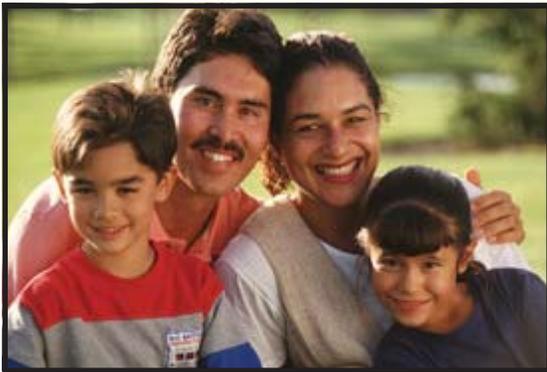


# ***DCFS SERVES CHILDREN AND FAMILIES***



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# HISTORY OF ILLINOIS CHILD WELFARE

In 1849, Illinois child welfare history began with the founding of the Chicago Orphan Asylum (now the Chicago Child Care Society) to care for orphans whose parents had died of bubonic plague in Chicago as they traveled west in search of gold.

## Public Child Welfare in Illinois

State-supported child welfare began in 1865 at The Civil War Orphans' Home in Normal, Illinois. The Civil War Orphans' Home, later known as the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's School, provided child welfare services only to the children of parents having "honorable" veteran's status. Local government and voluntary agencies had the responsibility for providing child welfare to other children. The generally accepted assumption and philosophy was that, when privately supported, volunteer agencies "took care of their own," and there would be little need for public funds to support child welfare services.

In 1869, the State Board of Commissioners of Public Charities was created to be responsible for monitoring and coordinating various social welfare activities. It was the first public agency in Illinois to collect information about the living conditions of dependent individuals, including children.

In 1899, the State Board of Commissioners of Public Charities was granted the authority to inspect private as well as public child welfare institutions. Later, with the help of Jane Addams and Julia Lathrop of Hull House in Chicago, Illinois was the first state to adopt a Juvenile Court Act which contained basic child protection procedures.

## New Public Child Welfare Organization Emerges

In 1905, the Department of Visitation was established for the purpose of visiting children who had been placed in foster homes, inspecting publicly funded institutions and granting certificates to those that passed inspection. In 1917, it was incorporated into a new Department of Public Welfare. In 1919, state law required the Division of Visitation on Children to annually inspect and license "boarding" homes for children. In 1920, this division was expanded to be a general division of child welfare, upon recommendation of the Child Welfare Committee of 1920. Due to inadequate funding and staff shortages, the Child Welfare Division dealt mostly with administrative matters.

## Formation of a Public/Private Partnership

Growing public awareness that private agencies were unable to be responsible for all children who required care produced a growing demand for a public governmental department to take primary responsibility for children. During the 1930's and 1940's, child welfare committees called for state functions to be unified and organized to improve service provision for children.

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In 1951, the Illinois Commission on Children was created by the legislature to implement recommendations of the 1950 White House Conference on Children. The Commission office became a “think tank” and catalyst for those who were concerned about the inequities in services which excluded thousands of Illinois children in need of care. As a result, many bills were proposed in the legislature and, though none were passed, they did raise public awareness about the State’s limited resources for child welfare services.

### **The Birth of DCFS**

It took until 1961 for the Illinois Commission On Children and members of the legislature to join in a thorough study of all aspects of services to children. This joint effort was undertaken by the Legislative Commission on Services for Children and Their Families.

On January 1, 1964, 99 years from the beginning of public child welfare in Illinois, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) was created by the legislature. In creating DCFS, the State assumed the fundamental responsibility for safeguarding Illinois children by providing comprehensive child welfare services.

DCFS stands as a separate agency whose director reports to the Governor. DCFS has its own budget which enables the State, through the legislature, to focus on services that are determined as necessary for Illinois children and families.

### **DCFS Today**

DCFS receives, investigates and acts on a report of child abuse or neglect every five minutes, child sex abuse every hour and the death of a child by abuse or neglect every day and a half. The department’s goal is to ensure safe, loving homes and brighter futures for Illinois’ children. For nearly 50 years, DCFS has worked with other government agencies, nonprofit child welfare partners and the private sector organizations to create successful initiatives that have often been a model for other agencies across the United States.

