

McCoy's face the realities of foster care to find success

Like most, Cathy and Frank McCoy initially got into foster parenting because they wanted to make a difference and help children in need. They felt that every child deserved a home where they could feel safe, secure, and loved.

“Like most foster parents, the expectation that children would be happy, excited, and grateful to be in our home was nowhere near reality,” Cathy admitted.

In reality, all of the children in their home were in various stages of being angry, afraid, and traumatized. They distrusted the McCoy's motives and felt that they somehow were responsible for being apart from their parents.

“We learned very quickly that foster parenting is not about ‘us’. The reality is that it's all about the children and what we can do for them, in spite of their anger, distrust, and lack of appreciation.”

The McCoy's also learned that it takes time to break down those walls of distrust bit by bit. After a series of bad days, tantrums and meltdowns, they would always eventually see some indication that their efforts were getting through. It sometimes took months for attitudes and behaviors to change, but every time they saw a change in behavior there was a feeling of satisfaction.

Cathy remembers, “One of our foster children at four years old spent the first few months in our home saying, ‘I don't like you’ and ‘I hate you!’... Imagine our pride when one day she tells us, “I don't like you, because I LOVE you!!”

Building and preserving connections with children is an important aspect of the way the McCoy's care for children. One of their most meaningful memories is of a little girl who spent almost three years with them after having moved four times in six months. The McCoy's worked closely with her caseworker and therapist to identify a new adoptive home and helped facilitate a slow, successful transition. The highlight of the process was when the adoptive parents asked them to be the godparents for their newly adopted daughter.

“One of our proudest moments was standing up in that church and promising to always be there for her,” Cathy said.

The McCoy's are happy to report that every child they had in foster care has either been successfully



Frank and Cathy McCoy with daughter Anna

adopted or returned home to a parent.

“We can't take credit for the success, but we feel a sense of pride at having been a part of the process. We stay in contact with all the children and feel lucky to have an extended family and our “kids” all around us,” she said.

The larger community of caregivers also benefits from that degree of dedication. For five years Frank has volunteered as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), protecting the interests of children while they are involved in juvenile court. Cathy has been a CASA volunteer for 10 years. She is also a recently appointed member of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, representing Northern Region.

Plan now to offset summer fun costs with agency help



Insuring summer fun means planning now to pay for summer activities. Many foster care programs have provisions to help offset the costs for activities that will enrich children's summer experience. How expenses are handled will depend on the agency that supervises the foster home. The child's caseworker should be able to help sort out the specific policies for families with licenses supervised by private agencies.

Foster caregivers whose licenses are supervised through the DCFS Northern Region should pay special attention to these reimbursement procedures for summer camp when seeking reimbursement through DCFS.

Maximum camp fees: \$260.35
Camp clothing: \$78.93
Camp Supplies: \$20.50

In addition to camps, summer is an opportunity for youth to get involved in recreational, artistic and athletic programs, through park districts and other community organizations. Youth in foster care are eligible for these programs with DCFS assistance, as long as the

program accepts the state voucher. Approved programs are eligible for reimbursement at prevailing rates. To enroll a child in a camp or summer program with DCFS reimbursement:

1. Discuss the options for camp or other activities with the child's caseworker, including costs.
2. Confirm that the program will accept a DCFS voucher for payment.
3. Register the child in the camp or other program.

4. Contact the child's caseworker to obtain a voucher. Provide the caseworker with the registration form and a bill or receipt.
5. The caseworker will prepare a signed voucher.
6. After receiving the voucher, the caregiver signs box 14 (signature of purchaser).
7. Present the voucher to the camp/store/park district (vendor) and have them sign box 1 (seller certification).
8. Leave the voucher with the vendor. This is how they get paid after they return it to the DCFS Business Office.

One detail that is often overlooked is that the DCFS fiscal year ends June 30. If camp charges straddle that date, it requires two vouchers--one for the time before the end of June and one for the remainder of the program that falls in the new fiscal year. Also remember that when enrolling more than one child in a program each will need his own voucher.

Northern News

Sponsor: Debbie Palmer-Thomas, DCFS
Northern Regional Administrator



Regional Reporter
Colleen Woolwine
595 South State St.
Elgin, IL 60123

Phone: 847-888-7635
Fax: 630-844-8968
Colleen.Woolwine@illinois.gov

Anyone can call the regional reporter with story suggestions about:

- foster parent association news and schedules
- local training notices
- features on foster families and community members working for children
- photos
- ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.



Job and school opportunities await young people in Kane County

The Kane County Department of Employment & Education (KCDEE) is reaching out to youth between the ages of 16 and 21 who reside within the Kane County area and some surrounding communities including: Aurora, DeKalb, Elgin, North Aurora, and Yorkville.

Some of the programs offered by KCDEE include adult mentoring, assisting with obtaining a GED or returning to school, setting career goals, offering tools to help find employment, and to provide guidance and counseling. There are programs to help youth finish

their education or get a job, even if things are getting in their way. Qualifications for this program are youth who have dropped out of school or are out of school and have not secured employment or training; are pregnant or parenting; have physical, learning, or mental disabilities; are in foster care or have been adopted; are homeless or a runaway; have been involved in the juvenile justice system; having trouble with basic reading and/or math; and are an “at risk” youth as defined by school staff.

