

Description of Post Adoption/ Guardianship Support Services

Part 1: Financial Support

Subsidies

Families adopting may receive monthly subsidy payments that are equal to the foster care board rate. Families remain eligible until the youth reaches their 18th birthday. If, at the age of 18, the youth is enrolled in high school, but has not graduated, the subsidy can be extended to high school graduation or age 19, whichever comes first with confirming documentation. If the youth has physical, mental, or emotional special needs that affect his major life activities the subsidy can be extended to age 21. If a youth was age 16 or older and adopted on/after 7/1/2017, the subsidy is paid until their 21st birthday.

Medical Care

All youth in care receive health coverage under the Medicaid plan administered by the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS). That arrangement continues after the completion of the adoption as a part of the subsidy.

Dental/Orthodontic Services

Dental and orthodontic services are provided by community-based providers that accept Medicaid.

Medical Assistance When Families Move Out of State

Illinois is a member of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICMA). Once a family chooses to move out of state, the family will continue to receive the subsidy from Illinois. Information will be forwarded to the receiving state by Department staff to request medical coverage in the new state.

Durable Medical Equipment

Most durable medical equipment for children entering adoption or guardianship is purchased through HFS are through a prior approval process. Requests for equipment not covered by HFS and processed through the child's regional Post Adoption unit and Clinical Services. The Post Adoption Unit also provides maintenance and/or replacement services on broken equipment.

Home Modifications

Many of the children in the Adoption Unit that require durable Medical Equipment also may require home modifications. Post Adoption in conjunction with Clinical Services work with the families to get verification of medical necessity, and with vendors to get bids on all home modifications. Once official approval of a bid has been determined, an authorization is provided to the vendor to complete the required modification.

Tax Information for Foster and Adoptive Families

Since 2003, families who adopt a child with special needs from foster care can claim a Federal Tax credit. Families can contact their Regional adoption unit for information on who to contact regarding the tax credit.

Education and Transition Services

Youth may apply for one of the 53 DCFS Scholarships that are awarded statewide each year. Youth who were adopted and gone through subsidized guardianship through the Department are also eligible for tuition waivers for public in-state Colleges and/or Universities. School advocacy services are also provided via contracted private agencies. Youth ages 17.5 to 20 may be eligible to receive assistance finding housing, food and clothing; help budgeting, cash for security deposits, beds, utilities, appliances, etc.

Part 2: Support and Preservation Services

There are four DCFS regions statewide. Each region has Post Adoption units that provide intervention and support to the adoptive families in that region. Once an adoption is finalized, the case is assigned to a Post Adoption worker. A welcome letter is sent to the family upon opening the case providing the name and contact number of the assigned worker. There is also a statewide toll-free number what will connect families to the Post-Adoption Unit in their region and services. There is also the Path Beyond Adoption website, where families can go find out information, resources, and support.

- *Adoption Preservation and Support Services:* Post adoption and post guardianship services continues to be a critical part of the service provision within the Post Adoption Unit. Intensive services are often required to stabilize and support adoptive families. Statewide adoption preservation programs have been the cornerstone of the post adoption services offered to these families and this successful model has proven to be an invaluable resource of intervention and stabilization. These services include the following.
 - Comprehensive assessment/Crisis intervention: Preservation staff will respond by phone within 24 hours and make an in-home visit within three days. A therapist will help a family identify their own strengths, complete an assessment and develop a family treatment plan within 30 days of the referral to the program.
 - Clinical services: A therapist will provide clinical services in the family treatment plan.
 - Support groups: Support groups are offered for both parents and youth at times and locations that meet the family's needs.
 - Case management/Advocacy services: A preservation agency will manage the case and services as outlined in the family treatment plan.
 - Children's mental health advocacy services: If a child has significant mental health needs, the program will provide or facilitate services.
 - Cash assistance: If a family participating in the program experiences economic hardships or require specialized services that cannot be obtained through other resources, a cash assistance payment (limited to \$500 per family per fiscal year) may be provided.

