

# Fostering Foundations

DCFS Quarterly Newsletter for Foster and Relative/Kin Caregivers



## State Parks offers free permits to caregivers

Thanks to the generosity of Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser and the [Office of State Parks](#), all certified foster caregivers and relative/kin caregivers can receive a permit good for free admission to any park in Louisiana for one year!

With your permit, everyone in your vehicle/group will be allowed in at no charge. You can enjoy boating, hiking, fishing, golf and much more as you explore the beauty of Louisiana.

For caregivers with a child in a wheelchair, there are [all-terrain track wheelchairs](#) now available at eight of the State Parks. They are electric-powered and can be used on designated park trails not suitable for regular wheelchairs. Please note that these wheelchairs need to be reserved and, if possible, you should bring your own helmet and eye protection for the child.

To get your permit, fill out the form at



[https://www.lastateparks.com/about\\_state\\_parks/foster\\_caregiver\\_permit](https://www.lastateparks.com/about_state_parks/foster_caregiver_permit).

That includes uploading a photo of your foster care certification card. For relative/kin caregivers, you will be mailed a card you can use for the form.

If you need an updated card, please reach out to your regional recruiter. You can find the full list on the Foster Caregiver Resources [webpage](#).

State Parks will begin mailing permits in mid-January to those who have completed the online form and uploaded their card. Once you receive your

permit, it will be good for one year. If you have questions or issues with the form, please call the Office of State Parks at 225-342-8111.

## Foster Care Community Collaboratives expand

The Foster Care Community Collaboratives continue to expand into more regions across the state.

The collaborative meetings bring together foster caregivers, community partners and DCFS staff members to learn about and meet caregivers' needs. They began with a group in Shreveport and, since the beginning of 2024, have expanded to the Baton Rouge, Thibodaux, and Monroe regions.

Alexandria just recently held their first meeting, and plans are underway to move into the Covington region after the first of the year. The goal is to eventually have these community-driven meetings in all nine regions of the state.

If you want to be involved in your region's meeting, or if you want to be part of starting a collaborative in your region, please reach out to your Foster Care Recruiter. You can find the list of

of recruiters at

<https://www.dcfslouisiana.gov/page/foster-caregiver-resources>.

**Thank you** to the churches and community organizations who have hosted our recent regional meetings!

**Alexandria:**  
Fostering Community  
One Life Church

**Monroe:**  
First West Church

**Baton Rouge:**  
Renew Church

**Shreveport:**  
Broadmoor Baptist  
Church

**Thibodaux:**  
House of Prayer

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## Foster caregiver recruiters added to more regions

We are excited to announce that almost all of our regions now have a dedicated Foster Caregiver Recruiter! The recruiters focus on finding new foster caregivers in their region and supporting current caregivers. They also help to organize and sustain the Foster Care Community Collaboratives and Foster Care Advisory Board meetings in their region.

The recruiters previously brought on are Evan La Roche in Covington; Angela Scriber in Monroe; Jessica Sias in Lake Charles; and Kellye Worley in Baton Rouge.

The new recruiters are listed below. You can find contact information for all of the recruiters at <https://www.dcfslouisiana.gov/page/foster-caregiver-resources>.

- **Debra Cyprian (Orleans)**  
[Debra.Cyprian.DCFS@la.gov](mailto:Debra.Cyprian.DCFS@la.gov)
- **Keena Lewis (Lafayette)**  
[Keena.Lewis.DCFS@la.gov](mailto:Keena.Lewis.DCFS@la.gov)
- **Rochelle Madden (Alexandria)**  
[Rochelle.Madden.DCFS@la.gov](mailto:Rochelle.Madden.DCFS@la.gov)
- **Tina Vial (Thibodaux)**  
[Tina.Vial.DCFS@la.gov](mailto:Tina.Vial.DCFS@la.gov)

The recruiter for Shreveport is coming soon! For now, caregivers can reach out to the Home Development Unit at [ShreveRegHDU.dcfslouisiana.gov](mailto:ShreveRegHDU.dcfslouisiana.gov).