DCFS remains the largest child welfare agency to earn accreditation from the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services. From annual investigations involving more than 111,000 children, to the care of 15,000 youth, to the licensing of day care and other facilities that serve more than 290,000 children, the department is dedicated to providing unrivaled professional service at all levels in its ongoing mission to ensure that all Illinois children live in safe and loving homes.

# DCFS MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

## Mission Statement

The mission of DCFS is to:

- protect children who are reported to be abused or neglected and to increase their families' capacity to safely care for them;
- provide for the well-being of children in our care;
- provide appropriate, permanent families as quickly as possible for those children who cannot safely return home;
- support early intervention and child abuse prevention activities; and
- Work in partnership with communities to fulfill this mission.

## Vision Statement

DCFS is committed to acting in the best interest of every child it serves, helping families by increasing their ability to provide a safe environment for their children, and by strengthening families who are at risk of abuse or neglect.

DCFS envisions a system in which children who have been abused or neglected:

- are served with respect, fairness and cultural competence;
- live in families that are safe and healthy;
- live safely at home or are placed for short-term care in capable, nurturing foster homes;
- have no unplanned placement disruptions;
- are quickly and safely reunified with their families through restorative services or are placed with adoptive families when reunification is not possible;
- are served by a comprehensive continuum of services providing options to best serve each child's individual needs;
- live in communities where partnerships between DCFS, which has immediate and direct responsibility for youth in its care, and other public and private agencies provide an effective array of services to meet the needs of children and families and prevent child abuse and neglect;
- are served by competent, highly trained staff who respond to every report of abuse or neglect and who act quickly and professionally to protect them and ensure their well-being;
- are served by a legal system that will promptly and efficiently adjudicate their cases and provide for an appropriate and expeditious disposition; and
- are served by a department that manages its fiscal and human resources effectively and with maximum efficiency.

## DCFS AND ILLINOIS STATE GOVERNMENT

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is one of many departments within Illinois state government. Directors of many Illinois state government departments report directly to the Governor. For example, the DCFS director works directly for the Governor.

Illinois' major state governmental departments include:

- Aging
- Agriculture
- Central Management Services
- Children & Family Services (DCFS)
- Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- Corrections
- Emergency Management Agency
- Employment Security
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Financial and Professional Regulation
- Healthcare and Family Services (formerly Public Aid)
- Historic Preservation Agency
- Human Services
- Illinois Lottery
- Illinois Power Agency
- Insurance
- Juvenile Justice
- Labor
- Military Affairs
- Natural Resources
- Public Health
- Revenue
- State Police
- Transportation
- Veteran's Affairs

For the most current information on Illinois state government, go to the official state website at [www.illinois.gov](http://www.illinois.gov).



### How DCFS is Funded: Illinois Budget Process

The Department of Children and Family Services is primarily funded through the State of Illinois budget and also receives funds from federal programs. The Illinois Constitution requires the Governor of Illinois to prepare and submit a state budget to the General Assembly (House and Senate) annually. The Governor's budget includes estimated funds available from taxes and other sources, as well as state debt and liabilities and recommended spending levels for state agencies, including DCFS.

## How the Illinois and DCFS Budget Affect Children in Foster Care and Their Families

The Illinois annual state budget process determines:

- monthly payments to foster families for each child’s food, clothes, housing, and allowance (board check rates);
- funding to DCFS-sponsored support programs for children in foster care and families; and  
*Examples:* Summer camps for children and training classes for caregivers
- funding for programs available to children in foster care and their families through other state agencies.  
*Example:* Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutritional program through the Department of Human Services

### Illinois Budget Process

**Fiscal Year: July 1-June 30**

DCFS and other state agencies work closely with the Bureau of the Budget and the Governor’s staff to propose budget options for final decisions. Each year, the Governor presents a recommended budget to both the Senate and House by the first Wednesday in March. Appropriation committees in both the House and Senate review the Governor’s budget and may adopt amendments to present to their respective members for debate and a final vote.

