

**Statewide Adoption and Permanency**

**Network and Independent Living Services**

**2014 Winter Statewide Meeting**

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

**April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month:**Activities will begin on April 2nd when PA Family Support Alliance (PFSA) hosts a Legislative Breakfast at the Harrisburg Hilton at 8 a.m.

Additional PFSA activities throughout the month include:

* April 8, Lancaster – Front Porch Project Training
* April 13, Hershey – Hershey Entertainment and Resorts- 10K Race with PFSA being one of three recipients of funds.
* April 22,State College – featured presenter at training institute, PA Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (topic: Empowering Parents with Psychiatric Disabilities)
* April 30, New Orleans- presentation at 19th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect (topic: Public Opinion, Social Marketing and Primary Prevention)

Additionally, PFSA will again be ‘Painting for Prevention’ at two sites, dates and locations of the events to be announced at a later date. Both events will be open to the public.

Throughout April blue ribbons will be distributed via PAFSA affiliates and organizations requesting ribbons. All county CYS offices will receive ribbons. Blue ribbon pins can also be ordered by contacting PFSA. For the most up to date information about these events, contact PFSA at 1-800-448-4906 or visit their website at [www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org).

**SWAN Media Schedule:**

SWAN’s new media campaign will air on network television and cable, rotating every two weeks through the months of January, February and March in the Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Harrisburg markets.

An online paid word search campaign is currently running on Yahoo, Google Facebook and MSN.

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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:jferrarobruce@diakon-swan.org) or at (717) 558-7292.

**Chafee Education and Training Grant Program:**

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.  Applications for the 2014-2015 school year will be available after April 1, 2014.

Please continue to spread the word about the ETG for youth who are, or were, in out of home placement or adopted from foster care 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.

Questions about current Chafee applications or a youth’s status should be directed to the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, 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 the Foster Care to Success website: [www.fc2sprograms.org](http://www.fc2sprograms.org).  Each state has its own individual application process.  If you have questions regarding the ETG program, contact Joe Warrick at [jwarrick@pa.gov](mailto: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 Free Application for Federal Student Aid, 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 which was 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 was 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](mailto: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.

**Higher Education Financial Preparation for 2014-2015:**

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, FAFSA, is available online for the 2014-2015 academic year.  The website address is fafsa.ed.gov.  Students must complete (or update) the FAFSA to become eligible for federal and state financial aid.  Prospective students do not need to have finalized their school of choice however they must list their school preferences.  Adding or changing schools after the application is submitted is a simple, online process.  Staff and adults are encouraged to assist youth as necessary and to inform them how to answer the dependency related questions, specifically question number 53 (Were you in foster care or a dependent ward of the court?)

**National Youth In Transition Database, NYTD:**

Effective October 1, 2013, all states began a new “Baseline Population” cohort to collect information of every youth in foster care reaching age 17.  The state also began a new period for the “Served Population” (any youth receiving an IL Service regardless of age) in October.  NYTD data collection and reporting is not optional and the state is assessed financial penalties for non-compliance.  These penalties reduce federal funds to counties for IL Services.

Follow-Up Population, Age 21 -  It’s hard to believe it’s coming so soon, but counties who participated in the 19 yr old Follow-Up sample will be required to locate and survey the same youth again beginning October 1, 2014.  Counties included in the 2012-2013 sample should continue their outreach to those youth and maintain a method of contact for the appropriate survey period from October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015.  County NTYD staff are encouraged to coordinate with their legal assistance staff and undertake a diligent search for hard to locate youth.   NYTD questions can be directed to David Derbes, [dderbes@pa.gov](mailto:dderbes@pa.gov) or (717) 705-2911.

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

**Continuous Quality Improvement, CQI, Updates:**We are pleased to announce that the fourth round of Quality Service Reviews, QSRs, is now underway. The QSRs involve use of a standard protocol to assess the quality of services being provided to the children, youth and families served by the County Children and Youth Agency and other service providers and are a part of the CQI process being implemented in a phased in approach across PA. The QSR Protocol contains qualitative indicators that measure the current status of the focus child/youth and the child/youth’s parents and/or caregivers and the quality and consistency of core practice principles. Pennsylvania’s QSR Protocol can be found online at: <http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CQI.htm>.

