

# **CSR Recipes for Permanency**

P R E P A R E D   B Y   T H E

*Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE)*



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# CSR Recipe #1: Registering Youth with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE)

## **Purpose:**

We know from reviewing statistics about the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) that about 87 percent of the youth who are active with PAE achieve permanency. We also know that the younger the youth is when registered with PAE, the shorter their time on PAE. In addition, updating a youth's information there increases their potential for matching; updated registrants are viewed more frequently on [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org).

## **Materials Needed:**

The *CY 130 Child Registration and Update Form* is required. A hard copy of the form can be downloaded from [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org), or an electronic version can be accessed in the [SWAN Portal](#). Always download a new copy to ensure you are using the most current version!

The information on the form required to place a youth on active status are: the demographics section, an alias if Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) has not yet occurred, special needs and behavioral characteristics, a photo and a strength-based narrative. You can glean information for the CY 130 by reviewing the youth's file; reading their youth profile; and most importantly, meeting and talking with the youth and primary caregivers.

## **Eligibility or Age Range:**

All youth with a primary or concurrent goal of adoption may be registered with PAE. Mandatory registration applies to youth who are legally free for adoption and for whom no Report of Intent to Adopt (RITA) has been filed within 90 calendar days of the date of TPR. Optional registration applies to youth where reunification with their birth family is neither possible nor appropriate, where TPR is being pursued and adoption is planned.

## **Time Needed:**

Completing the form should take no more than 30 minutes.

## **Directions:**

A frequently asked question is: "Who can complete a CY 130?" The **initial** CY 130 registration form must be signed by the county caseworker; however, the Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) worker can complete the form and provide it to the youth's county caseworker for review and submission.

The county can also complete the form directly in the [SWAN Portal](#). Once in the Portal, click "Add CY 130" and follow the prompts. If the youth is already in the system, the demographics should auto-populate. Once the initial CY 130 is accepted, the CSR worker or county caseworker can update any and all parts of it directly in the Portal or by completing a hard copy; electronic submission of the CY 130 is preferred.

Paper copies of the form can be mailed to SWAN, Attention: PAE Data Analyst, P.O. Box 4469, Harrisburg, PA 17111-0469, or faxed to PAE Data Analyst at 717.236.8510. CY 130's **cannot** be accepted by email.

### 1. Characteristics

The CY 130 contains 60 characteristics questions, six educational status questions and 16 questions about special needs. It is helpful to print and take the form with you when you review the youth's file. The characteristics have multiple sections, and affirmative responses to these sections should be indicated as "yes" if the appropriate professional has indicated they exist for the youth. It is important to accurately reflect a youth's current characteristics, and this section is not intended to

cover past behaviors. These questions are designed to reflect *current* behaviors (occurring within the past 90 to 120 days). Certain characteristics may be potential barriers to family matching (see Attachment 1: *CY 130 Critical and Important Characteristics*).

Before indicating a youth has a specific characteristic, please confirm the behavior was professionally diagnosed or is a current snapshot of their functioning. For example, do not check “inappropriate sexual behavior” unless the behavior is documented as an ongoing and diagnosed issue. If the youth is receiving specific treatment for a diagnosed issue, this should be qualified in the *Additional Information Section* of the CY 130 form. Some characteristics can be a “deal breaker” for families, so it’s imperative a youth is not inappropriately labeled when assigning characteristics.

2. Active Status

Youth in need of permanency resources are placed on active status. To be active, a strength-based narrative must be included with the initial registration (refer to CSR Recipe #2).

In addition, a photo should be submitted for youth who need a permanent resource, but is not necessary for the initial registration. For youth without TPR, a non-identifying photo is used, along with an alias to protect their identity (refer to CSR Recipe #3 and #4). Photos and narratives can be emailed to your PAE coordinator.

3. Hold Status

Youth who meet the mandatory registration requirements but already live with a potential permanency resource are placed on a hold status. If you check “Resource Identified” on the CY 130 form, it is not necessary to submit characteristics, narrative or a photo of the youth.

