



Illinois Families Now And Forever

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship

Services set teens on path to adults

As teenagers approach adulthood, they tend to fixate on “independence” as the end reward. Even if they don’t (or won’t) acknowledge it, they need the adults in their lives to help them find the path to freedom and prepare them for all that comes with it. This journey to adulthood is more complicated for youth who have been in DCFS care. They have to overcome the additional obstacles that come with childhood trauma. The DCFS Division of Service Intervention has developed many programs to help older youth who are still in DCFS care plan for the future.

Within the division, the Office of Education and Transition Services serves as the hub for education, training and employment programs. Hundreds of young people are benefiting from programs such as the Youth in College/Vocational Program, Employment Incentive Program and the Community College Payment Program, among others. The majority of programs are open only for youth still in DCFS care, and do not include youth who achieved permanency through adoption or guardianship. The exceptions would be the Youth in Scholarship Program and the Education and Training Voucher programs described on page 4 of this publication. To help navigate the various services, DCFS also has Transition Coordinators assigned to each DCFS regional office. These individuals can help youth and their families explore educational and employment resources from DCFS and in the community.

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Fitzgerald heads Service Intervention

Daniel Fitzgerald is the new Deputy Director for the Division of Service Intervention. He took the position in October of 2008. However, he is not new to DCFS. From 2003 to 2005 he served as an assistant to the DCFS Director.

Fitzgerald moved to the Department of Human Services overseeing programs to connect family members to treatment and recovery services. His experience as a “foot soldier” in child welfare began with his first job after college as a counselor with Youth Guidance where he supported students at school and at home. He went on to hone his social work skills at Casa Central, focusing on preserving families with intact services.

“Child welfare is a labor of love. It is my mission in life and I am good at it,” said Fitzgerald.

Discovering what he was good at came late for Fitzgerald. He left high school with limited prospects for higher education. Still, he made a leap of faith and left factory work for Southern Illinois University. The administration took a chance on him and helped him cobble together financial aid and work-study while on academic probation. He produced the grades, went on to graduate and earn advanced degrees.

As head of the Division of Service Intervention, Fitzgerald is looking forward to developing more resources to help young people find success during and after their involvement with DCFS.

He works out of the Chicago Office. Caregivers with questions about programs can call 312-814-5959.



From the DCFS Director

Erwin McEwen

A new year will always bring changes. Some will be cheered, and some we will just have to view as challenges to overcome. From my seat, I have to keep focused on the frontline and the programs and services that are closest to the children.

In 2009, just like families everywhere, we will have to figure out how to shift resources and set priorities. As the number of youth in care continues to drop, my goal is to refocus those funds on services, particularly post-adoption services. We will push to get more relative homes licensed to benefit relatives and bring in more federal funds.

This year we also face another round of the Federal Review. We are poised to show significant progress since the review in 2005. One important aspect of this national assessment is how we keep children at home safely initially or return them home swiftly. Parents and caregivers alike have positive reports about the Reunification Initiative and the support programs now in place. In December, I attended the inauguration of the new Family Advocacy Centers, where parents in crisis can find localized resources. We will also expand our preventative work with the Strengthening Familie Program.

I believe we have much good to look forward to. With your help our children will continue to be well served in 2009.

Services move teens to adults

Continued from page 1

Following are overviews of the flagship DCFS programs for youth transitioning to adulthood.

Youth In College/Vocational Training Program

Students may choose to attend an accredited vocational school, four-year college or community college. They receive a monthly grant in the amount of \$471 provided each month for up to four (4) years. Medical cards are provided to Illinois students until the participant reaches the age of 21. Reimbursement is available for books not covered by financial aid. Benefits are available until the earlier of four (4) years, or the semester of the 23rd birthday.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Be at least 16 years old, and not yet 21
- Be under court-ordered, legal responsibility of DCFS
- Maintain at least a “C” average each semester
- Maintain full time status and submit a class schedule and grades each term

Employment Incentive Program

The Employment Incentive Program (EIP) is designed to provide financial and supplemental services to help adolescent youth gain marketable skills through on-the-job work experience or through job training programs. Participants receive a monthly stipend in the amount of \$150.00 for a maximum of 12 months and a medical card until age 21. They may also be eligible for start-up funding of work-related items (e.g., tools, work clothing, etc.). Funding is need-based and limited to a one-time disbursement of up to \$200.00

