

# ILLINOIS FAMILIES Now and Forever™

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services



## From the DCFS Director

*Bryan Samuels* After a steady dose of attention from politicians and the media, I want our foster and adoptive families to be clear on some basic facts concerning Maryville.

First, the problems at Maryville's Des-Plaines campus are not new. Since 2001, the Department has expressed concerns that it did not provide services appropriate to the type of children it received at that program.

Second, Maryville must fix its problems. When the monitors and DCFS outlined specific problems, in many instances Maryville's response was slow, incomplete or nonexistent.

Third, Maryville did not create their problems solely on their own. DCFS has to own up to a past practice of using Maryville as the "placement of last resort" and now must commit to finding the most appropriate settings.

Lastly, and most importantly, we adults found a solution that keeps the interest of children at the forefront. Those children with high-end needs were moved first so they could get help immediately. The other children will continue to stay while transition plans are made. Maryville in Des Plaines will change its focus to become an academic enrichment center, which plays on its strengths and meets a dire need for our older youth. This plan was not perfect in its inception. However, I do feel everyone is finally pulling together in the right direction.

## Statewide Council honors top Implementation Plans

At a ceremony this Fall, the foster care programs with the top five scores on their Implementation Plans received recognition from the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Director's Office. The Foster Parent Law requires every private agency with a foster care program and the six DCFS regions to submit an annual Implementation Plan. The Foster Parent Law clearly lays out 14 rights and 17 responsibilities of foster parents so that they can know what to expect from agencies and what agencies can expect from them. These Implementation Plans describe how the agencies will uphold the rights and responsibilities outlined in the Law.



*Barbara Jones-Green, Ray Gates (DCFS), Jackie Sharp, Daniel Fitzgerald (DCFS) and Joanne Stiffic celebrate Lakeside Community Committee's second year with a top scoring plan.*



*Daniel Fitzgerald (DCFS), Heidi Darville, foster parent Osanyde Watson and Sylvia Florie relish the first top five award for Catholic Charities, Diocese of Chicago.*

Congratulations for receiving the five highest scores among all the state foster care programs go to:

- Catholic Charities, Diocese of Chicago
- Children's Home Association of Illinois in Peoria



## From the Editor

Vanessa James

In 2003, there were many changes that could make even an eternal optimist wonder what child welfare would look like after the dust settled. DCFS saw masses leave through early retirement. A new director took over with a new management team. Just when it seemed like things were on track, the “Maryville storm” struck. The public eye was again focused on the problems rather than the progress in child welfare.

Fortunately, individuals like you and me could maintain some balance by looking at our own families. Each day we can witness progress instead of problems. For example, a retiring adoption worker hastened the placement for 13-year-old boy. Now, Dontae’s adoption is final and my family has a new son. That is progress. After five years with our family, our oldest son Orlando celebrated his first A in a class that wasn’t gym or music. That counts as progress. The three teenage girls that lived with us in foster care have all become legal adults. They’ve come to understand the importance of education and employment. There, too, is progress.

Everyone who watches the news may not grasp what we see every night at our dinner tables. But, as long as we do the right thing for the children in our care, we will progress, and so will the child welfare system. I will do my best to make sure these pages give you the tools and the inspiration to keep up the good fight. Good luck to you and your families in 2004.

## Implementation Plans, con’t

- DCFS Cook North Region
- Generations of Hope in Rantoul
- Lakeside Community in Chicago

The plans are scored by members of the Council, according to how they follow and implement the tenets of the Foster Parent Law. The winning plans this year emphasized the value of teamwork, by facilitating staff, foster parents and even the birth families working together.



Daniel Fitzgerald (DCFS) congratulates Rick Allen and Bill Crowley of Children’s Home Association for the agency’s first time among the top five scores.

The Implementation Plans are important to foster parents because they lay out the role the foster parent will have as part of the child welfare team. Foster parents can provide input for the drafting of the plan (this usually occurs in the Fall) and access the completed plan (due at the end of November). Additionally, each plan must document the agency’s grievance procedure, so that foster parents can clearly see how problems will be managed. The Council encourages foster parents to work with



Chris McGrath, Jackie Bright, Sari Rowitz and Kathy Bilbo of DCFS Cook North Region break through to the top five plans, a first for a DCFS region.

their providers in creating and reviewing the plans.

