

Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship®

High emotions don't have to hamper holiday fun

Foster parenting challenges can become even greater than usual during the holidays. All children have the tendency to become overwhelmed by holidays, the prospect of gifts, and the let down when all is over. Children in care face all of these same stressors along with their own unique challenges. Children separated from primary caregivers struggle with confusing feelings of wanting to be loyal to their own parents and traditions and also wanting to be part of the season and fun. A child with attachment issues may unknowingly or unintentionally sabotage any attempts at engaging in enjoyable activities or may simply become withdrawn and sullen, dampening the holiday spirit. There are some ways to manage the holidays to minimize problems and help children feel less isolated and confused.

It starts with being aware of potential problems and looking at them from the child's perspective. For example, one foster caregiver was upset that on Christmas morning, the child in her care was "ungrateful" for so much generosity, demonstrated by a large number of presents. He became angry when opening an item that wasn't what he wanted. The foster mother was able to be more understanding when



Connie Payton of the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation helps make the holidays brighter with donated gifts to DCFS Youth. She is pictured here at a Holiday Party in DCFS Cook North Region. (archive photo)

realizing that her foster child might have really been feeling unworthy of so many gifts, or angry that the gifts were not from his birth parents, or guilty about being a burden to his foster family.

So how does a foster parent help a child to successfully manage the holiday season? Here is a list of do's and don'ts to consider:

- Do support the child's need for loyalty to birth family. Give the family a gift and help the child find a special gift as well. Ask about special rituals or favorite foods and incorporate these into your holiday.
- Do include the child in family rituals and activities. Have an extra Christmas stocking or let

them light the menorah. The feeling of being an outsider may not go away, but feeling awkward is better than feeling left out.

- Do be aware and respectful of cultural or religious differences. Consider attending an extra church service in their denomination if different from yours, or find a cultural celebration where the child may feel more comfortable.
- Don't overwhelm the child with too many gifts or activities. Keep things as simple as possible without sacrificing your own enjoyment.

Continued on page 2



From the DCFS Director

Erwin McEwen

When DCFS has to step in to keep children safe, we must look at the immediate situation. However, we must also take a longer view. Together we are raising kids who will at some point in time have to take care of all of us, either directly or indirectly in how they contribute to society as adults.

No matter how you look at it, there is nothing temporary about the work you do with children. Even if we call a placement “short-term,” you make an impact that is lasting.

The time you take, the money you spend and the patience you show help children work through the trauma of abuse and neglect. You are providing a chance for them to start a new chapter in their life stories. You give them the possibility for an ending that is happier than it would have been without you.

As this year comes toward a close, I hope you have an opportunity to reflect on the big and small successes in your homes. Celebrate the holidays and create many warm memories that will see you into the next year.

Best Wishes,

Holidays, con't.

- Don't expect profuse gratitude. Requesting a simple “thank you” is teaching manners; expecting a child to suddenly have no problems or issues is asking for disappointment!
- Don't let the child set the emotional tone in your household. Your feelings of joy and happiness should not be dependent on your foster child's feelings and behaviors.

Most importantly, don't forget to ask for help. Sometimes, despite your best efforts, your foster child may have difficulties beyond your ability to manage. At these times, professional help may be necessary in order to ensure the stability of your placement. It is good to know the warning signs. These may include:

- **Sabotaging.** Sabotaging is beyond moping or refusing to participate in activities. It may include destruction of holiday gifts and decorations, or ruining food intended for family dinners. It may also include acting-out behaviors beyond the norm that seem specifically designed to push you away, but may actually be unintended. Kids who seem to do everything to avoid mutually enjoyable time with you need outside assistance with a therapist who understands attachment-based issues.
- **Excessive depression.** Being sad at holidays is normal, but even kids who miss their birth

family should be able to enjoy getting presents and eating special meals. Youth who are particularly withdrawn may need intervention. Be aware, too, that depression in children can look like anger, crabbiness or even hyperactivity.

- **Check your own feelings!** Taking care of yourself will keep you in shape to enjoy the holidays and enjoy sharing them with your children. If you find yourself unable to feel any connection with a child in your home or you feel unable to manage your child's issues, it is time to seek assistance. Professional help can address your child's feelings and behaviors and can help you regain your sense of satisfaction with your role.

