



# Illinois Families Now and Forever®

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

## Adults must be on watch to keep homes safe for kids

### *Help young children sleep safe and sound*

Each year, DCFS tracks and reviews instances of childhood death by abuse or neglect across the state. Suffocation by neglect was the leading cause of death in 2012, where 40 indicated deaths (44 percent) were caused by unsafe sleep conditions. Most deaths occurred when parents slept with a newborn or infant in their bed, ignoring the advice of the American Academy of Pediatrics and safety experts. The adults unknowingly rolled over and smothered the child. In other instances, parents ignored safety warnings and allowed a newborn or infant to sleep with unsafe covers, on an adult mattress or couch, or on their stomachs, contributing to suffocation. Although the deaths might have been accidental, Illinois law holds parents and other caretakers accountable for creating a substantial risk of injury to a child. This prompts a DCFS investigation that can result in an indicated finding of neglect.

“The death of any child is heartbreaking, and even more so when that death may have been avoided if parents had just followed the warnings of their doctor,” said DCFS spokesperson Dave Clarkin. “We hope that other parents will learn from these losses and heed the warnings of experts.”

Tips on safe sleep practices can be found at the National SIDS/Infant Death Resource Center (NSIDRC) at [www.sidscenter.org](http://www.sidscenter.org).



The aim of foster care is to keep children safe. Yet, in our homes there can be common items and everyday circumstances that could cause unintentional harm.

Recently the federal government announced major product recalls on cribs, strollers, clothing and children’s toys that have caused injuries and even fatalities. While the media announcements can help families react, caregivers also have to be proactive to ensure that youth are safe at home.

DCFS rules require foster caregivers of children age six or under to check their homes for products listed as unsafe by the Children’s Product Safety Act. There are several resources that make it possible for caregivers to stay informed about products that have been recalled because of safety concerns. The complete list of unsafe products is available from the Illinois Department of Public Health. Additionally, the U.S. Con-

sumer Product Safety Commission maintains a product list along with helpful information at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). The site offers a subscription service where caregivers can sign-up for automatic e-mail updates. The commission also maintains a telephone hotline with a wide variety of recorded messages on product recalls, consumer products and product safety.

### **Do a clean sweep**

Caregivers should check the lists and remove any recalled items already in your home. It is also important to make informed choices about new items that you purchase or accept as gifts. Be on the lookout for small pieces that could cause choking or long strings that might strangle. The website for the national Safe Kids Campaign has a list of recommendations and tips to judge what toys and products may cause harm. Ultimately, it falls on the adults in the home to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable young ones.

### **Children’s Safety Information:**

U.S. Consumer Product Safety  
Commission

[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

800-638-2772

The toll-free line is open 24 hours a day,  
seven days a week.

Illinois Department of Public Health  
217-782-4977

Safe Kids Campaign  
[www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org).

## From the DCFS Director

**Richard H. Calica**



Thanks to you, in February state lawmakers passed legislation to restore \$25 million in cuts to the DCFS budget. That vote was the final step of a reorganization plan announced last October to move DCFS staff to the front lines by eliminating more than 400 obsolete positions, including an entire level of middle management.

As part of that plan, we have created new staff specialists dedicated to recruiting more foster parents to provide a temporary safe haven for endangered kids. The plan also includes new staff specialists charged with moving DCFS as quickly as possible to either safely reunify children with their families or – when safe reunification simply is not possible – facilitate adoption by a loving family.

Lawmakers and the Governor have already begun work on next year's state budget, which begins July 1st. Over the last decade, funding for DCFS from the state's general coffers has been cut by one-third after you adjust for inflation, and the state's pension problems will continue to squeeze funding for DCFS until a solution is reached. We are hopeful that lawmakers from both parties will come together to enact a state budget that fulfills our shared responsibility to protect children.

I invite you to stay up to date by joining us on Facebook at [facebook.com/ProtectIllinoisKids](https://www.facebook.com/ProtectIllinoisKids) for news on the state budget and other important information.

