

# ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

*Department of Human Services*

### Trauma-Informed Workgroup

In July 2019, Governor Wolf declared that Pennsylvania would become a trauma-informed state. The process is being implemented over a ten-year period in a phased approach. The four phases include trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-informed, and healing-centered. The Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) Trauma Team is focusing on the first phase of this process, ensuring that all county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) and licensed foster care and adoption providers will become trauma-aware by the conclusion of 2023. As defined in the Trauma-Informed PA Plan, trauma awareness occurs when, "the entity becomes aware of trauma, the prevalence of trauma and considers the potential impact on customers and staff."

In the immediate future, OCYF staff will be wrapping up its' outreach to CCYAs, foster care and adoption providers through the online survey and begin to evaluate the technical assistance that may be necessary for each agency towards becoming trauma aware. The Trauma Team is collaborating with the Children Welfare Resource Center to develop an ongoing web-based training to assist providers in their training efforts along the trauma continuum. This trauma curriculum will be adapted as different phases in this initiative progress. If you have any questions regarding this process, please do not hesitate to reach out to our designated resource account, [RA\\_PWOCYFTrauma@pa.gov](mailto:RA_PWOCYFTrauma@pa.gov).

### Family First Prevention Services Act

The Office of Children Youth and Families has added Family First-related content to the Keep Kids Safe Website. For information about Pennsylvania-specific Family First information, [see here](#).

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

### Chafee Education and Training Grant Programs

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application and instructions for the 2022 – 2023 academic year can be found online

[here](#). As a reminder, current ETG award recipients will automatically be enrolled for the next academic year and do not need to complete another ETG application. The ETG award amount cannot exceed the student's cost of attendance.

Please contact the PHEAA at 1-800-831-0797 with questions about the Chafee applications or a youth's current application status. Questions regarding the ETG program can be directed to Teresa Musser at [temusser@pa.gov](mailto:temusser@pa.gov) or 717-214-7385.

### Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program

The Fostering Independence through Education Program, known as FosterED, 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 PCOs can be found on the Center for Schools and Communities [website](#).

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

Questions related to the FosterED program can be directed to Teresa Musser at [temusser@pa.gov](mailto:temusser@pa.gov).

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

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) collects information in the following areas: Baseline Population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17), Served Population (any youth or young adult receiving independent living services regardless of age) and Follow-up Population (youth surveys at age 19 and 21 depending on Cohort period). Pennsylvania is currently in Cohort 4 for 19-year-old Follow-up Surveys as of April 1, 2022 through September 30, 2022 (2022B Period). Counties have until October 15, 2022, to submit their follow-up surveys as well as served population data. Counties can log onto [www.getnytdpa.org](http://www.getnytdpa.org) to enter their served and survey data. NYTD questions can be directed to Teresa Musser, Office of Children, Youth and Families, at [temusser@pa.gov](mailto:temusser@pa.gov) or at 717-214-7385.

If you have new staff, need assistance with resetting your password, forgot your username, or have other technical assistance questions related to NYTD, please contact the NYTD Help Desk at 800-436-4105 or [getnytd@pcgus.com](mailto:getnytd@pcgus.com).

### **American Bar Association (ABA): Pennsylvania Permanency and Education Barriers Initiatives**

The ABA Center on Children and the Law Permanency and Education Barriers Project is actively seeking new projects or technical assistance counties. Please reach out if you would like to discuss the ways in which we may be of assistance.

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

County agencies interested in the Permanency Barriers Project or general technical assistance should contact Heidi Redlich Epstein at [Heidi.epstein@americanbar.org](mailto:Heidi.epstein@americanbar.org).

County agencies interested in the Education Barriers to Permanency Project should contact Kathleen McNaught at [Kathleen.mcnaught@americanbar.org](mailto:Kathleen.mcnaught@americanbar.org).

### **Pennsylvania Kinship Navigator Program, KinConnector**

The PA KinConnector Program offers kinship families and professionals who work with kinship families support, guidance, and resources. Kinship families you work with can be referred to the Kinconnector website at, [www.kinconnector.org](http://www.kinconnector.org) or their helpline at 866-546-2111 for additional support and assistance.

The website includes a comprehensive, guided search feature of resources in the following topic areas: childcare, clothing, financial assistance, food, legal, medical, school, and support groups.

