

Illinois Families Now and Forever[®]

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

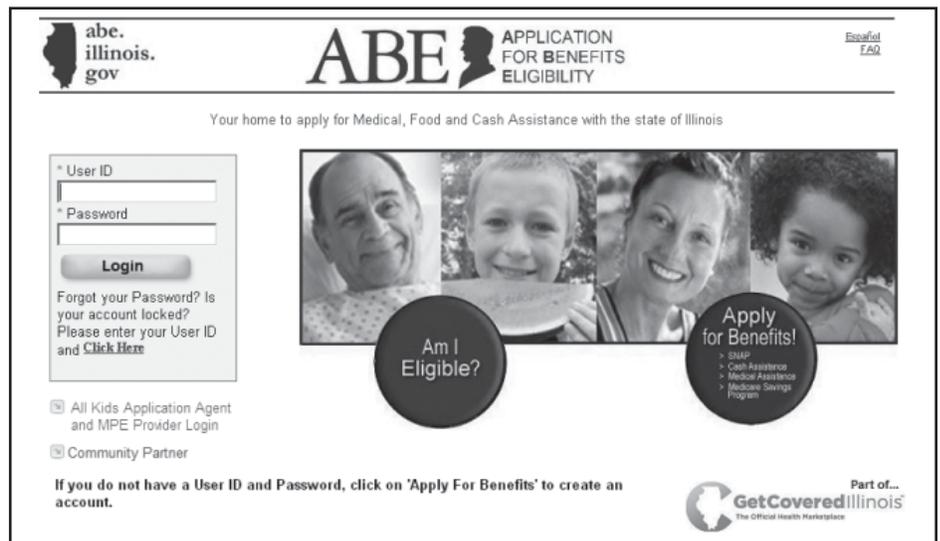
Affordable Care Act opens healthcare options

New program extends insurance path to age 26 for youth after DCFS care

The medical card that youth receive while in foster care makes it possible to take care of a wide range of routine and critical medical needs. While the program can be complicated and sometimes inconvenient, it can also be a lifesaver, literally. When a child's case closes after they leave DCFS foster care after age 18, the medical card ends. The young person is often left in medical limbo with few options. That changes as of January 1 with the way that the state of Illinois is implementing the Affordable Care Act.

The Illinois General Assembly passed legislation to expand its Medicaid program for low-income adults who live in Illinois. Now there is a new eligibility group that includes young people up to the age of 26 who were formerly in foster care. Additionally, young people who left DCFS through adoption or guardianship can also apply. They may be eligible based on low-income, disability or if they have dependent children.

"This is huge. There are so many young people out there who still desperately need the medical card after the door closes the day they turn 19. Now they can get their meds, continue therapy and keep improving," said Elizabeth Richmond, chair of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council.



This is the homepage of the online portal where youth formerly in foster care can apply for health insurance. The Application for Benefits Eligibility (ABE) site is the first stop for medical, food and cash assistance.

The council has been working with DCFS and the legislature for several years to look out for the health interests of youth after their DCFS cases close.

Coverage for routine wellness and more

Affordable Care Act Expanded Medicaid has these set these eligibility criteria for participation:

- age 19 through 25
- lives in Illinois
- has a social security number or proof of application
- meets US citizenship or immigration requirements

Once an application is approved,

coverage starts on January 1. Medical coverage is for preventative care, more serious conditions and interventions for emergency and chronic conditions. It includes:

- physician office visits
- emergency services
- hospitalization
- maternity and newborn care
- mental health services
- substance abuse services
- prescription medications including psychotropics with prior approval
- laboratory services
- preventative and wellness services
- emergency dental services (full dental for ages 18-20)

Continued on page 2

From the DCFS Director

Richard H. Calica



The holidays are a wonderful time to reflect on all that we have to be grateful for and on what we can give to others. You, all of the families who open your hearts to children, demonstrate both of the best aspects of the season. You give tirelessly, and for that you have my gratitude.

