

For Immediate Release
May 2, 2022

Contact: Deborah Lopez
Illinois DCFS
312-937-0050

May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month
*Illinois DCFS thanks foster parents and encourages the public
to become licensed foster families*

CHICAGO – May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month, a time to honor and celebrate the thousands of foster families across the state who have opened their hearts and homes to provide a temporary safe haven to vulnerable children and encourage more Illinoisans to join them by becoming licensed foster families.

Children are placed in the temporary care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) by local courts when it is determined that their families cannot safely care for them. DCFS works with the family to make the positive changes necessary to reunite with their children while foster families step up and provide homes where the children are protected, nurtured and loved. Today, there are just under 21,000 children living in foster care in the state: 8,600 are living with foster families, 11,300 with relatives and 600 in group homes and institutions.

“Children placed in our care, like all children, need a stable home and strong connections to their school, friends, siblings and other family members to thrive,” said Illinois DCFS Director Marc D. Smith. “Foster families provide all of this and more. I thank every foster parent for their commitment to keeping children safe in loving homes during a time when children need them the most.”

Foster homes are needed for sibling groups, adolescents, African American and Latino children, children with special medical needs, teenage mothers and their babies and LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex) children. To learn more about some of the children 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
- 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](#).

Organizations wishing to schedule a presentation to learn about waiting children, how to become licensed and the adoption process may call 312-814-6800.

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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