

# Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship®

## Create a safe zone at home, check toys and products

**W**ith all it takes each day to get children out the door clean and fed, it would seem only fair that your home should be a “free zone” where you can let down your guard and relax a bit. The reality is that home can be a haven, but you still have to be diligent about the products you bring in. Just in the first month of this year, the federal government announced major product recalls on cribs, strollers and children’s toys that have caused injuries and even fatalities.

### Find out about unsafe products

While the media announcements can help families react, caregivers also have to be proactive to ensure that youth are safe at home. DCFS rules

require foster caregivers of children age six or under to check their homes for products listed as unsafe by the Children’s Product Safety Act. There are several resources that make it possible for caregivers to stay informed about products that have been recalled because of safety concerns. The complete list of unsafe products is available from the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217-782-4977. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission maintains a product list along with helpful information at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). The site offers a subscription service where caregivers can sign-up for automatic e-mail updates. The commission also maintains a telephone hotline with a wide variety of recorded messages on product recalls, consumer products and product safety. The toll-free line is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 800-638-2772.

### Do a clean sweep

Caregivers can check the lists and remove items already at home. It is also important to make informed choices about new items that you purchase or accept as gifts. Be on the look out for small pieces that could cause choking or long strings that might strangle. The national Safe Kids Campaign ([www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)) has a list of recommendations and tips to judge what toys and products may cause harm.



### Cadmium in metal toys also poses risk

*Children’s jewelry and toys with high levels of cadmium, a lead substitute, are presenting health concerns.*

*Exposure or ingestion of high levels of cadmium can cause:*

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal cramps and pain
- Diarrhea

*Prolonged high exposure can result in damage to the stomach, liver or kidneys.*

*U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Chair Inez Tenenbaum encouraged manufactures to refrain from substituting cadmium, antimony or barium in place of lead.*

*“All of us should be committed to keeping hazardous or toxic levels of heavy metals out of surface coatings and substrates of toys and children’s products,” she said. She pointed out that the agency will develop mandatory standards, as needed, to deal with heavy metals in children’s products.*

...more on page 2



## From the DCFS Director

Erwin McEwen

When we use the word “safe” in child welfare, we tend to think about shielding a child from a person. This issue of your newsletter highlights the everyday safety that we need you as caregivers to focus on in your homes.

I recognize that licensing standards require much of you. I don’t believe we should ask without offering a way to assist. Along with the home safety information you will read about, I hope you will also look to your licensing representative. Their role goes beyond enforcing the requirements. They can help you resolve any problems that could affect your license.

Sometimes safety can translate to keeping children busy in constructive activities. DCFS and the private agencies have funds designated for summer camps for youth in grade school and older. We have also cleared the way for easier enrollment in early childhood education programs for preschoolers.

Summer should be fun. Days filled with baseball games, hiking and other activities are important for creating a positive childhood experience and offsetting trauma. But a vacation from school shouldn’t be a vacation from learning. The DCFS Education Advisors and the Education Liaisons in the agencies can give you ideas on how to avoid losing ground in the downtime, while staying safely occupied.

## Recent product recalls affect infant items

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced major recalls on items that can impact a young child’s daily routine. Several potentially dangerous strollers and cribs made headlines recently and require immediate action.

### Graco Strollers

CPSC announced that consumers should stop using Graco’s Passage™, Alano™ and Spree™ Strollers and Travel Systems, unless otherwise instructed. The hinges on the stroller’s canopy pose a fingertip amputation and laceration hazard to the child when the consumer is opening or closing the canopy. The recall affects about 1.5 million strollers.

Consumers should contact Graco to receive a free protective cover repair kit at 800-345-4109 or visit the firm’s Web site at [www.gracobaby.com](http://www.gracobaby.com)

### Dorel cribs with faulty drop sides

The CPSC in cooperation with Dorel Asia SRL announced a voluntary recall to replace drop side and non-drop side cribs that pose suffocation and strangulation hazards to infants and toddlers. Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled cribs until replacement kits are obtained and installed.