## Head Start plants seeds for early education



Now is the critical time of year to make sure that all children ages three to five are getting the crucial pre-school educational boost. Most local Head Start agencies conduct open enrollment for the fall starting in March.

The Illinois Office of Head Start places a priority on providing comprehensive services to families and children involved in the child welfare system. Children in foster care who meet program age requirements are automatically eligible for Head Start and/or Early Head Start.

Early childhood education programs are a vital first step toward getting children ready for kindergarten. It is important that caregivers and caseworkers come together to give children the head start they deserve by enrolling all children who will turn three years old by September 1, 2013 in Head Start or an appropriate early learning program.

Early childhood educational programs include five general categories:

- Head Start or Early Head Start;
- pre-kindergarten programs for children at risk of academic failure (Pre-K);
- accredited child care programs (e.g. licensed childcare, home visiting programs);
- early intervention services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays; and
- early childhood special education.

In addition to discussing Head Start and early education options directly with the child's caseworker, there are also other resources to help caregivers determine suitable programs for young children. DCFS has staff dedicated to the school readiness initiative who work statewide and in specific geographic regions. Cook County families (only) can also call Action for Children to find Head Start and pre-school programs in their areas. This is a dedicated line for Chicago and Cook suburban families caring for DCFS youth. Call 312-823-1334. To serve the entire state, the Illinois Head Start Association maintains a website with a Head Start program locator by zip code at [www.ilheadstart.org](http://www.ilheadstart.org)

### DCFS SCHOOL READINESS STAFF

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## High school graduation fees may be reimbursed in foster care



Before long, students will be filing down the aisle toward the graduation stage. This happy occasion comes with costs that go beyond the many hours of homework help and teacher conferences. There is help available for foster caregivers to make this event a memorable one for the child without breaking the bank. For a student in DCFS foster care (not adoption or guardianship), policy covers payment for graduation expenses such as a yearbook, pictures, cap and gown rental, class ring, new clothing for the graduation ceremony and other related fees. However, there are some important details in the language.

The student must be in his or her junior or senior year for payment of the class ring. He or she must be in the senior year of high school to obtain payment for other graduation items. As an example, if a youth wishes to purchase a class ring, the foster caregiver could submit the bill to the caseworker, who would then secure direct

payment to the vendor. The total of all items purchased cannot exceed \$512.50.

The specific procedures may differ for families caring for children whose case management is assigned to a private agency. Private agencies receive an administrative fee per child in foster care to take into account such non-recurring expenses like graduation. The agencies are expected to purchase the approved items and not expect caregivers to cover the costs. Be sure to talk to the child's caseworker in advance about what is allowable, especially before making any purchases out-of-pocket.

DCFS does not have any stated policy regarding expenses for eighth grade graduation. Again, talk to the youth's caseworker if you have questions about those expenses. Make plans now so there are no delays to dampen what should be a wonderful day.

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## CIPP team decision-making aims to preserve at-risk placements

A change in a child's or youth's placement is often extremely upsetting for the youth, caregiver, family members, and caseworker. Children who have experienced placement disruptions are likely to have lower feelings of self-worth, difficulties trusting and forming relationships, and an increase in behavioral and emotional problems. Conversely, children who live in a stable placement or home are known to exhibit a greater sense of security, self-esteem and overall well-being. They are also better able to build relationships with caregivers, friends and family, and enjoy greater success at home, in school and in the community.

Despite everyone's best efforts, it can sometimes feel like a placement is just not going to work out. DCFS has recently made changes in how it takes action when a youth's placement may be in danger of disrupting. CIPP, which is pronounced like "sip," replaces

the process formerly known as the Child & Youth Investment Teams (CAYIT). CIPP stands for Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation. It is a model for team decision-making. The goal of CIPP is to preserve placements by supporting and engaging the youth and the youth's immediate and extended family, caregivers and case management team. CIPP also strives to improve a child's well-being and functioning, and to strengthen his or her connection to family and community.

