

# Advocate

News for Chicago Metro Area Foster Parents

## Chicago Sponsors Safe Homes for Community-Based Foster Care

In an effort to help children in care remain in their neighborhoods, close to their schools, extended families and familiar surroundings, the City of Chicago and DCFS designed the Safe Homes for Kids program. This pilot will work with the Chicago Department of Housing and community organizations to develop single-family or two-flat "Safe Homes for Kids" to provide foster care services.

The City's Department Of Housing (DOH) will finance and convey ownership of the house to a selected community-based organization that will be responsible for operating it as a foster home. The organization will identify potential foster parents and work with DCFS and private agencies to license the home for foster care. The parents will move into the home and act as foster parents for children in the Safe Home for Kids home.

"Safe Homes for Kids is a unique partnership to provide what every child needs—a caring family and a safe home," said Andrea

Smith, Chicago Department of Housing assistant commissioner.

Three homes will be constructed or rehabilitated by DOH in 2000, and, pending budget approval, four additional homes are expected to be completed in 2001. The homes will utilize City-owned land or property that is currently owned by the community-based organizations in the program.

*"Safe Homes for Kids is a unique partnership to provide what every child needs - a caring family and a safe home"*

— Andrea Smith, Chicago Department of Housing

Seven community organizations have been selected to be involved in the pilot:

- Casa Central
- St. Thomas Episcopal Church, in partnership with Chase House
- The Good Hope Foundation
- Faith Community of St. Sabina
- Lydia Home
- Westside Health Partnership
- Lawrence Hall Youth Services

These organizations first submitted a letter of interest and



then a full application outlining their proposed foster care model, strengths of the organization and proposed site. A review team including DCFS, DOH, the Mayor's Office and the Department of Human Services selected the participating organizations.

"Safe Homes for Kids is an ideal use of city resources, the experience of DCFS and strengths of private foster care agencies on behalf of children and their families," said Smith.

The community organizations are expected to play a strong leadership role in the operation of each Safe Home. Each must demonstrate a holistic approach to providing care including afterschool programs and educational opportunities. DCFS will license the homes and provide the reimbursement rate to support the children in the Safe Home foster care home.

# DCFS Offers New Social Services with Chicago Public Schools



The Department of Children and Family Services has been working closely with the Chicago Public Schools to meet the educational needs of children in care. Deputy Director Gloria Fitzgerald and the Division of Education and Transition Services have made strides on many fronts to provide new services to foster children and their foster families.

## New DCFS/CPS Attendance Improvement Program

This year DCFS' Division of Education and Transition and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) established the Attendance Improvement telephone line. The telephone line is designed to provide immediate notification when attendance may be problematic.

CPS will contact the DCFS Attendance Improvement Line to report the name(s) of identified wards after they have been absent from school (excused or unexcused) for a total of 5 days and every day thereafter within a school year. This process differs from the current CPS Truancy Reporting procedure in that days need not be consecutive.

DCFS will intervene by contacting the education liaisons in private agencies or the field service managers for cases handled by DCFS staff. The staff will be instructed to work with the foster parents, case workers and the child to establish an intervention plan within 10 business days to ensure that the child is attending school on a regular basis. If attendance has not improved or the intervention plan is not appropriate or received within 10 days, DCFS Central Office Education staff will schedule a conference at the school with the appropriate staff, case-worker and caregiver to determine the cause for the absenteeism and develop an alternative intervention plan.

## Project S.T.R.I.V.E (Strategies To Rejuvenate Interest & Value in Education)

Project S.T.R.I.V.E is a collaboration between DCFS, the Chicago Public Schools and Youth Guidance Social Service Agency. This collaborative project with Youth Guidance and the Chicago Public Schools serves all 'at-risk'<sup>1</sup> children attending Oglesby Elementary School located at 7646 South Green, with the priority placed on DCFS wards. In addition to the regular school social worker provided by the Chicago Public Schools, Project S.T.R.I.V.E will provide one full-time social worker (to be on site at Oglesby four days per week), and one part-time social worker to address problematic issues that occur at the school. The Youth Guidance social workers will also provide on site support for foster parents, caseworkers and education liaisons.

