

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

National Adoption Month

November is National Adoption Awareness Month. This is a terrific opportunity for children and youth agencies to host special Adoption Day events to celebrate their children and families and promote permanency in their counties and via social media. If you would like to have your event featured on the SWAN Facebook page, please contact Joe Warrick at jwarrick@pa.gov or 717-214-6765.

Chafee Education and Training Grant Program

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application for the 2016–17 school year and directions on how to apply are available online at www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/other-educational-aid/chafee-program.shtml. The 2016–17 maximum ETG award has been increased to \$5,000 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 independent living 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 the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) at 1-800-831-0797. If you work with youth receiving 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. Each state has its own individual application process.

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

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Changes

Students who will graduate from high school or complete a GED in 2017 can apply for financial aid starting on October 1, 2016, rather than waiting until January of their senior year. This change will allow students to apply for financial aid using actual data rather than estimates at the same time that they typically start to apply for college admission. It's hoped that students will make more informed college decisions if they have financial aid information at the same time as admissions decisions.

To make that possible, FAFSA and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) will use the prior year's tax return for aid consideration in 2017–18. For example, an application for 2017–18 financial aid will use income from the 2015 tax return. Youth and independent living/transition staff should look for financial aid nights in your local area in late spring or early in the fall of 2016—and be aware that financial aid deadlines for priority processing may change at some colleges and universities. Please note, some funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Pay attention to the deadlines! There are federal and state deadlines, and your colleges may also have a deadline. August 1, 2017, is the deadline for youth attending college in Pennsylvania and all first-time applicants enrolled in a community ►

college; business/trade/technical school; hospital school of nursing; designated Pennsylvania Open-Admission institution; or nontransferable two-year program. All other applicants must meet the May 1, 2017 deadline.

Summer 2016 Network Newsletter

A special summer edition of the SWAN/IL *Network News*, featuring photos and highlights from the 24th Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference at the Kalahari Resorts & Conventions, is now available online at www.adoptpakids.org/SwanNetworkNews.aspx.

National Youth In Transition Database

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) implementation is ongoing with the baseline population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17) and the served population (any youth receiving independent living services regardless of age) collection period, which begins October 1, 2016. NYTD questions can be directed to Joe Warrick at jwarrick@pa.gov or 717-214-6765.

Accurint®

Accurint is a useful tool for obtaining an individual's address and phone number (landline), but did you know that you can search for cellphone numbers too? By running a separate search called Real-Time Phones, you can access phone records in real time. Try it out and greatly improve your search efforts! For more information about Accurint, contact Belinda Eigen at beigen@pa.gov or 717-787-2726.

Credit-Reporting Requirements

Credit-reporting requirements changed in September 2015. All youth in foster care ages 14 and older must receive their credit report annually and be given a copy of their credit history upon exiting care. If you are having trouble obtaining credit reports from Equifax®, Experian® or TransUnion® or have any credit-reporting questions, contact Belinda Eigen at beigen@pa.gov or 717-787-2726.

Safe Haven

We need counties to help in tracking newborn relinquishments. Please contact our office if you have questions about how recent changes to the Newborn Protection Act affects your county and/or where to obtain relinquishment forms. If your agency has not provided relinquishment forms on any Safe Haven newborns, please be sure to do so as soon as possible. Safe Haven questions can be directed to Belinda Eigen at beigen@pa.gov or 717-787-2726.

Mandated Reporter Training Available

Mandated reporter training is available for **free** to all mandated reporters. Register your office for in-person training from the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (www.pa-fsa.org) or register as an individual for online training through the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center (www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu). For more information about mandated reporter training, visit www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov.

SWAN/IL Google Groups

The SWAN/IL listserv 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 Pennsylvania. 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 by email at jwarrick@pa.gov or (717) 214-6765.

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 ABC27 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 Pennsylvania.

- 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 717-558-1242.
- If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WBRE's *A Little Love*, please contact Jane Johnston at jjohnston@diakon-swan.org or 717-231-5362.

Independent Living (IL) Site Visits

Site visits are underway for IL programs for 2016–17 across the Commonwealth. The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) practice improvement specialist assigned to your county will be contacting IL coordinators directly to set up the site visit.

In order to continue to strengthen services and outcomes for IL youth and to build partnerships, it is strongly recommended that counties select and invite the appropriate persons to participate in the site visit. If you have any questions or need additional information about IL site visits, please contact your CWRC practice improvement specialist or Meghan O'Hare at meo43@pitt.edu or 717-795-9048. Questions regarding IL funding should be directed to Joe Warrick, Office of Children, Youth and Families, at jwarrick@pa.gov or 717-214-6765.

