

**Statewide Adoption and Permanency**

**Network and Independent Living Services**

**2013 Summer Statewide Meeting**

**Office of Children, Youth and Families Updates**

**2013 Independent Living Youth Retreat**

Mark your calendars for the 2013 IL Youth Retreat: *United: Not Divided.* The retreat will be held August 5-9, 2013 at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown. Registration for youth will be coordinated through county children and youth agencies. Visit the YAB website, <http://www.independentlivingpa.org>, for more information.

**SWAN Media Schedule**

SWAN’s new media campaign will air on network television and cable, rotating every two weeks through the months of July, August and September in the following three media markets:

* Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Harrisburg

An online paid word search campaign is currently running on Yahoo, Google and MSN and will continue through September 30th, 2013.  SWAN Advertisements are also running Facebook and will continue to September 30th, 2013.

An online radio campaign through Pandora is also running until September 30th, 2013.

Additionally, all three waiting child segment contracts with WHTM in Harrisburg, KDKA in Pittsburgh and WBRE in Wilkes-Barre have been extended through September 30, 2013.  Utilize these contracts throughout the summer.

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 2, a Pittsburgh CBS affiliate, *Val’s Kids* is aired on WHTM abc 27 in the Harrisburg area; and *A Little Love* is aired on WBRE TV 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.

If you have a child you would like featured on KDKA’s, ***Waiting Child***, please contact Ja-Neen Jones at Three Rivers Adoption Council at jjones@3riversadopt.org.

If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WHTM’s, ***Val’s Kids***, please contact Karen Lollo at klollo@diakon-swan.org or at (717) 558-1242.

If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WBRE’s, ***A Little Love,*** please contact Jill Ferraro Bruce at jferrarobruce@diakon-swan.org or at (717) 558-7292.

Summer is a great time to utilize these valuable resources as school is out of session. Please take advantage of these opportunities by contacting any of the above individuals.

**Act 80 and Act 91 Update:**

The Department has received the necessary guidance from the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACF) and the Department has determined that the extension of subsidies permitted through the enactment of Act 80 is available for those adoptions or permanent legal custodianship subsidy agreements in effect on or after July 1, 2012 for youth 13 years of age and older. The ability for youth to request the court to resume dependency jurisdiction established through Act 91 is retroactive from July 5, 2012 for youth who have not attained age 21.

Any youth currently under 21, meeting the definition of child who had their dependency jurisdiction terminated by the court within 90 days prior to, on, or after their 18th birthday is able to request the court to resume dependency jurisdiction - up to and including placement - even if their dependency jurisdiction was terminated prior to July 5, 2012. Many counties are already making the required effort to reach all of those youth/families who have aged out of dependency, foster care and subsidy agreements from July 1, 2012 to the present and make payment for all appropriate retroactive subsidies and foster care payments to youth/families due to the late implementation of the new laws. County agencies that have not yet begun to implement this process should be aware that this process is required.

All counties should continue to educate youth/families who are currently active about the extension of services and begin updating documents and agreements accordingly. With receipt of the guidance from ACF, the Department anticipates issuance of final guidance regarding the implementation of Acts 80 and 91 in the form of a Special Transmittal in the imminent future. In addition to the Special Transmittal, the Department will also be sharing a question and answer document to further assist agencies with implementation of these Acts.

**Chafee Education and Training Grant Program (ETG)**

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application for the 2013-2014 school year and directions on how to apply is available online.  The 2013-2014 maximum ETG award is $4,000 per student, not to exceed their cost of attendance.

Please continue to spread the word about the ETG for youth who are, or were, in out of home placement or adopted after age 16.  Youth ARE NOT required to participate in a formal IL program to be eligible to apply and receive an award.  Timely completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the Pennsylvania State Grant and ETG applications is important.

All current ETG award recipients will be automatically enrolled for the next academic year and do not need to complete the ETG application.

For questions about current Chafee applications or a youth’s status, please contact PHEAA at 1-800-831-0797.  If you work with youth receiving aftercare services who plan to move to another state and establish residency there, they can find state information on the ETG programs at: [www.statevoucher.org](http://www.statevoucher.org/).  Each state has its own individual application process.

If you have questions regarding the ETG program, contact Joseph Warrick at jwarrick@pa.gov or (717) 214-6765.

**Remind yourself, remind your youth:**

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) reports that a significant portion of Chafee ETG youth have not applied or reapplied for the PHEAA State Grant. This means that some youth may have taken out loans that must be repaid and/or have used limited ETG funds, resulting in the reduction in the maximum award amounts for ETG. Staff are encouraged to educate and assist all college students annually to apply for the PHEAA State Grant. To apply for the State Grant, a youth must first complete the FAFSA. Most renewal students need only update their information to reapply. Please see the PHEAA website, Pennsylvania State Grant Program at [www.pheaa.org](http://www.pheaa.org).

