the DCFS Harvey office. The South Suburban Support Group has a meeting scheduled on May 22. The topic for discussion

will be Knowledge: Learning positive parenting strategies.

The support group meets the fourth Thursday of odd numbered months at 9 a. m. to noon in the DCFS Office, 15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey. The next meeting will be on July 22.



DCFS Cook Central Advisory Council

The Cook Central Foster Care Advisory Council is open to all caregivers in the Cook Central Area. This includes the west side of Chicago and the western suburbs of Cook. Families with the DCFS foster care program and homes served by private agencies are welcome to attend.

At the April meeting the group learned about summer programs for children available through the local park districts. Attendees also discussed training needs in order to set the agenda for the remainder of the year. The foster parent support specialists can provide information to caregivers who missed the meeting. Call 708-338-6739.

The group meets at 9:30 a.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the month at the DCFS Maywood office, located at 1701 First Ave.



DCFS Cook North Advisory Council

The Cook North Regional Foster Care Advisory Council meets the second Tuesday of every month at 1911 S. Indiana Ave.

The topic for the March meeting was domestic violence and the effect it has on children. Stephanie Holifield, of the DCFS Division of Clinical Practice and Professional Development was the featured speaker. She explained how traumatic domestic violence can be, particularly for infants who have no way to voice their feelings. Holifield discussed behaviors and reactions to look for and ways to help address effects.

At the April 8th meeting, Anthony Caballero, a technology instructor from YWCA, was the featured speaker. He introduced several courses that youth and caregivers can take through the YWCA. Enrichment courses are available on afternoons and weekends for these topics:

1. Business Technology Courses
2. Utilities Program
3. Tech Girls STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Program

The YWCA is located at 6660 S. Cottage Grove Ave. For more information, send an email to anthony.caballero@ywcachicago.org.

Northern IL Foster/Adopt Parent Association

Northern Illinois Foster/Adopt Parent Association sponsored a Parent Café on April 4 at the Glenview public library. Robyn Harvey of Be Strong Families provided a guided discussion on the five protective factors of strong families. The café was well attended and participants seemed to enjoy the information exchange and the support that the cafés provide.

Any caregiver living in the North part of the city or northern Cook can participate in this group's quarterly events. Contact Desiree Benbenek at 847-948-6771.

Cook Region Training

The DCFS Office of Professional Development, Parent and Caregiver Support has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the region. To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center at www.DCFstraining.org. 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 Professional Development, Parent and Caregiver Support at 877-800-3393 during business hours.

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

- Get training news and information;
- Check available trainings;
- View/print your training transcript;
- Register and take on-line courses;
- Download course materials to use in class or to access after training; and
- Get alerts for changes in course schedules.

DIGITAL TRAINING MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE

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

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

Who do you call when....?

...A child in your home is having a psychiatric crisis that may require hospitalization?

Call the CARES line at 800-345-9049. However, if a child is a danger to himself or others, call 911 first. The CARES line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

...You want information on becoming a foster parent or on adoption?

The Adoption Information Center of Illinois (AICI) can answer your questions and connect you with a licensing agency. The toll-free number is 800-572-2390. AICI also maintains information about the children who are featured in the newsletter.

...You have questions about your board check?

Call the DCFS Central Payment Unit at 800-525-0499 if your check comes from DCFS. If your check comes from a private agency, contact the agency.

...You need to report a child missing or have information about a youth who has run away?

To report information on missing youth call 866-503-0184. The toll-free number is available 24 hours a day every day of the week. If you feel the child is in danger, call 911 first.

...Your adoption or guardianship is final but you have questions about the subsidy?

Call the subsidy worker assigned to the case or the Adoption Support Line at 888-96-ADOPT so you can be connected to the right individual for help.

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

Contact the Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program that serves your area. Call the Adoption Support Line at 888-96-ADOPT.

...You have questions about your child's medical card?

Call 800-228-6533.

...You need to find a phone number for a caseworker?