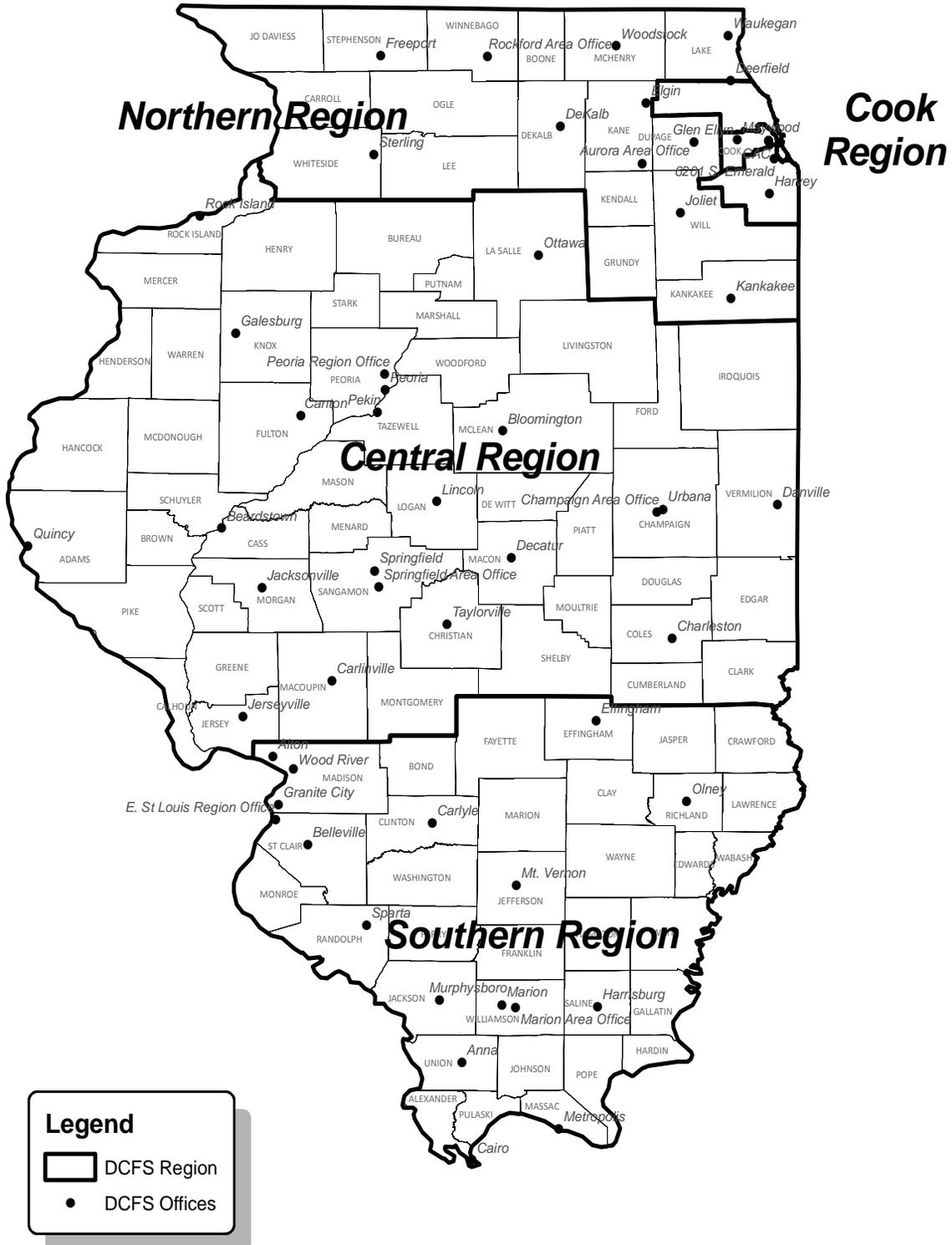
Changes made by either the House or Senate must ultimately be accepted by both chambers and be presented to the Governor. By statute, any proposed changes to the budget must be accompanied by a “Fiscal Note,” which describes the fiscal impact of the changes. Final budget approval by the Illinois Legislature usually does not occur until near the end of the legislative session, which is traditionally at or near the end of each May. The approved budget must then be sent to the Governor, who must take action before July 1 each year. The Governor can cut money from the budget or sign it as presented.

