

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

OCYF Personnel Update

Melissa Erazo accepted the position of Bureau Director for OCYF's Bureau of Budget and Fiscal Support.

She is joining the OCYF team with over 15 years of experience in fiscal operations, ten of those years spent as a contractor for OCYF working in the Title IV-E Compliance project. Melissa has significant experience in the areas of budgeting, fiscal and program analysis, contracting, human resources and operational management. Melissa's extensive work with the placement services budget documentation process assisted OCYF in the successful resolution of the federal partial deferral of Title IV-E foster care funding in 2019. Melissa looks forward to bringing her leadership skills and relationships established with stakeholders over the years to build a strong team and continuing to support the efforts of the child welfare system.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA), in partnership with OCYF, has planned several activities and events during April, Child Abuse Prevention Month. The theme surrounding the 2021 events will be "Thumbs Up for #ProtectPAkids." The events will be virtual and will include fundraising events lasting all month, expert presentations and interviews on topics related to child abuse prevention, recognition of the 2021 Blue Ribbon Champions, and a digital data map displaying child abuse data in Pennsylvania from the prior year. For the most up-to-date information related to Child Abuse Prevention Month events please visit PFSA's website (www.pafsa.org) or Facebook page. Also, please continue to visit www.KeepKidsSafe.pa.gov for information related to the protection of Pennsylvania's children.

Division X of the Consolidated Appropriations Act

On December 27, 2020, the President signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Public Law (P.L.) 116-260. The law provides additional appropriations for specified federal agencies and provides flexibilities and assistance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency; the COVID-19 public health emergency is defined as beginning on January 27, 2020, when the emergency was declared by the Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and continues to be in effect. The law also contains House Resolution 7947, the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act, known as Division X:

- Sections 3 of Division X provides an increase in funding and program flexibilities related to the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee) and the Education and Training Grant (ETG).
- Until September 30, 2021, Section 4 of Division X prohibits child welfare agencies from terminating foster care services to youth who would age out and requires child welfare agencies to provide re-entry to youth who aged out during the COVID-19 public health emergency even if they have reached age 21.

DHS/OCYF will release guidance related to Sections 3 and 4 of Division X. Prior to the release of this guidance, CCYAs should, if not already:

- Allow youth who age out as of December 27, 2020, who are adjudicated dependent, dually adjudicated or shared case responsibility to voluntarily remain in foster care until September 30, 2021, even if they reach age 21.
- As of December 27, 2020, permit formerly adjudicated dependent, dually adjudicated or shared case responsibility youth, who left foster care due to age during the COVID-19 public health emergency, to voluntarily re-enter care until September 30, 2021.
- Extend the age of eligibility for Chafee aftercare services to eligible former foster youth through age 26 (until their 27th birthday) or until September 30, 2021.

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The federal requirements of Division X supersede the definition of a “child” according to Pennsylvania’s Juvenile Act. Additional direction and information will be issued by the DHS/OCYF directly to CCYAs regarding funding adjustments and fiscal expectations so that CCYAs can follow procedures to fund extended placement and services for youth who reach age 21 who extend and re-enter foster care.

This law is intended to provide youth assistance during the pandemic and recovery by providing child welfare agencies the funding and flexibility to meet these urgent needs. We encourage CCYAs and providers to read Division X, Sections 3 and 4, as summarized by the [Children’s Bureau’s, Administration for Children and Families, Information Memorandum \(IM\), ACYF-CB-IM-21-05](#), on January 13, 2021, and outlined in the Program Instruction (PI) [ACYF-CB-PI-21-05](#) (hhs.gov) issued on March 9, 2021. CCYAs are encouraged to review pages 2-4 of the IM for details on the provisions, pages 1-7 of the PI, and the text of the law.

ABA’s Educational Barrier Project

The American Bar Association (ABA) Education Barriers to Permanency Project focuses on improving education outcomes for children in foster care as a key component to permanency and life success. The project combines the expertise of two successful ABA Center on Children and the Law projects—the ABA Permanency Barriers Project and the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education.

