

# Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship®

## State and nation celebrate foster parents in May

Currently, nearly half a million children in the United States are in foster care because their own families are in crisis and unable to provide for their essential well-being. Reports of abuse and neglect have already increased in some areas of the country due to the difficult economic times and are expected to rise as the economy worsens. In addition, there are an estimated 12 million alumni of foster care nationwide, representing all walks of life.

This month, across the country, people are:

- Raising their voices to educate federal and state public policy leaders on the issues facing children and families
- Serving as foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, advocates, social workers and volunteers
- Sponsoring scholarships enabling foster youth to go to college and trade school, as well as professional internships to prepare them for the workplace
- Encouraging their employees to volunteer their time as mentors, professional coaches, and role models for foster youth or young families with children in foster care
- Donating gift cards, school supplies, household gifts and other items to brighten a young person's life in foster care

Visit [www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org) to find out more about the many ways to get involved and make a lasting difference for children in foster care.

Proclamation

WHEREAS, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has the mission to provide for the well-being of over 15,000 children and young people in their care; and

WHEREAS, foster parent caregivers provide a safe haven when children cannot safely be in their homes of origin due to abuse or neglect; and

WHEREAS, foster caregivers devote great time and energy to children, their parents and agency staff to reunite families when possible or support other permanency options; and

WHEREAS, foster parent caregivers tirelessly tend to children's physical, emotional, material and educational needs, providing them the chance to move from the child welfare system to safe and successful lives; and

WHEREAS, in return for the immeasurable effort they extend, foster parent caregivers deserve the respect and gratitude of everyone in Illinois for their remarkable contributions and the ongoing positive impact they have in their communities;

THEREFORE, I, Pat Quinn, Governor of the State of Illinois, do proclaim May 2010 as **FOSTER PARENT APPRECIATION MONTH** in Illinois.

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

Done at the Capitol, in the City of Springfield,  
this NINETEENTH day of MARCH, in  
the Year of Our Lord two thousand and  
TEN, and of the State of Illinois  
the one hundred and NINETY-SECOND

*Debra White*  
SECRETARY OF STATE

PAT QUINN  
GOVERNOR



## From the DCFS Director

Erwin McEwen

Everyday I am grateful for each of the relatives who step into the gap and for all who welcome another's child into your home. However, in the month of May, Foster Parent Appreciation Month, this agency, the state and the nation officially acknowledges your labor of love.

As you nurture children who are affected by trauma, you can't help but to be affected. To be a caregiver, you must also take care of yourself. While it is a small gesture compared to all that you do, DCFS will again partner with the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association to provide another caregiver conference. Please take advantage of this opportunity to learn and to refresh your commitment to serving children. The conferences, institute days, support groups, Parent Cafés and advisory councils that DCFS and the agencies provide are designed to inform and to inspire you.

The phrase "it takes a village" is not just for children. In May, I hope you will expand your village to build relationships with other caregivers who understand what you do and why you do it. Lean on each other and learn from each other. Then share that energy and those ideas, so we can all do a better job of serving children and families. Enjoy the accolades of Foster Parent Appreciation Month, and thank you for all you do.

## IFAPA opens registration for free August weekend conference – Register on May 10

The Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (IFAPA) with DCFS will present a free weekend conference open to all caregivers in Illinois. The next offering in the Knowledge Reigns Supreme, Knowledge is Power conference series will be held on Friday, August 27 through Sunday, August 29. Illinois caregivers will come together at the Marriott Oak Brook Hills Resort, just west of Chicago, for a full weekend of learning, advocacy and networking. Registration will open on May 10.

Under the theme "Fostering Positive Outcomes for Children" caregivers can earn up to 14 training credit hours, choosing from more than 50 workshop topics. The workshops will cover development, education, health, behavior and parenting topics for youth of all ages and covering all permanency outcomes. There also will be a dedicated track for families who have already moved to adoption or guardianship.

