Illinois Families Now and Forever®

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

Council honors top Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans

On June 5, 1995, Governor Edgar signed the Foster Parent Law, requiring Implementation Plans. The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council celebrated the 20th anniversary at the June meeting.

Every foster care agency and DCFS regional foster care program must develop an annual Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. The plan must demonstrate how the program upholds the rights and responsibilities outlined in the Illinois law. The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council reviews each plan each year. When members discover an exceptional plan, they can go beyond the score to nominate it for special recognition in one of three categories:

- **Dignity and Respect**
- **Organization/User Friendliness**
- **Foster Parent Involvement**

On June 19, the council bestowed awards to four foster care programs that submitted outstanding Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. This year the council voted to recognize Association House, Chaddock and One Hope United in the category of Dignity and Respect. The plan from Guardian Angel stood out for the degree of Foster Parent Involvement it demonstrated.

The awards for extra recognition come after council members spend hours scoring every plan with a tool fine-tuned for reliability and fairness.

This year, the council reviewed and scored 56 plans. The council members and staff from DCFS take time to provide training on the standards and the scoring. This is a serious endeavor that is a mandate included in the Foster Parent Law and the law that established the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. Each year the council analyzes the procedures for the implementation plan program, looking for enhancements.

"You all work hard, scoring plans and conducting the agency reviews. I appreciate your loyalty to the organization and to your responsibility," said Carolyn Ross, DCFS Senior Deputy for Administration. Ross was on hand to address the council and present awards to foster parents and staff from each of the agencies that earned awards. ♡

Make it YOUR Implementation Plan

Every licensed caregiver should receive a copy or be able to view their agency/DCFS region's implementation plan. It contains details on important topics including how the program will:

- **Provide Training**
- **Handle Grievances**
- **Conduct Financial Reimbursements**

Implementation plans should be developed with caregivers. Many programs set meetings each fall specifically so caregivers can contribute to the draft. They are due on November 30.

Contact your agency's or DCFS region's Foster Parent Law Liaison or the DCFS regional advisory council for more information. ♡

Message from the DCFS Director

As summer begins to give way to fall and kids prepare to return to the classroom, I want to thank you for the critical role you play to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and youth who are brought into our care.

Throughout the summer, I had the opportunity to see some of our youth in action by attending the Regional Youth Summits and graduation celebrations. Each time I interact with our children, I'm uplifted and rejuvenated. They have so much passion and intelligence, and their resiliency knows no bounds.

One primary goal is to help you help our youth succeed academically so they will be well prepared to succeed in their adult endeavors. DCFS offers many services at various stages and ages to set a solid platform.

The Education Advisors can provide counsel and even accompany foster parents to elementary and high school meetings. These professionals are housed in each of the DCFS regions so they can respond to local needs across the state. Through the School Readiness Program those of you caring for our young children can be directed to pre-school options, creating a foundation for learning. On the other end of the age spectrum, the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services also maintains many educational programs for older youth. One of the brightest highlights is the DCFS Scholarship program. This fall, 53 students will be on college campuses with support for tuition, health care, and other school expenses. I had the honor of wishing them well at a ceremony in July.

I hope you enjoy the remainder of the summer with your families and wish that we all head into the fall energized for the tasks ahead.

George H. Sheldon
Acting Director

Award for Dignity and Respect

ASSOCIATION HOUSE

Carolyn Ross of DCFS; Jacqueline Perez, Foster Parent Sherry Henry, Cynthia Valentin of Association House; and Council Vice Chair Darrin Holt.

Association House gave foster parents the opportunity to openly critique the agency's work and make suggestions for improvements. Foster parents provided recommendations on various areas ranging from how to deliver services and how to enhance communication.

Award for Dignity and Respect

CHADDOCK

Carolyn Ross of DCFS; Deb Roberts, Foster Parent Chris Henry and Kim Wheelock of Chaddock; and Council Vice Chair Darrin Holt

Chaddock foster parents can voice their thoughts and concerns with their caseworker, licensing workers or supervisors through phone calls, e-mails or in-home contacts. Care is taken to assure they feel heard and supported when they share their need.