For round four, the following 14 counties will be conducting on-site QSRs:

Philadelphia: QSR Dates: 12/2/13 - 12/4/13 and 12/9/13 - 12/11/13

Allegheny: QSR Dates: 3/4/14 – 3/6/14 and 3/11/14 – 3/13/14

\*Adams: QSR Dates: 11/5/14-11/7/14

Butler: QSR Dates: 4/1/14 – 4/3/14 and 4/8/14 – 4/10/14

\*Cumberland: QSR Dates: TBD (Fall 2014)

Dauphin: QSR Dates: 4/30/14-5/2/14 and 5/7/14-5/9/14

\*Delaware: QSR Dates: 3/31/14 – 4/2/14 and 4/7/14 – 4/9/14

Lackawanna: QSR Dates: 3/24/14 – 3/25/14 and 3/26/14 – 3/27/14

\*Lycoming: QSR Dates: TBD (May 2014)

\*Pike: QSR Dates: TBD

Venango: QSR Dates: 5/21/14 – 5/23/14

Washington: QSR Dates: 4/7/14 - 4/9/14 and 4/14/14 - 4/16/14

Wyoming: QSR Dates: 6/11/14 - 6/13/14

York: QSR Dates: 4/8/14 - 4/10/14 and 4/15/14 - 4/17/14

(\* indicates county who is participating in their first QSR)

Individuals interesting in serving as a QSR Reviewer may contact Debbie McHugh ([dem107@pitt.edu](mailto:dem107@pitt.edu)) and provide the following information:

* Name
* Job title/Position
* Agency
* The region/county you are from
* Phone number
* Email address
* County/Counties you are interested in reviewing in
* Date you were last certified as a reviewer
* Training needs
* Reasons why you want to be a QSR reviewer

**Statewide Child Welfare Information System:**

In its effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its child welfare program, DPW has initiated a project to identify the functional, technical, and business requirements necessary to develop an automated system to support Child Welfare program stakeholders.

DPW will implement this in a four-phased approach:

•  Phase 1 – Referrals

 •  Phase 2 – Children

 •  Phase 3 – Providers

 •  Phase 4 – Finance/Accounting

The Child Welfare Information Solution, CWIS, project is currently in Phase 1 - Referrals, which is scheduled to be implemented in January 2015.

Phase I – Referrals

This phase will replace the current ChildLine application (MILLIE) system to expand state level access to referrals and clearances by providing real-time access to data on child protective services (CPS) and general protective services (GPS) reports from the County systems at the state level.  This federated hybrid approach incorporates a central state repository with the eight approved county case management systems to facilitate data sharing.  All Counties will continue to use their own County Case Management System.

Goals to be achieved are:

 •   Automated exchange of CPS and GPS reports between counties and OCYF;

 •   Improved National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System , NCANDS reporting;

 •   Electronic submission and processing of child abuse clearances;

 •   Self-service for mandated reporters and clearance applicants; and

 •   Single access point for counties to statewide data.

If you have any questions about the CWIS project please email the RA-PWCWIS@pa.gov<<mailto:RA-PWCWIS@pa.gov>>

**Affordable Care Act:**

On March 23, 2010, President Obama signed the federal healthcare reform law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, also known as the ACA. This comprehensive law has provisions to expand coverage, control healthcare costs and improve healthcare delivery.

Under the ACA, youth who were in Pennsylvania’s or another state’s foster care system and enrolled in Medicaid/Medical Assistance at any time on or after their 18th birthday will be eligible for Medical Assistance coverage until age 26 beginning Jan. 1, 2014.  Individuals may apply through COMPASS, Pennsylvania’s online application for health and human services programs, or the Federally Facilitated Marketplace, FFM. Youth between 18 and 21 years of age who receive Medical Assistance under the former foster care category will be eligible for the full range of benefits available to all children under the Medical Assistance program.  Individuals age 21 and older who receive Medical Assistance under the former foster care category will qualify for the most comprehensive level of benefits currently offered to adults enrolled in the Medical Assistance program. There are copayments associated with some services for individuals of any age in the former foster care category.

