

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

OCYF Staff Update

OCYF is proud to announce that **Carrie Keiser** has been promoted to director of the Program Division within the Bureau of Policy, Programs and Operations as of February 8, 2020, and **Jennie Pettet, MS** has been hired as the director for the Bureau of Child and Family Services as of March 9, 2020.

Carrie graduated from Shippensburg University with a BS in Social Work and began her child welfare career as a general protective services caseworker for Dauphin County Social Services for Children and Youth. Carrie came to OCYF in 2002, where she served as a coordinator for the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange. Carrie continued her career with OCYF, within in the Division of Programs as a human services program specialist and, recently, a human services program specialist supervisor for the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) and Independent Living (IL) unit. As such, she was responsible for the management and oversight of the SWAN prime contract, IL and other programs impacting permanency and older youth services in Pennsylvania. In addition to her new duties, Carrie will continue to provide direct oversight to the SWAN/IL unit until a replacement is hired.

Jennie began her career in child welfare over 32 years ago in San Diego, California working with a clinical team serving children, youth and families in the San Diego County Child Sexual Abuse Treatment program. Over the span of her career, Jennie has served families as a line social worker, forensic interviewer, supervisor, manager, deputy director, assistant director and most recently served as the Child, Youth and Family Branch director for Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency. In addition to her service in California, Jennie has served as a child welfare consultant for the Capacity Building Center for States and with the County Welfare Director Association.

Jennie has dedicated her career to strengthening safety, permanency and wellbeing for children and youth served by child welfare services. With a

background in providing technical assistance to states and counties to improve child welfare outcomes, Jennie has a passion for increasing evidence-based programs, accountability and building capacity for delivering strong, trauma-informed, culturally relevant services to children, youth and families.

Please join me in expressing our appreciation to Western Regional Director **Amber Kalp** for serving as our interim bureau director since September 2019. Anyone who has had the pleasure of working with Amber knows of her exemplary work and significant contributions to OCYF during this time.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

OCYF, in partnership with Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA), has postponed planned events during the April at this time. For the most up-to-date information related to Child Abuse Prevention Month please visit PFSA's website (www.pa-fsa.org) or Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ProtectPAKids).

Please continue to visit www.KeepKidsSafe.pa.gov for information related to the protection of Pennsylvania's children.

The Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First)

Pennsylvania continues to work towards implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act by October 1, 2020. To guide the work, a governance structure was adopted that includes multiple workgroups comprised of stakeholders from across the Commonwealth. These workgroups are charged with providing recommendations to support the federal reimbursement of certain evidence-based programs and services that maintain the unity of families and enhancing the quality of services in congregate care settings designed to treat the unique needs of children and youth.

Additional information regarding Pennsylvania's implementation of Family First will be made available on the KeepKidsSafe website (www.KeepKidsSafe.pa.gov) in the next few months.

Specialized Settings for Children and Youth

The Family First Prevention Services Act (Public Law (P.L.) 115-123) reforms federal child welfare financing to keep children safely with their families. The statute expands funding and enhanced supports to prevent placement. The statute further limits Title IV-E placement maintenance payments for eligible youth in congregate care settings beyond 14 days, except in specialized settings. DHS has defined specialized settings in the Commonwealth and established standards of practice commensurate with Family First and Governor Wolf's "Protection of Vulnerable Populations" and the Council of Reform's recommendation specific to using trauma-informed approaches. The standards were released in *OCYF Bulletin 3680-20-02, 3800-20-03: Certification as a Specialized Setting for Children and Youth*.

Specialized settings are defined as a trauma-informed child residential facility or supervised independent living (SIL) program specialized in providing care and treatment to one or more specific populations:

- Pregnant, expecting and parenting youth;
- Youth who are transitioning to adulthood; or
- Youth who are, or at risk of becoming, sex trafficking victims.

Providers who are interested in being considered a specialized setting will submit an application, which includes updated program descriptions, policies and procedure, and other supporting documentation identifying implementation of the standards of care as defined in the bulletin. Approved programs will receive a certification as a specialized setting. This certification is in addition to Chapter 3680 or Chapter 3800 licensure. To receive certification as a specialized setting, the agency will be expected to demonstrate an elevated level of quality of care and training of staff. Application deadline is April 15, 2020.

Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program

The Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program, known as FosterED, takes effect for the fall semester of 2020. FosterED provides a tuition and mandatory fee waiver for youth who are or were in foster care at 16 or older, are Pennsylvania residents and eligible for the federal Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) program under the Federal Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. Tuition and mandatory fee waivers apply to both public (state) colleges and universities, community colleges, private post-secondary schools 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 technical assistance, eligibility and other resources that may be available to them on and off campus. Each post-secondary education institution must have their POC listed on their website. Additional information about the tuition waiver can be found at PHEAA.org/FosterEd. If you have questions, please contact Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov.

Extension of Aftercare Services and Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG)

Under the provisions of the Family First Prevention Services Act, Pennsylvania will extend aftercare services to age 23 and Chafee ETG to age 26 beginning state fiscal year 2020-2021.

The extension of aftercare services from age 21 to 23 will allow current and former foster youth the ability to receive the full range of IL services to age 23, including any service area(s) addressed in their assessment. Youth who achieved permanency through adoption or permanent legal custodianship prior to age 16 are not eligible for stipends, ETG or FosterED.

The extension of Chafee ETG to age 26 from age 23 will allow eligible youth to participate in the program for five years, consecutive or not.

Special Transmittal

Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123) Adoption Assistance Program, Delay of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Delink for Applicable Child Special Transmittal was released on March 2, 2020, which impacts the adoption assistance program. Family First revised the eligibility rules as stated in Fostering Connections to delay phasing in the full "applicable child" requirements based on the age of the child. CCYAs may only apply the "applicable child" age requirements to children who will reach at least age two by the end of the federal fiscal year (FFY) their adoption assistance agreement was entered into from January 1, 2018 until June 30, 2024. A child may also be considered an "applicable child" by virtue of time in foster care under the CCYA's care and responsibility for 60 consecutive months or by being a sibling of an "applicable child," if the child will not reach age two by the end of the FFY the adoption assistance agreement is entered into. A table that incorporates the changes made in Family First can be found within the *Special Transmittal*.

National Youth in Transition Database

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) implementation is ongoing with the Baseline Population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17), Served Population (any youth receiving IL 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 Baseline Surveys for all 17-year-old youth in foster care as of October 1, 2019-March 31, 2020 (2020A file). Counties have until April 15 to submit baseline surveys for 17-year-old youth as well as served population data for this period. Counties can log onto www.getnytdpa.org to enter their survey data. NYTD questions can be directed to Teresa Musser, Office of Children, Youth and Families, at temusser@pa.gov or 717-214-7385.

If you have any problems with password reset, or you don't remember what your username is (or have any other technical assistance questions related to NYTD), please contact the NYTD Help Desk at evalsupport@pcgus.com.

Pennsylvania KinConnector Program

The Pennsylvania KinConnector program was created by Act 89 of 2018 to be a resource for grandparents and other relative or non-relative caregivers who are raising children in the state of Pennsylvania. The KinConnector program is a telephone support line that serves as a bridge for kinship care families to help them identify multiple sources of assistance, including local, state, federal, and private resources. It is staffed by KinConnectors, compassionate and knowledgeable social service professionals dedicated to helping kinship care families thrive. For more information, contact the KinConnector support line at 1-866-KIN-2111 or visit their website (www.kinconnector.org).

Accurint

Accurint is an online search tool available to every county throughout the state. It's able to assist with family finding efforts, contact information, criminal checks and identifying individuals for any type of family engagement meeting. Please be aware that only county employees may be Accurint administrators for your county's account. If you or your staff would like training in the Accurint software, please contact Bill News, Accurint Education Consultant, at William.news@lexisnexisrisk.com or 215-285-7108.

If you have any questions about Accurint, the number of Accurint users your county has, who your users are, etc., please contact W. Donald Dickinson at wildickins@pa.gov or 717-787-2726.

Waiting Child Segments

The Department 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 Pennsylvania.