This year, Statewide will begin monitoring the plans to see how agencies are delivering on their stated intentions. Working with the DCFS Agency Performance Teams, members will annually review a third of the plans. The review will include interviews with foster parents and staff. After a three-year rotation cycle, the Council will have a snapshot of how the plans match the reality for children and families in the field.



Jim Lane (Statewide Council) and Daniel Fitzgerald (DCFS) congratulate Brenda Eheart and Rebecca Ashe of Generations of Hope for the agency’s award winning plan.

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## When using a medical card, your pharmacist can be your friend

Sometimes getting Medicaid prescriptions filled can be frustrating. Here are a few things you can do with your local pharmacist and doctor to make the process easier for everyone.

- Make sure the doctor is aware the child receives Medicaid prescription benefits so that he or she can prescribe the appropriate generic drug. Medicaid will not pay for a brand name drug if a generic equivalent is available.
- Make sure the doctor's name is clear and lists the phone

number and DEA numbers on the prescription. The pharmacist needs this information to process the prescription. It could take hours to track down the doctor later.

- Some drugs are not covered or require prior approval. If this happens, ask the pharmacist to call the doctor to change to a covered drug. If none is available, ask the pharmacist to call for prior approval, which could take a few days.
- The Medicaid approved drug list changes periodically, so ask the pharmacist to process the

prescription even if he thinks it may not be covered. He may not be aware of the change.

- Many over the counter drugs are covered by Medicaid, if the doctor writes a prescription.

If you are satisfied with the service, try to stick with one pharmacy. If the staff gets to know you, they will usually be more helpful.

*Submitted by Jerry Welenc, licensed pharmacist and adoptive parent*

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## Save the date for the Spring Caregivers Conference March 26-28

The conference "Helping families Cross Life's Bridges" kicks off on March 26 at the Westin O'Hare Hotel in Rosemont. This conference is open to all foster, adoptive and guardianship caregivers. In one weekend, caregivers can earn training hours as they learn about new resources and innovative ways to build stronger ties with the children and families in the child welfare system.

This year, the Department is focused on broadening attendance, and involving parents who are first-time conference attendees, as well as more families from the southern areas of the state. The conference planning committee is busy working on special incentives and other considerations to make this the

best-attended conference possible.

The Spring conference will begin on Friday, March 26. Plans are underway for an opening address by the Director, a reception with DCFS executive staff and special entertainment at the hotel. Classes begin on Saturday, followed by dinner and the always enjoyable auction by the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (IFAPA). Don't forget to bring new items or crafts with you for the auction. Sunday will kick off with breakfast and a general session, followed by a raffle and the final workshop.

Instructions for registering for the conference will be mailed and also available on the DCFS website. All licensed foster parents, unlicensed relative caregivers, adoptive

parents and guardianship parents who are interested in attending must complete the registration materials and mail or fax the form back. DCFS will send confirmation letters to those individuals who are able to attend.

The conference registration is free and includes two nights accommodations and meals. **Children are not permitted at the conference so caregivers can focus on learning, avoid safety concerns and recharge their parenting batteries.** DCFS will arrange for bus transportation from specific sites in Cook County. Other pick-up sites around the state may also be added, depending on interest. For more information about the conference, contact DCFS training at 877/800-3393.



## News from the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council

### New members know adoption from experience

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council welcomes two new members who were both adopted as children.



*Amy Clark*

Amy Clark has a passion for adoption and looks forward to supporting the efforts of the Council. Amy was adopted by parents who celebrated adoption. Her positive experiences led her to choose adoption as a path for her own family. She and her husband are parents to seven children, four of whom have been adopted. Amy and her family are from the Central Region.