The drop side hardware can fail, causing the drop side to detach from the crib. When the drop side detaches, it creates a space in which an infant or toddler can become entrapped and suffocate or strangle. In addition, the recalled cribs can pose a serious entrapment and strangulation hazard when a slat is damaged. This damage can occur while the crib is in use, in storage,



Dorel recalls cribs with faulty drop sides

being put together, taken apart or reassembled; or during shipping and handling.

Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled cribs, find an alternative safe sleeping environment for your child, and contact Dorel Asia to receive a free replacement kit. Consumers should go the Web site at [www.dorel-asia.com](http://www.dorel-asia.com) to order the free replacement kit to prevent child entrapment in these cribs or call Dorel Asia toll-free at 866-762-2304.

### Diana Cribs’ rails may detach

Diana Crib and the CPSC announced a recall of 1,000 cribs distributed by Caramia Furniture and Mother Hubbard’s Cupboards, of Ontario, Canada.

The slats on the crib’s drop-side can detach from the top and bottom rails, posing fall and entrapment hazards to the child. Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled Diane cribs and contact Caramia Furniture to receive a free replacement drop side. For additional information, contact Caramia at 877-728-0342 or at [www.caramiafurniture.com](http://www.caramiafurniture.com)

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## Playing it smart around water hazards saves children's lives

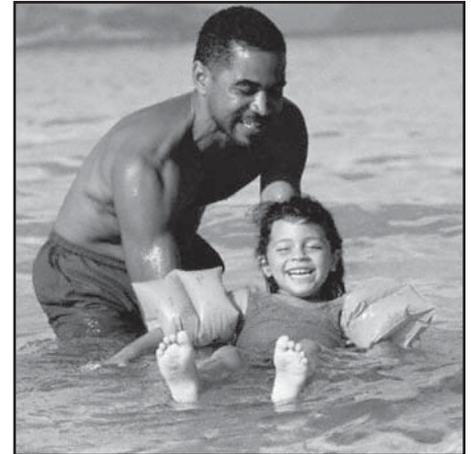
One Illinois infant drowned in less than six inches of water when his parent walked away to answer the phone. Another toddler drowned when she fell headfirst into a five-gallon bucket partially filled with water. In 2008, there were 24 accidental drowning deaths in Illinois. Adult supervision could have prevented these deaths.

Children cannot be left unattended around water even for one moment without the possibility of something tragic happening. Drowning can occur in seconds in as little as two inches of water in pools, bathtubs, buckets, and even decorative garden ponds. Parents need to lock access to pools, empty buckets when they are not in use, and make sure there are enough adults to adequately supervise the number of children around water. It is also important to teach children to stay away

from water until an adult is present. Following are some safety tips to help protect children from water-related tragedy:

### Swimming pools

- Keep ladders, patio furniture and toys away from above-ground pools. Toddlers are better climbers than you think!
- Fence in the pool and lock the gate. Pool covers and alarms provide added protection.
- Young children should wear or use personal flotation devices, but they do not replace adult supervision.
- Remind babysitters and other caretakers not to leave children unattended near or in water.
- Appoint an adult who can swim to watch kids during pool parties.
- Learn CPR and keep rescue equipment, a phone and emergency numbers near all pools.



### Bathtubs

- Never leave a young child alone in a bathtub or rely on a bathtub seat for safety.
- Don't allow children to play alone in bathrooms.

### Baby pools

- Don't be lulled into a false sense of security because of the shallowness of baby pools. Children should always be supervised when in a baby pool.
- Empty the pool immediately after use and store it upside-down.

### Buckets

- Five-gallon buckets of water pose a threat to babies and toddlers who may topple into them and be unable to get out.
- Empty and store all buckets out of children's reach.

### Drains/Suction in pools or spas

In addition to drowning, pools and spas can also present a danger of suction entrapment. The drains or the jets can entrap hair, the body, limbs and bathing suits. The suction can also result in disembowelment and other damage to internal organs. There were 11 reported fatalities between 1999 and 2008.

