

# **Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange**

## **Understanding the Matching Algorithm**

The matching algorithm for Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) child and family matches is the formula that the SWAN Portal applies to match children with adoptive families registered as active with PAE and to match families with children registered as active with PAE who have no identified permanency resource.

The algorithm has three major components: 1) demographics, 2) critical characteristics, and 3) important characteristics.

**Demographics** are comprised of the following:

- 1 Age
- 2 Child Race and Ethnicity
- 3 Child Gender
- 4 Siblings and Number

Demographics of the child have proven to be critical in the matching process. It is typically the first item considered by families. No family will be matched with a child if the acceptable demographics are not present. Families are not considered for a match with a child if the age, race, or gender of the child or siblings is not approved by the family.

To determine if a child and family will match based upon demographics, the age, race, and gender of a child are compared to the age, race, and gender a family will accept. If the child's age, race, and gender do not fall within the family's acceptable age, race, and gender then the child is not matched with the family. Additionally, the family's acceptance of siblings is a demographic that must match in their willingness to accept siblings, the age of siblings, and the number of siblings the family is willing to accept. If these do not match the child's siblings, sibling ages, and sibling number demographics, then the child is not matched with the family.

**Critical characteristics** are comprised of the following special needs (SN) and characteristics from the CY130 form:

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Mental Retardation Diagnosis (SN)      | 6 Abuses Animals (Q34)                |
| 2 Special Medical Care (SN)              | 7 Inappropriate Sexual Behavior (Q39) |
| 3 Physical Disability (SN)               | 8 Runaway (Q40)                       |
| 4 HIV (SN)                               | 9 Fire Setter (Q41)                   |
| 5 Masturbates Frequently or Openly (Q29) |                                       |

These nine items are deemed critical characteristics because families are less likely to be trained about or willing to take children with these particular needs. Knowing what families are willing to accept comes from these complementary questions on the CY131 and CY130 forms. If a family will not accept or is not willing to consider any of these nine items, then they are not considered as potential matches for the child who possesses these characteristics.

Each match is assigned a match score. These critical characteristics represent 65 percent of the overall match score, if a child possesses any of these critical characteristics.

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**Important Characteristics** are comprised of the following characteristics:

- |   |                           |    |   |
|---|---------------------------|----|---|
| 1 | Hyperactivity (Q3)        | 8  | Destructive Behavior (Q35)              |
| 2 | Legally Blind (Q8)        | 9  | Foul Language (Q36)                     |
| 3 | Seizures (Q11)            | 10 | Ties to Birth Family (Q42)              |
| 4 | Behavioral Problems (Q20) | 11 | Sexual Abuse (Q46)                      |
| 5 | Lying (Q31)               | 12 | Exposed to Promiscuous Behavior (Q48)   |
| 6 | Stealing (Q32)            | 13 | Parent has Mental Illness (Q55)         |
| 7 | Fighting (Q33)            | 14 | Continue Visits with Birth Family (Q59) |

These characteristics are more acceptable to most families but continue to show some preference differences between families. Generally, about 50 percent of families find these characteristics acceptable. Families who indicate they will not consider any of these characteristics may still be matched with a child who possesses these characteristics, but their score will be lower; they will not be a top match for this child. This component represents 35 percent of the overall match score.

### **The Matching Process:**

1. All newly registered and updated children and families who need a match will have a match run. Matches for newly registered children and families will occur as part of the initial registration process. Matches for child and family updates will occur upon request and/or submission of an updated CY130 or CY131 that changes any of the three major matching components: 1) demographics, 2) critical characteristics, and/or 3) important characteristics.
2. For all child matches, the top ten families that match with the child will be included in the match results as long as the overall match score is 70 percent or greater. If the 70 percent match result produces fewer than 10 matches, the reduced number of match results is distributed.
3. For all family matches, the top three children that match with the family will be included in the match results as long as the overall match score is 70 percent or greater. If the 70 percent match result produces fewer than three matches, the reduced number of match results is distributed.
4. As additional matches are run, children and families will be matched with new families and children. Children and families will not reappear on future matches for that same child or family unless updates to the three major matching components cause the match score to be greater than the original match score.
5. Children and families can and will appear on multiple match results, as the matching algorithm always runs the best possible match.
6. Active families can contact the SWAN Helpline to inquire about available children and view all eligible children online at [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org).
7. Match results are mailed to recipients.