*Krista McCoy*

Krista McCoy has a personal and a professional dedication to adoption and child welfare issues. She was adopted as a child and understands issues around transracial adoption as well as growing up in a transcultural environment. She looks forward to offering input from those perspectives. Additionally, she has established a career in child welfare, working with many Chicago area agencies. McCoy, a long-time resident of Chicago's South Side, is currently pursuing a master's degree in social work.

There are more open slots for adult adoptees from Northern, Southern, Cook Central and Cook

North regions. Adoptive or guardianship parents can also apply to fill an open slot for the Cook South region. Additionally, two slots remain open for community/agency experts to participate. After the Council makes nominations, Director Samuels will make final appointments. Individuals interested in the Council should contact Ray Gates in the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.

### Adoption council reviews criminal bars to licensing

The Council is looking at the laws and the DCFS policies that deal with criminal bars to licensing potential caregivers. The background checks for potential adoptive families are a necessary part of the licensing procedure. However, in some cases, families that could be excellent resources are barred because of instances found in the criminal background check. For example, a shoplifting conviction at age 19 could subsequently bar a 55-year-old adult from adopting, even if he were proven to be an exemplary citizen since the crime.

The Adoption Council, along with the Statewide Foster Care Council, is beginning a review of the Child Care Act to make recommendations to the department about how the law and subsequent policy could hamper or help the recruitment of more viable adoptive and guardianship families.

### Illinois Adoption Advisory Council Website

Look for the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council on the Internet. Check out the Council's web page on the DCFS Internet site at [www.state.il.us/dcfs](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs). The web page has the schedule of upcoming meetings, record of past minutes and current membership. So far the website has seen traffic and has been a tool to generate more input from adoptive families.

### Illinois is home to angels

The Adoption Information Center of Illinois (AICI) and DCFS' One Church One Child programs are National Angels in Adoption, according to the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI). Marilyn Panichi, AICI executive director, and Addie Hudson of DCFS External Affairs were invited to a ceremony in Washington, D.C. with other "angels", including Bruce Willis, and Muhammad and Lonnie Ali.

CCAI is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization focused on making Congress aware of the children in our country and around the world who need safe, loving, permanent homes. The group recognized AICI for its work in managing public inquiries about adoption and support recruitment for waiting children. One Church One Child was honored for being a model for recruiting families within the faith-based community.



# Foster Parent Checklist

There are many details to keep track of when a new child is placed with a family. This chart can help foster parents keep track of the important tasks and information.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Case ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Caseworker: \_\_\_\_\_

Caseworker's Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

	Done (if applicable)	Date Due/ Scheduled	Notes
<b>Initial Placement with DCFS</b>			
Receive initial clothing voucher			
Receive initial infant equipment voucher			
Receive report of initial Comprehensive Health Screening			
<b>New Foster Home Placement Day One (upon Placement)</b>			
Receive child's current Public Aid Medical Card			
Receive supply of current medication(s)			
Receive Health Passport			
<b>Week One</b>			
Enroll in school (within 5 days)			
Note upcoming court dates (plan to attend if needed)			
Change primary care physician with Healthworks			
Receive last medical exam report			
Receive last eye exam report			
Receive last dental exam report			

Clip and add to your Foster Parent Handbook or files



	Done (if applicable)	Date Due/ Scheduled	Notes
<b>First Month</b>			
Complete medication log (turn in monthly)			
Schedule therapist appointments			
Schedule psychiatrist appointments (as needed)			
Obtain refills for medications			
Note schedule for sibling visits (host if needed)			
Note schedule for family visits			
Schedule home visit by caseworker			
<b>Within Three Months</b>			
Attend quarterly staffing with agency/DCFS			
<b>Within Six Months</b>			
Attend ACR			
<b>First Year</b>			
Obtain new medical exam			
Obtain new dental exam			
Obtain new eye exam			
Attend ACR			



**Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor**

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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 addresses of office locations or request staff copies through the Editor.

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## A family for me

**Vicky** [C7019] Vicky (Victoria) likes to stay busy! She enjoys swimming, roller skating, and taking long walks, and she loves to shop. She relaxes by taking bubble baths. Vicky is 13 years old. Her foster parent and teacher said that Vicky loves to help out at home and she responds well to praise.

