

# ILLINOIS FAMILIES Now and Forever™

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services®

## New name, look and audience for newsletter

*Illinois Families Now and Forever* is the new publication from DCFS for families parenting children who are or have been in DCFS care. This new publication follows the tradition set by *Fostering Illinois* to provide updates on DCFS policy and useful information to help foster families. The new publication *Illinois Families Now and Forever* extends that goal to include adoptive and guardianship families.

### New Content

While the commitment to serve children is common to foster, adoptive and guardianship parents, DCFS realizes the type of information parents need can be different, depending on the family situation. *Illinois Families Now and Forever* will continue to feature articles that are pertinent to all audiences. However there will be some articles that relate to a specific family setting. For example, adoption related topics will be in a consistent section of the newsletter. Additionally, family-type specific stories will have a special version of the logo on the page as a cue to let readers know at a glance exactly what area the article covers. That way readers can quickly determine which articles may address their families' needs and interests.

### New Distribution

*Illinois Families Now and Forever* will be mailed six times a year to all:

- licensed foster parents
- unlicensed relative caregivers
- adoptive families, receiving a subsidy through DCFS
- guardianship families, receiving a subsidy through DCFS

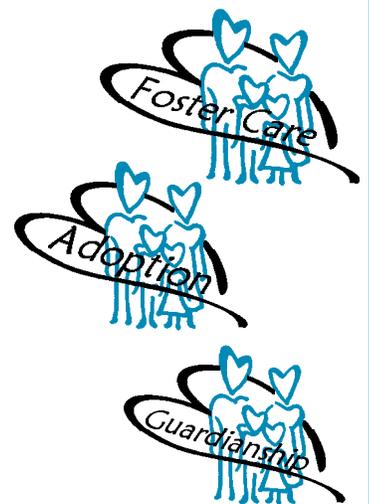
As long as caregivers maintain a foster care license, even if there are no foster children in the home at the time of printing, DCFS will automatically send a copy of *Illinois Families Now and Forever*. As always, any change of address requests or other changes must be directed through the family's licensing representative. Additionally, the bulk mailings for staff at child welfare agencies will continue. Private agencies can contact the Editor for more information.

These changes to the newsletter were developed with the input of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council. With the contribution of experienced parents and child welfare experts, the newsletter will continue to be a vehicle to provide important, relevant and practical information for families. As always, reader input is valuable and welcome, so do not hesitate to contact the Editor or the regional reporting staff with comments.

### New Look

The logo with the family inside a heart was designed to indicate that families are parents and children surrounded by love. The heart theme is carried over in the faces of the family members.

Throughout the newsletter variations of the logo will designate stories that address a specific family setting.



## DCFS scholarship applications now available

DCFS awards 48 scholarships annually to youth who are in care or former wards in adoptive or guardianship families. A scholarship winner can use it for up to four years (if 18 or younger upon receipt) while pursuing a bachelor's degree. DCFS provides a medical card, monthly maintenance payments of \$444.85 and tuition waivers at an Illinois state university.

The requirements are that the youth must:

- be at least 16 years old
- possess a high school diploma or GED accreditation by the end of the current school year
- be in the child welfare system currently or immediately prior to the adoption or transfer of guardianship

The DCFS Scholarship is a competitively-based process. A panel of experts will review and evaluate all applications. The student should complete the application packet and submit it to the Division of Education and Transition in time for the March 31<sup>st</sup> deadline.

Parents can help students gather copies of grades, letters of recommendation and other supporting materials.

Caseworkers will be able to provide the applications (CFS 438) to interested families. Contact Dwight Lambert, Statewide Education Coordinator at 217/524-2030 with questions.

## Take your marks in the race to financial aid

Now is time to apply for financial aid for students planning to attend college or university. Here is a financial aid "pop quiz" to get things rolling. This is excerpted from the DCFS publication *Crossroads: A handbook for youth in transition to adulthood* (CFS 1050-71). *Crossroads* is full of useful information for planning for college and other adult situations.

1. T F The Federal Government provides the majority of financial aid available to students.
2. T F A student must have A and B grades to get financial assistance.
3. T F Young men and women who have been in foster care, or live with a guardian can receive financial aid for a college education.
4. T F The Federal Government holds the foster families and guardians responsible for the cost of sending a child to college.
5. T F Adoptive parents are treated the same as birth parents for financial aid purposes.