The Education Barriers Project guides its work around three principles: 1) School stability strengthens placement stability and often speeds permanency for children and families; 2) School success guides life success, focusing on the full educational experience (including student needs and supports) improves school and life outcomes; and 3) Collaboration between schools, child welfare agencies, and courts is key to supporting students in foster care.

The Education Barriers to Permanency Project is available to provide support to counties through either a long-term project or targeted technical assistance (e.g., trainings, meeting facilitation) to support the needs and priorities of the county. Westmoreland County is currently engaged in the third year of the long-term project which involves working with the county child welfare agency, Westmoreland County school districts, court leadership, and other community partners. Through the Education Barriers Project, Westmoreland County has been able to identify strengths and challenges to supporting students in foster care; develop strategies, practices, and policies that improve education stability and success; receive targeted technical assistance from

the ABA on key priority areas identified by the county; and collaborate on a long-term reform strategy.

County agencies interested in learning more about the Education to Barriers Project, please see [here](#).

For a one-page summary to share with colleagues as you consider if your county is interested in this support, please see [here](#).

County agencies interested in the Education Barriers to Permanency Project should contact Kathleen McNaught at Kathleen.mcnaught@americanbar.org.

Annual ABA Legal Training Day

Join the American Bar Association (ABA) Center on Children and the Law and Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators (PCYA) for a full day on *The Family First Prevention Services Act: Judicial and Legal Practice Considerations* to be held on **April 28, 2021** from 10:00 AM-12:00 PM and continued from 1:00-3:00 PM.

The morning session will highlight practice strategies outlined in the new ABA tool, [The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018: A Guide for the Legal Community](#). During the afternoon breakout sessions, participants will explore the impact of this law on key issue areas such as: kinship caregiving, education, older youth, and prevention services. Finally, participants will have the opportunity to discuss their role in effective advocacy, decision-making, and practice in breakout groups designated for each case party.

This webinar is sponsored by the ABA, OCYF and PCYA. [Registration](#) is required. PCYA will seek 4.0 hours of Continuing Legal Education Credits (CLE) for this program. Credit hours are estimated and subject to Pennsylvania approval.

ABA’s Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Initiatives

The American Bar Association’s (ABA) Center on Children and the Law provides Permanency Barriers and Education Barriers assistance to county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) in Pennsylvania as well as targeted training and technical assistance to CCYAs, as requested.

ABA is actively seeking new project or technical assistance counties.

- For more information on Permanency Barriers, please see [here](#).
- For more information on Education Barriers, please see [here](#).

Strengthening Equity Workgroup

Nationally, the overrepresentation of Black children in the child welfare system has been well documented across numerous research studies. Understanding the impact of racial disparity in the child welfare system requires recognition of the points at which bias can enter the system and how inequities at each point can impact the trajectory of children and families as they move through the system. Racial disparity can often be found at the very point where families often first come into contact with the child welfare system.

As part of OCYF's racial equity initiative, and Families convened the Strengthening Equity Workgroup (SEW). SEW is represented by a diverse group of staff from across all bureaus within the program office. The purpose of the workgroup is to:

- Identify areas of child welfare service where changes in policy and/or practice can reduce racial disparities. This will be achieved by an intentional review of child welfare data and practices.
- Create meaningful change within the culture of OCYF by incorporating a racial equity lens in all OCYF initiatives and processes.
- Establish next phases for racial equity work.

Some of the key areas of focus proposed by the group include increasing culturally relevant prevention efforts, building partnerships and opportunities within the community and increasing cultural competency for responding to crises. The workgroup will devote significant time to review of existing and new data to further conduct analysis of apparent inequities and further identify root causes.

This work will take place over a two-year period and will be accomplished as a phased approach. Future updates regarding this initiative will be provided as they are available.