With contributions by Amy Baur, LCSW, The Bridge Youth and Family Services

Holiday fun on the Web

- Write to Santa, read stories, enjoy Karaoke, send e-cards, find recipes, play games and puzzles, print stories to color at www.northpole.com.
- Fill those school-free days with lots of winter crafts that are easy to do. Take a peek at www.crafts.kaboose.com for lots of ideas on neat pictures, cool hair accessories and lots of craft projects to pass the time constructively.

Learn and share family holiday traditions across cultures

The Illinois Foster Parent Law states that it is the foster parent's responsibility to "Respect and maintain a child's cultural needs and support relationships with his own family." If you are parenting across cultures, it is especially important to get some background on the holiday traditions that are meaningful to the child and his or her family. Yet, even children of the same religious faith as their caregivers may have emphasized different aspects of a holiday. The key is to talk about the holidays and work out ways to honor the child's past and present family rituals while he is in your home.

Following are highlights of several upcoming religious and cultural holidays that may be significant to children in your home.

Chanukah

In 2008, Chanukah will be observed beginning at sundown on December 21. Jews celebrate Chanukah or Hanukkah to mark the victory over Syrian rulers, who more than 2,300 years ago, tried to force the Jewish people to renounce their faith and worship Greek gods. Modern day Jewish families celebrate the Festival of Lights or Chanukah at home over eight days by lighting the menorah, eating special food and giving gifts.

Las Posadas

In Mexico the *posada*, which means lodging or shelter in Spanish, is celebrated every evening from December 16 to 24 to commemorate Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. On each

night of the *posada*, a home in the neighborhood plays host to a party with food, drinks and candy and fruit for the children. At dusk, a young child dressed as an angel leads a procession to the host home with adults singing Christmas carols.

Arriving at the house, the group splits in two, with one half going inside as the other remains outside and begs for shelter. When the doors open, the solemn aspect of the celebration gives way to fun. To end the *posada*, the children take turns swinging at a star-shaped *piñata*, hoping to release the treats inside.

Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is an African-American and Pan-African holiday that celebrates family, community and culture. It is celebrated from December 26 through January 1 by an estimated 26 million people around the world.

To celebrate Kwanzaa, first a central place in the home is chosen for the Kwanzaa Set, the symbols of Kwanzaa, which include a table covering of African cloth, the *mkeka* (mat) and the *kinara* (candleholder). Each of seven candles and each of the seven days of the Kwanzaa celebration focus on one of seven Kwanzaa principles: *Umoja* (unity); *Kujichagulia* (self-determination); *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics); *Kuumba* (creativity); *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility); *Nia* (purpose) and *Imani* (faith).

At the evening meal, the family



members light one of the seven candles to commemorate the principle of the day. Everyone explains what the *Nguzo Saba* principle of that day means to them and how they have practiced it during the day. After the discussion, everyone makes a commitment to practice and promote the particular principle throughout the year.

For more information, visit www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org

El Dia de los Tres Reyes (Three King's Day)

Three King's Day follows the account of the Three Magi who brought gifts of frankincense, myrrh and gold to the infant Jesus. It begins at dawn on January 6. The night before, Puerto Rican children place cut grass into a shoebox and top it with a wish list. The grass is intended as a treat for the kings' camels after their journey. The *Reyes* (kings) will only come if the child has been good all year.

After a night of anticipation, fortunate children wake to find gifts left by the *Reyes*. They spend the day playing with toys and enjoying a holiday meal with family and friends.

Caregivers get to have their say with service appeals

Caregivers often hear the phrase “take it up the chain of command” when you disagree with a decision made by the agency or the Department. You talk it over with the caseworker, discuss it with the caseworkers’ supervisor, and work your way up. When you can’t find resolution through the regular channels, you can file an appeal through the Service Appeal Process. This process offers a means for families to challenge a decision and be heard by an impartial Administrative Law Judge.

“The perception is that the deck is stacked against the caregiver and that they won’t get a fair hearing. But the judges are impartial. They are there to listen and to make a determination on the evidence that is presented,” said Phillip C. Dalmage, Chief Administrative Law Judge.