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## *Policy calls for CPR training in homes with pools, ponds, fountains and water hazards*

As of January 2010, changes in DCFS Rule 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes set new requirements for homes that have pools or hot tubs. Those homes will have to have 5-foot high fences, covers and locked gates to help prevent drowning. Homes licensed before January 2009 with existing fences that are 3 1/2 feet or higher will be considered in compliance.

Also, caregivers with pools, ponds, fountains or other water hazards now must be certified in CPR. DCFS and agencies are working with caregivers to identify homes with water hazards and to ensure CPR training.

As part of the monitoring visits, licensing representatives for DCFS and private agencies will go over the form CFS 452-5 Safety Plan for Pools, Hot Tub, Ponds and other Potential Water Hazards. Caregivers will complete and sign the form, which states the safety measures they will employ to keep children in the home safe.

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## Back to sleep, tummy to play is the key phrase for infant safety

The back to sleep campaign continues to educate parents and caregivers about the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Nancy Maruyama of SIDS Illinois sums it up by saying, “Every time we put them [infants] down to sleep, we put them on their back. But when they’re awake, we need to hold them and play with them, and love them and put them on their tummy to play. Supervised tummy time is what we need to have for proper growth and development.”

As the experts continue to research SIDS, there are steps that caregivers can take to reduce risk:

- Place infants to sleep on their backs, even though infants may sleep more soundly on their stomachs.
- Place infants to sleep in a baby bed with a firm mattress. There should be nothing in the bed but the baby - no covering, no pillows, no bumper pads and no toys.

- Do not over-clothe the infant while he/she sleeps. Keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for you. Overheating an infant may increase the risk for SIDS.
- Avoid exposing the infant to tobacco smoke. Don’t have your infant in the same house or car with someone who is smoking. The greater the exposure to tobacco smoke, the greater the risk of SIDS.
- Breast-feed babies whenever possible. Breast milk decreases the occurrence of respiratory and gastrointestinal infections. Studies show that breast-fed babies have a lower SIDS rate.
- Avoid exposing the infant to people with respiratory infections. Consider using home monitoring systems (apnea/brady-cardia monitors) in an attempt to prevent SIDS in high-risk infants.

*Excerpted from the Web site for the National SIDS/Infant Death Resource Center (NSIDRC) at [www.sidscenter.org](http://www.sidscenter.org).*

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## *Homeward Bound: Providing foster care while reunification is the goal*

### **Respect shows in what you say and do...even when it’s tough to be a team player**

When return home is the goal, each child is entitled to a caregiver who can support the family efforts toward a successful reunification. Caregivers, caseworkers and parents need to work together to build the child welfare team. It feels like work because in most cases it doesn’t come naturally. Teamwork is hard. It is more complicated when dealing with the emotions and sensitive topics that bring children into care. Still, respect and cooperation are expected and, fortunately, they are possible.

A team approach, where all are striving toward the return home goal, begins by recognizing the child and parent as members of a family unit.

Then it is vital to help the parent to remain in the parent role while the children are in foster care. Out of respect for the continuing nature of the parent-child relationship, it is important to continue to refer to the child’s parents as parents, rather than “birth parents” or “biological parents.” Later on the modifiers “birth” and “biological” may be used if parental rights are terminated to distinguish the parents of origin from the pre-adoptive or adoptive parents. While in foster care, they are the parent.

In the same vein, the families who offer care for the children are known as “caregivers” or “foster caregivers” or “relative caregivers” rather than “foster parents.” This shift in the names is still taking hold, as child welfare practice around reunification continues to adapt.

Adapt is a key word in reunification foster care. Every parent’s situation is unique, and circumstances can change quickly. In this very dynamic situation, foster caregivers, like other members of the child welfare team, need to maintain an attitude toward the child’s family that shows:

- Respect as a person
- Nonjudgmental support
- Respect for and attention to their feelings
- Genuine interest
- Understanding
- Respect for culture

Relationship building always will have highs and lows. As the adults adjust with patience and respect, they give the children invaluable lessons that will be useful no matter the permanency outcome.