Media

SWAN's #MeetTheKids media campaign will air on network and cable television in all six media markets in Pennsylvania during May, June, November and December 2021. Radio advertisements will also air during these months. In addition to TV and radio, the media campaign includes online media ads on Google, Hulu, Facebook, Instagram and Cumulus that will run from April 26 – December 31, 2021.

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

Waiting Child Segments

SWAN's media contractor 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 from April 26 – December 31, 2021.

If you have a child you would like featured on KDKA's *Waiting Child*, please contact Ja-Neen Jones at jjones@3riversadopt.org or Nikita Lewis at nlewis@diakon-swan.org.

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

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

Family First Prevention Services Act

Specialized Settings Least Restrictive Placement Statement: Specialized Settings were identified through the Family First Prevention Services Act as enhanced congregate care settings to meet the need of the identified populations of children at risk, or victims, of sex trafficking; pregnant and parenting youth and youth transitioning to adulthood. While Pennsylvania has developed standards and certification processes for becoming a specialized setting, that does not guarantee youth who may fit any of the designated population will automatically be placed in those settings. The placement decision for a child who has been determined to need out-of-home care continues to be made at the county level (county agency and Juvenile Court). Family First does not impact the current practice that the placement setting identified for a child should be in the least restrictive setting that can meet the child's safety needs and their identified treatment needs.

For an updated list of the providers who are pursuing a Specialized Setting Certification, please subscribe to receive PA Family First updates [here](#).

Trauma-Informed Workgroup

On July 30, 2019, Governor Wolf declared that Pennsylvania would become a trauma-informed state. The process will be introduced over the next ten years and will occur in a phased approach. The four phases include: trauma aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-informed and healing centered.

Pennsylvania's process for becoming a trauma-informed state was created over four months and included work by a vast group of individuals with various areas of knowledge and expertise relating to a trauma-informed approach. The result of their work is a plan to guide the Commonwealth and licensed residential stakeholders to an understanding of what it means to be a "trauma-informed and healing centered state."

Scientific studies have confirmed untreated trauma has negative and costly effects on a person's physical and mental health. It impacts their ability to learn and experience healthy relationships as well as their ability to reach their full potential. A Statewide Trauma-Informed Leadership Team has been created to establish short and long-term goals to achieve the identified objective of becoming a state that not only rises to the current scientific standards but exceeds those standards and sets the bar for the rest of the nation. This team is tasked with assigning accountability and advancing recommendations to achieve the desired outcome.

The plan focuses on six key areas:

1. Ensuring that the culture in the state of Pennsylvania is trauma-informed through universal training
2. Ensuring all state agencies' policies and practices are trauma-informed and more focused on prevention and healing
3. Mandating that all licensed and funded entities become trauma-informed
4. Building and supporting grassroots/community-based efforts to become trauma-informed in every part of the Commonwealth
5. Recognizing and healing from the traumas of major crisis like COVID-19
6. Preventing and healing racial, communal, and historical traumas, whether they be individual or systemic

The first phase of this process includes ensuring all OCYF staff and licensed residential stakeholders become "trauma aware" by the conclusion of 2021. All licensed county and foster/adoption stakeholders will become "trauma aware" by the conclusion of 2022. OCYF staff and all licensed residential stakeholders will begin working together over the next year to identify providers who are currently providing "trauma aware" training and information to their staff, as well as what training,

tools and resources are available to assist all OCYF staff and licensed stakeholders to become "trauma aware." OCYF requested all licensed residential stakeholders take a brief survey to determine each agency's and facility's current understanding of trauma-informed care.

The most cost-effective/free means of ensuring that all agencies and facilities become trauma aware are currently being explored.

In the immediate future, OCYF staff will be outreaching to our licensed residential providers to obtain detailed information regarding any trauma-related training that is currently being provided to agency staff. OCYF will also be reviewing the current trauma training practices to determine if an agency's training and protocols meet the accepted trauma-aware definition. For those licensed residential stakeholders who do not currently meet this criterion.

