



# Illinois Families Now and Forever<sup>®</sup>

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

## DCFS new 2014 budget includes board rate increase

*August checks for licensed, traditional foster care to reflect 4 percent increase*

**From the  
DCFS  
Director**



With Governor Quinn's full support, one of the department's top budget priorities this year was a long-overdue increase in the reimbursement we provide for children

in licensed foster homes across Illinois to help foster families meet basic needs for housing, food and other necessities. Although the budget Governor Quinn and I presented to the General Assembly was cut by \$20 million, I am pleased to announce that we have found a way forward to offer a modest increase in the reimbursement for foster children in licensed, non-specialized foster care homes across the state.

A four percent increase in the reimbursement for children in licensed, non-specialized foster care homes will take effect on July 1st and be reflected in the payments licensed, non-specialized foster families will receive in August. Relative foster parents who are currently unlicensed will become eligible for the reimbursement increase upon completion of their licensure. A more detailed explanation of the foster parent payment increase is available on the DCFS website at [www.DCFS.illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.illinois.gov). If you have any

additional questions, please contact the Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798 or [AOCF@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:AOCF@idcfs.state.il.us).

We all know that even at these levels, the funds that Illinois taxpayers provide to ensure a temporary safe haven for abused and neglected children does not cover the true costs to foster families. I want to thank you once again for your heroic efforts to promote the Common Good by ensuring a safe and loving home for children, and for the tremendous sacrifices you make every day on behalf of the people of Illinois.

On behalf of all of us at the department and our nonprofit partners, I hope you and your families have a safe and happy summer.

Licensed, Non-Specialized Foster Care Reimbursement Rate effective July 1st, 2013				
Child's Age	Total	Board	Clothing	Allowance
0 - 11 mo.	\$401	\$352	\$37	\$12
1 - 4 yrs.	\$409	\$354	\$42	\$13
5 - 8 yrs.	\$427	\$357	\$56	\$14
9 - 11 yrs.	\$453	\$364	\$65	\$24
12 yrs. +	\$491	\$374	\$74	\$43

## *New training teaches adults to help older youth protect their sexual health*

Caregivers, staff and parents can register for a new training focusing on the sexual health of children and adolescents.

Too often this important topic is avoided because it can be difficult to find the right words or provide accurate information. In this new training the

adults will learn factors that can affect a child's sexual health. They will learn how to talk openly with children about what is at stake and how to put children on a path toward long-term well being.

The training was made possible through a federal grant awarded to DCFS.

The course will be delivered in two three-hour sessions, at locations across the state. To register, log in to the Virtual Training Center (VTC) at [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org) or call the DCFS Registration Line at 877-800-3393 during business hours.

# Statewide Foster Care Council honors top Implementation Plans

As the calendar closed on May being designated as Foster Parent Appreciation month, there was still one more celebration in store. On May 17, the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council bestowed awards to three outstanding foster care programs. Each year council members receive and score each Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan that every foster care agency and DCFS regional program must submit. The members follow a tool developed to discern how the foster care programs measure up against the rights and responsibilities outlined in the Law. All 62 plans made the cut as acceptable.

For an exceptional plan, council members can go beyond the score to nominate it for special recognition in one of three categories:

- **Dignity and Respect**
- **Organization/  
User Friendliness**
- **Foster Parent Involvement**

This year the council selected three plans that each highlighted a commitment to treating foster caregivers with Dignity and Respect to a degree that went beyond the expected. Director Calica was on hand to congratulate Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, Kemmerer Village and Hephzibah Children's Association.

Council Chair Cathy McCoy commended the agencies on their commitment to caregivers. They are at the core of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. Each fall caregivers should be involved in drafting the new plan that will be due November 30. Every licensed caregiver should receive a copy of or be able to view their agency/DCFS region's Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.

## HEPHZIBAH CHILDREN'S ASSOCIATION

Hephzibah staff is trained to communicate respectfully and positively with foster parents and to be flexible and responsive to their needs. The agency also hosts events that allow families to be taken care of by agency staff that care for children each and every day.



Council Chair Cathy McCoy (far L) and DCFS Director Richard H. Calica joined in congratulating Hephzibah represented by Shaun Lane (C, back); caregiver Norma Husick (Center, L); caregiver Juanita Broscheit (Center, R); and Julie Dvorsky (R, front).

## LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF ILLINOIS

The plan outlined how respect is communicated in a variety of ways, including prompt return of messages, inclusion of foster parents in meetings and consideration of the foster parents' schedule when arranging meetings, training events and visits.



