

Northern region helps chart permanency path

Caregivers from the Northern Region joined educators, members of the court, child welfare staff, policy makers and parents in the Permanency Enhancement Symposium. Participants came together to provide input and help create new strategies to address the following questions:

1. What can DCFS, court personnel, community members, caregivers, and parents do to keep children in their homes of origin?
2. What are the barriers that keep children from returning home sooner?
3. What can communities do to improve adoption and guardianship outcomes and what are some factors that could contribute to this?
4. What factors contribute to the overrepresentation of African-American youth in foster care in some communities and how can we reduce these numbers?

The underlying goal of the symposium was to share information and to build a partnership with community stakeholders. The March event built took place at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and used videoconference to link in

groups at the Rockford, Hoffman Estates and Naperville campuses. In addition, community forums and focus groups were conducted prior to the symposium in 10 different communities.



Dr. Terry Solomon

According to Dr. Terry Solomon, Executive Director of the Illinois African-American Family Commission, the community forums generated substantial positive feedback and many strategies to improve permanency goals and help support families. The long-range goal of the symposium is for each community to develop a local action plan and identify resources for families that will improve the safety and well-being of children in care. The symposium participants also addressed the needs of Latino children involved in the child welfare system. The diverse range of participants explored ways to engage the courts, law enforcement and community leaders to address barriers that exist in the community. The following were just a few of the many suggestions made by the community stakeholders:

- Offer support services and court dates during evening and

weekend hours to accommodate work schedules.

- Educate professional staff on availability of services in the community.
- Make DCFS a community linkage resource, and be more proactive in helping families before children come into care.
- Mandate training on cultural diversity.
- Develop more education and social services to support older teens and young adults, especially minority males.
- Involve professional role models that reflect the cultural, ethnic, and racial background of the children in care.
- Lower worker caseloads.

According to Michael Burns, Chair of the DCFS African-American Advisory Council, "the efforts by DCFS to include community stakeholders will improve programs and insure policy makers are aware that community members, clients and service providers must all be involved in keeping children safe."

Annual swim party

The DeKalb Foster Adoptive Parent Alliance (F.A.P.A.) is a support group with the mission of connecting foster caregivers and adoptive parents through group meetings and recreational family events. They will be having their annual back to school SWIM PARTY and picnic on Saturday, August 2 at the Hopkins Aquatic Center in DeKalb.

The festivities start at 4:30 p.m., and the swim party goes from 6 to 8 p.m. The cost will be \$10.00 per household. Reservations are required. For more details, call Robyn Harvey at 815-787-5300 or 815-754-5915.

Northern News

Regional Reporter

Catherine Johnson

DCFS Reporter

841 N. Lake

Aurora, IL 60506

Phone: 630-844-8400

Fax: 630-844-8968

Catherine.Johnson2@illinois.gov

Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.

El Centro offers bilingual school help

El Centro de Informacion is a community agency based out of Elgin, serving Kane, DuPage, and Cook counties. The agency has been providing services to the community since 1972 and is part of Local Area Network 47. It provides Family Centered Services to youth age 6 to 12 facing truancy, suspension or possible expulsion from school. The program's goal is to improve the student's behavior, school attendance and academic achievement.

In one case, an 11-year-old boy was unable to control his behavior or emotions, made little progress in his school studies and had minimal interest in his academic future. In addition, he had been in detention twice, which prompted a referral to El Centro. This student received individual and family counseling for eleven months. The program helped him work through his academic, emotional and behavior issues. His relationship with his family improved, as did his self-esteem. He stated, "It is good to know that I am not a bad boy."

In addition to the school intervention programs, El Centro de Informacion has a wide variety of services including:

- Counseling for children, youth and their families
- Bilingual information, advocacy, and referral
- Health fairs, screenings, and HIV programs

- All Kids insurance and public benefits linkages
- Immigration and citizenship workshops
- Parenting classes
- Emergency food pantry and clothing
- Interpretation and translation services
- Legal clinics and housing issues
- Job fairs and employment services
- Women's support groups

For more information on El Centro, contact Herlinda Castillo at 847-695-9050. El Centro De Informacion is located at 28 North Grove Ave in Elgin, Illinois.

* * *

There are more educational intervention programs in LANs across the Northern Region. They are open to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship families, who are concerned about students at risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion. For more information about Local Area Networks, contact Frank Navarro, DCFS LAN Liaison, at 630-844-8400 or e-mail at Frank.Navarro@illinois.gov.

DCFS Education Advisors are on call to provide families expert school help

Caregivers and caseworkers working together can usually advocate successfully with schools for the children in their care. However, when families need additional expertise to work through school issues, they can contact the Education Advisor. Advisors can support DCFS-supervised foster families and families who adopted or took guardianship of children who were in DCFS care. Families with licenses supervised by private agencies can receive similar help from their agency's education liaison.