When I was still seeing children in weekly therapy, as the holidays drew near I could almost plot the inevitable emotional spikes on a chart. It could be the worry over a visit that might not happen; the wish list gift not received; the feeling of being an outsider even in a loving home—it was sometimes too much for a wounded child to absorb. Yet, when you become the target rather than the comfort, you still hold your arms open wide. That is your gift to children.

In return for all you give, you might get a holiday greeting card from the older one who left your home, but still remembers your lessons. Perhaps you get encouragement from a parent who is making strides with your support. You might get a teacher's note that says all homework was turned in for the whole week. Those moments would seem mundane to most, but you and I know they were hard to come by and thus, invaluable.

As the DCFS director now for nearly two years, I can't come close to touching your life on the heart level the way a child can. What I can do is recognize your commitment to that child. I can try to honor that in a small way with the increase in the board rate that went into affect this year. I can shift resources so that caseworkers can serve you better. I can end ineffective contracts and move that money to programs that actually meet your needs.

There is still more to do for the children that I have under my responsibility and you have under your

roof. At the department, we are finding new ways to work smarter and to use limited resources wisely. While we keep children safe, we are also going to see to their well-being. Together we will make sure they are healthy, educated and pointed toward a future that is full of positive potential.

I say thank you to all of you caring for children. I hope you take time this season to reflect on the good works you do and that those good feelings carry you forward into the New Year.

Editor's Note:

Not long after offering these words, Director Calica announced that he would be resigning from DCFS effective November 30, due to a diagnosis of cancer.

The director ends a 40-year career in child welfare that is distinguished by determined advocacy for families, a lasting body of influential research and a history of dedicated, compassionate care to hundreds of individual children.

Affordable Care, con't. from page 1

Enrollment is open now at www.abe.illinois.gov

The state has established ABE, a website designed specifically for customers who may be eligible for insurance under the Medicaid program. It is separate from the "marketplace" for private insurance. The application takes about 30 minutes to complete, as confirmed by DCFS staff who took it for a test drive right after the October 1 launch.

An individual can first check for eligibility or start an application. Caregivers or guardians can start the application on behalf of an eligible young person. The individual can set up an account with a password and then be able to return later to finish or to check the status of the application later.

As the applicant completes the form, there will be prompts to keep the application on track. The agencies

keep the information secure and can confirm entries with existing records. Along with the general information, the applicant will answer questions to confirm they were in foster care and should know the name that would have been used with their case.

When the individual is applying for the medical card, there is a 30-45 day period to review the application. Coverage will start beginning January 1. Applications for Medicaid can also be submitted by calling the toll-free number 800-843-6154.

While the ABE website is streamlined and designed to be easy to use, the DCFS Health Services staff can help with questions. Call 217-557-2689.



Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council had full agendas for the fall meetings in addition to the joint meetings with the youth board and a joint meeting with the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council. In October, the council members received updates on two new and important programs.

Protecting youth from human trafficking

The department has implemented new procedures to ensure that youth do not become victims of human trafficking. Stacy Sloan discussed the training that caseworkers will receive to address young people who, usually while “on run” from a placement, become vulnerable to abuse or are lured into prostitution or other types of exploitation. Sloan explained that caregivers should also be on watch for changes in

behavior, unexplained absences, inappropriate activity on social media or unaccounted gifts or money. These can be clues that a youth is being taken advantage of or being groomed for exploitation, and should be reported to the caseworker.

Homes for youth leaving detention centers

Older youth continued as a theme with a presentation by Geneva Byrd on youth who are dually-involved in the juvenile detention system and the child welfare system. She and colleagues are rounding out procedures to transition youth from detention centers back to the community in family settings. Training and supports will be available to the caregivers helping these youth.

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council was founded in conjunction with 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 six times a year, and more as needed, in locations around the state.

The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be on January 17 in Joliet at 9 a.m. Call DCFS Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for details.

Youth and adult advisory groups join forces to share ideas and find viable solutions

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council put aside its typical agenda for an extended version with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board. The October meeting started in the afternoon so the council could take care of regular business. Then the members stayed into the evening for a dinner with the youth who traveled in from all parts of the state. The two councils then had a joint discussion that lasted until 10 p.m.

“It is important that both our councils get to know each other and get to understand the issues that we have in common,” said Cathy McCoy, chair of the foster care council.

