

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

Department of Human Services

OCYF Personnel Updates

Brittany Roberts joined the Interstate Compact Unit in May. Previously Brittany worked at the Child Abuse Hotline. Brittany can be reached at brittarobe@pa.gov.

National Youth in Transition Database Federal Review 2023

Pennsylvania has been selected to participate in a NYTD Review by the Administration of Children and Families. The review is scheduled to take place the week of November 13 – 17, 2023. OCYF, along with CWRC and Public Consulting Group are preparing for this federal review. The review will consist of a case review of 30 youth records randomly selected from the 2022 B period for 19-year-old follow-up surveys, 2023 A period for Baseline Surveys for 17-year-old youth and Served Data.

Requirements also include participation in stakeholder interviews from those who actively work on NYTD data collection or who assist with youth transitioning to adulthood and included county caseworkers, youth, contracted service providers, IL Coordinators, foster parents, NYTD Administrators, CASAs, Judges, and technical staff. 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 5 for Baseline Surveys as of April 1, 2023 through September 30, 2023 (2023 B Period.) Counties have until October 15, 2023, to submit their baseline 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 is available on PHEAA's website at [Chafee Education and Training Grant Program \(pheaa.org\)](http://Chafee Education and Training Grant Program (pheaa.org)). Please assist youth with completing the correct academic year application.

As a reminder, current ETG award recipients will automatically be enrolled for the next academic year and do not need to complete another ETG application. The ETG award amount cannot exceed the students 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 Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov or at 717-214-7385.

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 five 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

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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 at <https://directory.center-school.org/fostercare/highereducation/search>.

Additional information about the tuition waiver can be found at PHEAA.org/FosterEd located at [PA Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program \(pheaa.org\)](https://pheaa.org/PA_Fostering_Independence_Tuition_Waiver_Program)

Questions related to the FosterED program can be directed to Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov or at 717-214-7385.

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. 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 credit report history of foster care youth or are having issues obtaining a credit history from one of the Credit Bureau's, please contact Jamie Bailey at jbailey@pa.gov or at 223-666-2095.

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. While Pennsylvania has been a long-time supporter of family finding and kinship care, this Act focuses on enhancing a collaborative family approach to ongoing family finding. This Act is intended to ensure that family finding occurs on an ongoing basis for all children entering the child welfare system, to promote the use of kinship care when it is necessary to remove a child from the child's home and to ensure that each child leaving foster care at 18 years of age or older is prepared for the transition to successful adulthood. Act 118 gives the statutory definition of family

finding and accepted for service; requirements for when family finding must be conducted; specific times that family finding can be discontinued; rules about family finding resumption; and guidance on the documentation that needs to be in the child's case plan. Pennsylvania continues to focus on reducing the number of older youths 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. This Act requires independent living planning to begin at age 14 and transition planning to begin at least 6 months prior to a youth turning 18 for youth who are adjudicated dependent. Additionally, Act 118 now requires youth to be 18 years of age or older for APPLA to be approved by the court as a permanency option and for county agencies to identify at least two significant connections with supportive adults in the permanency plan. Act 118 also requires county agencies to submit data to the department when the court terminates the jurisdiction of a child, 18 years of age or older. All provisions of Act 118 took effect on January 2, 2023 and guidance from OCYF is forthcoming.

Trauma Training Available for Child Welfare Professionals

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 **FREE** trainings facilitated by the team at Lakeside Global to become trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-informed, or healing-centered through **September 30, 2023**. This also includes Train the Trainer sessions to support trauma-informed sustainability within a child welfare organization.

There are multiple cohorts for courses and workshops that have been scheduled on specific dates and times available through <https://lakesidelink.com/training/course-registration-2023/>. Please see attached flyer for additional information.

If you have questions relating to any of these trainings, please email info@pacarepartnership.org.

OCYF Trauma Team

The Office of Children, Youth and Families (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.”

Throughout this phase, the Child Welfare Resource Center has collaborated with the OCYF Trauma Team to hold needs assessments as the first step in developing a trauma-sensitive training. Once the training is completed, it will be made available to all child welfare providers licensed by OCYF through the E-Learn platform. Additionally, OCYF regional offices continue to reach out to CCYAs, adoption, and foster care providers to partner in the assessment of each agency as they progress to being trauma-aware.