In addition to the workshops, there are several other events planned. Caregivers can earn certification in CPR and learn first aid as a pre-conference option. There will be an on-site health fair on Saturday. DCFS Director Erwin McEwen is scheduled to address caregivers. Throughout the weekend, staff from DCFS and representatives from community agencies will be on site to provide information and resources to families.

With DCFS support, IFAPA can offer this conference with no charge for meals or accommodations to



*Fostering Positive Outcomes for Children*

foster caregivers, adoptive parents, guardians and relative caregivers. Accommodations will require shared rooms with a spouse, self-selected individual or a roommate assigned by the DCFS Office of Training.

The registration will be limited, so be sure to request a packet and return it as soon as possible. To request a registration packet caregivers have three options:

- Visit the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association Web site at [www.ilfapa.org](http://www.ilfapa.org)
- Send an E-mail to [DCFStraining@illinois.gov](mailto:DCFStraining@illinois.gov) with "IFAPA conference" in the subject line
- Call the DCFS Registration Unit at 877-800-3393 to have a packet sent by mail

IFAPA President Gladys Boyd is also available to provide more details or assistance in registering. She can be reached by phone at 773-720-0669 or E-mail at [boydgladys@sbcglobal.net](mailto:boydgladys@sbcglobal.net).



# Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council's March meeting was held in Oak Brook. New business included clarification CPR requirement for foster parents and a status report on the scoring and monitoring of Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. Several new members also recently joined the council.

## Licensing standards

The Council invited Steven Minter of DCFS to address the newly announced requirement for CPR training for foster parents whose homes have water hazards. He presented members with a draft memo that clarified the policy for caregivers. The council brought up concerns about renewing CPR certification, how to account for caregivers who had been already certified recently and how to implement the policy across homes supervised by private agencies. Minter committed to include their recommendations in the outreach to caregivers.



**Steve Minter, DCFS Statewide Licensing Administrator, explained the CPR licensing requirement.**

## Implementation Plans

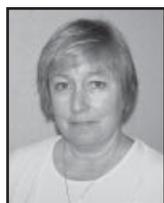
As part of its oversight of the state's Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans, the Council selected agencies to receive awards for their 2010 plans. They will be announced in

the July issue of Illinois Families Now and Forever.

Council members also reported progress on the in-person agency reviews that gauge how implementation plans are being incorporated into everyday practice in foster care programs.

## New Members

The Foster Parent Law designates the composition of the membership for the Council. Joining the council are:



**Deb Freke**, foster and adoptive parent, will represent Northern Region. She has been a foster parent support specialist and is a PRIDE trainer.

**Kathleen Lutz**, Program Director at Illinois Mentor in Peoria, joined the council to fill a child welfare expert slot.



**Carlos Argueta** is Director of Case Management at Arden Shores. He has worked extensively serving bi-lingual families. He joined the Council in March as a child welfare expert.

**The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be on May 21, beginning at 9 a.m. in Lisle. Call the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422 for details.**

# DCFS clarifies CPR certification guidelines for homes with water hazards

Rule 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes now requires caregivers to be certified in CPR if their homes have any identified water hazards such as pools, ponds, fountains, and the like.

- Qualifying certification must be from the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association or their equivalent organizations; and must include in-person instruction and demonstrated competency using a mannequin.
- Caregivers must be certified in the age-levels of CPR corresponding to the ages of children currently placed or who potentially could be placed in their care.
- Certifications are required to be renewed every two years at a minimum.

For more information on CPR certification courses, caregivers can examine those agencies' Web sites:

- [www.chicagoredcross.org](http://www.chicagoredcross.org)
- [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

The DCFS Office of Training is also compiling lists of additional resources for CPR training. That information will be published in the regional inserts of this newsletter, the training Web site at [www.DCFStraining.org](http://www.DCFStraining.org) and through the registration phone line 877-800-3393.

## Foster Parent Law strengthens rights and responsibilities

The Foster Parent Law and the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Law were signed into law in June, 1995, as the result of almost ten years of work by foster parents, DCFS staff, and members of the General Assembly. An effort led by Chicago veteran foster parent Jerry Welenc, Cyd Runde and others had finally paid off when foster parents' rights and responsibilities became codified as laws of the state of Illinois.