A CIPP meeting can help identify strategies and resources to settle a conflict in the caregiver's home to support the youth and caregiver. In a CIPP meeting, key people in the youth's life gather together with the assistance and support of a trained facilitator. Participants generate ideas on how to best address the youth's needs, ideally in the youth's current home. If it is determined that the youth's needs

are best met in a different home or at a higher level of care, caregivers will be encouraged to participate in the youth's treatment and/or be visiting resource after the transition.

The youth's current caregiver or caseworker can call CIPP Intake to schedule a meeting. All efforts will be made to swiftly schedule meetings at times and locations that will support involvement by the youth, their family and caregiver. When receiving calls from caregivers, CIPP Intake will contact the caseworker to schedule a meeting.

Caregivers can contact CIPP for assistance with identifying services and supports needed to preserve the current placement, not to change a placement. For more information, call 312-814-6800 or send an email to [CIPPIntake@illinois.gov](mailto:CIPPIntake@illinois.gov).



# Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council met in February in Bloomingdale. First on their agenda was the annual training to prepare council members to conduct onsite meetings to review agencies' Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. Each year council members visit one third of the foster care programs conducted by the DCFS regions and private agencies with foster care contracts. They interview some staff who work directly with foster parents. The interviews help council members understand the extent to which the agency or region is incorporating its plan in its everyday work with foster parents. Foster parents from these agencies and regions are also called and asked structured questions about their experience with the agency/region, giving council members information from the people who are served. The council then sends letters to those entities that were reviewed, advising them how well they did.

## New roles in DCFS Administration

Council members welcomed several members from the administration of the DCFS Bureau of Operations. After an overview of the new roles, the council members engaged the managers in discussions and had their questions answered. The new regional administrator for Northern Region, Marilyn Arnold, shared information about the new organizational structure and provided contact information for the area administrators. She also highlighted her efforts that re-established a foster parent council, noting that turnout at their first meeting was encouraging. Her plans for next fiscal year include adding more foster parent support specialists.

Associate deputy Valerie McDaniels gave a brief overview of her long-term experience with child protection work. Then she explained how she and fellow associate deputies Lori Welcher-Evans and Keith Langston are temporarily deployed to Cook Region to assist regional administrator Jackie Bright in completing the regional organization and wrapping up outstanding assignments. She noted that administrators everywhere are taking a more in-depth and intense approach to owning the work and getting it done.

Kevin Houser spoke next, providing a detailed, recent history of the adoption function restructuring. He expressed optimism since funding for the DCFS personnel budget was recently restored. He explained that decisions will soon be made about consolidating all adoptions work in one place in the organization. The council also got to meet Cheryl McIntire, the new statewide adoption administrator.

LaToya Champagne Thompson, associate director of training, gave a status report on the sexual health training pilots as well as her work on the Child and Family Team process. She invited two members to join her committee, and asked for feedback on members' experiences with Child and Family Team meetings.

*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 Bloomingdale at 9 a.m.**

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

## 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](mailto: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.*

## Adoption Advisory Council Update



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

In February, the council met via the usual winter conference call. Vince Champagne of the Office of Health Services provided an update on changes to the Medicaid program. Currently the Illinois legislature is drafting bills to address the expansion of the Medicaid program in January 2014. The DCFS legislative liaison is staying abreast of issues that could affect caregivers and children. He also mentioned that the state-issued medical card will be changing to one that is more durable and will be issued annually, even for youth in foster care.

The council also discussed instances of inconsistent services or delayed permanency outcomes when a child's case is managed by one foster care program and placed in a pre-adoptive home that is licensed by a different program. The adoption council voted to continue to gather information at the next meeting and then determine appropriate recommendations.

The next Illinois Adoption Advisory Council meeting is on April 5, at 10 a.m. in Springfield. Contact the Office of Training, Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for details.

