

# Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship®

## DCFS sends 48 youth to college on scholarship

Going to college with a scholarship that pays tuition, covers medical insurance and provides a monthly stipend is an amazing opportunity for 48 youth who are or were in DCFS care.

This year, more than 251 students across the state completed applications for the DCFS Scholarship Program, giving the selection committee many viable candidates. The final 48 were chosen based on scholastic aptitude, a written personal statement, and demonstrated community involvement. They receive a medical card and a monthly maintenance grant of \$471, as well as a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees if they attend one of the nine Illinois state universities or one of the Illinois community colleges.

On July 17, this year's recipients gathered in Chicago for the annual Scholarship Luncheon to celebrate their accomplishments. The luncheon was quite a festive event thanks to the generous contribution of the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation. The DCFS Division of Service Intervention administers the scholarship program and "shepherds" the young people through the application process, on to school and all the way through graduation. The recipients spent the morning before lunch getting briefed on college life and getting to know their fellow scholars. They also broke into groups



*The 2009 DCFS Scholarship Recipients celebrated their accomplishment at a July luncheon before heading off to start their new college careers.*

based on the schools they planned to attend, giving them an opportunity to make acquaintances before getting to campus.

Afterwards, the students sat down to a meal with the parents, caregivers, caseworkers and other proud and supportive adults who stayed with them on the long road to graduation. Director Erwin McEwen congratulated the scholars for their perseverance and hard work through challenges. Brittney Payton, herself a recent college graduate, spoke of how important it was to her father that his legacy after football give young people facing adversity hope for a brighter future. The final speaker of the event was Lavonte Stewart of the social service agency Lost Boys,

Inc. His personal story of the lure of gangs, subsequent incarceration and eventual educational success was both a cautionary tale and an inspiration.

Recipient John Gaspar said, "I know what an opportunity this is. I am so grateful not to have to deal with college debt like so many other students I know." Gaspar finished his freshman year at College of DuPage and is now studying criminal justice at Western Illinois University.

Spirits were high as the graduates had another moment in the spotlight when they each crossed the stage. This time instead of another diploma they received a plaque commemorat-

*Continued on page 2*



## From the DCFS Director

Erwin McEwen

We parents instinctively want to take care of our kids and keep them out of harm's way. That means taking extra measures and sometimes making sacrifices for their good. Opening your home for foster care is a sacrifice that puts even greater expectations on you, the caregiver. DCFS recently amended Rule 402, the Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, to address potential dangers in the home and to comply with state laws. I feel it is important to give you an overview of these changes, since they may require alterations in your home or lifestyle.

Since 2007, state law has required carbon monoxide detectors within 15 feet of every sleeping room in homes at risk for carbon monoxide buildup. The Smoke Free Illinois Act, passed in 2008, prohibits smoking around foster children in foster family homes. That means that no one may smoke tobacco in a family foster home, within 15 feet of the home's doors and windows, or in a car while transporting a foster child. These revisions to Rule 402 ensure that our foster homes comply with these laws.

Beginning January 1, 2010, families that have pools or hot tubs will need to employ 5-foot high fences, covers and locked gates to help prevent drowning deaths. Homes licensed on or before January 1, 2009 with existing fences that are 3 ½ feet or higher will be deemed to be in compliance with rule. Caregivers with pools, ponds, or fountains in their yards must be certified in CPR.

These are changes that will go a long way in keeping children safe and healthy. Since these changes may have a substantial impact on some families and homes, but require no change in others, I urge you to contact your local licensing representative with specific questions or concerns. You may also contact your representative or visit the Department's Web site ([www.state.il.us/dcfs](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs)) for a complete copy of the revised rule.

As a parent to my own children, I know it takes a lot of energy to anticipate what could go wrong and to try to stay one step ahead. Thank you for your commitment and cooperation to take these extra measures to keep children safe while they are in our care.

