



# Illinois Families Now and Forever®

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, nonspecialized 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.

# Cook County Advocate

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News for Chicago Metro Area Families

## Cook Central and North join in foster parent appreciation event

To mark the month of May as Foster Parent Appreciation Month, DCFS offices in the Cook North and Cook Central areas jointly hosted a dinner for families served by the regional foster care program. The Wishing Well Concordia Banquet Hall in Cicero was the place to be for a very special night. DCFS volunteers decorated the hall beautifully and donated time and funds to make the 120 foster caregivers feel honored. In addition to the generous family-style dinner that was served, the entertainment included trivia, prizes, a raffle and even a quick Zumba dance lesson. Foster parents enjoyed the meal from the soup and salad to dessert. Awards for outstanding service were given to foster families who had been nominated by their caseworkers.

### Foster Parent Honorees for 2013

**Elba Tsuetaki** has a deep dedication to foster care as noted by her caseworker. She has been a caregiver to children of different races, always showing respect and compassion. She is currently caring for two boys and shows incredible commitment to their education. She has always paid for private school for them.

**Sandra McGee** has been a foster parent for more than 15 years. She started in foster care when her nieces needed a home. Since then she has become a truly remarkable foster parent. Her approach is to give even the most difficult child a chance. Her successes are many. Over the years she has had many children of all ages who have called her family home, along with the three children she has adopted. Her professional approach makes her someone the Cook North caseworkers love to work with. When it's time to find a placement, the question often heard is, "Does Sandra have an opening?"

**Luis and Aida Soberal** approach foster care as a team. Their specialty is teenage girls. They have worked through difficult challenges that others might have given up on. Their caseworker was struck by how Aida is always driving the girls where they need to go to keep them safe. You can also find her at the school making sure they are on track with their grades. No matter how challenging the situation is she says, "They're my girls." Caseworkers in the Cook Central office nominated the Soberals as a truly special couple and devoted foster parents.

**Bernt and Debbie Arnsporg** became licensed in 2011 after working with Safe Families. They are currently providing care for a sibling group where both children have intense medical needs. The Arnsporgs are dedicated to the children and hold their care and well being as their number one priority. Both attend all possible trainings relating to the children's needs so they can better understand their medical diagnoses and can provide the best care they possibly can. The Arnsporgs were actively participating in the reunification process and as it failed they are committed to provide the children with a permanent, loving and nurturing home. They are also committed to preserve the bond between the children and their brother who is placed out-of state with another family.

**Bill and Joan Savas** have varied experiences in cross-cultural foster care. They are sincere, caring, dedicated, and compassionate to the needs of the children. "These are great people to know, and they make my job much easier to do," their caseworker said. They go the extra mile to ensure that all needs are met for the children in their care.

### Meet the New Regional Administrator for Cook County



The DCFS Cook Region has a new Regional Administrator. Arlene Grant-Brown began her career at DCFS in 1984 as a child protection investigator in Chicago. Since that time, she has served in management position in investigations and has filled several high-level assignments. She most recently served as the interim regional administrator of Cook South Child Protection,

and most recently, special assistant to the bureau chief of Operations. Grant-Brown is looking forward to working with foster families to support their efforts to keep children safe.

"I know how difficult the circumstances are that bring children to a foster home. I so appreciate all of the time, energy and love that you pour back into them day after day," she said.

## DCFS events honor graduates and prep youth for adult life

Youth living in Cook County had several reasons to celebrate in June. The end of the school year brought more than 150 recent graduates from high school and college together with special adults in their lives for a tribute luncheon on the Mystic Blue cruise ship at Navy Pier. The group enjoyed a delicious meal on board. Each student also received a goody bag with items donated by staff and community members.



Young adults got information from many resource tables at the Cook County Youth Summit.

The DCFS Office of Family and Youth Development also spearheaded the annual Youth Summit for all Cook County youth in care, ages 14 to 21. This program presented a slate of workshops and resources to help youth as they transition to adulthood. The Regional Youth Advisory Board played a key leadership role to make sure the information on employment, education and life skills was relevant and engaging for the young people. Anyone needing more information can contact DCFS Family and Youth Development at 312-814-5959.

## Mark calendars for school dates *CPS rolls out new 2013-14 schedule*

The Chicago Public School system announced a new schedule for the 2013-14 academic year. Public schools in Chicago will open earlier than in recent years, now the week before Labor Day. Report card distribution days will be the same date for high school and elementary school students in the coming year. Caregivers, caseworkers and parents should be aware of several important dates.

August 26	School starts for students
September 2	Labor Day
October 14	Columbus Day
November 11	Veteran's Day
November 12	Teacher conferences
November 28-9	Thanksgiving
December 23- January 3	Winter vacation
January 30	Report card distribution
February 12	Lincoln's Birthday
April 7	Teacher conferences/ LSC election day
April 14-28	Spring vacation
May 26	Memorial Day
June 10	Last day of school

## Cook County Foster Care Advisory Council Updates

### Cook Central

Before the summer break Cook Central had a meeting with a fire fighter to go over home safety tips and precautions. In May the group hosted a Family Fun Night at the Maywood office to celebrate Foster Parent Appreciation Month. Foster parents and their children were treated to a night of games, face painting, music, prizes and a hot dog dinner with all the trimmings. This was a fun kick off to the month and one that both children and adults seemed to enjoy.

The group will have a break until the September 24 meeting scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. at 1701 S. 1st Ave. in Maywood.

### Cook South

Caregivers in the Cook South area came together in May for a luncheon to celebrate Foster Parent Appreciation Month. Along with the meal, caregivers received certificates honoring them for their work with children and families.

Cook South meetings will resume on September 17 at 6201 S. Emerald at 10 a.m. The South Suburban Support Group will next meet on September 26 at 9 a.m. in Harvey.

### Cook North

The advisory council in the Cook North area has a new chairperson. Felicia Brown was elected this spring. In recent meetings the council has presented information on emergency preparedness, summer activities for youth and services from the DCFS nurses.

After the successful appreciation dinner with the Cook Central families, the Cook North council is on summer break. The next meeting is September 10 at 10 a.m. at 1911 S. Indiana in Chicago.

## Cook 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).



# Illinois Families Now and Forever®

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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)