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Contact: Bill McCaffrey
Illinois DCFS
312-390-5090

Illinois DCFS increases monthly financial support for foster parents to help offset increased living costs for families who have opened their homes to youth

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is increasing the financial support provided to foster parents, caregivers and older youth in care to help offset the recent increases in cost of living expenses experienced by families throughout the state.

DCFS had already planned on providing these families and youth a 3 percent cost of living adjustment in the new fiscal year. The additional investment of \$14.6 million will provide another 14 percent and made is affordable by a decrease in youth coming into DCFS care and reuniting youth with their biological families.

“Foster parents and foster youth deserve our state’s investment,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “As living costs continue to increase throughout the nation, Illinois is working to provide needed resources to these vulnerable children. By increasing financial support to foster parents, caregivers, and young adults in care, we are standing up for our most vulnerable youth, and we will continue to do so.”

“Foster parents are one of the key pillars of our child welfare system and these additional resources will help many families whose budgets have been impacted by inflation and other increased costs continue to provide a safe and loving home for every youth in our care,” said DCFS Director Marc D. Smith. “These families have opened their homes and their hearts to help have a positive impact on the lives of our state’s most vulnerable youth, and redirecting these funds will help ensure that foster families have the resources and support they need.”

The average additional increase, beyond the already planned COLA, for the more than 9,600 youth in licensed foster homes in Illinois will be \$74 a month, although families will receive between \$52 and \$111 more depending on the age of the child. Foster families caring for children between the ages of 1 and 4 will see the lowest increase, from \$492 to \$544 per month; while families caring for children between the ages 9 and 11 will see the largest increase, from \$545 to \$656 per month. More than 8,100 youth with unlicensed relative caregivers will receive an increase of \$46 a month, from \$342 a month to \$388. Youth in care over the



age of 18 who are living in transitional programs will see an increase from \$511 a month to \$586, and those pursuing higher education will see their monthly stipend increase from \$1,317 to \$1,506.

As part of the last budget cycle, DCFS projected 18,511 youth in foster homes at the end of the fiscal year that ends on June 30. DCFS currently has about 17,700 youth in foster homes, 800 fewer than the projected number. This reduction is a reflection of fewer youth entering the child welfare system and youth being successfully reunited with their biological parents.

***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 safe, loving and permanent homes for children through adoption or guardianship. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.*