The goals of Project STRIVE are:

- S**tudent Stabilization (home and school placements)
- T**ruancy/Absenteeism Reduction
- R**ecruitment of adoptive/foster parents
- I**mproved Academic Performance
- V**alue given to Education by increased parental/caseworker involvement
- E**nhancement of DCFS/CPS community partnerships

As a result of the success at Oglesby last year, \$1.5 million was allocated to develop Project HOPE at 53 Chicago Public Pchools with a high percentage of children in DCFS care. The program is very similar to Project S.T.R.I.V.E, however, the staff are hired by principals at the selected schools. They can be retired school teachers, social workers, psychologists or undergraduate or graduate students studying counseling, social work, psychology or education. The staff will be in each school for a maximum of 15 hours per week to provide assistance to students in the classroom.

<sup>1</sup>'At Risk' as defined by Project S.T.R.I.V.E is any child experiencing academic difficulty, absenteeism, loss and separation issues, grief, grade retention, numerous placement changes, and repeat suspension and/or expulsions

# Fire Safety Tips While Keeping Warm in the Winter

The leading cause of fire in the United States is due to equipment used to keep warm. Fireplaces, wood stoves and portable heaters pose special fire hazards and require precautions to reduce the risk of fire. As part of licensing, foster homes must meet safety standards, including provisions for smoke detectors, evacuation plans and a working telephone. Below are tips to make sure your home and your family are prepared in case of a fire.

**Install and maintain smoke alarms:** Smoke alarms will warn you of a fire in time for you to escape. Install them on every floor of your home and test them once a month. Be sure to replace the batteries when the alarm begins to chirp.

**Sleep with bedroom doors closed:** This provides protection against heat and smoke, and slows the spread of fire.

**Plan and practice two ways out:** Escape routes must not include elevators. Choose a meeting place where everyone will gather. At least twice a year, practice the escape plans.

**Test doors before you open them:** While kneeling or crouching at the door, reach up and touch the door, the knob and the space between the door and frame with the back of your hand. If it is hot, use another escape route.

**Crawl low under smoke:** If you encounter smoke, use another route because smoke is dangerous. If you have to exit through smoke, the cleanest air is just several inches off the floor. Crawl on your hands and knees to the nearest exit.

**Once you are out stay out!:** If a fire starts, don't wait for anything. Get outside. Go to your family's meeting place. Then someone can call the fire department from a nearby phone. Do not go back into your home for any reason.

**Stop, Drop and Roll:** If your clothes catch fire, don't run. Stop where you are, drop to the ground, cover your face with your hands to protect your face and lungs, and roll over to smother the flames.

**Space heaters need space:** Keep portable space heaters at least three feet from anything that can burn. Never leave heaters on when you leave home or go to bed. Keep children and pets away from portable heaters.

**Matches and lighters are tools, not toys:** In the hands of a child, matches and lighters are deadly. Store them high where kids cannot reach them, preferably in a locked cabinet. Teach children early that matches are not to be played with and should be given to an adult if found.

*National Fire Protection Association and Illinois Fire Marshal*



Many people don't realize how dangerous a fire can be. A survey by the National Fire Protection Agency found that 25 percent of individuals wrongly believed that it would take 10 minutes or more for a fire to become life threatening. It actually only takes about two minutes.

"Parents have to preach fire prevention in the home. Make sure that all members of your family are prepared to respond safely in a fire," advises Derrick Whitehead, a certified firefighter and former licensing representative.

On average more than 800 residential fires occur each year in Illinois due to heating devices. The Illinois State Fire Marshal maintains that many of the home heating-related fires could be prevented. Stay warm but practice smart fire safety tips.

