

# ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

Department of Human Services

## April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA), in partnership with OCYF, has planned several activities and events during April, Child Abuse Prevention Month.

*Throughout April: Blue Ribbon Campaign*

The symbol for child abuse prevention is the blue ribbon. Wearing a blue ribbon is a visual way for individuals to demonstrate they are taking a stand against child abuse and encouraging others to do the same.

*Tuesday, April 2, 2024*

- Wear blue in support of "Turn Pennsylvania Blue", as blue is the national symbolic color of child abuse prevention.
- Flag planting from Front to the Capitol steps in Harrisburg at 9:00 a.m.
- Annual PA Blue Ribbon Champions for Safe Kids Awards and Child Abuse Prevention Month Ceremony at the Capital building Rotunda in Harrisburg, at 10:30 a.m.

*Thursday, April 4, 2024*

PFSA's Speaker Spotlight, to be held virtually at 11a.m., will feature Emma Lee of the Fred Rogers Institute and will provide insight and encouragement on how adults can steward young people through a childhood that is vastly different from generations before. Registration is free, to register for this event visit [pa-fsa.org](http://pa-fsa.org).

*Tuesday, April 9, 2024*

Wesley Family Services Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast Event at Saint Vincent College's Fred Roger Center, Latrobe, PA. To register for this event visit [wfspa.org/events/parentwisebreakfast/](http://wfspa.org/events/parentwisebreakfast/).

## May - National Foster Care Month

May is National Foster Care Month. The Children's Bureau's National Foster Care Month campaign emphasizes the importance of equipping youth

leaving foster care with strengthened relationships, holistic supports, and opportunities for their future. This year's theme, "Engaging Youth. Building Supports. Strengthening Opportunities." highlights the need to create a child welfare system that authentically engages and supports young people. During this month, efforts are made to highlight the role that people from all parts of the child welfare system play in supporting these young individuals as they transition to adulthood. For more information about National Foster Care Month, visit the [National Foster Care Month - Child Welfare Information Gateway](#).

To support awareness and recruitment events about the need for foster and adoptive parents, OCYF will be awarding \$65,000 in mini grants to agencies and coalitions across the state. All events are welcomed. If you are having an event that you would like to have featured on the SWAN Facebook page, please send event information to, contact Teresa Musser at [temusser@pa.gov](mailto:temusser@pa.gov). All requests must be in the form of a picture (jpg or png).

To celebrate National Foster Care Month, the [Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association](#) will be hosting a Harrisburg Senators Baseball Game and buffet picnic. For tickets and information, please call 1-800-951-5151.

## Trauma Training Available for Child Welfare Professionals

OCYF is pleased to announce the continuation of our partnership with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services in contracting with Lakeside Global Institute to provide Pennsylvania child welfare professionals **FREE trauma training**. A child welfare professional includes anyone who serves children and families that who live in Pennsylvania. This applies to professionals or organizations that work to improve the lives of children and families.

Interested in workshops? Click [here](#).

Interested in the Intensive Courses? Click [here](#).

Questions relating to any of these trainings, shall be directed to Beth Hall at: [bethh@lakesidetraining.org](mailto:bethh@lakesidetraining.org)

### Human Trafficking Training

A three-day *SOAR (Stop, Observe, Ask, Respond) for Organizations* training will be held at the Child Welfare Resource Center in Mechanicsburg from April 29 - May 1, 2024. This interactive training will allow county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) and service providers to identify and respond to individuals who have experienced trafficking to create an action plan to:

- **Find opportunities** for strengthening responses to trafficking;
- **Empower staff** to identify and respond to trafficking;
- **Develop response protocols and resources** to meet the needs of those who have experienced trafficking;
- **Partner with community stakeholders** as part of a holistic approach to assist survivors and prevent human trafficking; and,
- **Gather and analyze data** to improve programs and policies.