When current foster youth leave care at age 18 or older, they will be enrolled in Medical Assistance under the former foster care category once the paperwork verifying the date they left foster care (CY60) is received by the County Assistance Office, CAO, from the County Children and Youth Agency, CCYA. The CY60 will have the permanent address where the former foster youth will be residing. There will be no break in coverage and this initial process will require no further action from the youth.

Individuals not yet age 26, who were previously in foster care and enrolled in Medical Assistance at any time on or after their 18th birthday will need to complete a full health care application and provide all required documentation, including verification of income, in order to have eligibility determined for health care coverage. Individuals must fully answer the questions on the health care application related to former foster care status to ensure they are considered for eligibility under the former foster care category. If they do not meet eligibility criteria (\*MAGI rules or other Medical Assistance rules) for any other Medical Assistance category, they will be provided coverage under the former foster care category which does not require an income or resource test.

Pennsylvania has elected to cover former foster youth from other states who meet the eligibility criteria as well. They will need to provide verification of prior placement in foster care, when they left care, and that they were receiving medical assistance while in care. Some methods of verification include prior court orders and/or letters from an official agency.

The COMPASS homepage [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us) has a new hyperlink available that will navigate users to the FFM to “Learn More about Health Insurance Marketplace.” When a COMPASS application is started, there will be a health care pre-screening to determine eligible medical benefits for existing Medical Assistance, CHIP or Federally Funded Qualified Health Plans through the FFM. COMPASS will also be used for Remote ID Proofing, RIDP, to validate the applicant applying for benefits.

If a former foster youth needs assistance in obtaining verification of prior placement in foster care and receipt of medical assistance, they should contact the Child Welfare Agency responsible for them while they were in foster care. The CCYA where they currently reside can also be a resource to assist in obtaining the required documentation. It is the applicant’s responsibility to obtain this verification, but if the applicant is unable to, the CAO will assist.

All individuals enrolled in the former foster care category will be subject to an annual renewal process to verify ongoing eligibility. When an individual is due for renewal, the CAO will send a renewal form in the mail that must be completed, signed and submitted with required verification, including income and resource information. The renewal form can be completed online using COMPASS in place of completing the paper renewal form provided by the CAO.

If an individual is receiving Medical Assistance, an account can be created on COMPASS to allow them to check and monitor their benefits. If an individual receiving benefits moves to a new address, it is important that they contact their local CAO to update their information. Mail from a CAO cannot be forwarded to a new address and will be returned to the CAO. This could cause coverage and/or benefits to be discontinued if requested documentation or responses are not received.

Information is now available at [www.healthcare.gov](file:///C:\Documents%20and%20Settings\nperrin\Local%20Settings\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\BX3DG2NR\www.healthcare.gov), the federal information source for those seeking insurance through the FFM. The federal hotline number is 1-800-318-2596. Pennsylvania’s information source is located at [www.dpw.state.pa.us](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us), where there is a large ACA Information graphic.  Individuals can also have questions answered by calling the PA Consumer Service Center at 1-866-550-4355. Additionally, [www.dpw.state.pa.us/applyforbenefits/index.htm](file:///C:\Users\ekiehl\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\68BOAG1I\www.dpw.state.pa.us\applyforbenefits\index.htm) is the state’s link to COMPASS, where individuals can locate their county assistance office, or download a paper application.

\***MAGI**  
MAGI, or Modified Adjusted Gross Income, is based on federal tax rules for determining adjusted gross income. MAGI is a new provision within the federal healthcare reform law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, often referred to as the ACA. MAGI rules are applied to determine financial eligibility for certain coverage groups, and MA rules will apply to non-MAGI coverage groups.