

# POST ADOPTION AND GUARDIANSHIP SERVICES



Illinois Department of  
**DCFS**  
Children & Family Services



# Post Adoption and Guardianship Services

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) realizes the valuable contribution families make in giving a child a permanent family through adoption or guardianship. This undertaking is one that will change lives forever.

By making the lifelong commitment to care for a child, adoptive and guardianship parents have ended the formal, day-to-day involvement of DCFS. That prospect can raise many emotions and perhaps even some concerns. Families formed by adoption and guardianship may experience some unique challenges. It is normal to need help for small or bigger concerns that your family may face as your child grows and develops. Your family now makes the important decisions for the children now in your home. You, not a caseworker, are responsible for finding information and programs. It is important to reach out early and often before smaller concerns escalate into crisis.

It is important that children and families do more than survive. They should thrive. There are many resources through Illinois DCFS, other government agencies, and in the community that can help you meet your responsibilities.

This booklet is designed to present families with an overview of the many services available, including supportive, trauma-focused, adoption/guardianship sensitive services to meet your child's ongoing needs. The first section outlines services that the department provides or funds for children previously in its care. It also includes resources outside of DCFS that you may contact for services. At the end of the booklet there is a collection of information available to all families that is not specific to adoption but may be of special interest to adoptive and guardianship families. Please keep this booklet as a handy reference.



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# Part 1: Adoption and Guardianship Subsidy and Other Financial Considerations

## The Adoption/Guardianship Subsidy

Families adopting children or becoming guardians of children in the care of DCFS may receive subsidies to assist them after adoption or guardianship.

### Subsidy components

Subsidies for eligible children may include any or all of the following:

- Payment for non-recurring expenses directly related to the adoption is available in an amount not to exceed \$2,250 per child for the adoption or guardianship.
- Monthly cash payments are available based on the needs of the child and the family circumstances.
- A Medicaid card is available to cover Medicaid-eligible services.
- Payment or reimbursement payment can be made for physical, emotional and mental health needs that are not covered through insurance or public resources and that resulted from a pre-existing condition. Services must be pre-approved by DCFS to receive payment or reimbursement
- Employment-related daycare payments are available for children under the age of 3 years, if day care is required due to the parent or guardian's employment or participation in a training program that will lead to employment.
- Therapeutic daycare is available for children who are determined to have a disability that requires special education services through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or a 504 Educational Plan and is not fundable through another source. The child must be unable to be maintained in employment-related daycare programs and services must be pre-approved by DCFS. These services must be approved through the child's subsidy and the provider must have the appropriate credentials/training to provide therapeutic daycare for the child(ren) specific needs. This service will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to determine continued eligibility.

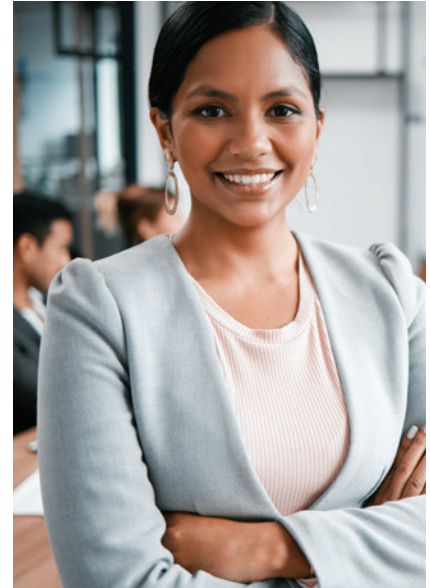
If you have questions about your subsidy, contact the DCFS Subsidy Support Line at 866-538-8892 or 312-808-5250 and you will be connected to the assigned subsidy support specialist in your region. You can also go to [pathbeyondadoption.illinois.gov](http://pathbeyondadoption.illinois.gov) for assistance, resources and up to date information.



## What does my subsidy support specialist do?

Everyone who completes a subsidy with Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is assigned a subsidy support specialist. The assigned subsidy support specialist assist with the following, but not limited to:

- **Provides assistance to the parent/guardian in determining the underlying issue, concern or need and explain what support or services are available to meet/address the area identified.**
- **Assists families with:**
  - Address and phone updates.
  - Information on direct deposits.
  - Marital status/name change.
  - Subsidy extension requests.
  - Verifying/reviewing annual certification letters.
  - Ensuring timely subsidy closure.
- **Service referrals and required documents for:**
  - Clinical referrals.
  - Psychological evaluation requests.
  - Counseling referrals.
  - Therapeutic day care requests.
  - Educational advocacy referrals.
  - Respite Services referrals.
  - Family First referrals.
  - Identifying community resources.
  - Adult guardianship.
- **Death or incapacitation support: Explaining the process to family, obtaining proper documents/forms and referral and follow-up with contracting agency for processing and finalization.**
  - Re-adoption.
  - Guardianships.
- **Identify community resources for the family that may help in meeting their needs; i.e. food pantry**
- **Interstate Compact Medical Assistance Program**
- **Post Adoption Guardianship Support Services (PAGS) Review**
- **Reimbursements and medical equipment requests**



## Mediation and appeals of subsidies

If you believe that your rights under an adoption assistance or subsidized guardianship agreement have been violated in some way, an Administrative Appeal may be available to you. A written appeal must be filed within 45 calendar days of the department's determination.

### Submit requests for an appeal to:

Administrative Hearings Unit  
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services  
406 East Monroe Street  
Springfield IL 62701

For additional information about the DCFS Administrative Hearing process, call 217-782-6655 if you live outside of Cook county. If you live in Cook County, call 312-814-5540.



## Missing subsidy checks

If you have been receiving subsidy checks regularly and suddenly don't receive your monthly subsidy check, call the DCFS Payment Unit at 800-525-0499 select #2. Dates may vary each month, so please allow a few days from expected date of deposit. If you do not receive your check AFTER 30 DAYS, you may request a stop payment by contacting the DCFS Payment Unit.