The joint meeting with youth started with an ice breaker exercise to get the conversation flowing before breaking down into four focus groups. The evening’s discussion centered on a brainstorming session to prioritize issues that the SYAB will present to the DCFS director. The groups focused on four main areas: Permanency, Preparing for Adulthood, Well-being and



The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Statewide Youth Advisory Board found common ground at their joint meeting.

Safety. After they fleshed out the issues they developed recommendations.

Both groups will seek out ways to incorporate the perspective of youth into current policy and future initiatives. At the end of the meeting, there was long list of good ideas and a wealth of good feelings from the collaboration.

No such thing as a perfect holiday, but It's a Wonderful Life

As the holiday season approaches, the phrase “in the best interest of the child” takes on many layers of meaning. Children take center stage when it's time to make their favorite dish, when shopping for gifts and when making plans to keep them entertained on vacation days. It is just as important to think about what is best for their emotional well-being. That is something that can't come wrapped up in a bow. When young people have trauma in their past and their present, wise caregivers remember to adjust expectations and prepare to go with the flow.

Be sure to talk to the child and the child's caseworker or therapist about how to ease through the holidays. There maybe emotional triggers that are surprising or confusing. Longings and mixed

emotions about family they can't be with often churn up during times that “should be” fun.

Sometimes caregivers will have to shift plans or share time to bridge two households during the holidays. The time off school might be convenient for an overnight visit even if it means having another child in the house. An extended visit with mom might result in a meltdown back at the foster home.

After the meltdown, hot chocolate and a holiday movie can bring out a smile. Warm new pajamas can convince a little one to get camera-ready when it's time for pose for the annual family photo. An extra bedtime story might open the door to a talk about hurt feelings or fears that come up. With a serving of patience and extra helpings of



compassion and compromise, the holiday season can be one where lots of good memories can balance out the rough patches.

TIPS TO MAKE THE HOLIDAYS SPECIAL

Talk about holiday traditions from the child's memory and find ways to incorporate them into your plans.

Make a plan for a visit or phone call with the child's parents during the holiday break.

Help children create and mail holiday cards or letters for their parents or siblings who are not together.

Understand and support the child's need for loyalty to his family.

Take a picture of the foster family, including the caregivers and any birth children to display with holiday decorations.

At a visit, snap a photo of the child and her parent. Display it at your home and frame a print as a gift.

Host an overnight sibling visit while school is out.

Get digital delivery

Many caregivers have decided to skip the paper and request electronic versions of the newsletter, Illinois Families Now and Forever®.

When you move to the online version, you still receive all the same valuable information with more benefits. It comes faster, is easier to file, saves money and protects the environment.

To make the switch, send an email to vanessa.james@illinois.gov (there is a dot before “james”) Be sure to include your name and mailing address. We will stop the hard copies and send you an e-mail each time a new issue is ready to read online.

Share holiday traditions and make lasting memories for children

One way to offset the affects of trauma is to set routines. Children respond more predictably when they know what to expect. It turns out that routines and traditions can also be fun and foster great memories. The simple things can mean the most. Here are a few examples of holiday traditions that foster and adoptive parents have set in their homes...

“Each year we love watching old Christmas movies, like “Holiday Vacation” with Chevy Chase. And we always bake cookies.”

– *Cathy McCoy*

Northern Region adoptive parent



We give each child new pajamas that they can open on Christmas Eve That way I know everyone will look decent for the family pictures on Christmas morning!

– *Vanessa James*

Cook County adoptive parent



On Thanksgiving we get around the table and we say what we are thankful for. Then we pray and thank God

for allowing us to be together for another year.

– *Gladys Boyd*

Cook County foster parent



Every child puts an ornament on the tree that’s personal to them. Maybe it’s a picture that we put

into a new ornament or a new personalized ornament...even a hand-made one works.

– *Judi Enix*

Northern Region foster parent



For Thanksgiving we cook turkey and ham. On the day after we cook *flautas*. We fry the tortillas and put meat in it. On Christmas we cook *lechon* (pork) then make flautas with what is left. We take down the tree on January 6 and celebrate Three Kings Day. We celebrate with extended family. It’s a really big family.

