

# ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

*Department of Human Services*

### OCYF Personnel Updates

#### **Dr. Valerie A. Arkoosh, MD, MPH - Acting Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS)**

Governor Shapiro announced that Dr. Valerie A. Arkoosh has been nominated to serve as the DHS Secretary. Dr. Arkoosh is a former chair of anesthesiology at Drexel University and was a chair on the board of commissioners in Montgomery County.

**Natalie Bates** accepted the role of Acting Deputy Secretary for OCYF on December 23, 2022. Natalie has been serving as the OCYF Chief of Staff since May 2019 and has been with OCYF for 10 years, having previously worked within the Bureau of Policy, Programs, and Operations as the Continuous Quality Improvement Manager.

**Andrea Clarke** was promoted to Southeast Regional Director for OCYF. Andrea transitioned to the Office of Children, Youth, and Family Services in 2015 as a Human Services Program Representative 1 and was promoted to supervisor in 2019. She completed her undergrad and graduate studies at Lincoln University where she earned a master's degree in Human Services. She continued her post-graduate studies at Capella University in Public Administration.

**Shannon Walborn**, Division of Policy, joined OCYF as a Human Services Analyst in October 2022. Shannon gained her child welfare experience as a caseworker and supervisor with Clearfield County Children, Youth and Family Services and most recently as the Administrator at Huntingdon County Children's Services. She is excited to be able to focus on topics related to caseworker visitation, sex and human trafficking, and the Citizen Review Panels. Shannon can be reached at [shawalborn@pa.gov](mailto:shawalborn@pa.gov).

**Dawn Traill**, Division of Policy, joined OCYF as a Human Services Analyst. Dawn most recently worked at the Westmoreland County Children's Bureau as the Program Specialist-Quality Assurance and Education Liaison. She is passionate about policy and education and is excited to use her experiences to advance child welfare practices

and policy. Dawn is assigned to topics to provide guidance to the child welfare system regarding educational stability of children in foster care, applicable directives, and best support for LGBTQIA+ individuals, and mandated reporting. Dawn can be reached at [datraill@pa.gov](mailto:datraill@pa.gov)

**Denise Sheffield**, Division of Policy, joined OCYF as a Human Services Analyst in November 2022. Denise comes to OCYF from the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) prime contractor, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, in partnership with Voce, where she served as a Post-permanency Technical Assistant. Denise is assigned to topics including prevention services, foster care, kinship, adoption and permanency. She is excited to use her passion for permanency for the betterment of the children and families of the Commonwealth. Denise can be reached at [desheffield@pa.gov](mailto:desheffield@pa.gov).

**Bryan Nilsson**, Division of Programs, joined OCYF as a Human Services Analyst in the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) and Independent Living unit in December 2022. Bryan comes to OCYF from Labor and Industry in the Apprenticeship Training Office as an Apprenticeship Training Representative. Bryan 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. Bryan can be reached at [bnilsson@pa.gov](mailto:bnilsson@pa.gov).

**Jamie Bailey**, Division of Programs, joined OCYF as a Human Services Analyst in the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) and Independent Living unit in December 2022. Jamie previously worked for the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services (BJJS), specifically, North Central Secure Treatment Unit (NCSTU) - a maximum secure facility providing treatment, care, and custody to the Commonwealth's most at-risk youth. Jamie's responsibilities will include management support of the SWAN prime contract including the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange and Annual Permanency Conference. Jamie will manage OCYF's recruitment and awareness activities, including the public relations campaign, #MeetTheKids, American Bar Association Permanency to Barriers and Education Barriers to Permanency Projects as well as the Pennsylvania

*Continued on p. 2*

State Resource Family Association among additional permanency efforts. Jamie can be reached at [jbailey@pa.gov](mailto:jbailey@pa.gov).

**Jessica Andrews-Slagel**, Division of Programs, joined OCYF as a Human Services Analyst in the Special Grants Unit in December 2022. Jessica has worked with children and families for the past eleven years. She comes to OCYF from Allegheny County's Office of Children Youth and Families where she worked as a caseworker and policy specialist. Jessica's responsibilities will include the oversight and management of the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance contracts, Accurint, Safe Haven, Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect contract with the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics contract and the Administration of Pennsylvania Courts among other duties. Jessica can be reached at [jandrewssl@pa.gov](mailto:jandrewssl@pa.gov).