The Foster Parent Law contains the Foster Parent Bill of rights. It also gives the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council (Council) authority to make sure the Law is implemented every year in the DCFS regions and the private agencies that provide child welfare services under contract with DCFS. So, every year the Council scores all the implementation plans required by the Law and conducts on-site reviews at certain agencies and regions in order to make sure staff are implementing the Foster Parent Law in their daily work with foster parents.

The statement of rights helps foster parents, agencies and DCFS regions know what role foster parents will play on the child welfare team and the consideration they can expect to receive. The responsibilities help prospective foster parents know what will be expected of them before they decide to become foster parents and gives current foster parents a clear understanding of the general expectations of the agency or DCFS region.

**Continued on Page 5**

## Rights under the Foster Parent Law

*Foster parent caregivers have the right to:*

1. Be treated with dignity, respect and consideration, as a professional member of the child welfare team.
2. Be provided pre-service and ongoing training to meet needs and improve skills.
3. Be informed on how to contact the placement agency for assistance to access support services.
4. Receive timely financial reimbursement for care included in the service plan.
5. Be provided with information about the agency's plan for placement, that includes supporting family relationships and cultural heritage.
6. Be provided fair, timely and impartial investigations, including mediation and/or administrative review and explanations of decisions concerning licensing.
7. Receive additional or necessary information relevant to the child's care anytime when a child is placed with the foster parent.
8. To be given information concerning a child from DCFS as required under the Children and Family Services Act and from a child welfare agency as required under the Child Care Act of 1969.
9. Be notified of scheduled meetings concerning the child. Be informed of decisions. To have input in developing the service plan. To communicate with other professionals.
10. Have any information the caseworker has about the child and his family that pertains to the child's needs and care.
11. Receive written notice of any changes in the case plan or plans to end placement, along with the reason.
12. Receive timely notification of court hearings.
13. Be considered as a placement option for foster children formerly in their care.
14. Have access to an agency's or DCFS's appeals process without retaliation.
15. Be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and information on reporting staff misconduct.

## Responsibilities under the Foster Parent Law

*Foster parent caregivers have the responsibility to:*

1. Openly communicate and share information about the child with other designated members of the child welfare team.
2. Respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families and act appropriately.
3. Advocate for children in their care.
4. Treat children in their care and their children's families with dignity, respect, and consideration.
5. Recognize their own individual and familial strengths and limitations when deciding whether to accept a child into care. Recognize their own support needs and utilize appropriate supports.
6. Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations.
7. Assess ongoing individual training needs and act to meet those needs.
8. Strategize to avoid placement disruptions.
9. Know the impact foster parenting has on individuals and family relationships and try to minimize the stress as much as possible.
10. Know and promote the rewards and benefits to children, parents, families, and society that come from foster parenting.
11. Know the role, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other child welfare professionals, the child, and the child's own family.
12. Serve as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse/neglect. Know procedures regarding allegations that foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect.
13. Understand administrative case reviews, client service plans and court processes, and actively participate.
14. Know the child welfare agency's appeal procedure for foster parents and the rights of foster parents under the procedure.
15. Maintain accurate and relevant records regarding the child's care, following the child welfare agency's procedures.
16. Share information through the child welfare team to help the child adjust when moving to a new foster home.
17. Respect and maintain a child's culture. Provide care and services, which are respectful of, and responsive to, the child's cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship between the child and his/her own family.

## Foster Parent Law (cont.)

The rights and responsibilities stipulated in the Foster Parent Law get put into practice through the DCFS rule-making process. The rule concerning the Foster Parent Law can be found in Rule 340, titled Foster Parent Code. The accompanying article summarizes the rights and responsibilities. The full text of Public Act 89-19 is printed in the Foster Parent Handbook.