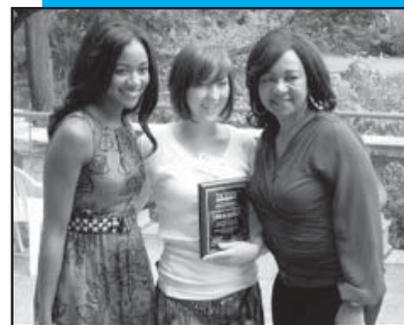
## Scholarship, con't.

ing their award. The final high note of the event was a raffle with prizes such as dorm-size refrigerators, a laptop computer, linens and other college must-haves.

*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.*

## DCFS 2009 Scholarship Recipients

- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Jasmine Agnew           | Ina Patterson         |
| Alaina Barnes           | Mariah Pierce         |
| Leslie Baske            | Jessica Presutti      |
| Shawna Bocek            | Derrius Quarles       |
| Raquel Bowlin           | Christopher Ricely    |
| Heather Burgard         | Shayla Richardson     |
| Karyn Burns             | Jewel Robinson        |
| Kasheena Callahan       | Gabriela Rosado-Rubio |
| Jenitra Cannon          | Acey Settle           |
| Lakeshia Carhee         | Jason Silver          |
| Ruby Dominguez          | Michael Spencer       |
| Carol Drey              | Nicholas Stucker      |
| Carmelita Duncan-Taylor | Katherine Swanberg    |
| Erica Duprey            | Melissa Taylor        |
| John Gaspar             | Justin Vlaovic        |
| Jordan Gill             | Kaera Watson          |
| Evelyn Harder           | Aushaunti Wills       |
| Keithan Hedrick         | Phillip Woods         |
| Danae Henning           |                       |
| Olivia Hoving           |                       |
| Breanne Jackson         |                       |
| Ashley Jefferson        |                       |
| Elijah Joyner           |                       |
| Sabra Julian            |                       |
| Torian Knox             |                       |
| Regina Krenz            |                       |
| Devion McArthur         |                       |
| Nathan Miranda          |                       |
| Brian Nissen            |                       |
| Richard Paduch          |                       |



**Brittney Payton (L) and Connie Payton-Strotter (R) congratulate Leslie Baske.**

# DCFS budget office shares big picture and details with caregivers

The economic condition has been top news, whether the discussions center on global financial markets or the household budget talks at the kitchen table. DCFS Deputy Director of Budget and Finance Matthew Grady III has been proactively discussing the Department's budget, how it is connected to the state budget and what the budget situation can mean for caregivers. Grady twice presented to the Adoption Advisory Council at meetings during different points in the budget cycle. When he meets with caregivers, he typically starts by providing background on the budget-making process.

## Budget of the State of Illinois

The state's fiscal year begins July 1. According to the state constitution, the Governor must prepare and submit a state budget to the General Assembly by the third Wednesday of February each year. The Governor's budget includes estimated revenue funds from taxes and other sources, as well as recommended spending levels from each state agency plus state debt and liabilities. Senators and Representatives review the budget in their respective chambers and work toward a final vote, ideally before the legislative session ends on May 31. After the budget is passed and signed by the Governor, it is enacted. All budgeted expenditures must have a corresponding appropriation that gives the Comptroller permission to release the funds as they become due in the current year. Lastly, much like home finance, as funds are available in the account, payments can be made.

## DCFS Budget

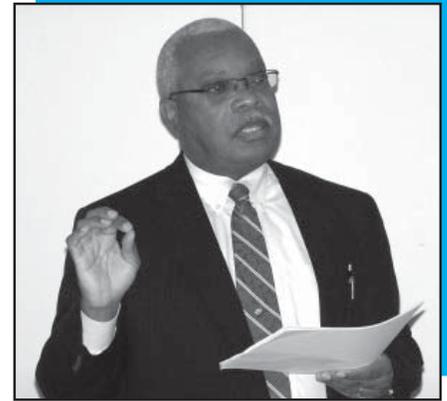
Each year, DCFS drafts a Briefing Book that details current programs

and initiatives and the requested appropriation for the upcoming fiscal year. For Fiscal Year 2010, the DCFS enacted budget is \$1,280,423,700. At just under \$1.3 billion, it is down slightly from the previous year to account for personnel retirement and the decreasing number of youth in care. The funds that DCFS can use for spending come from state funding streams, along with federal reimbursements for providing child welfare services.