**Natalie Bingaman**, Division of Operations, has been hired as a Human Services Analyst and will focus on quality assurance of staffing and operational needs. After obtaining her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, Natalie joined the child welfare workforce at Mifflin County Children and Youth. There, she spent over five years performing both intake and in-home services. In 2014, Natalie joined ChildLine as a ChildLine Caseworker and after approximately two years, she was promoted to the ChildLine Supervisor position. Natalie continued as a supervisor for six years, until accepting her new role as an HSA. Natalie is excited for the new opportunity and looks forward to continuing to support ChildLine's growth.

### 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 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. 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 take effect on January 2, 2023. OCYF will be releasing guidance related to Act 118 in the near future.

### Identification of Students in Foster Care to Schools

The Pennsylvania Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) recently issued a memo ([www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Children/Documents/Maintaining Confidentiality while Sharing Information with Schools.pdf](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Children/Documents/Maintaining%20Confidentiality%20while%20Sharing%20Information%20with%20Schools.pdf)) to advise County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYA) 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 should be provided to school points of contact and can be found at: [www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Children/Pages/Education-Stability-by-Child-Welfare-Services.aspx](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Children/Pages/Education-Stability-by-Child-Welfare-Services.aspx)

If you have any questions or concerns related to the memo or form, please contact [RA-PWOCYFEDUCATION@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PWOCYFEDUCATION@pa.gov)

### 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 in 2022. 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

*Continued on p. 3*

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<sup>st</sup> the Pennsylvania Department of Education issued a Basic Education Circular providing guidance to schools. The guidance can be found here: [www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/Purdons/Pages/Act1of2022AssistingStudentsExperiencingEducationalInstability--.aspx](http://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/Purdons/Pages/Act1of2022AssistingStudentsExperiencingEducationalInstability--.aspx). 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.

### **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 are able to 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 [lakesidelink.com/training/course-registration-2023/](http://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](mailto:info@pacarepartnership.org).

### **Trauma-Informed Workgroup**

The OCYF Trauma Team continues to distribute the Trauma Newsletter. This newsletter will continue to provide the most current information regarding the status of OCYF's trauma-informed initiative. We encourage continued communication with all providers through informative newsletters, updates such as this, and by utilizing the resource account [RA-PWOCYFTRAUMA@PA.GOV](mailto:RA-PWOCYFTRAUMA@PA.GOV).

OCYF regional staff have begun partnering with all CCYAs, and licensed foster care and adoption providers to complete an organizational

assessment utilizing the trauma-informed care assessment tool. This tool is designed to assist OCYF in offering feedback, technical assistance, support, and guidance as they partner with the CCYAs and licensed foster care and adoption providers.

The Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) has developed a trauma-informed curriculum that will include the information required to become trauma-aware. This voluntary, free online training is now available to all county children and youth, foster care, and adoption agencies through the E-Learn platform. Agencies may use other resources to meet the training requirement if the resource meets the minimum training standards for trauma awareness as provided by Heal PA.

### **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 [www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/FamilyFirst/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/FamilyFirst/Pages/default.aspx).

For PA Family First email updates, please subscribe at [listserv.dpw.state.pa.us/Scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=pa-familyfirst-updates&A=1](mailto:listserv.dpw.state.pa.us/Scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=pa-familyfirst-updates&A=1).

### **Chafee Education and Training Grant Programs**

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application and instructions for the 2023 – 2024 academic year will be available on PHEAA's website early April 2023 ([www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/other-educational-aid/chafee-program.shtml](http://www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/other-educational-aid/chafee-program.shtml)).

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 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 Bryan Nilsson at [bnilsson@pa.gov](mailto:bnilsson@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

*Continued on p. 4*

eligibility requirements and have applied for all available federal and state grants. Tuition and mandatory fee waivers apply to 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 at [directory.center-school.org/fostercare/highereducation/search](https://directory.center-school.org/fostercare/highereducation/search).

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 Bryan Nilsson at [bnilsson@pa.gov](mailto:bnilsson@pa.gov) or 717-787-7056.

### **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.

### **National Youth in Transition Database Federal Review 2023**

Pennsylvania has been selected to participate in an NYTD Review by the Administration of Children and Families. The review is scheduled to take place in November 2023. OCYF, along with CWRC and Public Consulting Group are preparing for this federal review. Requirements include participation from stakeholders 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 and technical staff. Additional updates will be provided in the future.

