

CYFS

Foster Caregiver  
Adoptive Parent  
**Connection**

Issue 1  
Volume 10

JAN 2021



THE CENTER FOR  
YOUTH & FAMILY  
SOLUTIONS  
[cysolutions.org](http://cysolutions.org)



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# Yes Virginia, There Are Silver Linings

by Carol Bennett-Barker

Here's to 2021, a year yet to be experienced, filled with all things yet to come! As we continue moving through the pandemic, and promote safety and health with our foster and adopted children and youth, we may be seeking answers for new situations and circumstances, all while trying to find our "new normal".

But what is this "new normal"? Who knows! Every home is unique, and every child is unique with a unique story. As we continue in pandemic mode, remember this is the boat called "child welfare" that we share, still striving to make a difference, help children and youth feel loved, accepted, encouraged and comforted. We will continue to promote healing in each child and with their biological families. We have a team of support, including caseworkers, licensing workers, supervisors, support workers,

and therapists. And considering everything we have experienced in this journey, we've acquired wisdom to share, day by day, with the children and youth in our homes, with each other, and with the rest of the team. We are exploring waters previously uncharted, so let us all be patient with ourselves and others. There is no book written about how to "do this". That is what we are discovering every day! And most importantly, we are so very grateful you are part of the team! There's no way we could care for these amazing children and youth without you. You have taught us much about what's important in this work. Those lessons are important for all of us. How we experience these times is a strong lesson for our children and youth in care. It is how we handle crisis, how we benefit from living in community, and the strength and power potential only found in "family" are all part of the experience. Here's to 2021, a time to grow, heal, and even thrive. Cheers!

# Calendar

## 2021 Foster Care Training and Support Groups

by Mindy McBride

Our agency wide virtual Foster Care Training and Support Group continues to meet the third Tuesday of every month from 5:30pm-7:30pm. This is a wonderful opportunity for foster caregivers to earn training hours and connect with other foster parents to offer support, seek advice and share hardships and achievements.

All foster caregivers agency wide are welcome to join the group as we will still be doing them virtually. All will receive an invitation for these trainings, which includes the Zoom link in order to participate. Foster caregivers need to RSVP Mindy McBride, whose email address will be found on the invitation.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact your local licensing worker.



### January 19<sup>th</sup> Visitation

Why is it important, the role of the foster caregiver in visitation, how to help with behaviors that occur as a result of visitation

### August 17<sup>th</sup> Licensing Investigations

This will also include the importance of documentation and how foster parents can protect themselves

### February 16<sup>th</sup> The Implementation Plan/ Grievance Process

Also looking at the rights and responsibilities of foster caregivers during this training

### September 21<sup>st</sup> Compassion Fatigue and Secondary Trauma

What it is and how to combat it to reduce burnout and stress

### March 16<sup>th</sup> Trauma Informed Parenting

Understanding what trauma is and how it impacts a child

### October 19<sup>th</sup> Working with Biological Parents

Co-parenting, what it is and how to do it. This training will also include working with incarcerated parents

### April 20<sup>th</sup> Trauma Informed Parenting

How to be a trauma informed parent

### November 16<sup>th</sup> Parenting During the Holidays

What to expect and how to manage behaviors during the most wonderful time of the year

### May 18<sup>th</sup> Human Trafficking

### June 15<sup>th</sup> Caseworkers and Foster Caregivers

How caseworkers and foster caregivers can partner together to help the children placed in their home thrive

### December 21<sup>st</sup> Court

Looking into what the court process is, what the responsibility of the foster caregiver is in that process and identifying the members of the court system: judge, ASA, GAL, and public defender

### July 20<sup>th</sup> Helping Foster Kids In School

How foster caregivers can work with the school system to ensure the best educational experience for the children placed in their home

# Updated Parenting Skills Training

by Carol Bennett-Barker

Next group sessions will begin the first week of February, offering both daytime and evening sessions to help accommodate everyone's availability. Daytime sessions will be scheduled from 10 am to 1 pm Monday through Friday, and evening sessions will be offered from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. If interested in participating, please contact your licensing worker. Groups may be a combination of foster caregivers, intact parents, and birth parents, with a maximum enrollment of 5 per group.

Updated Parenting Skills Training is required a all specialized foster caregivers, but is open to all foster caregivers. Several have completed the training more than once – you are welcome to take the course as a refresher as the information is still valuable for those who work with children and youth who have experienced trauma. If you have any questions about the 9 sessions, please contact Carol Bennett-Barker via email at [cbennett-barker@cyfsolutions.org](mailto:cbennett-barker@cyfsolutions.org).



## The Numbers, the Need

As of December 31, 2020, The Center for Youth and Family Services provided care for **1395** children and youth, with the assistance of **650** licensed foster homes and **320** unlicensed foster homes with placements.

# From the Desk of Jessica Bennett

Folks, we made it to 2021! I am so proud of each and every one of you. During many moments of uncertainty, you continued to navigate these uncharted waters, all the while ensuring that our children are safe and loved. I have been witness to an abundance of teamwork and creativity over these past 12 months, as we donned many different hats we never thought we would wear. I am looking forward to the continued collaboration and communication as we move forward into 2021.

As we enter into a new school semester, please continue regular discussions amongst your teams to ensure our kiddos are learning the best way possible within the mode of education in which they are participating. If you are noticing issues, don't hesitate to reach out to the schools to request a meeting to brainstorm possible solutions. As always, include your Family Worker in these meetings, so you have the support and additional advocacy you and our young folks deserve.