– *Edith Cruz of Cook County (told by daughter Angela)*

Bring the spirit of Kwanzaa into the holiday season

Kwanzaa is an African-American and Pan-African holiday that celebrates family, community and culture. The Kwanzaa celebration is a way to explore aspects of the African culture and build bonds within the family and the larger community. It is celebrated from December 26 through January 1 by an estimated 26 million people around the world. The tradition centers around the Kwanzaa symbols and the seven *Nguzo Saba* (principles) of Kwanzaa, which each get a day of devoted attention.

To celebrate Kwanzaa, the family chooses a central place in the home for the Kwanzaa Set, or the symbols of Kwanzaa. The set includes a table covering of African cloth, the *mkeka* (mat) and the *kinara* (candleholder).

The *kinara* holds seven candles to represent the seven days of Kwanzaa and the seven Kwanzaa principles:

- *Umoja (unity)*
- *Kujichagulia (self-determination)*
- *Ujamaa (cooperative economics)*
- *Kuumba (creativity)*
- *Ujima (collective work and responsibility)*
- *Nia (purpose)*
- *Imani (faith)*

Each night of Kwanzaa during the evening meal, the family members light one of the seven candles to commemorate the principle of the day. Everyone explains what the principle of that day means to them and how they practiced it during the day. Finally, everyone makes



a commitment to practice and promote the particular principle throughout the year. Families can head into the New Year, connected, focused and inspired.

For more information on how to celebrate the Kwanzaa holiday, visit www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org.

Holidays are perfect time to schedule visits with siblings

The holidays are a good time to plan extended visits with siblings who are in different foster care homes. Visits can often soften the traumatic impact of separation and contribute to siblings' long-term mental health. DCFS recognizes the power of sibling connections and will provide foster caregivers assistance and payment as they do their part to facilitate visits.

Visitation requirements

DCFS rules require that sibling visits among youth in DCFS care occur at least two times a month for a minimum of two hours each for all siblings placed apart. Exceptions to twice-monthly visits include:

- A court order requiring less frequent or no visitation
- Requests by the child for less frequent or no visitation (requires regular counseling)
- Risk of physical, emotional or mental harm from the visit (requires documentation)

If siblings are in residential care or are placed more than 150 miles apart, visits may be less frequent. However, visitation may not be reduced based on the unavailability of a visit supervisor or as a form of discipline.

These requirements only apply to youth in DCFS care. After adoption, visitation is still an important factor for the adoptive family to consider, but it is not mandated or reimbursed by DCFS. The adoptive parents have to determine what will work best for the children and families involved.

Foster caregivers who help children have visits with their siblings in foster care can be reimbursed for supervising the visits and providing transportation. A caregiver who hosts an overnight or weekend visit in their home can be reimbursed \$100 for supervising the visit. Supervising shorter visits is reimbursed at \$25 an hour for up to four hours. Reimbursement for supervising visits is capped at a maximum of \$100 per month. Driving a child to or from a visit is also eligible for reimbursement at the rate of \$0.565 per mile (as of January 2013). The maximum reimbursement for travel each month is capped at \$50.

The child's caseworker can help foster caregivers complete the form (CFS 315) for reimbursement.

New legislation helps siblings stay connected



After an adoption or when one child is in DCFS care and the sibling isn't, the foster care visitation rules don't apply. The result can be that brothers and sisters grow up apart, longing for relationships or perhaps not even knowing that a sibling exists "out there."

A group of young people working with the DCFS Statewide Youth Advisory Board decided to change that. Their efforts picked up momentum over many years of discussion with DCFS staff, legal professionals, representatives from the adult advisory councils for adoption and foster care and elected officials. Eventually, Public Act 97-1076 was signed last year. DCFS has since been developing new rules and procedures.

The new law is still underpinned by the notion that siblings will be placed together when in the best interest of the child. When that can't happen, the department now has to consider placements that are "likely to develop, preserve, nurture and support sibling relationships, where it is in the best interest of the child."