Dalmage believes that caregivers can do well in the appeal process if they remember a few key points. First, the hearing is different from criminal court and different from juvenile court. The administrative law judges are governed by DCFS rules and procedures. A case is proven based on how the actions hold up against the stated rules and procedures. His second piece of advice is to be prepared. Caregivers can navigate the appeal process without an attorney. However, they have to understand the rules before attempting to argue their point. The first place to start is Rule 337 Service Appeals Process. The most recent version of Rule 337 (and all DCFS Rules) can be found

on the DCFS Web site at www.state.il.us/dcf under the Policy and Rules section.

The overarching message to caregivers is to keep it simple and organized. Caregivers should be able to boil down the issue and the solution they want in very simple terms. Then you have to present the facts (in chronological order) and have documentation ready.

“I understand that these can be trying times and people can get emotional. But when you bring up all these other things, it just makes it more difficult for the judge to decide in your favor,” said Dalmage.

Appeal process overview

Foster parents or relative caregivers can appeal decisions that impact the caregiver (such as payment), decisions about a child’s services and some changes in placement. Caregivers cannot appeal changes required by state or federal law, decisions that were already determined by the appeal process or decisions made by the court. More specific details are contained in Rule 337.

There are two paths that an appeal can take toward resolution, depending on if the issue in question is a placement change or a service issue.

Change in placement appeal

A caregiver who objects to a removal or change in placement must request and complete a

Clinical Placement Review, before filing a request for an appeal. The request for a Clinical Placement Review must be made within 3 working days of receiving notice about the change of placement.

During the Clinical Placement Review, designated clinical staff from DCFS will determine which placement will best meet the child’s need for safety, well being and permanency. If you do not agree with the decision made as a result of the Clinical Placement Review, you may file an appeal, leading to a fair hearing. However, the child will be in the placement decided by the Clinical Placement Review while the appeal is pending.

At the hearing you will have a chance to state your opinion and the reasons for your opinion to an administrative law judge. The local DCFS office or agency making the decision will also state its opinion and reasons for making the decision it did. The administrative law judge will then issue a recommendation to the DCFS Director as to how the issue or issues should be resolved. The Director will consider this recommendation and issue the Department’s final decision in writing. If the caregiver does not agree with the Director’s Final Administrative Decision, the next step would be to ask the Illinois Circuit Court to review the decision.

Service appeal

If you do not agree with a decision made or action taken by DCFS pertaining to services, you may appeal.

Appeals, con't.

If you appeal within 10 days from receiving notice, you may be able to stop the Department from acting on its decision until your case has proceeded through the Service Appeal Process. You can request a service appeal in writing within 45 days from receiving notice of the decision or action intended to be taken by the Department.

Rather than going to hearing, a caregiver may choose to resolve the issue through mediation. Mediation is an informal process where both you and the staff responsible for the decision discuss your differences with a neutral third party, a trained mediator, leading the discussion. Mediation also gives you a chance to express your opinion through discussion, take part in the decision-making process, and be a part of the final decision. If you reach an agreement on your issue, all parties sign a Memorandum of Agreement, which spells out the terms of the agreement. Mediation is an optional process and you do not have to participate.

If you choose not to mediate your differences, or if you choose mediation and it is not successful, or if you begin mediation and you find you no longer wish to continue, you may request to have a fair hearing scheduled to resolve the disagreement. During this hearing you will have a chance to state your opinion and the reasons for your opinion to an administrative law judge. The local DCFS office or agency making the decision will also state its opinion and reasons

for making the decision it did. The administrative law judge will then issue a recommendation to the Director as to how the issue or issues should be resolved. The Director will consider this recommendation and issue the Department's final decision on the issue or issues. If you still do not agree with the Director's final decision, you have the right to appeal in Illinois Circuit Court.

Important things to know

- Download Rule 337 at the DCFS Web site under Policy and Rules www.state.il.us/dcfs
- Contact the DCFS Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798 for assistance
- Make your written request for a service appeal to: DCFS Administrative Hearings Unit
406 E. Monroe St., Station 15
Springfield, IL 62701
217-782-6655

Definitions:

- "Administrative law judge" means an attorney who is appointed by the DCFS Director and who is responsible for conducting the fair hearing
- "Appellant" means the person who requests a service appeal or on whose behalf a service appeal is requested.
- "Mediation" means a meeting open to all parties affected by the decision being appealed with a mediator who assists the parties in resolving issues and drawing up an agreement.

Movin' On Up For youth transitioning to adulthood

By now all high school students who are still in DCFS care should have had the Annual High School Academic Plan meeting with their caseworker. At that meeting the student, worker, caregiver and school personnel come together to monitor progress, discuss any problems and make plans for after graduation.