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## Summer camp search starts now to secure right fit and funding



Summer may seem far off as the weather refuses to let go of winter. However, since the best summer day camps and overnight camps tend to fill fast, now is the time to make plans. Caregivers to youth who are still in foster care should talk to the child's caseworker about the best type of summer program for the child and family. DCFS-supervised foster families should ask about the financial assistance available, the approval process and the reimbursement procedures.

For private agency foster families, the policy can differ from agency to agency. Every agency receives funds for "nonrecurring expenses" such as camp for some children. Ask the child's caseworker about the camp policy for children at that agency. Adoptive and guardianship families typically have to cover these expenses within the household. However, some camps do offer income-based financial assistance.

With funding cleared, the search for the right camp for a child can take off. When evaluating camps, inquire about the counselor-to-camper ratio and the counselors' skills and certifications. Many camps do serve special needs children. Be sure to ask about provisions for medication, accommodations for disabilities and behavior management procedures.

### Where to begin looking:

- Ask people you know for recommendations.
- Your child's school may have a local camp for sports or academics. Also check out nearby colleges for special programs for elementary and high school children.
- Check the community park districts. In Chicago and some Cook County suburbs, youth in foster care or with open subsidy cases can participate with a fee waiver. Contact the DCFS Office of Service Intervention at 312-814-5959 for more details.
- Local churches may have a youth camp or a youth group that plans summer activities. (Be sure to ask about parent permission for a religious program).
- Ask your child's caseworker for information on special needs camps focusing on ADHD or physical and developmental disabilities.
- Check organizations like the YMCA, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts for local camps.

Start making plans now. It is not unheard of for parents to wait for hours (even overnight!) in line for coveted spots at popular camps. Also, the paperwork to approve funding and consents for travel all take time, so it is best to get started early.

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## Tie loose ends before crossing state lines

Before packing up and taking off down the highway, make sure you have everything in order. Foster parents planning overnight trips should be sure to let the caseworker know where you will be and when you are leaving and returning. If travel will take your family across state lines, you must notify the caseworker to obtain consent. The casework staff has been given authority to consent for travel within the continental United States for up to 30 days. This requires staff to fill out the form CFS 432, Consent of Parent/Guardian for Out-of-state Travel. Copies of the consents should be filed in the child's case file.

Consent for out-of-country travel or travel for more than 30 days can only be executed by the guardian or authorized agent. The court that has jurisdiction for the child's case must also agree to this travel. In Cook County, the Juvenile Court has generally approved travel on the North American continent. However, the court should still be notified in writing. If the child will need a passport, start planning early. The application process can take at least 15 business days or longer during peak travel times. Procedures for obtaining a passport have been prepared for casework staff.

Whether traveling out of country or closer to home, don't forget to take the child's medical card and any prescribed medication. With a bit of advance preparation, the only thing left to worry about is how to keep everyone in the backseat happy until the next rest stop.

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## Illinois Adoption Advisory Council news

The Adoption Advisory Council had its first 2010 meeting on February 5, in Bloomington.

### Legal issues around adoption

Shelly Knuppel, from the DCFS Legal Counsel, discussed recent changes at juvenile court that could allow a judge to authorize extending a child's time in foster care depending on certain circumstances. She also discussed a legislative change that could allow the court to re-establish parental rights in the event of an adoptive parent's death. The DCFS adoption staff in the regions have also been briefed on both these issues and can assist caregivers as needed.

### Illinois Celebrates Adoption

The Adoption Advisory Council began making plans for this year's National Adoption Month celebration on November 19. The group is looking forward to a wide-reaching celebration to be held in Springfield at the Governor's Mansion. Planning for the event will continue for several months. The committee is open to hearing from



**Adoption Council co-chairs Elizabeth Richmond (L) and Jim Jones (R) celebrated National Adoption Month last year with DCFS Director McEwen.**

caregivers with ideas to contribute. Contact the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.

