

Caregivers share lessons from IFAPA/DCFS conference

The Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association conference held with DCFS was a prime opportunity for caregivers to learn about services, identify resources and meet other caregivers. Nearly 100 foster and adoptive parents from the Northern Region attended the conference. For those who did not, these caregivers have plenty of information to share.



Robyn Harvey and Director McEwen chat during a break at an advisory council meeting.

Robyn Harvey found the most beneficial information from the conference in Dr. Ira Chasnoff's session on Fetal Alcohol and the Effects of Drugs In Utero. In the session she learned about the symptoms, physical features, and current treatments for Fetal

Alcohol Syndrome. Harvey recommends caregivers read Dr. Chasnoff's book, "The Mystery of Risk."

She found the conference to be extremely worthwhile for the networking opportunities it afforded her. She also loved catching up with old foster parent friends.

Crystal and Dan Steffa have been licensed for eight years but this was their first foster parent conference. The Steffas especially enjoyed participating in the Foster Parent Café. The café was a session for open discussion in a supportive environment. The café was very beneficial in that it enabled them to speak with other foster parents and discuss similar problems and issues they were having or dealt with in the past.

The Steffas really enjoyed the dinners where they met Department staff. They met Director McEwen and thought it was nice that he would take time out of his

busy schedule to meet foster parents. Crystal spoke with DCFS Guardian Jean Ortega-Piron and felt she was "just like us, she is a mother too."

David and Theresa Juday

have been licensed for one year and attended the Foster Parent Conference for continuing education credits, getting information, and networking with other foster parents. The Judays thought the Education Advocacy session had a lot of

good information. Theresa felt the level of experience in the room to be a huge help to them. Theresa said she didn't realize how many foster parents hit roadblocks with their foster children's education. After the training, she discovered, "there are many resources available from DCFS so you are not put out on an island all by yourself." David and Theresa found the ability to meet with other foster parents and network to see what worked for them to be invaluable. The best advice the Judays received was "ask for help."



David & Theresa Juday
Bolingbrook

For More information on:

- **Educational Advocacy**
Rhonda Best (Rockford) at 815-967-3750
Aundrea Nabors (Rockford) at 815-967-3832
Robena Morgan (Joliet) at 815-730-4342
- **Foster Parent Cafes**
strengtheningfamiliesillinois.org
- **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome**
DCFS Lending Library at 877-800-3393

Northern Region celebrates at courthouse with new adoptive families

National Adoption Day is a special time for families living in Winnebago County. On Saturday, November 20, the county courthouse turned festive as families stood before the bench to finalize their adoptions during the weekend session.



The Adoption Day Committee received special recognition from the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council in 2009.

Each November for six years, DCFS has partnered with several private agencies including Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Charities, and Children's Home + Aid Society for this special event. It is made possible through the support of three judges, including Chief Judge Janet Holmgren, who have been volunteering their weekend time. In addition, numerous Winnebago County court officials donate their own time and services.

Not only do these judicial and child welfare professionals bring families together officially, they celebrate the day. Once the official adoption proceedings were done, the families were honored with a banquet of food and gifts, as well as donated gift bags for the newly adopted children.

DCFS takes to the road to recruit more Spanish-speaking homes

According to new figures released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there are 423,773 children in foster care nationally as of September. Of those, 20 percent were Hispanic, 30 percent were black, and 40 percent were white, with the remainder comprised of other ethnicities.

Illinois is one of the states that has decreased the number of children in care over the last decade. However, there is still work to be done to find more permanent families. The recruitment councils around the Northern Region have stepped up their efforts for targeted recruitment of Spanish-speaking caregivers, African-American caregivers, and foster homes that will care for large sibling groups.

The Northern Region has seen a drastic increase in the number of

“Burgos cases”. The Burgos Consent Decree was established in federal court, requiring that DCFS provide services in Spanish to Hispanic clients whose primary language is Spanish. Caseworkers also must make every effort to place those children with foster caregivers who are able to communicate in Spanish.

To increase the number of potential new foster families, Nataly Ramirez and Colleen Woolwine from the DCFS Kane County Recruitment Counsel attended a church festival in Carpentersville. The church's population is 98 percent Latino. One of the major obstacles in recruiting Latino foster parents is in educating them about foster care. Many Spanish-speakers may have immigrated from other countries that do not have a formalized foster care system. Through attending recruitment events and educating

recent Latino immigrants on foster care, the Department hopes to license new foster parents in areas in the Northern Region where there is a growing Latino population.



Nataly Ramirez and Colleen Woolwine of DCFS reached out to Spanish-speaking families at a Latino church festival.



Metropolitan Family Services offers school assistance in DuPage

The Educational Supports and Intervention Program of Metropolitan Family Service of DuPage County provides counseling and educational support to children and families to promote positive behavior and academic engagement. The program targets students who attend West Chicago Middle School. However, all DuPage County students who are referred by DCFS or private agency caseworkers will be given priority.

The Educational Support and Intervention program targets students with poor school attendance, problems with truancy or disruptive behavior or those who have been suspended. They may exhibit social, emotional and behavioral problems that negatively impact their ability to succeed in the school environment. Family issues that might contribute to a child's school attendance and performance problems include inadequate supervision, low expectations for school achievement, placement disruptions or moves, child abuse or neglect, trauma, family conflict, divorce, unemployment and non-English speaking parents.