## New statewide adoption administrator

In the fall of last year, DCFS announced a new structure to keep cases swiftly moving toward adoption and guardianship. Recently Cheryl McIntire was named the new statewide adoption administrator. She introduced herself to caregivers at the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council's February meeting.

While this is a new position for her, McIntire is not new to DCFS. Hers is a familiar name in the Central Region where she had served as an assistant regional administrator. She left DCFS in 2005 and was a principal in the Danville school district.

Commenting on her return to DCFS, she said, "job one is

looking at all the kids in care with adoption and guardianship goals and determining what needs to be done to move them to permanency."

She noted that the new structure is designed to improve the quality of adoptions, enhance customer service and decrease the amount of time it takes to complete the adoption process. The new strategic information technology plan focuses on getting needed information about dates and milestones to workers and others in a timely fashion and in formats that are efficient. The combined efforts will benefit children and their prospective adoptive families.

### *Call the Adoption Support Line for all adoption-related questions*

The Adoption Support Line has expanded capacity to serve callers statewide through one toll-free number at: 855-548-5505.

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. The Adoption Support Line allows all adoption-related calls to come to a centralized location. Trained responders with adoption experience will

be able to answer questions or direct calls for follow up.

The Adoption Support Line will have 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 8:30a.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.

# Be prepared for the subsidy's end as youth come of age



As youth approach 18, they often look at that birthday as a beginning. But, practically speaking, adoptive and guardianship parents should realize it is often an end to the adoption or guardianship subsidy agreement.

To help parents plan for the transition, six months before the youth's 18th birthday the family will receive a letter from DCFS titled *Notice of Intent to Discontinue Subsidy Payments on 18th Birthday*. On the youth's 18th birthday, the many benefits in the subsidy, including the medical card, may also end. There are only two specific circumstances where the subsidy could continue beyond 18. Both require preparation and necessary documentation from the family, before the child turns 18.

## Complete form to request extension: 30 days to respond

*The only two conditions that could qualify for extending the subsidy past the 18th birthday are:*

1. Youth with a physical or mental disability that existed prior to the adoption or transfer of guardianship which affects the child's ability to ever live independently could, with proper documentation, be approved for an extension until the child turns 21.
2. Youth who don't have a disability, but who are still in high school at age 18 could have payments continue until graduation, but not past the 19th birthday.

DCFS redesigned the letter and response form to make the information easier to understand. Parents should first watch the mail for the initial notice and respond within 30 days. If a caregiver believes their youth is eligible for an extension of his or her subsidy, select the appropriate extension option and return the form to the subsidy worker listed on the letter. DCFS subsidy workers will make attempts to reach adoptive and guardianship families by phone and mail if the initial letter goes without a response.

If the youth is eligible for a subsidy extension, it is crucial to get the proper coding done

early and correctly. For example, parents should be aware that a youth cannot be granted the extension for high school graduation at age 19 and then also receive a further extension to 21 due to a physical or mental disability.

## Document the need for an extension: Gather materials early

The disability extension only applies to a condition that affects the individual's major life activities. If a child is eligible for SSI (Supplemental Security Income from the Social Security Administration) due to a condition that existed prior to the adoption, documentation of that eligibility is sufficient to meet requirements for extension to age 21. In other cases, acceptable documentation would include a copy of a report or letter from a duly licensed or credentialed professional within the last year.

Youth without disabilities who have not graduated at 18 can ask the high school to provide a letter confirming enrollment and the anticipated graduation date.

At 60 days before the youth's 18th birthday, DCFS will send another letter to the family that confirms the subsidy termination date. It will also include instructions in case a family decides to appeal the decision.

By looking ahead and planning early, the end of the subsidy agreement can be a smooth transition. Parents or guardians seeking an extension should begin gathering documentation well before the child turns 18. All documentation needs to be turned in to the subsidy worker with enough time to confirm the end date and have the case coded correctly before the youth's 18th birthday. Otherwise, the subsidy agreement automatically ends if it has not been approved for an extension.