#### **DCFS Budget Briefing Book**

*Each spring, DCFS prepares a program and budget briefing book providing details regarding current issues and requested appropriations for the next fiscal year.*

# DCFS GEOGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION

## DCFS Regional Map



## DCFS Area Offices

Below are addresses and phone numbers for DCFS area offices. For information about other local offices, call the nearest area office. Additionally, the DCFS website lists DCFS locations at [www.DCFS.illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.illinois.gov). The directory is under the "Contact Us" link.

<b>Cook County Region</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Fax</b>
1911-21 S. Indiana, Chicago, 60616	312-808-5000	312-328-2107
1701 S. 1st Ave, 11th Fl, Maywood, 60153	708-338-6600	708-338-6714 / 6726
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago, 60621	773-371-6000	773-371-6101
15115 S. Dixie Highway, Harvey, 60426	708-210-2800	708-210-3729

### Northern Region

8 E Galena Blvd, Station 300 & 400, Aurora, 60506 630-801-3476 / 3472		630-801-3400
200 S. Wyman, FL 2, Rockford, 61101	815-987-7640	815-987-7447

### Southern Region

10 Collinsville Avenue, Rm 301, E. St. Louis, 62201 618-583-2141		618-583-2100
2309 W. Main, Suite 108, Marion, 62959	618-993-7100	618-993-5467

### Central Region

5415 N. University Street, Peoria, 61614	309-693-5400	309-693-2582 / 5316
2125 So. 1st, Champaign, 61820	217-278-5300	217-278-5323
4500 S. 6th Street, Springfield, 62703	217-786-6830	217-786-6771

### State Directory - ILLINOIS

**312-793-3500**

*Find a DCFS caseworker or employee, DCFS department or office, or DCFS division, office or other unit statewide.*

### DCFS Abuse/Neglect Hotline

**800-25-ABUSE**

DCFS director's office, Springfield	217-785-2509	217-785-1052
DCFS director's office, Chicago	312-814-6800	312-814-1888

**Call the DCFS Advocacy Office for Children and Families at 800-232-3798 with questions about policy, procedure, or help in obtaining services for children.**

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## DCFS Functions and Responsibilities

In order to ensure safe, loving homes and brighter futures for youth, DCFS is organized into several core functions. These functions encompass directly serving families, supporting staff as they fulfill their roles and complying with federal and state guidelines. While the core mission remains the same, the department will periodically change its structure to respond to new demands or to incorporate improved child welfare practices.

The current organization chart is available on the DCFS website at [www.DCFS.illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.illinois.gov). Following are descriptions of the primary functions and responsibilities within DCFS that most pertain to caregivers. Check the DCFS website for the most current information.

### **Administrative Case Review**

The Administrative Case Review unit fulfills the federal and state mandate for a review process that is independent of the caseworker and supervisor and ensures that case plans are family-focused and move children toward a safe, lifelong relationship. Caregivers should expect to receive notice of the semi-annual reviews and plan to attend to offer their input about the child.

### **Adoptions**

Adoption staff and management work with families to move children toward permanency through adoption or guardianship, when other goals have been ruled out. The adoption staff located in the DCFS regions assist prospective parents and caseworkers through the process of matching, placement and finalization. Adoption staff serve as the primary liaison to adoptive parents by providing post-adoption and guardianship services, including financial subsidies, information and referral, parent education, counseling, intensive preservation services, and training. This function also ensures that the department takes full advantage of state and federal permanency programs and is in compliance with adoption-related mandates. Service areas under this function also include Matching for Adoptive Placements (MAP) and Interstate Compact.

### **Affirmative Action**

The function of Affirmative Action is to assure agency compliance with civil rights rules and regulations, and ensure that the rights of all agency employees, applicants, clients and service providers are protected against unlawful discrimination. More specifically, Affirmative Action investigates complaints of discrimination, develops annual affirmative action plans, monitors service contracts for civil rights compliance, and conducts on-site compliance reviews of agency and private facilities under contract with DCFS.

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## **Caregiver and Parent Support**

To give caregivers a platform to stay engaged and informed, DCFS sponsors regional foster care advisory councils, the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council. It also conducts Partnering with Parent councils for DCFS-involved parents throughout the state. The bi-monthly newsletter Illinois Families Now and Forever® keeps foster, adoptive and relative caregivers informed of child welfare and parenting news and issues.