The goals of all preservation programs are to help parents:

- Prevent disruption of placements
- Understand adoption and guardianship and its impact on children
- Connect current behavior to history
- Help Understand how past trauma can connect and affect to current behaviors
- Develop tools and skills to assist in parenting their children

To further enhance the progress and efforts made by the adoption preservation programs, the agency has additional programming supports for adoptive/guardianship families:

- *Maintaining Adoption Connections (MAC):* The MAC programs provide an additional range of services to post adoption/guardianship families: from crisis intervention, assessment, respite, counseling, support groups, case management and various forms of advocacy. The Department's Maintaining Adoption Connections programs began operation in Cook County and the surrounding areas in FY09 and are have expanded to the Central region of Illinois as of 2019. These programs have been able to meet many service needs that are not covered through the traditional subsidy related services. Stabilization

and support services are provided to adoptive and guardianship families through agreed alternative living arrangements. These arrangements were established as these families may not qualify for Preservation Services. They also provide a more comprehensive case management piece.

Post Adoption Transitional Services: During FY14, the Statewide Adoption Council identified a gap in service delivery to older special needs adoptees. Parents were reaching out to post adoption staff asking for assistance in navigating through the adult systems their children would be transitioning into. They were struggling to find open doors to the legal system, (in cases where an adult guardian needed to be named for their child) and the adult financial systems (i.e. social security and public aid). A committee was formed to look at these issues, and recommendations were drawn up to present to the DCFS Director. This service is currently being implemented through the Center for Law and Social Work. In FY 19, the Center for Law and Social Work continues to provide adult transition services to families in Cook, Central and Northern Regions and expanded through the remainder of the state of Illinois.

- **Educational Support for Post Adoption Children**
Educational and support services are provided via Post Adoption Preservation Agencies, MAC Agencies and the Center for Law and Social work. While the Adoption and MAC agencies do assist with educational support with cases that are open in their programs, the Center for Law and Social Work are able to provide educational advocacy for all children adopted through DCFS. This educational advocacy includes, but is not limited to, interacting with the teachers, attending IEP meetings, advocated for services that are not being provided, etc. They can assist parents with educational needs up to the point that legal action is needed. They provide educational advocacy services in Cook, Northern Central, and Southern regions.
- **Counseling Individual and Family**
Statewide the Department has contracted counselors and therapists that provide in-home and in-office individual and family services. All services are pre-authorized at the request of the families by contacting their local regional Post Adoption Unit. Families are also able to obtain community-based therapy and counseling through the medical card.
- **Respite Programs**
Respite Services are available through contracted licensed child welfare agencies in Illinois. These services are available to provide some relief to the adoptive families. Respite components may include any or all the following:
 - Hourly in home
 - Hourly out of home
 - Overnight
 - Specialized campsThe respite care may be regularly scheduled or may be requested on an emergency basis. An initial assessment is completed on the family and child to develop a service plan that offers the appropriate type of respite for that family. Services may be provided up to two years with an extension request after the first year.
- **Day Care**
-Employment Related Daycare: Payments may be made for daycare for children under the age of three years when the adoptive/guardian parent is employed or in a training program which will lead to employment. These services are provided through the DCFS Office of Child Development.

- Therapeutic Daycare: Therapeutic daycare services are available for adoptive/guardianship families of children three years of age and older who cannot be served in a traditional child care setting. This is because of the intensity of the service the youth would require as a result of their physical, mental or emotional disabilities and the need for educational services through a current IEP or a 504 educational plan.
- Older Caregiver Services

The Department provides services through a private contracted agency, Metropolitan Family Services, to caregivers 60 years and older who are raising children they have adopted or have obtained guardianship or who are working towards these two goals. The goal of the program is to establish a stronger support system that will help older caregivers continue to provide for children in their care. In cases where this is not possible, program staff assists families in making new and more appropriate arrangements that ensure the safety, well-being and permanency of the children. The Older Caregivers Program Services Cook County and surrounding collar counties. These services include full assessments, physical and mental health recommendations, linkage to the Illinois Department on Aging, recommendations to court and other monitoring agencies, ad back-up planning.
- Arranging Future Care Plans for Youth