Call the main switchboard in Chicago at 312-814-6800 or the State of Illinois Operator at 312-793-3500.

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

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

...You are having a hard time getting services for your child at school?

Most private agencies have an education liaison, and each DCFS region has education advisors who can help. Call your agency or nearest DCFS office to be connected to the right educational resource for your area.

...You have questions about programs for youth approaching adulthood?

Contact the transition coordinator that serves your area, by calling the nearest DCFS regional office. The transition coordinator can advise on programs such as life skills training, preparation for higher education and employment assistance. Details on these programs can also be found at the Get Goal'd website www.youthincare.illinois.gov.

...You have an idea for an article in the newsletter?

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

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



Crystal (C8062)

Crystal [8062] Crystal, 14, is a sensitive young lady who is aware of herself and her surroundings, and who strives to make and maintain connections with people. She is able to identify her feelings, but would benefit from continued guidance on how to best process and express those feelings. Crystal enjoys writing and listening to music, and also enjoys being active. She is particularly fond of dancing, jumping on trampolines, and participating in gymnastics.

Crystal's worker says she has a "sweet personality." She enjoys having conversations with adults and peers alike, and is eager to form positive, trusting relationships.

The future family for Crystal is one that can provide a loving, structured home environment for her. You can encourage her as she learns to express her feelings appropriately. You can also establish and enforce boundaries with respect to personal space and appropriate topics of conversation. Crystal would like to have a "mom that cares." She would also like to join a family with other children, particularly girls that are close to her in age. Other children in the home should be older than Crystal.



Dallas (C8092)

to talk about his many interests. He also takes stock of the thoughts and feelings of others, and does his best to make others happy. When he is not engaged in conversation, he enjoys reading fantasy books, playing sports, and collecting Pokémon and Bakugan cards.

Dallas' worker says he is an expressive child who is able to clearly communicate his wants, needs, and emotions. Potential parents for Dallas can provide a structured home environment for him. You can establish clear boundaries and enforce the rules of your home in a fair, consistent manner. You can also encourage Dallas as he works to establish relationships that are based on mutual respect. Dallas would like to connect with a family that includes a mom, a dad, and, possibly, older siblings.

Darius [7975] Darius, 14, can be shy and reserved at first, but he is still able to form attachments with others. He is a fan of sports, and enjoys watching football and playing basketball with his friends. He also enjoys playing video games and listening to music. Darius has trouble concentrating at times, and also needs to be reminded to clean up after himself, but he is generally cooperative, both at home and in school.

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

To be a forever family for Darius, you would need to provide a loving home and assure him that he is a permanent part of

your family. You can be patient with him as he adjusts to your home. You can also work with professionals who can help him understand his emotions and develop appropriate coping techniques. Darius says he wants to live in a stable home. Other children in the home should be older than Darius.

Quadaysha [7974] This young lady is independent, strong-willed, and resilient. Quadaysha, 15, enjoys shopping, playing on the computer, and hanging out with her friends. She also enjoys spending time with her siblings, and benefits greatly from maintaining relationships that have been consistent and positive over the years. It usually takes Quadaysha a long time to open up to new people, but she has shown herself to be willing to embrace people who have earned her trust and proven they will be there for her.

Quadaysha's foster parents say she has a good heart. They add that she can be charming and helpful to others. Quadaysha's teachers say she is very intelligent, and earns good grades in school.

The right parents for Quadaysha can remain patient with her as she adjusts to her forever family. You can show unconditional commitment, which may in turn help you earn her trust. You can also help her maintain strong relationships with her siblings, including regular visits. Quadaysha wants to join a family that cares about her and is in it for the long haul. Other children in the home should be older than Quadaysha.



Darius (C7975)



Quadaysha (C7974)



Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI website – www.adoptinfo-il.org if you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted.



Illinois Families Now and Forever®

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*Celebrating 50 Years of Protecting
Children and Supporting Families*



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are available online in English and Spanish at www.DCFS.illinois.gov