There are too many circumstances to mandate one specific set of visitation rules for all of the situations that could occur for children outside of DCFS foster care. However, the department has implemented new procedures to foster the sibling connections that can help children thrive. For example, as a child's case moves toward adoption or guardianship and when adoptive parents agree to consider visitation and/or contact, the caseworker or adoption worker can help create a Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreement. This plan could plot out visitation between two adoptive families or with the child's adult siblings. The goal is not to dictate, but to cooperatively and proactively protect the connections that are vital to a child's emotional development.



Adoption Month in Illinois spotlights special families

The Saturday before Thanksgiving has firmly become cemented as a special holiday for adoptive families. Since its inception as the “official” National Adoption Day, hundreds of judges, attorneys, adoption agencies, adoption professionals and child advocates stand together on behalf of forever families for waiting children. These unique weekend proceedings add a festive touch to the proceedings and an air of excitement as courts across the country finalize thousands of adoptions.

Here, families can extend this special time as Governor Pat Quinn ushered in Adoption Month In Illinois. The month always includes a full slate of events and other outreach to call attention to adoption as an important permanency outcome. The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council combined resources with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. Council members carved out time to acknowledge Dave Matthews for his long career spent serving adoptive families, through the therapeutic services provided by Matthews and Associates in Herrin.

After the business of the joint meeting concluded, members volunteered to jump into the fun at the Festival of Trees holiday event in Bloomington. The councils sponsored a tree decorated in a family theme, they helped children play holiday games and led the story time corner. Hundreds of families attended the annual event, which also serves as a fundraiser for The Baby Fold child welfare organization.



WHEREAS, thanks to thousands of adoptive parents across the state, 16,265 children have found permanent loving homes over the last decade, including 1,468 children in the last year alone; and,

WHEREAS, all children need and deserve the love, nurturing, and sense of security that can only come from being a part of a loving, permanent family; and,

WHEREAS, adoption provides a unique joy and a special opportunity for individuals, whether or not they are already parents, married, in a civil union, single or divorced, to open their hearts and their homes for the rest of their lives to children; and,

WHEREAS, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and its nonprofit partners strive to reunify children with their birth families; but when that simply is not possible, they are equally committed to ensuring every child has the safe, loving family they deserve and need to reach their fullest potential; and,

WHEREAS, Illinois has made great strides in recent years in strengthening and improving the child welfare system: reducing the number of children in temporary substitute care from 52,000 to 15,000; establishing a Bill of Rights for both birth parents and adoptive parents; and strengthening licensing requirements for adoption agencies to prevent the exploitation of birth parents, adoptive parents and children; and,

WHEREAS, all of the progress in recent years would not have been possible without champions like State Representative Sara Feigenholtz, an adoptee herself, and State Representative Naomi Jakobsson, an adoptive parent and former foster parent, as well as child advocates including: Child Care Association of Illinois; Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association; Illinois Adoption Advisory Council; Illinois Statewide Youth Advisory Board; Chicago Bar Association; Loyola ChildLaw Clinic of Loyola University; and many child welfare agencies, adoptive parent groups and individuals across the state; and,

WHEREAS, together we are committed to improving the child welfare system even further, especially to reducing the length of time children remain in temporary foster care, where Illinois ranks 46th in the nation according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and,

WHEREAS, currently there are 1,973 children awaiting adoption across the state, of all ages, backgrounds and needs; and,

THEREFORE, I, Pat Quinn, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim November 2013 as **ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH** in Illinois, and do hereby encourage all Illinoisans to express their gratitude to the thousands of families across the state that have opened their homes and their hearts to children, and encourage others to consider joining them in making a life-changing difference to children.

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



Deese White

SECRETARY OF STATE

Done at the Capitol in the City of Springfield,
this TWENTY-FOURTH day of OCTOBER, in
the Year of Our Lord, two thousand and
THIRTEEN, and of the State of Illinois,
one hundred and NINETY-FIFTH.

