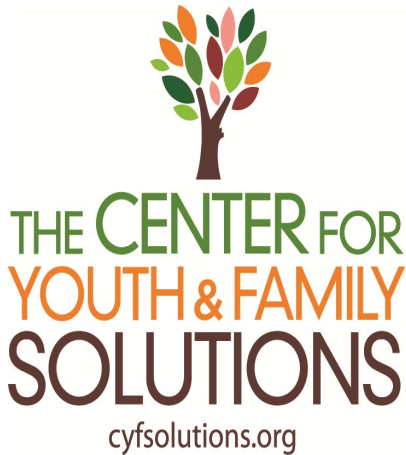


# The Foster Caregiver Connection

Connecting Foster Caregivers in Central and Downstate

## New Beginnings



Do you look at a new year as a fresh piece of paper or a blank slate, ready to be filled, waiting for all those important events, relationships, and experiences to come in these next twelve months? No matter what happened last year, did you also feel fresh air, breathing in the energy that comes with a brand new calendar and that first glorious sunrise of 2013?

I hope so. Again—we model what we want. And we want it all! We want to be open to every opportunity to learn and grow, something the children in our homes may need to learn. Today is a new day—we have entered a new year together. We can't change the past, but we can make a wonderful difference today and tomorrow.

Keeping this in mind, consider the children in your care, and the baggage they may bring with them. What do you see in

their posture, facial expression, tone of voice? How do they choose their friends, how do they treat their friends, how do their friends treat them? Do these children and youth struggle to get up in the morning, often refuse to eat something nutritious for breakfast, ignore basic hygiene, or always choose something "black" to wear?

None of these behaviors is unusual for children who have experienced chronic disappointment—and struggled to experience the ability to trust. Multiple "starting over's" become a way of life—frequent moves resulting in change of schools, friends, neighborhoods, either trying to fit in or trying to be invisible, or maybe expressing anger and rage without our knowing why.

Helping the children in our care have a fresh start requires us to stay focused on the positive. "Catching the child being 'good'"

is extremely important. Notice every detail—placing a dirty dish in the sink, shutting the door completely, using an inside volume of voice—all are small things. However, all are important reminders that our children have the ability to make appropriate choices, that they are appreciated, that they are valued and deserve to be loved.

When the struggle seems too large, we need to ask ourselves once again, does this child feel safe? What tells us this from their behaviors and patterns of behaviors? Where do the main struggles exist?

Safety comes first. Then the ability to feel comfortable. And then relationships can develop and grow. All this takes a significant amount of effort and time, but will make the difference for children in our care to have a fresh start, with the opportunity to heal and grow, something we

## Suffocation by Neglect—2012 Leading Cause of Death in Illinois

Neglect or abuse was indicated in 90 completed investigations of children's deaths by DCFS in 2012, while another 60 recently reported deaths are still under investigation. Suffocation by neglect was involved in 40 (44%) of the 90 completed investigations, due to unsafe sleep conditions.

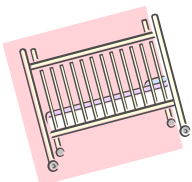
Most deaths occurred when parents ignored the well-researched advice of the American Academy of Pediatrics and other safety experts, and slept with a newborn or infant in their bed, rolling over on the child and smothering him or her. In other instances, parents ignored safety warnings and allowed a newborn or infant to sleep with a blanket, on an adult mattress or couch,

or on their stomachs, with the same result of death by suffocation. Illinois law holds parents and other caretakers accountable for creating a substantial risk of injury to a child, and DCFS indicates perpetrators for neglect.

These deaths are preventable. The Safe Sleep Campaign was launched in 2012 by DCFS, but needs all of us to promote and support these practices. The children in our care must be safe at all times. Rock them, hug them, hold them, but each newborn or infant needs their own crib for sleeping, with no bulky blankets or pillows, always.

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# The Big Family Calendar

## Bloomington

January 29, 6 pm to 8 pm; Relative Foster Caregiver's Support Group and Training. RSVP to Lois, 309.820.7616.

February 2, 9 am-noon and February 9, 9 am-noon; Promoting Healthy Sexual Development and Pregnancy Prevention with Children and Youth in Care Training for Foster Parents, Adoptive Parents, and POS Direct Service Staff, at The Baby Fold Training Center, 612 Oglesby, Normal. Register on the DCFS VTC at [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org), or by calling 1.877.800.3393.

February 4, 6-9 pm; June 8, 10 am-2 pm; September 8, 10 am-2 pm; December 7, 10 am-2 pm: Becoming a Love and Logic Parent, RSVP to Lois or Megan, 309.820.7616.

February 26, 6-7:30 pm, Dealing with CASA and Court. RSVP to Lois, 309.820.7616.

March 26, 6-8 pm; Uniting Pride Center of Champaign County—Uniting Pride is a multi-service agency, for youth and adults directed at furthering the well-being and development of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning. RSVP to Lois or Megan at 309.820.7616. Foster Parent Advisory Board will meet following the support group meeting.