**Norris** [C7177] Norris, 16, has a great sense of humor and loves to laugh! He is articulate and likes to talk with adults. He loves sports, especially basketball and football. He also enjoys listening to music and playing chess and Uno. He takes pride in looking good and likes to impress the girls with his cool outfits. His teacher and worker said he is outgoing, helpful, and considerate. Norris is eager to join a permanent family.

**Nathan** [C6676] Give Nathan a tool kit and he's happy! This creative 13-year-old loves to work with his hands and fix things. His foster parent said that Nathan is respectful and likes to help out. He especially enjoys working outdoors.

**Katharine** [C7111] Katharine, 14, has charisma! This charming young lady is friendly and well liked by other teens. She is a talented dancer and singer and draws very well. She is fond of animals—especially if they're dogs, cats, or horses. Blue is her favorite color.

Her foster parent said Katharine is helpful at home and works hard to achieve her goals. She is resourceful at finding productive ways to use her

time. Her teacher said Katharine has a pleasant, sweet personality.

**Demond** [C7266] This young charmer is warm and caring. Demond, 10, truly enjoys helping others, especially elderly people. For fun, he plays basketball and skates or rides his bike wherever he goes. He also enjoys watching movies and videos. His foster parent and teacher said he is respectful and extremely helpful. He loves to go to church, where he will soon be a junior usher.

**Antoinette** [C4478] This happy young lady loves to read and test her skill at games. Antoinette enjoys playing with Barbie dolls and listening to pop music. Riding her bike is a favorite activity. Antoinette is almost 10 years old. Her foster parent and teacher said Antoinette is outgoing and fun to be with. She's well adjusted and helpful at home.

**D'Shawn** [C6865] This exuberant young man feels like singing and dancing, and he does! D'Shawn, 12, has a great sense of humor and likes to tell jokes. He also enjoys art and video games, as well as team sports like basketball, soccer, and football. He hopes to play professional football and go to law school.

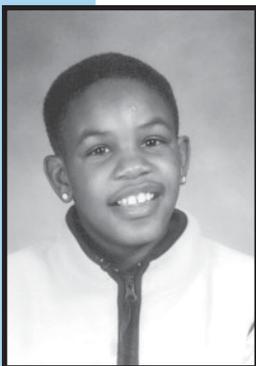
His worker said that D'Shawn has a vibrant personality and expresses and accepts affection easily. His teacher described him as helpful and cooperative.

If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390 (within Illinois) or 1-312-346-1516 (outside Illinois), or see the AICI web site – [www.adoptinfo-il.org](http://www.adoptinfo-il.org).

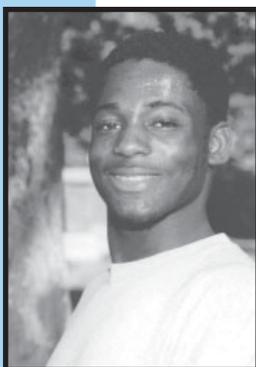
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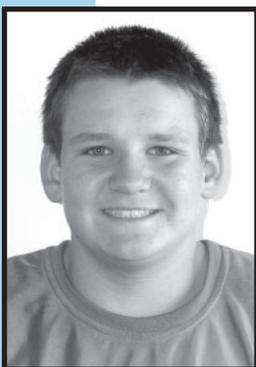
# DO YOU KNOW A FAMILY FOR ME?



Vicky (7019)



Norris (7177)



Nathan (6676)



Katharine (7111)



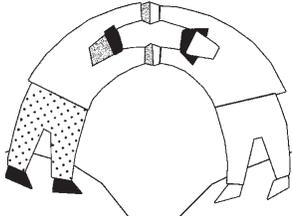
Demond (7266)



Antoinette (4478)



D'Shawn (6865)



**Plan now to attend the Spring  
Caregiver's Conference -  
March 26-28, 2004**  
*More info inside!*

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**Call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois 800-572-2390.**