If you should have any questions regarding this process, please do not hesitate to reach out to our designated resource account:

RA-PWOCYFTrauma@pa.gov

Thank you in advance for your commitment as we begin this process together. More information will be forthcoming.

Pennsylvania KinConnector Program

The PA KinConnector Program offers kinship families and professionals who work with kinship families support, guidance, and resources. 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 is 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. Kinship families you work with can be referred to the Kinconnector website at www.kinconnector.org or their helpline at 866-546-2111 for additional support and assistance. Any questions regarding this program can be directed to Desiree Weisser at OCYF at dweisser@pa.gov or 717-705-2911.

Chafee Education and Training Grant Programs

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application and instructions for the 2021 – 2022 academic year will be available in April 2021 and can be found online [here](#).

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

Please contact the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency at 1-800-831-0797 with questions about current Chafee applications or a youth's status. If youth have questions regarding the ETG program, contact Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov or at 717-214-7385.

Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program

The Fostering Independence through Education Program, known as FosterED, began with the fall semester of 2020. FosterED program requires Pennsylvania postsecondary institutions to award a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees for Pennsylvania resident youth who meet Chafee ETG eligibility requirements and have applied for all available federal and state grants. Tuition and mandatory fee waivers apply to both public (state) colleges and universities, community colleges, private post-secondary institutions, and other eligible schools. Youth are eligible to receive the waivers for five years, which need not be consecutive, or until age 26.

In addition to the waivers, each post-secondary institution must appoint a Point of Contact (POC) to 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.

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 Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov.

National Youth in Transition Database

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) collects information in the following areas: Baseline Population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17), Served Population (any youth or young adult receiving independent living services regardless of age) and Follow-up Population (youth surveys at age 19 and 21 depending on Cohort period). Pennsylvania is currently in Cohort 3 for Follow-up Surveys for 21-year-old youth as of April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021 (2021B). Counties have until October 15, 2021, to submit their follow-up surveys as well as served population data. Counties can log onto www.getnytdpa.org to enter their served and survey data. NYTD questions can be directed to Teresa Musser, OCYF, at temusser@pa.gov or at 717-214-7385.

Important Note for Reporting Served Population Data

The Consolidated Appropriations Act extended aftercare services to young adults through age 26 or until their 27th birthday through September 30, 2021. CCYAs need to include all IL services provided to this extended age population when entering their NYTD Served Population data into the system.

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 800-436-4105 or getnytd@pcgus.com.

Accurint

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

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.

Child Welfare Case Management System

Child Welfare Case Management (CW CM) is a subsystem to Enterprise Case Management (ECM). This chart (right) provides the current CW CM Timeline and Activities.

Credit Reports

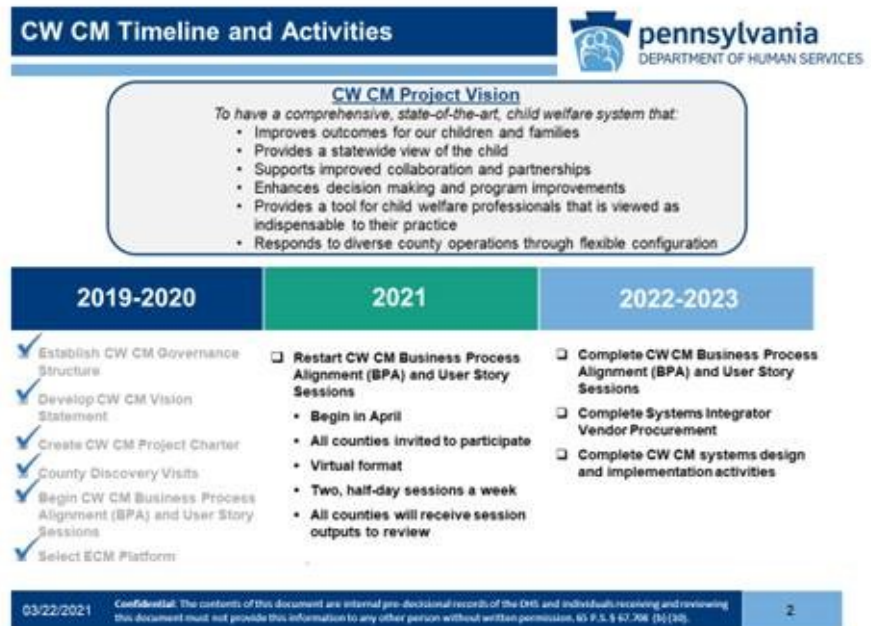
Did you know that every credit bureau has a specific contact person and process to ensure foster care youth credit history checks are completed appropriately? If you are unsure of this information, have questions regarding the credit report history of foster care youth or are having issues obtaining a credit history from one of the credit bureaus, please contact W. Donald Dickinson at wildickins@pa.gov or 717-787-2726 for assistance.

