

Advocate

News for Chicago Metro Area Foster Parents

Spotlight on Teamwork

Communication and Understanding Add Up to a Great Team



Lauren Wise was having a hard time remaining hopeful that she would have a helpful relationship with a caseworker. The dynamics of fostering a four-year-old boy with shifting permanency goals seemed overwhelming at times to the first-time foster parent. In a matter of months, caseworkers had changed and a trusted GAL left the case with no notice. Lauren felt like there was no one she could count on. Then she met Marianne Kelm, the caseworker with Hephzibah Social Services, who has served her foster son for the last six months.

"Marianne listened. She cared about what I was saying. She was always taking notes and following up on every small detail," said Lauren.

Marianne stood out to Lauren as an excellent caseworker because she made herself available and never made Lauren feel like a bother.

"At my agency there is always someone on call, but I gave Lauren my pager number so she could reach me directly if

something important came up," said Marianne.

Marianne believes that the open communication between the two is what makes their relationship so successful. Lauren leaves voicemails to keep Marianne informed about her foster son's educational, behavioral and emotional changes.

Marianne in turn, keeps Lauren posted on progress in court and with the birth family.

Lauren remembers how Marianne helped her see why discussions about changing the goal from adoption to a return home were difficult, but necessary.

"When we revisited the return home, I was not happy. But she helped me see it was the right thing to do. Nobody was going to be able to say we did not do a good job for the child," said Lauren.

They both believe the relationship works because



Foster parent, Lauren Wise and caseworker, Marianne Kelm, together update the records for Lauren's 3-year-old foster son.

they try and see things from the others' perspective. Lauren respects that it is Marianne's job to work for the child and the birth family. Marianne appreciates the work Lauren does as a parent and the challenges that brings. Marianne also can relate to the needs of the children she serves, as she was once a foster child who was adopted.

There is no secret formula for their good relationship. Mutual respect and steady, open communication have made the job easier for everyone involved.

Fostering Children with Sexual Behavior Problems

When a child is being sexual it can be hard to know if this is a normal developmental stage or a sign of a problem. When actions by children are made against other children, foster parents need special help to care for children and youth with sexually problematic behaviors. It can be a difficult task, but also a rewarding one as you help children redirect their actions and avoid further harm.

If you observe or become aware of a child acting out sexually toward another child, the first step is to report it to your caseworker or the DCFS Hotline. From there an "unusual incident" report will be made. The caseworker will review the circumstances to determine if the behavior is sexually problematic and if the child can stay in the home or may need to move. DCFS has set guidelines to judge sexual behaviors and set criteria for developing a protective plan to keep all the children in the home safe.

The protective plan will be completed within 24 hours of the unusual incident report and will describe:

- How the child's contact with his or her alleged victim/s is restricted.
- How the child will be supervised during all contact with other children or vulnerable persons.

- How adults who need to know about the child's sexual behavior will be told, while meeting confidentiality requirements.

All of the key people supporting the child will come together to complete the protective plan, including a sexual behavior specialist and counselors and the child if he or she is 12 or older. If the plan calls for treatment, it can be referred to a DCFS-approved provider.

In addition to the professional treatments and agency procedures, foster parents can provide much-needed help for children with sexual behavior problems. At the beginning of the year there were 1,886 wards in Illinois identified as exhibiting problematic behaviors. Of those children, 1,341 were in Cook County.

ChildServ, a private agency serving the Chicago area, has developed a program to help foster children learn to manage their behaviors in a positive foster family setting. The Project-90 program is highly structured with comprehensive evaluations, intensive therapy and educational support. Foster parents who serve these children through Project-90 commit to an



Socorro Cuadros, a foster parent in ChildServ's Project-90 program, helped a teen with a troubled sexual history find a bright future.

additional 18 hours of training above the initial PRIDE Training. With training and support from the agency, foster parents can provide a nurturing, instructive and safe home for children, who often respond well.

"When first approached to take a child with sexual problems, I was concerned about my younger sons. But I saw someone who had been victimized and I felt for him," Socorro Cuadros recalled. "We are all doing fine now. He got help and has slowly grown past his troubles," she said.

Three years later, the foster child Cuadros took a chance on is doing well at school and plans to go to college.

