

# COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE

## McDonough County, Illinois

### March 2017 Newsletter

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*Advocacy Network for Children Mission Statement: To protect and uphold the rights of children when wrongs have been committed against them; to help abused or neglected children have safe, permanent homes where they can thrive; to act as a powerful voice in these children's best interest and to educate the public about the plight of unrepresented children within the child welfare system.*

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## Adoption Surrenders and Consents

A **Final and Irrevocable Surrender for Purposes of Adoption** acts to terminate a parent's rights as soon as the document has been signed. It authorizes/designates DCFS or the adoption agency as the legal parent of the child. Even if the child is never subsequently adopted, parental rights remain terminated.

A **Final and Irrevocable Consent to Adoption by a Specified Person or Persons** provides a birth parent with the ability to consent to have a particular person adopt his/her child.

Some changes in the law effective January 1, 2013:

- Consents will no longer be "voidable" after the one-year point;
- Parents will provide more detailed contact information to DCFS;
- Caseworker will be required to contact parent if the adoption isn't able to go forward;
- The 6-month waiting period can be waived by the court so parents can sign consents earlier;
- DCFS will provide a "Rights and Responsibilities" form for birth parents.

These things are true under the old law and will continue to be true with the new law:

- Specific consents do not terminate a parent's rights;
- If the adoption isn't finalized, TPR (Termination of Parental Rights) does not occur;
- If the juvenile court issues a TPR order based on a specific/designated consent, the TPR order is only valid as long as the consent is valid;
- The consent is only valid as to the named adoptive parent(s);
- If the child is removed from that placement, the consent becomes invalid and the birth parent's rights remain intact;
- Specific/designated consents do not expire or convert to a general consent one year after being signed; and
- Consents that were signed before January 1, 2013 will be valid according to the old law.

Criteria must be met before a case is appropriate for a specific/directed consent.

- There must be a pending Juvenile Court case;
- The child must have been in the home of the named caregiver/adoptive parent for at least six-months prior to signing the consent unless the court has waived this waiting period;
- DCFS must be in agreement that the caregiver/placement is an appropriate adoptive home;
- Infants under age one have to be in the adoptive home for three months;
- With sibling groups, only one child has to have been in the home for the minimum period of time.

## Adoption Surrenders and Consents, Continued

- Parents should have benefit of legal counsel before signing a consent or surrender;
- Be sure the parent is competent to sign a consent (consider mental health issues, developmentally delayed, English is the preferred language, whether under the influence of alcohol/drugs);
- If parent is mentally ill and/or developmentally delayed, a doctor's statement is needed regarding competence;
- If parent has an adult guardian, the Court can take a specific consent from both the birth parent and guardian;
- DCFS should provide consent or surrender forms to parents in their preferred language.

From Illinois DCFS Office of Legal Services

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### Happy Birthday CASA Volunteers!

Dan Colvin – March 10th

Harry Rukavina – March 12th

Darlos Mummert – March 20th



### ***Koins for Kids . . . Please help us make this year even better than last!***

Last year's ***Koins for Kids*** project was a huge success. We collected more than \$900 at Farm King and Hy-Vee. This year's ***Koins for Kids*** will take place April 8<sup>th</sup> at the same locations from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. If you can help "collect those Koins" for just a couple hours, please call Vicki Duba, 309-544-0003 to sign up. (Bring a friend, your honey, or your kids or grandkids!)

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### NEW CASA VOLUNTEER TRAINING SCHEDULED TO BEGIN MAY 1, 2017

We currently have more abused and neglected children assigned to CASA of McDonough County than ever! Although we have advocated for more than 130 children since 2011, there are still children waiting for their CASA.

If you know of anyone who might like to advocate for abused children, please have them call me at 309-544-0003 so that we can make time to meet.

Please help me meet my goal of 7 trainees in the May 1<sup>st</sup> class!

## **COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE**

### **McDonough County, Illinois**

**March 4 – Advocacy Network for Children Annual Fundraiser Dinner . . . Grab your leathers and join the fun! It's the Biker Bash! Ambiance in Quincy at 6:00 PM.** Social hour, dinner, silent and live auction. Proceeds help fund all programs of the Advocacy Network for Children.

**March 14 – Brown Bag Lunch at 12:00 noon.** Susan Lawhorn, Board Member of Loaves and Fishes will talk about the food pantry, who they serve, and how they stock the pantry. Following lunch Susan will take us downstairs at the First Presbyterian Church for a tour of the pantry and it's storage facility. We will meet on the second floor of the First Presbyterian Church.

**March 29 – Food Insecurity and the Impact on Our Children.** This day long workshop in the Grand Ballroom of the WIU Union is co-hosted by the Interagency Council of McDonough County and Western Illinois University. Great speakers, including key note speaker Colleen Callahan, former Illinois State Director, USDA Rural Development. For more information go to [wiu.edu/coehs/iac2017](http://wiu.edu/coehs/iac2017) or call Pete Tarantola at 309-837-5437 between 8 AM and 4 PM. (Continuing education credits CASA volunteers!)

### **April – Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month**

**April 4 – Flag Raising at Macomb City Hall.** The tradition of raising the Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention flag at Macomb City Hall will continue. Mayor Inman will read a proclamation and the Honor Guard will raise the flag and it will continue to fly throughout the month of April to promote awareness of child abuse. Please join us to show your support!

**April 8 – Koins for Kids.** Please give a couple hours of your time at one of our collection sites. The “koin” collected will help assure abused and neglected children in McDonough County have a CASA! Contact Vicki Duba at 309-544-0003 to schedule your time.

**April 19 – Evening Poverty Simulation In-Service. 6:00 – 8:00 PM.** CASA of McDonough County has invited Lisa Fulkerson, University of Illinois Extension Office, to conduct this poverty simulation. The event simulates living a life in poverty and needing to rely on the “system” to help meet the family's basic needs. The simulation is most successful when there is a good-sized group to participate. If you are a member of a local food pantry or school backpack program, agency, a church with an outreach program for the poor, or an individual interested in participating, please call Vicki Duba, 309-544-0003 to reserve a spot!

**April 29 – Run for CASA'S Kids! 8:00 AM, Old Dairy, 210 Lafayette Street, Macomb.** First 5K run/walk with a 1 mile family and children's walk. All proceeds go to CASA of McDonough County. For a paper/mail in registration form go to [advonet.org](http://advonet.org). To register on-line go to [itsyourrace.com](http://itsyourrace.com).

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**May 9 - Brown Bag Lunch at 12:00 noon.** Kate McGruder, Director of Early Beginnings will speak about the services her program offers to children and their families. We will meet on the second floor of the First Presbyterian Church.