*Submitted by Derrick Whitehead of The Fire Prevention and Information Plan (FPIP), an organization that trains individuals and businesses in fire safety. FPIP can offer training workshops to foster parent associations or individual families. For more information, Derrick Whitehead can be reached at 800/633-9534.*

## Changes at the Top

This year the region experienced many changes in our administration. We are very excited to introduce (or reintroduce as it may be) newly promoted Jackie Bright as our Program Manager, Mamie Robinson as our Clinical Manager and Amie Joof and John Horwath as Field Service Managers.

The region said good-bye to Marilyn Hyde and Lorne Garrett who assumed the Program Manager position in Cook Central and Cook South, respectively, and to Jane Gantner, Clinical Manager who took a position with the division of Clinical Services, Central Office. We thank them for all of their hard work and wish them well!

In this edition, and in future editions of Fostering Illinois, we will introduce you to various people you should know in the region. This issue will introduce two of our new managers and one of our Clinical Coordinators.

**Jackie Bright**, Program Manager, has a Master’s Degree in Guidance and Counseling from Chicago State University. Bright has been with the Department for 21 years. During her tenure, she has performed a variety of job functions including caseworker, supervisor and Field Service Manager. On foster care, Bright says she’s “excited to have the opportunity to work more closely with our foster parent community. Our foster parents are crucial members of the team!”



**Mamie Robinson**, Clinical Manager, has a Masters in Social Work from Aurora University. She has 14 years experience in the field of Child Welfare and has been with the Department for the last 5 years. She has worked most recently as a Clinical Coordinator in the region. As a caseworker. Robinson “had excellent rapport with her foster parents and say she is looking forward to continuing to enhance the regions relationship with our foster parents.”

**Michael C. Jones** has been the with the Department for three years. He has a Masters in Community Mental Health. Prior to coming to the Department, Jones spent 17 years working with the Department of Mental Health. Jones wants foster parents to know that their attendance at the PRT is strongly encouraged. He wants to continue to use the process, to be supportive of the children and foster parents and to address their service needs. He also encourages children over 12 to attend whenever appropriate. He advises, “Come if you can, if you can’t, let us know and we can conference you in by phone!”



# KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

**LAN 76...** Located in the Bronzeville area, LAN 76 services the Armour Square Near North side, Douglas and Oakdale communities, between Roosevelt Road on the North, 40th street on the south, and west to Stuart Avenue. LAN 76 Steering Committee meetings are open to the community and occur on the fourth Friday of every month at Ada S. McKinley, 2907 S. Wabash, from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. This LAN offers many programs for families, including Adoption and Reunified Family Services through Ada S. McKinley.

**Saturday Morning Breakfast and Parenting program** (next session begins in March) at Michael Reese Hospital. The program includes:

Parenting Classes, children's groups, transportation and a weekend "Family Retreat" for at least 15 families who consistently participate in the program offered through Passages.

Parent/Child conference - a one-day event followed by an afternoon picnic and entertainment.

Beginning Photography Club, which uses this art form as a means to enhance youth and family communication.

Summer Youth Employment Program for youth between the ages of 14-18.

Girls mentorship program created to provide support, education and guidance to at risk girls as they prepare to enter the work force.

Male mentorship program that is school-based and provides group and one-on-one opportunities to promote positive coping strategies for a transition into manhood.

Teen Pregnancy Program, which works with at least three community schools to break the cycle of child neglect and repeat pregnancies.