If you have questions, please contact your PAE coordinator.

# CSR Recipe #2: How to Write a Strength-Based Narrative

## **Purpose:**

Strength-based narratives are used in public settings and therefore do not provide full disclosure about a youth. More comprehensive information about the youth can be found in the “Notes” section of their online record—which is accessible by Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) coordinators and data analysts and readable by SWAN Helpline staff—as well as in the county record and the Child Profile.

Depending on where the narrative is shared, its audience can include youth welfare professionals, foster and adoptive families, and the general public.

The narrative itself is an important step in getting to know more about a youth and their qualities, and it allows youth to present themselves in a positive light. The youth needs to know what is in the narrative, especially if they did not actively help develop it.

## **Materials Needed:**

None

## **Eligibility or Age Range:**

All youth needing permanency are eligible. All youth registered with PAE must have a narrative before they are posted to [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org).

## **Time Needed:**

Time needed will vary, as this is a fluid document that can grow and develop as the youth becomes more engaged. As the relationship between the youth and worker evolves, the narrative can be refined and expanded.

## **Directions:**

Reviewing the youth’s profile, conducting a file review and contacting people who know the youth are simple starting points in getting to know them; however, firsthand interaction is always the best way to gain an understanding of who they are and develop the best narrative possible. Engaging the youth in writing the narrative gives them a voice and allows them to share what they want people to know about themselves and the type of family they seek.

When asked to update a narrative, it’s always best to start fresh, with a blank screen or page. Start from scratch and your efforts will pay off! Don’t keep recycling the same material, no matter how good it was a year ago. First-person narratives are preferred; work with your youth to help them create, or at least co-create with them, their own narrative. Put the youth’s words in quotes. Speaking of quotes, use them as much as possible—from the youth’s resource families, teachers, coaches, and staff who work with them. Please don’t disrespect the youth by writing a first-person narrative **for** them!

Make it sound “real” and casual, so use contractions. And combine ideas for more complex and interesting sentences. Take “*He likes sports. He likes football. He likes the Steelers. He likes hot wings. He is not a picky eater.*” and make it “*He’s a big sports fan, particularly football. He’d love to watch a Steelers game with you, especially if you have chicken wings... the hotter the better!*”

Specificity is the soul of narrative. What does that mean? *Be specific*. Don’t say a youth likes video games, almost everyone like video games! Tell *what kind of game* or what kind of system or what specific game he or she likes! *Families respond to specifics*.

Make the first sentence really attention-getting. Instead of “*Billy is an active boy...*” try something like “*You won’t find Billy laying around or watching TV when he could be outside playing...*”

Strength-based is a frame of mind, not a writing style, so frame things positively. Turn *argumentative* into *assertive*.

### **What do Pennsylvania resource parents say they want to see in narratives?**

- 85% said they wanted to know about the youth’s *general personality traits*.
- 78% said they wanted to know *where the youth wanted to live: rural, suburban, or urban?*
- 75% said they wanted to know about how the youth *feels and behaves around pets*.
- 74% said they wanted to know the *size family the youth wants to live in*.
- 71% said they wanted to know the *youth’s religious preferences*.

### **What are three (or more) awesome things about the youth?**

- Identify, preferably *with* the youth, at least three things about them or that they do that makes them awesome. Integrate these into the narrative.
- You need to put the youth’s best foot forward: grab people’s attention and hook them! Focus on what sets THIS kid apart from all of the other kids on the website... Make them shine!