Caregivers can contact the worker with any questions. The youth's subsidy worker's contact information will be clearly listed on the notification letter.

*Requests to extend a subsidy until high school graduation or for a mental/physical disability require documentation early.*

## Education advisor helps families navigate tough school issues



For children who are in the care and custody of DCFS and find themselves struggling at school, there is help. Through the Northern Illinois University Education Access Project and DCFS, educational advisors assist foster caregivers with educational concerns and issues. Education advisors are strong advocates for children in care and provide technical assistance and support for caregivers whose homes are supervised by DCFS regional foster care programs. They can also provide support and guidance to child welfare staff, school personnel, court personnel and others on educational issues that require intervention. The DCFS education advisors have counterparts in the private agencies called education liaisons that can work with the families licensed through that agency.

The DCFS education advisors each have experience in the school system and know what children have the right to expect from schools. 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. For DCFS-supervised homes, Bessie Peabody is the education advisor. Examples of her functions and responsibilities include:

- **Attend and provide consultation on educational issues at Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings**

At an IEP meeting, it was learned that a student wasn't turning in homework consistently. After hearing all the comments from the teacher, it was determined that the student did not understand the homework and was afraid to tell the caregiver or the teacher. Instead, the student felt it was easier to not do it and was failing all subjects. The education advisor developed strategies and interventions to involve the teacher and caregiver. Now the student is passing and is not afraid to ask questions.

- **Track and address school suspensions and expulsions identified in DCFS Unusual Incident Reports**

Education advisors track school suspensions. They will call the school to meet about why the suspensions are occurring. Attendance at expulsion hearings is very important in order to advocate for the student. Many expulsions are overturned after the advisor intervenes.

- **Assist in education planning for youth in CIPP, Child and Family Teams and other staffings**

The education advisor will attend staffings to assist with any educational issues in order to collaborate with schools for the success of the student.

- **Follow up on education issues identified in DCFS Administrative Case Reviews**

Education advisors receive reports from ACRs. If there are any education concerns listed in the review, the advisor will follow up through the caseworker and foster caregiver.

- **Define and support educational best practices through participation in continuing research**

Advisors attend workshops and trainings to stay up on the current research in order to be the best advocate possible.

Homes served by private agencies can contact their agency for details. DCFS-supervised homes can contact:

Bessie B. Peabody  
NIU education advisor for DCFS,  
Southern Region  
10 Collinsville Avenue  
East St. Louis, IL 62201  
618-583-2125

## Start planning now to guarantee a great summer camp experience



It may seem too soon to make plans for summer. However, since the best summer day camps and overnight camps tend to fill fast, now is the time to make plans. Camp and activities such as dance and art can be important for a child's social development.

Caregivers' costs for enrichment programs may be eligible for reimbursement under Rule 359 for DCFS-supervised foster families. For private agency foster families, the policy can differ from agency to agency. Every agency receives funds for "nonrecurring expenses" such as camp for some children. Ask the child's caseworker about the camp policy for children at

that agency. Adoptive and guardianship families typically have to cover these expenses within the household. Some camps do offer income-based financial assistance. Before registering for a program, be sure you understand the funding process and be sure to have any needed approvals in advance.

### Finding the right camp

With funding cleared, the search for the right camp for a child can take off. Talk to other caregivers for recommendations. Check the community park districts. Area churches may have a youth camp or a youth group that plans summer activities. (Be sure to ask about parent permission for a religious program).

When evaluating camps, inquire about the counselor-to-camper ratio and the counselors' skills and certifications. Many camps do serve special needs children. Camp personnel should be able to outline their provisions for medication, accommodations for disabilities and behavior management procedures.

### DCFS Foster Care Homes

Caregivers whose licenses are supervised by the Southern Region foster care program should work with the child's caseworker to:

1. identify the right program;
2. confirm that the program is eligible for reimbursement under Rule 359;
3. obtain written approval;
4. pay for the camp in advance; and
5. submit the expense for reimbursement.

