

## New steps for kids near meth

For the last two years, a committee of DCFS staff and the Illinois State Police has been working on the Drug Endangered Children (DEC) protocol. Recently the group completed a new curriculum to train officers and DCFS workers on handling situations where children may have been exposed to methamphetamine laboratories.

Training rolled out in December. Meanwhile, directors of child welfare agencies signed Memorandums of Understanding to follow the procedures included in the protocol.

Foster parents should be aware of a new form that they will receive when a minor is taken into custody and placed with them. The form is *The Caregiver's Guide for Care of Children Exposed to Methamphetamine Laboratories*. It informs the foster parent of what to do and what is expected of them as they care for a child after exposure. It also gives them the name of the caseworker, the medical facility that will provide care, and the next medical appointment date. Look for more information coming in the near future, as training in the field continues.

## Schmidt family celebrates the holiday adoption of four

Christmas came early for the Schmidt family of Metamora. On December 21, they stood before a judge and adopted four siblings ranging in age from three to thirteen. David and Diane already had three adult children, living on their own, and a 13-year-old son whom they adopted at birth. Their new path to that momentous adoption day started in December 2000 when they became licensed for foster care.

David and Diane felt blessed with the first placement of twin boys who had been born prematurely. In the following spring of 2001, they added three more children to their family. The next year, the Schmidts learned that their children had a newborn sister. When the Schmidts were asked to take her into their family, David said, "There is nothing better that we could do with the rest of our lives."

As time and legalities progressed, the four siblings came closer to the adoption, just four days before Christmas. The Schmidts left the courtroom to celebrate their early Christmas present. With all seven children in tow, the family joined their adult sons in Hawaii for 16



*The Schmidt family gathers for a new "official" family photo to celebrate the adoption of four siblings.*

days. Even with one infant and two toddlers traveling halfway around the world, Diane kept a sunny outlook.

"We had the time of our lives. The kids all traveled well and it really couldn't have been any better," she said.

In addition to traveling, David and Diane believe that every child should have every opportunity to be the best they can be. They keep their children's lives full with camps, sports, Girl Scouts, student council activities, pets, parties and lots of country fun. Even with raising a second set of children, Diane and David are glad they have never been "empty nesters."

## Transition Services

The DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services (OETS) offers a variety of programs for older youth to assist them in receiving educational, employment and training opportunities as they prepare for self-sufficiency and independence.

To help the caregivers and caseworkers support youth as they move forward, Transition Managers are available for consultation in local DCFS offices. Freddie Higgins is the Transition Manager for Central Region, with office time for the following schedule:

- Springfield field office, 1<sup>st</sup> Monday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Peoria field office, 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Urbana field office, 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Higgins can assist caregivers and staff with transition programs including:

- DCFS Scholarship Program
- Youth in College Program
- Youth in Employment Program
- Youth Housing Assistance Program

He can be reached by phone at his regular office at 309-693-5441.

Youth who are attending college can access the Education Training Voucher and Illinois Community College Board Tuition Payment program to help pay for educational expenses at Illinois schools.

## Central Region hosts state youth representatives

The Central Region hosted the Statewide Youth Advisory Board in Champaign for a weekend of work in January. The Board represents youth in foster care from all over the state, including those from the Central region.

The weekend agenda started early on Saturday. Deputy Director of Service Intervention, Cynthia Moreno, presented information on the guardianship project due to begin in April 2006. It will extend some services to youth in subsidized guardianship beyond their 18th birthday or graduation from high school. Eligible youth who move to guardianship will also find access to more services that previously pertained only to young people who remained in foster care or residential settings. Under the new program, youth can build lifelong relationships with caregivers and benefit from additional supports from DCFS.

Kendal Marlow of the Division of Service Intervention provided an update on the Youth Summit held in December, summarizing the key themes and recommendations. Youth continue to want and need services to support them as they approach the age of emancipation. They said they desire quality experiences to prepare them for living on their own as well as continued support for family connections and sibling contact.



*The Statewide Youth Advisory Board often breaks into teams to tackle issues and brainstorm for solutions.*

The youth also received training to develop statewide initiatives and their own regional initiatives. The Central Region youth are working on a Youth Bill of Rights while in care. They envision this would include the right to information on programs available for continued education, support in employment and medical information, among others. Youth also received training in Leadership and Advocacy from Yvonne Jefferies of the Open Book project.

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The Central Region Youth Advisory Board continues to meet on the third Wednesday of the month at the Newman Catholic Center in Normal from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. A meal is served and youth benefit from the information and training that is provided at each meeting in addition to fellowship.

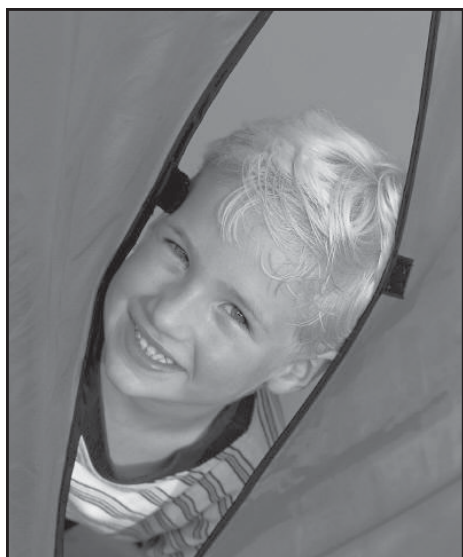
## Summer Camps

### Princeton

Prairie Arts Council in Princeton sponsors a children's theatre camp in the summer. It runs in half days for two weeks and culminates in a short play performed by the youth. The camp is offered to children in grades 2 through 8. The cost in the past has been \$85.00, which includes snacks. Contact Rachel Gorenz of the Prairie Arts Council at 815-875-ARTS.