### **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 October 1, 2022, through March 31, 2023 (2023 A Period.) Counties have until April 15, 2023, to submit their baseline surveys as well as served population data. Counties can log onto [www.getnytdpa.org](https://www.getnytdpa.org) to enter their served and survey data. NYTD questions can be directed to Teresa Musser at [temusser@pa.gov](mailto:temusser@pa.gov) or at 717-214-7385 or Bryan Nilsson at [bnilsson@pa.gov](mailto:bnilsson@pa.gov) or at 717-787-7056.

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](mailto:getnytd@pcgus.com).

### **Credit Reports**

Did you know that every Credit Bureau has a specific contact person and process to ensure foster care youth credit history checks are completed appropriately? If you are unsure of this information, have questions regarding credit report history of foster care youth or are having issues obtaining a credit history from one of the Credit Bureaus, please contact Bryan Nilsson at [bnilsson@pa.gov](mailto:bnilsson@pa.gov) or 717-787-7056.

### **American Bar Association (ABA) Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Initiatives**

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

*Continued on p. 5*



Technical assistance can range from one training to a few month 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: [www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child\\_law/pa-permanency-barriers-overview.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/pa-permanency-barriers-overview.pdf) or contact Heidi Redlich Epstein at [Heidi.epstein@americanbar.org](mailto:Heidi.epstein@americanbar.org).

### **Pennsylvania Kinship Navigator Program, KinConnector**

The PA KinConnector Program offers kinship families and professionals who work with kinship families support, guidance, and resources. Kinship families you work with can be referred to the Kinconnector website at [www.kinconnector.org](http://www.kinconnector.org) or their helpline at 866-546-2111 for additional support and assistance.

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 families, resources that agencies can print out and make available to kinship families, a kinship blog section, a podcast series called "Kindred Voices," and a newly established virtual Support Group called "Kindred Spirits."

OCYF encourages all county and provider agencies to reach out to the KinConnector program to learn more about the services they offer, to provide new resource information to be included on the website, and to form partnerships that could help inform how this program can grow. Any questions regarding this program can be directed to Diane Michel at OCYF at [dmichel@pa.gov](mailto:dmichel@pa.gov) or 717-705-2911.

### **Accurint**

Accurint is an online search tool available to every county throughout the state. It can 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 Melanie Todd at [melanie.todd@lexisnexisrisk.com](mailto:melanie.todd@lexisnexisrisk.com) or 937-580-6167.

If you have any questions about Accurint, please contact Jessica Andrews-Slagel at OCYF at [jandrewssl@pa.gov](mailto: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 long 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 at [pafsa.org/mandated-reporter-training/](http://pafsa.org/mandated-reporter-training/).

For questions or to schedule a session specifically for your organization, please email PFSA at [training@pa-fsa.org](mailto:training@pa-fsa.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](mailto:scan@paaap.org) or at 866-823-7226.

### **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 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 [www.psrfa.org](http://www.psrfa.org).

If you have any further questions, you can contact the PSRFA office at 1-800-951-5151 or email [dkinard@psrfa.org](mailto:dkinard@psrfa.org) or [klramper@psrfa.org](mailto:klramper@psrfa.org).

### **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](mailto:RA-PA-ICPC@pa.gov) for ICPC cases

[RA-PA-ICAMA@pa.gov](mailto: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](mailto:abehe@pa.gov) and Natalie Primak at [nprimak@pa.gov](mailto:nprimak@pa.gov) directly.

### **Clearance Verification Unit**

The Department of Human Services, Division of Operations, Child Verification Unit (CVU), ChildLine 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 [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home). 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](http://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.

Please visit our website at [www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov](http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov) for additional information regarding the clearance or call us at 877-371-5422.

### **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 the children of PA. 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](mailto:jjones@tracpgh.org) or Nikita Lewis at [nlewis@diakon-swan.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:ccrawford@diakon-swan.org).

### SWAN/IL Google Groups

There are 1,134 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](mailto:bwhary@diakon-swan.org) or 717-558-1223.

### Media

The #MeetTheKids media campaign is designed to recruit foster and adoptive families across Pennsylvania. The campaign is currently airing on network and cable television in all six media markets in Pennsylvania during the months of January through September 2023. Radio advertisements will also air during the months of February, May and June 2023. In addition to television and radio, the media campaign includes online media ads on Google, Hulu, Facebook, Instagram and Cumulus that will run January through September 2023.

