

Illinois Families Now and Forever®

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

Illinois celebrates Foster Parent Appreciation Month

*12 ways caregivers can
mark the month*

- * Join a foster parent support group and take a friend.
- * Flip through family photo albums.
- * Take a look at your rights and responsibilities under the Foster Parent Law and remember there is a state statute to support your efforts.
- * Pick a night to serve a cake with candles for dessert because your special family deserves a special day.
- * Make plans with another foster family to trade an afternoon watching the others' kids. Take the time to do something to refresh yourself.
- * Send a card to encourage a foster parent who is having a rough time.
- * Make a list of good parenting decisions you have made lately. Tuck it away for a "rainy day."
- * Write a letter to your local newspaper explaining the importance of foster care. Make the public take notice.
- * Meet a couple of foster parent friends over coffee.
- * Declare a "Good News Only Day." Let someone else field the phone calls from school and settle the squabbles. You'll have to take your turn one day the following week.
- * Pose for a family picture with all the kids who are part of your home.
- * Reconnect with an older youth who was once in your care.



WHEREAS, each year more than 4,000 children who have been abused or neglected cannot remain with their families safely, and these children need and deserve the temporary safe haven of a family home where they can be protected, nurtured and loved; and,

WHEREAS, without volunteer foster families, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services would not be able to fulfill its mission to provide for the well-being of the nearly 15,000 children currently in its care; and,

WHEREAS, the department and its nonprofit partners provide a wide range of supports to assist foster families in meeting not only a child's basic physical needs, but also ensure her educational, emotional and social well-being, none of which can be achieved without the dedication of foster families; and,

WHEREAS, foster families answer a noble calling to devote their time and energies to children to reunite families when possible, support other permanency options and create opportunities for a successful launch to adulthood; and

WHEREAS, foster families provide children with the one thing they need the most, which cannot come from a government or nonprofit agency, but only from the heart of another human being: love; and,

WHEREAS, it is impossible to quantify the minute and magnificent ways foster parents change lives, and they deserve the utmost respect and gratitude for the lasting impact they have in the life of a child, in their communities and on the future prosperity of this state; and,

THEREFORE, I, Pat Quinn, Governor of the State of Illinois, do proclaim May 2013 as FOSTER PARENT APPRECIATION MONTH in Illinois, extending thanks on behalf of our the people of Illinois to the thousands of Illinois foster families, and encouraging all to consider joining them in their noble service to children, communities and our state.

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



Deese Whitt

SECRETARY OF STATE

*Done at the Capitol, in the City of Springfield,
this SIXTEENTH day of APRIL, in
the Year of Our Lord two thousand and
THIRTEEN, and of the State of Illinois
the one hundred and NINETY-FIFTH*

Pat Quinn

GOVERNOR

From the DCFS Director

Richard H. Calica



As we celebrate Foster Parent Appreciation Month, I offer my personal thanks to all of you for providing a temporary safe haven for children who cannot remain safely in their homes. The department and our nonprofit partners offer a wide range of supports to assist you in providing a safe, nurturing home for children in need. But you provide them with the one thing no

state or private agency can offer: love.

As I talk with foster parents across the state, I am struck by their selflessness, compassion and tenacity. Foster parents brush aside praise and speak of the joy parenting brings to them. Thanks to your love, children who have been given every reason not to trust open their heart and place their faith in you. And when the challenges of parenting arise, you push through with resilience and grace.

The department's new resource and recruitment specialists have begun the tough task of identifying even

more foster parents across Illinois who share your talent and commitment. As local plans develop, we welcome your advice and most importantly your help. If you would like to assist us in identifying friends, co-workers or relatives you believe share your strengths and your passion, or you are willing to share your experiences as a foster parent with others, please contact the supervisor for the regional recruitment specialist in your area.

Thank you again for everything you do, every day, to provide a safe, nurturing home for Illinois children.

