

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

From the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

Department of Human Services

OCYF Personnel Updates

Lindsey Glezen, Division of Programs, joined the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) as a Human Services Analyst in the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) and Independent Living Unit in September 2023. Lindsey comes to OCYF having served as a SWAN supervisor for Justice Works. She spent twelve years working for the Lackawanna Office of Children and Family Services serving in many different roles with eight of those years as an Independent Living Coordinator. Lindsey will serve as Pennsylvania's Independent Living Coordinator which includes the management of the Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) and FosterEd programs, National Youth and Transition Database (NYTD) and Credit Reporting. Lindsey can be reached at ljglezen@pa.gov.

Rachael Harvey, Division of Operation, was promoted to a Human Services Analyst Trainer for the Learning, Development and Analytics Unit. Rachael joined ChildLine in October 2020 as a Hotline Caseworker. Before joining the Division of Operations, she was a Vocational Adjustment Services Worker at Danville State Hospital (DSH). She also assisted the nursing department at DSH by working overtime as a Psychiatric Aide. Prior to this, she was an Adult Intensive Case Manager and Resource Coordinator at CMSU and a Caseworker for Montour County Children and Youth. Rachael has a bachelor's degree in communications from Bloomsburg University. Rachael can be reached at racharvey@pa.gov.

National Adoption Month

November is National Adoption Awareness Month. This is also a terrific opportunity for agencies to celebrate children and families and promote permanency. This year's theme is "Empowering Youth: Finding Points of Connection." For more information on National Adoption Month 2023, please visit [Spread the Word - National Adoption Month - Child Welfare Information Gateway](#).

Once again, the OCYF will be issuing \$65,000 in mini-grants to agencies and coalitions across the

state to support recruitment and/or awareness events during the month of November. If you are having an event that you would like to have featured on the SWAN Facebook page, please contact Jamie Bailey at jbailey@pa.gov. All requests must be in the form of a picture (jpg or png).

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Federal Review 2023

Pennsylvania has been selected to participate in an NYTD Review by the Administration of Children and Families (ACF). The review is scheduled for the week of November 13 -17, 2023. Upon further collaboration and discussion with ACF, a full federal review of Pennsylvania's NYTD policies and procedures will not be conducted in November, but rather at the recommendation of ACF, a modified review focused on the technical data reporting aspects of NYTD will take place. This modified technical data review will allow Pennsylvania the opportunity to address identified technical challenges to better improve NYTD data collection. Additional communication will be provided in the future. Questions about the NYTD Review can be directed to Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov.

National Youth in Transition Database

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) collects information in the following areas: Baseline Population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17), Served Population (any youth or young adult receiving independent living services regardless of age) and Follow-up Population (youth surveys at age 19 and 21 depending on Cohort period). Pennsylvania is currently in Cohort 4 for 21-year-old Follow-up Surveys as of October 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024. Counties have until April 15, 2024, to submit their follow-up surveys as well as served population data. Counties can log onto www.getnytdpa.org to enter their served and survey data. NYTD questions can be directed to Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov or at 717-214-7385.

If you have new staff, need assistance with resetting your password, forgot your username, or have other technical assistance questions related to NYTD, please contact the NYTD Help Desk at 800-436-4105 or getnytd@pcgus.com.

Chafee Education and Training Grant Programs

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application and instructions for the 2023 – 2024 academic year are available on PHEAA's website at [Chafee Education and Training Grant Program \(pheaa.org\)](https://pheaa.org). The application deadline is December 31, 2023. Please assist youth with completing the correct academic year application.

As a reminder, current ETG award recipients will be automatically enrolled for the next academic year and do not need to complete another ETG application. The ETG award amount cannot exceed the student's cost of attendance.

Please contact the PHEAA at 1-800-831-0797 with questions about the Chafee applications or a youth's current application status. Questions regarding the ETG program can be directed to Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@pa.gov or at 717-787-7056.

Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program

The Fostering Independence through Education Program, known as FosterED, requires Pennsylvania postsecondary institutions to award a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees for Pennsylvania resident youth who meet Chafee ETG eligibility requirements and have applied for all available federal and state grants. Tuition and mandatory fee waivers apply to both public (state) colleges and universities, community colleges, private post-secondary institutions, and other eligible schools. Youth are eligible to receive the waivers for 5 years, which need not be consecutive, or until age 26.

In addition to the waivers, each post-secondary institution must appoint a Point of Contact (POC) to assist youth with eligibility, technical assistance, and other resources that may be available to them on and off campus. County and private provider IL Caseworkers/Coordinators may be contacted by the POC to verify a youth's eligibility. This is a critical step in assisting youth with verifying their eligibility when entering post-secondary education and financial aid packages being awarded.

All youth who apply for Chafee ETG are automatically evaluated for FosterEd. This is no separate application.