### **How do they get along with...**

- Peers and other people they have established a bond with, such as resource parents, teachers, and grandparents?
- Pets? (*Whether they like pets **and** how are they with them.*)

### **What are they looking for in a family...**

- Single parent, married, or same-sex
- Siblings (*older or younger, how many*)
- Anything specific they want to do with a mother or father
- Rural, urban, or suburban environment
- Faith preference

### **Talk about school:**

- Don’t mention their grade; that changes and isn’t as important as whether they’re...
- Performing at, above, or below grade level
- Mention any awards
- Include a quote from a teacher or authority person regarding the youth’s strengths
- Challenges the youth is working to overcome

### **These can be powerful, but are often overused: a youth’s favorite...**

- Food (*especially if unusual*)
- Hobbies and activities
- Sports and sports teams
- Movies and television shows
- Books
- Things to do indoors and outdoors
- Ways to blow off steam (*families like to read that youth have healthy coping strategies*)

### **Some things to avoid...**

- Diagnoses (*exceptions can be made for disorders present from birth*); medications; and special medical, psychological, or psychiatric needs or treatments. If you do list a diagnosis or special need, make sure

that information is couched in strength-based terms and phrases, such as how the youth and family are successfully coping with it.

- Making statements that apply to everyone, such as “*Would benefit from a warm and loving family*” or “*Needs a caring family that will support and encourage them.*”
- Also avoid specific descriptions (hair, eye color); let the *photograph* do that for you.
- Listing a specific area the youth wants to stay in or close to. It needs to read more generically, such as “Within a two-hour radius of Central Pennsylvania” or something like that.
- Imposing other people’s beliefs about what’s best for the youth in terms of kind of family or location of family. This is a *youth*-driven service.
- Don’t list a youth’s age; that’s calculated and displayed on the page.

### **Still stuck or need help?**

- Talk to your co-workers and supervisors.
- Read some of the other narratives on the website to get some ideas and inspiration.
- Contact your PAE coordinator!

The youth narrative is a fluid document. At minimum, it should be updated yearly; however, best practice is to update the narrative several times per year. The narrative can be updated as frequently as you want to best reflect the youth’s growth, development and wishes.

At the end of the narrative, indicate if the youth is free for adoption. If not, and the reason is that the county won’t terminate rights until an adoptive resource is located, you should indicate that “once a resource is identified, the county will pursue termination of parental rights.”

You may also include your email contact information. The format should be along the lines of: “For more information about [Youth’s Name], please contact their Recruiter, [Recruiter Name], at [Recruiter Email Address].”

# CSR Recipe #3: Tips for Taking Great Photographs

## **Purpose:**

Hundreds of prospective adoptive families visit the online photo gallery at [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org) every day. Many families report making a connection to a waiting youth when they first see a youth's photo — through a smile, a grin, bright eyes or that glimpse into their personality.

We want photos you would be proud of; use the same care and attention on photos of your kids that you might use for your own photos posted on social media.

We suggest updating photographs at least every six months. They also can be used in lifebooks, fliers and other recruitment efforts.

## **Materials Needed:**

Digital camera or smartphone.

## **Eligibility:**

All youth receiving SWAN services. Note that, for recruitment purposes, if a youth is not free for adoption, the county will likely require a non-identifying photograph.

## **Time Needed:**

Allow about an hour, plus adequate time for the youth to groom and pick out a few favorite items of clothing.

## **Directions:**

1. Select an appropriate location for the photograph. The easiest and best pictures frequently are outdoors, because there is plenty of light and the youth is free to pose in a play area. If you must take the photo indoors, please assure the photo doesn't look as if it were taken in an institutional setting (even if it was!). In other words, avoid cinderblock backgrounds or youth in institutional clothing.
2. Let the youth pick a favorite outfit and be sure they are well groomed.
3. Be aware of lighting: Even outdoors you may need to use your flash to avoid heavy shadows.
4. Consider taking pictures of the youth doing a preferred activity or with a special object. Keep in mind that the youth should be clearly visible in the photo. For example, if a youth loves soccer, rather than taking a picture of her playing soccer, take a picture of her in her soccer uniform or holding a soccer ball.
5. Have a familiar person, such as a social worker or foster parent, present during the photo session to put the youth at ease. With a hesitant youth, compliments often bring out a beautiful smile.
6. Candid shots are often best. Fight the urge to pose and say "cheese."
7. Get down on the youth's level and move several feet closer than seems natural. Head and shoulders should dominate the frame.
8. For youth with physical disabilities, include slightly more of the youth. Focus on their expression while including a wheelchair or other medical device.
9. Photograph siblings together in the same picture. Children who are photographed and listed together are more likely to be adopted as a sibling group. Let faces dominate! Overlap bodies and squeeze children together to achieve the goal. Keep the children approximately equal distance from the camera to avoid out-of-focus faces.
10. Set aside enough time so that you won't feel rushed. Plan to spend an hour in the photo session.
11. Take multiple horizontal and vertical shots in several locations.
12. Have the youth help pick the "best" photos.
13. Always send your PAE coordinator the largest size or highest resolution photos in JPEG format (the default for many digital cameras and phones). If possible, send the best three or four photos so they can be rotated over the next few months.