Regional Recruitment Specialists Supervisors

Central

Kevin Blickhan
107 N. 3rd St.
Quincy, IL 62301
217-221-2525

Cook

Mildred A. Cardona
1911 S. Indiana Ave.
Chicago, IL 60616
312-328-2477

Northern

Denice Cox
8 E. Galena Blvd, Ste. 300
Aurora, IL 60506
630-801-3434

Southern

Doris Clinton
1407 Vaughn Rd.
Wood River, IL 62095
618-259-8400

Illinois shines statewide spotlight on Child Abuse Prevention Month

Those who do foster care can understand the key message of several events in April to raise awareness for Child Abuse Prevention Month. The theme for the first day of April was "Give, Volunteer and Act to ensure kids are safe." DCFS joined forces with Prevent Child Abuse-Illinois, local nonprofits and elected officials to encourage everyday Illinoisans to unite to protect children.

An estimated 125,000 Illinois children are abused or neglected each year, and one in five kids are abused before age 18. DCFS receives, investigates and acts upon a report of child abuse or neglect every five minutes, child sex abuse every two hours, and a child death by abuse or neglect every day-and-a-half. DCFS Director Richard H. Calica said that while many across Illinois are doing their part to ensure safe, loving homes for kids, more can be done.

"In the long run, the best solution, the only fiscally and socially responsible solution, is to prevent abuse before it starts," said Calica.

The speakers at the James R. Thompson Center reminded the public of the importance of reporting suspected instances of child abuse. They thanked individuals for donating to agencies that support families and encouraged them to give of their own time and talents as mentors and even as foster families.

Prevent Child Abuse-Illinois and DCFS coordinated high-profile events in Chicago, Springfield, Carterville and Edwardsville. Leaders from human services organizations, elected officials and committed volunteers demonstrated the strength that comes from working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect.



Roy Harley, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse-Illinois and DCFS Director
Richard H. Calica

MOVIN' ON UP: *News for youth as they transition to adulthood*

Older youth are about to embark on a busy season. The end of spring brings several special events designed to educate and encourage teens and young adults who are involved with DCFS.

The DCFS Office of Youth and Family Development is honoring students' academic accomplishments with a graduation celebration in each DCFS region. Those youth in care or those formerly

under DCFS care who earned a high school diploma or GED or completed a vocational program are invited to attend.

There will also be four Youth Summits that will provide teens skills to help them successfully achieve self-sufficiency.

Save the date for the events listed below. More information will be sent directly to families with youth

ages 14 to 21 who are still in care. Youth who are adopted or in guardianship can also take part in the events by calling one of the support staff below.

Cook/Northern regions

Tony Lawlor, 312-401-5462

Central/Southern regions

Leshonda Rogers, 217-789-2908

Central Region

Graduation Celebration
June 6, 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Executive Mansion
Springfield

Youth Summit
June 20, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Miller Park Pavilion
Bloomington

Cook Region

Graduation Celebration
June 28
Mystic Blue, Navy Pier
Chicago

Youth Summit
June 17, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Illinois Institute of
Technology, Chicago

Northern Region

Graduation Celebration
June 21, in conjunction with
the Youth Summit

Youth Summit
June 21, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Kishwaukee College
Malta

Southern Region

Graduation Celebration
June 14
Location TBA

Youth Summit
June 13, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Kaskaskia College
Centralia

Caregiver families invited to State Fair August 9 - 18 in Springfield

DCFS continues the annual tradition of offering caregivers a special invitation to attend the Illinois State Fair.

Complete and return this page by June 21 and in July you will receive by mail:

- A pass that includes parking and admission for all passengers in the car for one \$3 fee.
- 1 refreshment ticket for each family member, worth \$3 in food or drink.
- One ride ticket for each family member that provides unlimited rides for \$15 (**during designated hours ONLY on August 12 -16**).