The next meeting of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council will be April 9 in Springfield. Call the Office of Foster Parent Support Services for more details at 217-524-2422.

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## Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council begins agency reviews

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council received and scored Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans from all of the foster care programs in the state. These plans describe how agencies and DCFS regional programs will uphold foster parent rights and assist them in their responsibilities.

In addition to judging the plans on paper, each year the council, working with the DCFS Agency Performance Teams, actually visits one third of the agencies for reviews. The Council also requires telephone surveys with a set number of randomly selected foster caregivers to give another perspective on how the plan translates into everyday practice.

This year the Council is reviewing:  
ABJ Community Services, Inc.

Catholic Charities, Joliet  
Catholic Social Services of So. IL  
Centers for New Horizons  
Chaddock  
CARC  
Cunningham Children's Home  
Evangelical Child and Family Agency  
Generations of Hope  
Hoyleton Youth and Family Services  
Hull House Association  
Jewish Child and Family Services  
Kaleidoscope, Inc.  
Lakeside Community Committee  
Lifelink Bensenville Home Society  
National Youth Advocate Program  
Seguin Services  
SOS Children's Village IL  
United Methodist Children's Home  
Universal Family Connection  
DCFS Cook Central Region  
DCFS Northern Region

*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.*

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**The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will meet on March 19 in Oak Brook and on April 16 in Bloomington. Meetings begin at 9 a.m. Call the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422 for more information.**

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# New DCFS Division of Service Support aids many fostering functions

DCFS recently announced a new division, the Division of Service Support, and a new deputy director to head it. Deputy Director Shaun Lane's 23-year child welfare career started as a caseworker and includes leadership positions in several advocacy and service organizations. Lane will have responsibility for many of the functions that caregivers frequently rely upon. The new Division of Service Support includes:

## Office of Foster Parent Support

This office publishes Illinois Families Now and Forever; coordinates caregiver conferences and institutes; and supports the foster care, adoption, and downstate parent councils. This office is also responsible for ensuring that foster care programs adhere to the Foster Parent Law.

## Administrative Case Review

Caregivers are encouraged to participate in the twice-yearly ACR, a federally-mandated progress check of the child's case.

## Office of Training

Training develops course curriculum, presents classes and records learning hours for foster care license compliance.

This office also spearheads professional development for staff.

## CAYIT

Caregivers can request and participate in Child and Youth Investment Team (CAYIT) meetings to determine a change in a child's service level or placement type.

## Child Location and Support Unit

The unit can assist families when a youth "goes on run" and helps the agency protect vulnerable youth.

Lane has already attended several meetings with the foster and adoptive parent groups. He says he appreciates the work that caregivers do in support of children. Lane works in Chicago, and can be reached at 312-814-6800.



## Save the date for IFAPA/DCFS conference

The Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (IFAPA) with DCFS recently announced the next joint conference for foster, adoptive, guardianship and relative caregivers. The conference "Fostering Positive Outcomes for Children" will be held on Friday, August 27 through Sunday August 29 at the Marriott Oakbrook Hills Resort, located in the Chicago's western suburbs. This major conference will offer more than 50 selections for training to nurture youth and enhance the experience for the adults. Through workshops presented by topical experts and engaging keynote speakers, caregivers will surely leave the conference informed and inspired. They can also earn up to 14 training hours toward licensing requirements.

Through support from DCFS, IFAPA can present this conference with no charge to caregivers for meals or accommodations.

Registration details will be announced in the next issue of Illinois Families Now and Forever.

## Join 2010 support group listing

If you lead a support group or association for foster or adoptive families, you can be included in the directory of support groups. Please send the following information by April 1.

- Name of group
- Meeting schedule (e.g. 2nd Tuesday monthly at 10 a.m.)
- Meeting location
- Contact name with phone number/e-mail
- Any other notes (e.g. potluck dinner, child care provided, RSVP required, etc.)

