

## Taylor carries own parenting lessons to foster care

When her daughter left for college, Kim Taylor knew she had not only extra room in her home but also in her heart to foster children. Kim has three children by birth, Brooke, 22; Gaylon 16, and 11-year-old Elijah. She had cared for children in her home before, as a foster parent and a home day care provider. Then in 2007 she decided that she would return to fostering children. As a stay-at-home mother, she knew she could give the individual attention that children need when coming into care. Since then, she has opened her home to six children, and provided respite care for other foster children.

Kim did not have adoption in mind when she decided to become a foster parent. Just before Christmas in 2008, two young children came to her home. Kimberlyn then four and De'Lance at two, were placed in her home. She recalled they were quiet, and wouldn't talk for the first few days. Kimberlyn would chew on her hair and suck her thumb for comfort when distressed. Both children would throw tantrums. It took several months, but with high levels of care, consistency and structure, the children's behaviors decreased.

Meanwhile, their parents' case proceeded and they became free for adoption. Kim found

herself seeking a sign for whether she should be the one to adopt. After much discussion with her children, her mother and other relatives, she made the decision to adopt the children.

Having been a young parent herself at one time, Kim realizes the challenges birth parents face when their child comes into care. She finds that becoming involved in Child and Family Team meetings are very helpful, noting that "everyone works as a team." Caseworker Christina Schwab noted that Kim encourages the parent by inviting her to the child's school functions, even providing transportation so she could be there.

When each child has come into her home, Kim found herself wondering about the possible challenges she may have in fostering him or her. How is he going to adjust? Will she be a match for this child? Can she as a parent meet this child's needs? Kim looks to her faith for additional guidance, believing "all things work together for the good."

For her it boils down to "Treat the child like your biological children." She added that caregivers should remember "children don't know or understand what is going on."



*Kim Taylor turned to foster care as her own nest emptied. Now her family has grown to five children.*

## Message from the Southern Region Administrators

During Foster Parent Appreciation Month in Illinois we take time to honor those who have chosen to serve this state and specifically the Southern Region in a very special way. You look beyond the trauma our children have experienced and support natural families. You attend court and ACRs and advocate at school for a child who has no voice other than yours. For all you do we are extremely grateful and appreciative to you.

Because you open your doors at midnight and provide food, clothing and warm beds, the children of Illinois rise above their traumatic experiences and all circumstances that could have barred them from enjoying their childhood and teenage years. Thank you for helping the children from Southern Region to finish school, start and complete college, join the military, and have and raise their own children. They can break the abuse and neglect cycle they were raised in, and go on to become valuable citizens of Illinois.

The management and staff of the Southern Region DCFS show appreciation to you and ask that you please carry on with the grand work you do.

*Valda Haywood and Nora Harms-Pavelski, Acting Regional Administrators*



## *Local Area Networks can “wrap” services around children to help at home, school and community*

Wrap-around planning can help provide children with resources that may not readily be available through typical child welfare channels. Wrap-around plans are offered through the Local Area Network (LAN). There are 62 LANS in Illinois (11 cover Southern Region counties) and each responds to specific needs of children in the local community. LANs are comprised of the traditional human service systems, families, community members, service professionals and educators working together to meet the needs of the at-risk children and their families.

One of the key functions of the LAN is to screen requests for WRAP plans and to provide applicable resources.

- WRAP uses a team approach to identify needs, identify resources and provide support to the child and their family.
- WRAP teams consist of the child, their family members, and the people that know the child best.
- Planning is based on family strengths.
- All decisions are made with family’s participation and approval.
- WRAP focuses on the coordination of services between multiple service providers and community partners

A wraparound plan starts with an application stating the need and how it will help the child succeed in at school, at home or in the broader community setting. When a wrap plan is approved it will be managed by a facilitator and will use the Child and Family Team model to ensure that the plan is relevant and effective based on the services and providers that are involved. Youth still in DCFS care and those who have been adopted or moved to guardianship can request WRAP planning. To get connected to the LAN in your community, contact the DCFS regional office or DCFS LAN Liaison Dwayne Philips at 618-257-7500 office or [dwayne.phillips@illinois.gov](mailto:dwayne.phillips@illinois.gov).

### Our Kids

Sponsor  
DCFS Southern Region Administration

Regional Reporter  
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Anyone can call the regional reporter with story suggestions about:

- news and schedules from foster parent associations
- 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.



## Pre-school programs give 3 - 5 year olds a head start on education

A solid education foundation is one of the most important ways to help children succeed. For youth involved in child welfare, pre-school is especially important to counter the effects of trauma that brings children into care. DCFS requires that all youth in foster care who are between the ages of three and five be enrolled in a quality early learning program such as Head Start, Preschool for All (pre-K), accredited day care, licensed day care with early education, or home day care with early education.

DCFS has taken several steps to assist caregivers in making sure that young children get an early

start on their education and social development. DCFS has a working partnership agreement with the Head Start program. Children age 3 to 5 years old in foster care are categorically eligible for services through Head Start and Early Head Start. When enrollment space is available, the Office of Head Start (OHS) encourages Head Start/Early Head Start agencies to prioritize children who are in DCFS care.

Southern Region has set a goal to enroll all children who will be three years old by September 1, 2011. Southern Region foster parents and relative caregivers should prepare

for head start enrollment now by consulting with your child's case-worker and making sure these items are in place for a smooth transition:

- Placement form (906)
- Medical card to verify up to date medical records
- Certified copy of the child's birth certificate
- A copy of the most recent "Early Intervention Assessment"

Contact Dock Conner, the DCFS Southern Region School Readiness Specialist, at 618-583-2096 for more information.

## Families can find support in numbers with caregiver groups

One of the responsibilities in the Foster Parent Law is to "Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations." DCFS, private agencies and community organizations sponsor many support groups and associations to assist foster and adoptive parents. The following list can help identify a group that may suit your family.

This list is a beginning and will be updated annually. Please contact the Editor at [vanessa.james@illinois.gov](mailto:vanessa.james@illinois.gov) with any corrections or information on other groups that should be listed next year.

### All-Dopt

Contact: Ginny Burkhart at 618-622-3522  
Meets quarterly. Call for schedule.  
Includes all types of adoptions.  
Serves Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair counties.

### Community Kids

Contact: Margie Fink at 618-534-4969  
[margie\\_fink@hotmail.com](mailto:margie_fink@hotmail.com)

Meets second Friday at 6 p.m.

Christ Community Church

473 W. Harrison Rd., Murphysboro

Potluck dinner served and child care is available with RSVP.

### DCFS Southern Region Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Gloria Pounds at 618-524-2428

Meetings held quarterly in various DCFS offices and connected via teleconference. Call for a schedule.

Open to all DCFS-supervised foster and adoptive families.

### Southern Region Adoption and Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program Support Group

Contact: Julie Fritzler at 618-988-1330, x. 103

Open to all adoptive parents and immediate family members.

Call for schedule details.



## Southern Region Caregiver Training

DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the Southern 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](http://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.

### East St. Louis Area

#### May

Module 12 Belleville

Adoption Certification Belleville  
(Worker referral required)

#### June

Educational Advocacy Belleville

### Marion Area

#### May

Module 6 Mt. Vernon

Adoption Certification Marion  
(Worker referral required)

Educational Advocacy Marion

### 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; 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 teen brain development and the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens. Participants will learn specific strategies that caregivers can use as fostering teenagers in the day-to-day life of the foster family.