Most recently, to inform future initiatives addressing secondary and vicarious trauma in the workforce, OCYF is gathering information from child welfare workers at both the state and county levels in Pennsylvania to better understand the specific needs of workers around the stress and trauma that is felt because of their work in child welfare settings. OCYF is conducting a series of focus groups to gather feedback about current practices that support trauma-informed practice. The information gathered will be shared with the OCYF Trauma Team. The focus groups will continue through 6/15/23 at which time the information will be synthesized to inform future staff supports

Lastly, as a reminder, the OCYF Trauma Team distributes a newsletter each month which features a self-care challenge to practice caring for oneself, as child welfare is such a demanding field. OCYF encourages individuals to use the information in the newsletter and share within respective organizations.

Any questions related to the work of the OCYF Trauma Team can be sent to the resource account at RA-PWOCYFTRAUMA@PA.GOV.

Family First Prevention Services Act

The Office of Children Youth and Families has added Family First related content to the Keep Kids Safe Website. For information about Pennsylvania-specific Family First information check out <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/FamilyFirst/Pages/default.aspx>.

For email PA Family First email updates, please

subscribe to at <http://listserv.dpw.state.pa.us/Scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=pa-familyfirst-updates&A=1>.

Pennsylvania’s Round 3 Child and Family Service Review

Pennsylvania is currently in Round 3 of the federally required Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR). As part of this process, Pennsylvania was required to implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and show increased performance on 10 case review measures relative to a baseline set using 2017 case review findings. Pennsylvania successfully completed implementation of the PIP strategies in May of 2022 and successfully increased performance in nine areas, however Pennsylvania has not yet been able to achieve the required measurement goal for one remaining case review measure item. As a result, Pennsylvania could be subject to a significant federal financial penalty if improvement to this final measure cannot be satisfactorily demonstrated through case reviews by November 2023. Case reviews began April 4, 2023 and will continue through August 17, 2023.

American Bar Association (ABA): Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Initiatives

The ABA’s Center on Children and the Law Permanency Barriers Project is actively seeking new project 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
- Assessing current practices and exploring solutions with a race equity lens
- 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: https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/pa-permanency-barriers-overview.pdf 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 for legislation and advocacy for family resource care and provides 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 \(psrfa.org\)](https://psrfa.org).

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

Supporting the Educational Success of Youth

OCYF is facilitating quarterly meetings with county children and youth agencies (CCYA) and regional office educational liaisons to provide technical assistance, promote collaboration, and highlight new initiatives and successes promoting educational stability for children involved with dependency court. Quarterly sessions also help to bridge communication gaps when identified and support the roles and responsibilities that our CCYAs hold. Starting July 17, and every Monday thereafter, until August 21, we will be promoting our 'Back to School' Campaign. This campaign is a collaboration from OCYF, the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, and the Center for Schools and Communities. The campaign will assist CCYAs by providing resources, materials, and check ins for the upcoming school year. More details and resources related to OCYF's work in supporting educational stability can be found on our website at <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Children/Pages/Roles-Responsibilities-of-CCYA-Education-Liaisons.aspx>.

Save the Date: Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference

OCYF also excited to promote the [2023 Paving the Way Conference](#), scheduled for October 11-13, 2023 in the Pittsburgh area. The Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness and Foster Care is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and Center for Schools and Communities.

Act 1 of 2022- Assisting Students Experiencing Education Instability

[Act 1 of 2022](#), known as "Assisting Students Experiencing Education Instability" was approved by Governor Wolf earlier this year. The Act strengthens school supports and increases education equity to foster academic achievement and graduation for certain students experiencing education instability. The law is applicable to students that have had one or more changes in school enrollment during a single school year as a result of dependency, delinquency, homelessness as defined by the McKinney Vento Act, or a court ordered voluntary placement agreement or court ordered custody agreement. It applies to students returning to their former school, starting at a new school, or re-engaging in school after an extended absence. On August 1, the Pennsylvania Department of Education issued a Basic Education Circular providing guidance to schools. The guidance can be found [here](#). Child welfare staff are advised to identify and advocate for eligible students to receive supports required to be provided by schools under this new law.

Identification of Students in Foster Care to Schools

On April 29, 2022, Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) issued a [memo](#) to advise County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYAs) about information sharing with schools. CCYAs are encouraged to maintain continued communication and collaboration with schools to support students while maintaining that confidential information is kept confidential. CCYAs are advised to utilize the Identification of Students in Foster Care to School Points of Contact form to notify K-12 schools of a student's entry into foster care or change in foster care placement. The form, which can be found on the Department of Human Services Education of [Education of Students Served by Pennsylvania County Children and Youth Agencies web page](#), should be provided to school points of contact.