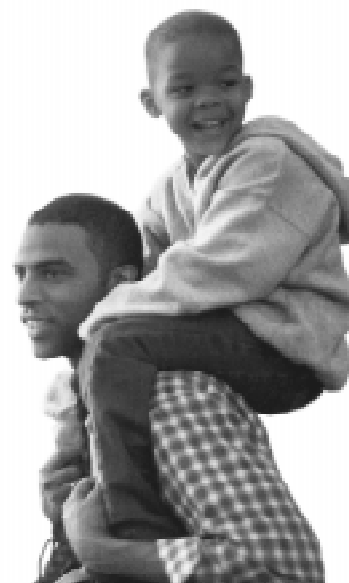
25 Questions To Ask About a Child When Considering a New Placement



When a worker calls you about a child who needs to be placed, below are questions to ask as you make the decision to bring a new child into your family. You can clip this list to keep by your phone, on the refrigerator or in your foster care file. You may not get all of the answers if a case is new or if information is unknown. But, asking never hurts and more information will help you understand how you may best help the child.

1. What is the child's name, age, sex and race?
2. Why has the child been placed in foster care?
3. What is the child's permanency goal? Is there a concurrent plan in place?
4. Will this be a short- or long-term placement? What is the planned length of stay?
5. Does the child have siblings? Where are they placed? Can they have contact?
6. What is the visitation plan for parents and/or siblings? Are visits supervised?
7. Is there any relative involvement?
8. Is there a history of drug or alcohol use by any member of the family?
9. Is there a history of family violence?
10. Does the child have any diagnosed medical conditions or exhibit symptoms of medical problems?
11. Does the child have any communicable diseases?
12. Does the child display behavioral problems? If so, what behaviors?
13. What is the child's emotional/mental state in general? Are there any triggers around certain events or circumstances, for example, agitation on visit days?
14. Are there any safety issues to be aware of, for example, fire setting, physical aggression, self-abuse or running away?
15. What school does the child attend? What grade is the child in?
16. Do you have school records in the file?
17. Does the child have any learning disabilities? Does the child qualify for special education services? Is there an Individualized Education Plan in place?
18. How does the child relate to peers?
19. Is the child identified as a Sexually Aggressive Child or Youth? Is there a protection plan in place?
20. Is there evidence or indications that the child has been a victim of known or suspected sexual abuse?
21. Does the child have an arrest or probation history?
22. What is the religious preference of the birth parent? Are there any religious practices that the foster family should be aware of?
23. Tell me about upcoming court dates regarding the child/family.
24. When is the next ACR scheduled?
25. _____

Add your own questions based on your particular family situation.



Know your Local Area Network Community Resources...

Local Area Network (LAN) 37A, located in the northern Cook County suburbs, is composed of New Trier and Northfield Townships. This includes the suburbs of Glencoe, Glenview, Kenilworth, Northbrook, Northfield, Winnetka and Wilmette. The co-conveners for the LAN are Nancy Bloom of Youth Services of Glenview and Northbrook and Laurie Lezak, a parent representative.

One of the many programs to help families who reside in LAN 37A is The Adoption and Safe Family Program, which offers a series of educational offerings and support groups to families who reside in LAN 37A. This includes groups for single parents, adoptive parents, parents going through separation and divorce, parents of at-risk children, parents of children diagnosed with ADHD and a basic life skills group for at-risk parents. These groups are facilitated through the cooperation of social service and mental health providers that are active in the LAN. The groups usually run from six to eight weeks and are located at various sites throughout LAN 37A. Childcare and refreshments are provided at the group meetings.

In conjunction with the groups, the LAN has developed a parent network program that plans family outings and recreational and cultural activities for parents and children. The focus is on strengthening the family while giving parents an opportunity to network with one another.

In addition to these programs, the LAN offers support and respite services to adoptive families and reunification services on an as-needed basis to families involved with DCFS. The LAN steering committee meets the second Tuesday of every month at 9:00 a.m. at the Josselyn Mental Health Center, 405 Central in Northfield. For more information on these services, contact Nancy Bloom at 847/724-2620.

Regional Youth Advisory Board

The Cook North Region is looking for youth between the ages of 14 and 21 to serve on our Regional Youth Advisory Board. The youth can be in a licensed foster care home, placed with relatives, in a group home or residential placement or in college. Youth cases must be managed by a Cook North DCFS or private agency worker.

In most situations, high school youth may be able to earn their community service requirements for graduation by participating in the advisory board. It is a great opportunity to meet other youth, voice concerns and work together with Department staff to improve the quality of services to youth and families.



Transportation can be arranged and refreshments are provided. The Cook North Youth Advisory Board meets on the fourth Monday of every month from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., at 1911 S. Indiana. The dates for our meetings through July 2001 are:

May cancelled due to Memorial Day Holiday
Monday, June 25th
Monday, July 23rd

For more information, please contact Joanne Nett at 773/866-5500

People you should know...