- If you have a child you would like featured on KDKA's *Waiting Child*, please contact Nikita Lewis at nlewis@diakon-swan.org. The contract with KDKA began on January 20 and will end on June 21, 2020.
- If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WHTM's *Val's Kids*, please contact Alfredo Gonzales at agonzales@diakon-swan.org. The contract with WHTM began on January 6 and will end on June 21, 2020.
- 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. The contract with WBRE began on January 6 and will end on June 21, 2020.

SWAN/IL Google Groups

There are over 700 members of the SWAN/IL ListServ through Google Groups. This is a great way to share confidential information across the network to seek collegial 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 at bwhary@diakon-swan.org or 717-558-1223.

Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

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www.dhs.pa.gov

From the SWAN Prime Contract

Diakon-SWAN, LLC/Family Design Resources, Inc.

Boost Your Attendance at Matching Events

As you set the wheels in motion to plan your next matching event, don't forget to partner with the SWAN Helpline to invite Pennsylvania families. There are several proven ways the SWAN Helpline can boost your event attendance:

1. On the first Tuesday of each month, the SWAN Helpline sends a mass email to active families to highlight upcoming matching events across the state;
2. The SWAN Helpline can partner with your specific event to make reminder calls to your area's local pool of active families; and
3. The SWAN Helpline keeps a list of all upcoming matching events handy so they can offer information about these events when talking with registered/active families about waiting children.

To partner with the SWAN Helpline, contact your region's PAE coordinator at least one month prior to the matching event you would like to promote to ensure enough time for the SWAN Helpline staff to make calls to prospective families. Provide detailed information about the event location and specific factors that may impact a family's attendance (i.e., the event will focus on permanency for waiting children ages 10+). The PAE coordinator will use this information to identify active families from the Pennsylvania Resource Family Registry who are nearby and fit the event criteria. The PAE coordinator will communicate this information to the SWAN Helpline.

Adoption Day Events: A Planner's Guide Updated

The SWAN Legal Services Initiative (LSI) has released an updated version of *Adoption Day Events: A Planner's Guide*. This tool is designed to help paralegals, county and affiliate agency workers and additional colleagues throughout the network plan events for Adoption Day celebrations. The guide is available in the LSI section of the SWAN Toolkit (www.swantoolkit.org).

This guide was first created in 2013 to share stories, successes and lessons learned. Since that time, we have heard of and been part of many exciting Adoption Day celebration events and finalizations. This updated guide offers many additional suggestions from those who have planned or participated in these events. The *Planner's Guide* provides:

- A history of National Adoption Month and Adoption Day;
- Tips for planning your event;
- Real-life Adoption Day stories from counties; and
- Sample documents and resources to support your Adoption Day event.

The original *Planner's Guide* included information about adoption awareness and matching events planned in coordination with Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE); however, this guide has been updated to focus solely on the LSI paralegal's role and perspective in supporting county Adoption Day events/finalizations. To learn more about planning adoption awareness or matching events, see *Adoption Awareness and Matching Events: Planning for Success* in the PAE section of the SWAN Toolkit.

AdoptUSKids Helps Recruit Families

AdoptUSKids (AUSK) is a national project that works to achieve permanency for children and teens in foster care. As their website states, "AUSK helps families who are approved to adopt search for children on our national photolisting and make inquiries directly to the children's caseworkers. Caseworkers use our site to search for families for children and access resources that help them manage their caseloads and find and support families."

We encourage recruiters to expand their search for permanency by signing up for an AUSK account through the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange. To do this, send your name, email, phone number and agency to Bobbi Whary at bwhary@diakon-swan.org. Denote "AUSK Account" in the subject line.

(Pop culture fact: AUSK was the website featured in the 2018 movie *Instant Family*.)

"PAE Pending" on Flyers

The term "PAE Pending" displayed on child flyers is not a status issued by the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE). Agencies should not use this term and instead, only display a child's PAE registration number on flyers to aid in their recruitment efforts.

If you are working with a youth who does not have a PAE number, prior to creating flyers, caseworkers should contact the child's PAE coordinator for assistance. The PAE coordinator will support you with PAE registration, provide additional information, and answer any questions you might have. You can contact your PAE coordinator by calling 1-800-227-0225 or send an email request at PAE@diakon-swan.org.