If you have any questions or concerns related to the memo or form, please contact RA-PWOCYFEDUCATION@pa.gov.

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

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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.

September is National Kinship Care Month

September is National Kinship Care month, a time to high-light the ben-e-fits of main-tain-ing famil-ial bonds for the chil-dren in Amer-i-ca whose care-givers are their grand-par-ents and oth-er relatives. Kinship caregivers are blood and non-blood relatives (i.e., teachers, coaches, and family friends) who care for children when their biological parents can't. There are an estimated 259,405 children in Pennsylvania under 18 that live in homes where householders are grandparents or other relatives. This includes 82,556 grandparents who are responsible for the basic needs of their grandchildren.

In September 2023, PA KinConnector, in partnership with the Office of Children Youth and Families (OCYF) is planning to host two events for kinship caregivers to celebrate National Kinship Care Month. The events are tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 9, 2023 in Easton, PA and Wednesday, September 13, 2023 in Newport, PA. Both events are planned to be in-person, with limited registration, however, they will be livestreamed across the Commonwealth. Planned activities may vary for each event, and at this time include, Managing Family Dynamics Discussion, Co-Parenting Guidance, Kinship Families Resource Booths, Q&A sessions with PA KinConnector Navigators and a training featuring kinship expert Dr. Joseph Crumbly.

Stay tuned for more details.

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 a new training, "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.

Both trainings are three-hours and available virtually. They are approved by the Departments of Human Services, Education, and State and meets 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 PSFA website at pafsa.org. For questions or to schedule a session specifically for your organization, please email PFSA at training@pafsa.org

If you are in the medical profession and wish to schedule training with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) for the Educating Physicians in their Communities-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 September 2023 airing

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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 September 2023.

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

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://www.pennsylvania.gov/child-welfare-information-solution). 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 IdentoGo 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/IdentoGo at 1-844-321-2101. To register online go to [www.Identogo.com](https://www.identogo.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.

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 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 September 17, 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@diakion-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.

Interstate Compact Unit

Lisa Schumber retired on April 14, 2023, after more than 35 years of employment with the Commonwealth and 17 of those years were spent in the Interstate Compact Unit. Any "well wishes" can be emailed to wlautsbaug@pa.gov and will be forwarded to Lisa.

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.

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

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 Bobbi Whary by email at bwhary@diakon-swan.org or 717-558-1223.

Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

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From the SWAN Prime Contract

Diakon-SWAN, LLC/Voce

State Fiscal Year 2021-22 Referrals

As we near the end of state fiscal year (SFY) 2022-2023, some needs-based budget (NBB) dollars are not yet spent. We encourage counties to continue to make referrals for children and families who need services. Affiliates are also encouraged to continue to submit family profile, family matching, and family matching extension service referrals as well.

For referrals to be applied to the SFY 2022-23 NBB, referrals must be submitted to the SWAN prime contractor by 11:59 p.m. on **Friday, June 30, 2023**. Any referral received after this cut-off time will be held and then processed in SFY 2023-24. Processing of SFY 2023-24 referrals is expected to begin on **Monday, July 10, 2023**.

If your county has exhausted its SWAN SFY 2022-23 NBB dollars, do not stop referring. The Department of Human Services has authorized the reallocation of funds among counties so the use of these dollars can be maximized. The SWAN prime contractor will continue to process referrals received for SFY 2022-23 until the NBB dollars are exhausted.

Affiliate Agreements and SWAN Subcontracts

The Department of Human Services, Office of Children and Youth issued two six-month extensions to the SWAN Prime Contract. **The contract term now continues until June 30, 2024.** Accordingly, Diakon-SWAN, LLC is extending the Purchase of Service Affiliate Agreements and Subcontractor Agreements for the same contract term.

At this time, no contract amendments are required. The existing contract amendments address the updated term.

New SWAN Technical Assistance Program Director Named

Tinnesha English, MSW assumed the position of SWAN technical assistance program director effective June 12, 2023. Tinnesha has worked in various capacities serving children and families involved with the child welfare system within SWAN and previously as a SWAN regional technical assistant in the southeast region. She has worked in the field of permanency and adoption for over 15 years, more than half of which was in a supervisory or program management capacity.