The caseworker calls this meeting at the start of the school year. After the meeting, the follow-up form (CFS 407 HS) should be presented at the next Administrative Case Review. The student, caregiver and counselor should also get copies. If your meeting has not been scheduled, check in with your caseworker.

If you have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), are missing credits or have other educational concerns, you can also get help from a DCFS Education Advisor who can be included in the meeting.

Youth who have moved to adoption or guardianship will not have an annual high school academic plan meeting. However, the Education Advisors can assist with school-related issues.

Contact the Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959.

Homeward bound

When return home is the goal

Caregivers to children who have a return home goal should be aware of the heightened emotions during the holiday season. You may have to work hard to remember not to take their potential outbursts personally. Your main priority is to provide an emotionally safe place and consistent structure. Try to turn things toward positive with a few gestures to bridge the gap between the two homes.

1. Decide early what the visit schedule will be during the break from school and on the actual holidays. Arrange transportation in advance. If an in-person visit can't happen, set a time for a phone call.
2. Agree in advance on a "signal" so the child can let you know if a visit gets to be more than he can handle. Prepare plan to give the child some safe space, if needed.
3. Talk to the child about holiday traditions from his or her home. Try to incorporate what you can in your own holiday plan.
4. Ask the child about special holiday foods that are part of their traditions. During an in-home activity, their parent could help them help prepare the dish at your home.

Children who have faced the trauma of separation from their families can have unrealistic expectations of the holidays. Talk to the caseworker and therapist and especially the child to determine how to provide support and encouragement to make the season enjoyable.

Holiday time is right for sibling visits

For children in foster care, regular visits with siblings can preserve connections when they have to be in separate homes. Visits can often soften the traumatic impact of separation and contribute to their long-term mental health. DCFS recognizes the power of sibling connections and will provide foster caregivers assistance and payment as they do their part in visits.

Visitation requirements

DCFS rules require that sibling visits among youth in DCFS care occur at least two times a month for a minimum of two hours each for all siblings placed apart. Exceptions to twice monthly visits include:

- A court order requiring less frequent or no visitation
- Requests by the child for less frequent or no visitation (requires regular counseling)
- Risk of physical, emotional or mental harm from the visit. (requires documentation)

If siblings are in residential care or are placed more than 150 miles apart, visits may be less frequent. However, visitation may not be reduced based on the unavailability of a visit supervisor or as a form of discipline.

These requirements only apply to youth in DCFS care. After adoption, visitation is still an important factor for the adoptive family to consider, but it is not mandated by DCFS. The adults have to determine what will work best for the children and families involved.

Reimbursement Available

Foster caregivers who help children have visits with their siblings in foster care can be reimbursed for supervising the visits and providing transportation. A foster parent who hosts an overnight or weekend visit in their home can be reimbursed \$100 for supervising the visit. Supervising shorter visits is reimbursed at \$25 an hour for up to four hours. Reimbursement for supervising visits is capped at a maximum of \$100 per month. Driving a child to or from a visit is also eligible for reimbursement at the rate of \$0.505 per mile (as of July 1). The maximum reimbursement for travel each month is capped at \$50.

Sometimes caregivers participate in visitation, but don't complete the paperwork to be paid. The child's caseworker can help foster parents complete the form (CFS 315) for reimbursement. This reimbursement could be a way to set aside extra funds for movies, dinner or activities for the next visit, but the caregiver has the freedom to decide how to put it to use.

If a caregiver is unable or decides not to host sibling visits or transport a child to a sibling visit, it is still important to provide positive support to the worker and the youth. Respecting and encouraging on-going family relationships sends a powerful message to a child. Caregivers with questions about sibling visitation or the reimbursement process should contact the child's caseworker.

Foster care and adoption councils meet

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council came together for their annual joint meeting in November. Often, issues that affect children who are in or came from DCFS care are shared across foster, adoptive and guardianship families.

Director Erwin McEwen addressed the meeting by discussing pending legislation and the budget situation. He made the point that Illinois is unique in the nation in that the number of youth in foster care is so low. However, there are 38,000 open adoption and guardianship subsidy cases, where children may still need resources.