The statement of rights and responsibilities is a good starting point to avoid or to resolve issues between caregivers and other members of the child welfare team. Additionally, the Law requires agencies to have a grievance process specific to the rights and responsibilities listed in the Foster Parent Law.

Each agency and DCFS region prepares an annual Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan that demonstrates how the rights and responsibilities are incorporated into practice. Programs are required to involve caregivers in drafting the implementation plan and to make the plan available for review. Many foster care programs send copies of the implementation plan directly to caregivers. Others have the plan ready as requested.

Caregivers with questions about the Foster Parent Law or implementation plans can contact their agency or call the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.

# DCFS INVITES YOU TO THE ILLINOIS STATE FAIR

August 13 - August 22, 2010



Corner of Peoria Road and Sangamon Ave., Springfield

**Foster Families, Relative Caregiver Families, Adoptive Families,  
and Guardianship Families - Choose Your Own Discount Day!**

*Complete the coupon below if you would like to attend the Illinois State Fair and get the discounts available for caregivers. If you return the coupon now, in July you will receive by mail:*

A ticket that will get your vehicle and everyone in it into the Fair and parked for one fee of \$3.

One refreshment ticket for each family member, worth \$3 in food or drink.

One ride ticket for each family member that provides unlimited rides for \$15 (during designated times **ONLY on Monday, August 16 - Friday, August 20.**)

A special map of the fairgrounds made just for you.

**COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS COUPON BY MAIL OR FAX NO LATER THAN JUNE 25, 2010**

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

**Tickets may NOT be requested by telephone. Nothing will be sent to you unless you return this coupon. This is Your ONLY Invitation to the State Fair. Please Act NOW if You Wish to Attend**

We are a licensed foster family, relative caregiver, a guardianship family or have adopted a child through DCFS, and we would like to attend the 2010 Illinois State Fair. We understand that only our foster, adopted and guardianship children and family members who live in our home consistent with DCFS licensing regulations are eligible for these special offers.

### **PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY**

There will be \_\_\_\_\_ family members in our party. Number of vehicles \_\_\_\_\_ (limit 2)  
*If requesting more than 8 tickets, please print the name and phone number of your licensing or subsidy worker.*

Worker's name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Caregiver Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. No. \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### **For foster families only:**

We are supervised by DCFS \_\_\_\_\_

We are supervised by a private agency \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Note - Please bring a copy of this invitation or a copy of a recent board or subsidy invoice with you when you attend the Fair. You may be asked to show this invitation or invoice in order to use the tickets. **It is illegal to duplicate or sell these tickets, or to transfer these tickets to any person who is not a family member living in your home.***

## Homeward-bound

*When return home is the goal*

### Everyone on the team has a role in reunification

The parent, caregiver and case-worker make a powerful team for reunification. They work together like three legs of a trusty stool. Without all three supporting legs, reunification cannot stand strong.

Permanency planning toward reunification offers caregivers the opportunity to play a central role in strengthening families. Foster caregivers can be rightfully proud of their contribution in providing safe protective homes for children in need.

However, each team member has an important role. When a family must be separated, an emergency response is needed. No one can wait to get started working to reunify the family. Each one must work as a positive agent of change and as a helper, not a judge or jury. Each has responsibilities.

Parents do the hard work of reunification:

- Change behavior
- Build relationships
- Enhance skills
- Improve conditions

Caseworkers assist the family in an immediate, active and ongoing way through:

- Casework support
- Family meetings
- Services and treatment

Caregivers help with:

- Encouraging words
- Shared parenting
- Visits

The caregiver's role starts with a positive attitude. Reunification foster care is not for everyone. Your licensing representative will have discussed reunification with you beforehand and should have gone over the Reunification Commitment Form before you signed it. Once you understand the expectations, it should be easier to be supportive and encouraging.



Shared parenting is a right and a responsibility of the parent. For the caregiver, sometimes the hardest thing to share is control. Respecting the parent's right to parent is a gift you give to the child you both are caring for. Shared parenting can include the parent participating in activities, such as attending school meetings and doctors appointments.