Pat Quinn

GOVERNOR

Home is home – by foster care, adoption or even foreign exchange

Sharyn is a single parent, employed full-time, and has opened her home to 30 children of all ages in the past 15 years. If that weren't enough plates to keep spinning, she has also had three foreign exchange students and four other young women live with her voluntarily. The most recent headcount includes her three children by adoption (ranging in ages from 13 to 19 years old), two high school juniors from China and Thailand here to study for a year, and a child who is with the family through foster care.

"I'm in this world to share. Someone has to help foster children, and if it's not me, then who will it be?" she offered as a simple explanation.

Sharyn describes herself as someone who is not too materialistic and she believes that outlook has helped her as a foster parent. Her own happy childhood experiences created a strong desire in her to share some of what she has come to cherish. One important lesson centers on education. That is to her a key means to better control one's life and to eventually earn a

good income with the benefits that it affords. She also knows that success in school is more likely when children can find success in relationships. She often catches herself instructing her children on social cues and on how they interact with others.

During 15 years as a foster parent, Sharyn has learned a great deal about others and about herself by working through an array of behaviors and attitudes. She has set for herself some guiding principles on how to start a relationship with a new child on a positive note and how to keep things pointed in the right direction. For example, she believes it is important to make a good initial impression on the child coming to her for a new placement. So she refuses to allow a child to be dropped off at her house. Instead, she makes a point to go to the child to ensure a proper greeting that honors the move. She says it helps establish a preliminary knowledge of how each one operates. She has come to realize that it takes about six weeks for a child to settle into a rhythm in her home, so she remains patient in the beginning.

Having so many children of different cultures and backgrounds has taught Sharyn and the children how to adapt to the unique qualities each child brings with them. Once a youth settles in, Sharyn understands the real work begins. Fortunately she has come to learn the fine art of remembering not to respond immediately to an



Hall makes sure that every child feels welcome and appreciated.

angry outburst from a child. She reminds herself to be flexible and to cope with the different turns and bumps that are part of the journey. She has also learned more about her own limitations and realizes that she cannot always "fix" every relationship.

Practically speaking she does keep several tools close by. For instance, she makes a point to find local resources and always strives to keep a good working relationship with service providers. She also relies on her extended family. They have accepted each child and welcomed them. It definitely helps to have a cheering section as she continues to weave a feeling of family for the children in her home.

*Be flexible...
the different turns
and bumps are
part of the journey.*

Northern Region advisory council finds solutions to help families across DCFS

Raise a voice and see change happen

Caregivers who are “in the trenches” have several means for back up in addition to their daily interactions with caseworkers. There are support groups, where networking with fellow peers in foster care can provide encouragement and a healthy exchange of information. DCFS also sponsors the Northern Region Foster Care Advisory Council. The regional council addresses DCFS policy and gives caregivers a platform to voice concerns that are systemic and could affect homes throughout the region. From there an issue could elevate to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council.

Recently, the Northern Region Advisory Council raised an issue locally that brought about changes that will serve families throughout the state system. During a council meeting, a number of caregivers said they were asked to commit to an adoption before receiving enough information about the child. The Advisory Council took that concern and made a recommendation to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. The result was a policy change that created the Adoption Disclosure form (CFS 470-H) that must be given to the prospective adoptive parent prior to their signing off on any commitment forms.

A second concern raised by foster parents involved those who felt they were not given relevant information about the child prior to an actual placement. As a result, a new form called Sharing

Information with the Caregiver (CFS 600-4) will now have to be filled out and made part of the child’s file. Both foster parents and caseworkers need to sign off on that form.

The new forms are quite informative and will facilitate greater communication between caregivers and placement staff throughout the life of the case. This should lead to improved permanency outcomes and avoid placement disruptions. Thanks to the perseverance of the Northern Region Council, foster families and the supporting staff can smoothly transition a child to adoption or to a new foster home placement with more information on the individual child’s situation and future needs.

The Northern Region Foster Care Advisory Council was satisfied that twice the process worked and many families within and beyond Northern Region will benefit. Caregivers are invited to come to the next monthly meeting to say informed and involved.

The council meets on the second Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. in the DCFS Aurora Regional Office, 8 East Galena Blvd.

Discussion centers on a common theme, frequently with outside speakers. There is also time for solving common problems. Training credit hours may also be offered.