*True: Questions 1, 3 and 5 False: 2 and 4*

Financial aid typically starts by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). All assistance based on financial need requires this form. The major determining factor for youth in foster care or guardianship families is the student's status as dependent or independent.

The form will ask if the applicant currently is a ward of the court or if the applicant was a ward until age 18. Youth in foster care or guardianship should answer YES. Those youth who have been adopted must answer NO. A YES answer will consider the youth an Independent Student, which means their parent's income will not be included in the financial need formula. Adoptive parents' income will be included, unless special circumstances apply.

The financial aid picture is fairly complicated, however there are several resources to help. The *Crossroads* booklet is mailed to youth on their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. If necessary, contact your caseworker to request another copy or print it from the DCFS web site at [www.state.il.us/dcf](http://www.state.il.us/dcf). High schools and colleges have the FAFSA form and other information to go along with it. It is also available on the Internet at [www.ed.gov/studentaid](http://www.ed.gov/studentaid).

## Talking to teens about AIDS/HIV, STDs and unintended pregnancy

The Illinois Department of Public Health has developed a statewide campaign to raise awareness of AIDS/HIV, sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancy among adolescents. Talking about sex, diseases and pregnancy to teenagers is not an easy or comfortable task, but it is an important one. Teenagers today are growing up faster than ever before and, consequently, parents need to maintain an open dialogue with their children. Here are some tips for parents tackling the subject of sex and its consequences in an effective and comfortable manner:

- **Really get to know your child.** As children go through emotional and physical changes, it is important to try to understand what is happening in their lives. Frequently ask your kids what they are thinking and how they are feeling.
- **Begin with a comfortable subject.** Breaking the ice can be a challenge. Use events from everyday life, whether it be their friends or your own experience. Begin by discussing these situations and then steer the conversation to personal issues.
- **Be direct and honest.** When you show that you are open and nonjudgmental, your child will be encouraged to also speak candidly. Do not use the “birds and the bees” terminology; instead be direct in your language choices. Your child will benefit from learning the correct terms.
- **Share experiences.** It is helpful to give examples or stories because children have difficulty grasping some information. Relate an experience you had growing up.
- **Listen to your child.** Stop whatever you are doing to focus your attention and listen to your child. Make eye contact. Acknowledge what your child is saying to show that you understand and, if you don't understand, ask for clarification.
- **Encourage your child to ask questions.** When you do not have the answers, simply let your child know that you are not sure how to answer his/her question. However, do not turn children away when they have expressed an interest in discussing these matters.
- **Keep the door open.** Let your child know that you are available and willing to continue the conversation anytime. To confidentially speak to someone about communicating with your child about AIDS/HIV, STDs and unintended pregnancy, call the Illinois AIDS/HIV and STD Hotline at 1-800-243-2437.

## Recommended reading for teens in foster care

### **The Heart Knows Something Different: Teenage Voices from the Foster Care System**

*Edited by Al Desetta*

How well can a bureaucracy replace the family? In well-crafted narratives that are remarkable for their candor, range of experience, and hard-won insight, more than three dozen young writers (ages 15-20) provide an insider's view of growing up in “the system.” Intimate and honest, *The Heart Knows Something Different* shows us — from the inside, looking out — the mix of pain and fear, and sometimes hope and happiness that the foster care experience involves.

### **Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me**

*By Julie Johnston*

From the author of the award-winning *Hero of Lesser Causes* comes an unforgettable novel. Sara Moone is a bitter veteran of too many foster homes. So when she winds up on the Huddleston farm, she expects the worst. She yearns to escape from everyone, including a strange woman who is looking for the daughter she gave up at birth. Sara finds it's hard to run from love.

### **The Lottery Rose**

*By Irene Hunt*

Abused by his mother and her boyfriend, Georgie Burgess learns to hide his hurt. When Georgie wins a small rosebush in a grocery store lottery, he gives it all the love and caring he has never had. His life begins to open up when the courts send him to a home for boys where he will be safe. Slowly, and not without pain, Georgie learns to give—and receive love.

## Statewide Council and Director award top agency implementation plans

The Foster Parent Law requires the DCFS regions and all agencies with contracts to provide foster care services to develop an implementation plan, outlining how the agency will meet its responsibilities to foster children and the foster parents they serve. The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, as part of its role to oversee the implementation of the law, reviews and scores each of the implementation plans.