Additionally, participants will be educated on the terminology surrounding trafficking, how to ensure their work is trauma-informed while remaining culturally responsive, effective ways to complete documentation and action planning, how to mitigate the secondary effects of trauma, the importance of self-care, and ways to establish long term safety, stability, and well-being. CCYAs are encouraged to attend the training in small groups, including CCYA decision makers and service providers who assist the CCYA in human trafficking cases. Participants can register online [here](#). For more information on the SOAR for Organizations training contact Shannon Walborn at [shawalborn@pa.gov](mailto:shawalborn@pa.gov).

### Voluntary Resolution Agreement Between Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and the Federal Office of Civil Rights

In July 2023, the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Federal Office of Civil Rights (OCR) entered into a Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA) to resolve a complaint filed alleging discrimination, specifically withholding participation in services, based on an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defined condition. DHS and by extension the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) receives federal funding including Foster Care Title IV-E, and Social Services Block Grant from the Administration of Children and Families. As a recipient of federal financial assistance, DHS OCYF and its program offices including county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) and agencies with which they contract are obligated to comply with federal civil rights laws and is subject to Section

504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and its implementing regulations. Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all operations of any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Additionally, as a public entity providing state government services, DHS OCYF is obligated to comply with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and its implementing regulation. Title II prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by state and local government agencies, including denying opportunities to benefit from services and failing to reasonably modify policies and procedures. By entering into the agreement, DHS OCYF affirmed that it will comply with all provisions of Section 504 and Title II of the ADA. To ensure compliance by DHS OCYF and the county children and youth agencies OCR outlined several requirements that apply to OCYF and the county children and youth agencies. To transmit these requirements to CCYAs OCYF has issued a series of Special Transmittals.

OCYF and CCYAs have been working to meet the requirements set by the VRA. The first Special Transmittal, released on September 1, 2023, provided CCYA's with information on the development of a Notice of Nondiscrimination and the Grievance Procedure. The second Special Transmittal, released on December 21, 2023, provided CCYA's with information on the development and implementation of the county's Nondiscrimination Policy and Procedure. The third Special Transmittal, to be released in late April 2024, outlines requirements for staff training and verification of training. These training requirements extend to CCYAs and the agencies with which they contract. All staff involved in the provision of child welfare services to children and families must take the approved training, *Supporting Children and Families with Disabilities*, by July 31, 2024. OCYF worked in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) to create the *Supporting Children and Families with Disabilities* training. This training has been approved by the federal OCR and meets the requirements of the VRA. The training is now live in eLearn for individual to self-enroll. Contact [RA-PWOCYF-ADARESOURCE@PA.GOV](mailto:RA-PWOCYF-ADARESOURCE@PA.GOV) for more information related to the VRA.

### Parent Town Hall Meeting

The Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) hosted a Parent Town Hall meeting on March 26th in Reading, Pennsylvania. The purpose of the Parent Town Hall was to engage parents with lived experience in Pennsylvania's child welfare system and to learn about their views on the successes and areas for improvement within the system. Participation included birth parents from Berks, Chester, Delaware, Lebanon, Lehigh, Montgomery,

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and Schuylkill counties. OCYF's Deputy Secretary, Laval Miller-Wilson, was a special guest at the event. CWRC plans to host Parent Town Hall meetings regionally across the state in 2024. When information is shared by CWRC about upcoming Parent Town Hall Meetings, please spread the word about this opportunity. To learn more, contact Felicia Matriccino, Parent Ambassador at [PAParent@pitt.edu](mailto:PAParent@pitt.edu) or 717-605-0230.

### **Act 48 of 2023**

Act 48 of 2023, signed by Governor Shapiro on December 14, 2023, amends Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) to outline new requirements for the provision of timely notification of hearings to potential kinship care resources. Pennsylvania continues to prioritize the use of kin for children who require out-of-home placement. Act 48 ensures that family and kinship care provider voices are heard and additional kin supports and connections are identified and documented. All provisions of Act 48 took effect on February 12, 2024. OCYF will be releasing guidance related to Act 48 in a Special Transmittal.