Council Chair Cathy McCoy (far R, front) and DCFS Director Richard H. Calica (R, back) celebrated with caregiver Ronald Guhl (Center, B); caregiver Ethel Chapman, (Center, R); LSSI staff including John Schnier, Ruth Jajko, and Laura Hart with John Patterson of DCFS.

## KEMMERER VILLAGE

At Kemmerer Village, the wide breadth of long-term foster parents can be tapped as mentors and respite resources. Kemmerer staff also believes it is essential that foster parents are included as part of the team in every way possible.



Council Chair Cathy McCoy (far L) and DCFS Director Richard H. Calica (far R) congratulated Kemmerer Village's foster care program, represented by caregivers Chris and George Brizendine and Kemmerer staff Renee Heath and Tavia Jones.



## Illinois Adoption Advisory Council update

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council met June 7 in Bloomingdale.

### New courses for caregivers

The first order of business was an update on the PRIDE training program, with special emphasis on two new in-service courses recently added to the roster. The Sexual Health course brings caseworkers and foster parents together to learn how to talk with youth about strategies to prevent and delay teen pregnancy, prevent sexually transmitted infections, and how to identify the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships. This course consists of two three-hour classes spaced one week apart. The second new course is the Effective Black Parenting course. This course consists of 15 three-hour classes, and it immerses participants in helpful information and strategies about all aspects of parenting. It also contains instruction for helping parents to

parent Black children in culturally appropriate ways.

Another enhancement coming to PRIDE and the Foster Parent Support Specialist (FPSS) program is that some specially-selected PRIDE trainers will soon be trained then deployed as Adjunct First Responders (AFR). They will continue serving as trainers, but will also be able to respond to foster parents in need when there is no FPSS in the area where the response is needed. This is an important step toward achieving convergence of these two programs.

### New adoption workers

Karen Taylor gave an update on her work to train the new staff who have recently taken adoption positions. Work is now being done to develop/update the adoption core training component, which is the clinical piece. She briefly discussed the latest work on

adoption subsidies and she agreed to bring forms for the council to review at their September meeting.

### Adoptions for children with developmental disabilities

Don Vasich, an adoption supervisor, discussed the council's concerns about the need to enhance the process for adopted children with developmental disabilities to smoothly transition from DCFS to receiving adult services. The council approved a formal recommendation that DCFS work directly with the Department of Human Services to do problem solving and take corrective action.

**The next meeting of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council will be on September 9 in Joliet at 10 a.m. Call DCFS Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for details**



## DCFS Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council update



The statewide Foster Care Advisory Council elected new leadership at the May meeting. Cathy McCoy (right) a caregiver from Northern Region, will lead as chair for a second year and Lee Coffman (left) a caregiver from Central Region, will be vice-chair.

The council bid farewell to several members whose terms came to an end. Carlos Argueta (left) and Steve Steinhardt (right) previously served as experts in child welfare.



*The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be September 20 in Effingham. Call the Office of Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for details.*

### Education Advisors are ready to help

Education Advisors help caregivers sort out school related issues, including special education, student evaluations, attendance or behavior concerns. They can attend meetings with caregivers or parents to advocate.

The education advisors are able to help all DCFS supervised homes. Call the nearest regional office to get connected or the Office of Family and Child Development at 312-814-5959. Many of the partner private agencies' foster care programs also have education liaisons for their families.

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## Save a life: constantly supervise children near water

Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death for children ages one to four. Most drownings result from inadequate supervision when a caregiver becomes distracted by a phone, doorbell or other children. Young children drown quickly and silently in as little as one inch of water. For every child who drowns, five more need emergency medical care for injuries that can result in brain damage. The good news is that drowning tragedies can be prevented by constantly supervising children at all times when they are near water.

### Swimming pool and baby pool safety

- An adult who can swim should supervise children while they are in the pool. He or she should not read, talk on the phone, mow the lawn, leave or turn her back on the pool area, or do any other distracting activity while watching the children. Remind babysitters and other caretakers not to leave children unattended in or near water.
- Don't consider children to be 'drown-proof' because they've had swimming lessons
- Children should wear or use personal flotation devices, but they **do not** replace adult supervision. They could deflate or slip from underneath a child, leaving him in a dangerous situation.
- Keep ladders, patio furniture and toys away from above-ground pools. Toddlers are excellent climbers!
- Fence in your pool completely and install a self-closing, self-latching gate. Pool safety covers and alarms provide added protection.
- Learn CPR and keep rescue equipment, a telephone and emergency numbers near all pools.
- Don't be lulled into a false sense of security because of the shallowness of baby pools. Children should be kept within arm's reach when in a baby pool, and

the pool should be emptied immediately after use and stored upside-down.