April 30, 6-8 pm; Love and Logic Parenting Approach. RSVP to Lois or Megan at 309.820.7616. Foster Parent Advisory Board will meet following the support group meeting.

March 4-May 6, 6-9 pm; Updated PST Training for Foster Caregivers. Call Bill at 309.820.7616 to register or if you have questions about the class.

## Champaign

February 11, 5:30-6:30 pm; Foster Parent Support Group. RSVP to Carol at 217.352.5179.

## LaSalle

February 28th at 6:30pm "Child Development Stages and Adoption" Location: 815 Second Street, LaSalle RSVP to Sara at 815-223-4007

April 7 Foster Care Advisory Board 4-6pm 815 2nd Street LaSalle. Contact Erin at 815-223-4007

## Peoria

January 3, Feb. 7, March 7, 6 pm to 8 pm, Support Group for Specialized Foster Caregivers

January 15, Feb. 19, March 19, 6 pm to 8 pm; Peoria Foster Care Advisory Board and Support Group.

Jan. 31, Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28, March 7, 14, 21, April 4, 5:30 -8:30 pm each session, OR Feb. 1, 8, 15, 22, March 1, 8, 15, 22, April 5, 9 am-noon each session. Updated PST Training for Foster Caregivers. RSVP Carol at 309.323.6529 to register.

February 26, 6 pm-8 pm. Relative Caregiver Trainer. RSVP Allison at 309.323.6557 to register.

February 5, 12, and 19; Tuesday nights 6:00 - 9:00 CYFS, 2610 W. Richwood Blvd, Peoria: Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs (9 hours of training credit) - This training provides practical information to foster parents on how to use effective discipline techniques Register on the DCFS VTC at [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org), or by calling 1.877.800.3393.

February 6, 13, 20, 27, and March 6; Wednesday nights 6:00-9:00 pm at Family Core 330 S. W. Washington, Peoria: Caring for Children who have Experienced Trauma (15 hours of training credit) - Register on the DCFS VTC at [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org), or by calling 1.877.800.3393.

March 1 & 2; Community Days at Bergner's in Sheridan Village Fundraiser and Recruitment.

## Rock Island

March 2, 9 am-3:30 pm; All Day Caregiver Training: Sponsored by The Alliance, at The Believers Together Center, 3205 60th St., Moline. Call Joyce to register at 309.794.3653, or send her an e-mail at [Joyce.Loy@illinois.gov](mailto:Joyce.Loy@illinois.gov). Reserve childcare by calling Vicki at 309.736.6604, or e-mail her at [Vickie.Burke@illinois.gov](mailto:Vickie.Burke@illinois.gov).

March 18, 6:00pm The Prenatal Experience and the Impact on the Infant 4703 - 44th Street, Rock Island RSVP to Sara at 815-223-4007

April 25 6:30pm "Multi/Minority Adoption Readiness" Location: 4703 - 44th Street, Rock Island RSVP to Sara at 815-223-4007

## Springfield

Jan. 28, Feb. 4, 11, 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 5:30 pm-8:30 pm each session. Updated PST Training for Foster Caregivers. RSVP Becky at 217.528.3694.

Jan. 29, Feb. 5, 12, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 2, 10 am-1 pm each session. Updated PST Training for Foster Caregivers. RSVP Becky at 217.528.3694, by calling Vicki at 309.736.6604, or e-mail her at [Vickie.Burke@illinois.gov](mailto:Vickie.Burke@illinois.gov).

April 2, Foster Parent Advisory Board Meeting. 5:00- 7:30 CYFS Building. RSVP Becky at 217.528.3694.

[www.cyfsolutions.org](http://www.cyfsolutions.org)

## CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE

Our newly designed website is **LIVE!** Check it out. In the near future your licensing worker will be providing you with information as to how to get your password for the FOSTER PARENT RESOURCE section. This is a section only for our current foster parents. It will provide you with resources and information that will be helpful in your foster parenting role. Also, don't forget to **LIKE** and **SHARE** us on **Facebook**.





## Mary Kay's Corner

The partnership between our foster parents and our foster care staff is truly important to how we both provide for the children who come into care. This year, let's spend some time learning more about each of our roles and how we can strengthen our relationship with each other. Since the first staff member that foster parents generally come in contact with is our licensing staff, we will begin there.

The relationship between staff and foster parents begins long before a child is placed in your home. From the beginning of your training and through the licensing process, you are learning how to nurture and respond to children who have experienced trauma.

Consider your licensing worker as your guide. Your licensing worker can

- help you identify the unique qualities or characteristics that will assist you in succeeding as a foster parent.
- help you discover where you need to grow to ensure you are ready for the challenges of foster parenting. For example, if you have never worked with children who act out as a way of coping with loss, your worker may suggest you participate in trainings or support groups to become better aware of how children's behavior is influenced by trauma.
- assist you as you work through the process of licensure. It is not enough to simply want to be a foster parent. Foster parents in Illinois must comply with licensing standards that are grounded in law. For this reason, your licensing worker will require you to have a medical examination, pass background checks, participate in training and have your home evaluated for safety.
- help you assess the specific needs of children that would do well in your home. This will include the number of children that may be placed in your home, the specific ages and needs of each child and how these children will impact your current family system.