### **OCYF Trauma Team**

The OCYF Trauma Team is working diligently to offer technical assistance related to 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 become trauma-aware. As defined in the TIPA Plan, trauma-awareness occurs when, "the entity becomes aware of trauma, the prevalence of trauma and considers the potential impact on customers and staff."

The online training, "Developing Trauma Sensitivity in Therapeutic Foster Care", released in August 2023, has been made available in the Child Welfare Resource Center's E-learn Catalog, [ID# 2412](#). This training explores child welfare practice, specifically relating to therapeutic foster care, through a trauma-sensitive lens. This module is the second in a series designed to promote Trauma Informed and Healing Centered practice in Pennsylvania's child welfare organizations. The sections within this module focus on fundamentals of trauma sensitivity; attachment, relationships, and the brain; signs and symptoms of trauma; implementing trauma-informed principles to respond to trauma; self-care; and resources. This training is designed for therapeutic foster care staff and therapeutic foster care families. This course is eligible for up to three continuing education credits. The second iteration of the trauma-sensitive training, specific to administrative staff is currently under development.

Lastly, the OCYF Trauma Team Tip Sheet continues to be offered monthly to promote staff competency related to trauma sensitivity as well as self-regulation and care. Any questions related to the work of the OCYF Trauma Team can be sent to the resource account at [RA-pwocyfrauma@pa.gov](mailto:RA-pwocyfrauma@pa.gov).

### **National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Federal Review**

Pennsylvania participated in a modified NYTD Review by the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) on January 17-18, 2024. The modified review focused on the technical data reporting aspects of NYTD. This modified technical data review will allow Pennsylvania the opportunity to address identified technical challenges to better improve NYTD data collection. ACF will provide OCYF with their findings and recommendations to improve NYTD data collection. Additional information will be provided in the near future. Questions related to the NYTD Review can be directed to Teresa Musser at [temusser@pa.gov](mailto:temusser@pa.gov).

### **National Youth in Transition Database**

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) collects information in the following areas: Baseline Population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17), Served Population (any youth or young adult receiving independent living services regardless of age) and Follow-up Population (youth surveys at age 19 and 21 depending on Cohort period). Pennsylvania is currently in Cohort 4 for 21-year-old follow-up surveys. The 2024A period concluded on March 31, 2024. Counties have until April 15, 2024, to submit their follow-up surveys as well as served population data. The 2024B period began on April 1, 2024 and runs through September 30, 2024. Counties will have until October 15, 2024 to submit follow-up surveys and served population data. Counties can log onto [www.getnytdpa.org](http://www.getnytdpa.org) to enter their served and survey data. NYTD questions can be directed to Lindsey Glezen at [linglezen@pa.gov](mailto:linglezen@pa.gov) or 717-878-7056.

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).

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

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application and instructions for the 2024 – 2025 academic year will be available on PHEAA's website at [Chafee Education and Training](#)

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[Grant Program \(pheaa.org\)](https://pheaa.org) in April. The application deadline for the 2023-2024 academic year was December 31, 2023.

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

### **Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program**

The Fostering Independence through Education Program, known as FosterED, requires Pennsylvania post-secondary 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 assist youth with eligibility, technical assistance, and other resources that may be available to them on and off campus. County and private provider Independent Living (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](#).

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

Questions related to the FosterED program can be directed to Lindsey Glezen at [linglezen@pa.gov](mailto:linglezen@pa.gov) or at 717-787-7056.

### **Credit Reports**

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

### **Act 118 of 2022**

Act 118 of 2022, signed by Governor Wolf on November 3, 2022, amends Title 67 (Public Welfare) and Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) to include provisions relating to family finding, Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), transition planning and data collection. Act 118 requires county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) to submit data to the department when the court terminates jurisdiction of a child/youth, age 18 years of age or older. Data for a child/youth who returns to care after terminating court jurisdiction, shall be reported to the department again following termination of court jurisdiction. As a reminder, Act 118 requires that specific information be submitted via each county's DocuShare folder. Requirements related to the specific information that needs to be reported to the department are outlined within the Special Transmittal, OCYF Special Transmittal-Act 118 (APPLA), released on June 28, 2023. If you have questions or need assistance related to submitting your data, please contact Lindsey Glezen at [linglezen@pa.gov](mailto:linglezen@pa.gov) or 717-787-7056.

