

It's Our Little Secret, Inc.  
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# Press Kit

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# I. Overview

It's Our Little Secret (IOLS) is a non-profit organization comprised of volunteers dedicated to providing a voice to emotionally, physically, and sexually abused children and teens through advocacy, mentoring, and creative expression. It is IOLS' mission to promote a healthy recovery for abused children and youth, and to stop the destructive future behavioral patterns of the abused towards their own and other children.

This is an important charity that aids children, who have already experienced so much, gain a sense of community caring and personal worth to help them achieve their great potential. It is estimated that nearly 7,000 children will enter the foster care program over the next year alone. Without the proper nurturing support required for their developmental and formative years, these children are at greater risk for emotional and behavioral problems later in life. As a community, it serves our interests to support their mission to promote positive messaging and personal enrichment.

# II. About IOLS

It's Our Little Secret (IOLS) is a non-profit organization comprised of volunteers dedicated to providing a voice to emotionally, physically, and sexually abused children and teens through advocacy, mentoring, and creative expression. It is IOLS' mission to promote a healthy recovery for the abused children and youth, and to stop the destructive future behavioral patterns of the abused towards their own and other children.

It's Our Little Secret's goal to make a difference in the lives of the children and youth through our various programs and services. It is our goal that the youth we serve will learn to love themselves and enjoy life; learn to live and not just survive.

IOLS offers a comprehensive program of support for children within the foster care system that includes mentoring and educational support as well as targeted programs that help heal and empower them with coping skills and self-esteem building methods.

Founded in October 2009, IOLS has grown dramatically, thanks to the success of our programs and generous support within the community. We employ only the best, clinically proven programs designed to empower children in ways that help them become successful, well-grounded adults. Our goal is to break the cycle of violence and help children become young adults that are caring, driven to succeed and ready for the challenges that lay ahead. Every child has different needs so our programs are structured with flexibility to address the challenges specific to each child.

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## Gifts and Financial Support

It's Our Little Secret is organized as a nonprofit corporation, and operates under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is, therefore, exempt from federal and state income taxes, except as to unrelated business income. Contributions to It's Our Little Secret are deductible under section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code.

It's Our Little Secret Inc. **Federal Taxpayer I.D. Number** is **27-1091802**. It's Our Little Secret Inc.'s **IRS 990 Statement** and **Audited 2010 Financials** can be viewed in PDF by May 2011. \*990N Submitted for 2009

## Our Programs

**Teen Support Group:** This structured group for teens (13-18) who have suffered sexual and physical abuse meets weekly to help teens identify the impact of the abuse, trust issues and help them identify triggers and effective coping skills to aid in the healing process.

**Learn to Trust Again:** *Volunteer mentors will provide the emotional support to the abused children and teens by listening to their stories, sharing their own experiences, and cultivating a healthy environment for them to start the building blocks of trust.*

**This Feels Wrong:** *This is a play where elementary school children learn about the uh-oh feeling. The program provides children with the knowledge and skills they need to help protect themselves from undesirable situations and harm.*

**Give Me Back the Power to Choose Abstinence Program:** *This program provides teens with the tools to cope with the past, and move forward by empowering them to make healthy, desirable choices.*

**God, Can You Hear Me?:** *This is faith-based program designed to help restore a child's faith in God & humanity. This program is managed by a chaplain and is intended as a year round program with opportunities for children to ask questions and explore their faith in a nurturing and impactful way.*

**Community Outreach Programs:** *IOLS brings our Creative Expressive Sessions to many of our community partners, including youth in hospitals and other treatment facilities.*

**Community Art Projects:** *IOLS collaborates with many partner organizations to create public works of art in order to beautify and bring creativity to the environments of the children we serve. In addition, the projects develop and encourage a sense of community among the youth who co-create them.*

## Seasonal Projects & Events

### **2010 Backpack Drive**

*This summer, IOLS hosted its inaugural Back 2 School Backpack Drive. The goal of the drive was to collect 200 filled backpacks for children in foster care. Donors from all across the area generously supported the program by purchasing backpacks and school supplies or by providing funds needed to purchase the supplies on behalf of foster children in our area.*

### **November 15, 2010 - Toy Drive**

*There are currently 16,160 children in the Illinois foster care system, please help IOLS reach its goal of one toy per foster care child! Unused Toys needed for all ages!*

### **November 19, 2010 - IOLS 1 Year Anniversary. Party for Sponsors and Donors**

### **February 2011 - IOLS presents Touching Lives through Theatre and Comedy A Night of Laughter were Teens can have a good time and be themselves!**

IOLS is also proud to offer Touching Lives through Theatre and Comedy, A day of Laughter were Teens can have a good time and be themselves!