## **Child Protection**

Child Protection maintains a 24-hour, year-round child abuse and neglect hotline, and investigates all child abuse and neglect allegations. Child Protection also maintains the Emergency Resource Center, which receives all DCFS-involved children needing placement in Cook County and locates a relative or a foster care placement for them. Child Protection also oversees the Children’s Advocacy Centers, which are county-based programs that coordinate child sex abuse investigations among the department, law enforcement agencies and the State’s Attorney’s Office.

## **Clinical/Behavioral Support**

DCFS develops, implements and coordinates diverse behavioral health activities under the Clinical Services umbrella. This includes consulting with caseworkers, psychiatrists and psychologists on the mental health needs of children and their families. The department also oversees specialized services such as the assessment and treatment of children with sexually problematic behaviors and support for children with AIDS.

## **Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP)**

CIPP stands for Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation. It is a model for team decision-making. The goal is to reduce placement disruptions by encouraging the engagement and support of the youth’s immediate and extended family, caregivers and case management team when developing specific, individualized, and appropriate interventions for the youth. Caregivers can request a CIPP meeting to help evaluate new resources to settle, support and preserve an unstable placement situation.

## **Communications**

DCFS Communications handles all press inquiries for the department, and it creates and approves internal and external publications that describe and promote the services and programs managed by DCFS. Communications oversees special events and public service campaigns (including all advertising and marketing strategies, as well as adoption outreach and recruitment), maintains the department’s web and intranet sites and handles public requests submitted under the Freedom of Information Act. It also provides a variety of photography and desktop publishing services.

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### **Foster Care Services**

DCFS maintains foster care programs in each of the DCFS regions. Caseworkers and other direct service staff support foster homes where DCFS supervises the license. The foster care programs ensure that youth under DCFS custody are maintained in nurturing foster homes as their cases progress toward permanency goals set by the juvenile court. Private agencies provide similar foster care services, under contract with DCFS, to about 80 percent of the children in care. For DCFS foster homes, the department has a team of foster parent support specialists who are foster parents that work directly with other foster parents to provide various types of information and support.

### **DCFS Guardian**

The DCFS Guardian serves as the legal guardian of youth placed in the care of DCFS. This function is responsible for securing appropriate legal services to protect the rights of children. The Guardian's office can also represent children in civil actions when they need to be defended or aided in judicial matters or financial matters concerning trusts. In addition, the DCFS Guardian exercises the consent-giving function regarding medical treatment decisions, admission to psychiatric hospital programs, administration of psychotropic medication, and the many legal decisions that parents would normally make involving the day-to-day life, care, and well-being of minors.

### **Health Services**

Health Services provides medical consultation to support caseworkers and caregivers. This function also includes monitoring contracts for vision and dental services, serving as liaison for caregivers with questions about the state medical card, and keeping caregivers informed of public health concerns.

### **Inspector General**

The Inspector General investigates allegations of malfeasance and violations of rules, policies and procedures by DCFS employees, foster caregivers and other contractors. The Inspector General also investigates incidents where abuse or neglect is the suspected cause of death for children who have current or prior involvement with the department.

### **Integrated Assessment**

The Integrated Assessment Program is a process that coordinates case planning and decision making when a child initially comes into the child welfare system and provides support to caseworkers. Specially trained screeners meet with parents, caregivers and children to determine their needs, strengths and support systems. This results in a Client Service Plan with individualized tasks that must be submitted to the juvenile court. Foster families are also involved in the IA process to be certain they can support the child initially and as the case progresses.

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## **Licensing**

DCFS Licensing is responsible for many functions. In addition to licensing foster homes supervised by DCFS regional foster care programs, it licenses Purchase of Services agencies (POS) also called “private agencies” and monitors their compliance with various aspects of child welfare cases, including child endangerment risk assessment protocol, court proceedings and service delivery. Additionally, the function includes licensing of day care homes, day care centers, group day care homes, day care agencies, child welfare agencies (which may license private agency foster homes), child care institutions and maternity centers, group homes and emergency shelters.