Because of the special and serious nature of child welfare, the state is obligated to provide a baseline level of service. Furthermore, the BH Consent Decree is a federal court case that requires DCFS to provide specific services to children and families. In fact, on June 30, a federal court order averted proposed funding cuts that would have drastically limited the services DCFS provides directly and through caregivers and agencies. Thus, spending levels for FY10 will remain largely intact, comparable to last year. There is some specific funding that is allocated directly by the Governor. A final decision on that has not yet been reached.

## DCFS makes funding go further

Director McEwen has charged that the agency make available funds go further by looking for ways to cut costs and bring in more revenue. For example, licensing staff is concentrating on converting more relative caregivers to licensed homes. That alone could increase the federal reimbursement by \$9 million. On top of that, by tracking and claiming more counseling services with Medicaid, the Department can target \$17 million in additional funds. There are also cost savings to explore. DCFS is



**Matthew Grady III, DCFS Deputy Director for Budget and Finance**

assessing the location and use of all field offices to see where consolidation makes financial sense.

## Budget impact on caregivers

Grady told the Adoption Advisory Council that DCFS "was the only agency to avoid head count decreases." In fact, the budget calls for hiring 60 new direct service positions. Despite the hurdles at the beginning of the fiscal year, the staff in the Budget Office has worked extra hours to complete contracts with providers. Payments, including foster care board checks, have gone out. Those are a top priority to be paid on time. Still, Grady said "the state can only spend money as it becomes available in its accounts." He does not foresee any major disruptions or lengthy delays to caregivers' payments, but it could happen. So one of those "kitchen table" discussions might be for families to look at their personal budgets and how bills would be paid if there were any delay in board payments.

# Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Update

## *Council shares advocacy mission with Statewide Youth Advisory Board*

Each fall, the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council holds a joint meeting with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board. In advance of that, Thu Vo who supports the board on behalf of the Director's Office came to the foster care council's July meeting. She gave an update on the youth board activities. She also asked the adult council to help advise the younger board as it develops action plans, to model how to be an

effective board and to advocate for the youth.

In recent months the youth board has been working hard to restructure its mission statement, strengthen its bylaws and institutionalize its follow-up protocols. The board members recently attended an annual "boot camp" where they sharpened their leadership skills and set goals for the board. Moving forward, the youth board is focusing on five issues:

In September, the two advisory groups met in Peoria for an overlapping meeting to discuss common issues and points on which the two groups could collaborate. After the foster care council conducted its regular business meeting in the afternoon, the youth joined them in the evening. The two councils shared a meal and then got down to work on their common concerns well into the night.

Chair Robyn Harvey was grateful that foster care council members shifted schedules to participate in what is always an enlightening event with the young leaders.



**Thu Vo updated the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council on the youth advisory board's recent activities.**

- Court and legal issues
- Creating a Strengthening Families program for youth
- Legislation
- Life Skills
- Transitional/Independent living programs

### Youth services update

Frances Elbert, associate deputy director in the DCFS Division of Service Intervention, came to the Council's July meeting to discuss programs available to youth in the new fiscal year, which started July 1.

Despite the budget constraints that loomed at the beginning of the summer, the SOAR program did continue to provide free camp programs through park districts in Cook County. The SOAR recreational and arts programs will run year-round for the three Cook County regions. Elbert also shared that the School Readiness Program that calls for children between two and five years old to be enrolled in an early learning program will also

receive support from DCFS. Staff is available to address wait lists, transportation or other constraints that caregivers may encounter. Call 312-814-5959 for details.

### New member for Central Region

Bill Moorehead joined the council to represent Central Region. His family has included nearly 40 children through foster care and four adoptions. He is licensed for specialized foster care and the adolescent foster parent program.