### Henry County

Royal Family Kids camp is a nondenominational secular camp. It is a one-week resident camp designed to meet the unique and overwhelming needs of abused and neglected children. The camp is open for girls and boys ages 7 to 11. The staff is prepared to work with children who have some special needs or take medication. Henry County case-workers can help foster parents apply for this August camp session.



## Central Region Foster Parent Customer Service Line is taking calls

DCFS Central Region Foster Parent Customer Service Line is 866/368-5204. This line is toll free. It will be operational Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. excluding state holidays. The line is equipped with voice mail. The goal is to have a response time of 24 hours to all calls. If a foster parent has an emergency or urgent request, they should call the Field Office directly. ***This is not an emergency response line.***

The Customer Service Line is set up for calls from foster families whose licenses are supervised by DCFS Central Region. The calls can be about issues or concerns that foster parents have not been able to resolve through normal channels. These could be business issues, respite, licensing, investigation or case management. Note, issues appropriate for a service appeal should be handled through that vehicle. Additionally, foster parents who must face long-distance charges may use this line to have messages forwarded to DCFS personnel via e-mail as long as the calls are not urgent.

Regional administration established a "point-person" to be responsible for this line. The pointperson fields the call and routes calls to the appropriate person for follow-up. The point-person will also check on the resolution by the fifth business day.

Foster Parent Grievance calls: If callers indicate they would like to file a Foster Parent Grievance, they will be sent the Foster Parent Grievance Form and asked to complete it and mail it to the address provided.

This line was not designed to handle calls from caregivers with private agencies. Those calls should instead go directly to the agency that supervises that home's license. If the POS foster parent leaves a message on the line and feels they have exhausted the chain of command within their agency, they will be referred to the DCFS agency monitoring team if appropriate.

### Central Connections

#### Sponsor

Robert Blackwell, DCFS  
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#### Regional Reporter

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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.

# Central Region Training Calendar

## Integrated Assessment Training

### Peoria Area 888-507-7433

**CANTON** *Spoon River College*  
May 22 (Mon) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**EAST MOLINE** *BHC Outreach Ctr.*  
April 6 (Thu) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

### Champaign Area 217-355-4644

**CHAMPAIGN** *Parkland College*  
April 15 (Sat) 9-11 a.m.  
May 13 (Sat) 9-11 a.m.  
June 10 (Sat) 9-11 a.m.

**CHARLESTON** *Coles Cty. Center for Human Svcs.*  
May 25 (Thu) 9-11 a.m.

**DANVILLE** *Comm. Church of God*  
April 3 (Mon) 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
June 8 (Thu) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**DECATUR** *Webster Cantrell Hall*  
April 18 (Tue) 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
May 9 (Tue) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**NORMAL** *BabyFold*  
April 3 (Mon) 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
May 6 (Sat) 9-11 a.m.  
June 3 (Sat) 9-11 a.m.

### Springfield Area 217-786-2458

**JACKSONVILLE** *LLCC Edu. Center*  
May 22 (Mon) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**QUINCY** *Blessing Hospital*  
April 29 (Sat) 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

## Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

### Peoria Area 888-507-7433

**EAST MOLINE** *BHC Outreach Ctr.*  
May 23 & 30 (Tue) 6-9 p.m.

**MACOMB** *First Presbyterian Church*  
June 22 & 29 (Thu) 6-9 p.m.

**PEORIA** *Children's Home*  
April 22 & 29 (Sat) 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

**PEORIA** *Lutheran Social Svcs.*  
June 12 & 19 (Mon) 6-9 p.m.

### Champaign Area 217-355-4644

**NORMAL** *BabyFold*  
April 3 & 10 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**CHAMPAIGN** *Parkland College*  
June 5 & 12 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**DANVILLE** *Community Church of God*  
June 3 (Sat) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**DECATUR** *Webster Cantrell*  
May 16 & 23 (Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

### Springfield Area 217-786-2458

**JERSEYVILLE** *Lutheran Social Svcs.*  
April 17 & 24 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**SPRINGFIELD** *Lincoln Land Community College*  
May 6 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

## Non-PRIDE Inservice Training

### Peoria Area 888-507-7433

*Special Education of Children in Foster Care*  
**PEORIA** *Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Ctr.*  
April 5 (Wed) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

### Champaign Area 217-355-4644

*Summer's Coming, What am I Going To Do with My Child?*  
**CHAMPAIGN** *Illinois Terminal Ctr.*  
April 6 (Thu) 6:30-8 p.m.

### Springfield Area 217-786-2458

*Educational Services & Rehabilitation Act 504: Who is Covered?*  
**JERSEYVILLE** *Public Library*  
April 1 (Sat) 10-11:30 a.m.

Register now for the 2006 Caregiver Training Institutes. This year's theme is **Effecting Transitions for Youth in Care - Resources for Caregivers and Youth**. Caregivers will earn training hours as they learn about new DCFS programs, avenues for positive involvement in decision-making and resources to prepare youth for self-sufficiency.

Call the toll-free registration number **877-800-3393** to sign up for the last session in Central Region.

**April 8**  
**8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**  
**Pere Marquette Hotel ~ Peoria**