Due to the meeting structure, children cannot attend.

Youth have a say on their advisory board

Youth aged 14 to 21 who are currently or formerly in foster care are invited to attend the monthly Youth Advisory Board meetings. The youth help make changes within the department and the larger community that will improve outcomes for other youth in care. They learn to work with child welfare staff and elected officials to review, edit and create policies and best practices from the perspective of children and youth.

The local youth advisory board plants the seeds for leadership development, communication skills building and problem solving. The young people receive training in Robert’s Rules of Order and they can run for several elected positions. Officers of the local board can also represent the region on the Statewide Youth Advisory Board.

The Northern Region Advisory board meets each month on 3rd Tuesday from 5:45 to 8 p.m. at the DCFS regional office in Aurora, located at 8 East Galena.

Caregivers to older youth should encourage them to be part of a team that can make a difference. Contact Briana Pitassi at 773-696-1014 for more details.

Northern Region Training

The DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the region. To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center at www.DCFstraining.org. Click on any of the links under Training Schedule to access course descriptions, in-service training and Educational Advocacy Training or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during business hours.

The Virtual Training Center (VTC) is your tool to:

- Get training news and information;
- Check available trainings;
- View/print your training transcript;
- Register and take on-line courses;
- Download course materials to use in class or to access after training; and
- Get alerts for changes in course schedules.

DIGITAL TRAINING MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE

As we move into the digital age and aim to use fewer printed resources, DCFS Training has made many PRIDE materials easily available on the home page of the Virtual Training Center at www.dcfstraining.org.

Anyone may print the materials or download them onto almost any electronic device and bring their device to training class. Trainees who have no digital access should speak with their trainers when they arrive in class, so we can accommodate everyone.

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 with a licensing agency. The toll-free number is 800-572-2390. AICI also maintains information about the children who are featured in the newsletter.

...You have questions about your board check?

Call the DCFS Central Payment Unit at 800-525-0499 if your check comes from DCFS. If your check comes from a private agency, contact the agency.

...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. If you feel the child is in danger, call 911 first.

...Your adoption or guardianship is final but you have questions about the subsidy?

Call the subsidy worker assigned to the case or the Adoption Support Line at 888-96-ADOPT so you can be connected to the right individual for help.

...You are having family problems with your adopted child?

Contact the Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program that serves your area. Call the Adoption Support Line at 888-96-ADOPT.

...You have questions about your child's medical card?

Call 800-228-6533.

...You need to find a phone number for a caseworker?

Call the main switchboard in Chicago at 312-814-6800 or the State of Illinois Operator at 312-793-3500.

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

If you've already tried to resolve the issue with the caseworker and his or her supervisor and are not sure where to turn, call the Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

...You are having a hard time getting services for your child at school?

Most private agencies have an education liaison, and each DCFS region has education advisors who can help. Call your agency or nearest DCFS office to be connected to the right educational resource for your area.

...You have questions about programs for youth approaching adulthood?

Contact the transition coordinator that serves your area, by calling the nearest DCFS regional office. The transition coordinator can advise on programs such as life skills training, preparation for higher education and employment assistance. Details on these programs can also be found at the Get Goal'd website www.youthincare.illinois.gov.

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

Each region has reporters to help gather local news. The names and contact information are listed on the back page of each edition. You can contact the Editor, Vanessa James, at 312-814-6800 or send an e-mail message to vanessa.james@illinois.gov.

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



Dallas (C8092)

Dallas [8092] “What’s going on?” “What are you doing?” “How does that work?” These are the types of questions that Dallas, age 12, asks on regular basis as he explores his surroundings and seeks to learn new things. This young man enjoys conversing with peers and adults, and is always eager to talk about his many interests. He also takes stock of the thoughts and feelings of others, and does his best to make others happy. When he is not engaged in conversation, he enjoys reading fantasy books, playing sports, and collecting Pokémon and Bakugan cards.



