



Illinois Families Now & Forever®

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship



Message from the DCFS acting director

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time when we recognize the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect and making sure our children are safe.

At DCFS we are first responders when it comes to helping families in crisis, but we cannot do this job alone; and in these stressful times of social distancing, turning our kitchens into classrooms and the uncertainty of knowing when life as we knew it will return to normal, we need your help now more than ever. Text your friends with children and see how they're doing; share child abuse prevention messages on social media; and most importantly, if you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, call the DCFS Child Abuse Hotline at **1-800-25-ABUSE** (252-2873).

By getting involved, one person can positively impact a child's life forever.

Marc D. Smith
Acting Director

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month



(4/10/20) Governor JB Pritzker recognizes April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/33GXX2cy8Mo>

ALL IN Illinois

Stay home and stay safe! Take the pledge to be ALL IN for each other – our families, essential workers, health care workers, first responders and neighbors. Download an #allinillinois sign here and share your kids' creations below and on your own social media pages with the hashtag #allinillinois



<https://www.enjoyillinois.com/assets/Media-Files/AllInIllinois-Printable-Signs.pdf>

COVID-19 PANDEMIC



COVID-19 restrictions on visits:

A barrier to family reunification

Birth parents involved with DCFS may feel frustrated in seeing their hopes of reunification delayed as courts cancel hearings and in-person visits are suspended over the coronavirus pandemic.

Visits provide the opportunity for parents to build skills, and restrictions on visits cost bonding time that is crucial for reunifying their families. Navigating the “new normal” can be a stressful and frustrating time for parents and foster parents and a confusing and upsetting time for children.

Here are some ways foster parents can support visits between youth in care and their parents during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Show compassion** – Children need their families. Support the child in your care while you support birth family connections.
- **Identify alternative options to in-person contact** – Gather phone numbers, open your calendars, set your phone to accept video chats and find ways to keep children connected.
- **Communicate** – Find ways to connect children with their families, whether by writing notes, hearing voices on the phone or seeing their faces on video connections.
- **Be creative** – Help children think of activities to do and things to talk about with their parents.
- **Be supportive** – recognize that both children and their parents have strong feelings, and these may be displayed in many ways.
- **Practice shared parenting** – Coach children and parents and help support successful outcomes.
- **Rely on your worker** and/or Foster Parent Support Specialist for information, ideas and self-care support during this time.

Helping children cope during a crisis

Children may respond differently to the COVID-19 pandemic depending on their age. Below are some reactions according to age group and the best ways you can respond.

Age Group	Reactions	How to Help
 <p>Pre-School (2-1/2 to 5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of being alone • Bad dreams • Speech difficulties • Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation or bed-wetting • Change in appetite • Increased temper tantrums, whining or clinging behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience and tolerance • Provide reassurance (verbal and non-verbal) • Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story telling • Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements • Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime • Maintain regular family routines • Avoid media exposure
 <p>School-Aged (6 to 12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior • Clinging, nightmares • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches) • Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest • Competition for parents' attention • Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, tolerance and reassurance • Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through telephone and internet • Regular exercise and stretching • Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games) • Participate in structured household chores • Set gentle but firm limits • Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions. Include what is being done in the family and community • Encourage expression through play and conversation • Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines • Limit media exposure and talk about what they have seen/heard • Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation
 <p>Adolescent (13 to 18)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.) • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy • Ignoring health promotion behaviors • Isolating from peers and loved ones • Concerns about stigma and injustices • Avoiding/cutting school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, tolerance and reassurance • Encourage continuation of routines • Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers and family (but do not force) • Stay in touch with friends through telephone, internet, video chat • Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors • Limit media exposure and talk about what they have seen/heard • Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring during outbreak

Source: National Child Traumatic Stress Network (www.nctsn.org)



Illinois Families Now & Forever

J B Pritzker, Governor

Marc D Smith, DCFS Acting Director

Published by

DCFS Office of Communications

Phone: 312-814-6847

Graphic Design: Bert Tijerina

Production

Printed by: DCFS Print Shop

Purpose: To help busy families more effectively parent children currently or formerly in DCFS care. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

Address Changes:

Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS.

Archive Issues:

www2.illinois.gov/DCFS

(English and Spanish available)

Illinois Families Now and Forever[®] is mailed to licensed foster parents, unlicensed relative caregivers and adoptive and guardianship families receiving subsidies. Digital notice is sent to all DCFS staff and private agency staff.

Material may not be reprinted in whole, in part or in any form whatsoever without permission from the Editor or DCFS. Opinions expressed by experts writing articles are no substitute for professional answers or opinions about a family's or child's specific situation. Consult a competent professional for answers to your specific questions.



Printed by Authority of the State of Illinois
DCFS #606 - Apr 2020 - 26,075 copies

Illinois Families Now and Forever
Department of Children & Family Services
100 West Randolph - 6th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60601

PRESRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SPRINGFIELD, IL
PERMIT NO. 763



PATH Beyond Adoption

PATH guides adoptive and guardianship families

Building a family by adoption or guardianship is a journey, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, you may have new questions or need additional support. Help is just a call or click away.

- Visit www.PathBeyondAdoption.illinois.gov for information and resources.

Call the toll-free PATH (Partners Available to Help) Beyond Adoption support line at 866-538-8892 during business hours or leave a voicemail message at any time to:

- Connect with resources
- Get answers to questions
- Seek counseling and other services
- Understand your subsidy agreement

COVID-19 up-to-date websites

- Illinois coronavirus website: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx>
- DCFS website: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs/brighterfutures/healthy/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>
- IDPH website: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-zlist/coronavirus>
- CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>