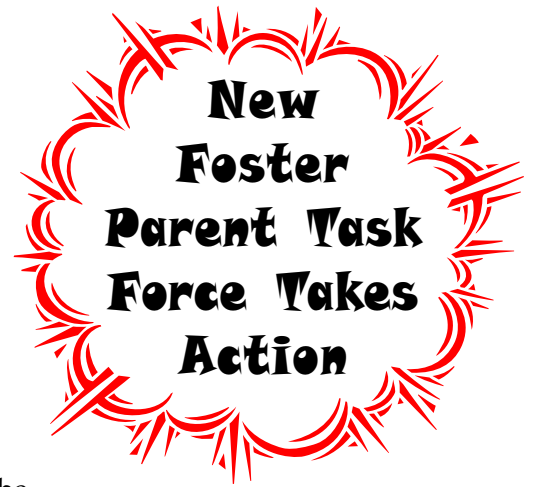
For more information about LAN 76 or any of these community-based programs, contact Cheri Howze at Passages at (312) 225-3800.

## WE WANT YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS....

Often the region learns about community events, trainings and opportunities for interaction or finds some interesting information to share and pass along. If you are a Cook North Foster Parent on-line, send us your e-mail address so we can create a distribution list. If interested send your address to: [twalton@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:twalton@idcfs.state.il.us). We will also continue mailing information by post.



The Cook Central Region hosted a dinner this fall for the newly-established Foster Parent Task Force Committee. The Task Force is comprised of foster parents, caseworkers, members of the Foster Care Advisory Council and management staff. The committee was developed with the intent to explore ways of improving the relationship between foster parents, caseworkers and management staff. In order to encourage foster parent attendance, foster parents were reimbursed for child care and mileage. There is a rotation of fifty foster parents that are invited to the dinner dialogue. Foster parents who did not attend the initial dinner meeting in October are encouraged to contact their Foster Parent Support Specialist with items they would like to bring to the attention of the Foster Parent Task Force Committee for resolution.



## Warm Wishes From Cook Central

Good wishes for a quick recovery go to Foster Parent Support Specialist Shirley Stewart. Shirley is recovering at home through January. Anyone wishing to cheer her up may send a card to her at: 226 North Parkside, Chicago, IL 60644.

## Cook Central Education Advisors are Ready to Help



Now that school is in full swing, it is a good time to remind you of a valuable educational resource available to you at the regional level. The regional Educational Advisors are available to you when you have questions about the educational rights of the children placed in your home. You may call them to discuss your concerns and when necessary, the educational advisor will assign a volunteer education advocate to attend school staffings on behalf of the foster/adoptive child placed in your home. The following are the Cook Central Educational Advisors locations and phone numbers:

Cook Central Advisor  
Christine A. Feldman  
3518 W. Division Street  
Chicago, IL 60651  
773-292-7731

Cook Central Assistant Advisor  
Leticia Nunez  
3518 W. Division Street  
Chicago, IL 60651  
773-292-7732

Cook Central Suburban Advisor  
Charles Ingram  
4909 W. Division Street  
Chicago, IL 60651  
773-854-0606

Cook Central Suburban Advisor  
Richard Baker  
4909 W. Division  
Chicago, IL 60651  
773-854-2208

*For assistance in Spanish, contact Leticia Nunez.*

## Welcome to a New Cook South Foster Parent Resource

**COOK  
SOUTH**



Cook South welcomed its newest Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist, Mercedes Ball, on September 23, 2000. Ball was selected to be the Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist for our Emerald Office, located at 6201 S. Emerald. Ball brings a lot of experience and knowledge to this position. She has been a Foster Parent Support Specialist for approximately 2½ years. She is a Certified Trainer for the Department and has done co-training on the Licensing Standards. She is also a foster parent, and has provided a stabilizing environment for some of our most difficult to place children.

Tim Snowden, the Regional Administrator for Cook South says, "The region is very enthusiastic about the addition of Mercedes to our regional staff. Mercedes and our extremely competent staff of Support Specialists will bring a renewed effort to providing quality foster care to the state of Illinois". DCFS foster parents can contact Mercedes at 773-371-6119.

## South City's Foster Parent Dinner and Dance

The South City Foster Parent Association will have a dinner and dance on February 11, 2001 at Annie Piques. Tickets cost \$40.00 per person, and include dinner, drinks and dancing from 6:00 p.m. until 12:00. Contact Ardyce Thomas at 773-239-7317 for more information.