## Medical Care Benefits

### Medical card

DCFS youth in care and former youth in care have transitioned into Medicaid managed care plans through HealthChoice Illinois. Former Youth in Care are youth under 18 years of age (or under 21 years of age if the child has been found to have specialized needs by the department), who were previously under the guardianship of DCFS prior to adoption or subsidized guardianship. Former Youth in Care will automatically be enrolled in YouthCare Health Plan. Adoptive parents or guardians may choose a different health plan for their former youth in care, upon finalization of adoption or guardianship. Each youth will receive a medical card that will cover all Medicaid-eligible services provided by a contracted Medicaid provider under the enrolled health plan.

- Anyone who did not choose an alternate MCO – managed care health plan 30 days after adoption/guardianship finalization is automatically enrolled with YouthCare.
- However, anyone can change their MCO – managed care health plan for up to 90 days after they select their managed care plan. After the one-time switch or when 90 days is up, the plan cannot be changed for one year from the anniversary date of selection, which is your specific child's open enrollment. An open enrollment letter will be sent out before the open enrollment starts. To change the plan, they can call Client Enrollment Services at 877-912-8880.

For any YouthCare related questions, including but not limited to, coverage questions, primary care physician questions or to verify that providers are part of the YouthCare network, call 844- 289-2264 and ask for the Rapid Response Team or send an email to [ILYouthCare@Centene.com](mailto:ILYouthCare@Centene.com)

To find out information regarding different health plans, please see below for contact information:

Aetna Better Health of Illinois (All counties).....	866-329-4701
Blue Cross Community Health Plan (All counties) .....	877-860-2837
CountyCare Health Plan (Cook County only).....	855-444-1661
Meridian Health Plan (All counties).....	866-606-3700
Molina Healthcare (All counties) .....	855-687-7861

If you have a primary care doctor (PCP) or specialist you want to keep seeing, check to see what health plans they accept before you enroll. To change your PCP, call your health plan's member services number on your member ID card for help.

There are two ways to enroll:

Online: Go to [EnrollHFS.Illinois.gov](http://EnrollHFS.Illinois.gov) and click “**Enroll**” or

By phone: Call Client Enrollment Services at 1-877-912-8880 (TTY: 866-565-8576).

Call Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

## Dental/Orthodontic services

If you need to find a dental or orthodontic provider in your area who accepts Medicaid, contact your managed care provider to find a provider near your home.

## Subsidy and Medical Coverage Payments When Moving Out of Illinois

### Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)

#### ICAMA and adoptive families

Families often worry about what will happen to their child's subsidy if they move out of state. Illinois is a member of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA), which assists adoptive families moving in or out of Illinois.

#### Moving prior to adoption finalization

Your adoption worker will provide you with information about your child's medical coverage prior to the adoption. If you will be moving out of state, there are a various options for medical care in your new state of residence. To obtain a referral and to discuss your options before moving out of state contact your adoption worker first. If further assistance is needed, contact the Interstate Compact Office at 217-785-2680 or via email at [DCFS.InterstateCompactGeneral@illinois.gov](mailto:DCFS.InterstateCompactGeneral@illinois.gov).

#### Moving after finalization

If you plan an out-of-state move after the adoption is finalized, contact your subsidy support specialist for information on the steps that will be taken to ensure that the new state has all of the necessary information. **Illinois will continue to process your monthly subsidy payment and you may contact your subsidy support specialist as needed.** Your subsidy support specialist will provide information about the options for medical coverage described above.

Guardianship families can contact the Interstate Compact Office at 217-785-2680 to discuss their options before moving out of state, as they may differ from families who have adopted.



## Tax Information for Foster and Adoptive Families

Since 2003, families who adopt a child with special needs from foster care can claim a federal adoption tax credit without needing to incur or document expenses. For non-special needs adoptions (except stepparent adoptions, which do not qualify for the credit), parents can claim the credit with the same rules as below, except that they must document qualified adoption expenses. You do not have to submit documents to IRS but must keep them for your files.

The amount of the credit is based on the year the adoption finalized.

To qualify for the credit without documenting expenses, families must:

- Have adopted a child determined special needs (who receives adoption assistance).
- Have a modified adjusted gross income below a level.

For example, how much, if any, of the credit you can use is based on your income. Families with a 2022 federal modified adjusted gross income above \$263,410 cannot claim the credit at all. Those with incomes from \$223,410 to \$263,410 can claim a portion of the credit. Married couples must file Married Filing Jointly the year they are claiming the credit.

To claim the credit, complete IRS Form 8839 in addition to filing your usual IRS Form 1040. If you are using software, it will generate the needed forms.

If you are filing by paper, forms are available on [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or <https://www.nacac.org/help/adoption-tax-credit/irs-forms-related-to-the-adoption-tax-credit/>. If the IRS were to audit your return and the documentation of your adoption of a child with special needs, you would submit a copy of your adoption decree and adoption assistance agreement.

Currently the Adoption Tax Credit is not refundable, which means that a family may not be able to use the full amount of the credit (some families unable to use any credit) in the year they claim the credit. Families have a total of six years to use the credit. Any unused credit is carried forward to the next year. Most families will not receive the full credit as a refund to their tax return. Families that typically receive a refund should still file for the Adoption Tax Credit as they may receive a larger refund due to the Adoption Tax Credit.

For more information, visit <https://www.nacac.org/help/adoption-tax-credit/> (includes link to recorded webinar), email [taxcredit@nacac.org](mailto:taxcredit@nacac.org), or call 651-644-3036. NACAC is not a tax professional organization, and this information should not be considered legal or tax advice. For further questions please seek out guidance from a certified tax professional.

## Education and transition services after adoption and guardianship

Youth in a subsidized adoption or subsidized guardianship from DCFS may access the following services as they transition to adulthood:

### DCFS Scholarship Program

Each year the department shall select a minimum of 53 students, at least four of whom shall be children of veterans, to receive scholarships and fee waivers which will enable them to attend and complete their post-secondary education at a community college, public university or college. Scholarships and fee waivers shall be available to students for at least five years, provided they are continuing to work toward graduation. Scholarship recipients are selected based on their scholastic record, community and extracurricular activities and general interest in higher education.



