

Mother adopts her own kids

New Illinois law restores parental rights

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CHICAGO— For the first time in Illinois, a mother has adopted her own children under a new state law that reunites families.

The new law restores parental rights to rehabilitated birth parents who previously had their rights terminated by the court and whose children were put up for adoption by blood relatives.

More than 14 years ago, Yolanda Miller, mother of 11 children, had a chronic substance abuse problem. She was hooked on crack cocaine and unable to properly care for her children. The Department of Children and Family Services removed the children from the home, a court terminated her parental rights, and the children were put up for adoption by relatives,

But Miller, who says she never stopped loving her children, never lost sight of her responsibility.

"I knew my mom took over, and I knew that it wasn't my mom's job to raise my kids," Miller told reporters at the Thompson Center today. "That was my job."

Miller's parental rights to four of her children have been restored. The four of them -- two teenaged boys and 27-year-old twin girls -- were with their mother this morning as she talked about her hard-fought battle against addiction.

"This is a law whose time had come," said State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), the sponsor of the new law. "Clearly Yolanda's children wanted to be adopted as adults to their mother, and wanted to be their mother's child again. So that speaks volumes, I think. And their mother wanted very badly for that to happen -- so badly that she got her life in order."

Yolanda Miller has five more adult children who wish to have her rights to them restored. A court date is pending.