MAIL OR FAX NO LATER THAN JUNE 21, 2013

DCFS Office of Communications
406 East Monroe Street, Station 65
Springfield, IL 62701-1498
Fax: 217-524-0014

Tickets may not be requested by telephone. **Nothing will be sent to you unless you return this coupon.** This is the only invitation to the state fair. Please act NOW if you wish to attend.

There will be _____ family members in our party.

Number of vehicles _____ (limit 2)

(If you are requesting more than 8 tickets, please print the name and phone number of your licensing or subsidy worker. He or she will be contacted to confirm the number of family members in your household).

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Foster Home supervised by: DCFS Private agency

Post Adoption/Guardianship: Yes No

Name of Agency/DCFS Region: _____

Worker's Name: _____ Phone: _____

We are a licensed foster family, relative caregiver, a guardianship family or have adopted a child through DCFS, and we would like to attend the 2013 Illinois State Fair. We understand that only our foster, adopted and guardianship children and family members who live in our home consistent with DCFS licensing regulations are eligible for these special offers.

Signature: _____



Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin

Oversight of Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council has wrapped up final evaluation of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. As part of the plan review, council members can highlight plans that stand out and nominate them for awards in three areas:

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

The foster care programs that receive rewards are invited to a special event on May 17 where they will be honored for their commitment to the Foster Parent Law. Those outstanding plans will be featured in the next issue of Illinois Families Now and Forever®.

In addition to reviewing plans, the council members also visit agencies and DCFS regional programs to conduct interviews about how the plans are incorporated into practice. The council reported that site visits are on track to be completed on time.

Election of officers

In March and April nominations for the council’s chair and vice-chair positions were opened. The election of officers is set for the May 17 meeting. According to state statute, the council holds elections each year. The new officers will take their positions starting with the beginning of the new fiscal year on July 1.

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council was founded in conjunction with the Illinois Foster Parent Law. Membership consists of caregivers, agency representatives and other experts in child welfare who are appointed by the DCFS director. The mandated positions for caregivers are spread among the DCFS regions.

The council holds open meetings at least six times a year, and more as needed, in locations around the state.

The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be on May 17 in Bloomington at 9 a.m.

Call the Office of Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for details.

“Leave no child inside,” Get out to state parks

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has developed educational opportunities to teach young people about conservation and to foster an appreciation for the environment.

Children in all parts of the state can take advantage of free and low cost activities at state parks, park districts, schools and forest preserves. Youth can participate in archery, fishing, fort building, nature hikes, bird watching, rock wall climbing and camping. State parks will host many special outdoor recreational activities throughout the month of June.



Families can also visit Torstenson Educational Farm in Rockford to experience outdoor fun. Programs at the farm feature archery, fishing, nature hikes, bird watching, camping, mapmaking, land stewardship, GPS scavenger hunt, educational resource kits, survivor skills and habitat restoration.

For more information contact Jeffrey Jones, Director of Community Outreach, at 312-590-5094 or Jon Woods, youth program coordinator, at 312-720-7149. Stay updated on IDNR on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CommunityOutreachIDNR.

Get digital delivery

Many caregivers have decided to skip the paper and request electronic versions of the newsletter, Illinois Families Now and Forever.®

When you move to the online version, you still receive all the same valuable information with more benefits. It comes faster, is easier to file, saves money and protects the environment.

To make the switch, send an email to vanessa.james@illinois.gov (there is a dot before “james”) Be sure to include your name and mailing address. We will stop the hard copies and send you an e-mail each time a new issue is ready to read online.

Foster Parent Law defines caregivers' rights and responsibilities

Before 1995, the rights and responsibilities for the individuals providing foster care were not clearly defined. Without a clear job description, caregivers, agencies and DCFS struggled to place caregivers' rights and responsibilities within child welfare policy. It took a lengthy, coordinated effort from individual caregivers, foster care advocacy organizations, legislators and child welfare personnel to bring about the Foster Parent Bill of Rights. That document provided the foundation for the Foster Parent Law, signed on June 3, 1995.