DCFS Education Advisors are part of the Northern Illinois University Educational Access Project. They work with families where children may have learning, discipline or behavioral concerns at school. They can take part in meetings for special education. The advisors will help caregivers and caseworkers determine the best strategies to help youth make successful transitions through school.

The Northern Region Education Advisors offer the following reminders to help families prepare for the expenses that come with education.

- ALL schools provide free lunches, required textbooks and instructional materials to qualified families. Youth in foster care qualify. (Free and Reduced Lunch forms must be completed with Medical

Card number or other proof of income.)

- School districts have individual policies regarding the waiver of other school fees.
- School clothes are to be purchased from the clothing allowance that is part of the monthly foster care payment to caregivers.
- Private agencies have individual policies regarding routine school supplies. Foster parents through DCFS receive \$50.00 per school age child placed in their home during the month of July on their August check.
- Transportation is free for students living more than 1-1/2 miles from school or 1 mile from public transportation, experiencing hazardous traffic conditions or receiving special education services and needing transportation. Ask your school.



Rhonda Best



Mitch Kremer

To reach a Northern Region Education Advisor, contact Rhonda Best in Rockford at 815-967-3750 or Mitch Kremer in Woodstock at 815-338-1068.

Region welcomes new 0-5 service coordinator

Angel Nicole Williams is the new Early Childhood Services Coordinator for Northern Region. Williams will be responsible for ensuring that each child from age zero to five receives a developmental screening. The screening assesses whether the child has reached expected medical, developmental, physical and behavioral milestones. If the child fails the initial screening, he or she is referred for further evaluations and connected with needed services. Williams can assist caseworkers and caregivers to access providers.

These screenings are important to track a child's development and to prepare him for the learning that should take place before kindergarten. Studies show that children who are enrolled in early childhood programs have more opportunities to practice and learn among same aged peers. This ultimately helps children to be more successful in school. Also, in Early Childhood Education programs, children learn to form friendships with other children. In the process, children develop emotionally, socially, behaviorally and cognitively.

Foster parents and relative caregivers with questions or concerns about their child's development can contact Angel Williams at 630-844-8400, Monday through Friday.

Northern Region Training Calendar

Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All caregivers are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. **Advance registration is required.** Training dates, times and locations are subject to change. Detailed address information will be provided with registration.

Module 12 - Understanding and Promoting Preteen and Teen Development (6 training hours)

This new course will assist Caregivers to identify developmentally appropriate ways to best promote healthy development for preteens and teens who have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma. This six-hour module will help foster/adopt caregivers to understand the teen brain development and the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens. Participants will learn specific strategies that caregivers can use fostering teenagers in the day to day life of the foster family.

Kankakee **Kankakee College**
Sept. 27 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Rockford **Camelot**
Sept. 9 & 11 (Tue/Thu) 6 - 9 p.m.

Child Trauma

This four-hour course helps caregivers recognize the signs of trauma and understand how to work with children who have experienced trauma.

Elgin **Judson College**
Sept. 9 & 11 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Love's Park **Illinois Mentor**
Sept. 27 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Rockford **CHASI**
Sept. 22 & 24 (M/W) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Romeoville **Comfort Inn**
August 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Waukegan **Ramada Inn**
Sept. 20 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

The Teen in Family Foster Care: Supporting Attachment (6 training hours)

This training will help foster/adopt caregivers to understand how early attachment experiences have impacted the teen's development.

Aurora **Comfort Suites**
Sept. 27 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Elgin **Judson University**
Sept. 17 & 22 (W/M) 6:30. - 9:30 p.m.

Kankakee **Kankakee College**
Sept. 13 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Love's Park **Illinois Mentor**
Sept. 13 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Rockford **Camelot**
August 9 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Rockford **CHASI**
Sept. 18 & 23 (Thu/Tue) 6:30. - 9:30 p.m.

Romeoville **Comfort Inn**
Sept. 20 & 27 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

**Caregivers must
register to attend any
of these training classes.**

**Call the DCFS Office
of Training**

**877-800-3393
toll free**

Educational

Advocacy 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

Aurora **Comfort Suites**
August 26 & 28 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
(Tue/Thu)

Elgin **Judson University**
August 18 & 20 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Mon/Wed)

Kankakee **Kankakee Community
College**
September 4 & 9 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Thu/Tue)

Love's Park **Illinois Mentor**
September 9 & 11 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Tue/Thu)

Rockford **Camelot**
August 12 & 14 6-9 p.m.
(Tue/Thu)

Rockford **CHASI**
August 25 & 27 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Mon/Wed)

Romeoville **Comfort Inn**
August 18 & 20 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Mon/Wed)

Waukegan **Ramada Inn**
September 8 & 10 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Mon/Wed)