### **Act 131 of 2022**

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



### **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Family First Prevention Services Act**

OCYF has added Family First-related content to the Keep Kids Safe website. For information about Pennsylvania-specific Family First information check out [dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/FamilyFirst/](https://dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/FamilyFirst/).

For email PA Family First email updates, please subscribe [here](#).

### **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;
- Implementing a race equity lens to child welfare work;
- Achieving relational and legal permanence for older youth;
- Implementing effective concurrent planning; and
- Conducting a successful testifying workshop for caseworkers.

For more information on Permanency Barriers technical assistance please see [here](#) or contact Heidi Redlich Epstein at [Heidi.epstein@americanbar.org](mailto: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 [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](mailto:dkinard@psrfa.org) or [klramper@psrfa.org](mailto:klramper@psrfa.org).

## **CWEL and CWEB Programs**

### Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL)

The April 30<sup>th</sup> deadline is quickly approaching for 2024-2025 academic year applications to the Child Welfare Education for Leadership program (CWEL). The CWEL program strengthens Pennsylvania public child welfare services by providing graduate-level educational opportunities for current public child welfare professionals at 13 partner graduate schools. Counties approve students for either full-time or part-time participation; all students accepted into the program receive tuition and fees at the in-state rate, reimbursement for books, and other benefits. Full-time students are also granted an educational leave from their jobs and their county employers receive reimbursement for the student's salary and benefits. Upon graduation, a work commitment at their county agency is required. This Spring and Summer, 69 students will graduate from their master's degree programs and will return to their agencies well prepared to enhance the quality of services provided to the children and families of Pennsylvania who become involved with the public child welfare system.

Additional information is available at: [Child Welfare Education for Leadership \(CWEL\) | School of Social Work | University of Pittsburgh](#)

### Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB)

Attention Independent Living Professionals! Are you an Independent Living Professional working with young people who want to give back? Are they interested in a career as a child welfare professional? Encourage youth to consider a degree in Social Work and share the benefits of the CWEB program with them. Social Work majors at our 15 CWEB partner schools are encouraged to apply in their junior year of study. Deadlines are April 30<sup>th</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup> each year.

Students accepted into the program receive tuition and fees at the in-state rate for their senior year, fellowship payments during their internship, a bonus upon graduation, and more. CWEB students complete an internship at a public child welfare agency and begin their Foundations training. Upon graduation, a one-year work commitment in a Pennsylvania public child welfare agency is required. This spring and summer, 27 students will graduate and begin their careers as caseworkers in one of our PA county child welfare agencies. For more information about the CWEB Program, go to [socialwork.pitt.edu/researchtraining/child-welfare-programs/child-welfare-education-baccalaureates](https://socialwork.pitt.edu/researchtraining/child-welfare-programs/child-welfare-education-baccalaureates)

The CWEL and CWEB teams are available to provide presentations to county commissioners, advisory boards, agency leadership teams, agency staff members, and independent living programs. For more information and to schedule a

presentation, please contact Laura Borish, CWEL Agency Coordinator at [lbb14@pitt.edu](mailto:lbb14@pitt.edu) or 412-334-9122.

## **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 [kinconnector.org](https://kinconnector.org) and helpline can be reached at 866-546-2111.

The website includes a comprehensive, guided search feature of resources in the following topic areas: childcare, clothing, financial assistance, food, legal, medical, school, and support groups. Also available on the website are training opportunities for both professionals and kinship caregivers, printable resources, a podcast series called "Kindred Voices," and a 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 [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 is able to assist with family finding efforts, contact information, criminal checks and identifying individuals for any type of family engagement meeting. Each county must have a county employee who is designated as their Accurint administrator. Administrators can be Accurint users or non-users. Non-user registered administrators do not count toward the county's allotment of users. Counties may have more than one Accurint administrator. If you or your staff would like training on the Accurint software, please contact Accurint Education Consultant, Bill News, at [William.News@lexisnexisrisk.com](mailto:William.News@lexisnexisrisk.com) or 215-285-7108.