The Foster Parent Law clearly defines 15 rights and 17 responsibilities for all Illinois families who provide foster care to children in DCFS care. The statement of rights helps foster caregivers, agencies and DCFS regions know what role caregivers will play on the child welfare team and the consideration they should receive. The statement of responsibilities helps caregivers know what will be expected of them and gives a clear understanding of the general expectations they should have of the foster care agency or DCFS regional foster care program.

The accompanying Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Law established the council to advise DCFS about foster care issues. The council also has the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the Foster Parent Law.

Details and the full text of Foster Parent Law are included in the Foster Family Handbook. Caregivers can also request their foster care program's annual Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan to see how it upholds the Law. The DCFS Office of Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 can provide further information.

Caregivers have the right to:

1. Be treated with dignity, respect and consideration
2. Be provided pre-service and appropriate ongoing training to improve skills
3. Be informed on how to receive supportive services from the agency
4. Receive timely financial reimbursement commensurate with child's service plan
5. Be provided a clear, written understanding of the plan concerning the child's placement and how it will support his family relationship and cultural identity
6. Fair, timely and impartial investigations of licensing complaints
7. Receive additional information to assist in the care of a child while in placement
8. Receive specific information from DCFS and private agencies listed in Children and Family Services Act and the Child Care Act of 1969
9. Be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings in order to participate in case planning and decision-making
10. Be provided, before placement, with any information a caseworker has that is pertinent to the child's care and the permanency plan
11. Receive written notice of any change in a child's case plan or of plans to terminate the child's placement, along with the reasons for the change or termination
12. Timely notification of court hearings and right to intervene or request mandamus
13. Be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parents re-enters DCFS care
14. Access the existing appeals process with the assertion that the appeal will be free from acts of harassment and retaliation.
15. Be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and the rights for foster parents when reporting misconduct by child welfare personnel

Caregivers have the responsibility to:

1. Communicate and share information with the child welfare team
2. Respect the confidentiality of information about the child and his family
3. Advocate for children in the care of the foster parent
4. Treat the child and his or her family with dignity, respect and consideration
5. Recognize their individual and family strengths and limitations and to utilize appropriate supports as appropriate
6. Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations
7. Assess their ongoing training needs and take action to meet those needs
8. Strategize with agency representatives to avoid placement disruptions and support the child if disruption occurs
9. Recognize the impact of foster care on relationships and take steps to minimize stress as much as possible
10. Positively promote the benefits of foster parenting
11. Know the role, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the child, and the child's own family
12. Know and fulfill their role as a mandated reporter and know policies regarding allegations that foster parents have committed abuse or neglect
13. Know the purpose of and to participate in Administrative Case Reviews, client service plans and court proceedings
14. Know the child welfare agency's appeal process
15. Maintain accurate records
16. Share information about the placement with subsequent caregivers/parents
17. Provide care that respects the child's cultural needs supports the relationship between the child and his or her own family

Illinois Adoption Advisory Council update



At the April meeting of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, Cheryl McIntire, the statewide adoption administrator provided details on progress made since she took the position last winter.

The council was especially pleased to hear that DCFS is adding staff to support adoption efforts. In Cook County, there will be 15 workers devoted to adoptions and guardianship. Central Region will have 12, Northern Region will be up to seven and Southern Region will have five. Under the new structure, the supervisors now lead teams that will be trained in all aspects of adoption, from permanency planning to writing the subsidy and on to post-adoption support.

“Everyone is a ‘generalist,’ even if they have a specialty. We will move forward with the goal that everyone knows how to do everything,” McIntire said.

She said the staff is excited at the prospect of being able to fully serve families through all the stages of permanency. Additional training is already underway.