### **Non-identifying photographs**

For youth whose parental rights have not been terminated, the county will mostly likely require a non-identifying photograph.

1. These often can be obtained by getting closer, so that the child's profile or face isn't in the shot. Having arms, hands, legs and feet in the photo is still possible.
2. Be creative: Think about things the youth is interested in, get them involved in that and get close.
3. It's also possible to use more generic photographs or art that represents the youth and their interests (sports equipment, team logos, etc.), but photos that actually have the youth in them are preferred.

When in doubt, scroll through the photo gallery on [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org). You can also consult with your PAE coordinator if you need additional ideas.

# CSR Recipe #4: Scheduling a Free Professional Photo Session

## Purpose:

The purpose of these photo shoots is to give each SWAN youth a beautiful and unique portrait that will be displayed on the [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org) website so prospective adoptive families can better see their spirit and personality. These photos also can be used in the youth's lifebook, recruitment fliers and presentations.

## Materials Needed:

1. The worker must be able to transport youth to the designated site, unless the photographer is coming to the youth.
2. Assure the youth has grooming items and favorite clothing items.

## Eligibility or Age Range:

Youth who are registered with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE).

## Time Needed:

A photo session can take one to two hours.

## Directions:

1. All children and youth registered with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE), whether active or on hold status, are eligible for a free photo session.
2. The caseworker will review the SWAN Volunteer Photographers List at <http://www.diakon-swan.org/swan/documents/item/141/> and will contact a photographer located in a convenient geographic area.
3. The caseworker will identify themselves to the photographer and say they are inquiring about the SWAN Volunteer Photography Program. The caseworker must provide the photographer with the child's first name (not an alias) and PAE ID#. This is critical information, and if it is not provided, the photographer must request it.
4. The caseworker will coordinate a photo session with the photographer.
5. The caseworker will make sure the following requirements are met for the session:
  - a. The caseworker must be present with the photographer and the child at all times; this is for the safety of all involved.
  - b. The photographer will not communicate directly with the child before or after the photo session and must coordinate interaction with the child through the caseworker.
6. The photo session is intended to provide each PAE-registered child in care with beautiful, professional photographs that portray their spirit and personality, which can be used in recruitment, posted in the [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org) photo gallery, used in life books, etc.
7. We strongly prefer candid shots of the child reflecting their personalities; however, posed head-and-shoulder shots showing the child's face also are acceptable.
8. The caseworker can request non-identifying photos of the child such as a picture from the back, a profile, or picture of hands and feet. This is done when a county does not want an identifying photo on the PAE website.
9. When composing shots, please keep in mind that photographs will be displayed at [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org) and printed on PAE posters in a 1:1 (square) aspect ratio. Allow room in the shots for cropping and adjustment as necessary.
10. If possible, the photographer will share the photographs with the child at the photo session, allowing the child and the caseworker to have the final choices. If the volunteer photographer cannot share photographs at the session, they will email their top choices (at least three images) to the caseworker.

Always provide high resolution JPEG files (at least 3MB each at 300dpi), as this allows for higher quality printing and other uses beyond display on the website.