Mandated Reporter Training:

In-person mandated reporter trainings are still not able to be conducted at this time due to COVID-19 restrictions; however, the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) are continuing to offer virtual training opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic so that professionals and volunteers can participate in a safe learning environment. In-person trainings will be made available once possible. PFSA now also offers a new Residential Care Facility training course that educates staff as to what is a reportable incident versus what is a recordable incident. To schedule a virtual training with PFSA, contact their office at info@pa-fsa.org or at 1-800-448-4906. If you are in the medical profession and wish to schedule training with AAP for the Educating Physicians in their Communities-Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (EPIC-SCAN), contact AAP at scan@paaap.org or at 866-823-7226.

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 colleague's advice and announce upcoming events. Anyone wishing to join the group must be an employee of a county children and youth agency, SWAN affiliate agency or IL provider. If interested, please contact Bobbi Whary by email at bwhary@diakon-swan.org or 717-558-1223.



National Foster Care Month

May is National Foster Care Month. OCYF will once again be awarding \$60,000 in mini-grants to agencies and coalitions across the state to support Foster Care/Adoption/Permanency recruitment and/or awareness events to be held throughout the month. If you would like to have your event featured on the SWAN Facebook page, please contact Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov.

Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

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From the SWAN Prime Contract

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

Staff Update

Pamela Wilson, Esquire recently joined the SWAN prime contractor as a legal training specialist. Pam brings her knowledge and experiences as a former CYS solicitor and a custody hearing officer to the training team. Welcome, Pam!

A Message from SWAN Prime Contract Partner, Family Design Resources

More than 20 years ago, Family Design Resources, Inc. partnered with Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries to deliver the SWAN prime contract. Now known as Voce (pronounced vō-chāy, which means voice), we are building on our legacy in adoption and permanency to provide consultation and training in the areas of trauma and loss, diversity and inclusion and individual and family well-being to human services agencies throughout the country. Our vision is a society where every person belongs and is empowered to thrive.

As we make this transition, we recognize that we do so on the shoulders of a small group of visionary social workers who inspired the idea for our agency two decades ago. Voce remains committed to both our partnership with Diakon to administer the SWAN prime contract and to serving the needs of Pennsylvania's children and families.

We are eager to use our voice, and empower you to use yours, to cultivate positive lasting change in people's lives. To learn more, visit VoceTogether.org or our social media channels and subscribe/follow for updates.

Update on Response to COVID-19

A little more than a year ago, the SWAN prime contractor moved all staff to telework and suspended all in-person events and trainings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, some SWAN LSI paralegals have resumed working in the county offices to which they are assigned, and the prime contractor's Harrisburg office is open to personnel on an as-needed basis. Otherwise, at the direction of DHS/OCYF and until further notice, the prime contractor continues to maintain a virtual operation. We look forward to the day that we once again can provide in-person site visits, trainings and events and will keep you updated on any changes to our status.