Recently the Statewide Council Chair James Lane and DCFS Director Jess McDonald honored five agencies that garnered the highest scores for their 2002 plans. After sharing the highlights that made these agencies' plans rise to the top, Director McDonald and Chair Lane posed for photos with the elated winners.



**Lakeside Community Committee's** Foster Parent Council embraced the theme "No Placement Disruptions" for the Year 2002. This commitment to stability and the agency's collaboration with foster families made a difference in the services the agency provided to children.



At **Hoyleton Youth and Family Services**, a foster parent is a voting member of the Board of Directors. With this oversight, the Foster Parent Advisory Council and the Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey, Hoyleton can respond to its families and the children in their care.



**Children's Home Association of Illinois** believes that foster parents are integral to every aspect of the agency's service to children. As such, the agency holds leadership meetings, support groups, trainings and social events throughout the year. Communication and coordination are the key elements to all they do.



**ChildServ** considers foster parents to be partners in its 108-year-old mission. Parents meet to go over the previous year's plan to find areas that need to be changed or enhanced. Their input feeds directly into developing the current implementation plan.



In addition to involving foster parents in creating the implementation plan, **The Baby Fold** focused efforts on providing relevant trainings to foster parents as well as fun events. Newly licensed foster families are welcomed into the "Fold" with a potluck dinner and an orientation to the agency.

## Free tax booklet offers help for foster and adoptive parents

Once again it's time for taxes. Households are required to file tax returns for earnings and deductions incurred during 2002. DCFS and the Center for Economic Progress (formerly known as the Center for Law & Human Services) are again working together to provide foster and adoptive families with timely information to help them in preparing their tax returns. Earlier this year, the Center for Economic Progress sent the Tax Booklet for Foster and Adoptive Parents to families with foster and adopted children to help them obtain all federal and state tax benefits and credits for which they might be eligible.

The Center for Economic Progress continues to provide free tax preparation to families with income under \$35,000 at 26 sites located throughout Illinois. The booklet provides the address of these sites and other services for which foster and adoptive parents may be eligible such as free legal tax representation in cases of tax controversies with the IRS and the Illinois Department of Revenue.

The Center for Economic Progress also tracks changes to the tax laws that are pertinent to these families. For example, the credit for adoptions in the tax year 2002 has been increased to \$10,000 from \$5,000 for adoptions in 2001 and \$6,000 for special needs adoptions. The credit can be carried forward for five years. Beginning in 2003, the credit for these adoptions will result in a \$10,000 credit, regardless of the amount of qualifying expenses. This special needs credit cannot be carried forward. The tax booklet has more details.

For more information on any items on the booklet including the free tax preparation sites, tax representation or any other question pertaining to tax issues for foster and adoptive parents, please call the Center for Economic Progress at 312-252-0280.



### Discipline does not include manual restraint techniques

There has been some confusion among some foster parents and caseworkers about interpretation of Subsection 402.21(h) of the Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, involving discipline of a child who's behavior is temporarily out-of-control. Subsection 402.23(h) states, "A child may be temporarily restrained by a person physically holding the child if the child poses a danger to himself or others."

*The question is:* How may a foster parent temporarily restrain a foster child who is having a tantrum or is temporarily out of control, to prevent the child from hurting himself or others?

*Answer:* A foster parent may hold a child, such as by placing the child on his/her lap in a "bear hug", or by placing the child next to him/her on a chair with an arm placed around the child in order to calm a child who's behavior is temporarily out-of-control.

According to the Office of Child and Family Policy, a foster parent cannot use:

- a "manual restraint" technique, such as any specialized arm or body holds that involve use of force;
- the assistance of a second person to restrain or hold the child;
- an object, such as a bean bag, to physically restrain or subdue a child; or
- "corporal punishment", including any act (such as pinching or squeezing) that causes or inflicts pain.

Restraint techniques that rely on the use of force or an object can result in serious injury to a child, or in some instances may cause suffocation.

Questions regarding this Policy Interpretation should be directed to the Office of Child and Family Policy at 217-524-1983 or [cfpolicy@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:cfpolicy@idcfs.state.il.us).



## New logs to monitor medication and behavior

Foster parents are required to keep a log of all medications given to a child, including psychotropic medications, other prescription drugs and non-prescription medications. The Department recently developed a new log to monitor medications daily (CFS 534). Foster parents are to complete the logs each day and submit them to the caseworker each month. Ask your caseworker for help completing the form or getting more copies.

