

October 17, 2016
For Immediate Release

Media Contacts
Veronica.Resa@Illinois.gov
Alissandra.Calderon2@Illinois.gov

Inaugural Child Welfare Transformation Summit Launches Immersion Sites

Unveils strategic plan, to offer more in-home services

ITASCA, Ill. – The inaugural Child Welfare Transformation Summit kicked off today, bringing together, for the first time, stakeholders in Illinois’ child welfare system. Among the participants were representatives of the Illinois judicial system including judges and lawyers, front-line staff, non-profit leaders and workers, birth, foster and adoptive parents, youth in care and alumni.

“We have to be there at the right moment, with the right step, with the full determination to catch a child when he or she falls and put him or her back on track,” said DCFS Director George H. Sheldon. “And that means helping put families back on track. We have to do that not just every day but every hour, every minute, on every case, with every child.”

A major initiative is the development of what the agency calls “immersion sites” to push decision-making to the community level instead of Chicago or Springfield. The goal is to reinvent the way the child welfare system approaches children and families through a more comprehensive set of services focused on housing, domestic violence, therapy and other services to families.

The department announced directors of the first four immersion sites: Norma Machay in Lake County, James E. Tooles in St. Clair County, Hope Carbonaro in the Mount Vernon area, and Verletta Saxon in the Rock Island area.

The theme of the summit is Illinois C.A.R.E.S., which stands for Compassion, Accountability, Responsiveness, Relationships, Respect, Empathy and Safety. This two-day educational summit hosted by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services in partnership with Casey Family Programs, is a conversation about the future of care for the children and youth of Illinois. Participants will hear from leaders in the field of child welfare and in our state. Notable attendees include Commissioner Rafael López of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families in Washington and Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Rita B. Garman, as well as Governor Bruce Rauner and First Lady Diana Rauner.

During the summit, DCFS is also releasing its strategic plan for transformation of the child welfare system in Illinois. Community partners, foster adoptive and biological parents and youth in care contributed to the many elements of the plan. For more information visit: www.DCFS.Illinois.gov.