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Inspired by her journey as a kinship and adoptive parent, she has championed resource parent training as a facilitator and curriculum developer. Tinnesha received her B.A. in Sociology from Pennsylvania State University in 2004 and a Masters in Social Work from Widener University in 2008. In her role as program director, she hopes to capitalize on the expertise within the network to support the development of innovative strategies to aid in timely permanency for our youth and support services to the families caring for them.

SWAN Legal Training Staff Updates

The SWAN legal training team would like to welcome our newest trainer, **Dana J. Ritchey, Esquire**, to the team. Ms. Ritchey currently serves as a legal training specialist in the western region of the state. In this role, Ms. Ritchey designs and delivers trainings to the full spectrum of professionals in the child welfare system. Prior to serving in her current role, Ms. Ritchey served as a SWAN LSI paralegal supporting the Philadelphia County Office of Children and Youth and later practiced as a Guardian Ad Litem for the Defender Association of Philadelphia, representing youth in dependency matters. Ms. Ritchey is graduate of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and earned a Master of Science in Counseling Psychology degree from Chatham University.

If you interested in scheduling a training with Ms. Ritchey, or the legal trainer nearest you, please reach out to your SWAN/LSI contacts for more information.

Eligibility for SWAN Services

In order to be eligible for SWAN services, children and youth must be adjudicated dependent and in out of home placement. County and affiliate workers are encouraged to contact their SWAN RTA if you have any questions about determining eligibility for SWAN services when making or accepting referrals.

Programming Reminder

All visits with families and children connected to SWAN units of service are in-person visits unless otherwise specified within the unit's Benchmarks. Any need for an exception due to special circumstances should be directed to your SWAN RTA who will provide guidance.

Automated Cost and Time Utility

The January 2002 to December 2022 (CY 2022) automated cost and time report was emailed to all affiliates in June of 2023. This yearly cost and time report will provide you with the ability to:

- Review and analyze cost and time data by service;
- Review and analyze cost and time data by worker or office;
- Compare cost and time averages with the state averages and SWAN established timelines; and
- Compare data across previous calendar years.

A drop-in session is offered at the summer statewide meeting on June 20, 2023 from 1:00-5:00 to provide assistance in reviewing and understanding the yearly data. If you are unable to attend the drop-in session, but would like to schedule a consultation or if you are having questions about the utility, please contact your SWAN RTA.

SWAN Portal Version 3.0

The SWAN prime contractor is working diligently to complete the SWAN Portal Version 3.0 design. We anticipate that the design will be completed in late 2023 and implemented in conjunction with the 2024 Winter Statewide Meeting. The new design will include all features of the existing system with some new enhancements. After implementation, we will immediately begin to design additional enhancements and new features.

Much work is still required. Later this summer or early fall, we will share the opportunity to test services, referrals, benchmarks, cost and time entry portal features as well as service certification and invoicing with several affiliates and county users.

Please stay tuned for further updates as we navigate this milestone for the network.

County Family Profile and Family Profile Addendum Referrals

A SWAN-eligible child must be identified for counties to refer a family for a Family Profile or Family Profile Addendum. The SWAN Portal will be updated to prohibit a county from submitting a Family Profile or Family Profile Addendum service referral if a child is not identified on the referral. Instead, county users will be instructed to add a child to the referral before the referral can be submitted.

Counties, please look for further notice from the prime contractor when this portal feature is added.

Happy Birthday Family Matching!

The Family Matching unit of service will be one year old in July and a celebration is in order. The number of referrals has exceeded expectations, and additional dollars have been allocated to the

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service. Since July 2022, 196 families were referred, resulting in **35** matches. There are 139 initial referrals and 14 extension referrals still in progress.

The Family Matching unit includes ongoing efforts to engage and develop families to adopt older and harder to place youth. Activities within the Family Matching Plan are intentional and planned, thereby maximizing efforts to match families with waiting children. Running electronic matches for families in the SWAN Portal is a required activity in the matching unit. The number of affiliate workers running electronic matches has steadily increased since July 2022, with April 2023 showing three times more workers running over 110 electronic matches. The Family Matching unit allows more waiting families to be matched through the SWAN system, improving SWAN's ability to meet timely permanency for children.