Note that State Grant deadlines are different for first-time applicants and renewal applicants. If you find a youth has missed the deadline, apply anyway. Late applications may qualify for awards if funding permits.

**Credit History Reporting**

OCYF is finalizing the revised Independent Living (IL) Services Bulletin to include additional policy and assistance for counties to comply with Section 475(5) of the Social Security Act is amended by adding the requirement that “each child in foster care under the responsibility of the State who has attained 16 years of age receives without cost a copy of any consumer report of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA)) pertaining to the child each year until the child is discharged from care, and receives assistance (including, when feasible, from any court-appointed advocate for the child) in interpreting and resolving any inaccuracies in the report.”  The effective date of implementation is October 1, 2011.

As most county staff are aware, implementation of the new requirements has been challenging and confusing.  Part of this challenge is because of the way the Credit Reporting Agencies are attempting to meet the new requirements as well as the influx of state and county requests.  At this point in time, Experian will only accept paper submissions from county agencies.  TransUnion has provided information that they prefer online submission but are requiring states or counties (in the case of Pennsylvania) to sign an agreement.  TransUnion is waiving fees for child welfare agencies.  Equifax also prefers online submission but require a start-up cost, ongoing fee and signed agreement.  Counties should not make any payments to Equifax unless otherwise directed by OCYF.  There is hope that this fee will be waived or chargeable to OCYF.  It is anticipated that counties will then be required to sign an agreement with Equifax for online submission. OCYF will notify county child welfare agencies when this is finalized.

The Administration of Children, Youth and Families has informed all states that while there was a delay of implementation, the effective date of implementation remains at October 1, 2011.  Additional and current information will be available in the revised IL Services Bulletin.

**Photographers Available!**

Having beautiful portraits that capture the spirit and individuality of Pennsylvania’s waiting children in a single portrait is often the key to matching. To serve more waiting children, SWAN is using the talents of volunteer photographers from across the state to obtain artistic portraits of all youth registered with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE).

SWAN has identified professional photographers located throughout Pennsylvania.  These photographers will donate their time and talent to create portraits that spotlight each child in a personal way.  Participating photographers will submit new portraits electronically to PAE staff for inclusion on PAE’s website, [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org).

Caseworkers need to follow the *Heart Gallery* *Caseworker Photography Process* which outlines the steps caseworkers must follow to participate. A copy of the process can be obtained by contacting Karen Lollo at 800-227-0225 ext. 1242 or klollo@diakon-swan.org. The document also explains where you can obtain the list of participating photographers.

Please use the volunteer photographers in your area and work together to capture Pennsylvania’s waiting children in a beautiful portrait.

**National Youth In Transition Database (NYTD)**

NYTD implementation is ongoing with the Baseline Population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17) and the Served Population (any youth receiving an IL service regardless of age.) Counties electing to use an alternative to the [www.GetNYTD.org](http://www.GetNYTD.org) website entry for the Served Population are currently undergoing the testing phase with Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc. October 1, 2013 begins a new federally reported baseline Population collection period. OCYF will offer a NYTD Baseline Population Refresher via three WebEx sessions on:

 Wednesday, September 4, 2013 from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.

 Thursday, September 12, 2013 from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

 Friday, September 20, 2013 from 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.

These identical sessions will focus on preparing the youth for the online survey and setting the stage for the Follow-up Surveys, while helping the youth understand the importance of taking the survey. Clarification will be provided on registering JPO youth.

**SWAN List Serve**

The SWAN list serve through Google Groups **is comprised of county children and youth agency workers and SWAN affiliate agency workers. The goal of the group is to facilitate special needs adoptions throughout PA.  All information posted on this site is confidential.  Anyone wishing to join this group must be an employee of a county children and youth agency or SWAN affiliate agency. If interested, please contact Joe Warrick at (717) 214-6765 or by email at** jwarrick@pa.gov**.**

**SWAN-IL Network Newsletter**

Tell the Network about all of the wonderful things you, your agency, your community, a youth or a colleague is doing to promote permanency for the youth of PA! If you have something exciting, interesting or informative to share with your colleagues, please forward your articles, success stories, matching events or ideas to Karen Lollo at klollo@diakon-swan.org or at (717) 558-1242. Pictures are always a great addition to any article. You can find the latest and past editions of this newsletter at [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org) under the Network Newsletter link.