



For Immediate Release
Tuesday, May 14, 2019

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DE Children's Department to Host Nearly 400 for Foster Parent Conference

Workshops offer best practice for parenting children exposed to trauma and recognize the contribution of foster families in Delaware

Bridgeville – Nearly 400 foster families, Division of Family Services staff and service providers will gather in Bridgeville on Thursday, May 16th at Heritage Shores Clubhouse (1 Heritage Shores Circle), to learn more about best practice tools and strategies to help care for children who experience Delaware's foster care system. The theme for the Foster Parent Conference and Recognition Luncheon hosted by the State's Division of Family Services (DFS) is 'Full Hands – Full Hearts'. DFS officials say foster parents provide a critically important role in Delaware's child protective services system.

"They open their hearts and their homes to care for these children, many of whom have experienced a variety of trauma in their young lives, and provide love, nurturing, stability, safety and support," said DFS Director Trenee Parker. "It is our goal to support them through this conference so they can even more effectively care for the children who enter their homes."

Workshops cover a variety of topics including strategies for dealing with challenging teen behaviors, understanding the impact of trauma on children's behavior and techniques to build resiliency, caring for substance-exposed babies, how to help children maintain familial bonds and connections while in care, the impact of trauma on behavior, and helping children in care get through school and transition to adulthood. Workshops begin at 9:00am with foster parent recognition awards beginning at 12:30pm.

Foster parents provide a temporary home to children who have entered the child protective services system due to abandonment, abuse and/or neglect and prepare them to either reunify with their birth family or move onto a new permanent family when reunification is not appropriate. There are approximately 650 children currently in foster care in Delaware.

"I see foster parents as the starting point for our children's healing journey," said Josette Manning, Cabinet Secretary for the Children's Department. "Our foster parents are some of the most dedicated and caring people in Delaware. This conference is a great opportunity for the Children's Department to hear from them regarding what they are experiencing on a daily basis and what supports they might need to better provide a nurturing environment for our children. It is also our chance to share the initiatives we're developing to better support their work with children in very challenging circumstances." These initiatives include additional training opportunities and respite support.

Additionally, the Division of Family Services is in need of, and actively recruiting, more families to care for teens, sibling groups and children with special needs or who are medically fragile.

The Children's Department provides services to children who have been abused, neglected, are dependent, have mental health or substance problems, have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts, as well as prevention services targeted toward all youth. For more information, please visit www.kids.delaware.gov.

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