Revised Independent Living (IL) Training

The Child Welfare Resource Center has revised Modules 1 and 2 of their online trainings for anyone interested in understanding "The Purpose and Policy of IL Services" (Module 1) and "Adolescent Issues: Risk and Resiliency" (Module 2). To access these online trainings, log on to www.e-learn.pitt.edu. Further assistance can be obtained by contacting Rachael Ickes at rmi6@pitt.edu or 717-795-9048. These workshops are eligible for two continuing education credit hours each.

Volunteer Photographers Needed

SWAN is seeking volunteer photographers throughout Pennsylvania! Many waiting children and youth need a good quality photograph to enable connections with potential adoptive families. These candid shots highlight a child's personality

and give a glimpse into their heart. Although we have volunteer photographers in many Pennsylvania counties, SWAN needs more to better serve our waiting children and youth. We are seeking accomplished photographers or recommendations of somebody you know. The photographs will be used expressly for adoption recruitment purposes. Although all are welcome, volunteers are especially needed to cover these counties: Cambria, Columbia, Fayette, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Juniata, Lebanon, Perry, Pike, Somerset, Union, Venango and Wayne. If you or a photographer you know would be interested in sharing time and talent to take candid photographs within the state, please contact Karen Lollo at klollo@diakon-swan.org or 717-558-1242.

Caseworkers interested in obtaining a list of participating photographers and the Heart Gallery Caseworker Photography Process may also contact Karen Lollo.

CSR Recipes for Permanency

A new tool entitled *CSR Recipes for Permanency* is now available for use by SWAN members. This tool contains 19 "recipes" for common strategies and session activities to use when completing the Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) unit of service. The information is laid out in a clear, step-by-step manner and will prove to be beneficial for county and SWAN affiliate agencies in developing CSR plans. This document can be downloaded from the SWAN prime contract website at: www.diakon-swan.org/swan/documents/item/297/.

The *CSR Recipes for Permanency* will be updated at least once a year with refinements and additional recipes. If you have a technique, strategy or activity that you would like to submit for consideration, please contact Robert Brockman at rbrockman@diakon-swan.org or 717-558-7214.

SAVE THE DATE!

The 25th Annual Pennsylvania
Permanency Conference

June 28–30, 2017

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions
Pocono Manor, PA 18349



New OCYF Staff

ALICIA TYLER joined the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF), Division of Policy as a Human Services program specialist in April 2016. Alicia is providing technical assistance and overall policy support to child welfare services as it relates to foster care, kinship care, adoption services, permanent legal custodianship, independent living and education related issues. Prior to joining OCYF, Alicia worked as a general caseworker for Fulton County Services for Children and as a counselor at the Abraxas Leadership Development Program for adjudicated youth. Alicia can be reached at altyler@pa.gov or 717-214-3809.

JULIANA QUINTERO joined the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF), Division of Policy as a Human Services program specialist in August 2016. Juliana will be providing technical assistance and overall policy support to child welfare services as it relates to child fatalities/near fatalities. Prior to joining OCYF, Juliana worked as an income maintenance caseworker at the York County Assistance Office. Juliana can be reached at jquintero@pa.gov or 717-214-7386.

IAN MICHELS joined the Interstate Unit in February 2016. Ian's caseload includes children for placement/possible placement in parental care, foster care, and private and public adoption placement settings. Prior to joining the Interstate Unit, Ian was a ChildLine caseworker, a Dauphin County Social Services for Children and Youth caseworker, and a counselor for Abraxas. Ian can be reached at imichels@pa.gov or 717-214-3460.

In July 2016, previous Interstate Director, **JASON MCCREA**, was promoted to Public Health program manager with the Department of Health. **WENDY LAUTSBAUGH** was promoted to Interstate director in August 2016; the Compacts are the Interstate Compact for Juveniles, the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance, and the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. Wendy was an Interstate specialist for six years, and prior to joining the Interstate Unit, she was a Cumberland County Children and Youth Services caseworker. Wendy can be reached at wlautsbaug@pa.gov or 717-772-5501.

TERESA MUSSER joined OCYF's Division of Policy as a Human Services program specialist in June 2016.

She will be working in the MA/Cross Systems Unit to coordinate Medical Assistance benefits for children in out-of-home placement to ensure their health and well-being and improve access to services offered by various state agencies. Teresa spent the last three years working in the Bureau of Budget and Fiscal support reviewing budget for out-of-home county and private providers within the state. Her previous work experience includes more than 30 years' experience working with the intellectual disabilities/mental health population in both Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Teresa can be reached at temusser@pa.gov or at 717-214-7385.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2017 SWAN/IL Winter Statewide Meeting

Jan. 18–19

Penn Stater Conference Center
State College

2017 SWAN/IL Spring Quarterly Meetings

March 29, Scranton

April 5, Clarion

April 6, Monroeville

April 12, Philadelphia

April 13, Lansdale

April 25, Enola

2017 SWAN/IL Summer Statewide Meeting

June 27–28

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions,
Pocono Manor

25th Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference

June 28–30

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions
Pocono Manor

From the SWAN Prime Contract
Diakon/Family Design Resources, Inc.