Also available on the website are training opportunities for both professionals and kinship 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 outreach 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. Any questions regarding this program can be directed to Diane Michel at OCYF at [dmichel@pa.gov](mailto:dmichel@pa.gov) or 717-705-2911.

### **Accurant**

Accurant 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 an Accurant Administrator for your county's account. If you or your staff would like training in the Accurant software, please contact Accurant Education Consultant Melanie Todd at [melanie.todd@lexisnexisrisk.com](mailto:melanie.todd@lexisnexisrisk.com) or 937-580-6167.

If you have any questions about Accurant, please contact Diane Michel at OCYF at [dmichel@pa.gov](mailto:dmichel@pa.gov) or 717-705-2911.

### **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 credit report history of foster care youth or are having issues obtaining a credit history from one of the Credit Bureau's, please contact Diane Michel at OCYF at [dmichel@pa.gov](mailto:dmichel@pa.gov) or 717-705-2911 for assistance.

### **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](mailto:bwhary@diakon-swan.org) or 717-558-1223.

### **Mandated Reporter Training**

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSa) continues to offer virtual Mandated Reporter Trainings at no cost to mandated reporters in Pennsylvania. Trainings include, "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse" which meets all the requirements for training on recognizing and reporting child abuse as well as a new training, "Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse" for mandated reporters who have taken training before and need to take it again. The "Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse" training is designed to help professionals and volunteers respond to disclosures of child abuse in a way that is sensitive and supportive to the child, but without tainting the child's memory.

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

Additional information and training dates can be found at Mandated Reporter Training | Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance ([pafsa.org](https://pafsa.org)). For questions or to schedule a session specifically for your organization, please email PFSa at [training@pa-fsa.org](mailto:training@pa-fsa.org)

If you are in the medical profession and wish to schedule training with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) for the Educating Physicians in their Communities-Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (EPIC-SCAN), contact AAP at [scan@paaap.org](mailto:scan@paaap.org) or at 866-823-7226.

### **Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA)**

PSRFA began as a small group in 1974. Since then, they have grown to support children and families involved with foster care, adoption, and kinship care along with local foster parent associations and agencies who care for the children they serve throughout the state. PSRFA are supporters for legislation and advocacy for family resource care and provides training and education for those seeking guidance. They are a fantastic resource for children and families in these scenarios.

You can learn more about the PSRFA at [psrfa.org](https://psrfa.org). If you have any further questions, you can contact PSRFA Office at 1-800-951-5151 or email [dkinard@psrfa.org](mailto:dkinard@psrfa.org) or [klramper@psrfa.org](mailto:klramper@psrfa.org).

### **Exciting Volunteer Opportunity in Southeastern Pennsylvania!**

- Do you live or work in Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and/or Philadelphia County?
- Do you have an interest in child welfare and ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of Pennsylvania's children?
- Do you want the opportunity to take an ACTIVE role in protecting children from abuse and neglect?

If you answered yes to the above questions, apply to become a Citizen Review Panel Member! An online application is accessible through the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) website [here](#).

Applications will be accepted from April 15 through July 1. Orientation for new members will take place in October of 2022. For more information, e-mail the CRP Coordinator at [PACRP@pitt.edu](mailto:PACRP@pitt.edu).

### **Save the Date: Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference**

The 2022 Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference (PTW) will take place in person September 27 to September 29, 2022, and will be held at Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Pocono Manor, Pennsylvania (PA). PTW is a unique opportunity to deepen knowledge, enhance best practices and share innovative solutions for working with students in foster care and students experiencing homelessness. PTW is sponsored by the PA Department of Education's Educational Stability for Children and Youth in Foster Care and the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness programs and is held in collaboration with the PA Department of Human Services and Center for Schools and Communities.

PTW is designed for child welfare agency education liaisons, child welfare private providers, school district homeless liaisons, foster care points of contact, shelter staff, educators, school social workers, pupil services personnel, school counselors and any other professionals working with students in foster care or students that are homeless. Registration will open in August 2022. There will be no cost to attend the PTW sessions. Select sessions will be offered virtually.