Council members took the opportunity to ask how they and other caregivers can make their voices heard. McEwen reminded them that while his time as a caseworker and a former councilmember helps him take caregivers' concerns into consideration, it is the individual legislators who have the final say. Both councils have legislative committees that have developed outreach strategies to involve individuals who can contact specific General Assembly members and incorporate testimony and letters from "real" people. Those voices are the ones that can influence decisions.

Both councils have been advocating for expanded children's mental health resources. Diahann Moore, Associate Deputy Director of Psychiatric Services came to the meeting to discuss the PACT

clinic progress. Psychiatry for Adolescents and Children in Transition (PACT) clinics were established in Cook County as a way to provide expedient care for pressing mental health issues, until a regular community provider is secured. Moore discussed plans for more clinics and for new ways to deliver psychiatric services to youth living in communities outside major metropolitan areas.

Youth themselves also have an advocacy voice by way of the Statewide Youth Advisory Board. The adult councils regularly reach out to the youth board and will find issues to address jointly. The councils are assisting the youth council in preparing a proposal for independent living training.

The councils also had an update from the DCFS Office of Training. Both councils have been following when and where training is offered, since an internal reorganization. Judy Zaleski, Administrator for the Office of Training answered questions about the slate of course offerings, computer-based trainings, the virtual training system where caregiver's can manage their transcripts and other training enhancements.

Both councils will go back to their regular meeting schedules as they follow-up on action items from the joint meeting. Questions about either council can be directed to the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.

New Extreme Home for Gry's family

The Gry's family of Pekin will soon be featured in an upcoming episode of ABC television's Extreme Makeover Home Edition. Steve and Jeannie Gry's have been foster parents to more than 250 children during 25 years. In 2000 they brought Jake home from the hospital at 10 days old. Jake has Osteogenesis Imperfecta also known as "brittle bone disease" compounded with dwarfism. He is unable to walk, but at age 8 he can dress and feed himself. His size and medical condition necessitated an overhaul of the family homestead to keep him safe long-term.

Jake's therapist from Easter Seals helped nominate the Gry's family for the television program. In October the Gry's headed off to Disney World, while a crew of hundreds of volunteers went to work. They completely demolished the old home and replaced it with a new house designed with accommodations for Jake in just one week. All of the materials, labor and furnishings were donated.

The Gry's family returned from their trip to see their new home unveiled. The rest of the world will see it when the episode airs on ABC near the beginning of the year.



Steve and Jake Gry's leave their old home.

Prepare now for tax preparation time

The annual Tax Booklet for Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parents had to be suspended due to cuts in the state budget. Still, there are resources to help caregivers navigate the tax benefits specific to foster care and adoption.

Key areas to explore yourself or with your tax preparer are:

- Uniform Definition of Child, which allows for a child who has lived in the home less than 12 months to be claimed as a dependent.
- Adoption Tax Credit of up to \$11,650 which can offset income and potentially lower taxes, even if there were no actual expenses associated with the adoption.

As caregivers prepare for tax season, they can look to these free publications at the Web site for the Internal Revenue Service www.irs.gov under the forms and publications section.

- Pub 17, Your Federal Income Tax
- Pub 501, Exemptions, Standard Deduction and Filing Information
- Pub 596, Earned Income Credit
- Form 8839, Qualified Adoption Expenses
- Topic 607, Adoption Credit

The Center for Economic Progress will continue to offer free tax preparation services in sites across Illinois for families with income less than \$40,000. For more information, call 312-701-1326 or 888-827-8511 or visit the Web site at centerforeconomicprogress.org.

DCFS and IFAPA host joint conference

In October, DCFS partnered with the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (IFAPA) to present the caregivers conference "Empowering and Educating to Excel." This was the first joint conference with DCFS sponsorship since 2004.

"When we face tough challenges, it is important that family comes together. I fought hard to keep this conference moving forward during tough fiscal circumstances. I did it because you need this time to help you do what we ask you to do for our kids," said DCFS Director Erwin McEwen.

Hundreds of caregivers met in Lisle, Illinois for an action-packed weekend of more than 60 workshops, a health fair, inspirational keynote speakers, a reception with officials from the state legislature and judiciary, and many opportunities to network with caregivers from all parts of the state.



Gladys Boyd

"Bringing unity to Illinois caregivers was our theme for this conference. Seeing so many of us from all over come together to

learn and fight for our children makes this a success," said Gladys Boyd, IFAPA President.

The Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association is the only nationally recognized foster parent association in Illinois. It states its mission as:

- 1) To provide personal enrichment and exceptional support to



Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke, an adoptive parent, greets fellow caregiver Josephine Love at the IFAPA reception.

foster/adoptive parents and families on a continuous basis.

- 2) To review new laws, regulations, and funding proposals by DCFS and the state legislature.
- 3) To advocate actively for foster/adoptive parent towards positive change in the child welfare system; by identifying, delineating, and lobbying areas of advantageous reform.
- 4) To interface with established child welfare organizations; becoming more innovative and responsive to all clients, while streamlining efforts and coordinating resources.
- 5) To actively seek private funding for members to facilitate education, workshops and conference participation.

Membership is open to Illinois foster, adoptive, guardianship and kinship families. The membership fee is \$25 annually. For more information, visit the organization's Web site at www.ilfapa.org or contact Membership Chairperson Rick Hobbs at membership@ilfapa.org. The mailing address is IFAPA, PO Box 729, Mundelein, IL 60060.

Adoption Advisory Council Update

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council prepared for National Adoption Month by planning a celebration that kicked off in conjunction with the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Foster Parent Association conference on October 24.

The planning committee enlisted the help of the Lyons Township High School to design a logo for this year's celebration. The senior graphic arts class developed several inspired designs. The council selected the design with two intertwined hands and the theme Change a Life, Change Your Life. The chosen logo was displayed on the celebration cake served at dinner on the first night of the conference. It was also made into a lapel pin for all the caregivers. Blowups of all the logos were displayed through out the banquet hall. The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council even selected one for use on its official letterhead.

All of the caregivers received a take home scroll of the proclamation from Governor Rod R. Blagojevich in honor of Adoption Month in Illinois. That proclamation is reprinted here.

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council last met in November as a joint meeting with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council (details are on page 7 of this issue). The next meeting of the council is February 6 in Bloomington. Call the Office of Foster Parent Support Services for more details at 217-524-2422.



WHEREAS, adoption is a rewarding and enriching experience for individuals and couples who want to provide children with a stable, loving family environment; and

WHEREAS, Illinois is recognized as a national leader in finding permanent homes for waiting children, placing more than 50 thousand foster children into adoptive and subsidized guardianship homes since 1997; and

WHEREAS, largely because of its success in adoption recruitment, Illinois has become the first state in the nation to support more children in permanent adoption guardianship placements than in substitute care; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the Child Care Association of Illinois, the Adoption Information Center of Illinois, the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, the Chicago Bar Association, and the many Illinois child welfare agencies and adoptive parent groups all encourage families to consider adopting a child in need of a home; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of children in Illinois are still awaiting adoption:

THEREFORE, I, Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim November 2008 as **ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH** in Illinois, and encourage all families to consider adopting a child into their family.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Illinois to be affixed.



Done at the Capitol, in the City of Springfield,
 this EIGHTH day of SEPTEMBER, in
 the Year of Our Lord two thousand and
EIGHT, and of the State of Illinois
 the one hundred and NINETIETH

Debra White
 SECRETARY OF STATE

Rod Blagojevich
 GOVERNOR



DCFS Deputy Director Arthur Bishop; Gladys Boyd, IFAPA President; Diane Martin-Hushman, North American Council on Adoptable Children; and Illinois Adoption Council co-chairs Elizabeth Richmond and Jim Jones cut the ceremonial cake to kickoff Illinois Celebrates Adoption Month

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

After you've tried to resolve the issue with the caseworker and supervisors, then call the Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

...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, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

...You have questions about your board check?

Call the DCFS Central Payment Unit at 800-525-0499 if your check comes from DCFS. For other checks, contact your private agency.

...You have questions about your child's medical card?

Call 800-228-6533.

...You are having a family crisis with your adopted child

Contact the Adoption Preservation Program that serves your area. Judy Pence at 217-557-5677 can direct you to the appropriate agency.

...You are interested in adopting one of the children featured in the newsletter?

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, or see the AICI Web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org.

...You have an idea for an article in the newsletter?

Each region has a reporter to help gather local news. They are listed in the regional section of each edition. Or you can contact the Editor, Vanessa James.

Tell it like it is

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

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

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.