The program provides intensive home-based treatment services by a highly trained social worker with bilingual/bi-cultural expertise. Families are seen once or twice weekly for individual and family counseling. The worker also maintains regular contact with educational staff who are directly involved with the child. This includes attending Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings and other staffings on behalf of the child and family. The worker conducts a comprehensive mental health assessment and social history with each client. In addition, the caregiver or parent can receive parent education services that will address behavioral management, safe and age appropriate limit setting, structure, appropriate expectations, improved monitoring of the child's overall behavior and school attendance. The worker and the family mutually agree upon goals and services that the student may need.

For example, at West Chicago Middle School many students face problems with gangs, drugs or truancy. One seventh grader was referred to Metropolitan Family

Services Educational Supports and Intervention program because he did not want to go to school. The parents believed him when he said he was sick and most of the time allowed him to stay home. However, after the MFS social worker completed the assessment, it came out that the child was being ridiculed for not wanting to participate in gang activities with a "friend." The child was threatened and so avoided school. The student, caregivers and caseworker discussed what was happening at school and brought it to the attention of the administration. The parents now know what behaviors they should look out for; the school put rules in place to stop the harassment; and the student is attending school regularly.

The Educational Supports and Intervention program has been successful in bringing many DuPage County students back to school with a more positive outlook. For more information or to refer a student, caregivers or caseworkers can contact Metropolitan Family Services, 222 E. Willow Ave., Wheaton, IL 60187, or call 630-784-4825

School help in other areas of Northern Region

There are similar programs for youth living in the other Local Area Networks (LANs) in Northern Region. For more information on local resources contact one of the DCFS LAN Liaisons.

These services are open to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship families.

DCFS Local Area Network (LAN) Liaisons

Phil Biage • 630-801-3400
Kane, Kendall, McHenry, and Lake counties

Sidella Hughes • 815-967-3731
DeKalb, Lee, Ogle, Whiteside and Winnebago counties

Sharon O'Bryant • 815-730-4000
DuPage, Grundy, Kankakee, and Will counties

Northern News

Sponsor: Debbie Palmer-Thomas, DCFS
Northern Regional Administrator



Regional Reporter
Colleen Woolwine
595 South State St.
Elgin, IL 60123
Phone: 847-888-7635
Fax: 630-844-8968
Colleen.Woolwine@illinois.gov

Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.



Northern Region Caregiver Training

For the most up-to-date and complete schedule information, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center anytime at www.DCFStraining.org or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours. In addition to the slate of classroom courses, caregivers can take advantage of these other options.

Learning and credit hour earning options outside the classroom

Classroom training is the preferred method for training caregivers. Interacting with instructors and other caregivers brings a unique richness to the training experience. Still, there are other methods of learning that can take advantage of technology and flexible scheduling. DCFS can offer caregivers the additional options of computer-based training and the DCFS Lending Library of books and tapes.

The in-service PRIDE training modules are now available as an interactive CD-ROM format in addition to the traditional classroom format. The digital format provides anytime, anywhere use, allowing caregivers to receive training, while working around the other responsibilities that compete for their time.

The nine in-service modules in PRIDE Digital Curriculum use the same combination of cotrainers that are featured in all the PRIDE classroom training programs. A child welfare professional and a foster parent professional guide at home learners through each module. Using video and an easy-to-use computer format, the computerized course presents the information and recorded discussions from other caregivers, adopted individuals and agency staff with knowledge of Illinois' child welfare system. The digital system takes learners

through exercises to test their understanding of the material. It saves exercises so caregivers can document their work.

To order a CD set for one of the PRIDE in-service modules, call 312-328-2828.

The DCFS Lending Library can also be used as a convenient alternative for obtaining approved training credit for license renewal. Licensed foster and adoptive parents can borrow materials for a two-week period at no charge. The Lending Library catalogue highlights a multitude of books, audio cassettes and videos for self-directed training in parenting and family life, spanning 17 categories.

To borrow these or one of the myriad titles in the Lending Library, simply fill out the order form at the back of the catalogue. Send it to the DCFS Office of Training, Station 122, 406 E. Monroe, Springfield IL 62701.

To request a catalogue, call 877- 800-3393. The catalogue is also available on the DCFS Web site: <http://www.state.il.us/DCFS/docs/lendinglibrary.pdf>.

Lending Library Categories

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Children with Sexually Aggressive Behaviors
- Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Children with Behavioral Disorders and/or Emotional Disturbances
- Disciplinary Strategies for Difficult Children
- Separation and Visitation
- Drug-Affected Infants and Children
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects (FAS/FAE)
- The Medically Complex Child
- The Child With HIV/AIDS
- Promoting Educational Success Through Improved Learning Skills
- Building A Healthy Self Esteem in Kids
- From Foster Care to Adoption
- Child Development and Parenting
- Parenting Adolescents
- Families and Diversity—Parenting with Greater Understanding
- Children With Mental Health, Language and Physical Challenges