Eligibility Requirements:

- Be 17 years of age, and not yet 21

- Have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate
- Be under court-ordered legal responsibility of DCFS
- Complete Ansell-Casey living skills assessment
- Be involved in job training through a certified job skills training program or be employed for at least one month prior to applying for the EIP and working a minimum of 20 hours per week

Community College Payment Program

The Community College Payment Program allows youth under DCFS guardianship who enroll in an Illinois community college the opportunity to have their in-district tuition, fees, and books paid by DCFS- if they are not paid by other financial aid.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must be a youth for whom DCFS is legally responsible
- Must be accepted for enrollment by an in-district community college
- Has not used his/her four semesters of payments
- Maintain a “C” average
- Must apply for financial aid through FAFSA, designating community college to receive funds.

For more details contact the young person’s caseworker, or call one of the division offices:

- Chicago - 312-814-5959
- Springfield - 217-557-2689
- Peoria - 309-693-5150



Register now for Caregiver Institutes Meeting Mental Health Needs

Enrollment is now open for the 2009 Caregiver Institutes: Focusing on Meeting Mental Health Needs. Foster, adoptive, guardianship and relative caregivers may call the DCFS Registration Line at 877-800-3393 TODAY to register for one of four sessions. This year's training will focus on caring for children with mental health issues.

Abused and neglected children and youth often have experienced multiple separations and may feel isolated, overwhelmed and out of control. Mental health issues are not uncommon in children and youth involved in the child welfare system. This training will address ways caregivers can identify mental health needs and obtain services to assist children and youth in their care. It will also help them identify ways to maintain their own health and well-being while dealing with challenging behaviors and navigating the mental health system.

The Caregiver Institutes have become known for being dynamic and interactive sessions. Participants will earn five training credit hours to meet licensing requirements when they sign in on time and participate in the entire session.

Caregiver Institutes will be presented in four sites around the state. Please choose the most convenient location and date, regardless of your designated DCFS region. The same training content will be presented at each institute, so you should plan to attend only one institute.

March 7
DCFS Office, 6201 S. Emerald

Chicago

March 14
Hamilton's Fireside Room
110 North East Street
Jacksonville

March 28
Heartland Regional Medical Center
3333 West DeYoung
Marion

April 18
Illinois Valley Community College
815 North Orlando Smith Avenue
Oglesby

Registration opens at 8 a.m. with the program beginning at 9 a.m. and finishing by 3 p.m. Coffee, donuts and lunch will be provided for participants. There are no accommodations for childcare at the institutes, and children must not attend. Caregivers who bring children must be asked to leave.

There may be limited funds available through the DCFS regions to reimburse DCFS supervised caregivers for child care or mileage (not lodging) expenses to attend this training. Caregivers should follow normal procedures within their own regions to check on potential reimbursement before attending. Attendees from private agencies should contact their agencies in advance to determine whether they can be reimbursed for those expenses.

Space is limited at each site so CALL 877-800-3393 NOW to register.

From The Editor



I do look forward to starting each year with this column. I think it is important to know that there is a real person working behind the scenes to bring other "real people" news you need to help your families.

At the James household we just turned in our license renewal packet after a dozen years of foster care and adoption. We have been on a bit of a hiatus from bringing in any new kids in, while we focus on getting our brood on solid ground. Some of you may remember a certain 12-year-old whom we adopted with great fanfare on National Adoption Day 2003. In what seems like a blink, he has graduated high school (whew!) and is exploring many of the programs you will be reading about in this issue devoted to teens.

With our daughters, ages 13 and 8, at the teen and "tween" stages, I will undoubtedly have many more real life parenting examples to share within these pages. Meanwhile, if you want to offer your ideas for stories, please fill out and return the survey on pages 7 and 8.

My thanks go to the regional reporters, the design staff and the print production team for all they do to deliver this publication to more than 42,000 homes and child welfare staff six times a year. To those caregivers who stop me at trainings or call me with both complaints and compliments, thank you too. It is nice to know you are still reading after nine years of writing for you.

Peace and blessings to your family in 2009.

College financial aid for foster care and now teenage adoptions

The first step in qualifying for financial aid is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form (FAFSA). All assistance based on financial need requires filling out the FAFSA. It is important that each youth complete and mail or e-mail their applications early in the calendar year in order to secure the maximum benefits. Students can get forms from their school counselor or via the Internet. After filling out and returning the application, the student will receive the Student Aid Report (SAR) that lists the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC is what the family is expected to pay, based on their family income, on top of any financial aid that is awarded.