Post-adoption provides assistance with planning for the adoptive or guardianship child's future in the event something unforeseen occurs with the adoptive/guardianship parents. This service is provided through a contracted private agency- the Center for Law and Social Work

 - Standby Adoption is a court-approved arrangement that provides for a future adoption of a child, if needed. Standby adoption allows the parent to ask the court to appoint a person or persons as standby adoptive parents. The standby adoptive parent does not take custody of the child until needed and the adoption becomes final. In the meantime, the adoptive parent retains all rights as the parent and custody of the child.
 - Standby Guardianship is a legal arrangement approved by a Judge that provides for the future care of a child, if needed. It allows the parent to appoint someone as legal guardian of his or her child. The standby guardian does not take custody of the child immediately but only at the point when the guardian is no longer able to take care of the child.
 - Short-Term Guardianship is a private legal arrangement between the parent and a person chosen to take care of the child. A short-term guardian is not a permanent arrangement. The person appointed as short-term guardian will only have authority to act as the guardian for up to 365 days.
- Search and Reunion Services

The Post Adoption Unit provides search and reunion services statewide through a contracted private agency- Midwest Adoption Center. Adoptees and birth family members whose adoption was handled by DCFS can request search and reunion services at no charge.
- Adoption Registry

The Illinois Adoption Registry provides a way for specific individuals involved in an adoption in Illinois to locate other people involved in the adoption. Persons who were adopted or surrendered for adoption, their birth parents, and birth siblings may file consent to exchange information. The Adoption Registry also includes a medical exchange. The medical information exchange questionnaire asks questions about diseases or conditions that medical professionals believe may be inherited or has a genetic link.
- Advocacy Office for Children and Families

This Unit at DCFS receives and responds to concerns presented to DCFS regarding youth in care and youth that are adopted or under guardianship through the department. The Advocacy staff functions as advocates on behalf of the best interest of the child, providing assistance and seeking resolutions to a problem.

January 2019- December 31, 2019

Private contracted counseling/ therapy services	490
Therapeutic Daycare	77
Adoption Support and Preservation/MAC services	1451
Respite	266

Search and Information Program (up to October 2019)

Initiating Clients for Information	333
Relatives who were located	92

CISI Program (up to October 2019)

Number of Petitioners	81
Number of found relatives	142

Backup Care Provider Services (up to October 2019)

Adult Guardianship	15
Backup Caregiver	4
Adoption due to death	31
Educational Advocacy Services	11
Juvenile Court Liaison Services	31

<u>Older Caregivers</u>	23
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Calls Received Regarding Potential Disruptions

(These numbers reflect calls received from January 2019 to December 2019)

Calls received with potential placement disruptions 159

Calls received in which services were declined by the department 1

Post Adoption Pilot Program

DCFS has completed the pilot program with the National Quality Improvement Center for Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation (QIC-AG) and received an extension for an additional year. The QIC-AG is a federally funded initiative. Illinois was selected to be one of eight sites to participate in this initiative. QIC-AG is a national project designed to promote permanency, where reunification is no longer a goal, and to improve adoption and guardianship preservation and support. It is built on the premise that child welfare agencies need to provide a continuum of services to increase permanency stability beginning when children first enter the child welfare system and continuing after adoption or guardianship has been finalized. QIC-AG works with selected sites to develop a continuum of services that increase pre- ad post-permanency stability for families, improve children's behavioral health, and advance the well-being of children and families. In Illinois, the intervention selected was, Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET). The intention was to forestall the escalation of moderate risk with pre and young teens into high risk by enhancing and/or increasing their knowledge, attitudes and skills in regulating their emotions, making better decisions and developing healthy relationships. After having implemented this program with post adoption families, it was found to be helpful for some, but the capacity and cost to continue training staff compared to the amount of successful completions in the post adoption community did not appear to be the most effective and efficient for the Post Adoption and guardianship families. From this project, a new prevention and educational short-term modality was established called START; Start Early, Trauma-informed, Attachment focused, Resiliency-building Therapeutic modality. The START services are provided through Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Support and Preservation (ASAP) programs. The START programs intends to provide families with short-term services in which they provide tools, support and education that individual families need and can assist with the safety, well-being and long-term permanency of your family. Illinois is also still working with QIC-AG to determine other capacity building activities and prevention promotion tools that will assists families in stability and well-being.