SWAN Legal Services Initiative Continues Serving PA Kids

The SWAN Legal Service Initiative (SWAN LSI) continues to address barriers within the legal process and focus on ways to expedite permanency for children in Pennsylvania. SWAN LSI paralegals impact the cases of children at all stages of their permanency journey. They work steadfastly with county children and youth agencies to provide Diligent Search services throughout a child's case. When reunification is not an option, SWAN LSI paralegals assist with both terminations of parental rights (TPRs) and adoption finalizations. While each child's goals and journey to permanency is different, these services are crucial steps to achieving permanency through adoption.

From July 1, 2020 through March 15, 2021, SWAN LSI provided support to the cases of 25,183 children and youth involved with the child welfare system. This includes Diligent Search services for 7,762 children and youth. Diligent Search efforts seek to locate both missing parents and placement and kin support resources. 54% (4,193) of these searches successfully identified resources who met SWAN LSI's standard of "Address Found and Verified" through other official governmental sources.

In the same time period, SWAN LSI paralegals assisted with the TPR paperwork for 2,017 children and youth. This included documents for both voluntary and involuntary TPR petitions and related documents. Additionally, SWAN LSI paralegals provided support to the finalization process for 680 children and youth in 44 counties across Pennsylvania.

SWAN Affiliate Budgeting Worksheet (ABW) Updates Released

The SWAN ABW has been updated to better serve the needs of the network. The corresponding user guide has also been updated in the "Help" section on the SWAN Portal.

Enhancements include updates to the statewide average hour based on data from 2020, small updates to the fiscal year selection and numbering of service rows on the schedule screen, and a new "Analyze Results" feature. This feature automatically determines how many workers will cover the remaining available hours on the worksheet if there are more hours scheduled than hours for which the workers are available. The ABW will use the workers entered in the Worker Info screen and determine how many of those workers (based on their total available hours) will most efficiently cover the remaining available hours.

If you have any questions, contact your SWAN regional technical assistant.

Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) Training

The SWAN prime contractor is pleased to announce CSR training has been added to SWAN's E-Learning Center (swan-online.net or via the SWAN Permanency Toolkit). In this training, learners follow a CSR case step-by-step, from referral until a permanent connection is identified and the case closed. Learners are also able to walk through a real-life CSR success story to see how the CSR team worked together to achieve permanency for an older youth. Other considerations, such as the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, SWAN Connect, the affiliate agency's role in the selection process and introducing the topic of permanency to youth, as well as laws and Pennsylvania permanency initiatives as they relate to CSR are discussed. Of course, benchmarks and required paperwork are covered too.

All SWAN E-Learning courses are free of charge and available to all members of the network. The courses can be self-directed or completed in collaboration with a supervisor. Each training is divided into modules, which allows the learner to exit and re-enter the course as needed. Please consider including these online courses in your professional development plan.

SWAN Connect Guides Families to Permanency

Happy spring from the SWAN Helpline! We would like to take a moment to remind everyone about the SWAN Connect process. 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 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. 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 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. We encourage family workers and child workers to respond to these emails as quickly as possible to keep this process running smoothly.

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. SWAN Helpline specialists look forward to helping in the matching process!

Virtual Support Groups

We are continuing to encourage SWAN Post-permanency affiliates to develop virtual support groups. These groups can use any available video or audio conference technology. Virtual support groups allow affiliates to reach a larger group geographically. They also allow families in remote areas the opportunity to participate in a broader array of support groups. The groups may be time-limited or open-ended. Some ideas for virtual support groups include:

- "Lunch and learn" sessions
- Book discussion groups
- Kinship groups
- Teen groups
- International adoption groups
- The CORE Teen curriculum is available to affiliates for support groups

Note, to invoice virtual support groups, your service must meet all support group benchmarks. The only difference is the mode of delivery.

While the governor's Emergency Orders are in effect, a proposal is not necessary, but affiliates should still contact their Post-permanency technical assistant to let them know they will be hosting a virtual support group.