## **Placement/Permanency Services**

When out-of-home options for care need to be considered, DCFS provides placement and permanency services to address safety, permanency and well-being goals in the least-restrictive, most home-like environment that meets the needs for the child. These options include transitional/independent living, residential placement, psychiatric hospitalization, or services through Screening, Assessment, and Support (SASS)/System of Care (SOC).

## **Policy and Advocacy Offices**

The DCFS Policy Office is responsible for establishing rules, procedures, policy guides and other policy documents for the department. This function also includes the Advocacy Office for Children and Families, which foster parents can call for assistance with matters that haven’t been resolved by going through the chain of command.

## **Training**

The training function supports the educational needs of staff and caregivers. Training tracks the Child Welfare Employee Licensure credits for professional development. It also develops and presents curriculum for foster care pre-service training (PRIDE) and courses for specific developmental/situational needs children may have after a caregiver becomes licensed. Training is presented by skilled personnel in person and on-line. Caregivers can register for courses and track their credit hours through the Web-based Virtual Training Center (VTC).

## **Transition Services for Older Youth**

DCFS provides many services and supports to help young people find education success and prepare for adulthood. This includes programs that assist families in school advocacy, teach youth to advocate for themselves, support students in college and vocational programs, teach life skills and encourage gainful employment.

# DCFS POLICYMAKING

## Administrative Rules

### **Confidentiality of Draft Rules**

*If you are a foster caregiver belonging to an advisory group, you may be asked to review DCFS policy drafts that are not yet ready for review by the general public. These policy drafts are not public information and should not be shared with persons who are not members of the advisory group.*

DCFS' administrative rules affect the rights and entitlements of the public. Rules specify the manner in which DCFS will implement federal or state laws, court decisions, executive orders of the Governor, or administrative decisions of the DCFS director.

Like all Illinois state agencies, DCFS is required to submit its rules for the public to review prior to DCFS adopting the rules. DCFS' proposed rules are published in the *Illinois Register*. This publication begins a 45-day period in which the public may comment on them in writing or through public hearings.

After the 45-day comment period, DCFS submits the proposed rules to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) for approval. This legislative committee determines, among other things, whether DCFS has the authority to adopt the proposed rules, whether the rules carry out the intent of the law, and whether DCFS followed the proper process. After JCAR completes its review and indicates that it has no objection to the rules, DCFS is free to adopt them by filing certified copies with the Secretary of State and again publishing the rules in the *Illinois Register*. This time they are filed as *adopted* rules. Rules may also be adopted by DCFS on an emergency basis when DCFS determines that a situation poses a threat to the public interest, safety, or welfare.

Rules adopted under the procedure described above are known as "administrative law" and have the same force and effect as laws enacted by the Illinois General Assembly. They are equally binding on DCFS and the public. Once adopted, rules are distributed to DCFS staff, agency service providers, and other interested parties. They are also posted online for public access.

## Procedures

Most DCFS rules are accompanied by procedures. Rules detail the "what," with procedures detailing the "how to." Procedures specify the activities staff must complete to satisfactorily comply with the provisions of the rules. In addition to procedures that specify how rules are to be implemented, DCFS also has "administrative procedures" that guide its day-to-day management from an administrative or organizational perspective.

The full text of any rule or procedure can be obtained by visiting the DCFS website at [www.DCFS.illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.illinois.gov) and selecting the link for "Policy and Rules."

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## CONNECTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WITH DCFS

DCFS services for children and families are initiated in a number of ways:

- a report to the statewide DCFS hotline (800-25-ABUSE) alleging that a child is abused, neglected, or dependent;
- a referral from an agency contracted by DCFS to provide services to the child or family; or
- a direct request for child welfare services from a family to:
  - keep the family together;
  - have a child temporarily removed from their care until a short-term crisis or problem is resolved (voluntary placement); or to
  - voluntarily surrender their child for adoption when an adoptive placement resource for that child is expected to be available within 90 days. If an adoptive resource is not readily available, DCFS will seek court ordered legal responsibility for the child.

### Who is Eligible for Child Welfare Services?

Child welfare services, by law, must be provided to a child and his or her family if a court finds the child to be:

- *abused and/or neglected;*
- *dependent;*
- *delinquent* — over 13 years old and currently in DCFS care or under 15 years old and placed in DCFS care by the judge who presided over the delinquency case; or
- *MRAI (Minor Requiring Authoritative Intervention)*

More information about the legal definitions of abuse, neglect, dependency, delinquency, and MRAI connected to foster parenting are found in Section 2: Juvenile Court.