Each post-secondary education institution is required to have their identified POC listed on their website. A list of POCs can be found on the Center for Schools and Communities [website](https://www.csc.pa.gov/).

Additional information about the tuition waiver can be found at [PHEAA.org/FosterEd](https://pheaa.org/FosterEd).

Questions related to the FosterED program can be directed to Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@pa.gov or at 717-787-7056.

Credit Reports

All CCYAs are required to run a credit check for all youth in foster care beginning at age 14 from each of the three credit bureaus as required by the Social Security Act §475 (5)(I). [Social Security Act §475 \(ssa.gov\)](https://www.ssa.gov). Each credit bureau has a specific contact person and process to ensure foster care youth credit history checks are completed appropriately. If you have questions regarding the credit report history of foster care youth or are having issues obtaining a credit history from one of the credit bureaus, please contact Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@pa.gov or at 717-787-7056.

Act 118 of 2022

Act 118 of 2022, signed by Governor Wolf on November 3, 2022, amends Title 67 (Public Welfare) and Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) to include provisions relating to family finding, Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), transition planning and data collection. Pennsylvania continues to focus on reducing the number of older youth aging out of the child welfare system without the support and guidance of a permanent connection. Act 118 ensures that each child leaving foster care at 18 years of age or older is prepared for the transition to successful adulthood. All provisions of Act 118 took effect on January 2, 2023. OCYF released guidance related to Act 118 in a Special Transmittal on June 28, 2023.

Act 131 of 2022

The OCYF Bulletin #3700-23-01, entitled Implementation of Act 131 (Resource Family Legislation Act), repeal of Act 68 of 2005 (The Resource Family and Adoption Process Act), and repeal of Act 73 of 2005 (The Resource Family Care Act), was issued on June 28, 2023. Act 131 defines "resource family", addresses the legal responsibilities of public and private children and youth agencies, and protects a resource family's fair consideration as a permanent resource. Bulletin #3700-23-01 provides clarification and direction to both public and private children and youth agencies regarding the implementation of Act 131. This Bulletin rescinds and replaces Bulletin 3700-08-01 Implementation of Act 68 of 2005 (The Resource Family and Adoption Act), Act 73 of 2005 (The Resource Family Care Act) and Act 76 of 2007.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) issued guidance to school entities on August 30, 2023, regarding, *Change in Age of Eligibility for Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)*. The communication informed school entities that effective no later than September 5, 2023, all students entitled to FAPE and the rights and procedural safeguards under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Chapter 14 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code may remain enrolled in public school until they turn 22 years of age. This includes students who turned 21 and exited during or after the 2022-2023 school term.

PDE will be contacting students with disabilities who turned 21 and exited during or after the 2022-2023 school term. Local Education Agency (LEA) should also contact those students and provide them the option to re-enroll and access FAPE until their 22nd birthday.

How does this apply to youth in care with County Children and Youth Agency (CCYA)?

If you have a student who is eligible under IDEA, they are entitled to FAPE until the last day of the age of 21. If you have a student on or around the age of 21, contact education decision makers and school entities regarding Individual Education Plan (IEP) re-evaluations and revisions, to ensure their plans reflect the new changes.

CCYAs and Independent Living (IL) workers are encouraged to coordinate IL services with a student's IEP transition planning team to maximize the benefit to the youth. Transition services within the IEP often overlap with service plans within IL services. The IEP and IL transition plan must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment and, when appropriate, independent living skills. Both transition plans must be based on the student's needs and interests, and for IEPs, must be updated every year. Transition services can include instruction in using public transportation, budgeting, cooking, access to college preparation programming (including information on applications for Chafee Grants and other financial aid resources), high school and post-secondary vocational programming and linkages to OVR.

While FAPE under the IDEA does not include education beyond grade 12, there is a requirement to continue to offer to develop and implement an IEP for eligible students with a disability who graduate from high school with a credential other than a regular high school diploma until the student has exceeded the age of eligibility for FAPE.

OCYF Trauma Team

The OCYF Trauma Team continues to focus on the trauma awareness phase of the Trauma-Informed PA (TIPA) Continuum, ensuring that all county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) and licensed foster care and adoption providers will become trauma-aware by the conclusion of 2023. As defined in the TIPA Plan, trauma awareness occurs when, "the entity becomes aware of trauma, the prevalence of trauma and considers the potential impact on customers and staff."

The team is excited to announce the release of the first in a series of trauma-sensitive trainings. [Developing Trauma Sensitivity in Therapeutic Foster Care](#) has been made available in the Child Welfare Resource Center's E-learn Catalog, [ID# 2412](#). This training explores child welfare practice, specifically relating to therapeutic foster care, through a trauma-sensitive lens. This module is the second in a series designed to transition Pennsylvania's child welfare organizations into being Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered. The sections within this module focus on fundamentals of trauma sensitivity; attachment, relationships, and the brain; signs and symptoms of trauma; implementing trauma-informed principles to respond to trauma; self-care; and resources. This training is designed for therapeutic foster care staff and therapeutic foster care families. This course is eligible for up to three Continuing Education Credits.