All scholarship recipients, regardless of whether they attend an Illinois community college or university or a private out-of-state college or university, shall receive:

- A monthly grant which is effective the first day of attendance and will terminate at the end of the academic year. Scholarship recipients must utilize the monthly grant towards payment for maintenance and school expenses, including but not limited to room/board/dormitory fees, or travel expenses to/from campus. Monthly grant payments will continue through the summer if the recipient is enrolled in summer school for a minimum of six college credit hours, or is participating in an approved internship program, or submits proof of enrollment for the fall semester by June 1.
- One-time start-up grant to assist with their initial college living expenses. Recipients will receive the grant payment in July.
- Medical card



Applicants must meet one of the following educational requirements:

- Earned a high school diploma from an accredited institution, or
- Earned a General Education Development (GED) certificate/diploma or
- Met the state criteria for high school graduation before the start of the school year for which they are applying for the scholarship.

In addition, applicants must meet one of the following criteria:

- The department has court-ordered legal responsibility for the applicant, or
- The applicant aged out of the department's care at age 18 or older, or
- The applicant who was formerly under care has been adopted or placed in subsidized guardianship.

The CFS 438, DCFS Scholarship Program Student Application, may be obtained from:

- The DCFS website at <https://DCFS/illinois.gov>.
- Calling 217 557-2689 (Springfield) or 312 814-5959 (Chicago).

### **DCFS Tuition Waiver Program**

Eligibility requirements:

- The department must have court-ordered legal guardianship for the applicant; the applicant must have aged out of DCFS guardianship at age 18 or older; or the department must have had legal guardianship for the applicant immediately prior to the adoption or guardianship being finalized.
- An applicant must have earned a high school diploma from an accredited institution or a high school equivalency certificate or have met the state criteria for high school graduation before the start of the school year for which the applicant is applying for the waiver.
- An applicant must be enrolled in a qualifying post-secondary education program before the applicant reaches the age of 26.
- An applicant must apply for federal and state grant assistance by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

**Benefits:**

- Tuition and fee waiver available to Illinois public universities or in-district community college. If student is awarded the Illinois MAP grant and/or federal Pell grants, these funds may be applied first.
- Benefits available for up to five consecutive years.
- The application period is open every year between January 1 and March 31.

**To apply:**

- Submit a complete DCFS Form 438A to [DCFS.TuitionWaiver@illinois.gov](mailto:DCFS.TuitionWaiver@illinois.gov)

**Education Training Vouchers Program:**

Youth adopted or moved to guardianship after their 16th birthday may be eligible for these vouchers that assist in providing for post-secondary school expenses up to \$5,000 per academic year. The students are required to complete the application once a year with a preferred deadline of August 1st. Completed applications (CFS 449-3 found) or questions should be forwarded to: [DCFS.ETVCoordinator@illinois.gov](mailto:DCFS.ETVCoordinator@illinois.gov)

Application can be found at CFS 449-3 Application for Education and Training Voucher Funds (<https://DCFS.illinois.gov>)

**Youth Housing Assistance Program:**

Youth adopted or moved to guardianship on or after their 14th birthday and are currently between 17½ and their 21st birthday may access housing advocacy services. Housing Advocacy services assist youth in obtaining and/or maintaining stable housing. Services include:

- Assistance in securing affordable housing.
- Consumer education.
- Budget counseling.
- Linkages to community-based resources (i.e., assistance with utilities, clothing and food).
- Follow-up services for a minimum of three months after the client secures appropriate housing.

Youth who moved to adoption or subsidized guardianship on or after their 16th birthday may be eligible for cash assistance which vary depending on a client's situation. Cash assistance may be authorized for the following reasons:

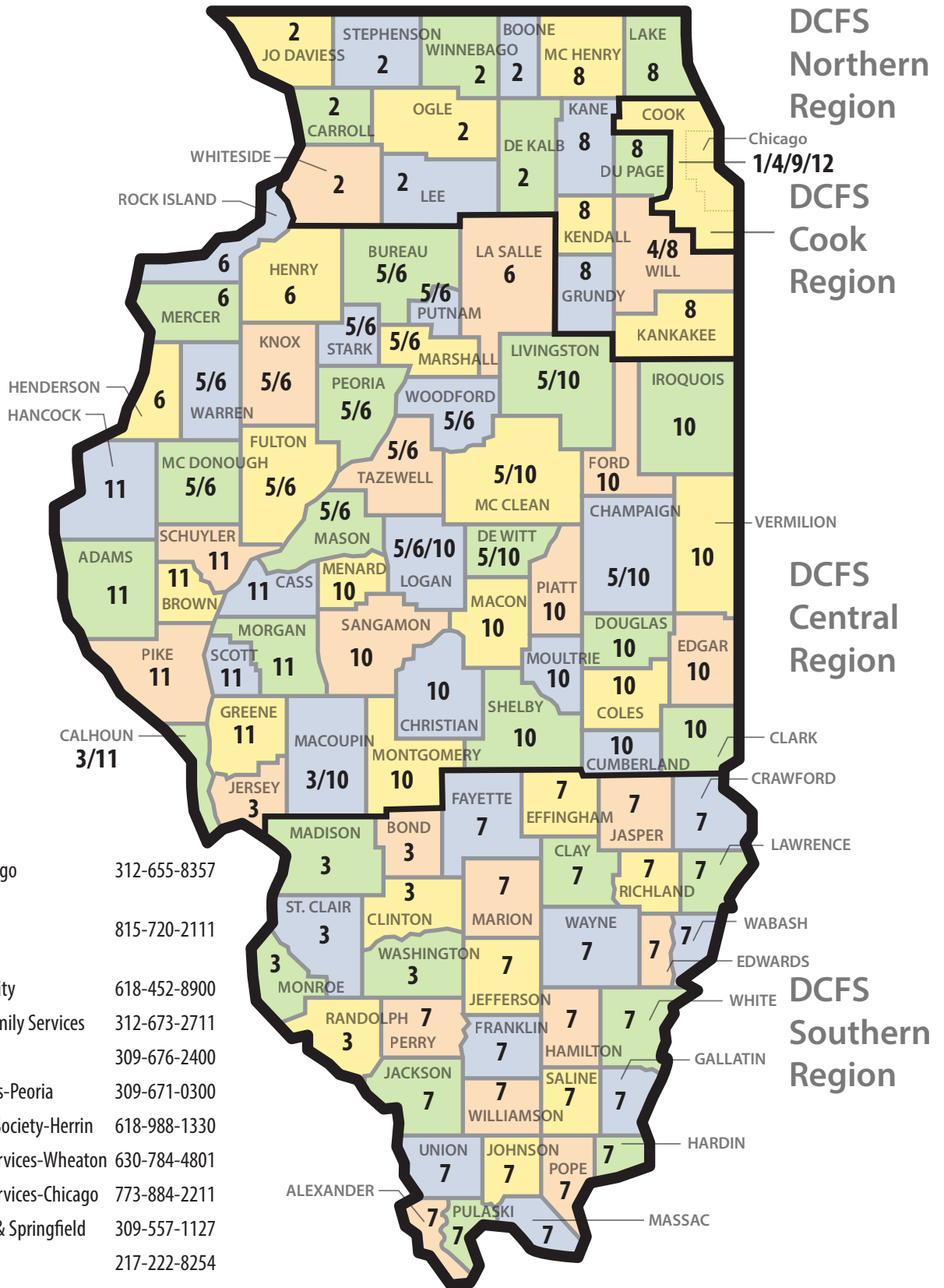
- Housing security deposit.
- Rent (limited circumstances).
- Beds for the client and the client's children.
- Current utility bills or utility deposits.
- Appliances
- Partial housing subsidy for a period of one year following case closure (housing costs must exceed 30% of income and assistance cannot continue past the client's 21st birthday).
- Other items required by the client to avoid or manage a crisis.

