



# Baby Steps

Helpful Hints for Teen Parents and Parents-To-Be  
From the Teen Parent Project and Illinois Action for Children



illinois  
action for  
children

**My name is:**

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# **This book is for, and about, you and your baby.**

Being a good parent is hard work. But it's also important work—and no one can do it better than you. We hope that the information in this book will help you be the best parent you can be. If you have more questions, or need help, please call the Teen Parent Project at 312-823-1100. We're here for you.

The Teen Parent Project is a program of Illinois Action for Children. Illinois Action for Children is a group of people who work in a lot of different ways to make sure that you, and your baby, have access to quality child care. They do this because they believe that great child care makes great people, and that great people make great communities. It's all good!

For more information about the Teen Parent Project, please email us at [teenparent@actforchildren.org](mailto:teenparent@actforchildren.org).

For more information about Illinois Action for Children, visit our website at [www.actforchildren.org](http://www.actforchildren.org) or call 312.823.1100.

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**alcohol  
tobacco  
drugs**

**Do not drink alcohol, smoke or take drugs  
while you are pregnant! You will harm or possibly  
even kill your baby!**

# Healthy Eating

It is very important to eat well during your pregnancy. **If you don't eat well, your baby doesn't eat well.** Babies who don't get enough of the right food won't weigh enough when they're born and are more likely to get sick. Good nutrition and a balanced diet will help your child grow up healthier.

## Good foods for you while you are pregnant:

### Dairy products high in calcium:

Lowfat milk, cottage cheese, lowfat yogurt

### High protein foods:

Fish, chicken, eggs, peanut butter, beans

### Veggies high in vitamin A:

Carrots, sweet potatoes, greens, spinach, broccoli

### Foods high in vitamin C:

Oranges, tomatoes, peppers, strawberries

### Fruits and veggies like:

Bananas, corn, green beans, apples

### Energy foods that are high in fiber:

Pasta, muffins, bread, rice, cereal

## Foods you should try to avoid:

### Fried, breaded or fatty foods like:

fried fish, fried chicken, hamburgers, French fries, potato chips, bacon, refried beans and tamales

### Foods high in sugar, artificial sweeteners and caffeine including:

Soda, ice cream, doughnuts, cake, cookies and candy

### Extras that add fat, sodium or sugar to good-for-you foods:

sour cream, butter, salt, ketchup, cheese and cream sauces

## And don't forget to drink lots of water!

Drinking 10 cups of water or juice a day will help you avoid stuff like:

- Headaches
- Swelling
- Hemorrhoids
- Constipation

## Foods I like that are good for my baby and me:

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# Breastfeeding

Starting to breastfeed is not always easy and the first few days can be strange or uncomfortable. But, **there are a lot of really good reasons to breastfeed.**

## Good things about breast milk:

- It has all the nutrition your baby needs — and it's free!
- It's the easiest food for your baby to digest in the first 4–6 months
- It is always the right temperature and needs no preparation
- Breast fed babies are more likely to be of normal weight
- Breast milk that you produce in the first few days has antibodies that help make your baby healthier

## Some things to know about breastfeeding:

Babies need to feed whenever they are hungry. A mom who is breastfeeding needs to plan a lot so that she can be there when her baby is hungry.

It's not always easy to tell how much milk your baby is getting, so it's important to get regular check-ups with your baby's doctor to make sure they're gaining enough weight.

To make sure that your body makes enough milk for your baby, it's important to allow the baby to empty each breast at every feeding.

It is important to take care of yourself when you are breastfeeding. If you are sick, tired or not eating right, your milk supply will be affected. If you drink alcohol, take drugs or smoke you will pass toxic substances to your baby through your breast milk.

Breastfeeding for the first time can get frustrating. Don't be afraid to ask for help and support from family, friends, your doctor or nurse.