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

### Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

P.O. Box 2675  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2675  
717-787-3984  
[www.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.dhs.pa.gov)

### From the SWAN Prime Contract

*Diakon-SWAN, LLC/Voce*

### Affiliate and Subcontractor Agreements

With the extension of the SWAN Prime contract, Affiliate Purchase of Services Agreements and Subcontractor Agreements are also be extended. Agreement extensions were delivered electronically and are available for signature via DocuSign.

Affiliate and subcontractor personnel, authorized to sign contracts on behalf of each agency, if not already signed, should sign and submit these aforementioned contract extension amendments.

### SWAN Program Administrator Retiring

The start of 2023 comes with an announcement of SWAN Program Administrator Judi Damiano's retirement after five years overseeing SWAN programs and services and more than twenty years with the SWAN prime contractor. Judi will be stepping down from her role and stepping into a well-deserved retirement effective February 10, 2023.

Judi's expertise and influence can be felt throughout the network. Prior to joining Voce's (then Family Design Resources, Inc.) technical assistance team in 2000, she was a permanency specialist with SWAN affiliate Project Star. Through the years, Judi has helped to guide the growth of the network and the expansion of SWAN services, and, among her many accomplishments, she is widely credited for helping to design Child Preparation.

Judi embodies the SWAN mission in all aspects of her professional and personal life. As an adoptive parent and a permanency advocate, she has assured many children and youth in Pennsylvania's child welfare system a voice and a family.

As Judi's time with SWAN winds down, the SWAN prime contractor will begin the process of evaluating the SWAN program administrator role in support of the network and will seek to fill the position in the weeks ahead. During this time, Voce Executive Director Rick Azzaro will serve as interim SWAN program administrator.

We hope you'll join us in expressing your gratitude and goodwill to Judi as she embarks on her retirement. From now until February 10, continue to contact Judi at [jdamiano@diakon-swan.org](mailto:jdamiano@diakon-swan.org) or 717-231-6430 as needed. After February 10, until a replacement is named, direct questions to your SWAN technical assistant.

### SWAN Portal

Development continues on the SWAN Portal version 3.0. Construction of the new family record is complete and several affiliate and county users are testing its functionality.

When version 3.0 is released, users will be able to update specific family data without having to submit a form. The goal is to streamline portal transactions for our county and affiliate users.

Additional updates will be provided as we approach implementation.

### Start the New Year off Right with SWAN LSI Resources

The SWAN Legal Services Initiative (SWAN LSI) is highlighting several resources designed to support better outcomes for kids. All resources can be accessed in the SWAN Permanency Toolkit at [www.swantoolkit.org](http://www.swantoolkit.org).

#### *SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual (IRM)*

The IRM can assist caseworkers and supervisors as they plan with incarcerated parents, as well as be a resource to support the counties' efforts to engage with these parties. Additionally, the information contained in the IRM can aid the child-parent connection by supporting:

- Contact between the incarcerated parent and child by detailing guidelines and nuances regarding written and telephone communication.
- Parent-child visitation by providing details on visitation schedules or video visitation.
- Permanency by listing services available for the incarcerated parent and re-entry information.

Links to additional resources, such as state and federal facilities, are also included in the manual. Updates about county prison policies and procedures or questions may be forwarded to [lsi-irmupdates@diakon-swan.org](mailto:lsi-irmupdates@diakon-swan.org).

#### *The SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet*

This guide contains vital information and forms to help paralegals and agency staff search for permanent resources for children in the Pennsylvania child welfare system and comply with federal and state mandates in their diligent search efforts. The SWAN LSI Warmline ([lsiwarmline@diakon-swan.org](mailto:lsiwarmline@diakon-swan.org)) is available to answer questions about the packet and searches. To seek training or assistance with diligent search, contact your assigned SWAN LSI coordinator (counties) or SWAN regional technical assistant (affiliates).

#### *The SWAN Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Search Guide*

The guide is designed to help children and youth agencies across the United States comply with federal laws, regulations and guidelines when working with an Indian child or family. Child welfare professionals may need to perform a comprehensive ICWA search when a child in care could have tribal connections. SWAN defines an ICWA search as a search completed to identify and locate potential tribal connections in order to allow the tribe to determine eligibility and placement under the Indian Child Welfare Act and to regulate placement proceedings involving Indian children, including Alaska Natives, who are unmarried and under the age of 18 (25 U.S.C. § 1901 et. seq.). ICWA regulations require "active efforts" to maintain and reunite an Indian child with their family or tribal community. For that reason, an ICWA Diligent Search must be conducted to "identify, notify and engage" representatives of the child's tribe. The SWAN ICWA Search Guide is a tool that will help streamline this process and ensure compliance with ICWA requirements. *The SWAN ICWA Search Guide* is intended to be used in conjunction with the law and as a supplement to a comprehensive diligent search process.