Reginald (C7832)

Dallas’ worker says he is an expressive child who is able to clearly communicate his wants, needs, and emotions. To be the right parents for Dallas you can provide a structured home environment. You can establish clear boundaries and enforce the rules of your home in a fair, consistent manner. You can also encourage Dallas as he works to establish relationships that are based on mutual respect. Dallas would like to connect with a family that includes a mom, a dad, and, possibly, older siblings.



Temirlan (Alex)
(C8072)

Reggie [7832] Reggie, 9, is a joyous, enthusiastic young man who loves spending time with people. He has an outgoing, “bigger than life” personality and is constantly playing, learning, laughing, and trying to engage others. Although he learns at a

slower rate than his peers, he is able to grasp concepts quickly. Reggie asks lots of questions and responds very well to encouragement. When he is done with his schoolwork, he enjoys playing with toy cars, spending time with both children and adults, and snacking on healthy foods.

Reggie’s former foster parent says “his laugh is one of the happiest sounds ever invented, and you will get to hear it every day when you welcome him into your family.” He adds that Reggie is one of the happiest, most loving children he knows.

Potential parents for Reggie should be able to encourage Reggie’s love of learning by reading to him, helping him grasp concepts, and helping him apply those concepts to everyday problems. You can also monitor Reggie’s behavior, and work with various professionals in order to understand and meet his emotional and medical needs. Reggie loves to be around people, and would benefit from regular, ongoing contact with the most important people in his life. The ideal family would be able to devote a large share of their attention and energy to Reggie’s care, and would provide supervision when Reggie is playing with other children or animals.

Termilan (Alex) [8072] While some children prefer the comfort of the family

couch, Alex, 13, never has to be coaxed into going outside. This young man enjoys camping and wilderness survival, and is eager to join a club that will help him explore the great outdoors. He also enjoys playing soccer, riding his bicycle, and mastering the fine points of his remote control car. When Alex does come inside, he tends to read fantasy novels, play video games, and watch mystery shows on TV. He also enjoys cheering for Chicago sports teams, and is a huge fan of the Chicago Bears.

Alex’s foster parents say he is a motivated, caring young man with a great sense of humor. Alex’s teachers say he is an intelligent, engaged student who does well in school. Alex’s worker says he is a curious young man who likes talking to people and learning everything he can about his surroundings.

Alex’s forever family will be able to create a loving home environment and encourage him to pursue his academic, athletic, and social interests. You can also work with professionals to make sure his emotional needs are met. Alex would like to join a two-parent family that has pets (especially dogs), is willing to spend time with him, and is eager to go on outdoor excursions. Other children in the home should be older than Alex.



Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI Web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org if you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted.



Illinois Families Now and Forever®

Pat Quinn, Governor
Richard H. Calica, DCFS Director
Published by: DCFS Office of
Workforce Development, Parent
and Caregiver Support

Editor: Vanessa James
Phone: 312-814-1307
Fax: 312-814-4131
E-mail: vanessa.james@illinois.gov

Sponsor: Marilyn Arnold, DCFS
Northern Regional Administrator

Regional Reporter

Norm Suire
800 W. Roosevelt Road Bld D
Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137
Phone: 630-790-6824
Fax: 630-790-7831
Norman.Suire@illinois.gov

Graphics: Jenny Florent
Produced by: DCFS Print Shop

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

Address Changes: Families must notify their licensing 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, and adoptive and guardianship families receiving subsidies. An electronic version is sent to all DCFS and private agency staff.

Material may not be reprinted in whole, in part or in any form whatsoever without permission from the Editor or DCFS. Opinions expressed by experts writing articles are no substitute for professional answers or opinions about a family's or child's specific situation. Consult a competent professional for answers to your specific questions.

Department of Children and Family Services©

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

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

Inside this issue:

- Page 1** Affordable Care Act opens new options for youth leaving DCFS care
- Page 2** Message from the DCFS Director
- Page 3** Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin
- Pages 4-5** Tips for managing emotions during the holiday season
- Page 6** Plan a sibling visit during the holiday break
- Page 7** Adoption news
- Page 8-10** *Northern News: Regional News*
- Page 11** Family for Me profiles of waiting children

Current and back issues of *Illinois Families Now and Forever®*
are available online in English and Spanish at www.DCFS.illinois.gov