New listings and updates should be sent to [Vanessa.James@illinois.gov](mailto:Vanessa.James@illinois.gov), 312-814-6824.



Fostering Positive Outcomes for Children

## Free retreats refresh

Children's Home + Aid developed a program to address the stress that adoption or guardianship of a child can place on a couple's relationship. Adoptive Families Together is designed to strengthen and support those adult relationships to the benefit of the entire family. One unique aspect of the program is a free weekend retreat. The Relationship Enhancement Retreat provides couples an opportunity to get away, have fun, relax, and enjoy each other's company.

The retreats are interactive and cover topics such as: communication, commitment, friendship, expectations and conflict resolution. To learn more about Adoptive Families Together or to register for an upcoming retreat, call Ann Siegel at 815-962-1043 or see the agency's Web site at [www.childrenshomeandaid.org](http://www.childrenshomeandaid.org).

**April 30 - May 2, 2010**

Country Inn & Suites  
Galena, Illinois

**July 23 - 25, 2010**

George Williams College  
Williams Bay, Wisconsin

**September 17 - 19, 2010**

Grand Geneva  
Lake Geneva, Wisconsin  
Registration begins 5/17/10

**November 5 - 7, 2010**

Pheasant Run  
St. Charles, Illinois  
Registration begins 7/6/10

## Permanency still requires future planning



Even after finalizing the adoption or taking guardianship of a child, permanent relationships are still subject to fate. Adoptive and guardianship parents should think through the options of providing care for their children in case they become unable or unavailable to parent. Short-term guardianship and standby adoption or guardianship are ways to develop a legally sound plan to ensure a smooth transition for children and potential future caregivers.

### Short-term guardianship

If, for example, a parent needed to be in the hospital for an extended medical treatment or make a trip out of the country, he or she could appoint a short-term guardian for a child. A short-term guardianship appointment is a private arrangement made by a parent or guardian without court involvement. The guardianship arrangement is done by filling in a legal form (755 ILCS 5/11-5.4) with formal witnesses. The appointment enables the short-term guardian to act as guardian of a child for up to 60 days. Short-term guardian appointments are renewable, but only one appointment can be in force at a time. Families with questions about this should consult an attorney.

### Standby guardianship

Illinois law establishes standby guardianship to allow parents to designate someone of their choosing as standby guardian/s for their children. This is usually done to prepare for a future event, such as the death or disability of the parent. Standby guardianship takes effect

on the occurrence of a future event, usually the death of the parent or the parent's inability to make and carry out day-to-day childcare decisions. Once the standby guardian's duties are activated, the standby guardian has 60 days to file a petition for full guardianship with the Court. If a standby guardian is unable to fulfill his/her duties, the Court will appoint a new guardian for the child, or return the child to the child welfare system. Families considering standby guardianship should consult an attorney to discuss this option and to draw up the legal documents. Caregivers should also contact the adoption worker to give notice of the arrangement.

### Standby adoption for a terminally ill parent

Standby adoption allows a terminally ill parent to choose who will adopt the child after the parent's death. Standby adoption is initiated while the parent is still living, and can be finalized either after the parent dies, or prior to the parent's death, if that is what the parent wishes and consents to. Initiating the process while the parent is still living allows the parent to testify in court concerning his or her wishes. These adoptions are subject to the approval of the Court, and must be shown to be in the child's best interest. Standby adoption ensures that the child will be adopted by a person chosen by the terminally ill parent, without reentering the Illinois child welfare system to secure another adoptive family. An attorney should assist the family in the legal requirements and notify the Department of the arrangements.

## Subsidy agreements end on 18th birthday:



As youth approach 18, they often look at that birthday as a beginning. But, practically speaking, adoptive and guardianship parents should realize it is often an end to the adoption or guardianship subsidy agreement. On the youth's 18th birthday, the many benefits in the subsidy, including the medical card, may also end. To help parents plan for the transition, six months before the youth's 18th birthday, the family will receive a letter from DCFS titled Notice Of Intent to Discontinue Subsidy Payments on 18th Birthday.

