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‘How to Adopt from Foster Care’ seminar to be held July 9 in Chicago *Special call to LGBTQ community to become foster parents during Pride Month*

CHICAGO, Ill. – The Illinois Departments of Children and Family Services, in partnership with Illinois Center for Adoption and Permanency, Let It Be Us, Pride Action Tank, and Windy City Times media to host a foster parent recruitment seminar July 9, 2016 at University of Illinois at Chicago.

“We desperately need more adults in the LGBTQ community, and allies, to help foster our LGBTQ youth in care,” says Illinois DCFS Statewide LGBTQ Coordinator Jane Kelly. “As many in the LGBTQ community already know, many of our youth come into care when they are told to leave their homes by their own families because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. And while it’s sad and simply not right, we as a community need to step forward and help foster, adopt, or mentor our youth. When youth are provided with a supportive and loving home, this is a huge mitigating factor of preventing homelessness and other adverse circumstances for our youth.”

It is estimated that there are 25,000 homeless youth in Illinois. And of that number, approximately 32% – 40% are homeless because they identify as LGBTQ. Researchers have attributed this high percentage of homeless LGBTQ youth to factors that include family rejection, employment discrimination and mental health issues cause by stigmatization and discrimination (Sadowski et al, 2009). *Source:*
<http://projectfiercechicago.org/problem-statement/>

The free event titled "Call to Action – Foster and Adopt Our Children" has the **specific goal of finding foster and adoptive families within Chicago's LGBTQ community**. It is open to anyone (single, divorced, married, civil union) interested in becoming a foster parent. The event will be held at UIC at Chicago Student Center, at 750 S. Halsted Street from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Foster Parent candidates must be at least 21 years old.

The event includes an overview of the foster care license process, the adoption from foster care process and a speaker's bureau featuring teens and parents. Agency representatives and foster families will be on hand to answer questions from attendees. Reservations are highly encouraged. For more information and to RSVP, visit www.letitbeus.org/events.

Other Participating social service agencies include Aunt Martha's, ChildServ, Hephzibah, Kaleidoscope, Lakeside Community Committee, Lawrence Hall Youth Services, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, Little City, National Youth Advocate Program and SOS Children's Villages.

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