Monthly Legal Report Covers Latest Developments

The SWAN legal training specialists prepare a monthly report on current legal developments impacting child welfare practice. The report includes summaries of the key facts, holdings and rationale of Pennsylvania state and federal court decisions, as well as any new statutes, court rules or regulations. The report consolidates the legal information in one easy-to-read document to help your agency comply with new and existing laws and complete legal research. Each legal report can be found at www.diakon-swan.org under the Publications tab. If you have any questions about the report, feel free to contact the LSI Warmline at lsiwarmline@diakon-swan.org.

New SWAN Portal Features Available

In January, the SWAN prime contractor announced two new features available in the SWAN Portal:

- Automated Previous Agency Affiliation (PAA) requests for families
- Child and family matches

OCYF Bulletin #3490-05-01: Implementation of ACT 160 of 2004 enables agencies approving resource families to request information from the Resource Family Registry through a PAA request as part of the approval process. The former process for submitting a PAA request required agencies to mail or email requests to SWAN, then receive results in the mail. Now, agencies can submit requests and view results from the family record within the SWAN Portal. This feature not only streamlines the exchange of information, but also maintains request results within the family record for immediate and future access.

Additionally, agencies can now create child and family matches in the SWAN Portal. Previously, the matching process required users to request matches from the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) when completing the CY130 or CY131 forms, then wait to receive results in the mail. With this change, agencies are still required to complete PAE registrations; however, users can now initiate matching with the click of a button any time after a child or family record is created. Like the PAA requests, all matches run will be maintained in the child or family record for easy access.

To learn how to navigate these new features, please refer to the user guides available in the Help section of the SWAN Portal. To see a live demonstration of these features, please contact your SWAN regional technical assistant or PAE coordinator.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2018 SWAN/IL Summer Statewide Meeting

June 16-17

26th Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference

June 17-19

Kalahari Resorts and Conventions
250 Kalahari Drive
Pocono Manor, Pennsylvania 18349

2020 Spring Quarterly Meetings

Scranton — Sept. 30, 2020

Clarion — Oct. 7, 2020

Monroeville — Oct. 8, 2020

Philadelphia — Oct. 28, 2020

Lansdale — Oct. 29, 2020

Harrisburg — Nov. 6, 2020

[www.diakon-swan.org/swan/events/
upcoming/](http://www.diakon-swan.org/swan/events/upcoming/)



/adopttpa

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

Save the Dates

Please take note of some of our upcoming events and save the date for our:

- *2019 YAB Leadership Summit held at the Child Welfare Resource Center*
June 27-28, 2020
- *2019 Older Youth Retreat held at the University of Pittsburgh Johnstown campus*
August 5-9, 2020

You can always find more information about these events at the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) website (<http://www.payab.pitt.edu/>).

Statewide Youth Advisory Board Projects

Over the next few months, the statewide YAB will be developing resources for potential and current resource parents fostering older youth. The youth are developing a flyer and video to help recruit resource families for older youth. They are also developing a questionnaire/introduction process for older youth to share with families who they are, beyond a case file. These resources will be rolled out at the youth summit in June.

YAB Website

The PA YAB website, formerly www.independentlivingpa.org, has been revamped and has a new URL: <http://www.payab.pitt.edu/>. Over the past year, we have worked to make the website more user-friendly, visually appealing and full of relevant resources based on feedback from older youth and staff. We've also moved the information that was previously located on the Independent Living Project page (<http://www.ilp.pitt.edu/>) to the YAB website under the Staff tab. Our goal is to keep youth and staff up to date about events across the state, resources and opportunities for collaboration and engagement.

IL Trainings (available online and in-person)

The Child Welfare Resource Center recently revised the IL training series. Two of the three modules are now available online through the Resource Center's E-Learn site (<http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/ELEARN.htm>). The third module, Engaging Older Youth, is an in-person training that involves application of theories learned in modules one and two through simulation-based training.

If you have questions regarding how to register for these trainings, please contact Rachael Ickes at cwtpreg@pitt.edu.

- Independent Living (IL) Services: Module 1: Purpose and Policy (online)
- Independent Living (IL) Services: Module 2: Adolescent Issues: Risk and Resiliency (online)
- Independent Living (IL) Services: Module 3: Engaging Older Youth (in-person simulation)

PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)

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