For more information, contact the Youth Housing Assistance Coordinator at 312-328-2159 or email [DCFS.YHAP.Coordinator@illinois.gov](mailto:DCFS.YHAP.Coordinator@illinois.gov)

Call 312-814-5959 (Chicago) or 21-557-2689 (Springfield) for more information or you can find the Get Goal'd book at <https://dcfs.illinois.gov/brighter-futures/independence.html>



# Illinois Sites: Adoption and Guardianship Preservation Providers



1. Catholic Charities-Chicago 312-655-8357
2. Children's Home & Aid Society-Rockford 815-720-2111
3. Childrens' Home & Aid Society-Granite City 618-452-8900
4. Jewish Children and Family Services 312-673-2711
5. Family Core 309-676-2400
6. Lutheran Social Services-Peoria 309-671-0300
7. Childrens' Home & Aid Society-Herrin 618-988-1330
8. Metropolitan Family Services-Wheaton 630-784-4801
9. Metropolitan Family Services-Chicago 773-884-2211
10. The Baby Fold-Normal & Springfield 309-557-1127
11. Cornerstone-Quincy 217-222-8254
12. Ada S. McKinley 312-385-2050

# Part 2: Services and Supports for adoptive and guardianship families

## Statewide subsidy support information

### Subsidy support contacts

For most services listed in this booklet you can contact the agencies directly at the numbers listed. Any services not listed in part 2 of this book must be included in your subsidy. Service providers must have approval from the Subsidy Support Unit prior to starting services. To speak to your regional subsidy support specialist, contact the Statewide Subsidy Support Unit at 866-538-8892 or 312-808-5250.

### Support and preservation Services

Families created through adoption or guardianship may experience problems that require intensive services to help them gain stability and to reduce the risk of out-of-home placement. The Adoption and Guardianship Support Preservation Program recognizes that families built through adoption or guardianship may have characteristics significantly different from those created through birth. This can result in unique challenges for the family. The Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation Program helps families who often feel they need assistance to meet their family's needs by offering family-centered support and services. Testimonials from families who have used support services reveal that these services worked, while other traditional, less intensive services they had tried, did not. DCFS contracts with agencies statewide to provide Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation Services for free to adoption and subsidized guardianship families.

The goals of all preservation programs are to help parents:

- Feel supported and empowered in their parenting abilities.
- Understand adoption and guardianship and its impact on children.
- Understand trauma and its effects on current thoughts and behaviors.
- Understand the child's past losses.
- Gain skills to help their child.

Each Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation Agency can provide the following:

- **Comprehensive assessment/Crisis intervention:** Preservation staff will respond by phone within 24 hours and make an in-home visit within three days. A therapist will help a family identify their own strengths, complete an assessment and develop a family treatment plan within 30 days of the referral to the program.
- **Clinical services:** A therapist will provide clinical services in the family treatment plan.
- **Support groups:** Support groups are offered for both parents and youth at times and locations that meet the family's needs.
- **Case management/advocacy services:** The agency will manage the case and the services as outlined in the family treatment plan.



- **Children’s mental health advocacy services:** If a child has significant mental health needs, the program will provide or facilitate services.
- **Cash assistance:** If a family participating in the program experiences economic hardships or requires specialized services that cannot be obtained through other resources, a cash assistance payment (limited to \$500 per family per fiscal year) may be provided.
- **START (Start Early, Trauma-informed, Attachment-focused, Resiliency-building, Therapeutic services):** A customizable and flexible short-term prevention service to address the family’s specific needs. START services are family-focused, provide interactive and meaningful activities with children and caregivers, and link families to experienced clinicians trained in the most effective techniques for working with the toughest situations.



The key to support and preservation services is that they serve the whole family to keep the family together. The subsidy support specialists/therapists work with all members of the family, not just the child with the identified concerns, to identify ways they can work as a unit. The adoption and guardianship support and preservation service agencies understand the rhythms of the special families they serve and can respond to crisis situations.

Families that find they need intensive intervention to keep their family supported can call the appropriate agency from the list on the following pages.