Visits are where the caregiver can make a lasting contribution. Caregivers support visitation by preparing the child for the visit; providing transportation; greeting the parent when you drop off or pick up the child; or helping the child as needed after the visit. How, when and where visits take place are details that the parent, caseworker and you will work out and can change as the case progresses.

## Movin' on UP

*For youth transitioning to adulthood*

Teens across the state will have "one-stop shopping" for information to help them prepare for life as adults. The DCFS Division of Service Intervention is planning four Youth Summits. Teens who participate in summits will obtain educational and survival skills to help them successfully achieve self-sufficiency and independence. Teens have helped plan workshops covering financial planning, life skills, employment training, academics, nutrition and health.

Youth will co-facilitate sessions to keep the discussion relevant and interesting. They have also injected some fun with food and prizes at each event. Youth (and their caregivers) should save the date for the Youth Summit.

**Cook County** • June 18  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Malcolm X College, Chicago

**Northern Region** • June 18  
9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.  
Kishwaukee College, Malta

**Central Region** • June 24  
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Carl Sandberg College, Galesburg

**Southern Region** • June 4  
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Kaskaskia College, Centralia

For more information contact:  
*Gail Simpson (Central)*  
217-524-2425  
*Kim Peck (Southern)*  
217-524-1982  
*Lynda Swan-McClendon (Cook)*  
312-814-5991  
*Holly Bitner-Duck (Northern)*  
630-801-34467

## Celebrate yourself in Foster Parent Appreciation Month

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

- Take a look at your rights under the Foster Parent Law and remember there is a state statute to support your efforts.
- Join a foster parent support group and take a friend.
- Flip through family photo albums before bed to guarantee sweet dreams.
- Serve a cake with candles for dessert and show the kids you deserve a special day.
- Make plans with another foster family to trade an afternoon watching the others' kids. Take the time to do something to refresh yourself.
- Send a card to encourage a foster parent who is having a rough time.
- Make a list of good parenting decisions you have made lately. Tuck it away for a "rainy day."
- Write a letter to your local newspaper explaining the importance of foster care. Make the public take notice.
- Update your child's life book one morning over coffee.
- Declare a "Good News Only Day." Let someone else field the phone calls from school and settle the squabbles. You'll have to take your turn the next week.



## Emotional needs (and parents' responses) change for school aged children after adoption

School-age children form a stronger sense of who they are. Much of that identity comes from their family and the relationships with the people in their lives. For adopted children, developing an identity is more complicated. They must merge two separate families and histories as they explore how they fit in. In middle childhood, children adopted as infants or toddlers often start thinking about themselves and their pasts more carefully. They begin to sort through critically important questions about who they are. Those who felt "special" and "chosen" because they were adopted may begin to realize, at least subconsciously, that someone else "unchose" them. Many struggle with issues of self-worth, self-esteem, and being different. Newly adopted children may be grieving for previous homes or caregivers. Some adopted children may have difficulty with social relationships outside the family. These emotional tasks can interfere with concentration and distract children from schoolwork.

Adoptive parents should be aware that children who did not spend enough time with emotionally healthy adults may have difficulty identifying and controlling their emotions. If they came to you from a group care setting, they may not have had many opportunities to see or practice healthy social interactions. Children who were maltreated may not have learned how to empathize with others, may have learned to relate to others in a violent way, or may reenact trauma they have experienced.

Remember that children who have been separated abruptly from previous caretakers or who have insecure attachment to their primary caregivers may be anxious when they are away from home.

### What you can do:

- Using age-appropriate language, talk with your child about his or her relationships with others.
- Help your child remember the places where he or she has lived and the people who were in his or her life before coming to your home.
- Speak positively about birth family members and prior caretakers.
- Teach your child the words for various feelings.
- Explain to your child how to handle and express emotions.
- Be a positive example to your child as you express emotions. ("I feel so angry right now, I think I'll take a walk until I cool down.")
- Teach your child how to interact with others. Practice how to greet a playmate, how to ask for something, how to share.
- Coach your child on how to see things from another person's point of view. ("I wonder how Sammy felt when no one chose him for their team.") This helps children develop empathy.
- Make sure there is plenty of family time: routines, schedules, consistency, and a safe and secure environment.