Award for Foster Parent Involvement

GUARDIAN ANGEL COMMUNITY SERVICES

Carolyn Ross of DCFS; Ines Kutlesa, Erin Cohan, Foster Parent Nikki Lane, Carlette Scott of Guardian Angel and Council Vice Chair Darrin Holt.

Guardian Angel Community Services staff surveyed families on how to enhance the partnership. Foster families receive postal mailings and regular e-mails to include as many foster parents in the plan for programs as possible.

Award for Dignity and Respect

ONE HOPE UNITED

David Fox, Carolyn Ross of DCFS, Foster Parent Kellye Norris, Jackie Schedin of One Hope United and Council Vice Chair Darrin Holt

The goals of One Hope United are to provide the tools necessary for foster parents to be able to meet the needs of the children in their homes, support the families of these children and be the best possible substitute caregiver.

Statewide Foster Care Council Update

Doreen Henry (left) and Judi Enix (right) received certificates from Terry McGlothlin of DFCS for completing their terms on the council.

Agency reviews

At the May meeting the council reported that in addition to the Implementation Plans, all of the in-person agency reviews were completed. All received acceptable ratings. The agency reviews are part of the process to ensure that agencies are incorporating the Foster Parent Law into everyday practices.

Partnering with Parents

Along with the regular business items, the council participated in the Partnering with Parents Summit. This meeting brought members of the councils that represent parents involved in the DCFS system or those whose cases have been closed together with the foster care council. The birth parents and the foster parents have come together each year to discuss their experiences with the child welfare system.

Membership updates

Sarah Olson was elected to another term as chair. Laura Hart was elected to be the vice chair. The council recognized the end of terms for members Lee Coffman, Judi Enix and Doreen Henry.

UPCOMING MEETING

The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be September 18 in Effingham.

Call DCFS
Caregiver and Parent Support at
217-524-2422
for details.

Adoption Advisory Council news

Cheryl McIntire (holding plaque) with Pam Mills (right) was congratulated by council member Maripat Oliver and her son.

DCFS Adoption Staff Changes

Cheryl McIntire, Statewide Administrator for Adoption, retired from DCFS. Pamela Mills is now the new administrator, as announced at the June council meeting. Mills has been with DCFS for 24 years. She most recently was the lead adoption supervisor in Cook County. She has been involved in many of the new permanency initiatives and looks forward to continuing the progress.

Embracing Adoption

Families in Cook County that complete an adoption soon after will receive an invitation to the Embracing Adoption program. Pat Kelly and Tiffany Desroches of Metropolitan Family Services Adoption Preservation program explained the Embracing Adoption program to the council. DCFS directed the agency to develop a celebration for families that had adopted through DCFS, internationally or privately. The goal was to reach families early in the adoption to let them know about services and to help them build connections to their agency and with other adoptive families. The program culminates with cake and a goody bag of resources to use at home. MFS runs the groups quarterly at the Chicago office and in DuPage.

Since the successful launch in April, the department is exploring ways to spread the program throughout the state.

Membership Changes

The council thanked several members for their service as their second terms ended. Rosa Dust, Nancy Golden, Ruth Jajko, Sandra McGee and Maripat Oliver will be leaving the council as replacements are named. The nomination committee is actively seeking adoptive parents and adoption professionals to fill the open slots. ♡

Guardianship options when adopted youth with disabilities turn 18

Kristie Kunstman-Stern of the Center for Law and Social Work and colleague Patti Fells presented program offerings to help parents establish guardianship when minors with disabilities turn 18. Some adoptive parents reported barriers to getting services (medical, educational) after their child reached 18 and was viewed as an adult. Parents thought that they could continue signing and applying as their adult child's primary caregiver. However, to continue in that role, the parent needs to be named as a guardian of their adult child.

The Center for Law and Social Work is a Cook County-based program that is branching out to the Central Region. The model is one that provides social work to determine the family's needs and legal services to assist with court proceedings to establish guardianship or manage other legal circumstances. The organization can also provide back-up planning and stand-by adoption/guardianship arrangements.