Child Preparation “Recipes for Success”

The SWAN prime contract, Diakon/FDR, is excited to announce the *SWAN Child Preparation Recipes for Success* will be updated in the coming months. Child Preparation activities from across the state will be compiled into one document and will be available to the network through the SWAN prime contract website, Toolkit and online trainings. Any SWAN affiliate or Child Preparation worker is invited to submit a Child Preparation activity for possible inclusion in the Recipes for Success. Visit www.diakon-swan.org and click on “Publications” for the Recipes for Success submission form. Activities should be emailed to Dianne Ott, SWAN program technical assistant, at dott@diakon-swan.org. The submission deadline is December 2, 2016.

Virtual Support Groups

Post-permanency affiliates are encouraged to submit proposals for virtual Post-permanency support groups. These groups can use any available technology, including conference calls and WebEx. Virtual support groups allow affiliates to reach a larger group than is available in their geographic area.

Some ideas for virtual support groups include:

- “Lunch and learn” sessions
- Book discussion groups
- Kinship groups
- Teen groups
- International adoption groups

PAE and RFR: What Should I Know?

The past six months have seen many changes within and around the Resource Family Registry (RFR) and the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE). The following are some quick references to things you should know:

- Electronic matching has been updated, and families will only get matches in the age range the family specifies.

- The algorithm has been intensified and there must be a 70 percent overall match score on the demographic, and important and critical characteristics increased from a 40 percent match. There will now be many families and children who get zero matches.
- Make sure the age, gender, race and number of siblings the family is willing to accept are accurate. PAE will no longer match outside these guidelines.
- There is no longer a wait period for families after being matched; this makes it more important than ever to move on matches immediately.
- Family-to-child matching will resume; for the past few years electronic matching was done exclusively child to family. This means when you register a family as wanting to adopt you should expect to receive electronic matches for that family.
 - ◊ If you receive zero matches for the family, this indicates that the family’s acceptable characteristics and demographics are outside the characteristics and demographics of waiting children, and you may want to review these selections with your family.
 - ◊ If your family is selected for a child, please email PAE (dsariano@diakon-swan.org) and ask to have the family placed on a hold status.
- Customized matching for children is always available through your PAE coordinator. They can match for region of the state for children who do not have terminated parental rights.
- Any child with a “county-established” goal of adoption (either a primary or concurrent goal) is eligible for PAE registration, but is not required to be registered with PAE.
- Any child receiving child-specific recruitment **must** be registered with PAE.
- Eighty-seven percent of children who are registered with PAE **and** need a permanency resource achieve permanency (stats since 2010).
- The list of recruitment strategies PAE coordinators preach are now available to view in the SWAN Portal. It is very exciting to see all efforts recorded.
- We are working to create a process to allow

other TV stations and other taped children to also be featured on www.adoptpakids.org. Stay tuned.

- You will see an increased focus on making the information in the RFR right.
 - ◊ Jen Casner-Hockenberry is going to lead this effort.
 - ◊ Our records say there are 1,400 families who want to adopt, and we are going to do everything we can to make sure this is 100 percent accurate.
 - ◊ Overall, our system says that there are more than 20,000 families—either kinship, foster care or adoption—who are active in the state. It is important to make this information as accurate as possible too.
 - ◊ You can expect to hear regularly from your RTAs and PAE to place on hold families who no longer want to adopt and to close families who are no longer in the process.

SWAN Helpline — Post-Permanency

The SWAN Helpline is the entry point for families wishing to access SWAN Post-permanency services. These services are family-driven, requiring families to reach out to the SWAN Helpline by calling 1-800-585-SWAN or emailing SWANHelpline@diakon-swan.org.

As a reminder, when families call to be reassessed for additional services, all previous services must be invoiced.

SWAN Helpline — Matching Events

The SWAN Helpline assists families throughout the whole process of adoption, from initially obtaining information to taking referrals for Post-permanency services. When families are involved in the matching phase of the process, Helpline can inform them about upcoming adoption matching events going on in their area. Agencies and PAE coordinators can seek Helpline’s assistance in notifying families of future events in order to increase attendance; PAE can help generate a list of approved adoptive families in the area, and Helpline can call the families to inform or remind them of these events.

