

Illinois revamps laws

*Adoption reforms
make state a national model*

BY JULIE TYE

The Illinois Adoption Reform Act, signed into law by Gov. Rod Blagojevich this summer, makes Illinois the model for children's rights as well as those of birth parents and adoptive parents.

The bill does a number of

After a bitterly contested struggle with prospective adoptive parents who had a history of drug abuse, Tamia was returned to her mother and grandmother in Illinois.

Specific provisions of the new law include:

- Requiring all private adoption agencies to be tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code by August 2007, which eliminates opportunities for profiteering.
- Requiring adoption service providers to be licensed as child welfare agencies.
- Establishing a statewide adoption complaint registry and a toll-free number for the public to help families find out whether the agency they are considering has a history of licensing violations.
- Requiring adoption service providers to disclose policies, fees and any circumstances relevant to a child's placement (such



things. Key among them is the elimination of profiteering among agencies placing children with adoptive families and the regulation of out-of-state placement agencies and facilitators.

Out-of-state agencies will no longer be allowed to advertise in Illinois without aligning themselves with a licensed, Illinois-based, nonprofit agency. The law was passed in the wake of the Baby Tamia case.

In that case, Tamia's mother, Carmen McDonald, was suffering from postpartum depression when she was pressured to place her infant daughter for adoption with a Utah-based agency doing business in Illinois.

as his health) to prospective adoptive parents before adoption proceedings.

- Banning unlicensed organizations or individuals from advertising adoption services in Illinois and establishing penalties for deceptive advertising by adoption agencies.
- Establishing a Bill of Rights for both birth parents and adoptive parents.

Julie Tye is the president and chief executive officer of The Cradle, a nonprofit, licensed and accredited adoption agency in Evanston founded in 1923. For more information, call (847) 475-5800 or visit www.cradle.org.