### **April 2011 – IOLS Run/Walk for Healing & National Child Abuse Awareness Month**

### **August 2011 – Family Fun Fest**

#### Board Member Profile:

Kristie Sams-Faulkner (Founder of IOLS) serves as Chairman and CEO of It's Our Little Secret, Mrs. Sams-Faulkner serves as the organization's key spokesperson and has primary responsibility for fund development and overall oversight of the organization's business. Kristie has a B.A. in Finance from DePaul University in Chicago Illinois. Kristie has over eleven years of experience as a Regional Controller, Corporate Controller and Interim CFO. Kristie then founded C&C Event Planning & Mgt., Inc., in 2005, a successful full service event planning and management firm. She then founded It's Our Little Secret in 2009. Kristie is married to Melvin Faulkner and has two children; a son named Caleb and a daughter named Carly.

Maebelle Obispo-Emery serves as the Vice President of Corporate Development for IOLS. In this role Mrs. Obispo-Emery promotes the growth, quality and sustainability of IOLS's programs and initiatives. Mrs. Obispo-Emery oversees IOLS's national grant development strategy and serves as a catalyst for business analysis and strategy development for IOLS programs and initiatives. Mrs. Obispo-Emery also is the corporate officer who directly interfaces with major corporations to form joint alliances and cause marketing to benefit It's Our Little Secret. Maebelle has a B.A. in Political Science from DePaul University in Chicago Illinois. Maebelle is married to Jason Emery and has two children; a son named Austin and a daughter named Isabelle.

Jannette Brambila serves as Vice President of Marketing for It's Our Little Secret. Ms. Brambila's primary function is to supervise fundraising activities for the organization.

Clinicians:

**Teen Support Group:** Kelly Hilton, MA, NCC - Kelly has a master's degree in counseling from the University of North Carolina. Kelly has worked as a school counselor at Marian Central Catholic High School for the past three years. Prior to working as a guidance counselor, Kelly was employed at KinderMourn, a non-profit agency in Charlotte, North Carolina. As the children's program director, Kelly conducted individual counseling sessions and lead structured support groups for grieving children/youth who had experienced the death of a close loved one. Throughout her career, Kelly has worked with children ages 4-18 with a focus on positive decision-making skills.

**Psycho- Educational Support Group for Adult Survivors:** Dr. Choate, LPC, NBCC, is an associate professor and has been at LSU since August 1999. She is the coordinator of the community counseling track within the counselor education program. Her research interests include counseling issues and interventions for working with girls and women, college student wellness, and counselor preparation. She is the author of the 2008 book, *Girls' and Women's Wellness: Contemporary Counseling Issues and Interventions*, published by the American Counseling Association press. She has published over 20 articles in peer refereed journals including the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *Counselor Education and Supervision*, and the *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*. Dr. Choate was the 2004-2006 editor of the *Journal of College Counseling*, and an editorial board member of the *Journal of Counseling and Development*. She is the 2009-2010 chair of the American Counseling Association Publications Committee. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor and is a member of the Louisiana Licensed Professional Counselors Board of Examiners. Dr. Choate has volunteered as an outreach presenter to over 30 groups of girls and women in the Baton Rouge community on the topics of sexual assault prevention and eating disorders prevention. She teaches *Introduction to Counseling Services*, *Counseling Skills and Interventions*, *Analysis of the Individual, Group Counseling*, *Girls' and Women's Issues in Counseling*, and *Community Practicum*.

### III. Appendix

#### **The Need is Real**

Approximately 260,000 calls of alleged parental neglect and abuse are received each year to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS, the Department). One out of four of these calls are determined to warrant further action and are referred for formal investigation by local offices. These approximately 67,000 reports of suspected abuse or neglect involving about 110,000 children set into motion a sequence of decisions by DCFS and the courts that commence with the question of safety: Is there credible evidence to find that a child has been maltreated as defined under the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act. \*

In 2006, in slightly more than one out of four investigations of reported abuse and

neglect, DCFS investigators found credible evidence to indicate approximately 27,000 children for maltreatment. This is down from approximately 53,000 indicated cases of abuse or neglect in 1995.

For children indicated for abuse or neglect, child protective services (CPS) investigators must next make a decision about stability: can the child be safely left or served in the home, or must he or she be removed and taken into state protective custody? In approximately four out of ten cases of indicated child maltreatment, DCFS will refrain from any further involvement with the family. This can happen because the investigator determines that the children are no longer at substantial risk as a result of changed circumstances. In the remaining 60% of indicated cases, if it is desirable that the indicated perpetrator (mostly birth parents) stay involved in the care of the children and if it is determined that it is safe for them to do so, DCFS will make "reasonable efforts" to prevent removal and instead supervise the children in the home as an "intact family" case.

In recent years, approximately 10,000 family cases with 20,000 children were opened for intact family services by DCFS and private agencies. Safety considerations necessitated 5,700 children be removed into state protective custody for a period of 48 hours. DCFS must make its case before a juvenile court judge that there is an "urgent and immediate" necessity for retaining them longer in temporary state custody. In about ten percent of child removals, DCFS allows protective custody to lapse and the child is returned home. The remaining children are retained in foster care. Disruption of regular parental care, even if it is abusive and neglectful parenting, can be extremely stressful to children. To minimize the trauma, every effort is made to place the child with a trusted relative or foster family in close proximity to their home of origin, school or neighborhood.