Over the course of the summer, OCYF held focus groups to hear from the child welfare workforce about specific needs related to secondary trauma and burnout. This information is being reviewed and areas of support that may be offered are being explored.

Lastly, the OCYF Trauma Team Newsletter has transitioned to OCYF Trauma Tips. This will be offered monthly and include tips for self-care, regulation techniques, and other helpful ways for those serving in child welfare may care for themselves. It is important to remember to care for yourself first.

Any questions related to the work of the OCYF Trauma Team can be sent to the resource account at RA-pwocyftrauma@pa.gov.

Trauma Training Available for Child Welfare Professionals

Again, in partnership with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) is funding trauma training opportunities for all child welfare professionals in Pennsylvania via Lakeside Global. Pennsylvania child welfare professionals serving children in the state can take advantage of

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FREE trainings facilitated by the team at Lakeside Global to become trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-informed, or healing-centered. This also includes Train the Trainer sessions to support trauma-informed sustainability within a child welfare organization.

Communication of available trainings will be distributed soon.

Family First Prevention Services Act

OCYF has added Family First-related content to the Keep Kids Safe website. For information about Pennsylvania-specific Family First information check out our [website](#).

Pennsylvania's Round 3 Child and Family Services Review

Pennsylvania's Round 3 Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) began in 2017. As a result of the 2017 CFSR review, Pennsylvania was required to implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and show increased performance on 10 case review measures relative to baseline data established from the 2017 case review. Pennsylvania successfully completed implementation of the PIP strategies in May of 2022 and successfully increased performance in nine case review measures. During 2022 and 2023, a modified CFSR case review was conducted to focus on the one remaining review measure to pass, Item 14, which evaluates the frequency of quality of casework visits while meeting with children and families. If Pennsylvania did not pass this final measurement, then the state would be subject to an approximate \$1.6 million dollar penalty from ACF.

OCYF is pleased to announce that Pennsylvania passed this federal review. For this measure, Pennsylvania's measurement goal was to reach an 84% strength rating and the final rating came in at 84.6%. While there continues to be additional work to accomplish related to this and all performance measures, it is time to recognize and celebrate this accomplishment. OCYF appreciates the collaboration and partnership of the Child Welfare Resource Center through this federal process. OCYF would also like to extend gratitude and congratulations to the seven counties—Butler, Centre, Mercer, Lycoming, Lehigh, Northampton, and Philadelphia—for all their hard work and dedication in representing Pennsylvania in the Round 3 CFSR. Additionally, an immense thank you to the many CFSR volunteer case reviewers and participants who also worked hard to bring Pennsylvania to this successful conclusion.

American Bar Association (ABA): Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Initiatives

The ABA's Center on Children and the Law Permanency Barriers Project is actively seeking new projects or technical assistance counties.

Technical assistance can range from one training to a few months of engagement. Please reach out if you would like to discuss the ways in which we may be of assistance. Areas in which the ABA is available to help include:

- Improving collaboration and communication between CYS, court, attorneys, and local providers
- How to create a true kin-first culture in your county
- Implementing a race equity lens to child welfare work
- Achieving relational and legal permanence for older youth
- Implementing effective concurrent planning
- Conducting a successful testifying workshop for caseworkers

For more information on Permanency Barriers technical assistance please see: [education-barriers.pdf \(americanbar.org\)](#) or contact Heidi Redlich Epstein at Heidi.epstein@americanbar.org.

Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA)

PSRFA began as a small group in 1974. Since then, they have grown to support children and families involved with foster care, adoption and kinship care along with local foster parent associations and agencies who care for the children they serve throughout the state. PSRFA are supporters of legislation, advocate for family resource care and provide training and education for those seeking guidance. They are a fantastic resource for children and families in these scenarios.

You can learn more about the PSRFA at [Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association | Support For Foster, Adoptive, And Kinship Families \(psrfa.org\)](#).

If you have any further questions, you can contact the PSRFA Office at 1-800-951-5151 or email dkinard@psrfa.org or ktramper@psrfa.org.

Pennsylvania Kinship Navigator Program, KinConnector

The PA KinConnector Program offers kinship caregivers and professionals who work with kinship caregivers support, guidance, training and resources. Please provide kinship caregivers with

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information about PA KinConnector. The PA KinConnector website is www.kinconnector.org and the helpline can be reached at 866-546-2111.