### SWAN LSI Seeks to Make an Impact

The impact of SWAN Legal Service Initiative (LSI) Paralegals has been evident throughout Pennsylvania during the first five months of State Fiscal Year 2022-2023. From July 1, 2022 to November 30, 2022, SWAN LSI paralegals have logged activities for 17,972 children across Pennsylvania. LSIPs have completed more than 90,000 total activities, including 7,560 diligent searches, 64,810 Juvenile Court Activities and 15,098 Orphans Court Activities.

Of the Diligent Searches completed for children during the reporting period, 49% were conducted to locate a missing parent, 31.3% were conducted to locate resources as required by Fostering Connections, and 16.9% were conducted to locate connections as required by Act 55. Of all the Diligent Searches conducted from July 1, 2022 – November 30, 2022, 38.7% were conducted for children under the age of six, 21.8% were for children from the ages of 6-11, 27.6% for children ages 11-15 and 13.8% were for individuals ages 16+.

Further, almost 400 children have had documents prepared for adoption during the first five months of the fiscal year. Over 50% of the children with adoption documents prepared were under the age of 6 and 78% of the children were under the age of 11. There were 4% who were over the age of 16 and had adoption documents prepared.

*Continued on p. 9*



SWAN LSI looks forward to continuing to collaborate with County Children and Youth Agencies to expedite permanency and overcome barriers in 2023.

### **SWAN Family Matching Unit of Service: Trainings and Updates**

Since Family Matching referrals began processing on July 1, 2022, the prime contractor has provided six virtual, SWAN Family Matching unit overview trainings and is in the process of completing a three-part, in-person workshop series titled “SWAN Family Matching – A Closer Look,” which dives deeper into the practical implications of the SWAN Family Matching Benchmarks. Part One was offered as a workshop at the 2022 SWAN/IL Fall Quarterly meetings and took an in-depth look at completing the Family Matching Plan in collaboration with the family, the process of requesting and reviewing information and techniques on how to present and discuss this information with families.

Part Two is being offered as a workshop at the 2023 SWAN/IL Winter Statewide meeting and dives deeper into the selection process after a child is identified. This includes providing family support during decision-making, the county interview process and Post Adoption Contact Agreement implications. The Family Matching Extension Benchmarks and the Child/Family Match Confirmation form will also be explored.

Part Three will be offered as an afternoon workshop at the 2023 SWAN/IL Spring Quarterly meetings and will look closely at the Family Matching Extension, Family Matching Assessment for Unmatched Families and the Child/Family Match Confirmation form. Tools and activities for matching will be explored.

In addition, through the use of games and activities, the morning session of the 2023 SWAN/IL Spring Quarterly meetings will highlight important elements of the Family Matching unit.

The Family Matching unit includes ongoing efforts for maintaining active, viable families as well as activities to identify a child for placement with an eligible SWAN family through the implementation of a Family Matching Plan. Family Matching is an affiliate-referred, eight-month unit of service with a four-month extension. Since July 2022, over 130 Family Matching referrals have been made.

The prime contractor encourages affiliates to continue to refer eligible families for the SWAN Family Matching unit of service.

Eligible families will:

- Have a current, approved SWAN Family Profile.
- Be registered with the Resource Family Registry

as an adoptive family or any variation that includes an adoptive family.

- Not have an identified child for adoption.
- Be interested in Pennsylvania children awaiting adoption and who are in the custody of a county AND meet one or more of the following criteria:
  - Searching for children over the age of ten years.
  - Searching for children with significant medical, physical, cognitive or emotional challenges.

Please contact your SWAN regional technical assistant with any questions about the Family Matching unit and upcoming trainings.

### **Upcoming: Automated Cost/Time Reports**

In order to improve the accuracy of cost and data entry, the SWAN prime contract has recently enhanced the cost and time reports sent to affiliates on a quarterly basis. This automated version, developed in consultation with affiliates from across the state, will provide an easier way 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 calendar years.

It is anticipated that the automated quarterly cost and time will be sent to affiliates beginning in April of 2023. SWAN technical assistance staff will provide training and support for using this new version of the cost and time report.

### **Updating Photos and Videos for Recruitment**

As our recruiters across the state are working diligently to identify permanent resources for our children/youth, PAE would like to remind everyone of the best practice standards for updating photos and recruitment videos.