Excerpted from Parenting Your Adopted School-Age Child. US Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau. [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)



# Illinois Adoption Advisory Council Update

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council met in April in Springfield.

## Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Barbara Sittler of the DCFS Office of the Inspector General presented information on DCFS resources and inter-agency work to assist older caregivers. Barbara Schwartz of the Illinois Department on Aging discussed the regionally based support centers that can provide resources to parents over the age of 60. In Illinois, over 200,000 children under the age of 18 are living in a grandparent-headed home. More than 100,000 grandparents are caring for their grandchildren.

The Illinois Family Caregiver Support Program focuses on five elements:

- Information to caregivers about available services
- Assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services
- Individual counseling, support groups and caregiver training
- Respite care to enable caregivers to be temporarily relieved from their care giving responsibilities
- Supplemental services, on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by caregivers. Supplemental services can include assistive devices, home modification, legal assistance, transportation, school supplies and any other gap filling service which attempts to address a short-term caregiver emergency.

There are more than 100 Caregiver Resource Centers across the state that can link older parents to services. More information on these services is at [www.state.il.us/aging](http://www.state.il.us/aging) or call the Senior Helpline at 800-252-8966.

## Adoption Day Celebration

The committee for Adoption



*Barbara Sittler discussed DCFS resources for older caregivers.*

Day in Illinois continues to plan a celebration event to be held in Springfield at the Governor's Mansion on November 19.

The council would like to know how communities are noting the day. To take part in plans or to share other events, contact the council at 217-524-2422.

***The next meeting of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council will be on Friday, June 4 at 10 a.m. in Lisle. Call the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422 for details.***



## Reading books first takes the edge off tough adoption discussions

When young children are experiencing difficulties in their daily life, reading about other children with similar problems can help them see hope for their situation. When children read about others in similar situations, they come to realize they are not the only ones with those fears and concerns. If a specific need or question arises, such as how to talk to a child about a birth parent's drug use, a book can help sort out the most appropriate response.

The DCFS Lending Library has a catalog of adoption titles that caregivers can borrow for up to two weeks. Call 866-800-3393 for more information. Adoptive parents who are looking for more titles, reviews or books to purchase can turn to Pact, An Adoption Alliance. Pact's online store has reviewed more than 1500 titles that cover age-specific books, various types of

adoption, books for adults and resources for educators. Pact suggests a simple, three-part method to help you use books to talk about the core issues that predictably occur in adoptive families:

- Select a story about a child dealing with one of life's deeper or more challenging issues.
- After reading the book together, talk with your child exclusively about the characters in the story to understand his feelings about the plot and the personalities
- If you and your child want to take it further, lean back in your chair and say something like..."Gee, this story reminds me of the time in my own life when..."

For more information on how to help discussion flow, download Pact's Book Source from [www.pactadopt.org](http://www.pactadopt.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 connect you to a licensing agency. 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 are having a family crisis with your adopted child?** Contact the Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program that serves your area. Call Christine Feldman at 312-814-1565 for more information.

**...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).

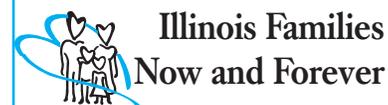
## Tell it like it is

Families Now and Forever wants to hear the real deal on caring for children from those who know best...YOU!

The new question is: **How do you handle your kid's toughest school-related problem?**

You can contact me with your response by e-mail at [Vanessa.James@illinois.gov](mailto:Vanessa.James@illinois.gov) (Note: there is a "dot" after Vanessa) or by phone at 312-814-6824. I am looking forward to sharing your responses in the next issue.