McIntire also outlined several initiatives to fine-tune the processes the lead to permanency. She has streamlined subsidy agreement review by setting up intake points in both Springfield and Cook County. She said new software developed to track the subsidy through all its milestones was successful in its pilot. It is planned to launch statewide. With the computerized log, a worker or supervisor can know exactly what needs to happen next and when the next task should be (or should have been) completed. Having everything mapped out and at the ready will make it easier to coordinate between the prospective family, the worker and juvenile court. It should significantly cut the time that it takes to thoroughly and correctly complete a subsidy package.

To be certain children are moving toward permanency within the designated timeframes, McIntire has established monthly meetings to review cases. She and the staff will go through cases, child by child, where there is a goal of adoption. They will discuss the child specifically, to troubleshoot and get the right permanency goal and assign tasks. This effort will ensure that the right resources are in place to successfully move the child to permanency.



Cheryl McIntire (r), statewide adoption administrator, and council co-chair Elizabeth Richmond discuss new adoption initiatives.

Call Adoption Support Line: 855-548-5505



The Adoption Support Line allows all adoption-related calls to come to a centralized location. During the move to adoption, a caregiver may be in close contact with the adoption worker. After finalization, sometimes years down the road when there is a question about a subsidy or a new need for services, caregivers may not know who to call. Now they can call support line for answers. Trained responders with adoption experience will be

able to answer questions or direct calls for follow up.

The Adoption Support Line has extended hours so caregivers can call outside of the regular business day. Operating hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Monday through Thursday) and 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays.

Calls requiring a normal response will be routed to the assigned worker and supervisor for follow-up to occur within 24 business hours.

The 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 Advisory Council will be on June 7 in Bloomington at 10 a.m.

Call the Office of Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for details.

Caregivers have their say in May for Appreciation Month

*In honor of Foster Parent Appreciation Month, we asked Northern Region caregivers: **What aspect of foster care makes you feel appreciated for what you do?***

"I truly appreciate watching my son Andrew mature and grow into a fine young man. Andrew has come such a long way in the past three years that I have known him. He has improved and discovered what great potential he has.



"I am in the process of adopting another child and I tell you it's the best thing I have ever done! There is no other experience in my life that has given me this much joy. Both kids are a gift from God and I am honored that I am their father."

– **Dean Marchisio**

"There are a million reasons why we foster children. Don't get me wrong, it is nice to hear good feedback from the DCFS staff, but the BEST feeling comes from sharing the life of a child who knows they are loved and safe.



"Some days when everything is going wrong...no one is listening; shoes are lost; homework gets left at school; you have to stay up all night long; there're diaper blowouts and you get sneezed, puked, peed and pooped on... I sit back, breathe, and remember why I do this. Because TODAY I get to make a difference in the life of a child."

– **Dana and John Vassos**

"Brandee and I believe that for ourselves and our biological son, it is important to be aware of our social footprint and our contribution to our community. In other words, what we can do to better the lives of others?"



"The question was, what makes us feel appreciated, but the reality is that we are not looking for any signs of appreciation from our foster children. We do this for the intrinsic appreciation that we get out of using our skills and abilities to give back to others and to teach them that true success and happiness comes from having a positive impact on others.

"Our dream is that the struggles that our children have faced and the success that they find in overcoming their barriers will lead them to find the strength and courage to help others who are vulnerable and in need."

– **Brett and Brandee Simon**

"I have felt great appreciation throughout the years. Friends and family members show appreciation by helping and supporting our family. I feel like the agency and court system show great appreciation for us by being there and helping during difficult times.



"I think the very best is now that some of our kids have aged out, they call us just to tell us how happy they have been with our family. Also, our daughter asked Andy to walk her down the aisle on her wedding day. We see the girls living on their own and running their households as we do. I love that they call me for recipes and we share stories of their memories. I could go on forever!"

– **Rhonda and Andrew Johansson**

DCFS Administration marks Foster Parent Appreciation Month

My Dearest Foster Parents and Caregivers of the Northern Region:

Since my return to DCFS last July as the regional administrator, it has been a pleasure to work with all of you. The work you do with and on behalf of the children of the state of Illinois is phenomenal. I can't begin to thank you enough for your service, generosity and caretaking.