Additionally, affiliates are reminded to keep all families working with their agency aware of all SWAN Post-permanency services, even the services not offered by the agency. A family can use another SWAN affiliate agency to obtain those services.

If you have any questions about support groups or any other SWAN Post-permanency services, contact your SWAN regional technical assistant.

Promoting SWAN Post-permanency Services

SWAN Post-permanency dollars are still available for use in this fiscal year. Below are some ideas to help build and promote your programs:

- Incorporate Post-permanency information into virtual matching and awareness events, and pass out brochures at in-person outreach events.
- Communicate and coordinate with county CYS offices (e.g., intake department, kinship department, support groups).
- Include notices about Post-permanency services in agency newsletters and other regular publications.
- Collaborate with other agencies to provide services to families (e.g., county assistance office, juvenile probation, private adoption agencies/attorneys, schools).
- Distribute brochures/information to local community organizations (e.g., pediatricians, mental health providers, family-based providers, residential treatment facilities, intellectual disabilities office, and office of aging).

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

CWRC Staffing Updates

Please join us in welcoming our newest members of the older youth team:

CWRC would like to welcome **Amah Dunor**, our newest Youth Ambassador. Amah has experience in the child welfare system and is able to bring his knowledge and perspective to various statewide initiatives and projects. Amah's role will include assisting in youth engagement efforts, training, and technical assistance across Pennsylvania, in collaboration with our Youth Quality Improvement Specialist, Youth Ambassador and Practice Improvement Specialists working in the counties. Amah will also support the Youth Advisory Board.

We would also like to welcome **Shayla Jones**, our new Youth Quality Improvement Specialist. Prior to joining us, Shayla worked in independent living (IL) services in Erie and brings a wealth of knowledge related to IL and the needs of older youth. Shayla is the Project Manager for the Youth Advisory Board and will be coordinating the Statewide and Regional YABs. She will also be working closely with the Youth Ambassadors and YAB Consultants to assist in youth engagement efforts, training, and technical assistance across the state.

Statewide Virtual Events

Older Youth Retreat:

The 2021 Older Youth Retreat will be held virtually this year. Please save the dates, August 9-13, and look for additional information to be shared on our [website](#).

YAB Leadership Summit:

The 2021 YAB Leadership Summit will be held virtually this year. Please save the date June 24 and look for additional information in the coming weeks.

You can always find more information about these events on the [YAB website](#).



www.adoptpakids.org

SWAN Prime Contract

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471 JPL Wick Drive

Harrisburg, PA 17111-0560

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

www.diakon-swan.org

IL Networking Sessions

IL networking sessions are offered across the state in all regions to support both new and seasoned IL staff in working with older youth. The meetings are driven by staff learning needs and include opportunities to share information, bring in relevant presenters and brainstorm with other staff how to address issues youth are experiencing or may need additional support in. These networking sessions have been especially helpful in supporting both staff and youth during COVID-19. If you are interested in connecting with your regional IL networking group, please contact Meghan O'Hare meo43@pitt.edu.

Webinars/Trainings

Older Youth Webinars:

The Child Welfare Resource Center continues to offer webinars. If you are unable to view the live webinars, you can find the recorded webinars and handouts [here](#). Currently, we are looking for counties/programs that have promising practices that may be beneficial to highlight in a webinar. Please contact Meghan O'Hare meo43@pitt.edu if you are interested in presenting.

CWRC Trainings:

While training has moved to a completely virtual format, there are many options available online for staff working with older youth. To explore what is available, please visit our [website](#).

SAVE THE DATE!

Please plan to join us for the first ever virtual SWAN/IL Summer Statewide Meeting and Pennsylvania Permanency Conference.

June 15 - 18, 2021

Thirty sessions, including four keynote speakers, will be offered over the two events as well as a virtual Awards Ceremony.

Stay tuned for more information!

PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)

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