### **Identification of Students in Foster Care to Schools**

The Pennsylvania Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) recently issued a [memo](#) to advise County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYA) about information sharing with schools. CCYAs are encouraged to maintain continuous communication and collaboration with schools to support students while maintaining that confidential information is

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kept confidential. CCYAs are advised to utilize the Identification of Students in Foster Care to School Points of Contact form to notify K-12 schools of a student's entry into foster care or change in foster care placement. The form, which can be found on the Department of Human Services Education of [Education of Students Served by Pennsylvania County Children and Youth Agencies web page](#), should be provided to school points of contact.

If you have any questions or concerns related to the memo or form, please contact [RA-PWOCYFEDUCATION@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PWOCYFEDUCATION@pa.gov).

### **Announcing Act 1 of 2022**

[Act 1 of 2022](#), known as "Assisting Students Experiencing Education Instability" was approved by Governor Wolf earlier this year. The Act strengthens school supports and increases education equity to foster academic achievement and graduation for certain students experiencing one or more changes in school entity enrollment during a single school year. The law is applicable to children and youth in foster care. The Pennsylvania Department of Education, in consultation with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, will issue guidance prior to the 2022-2023 school year.

### **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](mailto:bwhary@diakon-swan.org) or 717-558-1223.

### **Interstate Compact Unit**

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

[RA-PA-ICPC@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PA-ICPC@pa.gov) for ICPC cases

[RA-PA-ICAMA@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PA-ICAMA@pa.gov) for ICAMA cases

717-425-5562 fax

As always in a runaway situation, continue to email both Amanda Behe at [abehe@pa.gov](mailto:abehe@pa.gov) and Natalie Primak at [nprimak@pa.gov](mailto:nprimak@pa.gov) directly.

### **Clearance Verification Unit**

The Department of Human Services, Division of Operations, Child Verification Unit (CVU), ChildLine provides eligible individuals with the following three clearances: Child Abuse History Clearance, FBI Fingerprint Clearance and – National Sex Offenders Registry (NSOR). The Pennsylvania (PA) Child Abuse History clearance can be submitted and paid for online through the Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) self-service portal at [Pennsylvania Child Welfare Information Solution \(state.pa.us\)](https://www.pawelfareinformation.com). Applicants are able to view and print their results online.

CVU will also accept PA Child Abuse History Clearance applications in paper format for anyone who may not have access to the internet. Results for paper applications are mailed to the appropriate address noted on the form and within 14 days from the date that application is received in CVU.

The Commonwealth's vendor for digital fingerprinting is IDEMIA (also referred to as IdentoGo or MorphoTrust). The fingerprint-based background check is a multi-step process. For general questions about FBI clearances, please contact the FBI Background Check Unit at 1-877-371-5422. For IDEMIA registration, processing, or billing questions, please contact IDEMIA/IdentoGo at 1-844-321-2101. To register online go to [www.Identogo.com](http://www.Identogo.com) or call 1-844-321-2101 and listen to the options menu.

CVU is responsible for processing out of state clearances for resource parents, including adoptive and foster parents when a resource parent has resided outside of Pennsylvania within the past five years. Effective March 2022, prospective foster and adoptive parents required to obtain an Out-of-State Child Abuse clearance are no longer required to submit the clearance to ChildLine for interpretation, IF the clearance shows *no result (or no record)*. Out-of-State Child Abuse clearances with ANY result or record, are required to be submitted to ChildLine for interpretation.

Please visit our website at [www.KeepKidSafePA.gov](http://www.KeepKidSafePA.gov) for additional information regarding the clearance or call us at 877-371-5422.

### **Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)**

P.O. Box 2675

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

### State Fiscal Year 2021-22 Referrals

The end of state fiscal year (SFY) 2021-2022 is close and some Needs-Based Plan and Budget (NBPB) dollars are not yet spent. The Office of Children, Youth and Families along with the SWAN prime contractor encourages counties to continue to make referrals for children and families who need services.

For referrals to be applied to the SFY 2021-22 NBPB, counties must submit referrals to the SWAN prime contractor by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, June 30, 2022. Any referrals received after this cut-off time will be held and then processed in SFY 2022-23. Processing of SFY 2022-23 referrals is expected to begin on Friday, July 8, 2022.

If your county has exhausted its SWAN SFY 2021-22 NBPB dollars, do not stop referring. The Department of Human Services has authorized the reallocation of funds among counties so the use of these dollars can be maximized. The SWAN prime contractor will continue to process referrals received for SFY 2021-22 until the NBPB dollars are exhausted.