### Notes:

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**Make sure that you take care  
of yourself so you can take care  
of your baby!**



# Development Milestones: Ages 3–9 Months

## What can an average 3-month old do? Check this list.

### 3 month milestones

- Cries when something is wrong
- Lifts head
- Vocalizes sounds (gurgling/cooing)
- Turns toward objects that touch the face or hand
- Smiles and laughs
- Recognizes your voice, face and scent
- Responds to sounds
- Follows objects with eyes
- Stares at faces

### 6 month milestones

- Holds head steadily
- Coos when talked to
- Can roll over
- Can bear weight on legs
- Amuses self by playing with hands and feet
- Reaches for objects
- Cries when left alone
- Likes to look at self in the mirror
- Tries to imitate the sounds you make

### 9 month milestones

- Can sit without support
- Can say “dada” and “mama”
- Begins to crawl
- Passes objects from hand to hand
- Can hold own bottle
- Can push self up into a sitting position
- Turns toward sounds and voices
- Can roll in both directions
- Likes to blow bubbles
- May have at least 3 teeth

*NOTE: Please remember each child is different and will achieve milestones at different times in each stage. If you feel your child is behind in developing, you should contact your child's doctor.*

# Development Milestones: Ages 12–18 Months

## What can an average 12-month old do? Check this list.

### 12 month milestones

- Plays games (patty cake, peek-a-boo) and claps hands
- Can stand while holding onto something
- Can stand alone for a few seconds
- Can walk while holding on to something
- Will indicate wants with gestures
- Knows own name when heard
- Crawls quickly
- Can feed self small bits of food
- Will imitate others' activities

### 15 month milestones

- Walks well
- Stands alone well
- May be learning to run
- Puts objects into containers
- Can stack 3 blocks
- Making more word like sounds
- Waves good bye
- Understands and responds to simple instruction
- Drinks from a cup
- Can scribble on paper

### 18 month milestones

- Communicates feelings (excitement, affection, sadness)
- Begins to understand limits
- Enjoys climbing
- Points to facial parts
- Begins to join words
- Plays away from caregiver
- Feeds self with spoon or fork

*NOTE: Please remember each child is different and will achieve milestones at different times in each stage. If you feel your child is behind in developing, you should contact your child's doctor.*

# Development Milestones: Ages 20 Months – 3 Years

## What can an average 20-month old do? Check this list.

### 20 month milestones

- Finds it difficult to share
- Bends over easily to pick up toys
- Gains some control over bladder
- Walks up steps
- Refers to self by name
- Can remove some clothing
- Speaks between 6–50 words

### 2 year milestones

- Jumps and runs well
- Kicks and throws a ball
- Goes up and down stairs alone
- Speech can be understood half the time by others
- Uses two word combinations
- May brush teeth with help
- Identifies body parts
- Can put on a piece of clothing
- Can name 6 body parts
- Can follow 2 step commands
- Combines words often
- Identifies 4 word pictures verbally
- Uses more than 50 single words
- Shows interest in riding a tricycle

### 3 year milestones

- Dresses and undresses self
- Alternates feet when walking up stairs
- Rides a tricycle well
- Communicates in 4–5 word sentences
- Most words spoken are understandable to others
- Shows interest in pretend play
- Socializes with others well

*NOTE: Please remember each child is different and will achieve milestones at different times in each stage. If you feel your child is behind in developing, you should contact your child's doctor.*



**Quality child care should provide a positive, stable place  
for your child to grow and develop.**

# Child Care

Finding good child care is not always easy, but if you take it step by step, **you can do it!**

## Step 1

**Learn** about the kinds of care that are available to you. Your choices include child care in a home or in a center.

### Family Child Care

Some families choose for their child to be cared for in a home-like setting. Family child care providers fulfill this need by offering care for children in their homes.

- 1) Licensed Family Child Care providers\*** may care for up to eight children (including their own), or up to 12 children with an assistant.
- 2) Licensed Family Child Care Group Home providers\*** may care for up to 16 children (including their own) with the help of a full-time assistant.
- 3) License-Exempt Family Child Care providers** (such as Family, Friend and Neighbor care) may care for three or fewer children (including their own), or children from one family.