*Vanessa James, Editor*



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

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

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

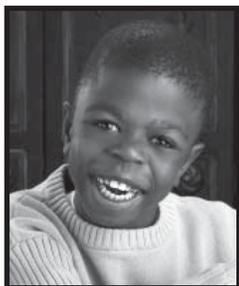
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Department of Children and Family Services©

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



Fijuan (C7787)



Jaiombre (C7429)



Joshua (7757)



Marquis (C7774)



Nyshia (C7789)

**Nyshia [7789]** Nyshia, 8, is an energetic child who loves exploring the world around her. She is friendly and enjoys getting to know other people. Thanks to her happy-go-lucky attitude, Nyshia is able to give and receive affection and attach to people easily. She also likes to tinker with things in order to understand how they work. In her spare time, she enjoys playing with toy trucks, coloring, and reading.

Nyshia's worker says she is friendly and outgoing. She is a loving child who can be helpful both at home and in school. The right family for Nyshia would encourage her to explore, learn, and enjoy everything she can. You can show patience with her as she adjusts to your home, redirecting her behavior if needed. You can also advocate for her physical and educational needs, working with various professionals to make sure those needs are met. Nyshia should be the only child in her adoptive home.

**Fijuan [7787]** Fijuan, 9, is a polite and respectful child who has no trouble meeting people's expectations of him. Although he struggles to relate to children his own age, Fijuan does get along with adults and older children quite easily. He also loves bowling. In fact, Fijuan is so taken with the sport that he becomes very excited when he learns he is going to a bowling alley and has a tendency to talk about the experience for hours afterward. Fijuan's teachers say he is well-behaved and works hard to complete his tasks. His foster parent says he does well in the home, despite not being a "morning person." Everyone who meets Fijuan is struck by how polite he is.

Potential parents for Fijuan can provide a loving and accepting home for Fijuan. You can encourage him to focus on schoolwork and stress the importance of education in his life. You can also work with various professions to ensure Fijuan's medical, educational, and emotional needs are met. Fijuan says he would like to live with a family that will let him ride his bike a lot. Other children in the home should be older than Fijuan.

**Jaiombre [7429]** Jaiombre, 12, 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. His worker says Jaiombre

is sweet, lovable, and polite. He enjoys computer time in school.

Jaiombre's forever family is one that can be patient and loving and 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.

**Joshua [7757]** Joshua, 13, is a sensitive and inquisitive child who struggles socially at times, but still takes a genuine interest in other people. He can be reserved, but still enjoys a wide variety of activities ranging from basketball and soccer to robots and video games. Joshua loves to ask questions and delve into science-related subjects in school. He enjoys immersing himself in problem-solving activities such as playing chess, amusing himself with board games, and building things with building blocks. Joshua's worker says he is friendly and kind, and enjoys spending time with adults and peers alike. He respects adults and responds well to their encouragement and support.

Prospective parents for Joshua should be able to display patience as he develops intellectually and emotionally. You can also encourage his social relationships with peers, coaching him when necessary. Joshua thrives when he receives recognition of his strengths and abilities. Other children in the home should be older than Joshua.

**Marquis [7774]** Marquis, 12, is an affectionate young man who has high hopes for finding a permanent home. Although he has trouble managing his anger at times, Marquis does attend therapy sessions and is actively engaged in trying to improve his behavior. In his spare time, Marquis likes to build things using LEGO pieces and similar, construction-themed toys. He also loves to collect Matchbox and Hot Wheels cars. Marquis' therapist says he is friendly, talkative, and fun-loving. She is convinced he will respond positively to being placed in a stable, loving home.

The right parents for Marquis can provide much-needed stability. You can show him lots of love and affection, without expecting him to reciprocate immediately. Marquis would like to live with a close-knit family that sits down to dinner together and takes family trips. He has thrived when living in racially and ethnically integrated communities.



Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI Website – [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.

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## Announcements: **May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month**



### **Free Weekend Conference**

**Illinois Foster/Adoptive Parent Association & DCFS**

**August 27-29**

**Registration Opens on May 10. Info inside on page 2.**



### **Order your family's free tickets to the Illinois State Fair**

**Mail or Fax order form by June 25**

**Details inside on page 6.**

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