### SWAN Portal

Development continues on the SWAN Portal version 3.0. Construction of the new child record is complete and the family record is in its final development phases. This spring the SWAN prime contractor was delighted to have five affiliates and three counties test the new child record functionality. Test feedback was positive and recommendations for future enhancements were shared. Specifically, users shared excitement about a new record update feature to be offered.

When version 3.0 is released, users will have the ability to update specified child and family data without having to submit a form. The goal is to streamline portal transactions for our county and affiliate users.

Additional updates will be provided prior to implementation.

### New SWAN Family Matching Unit of Service

The prime contractor is pleased to announce referrals for the SWAN Family Matching unit of service can be made starting July 1, 2022. This service focuses on engaging families waiting to be matched and developing their capacity to provide successful permanency. The Family Matching unit includes ongoing efforts in these areas as well as activities to identify a child for placement with an eligible SWAN family through the implementation

of a Family Matching Plan. Family Matching is an eight-month unit of service with a four-month extension.

The Family Matching unit was developed through a series of Unit of Service Meetings. SWAN affiliate and county agencies participated in meetings to inform SWAN Family Matching benchmarks and create templates and template guidelines for the unit of service. The templates include the Family Matching Plan, Family Matching Log, Family Matching Extension Assessment for Unmatched Families and Family/Child Match Confirmation form. The Family Matching templates and benchmarks can be found in the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#).

The SWAN Family Matching unit is an integral addition to the SWAN continuum of services, so training on this unit will be provided virtually on the following dates:

- July 8, 2022 - 9am to 12 pm
- July 13, 2022 - 9am to 12pm
- July 27, 2022 - 9am to 12pm
- August 10, 2022 - 9am to 12pm
- August 17, 2022 - 9am to 12pm
- August 31, 2022 - 9am to 12pm

### Changes Coming to the Placement Unit of Service

The development of the new Family Matching unit necessitated changes to the Placement unit of service. Placement benchmarks were revised during the SWAN Units of Service Meeting on April 28, incorporating extensive feedback from counties and affiliates. Additionally, a revised *Individual Permanency Service Plan* emerged from the work at that meeting. Both state-approved documents are available in the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#). Please take time to review the revised documents and be on the lookout for upcoming training dates focused on changes to the Placement unit of service. Contact your regional technical assistant if you have any questions.

### State Guidelines for the Child Narrative/Photo

Two new state guidelines for public narratives and photos on [adoftpakids.org](https://adoftpakids.org) have been in effect for a few months. The guidelines have been implemented to ensure the safety and well-being of youth online and are as follows:

- Any reference to specific social media, video games, or gaming platforms in a child's narrative must be omitted and replaced with general references that still help families get to know the youth by showcasing their talents and interests in a strengths-based way. It is

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recommended that this guidance is also used when creating child flyers, presenting children as matching moments, and interviews for TV tapings.

- Guidelines regarding acceptable photos of waiting children require that profile photos for children/youth on [adoptpakids.org](https://adoptpakids.org) need to meet certain criteria.
  - ⇒ Must be a photo. Graphics and clip art will no longer be acceptable;
  - ⇒ Must include some portion of the child visible in the photo (photos of a child facing backward, holding something up over their face, or any other obscuring methods are acceptable). Profile pictures that do not include some portion of the child will be replaced with a non-descriptive, Department of Human Services-approved icon; and
  - ⇒ Should be as high resolution as possible.

Thank you for embracing these changes and continuing to recruit for children with these guidelines in mind. As always, feel free to reach out to your agency's SWAN regional technical assistant or the PAE coordinator assigned to the child's custodial county for assistance.

### Waiting Child Tapings

The Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) media contract includes subcontracts with three television stations: WHTM in Harrisburg, KDKA in Pittsburgh, and WBRE in Wilkes-Barre. Each station runs waiting child segments, and their reporters participate in unique child interviews that feature the interests of the child. Historically, 40 percent of all children who are featured in a television segment achieve permanency. Families who have never considered adoption before can see a child they may want to adopt. Children who are on active status with the Pennsylvania Adoptoin Exchange (PAE) and have information posted to [adoptpakids.org](https://adoptpakids.org) are eligible. Contact a PAE coordinator to schedule a waiting child segment:

- Central PA – Val's Kids (WHTM):  
Alfredo Gonzalez at 717-909-6815 or [algonzalez@diakon-swan.org](mailto:algonzalez@diakon-swan.org)
- Northeast PA –A Little Love (WBRE):  
Criscia Crawford at 717-558-7370 or [ccrawford@diakon-swan.org](mailto:ccrawford@diakon-swan.org)
- Western PA –Waiting Child (KDKA):  
Nikita Lewis at 724-809-1901 or [nlewis@diakon-swan.org](mailto:nlewis@diakon-swan.org)

There are also two [waiting child segments](#) in Pennsylvania that are not OCYF-sponsored but are

still fantastic ways to increase the visibility of waiting children. These segments are *WCAU Wednesday's Child* (in the Philadelphia region) and *WFMZ Adopt Lehigh Valley Kids* (in the Lehigh Valley region).

In addition to in-person tapings, several of these stations are also offering virtual tapings at this time. These offer an opportunity for children who may not be able to engage in an in-person taping or where travel to the region may be difficult. Children can be recorded more than once, and it is highly recommended that every eligible child has the opportunity to participate in a television segment. It is a wonderful day for the child as well as a great way to move towards permanency.

For more information on all five of these Waiting Child Segments, refer to Tip/Technique 11 and 12 in the *Strategies for Permanency*, which can be found in the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#). If you have any questions, please contact a PAE coordinator.

### Virtual Support Sessions -SWAN Affiliate Budgeting Worksheet

The SWAN Affiliate Budgeting Worksheet (ABW) is a resource that can be used to plan an agency's caseloads for the year, predict the agency's profitability and determine if more workers are needed to fulfill the projected staffing needs.

Virtual support sessions are being offered to demonstrate practical uses of the ABW.

Session topic, dates and times are as follows:

- Managing Worker Caseload  
August 17, 2022, 10:00am-11:00am
- Identifying Program Capacity and Staffing Needs  
September 15, 2022, 10:00am -11:00am
- Identifying Referral Trends  
October 11, 2022, 10:00am -11:00am

Look for the support session invitation in the coming months!

### 133 Days Until National Adoption Month!

There are only 133 days until National Adoption Month in November! During National Adoption Month, our network celebrates permanency through adoption, enhances awareness about the need for permanent families and hosts matching events to promote opportunities for children and youth to experience the belongingness, security and the love of a forever family. The SWAN prime contractor has two resources to help plan National Adoption Month events: *Adoption Day Events: A Planner's Guide* and *Adoption Awareness and Matching Events: Planning for Success*. Both guides

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are housed in the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#). As Network looks forward to planning this year's festivities, the SWAN prime contractor would like to recognize the collaboration and ingenuity of the courts, counties and affiliate agencies who have been very creative in their efforts to celebrate children, families and permanency.

Over the last several years, Governor Wolf has provided advocacy and awareness for adoption by proclaiming November as Adoption Month in PA. A copy of the 2021 proclamation can be found [here](#).

### **20 years of Programming: The Expansion of SWAN LSI Resources**

The SWAN Legal Service Initiative (LSI) hired its first paralegals in 2002, with representation in 11 counties (Centre, Dauphin, Delaware, Juniata, Lehigh, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montgomery, Snyder, Westmoreland and the Adoption Legal Services Project in Allegheny County). Since then, LSI has expanded to 263 paralegal positions serving all 67 Pennsylvania counties. This growth has built the capacity needed to better serve children and families impacted by the child welfare system. It has also supported the development of valuable network resources.

The *Diligent Search Packet*, released to the network in 2005, contains vital information and forms to help paralegals and agency staff to search for parents, relatives or kin who may become a permanency resource for a child involved in the child welfare system. The packet also contains information pertinent to individual Pennsylvania counties and to complete international searches.

*Adoption Day Events: A Planner's Guide*, released to the network in 2013, is a tool for paralegals, county and affiliate agency workers and others throughout the network. The guide offers suggestions and lessons learned from those who have planned or participated in these amazing events. The *Planner's Guide* provides:

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

The *SWAN Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Search Guide*, released to the network in 2016, is designed to help children and youth agencies comply with federal laws, regulations, and guidelines when working with an Indian child or family. Child welfare professionals may need to perform a comprehensive ICWA Search when a child in care could have tribal connections. The

*SWAN ICWA Search Guide* is intended to be used in conjunction with the law and as a supplemental tool within the full Diligent Search process. It was updated in 2021 to reflect changes in the laws and regulations governing ICWA practice.