For students who have been in the child welfare system, the major factor for financial aid is the student's status as "dependent" or "independent." As an independent student, the parent's (parent by birth or foster caregiver) income will not be included in the financial need formula. That typically results in eligibility for more financial aid. Youth in foster care or subsidized guardianship would qualify as independent students. Alternatively, for youth who left DCFS care through adoption, the adoptive parents' income will be included, unless special circumstances apply.

However, new guidelines go into effect for the 2009-10 award year that could benefit some adopted youth. Youth adopted from foster care after age 13 can apply under the recently expanded definition of independent, which goes into effect in July 2009. Students who plan to attend college in 2009 should talk to their guidance counselors and college financial aid advisors for more specific details on the new criteria.

The Education Finance Council website at www.efc.org is another source of information on financial aid resources specific to youth in foster care and other special

circumstances. Along with assistance in securing funds, there is also a tip sheet on applying for financial aid written for youth involved with the child welfare system.

The DCFS Education Advisors can also help families make plans for college. The advisors are assigned to each region. For more information contact the office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959. DCFS also administers two programs that can offset the expense of college and career training.

DCFS Scholarships Available Apply before March 31

DCFS annually provides 48 college scholarships to youth who are currently under guardianship of the Department or who left DCFS guardianship through adoption or private guardianship arrangements. Scholarship recipients receive up to four consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers to be used at participating Illinois state colleges or universities, a \$471 monthly stipend and a medical card up to age 23. Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED by the end of the current school year. Scholarship Program Student Applications (CFS 438) are available now. Contact the youth's caseworker or call 312-814-5959.

Education & Training Vouchers

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program assists youth with post-secondary education related expenses not covered by financial aid grants. Qualifying students can receive payment of up to \$5000 annually for education related expenses such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, uniforms, equipment, and/or transportation not covered by other grants or scholarship. Funding is available until age 21. However, if the student is enrolled in a post-secondary program before age 21 and making satisfactory progress toward completion

of the program, funding is available until age 23.

Eligibility:

- Youth for whom DCFS is legally responsible or who aged out of care at age 18 or older

OR

- Achieved permanency at age 16 or older through either subsidized guardianship or adoption

Web resources

These Internet sites have information on selecting colleges, preparing the applications and financial aid. They can be valuable tools in helping students make decisions and secure resources for further education.

- Free Application for Federal Student Aid Commission
www.fafsa.edu.gov

- Illinois Student Assistance Commission
www.collegezone.org

- Fastweb scholarship search
www.fastweb.com

- United Negro College Fund
www.uncf.org

- Black Excel College Help Network
www.BlackExcel.org

- Minority Scholarships
www.free-4u.com/minority.htm

- Orphan Foundation of America
www.orphan.org

Avoid spread of salmonella sickness

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there are over 1.4 million cases of salmonella each year in the United States. Salmonella is a bacterial infection of the intestinal tract and is shed through feces, where it remains highly contagious. Salmonella is the most frequently reported food-borne illness in the United States. It is more likely to contract salmonella at home than at a restaurant.

Salmonella is spread primarily by someone eating food contaminated with salmonella bacteria. Contamination happens when infected human or animal feces has contact with food while it is

otics may be needed if the salmonella disease has spread beyond the intestines. Serious cases of salmonella are more likely to affect young children, people with weak immune systems, and frail or elderly people.

Salmonella infection is contagious so it is important to take precautions to avoid spreading bacteria to others. Cleanliness is the key to prevention. Several steps can be taken to help prevent the spread of salmonella, including:

- Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and handling pets. This is the best way to prevent the spread of salmonella.
- Using paper towels to clean kitchen and bathroom surfaces, or washing cloth cleaning towels often in the hot cycle of the washing machine.
- Washing vegetables and fruits under running water before eating.
- Not letting raw foods or the surfaces



being harvested, processed, or prepared. Outbreaks of the disease have involved raw eggs, peanuts, fresh vegetables, egg products, cereal and contaminated water. However, salmonella can also affect any food that comes from an animal, or unpasteurized dairy product.