Additionally, you can look up trainings on the National Training Calendar ([learn.lexisnexis.com/](https://learn.lexisnexis.com/)). If you have any questions about Accurint or to set up a non-user administrator account, please contact Jessica Andrews-Slagel 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 "Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse" for mandated reporters who have taken training before and need to take it again. The "Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse" training is designed to help professionals and volunteers respond to disclosures of child abuse in a way that is sensitive and supportive to the child, but without tainting the child's memory. PFSA's third training, "Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect", assists professionals and volunteers to better understand child neglect and how best to respond. This training helps participants to recognize signs of neglect in children, determine when and how to make a referral, understand General Protective Services and agency procedures, and develop prevention and intervention strategies.

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

Additional information and training dates can be found on PSFA website at [www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org). 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 (including Emergency Medical Services and School Nurses) and wish to schedule training for medical professionals with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) through their Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN), contact AAP at [scan@paaap.org](mailto:scan@paaap.org) or at 866-823-7226.

### **SWAN/IL Google Groups**

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

### **Interstate Compact Unit**

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

Resource Accounts:

[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

Interstate Unit Fax Number:

717-425-5562

In a runaway situation, email Amanda Behe at [abehe@pa.gov](mailto:abehe@pa.gov) or Natalie (Primak) Mwaniki at [nmwaniki@pa.gov](mailto:nmwaniki@pa.gov).

### **Clearance Verification Unit**

Childline's Clearance 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 \(state.pa.us\)](http://Pennsylvania Child Welfare Information Solution (state.pa.us)). 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.

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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 [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. 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.

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

**From the SWAN Prime Contract**  
*Diakon-SWAN, LLC/Voce*

### **Coming Soon to a Computer Near You!**

Work on the SWAN Portal Version 3.0 continues. This spring, several affiliates and counties will pilot the full system to ensure its functionality with a goal to implement during the summer. The system design includes all the functionality of the existing system with several new features. Post-implementation, additional enhancements and functionality will be designed. Stay tuned for further updates.

### **Practice Reminders**

The following are some reminders about best practices when administering the SWAN Units of Service. If you have any questions about these topics, reach out to your SWAN regional technical assistant.

#### *County-referred Family Profiles*

County children and youth agencies are required to have a child assigned to a family before making a Family Profile referral. Affiliates should talk with their regional technical assistant if they get a referral from a county for a family who does not have an identified child.

#### *Family Profile/Finalization Referrals*

Recently, it has become common to [refer](#) the Finalization and Family Profile Units of Service simultaneously. Usually, this is done with the assumption that the family will be approved and they have enough knowledge about the child to be confident they are ready to adopt. Unfortunately, we cannot know that until the family profile process is complete. There is always the possibility things will not go as planned. Additionally, children are often aware of the process, and they are the ones most affected when things do not go as expected. Therefore, children are better served when a family is approved before finalization work begins.

#### *Submission Process for Family Matching Extension Assessment*

There is a process in place for submitting the Family Matching Extension Assessment for Unmatched Families. At the one-year mark, following completion of the initial referral and one extension, the Family Matching Extension Assessment for Unmatched Families must be completed and approved for a second and subsequent extensions to be referred. For families who are at the point of needing a second extension, affiliates will make the referral for the Family Matching Extension, which will go to

**Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)**  
P.O. Box 2675  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2675  
717-787-3984  
[www.dhs.pa.gov](https://www.dhs.pa.gov)



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

*Placement Unit of Service: Are You Using It?*

The Placement Unit of Service was revised when the Family Matching Unit of Service was implemented. It focuses on all that needs to happen to successfully transition a child and family to placement once a match is identified. Well-planned pre-placement activities establish trust, diminish the child’s fears and engage current caretakers to support the transition. Families and children are set up for success as services are identified and put in place before the child moves in. 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.