DCFS may also *elect to provide* child welfare services to other families requesting services, or to families identified by DCFS as needing and likely to benefit from services.

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## Child Welfare Services Defined

Child welfare services may be provided by DCFS staff or they may be purchased by DCFS from other agencies, organizations and individuals.

These services are directed toward the purpose of:

- protecting and promoting the health, safety and welfare of all children, including homeless, dependent and neglected children;
- preventing, remedying or assisting in the solution of problems that may result in the neglect, abuse, exploitation or delinquency of children;
- preventing the unnecessary separation of children from their families by identifying family problems, assisting families in resolving their problems and preventing breakup of the family where desirable and possible when the child can be cared for at home without endangering the child's health and safety;
- restoring to their families children who have been removed, by the provision of services to the child and the families when the child can be cared for at home without endangering the child's health and safety;
- placing children in suitable adoptive homes in cases where restoration to the biological family is not possible or appropriate;
- assuring safe and adequate care of children away from their homes, in cases where the child cannot be returned home or cannot be placed for adoption. At the time of placement, the department shall consider concurrent planning so that permanency may occur at the earliest opportunity. Consideration should be given so that if reunification fails or is delayed, the placement made is the best available placement to provide permanency for the child;
- providing supportive services and living maintenance that contributes to the physical, emotional and social well being of children for whom DCFS is legally responsible and to youth in care who are pregnant and unmarried; and
- placing and maintaining children in facilities that provide separate living quarters for children under the age of 18 and for children 18 years of age and older, unless a child 18 years of age is in the last year of high school education or vocational training, in an approved individual or group treatment program, or in a licensed shelter facility, or secure child care facility.

The department is not required to place or maintain children:

- who are in a foster home; or
- who are persons with a developmental disability, as defined in the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code; or
- who are female children who are pregnant, pregnant and parenting or parenting; or
- who are siblings

in facilities that provide separate living quarters for children 18 years of age and older and for children under 18 years of age.

These services include but are not limited to: counseling, advocacy, protective and family maintenance day care, homemaker, emergency caretaker, family planning, adoption, placement, child protection, and information and referral.

## **Delivering Child Welfare Services**

DCFS provides services directly or purchases services from private agencies and other organizations and individuals. Each family has an individual client service plan to meet its needs. The services provided are directed toward four primary service goals:

- family preservation;
- family reunification;
- adoption or attainment of a permanent living arrangement, such as guardianship; and
- youth development.

Child protection and well-being underpin all of this work.

### **Family Preservation**

When family preservation is the goal, services are directed toward the child's development, safety and well-being in his or her parents' home and toward preventing placement away from the family. These families may have been reported to DCFS due to alleged neglect or abuse, or referred by community agencies. Services for these families may include:

- counseling/advocacy;
- emergency caretaker;
- homemaker;
- family planning;
- parent education;
- self-help groups;

- 
- intensive family preservation services;
  - protective and family maintenance day care and child development;
  - referral for substance abuse treatment services;
  - referral for financial assistance and employment related day care;
  - referral for housing assistance or housing advocacy; and
  - referral for legal services.

### **Family Reunification**

When family reunification is the goal, services are directed toward returning a child to his or her parents' home. The services help the child's parents achieve minimum parenting standards and insure the child's health, safety and well-being upon being returned home.

Services may include:

- counseling/advocacy;
- homemaker;
- protective and family maintenance day care and child development;
- foster family home care;
- relative home care;
- residential care;
- family planning;
- parent education;
- intensive family preservation services; and
- referral for substance abuse treatment services.

### **Adoption or Attainment of a Permanent Living Arrangement**

When adoption is the goal for the child, services are directed at securing a new legal status in a permanent living situation for the child.

Services may include:

- counseling;
- adoption;
- subsidized guardianship;
- relative home care;
- foster family home care; and
- intensive family services.

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## Youth Development

These services are directed at helping youth live independently or assisting unmarried youth with planning for the birth or care of a child.

