



Governor George H. Ryan

Dear DCFS management and staff:

Congratulations for reaching your monumental goal of becoming the nation's largest child welfare agency to become fully accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children. I am extremely proud of your accomplishment. It was no small achievement, given that the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is only the second state child welfare agency in the nation to receive COA accreditation, and the accreditation process required that workers in each of the Department's offices put in thousands of hours preparing for accreditation - all while maintaining full caseloads.

Protecting the safety and well-being of children is the reason why DCFS exists. It is also the driving force behind the thousands of factors that COA reviewers consider before giving their stamp of approval on an agency's performance. These are stringent, practical measures that test every aspect of child welfare services. Few other state agencies have attempted system-wide accreditation, and you have become the example for all others to follow. When Director Jess McDonald set COA accreditation as a Department goal in 1996, he realized the years of commitment required to achieve a record that had never been reached before. Thanks to the combined efforts of thousands of staff in dozens of DCFS offices around the state, that vision is now a reality, and COA accreditation plaques are adorning DCFS field offices throughout Illinois.

Like the COA, which is the world's leading accreditor of child welfare services, the Department of Children and Family Services is dedicated to promoting best-practice standards and championing quality services for the more than 44,000 children and families who depend on the professionalism of the Department's 4,000 staff members. When an agency meets the rigorous COA standards, it means that clients can expect greater participation in decisions that affect their cases, improved case management, and a greater accountability built into the system. Additionally, accreditation builds confidence by foster and adoptive parents, providers, the courts and members of the community in the Department's work and dedication. On behalf of the people of Illinois, I want to express our deep admiration and thanks for a job well done.

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