*The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council was founded as part of 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 6 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 Friday, October 16 beginning at 9 a.m. in Alton. Call the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422 for details.**

## Homeward Bound

*when return home is the goal*

Reuniting children with their families has always been an important part of the DCFS mission. Under last year's "Permanency Planning Toward Reunification" policy guide, the Department added more specifics about practices and supports that will help reunite families. There is now more emphasis on involving parents with their children while in care. The policy guide affects the role played by parents, supervisors, caseworkers and caregivers as children enter the child welfare system. There are new expectations and additional supports such as the Family Reunification Support Special Service Fee, a reimbursement to those caregivers who support children with a reunification goal.

Not every case will have a goal of reunification and not every caregiver will be suited to support a family with a reunification goal. Last year, licensing workers began discussions with foster parents about whether they wanted to be identified as a resource for a case where reunification was the goal. Those who chose to could then sign a self-assessment form and be listed as such in the Foster Home Availability Database.

A foster caregiver that decides to accept a reunification case would also be open to:

- Meeting the parents, as soon as possible, shortly after case assignment
- Exchanging information about the child between the parent, caregiver and caseworker at initial placement and as the case moves forward

- Shared-parenting activities to allow the parent to fulfill certain parenting responsibilities while the child is in care
- Family visits in a family setting, where the caregiver can support or host visits between the parents and the child
- Mentoring and modeling with parents, as the caregiver serves as a respectful helper and role model to parents on the road to reunification

Foster caregivers who are supporting children and parents with the goal of reunification can find help with the Family Reunification Support Special Service Fee. This is a reimbursement to caregivers for certain expenses incurred through reunification work with parents. Eligible activities related to reunification can be reimbursed up to \$400, depending on the number of activities done in a month. The reimbursement can cover expenses such as transportation, entrance fees, and food that are part of eligible activities supporting foster children and their parents. It is crucial that caregivers document their activities that support reunification, to be eligible for the reimbursement. The child's caseworker can assist in determining the shared parenting activities and in assuring that all of the needed signatures are in place.

Caregivers can ask their child's caseworker for more information about reunification activities and resources.

## Movin' on UP

*For youth transitioning to adulthood*

The Employment Incentive Program (EIP) provides financial and supplemental services to help adolescents gain marketable skills through on-the-job work experience or through job training programs.

### Benefits

- Monthly stipend in the amount of \$150.00 for a maximum of 12 months and a medical card until age 21.
- Start-up funding for work-related items. Funding is need-based and limited to a one-time disbursement of up to \$200.00

### Eligibility

- Be 17 years old, and not yet 21
- Have a high school diploma or a GED certificate
- Be under court-ordered legal responsibility of DCFS
- Complete Ansell-Casey living skills assessment
- Be involved in job training through a certified job skills training program or be working a minimum of 20 hours per week for at least one month prior to applying
- Not be a participant in any other DCFS stipend program.
- Youth living in foster care, supervised independent living, group homes or institutional placements may apply.

Call the Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 with questions.

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## Vaccine and good hygiene protect against flu

Influenza, more commonly referred to as the flu, is a respiratory tract infection that is typically caused by the influenza virus. The flu season typically runs between November and April. With this past spring's outbreak of H1N1 strain of flu, also commonly called "swine flu," medical experts have released a new set of recommendations for preventing both seasonal influenza and H1N1.

Getting the flu vaccination is the primary tool for preventing influenza. Most people over the age of five months can get the flu shot, including breastfeeding mothers. The normal period for getting a flu shot is during October through December each year. This year, the Illinois Department of Public Health is urging children ages 6 months to 24 years be vaccinated for **both** the H1N1 virus and the seasonal flu virus. The US Centers for Disease Control is also recommending that caregivers of children younger than six months old be vaccinated to lessen the risk to vulnerable infants.

A flu vaccination can lower the risk of a bothersome and potentially

serious bout of the flu. Some of the symptoms associated with the flu are fever, headache, cough, sore throat, chills and fatigue. The symptoms for H1N1 are similar, with some people reporting diarrhea and vomiting.

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 Vaccines for Children Program for those children enrolled in Medicaid, children with no health insurance or children whose health insurance plans do not include vaccinations.

