

# 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.

## Beaty family adds 11th team member and still recruits siblings

When you think of the word “supersize,” fast food usually comes to mind before families. But when you meet the Beaty family you realize that “super” is the key word for this large family. Having five children by birth did not deter Andrew and Karen Beaty from reaching out to serve children in foster care both in South Dakota and Illinois. Andrew and Karen attribute their dedication to foster children to their faith, their personal experience with serving on a county-wide “Child Protection Team,” and the positive influence of friends who have adopted many children. While working with their youth ministry in South Dakota, the Beatys saw the struggles of children in foster care and “were compelled to figure out if we could help with the foster care system... We didn’t know where the road would take us, but we were calm and excited at the same time as we started a new journey.”

The call to take a child came almost immediately after they became licensed. Their first placement was a young girl who came to require out-of-home care. They felt discouraged the day she left and wondered what path foster care would take for their family. That very day they received a call for another placement; this time a baby needed a home. Elizabeth, after a long three-year journey, would become part of their forever family. The Beatys fondly recall leaving the adoption hearing with Elizabeth and her sweet litany the

rest of the day: “I’m a Beaty now, I’m a Beaty now, I’m a Beaty now.”

After the family’s move to Illinois they patiently waited the three years for their oldest to turn 18 so that they could become foster parents again. They welcomed 3-month-old Samuel into their home. A year later Samuel’s brother, Noah, joined the family.

Even with seven of eight children living at home, Andrew and Karen explained to their caseworker that they still want a larger family.

“She thinks we’re crazy, but she said that she’d support us if she found a sibling group to add to our family.”

Not much time had passed and pre-placement visits began for Benjamin and Aaron to begin their transition to become part of the Beaty family. Shortly after Benjamin and Aaron moved in, Samuel and Noah’s birth mother became pregnant and the Beatys began the paperwork to bring the baby home to their brothers. Though they had to wait a few weeks, Titus was able to join their



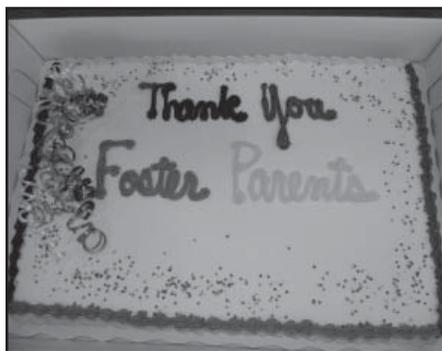
*The Beaty family gathered at the adoption hearing to welcome its newest member, Elizabeth.*

family and his adoption became final in May.

Currently, the Beatys have five children by birth and six by adoption. This line-up works with a strong support system. They praise their adoption workers Sheryl Kreckman and Brenda Clark. They said their caseworkers, Sheryl Rushton and Joy Hershberger, “were amazing. They kept us informed, believed in us, encouraged us and trusted us!” They also said that their foster parent support specialist, Maria Levensgood, “is the reason we’ve survived all of our placements. She made the “good, the bad, and the ugly easy to survive.”

The Beatys aren’t slowing down. They stated that, “We’re looking for another sibling group to adopt. (We’re) passionate about keeping siblings together.”

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



During the month of May local offices celebrated Foster Parent Appreciation Month by hosting various appreciation events. Following is a roundup of how staff in many DCFS offices in the Central Region rallied to make families served by DCFS foster care programs feel special:

### **Bloomington/Normal**

On May 14 the Bloomington field office hosted a dinner for foster parents with the theme, “Everyone is a Star.” Each foster parent received an award. Judge Kevin Fitzgerald gave an opening remarks and state’s attorney Jason Champers was the guest speaker. Childcare was provided so the adults could enjoy a catered dinner.

### **Charleston**

The DCFS Charleston field office hosted a dinner buffet at Yoder’s Kitchen on May 2. Regional Administrator Michael Ruppe attended. Everyone enjoyed the food and fellowship.

### **Decatur**

On June 13 foster families served by the Decatur field office enjoyed an ice cream social with family entertainment provided by “Rea-diculous” from the Decatur Public Library. The children in attendance enjoyed several activities just for them.

### **Danville**

Danville field office staff hosted a dinner for foster families with entertainment by the Brewz Brothers at the Knights of Columbus.

### **Jacksonville/Beardstown**

The offices hosted a combined appreciation dinner for 30 caregivers at the Jacksonville field office, despite flood warnings and road closures. Each family received a small gift basket which included gifts for the adults as well as the children.

### **Peoria/Pekin**

On May 17 the Peoria and Peoria offices hosted a reception for foster parents at the Landmark Recreation Center. Foster Parents enjoyed appetizers, cake, and fun.

### **Springfield**

Foster families gathered at the Springfield field office on May 16 for a dinner in their honor

### **Rock Island**

The theme was Italian for the foster family festivities sponsored by the staff of the Rock Island field office on June 21. There was plenty of pizza and spaghetti on hand. The foster parents and children enjoyed entertainment that included trivia games and prizes for the children. Many lucky foster parents went home with door prizes.

### **Urbana**

On May 30, foster families of Champaign and Ford counties enjoyed a fun night food and games at Stone Creek Church in Urbana. Staff served all the best picnic fare and kept the children entertained with many games and prizes.

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## *DCFS and agencies support Mercer, Rock Island and Henry county families*

The DCFS Rock Island office and surrounding area foster care agencies are part of the Foster Care Alliance, a partnership with private agency providers covering Mercer, Rock Island and Henry counties. The group consists of the foster care agencies: Bethany, DCFS, Lutheran Social Services and The Center for Youth and Family Solutions. The group provides monthly trainings on topics foster parents request, plans recruitment efforts and maintains a high profile in the community on behalf of children and families.

Once a year the group hosts an all-day training for foster parents. In May, in addition to providing information, the Alliance brought in medical professionals to

complete free adult physicals. Biometrics provided convenient fingerprinting services. Staff also conducted home of relative training and provided childcare for caregivers.

This year, the group will continue recruitment to diverse community audiences. By being active in the community, The Foster Care Alliance is building positive relationships and sharing the goal of helping families one child at a time.

For more information about Alliance activities and trainings, contact Joyce Loy, foster parent support specialist at 309-794-3653 or joyce.loy@illinois.gov.

## Central 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.

### 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](http://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.

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## 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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Current and back issues of *Illinois Families Now and Forever®* are available online in English and Spanish at [www.DCFS.illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.illinois.gov)