Also released to the network in 2016, the *Incarceration Resource Manual (IRM)* is a guide that helps county caseworkers and supervisors to engage and case-plan with incarcerated parents. The manual provides protocols for each county correctional facility in Pennsylvania. Details about specific facility protocols include:

- Guidelines and nuances regarding written and telephone communication to support contact between the incarcerated parents and children;
- Visitation schedules or video visitation to support parent-child visitation; and
- Services that are available for the incarcerated parent and re-entry information to support reunification and permanency efforts.

Links to additional resources, such as state and federal facilities, are also included in the IRM. *Work is currently underway for the release of the IRM third edition. If you have any questions about this resource or would like to notify the team about updates to a facility's protocols, please contact [lsi-irmupdates@diakon-swan.org](mailto:lsi-irmupdates@diakon-swan.org).*

All LSI resources can be downloaded from the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#).

### **SWAN LSI: The Data Through the Years**

For the past 20 years, SWAN Legal Services Initiative (LSI) paralegals have assisted counties to expedite permanency for children involved in Pennsylvania's child welfare system. While the goal of the program to expedite permanency remains consistent across the state, the implementation of the program and activities performed by SWAN LSI paralegals differs by county.

The statistics below display the breadth of the work that SWAN LSI paralegals have conducted since SWAN LSI started maintaining data in the SWAN Portal in 2013 until June 30, 2021.

- 134,158 children have had at least one SWAN LSI activity (Diligent Search or court-related activity).
- 65,552 children have had a SWAN LSI Diligent Search.
- 5,479 children have had an Adoption Petition prepared by a SWAN LSI paralegal.
- 15,529 children have at least one TPR Petition completed (voluntary or involuntary).

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- SWAN LSI paralegals prepared documents for 370 youth aged 18+ wishing to have their cases resumed after closing.
- SWAN LSI paralegals have assisted in preparing transition documents for 341 youth turning 18.

Additionally, from the beginning of the State Fiscal Year on July 1, 2021...

- 29,533 children have had at least one SWAN LSI activity (Diligent Search or court-related activity).
- 9,968 children have had a SWAN LSI Diligent Search.
- 915 children have had an Adoption Petition prepared by a SWAN LSI paralegal.
- 2,389 children have at least one TPR Petition completed (voluntary or involuntary).

The SWAN prime contractor appreciates its collaborative partnership with county agencies and recognizes the vital work of LSI paralegals in the counties necessary to overcome barriers and expedite permanency on behalf of the children in Pennsylvania.

### SWAN LSI Diligent Search Services

SWAN LSI paralegals have been diligently searching on behalf of Pennsylvania's children for 20 years! Over that time, the paralegals have become super sleuths in their search process while also expanding search activities. You may wonder, are SWAN LSI paralegals able to support searches for:

- Missing parents?
- Fostering Connections (within 30-days of a child entering care)?
- Connections for older youth and youth in transition from care?
- Locating connections for involvement with Family Group Decision Making or other case planning?
- Child-specific Recruitment or Older Child Matching Initiative referrals?
- Family connections when case is accepted for service and annually thereafter?
- Compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)?

The answer to all of these questions is: **YES!**

Nearly every child in care will benefit from diligent search activities at some point in their case. If you have any questions about diligent search services through SWAN LSI, please contact your county's SWAN LSI coordinator.

### SWAN Prime Contract

P.O. Box 4560

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

### Older Youth Retreat

The older youth retreat will be held in person at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown Campus August 2 – 5. Registration information was sent to the county identified IL coordinator and remains open until July 1, 2022. Additional information can be found [here](#). Please feel free to contact Meghan O'Hare, [meo43@pitt.edu](mailto:meo43@pitt.edu) with any questions regarding the event.