The flu shot is an important step toward prevention. Additionally, everyone can take everyday actions to stay healthy.

Remember to teach youth to cover their mouth and nose when they sneeze or cough, and remind them

to wash their hands each time. They need to remember to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth, since that can spread germs. They should also try to avoid close contact with sick people.

For more information H1N1 and the upcoming flu season, go to [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) or contact the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217-782-4977.

### *Stay Healthy by Following the 3 Cs:*

*Clean -- properly wash your hands thoroughly*

*Cover -- cover your cough and sneeze*

*Contain -- contain your germs by staying home if you are sick*

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## DCFS offers family savings on State Fair fun



DCFS foster, adoptive and guardianship families again took advantage of the opportunity to attend the Illinois State Fair in Springfield. In addition to reduced-price parking and admission to the fair, DCFS provided each eligible family member discounted carnival rides and \$3 in free meal tickets.

The DCFS tent was a convenient gathering place for refreshments and to pick up information on child-related resources. Families could also pose for a free picture to help remember the fun at the fair. Staff and other volunteers faithfully manned the tent throughout the ten-day event.



# ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

# Tackling Tricky Assignments

Six projects account for most of the tricky assignments our kids face at school. Understanding the learning goals and the specific challenges each one poses will help parents and children alike find the best solutions.



## Baby Picture

**Assignment:** Bring in a baby picture. The photos are often posted anonymously and classmates are asked to guess who's who, or may be used in year-books or graduation presentations.



- Grade level:** Preschool to kindergarten; junior high and high school graduations.
- Learning goal:** To help students get to know one another; to salute graduates.
- Why it's challenging:** Children adopted at an older age may not have baby pictures; the identities of children who stand out because of race or physical differences are easy to guess.
- Alternatives for teachers:** Have children bring in pictures from when they were "younger," or draw pictures of themselves as babies.
- Approaches for parents:** Let your child know that you wish you had photos, too, and say that you're sure she was a beautiful baby. Encourage her to draw a picture of herself.
- How one family handled it:** "My son was asked to bring a baby photo for his elementary school graduation. I wrote a letter to the teachers and included articles from AF. The team leader acknowledged that they'd just always done it this way. In future years, they'll ask for photos of the children 'at a younger age.'" — DEBBIE SCHWARTZ

## Family Tree

**Assignment:** Draw a family tree—either as a literal tree, with branches, or in diagram form—showing family relationships.



- Grade level:** Elementary school.
- Learning goal:** To illustrate family relationships.
- Why it's challenging:** The format may not accommodate birth and adoptive relatives, or otherwise non-traditional family makeups.
- Alternatives for teachers:** Offer formats that show roots as well as branches; instead of a tree, have students create a family forest or a neighborhood of family houses.
- Approaches for parents:** Allow your child to choose which family or families to portray, or encourage him to design his own format.

To see examples of inclusive trees, click on "A Forest of Family Trees" at [adoptivefamilies.com/school](http://adoptivefamilies.com/school).

## What Role Should Parents Play?

**Our instinct will always be to step in, but, as our kids grow, we need to learn to scale back our involvement.**

**> Preschool and early elementary:** Offer to talk with the teacher, alone or with your child, and to accompany your child to school when she's Star of the Week. At this age, children may welcome a parent's presence in the classroom and like the idea of an adoption presentation.

**> Later elementary:** An eight- or nine-year-old may not want his mom to come with him to school, but will probably still appreciate your offer to talk with the teacher. Involve your child in the conversation and let him make the final decision about how he'll complete the assignment.

**> Middle and high school:** During the middle-school years, parents should shift to providing behind-the-scenes support. Act as a sounding board as she decides what to do, then role-play conversations to have with the teacher, so she can practice explaining why an assignment is difficult.