We conducted polls during several recent Units of Service meetings to understand how affiliates are thinking about this new unit of service. What we learned is affiliates appreciate that the unit gives more opportunity for families to match and that it standardizes services. Affiliates noted barriers such as a lack of eligible families (families who do not meet the criteria established for the unit) and the need for additional training.

To meet the training needs of the network, a Family Matching Overview training will be offered through our *Zoom in on Practice* series on July 28 and August 28, 2023 from 9:00 to 11:30 AM. Additional training dates will continue to be offered periodically.

Reminder: Family Matching Confirmation Form

The Family Matching Confirmation Form is a required template within the Family Matching unit. This template must be completed and signed by all parties before invoicing. If this form is not signed by all parties, the unit should not be invoiced until all signatures are obtained. If you have any questions about this form, please contact your SWAN RTA.

Family Matching Extension Assessment for Unmatched Families

Starting in July, Family Matching referrals that have had one extension and have not produced a match will be eligible for another extension *if the* Family Matching Extension Assessment for Unmatched Families is completed. This assessment is used when a family is not matched after an initial eight-month Family Matching referral and one Family Matching Extension referral (i.e., after one year of services). The purpose of the

assessment is to review past matching efforts, assess factors that may be impacting matching and develop strategies to move forward. The assessment is completed and reviewed with the family in a face-to-face in-person or virtual meeting and if the family and agency agree to proceed, the assessment is submitted, and then a referral for an additional Family Matching Extension can be submitted. The assessment template and guidelines can be found at swantoolkit.org.

SWAN Resources to Help Advocate for Older Youth

We all need permanent connections in our lives... for advice, to share happy news, or even if we need to borrow a few bucks. Older youth who are close to aging out of care need permanent connections just like the rest of us, if not more so given their placement in foster care.

There are two new requirements to Act 118 of 2022: 1. Counties can only assign the court appointed goal of APPLA to youth who are **age 18 and older**, and 2. county staff must identify at least **TWO permanent connections** for older youth and document their efforts. SWAN has resources to help!

- Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) is available to any child or youth in the legal custody of CYS in out-of-home placement regardless of their permanency goal, and can help identify and develop connections and supports for older youth as they transition into young adulthood.
- The Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) is another tremendous resource for establishing permanent connections for older youth. Children can be registered with PAE as long as there is a primary or concurrent goal of adoption. As long as the county is still open to seeking an adult/family to provide permanency for an older youth (even with the goal of APPLA), the youth can benefit from PAE registration.

For questions about the use of the CSR and PAE registration for older youth who need permanent connections, please reach out to the assigned SWAN RTA or PAE coordinator.

SWAN LSI Supporting Permanency Efforts

SWAN Legal Service Initiative (SWAN LSI) paralegals impact many parts of a child's journey to permanence including family finding, juvenile court, termination of parental rights and adoption. Through the first ten months of State Fiscal Year 2022-23, SWAN LSI paralegals have been active across the state assisting county agencies to expedite permanency. In total, 180,516 activities

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have been logged in the SWAN Portal on behalf of more than 25,000 children.

SWAN LSI Diligent Search is the process by which SWAN LSI paralegals support family finding efforts by utilizing available resources to identify and locate parents, relatives or other potential permanency resources or connections for a child. Through April 30, a total of 16,479 diligent searches were conducted on behalf of 9,250 children. 8,476 (51%) of those searches were performed to locate family related to the requirements of Act 55 and the Fostering Connections to Success Act. 7,551 (46%) searches were conducted to locate a missing parent.

SWAN LSI paralegals are active in many facets of court involvement. For Juvenile Court, this includes assisting in drafting dependency petitions (6,653), attending court hearings to support county staff (20,026), preparing documents for permanency review hearings (16,206), preparing motions (7,156) and hearing notices (10,079), and providing additional non-specific case support (33,704). For Orphan's Court, SWAN LSI paralegals contributed to 3,667 termination of parental rights petitions or confirmation of consent documents and 837 adoption packets. They also provided assistance by attending court 4,480 orphan's court hearings to support county staff.

SWAN LSI looks forward to continuing its partnership with county agencies to eliminate legal barriers to permanency and assist agencies to identify and locate permanent connections and placement resources for children.

133 Days Until National Adoption Month

There are only 133 days 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](#) (swantoolkit.org).

Committed Collaboration Prioritizing Permanency

May 11, 2023 marked the end of the Public Health Emergency and an opportunity to reflect on events over the past three years. For SWAN, this time will be remembered not only for its challenges but as a time of resilience, collaboration and innovation.