A pilot project launched last December in Peoria with 10 families. Kunstman-Stern said that families were well-versed in the available services, but still needed help navigating the legalities. The Center of Law and Social Work said that after only a few months most of the open cases were handled with just one court appearance.

For more information contact the Center for Law and Social Work at 773-728-7800 or clsw@clsw.org. ♡

ILLINOIS ADOPTION ADVISORY COUNCIL

meets six times a year to discuss issues and make recommendations to DCFS regarding the concerns of adoptive and guardianship families. The Council is made up of parents, professionals in the child welfare field and adopted individuals.

THE NEXT MEETING
of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council will be in Bloomington on September 11 at 10 a.m.

Call DCFS Caregiver and Parent Support at **217-524-2422** for details.

A dozen ways to help guarantee a successful school year

The DCFS education advisors compiled this easy way to remind caregivers how to help students start the school year strong…

BACK TO SCHOOL

Before school begins, set (and stick to) an after school routine. This routine should include completing homework and other activities designed to ease the morning rush (e.g., packing lunches and backpacks, picking out clothes for the next day)

Attend all conferences, registration meetings, and school functions. Your attendance at these events helps you get to know the other adults in your student's life. This will also help you stay informed of upcoming events at your student's school.

Check backpacks and folders each night. Look for any school notices, papers requiring signatures, and other updates. You can also help your student keep a tidy backpack by removing (or asking her to remove) unnecessary items.

Keep accurate records of your communication with the school. It helps to keep a notebook containing meeting dates and people with whom you've spoken. When concerns come up, remember - if it isn't documented in writing, it didn't happen.

Take time to talk to your student's teacher when things are going well. You will have established a positive home-school relationship, which will help you feel more comfortable talking to the teacher if concerns arise.

Observe your student to see how he learns best. Your thoughts and comments are critical in designing your student's school environment.

Share information about your student's background only when it is relevant to her education, emotional well-being and/or safety.

Consult your local education advisor for educational assistance whenever questions arise.

Homework should have 1) a set spot, 2) a set time and 3) a set purpose. When the expectations for homework are clear, everyone can work together to get it done.

(Turn) **O**ff the television and other distractions during homework time.

Ongoing encouragement helps students stay motivated to succeed. Catch students being "good" whenever possible. You might say something like, "Wow, I'm really impressed with how you've been bringing your homework home each night. Keep up the good work!"

Learn to laugh at and about school! Whatever it takes, help your student enjoy her time at school. Children are in school too many hours each day to be miserable. It is our job to make learning fun.

Earn an "A" for student health exams

The state of Illinois requires school children to have a current physical (within the past year) and to be current with immunizations when they are:

- **entering an Illinois school for the first time at any age**
- **starting kindergarten**
- **entering the sixth grade**
- **entering the ninth grade**

A lead screening is required for young children entering daycare, preschool and kindergarten. Children entering kindergarten or first grade also must be immunized against chicken pox/varicella. In areas of high incidences of tuberculosis (TB) a TB skin test is required as part of the physical exam. Talk with the child's doctor to see what is required.

Health Exam forms due by October 15

Completed Certificate of Child Health Examination" forms, signed by the physician, should be given to the school nurse where the child is enrolled. Give a copy to the child's caseworker, and keep a copy for the home record. Caregivers who need a copy from a previous visit can ask the caseworker to print the child's Health Passport. According to state law, children who do not have a current physical or shots by October 15 will not be allowed to continue attending school until they have received the care and their record is updated.

Eye & dental exams required

All students entering kindergarten (or starting an Illinois school for the first time) must also have an eye exam performed by a licensed optometrist or a medical doctor who performs eye examinations. This required examination is beyond the screenings that are often part of a regular physical or are sometimes provided at the school. The Eye Exam form should be turned in to the school by October 15. Students without this exam will not be excluded from school, but report cards could be withheld.

Additionally, state law requires that Illinois children in Kindergarten, second and sixth grades have dental examinations by a licensed dentist. Caregivers must present proof of examination before May 15 of the current school year. If not, the school may hold second and sixth grade report cards until receiving proof that the exam took place or will happen within 60 days of May 15.