The most common disease that salmonella causes is the stomach flu, which is characterized by diarrhea, vomiting, headache, stomach cramps, fever, and nausea. These symptoms usually begin to appear 12 to 72 hours after consuming a contaminated food or drink. People typically recover from salmonella in 4 to 7 days, and treatment usually only requires drinking plenty of fluids. Antibiotics

that raw foods touch come into contact with one another.

- Keeping eggs refrigerated.
- Not eating foods like eggs or meat undercooked. Meat should not be eaten if it is still pink in the middle after being cooked.
- Avoiding direct contact with animals who may be carriers, such as turtles, pigs, snakes, other reptiles, whether they are from a pet store or found in the wild. Always wash hands thoroughly after handling these animals.
- Drinking chlorine-treated water.

DCFS offers deaf youth services

For the children in care who are deaf or have hearing loss, communicating feelings presents many more challenges. They may miss the inflections that add meaning or may not have the vocabulary to express their feelings. These complications can compound the effect of the trauma of abuse and neglect.

The DCFS Division of Clinical Services has established an office to be sure that children with deafness or other degrees of hearing loss have their needs met through child welfare and other social service networks. Marsha Northrup, Statewide Deaf and Hard of Hearing Coordinator, works with families and consults with caseworkers on behalf of children with special hearing-related needs.

Together with Dwayne Harris, her colleague and interpreter, DCFS is preparing to launch the Deaf Care Communication Project. Harris recently worked with the foster family of a child who is deaf to give them resources to learn basic sign language and improve communication among all the family members. The goal is to work directly with more families in Cook County and establish a model for expansion.

Caregivers who know sign language should talk to their licensing representatives about potential placements. Individuals with questions about hearing services can also contact Marsha Northrup through a video translation service at 866-927-5903. The Illinois Department of Human Services also provides employment and education support for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Information is on the website at www.dhs.state.il.us under the Rehabilitation Services division.



SSI funds for foster care

Foster caregivers may be contacted about the Children's SSI Project. DCFS recently contracted with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to identify children in DCFS care who may be eligible for Supplemental Security Income, or SSI, benefits because of a disability.

Foster parent caregivers are in the unique position of seeing foster children everyday and knowing how they function. Because of this relationship, caregivers may be contacted by PCG staff to assist in the SSI application process.

Ways to assist:

- Provide information - fill out daily functioning questionnaires;
- Transport child to/from Consultative Examinations set up by SSA;
- Give history of child's treatment for his/her medical conditions.

If a child is determined to be eligible for SSI, the federal government provides the funds to offset the child's normal cost of care as well as other special needs he or she may have. The caseworker may discuss these needs with you. DCFS as the legal guardian receives the SSI payment on behalf of the child. The Department then draws against these funds to cover the cost of the child's monthly care. This is not a savings account, but a needs-based welfare program. As such, the account must remain under a certain balance for the child to remain eligible.

Foster caregivers are encouraged to cooperate fully with PCG in this effort to identify more funding resources to benefit children in care. Contact Jodi Biggs of DCFS Children's Accounts at 217-524-1976 with questions.



MAC can help youth in care reconnect with family members

DCFS recognizes how important a connection to a birth relative can be to a child while in foster care. Sometimes those connections to a sibling who was placed separately or to an aunt who moved can be broken. For 15 years, Midwest Adoption Center (MAC) has been contracted to deliver Search Service and Closed File Information to help rebuild connections and answer questions on behalf of an adopted child or after the youth becomes of adult age. Now this service can connect children to their relatives while they are still in DCFS care.

For any number of reasons it may be difficult for the child's caseworker to find a relative that the child may be asking about. Through MAC's search service staff will work with the child's caseworker and/or caregiver to decide what kind of connection would be in the best interest of the child, then attempt to locate the relative being sought.

"Connection" can be defined on a broad spectrum. It could mean direct contact at some point. Alternatively, MAC can be the go-between for correspondence without disclosing the location of the child or names of foster parents. It may be enough for the child just to know where that relative is and how to get in touch later. These connections are important and can benefit a child coping with the traumatic effects of abuse or neglect. They can also be complicated. MAC specialists will help navigate the scope of connection or contact in a manner that is appropriate for the child and the adults who support that child.

Since opening up the service to youth in care last year, a number of requests have already been received. They include young teens who have lost contact with a relative they had once been close to. Several youth hope to reconnect with siblings who were adopted by other families. Sometimes youth in care wish to reconnect with older siblings who were never or are no longer in the child welfare system.