#### *Photos*

Children change so quickly, so it is best to update the photo on [AdoptPAKids.org](https://adoptpakids.org) as often as possible. *It is best practice to update a photo on the website at a minimum of once a year; however, updating the photo every six months is even better.*

*Continued on p. 10*

### Videos

Videos of the child (both TV-taping videos and recruiter-created videos) can capture a family's attention and give them an even closer look into that child's personality. *It is best practice to update a video on the website every two years, but annual updates are even better.*

Children who are featured on any of the state's five television station recruitment segments will have this video posted to [AdoptPAKids.org](https://www.adoptpakids.org) automatically. Recruiters can also submit their own short videos of the child to be considered for the child's webpage.

As with photos and public narratives, these videos should highlight the child's strengths and capture their spirit and personality. When a new video is obtained, the older recruitment video(s) can remain on the website, or the team can choose to remove them.

Thank you to the wonderful recruiters across the state who work so hard to serve PA children in need of permanency. For your convenience, information on photos, TV tapings, and recruiter videos is contained in the *Strategies for Permanency* document in the SWAN Toolkit. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to the child's PAE coordinator.

### Legal Training Staff Updates

The SWAN legal training specialists are excited to announce they have welcomed two new attorneys to the team!

*Jena Braunsberg, Esq.* has devoted her legal career to child welfare law, which includes working as an assistant public defender and a children and youth solicitor. Jena also has extensive experience in legal research and writing, including appellate writing and drafting opinions for both state judges and federal administrative law judges. Jena will be serving the northeast region of the state.

*Jennifer Spata, Esq.* is a returning trainer who has represented children, parents, relatives and kin, foster and adoptive parents in dependency, termination of parental rights and adoption matters at both the trial and appellate levels. Before earning her law degree, she also served as SWAN LSI paralegal and coordinator supporting counties in the Southeast. Jennifer will be covering the eastern central part of the state.

Both trainers will join the existing trainers in responding to Warmlines, drafting monthly legal reports, and delivering trainings across the state.

### Placement Unit of Service Follows Successful Family Matching Services

Has the Family Matching unit of service been successful for a family working with your agency? The Placement unit of service continues that success! The Family Matching unit of service identifies a child for a waiting family. It ends when the county, affiliate and family agree to proceed to visitation. At that time, the Placement unit of service should be referred so that the affiliate can develop and coordinate the visitation plan and prepare the child and family to meet. A well-planned pre-placement schedule establishes trust, diminishes the child's fears and engages current caretakers to support the transition. That can minimize trauma for children.

The work of the Placement unit of service helps build a strong foundation for families by supporting all who are involved in the placement process. Families and children are well-equipped and well-supported at the front end. Services are identified and put in place before the child moves in so that families are set up for success. Families are engaged and entitled as parents, thereby laying the foundation for finalization work. The Placement unit of service can stabilize the placement by addressing risk factors, such as a mismatch between parents and child, inadequate preparation of parents and child, unrealistic expectations and lack of family support and resources.

The bottom line is that Placement services can make disruption less likely. To be eligible for the Placement unit of service, the child must have a goal of adoption and the family must have an approved SWAN Family Profile. Families who already have an identified child (foster/adopt or Permanent Legal Custodianship) are not eligible. If you have any questions about the SWAN Units of Service, please reach out to your SWAN regional technical assistant.

### SWAN Connect: A Free Matching Tool

SWAN Connect is a route that families can take to learn more about Pennsylvania children who are seeking permanency. Through this process, the SWAN Helpline connects child and family workers to support a family's interest in adoption. Before beginning the SWAN Connect process, families must be registered with the Resource Family Registry or with [adoptUSkids.org](https://adoptuskids.org) if they are from out of state.

To begin, families call the SWAN Helpline to ask for additional information about a child featured on [adoptpakids.org](https://adoptpakids.org). If the family decides they may be a fit for the child and would like to learn more, the SWAN Helpline sends an email expressing that interest to the child's team, which includes the

*Continued on p. 11*

child-specific recruiter, county caseworker, the family caseworker and Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) coordinator. The SWAN Helpline and the PAE coordinator monitor communication to make sure the family's team and the child's team establish a connection. Family workers and child workers are encouraged to respond to these emails as quickly as possible to keep this process running smoothly.