Pennsylvania AFCARS data for Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2019, 2020 and 2021 reveal the percentage of children in out of home care with a goal of adoption remained steady at 22%. There was more than a 10% decrease in the number of PA children in foster care on September 30, 2021 compared to September 30, 2019. Although there was a decrease in the number of children adopted from child welfare from FFY 2019 to FFY 2020, FFY 2021 saw a 6% increase in adoptions over the previous year. The SWAN prime contractor would like to applaud the efforts and ingenuity of the courts, counties and affiliate agencies who have been steadfast in their efforts to prioritize permanency for our kids!

SWAN LSI Incarcerated Resource Manual (IRM): Third Edition is on its way!

According to data cited on the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections website, 1.4 million children nationwide have a parent who is incarcerated. Visitation with incarcerated parents has been correlated with better outcomes for children – keeping connections count!

The [IRM](#) is a guide that helps county caseworkers and supervisors to engage and case-plan with incarcerated parents. The manual provides protocols for each county correctional facility in Pennsylvania including:

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

Work is currently underway for the release of the IRM third edition. The IRM is housed in the SWAN Permanency Toolkit (swantoolkit.org). If you have any questions about this resource, or have updates about a facility's protocols, please contact lsi-irmupdates@diakon-swan.org

SWAN LSI Diligent Search Services

SWAN LSI paralegals have been diligently searching on behalf of Pennsylvania's children for 20 years! Over that time, the paralegals have become super sleuths in their search process while also expanding search activities. You may ask, are SWAN LSI paralegals able to conduct searches for:

- Missing parents?
- Fostering Connections (within 30-days of a child entering care)?

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- Connections for older youth and youth in transition from care?
- Locating connections for involvement with Family Group Decision Making or other case planning?
- Child Specific Recruitment or Older Children Matching Initiative referrals?
- Family connections when a case is accepted for service and annually thereafter?
- Compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)?

The answer to all of these questions is: YES!

Nearly every child in care will benefit from diligent search activities at some point in their case. If you have any questions about diligent search services through SWAN LSI, please contact your county's SWAN LSI coordinator.

For guidance on diligent search activities or compliance with ICWA, please consult the [SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet](#) and [SWAN ICWA Search Guide](#). Both resources are available in the SWAN Permanency Toolkit (swantoolkit.org).

"Zoom In On Practice" Virtual Trainings

Grab your lawn chairs and sign up for the summer series of "Zoom in on Practice" virtual trainings offered by the SWAN prime contract. Trainings focus on a wide variety of topics centered on permanency and are open to affiliates, counties and independent living workers.

- **Prediction Form**

July 12, 2023 10-11:30AM

*The Prediction Form is required within the Family Matching unit benchmarks. It is a tool that can assist in presenting information to potential adoptive parents that includes predictions for a child's future needs and functioning based on the history and experiences of the specific child matched with the family. This training will address the development of the Prediction Form using **NOPI (Need, Occurrence, Prevention and Intervention)**.*

- **Tips for Sharing Child Profiles with Youth** | July 19, 2023, 10-11:30AM

*The purpose of this presentation is to discuss **tips for affiliates, county workers and independent living workers** around sharing Child Profile information with older youth and to deliver the recently developed "Tip Sheet for Sharing." The tip sheet is a quick reference guide to sharing information with a youth using a*

sensitive and supportive approach.

- **Family Matching Overview** | July 28, 2023 and August 28, 2023, 9-11:30 AM

In July 2022, SWAN introduced the Family Matching unit, which is about engaging and developing families as well as identifying a child for placement with an eligible SWAN family through the use of matching activities. This training is an overview of the benchmarks and templates for the Family Matching unit of service.

- **Remembering Our Roots** | August 12, 2023, 10-11:30 AM

For a tree to grow healthy and fruitful, it must establish strong roots. This training looks at how the continuum of SWAN services creates a solid foundation that supports the structure of permanency for children, youth and families. We will delve into the basics of each unit of service, highlighting essentials related to referral and delivery of service.

Electronic invitations have already been sent out to register for the upcoming SWAN "Zoom in on Practice" trainings. Be on the lookout for electronic invitations to the US Meetings being sent out soon. If you have questions about registering for any trainings or meetings, please contact your SWAN RTA.