## Star of the Week

- **Assignment:** During the child's turn as Star of the Week, create and present a poster with the child's story and family photos.
- **Grade level:** Kindergarten to first grade.
- **Learning goal:** To help students get to know one another; also serves as a leadership opportunity.
- **Why it's challenging:** When our kids are placed in the spotlight, adoption often comes up, and they may not feel comfortable handling intrusive questions.
- **Alternatives for teachers:** Instead of focusing on the child's past, let the Star of the Week talk about pets, current hobbies, and other elements of her life.
- **Approaches for parents:** Role-play possible responses to questions in advance. Ask your child about accompanying her to school to give an adoption presentation.
- **How one family handled it:** "After my five-year-old presented her poster, a classmate asked, 'Where's your father?' My daughter cheerfully explained that she did not have a father, that she was adopted. Then: 'Is that why you look different from your mom?' The teacher reported that what followed was a discussion about adoption—and that my daughter handled it with competence and grace." —CARRIE KRUEGER



## Helpful Resources

- **adoptivefamilies.com/school.** Drawn from AF's archives, our best advice on talking to the teacher and preparing your child to answer questions, along with sample adoption presentations and family trees.
- *Adoption and the Schools*, ed. by Lansing Wood and Nancy Ng (**fairfamilies.org**) and *S.A.F.E. at School*, by Marilyn Schoettle (**adoption support.org**). These guides help parents and teachers work together to ensure a positive school environment.

## Heritage Exploration

- **Assignment:** Write a report, make a flag, or participate in a cultural celebration based on the student's country or culture of origin.
- **Grade level:** Elementary through high school.
- **Learning goal:** To learn about different cultures.
- **Why it's challenging:** A child's ethnic or cultural heritage may differ from that of his family. A teacher may direct a student to write about her birth heritage, even though she would rather write about her adoptive family's, or vice versa.
- **Alternatives for teachers:** Let students report on a country or culture of interest rather than one related to their family.
- **Approaches for parents:** Provide any available resources relating to his adoptive and birth family cultures. Accompany your child to class, if appropriate, to help conduct a presentation.



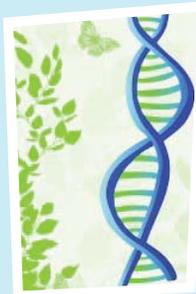
2000 2001 2002 2003

## Timeline

- **Assignment:** Create a historical timeline using a child's own life events from birth to present.
- **Grade level:** Elementary through junior high school.
- **Learning goal:** To learn how to chart historical events on a timeline.
- **Why it's challenging:** A child may be unsure of the time, the location, or even the date of his birth; he may wonder if he needs to include the dates he was relinquished by his birth family and placed with his adoptive family, or other private information.
- **Alternatives for teachers:** Do not specify that the timeline must begin at birth. Define it generally as "past, present, and future." Allow children to create a timeline for a historical event or fictional character.
- **Approaches for parents:** Help your child decide how to define "significant events," and to choose what she wants to keep private. Encourage her to use general labels, such as "When I Was One," rather than specific dates.
- **How one family handled it:** "Our daughter, adopted at age 12, was assigned a timeline of 'milestone events' on her first day of middle school, and she worried that this list would be too revealing. I explained that the goal was to learn to use timelines, and that she was under no obligation to reveal private details. So she listed events—learning to ride a bike, moving to a new town, winning an award—that she was happy to share with classmates." —KATHRYN REISS

## Charting Genetic Traits

- **Assignment:** Diagram or write about the presence of a particular trait in the child's family, such as eye or hair color.
- **Grade level:** Junior high through high school; occasionally late elementary school.
- **Learning goal:** To help children understand how genetic traits are passed along through generations.
- **Why it's challenging:** Charting traits in an adoptive family may raise unwanted questions, and a child may not have much information about birth relatives.
- **Alternatives for teachers:** Study genetics in insects or plants. Use historical examples, such as the prevalence of inherited diseases in the royal families of Europe.
- **Approaches for parents:** Help your child identify friends or a biologically related family group, such as grandparents or cousins, on which to base a genetic chart.



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## Illinois Adoption Advisory Council update

When the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council met in August, members discussed updates to the training curriculum, new and pending adoption-related legislation and the status of the DCFS budget.

### Training

Joan Langan, from the DCFS Office of Training, shared with the council that staff is currently being trained on the new KinGAP program for relatives who take guardianship. The office also continues to make training of relative caregivers a priority so they can move to become licensed caregivers.