When completing the medication log, caregivers should keep the following points in mind:

- Use a separate chart for each medication. Be sure to include over the counter medications, such as aspirin, anti-nausea or anti-diarrhea medications.
- Initial the chart each time medication is given
- If you miss a dosage, fill in the section on information about the missed dose
- List all appointments for medication. In addition, note if any appointments were missed or cancelled.
- Sign and initial the form before turning it in.

CFS 534  
8/2002

State of Illinois  
Department of Children and Family Services  
**MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION LOG**

For the Month of: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician ordering medication: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Medication: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Dose: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Times Given per/day \_\_\_\_\_

Time Medication was given during the day	DAYS WITHIN THE MONTH																																
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		

Physician ordering medication: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Medication: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Dose: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Times Given per/day \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to the medication logs, foster parents are required to chart any "extreme" or "unusual" behaviors/incidents that happen at home, at school or in the community. This would also include any adverse medical or behavioral reaction to a medication. Caregivers still should contact the caseworker within one business day to notify him or her of the incident. However, the log will help track behaviors over the course of a month. The behavior log (CFS 534-1) will instruct the caregiver to record a description of the behavior, where it took place, circumstances right before the incident and any actions by the foster parent. If there is an unusual or extreme behavioral incident, the log should be filled in and turned in to the caseworker each month.

CFS 534-1  
8/2002

State of Illinois  
Department of Children and Family Services  
**BEHAVIOR LOG**

**Directions:** Foster parents who are caring for a child for whom the Department is responsible are to keep a log of any "extreme" or "unusual" behaviors/incidents that the child has in their home, school, or the community. **This log does not take the place of contacting the worker/supervisor within one business day of any type of unusual incident.** This log will be used to keep track of the child's behaviors over the entire month. This log should be completed throughout the month as the child experiences "extreme" or "unusual" behaviors. A copy of the log must be submitted to the child's caseworker every month in which there is an incidence of extreme or unusual behavior. This log is also to be used in conjunction with the required monthly medication log to record any adverse medical or behavioral reaction as reported by the child, observed by the caregiver, school personnel, the child's parents or friends etc.

For the Month of: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF THE CHILD'S BEHAVIOR	WHERE DID THIS BEHAVIOR TAKE PLACE (i.e. school, home, friend's house)	WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE RIGHT BEFORE THE BEHAVIOR (i.e. argument with a peer, confrontation with parent, sibling visit, medication last administered, etc.)	ACTIONS TAKEN DUE TO THE CHILD'S BEHAVIORS INCLUDING CONSEQUENCES/REACTIONS BY FOSTER PARENT (i.e. sent to room, grounded, suspended from school, brought to a hospital, contacted emergency number of the foster care agency #800)



## Illinois scores six federal Adoption Excellence Awards

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced that Illinois garnered six Adoption Excellence Awards in 2002. Over the five-year course of the award program, Illinois has often been at the head of the pack. This year, awards were given to the following Illinois agencies, programs and individuals:

**Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Springfield, Illinois.** The Department restructured its operations in ways that build on the strengths and cultural traditions of the African-American family and turned kinship care into a viable route for achieving permanency. After these changes, adoption from kinship care increased 16 percent in three years.

**Director Jess McDonald, Springfield, Illinois.** The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has made dramatic improvement in securing permanency for Illinois children since Director McDonald took the helm in 1994. McDonald's initial partnership with Cook County Juvenile Court judges resulted in the elimination of case backlogs; the convening of special court sessions on finalizing permanency decisions; the development of the legal framework for Illinois' Permanency Initiative, and the reduction in the average time a child spends in foster care from 4 years to 2 years. In addition, Illinois has secured 3 separate federal waivers to test policy innovations designed to support the rapid movement of children from foster care to permanency.

**Brenda Krause Eheart, Rantoul, Illinois.** An adoptive parent herself, Brenda Eheart oversees Hope Meadows, an intergenerational neighborhood she created eight years ago on a decommissioned military base. Her foster/adoptive families, fixed-income seniors and children live together and support one another. Children find nurturing, permanent homes through adoption; parents receive tremendous support; and seniors find a safe, affordable, and caring neighborhood in which to retire.