In addition to the services now available to foster care, MAC continues to provide service to adoptive parents of minors. This includes "non-identifying" medical/social information from their child's closed DCFS file and help in locating and communicating with birth relatives.

To get more information about establishing new connections or renewing past connections, contact MAC staff person Diana Phalen at 847-298-9096, ext 24 or by e-mail at dianap@macadopt.org. She can explain how the program works and can send a service request form.



2009 Reader Survey

Please help us make sure Illinois Families Now and Forever offers what you want to know. After circling your answers on both sides, simply fold, seal and mail the survey back. Or visit the DCFS Web site at www.state.il.us/dcfs to fill it out on-line. You may also fax both sides to 312-814-4131. Thank you in advance for your input.

CIRCLE: 1=GREAT interest 2=SOME interest 3=NO interest X=NOT applicable

Working Within the Child Welfare System

1 2 3 X	Foster care rules/procedures	1 2 3 X	Child and family teams
1 2 3 X	Adoption rules/procedures	1 2 3 X	Confidentiality
1 2 3 X	Guardianship rules/procedures	1 2 3 X	System of care service network
1 2 3 X	Governmental rules/legislation	1 2 3 X	Integrated assessments
1 2 3 X	Licensing policy	1 2 3 X	Intake/child investigation process
1 2 3 X	Obligations of foster parents	1 2 3 X	Juvenile Court
1 2 3 X	Recruiting foster/adopt families	1 2 3 X	Resolving DCFS/agency disputes

other topics/comments: _____

Adoption and Guardianship

1 2 3 X	Financial implications	1 2 3 X	Subsidy agreement
1 2 3 X	Advocating for the adopted child	1 2 3 X	Rights and responsibilities
1 2 3 X	Obtaining community resources	1 2 3 X	Accessing free post-adopt services

other topics/comments: _____

Medical and Mental Health

1 2 3 X	Depression	1 2 3 X	Developmental disabilities
1 2 3 X	Attachment disorders	1 2 3 X	Medically-fragile children
1 2 3 X	Eating disorders	1 2 3 X	Sexual abuse
1 2 3 X	Self-esteem	1 2 3 X	Resources for medical specialties
1 2 3 X	Fetal alcohol/drug exposure	1 2 3 X	Resources/info for dental services
1 2 3 X	Asthma	1 2 3 X	Resources for mental health
1 2 3 X	Diabetes	1 2 3 X	Using the Public Aid medical card

other topics/comments: _____

Education

1 2 3 X	Working with schools/teachers	1 2 3 X	Tutoring
1 2 3 X	Special education services	1 2 3 X	DCFS Education Advisors
1 2 3 X	Scholarships	1 2 3 X	Education after high school

other topics/comments: _____

Age-related Topics

1 2 3 X	Early childhood intervention	1 2 3 X	Independent Living
1 2 3 X	Tantrums, biting, aggression	1 2 3 X	Services for teens
1 2 3 X	Safety (home, playground, school)	1 2 3 X	Housing for transitioning teens
1 2 3 X	Pre-teen sexuality	1 2 3 X	Youth Advisory Boards
1 2 3 X	Teen sexuality	1 2 3 X	Runaways

other topics/comments: _____

Family Life

1 2 3 X	Behavior management/discipline	1 2 3 X	Foster/adoptive family networking
1 2 3 X	Sibling rivalry	1 2 3 X	Family traditions/activities
1 2 3 X	Impact of placement changes	1 2 3 X	Camps
1 2 3 X	Handling stress	1 2 3 X	Arts, music, sports activities
1 2 3 X	Family therapy/counseling	1 2 3 X	Travel
1 2 3 X	Self-care for parents	1 2 3 X	Free services, products

other topics/comments: _____



Tell us how you feel about the regular features currently offered in each issue:

CIRCLE: 1=GREAT interest 2=SOME interest 3=NO interest X=NOT applicable

Regular Features

1 2 3 X	Director's Message		
1 2 3 X	Foster/adoptive parent profiles	1 2 3 X	Family for Me photos of children
1 2 3 X	Tell It Like It Is question/answer	1 2 3 X	Regional edition insert
1 2 3 X	Movin' On Up (for transitioning youth)	1 2 3 X	Training schedule

other topics/comments: _____

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Please tell us about yourself: _____ # children by birth
 _____ # foster children currently in your home _____ private agency supervised home
 _____ # children you have adopted _____ DCFS office supervised home
 _____ # foster children previously in your home _____ relative caregiver (yes / no)
 _____ # children you have taken guardianship of _____ DCFS/agency staff (yes / no)