*\*Licensed family child care providers and licensed family child care group home providers must meet Illinois Department of Children and Family Services standards for health and safety including child to staff ratios and required space per child.*

## A Child Care Center

This is care for your child in a place that is set up only for child care. There are a lot of rules regarding how many children a center may care for.\* You can ask to see each center's license to find out its capacity.

*\*To find out more about child care licensing, call the Teen Parent Project at 312-823-1100 or email us at [teenparent@actforchildren.org](mailto:teenparent@actforchildren.org).*

## Step 2

**Think** about your child and the specific things he or she might need from a caregiver and make a list. The caregiver you choose should give your child **all** that he or she needs.

All children need:

- Love
- Smiles
- Attention
- Healthy food
- Quiet time to rest
- Caring adults
- A safe place to be
- Safe toys to play with

## Step 3

Evaluate your options. Finding the best child care for your family means asking a lot of questions! Use our Child Care Checklists in this book to see how your choices measure up.

## Step 4

Make it work! Once you find the right person or place to care for your child, you have to work to keep that relationship positive and good. There are 3 keys to a good partnership with your caregiver:

### 1. Respect

- Treat your caregiver as you would want to be treated.
- Remember that she is a business person as well as a caregiver.
- Respect her home and her family. (She should show the same respect to you, too!)

### 2. Communication

- Talk about what's working and what's not. Solve small problems before they become big ones.
- Let your caregiver know if your schedule is going to change so that she can plan around it.
- Always call if you're going to be late.
- Share information about your child's likes, dislikes, fears and routines.
- If your child has any allergies, or needs medicine, make sure you tell your caregiver.
- It's always a good idea to have a written contract stating the hours your caregiver will be taking care of your child and the fees she'll be charging you. That way, there won't be any surprises.

### 3. Appreciation

- Show that you appreciate all that your caregiver does for you and your family.
- Be understanding when you see that your caregiver has had a rough day.
- Saying "thank you!" is an easy way to show appreciation.

### My child care provider options:

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# Infant Child Care Checklist

Evaluating your child care options is hard work. Make a copy of these pages to remind you of some things to look for when visiting the child care providers you are considering. Don't forget to bring a pen and take notes, there's a lot to remember!

## Questions to ask the provider

### Licensing

- Are you licensed by DCFS? May I see your license?
- Do you have any assistants?
- How many children are you licensed to take care of?
- How many other babies do you take care of?

### Training and Experience

- Are you trained in CPR and first aid?
- What is your educational background?
- Do you have any special training in child care?
- Are your assistants trained in CPR and first aid?

### Diapering, Feeding and Sleeping

- Do I need to provide diapers and wipes?
- How often will you change my baby?
- Do I need to provide formula and baby food?
- Do you accept breast milk?
- Where will my baby's formula be stored?
- Do I need to label my baby's formula and food?
- Will my baby have his/her own crib for sleeping?
- Are sheets washed regularly?
- Can I bring a blanket/toy from home to make my child feel more at home?

### Schedule and Fees

- What are the hours of your program?
- How much is the weekly fee?
- Are there any other fees? (registration, late fees, supplies, etc.)
- Do I pay when my child does not come or when you are closed?
- Do you accept payments from the state?
- Will I have to pay before I am approved?\*

*\*Note: if you do have to pay the provider upfront, you may want the provider to sign a note saying that they will pay you back when the state pays him/her.*

### Policies and Procedures

- Are there materials, or a handbook, explaining your policies?
- Do you have an assistant or "back-up" person if you are sick or on vacation?
- Will you talk to me daily about my baby's day?
- Am I welcome to visit or call any time?
- Can you give me the names of 3 parents I can call as references?

## Things to observe

### Child Care Areas

- Are the areas used for child care safe and clean?
- Is the environment comfortable and soothing?
- Is there enough room for my baby to crawl or walk around?
- Are there pets on the premises? If so, what kind and are they around the children?
- Is the environment well lit, ventilated and heated properly?