**Tom and Elizabeth Richmond, Peoria, Illinois.** Since becoming foster parents in 1993, the Richmonds have parented or provided respite care for 15 children and adopted 3 children, all with special needs. Elizabeth has become one of Illinois' most vocal advocates for children and the parents who care for them, whether birth, foster or adoptive. The

Richmonds serve on many adoption-related boards and councils and are frequently invited to participate in state policy discussions.

**Allison Rosati, Chicago, Illinois.** Having once been a foster child, Allison Rosati, NBC 5 news anchor and host of Wednesday's Child, understands and relates to children who long for a stable family structure. She has dedicated herself to developing a unique family recruitment segment for each featured child. As a result of two years of her work, 24 adoptions have been finalized, 7 children are with guardianship families and 63 children are moving toward permanency with identified families.

**Freddie Mac Foundation, McLean, Virginia.** Freddie Mac and the Freddie Mac Foundation have invested more than \$130 million in nonprofit organizations that serve children and families. The foundation began the "Wednesday's Child" program in 1992 as a feature of the local news in Washington, D.C. It has grown to include the Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Dallas and Atlanta television markets.





## Create a Family Album before an adoptive placement

A Family Album is a great tool to “introduce” a prospective adoptive family (or new foster family) to a child prior to the first meeting. A simple collection of photographs with captions is helpful in addressing some of the anxiety a child would have before meeting a family for the first time. It also helps the child generate questions and initiate further discussion of the impending move.

A Family Album can take many forms, however, most families find it easiest to use a basic photo album or scrapbook format. Some families are very creative and design their own books; others rely on purchased books and embellish them to be appealing to a child. They do not have to be elaborate. Keep in mind that even two or three pictures in a simple album is better than nothing.

“A Family Album is not meant to impress a child, rather to give a glimpse of what life is like in your home,” said Tracey Gee, Adoption Specialist with the DCFS Legacy Project.

Here are some of her ideas about what to include in your family album and some sample pictures to get you started.

### Family members:

Include everyone who lives in your home. Include names and ages of children. The prospective parents can use “Mom and Dad” or go by first names. Be sure to respect the child’s preference and comfort level on this issue, if it is known. You may choose to include some extended family members too, as long as it isn’t an overwhelming number.



*Dad’s father also lives with us. Grandpa likes to read the paper each day as he drinks his coffee. Sometimes he watches the kids when Mom and Dad are not at home. His favorite card game is Crazy Eights.*

### Your home:

Include pictures of the outside and inside of your home, especially the child’s room. If the room is currently being used as a home office or for another purpose, you should still include it. You may add a caption such as; “Right now, we use this as an office but can’t wait to have you help us pick out paint and decorations to make it your room.” Also include the backyard and any play areas in and around the home.



*Dad and Orlando just installed new windows in the guest room. When it becomes your room, you can pick out a bedspread to match the walls. There are lots of projects going on in our house for someone who wants to learn to work with tools.*



*Hank likes to get hugs from Dominique. He barks a lot when strangers come to the door. When he gets to know you, he likes to sleep with his head in your lap.*

**Pets:** Pets are often a great icebreaker with children. Many children are drawn to pets and playing with pets on initial visits can help ease some of the anxiety of the situation. If you have a large pet and/or the child is afraid of pets, try to reassure the child. For example, you could say; “George may look pretty big but he is very gentle and loves to play with kids” or “George lives in his own house in the backyard. Once he gets to know you, he is very loyal. Would you like to meet him?”

**School:** Take a picture of the school that the child will be attending. You could also mention how far it is from your home and whether the child will walk or take the bus. If you're not sure which school he will attend, take pictures of all the schools he could possibly attend.



*The school is only four blocks away from our house. It starts with Pre-K and goes through the eighth grade. This is a new building so everything is bright and clean.*

**Interests/  
Hobbies:**

Include information on what the family likes to do for fun and what the parents do for a living. You could include a picture of a parent in their work uniform, for instance. Or, you could include a picture that a child already in the family drew for the child.



*This is a picture of Orlando when he played football. The Wolfpack is the team for boys who are your age. On Saturday mornings we watch Dominique play soccer. After the games we do chores. In the evening we usually rent movies and order Chinese food.*



*Shoesmith Park is at the corner. There is a diamond where the baseball team plays games. There are no basketball hoops, but we have one in our backyard.*

**Neighborhood/Community:**

Give the child a sense of what the block, neighborhood and town are like. Are there any special characteristics the child might especially be interested in or that your family takes advantage of? Consider taking a picture of the neighborhood kids around his/her age. This is also an excellent opportunity to explain the placement to the neighbor children, without the child having to face these inevitable questions alone.