## Free online tutoring and academic resources offered through HomeworkLouisiana

HomeworkLouisiana is a free service that provides academic tutoring for students from kindergarten through 12th grade, help preparing for standardized tests (including the ACT and SAT), and job search assistance for adults.

Kindergarten students through adult learners can get help in English, math, reading, science, social studies, Spanish and writing from an on-demand tutor. The job search assistance is one-on-one, real-time support for an online tutor.

All of the services can be accessed from a home computer, a mobile device, or from a Louisiana public library. To learn more or to find the nearest public library, visit [www.homeworkla.org](http://www.homeworkla.org).

HomeworkLouisiana is provided by the State Library of Louisiana, local public libraries, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

## Resources for Foster Families

- [DCFS' Foster Caregiver Resources webpage](#) has been updated so that you can easily access agency forms, review policy, and find other resources. Take a look and let us know what other items you'd like to see on this page.
- Our [Foster Caregiver Fact Sheet](#) answers some of our most frequently asked questions, and it has been updated to include information about daycare enrollment
- The Louisiana Foster Care Support Organization (FCSO) has a [statewide list of foster care resources](#).
- FCSO also offers [Foster Care Mentors](#) who support other foster caregivers at any stage of their journey in any region of the state.
- [UNITE Ministries' Foster Friendly](#) app is one way for foster caregivers to stay aware of resources and benefits available to foster families.
- [Mobile Crisis Response Services](#) for children through the Louisiana Department of Health are currently available in Orleans, Lafayette, and Lake Charles regions.

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## Foster Care Advisory Board kicks off in Monroe

The Foster Care Advisory Board has recently relaunched and will hold regional and statewide meetings in 2025.

While the Foster Care Community Collaboratives focus on foster needs that the community can meet, the Advisory Board will address policy and procedure issues and improving communication between foster caregivers and the agency. Regional meetings will focus on local needs and working together to find solutions. Regional caregivers will elect representatives to the statewide Advisory Board, which will meet quarterly and look at statewide needs.

The first regional Advisory Board meeting was held in Monroe on Nov. 20. Be on the lookout for an invitation to your regional meeting in 2025.

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## CASA and DCFS: Working Together for Children

Our agency has been working to strengthen our relationship with the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Associations across the state. Appointed by the court, CASA volunteers work to ensure that children in the Child Welfare system find safe, permanent homes. The role of a CASA is to serve as an independent advocate for one child or sibling group, allowing them time to give their full attention and support to that one child or sibling group. CASA volunteers submit detailed court reports to the court and all relevant parties involved in a case.

Together, CASA and DCFS put together [this flyer](#) to provide more information about CASA's purpose and work. You can find out more about CASA on the Louisiana CASA [website](#), as well as find contact information for the CASA Association [in your region](#).

## New support group helps biological children in foster families

Hanna Beth Nielsen grew up as a biological child in a family that took in foster children. Based on her experience and the needs she's seen, she created Siblings Supporting Siblings. The organization is for biological children in foster and/or adoptive families to empower and support them.

Siblings Supporting Siblings holds support groups for children ages 12 to 17 and covers topics such as grief, how to use your voice, and other topics related to foster care. The groups are not meeting during the holidays, but will resume in 2025.

For information about the support groups, meeting days and times, or other needs, contact Hannah Beth Nielsen at 318-884-2580 or [hnielsen593@gmail.com](mailto:hnielsen593@gmail.com). You can also find Siblings Support Siblings on Facebook or Instagram.

## We want to hear from YOU!

- Are there topics you want to see covered in this newsletter? What do you want to know more about?
- Do you have any concerns you'd like addressed, or suggestions for improving the foster caregiver experience? Let us know by filling out [this form](#).
- Do you have special skill you'd be willing to share with your foster care community? It can be anything from car repairs, to baking, sewing, or home maintenance. If you want to put your skills to good use, let us know [here!](#)