

For Immediate Release  
June 10, 2020

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## Illinois youth in care want to know: “Can you Foster My Future?”

*New foster parent recruitment campaign strives to find loving homes for youth in care*

(CHICAGO) – The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) launched a new social media campaign today focused on foster parent recruitment. The campaign asks the simple question on behalf of youth in care: “Can you foster my future?”

Youth are placed in the temporary care of DCFS by local courts when it is determined that their families cannot safely care for them. Today, there are just over 18,000 youth living in foster care in the state: 6,200 are living with foster families, 10,500 with relatives and 1,300 in group homes and institutions.



“Youth placed in our care, like all youth, need a nurturing home – to grow up with their siblings, to communicate in their preferred language, stay in the same school and see their relatives and parents if it is safe to do so,” said Illinois DCFS Acting Director Marc D. Smith. “When foster families open their hearts and homes to a child who is experiencing what is certainly the most frightening and uncertain time in the child’s life, they are providing a safe haven, stability and paving the way for this child to have a successful future.”

Currently, foster homes are needed for sibling groups, adolescents, African-American and Latino youth, children with special medical needs, teenage mothers and their babies and LGBTQI

(lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex) youth. To learn more about some of the youth in need of a foster family, visit the Heart Gallery of Illinois at <https://greenlightfamilyservices.org/heartgalleryofil/>.

Making the decision to become a foster parent is a serious commitment to a child who needs stability and love. DCFS and a network of private agency partners offer a range of supports to foster families, including a monthly stipend for the child's basic needs, such as food, clothing and housing costs; a medical card; therapeutic, educational, recreational and crisis support services; and access to caseworkers, training programs and support groups to meet the child's and family's needs.

Foster families also become part of a team, working with DCFS and private agencies, birth families, counselors, physicians and the courts to reunite children with their families whenever possible.

The licensing process to become a foster parent can take up to six months. Prospective foster families are required to:

- Participate in a social assessment and home inspection;
- Complete a training on foster care and the needs of children who are in foster care;
- Complete a criminal background check of all household members;
- Be financially stable; and
- Complete a health screening.

Foster parents must be at least 21 years old and can be married, in a civil union, single, divorced or separated. They can work full- or part-time, go to school or be a stay at home parent; and rent or own their own home.

There are many types of foster care, including traditional care, emergency/shelter care, medical/therapeutic care, relative/kinship care, respite/short-term care and tribal care.

To learn more about becoming a licensed foster parent, fill out the online interest form on the DCFS website: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs>. Click on Loving Homes, then click on [Become a Foster or Adoptive Parent](#).

*About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to calls received on the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.*

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