**Tips for creating a Family Album**

- If you are having trouble getting started, ask your worker or another family if you can see a family album another family has completed. If you don't know what words to use, ask for your worker's help.
- Don't overwhelm the child with too many pictures or too much information. The simpler, the better.
- Leave the last page for the child. Ask him/her to add to it with their picture or a drawing. Or, you could insert an empty framed space with the caption: "We left this page for your picture, we can't wait to have you join us!"
- Use recent, quality photos. If you're in a hurry and don't have the right photos handy, use a disposable or Polaroid camera and/or overnight film developing.
- Consider making a "video family album" for the child.
- Decorate your pages with stickers or markers to make it appealing to a child or ask the child to help you decorate it. If you know anything about the child's interests, incorporate those elements, e.g. use a photo album with the child's favorite sports team or cartoon character.
- Keep sentences simple and use age and developmentally appropriate language.
- Be sure to ask the child's worker what the child wants to know and what information may decrease the child's anxiety.
- Have fun with it and remember that it doesn't have to be perfect.
- Be creative and let your personality come through. This will likely become a cherished memory book for you and the child.

## From the Files

### Spring Conference is coming

On March 21-23, Illinois Foster/Adoptive Parent Association and DCFS will hold the Spring Foster and Adoptive Parent Conference at its new location at the Wyndam-Chicago Northeast Hotel in Itasca.

Questions about registration can be directed to the DCFS Registration Unit at 877-800-3393.

### New website to protect girls

Check out the Girls Allowed website, a 3-D animated site for girls 11 to 14 at [www.girlsallowed.org](http://www.girlsallowed.org). Its focus is to help girls learn to identify healthy relationships from unhealthy ones that could become violent. One study found that 1 in 5 female high school students reported being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner. Girls Allowed (or aloud) gives girls a voice in their relationships.

### On-line Adoption Tax Credit Course

Adoption Learning Partners [www.adoptionlearningpartners.org](http://www.adoptionlearningpartners.org) announces the launch of a new e-learning course,

***Understanding the Adoption Tax Credit.*** The course will help you determine your eligibility and see how the tax credit works with different types of adoptions and financial situations. It can also assist in creating a system for tracking and documenting allowable adoption expenses and preparing for working with a tax professional.

## Tell it like it is - families speak out

Families want to hear the “real deal” on foster care, adoption and guardianship from those who know best – you!

Below, readers respond to the question: ***If you were “boss for a day” at DCFS, what change would you make to improve service to children?***

My main concern would be group homes. They should be more supervised. Kids need to be in a place where people really care about these kids.

*Barbara Pritta*

If I were boss for a day at DCFS, I would implement more programs that help foster parents. I would implement a rental subsidy and/or a house purchase assistance program. I would implement programs to help with transportation for foster parents. I would implement programs that would assist the foster parents in being better foster parents to the children that they service.

*Via e-mail*

I would be sure to put children in a home with people who love them. I would screen foster parents to make sure they love children and I would see how they raised their own kids. I would try to get houses for the foster parents, so they could have a place that would be comfortable for the children. I would try to give large enough subsidies so the parents could have enough to get the children all of the things they need.

*Evelyn Massey*

I would hold monthly or quarterly open houses so caseworkers could get to know foster parents. This way they become real people to workers. We were licensed last spring and feel like we have no connection.

*Anonymous*

The new question is: ***What special thing has a child in your care done or said to make you feel appreciated?***

You can contact me with your response by e-mail at [foster@chicagonet.net](mailto:foster@chicagonet.net) or by phone at 312-814-6824 or by mail at Families, Now and Forever, James R. Thompson Center, 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Chicago IL 60601. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

*Vanessa James, Editor*



**Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor**

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

**Address Changes:** Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change addresses of office locations or request staff copies through the Editor.

*Illinois Families Now and Forever* is published six times a year, bi-monthly, and mailed to licensed foster parents, unlicensed relative caregivers, adoptive and guardianship families receiving subsidies, all DCFS staff and private agency staff as ordered. Material may not be reprinted in whole, in part or in any form whatsoever without permission from the Editor or DCFS. Opinions expressed by experts writing articles are no substitute for professional answers or opinions about a family's or child's specific situation. Consult a competent professional for answers to your specific questions.