### **DCFS Cook County Regions**

Catholic Charities/Chicago	773-630-4122
Metropolitan Family Services/Cook	630-784-4894
Jewish Children and Family Services	773-673-2711
Ada S. McKinley	773-343-2578

*(Families in Cook County can contact either agency for service)*

### **DCFS Northern Region**

Children’s Home & Aid Society/Rockford	815-720-2111
<i>(Serves Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, Winnebago &amp; Whiteside counties)</i>	

Metropolitan Family Services/DuPage	630-784-4894
<i>(Serves DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, Kankakee and Will counties)</i>	

### **DCFS Central Region**

Cornerstone/Quincy	217-222-8254
<i>(Serves Adams, Brown, Cass, Northern Calhoun, Greene, Hancock, Morgan, Pike, Schuyler and Scott counties)</i>	

Lutheran Social Services/Peoria, Galesburg, Rock Island	309-671-0300 x4237
<i>(Serves Bureau, Fulton, Henderson, Henry, Knox, LaSalle, Logan, Marshall, Mason, McDonough, Mercer, Peoria, Putnam, Rock Island, Stark, Tazewell, Warren and Woodford counties)</i>	

The Baby Fold–Bloomington/Champaign, Springfield	309-557-1149
<i>(Serves Champaign, Christian, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, DeWitt, Edgar, Douglas, Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, McLean, Menard, Montgomery, Moultrie, Piatt, Sangamon, Shelby and Vermilion counties)</i>	

## Family Core/Peoria

(Serves Peoria, Tazwell, Woodford, McDonough, Mason, Logan, Dewitt, McClean, Livingston, Marshall, Putnam, Bureau, Stark, Knox, Fulton and Warren counties)

309-676-2400 x290

## DCFS Southern Region

### Children's Home & Aid Society/Granite City

(Serves Bond, Clinton, Jersey, Macoupin, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, S. Calhoun, St. Clair and Washington counties)

618-452-8900 x101

### Children's Home & Aid Society/Herrin

(Serves Alexander, Clay, Crawford, Edwards, Effingham, Fayette, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Johnson, Lawrence, Marion, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Richland, Saline, Union, Wabash, Wayne, White and Williamson counties)

618-452-8900 x101

Families in counties that are served by two or more agencies, according to address can choose between them or call to be referred to the appropriate agency.

For specialty counseling service needs or services/providers outside of those identified in this section, please contact your subsidy support specialist for availability and prior approval. These services should not be started prior to approval from the Subsidy Support Unit. If you are unsure if the service you are seeking has been approved, please contact your subsidy support specialist.



## Adoption and Guardianship Respite Program

Respite Services are available to children who were adopted or have gone through subsidized guardianship placement with Illinois DCFS.

Respite services are defined as short-term, temporary care provided for children to give some relief to the adoptive or subsidized guardianship family. Respite components may include any or all the following: mentoring, hourly in-home, out-of-home and overnight respite care; and specialized camp experiences. The respite care may be regularly scheduled or may be requested on an emergency basis. Respite services are typically short-term (six months to one year).

An initial assessment is completed on the family and child to develop a service plan which will offer the appropriate type of respite for that family. Services may be provided up to one year. There is no cost for participation in this respite program.

## Agency Respite Service Providers

### DCFS Cook County Regions

Catholic Charities-Chicago

773-630-4122

Metropolitan Family Services

630-784-4894

### DCFS Northern Region

CHASI-Rockford

815-720-2111

(Serves Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, Winnebago and Whiteside counties)

Metropolitan Family Services

630-784-4894

(Serves DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will counties)

## **DCFS Central Region**

**Baby Fold** 309-557-1149

(Serves Christian, Clark, Cumberland, Coles, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Iroquois, Macon, Macoupin, McLean, Menard, Montgomery, Moultrie, Piatt, Sangamon, Shelby and Vermilion counties)

**Cornerstone** 217-222-8254

(Serves Adams, Brown, Northern Calhoun, Cass, Greene, Hancock, Morgan, Pike, Schuyler and Scott counties)

**Family Core** 309-676-2400 x290

(Serves Peoria, Tazewell and Woodford counties)

**Lutheran Social Services of Illinois** 309-671-0300 x4237

(Serves Bureau, Fulton, Henderson, Henry, Knox, LaSalle, Logan, Marshall, Mason, McDonough, Mercer, Peoria, Putnam, Rock Island, S. Calhoun, Tazewell, Warren and Woodford counties)

## **DCFS Southern Region**

**CHASI-Granite City** 618-452-8900 x101

(Serves Bond, Clinton, Jersey, Macoupin, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, S. Calhoun, St. Clair and Washington counties)

**CHASI-Herrin** 618-452-8900 x101

(Serves Alexander, Clay, Crawford, Edwards, Effingham, Fayette, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Johnson, Lawrence, Marion, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Richland, Saline, Union, Wabash, Wayne, White and Williamson counties)





## Family First

Family First has several provisions to enhance support services for families to help children remain at home with their families, reduce unnecessary use of congregate care and build the capacity of communities to support children and families. This is being achieved by emphasizing prevention, early intervention and the use of family-centered, trauma-informed, and strength-based interventions throughout Illinois.

Understanding the impact of trauma and shifting our mindset to view families through a trauma-informed lens creates a more compassionate and effective approach while serving families using interventions that are known to be effective. Evidenced Based Interventions involve approaches to prevention and/or treatment that are validated by documented scientific evidence. This includes findings established through controlled clinical studies, but other methods of establishing evidence are valid as well. This, along with providing the appropriate Evidenced Based Intervention to families, will lead to more positive, sustaining outcomes for children and their families.

Below are the various Family First interventions:

- Child Parent Psychotherapy <https://childparentpsychotherapy.com/>
- Nurturing Parenting Program <https://www.nurturingparenting.com/>
- Multi-Systemic Therapy [www.mstservices.com](http://www.mstservices.com)
- Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy <https://tfcbt.org/>
- Positive Parenting Program [www.triplep.net](http://www.triplep.net)

For more information and referrals please contact your subsidy support specialist at 866-538-8892 to be connected.

## Search and Reunion Services

The DCFS Closed File Information and Search program provides information from DCFS files and can help you locate birth relatives. If you are an adult adopted person or the adoptive or guardianship parent of a minor, you are entitled to receive certain information. Midwest Adoption Center (MAC) is a statewide program that will attempt to locate DCFS files and prepare documents for your review. It can include nonidentifying information about biological relatives, medical and social history, a description of how the child came into care and a record of placements before adoption or guardianship.