Call the DCFS Office of Health Policy at 217-557-2689 with questions. ♡

Know what (or not) to sign for school forms

When school gets underway, stacks of papers will come home stuffed in book bags waiting for an adult's signature.

For children in DCFS foster care, there are guidelines about what a caregiver can sign.

Foster parents are authorized and encouraged to sign consents for general school-related activities, including but not limited to:

- **Field trips within Illinois**
- **Routine special events (picnics, school parties, etc.)**
- **School enrollment**
- **Attending sporting events**
- **Extra-curricular activities (excluding sports)**
- **Cultural events**
- **Case study evaluations**
- **Individualized Education Plan**
- **Three year re-evaluations of special education services**

While children are in foster care, caregivers are not authorized to sign consent for the following activities. Instead, they must contact the caseworker when consent is needed for:

- **Athletic participation**
- **Media coverage/events**
- **Slide show productions**
- **Voice reproductions**
- **Research projects**
- **Field trips outside of Illinois**
- **Liability releases**
- **Medical exams or care**

If there is ever a question about what consent a caregiver can provide, first ask the child's caseworker. ♡

School lunch forms guarantee meals for kids and funding

Among the many forms that schools require families to complete, one that is especially important is the application for free or reduced price school meals (commonly referred to as the free lunch form). Funding from federal resources is often based on the number of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Additionally, the income information from the applications can determine what programs a school may be able to offer.

Students who have an open DCFS case will automatically qualify for free meals. **Step One** on the form asks the name of children in the household and has a checkbox for "foster child." However, once a child moves to adoption, his or her case is closed; there is no longer an automatic qualification.

EVERY FAMILY SHOULD FILL OUT AND RETURN THE FORM FOR FREE SCHOOL LUNCH.

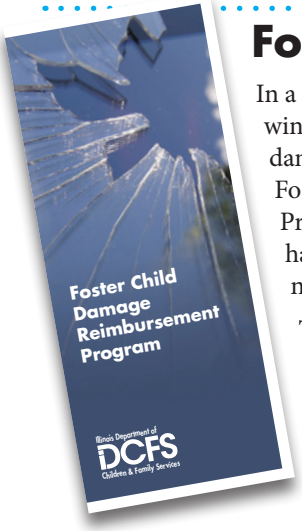
ALL CHILDREN IN DCFS FOSTER CARE QUALIFY.

Adoptive parents will have to complete the form to determine if the family is eligible for free or reduced lunch based on income.

Families may choose not to apply, knowing their income will not be eligible. Still, it is important to write that on the form, sign it and return it. From the school's perspective, every form counts.

Some caregivers have reported that their child received meals at a reduced rate without a form, and then received a bill at the end of the year. The DCFS Educational Advisors urge caregivers to return the forms so they can take advantage of the benefits and avoid possible problems. ♡

Foster Child damage reimbursement



In a home where there are children, a window or a wall is likely to see some damage at some point. The DCFS Foster Child Damage Reimbursement Program can help when foster parents have to make repairs (or amends to neighbors).

The Foster Child Damage Reimbursement Program may reimburse foster parents, relative caregivers and innocent victims for the actual cash value, repair costs or paid insurance deductibles if children in foster care damage personal property or cause bodily injury. This program is not insurance and isn't administered by an insurance company. However, it can help defray remaining costs after filing an insurance claim.

Filing a claim

If there is an incident of harm or damage of more than $50, the caregiver should immediately notify the child's caseworker that a claim needs to be filed. The caseworker will view the damage and together they complete and both sign the claim form (CFS 851).

The Administrative Procedure 13 provides instructions on the supporting documents (receipts, photos, insurance reports) that must be attached.

Reviewing the claims

Program Coordinator Pamela Paulson explained the process for settling claims to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Group in June. She said that she typically receives a dozen claims each month and many more calls. "It is important to gather the documentation and reach out soon," said Paulson. Sending all supporting documents will help avoid delays. She will help caregivers work through the process. For example, complications can arise when caregivers have to first file a loss with their homeowner's insurance. In that case, the reimbursement program could cover the insurance plan's deductible.