The website includes a comprehensive, guided search feature of resources in the following topic areas: childcare, clothing, financial assistance, food, legal, medical, school, and support groups. Also available on the website are training opportunities for both professionals and kinship caregivers, printable resources, a podcast series called "Kindred Voices," and a newly established virtual Support Group called "Kindred Spirits."

OCYF encourages all county and provider agencies to connect to PA KinConnector and learn more about the services offered, provide new community resource information for website inclusion and to establish partnerships for program growth across the state. Any questions regarding this program can be directed to Diane Michel at OCYF at dmichel@pa.gov or 717-705-2911.

Accurint

Accurint is an online search tool available to every county throughout the state. It is able to assist with family finding efforts, contact information, criminal checks and identifying individuals for any type of family engagement meeting. Please be aware that only county employees may be an Accurint Administrator for your county's account. If you or your staff would like training in the Accurint software, please contact Accurint Education Consultant Jessica Kraft at Jessica.Kraft@lexisnexisrisk.com or 937-286-7660

Additionally, you can look up trainings on the National Training Calendar. If you have any questions about Accurint, please contact Jessica Slagel at OCYF at jandrewssl@pa.gov or 717-787-2726.

Mandated Reporter Training

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) continues to offer virtual Mandated Reporter Trainings at no cost to mandated reporters in Pennsylvania. Trainings include "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse," which meets all the requirements for training on recognizing and reporting child abuse, as well as "Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse" for mandated reporters who have taken training before and need to take it again. The "Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse" training is designed to help professionals and volunteers respond to disclosures of child abuse in a way that is sensitive and supportive to the child, but without tainting the child's memory. PFSA now has a third training, "Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect." This training will assist professionals and volunteers to

better understand child neglect and how best to respond. The "Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect" training helps participants to recognize signs of neglect in children, determine when and how to make a referral, understand General Protective Services and agency procedures, and develop prevention and intervention strategies.

The trainings are three hours long and available virtually. They are approved by the Departments of Human Services, Education, and State and meet all requirements for training on recognizing and reporting child abuse (to include Act 126 for school employees). The trainings are also approved for continuing education credits under Act 31 (Department of State for health-related licenses) and Act 48 (Department of Education for teachers) at no cost. PFSA will submit your training verification to the Department of State or Education as appropriate on your behalf (details provided during training).

Additional information and training dates can be found on the PSFA website at pafsa.org. For questions or to schedule a session specifically for your organization, please email PFSA at training@pa-fsa.org

If you are in the medical profession (including Emergency Medical Services and school nurses) and wish to schedule training for medical professionals with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) through their Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (EPIC-SCAN), contact AAP at scan@paaap.org or at 866-823-7226.

Media

The #MeetTheKids media campaign is designed to recruit foster and adoptive families across Pennsylvania. The campaign began in January 2023 and will run through December 2023 airing on network and cable television in all six media markets in Pennsylvania. Radio advertisements have also been airing since February and will continue through June 2023. In addition to television and radio, the media campaign includes online media ads on Google, Hulu, Facebook, Instagram and Cumulus that also started in January and will continue through December 2023.

While this media campaign airs, agencies should be prepared to promptly respond to phone calls from prospective foster and adoptive families.

Waiting Child Segments

OCYF funds three waiting child segments across the state designed to find adoptive families for older youth in need of families. *Waiting Child* is aired on KDKA-TV, channel 2, a Pittsburgh CBS

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affiliate; *Val's Kids* is aired on abc27 WHTM in the Harrisburg area; and *A Little Love* is aired on WBRE-TV, channel 28, a Wilkes-Barre NBC affiliate. Waiting child segments have proven to be successful over the years in helping find permanent homes for children in foster care. Contracts will be in place through December 31, 2023.

If you have a child you would like featured on KDKA's Waiting Child, please contact Ja-Neen Jones at TRAC Services for Families at jjones@tracpgh.org or Nikita Lewis at nlewis@diakon-swan.org.

If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WHTM's *Val's Kids*, please contact Alfredo Gonzalez at algonzalez@diakon-swan.org.

If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WBRE's *A Little Love*, please contact Crissy Crawford at ccrawford@diakon-swan.org.

SWAN/IL Google Groups

There are over 1,100 current members of the SWAN/IL ListServ through Google Groups. This is a great way to share confidential information across the network to seek colleague's advice and announce upcoming events. Anyone wishing to join the group must be an employee of a county children and youth agency, SWAN affiliate agency or IL provider. If interested, please contact Isabel Madrigal at imadrigal@diakon-swan.org or 717-558-1223.

Interstate Compact Unit

The PA Interstate Unit does not have the ability to process USPS, FedEx, or UPS "paper mail." When providing any case documents to the Interstate Unit, please use the unit's Resource Accounts, fax, or the Interstate/County DocuShare collection. Case documents include request packets, completed ICPC home studies, 100Bs, supervisory reports, ICAMA documents, etc.