**Post-permanency Service Reminders**

Below are some important reminders about [Post-permanency](#) services:

- Remember when you receive a referral for a kinship family, you need to ensure that they are a formal kinship family (formal kinship care: situations in which the county agency has legal custody of the child and out of home placement is made with a kinship caregiver who is an approved foster parent by a licensed foster family care agency. (See: OCYF bulletin 00-03-03. Kinship Care Policy)
- Be sure to include your Respite purchased service costs in your Benchmark Cost and Time Log.
- Remember, a Respite event report/monthly Supportive Services report must be filled out for every Respite or Case Advocacy instance invoiced.
- Notify your [Post-permanency](#) technical assistant immediately if you withdraw an assessment. This is the only way we know if an assessment has been withdrawn and needs to be reassigned.
- Remember, for a family to receive a new assessment under the 2015 Reauthorization Criteria, they must be calling back with a new issue. Post-permanency services are not designed to be long-term, but rather a short-term boost to connect with community resources that can service them in the future.

**SWAN Post-permanency Services: Respite**

Respite services are available to families living in Pennsylvania who have adopted, are providing permanent legal custodianship or are formal kinship families. Respite provides a scheduled time apart that allows the parents and the child a time to relax and rejuvenate. A family member, a formal respite provider such as a foster family, a drop-off center, or a camp are examples of respite providers. For more information, contact your [Post-permanency](#) technical assistant or your regional technical assistant.

**Happy Anniversary Family Matching**

The Family Matching Unit of Service will soon celebrate its second anniversary. The affiliate-referred unit includes ongoing efforts to engage and develop families to adopt older and harder to place youth. Key practice components for maintaining active, viable families include individualized planning, on-going communication, education, transparency, guidance, development and support throughout the matching process. The Family Matching unit includes ongoing efforts in these areas as well as activities to identify a child for placement with an eligible SWAN family through implementing a Family Matching Plan. Family Matching is an affiliate-referred, eight-month unit of service with a four-month extension.

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. 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 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.

**Affiliate-Referred Family Profile (ARFP) Criteria**

As a reminder, families submitted by affiliates for an ARFP referral must be interested in being matched with at least one of the following types of children:

- Children aged ten and over;
- Children under the age of ten with significant medical, emotional, or cognitive conditions;
- Sibling groups; and
- Pre-adoptive placement(s) eligible for county-referred family profile and funding is denied by the county.

The ARFP referral request should include a signed copy of the Family Authorization Agreement. Please ensure that you are using the current version of the form, which can be found on the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#). It is important for families entering the ARFP process to understand the type of children who are receiving SWAN services.

When affiliate agencies provide information about where families are in the approval process, it helps the prime contractor staff efficiently make decisions related to ARFP approval. Communication to the SWAN regional technical assistant might indicate, for instance, that the family has completed orientation, is currently attending family preparation training, that development of the family profile has begun, etc.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact your SWAN regional technical assistant.