Kathy Cook is a name and a voice that is familiar to many of our foster parents, staff and providers. She is the Executive Secretary to our Regional Administrator, Chris McGrath. Kathy has been employed with the Department for over 27 years and says that on most days she loves her job!

Having been a relative foster parent for ten years, Kathy has seen the need for love and caring that children require to feel part of a family. She is strongly committed to the job of supporting families. She has many different responsibilities in her job and plays a very important role in the region in assisting

the administration to "provide quality services to our Cook North children and families." Foster parents and staff call her for all kinds of information and she says that if she can't find the information for them, she knows how to find someone who can!

Mike Barry is a Field Service Manager for some of the Cook North permanency teams at 1911 S. Indiana and the region's two adoption teams also report to him. Mike has been with the Department for 17 years. He has a master's degree in social work. Most recently prior to becoming a Field Service Manager, he was a permanency team supervisor.

Mike is a strong supporter of our foster parents. Whenever his schedule allows, he participates in the region's monthly Foster Care Advisory Council meeting. He believes that foster parents are the backbone of the child welfare system.

"It is the everyday triumphs that occur in our foster homes that make foster parents the heroes of our system. People in the state owe them a debt of gratitude. We must continue to work on ways to support all of our foster parents," he said.



Joel Maderer is the specialist for children with sexually problematic behaviors in the region. He has a master's degree in social work, is bi-lingual in Spanish and has worked in a variety of positions all across the state in his 22 years with the Department; working with families and children in permanency, Administrative Case Reviewers, investigations and licensing capacities.

Joel's main responsibilities now are to work as part of the team to ensure the safety and well-being of children with sexual problems, as well as the children that they have contact with. He works with caseworkers and agencies to help see that children are receiving the appropriate services in the least restrictive environments. He reviews safety plans to see that the needs for safety and supervision are provided. He encourages foster parents who are caring for youth with these behaviors to stay involved, ask questions and advocate for services. The one thing that he would like foster parents to know is that, "Many kids are able to overcome their inappropriate sexual behaviors with the appropriate therapeutic services and the support of a caring family."

Upcoming Events - Be sure to save the dates...

- 3rd Annual Cook North Foster Parent Appreciation Luncheon will be held on Saturday, May 19th at 1911 S. Indiana.
- Foster Parent picnic for DCFS licensed foster parents and Cook North relative caretakers is scheduled for Friday, June 15th.

COOK NORTH

Foster Home Recruiter Needed

The Cook Central Region is accepting applications for a foster home recruiter. This is a full-time position, requiring flexible hours that include working evenings and weekends. The ideal candidate is a current or previous foster parent with the ability to speak in public, familiarity with DCFS supports for foster parents and the children placed in their home and knowledge of the Foster Parent Law. If you are interested in applying for this position, mail your resume to DCFS, attention Carmen Velazquez, 3301 W. Arthington, Chicago, Illinois 60624, or you may FAX it to 773/638-5092.

Foster Parent Law Training

Ray Gates provided training on the Foster Parent Law to Cook Central supervisors. The Foster Parent Law outlines the responsibilities and rights of foster families and the staff supporting them. We are also planning joint trainings for caseworkers and foster parents. A mailing will be sent to families licensed with DCFS with dates and locations.

The Foster Parent Law calls for all private agencies and DCFS regions to prepare an Implementation Plan for providing services that meet the rights and responsibilities outlined in the law. If you need a copy of the DCFS Regional Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan for our region, you may request a copy from your Foster Parent Support Specialists or you may call Carmen Velazquez at 773/638-5088. Private agency families can contact their agency directly to review the plan.

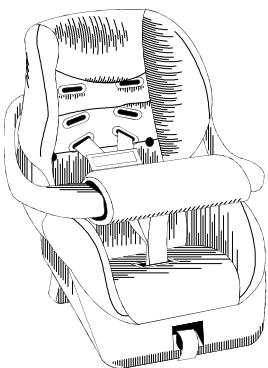


Staff Changes for DCFS Mentor Home Program

Congratulations are extended to former Mentor Home Specialist, Joann Niemuth. Joann has accepted a promotion to LAN Liaison at Cook North. Congratulations are also in order for Gloria Scales-Brown who has been promoted to serve as the Mentor Home Specialist for Cook Central. Prior to accepting her new position, she was a Family Development Specialist licensing foster homes in Cook Central. To contact Gloria, call the regional office at 773/638-5885.

The Mentor Home Program is a level of foster care for older children that provides long-term specialized foster care for adolescents in a home environment. It focuses on encouraging personal growth and preparing adolescents for the transition to adulthood.