RA-PA-ICPC@pa.gov for ICPC cases

RA-PA-ICAMA@pa.gov for ICAMA cases

717-425-5562 fax

As always, in a runaway situation, continue to email both Amanda Behe at abehe@pa.gov and Natalie Primak at nprimak@pa.gov directly.

Clearance Verification Unit

Childline's, Child Verification Unit (CVU), provides eligible individuals with the following three clearances: Child Abuse History Clearance, FBI Fingerprint Clearance and National Sex Offenders Registry (NSOR). The Pennsylvania (PA) Child

Abuse History clearance can be submitted and paid for online through the Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) self-service portal at [Pennsylvania Child Welfare Information Solution \(state.pa.us\)](https://pennsylvania.childwelfare.gov). Applicants are able to view and print their results online.

CVU will also accept PA Child Abuse History Clearance applications in paper format for anyone who may not have access to the internet. Results for paper application are mailed to the appropriate address noted on the form and within 14 days from the date that application is received in CVU.

The Commonwealth's vendor for digital fingerprinting is IDEMIA (also referred to as Identigo or MorphoTrust). The fingerprint-based background check is a multi-step process. For general questions about FBI clearances, please contact the FBI Background Check Unit at 1-877-371-5422. For IDEMIA registration, processing, or billing questions, please contact IDEMIA/Identigo at 1-844-321-2101. To register online go to [www.Identigo.com](https://www.identigo.com) or call 1-844-321-2101 and listen to the options menu.

CVU is responsible for processing out-of-state clearances for resource parents, including adoptive and foster parents when a resource parent has resided outside of Pennsylvania within the past five years. Effective March 2022, prospective foster and adoptive parents required to obtain an Out-of-State Child Abuse clearance are **no longer required** to submit the clearance to ChildLine for interpretation, **IF** the clearance shows *no result (or no record)*. Out-of-State Child Abuse clearances with **ANY** result or record, **are required** to be submitted to ChildLine for interpretation.

Please visit our website at www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov for additional information regarding the clearance or call us at 877-371-5422.

Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

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www.dhs.pa.gov

From the SWAN Prime Contract

Diakon-SWAN, LLC/Voce

SWAN Prime Contractor Office Move

At the end of October, the SWAN prime contractor office will move to its new location in Camp Hill. Until further notice, please continue to address mail to our post office box:

PO Box 4560,
Harrisburg, PA 17111

More information will follow as we settle into our new location.

IRM: Fourth Edition

The SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual (IRM) fourth edition is now available in the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#). Visitation with incarcerated parents has been correlated with better outcomes for children – keeping connections count! The IRM helps county caseworkers and supervisors engage and case-plan with incarcerated parents. The manual provides protocols for each county prison, including:

- Guidance on written and telephone communication to support parent-child contact;
- Visitation schedules or video visitation to support parent-child visitation; and
- Services available to the incarcerated parent to support reunification and permanency efforts.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been significant changes in facility visitation policies. As of December 2022, some facilities have adopted COVID-19-related policies as routine policy, some facilities still have specific COVID-19-related policies which will remain in effect for an indeterminate amount of time, and other facilities have reverted to their policies prior to COVID-19.

Additionally, this updated resource recognizes most county prisons still accept legal mail to their address while others no longer accept personal mail services and instead have mail sent to a different address altogether.

Thank you to the county prisons throughout Pennsylvania whose staff have been overwhelmingly supportive of this project. Appreciation is also extended to the SWAN LSI paralegals who continue to assist with the ongoing development, accuracy, and success of this project.

Countdown to National Adoption Month!

Only a few short weeks until National Adoption Month in November! Throughout National Adoption Month, our network celebrates permanency through adoption, enhances awareness about the need for permanent families and hosts matching events to promote opportunities for children to experience the belongingness, security and love of a forever family. The SWAN prime contractor has two resources to help plan National Adoption Month events: [Adoption Day Events: A Planner's Guide](#) and [Adoption Awareness and Matching Events: Planning for Success](#). Both guides are housed in the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#).

Important Information on Adoptive and Foster Family Clearances

The prime contractor received clarification from DHS/OCYF concerning the length of time clearances are valid in Pennsylvania for foster, adoptive and permanent legal custodian families related to the Family Profile and Finalization.

DHS/OCYF referenced the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), as the most recent statute, stating clearances are valid for up to 60 months for foster or adoptive parents unless there is a court order providing a different timeframe, such as one year. Therefore, if a court requires clearances to be updated within a year, the public/private child welfare agency needs to comply. If *only* public/private child welfare agency policy is requiring updated clearances and the family has clearances within the 60-month timeframe, then DHS/OCYF will connect with those entities to understand their reasoning and explain DHS/OCYF's interpretation of the law. Please visit the Keep Kids Safe [website](#) for information related to the CPSL and clearances.