**Diligent Search Used to Achieve Positive Permanency Outcomes**

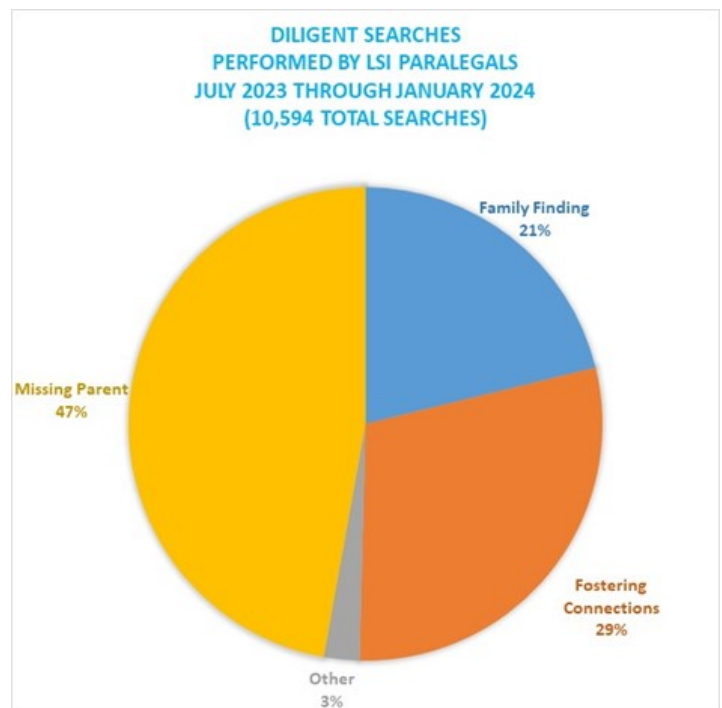
As we celebrate the release of the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the *SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet*, LSI paralegals continue to use diligent search as an integral tool in assisting county children and youth agencies in efforts to locate missing parents and identify family resources for children in out-of-home care.

To date this state fiscal year, LSI paralegals have performed a total of 10,594 Diligent Searches for 6,493 individual children.

During this time, 47% of all diligent searches performed were for the purpose of assisting county staff in locating missing parents of youth in care; 29% of searches were performed to adhere to the requirements of the *Fostering Connections and Increasing Success to Adoptions Act of 2008*; and 21% of all searches were performed to ensure family finding efforts as required under 67 Pa. C.S §7503 (formerly known as *Act 55 of 2013*). The

remaining 3% of searches were performed for various purposes including attempts to locate alleged perpetrators of abuse, to identify family members to participate in Family Group Decision Making meetings, to assist with Child Specific Recruitment and Older Child Matching Initiative, and for compliance with the requirements of the *Indian Child Welfare Act*.

For almost 20 years, diligent search has been a vital component of LSI. The search process has evolved and will continue to do so in response to changes in state and federal legislation. SWAN LSI paralegals will continue to use diligent search to aid county agencies in achieving positive permanency outcomes for children in out-of-home care.



**Incarceration Resource Manual**

Over six years ago, SWAN LSI released the original *SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual (IRM)* to help address the impact of parental incarceration on children in the child welfare system. The program developed the IRM as a comprehensive tool for child welfare professionals to use for case planning with incarcerated parents and as a resource to support the county agencies’ efforts to engage with these parties. The information contained within can be applied in many ways to support the child-parent connection, such as:

- Supporting contact between the incarcerated parent and child by detailing guidelines and nuances regarding written and telephone communication.

- Supporting parent-child visitation by providing details on visitation schedules or video visitation.
- Supporting permanency by listing services available for the incarcerated parent and re-entry information.

The *SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual* (IRM) fourth edition is available in the SWAN Permanency Toolkit: [SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual](#) | [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#) ([swantoolkit.org](http://swantoolkit.org))

### Updated LSI Resources in Bloom for Spring 2024

As promised in the winter edition of the *Administrative Updates*, SWAN LSI is extremely pleased to announce the release of the 9<sup>th</sup> Edition of the *SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet*. The Packet was officially approved by DHS on March 28, 2024. This new edition has updated all of the information and resources in it to provide you with the most current and effective guidance for all of your search requests, thus streamlining your diligent search process.

To download a copy of the 2024 *SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet*, please visit the prime contractor's [website](#). Additionally, The SWAN LSI Warmline ([lsiwarmline@diakonswan.org](mailto:lsiwarmline@diakonswan.org)) is available to answer questions about the packet and searching.

### Our Words Matter

Be aware that you may get gentle feedback from a PAE coordinator suggesting changing your language to this more accurate and sensitive language in a public narrative for the [Adopt PA Kids page](#) or on a flyer shared on the SWAN/IL Google Group. For example, when describing adolescents, it is best to describe them as "teenagers" rather than identifying them as "kids" or "children." These changes help ensure that our youth and families are always presented and characterized in the most respectful manner possible.