In addition, two virtual Unit of Service (US) meetings will be held over the summer months:

- **Post-permanency US Meeting:** July 25, 2023 9:30-11 AM

- **Programming US Meeting:** August 21, 2023 10AM- 12:00 PM

(This US meeting will be hosted by PAE staff.)

SWAN Prime Contract

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

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



Older Youth Retreat

The older youth retreat will be held in person at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown Campus August 7 – 11th. Registration information was sent to county-identified IL Coordinators and remains open until July 7, 2023. Additional information can be found at <http://www.payab.pitt.edu/ILRetreat.htm>.

Please feel free to contact Meghan O’Hare, meo43@pitt.edu with any questions regarding the event.

PA Youth Advisory Board

The Youth Advisory Board continues to work diligently to ensure they are providing youth and staff across PA with new and relevant resources. All existing resources can be found on the YAB website at <http://www.payab.pitt.edu/>. Some the projects currently in progress include:

- 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, youth’s right’s while in care, and how to become connected to the PA Youth Advisory Board.

Older Youth Training and Resources

There are several sources of information and training related to older youth maintained by the Child Welfare Resource Center that are free and available to all of you.

- PA Youth Advisory Board website which includes information for youth and staff <http://www.payab.pitt.edu/>
- PA Child Welfare Resource Center website <http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/>
- Including webinars specific to older youth <http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Webinars.htm>
- PA Youth Advisory Board Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PAYouthAdvisoryBoard>

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.

Attention PA Child Welfare Professionals FREE Trauma Training Available – Act Now!

The Offices of Children, Youth and Families and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services have partnered with PA Care Partnership to provide any child welfare professionals in Pennsylvania **FREE** Trauma Training. These trainings will be facilitated by Lakeside Global Institute and are available until **September 30, 2023** or while funding is available. Available trainings will be offered in-person or live via web-based platform.

DO NOT DELAY for this exciting opportunity and schedule your trauma trainings now!

There are multiple cohorts for courses and workshops that have been scheduled on specific dates and times available through <https://lakesidelink.com/training/course-registration-2023/> Trainings available include the following:

- Enhancing Trauma Awareness
- Deepening Trauma Awareness
- Applying Trauma Principals
- Train the Trainers
- Trauma 101 through 109 Workshops

Full course descriptions are available here: <https://www.paproviders.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Lakeside-Trauma-Course-Descriptions.pdf>

There are also Trauma 101-109 workshops available for Pennsylvania organizations that provide services to children, youth and families. To schedule trauma workshops designated for your organization, please follow the steps below:

1. Click on this link: <https://www.pacarepartnership.org/community-partners/trauma-informed-training/>
2. Click on the Trauma Workshop Request which will take you to a brief survey to complete.
3. Submit your survey
4. Someone will be in touch with you to schedule your desired trainings.

Descriptions of workshops and courses can be viewed on the attached document labeled "Training Descriptions".

If you have questions relating to any of these trainings, please email: info@pacarepartnership.org.

Pennsylvania Adoptees Longitudinal Study (PALS)



ABOUT THIS STUDY

The Pennsylvania Adoptees Longitudinal Study (PALS) is a developmental study of children adopted from the child welfare system between the ages of 4 and 10. The goal is to identify factors that predict both positive and negative outcomes for these children later in life.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

- Children between the ages of 4 and 10 and their primary caregiving parent.
- Finalization of the adoption must have occurred within 12 months of beginning participation in PALS.
- Adoptive parent must not be biologically related to the child. International adoptees are not included in this study.
- The child's estimated IQ must be above 70. Children diagnosed with an intellectual disability are not included in this study.
- Families able to complete at least one visit remotely via Zoom.



WHAT WILL PARTICIPANTS DO?

The child and parent will be asked to complete interviews, questionnaires and various tasks. Parents may also be asked to complete questionnaires online.

Participation will last for one year and will include the following:

- One visit occurring remotely on Zoom
- One visit at the Transforming the Lives of Children Center in Harrisburg, Pa., four weeks after Zoom visit (optional)
- Final visit at home will occur one year after the first Zoom visit

Compensation is provided to eligible participants.



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO PARTICIPATE

Pennsylvania Adoptees Longitudinal Study Team

PALS@pennstatehealth.psu.edu

717-531-0003, ext. 32713

research.med.psu.edu/adoption

STUDY DIRECTOR

Brian Allen, PsyD | *Department of Pediatrics*



redcap.link/pals