The SWAN benchmarks and templates will be updated to include language that allows for 60 months unless there is a court order providing a different timeframe.

Contact your SWAN regional technical assistant with questions.

Legal Training Update

The SWAN legal training team delivered an informational session on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) at the 2023 SWAN/IL Spring Quarterlies. At that time, there was a pending U.S. Supreme Court case, *Brackeen v Haaland*, which called the constitutionality of ICWA into question. The Supreme Court justices issued a majority decision on June 15, 2023, and the legal training team then offered a virtual statewide training opportunity on August 22 to discuss the outcome

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of the case. For those who missed it, the Supreme Court found that ICWA is consistent with congressional powers, and all claims of state commandeering were rejected. As for the claim that ICWA violates equal protection, no determinations were made due to a lack of standing. The result of this ruling is that ICWA remains untouched and all longstanding ICWA practices should continue. The team will be sure to keep the network updated regarding any future movement on this issue. If anyone has questions about the *Brackeen* case, or about ICWA in general, email lsiwarnline@diakon-swan.org.

Happening now: Updated Guidelines for Photographs Submitted to PAE

We've raised the standards for printing posters, which we use at quarterly meetings, and we want to ensure we're showing off our kids in the best possible light. Please do your best to ensure that if the child's face is shown, they smile and look their best. Outdoor shots with natural lighting and neutral backgrounds are often the most pleasing. If you need a non-identifying photograph, check out Tip 5 in the [Strategies for Permanency](#) for some great ideas on how to get the perfect shot. We want to avoid images with graphics pasted on a child to make a photo non-identifying. From a technical standpoint, please send us high-resolution images (at least 1000x1000 or 2-3 MB). Please avoid altering or cropping photos before sending them. Don't forget to take advantage of our network of volunteer photographers who are eager to help capture photographs that reflect the child's true personality and character. If you have questions or need assistance, get in touch with a PAE coordinator.

Resource Family Registry 101

Act 160 of 2004 amended the CPSL, creating the Resource Family Registry (RFR) to collect foster, kinship and adoptive family information. This information is used by counties and affiliates to match Pennsylvania families and children. The accuracy and integrity of the RFR depends on network updates and is crucial to the futures of children and families. Correct and accurate information promotes the match process, ensuring workers contact the correct persons to drive solid communication leading to permanency.

Information from the CY131 form is entered into the RFR and accessed by agencies through their RFR reports. These reports show a family's current address, email, family composition, and if they are "active" or on "hold" for matching with children in the system. It also shows the agency caseworker and their contact information. Any active family must have a complete characteristic section that

must be kept up to date to ensure the SWAN Portal generates an accurate electronic match or PAE customized match. All information on the CY131, including the data named above, must be updated in the portal within 30 days, per the law stated in Act 160 of 2004.

There are three levels of RFR training available. The first is a comprehensive three-hour training on Act 160 of 2004, which includes the SWAN legal team, SWAN Helpline, and PAE family coordinator. Next is an RFR consultation, which the PAE family coordinator conducts through the SWAN RTA. This 1.5 hour session briefly overviews Act 160, including critical terms, and provides a SWAN Portal demonstration of the CY131 and RFR reports. Finally, there is a RFR mini-consultation, a one-on-one training conducted by the PAE family coordinator and agency or affiliate portal users to troubleshoot any issues they face.

If you would like to request RFR training for your agency, reach out to your SWAN RTA. If you have questions about the RFR, contact [Russ McCurdy](#), PAE family coordinator.

What Recruiters Should and Should Not Update in a Child's CY130

We appreciate affiliates taking the initiative to update information for children in the SWAN Portal. However, we would like to clarify that only certain information for a child's CY130 should be edited by someone who doesn't work for the child's county children and youth agency. This information includes the child's alias (if they have one), picture, special needs, behavioral characteristics, public narrative, and additional information. Non-county workers should never update other data, such as a child's permanency goals and dates or TPR status and dates. Only the county is authorized to update that information. Keeping these guidelines in mind will help avoid any legal issues. Get in touch with a PAE coordinator or member of your SWAN team with questions.

Submission Process for Family Matching Extension Assessment

The Family Matching Unit of Service became available July 1, 2022. It is an eight-month unit of service with options for four-month extensions. At the one-year mark, following completion of the initial referral and one extension, the Family Matching Extension Assessment for Unmatched Families must be completed and approved for a second and subsequent extensions to be referred. As of July 1, 2023, there may be families who are at the point of needing a second extension. For those families, affiliates will make the referral for the Family Matching Extension, which will go to

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“pending awaiting more information” in the SWAN Portal. At the same time, affiliates will submit the Family Matching Extension Assessment for Unmatched Families to their SWAN RTA. Once the Extension Assessment is reviewed and approved, the RTA will request the release of the referral and notify the affiliate when it is released. Reach out to your SWAN RTA if you have questions.