After the coordinator makes sure that all necessary information is present, the claim goes to the Review Committee. Once a decision for payment is approved or denied, the caregiver will be contacted by mail. If payment for the claim is approved, the foster parent will receive reimbursement from the State Comptroller, which may take 8 to 12 weeks.

For more information about the Foster Child Damage Reimbursement Program, refer to CFS 851 or contact the office at 312-814-7294. ♡

Cook County Advocate

News for Chicago Metro Area Families

2015 • Vol. 4

Cook County Education Advisors are ready for a new year

With the start of a new school year on the horizon, Cook County caregivers should know they have a powerful resource ready to help with education issues. Through a partnership with Northern Illinois University, the DCFS/NIU education advisors advocate for youth in DCFS care.

The Education Advisors can assist with the assessments and Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for special education. When there are behavioral issues, they can work out an intervention with the school. They can answer caregivers' questions and attend school meetings with them. They will help caregivers and caseworkers obtain appropriate educational services for the children. They also will help caregivers plan for education after high school.

With the background of working in or with schools before joining DCFS, Education Advisors know how to navigate the system. They understand school issues including special education, attendance policies, discipline and a host of other concerns. Working with an Education Advisor can be very positive and gratifying. They identify with and highly value caregivers and the children in their homes. They recognize and empathize with the frustrations and needs of both the education and child welfare systems, making them invaluable advocates. The advisors are each well-versed in the federal and state education laws and DCFS Rule 314 concerning education services that must be provided to children in DCFS care. Since every school can have a slightly different way of doing things, it helps to have an Education Advisor sitting beside the caregiver as an advocate.

Cook North-Chicago and Northern suburbs

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DCFS events help launch youth toward adult life

DCFS Acting Director George Sheldon met with Carlos Rodriguez and Tashyla Coleman and other youth after his remarks.

"Mission POSSIBLE," the annual Youth Summit on June 27 brought more than 100 young people together for presentations and workshops to help them learn about healthy relationships, life skills, community resources and making social connections.

The Office of Education and Transition Services also hosted a celebration for all 2015 graduates from high school, college and vocational programs.

The Odyssey Cruise capped off the academic year for graduates. DCFS Guardian Debra Dyer-Webster (right) celebrated the students' accomplishments.

Cook County youth learn life skills

Youth have a new option to gain education in life skills that will help them make a smooth transition to adulthood.

All youth in DCFS care aged 14 and 16 years old must complete the Casey Life skills assessment. The series of questions examines the practical life skills youth need for their well-being, confidence and safety as they navigate high school, postsecondary education, employment and other life milestones. Youth will also complete the assessment six months prior to case closure. After getting a baseline, youth can be referred to a life skills program where they get an individualized transition plan with goals they will develop with input from the caregiver and caseworker.

The DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services recently announced that in Cook County, life skill services will be provided by UCAN. This social service organization works with 10,000 children, youth and families in Illinois each year. UCAN will accept referrals for DCFS youth age 14 to 20 in foster homes, relative homes, youth in college or vocational training programs or alternative placements. The youth's caseworker will complete and submit a referral packet to the DCFS Transition Manager for Cook County. John Kasper can answer questions about the life skills program and other services for young people approaching adulthood.

John M. Kasper

Office of Education and Transition Services (OETS)

6201 S. Emerald
Chicago, Illinois 60621

Phone (773) 371-6134

Fax (773) 371-6334

Leaders of the Partnering with Parents council met at the 2015 Cook County Birth Parent Summit

SEEKING SPANISH-SPEAKING FOSTER FAMILIES

More bilingual/Latino foster homes are greatly needed statewide and especially in the Cook North Region. In addition the need for foster homes for teenagers is rising. The Recruitment and Resources Unit has been actively recruiting homes for this population, attending many community-based events and appearing on TV news segments. Foster parents are encouraged to join the recruitment effort.