The services may be provided to:

- youth, 16 years of age or older, for whom DCFS has legal responsibility to help them live independently from adult supervision and achieve economic self-sufficiency;
- youth who are part of the Supporting Emancipated Youth Services program for former youth in care who reengage with the department and juvenile court;
- youth who are high school graduates and have been awarded scholarships; and
- unmarried, pregnant, and pregnant and parenting youth for whom DCFS is legally responsible.

Services for youth for whom DCFS is legally responsible may include:

- counseling/advocacy;
- day care for children of unmarried youth;
- homemaker;
- family planning; and
- maintenance of payments for foster family home, relative home or residential care payments, except that maternity home payment is limited to 90 days maximum.

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## **DCFS/PRIVATE AGENCY PARTNERSHIP**

Foster care in Illinois is often referred to as a “public/private” partnership between DCFS, which is a public agency, and the many private child welfare agencies contracted by DCFS to have foster care programs. DCFS provides some, but not all, services directly to children and families through foster care programs administered by DCFS regions. More often, DCFS contracts with other agencies, organizations and individuals statewide to provide needed services. Agencies contracted by DCFS are “private” agencies, because even though they work with the state’s child welfare system, they are separate entities with their own leadership structure that decides the business and practices of the specific agency. Recently, about 20 percent of children in foster care live with foster families supervised directly by DCFS regional foster care programs and about 80 percent of children in foster care live with foster families supervised by private agencies contracted by DCFS.

DCFS is responsible for:

- contracting with private child welfare agencies;
- issuing licenses to foster families;
- contracting with other service providers; and
- monitoring all agencies and service providers under contract.

Agency contracts are usually for one fiscal year (July 1-June 30). Contracts specify all services to be provided and the rate DCFS will pay for these services.

### **Private Agency Foster Care Programs**

Private agencies, often referred to as POS (purchase of service) agencies, are contracted by DCFS to run foster care programs. These agencies:

- receive foster care cases from DCFS;
- work directly with the children and families in these cases;
- meet each child’s individual needs;
- report and document a family’s progress and a child’s health, safety and well-being or needs to the juvenile court;
- recruit, train and recommend licensure of agency foster parents to DCFS;
- implement the Foster Parent Law, which defines the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved in foster care. (See Section 8, pages 1-12); and
- supervise and support agency foster homes.

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Each private agency develops and enforces its own policy about operating procedures and unique agency supports available to foster families and children, such as camp, after school care and support groups.

### **DCFS Foster Care Program**

DCFS also directly recruits, licenses, trains, supervises and supports foster families for its own foster care program. Each DCFS region is responsible for recruiting, licensing and training, and must implement the Foster Parent Law within their region, just like private agencies.

Like each private agency, DCFS decides what supports will be available to foster families under its direct supervision. Therefore, supports available to Illinois foster families vary from agency to agency and from DCFS region to DCFS region.

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## ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS FROM FOSTER PARENTS

**Q:** If my foster parent license is issued and mailed from DCFS, how do I know if I'm a private agency or DCFS foster parent?

**A:** Ultimately the state of Illinois, through DCFS, licenses all foster homes. However, licensed foster homes are either supported directly by a DCFS regional foster care program or by one of many private agencies that have contracts to provide foster care services. DCFS foster families will have a licensing worker who is a DCFS employee. Private agencies support families with their own staff. As another reference point, if your board check comes from your agency, you are a private agency foster parent. DCFS foster parents receive board checks from the state.

**Q:** Is it better to be a DCFS or a private agency foster family?

**A:** Every agency with a foster care program, including DCFS, maintains supports for its own foster families which are unique to that agency. Agencies also have contracts with DCFS to provide different types of foster care (i.e. regular, treatment, specialized, etc.) Prospective foster families should talk to a number of agencies with foster care programs to make an informed decision as to which agency provides supports and programs which match their needs, interests and special skills.

**Q:** If I am a private agency foster parent, can I transfer my license to another agency or to DCFS?

**A:** Yes, but the new agency or DCFS must accept your transfer. Consider your reasons for wanting to transfer. If you are dissatisfied with services provided by the agency, be sure your complaints have been heard by the agency's administration, not just the caseworker. Additional help and advocacy is also available through the DCFS Advocacy Office for Children and Families (800-232-3798).