### PA Youth Advisory Board

The Youth Advisory Board continues to work diligently to ensure they are providing youth and staff across PA with new and relevant resources. All the resources can be found on the [YAB website](#). Some of the new resources include:

- [The Know Your Rights Manual](#), [The Top 10 Tips](#) and the [Youth Questionnaire](#) available in Spanish.
- [Permanency Game Available Online](#): The PA Youth Advisory Board (YAB) wants to support educating youth to ensure they understand permanency goals. The purpose of the Permanency Game is to help youth by teaching them while increasing their knowledge about permanency goals. Youth have expressed that they often feel misinformed due to a lack of communication and or explanation regarding permanency goals and their hierarchy. The Permanency Game gives youth a hands-on experience about the challenges and benefits on the road to permanency. While playing the game, youth will work as a team of siblings to navigate around the board to make it "home." Keeping in mind the goal for all youth in care is to transition safely and legally with a permanent family. The Permanency Game is designed to help stakeholders educate youth about permanency goals in a youth-friendly and engaging manner.
- **Bill of Rights Coloring Books**: The YAB identified a need for younger youth and youth with intellectual disabilities to understand their rights while in foster care. The Bill of Rights coloring book was created to simplify information shared in the Know Your Rights Guide. Two coloring books were created, one for youth ages 5-7 and another one for youth ages 8-10. Along with the coloring book is a message for caregivers which stresses the importance of the information in the coloring book and how they can help children

understand the information by completing different pages. If you are interested in obtaining coloring books, please contact Sherri Krodel [slk114@pitt.edu](mailto:slk114@pitt.edu) or Shayla Jones [shj93@pitt.edu](mailto:shj93@pitt.edu)

- **National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Campaign**: To reinvigorate our NYTD efforts as a State and to re-engage youth, the YAB felt it was important to educate youth about the NYTD survey and help them understand its purpose and the importance of it. Currently, the YAB is focusing on a media campaign which will include a NYTD brochure, NYTD videos, as well as ensuring that NYTD is a standing item in the BLAST newsletter as well as on the YAB Facebook page.
- **Independent Living Site Visit Brochure**: Because youth voice is an integral part of the IL site visit process, YAB has developed a brochure to provide an overview of the site visit process for youth, explain the purpose of the visits and to help youth understand their role if invited to participate in the site visit.

### 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 you are experiencing or may need additional support in. If you are interested in connecting with your regional IL networking group, please contact Meghan O'Hare [meo43@pitt.edu](mailto:meo43@pitt.edu).

### Older Youth Training and Resources

There are several sources of information related to older youth maintained by the Child Welfare Resource Center. These include:

[PA Youth Advisory Board website](#) which includes information for youth and staff.

[PA Child Welfare Resource Center website](#) Including [webinars](#) specific to older youth  
PA Youth Advisory Board Facebook [page](#).

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# PALS

## Pennsylvania Adoptees Longitudinal Study



### Growing Up Adopted:

#### CHILDREN AND PARENTS INVITED TO SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES IN NEW STUDY

##### ABOUT THIS STUDY

The Pennsylvania Adoptees Longitudinal Study (PALS) is a developmental study of children adopted from the child welfare system between the ages of 4 and 10. The goal is to identify factors that predict both positive and negative outcomes for these children later in life.

##### WHO CAN VOLUNTEER?

1. Children between the ages of 4 and 10 and their primary caregiving parent.
2. Finalization of the adoption must have occurred within 12 months of beginning participation in PALS.
3. Adoptive parent must not be biologically related to the child. International adoptees are not included in this study.
4. The child's estimated IQ must be above 70. Children diagnosed with an intellectual disability are not included in this study.
5. Families able to complete at least one visit remotely via Zoom.



##### WHAT WILL VOLUNTEERS DO?

The child and parent will be asked to complete interviews, questionnaires and various tasks. Parents may also be asked to complete questionnaires online. The research team from Penn State College of Medicine's Department of Pediatrics will collect all data in a remote study visit, at the Transforming the Lives of Children (TLC) Center in Hershey, PA and in person at the child and parent's home.

Participation will last for one year and will include the following:

- One visit occurring remotely on Zoom
- One visit at the Transforming the Lives of Children Center in Hershey, Pa., four weeks after Zoom visit (optional)
- Final visit at home will occur one year after the first Zoom visit

Compensation is provided to eligible participants.

##### BENEFITS

There is no direct benefit to you, however, results may guide future treatment of adopted children and families by helping to identify influential factors in healthy development of adopted children.



##### FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO PARTICIPATE

Email the research coordinator at [PALS@pennstatehealth.psu.edu](mailto:PALS@pennstatehealth.psu.edu) or call **717-531-0003, extension 321713**.



**PennState**  
College of Medicine

##### STUDY DIRECTOR

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This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, under federal regulations at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and Penn State College of Medicine.

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