DCFS places approximately 45% of entering children with relatives who pass home safety standards and criminal background checks (up from 1/3 in 2000). The remaining children are placed in family foster care, group homes and residential treatment facilities. Approximately one-third of all foster children in Illinois are placed within five miles of their parents' home and 40% of children in sibling groups of all sizes are placed together in the same home.

\* Statistics and summary information provided by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (<http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/index.shtml>)

## **In Their Own Words**

*The following stories were featured in the study, "[CONDITIONS OF CHILDREN IN OR AT RISK OF FOSTER CARE, IN ILLINOIS AN ASSESSMENT OF THEIR SAFETY, STABILITY, CONTINUITY, PERMANENCE, AND WELL-BEING](#)," by the Children and Family Research Center School of Social Work, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Nancy Rolock, M.A. and Mark F. Testa, Ph.D.) and reprinted with permission in the June 19, 2006 edition of People magazine.*

### **Kim Brown-Riley**

I am 19 years old and, 18 years ago, I entered the Department of Children and Family Services as a foster child. My mother allowed physical abuse as well as

sexual abuse to happen to my siblings and me. In fact, it was my mother that tried to kill me and now I have permanent body marks to constantly remind me of the event, as well as other scars from different incidents. The sister who was next to me in age, and I, went to the same foster home but my brother was sent to another home. I visited him annually in appointed supervised meetings. My oldest sister stayed with my biological family. She suffered from MS. I didn't see her again until I went to her funeral two years ago. I am an orphan now and now my older sister has died also. I am the youngest of my biological family and now there are only 3 of us left from this family. Three of us left...

During the beginning of foster care, when I first entered, I didn't talk - I was unresponsive. It took me until age 3 to finally say a word and of course by then, I had developed a speech impediment. My biological sister who had first joined me in the foster home slept with a knife under her pillow and hid the keys at night - this was the first reason why we were split up. She came back years later and we were reunited, but then she went away again; this happened constantly throughout both our childhoods. She was always in and out of my foster home. I never had a chance to really know her and develop a deep relationship. I only had enough time to remember her face and name. She was just another foster child. I quickly adapted to this situation but I always wondered what was outside - in the place where foster children went when they left my foster home. I never got the opportunity to find out. The one foster home I was placed in as a one-year old baby became my adoptive home at age 11.

Now, eight years later, at age of 19, I am a junior at the University of Illinois, majoring in Psychology with a minor in Afro American studies. I want to continue advocating for kids in the DCFS system, as I do now with the Project FYSH program. I plan to go to graduate school, concentrating on behavioral psychology in adolescents and young children. I want to develop research that seeks to understand what can best be done for teenagers and youth who enter the Children and Family Services system. I want things to improve...I want things to change...

### **Rebekah Childers**

Intelligent, resilient, and beautiful – these are three words that best describe me. I am an 18-year-old junior at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where I am currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Advertising. I am a sister of 4 girls and 2 boys. My siblings are very important to me, as are other family members and the boyfriend I have managed to hang on to. I was born in Detroit, Michigan, the third child of seven. I grew up in various homes with relatives, foster parents, and my biological parents as well.

Growing up without stable parents and strong family relationships was hard for me, but it has made me who I am today. I am a person that is forever striving to build relationships and family for myself, a person that believes kindness is a treasure to be shared.

### **Statistical Data**

There is a link between abuse suffered as a child and predicting future criminal behavior:

-Almost five children die every day as a result of child abuse. More than three out of four are under the age of 4. It is estimated that between 60-85% of child fatalities due to maltreatment are not recorded as such on death certificates.

-A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds.

-Ninety percent of child sexual abuse victims know the perpetrator in some way; 68% are abused by family members.

-Child abuse occurs at every socio-economic level, across ethnic and cultural lines, within all religions and at all levels of education.

-About 30% of abused and neglected children will later abuse their own children, continuing the horrible cycle of abuse.

-About 80% of 21 year olds who were abused as children met criteria for at least one psychological disorder.

-Abused children are 25% more likely to experience teen pregnancy.

-Children who experience child abuse & neglect are 59% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28% more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30% more likely to commit violent crime.

-Nearly 2/3 of the people in treatment for drug abuse reported being abused as children.

-14% percent of all men and 36% of women in prison in the USA were abused as children.

-Children who have been sexually abused are 2.5 times more likely develop alcohol abuse.

-Children who have been sexually abused are 3.8 times more likely develop drug addictions.

Sources:

*Centers of Disease Control and Prevention and The Federal Administration for Children and Families. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr>, Prevent Child Abuse America: Current Trends in Child Abuse Reporting & Fatalities: The 2000 Fifty State Survey, National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research: Prevent Child Abuse America; Current Trends in Child Abuse Reporting and Fatalities: The Results of the 1997 Annual Fifty State Survey, Lung, C. & Daro D. (1996) Current Trends in Child Abuse Reporting and Fatalities: The Results of the 1995 Annual Fifty State Survey. Chicago: National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse.*

*<http://www.childabuse.com/fs9.htm>, US Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children & Families. Child Maltreatment 2003: Summary of Key Findings, National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse & Neglect Information. Long-term Consequences of Child Abuse & Neglect 2005*