

Rod R. Blagojevich
Governor



Bryan Samuels
Director

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 6, 2005

CONTACT:

Diane Jackson, 312-814-8436

**STUDENTS FIND PROMISING FUTURES
THROUGH NEW DCFS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**
*Chicago area employers in public and private sector welcome
30 scholars to their workplaces*

Chicago -- College students looking to begin a career need focus, dedication and education. They also need contacts to help them find their first on-the-job experience through internships or entry-level positions.

For many college students, family and friends provide a ready-made network to help them get started on a career path. But not all college students have such built-in advantages.

On June 6, DCFS held an internship program orientation at the Thompson Center for 30 students selected from 100 applicants that attend public and private colleges around the country. The internships will run now through mid August. DCFS cares for nearly 700 students enrolled in two- and four-year colleges throughout the nation. However, many of them don't have family members who can make contacts and introductions on their behalf.

"For most of these kids," says DCFS Director Bryan Samuels, "we are their family."

Samuels said DCFS interns attend colleges including Eastern Illinois University, Harold Washington College, Illinois State University, Malcolm X College, Northern Illinois University, Richard J. Daley College and the University of Illinois. Students must maintain a full-time schedule and a "C" average to receive financial assistance and access to medical care. The agency awards 48 college scholarships each year. DCFS students are studying to work in several professional fields such as law, health care, social services, education, child welfare and communications.

After taking office in 2003, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich asked DCFS to focus on providing older wards with more educational opportunities and life-skills to ensure their long-term success. He applauds the new internship program as important to achieving that goal.

"To succeed in school after overcoming serious obstacles says everything about how dedicated these kids are to getting ahead," said Governor Blagojevich. "Through the efforts of DCFS, we want to take their education to the next level and connect them with experience in the professional world that matches their career interests."

-- More --

100 West Randolph, 6-200 · Chicago, Illinois 60601-3249
312-814-4650 · 312-814-8783 / TTY



ACCREDITED • COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

During the orientation, DCFS Director Bryan Samuels made opening remarks and presentations included business etiquette that was conducted by Deneen Collins, HR/Diversity Coordinator for the Tribune Company, and self marketing that was led by Val Gatson, Human Resources Vice President and Director of College Relations at Northern Trust.

For students that were accepted, it's the opportunity of a lifetime in which they haven't had many. They know they need to make the most of their experience.

"I really believe my internship will help me learn how medical school works," says Symone Young, 20, who will intern at Northwestern University Medical School and plans to combine a master's in public health with a medical degree.

"This is a rare opportunity, and I didn't want to miss out on it," she said. "I can get a lot from this. I'm open to anything I can learn."

For her internship, Symone will help update the school's web site and participate in a research project that she will present at the end of the summer.

Like Symone, 22-year-old DeShone Jackson is looking for hands-on experience when he starts his internship at WGN-TV.

"I really want to get into the field of my choice," said the budding broadcaster. "I want to know I learned as much as possible and have more experience under my belt in the field that I've always dreamed about," he said.

Depending on their career interests and placement, interns frequently receive help from employers to prepare for advanced education and gain a deeper understanding of a profession.

"My supervisor will help me break down the basics of the LSAT exam and learn more about how to interpret cases and pick up on contextual cues," says Michelle Dordies, 22, a pre-law student who will work this summer at Chicago-based law firm Winston & Strawn. Dordies is one of five DCFS interns Winston & Strawn has hired for the summer.

"This internship will help me get a sense of what it will be like for me in law school," said Dordies, which is exactly what Winston & Strawn Employment Specialist Traci Bartosz has in mind.

"We want our interns to have a well-rounded experience. We want them to learn something work related and about themselves that they can apply in their lives," said Bartosz, who said the interns will attend weekly meetings conducted by the firm's human resources and technology directors and various lawyers. Bartosz said she will conduct interview training and give interns pointers on preparing their resumes.

Find Your Future is part of a "lifetime approach" DCFS introduced last year to provide better services for children and youth in state care. "Today we care for 18,000 children, whereas in 1997 we had 51,000 children in care," said Samuels. "Our kids are older and need different services to prepare them for life on their own."

Employers who want to know more about the program or participate in Find Your Future 2006 can contact Sujata Bhat in the DCFS director's office, 312-814-6831, or e-mail her at sbhat@idcfs.state.il.us.