Rule 359 caps annual camp expenses at \$260.35. Other enrichment activities will be evaluated for the appropriate prevailing rate. The caseworker can assist with the approval and the reimbursement.

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## Be included in the 2013 of foster care associations and support groups

If you lead a support group or association for foster or adoptive families, you can be included in the directory of support groups, published in May in the Foster Parent Appreciation Month issue.

New listings and updates should be sent in writing by email or post to: [vanessa.james@illinois.gov](mailto:vanessa.james@illinois.gov) (there is a dot before "james")  
Vanessa James, DCFS  
100 W. Randolph, 6th fl.  
Chicago, IL 60601

Be sure to include:  
Name of group  
Meeting schedule (e.g. 2nd Tuesday monthly at 10 a.m.)  
Meeting location  
Contact name with phone number/e-mail  
Any other notes (e.g. potluck dinner, child care provided, RSVP required, etc.)

Please send the information by March 30.

### Know your Foster Parent Law Rights and Responsibilities

Each year all foster care programs submit a Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. Every licensed caregiver should receive a copy of or be able to view their agency/DCFS region's Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.

It contains details on important topics including how the program will:

- provide training;
- handle grievances;
- conduct financial reimbursements to caregivers;
- convey information about the child; and
- provide needed services.

Contact the Foster Parent Law liaison at DCFS region or the agency for additional details.

## Caregivers and youth stay informed and speak out on councils

The next meeting of the Southern Region Foster Care Advisory Council will be on April 23 at 6 p.m.

These meetings are open to all caregivers from the DCFS and private agency-supervised foster care programs. The advisory council is an important platform for caregivers to stay informed and to have a say in new policies and procedures to discuss issues related to the foster care program.

If an issue has the potential to impact foster care homes across the

state, the regional representatives can elevate it to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. Administrators from the region participate in the meetings and assist in resolving caregiver concerns.

Caregivers are invited to come to the DCFS office in Belleville, Cairo, Effingham, Marion, Mt. Vernon and Wood River. Participants at each site will be connected by teleconference. Contact the nearest DCFS office for more details.

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Young people involved with the child welfare system can also have an opportunity to be heard. DCFS sponsors youth advisory boards to help youth learn to advocate and become leaders. The board is also a vehicle to provide youth with information they need to take advantage of services and resources to aid them as they transition to adulthood.

The Regional Youth Advisory Board is open to all youth 14 to 21 who are currently in care or those who moved to adoption or guardianship.

The Southern Region meetings are held on the first Monday of the month from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at 700 John A. Logan Dr. in Carterville.

The local board is hoping that caregivers will encourage young people in their homes to join the YAB. Arrangements for transportation can be made. Anyone needing more information can contact the board's advisor Leshonda Rogers at 217-789-2908.

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## Free Mt. Vernon health services can help keep young children safe

Southern Region caregivers in the Mt. Vernon area should be aware that there are various resources and programs available this spring to help with early childhood health and safety issues in their particular areas.

The Jefferson County Health Department will be providing lead screenings for all children one and two years of age to determine if they are within the normal blood level range for lead. High levels of lead can inhibit growth and development.

Project Child is an organization designed to help provide quality, affordable help to parents and providers in the community to better

care for children. Project Child is offering a resource fair on April 13th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Rend Lake College Marketplace in Mt. Vernon. This will consist of Car Care Awareness car inspections, child passenger seat inspections, and child passenger safety. If a child seat is not appropriate for the child's age or size, they will be provided with an appropriate seat.

Project Child also provides information on the safe disposal of unused prescription drugs, the child vitamin program, bicycle safety, water safety, poison prevention materials, fire safety and various other resources. To get more details, call Project Child at 618-244-2210.

### Need a Car Seat Safety Check?

Car crashes are the number one killer of children 1 to 12 years old in the United States. The best way to protect them in the car is to put them in the right seat, at the right time, and use it the right way.