Contact Miriam Mojica at 312-328-2324 *or* **miriam.mojica@illinois.gov**

Foster parents honored during appreciation month celebrations

Cook South combined recreation and recruitment at Family Fun Night on May 28 in the 6201 S. Emerald office. Foster parents and children were invited to bring a friend. The 20 guests sat in on a foster care presentation. Staff will follow up with those interested in becoming licensed for foster care.

Cook North held a picnic for families in the northern portion of the region on June 13 at Flick Park in Glenview. Families enjoyed food and fun together with staff.

Cook Central celebrated May as foster parent appreciation month with the annual Family Fun Night at the Maywood Office. Foster parents and their children enjoyed games, face painting and refreshments.

Cook County Unity Dinner
The administration of the Cook County regional foster care program invited families to a dinner that honored their commitment to children. Foster families served by all three Cook offices enjoyed a meal at Crystal Light Banquets in Burbank on May 20. It was an evening designed to let parents forget the responsibilities of day-to-day parenting and to enjoy the company of other adults who share a purpose.

Staff from the DCFS offices made sure that the decorations, entertainment and donated gifts demonstrated just how much everyone appreciated another year in foster care.

Cook County Region Training

DCFS has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the region.

To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center (VTC) anytime at *www.DCFStraining.org*. Click on any of the links under Training Schedule to access course descriptions, in-service training and Educational Advocacy Training or call the DCFS Registration Line at 877-800-3393 during business hours.

The Virtual Training Center (VTC) is your tool to:

- See training news and general information
- Check available trainings
- View/Print your training transcript
- Register and take on-line courses

DIGITAL TRAINING MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE

DCFS Training has made many PRIDE materials easily available on the home page of the Virtual Training Center at *www.DCFStraining.org*.

Anyone may print the materials or download them onto almost any electronic device and bring their device to training class. Trainees who have no digital access should speak with their trainers when they arrive in class, so we can accommodate everyone.

Who do you call when...?

...A child in your home is having a psychiatric crisis that may require hospitalization? Call the CARES line at 800-345-9049. However, if a child is a danger to himself or others, call 911 first. The CARES line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

...You want information on becoming a foster parent or on adoption? The Adoption Information Center of Illinois (AICI) can answer your questions and connect you with a licensing agency. The toll-free number is 800-572-2390. AICI also maintains information about the children who are featured in the newsletter.

...You have questions about your board check? Call the DCFS Central Payment Unit at 800-525-0499 if your check comes from DCFS. If your check comes from a private agency, contact the agency.

...You need to report a child missing or have information about a youth who has run away? To report information on missing youth call 866-503-0184. The toll-free number is available 24 hours a day every day of the week. If you feel the child is in danger, call 911 first.

...Your adoption or guardianship is final but you have questions about the subsidy? Call the subsidy worker assigned to the case or the Adoption Support Line at 866-538-8892 or 312-808-5250 so you can be connected to the right individual for help.

...You feel you aren't being treated fairly by DCFS or a private agency? If you've already tried to resolve the issue by going up the chain of command with the caseworker and supervisors, then call the Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

...You need to seek expense reimbursement for property damage or bodily harm caused by a child in foster care? Let your caseworker know you intend to submit a claim to the Foster Child Damage Reimbursement Program. Refer to DCFS form CFS851 or contact the office at 312-814-7294.

...You have questions about your child's medical card? Call 800-228-6533.

...You need to find a phone number for a caseworker? Call the main switchboard in Chicago at 312-814-6800 or the State Operator at 312-793-3500.

...You are having family problems with an adopted child? Contact the Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program that serves your area. Call the Adoption Support Line at 866-538-8892 or 312-808-5250.

...You are having a hard time getting services for your child at school? Most private agencies have an Education Liaison, and each DCFS region has Education Advisors who can help. Call your agency or nearest DCFS office to be connected to the right educational resource for your area.

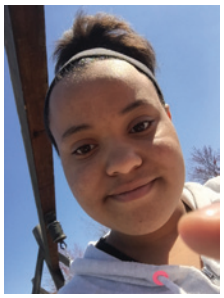
...You have an idea for an article in the newsletter? Email vanessa.james@illinois.gov at the DCFS Office of Communications.