## A family for me

**Norris** [C7177], 15, has a great sense of humor and loves to laugh! He is good at team sports like basketball and football. He also likes rollerblading and listening to music and enjoys watching his favorite programs on TV. His foster parent and teacher said he has a good sense of humor and he does well in class. His worker said that Norris likes to laugh and to keep busy.

**Freddy** [C6852] Engineering may be in this boy's future. Freddy, 11, is a really good math student and he likes working with computers. He likes to play video games and he enjoys group activities. He has recently developed an interest in playing football and baseball. Freddy's foster parents and teachers said that he is polite and volunteers to help in school and at home. Last Thanksgiving, he stayed up late to help cook dinner. His worker said that he has mature attitudes for a child his age.

**Shalmal** [C6022] If you like activity, you'll get along great with Shalmal! She enjoys jumping rope, dancing, and playing outdoors. This 12-year-old is also talented at arts and crafts. Her teacher and foster parent said she likes to joke with others and has a nice sense of humor. Shalmal is good at finding ways to entertain herself.

**LaMarkus** [7139] He's an enthusiastic camper. LaMarkus, 11, especially enjoyed attending Easter Seals camps during the past year. He likes going to the park and joining in group activities. His foster parent and teacher said LaMarkus has improved in his schoolwork and has become more patient. He listens well and helps out at home and school.

**Allen** [C7126] This active young man has a lot of love to give, and he's eager to have a family of his own. Allen, 11, likes outdoor activities – baseball, basketball, and hockey. Indoors, he enjoys a fast-paced card game. He loves science and dreams of being an astronaut.

Allen's foster parents said he is cooperative and likes to help out at home. His teachers said he is very intelligent and enjoys reading and expressing his opinions.

**Marvin** [C4041] Marvin, 8, is a friendly and outgoing boy who's ready to join your family. Marvin plays basketball and football and enjoys drawing. And he really loves dogs! His foster parent said Marvin is helpful at home, and his teacher said his handwriting is excellent. His teacher added that Marvin is a good athlete.

**Shawn** [C6875] This energetic young man loves to talk about almost any subject! Shawn, 11, enjoys a good baseball game and, in quieter moments, a challenging chess game. And he likes operating anything by remote control.

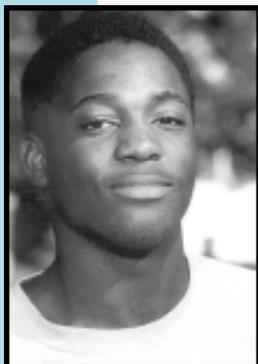
His foster mom said that Shawn is resourceful and can occupy himself for long periods of time. He would like a mom and a dad and would prefer to live in a city.

If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390 (within Illinois) or 1-312-346-1516 (outside Illinois), or see the AICI web site – [www.adoptinfo-il.org](http://www.adoptinfo-il.org).

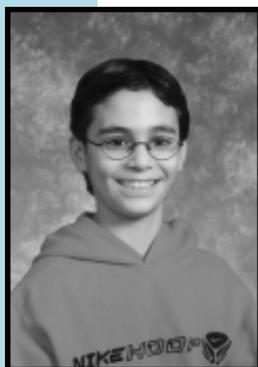
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DO YOU KNOW A FAMILY FOR ME?



Norris (C7177)



Freddy (C6852)



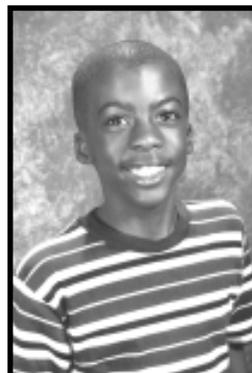
Shalmai (C6022)



LaMarkus (C7139)



Allen (C7126)



Marvin (C4041)



Shawn (C6875)

Introducing **Illinois Families Now and Forever**,  
a DCFS publication for Illinois' foster,  
adoptive and guardianship families

**Inside this issue:**

- 2 Special feature on teen topics
- 4 Top 5 implementation plan winners
- 5 Tax information for foster and adoptive families
- 6 New policies on medication and behavior logs
- 7 Illinois wins six national adoption awards
- 8 Creating a pre-adoption Family Album

Call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois 800-572-2390.