### Safety

- Are there working smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers?
- Are electrical outlets and wiring covered?
- Are dangerous items (knives, cleaning supplies, medications) stored out of reach?
- If there are stairways, is a safety gate or door in place?
- Are exits easily accessible in case of emergency?
- Is the furniture in good condition with no broken or missing pieces?

### Does the Provider...

- appear to be loving, gentle and friendly?
- seem to enjoy the children?
- respond to babies who need to be fed or changed?
- hold babies while feeding them?
- supervise children at all times?

### Development, Learning and Activities

- Are there clean, safe, toys, activities and games that are appropriate for my baby?
- Does the provider talk, read and play games with the children?
- Does the provider hold and comfort the children?

### Sleeping and Diapering Areas

- Is there a quiet, safe place for my baby to sleep?
- Is the crib in good condition with no broken or missing pieces?
- Is there a diapering area? Is it in a place where the provider can see the other children?
- Is the changing table in good condition with no broken or missing pieces?
- Does the provider wear gloves and wash his/her hands before and after diapering?
- Is the area sanitized after each changing?

### Notes:

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# Toddler Child Care Checklist

Evaluating your child care options is hard work. Make a copy of these pages to remind you of some things to look for when visiting the child care providers you are considering. Don't forget to bring a pen and take notes, there's a lot to remember!

## Questions to ask the provider

### Licensing

- Are you licensed by DCFS? May I see your license?
- Do you have any assistants?
- How many children are you licensed to take care of?
- How many other toddlers do you take care of?

### Training and Experience

- Are you trained in CPR and first aid?
- What is your educational background?
- Do you have any special training in child care?
- Are your assistants trained in CPR and first aid?

### Sleeping

- Will my baby have his/her own crib for sleeping?
- How long is naptime and at what time?
- Can I bring a blanket/toy from home to make my child feel more at home?
- Are pacifiers allowed at naptime?
- What is planned for children who don't nap or wake up early?
- Can my child sleep later than the set time?
- Are sheets washed regularly?

### Diapering/Toileting

- Do I need to provide diapers and wipes?
- How often will you change my child?
- Do you assist with potty training?
- How often are children taken to the bathroom?

### Eating

- Is food/milk provided?
- Do I need to bring food due to my child's allergies or dietary restrictions?
- Do I need to label my child's food?
- Does my child have to taste everything that is served? What if he/she doesn't like what is served?
- Is the food cut into bite sized pieces for the children?

### Schedule and Fees

- What are the hours of your program?
- How much is the weekly fee?
- Are there any other fees? (registration, late, supplies, potty training, etc.)
- Do I pay when my child does not come or when you are closed?
- Do you accept payments from the state?
- Will I have to pay before I am approved?

*Note: if you do have to pay the provider upfront, you may want the provider to sign a note saying that they will pay you back when the state pays him/her.*

## Policies and Procedures

- Is there a handbook explaining all of your policies?
- Do you have an assistant or “back-up” person if you are sick or on vacation?
- Will you talk to me daily about my child's day?
- Am I welcome to visit or call any time?
- Can you give me the names of 3 parents I can call as references?

## Things to observe

### Child Care Areas

- Are the areas used for child care safe and clean?
- Is the environment comfortable and soothing?
- Is there enough room for my child to crawl or walk around?
- Are there pets on the premises? If so, what kind and are they around the children?
- Is the environment well lit, ventilated and heated properly?

### Safety

- Are there working smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers?
- Are electrical outlets and wiring covered?
- Are dangerous items (knives, cleaning supplies, medications) stored out of reach?
- If there are stairways, is a safety gate or door in place?
- Are exits easily accessible in case of emergency?
- Is the furniture in good condition with no broken or missing pieces?

## Does the Provider...

- Appear to be loving, gentle and friendly?
- Seem to enjoy the children?
- Respond to children who need to be fed or changed?
- Supervise children at all times?
- Give each child individual attention?
- Handle conflicts without losing patience?