Once you are licensed, the role of your licensing worker is to assist you with placements, make sure you stay in compliance with the licensing standards, provide opportunities for ongoing training and support and when necessary conduct licensing complaint investigations.

For your part, there are some things that you can do to strengthen your relationship with your worker.

- Be honest with your licensing worker during the initial licensing process and beyond. Don't be afraid to ask for help or clarification. Your worker can only help you if you let him/her. Some foster parents fall into the trap of only telling the licensing worker what they think the worker wants to know. Generally this does not work toward building a healthy relationship. Even if it is uncomfortable or embarrassing it is important to be honest with the worker.
- Be timely with your responses. If you are asked to complete some paperwork or to provide some follow up, do so in a timely way.
- Keep your worker in the loop. Once you are licensed, your worker will be required to meet with you within 60 days and then every six months. If you need something more or if something changes in your life, it is your responsibility to make sure your licensing worker is made aware.
- When you have a placement, continue to work with your licensing worker. The licensing worker will partner with the child's foster care worker to make sure you have what you need to be successful with the placement.
- Support the efforts of your licensing worker in providing opportunities for training and support. One of the licensing workers roles is to provide ongoing training opportunities for our foster parents. When your worker follows up in providing requested training opportunities, participate in them.
- Finally understand that while your licensing worker is your advocate and there to help you with your foster parent experience, his/her ultimate responsibility is to ensure the safety and well-being of the children placed in foster homes.

Next time we will consider the relationship between the foster parent and the child's foster care worker. -

- *Mary Kay*

### Important Phone Numbers

#### Child Abuse Hotline

800.252.2873

#### Missing Child Helpline

866.503.0184

#### Advocacy Office

800.232.3798/217.524.2029

#### Foster Parent Hotline

800.624.KIDS/800.624.5437

#### Adoption Hotline

800.572.2390

#### Inspector General

800.722.9124

#### Daycare Information

877.746.0829/312.328.2779

#### Youth Hotline

800.232.3798



# The Center for Youth and Family Solutions

2610 W. Richwoods Blvd.  
Peoria, IL 61604

Branch offices in Bloomington, Champaign, Danville, Galesburg, LaSalle, Lincoln, Macomb, Rock Island, and Springfield

Phone: 309.323-6600  
Website: [www.cyfsolutions.org](http://www.cyfsolutions.org)

## Branch Offices

<b>Bloomington—Morris</b>	<b>309.820.7616</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>217.732.3771</b>
<b>Champaign</b>	<b>217.352.5179</b>	<b>Macomb</b>	<b>309.883.1791</b>
<b>Danville</b>	<b>217.443.1772</b>	<b>Peoria</b>	<b>309.323-6600</b>
<b>Galesburg</b>	<b>309.342.1136</b>	<b>Rock Island</b>	<b>309.786.0770</b>
<b>LaSalle</b>	<b>815.223.4007</b>	<b>Springfield</b>	<b>217.528.3694</b>

Achieving Solutions.  
Together.



## More Self Care...how do you tell children good-bye?

Most children enter the system with a goal of return home. Some achieve this, some do not. Some children and youth who come to our home are with us until a relative is available to provide care for this child. And sometimes a child or youth has so many problems that they are with us until they can enter residential treatment to receive what they need to address their mental health issues, things which cannot be provided in a home environment.

Each child or youth is unique, a person deserving of love, respect, and encouragement. Spending time with each foster child is time spent forming relationships, relationships which may last a lifetime, but may also fade away. One thing important to remember is a quote from Maya Angelou—"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Bridges are important for each of us, whenever they are possible. Sometimes...it doesn't work out. However your relationships change or end with the children in your care, consider carefully what the child needs, and what do you need.

It is not unusual—and probably very wise—to allow some time to rest and heal after a child moves from your home, time for reflection and to just "be". This may be especially significant after

an intense situation where so many things are beyond our control. Even now, as much as at any time during this foster caregiver-foster child relationship, it is essential to focus on the positive, on the strengths of this person who just left your life. Work diligently to express respect and compassion for this youth in those last moments, as every message has unknown power.

Preparation for this moment is best done as a team. Everyone needs to be on board—caseworker, therapist, supervisor, birth parents or relative caregivers—need to know who will say what and when. Clarity and honesty is critical. So many things in foster care make little sense to the children and youth we care for. False promises reminds them of others who have failed them—that's not where we want to be.

Will there, should there be phone contact? Are photos available to share? Will follow-up visits or other contact be allowed? These transitions are tough, but the planning involved is what makes the difference in its outcome.

Then...breathe. You are one person, one thread in the fabric of this child's life. Let it be strong, colorful, and a celebration of the time you have shared together.