I have re-instituted the Foster Care Advisory Council meetings in the region, as of January 2013. My hope is to use these meetings as a venue for us to communicate, network and fellowship with each other. You are a

vital part of the DCFS Team and your input, feedback and participation is paramount to reaching the department's outcomes and performance measures for the children we serve. In addition, I have recently hired a foster parent support specialist for the Waukegan Field Office and hope to hire more in the new fiscal year to assist our DCFS-supervised homes with the work that you perform.

Thanks for all of the long hours of caring, for being there and for helping our youth. We depend so much on our foster families and all caregivers, and couldn't function as an agency without you. I am wishing you a

fantastic Foster Parent Appreciation Month; but for me I appreciate you each and every day. Take care.

**– Marilyn Arnold
DCFS Regional Administrator**



Northern Region Foster Care Advisory Council Update

The Northern Region Foster Parent Advisory Council met on March 7. The guest speakers were DCFS Northern Region regional administrator Marilyn Arnold and Northern Region administrative services manager Robert Johnson.

Arnold updated caregivers on all the newly-created positions in DCFS and their functions. The new positions include foster care recruitment specialists, high-risk intact specialists, adoption specialists, and permanency specialists.

Johnson was on hand to discuss services provided by an agency contracted to drive foster children to visits and appointments. He explained the parameters for the services and how children can be eligible. Some foster parents voiced concerns about the level of service provided. Together the administrators and the caregivers determined a plan to address

future issues and developed action steps to make sure transporters are adequately trained.

DCFS statewide adoption administrator Cheryl McIntire was the guest speaker at the April meeting. She discussed changes in the structure for delivering adoption support and post-adoption services.

Northern Region Foster Care Advisory Council

First Thursday of the month at 6 p.m.
DCFS Aurora Regional Office
8 E. Galena Blvd.
3rd Floor Conference Room
A light dinner will be served.
RSVP to Robyn Harvey at
robyn.harvey@illinois.gov or
815-793-5847.

Due to the sensitive nature of the discussion, caregivers must make outside child care arrangements.

New support group for DuPage families

DCFS foster parents Larry and Diana Blackburn had a desire to connect with other like-minded foster parents in the DuPage County area, but upon learning that no support group in their locale existed, they decided to launch one on their own.

The first meeting was held in February with a good core turnout. Diana noted how there was “a good energy there.” The overall purpose was to meet other families to establish connections in DuPage County. As the caregivers talked, they often came back to the common question, “Have you experienced that?”

The conversations will continue on the fourth Sunday of each month from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Panera Bread, located at 25 Rice Lake Square in Wheaton. Contact Diana Blackburn at 630-653-1986 for more information.

Families can find support among caregivers in a nearby group

One of the responsibilities in the Foster Parent Law is to “*Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations.*” DCFS, private agencies and community organizations sponsor many support groups and associations to assist foster and adoptive parents. The following list can help identify a group that may suit your family. This list will be updated annually. Please contact the editor at vanessa.james@illinois.gov with any corrections or additions for next year.

Adoptive Families Together

Contact: Jocelyn McMahan at 815-969-8836, ext. 4115 or jocelyn.mcmahan@lssi.org
Meets the first Tuesday of the month
6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
321 W. State St., 5th Floor, Rockford
Open to all types and stages of adoption. Snacks provided.

Children’s Home and Aid Parent & Teen Adoption Support Group

Contact: Lynda Nguyen at 815-962-1043
Meets the second Thursday of the month
5:45 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Children’s Home + Aid Northern Region
910 2nd Ave., Rockford
Group is open to parents and teens in adoptive families in Northern Region.

