



DCFS transformation applauded by Governor

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Agency making administrative reforms to improve life of children supports legislation to make foster children's lives more normal



CHICAGO – Governor Bruce Rauner today discussed the transformations at the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and how it's better serving the needs of Illinois children.

“When I took office, DCFS was in shambles from a lack of leadership and direction,” Governor Rauner said. “Today, under the direction of Director George Sheldon, the agency has made an impressive transformation to ensure we are protecting our state’s most vulnerable children.”

Within the last year, DCFS has reduced the number of children in shelter care by 50 percent and instituted a new directive to ensure no child under the age of six spends the night in a shelter. DCFS has also reduced the use of deep-end residential treatment and partnered with the Cook County Sheriff’s Department to create the Child Recovery Unit.

In addition, DCFS increased its federal reimbursement for services provided to youth aged 18-21 by \$20 million for FY16, and the state is expected to receive an additional \$16 million in subsequent fiscal years by fixing a paperwork issue.

DCFS is also part of the state’s IT transformation by implementing the 360 Initiative. It is a platform that brings multiple databases together to ensure caseworkers have the whole picture of a family’s situation more quickly and efficiently.

“In the last year, we’ve accomplished a lot to improve Illinois’ child welfare system. These initiatives are just a starting point; we must also change the way we think about our youth in care,” DCFS Director Sheldon said. “DCFS is supporting new legislation to provide children in foster care more normalcy and to recognize the strong bond a child and foster parent may develop. We also must recognize the hard-working women and men at DCFS who are striving every day to restore families, and give children hope for their future and set them on a path for better lives.”

The bills supported by DCFS are SB 2371/HB 5551 which expand the definition of “fictive kin” to include foster parents, and SB 3041/HB 5665 which enable foster parents and caregivers to act as “prudent parents” and make decisions to give children a more normal life.

These transformations are part of the vision Governor Rauner laid out in his State of the State Address. The purpose is to improve how we provide health and human services in Illinois to produce better outcomes for our most vulnerable residents.