### Legislative Update



**DCFS Legislative Liaison Dana Yowell shared information on laws that could affect caregivers.**

Dana Yowell, the DCFS Legislative Liaison, first provided background on how she and her staff monitor proposed laws that may affect DCFS and the families it serves. Then she went on to brief the council on legislation including:

- SB807: addressing how calls to the hotline can be directed to services.

- HB 529 and HB 2405 providing consideration for parental rights to be re-established under specific circumstances.
- SB 340: calls for credit checks for youth in care to protect against identity theft.

Yowell shared that details on these bills and all others is available at the Web site [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov)

### DCFS Budget Briefing

Matthew Grady, DCFS Deputy Director for Budget and Finance, returned to the council for an update on the budget situation since the start of a new fiscal year. DCFS will continue to fund services at the FY09 amounts. However, some other state agencies did make cuts to programs that also serve DCFS families. He stated that he would do all he could to keep funds flowing smoothly as the Executive Branch makes them available.



**Julie Fritzler of Matthews and Associations, Nancy Golden of Midwest Adoption Center and adoptive parent Rosa Dust from Effingham attended their first meeting as members of the Adoption Advisory Council.**



## Midwest Adoption Conference

The Midwest Adoption Conference will be held on Sunday, November 1 at Trinity International University in Deerfield. This conference is put together by Adoptive Families Today, Stars of David and Families with Children from China. It is a conference for those looking to adopt, adoptive families, birth parents, adult adopted persons, foster families, and adoption professionals.

Caregivers licensed through DCFS will find much of interest and can receive training credit from a full slate of workshops covering:

- General Parenting Topics
- International Adoption
- Legal Issues in Adoption
- Domestic Adoption
- Parenting Children with Challenges
- Issues Unique to Pre-Adoption
- Post-Adoption Services and Resources
- Adoption and the Schools
- Race and Culture in Adoption
- Teen Issues
- Therapeutic Issues
- Single or Gay/Lesbian Adoption
- Openness in Adoption
- Advocacy and Public Policy
- Fostering
- Search and Reunion

The featured speaker is Dr. Jaiya John on the topic "Identity and Heritage as Roots of Blossom in Adoptive Children."

For more information or to register call 847-934-4385 or go to [www.adoptivefamilies.today.org](http://www.adoptivefamilies.today.org).

## 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 get you started with the licensing process. The toll-free number is 800-572-2390. AICI also maintains information about the children who are featured in this newsletter.

**...You have questions about your board check?** Call DCFS Central Payment Unit at 800-525-0499 if your check comes from DCFS. For other checks, contact your private agency.

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

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

**...You have a general question about a child's case or a service?** Call the DCFS Chicago Headquarters at 312-814-6800 or the Springfield Headquarters at 217-785-2509.

**...you want to report an incidence of possible abuse or neglect?** Call the Child Abuse Hotline at 800-25-ABUSE (800-252-2873) or 217-785-4020.

## News from the DCFS Office of Child & Family Policy

The DCFS Office of Child and Family Policy recently issued an announcement regarding the Illinois Parental Notice of Abortion Act. That state law requires a physician who intends to perform an abortion on a pregnant minor, or refers a minor for an abortion, to give 48 hours actual notice to an adult family member.

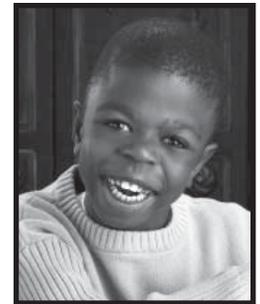
In situations involving minors in DCFS guardianship, that notice must be given to the DCFS Guardian. If foster parents get an "abortion notification" phone call about a minor who is in DCFS guardianship, they should immediately instruct the physician to contact the DCFS Guardian, D. Jean Ortega-Piron. Physicians can reach the DCFS Guardian at the DCFS Consent Line at 800-828-2179, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., or after hours (including holidays and weekends) at the Emergency Reception Center (ERC) at 773-538-8800.