As a result of the new SWAN Family Matching Unit, it is also strongly encouraged that Family workers email the SWAN Helpline with inquiries about children for families on their caseload. Please send inquiries from a work email that includes your signature, position title and agency information. Please also include the family names on behalf of whom you are inquiring so we can log the recruitment efforts for the child. The SWAN Helpline will email you the children's additional information and ask that you verbally share this information with your families.

SWAN Connect allows a family to be more proactive in their own permanency journey. Families may inquire about three children or sibling groups per day, and they can call every day if they wish. The SWAN Helpline will maintain up to three open inquiries for a family at any given time.

SWAN Helpline specialists can be reached at 1-800-585-7926, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Note that while families do need to call the SWAN Helpline to inquire about additional information, caseworkers may also inquire by email at [swanhelpline@diakon-swan.org](mailto:swanhelpline@diakon-swan.org). SWAN Helpline specialists look forward to helping in the matching process!

### **TPR Appeal and PAE Status**

This is a reminder that according to the Pennsylvania Adoption Act, a child for whom termination of parental rights is being appealed in a court shall not be registered with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) as available for adoption. If this is the case, the child will not be receiving matching services or listed on [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org). If you have any questions about this process, please contact your PAE coordinator.

### **"Zoom In On Practice" Virtual Trainings**

Virtual "Back to Basics 2.0" trainings for each Post-permanency unit will be held in February and March. These trainings are available for new staff and are also great refreshers for seasoned staff. Each updated, comprehensive training will integrate practice elements into a deep dive of the benchmarks, cover the Benchmark Cost/Time Log and invoicing procedures and look at how all of the elements combine in the SWAN Portal. Participants will gain a better understanding of best practices for completing each Post-permanency unit of service. All trainings will be held from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM.

- **Feb 28, 2023: Post-permanency Assessment**
- **March 7, 2023: Post-permanency Case Advocacy**
- **March 14, 2023: Post-permanency Respite**
- **March 21, 2023: Post-permanency Support Group**

In addition, the following "Zoom In On Practice" virtual trainings will also be offered from 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM:

- **March 15, 2023: Creative Child Profiles: Sensitively Factual**  
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.
- **April 3, 2023: Electronic Matching and SWAN Connect for Families**  
This training will provide an overview of Electronic Matching for families and the SWAN Connect process, including the advantages of these recruitment activities and the roles/responsibilities of family workers. This training is designed for caseworkers providing the new Family Matching Unit of service, as well as their supervisors, and anyone who would like to learn more about these aspects of the family matching process.

Please be on the lookout for electronic invitations to register for the upcoming SWAN "Zoom In On Practice" trainings. If you have any questions about registering, please contact your SWAN regional technical assistant.

## ***Celebrate!***

We want to celebrate the following affiliate agencies for becoming SWAN Post-Permanency providers. We congratulate them for recognizing the ethical obligation we have to serve Pennsylvania families after they achieve permanency.

- *Justice Works*- Western Region
- *A Second Chance, Inc.* – Southeast Region
- *Family Care for Children and Youth, Inc* – Central Region
- *Asociacion Puertorriquenos en Marcha/Pradera* — Southeast Region

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

### **Older Youth Services Certification Series**

The purpose of the Older Youth Services Certification series is to provide individuals working with adolescents with the knowledge, skills, techniques, and confidence to engage and empower youth involved in the child welfare system and their support. The courses within this series include foundational-level information for working with older youth, and the certification track is a total of 13 credit hours. Courses will be offered mainly online via E-Learn with one instructor-led training. This certification series is eligible for all agencies and all position levels to enroll.

Courses include:

- Independent Living Services: An Overview – Module 1 Purpose and Policy (online) – 2 credit hours (PLEASE NOTE: This module is a prerequisite to the instructor-led session)
- Independent Living Services: An Overview – Module 2 Adolescent Issues: Risk and Resiliency (online) – 2 credit hours (PLEASE NOTE: This module is a prerequisite to the instructor-led session)
- Independent Living Services: Engaging Older Youth (online prerequisite) – 1 credit hour
- Independent Living Services: Engaging Older Youth (instructor-led session) – 6 credit hours
- Implicit Bias in Child Protection (online) – 2 credit hours

To register for this certification series, you can self-enroll in the courses or contact the Registration Account at [cwtpreg@pitt.edu](mailto:cwtpreg@pitt.edu).

### **IL Networking Sessions**

IL networking sessions are offered across the state in all regions to support both new and seasoned 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 may need additional support in. If you are interested in connecting with your regional IL networking group, please contact Meghan O'Hare [meo43@pitt.edu](mailto:meo43@pitt.edu).