Even if this service is not needed, it is helpful to

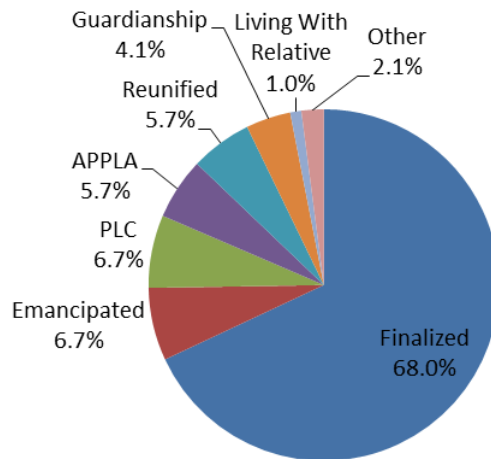
inform the Helpline about upcoming adoption matching events. Lynette Lemke, SWAN technical specialist, maintain a matching events calendar, and regularly adds events as she becomes aware of them. Helpline can refer to this calendar when families call to inquire about future events. Families have reported that it is helpful to meet agencies and waiting children in person during the matching process, so it is beneficial to keep us updated and involved since we speak to families regularly.

If you would like the Helpline to promote or remind families of your event, please get in touch with your PAE coordinator; SWAN RTA; or Tonya Hottenstein, Helpline coordinator, at thottenstein@diakon-swan.org or (800) 585-7926.

Update on Finalizations

During the fourth quarter of state fiscal year (SFY) 2016 (April–June 2016), 339 children, including 34 older children (age 13 and older), completed the SWAN adoption finalization service.

According to SWAN Portal data, 194 older children were discharged during the SFY 2015–16. Among them, 166 older children achieved permanent arrangements, including 132 adoptions. Compared to SFY 2014–15, among all discharged older children, the number of older children who achieved permanency increased from 80 percent to 85.6 percent, the number of children who aged out decreased from 8.9 percent to 6.7 percent.



Older Children Discharged During SFY 2015–16 (n=194)

From the PA Child Welfare Resource Center
University of Pittsburgh

SAT Waivers

An email was sent to all IL Coordinators and private provider agencies in August making them aware that the 2015-2016 SAT Waivers are available. These waivers are only available to youth currently enrolled in high school. There are also a limited number of college application fee waivers. If you need to obtain either waiver, please contact Melissa Moore (mcm141@pitt.edu) at the Child Welfare Resource Center.

Youth Advisory Board

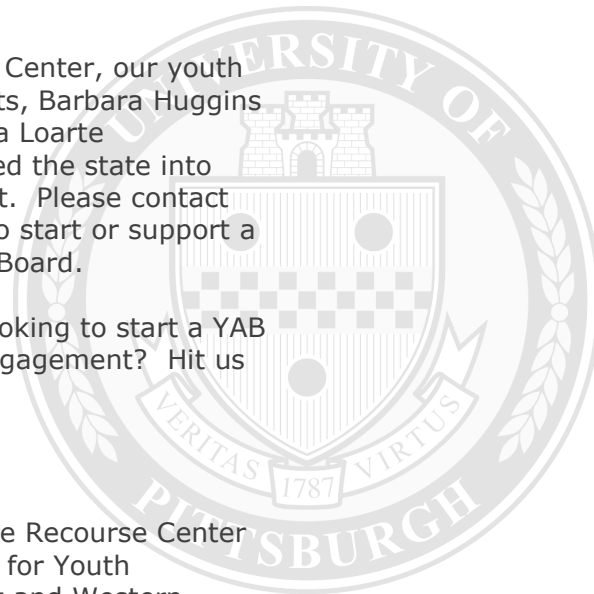
At the Child Welfare Resource Center, our youth quality improvement specialists, Barbara Huggins (bmh75@pitt.edu) and Jesenia Loarte (jel181@pitt.edu), have divided the state into regions that they each support. Please contact them with questions on how to start or support a local/regional Youth Advisory Board.


Are you a county or agency looking to start a YAB for peer support and youth engagement? Hit us up!

Youth Ambassadors

The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Recourse Center currently has vacant positions for Youth Ambassadors in the Southeast and Western Regions. The purpose of the Youth Ambassador program is to provide foster care youth enrolled in post-secondary education the opportunity to share their unique perspective of the child welfare system in Pennsylvania. The program is open to current and former foster care youth. Please share this information with your youth or stakeholders who work with youth.

Youth may apply at pittsource.com. There you can search for positions under the Mechanicsburg "campus." Make sure youth are applying to the correct region.



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www.adoptpakids.org

SWAN Prime Contract

P.O. Box 4560

471 JPL Wick Drive

Harrisburg, PA 17111-0560

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

www.diakon-swan.org