If a physician calls about a minor for whom DCFS has only protective custody or temporary custody, the foster parent should instruct the physician to call the youth's parent, a grandparent, a step-parent living in the household, or the child's legal guardian (not the DCFS Guardian).

Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390.



Christopher  
(7703)



Jaiombre  
(7429)



Mierra  
(7677)



Telecia  
(7470)

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

**Mierra [7677]** Mierra, 10, is a happy young lady who loves Disney Princess dolls and hopes to have her room decorated with princess wallpaper. When she's not watching cartoons, Mierra likes to play board games and ride her bike with friends. Although she's a little shy at first, Mierra is very friendly once she gets to know someone.

Her foster parents and teachers say that Mierra is kind and sociable. She wants to make friends and is eager to please. The forever family for Mierra would provide lots of love and encouragement, while also being clear about expectations and consequences. You can give Mierra time to adjust to your home.

**Christopher [7703]** Christopher, 12, is a friendly and helpful young man. He is an aspiring veterinarian, and takes really good care of animals. He also has a passion for telling stories. Christopher is an inquisitive young man who loves to figure out how things work. His hobbies include playing video games, putting together model cars and reading. He particularly likes reading the "Twilight" book series.

Christopher's foster parent says he is a very smart young man. She says he demonstrates strong coping skills

and leadership abilities. His teachers report that he is a pleasure to have in class, has a good sense of humor and works well with others.

Potential parents for Christopher can provide a structured and loving environment in which he feels safe and supported. You can be patient and understanding as he continues to make strides to overcome past hurdles. You can encourage his love of reading, and ensure he receives the support he needs to become an avid reader. You can also help him maintain contact with his siblings. Christopher says he would like to join a family where he is the only child. He would enjoy a family that goes camping and fishing, and likes to play video games with him.

**Telecia [7470]** Telecia, 17, is a bright young lady with a great sense of humor. She loves to laugh and make others laugh. She treats people in a kind and supportive fashion, especially when she feels an attachment to them. In her free time, Telecia enjoys dancing, reading and journaling. She likes caring for cats, hamsters and other pets.

Her worker says Telecia is relaxed and easy to talk with. She is funny, resilient and very motivated. She performs well in her part-time job.

Telecia says, "I'd like my new family to be supportive and sit down and talk with me without raising their voice. I want to feel like a normal kid. I want to be able to say the words 'mommy' and 'daddy' to people I love and who love me back."

**Jaiombre [7429]** Jaiombre, 11, is an outgoing young man who enjoys playing superheroes with his friends. He especially likes pretending he's Batman or Spider-Man. Jaiombre also loves to eat, and his favorite foods are pizza, chicken and French fries. He enjoys trips to amusement parks and hopes to visit Disney World some day.

Jaiombre's worker says he is sweet, lovable and polite. He enjoys computer time in school. The forever family for Jaiombre would be patient and loving, and you can provide ongoing supervision. A two-parent home is preferred. Other children in the home should be older than Jaiombre, so he can receive an appropriate share of parental attention.



Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI Web site – [www.adoptinfo-il.org](http://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

Pat Quinn, Governor  
Erwin McEwen, DCFS Director

Published by:  
DCFS Office of Foster Parent  
Support Services  
Ray Gates, Administrator

Editor: Vanessa James  
Phone: 312-814-6824  
Fax: 312-814-4131  
E-mail: [vanessa.james@illinois.gov](mailto:vanessa.james@illinois.gov)

Regional Editors  
Central – Sam Saladino  
Northern – Catherine Johnson  
Southern – Michael Bollman  
Cook North – Joann Niemuth  
Cook Central – Merrylee Guge-  
Jorgenson  
Cook South – Rod Mulford  
Graphics: Jenny Florent  
Produced by: DCFS Print Shop

**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 rep-resentative, 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, all DCFS staff, and private agency staff as ordered.

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Department of Children and Family Services©

Illinois Families Now and Forever  
Vanessa James, Editor  
Department of Children & Family Services  
100 West Randolph - 6th Floor  
Chicago, Illinois 60601

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

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