Circle your DCFS region: Cook Central Cook North Cook South Southern Northern Central
 Would you be interested in receiving the newsletter by e-mail? Yes No
 Would you be interested in reviewing the newsletter on the DCFS Web site? Yes No

What do you like best about the newsletter?
 What do you like least about the newsletter?
 Other comments:

Please offer your Name, Address and Phone Number, if you wish.



Adoption Council fills open seats with new members

The Illinois Adoption Council welcomed seven new members at the November meeting. The council is made up of adoptive or guardianship parents, people who are adopted and professionals in child welfare.



Lisa Boatman was herself adopted from the child welfare system. She now works as a private agency caseworker.

Claudia Dancy-Davis has been a caregiver for more than 25 years. She and her husband Ronald have adopted two children. She is a former member of the foster care advisory council.



Karen Taylor works for DCFS, where she has had a hand in overseeing the state's adoption program and in helping to develop its policies and practice.

Maripat Oliver has been an adoptive parent for eight years. She has held offices in the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association. She is also the founder and president of the West Suburban Foster Parent Association.



Julie Cebulski has adopted two children through foster care. She also is a Foster PRIDE trainer. Last year she returned to DCFS as a Foster Parent Support Specialist.

Specialist.

Billie Ray Lewis and his wife have cared for several children since November of 2002. They are in the process of adopting a third child. He is active in the Cook Central Regional Advisory Council.



Ruth Jajko is an adoptive parent to two children. She is also the statewide director of adoption services at Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. Jajko is a former member of the DCFS foster care council.

Breanne Radke and her husband have adopted two children. She is an advocate who serves on organizations that support families on transracial adoption issues.

Tamara Guy and her husband have two children adopted in 2003 and 2004. As the Prevention Resource Developer for Prevent Child Abuse Illinois, she also coordinates trainings on child welfare topics.

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council is scheduled to meet April 3 in Springfield. The meeting starts at 10 a.m. and concludes by 3 p.m. All meetings are open to the public. Meeting schedules for the full fiscal year, membership rosters and archived minutes of past meetings are available for review on the DCFS website at www.state.il.us/dcfs.

Contact the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422 for more information.



Couples find help with adoption

The Adoptive Families Together is a program for couples who have adopted or who have become guardians of a child through the child welfare system. Children's Home + Aid developed the program to address the stress that adoption or guardianship of a child can place on a couple's relationship. Adoptive Families Together program is designed to strengthen and support those adult relationships to the benefit of the entire family.

One unique aspect of the program is a weekend retreat for couples who participate in the Adoptive Families Together program. The retreat provides couples an opportunity to get away, have fun, relax, and enjoy each other's company.

The retreat is a component of other programming, which includes workshops and group activities that explore:

- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Commitment
- Expectations
- Enjoyment
- Friendship

Child care and group activities are available for children during evening workshops. Workshops and the weekend retreat are offered at no cost to participants.

To register for an Adoptive Families Together workshop series or learn more about upcoming retreats, call 815-962-1043 or see the website at www.childrenshomeandaid.org.

Tell It Like It Is

Illinois Families Now and Forever wants to hear the real deal on caring for children, from those who know best... YOU!

Here's what you had to say about the question:

What's the most important thing you would tell a "rookie" caseworker about foster care to help them do their job better?

"I would tell them to take a good look at placement... If placement is not done right it only causes more problems in the future for the child and for the caseworker because the child will have to be moved. Learn the art of discernment, listen to your gut feelings sometimes, and last but not least, listen to the child. Being a case worker is not an easy job. Just remember that your job is the safety and well being of the children in your care."

Mrs. Lenora J. Rodin

"1. Meet your deadlines.

2. Be on time for home visits. If you can't, call the parent to let them know. Our time is just as valuable as yours.

3. Give me your cell phone number. It may not be protocol, but if I'm late or you're late, it can reduce resentment and confusion.