Best Practice Reminder for Family Profile/Finalization Referrals

The SWAN program technical assistance team would like to remind permanency workers to refer Family Profile and Finalization Units of Service separately. Recently, it has become common to refer these units simultaneously with the assumption the family will be approved and they have enough knowledge about the child to have thoughtfully made the decision to adopt.

Best practice allows for the family profile process to be completed first. The Family Profile explores the family’s decision-making process, as well as their motivation to adopt. We don’t want to get ahead of the family by referring the Finalization Unit before they are even approved to adopt. Families shouldn’t get caught up in the tide or feel pressured during this stage. In addition, there is always the possibility the family study leads to the family being disapproved. Usually, the children are aware that a finalization worker is assigned and the family is supposedly moving toward adoption. They are the ones most affected when things don’t go as expected. Therefore, children are better served when we make sure we have an approved family who has made the decision to provide permanency before finalization work begins.

If you have any questions about service referrals, contact your SWAN RTA.

SWAN Post-permanency Reminders

The SWAN Post-permanency team would like to remind affiliates of the following items:

- Remember to put your respite costs in the “purchased service” section in the Respite cost and time log.
- To be considered as a formal kinship family, CYS must have been involved with the family previously, but now is no longer involved. A family who has been declared a fit and willing relative is considered a formal kinship family.
- The COVID-19 Emergency Declaration has ended and durable goods may no longer be approved for Respite.
- Notify your Post-permanency technical assistant immediately if you withdraw an

assessment. This is the only way we know if an assessment has been withdrawn and needs to be reassigned.

- The support group rate has increased from \$250/per family/per quarter to \$750/per family/per quarter. Think about starting a group! Contact your SWAN Post-permanency technical assistant for help getting started.
- Complete cost and time logs on a weekly basis to keep an accurate accounting of your practice and travel time.
- Remember for every Respite or Case Advocacy instance invoiced, a Respite event report/monthly report must be filled out.

If you have any questions about these reminders, contact your SWAN Post-permanency technical assistant.

SWAN Helpline Goes Remote

On May 1, 2023, SWAN Helpline operations went fully remote. SWAN Helpline staff are outfitted with softphone equipment and laptops, and staff are able to perform all services the same way we did in the office setting, supporting families interested in fostering or adopting through every stage of the process.

The SWAN Helpline can be reached at 1-800-585-SWAN (7926) or swanhelpline@diakon-swan.org. The SWAN Helpline answers calls live Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm and has an answering service for after hours and weekend calls. Calls are returned the next business day.

Save the Date!

Post-permanency Units of Service Meetings: *Fall and Winter 2023*

October 24, 2023
9:30 to 11:30 am

December 15, 2023
9:30 to 11:30 am

Zoom In on Practice Trainings

The weather is getting colder so grab some hot tea and cozy up to your computer screen for the exciting fall/winter SWAN *Zoom in on Practice* series. To sign up for one of the trainings below, see the invitation sent out by the SWAN prime contractor or contact your SWAN RTA.

- **November 10, 2023**

10:00 to 11:30

Title: Behavioral Interviewing

Description: This workshop addresses leading, behavioral and theoretical interviewing styles. It demonstrates why behavioral interviewing is most conducive to obtaining information that shows a family's ability to provide safety, nurturing and commitment to a child. Strengths-based writing tips help participants effectively present gathered information in written documents.

- **November 28; December 19, 2023**

10:00 to 12:00

Title: Creative Child Profiles: Sensitively Factual

Description: Creativity in Child Profiles is about using all tools and techniques to tell the child's whole story in a way that presents a real child with real strengths and endearing qualities, maintains racial, ethnic and cultural identity and honors the child's self-worth and dignity. This training will focus on creating sensitively factual Child Profiles.

- **December 6; December 12, 2023**

10:00 to 11:30

Title: The Significant Benefits of the Placement Unit of Service

Description: This training will look at the benefits of the Placement Unit of Service. Why do we use it? How does it benefit counties? Can it make a difference in the success of a placement? The Placement Unit of Service recently changed and now focuses heavily on pre-placement work. Come and learn what the Placement Unit of Service has to offer counties, affiliates and families.

- **November 6, 2023** from 10:00 to 12:00;
November 13, 2023 from 9:00 to 12:00
and

November 20, 2023 from 10:00 to 12:00

Title: Post-permanency Assessment Tools Training

Description: Attendees must attend all 3 sessions to receive a Certificate of Training. The risk assessment process determines the degree to which key risk and safety factors are present

in a family situation. This training looks at how to identify those factors and how to interpret them in the context of providing post-permanency services. The training will also look at how to use FACES III. The training will cover incorporating all the information gained from the assessment—including CAFAS and JIFF—into the SWAN Post-permanency Family Support Plan.