Disruptions from January 2019-December 2019

Type of placement, including whether the child was a prior youth in care	Did the child enter state custody after disruption	length of placement prior to disruption	Age of child at time of adoption	Age of child at time of disruption	Reason for disruption
Adoption/Youth In care	yes	6	10	16	abuse/neglect reports
Subsidized Guardianship/ Youth in case	yes	5.5 years	12	17	
Adoption/Youth In care	yes	10 yrs.	6	14	lock out/behavioral issues
Subsidized Guardianship/ Youth in case	yes	4 yrs.	8	12	lock out/behavioral issues
Adoption/Youth In care		5 yrs.	6	10	abuse/neglect reports
Adoption/Youth In care	yes	9 yrs.	7	16	behavior issues
Subsidized Guardianship/ Youth in case	no	3 yrs.	11	13	return to bio mom, then disruption from that
Subsidized Guardianship/ Youth in case	no	3 yrs.	9	11	return to bio mom, then disruption from that
DCFS Adoption	yes	10	4	14	TC taken after reported abuse
DCFS Adoption	no	12	2	14	behavioral issues
DCFS Adoption	yes	16 years		16	child refused to return home
subsidized guardianship	yes	9 years	5	14	behavioral issues
DCFS Adoption	yes	6 years	7 years old	13	behavioral issues
Adoption	yes	6 years	8	13	abuse/neglect
Guardianship	yes	11 years	1	12	behaviors
Guardianship	yes	1 year	15	16	loss of parent previously
Guardianship	yes	17 years	0	17	moved with boyfriend
Adoption	yes	4 years	13	17	moved with boyfriend
Guardianship	yes	7	6	13	in between homes
Adoption	yes	10 years	8	16	
Guardianship	yes	11 years	1	17	
Guardianship	yes	3 years	11	12	behaviors
Adoption	yes	4 years	8	10	lockout

Guardianship	yes	15 yrs.	7	16	lockout, behaviors
Adoption	yes	14 years	3	14	lockout, behaviors
Adoption	yes	9 years	5	12	lockout
Adoption	yes	8	6	14	abuse/neglect
Guardianship	yes	3 years	2	4	abuse/neglect
Adoption	yes	10 years	4	9	abuse/neglect
Adoption	yes	11 years	3	12	abuse/neglect
Adoption	yes	10 years	9	11	behaviors
Adoption	yes	13 years	6	15	abuse/neglect
Adoption	yes	13 years	4	12	abuse/neglect
Adoption	yes	13 years	5	14	abuse/neglect
Adoption	yes	9 years	10	15	lockout
Adoption	yes	15 years	2	15	lockout, abuse/neglect
Adoption	yes	14 years	5	17	behaviors/juvenile detention
Adoption	yes	15 years	10 days	15	behaviors
Guardianship	yes	9 years	8	17	motion from court to vacate guardianship
Adoption	yes	14 years	10 months	14	mental health
Adoption	yes	10 years	12	16	behaviors, lockout
Adoption	yes	10 years	8	17	lockout

Intercountry Adoptions/ Private Adoptions

DCFS does not currently have a system in place that identifies international or private adoptions that disrupts, leading to the youth coming into state care. It is the plan to correct this situation, but it will need further assessment on how.