Children’s Home + Aid Specialized Foster Parents Educational/Support Group

Contact: Donna Kasper at 815-962-1043, ext. 172
Meets the third Tuesday of the month
6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Children’s Home + Aid Northern Region
910 2nd Ave., Rockford

Children’s Home + Aid Support Group for Adoptive and Guardianship Parents

Contact: Lynda Nguyen at 815-962-1043
Meets the second Tuesday of the month
5:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m.
Children’s Home + Aid Northern Region
910 2nd Ave., Rockford
For families served by the Adoption Preservation program. Child care is provided.

DeKalb Area Adoptive Families

Contact: Diane DeMers at 815-756-3874
Email: Ballantine@aol.com
246 Rolfe Rd., DeKalb
Serves families in DeKalb and nearby counties.

DeKalb Area Friends of Fostering (DAFF)

Contact: Patty Ihm at 815-751-4061
Meets the second Saturday of the month at 7 p.m.
Salvation Army Church
830 Grove St., DeKalb

DCFS Regional Foster Parent Advisory Council

Contact: Robyn Harvey at 815-793-5847 or robyn.harvey@illinois.gov
Meets the first Thursday of the month
DCFS Office, 8 E. Galena, Aurora

Family Focus Foster Support Program

Contact: Juana Ruiz at 630-844-2550 or juana.ruiz@family-focus.org
Meets the third Monday of the month
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
1575 Reckinger Rd., Aurora
Dinner and childcare provided. Open to foster families in DuPage and surrounding counties.

DuPage County Support Group

Contact: Diane Blackburn at 630-653-1986
Meets the fourth Sunday of the month
3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Panera Bread, 25 Rice Lake Square, Wheaton
Open to all foster and adoptive families in Wheaton, Glen Ellen and neighboring DuPage County communities.

Fox Valley Adoption Group

Contact: Maureen Van Scoit at 630-844-9385
968 Wellington Circle, Aurora
Serves families in DuPage, Kane, and Kendall counties.

Family Focus-Grandparents & Relatives Raising Grandchildren (GRRC)

Contact: Juana Ruiz at 630-844-2550, ext. 239 or juana.ruiz@family-focus.org
Meets the third Tuesday of the month
6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
1575 Reckinger Road, Aurora
Dinner and child care provided.

Illinois Mentor Support Group

Contact: Sally Humphreys at 815-282-6153 x21
Meets the second Thursday of the month
6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. (no meetings June-August)
Illinois Mentor office, 6701 Clinton Road, Loves Park

Lutheran Social Services of IL Foster Parent Group

Contact: Leslie McKinstry at 815-284-7796
Meets the fourth Monday of the month
6 p.m. - 8 p.m.; 1261 Illinois Route 38, Nachusa

Northern Region Training

The DCFS Office of Training 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 Office of Training 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; and
- download course materials to use in class or to access after training.

DIGITAL TRAINING MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE

As we move into the digital age and aim to use fewer printed resources, 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 888-96-ADOPT 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 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 of Illinois Operator at 312-793-3500.

...You are having family problems with your adopted child?

Contact the Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program that serves your area. Call the Adoption Support Line at 888-96-ADOPT.

...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.

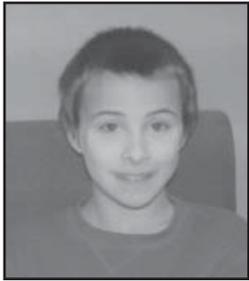
...You have questions about programs for youth approaching adulthood?

Contact the transition coordinator that serves your area, by calling the nearest DCFS regional office. The transition coordinator can advise on programs such as life skills training, preparation for higher education and employment assistance. Details on these programs can also be found at the Get Goal'd website www.youthincare.illinois.gov.

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

Each region has reporters to help gather local news. The names and contact information are listed on the back page of each edition. You can contact the Editor, Vanessa James, at 312-814-6800 or send an e-mail message to vanessa.james@illinois.gov.