There are only two specific circumstances where the subsidy could continue beyond 18. Both require preparation and necessary docu-

mentation from the family, before the child turns 18.

### **Complete form to request extension: 30 days to respond**

DCFS redesigned the letter and response form to make the information easier to understand. Parents should first watch the mail for the initial notice and respond within 30 days. If a caregiver believes their youth is eligible for an extension of their subsidy, select the appropriate extension option and return the form to the subsidy worker listed on the letter. DCFS subsidy workers will make attempts to reach adoptive and guardianship families by phone and mail if the initial letter goes without a response.

If the youth is eligible for a subsidy extension, it is crucial to get the proper coding done early and correctly. Parents should be aware that a youth cannot be granted the extension for high school graduation or age 19 and then also receive a further extension to 21 due to a physical or mental disability.

### **Documentation for extensions: Gather materials early**

The disability extension to age 21 only applies for a condition that affects the individual's major life activities. If a child is eligible for SSI (Supplemental Security Income from the Social Security Administration) due to a condition that existed prior to the adoption, documentation of that eligibility is sufficient to meet requirements for extension to age 21. In other cases, acceptable documentation would include a copy of a report or letter from a duly licensed or credentialed

## *Extensions to the subsidy past age 18 for high school graduation or mental/physical disability require early documentation*

professional within the last year. For youth without disabilities, the high school can provide a letter confirming enrollment and the anticipated graduation date.

At 60 days before the youth's 18th birthday, DCFS will send another letter to the family that confirms the subsidy termination date. It will also include instructions in case a family decides to appeal the decision.

By looking ahead and planning early, the end of the subsidy agreement can be a smooth transition. Parents or guardians seeking an extension should begin gathering documentation well before the child turns 18. All documentation needs to go to the subsidy worker with enough time to confirm the end date and have the case coded correctly before the youth's 18th birthday. Otherwise, the subsidy agreement automatically ends if it has not been approved for an extension.

Caregivers can contact the worker with any questions. The youth's subsidy worker's contact information will be clearly listed on the notification letter.

### **The only two conditions that could qualify for extending the subsidy past the 18th birthday are:**

1. Youth with a physical or mental disability that existed prior to the adoption or transfer of guardianship, which affects the child's ability to ever live independently, could with proper documentation be approved for an extension until the child turns 21.
2. Youth who don't have a disability, but who are still in high school at age 18 could have payments continue until graduation, but not past the 19th birthday.

## 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 on the back page of the 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 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 questions about your child's medical card?

Call 800-228-6533.

### ...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.

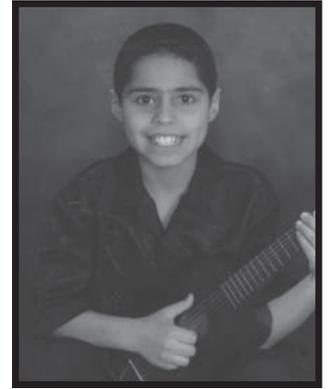
### ...You want to report an incidence of possible abuse or neglect?

Call the Child Abuse Hotline at 800-25-ABUSE (800-252-2873). If you are calling from outside of Illinois, call 217-785-4020.

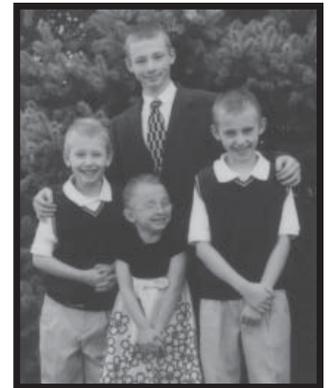
### ...You have an idea for an article in the newsletter?

Each region has a regional reporter to help gather local news. The names and contact information are listed in the regional section of each edition. Or you can contact the Editor, Vanessa James, at 312-814-6824 or e-mail [vanessa.james@illinois.gov](mailto:vanessa.james@illinois.gov).