SWAN Prime Contract

P.O. Box 4560

471 JPL Wick Drive

Harrisburg, PA 17111-0560

Ph: 717-236-8490 | Fax: 717-236-8510

www.diakon-swan.org | www.adoptpakids.org

 /adoptpa

 /adoptpakids

**From the PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)
Independent Living (IL) Project
University of Pittsburgh**

IL Networking Sessions

IL networking sessions are offered across the state in all regions to support both new and seasoned IL staff in working with older youth. The meetings are driven by staff learning needs and include opportunities to share information, bring in relevant presenters and brainstorm with other staff how to address issues you are experiencing or in which you may need additional support. The groups are now making more intentional efforts to provide educational information related to SWAN and how their services connect to the older youth we serve.

Older Youth Training and Resources

There are several sources of information related to older youth maintained by the Child Welfare Resource Center. These include:

- [PA Youth Advisory Board website](#), which includes information for youth and staff.
- [PA Child Welfare Resource Center website](#), including [webinars](#) specific to older youth
- [PA Youth Advisory Board Facebook page](#)

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Waivers

Fee waivers for both the SAT Reasoning Test and the SAT Subject Test are available for *current high school students* who cannot afford to pay the test fees. SAT Waivers are available for students who are *currently* in high school. If a youth already graduated or did not graduate, but received their GED, the College Board will not accept the fee waiver. There are also a limited number of college application fee waivers. Eligible students can receive a total of four SAT fee waivers during their academic career – two for the SAT Reasoning Test and two for the SAT Subject Tests. If you need to obtain either waiver, please contact Sherri Krodel at slk114@pitt.edu at the Child Welfare Resource Center.

PA Statewide Youth Advisory Board (YAB)

Some of the projects youth are currently working on include finalizing:

- Tips for caseworkers to enhance the relationship between the caseworker and older youth they work with. This resource will allow caseworkers the opportunity to learn directly from older youth how to best support them as they are navigating being in foster care.
- A quick reference guide to information located in the Know Your Rights information.
- The YAB Welcome Guide, which will include YAB resources and tools for older youth upon entry into foster care. This guide will include existing YAB resources and information regarding Independent Living Services, youths' rights while in care, and how to become connected to the PA Youth Advisory Board.

PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)
403 E. Winding Hill Road
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
717-795-9048
www.payab.pitt.edu

ABA Permanency Barriers Project

A project of the American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law

The ABA Permanency Barriers Project works with you to reduce the time children spend in foster care before achieving permanency.

Principles

1. Permanency begins on Day 1.
2. Small steps add up to change.
3. Full stakeholder engagement is key to realize and maintain system reform.

Project Approach

1 Focus on System Change

ABA staff help local stakeholders develop individualized county action plans. The action plans are based on a thorough assessment of needs, which includes:

- Case file review
- Court observation
- Data analysis
- Focus groups with stakeholders

2 County-Driven, County-Owned

Each jurisdiction encounters unique challenges. We form a county Advisory Board and issue-based subcommittees made up of lead decisionmakers, including:

- Child welfare agency administrators and staff
- Behavioral health providers
- Juvenile and family court judges
- School administrators
- Agency, parent, and children's attorneys
- Others, as identified by county

3 ABA as Neutral Facilitator and Strategic Partner

ABA staff are on site monthly working to develop and implement reforms.

- Our attorneys bring extensive firsthand knowledge and national perspective to guide your county.
- We ensure all stakeholders join the effort as equal partners.
- We focus on system barriers and engagement between the legal and nonlegal communities at both the county and state level.
- We provide individualized attention, which can include refining court and agency procedures, providing legal analysis, and conducting trainings.

4 Improved Outcomes

At the end of this two-year project, you will see:

- More efficient and effective pathways to permanency for every case;
- A reduction of time in foster care for children in your county; and
- Improved communication, network building, and stakeholder collaboration.

Measurable Results

At the end of the two-year project each county receives a final project report that summarizes results and provides recommendations to sustain system change. To date, the project has:

- ✓ served **55** different counties in **four** states,
- ✓ reduced the time children spend in foster care in all four states by an average of **nine months**,
- ✓ realized a positive impact on more than **3,000** children,
- ✓ saved counties and states over **\$30 million** in foster care costs.

Targeted Technical Assistance

As an alternative to the two-year model, we provide targeted technical assistance on permanency matters through on-site trainings, developing local protocols, facilitating meetings, and other solutions to address local challenges. ABA technical assistance can range from a one-day training to a multi-month engagement.

Get Started Today

The ABA Permanency Barriers Project can work with your county to promote permanency for children in foster care.

For more information, contact:
Heidi Redlich Epstein, 202-662-1725
Heidi.Epstein@americanbar.org

This project is funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.