The law does not permit DCFS to release identifying information from the files such as the names and addresses of others. However, you can request search service to help locate relatives including birth parents, siblings, grandparents and others. If they can locate the sought out relative, the MAC caseworker will explain the reason for the outreach and every attempt will be made to negotiate an arrangement that is comfortable for everyone. You may want to exchange some information through your MAC caseworker, communicate by letter without revealing your name, or you and your relative may decide to have direct contact. This program is not intended to provide in-depth counseling, but assistance and support will be offered to you and to your birth relative throughout the process. There is no fee for service.



The Confidential Intermediary Service of Illinois assists those who were private adoptees as well as adopted parents and birth relatives of these adoptees in search and reunion services, on the condition that either the adoption or birth took a place in Illinois.

An intake worker is available to answer any questions regarding the steps necessary to file a petition in court. A Confidential Intermediary (CI) appointed by court contacts the petitioner and keeps them updated on the case. Supportive counseling is provided to the initiating client as requested throughout the life of the case.

To request service, please call or email Midwest Adoption Center. Forms can also be downloaded from the MAC website: [www.macadopt.org](http://www.macadopt.org)

**Midwest Adoption Center**  
847-298-9096 ext. 21  
[mac@macadopt.org](mailto:mac@macadopt.org)

## Illinois Adoption Registry

The Illinois Adoption Registry provides a way for certain individuals involved in an adoption in Illinois to locate other people involved in the adoption. Persons who were adopted or surrendered for adoption, their birth parents, birth siblings, adoptive parents and legal guardians of an adopted person may file their consent to exchange information with others involved in the adoption. If done in compliance with the law, information may be exchanged without the need for a court order.

Confidential facts may be released to registrants only after at least two parties to the adoption have filed their consent to exchange the specified information.

The following individuals may register:

- Birth parents.
- Adopted or surrendered person, 21 years of age or older.
- Surviving relative of deceased (adult child of adopted or remaining adoptive parent of minor child or adoptive parent).
- Surviving relative of deceased birth parent (adult child or brother or sister of parent).
- Adoptive parents of adopted individuals under age 21.
- Legal guardians of adopted or surrendered persons.

The Adoption Registry also includes a medical exchange. The Medical Information Exchange Questionnaire asks questions about diseases or conditions that medical professionals believe may be inherited or have a genetic link, that is, illnesses that “run in families.” These diseases and conditions are of interest to other biological family members and their physicians because knowing about them may alert the family members and physicians to watch more carefully for certain signs and symptoms and to take preventive action. Medical history can be exchanged confidentially without revealing identities. No identity will be exchanged unless all parties agree.

For more information about the Adoption Registry, contact:

**Illinois Department of Public Health/Division of Vital Records**  
925 E. Ridgeley Ave.  
Springfield 62702-2737,  
877-323-5299  
[dphvitals@illinois.gov](mailto:dphvitals@illinois.gov)

Forms and application can be found at:

<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/birth-death-other-records/adoption/iarmie>

## Arranging Future Plans for Your Child

Families are often concerned about planning for an adopted or guardianship child in their care in the event something unforeseen occurs. There are various options available to assist you in future planning for your child. **Your attorney can assist you with the legal requirements for the following options:**

### Standby Adoption

Standby adoption is a court-approved arrangement that provides for a future adoption of your child if needed. Standby adoption allows you to ask the court to appoint a person or persons as standby adoptive parent(s) of your child, and that person “stands by” until needed. The standby adoptive parent doesn’t take custody of your child until the adoption becomes final, when a) you decide that you want the adoption to be final or b) upon your death. In the meantime, you retain all your rights as a parent, and custody of your child.

### Standby guardianship

A standby guardianship is a legal arrangement approved by a judge that provides for future care for your child, but only if it is needed. It allows you to appoint someone as legal guardian of your child, but that person “stands by” until needed. In other words, the standby guardian does not take custody of your children immediately, but only at some point in the future when you are no longer able to take care of your children yourself.

### Short-term guardianship

A short-term guardianship is a private legal arrangement between you and the person you want to take care of your child. **A short-term guardian is not a permanent arrangement.** The person that you appoint as short-term guardian will only have authority to act as guardian **for as long as 365 days**. It is very useful if you are going to be hospitalized or are entering a residential program or facility where you will need to be without your children.

### Greenlight Family Services

Greenlight Family Services’ (previously known as The Center for Law & Social Work), mission is to create, preserve and protect families. The agency assists families who have gone through subsidized adoption and guardianship with legal, therapeutic and case management services. They provide direction and assistance with backup planning, adult guardianship for adults with disabilities, temporary guardianship, educational advocacy, assistance with subsequent adoptions or subsidized guardianship after death or incapacitation of a caregiver and crisis clinical services. Greenlight Family Services covers the entire state of Illinois. For more information, visit <https://greenlightfamilyservices.org/>

319 E. Madison, Suite 4G  
Springfield, IL 62701

3636 S. Iron St.  
Chicago, IL 60609  
or 773-728-7800.

### Notifying your subsidy support specialist

Please note that you will need to advise your regional subsidy support specialist of any standby or short-term arrangements that you are contemplating or any time you make alternate long-term arrangements for your child’s care. Eligibility for a subsidy in a subsequent adoption or guardianship must be determined by subsidy support staff and a new subsidy document must be signed prior to the finalization of a new adoption or guardianship.

## Part 3: Resources for training and advocacy after adoption and guardianship

### DCFS foster and adoptive parent training information

All statewide DCFS foster and adoptive parent training is scheduled and coordinated by the DCFS Office Learning and Professional Development (OLPD). Contact the OLPD at 877-800-3393 to register for classes, track training credit and have questions answered.

### Adoption Learning Partners

*AdoptionLearningPartners.org* offers courses and webinars that give parents tools they can use immediately at home. The courses offer advice on what children need to know, what words to use to explain adoption, how to help your child, coping with grief and loss, forming identity in the teenage years, disciplining an adopted child and advocating for your child.

Many courses are FREE to DCFS families and training credits are available. During registration make sure to choose Illinois Department of Children and Family Services as your agency. Courses never expire and are in your account forever. Registration takes a few minutes; information lasts a lifetime.