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



Christopher (8008)

Vasha [7686] Vasha, 13, is a considerate child who likes helping others. She enjoys attending church, participating in Bible study, and visiting with her relatives. She also enjoys singing, dancing, and listening to music. She struggles with self-control at times, but usually responds well when supervised by consistent, responsible adults.

Vasha's teacher says she is a sweet girl who behaves well in school and tries hard to please others. Vasha's foster parent says she is capable of following rules and behaving appropriately in the home.

Potential parents to Vasha would be loving and supportive, while also providing clear expectations and regular supervision. Once Vasha is adopted, you can give her plenty of time to adjust to your home. You can also work closely with child welfare professionals to help meet Vasha's medical and emotional needs, and to encourage continued positive behavior. The ideal family would live in the St. Louis area, and would help Vasha maintain relationships with her siblings and other members of her birth family

Chris [8008] Chris, 11, is a quiet, polite child who generally cooperates with others. He can be shy at first, but usually warms up to people once he gets to know them. Chris sometimes struggles to manage his emotions, but he has improved significantly in this area. In his spare time, he enjoys watching sports and taking care of animals.

Chris' worker says he is a

friendly child who is easy to get along with. He does well when interacting with other kids in his community.

Chris' "forever family" can remain patient with Chris as he adjusts to his new, permanent home. You can provide the kind of structure and routine that will put him at ease. You can also work with professionals who can help him manage his emotions. Chris would like to live in a rural area, and would like to join a family that has pets. Chris should be the youngest child in his adoptive home.

Emmit [7908] Good luck convincing Emmitt to stay indoors, because this active, energetic 14-year old loves to play outside. Whether he's chasing bubbles, playing sports, or helping weed a garden, Emmitt is always happy to be outdoors, enjoying the fresh air. He is particularly eager to visit new places and learn new things. When he does settle down inside the house, Emmitt enjoys playing with magnets and solving simple puzzles. He has been diagnosed with autism and will need a family that understands, and knows how to meet, his educational and emotional needs.

Emmitt's worker says he is a warm, friendly child. He is also very helpful around the house, and is respectful toward adults. Emmitt has developed strong attachments to his current foster parent, and to members of her extended family. Permanent parents will need to be patient with Emmitt as he adjusts to his new, permanent family. You

can introduce him to as many positive experiences as possible, and teach him to express his thoughts and feelings regarding those experiences. You can also work with professionals who can help you understand autism, and who can offer suggestions on how to meet Emmitt's educational and emotional needs.

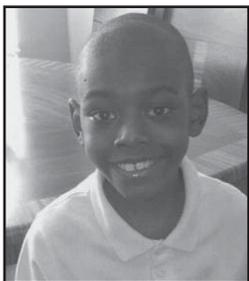
James [8015] This young man brings new meaning to the phrase "multi-tasking!" James likes to keep himself busy at all times by playing, laughing, talking, and interacting with others. He becomes distracted easily, but usually responds well to redirection. James prefers to play inside, and is especially partial to toys, including Transformers and LEGO pieces. He has been diagnosed with autism, and can become overwhelmed when confronted with loud noises or other excessive stimulation. James is 10 years old.

James' worker says he is an outgoing child who is both friendly and well-mannered. He has a wonderful imagination, and can entertain himself for hours on end.

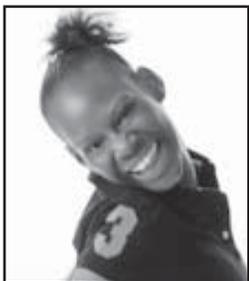
The family for James can monitor his behavior and provide redirection to help him stay on task. You can also learn about autism, so you can become an effective advocate for him, both educationally and emotionally. The ideal family would include children who are roughly the same age as James, and would also help him maintain relationships with his siblings, including regular visits.



Emmitt (7908)



James (8015)



Vasha (7686)



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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Current and back issues of *Illinois Families Now and Forever®* are available online in English and Spanish at www.state.il.us/dcfs