4. Don't make promises you can't keep.

5. Try to see things from the parent/guardian's perspective. Empathize if you can.

6. Help us see things from your perspective.

7. File papers, send forms, and follow procedures as expeditiously as you can.

8. Appreciate good foster parents and pre-adoptive parents. Don't treat us like the bad ones."

Jenifer Grady

The new question is:

When you start to feel overwhelmed with parenting, how do you take care of your emotional needs?

You can contact me with your response by e-mail at Vanessa.James@illinois.gov (Note: there is a "dot" after Vanessa) or by phone at 312-814-6824 I am looking forward to sharing your responses in the next issue.

Add your support group to the 2009 listing

If you lead a support group or association for foster or adoptive families, you can be included in the directory of support Groups, published in May. Please send the following information by March 30.

Name of group

Meeting schedule (e.g. 2nd Tuesday monthly at 10:00 a.m.)

Meeting location

Contact name with phone number/e-mail

Any other notes (e.g. potluck dinner, child care provided, RSVP required, etc.)

New listings and updates should be sent in writing by e-mail or post to:

Vanessa.James@illinois.gov

Vanessa James, DCFS

100 W. Randolph, 6th fl.

Chicago, IL 60601



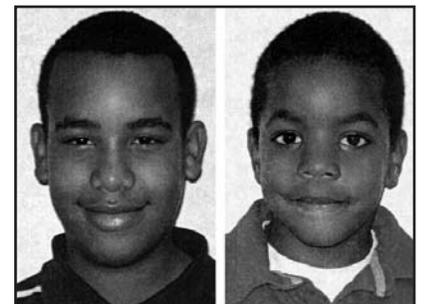
Christopher (7370)



Telecia (7470)



Jared (7622)



George and Mykl (7692-91)

Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390.

A family for me: [Call 1-800-572-2390 for more information](tel:1-800-572-2390)

Jared [7622] Jared, 10, is a cheerful young man who gets along well with others. His favorite activity is fishing with his foster parents. He also enjoys playing with toy cars and watching cartoons. Jared uses a wheelchair to go from place to place. While he has some difficulty speaking, his comprehension is good, and he can nod “yes” or “no” to many questions.

His worker said Jared is sweet and respectful. He waits his turn to interact with others, and he’s always willing to help with his care. The right parents for Jared would be loving, patient, and supportive. You would also have plenty of time for Jared’s care. A family in central Illinois is strongly preferred, so Jared can remain in contact with his siblings and grandparents after he is adopted.

George & Mykl [7692-91] George is a smart twelve-year-old who grasps new concepts very quickly. He appreciates his friends and will go to great lengths to help them when they need it. George enjoys playing football and basketball, and would like to be on a team someday. His brother Mykl, 7, is a lovable young man with a positive attitude. He works hard at tasks and likes to be involved in activities that his older brother is doing.

Mykl is also very bright and was nicknamed “The Sponge” at school because he soaks up information so quickly. He enjoys reading anything, and his favorite characters are superheroes. George’s teachers said he is a caring, friendly and happy young man. He is well organized and when properly motivated, can accomplish great things. Their foster parents said Mykl is very likeable and has a great smile. He’s always willing to help and is interested in learning new things.

Potential parents to George and Mykl would be patient, caring, and kind. You would be able spend time with George and Mykl, get to know them well, and provide for their individual needs.

Christopher [7370] Christopher, 13, is a bright young man who enjoys being with people, especially in one-on-one settings. He is good at communicating his thoughts and feelings. In his free time, Christopher likes to play basketball and watch movies. His role models include Michael Jordan and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

His teacher said Christopher is smart and fun to be with. His worker said Christopher enjoys collecting sports cards. Christopher’s forever family would provide lots of love and atten-

tion. Christopher would like to remain in contact with his brothers after he is adopted. An Illinois family is preferred.

Telecia [7470] Telecia, 17, is a bright young lady with a great sense of humor. She loves to laugh and make others laugh. She treats people in a kind and supportive fashion, especially when she feels an attachment to them. In her free time, Telecia enjoys dancing, reading, and journaling. She likes caring for cats, hamsters, and other pets.

Her caseworker said Telecia is relaxed and easy to talk with. She is funny, resilient, and very motivated. She performs well in her part-time job.

Telecia said, “I’d like my new family to be supportive and sit down and talk with me without raising their voice. I want to feel like a normal kid. I want to be able to say the words ‘mommy’ and ‘daddy’ to people I love and who love me back.”



Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI Web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org if you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted.

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