For more information, visit [www.AdoptionLearningPartners.org](http://www.AdoptionLearningPartners.org), call 800-566-3995, or e-mail [info@adoptionlearningpartners.org](mailto:info@adoptionlearningpartners.org).

### The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council

#### *Serving adoptive and subsidized guardianship families*

The council began in November 2000 and was created to guide the department in several areas: assisting the department with finding new homes for waiting children, supporting families and children in the adoption and subsidized guardianship process and supporting these families after the permanency is achieved. The Adoption Council's membership includes adoptive/subsidized guardianship parents, adoptees, and other experts throughout the state of Illinois. For questions or inquiries about how to join the council reach out to: [DCFS.AdoptionAdvisoryCouncil@illinois.gov](mailto:DCFS.AdoptionAdvisoryCouncil@illinois.gov)

### Advocacy Office for Children and Families

DCFS established The Advocacy Office for Children and Families to receive and respond to concerns presented to DCFS regarding the child welfare system in Illinois. Advocacy Office staff function as advocates on behalf of the best interest of the child, providing assistance in seeking resolution to a problem when the caller has not been able, or does not know how, to find a satisfactory resolution.

The Advocacy Office accepts concerns by phone, electronic mail, letters or in person. Anyone can call the Advocacy Office and speak with an advocate. To present issues or obtain information about child welfare services from DCFS or its agents contact the Advocacy Office at:

**1-800-232-3798** (toll-free).  
[DCFS.advocacy@illinois.gov](mailto:DCFS.advocacy@illinois.gov)  
406 E. Monroe St.  
Springfield, IL 62701

## National and Internet Resources

The Internet has become an important source of information for busy families with computer access at home or through their local public library. You will find a wealth of state and national information about adoption and guardianship on the Internet.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services website: [DCFS.illinois.gov](http://DCFS.illinois.gov) is one place to obtain information regarding post-adoption and guardianship resources. Other websites are as follows:

**Adopt America Network**  
3100 W. Central Ave., Ste 225  
Toledo, OH 43606  
800-246-1731  
[www.adoptamericanetwork.org](http://www.adoptamericanetwork.org)  
email:  
[adoption@adoptamericanetwork.org](mailto:adoption@adoptamericanetwork.org)

**Adoptive Families of America (AFA) Magazine**  
108 W. 39th St., Ste 805  
New York, NY 10018  
800-372-3300  
[www.adoptivefamilies.com](http://www.adoptivefamilies.com)  
email:  
[customerservice@adoptivefamilies.com](mailto:customerservice@adoptivefamilies.com)

**Center for Adoption Support and Education Headquarters**  
3919 National Drive, Ste 200  
Burtonsville, MD 20866  
301-476-8525  
Fax: 301-476-8526  
<https://adoptionssupport.org/>

**Child Welfare Information Gateway Children's Bureau/ACYF**  
330 C St., SW  
Washington, DC 20201  
800-394-3366  
[www.childwelfare.gov/index.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/index.cfm)  
email: [info@childwelfare.gov](mailto:info@childwelfare.gov)

**Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)**  
727 15th St. NW, 12th Fl.  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-688-4200  
Fax: 202-833-1689  
[www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)  
email: [cwla@cwla.org](mailto:cwla@cwla.org)

**Children Awaiting Parents, Inc. (CAP)**  
274 N. Goodman St, Ste D103  
Rochester, NY 14607  
888-835-8802 or 585-232-5110  
<https://childrenawaitingparents.org/>  
email: [info@capbook.org](mailto:info@capbook.org)

**Collaboration to Adopt US Kids Adoption Exchange Association**  
605 Global Way, Ste 100  
Linthicum, MD 21090  
888-200-4005  
877-236-7831 (Español)  
[www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org)  
email: [info@adoptuskids](mailto:info@adoptuskids)  
[espanol@adoptuskids.org](mailto:espanol@adoptuskids.org) (Español)

**Greenlight Family Services**  
3636 S Iron St, Ste 240  
Chicago, IL 60640  
<https://greenlightfamilyservices.org>

**National Adoption Center (NAC)**  
1500 Walnut St, 701  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215-735-9988  
800-TO ADOPT  
Fax: 215-735-9410  
[www.adopt.org](http://www.adopt.org)  
email: [ac@adopt.org](mailto:ac@adopt.org)

**North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)**  
970 Raymond Ave., Ste 106  
St. Paul, MN 55114-1149  
651-644-3036  
[www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org)  
email: [info@nacac.org](mailto:info@nacac.org)

**National Quality Improvement Center for Adoption & Guardianship Support & Preservation**  
16250 Northland Dr, Suite 100  
Southfield, MI 48075  
248-443-0306  
Fax: 248-443-7099  
<https://qic-ag.org/>

**PACT, An Adoption Alliance**  
5515 Doyle St., Ste. 1  
Emeryville, CA 94608  
510-243-9460  
Fax: 510-243-9970  
[www.pactadopt.org](http://www.pactadopt.org)  
email: [info@pactadopt.org](mailto:info@pactadopt.org)

**Spaulding for Children / National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption**  
16250 Northland Dr., Ste 120  
Southfield, MI 48075  
248-443-0300  
Fax: 248-443-7099  
[www.spaulding.org](http://www.spaulding.org)

**NOTE:** Websites listed in this booklet are solely for the convenience of the reader. Inclusion in this listing does not imply an endorsement of that organization, website or individual by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). DCFS is not responsible for the maintenance of any website shown other than its own.

## Part 4: Additional family resources

### Income-based services and resources

#### Daycare for children over 3

Adoptive or guardianship families with children three years of age and older who do not qualify for therapeutic day care may still be eligible for day care assistance through the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS). Parents must meet the following criteria to receive daycare assistance:

- Illinois resident.
- You are working and meet income requirements.
- You receive TANF.
- You are a teen parent enrolled full-time in elementary or high school or GED program.
- Family with a special needs child(ren).

All families pay a portion of the cost as a co-payment. The amount of the family's co-payment is based on income and family size. Call the DHS toll-free day care referral line, 877-20-CHILD or visit [www.dhs.state.il.us](http://www.dhs.state.il.us) and click the child care link. By entering a zip code, the call will be connected to the referral agency serving that area.