## Development, Learning and Activities

- Are there clean, safe, toys, activities and games that are appropriate for my child?
- Does the provider talk, read and play games with the children?
- Does the provider encourage children to explore new things?
- Are children encouraged to practice self-help skills like picking up toys and washing hands?

## Diapering / Toileting Area

- Is there a diapering area? Is it in a place where the provider can see the other children?
- Is the changing table in good condition with no broken or missing pieces?
- Does the provider wear gloves and wash his/her hands before and after diapering?
- Is the area sanitized after each changing?
- Do children wash their hands with soap after toileting?
- Are there potty seats and foot stools to aid in potty training?

# Preschool Checklist

Not all preschool programs are the same. It's very important to visit each program that you are interested in and ask lots of questions so you can find the best one for your child. Some of these questions may be asked directly, while others rely on observation. Don't forget to bring a pen and take notes, there's a lot to remember!

## About the provider

- Do the teachers have training and education in caring for children?
- Do the teachers seem happy in their work and plan on staying at the center?
- Do the teachers set a good example in how they interact with the children and each other?
- Do the teachers respect each child's individuality with respect to learning styles, self-expression and creativity?
- Does the provider give parents regular feedback on their child's progress and daily activities?

## About the program

- Do the teachers take time to speak with children individually?
- Are the activities, books and toys right for the age of your child?
- Do the teachers read books to the children?
- Do the children have daily opportunities for artistic expression through various forms of art and music?
- Do the children get to play-act and pretend with costumes, hats, puppets, etc.?
- Is there a balance between group and individual activities?

- Do the children have regular supervised outdoor play time?
- Are field trips and special events planned periodically? Are permission slips given to parents to sign?
- Is the curriculum posted for parents to view?
- Is there a handbook or contract that explains the program?

## Discipline

- Does the provider allow children to use newly developed skills while being patient with accidents and setbacks?
- Are there clear, consistent rules that are stated positively (like, "do this" instead of "don't do this")?
- Do teachers praise children when they do the right thing or does it seem like they are always saying "NO!"?
- Do you agree with the provider's discipline style?

*Teachers should be helping your child to become independent and self-confident, learn communication and social skills and grow both emotionally and physically.*



# My Child

Fill out this form so that you'll have all of your child's important information in one place. You may want to make copies for child care providers or babysitters.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex:      Male    Female

Birthdate:    /       /

Blood type: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifying birthmarks or scars (if any):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Allergies (food or medications):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Chronic illnesses (like asthma, diabetes or other):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Special needs (any physical or developmental disabilities your child may have):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Medications and dosages (medications your child takes regularly):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Child's doctor:

Doctor's phone number:

Preferred hospital:

In case of emergency call:

Relationship to child:

Day phone:

Evening phone:

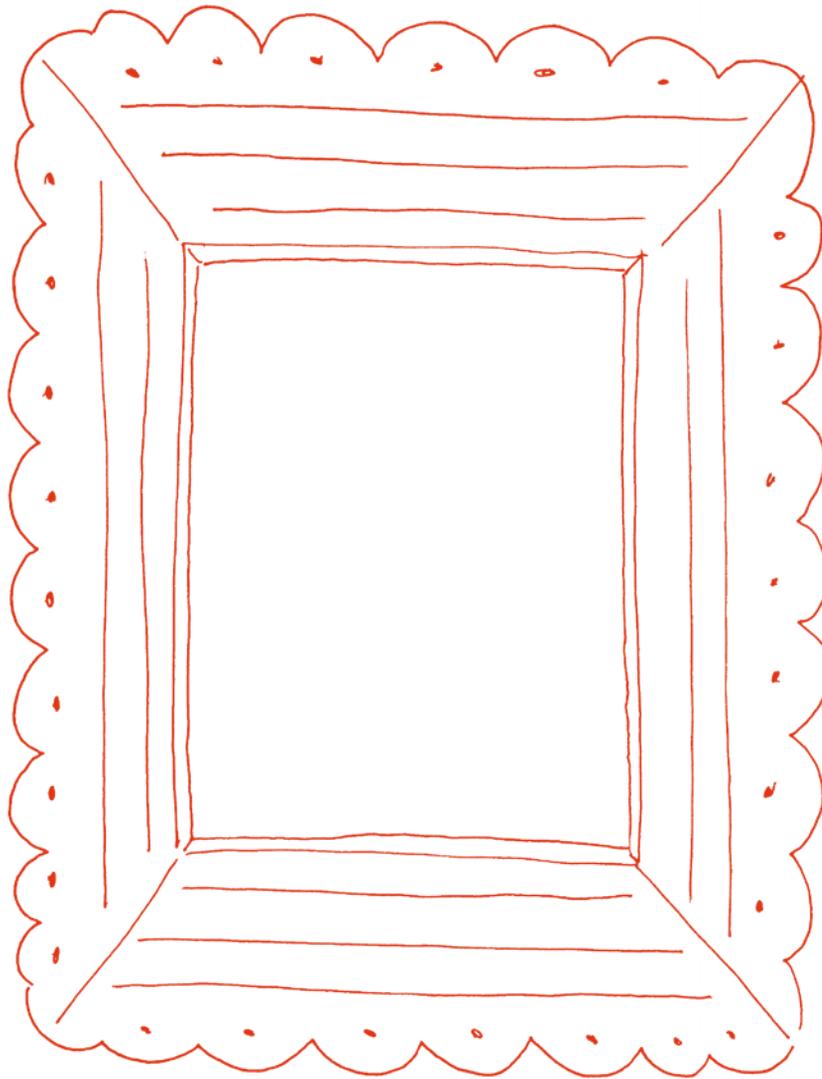
(second choice)

Name:

Relationship to child:

Day phone:

Evening phone:



**My child's name:**

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**Child's age at time of photo:**

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# My Stuff

Fill out this form so that you'll have all of your important information in one place in case of emergency. You may want to make copies.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex:  Male  Female

Birthdate:     /     /

Blood type: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

School address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

School phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Caseworker (1): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Caseworker (2): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Caseworker (3): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Child Care provider (1): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Child Care provider (2): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies (food or medications): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Chronic illnesses  
(like asthma, diabetes or other):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Medications and dosages  
(list all medications you take regularly):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## My doctor:

Doctor's phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred hospital: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In case of emergency call: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Day phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_

# Important Resources

## Teen Parent Project

### Illinois Action for Children

1340 S. Damen Ave., 3rd fl  
Chicago, IL 60608

[teenparent@actforchildren.org](mailto:teenparent@actforchildren.org)

[www.actforchildren.org](http://www.actforchildren.org)

1-312-823-1100

## Department of Children and Family Services — DCFS

Child Care information — Cook County child care licensing information, including complaints against child care providers

[www.state.il.us/dcfs](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs)

1-312-328-2464

## Illinois Department of Human Services — Information and Referrals

Information on TANF, child care, children's health, parenting classes, WIC and immunizations

[www.dhs.state.il.us](http://www.dhs.state.il.us)

1-800-843-6154

## Chicago Public Schools Screening Services for Special Needs

for help identifying if a child has disabilities or special health needs

[www.cps.edu](http://www.cps.edu)

1-773-553-1800

## Children's Law Project of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago

[www.lafchicago.org](http://www.lafchicago.org)

1-312-341-1070

## Illinois Department of Public Health All Kids Hotline

Illinois' program to provide health care to all kids

[www.allkids.com](http://www.allkids.com)

1-866-255-5437

## Cook County State's Attorney

Child Support Enforcement Division

1-312-345-2200

## DCFS Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-252-2873

## Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

Report child abuse or neglect

[www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org)

1-800-422-4453

## More phone numbers:

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action for  
children

Illinois Action for Children

[www.actforchildren.org](http://www.actforchildren.org)

312.823.1100