## Black Parenting Class Offered in Cook South Region

The Center for the Improvement of Child Caring (CICC) is offering a class on parenting African-American children to help them become healthy, proud and capable people. The class, sponsored by the Thorton Township Youth Committee, will be held on January 17 at 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The goal of the workshop is to foster:

- Effective family communication
- Healthy African-American identity
- Extended family values
- Child growth and development
- Positive self-esteem

"Effective Black Parenting" uses African proverbs as it teaches a series of highly effective and easy-to-use parenting strategies and skills. For more information on the program and to register, call Marcia Harris at 708/596-6046.

Wednesday, January 17, 2001  
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Thorton Township Youth Committee  
14324 Halsted  
Riverdale, IL

Registration Fee: \$30

# Cook County Training Calendar

## FosterPRIDE In-Service Training Call 312-553-5829 or -5830

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Training offerings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

**Module 1** - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children*  
(Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

**Module 2** - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture*  
(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 3** - *Addressing Developmental Issues Related to Sexuality*  
(One 3-hour session = 3 training hours)

**Module 4** - *Responding to the Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse*  
(Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

**Module 5** - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families*  
(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 6** - *Working as a Professional Team Member*  
(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 7** - *Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity*  
(Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

**Module 8** - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes*  
(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 9** - *Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family*  
(Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

**Module 10** - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families*  
(Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

COOK NORTH		Module	COOK CENTRAL		Module	COOK SOUTH		Module
<b>Galewood Church</b>			<b>DCFS - 3518 W. Division</b>			<b>DCFS South Area Office</b>		
Feb. 19, 21, 26 & 28 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m.	1	Feb. 5, 7, 12 & 14 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m.	1	Jan. 30, Feb. 1, 6 & 8 (Tues/Thurs)	6:30-9:30 p.m.	1
March 19, 21 & 23 (Mon/Wed/Fri)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	3&4	March 5, 7 & 9 (Mon/Wed/Fri)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	3&4	Feb. 19, 21 & 26 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m.	2
<b>Site to be Announced</b>			<b>Maywood Public Library</b>			March 5, 7 & 12 (Mon/Wed)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	3&4
March 10 & March 17	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	2	Feb. 24 & March 3 March 19, 20 & 26 (Mon/Tues)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 6:30-9:30 p.m.	2 5			

## 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 licensed or 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.

**COOK NORTH** **Jewish Childrens House**  
March 11 (Sun) &  
March 13 (Tues)  
**Irish Center**  
March 12 & 14 (Mon/Wed)

1:00-4:00 p.m.  
6:30-9:30 p.m.  
6:30-9:30 p.m.

**COOK CENTRAL** **Spanish Association House**  
Feb. 24 (Sat)  
March 6 & 8 (Tues/Thurs)  
**Hephzibah**  
March 8 & 15 (Thurs)  
**Habilitative Systems**  
March 8 & 13 (Tues/Thurs)

9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
6:30-9:30 p.m.  
6:30-9:30 p.m.  
6:30-9:30 p.m.

**COOK SOUTH** **DCFS South Area Office**  
Feb. 10 (Sat)  
Feb. 12 & 14 (Mon/Wed)  
March 13 & 15 (Tues/Thurs)  
March 14 & 19 (Mon/Wed)  
March 24 (Sat)  
**DCFS Harvey Area**  
Feb. 10 (Sat)  
Feb. 12 & 14 (Mon/Wed)  
March 13 & 15 (Tues/Thurs)  
March 24 (Sat)  
March 26 & 28 (Mon/Wed)  
**Sullivan House**  
March 3 (Sat)  
March 15 & 20 (Tues/Thurs)

9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
6:30-9:30 p.m.  
6:30-9:30 p.m.  
6:30-9:30 p.m.  
9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
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