If the answer is yes to any of the

above criteria, youth may qualify for a youth training program under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). To find out more information, contact the local one-stop career center and ask to speak with a KCDEE Youth Services Employment Representative. For those that qualify, services are available for free.

Visit www.kcdee.org or contact one of the following offices:

DeKalb	815-756-4893
Elgin	847-888-7900
North Aurora	630-844-6640
Yorkville	630-553-8303

Local Area Networks home to community resources for families

Northern Region families can look to Local Area Networks (LANs) for resources in the community to help meet various needs that children have. DCFS LAN Liaison Sharon O’Bryant reminds families that “wrap around plans” can be a way to get the services and tools needed to help a child succeed at school. For example, one student could not afford the required \$100 calculator for algebra. She was struggling to keep up and was sure to fail without the calculator. Through the Wrap Around Program she was able to purchase the calculator, and eventually pass the course.

Local Area Networks are comprised of the Illinois State Board of Education, community organizations and DCFS. They spring from the community and create programs to address the needs of families in that locale. The programs may differ from one LAN to another. However, each will have an Education Initiative program targeted to youth who

are at risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion.

Debralee Townsend from the BEST/ATM Program has helped a number of students through the LAN wrap around program. She feels “it is an awesome program that appears to do what is intended, by providing for a few of the students’ basic needs so that students can concentrate on reaching their grade level goals, and ultimately graduating.”

Like most of the Education Initiative programs, BEST/ATM also provides counseling for the social and emotional well-being of students and their caregivers. Case managers will also work with school personnel and connect families to community providers.

Caregivers who feel their children could benefit from educational interventions or other community-based services should contact the DCFS LAN Liaison for more information.

Youth services in Local Area Networks

For information on resources available through the Local Area Networks contact one of the DCFS LAN Liaisons. These services are open to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship families.

DCFS Local Area Network (LAN) Liaisons

Phil Biage

630-801-3400

Kane, Kendall, McHenry, and Lake counties

Sidella Hughes

815-967-3731

DeKalb, Lee, Ogle, Whiteside and Winnebago counties

Sharon O’Bryant

815-730-4000

Boone, Carroll, DuPage, Grundy, Jo Daviess, Kankakee, Stephenson and Will counties



Northern Region Caregiver Training

DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across Northern Region. The listing below can help caregivers plan for their training needs. To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center (VTC) anytime at www.DCFStraining.org or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours. In addition to classroom courses, caregivers can also take advantage of videos, books and online training.

April

Child Trauma	Kankakee
Transcultural Parenting	Loves Park
Adoption Certification (worker referral required)	Aurora
Educational Advocacy	Waukegan Loves Park

May

Module 2	Joliet
Adoption Certification (worker referral required)	Wheaton Loves Park
Educational Advocacy	Aurora Rockford

June

Adoption Certification (worker referral required)	Elgin
Educational Advocacy	Wheaton Loves Park Rockford



Remember to register for the Northern Region Caregiver Institute

Saturday, April 2
Holiday Inn
Joliet

In-service Training modules (scheduled periodically in classroom sessions or available on DVD)

Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk (12 hours) The focus of this module is how to build self-esteem in children; how kids act when they need recognition, power, freedom, enjoyment and to belong; and how to listen to what kids say and not what we think they say.

Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs (9 hours) This workshop provides practical information to foster parents about how to use effective discipline techniques such as I-messages, natural and logical consequences, time out and how to catch kids being "good" and what to do to encourage positive behavior.

Module 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (9 hours) Participants learn to differentiate normal from problematic sexual behaviors in children and youth, signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and ways to help sexually abused children recover.

Module 5 - Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families (9 hours) This training focuses on helping foster parents learn how to help kids

attach to caregivers and at the same time stay loyal to birth families. Caregivers learn about how to prepare and support children before and after visits with the birth family and how to share the parenting role with birth parents.

Module 6 - Working as a Professional Team Member (9 hours) Foster parents learn everyone's role on the team, when and how to be an advocate for children, what conflict is and their own personal style for managing it, and how conflict can be a "win - win" situation for everyone involved.

Module 7 - Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity (6 hours) Culture includes traditions, values, customs and history. What "culture" means to a child's self-esteem, how to manage cultural diversity in a foster home, how to discuss sensitive issues with children and how to help a child record his or her history are topics covered in this module.

Module 8 - Promoting Permanency Outcomes (9 hours) The focus of this training is on families who have children in care and supporting reunification of the children and parents.

Module 9 - Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family (6 hours) In this training caregivers learn how fostering children can affect family relationships, how to minimize stresses that can result and how to find available supports.

Module 10 - Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families (15 hours) Foster parents will study the risk factors for chemical use, abuse, and dependency. They will understand relapse and recovery and be able to acquire skills necessary to be an active member of the team to support parents' recovery.

Module 12 - Understanding & Promoting Pre-Teen and Teen Development (6 hours)

This 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 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.