### What To Know About Customized Matches

Occasionally, a child's needs are significant, or the matching request is so specific that it is beyond the scope of the electronic matching process. The child's needs may be due to their identified characteristics, or they may want to remain close to where they currently live because of family connections or school opportunities. In these cases, PAE coordinators can take a personalized approach to matching, allowing for a tailored exploration of all active families in the Resource

### Family Registry (RFR)

Any of the child's workers can request these matches: county, CSR, or OCMI. The results of this match are not sent to the families; instead, it is the requester's responsibility to contact the family's caseworker if they would like additional information about the family. Note that the PAE coordinator can only filter for information based on the content in the family's CY131 form. Because the customized match is conducted manually by the PAE coordinator, the results are not instant and may take a few days to complete. If you have any questions regarding this or other forms of matching, do not hesitate to contact any PAE coordinator.

#### SWAN Prime Contract

200 Corporate Center Drive Suite 100B  
PO Box 959  
Camp Hill, PA 17011  
Ph: 717-236-8490 | Fax: 717-236-8510  
[www.diakon-swan.org](http://www.diakon-swan.org)  
[www.dhs.pa.gov/AdoptPAkids](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/AdoptPAkids)



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

### Older Youth Retreat

Please save the date for the 2024 Older Youth Retreat which will be held July 29 – August 2, 2024. Additional information regarding the event can be found at [payab.pitt.edu/ILRetreat.htm](http://payab.pitt.edu/ILRetreat.htm).

### PA Statewide Youth Advisory Board (YAB)

Standard email addresses have been designated for the Regional Youth Advisory Boards (YABs). For details about your regional contact and the map of regional YAB Boards, please visit [payab.pitt.edu/YABRegions.htm](http://payab.pitt.edu/YABRegions.htm). You can also reach out the assigned regional consultant for more specific information.

Northwest Region:

Chris Reger, [NWPAYAB@gmail.com](mailto:NWPAYAB@gmail.com)

Southwest Region:

Beth Wyatt, [SWPAYAB@gmail.com](mailto:SWPAYAB@gmail.com)

North Central Region: [NCPAYAB@gmail.com](mailto:NCPAYAB@gmail.com)

South Central Region:

Dennis Lentz, [SCPAYAB@gmail.com](mailto:SCPAYAB@gmail.com)

Northeast Region:

Sommer Gaydos, [NEPAYAB1@gmail.com](mailto:NEPAYAB1@gmail.com)

Southeast Region:

Deb Seager, [SEPAYAB1@gmail.com](mailto:SEPAYAB1@gmail.com)

### YAB Leadership Summit:

The PA Youth Advisory Board will hold its 2024 Leadership Summit June 12 – 13, 2024 at the Child Welfare Resource Center. This event allows youth from across the state to participate in trainings, workshops, and networking opportunities with youth and staff from different regions across the state. This event is youth-led and continues to

be an opportunity for youth to display leadership skills, develop youth friendly resources, and improve public speaking skills. If you have questions regarding this event or may have youth who would be interested in attending, please contact your YAB regional coordinator. ([www.payab.pitt.edu/YABRegions.htm](http://www.payab.pitt.edu/YABRegions.htm))

### YAB Projects:

The members of the PA Youth Advisory Board have recently finalized the following resources:

*Know Your Rights: Quick Reference Guide:* This quick reference guide highlights the key rights that your peers from the Youth Advisory Board consider essential for you to be aware of. Understanding your rights is a crucial aspect of advocating for yourself. Familiarity with your rights enhances your knowledge of the system and empowers you to advocate for yourself more effectively. To access the full Know Your Rights Guide please see [here](#).

*Navigating Foster Care as an Older Youth:* This is a youth friendly resource created by the PA Youth Advisory Board to help their fellow peers as they navigate foster care. "Your fellow peers want you to know we have traveled this road before you. We know what it's like to experience foster care. We want you to know that you are not alone, and many of us share your story. Don't give up; the beginning is always the hardest."

### 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)