I'd like to take a moment to highlight some of the programs available to our older youth to assist with post-secondary education and vocational training programs:

**Youth in College/Vocational Training (YIC) placement and DCFS Scholarship Program:** The monthly board payment for the YIC and DCFS Scholarship placements has increased to \$1,235.00. Similar to the ILO placement, this rate includes monthly allocations of \$55 for personal allowance, \$55 for clothing, \$55 for utilities, \$216 for food, \$43 for phone, \$108 for transportation and up to \$703 for rent. We will advise youth to develop a monthly budget based on their income (if working), rent and utilities or school-based dorm housing costs and other personal and school expenses using these allocations as a guide, including an amount for savings as part of their budget. This is a substantial increase to make post-secondary education more affordable for Youth in Care, allowing them to focus on academic success and improve graduation rates. Youth in Care are eligible to apply for the Youth in College/Vocational Training Program. Youth in Care, youth who have aged out of DCFS care at age 18 or older, and youth whom the department had legal guardianship of immediately prior to an adoption or guardianship being finalized are eligible to apply for the DCFS Scholarship Program. Applications are due by March 31, 2021.

**Education and Training Vouchers:** Payment of up to \$5000 annually of education related expenses such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, uniforms, equipment and/or transportation not covered by other grants or scholarships. Students may also request a computer package to assist with their studies. Youth in Care, youth who have aged out of DCFS care at age 18 or older, and youth who achieved permanency at age 16 or older through either guardianship or adoption are eligible to apply for the Education and Training Vouchers.

**Tuition and Fee Waiver:** Available to Illinois public universities or in-district community college. If student is awarded MAP grants and/or federal Pell grants, these funds are applied first. Youth in Care, youth who have aged out of DCFS care at age 18 or older, and youth whom the department had legal guardianship of immediately prior to an adoption or guardianship being finalized are eligible to apply for the Tuition and Fee Waiver. Please contact your Family Worker or me for further information regarding these programs.

# Homemade Hot Chocolate Yum!

Just 4 ingredients, mixed by shaking the dry ingredients in a Mason jar with the lid on tight. Here's what goes in the jar:

**1/2 c. cocoa powder**  
**1 c. granulated sugar**  
**1 tsp. salt**

Then seal the lid tightly on the jar and shake well. When ready to use, scoop 2 Tbsp. of the cocoa mix into a mug, and add 1 cup warm milk (heated in a small saucepan on top of the stove). Stir well. Add marshmallows, or marshmallow crème, or whipped cream, or mini chocolate chips, or a drop of peppermint extract, or a tiny splash of vanilla extract, or a sprinkling of powdered sugar, or a drizzle of chocolate syrup, or your favorite combination of any of these ingredients.

The mix should last up to a year when tightly sealed and stored on a dry shelf. Enjoy. It's perfect for the kiddos to help assemble and mix.





# Get Connected with CYFS

by Amanda Troyer

As December 2020 comes to an end, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the year and how much each of you have done for the children in your home. It has been a hard year working through remote learning, sometimes still working, finding day care, keeping healthy, wearing masks, and working through being isolated at home with children with intense trauma and behaviors.

Then you add on home visits, virtual visits, visits both in person and virtually with parents, the foster care system, and zoom court hearings. It has been a lot to take on, and this is just the tip of the iceberg. Not to mention all the things each of you have had to go through personally due to COVID. Some have lost family members, financial struggles due to not working, being home when you're used to working, canceling vacations, and not being around your family for the holidays. It has been a lot and I want you to know I see the struggles you have faced and how strong you continue to be despite adversity this year has brought.

As we look back on the year, I hope there have been moments of growth, reflection, and times where you can say you were also grateful despite the challenges. I hope you were able to see being home and present with your family including our kids in your care has been a time of making memories and bonding with each other. And those of you

who have continued to work, thank you for doing your jobs with added stress during a pandemic. We appreciate your hard work.

I am blessed to have each of you on my caseload. I hope you know how important you are to our agency as well as to the children who you have placed in your home. You are making a difference to each child you care for and I am honored to be your licensing worker. Thank you for choosing us and working through the hardships which comes with the foster care system. Fostering is not an easy job. And it truly takes a special person like each of you to make it work.

Thank you for your patience, understanding, flexibility, kindness, and grace each day as we navigate the foster care system together each playing out our role. There are times an appointment has been canceled or you have had to wait for an answer. Thank you for allowing me to spread myself out to all the families I work with while waiting for your answers. Being just one person, it sometimes takes a bit of time to make sure everyone has what they need and yet you seem to understand and accept this. I am so glad our paths crossed and I am able to get to know you more as the years have passed. You make this job enjoyable and I treasure our time together however long that may be. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

~Amanda

*"We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures."*

Thornton Wilder



## Branch Offices

<b>Bloomington-Center</b>	309.829.6307	<b>Lincoln</b>	217.732.3771
<b>Bloomington-Morris</b>	309.820.7616	<b>Macomb</b>	309.833.1791
<b>Champaign</b>	217.352.5179	<b>Peoria</b>	309.323.6600
<b>Danville</b>	217.443.1772	<b>Rock Island</b>	309.786.0770
<b>Galesburg</b>	309.342.1136	<b>Springfield</b>	217.528.3694
<b>LaSalle</b>	815.223.4007		