### Bathroom safety

- Never leave a young child alone in a bathtub or allow a sibling to watch a younger child. If you need to leave the bathroom, take your child with you.
- Infant bathtubs and bathtub seats are bathing aids, not safety devices.
- Keep the toilet lid down and use a toilet seat lock to keep children from opening the lid.
- Put a latch on the bathroom door to keep children out of the bathroom when unsupervised.

### Bucket safety

- Five-gallon buckets of water pose a threat to babies and toddlers who may topple into them and be unable to get out because they lack coordination and upper-body strength.
- Empty and store all buckets out of children's reach.

### Garden pond safety

- If you have young children and a garden pond, consider waiting to fill it until they are older; installing a rigid screen across the pond to create a secure cover that is strong enough to support an adult and is at least one inch above the surface of the water; and fencing in the pond area and installing a self-closing gate with a childproof lock.

### Lake and river safety

- Swimming in a lake or river is not like swimming in a pool. Children should always wear life vests, stay out of murky or fast-moving water, and should never dive head-first into a lake or river.

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## *Plan now for school health requirements*

The state of Illinois requires school children to have a current physical (within the past year) and to be current with immunizations when they are:

- entering an Illinois school for the first time at any age;
- starting kindergarten;
- entering the sixth grade; and
- entering the ninth grade.

A lead screening is required for young children entering daycare, preschool and kindergarten.

Children entering kindergarten or first grade also must be immunized against chicken pox/varicella. In areas of high incidences of tuberculosis (TB) a TB skin test is required as part of the physical exam. Talk with the child's doctor to see what is required. Any child entering sixth through 12th grade must also show proof of receiving one dose of Tdap (defined as Tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis) vaccine regardless of when they may have had their last

DTaP, DT or Td dose. Check with the physician for more details.

Submit the completed "Certificate of Child Health Examination" forms signed by the physician, school nurse and child's caseworker and keep a copy for the home record. According to state law, children who do not have a current physical or shots by October 15 will not be allowed to continue attending school until they have received the care and their record is updated.

## As DCFS staff and foster mom, Sarah Olson gets to see the system at work and at home



*Sarah Olson is a former caseworker and present foster caregiver.*

While visiting foster homes as a placement worker for DCFS, Sarah Olson never dreamed that she and her husband Mike would eventually become foster and adoptive parents themselves. Sarah had an up-close view of the need for more good foster homes through her work. She also saw how foster parents play such an important role in the lives of children in foster care. Sarah and Mike had always had a love for children. They decided they also wanted to make a difference in a child's life, and became licensed for foster care with Lutheran Social Services in Marion three years ago.

Almost immediately they learned about the many special needs of children in the child welfare system. One young boy had faced multiple moves and subsequently, three

different kindergartens. When he arrived at the Olsons' home he did not know his letters and the sounds that went with them, resulting in emotional outbursts. They worked with the school and got him special reading services. He now reads at his grade level.

Sarah and Mike also had to learn how to iron out the complicated schedule and transportation details of youngsters in need of many resources and emotional support. Sarah navigated the visits between siblings who were living with their father. She quickly came to discover how much road time would need to be logged between rural Marion and Carbondale for speech therapy several times a week. In addition, there is travel to Cardinal Glennon Hospital in St. Louis to see medical specialists. Fortunately they have a good family support team to help them – the same recommendation she would make to the families on her caseload as a caseworker and now as a trainer.

After three years of doing foster care on the job and at home, she has good news to report. The children are excelling emotionally, socially, physically and educationally. The Olsons celebrated an adoption of their middle son in March. They hope that soon they will be the adoptive parents of the other two children.

## *Birthdays are better with a Buddy*

The Birthday Buddy program can help foster caregivers make a child's birth extra special. The Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition coordinates the program that encourages generous individuals in the St. Louis community to apply to become a Birthday Buddy to a child in foster care. Foster caregivers provide the Coalition with general information about the child and birthday present ideas, which are posted on the Coalition's website. Individuals then purchase some (or all) of the gifts on their Birthday Buddy's wish list. They drop the donated presents off with the Coalition so the foster caregiver can pick them up in time for the celebration.

The Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition is a nonprofit organization that focuses on recruitment and resources for Illinois and Missouri families in the greater St. Louis area. The Birthday Buddy program is open to children in foster care placements (not in adoptive families). The foster parent must complete and submit the application found online at [www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org) at least one month before the child's birthday and no more than four months prior.

For more information, please contact Shelley Thomas-Benke by phone at 800-FOSTER-3 or (314-367-8373) ext. 2229.

## Southern Region offices find many ways to honor families in May

One day every May is taken to acknowledge foster parents for their work 365 days a year. Following is a roundup of how staff in many DCFS offices in the Southern Region rallied to make families served by DCFS foster care programs feel special:

### Marion-Murphysboro-Mt. Vernon-Harrisburg

Approximately 180 members of foster families living in Jackson, Williamson, Saline and Jefferson counties enjoyed a Southern Illinois Miner's baseball game in Marion on May 19. The kids also enjoyed playing in the Fun Zone.



### Anna-Cairo-Carlyle-Metropolis-Sparta

Cairo hosted a foster parent appreciation event that included food, awards and fun activities for the children. Metropolis hosted a reception for the foster families that are served by that office. The Sparta office presented their foster parents with gift cards and certificates. The Anna office had a reception to appreciate foster parents for all of their hard work and commitment. Carlyle caseworkers visited their foster parents and took them a certification of appreciation for their commitment to foster children.

### East St. Louis-Belleveille

The DCFS staff serving families in St. Clair County provided a delicious dinner at an O'Fallon restaurant. The guests were treated to a special keynote speaker, Shelby Houck, the 15-year-old daughter of foster parent Jennifer Houck. Shelby has been an incredible support to her family's foster care efforts and has initiated her own activities. She has assisted the Lions Club in collecting suitcases for foster children; taken part in the Super Run for CASA and has volunteered at the Refresh clothing store in St. Louis, exclusively for children in DCFS care. Her hope is to bring awareness to the foster care system.

### Effingham-Olney

Staff in the DCFS Effingham office hosted a family picnic, which also included a bounce house. The DCFS personnel in the Olney area hosted families for refreshments and gave each foster family a beautiful potted plant for their home.

### Alton-Granite City-Wood River

The staff from these three offices brought foster families and the children in their homes together for a picnic and games. It was a welcomed time for families and staff to get to know each other in a relaxed setting.

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## SIU students find support in campus group for DCFS-involved youth

The transition to college can be difficult for new students. Young people who are involved in the child welfare system may have different educational needs or emotional concerns, or may not have the same family connections or access to assistance as other youth and therefore may face additional challenges. Youth in care who attend Southern Illinois University at Carbondale have a new resource on campus to help ease the transition.

The Youth in Care on Campus support network for DCFS-involved SIU students who are taking the next step in their lives was recently recognized by the university as an official student group. Jahlisa

Glenn, who was formerly in DCFS care, helped organize the group with other students. After the inaugural "official" meeting in the spring, DCFS Transition Manager Donna Wilson was moved by the individual stories of perseverance.

"I kept telling myself that we are sitting on a college campus and these kids are survivors! It helped to keep back the tears," she said.

Jahlisa graduated in May with a master's degree in social work. However, Youth in Care on Campus will keep moving forward. The group is accepting donations for a fall "trunk party" to share personal care items and school supplies with

students when they arrive in the fall. For details, contact Donna Wilson, DCFS Transition Manager at 618-993-7100.

### DCFS alum goes to Washington



Jahlisa Glenn traveled to the nation's capital

as one of 39 DCFS-involved young adults in the Congressional Foster Youth Shadow Day. Glenn was matched with Congressman Aaron Shock. She shared the activities of Youth in Care on Campus with him. With the congressman's interest, she is hoping to see the program move beyond southern Illinois.

## Southern 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 (VTC) anytime at [www.DCFstraining.org](http://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:

- see training news and general information;
- check available trainings;
- view/print your training transcript;
- register and take on-line courses; and
- download course materials to use in class or to access after training.

### Adoption Preservation Services and Respite changes

The Adoption Preservation program provides intervention to help adoptive parents and children work through intensive challenges. In the Southern Region, that program has moved from Matthews and Associates to Children's Home + Aid's Granite City office. Children's Home + Aid will also be providing respite services to adoptive families.

Call the Adoption Support Line at 888-96-ADOPT for more details or to connect with services.

## 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 feel you aren't being treated fairly by DCFS or a private agency?**

If you've already 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 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 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 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](http://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](mailto:vanessa.james@illinois.gov).



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