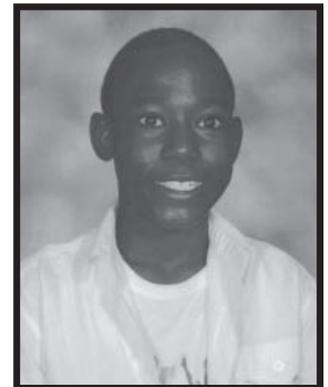
Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390.



Josue (7710)



Louis, Robert,  
Jesse & Holly (7776-79)



Daquan (7764)



Tytiana (7590)

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

**Josue [7710]** Like most little boys, Josue enjoys being active. Going to the park is one of his favorite activities. In summer, he likes to go swimming. Any time of year, he enjoys playing with his dog. In quieter moments, 10-year-old Josue, likes to color, do puzzles, and play with LEGO pieces. Of course, video games are a favorite, too.

His teacher says Josue works on grade level and continues to show improvement in the classroom. His foster mother says he enjoys teaching younger children and easily shares his toys with others. He is also helpful at home.

Potential parents to Josue would be able to provide the nurturing, time, and patience he needs to focus his attention and continue his improvement in school. He wants parents who will play with him and provide him with love and affection. A Chicago-area family is preferred, so Josue can maintain contact with his siblings.

**Louis, Robert, Jesse & Holly [7776-79]** These four siblings have been together through thick and thin. Louis, the oldest at 15, is well-behaved and willing to help others. He values his independence, but this has not stopped him from developing a bond with his foster parent. Robert, 11, is loving and sociable. He seeks attention and affection, and is able to clearly express his needs and wants. The third oldest at 10, Jesse, does very well at home. He likes watching cartoons and playing with toy cars. Holly, 7, is outgoing and

enjoys being in the spotlight. She has a bright smile, and enjoys giving and receiving hugs.

Louis' worker says he feels comfortable in his rural community. Robert's worker says he does best in a highly structured environment where he receives positive reinforcement. Jesse's worker says he loves attention and affection, and can be very loving. Holly's worker says she does very well academically.

To be a family for these children, you can first enable them to remain together so they can retain the strong bonds they have built over the years. You can provide a stable, loving home where they can all grow together. You can show patience and remain flexible as you attend to their individual needs, working with a variety of professionals and systems along the way. Other children in the home should be older than Louis, Robert, Jesse, and Holly.

**Daquan [7764]** Daquan, 12, is a friendly young man with a bubbly personality. He is very articulate, and capable of expressing his thoughts and feelings. Daquan has trouble focusing at times, but still maintains a great many hobbies and interests. He enjoys cooking, drawing, and using the computers at the library. He also likes to play sports, including basketball and soccer.

Daquan's foster parent says he is intelligent and does well in school when he applies himself. Daquan's

teachers say he is a good kid who succeeds when he remains on task.

Potential parents for Daquan can provide a loving, trusting home for him. You can help guide him as he chooses new friends and hobbies, and matures into a young man. You can encourage Daquan to focus on his studies and make school a priority in his life. Daquan would like to live with a mom, dad, and siblings. Other children in the home should be older than Daquan.

**Tytiana [7590]** Tytiana, 12, is known as the smartest student in her class. She's very observant and intuitive. When meeting new people, Tytiana can be shy at first, but once she gets comfortable, she enjoys learning about people and their interests. She is also an excellent storyteller and often creates narratives based on her experiences. In her free time, Tytiana likes to draw and will use crayons, paints, or whatever else is handy.

Her foster parent says Tytiana is bright and can be very helpful. Her worker says Tytiana enjoys assisting other students with their schoolwork.

The forever family for Tytiana is one that would provide her lots of love, nurturing, and support, as well as consistent rules and expectations. You can help her remain in contact with her brother after she is adopted. Other children in the home should be older than Tytiana.



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

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## 2010 Volume 2: Early Childhood Feature

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