#### Need help finding child care?

Call **Illinois Action for Children** at 312-823-1100 option 3. If you are located outside of Cook County, ask for a Parent Referral Line that serves your county. Families from around the state can also call the DHS toll-free referral line (877-20-CHILD). Visit the website at [www.actforchildren.org](http://www.actforchildren.org)

#### All Kids Healthcare

All Kids is a state program offering health care coverage or help in paying premiums of employer-sponsored or private insurance plans for children through age 18. For eligibility requirements or more information, call 866-255-5437 or visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/hfs/MedicalPrograms/AllKids/Pages/default.aspx>. This program cannot be used in conjunction with the medical card obtained with the subsidy.

#### Earned Income Tax Credit

The Earned Income Credit (EIC) is a special tax benefit for people who work who are low or moderate income. The EIC is a refundable credit, so if you normally owe taxes at filing time you may owe less or even receive a refund. For families that typically receive a refund it will increase the size of your refund. Benefits and eligibility may change each year. To obtain this benefit, families only need to complete their tax form (1040 or 1040A) and attach Schedule EIC. More information on EIC can be obtained by calling the Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-1040 or go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

## Resources for older parents

Are you over 60 and raising children or grandchildren? The Illinois Department of Aging's Senior Helpline at 800-252-8966 (Voice) and 800-206-1327 (TTY) refers callers to programs or services related to any health or aging issue.

Website: [www2.illinois.gov/aging](http://www2.illinois.gov/aging)

Email: [aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov](mailto:aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov)

Anyone over age 60 will also find a wealth of information through AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) English: 1-888-687-2277 Spanish: 1866-238-9488 (TTY English: 1-877-434-7598 Spanish: 1866-238-9488) or visit [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org). AARP also maintains a separate Grandparent Information Center for grandparents raising grandchildren.

## Metropolitan Older Caregivers Project

This Metropolitan Family Services program serves caregivers 60 years old and over who are currently raising children they have adopted or obtained guardianship of or who plan to move towards adoption or guardianship and are under the age of 18 years old. The goal of the program is to establish a stronger support system that will help caregivers continue to care for the children in their care. In cases where this is not possible, program staff assists families in making new and more appropriate arrangements that ensures the safety, well-being and permanency of the children. These services are only provided to residents of Cook County and some surrounding counties. Contact them at 773-884-2260.

## Resources for individuals with disabilities

### Home services

The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) offers home services to qualifying Illinois residents aimed at enabling individuals with disabilities to remain at home. Available services include: personal assistant, homemaker services, maintenance home health, electronic home response, home delivered meals, adult day care, assistive equipment, environmental modification and respite care. To find your local DHS counselor to see if you, your child or your family qualifies, call 800-843-6154 (Voice) and 866324-5553 (TTY).

All DHS rules and services are also given on the website: [www.dhs.state.il.us](http://www.dhs.state.il.us).

## Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS)

You may start planning for adult services for your child as early as they turn 16 and a half. The Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS) is a statewide database that records needed services for children and adults with a developmental disability who have an unmet service need anticipated in the next five years. This service is provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS). For more information visit:

<https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=41131>

### Signing Up for PUNS

Individuals who want to be on PUNS should contact the Independent Service Coordination (ISC) agency in their area. You can locate your ISC agency by:

Calling Division of Developmental Disabilities Hotline at 1-888-DD-PLANS and 1-866-376-8446 (TTY) during business hours. When prompted by the recording, type in your ZIP Code and you will be connected with your local ISC agency.

*Note: Completion of a PUNS form does not guarantee that an individual is eligible for services or will be provided services.*

## Advocacy services

Equip for Equality, Inc. is the corporation designated in Illinois as the protection and advocacy system for people with physical disabilities, mental illness and developmental disabilities.

Equip for Equality, Inc. offers:

- Professional advocates and attorneys who provide technical assistance and advice in self-advocacy and direct legal services.
- Monitoring of agencies responsible for delivering services to people with disabilities to ensure compliance with individual rights.
- Lobbying for laws to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities.
- A quarterly publication, *The Equalizer*.

Disability-rights training to help people with disabilities and their families become better advocates for their rights.

For further information about services, contact your nearest regional office or visit [www.equipforequality.org](http://www.equipforequality.org).

### **Main Office**

20 N. Michigan Ave., Ste 300  
Chicago, IL 60602  
312-341-0022  
800-537-2632  
800-610-2779 (TTY line)

### **Central Region**

1 W. Old State Capitol Plaza, Ste 816  
Springfield, IL 62701  
800-758-0464

### **Southern Region**

300 E. Main St., Ste 18  
Carbondale, IL 62901  
800-758-0559





## Training funds for family members of persons with a disability

Each year Illinois allocates training funds to families of persons with a disability to attend training related to the family member's disability. Only individuals - not agencies or organizations - may apply. The amount of funds available and eligibility guidelines may change each state fiscal year. They also have a free lending library consisting of books, journals and DVDs related to early childhood, parenting and young children with special needs.

Call the Early Intervention Clearinghouse at 877-275-3227 or email at [Illinois-eic@illinois.edu](mailto:Illinois-eic@illinois.edu) for information or for an application and training opportunities. You can also visit at <https://eicclearinghouse.org>

## UIC specialized care for children

This program serves families in all counties across the state of Illinois and partners with communities to help children and youth with special healthcare needs connect to services and resources.

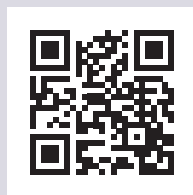
- Accessing diagnostic tests
- Finding specialized medical care
- Using insurance & All Kids / Medicaid
- Finding resources & information
- Developing a care coordination plan
- Communicating with doctors, specialists & schools
- Preparing for transition
- Paying for certain medical expenses

For more information call 800-322-3722 or visit <https://dsc.uic.edu/>









[pathbeyondadoption.illinois.gov](https://pathbeyondadoption.illinois.gov)

**DCFS Subsidy Support Toll-Free Line 866-538-8892**

[DCFS.illinois.gov](https://DCFS.illinois.gov)

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