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

Aaron age 15, is a very personable and intelligent young man, with a wonderful sense of humor. He enjoys writing, drawing, and listening to music. Aaron loves action figures! Two of his favorites are Spider-Man and Batman. It has also been reported that Aaron is a huge fan of the "Star Wars" movie series.

Aaron's caregivers say he works very hard at developing and maintaining positive relationships with adults and peers. They also say he loves making people laugh.

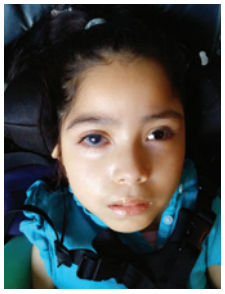
As you provide a nurturing home environment for Aaron, you can also set clear boundaries, offer structure, and create realistic goals. You can exhibit patience and understanding as Aaron gets acclimated to his new environment. Aaron would benefit from ongoing contact with his older sister, including phone calls and emails *[8283]*.



Tairen, age 12, is an active and artistic girl with an outgoing personality. She is a talkative young lady who enjoys spending chatting it up with friends and adults. Tairen loves to play outside, and partakes in activities such as dancing and playing volleyball. She also has a creative side, which involves her doing various arts and crafts activities, as well as knitting.

Tairen's teacher says she is smart and willing to work. She does well the majority of the time in school. However, she does sometimes struggle to follow directions and keep to herself. Tairen's worker says she helpful and playful.

The forever family for Tairen would provide her with lots of love, affection, and individualized attention. She would do best in a home with consistent rules and structure. It is also important for the adoptive family to display patience as she adapts to her new surroundings. Tairen would benefit if she was involved in extracurricular activities such as school sports and clubs. She would like her adoptive family to be active, outgoing, fun, and nice. It is important for the adoptive family to respect the close bond that Tairen shares with all five of her siblings, and to support these relationships by ensuring that routine visits continue *[8272]*.



Natalia
This young lady is sensitive, expressive, and full of life. Although Natalia, age 7, is non-verbal and struggles with limited vision, she is still able to communicate by smiling, laughing, and cooing. Natalia is developmentally disabled, and requires constant attention from trained medical professionals. She uses a wheelchair for mobility, and receives nutrition through a feeding tube.

Natalia's teachers say she is a joy to have in the classroom. Her foster parent says she is a sweet and sensitive young lady, who can light up a room.

Potential parents to Natalia will be able to encourage open communication by responding to her non-verbal cues and requests. You can also work closely with doctors, nurses, and other professionals to ensure Natalia receives the care and attention she needs *[8266]*.

Darius, age 15, can be shy and reserved at first, but he is still able to form attachments with others. He is a fan of sports, and enjoys watching football and playing basketball with his friends. He also enjoys playing video games and listening to music. Darius has trouble concentrating at times, and also needs to be reminded to clean up after himself, but he is generally cooperative, both at home and in school. The staff members at Darius' school say he is well-behaved. His worker says he is usually quiet and well-mannered.

Darius is seeking a loving home, with parents that can assure him that he is a permanent part of your family. You can be patient with him as he adjusts. You can also work with professionals who can help him understand his emotions and develop appropriate coping techniques. Darius says he wants to live in a stable home. Other children in the home should be older than Darius *[7975]*.

Destiny at 14 has already sought out her "destiny." This young lady wants to be a special education teacher because she enjoys supporting and advocating for others who are lower functioning. Destiny is lively, outgoing, and has a good sense of humor. When she's not busy helping others, she enjoys arts and crafts, scrapbooking, reading books, and gathering quotes. Destiny is very smart and willing to help.

The parents for Destiny will be able to offer a solid family structure and display patience as she adapts to her new surroundings, along with lots of individualized attention and love. Destiny would like to maintain phone contact with her mother. She would like honest, fair parents who are willing to give her a chance. She would also prefer a family that lives in a rural setting, where it's quiet *[8282]* ♡

Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI website – 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®

Bruce Rauner, Governor

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