There are so many car seat types and models. The right car seat or booster fits your child and your car, and is one you will use correctly every time you travel. Not only will your child ride as safely as possible, you will be establishing the foundation for a lifelong habit of seat belt use every time your child travels.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration maintains a website where families can locate car seat inspection sites by zip code at [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov).

## Southern 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](http://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](http://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.

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## 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](http://www.youthincare.illinois.gov).

**CORRECTION: The Youth in College article in the 2013 January/February issue contained a mistake. The benefits of the program are for four years or until the term of the student's 23rd birthday. The medical card is the exception, and ends at age 21.**

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



Jeremiah & Joshua  
(C7899-C7900)

**Jeremiah & Joshua [7899-900]** These brothers love to spend time outside. Whether they're playing basketball, riding their bikes, or finding other ways to be active, they simply can't be confined to the house. The older brother, Jeremiah, at age 11 is a playful child who enjoys positive attention. He can be impulsive at times, but responds well to structure. Joshua, age 9, is a sweet, playful child. He also responds well to structure in his day-to-day activities.

Jeremiah's teachers say he is one of the highest functioning students in his class. Joshua's worker says he is sweet, lovable, and engaging. The right family can provide a supportive, structured home for Jeremiah and Joshua, redirecting their behavior when necessary. You can provide plenty of love and affection for these boys, while giving them ample time to adjust to their new, permanent family. You can also help Jeremiah and Joshua maintain relationships with their siblings.

they are present and attentive to her needs.

Alexis' worker says she is a happy child who loves being around others. She especially likes it when people talk to her. Potential parents should be able to spend lots of time with Alexis, giving her plenty of opportunities to be around family, friends, neighbors, and classmates. You can announce yourself when you enter a room, so as not to startle her. You can also help her navigate between wheelchair, bed, and bathtub, and work with doctors and other professionals to ensure her ongoing medical needs are met.

**Nikkin [7826]** If you're planning a family excursion, Nikkin, age 12, will be the first person to sign up. He enjoys attending church, playing sports, and participating in other activities outside the home. Nikkin is a social young man with an engaging personality. He makes friends easily, and is polite and respectful toward adults. He also has an active imagination, and enjoys reading, as well as telling, stories.

Nikkin's teacher says he is polite and friendly. He is a bright, intelligent young man who does well academically. To be a forever family to Nikkin, you can provide a structured home environment, complete with appropriate supervision. You can also work with Nikkin's school to help monitor his behavior. Nikkin would like to live with

a family that will take him places and invite him to participate in fun activities. He would also enjoy having other children in the home so he can have someone to play with.

**Jaydn & Sabrina [7992-93]** These siblings have a strong connection, and they deserve a family that will help them grow and thrive together. Jaydn, 10, is an imaginative young man who enjoys creative endeavors like drawing. He can be quiet and reserved, but is learning how to express himself in social situations. Sabrina, age 7, is outgoing, friendly, and eager to share her feelings. She loves coloring, playing with dolls, and watching Dora the Explorer. Both children are well-behaved in school.

Jaydn's worker says he is intelligent, kind, loving, and he draws exceptionally well. Sabrina's worker says she is a happy child who likes spending time with her friends, and tries to help others whenever she can.

The right parents for these two can provide a loving, consistent home environment for Jaydn and Sabrina. You can monitor their behavior, and redirect them when necessary. You can also help them learn effective techniques for managing their emotions. Jaydn and Sabrina both want to maintain relationships with their siblings in southern Illinois. Sabrina would like her forever family to "be nice."



Alexis (C7854)



Nikkin (C7826)



Jaydn (C7992)



Sabrina (C7993)



Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI Web site – [www.adoptinfo-il.org](http://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®

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Purpose: To help busy families more effectively parent children currently or formerly in DCFS care. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

Address Changes: Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change office addresses or request staff copies through the Editor.

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