Car Seat Safety Training and Free Car Seats Available



The National Center for Latinos with Disabilities is sponsoring a training for foster parents of infants and future parents. The first 30 people to participate will receive a free car seat. The training will include a 30-minute video on how to properly use car seats. To enroll, call Patricia Alonzo at 312-666-3393.

June 15 at 9:30 a.m.
1915-17 S. Blue Island Avenue
Chicago, IL

Project: Relationship Building

Cook South Starts Pilot Project to Work with Foster Families

Teamwork is the key to permanency for children, whether the goal is return home, adoption, subsidized guardianship or preparing them for independence. Foster parents are a vital part of the team.

In January, Cook South began a Quality Improvement pilot project to improve the communication and teamwork with the DCFS foster families in the Field Group headed by Pamela Mills. The project will focus on providing better response time to foster parent concerns and needs, and involving the foster parent in service planning for the child. Every DCFS foster parent who has children from this field group is part of the pilot and should have received information about the project through the mail.



Pamela Mills

**COOK
SOUTH**

A goal of the project is for all calls and inquiries from foster parents to be responded to within 24 hours. Earlier this year, all of the foster parents in the pilot were sent the current telephone numbers of the Field Service Manager (FSM), the supervisors and the workers for the children in their home from this field group. They were also sent the pager numbers of the FSM and the supervisor. A 1-800 number was set up for use during office hours if the 24-hour response time is not achieved. If a foster parent has not been responded to within 24 hours and calls the 1-800 number, a secretary answers the call and puts the caller in contact with the supervisor or FSM. It also is used when there is a current emergency and guidance is needed.

As part of the pilot, supervisors from this field group will also include the foster parent in the case supervision. When the supervisor meets with the worker for the quarterly case conference on a case, if the foster parent is available, he or she will be teleconferenced in on the meeting. The supervisor and worker will get the foster parent's assessment of the child's current functioning and well being, first hand.

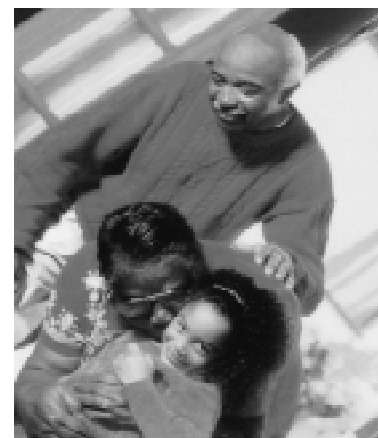
The region hopes that by including the foster parents in the quarterly case conferences and other case planning activities, it can create an environment in which foster parents and caseworkers will openly address their needs as it relates to the child in care. The Regional Administrator, Tim Snowden, also wants to improve communication with these foster parents by keeping them informed and encouraging their participation in the support groups, councils and trainings available at Cook South or within our community. They will receive regular mailings from the staff to inform them of these resources.

Cook South will have regular teleconferences with these foster parents to get their input into the success of this project. Everyone is committed to work as a team to improve our relationship in order to better serve our children.

New Help for Older Foster Parents

DCFS recently contracted with Metropolitan Family Services in a pilot program to support older foster parents, relative caregivers, adoptive parents and subsidized guardians living on Chicago's South Side. The project is designed to help these families make alternative or back up plans for the children in their care to avoid a crisis if the caregiver becomes unable to continue in the care-taking capacity.

The program may include assessment of needs, connections to resources in the aging network, help in developing wills and survivor plans, financial and housing consultation, and counseling with children to address potential changes. If these services are needed in your family, contact your caseworker, who can make a referral to the program as appropriate.



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 Trainings 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
Epiphany Church, 2008 W. Bradley		DCFS, 3518 W. Division		DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald	
June 5 & 7 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.	9	June 11, 13, 18		May 22 & 24 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.	9
June 14, 19, 21, 26 & 28 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.	10	20 & 29 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.	10	May 31, June 5, 7, 12 & 14 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.	10

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
June 2 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Irish Center
Children's Home & Aid
June 2 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

COOK CENTRAL
June 7 & 14 (Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
Hephzibah
Habilitive Systems
June 7 & 12 (Tues/Thurs) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Association House Spanish
June 30 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

COOK SOUTH
May 19 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Ivanhoe Methodist Church
June 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
DCFS South Area Office
May 23 & June 2 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
June 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
DCFS Harvey Area
June 5 & 7 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
June 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Sullivan House
June 7 & 12 (Tues/Thurs) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

