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## **Illinois DCFS presents inaugural Family First Act Summit**

*National, state and local stakeholders convene to strengthen outcomes  
for children and families served by the child welfare system*

CHAMPAIGN, IL – Today the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in partnership with Casey Family Programs and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign School of Social Work, presents the inaugural Family First Act Summit, **Strengthening Illinois through Child and Family Well-Being** in Champaign, Illinois.

The event brings stakeholders together from across the child welfare system, including state agencies, private agency partners and service providers, local community networks and child welfare experts to take part in a transformative conversation to leverage resources available through the Family First Act to better serve families and children and strengthen child and family well-being outcomes in Illinois.

The federal Family First Act, signed into law as part of the Federal Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, increased states' funding and flexibility to operate programs aimed at strengthening and supporting families to keep children safely at home and out of foster care. Illinois' Family First Title IV-E Prevention Plan was approved by the US Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau in October 2021.

"All children deserve the opportunity to grow up in safe, stable and loving families," said **Illinois Governor JB Pritzker**. "The Family First Act allows Illinois to invest more resources into addiction treatment, mental health services and parental skill building that will help strengthen families so children can remain safely at home."

Illinois' five-year plan outlines how the state will support families in crisis by mobilizing and broadening the array of evidence-based interventions for parenting skills, substance use disorder prevention and treatment and mental health services to prevent children from entering foster care;



encouraging and supporting kinship care; improving services to pregnant and parenting teens; and shortening lengths of stay and improving the quality of care for children for whom residential care is appropriate.

“Our work to create a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Child and Family Well-Being System did not begin with the passage of the Family First Act, but Family First is giving us new opportunities to meet the unique needs of every child and family we serve even before they come into our care,” said **Illinois DCFS Director Marc D. Smith**. “No agency or organization can do this work alone. Today’s summit is an important step in our continued collaboration as we work toward a vision of an Illinois where children and families have the resources and supports they need to thrive.”

“Casey Family Programs is pleased to partner with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services in support of the first in a series of statewide summits focused on increasing well-being for vulnerable children and families and preventing child maltreatment,” said **Casey Family Programs Senior Director Lyman Letgers**. “We are excited to support today’s summit and look forward to engaging with Illinois in the work ahead.”

*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 guardianship or 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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