#### **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](http://www.diakon-swan.org)  
[www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org)





## **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 4 SAT fee waivers during their academic career – 2 for the SAT Reasoning Test and 2 for the SAT Subject Tests. If you need to obtain either waiver, please contact Sherri Krodel [slk114@pitt.edu](mailto:slk114@pitt.edu) at the Child Welfare Resource Center.

## **Youth Advisory Board Resources**

*Important Tips for Sharing the Child Profile with Older Youth:* This is a tool developed by SWAN to assist staff working with older youth with appropriately sharing the Child Profile prior to youth leaving care.

Resource: [www.payab.pitt.edu/files/Sharing\\_ChildProfile\\_with\\_Youth.pdf](http://www.payab.pitt.edu/files/Sharing_ChildProfile_with_Youth.pdf)

Webinar: [www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Webinars.htm](http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Webinars.htm)

*Bill of Rights Coloring Books:* The YAB identified a need for younger youth and youth with intellectual disabilities to understand their rights while in foster care. The Bill of Rights coloring book was created to simplify information shared in the Know Your Rights Guide. Two coloring books were created, one for youth ages 5-7 and another one for youth ages 8-10. Along with the coloring book is a message for caregivers that stresses the importance of the information in the coloring book and how they can help children understand the information by completing different pages. Both coloring books are available to download and print on the YAB website.

[www.payab.pitt.edu/files/ColoringBook-Ages8-10.pdf](http://www.payab.pitt.edu/files/ColoringBook-Ages8-10.pdf) (ages 8-10)

[www.payab.pitt.edu/files/ColoringBook-Ages5-7.pdf](http://www.payab.pitt.edu/files/ColoringBook-Ages5-7.pdf) (ages 5-7)

*The Permanency Game:* The YAB wants to support educating youth to ensure they understand permanency goals. The purpose of the Permanency Game is to help youth by teaching them while increasing their knowledge about permanency goals. Youth have expressed that they often feel misinformed due to a lack of communication and or explanation regarding permanency goals and their hierarchy. The Permanency Game gives youth a hands-on experience of the challenges and benefits on the road to permanency. The game was

designed for in-person play; however, it has now been created for virtual engagement and is available on the YAB website ([www.payab.pitt.edu/game/](http://www.payab.pitt.edu/game/)).

*The Youth Introductory Questionnaire:* The YAB created the youth questionnaire as a useful tool to help resource parents get to know the youth as an individual from the youth's perspective. It's an additional resource separate from the official documents and provides potential resource families with an idea of who that youth is, what's important to them and what support they may need. It can help youth begin a conversation when meeting with a new resource family or even a caseworker. The PA Youth Advisory Board encourages all youth to complete the questionnaire with individuals from their support team ([forms.cwrc.pitt.edu/youthquestionnaire/](http://forms.cwrc.pitt.edu/youthquestionnaire/)).

*The Top 10 Tips:* The YAB developed the Top Ten Tips brochure to help engage foster parents and youth in conversation about realistic roles, responsibilities, and expectations to increase positive connections within the household ([payab.pitt.edu/files/10TipsBrochure.pdf](http://payab.pitt.edu/files/10TipsBrochure.pdf)).

*Foster Care Welcome Booklet:* The YAB created a welcome booklet to support youth entering foster care. The booklets were designed to encourage and assure youth they're not alone on their foster care journey. The Welcome booklet contains drawings, poems, and messages of inspiration from former and current foster care youth ([payab.pitt.edu/files/FosterCareWelcomeBooklet-WEB.pdf](http://payab.pitt.edu/files/FosterCareWelcomeBooklet-WEB.pdf)).

## **YAB 2023 Projects**

For 2023, the members of the PA YAB have identified several projects, including the development of resources to enhance collaboration and communication between the caseworker and older youth, a "Know Your Rights" quick reference guide highlighting rights older youth feel are most important to know immediately upon entry into foster care, as well as a YAB Welcome Packet which will include YAB resources and tools for older youth in care.

### **PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)**

403 E. Winding Hill Road  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
717-795-9048  
[www.payab.pitt.edu](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:PALS@pennstatehealth.psu.edu)**

**717-531-0003, ext. 32713**

**[research.med.psu.edu/adoption](https://research.med.psu.edu/adoption)**

STUDY DIRECTOR

Brian Allen, PsyD | *Department of Pediatrics*



[redcap.link/pals](https://redcap.link/pals)