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



Jaiombre (7429)



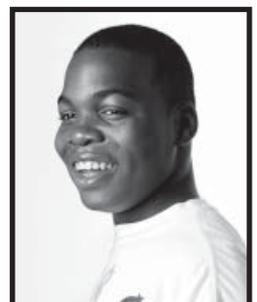
Chrishon (7371)



Samantha (7656)



Robert (7670)



Christopher (7010)

A family for me: Call 1-800-572-2390 for more information

Jaiombre [7429] Jaiombre, 10, is a sweet young man who loves music. He listens to all kind of songs, likes to dance, and even experiments with different musical instruments. Jaiombre likes to spend one-on-one time with caring adults, and especially enjoys trips to amusement parks and carnivals.

His worker said Jaiombre is sweet, lovable, and polite. He enjoys computer time in school. Jaiombre would benefit from a family that was patient and loving, and could provide a stable home. You could also ensure that Jaiombre receives help with his homework and regular medical check-ups.

Chrishon [7371] Chrishon, 11, is a good athlete who is well liked by the other children in his class. His favorite subject is math, but he looks forward to summer vacation each year, when he can play outside. If the weather is bad, he'll watch cartoons like Scooby-Doo and play video games like "Need for Speed." His favorite food is French fries.

Chrishon's foster parents and teachers said he is very likeable and polite. His worker said Chrishon is very enthusiastic and active.

Potential parents to Chrishon would be patient and kind. Chrishon would

like to live in a safe neighborhood, so he can play outdoors. He'd like to join an active family that has other children.

Samantha [7656] Samantha, 14, is a creative young lady who loves to draw and work on crafts. She has a positive outlook and likes to have fun. When she's not creating artwork, Samantha likes to care for animals, especially dogs and cats. She also enjoys playing video games on her Gameboy and Nintendo DS systems.

Her foster parents and teacher said that Samantha is a smart, talented young lady. They reported, "She has such a great sense of humor, we just love her."

The right parents for Samantha would be good communicators and good listeners. Samantha said, "I want my mom and dad to like me and spend time with me." She hopes her adoptive parents to never leave her.

Robert [7670] Robert, 10, is an energetic and outgoing young man who loves sports. He plays soccer, baseball, basketball, football, and tennis. Robert is a natural leader who can express his opinions well. In his free time, he enjoys watching cartoons and playing video games.

He also enjoys caring for pets, especially cats.

People who know Robert say he is clever and has a good sense of humor. He is also sociable and interacts well with others. His worker said Robert is helpful and articulate.

Robert is looking for a loving and patient family. You could also help Robert maintain contact with his brother after adoption. An Illinois family is preferred.

Christopher [7010] Christopher, 16, is an honest young man who displays good leadership and stays out of conflicts in school. He enjoys being active, and his favorite pastime is lifting weights. He also likes swimming and playing basketball. In quieter moments, Christopher watches movies or cartoons on TV.

His teachers said Christopher is a joy to have in the classroom. He works hard and always seeks help if he has questions. Christopher's forever family would be loving and supportive. Christopher said he'd like to join a family with parents who like to talk with him. An Illinois family is preferred.



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.



*Illinois Families
Now and Forever*

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor
Erwin McEwen, Director

Published by:
Office of Foster Parent Support
Services,

Editor: Vanessa James
Phone: 312-814-6824
Fax: 312-814-4131
E-mail: vanessa.james@illinois.gov

Regional Editors
Central – Sam Saladino
Northern – Catherine Johnson
Southern – Michael Bollman
Cook North – Joann Niemuth
Cook Central – Merrylee Guge-
Jorgenson
Cook South – Rod Mulford
Graphics: Jenny Florent
Printing: DCFS Print Shop

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 office addresses 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, un-licensed 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.

Department of Children and Family Services©

Illinois Families Now and Forever
Vanessa James, Editor
Department of Children & Family Services
100 West Randolph – 6th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60601

PRESRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

SPRINGFIELD, IL
PERMIT NO. 763

Inside this issue:

- Page 1-2** Handling holiday emotions
- Page 3** Learn and share holiday cultural traditions
- Page 4-5** Caregivers have their say with Service Appeals
- Page 6** Reimbursement available for sibling visits
- Page 7** Foster Care and Adoption councils meet together
- Page 8** IFAPA and DCFS conference recap
- Page 9** Illinois Adoption Advisory Council update
- Page 10** Who do you call when...
- Page 11** Family for Me profiles of waiting children