11. After the session, the volunteer photographer should email the child's first name, PAE ID# and the date of the session to [PAE@diakon-swan.org](mailto:PAE@diakon-swan.org) for our records.
12. The caseworker will work with the child to pick their favorite photos. The caseworker will send at least three photographs to [PAE@diakon-swan.org](mailto:PAE@diakon-swan.org), along with the child's first name and PAE ID#, the name of the volunteer photographer, and the date of the photo session.
13. Please contact your PAE coordinator with any questions. Thank you so much for your participation!

# CSR Recipe #5: Career Matching

**Submitted by:**

Leonette Boiarski, LCSW, ACSW, Madison Adoption Associates

**Purpose:**

To locate permanency resources for a youth by matching their career choice with local professionals in that field and then presenting the youth to those groups and posting fliers at their workplaces or gatherings.

**Eligibility:**

Youth who are on active status with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) and have information on [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org).

**Time Needed:**

Prep Time – can vary

Outreach Time – can vary

Follow-up Time – can vary

**Directions:**

1. Poll youth to determine their career interest. Don't discourage the youth if you believe the goal is beyond them; instead, gently probe and ask questions like: "So what do you think the requirements are for that?", "What would be your first steps?", etc.
2. Take a photo of the youth with someone in the local community who is in that career, while that person is doing or wearing something representative of their work. Include the photo in the youth's flier.
3. Generate a list of relevant places to post or share the flier, and arrange presentations before the youth's identified professional group.
4. Post the youth's flier at that group's workplace or place fliers in the company's pay envelopes.
5. Give a copy of the final presentation to the youth and county caseworker.

*Example: A youth wants to be a firefighter. Contact the community fire company where youth attends school and get a volunteer to take a photo with the youth; the volunteer should wear their gear, and the youth might also wear a firefighter helmet or sit on a fire truck. Establish a relationship with community firefighters at the photo shoot and brainstorm with them locations to place fliers or places to reach firefighters with a face-to-face presentation.*

# CSR Recipe #6: Newspaper Spotlight with *Citizens' Voice*

## Submitted by:

Becky Nallon, Children's Service Center

## Purpose:

This activity is both a recruitment and an awareness opportunity. Different youth are spotlighted each week in *Citizen's Voice*, a newspaper that reaches all of Luzerne County, in the hope of finding a forever family for them. By featuring a new youth each week, readers become more aware of our state's waiting youth and the need for adoptive families in Pennsylvania. Workers report they have received inquiries about the youth who are spotlighted as well as more general inquiries from readers about becoming adoptive and foster families.

This activity is especially good for youth who are reluctant to be featured in their own geographic area.

## Materials Needed:

The youth's narrative and their photo, in high-resolution JPEG format.

## Eligibility:

Youth who are on active status with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) and have information posted to [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org). For youth who are not yet legally free, the county's permission for newspaper publication is needed.

## Time Needed:

The worker may need up to an hour to organize the narrative and assure a JPEG format photo is available to electronically submit to the newspaper.

## Directions:

1. *Citizens' Voice* spotlights a waiting youth each week. The notice is free and typically runs in the Wednesday edition.
2. The worker identifies a PAE-registered youth or youth from their caseload. For youth who are not yet legally free, permission from the custody county must be obtained first.
3. The worker reviews the youth's narrative, assuring it is a current, accurate, and strength-based portrayal, and further develops the narrative as needed. The narrative should end with the worker's direct contact information. A standard SWAN line can be used: "For more information on [Youth's Name] or any other waiting youth, please contact the SWAN Helpline at 1.800.585.SWAN (7926)."
4. The worker reviews the youth's current photos and selects the professional one, as photo will appear in color and must be a high quality.
5. The worker contacts Richard Pais of Wilkes-Barre Racing ([richpais@aol.com](mailto:richpais@aol.com)), who will arrange for space in the newspaper.
6. Once Richard Pais confirms availability, the worker will submit the narrative and photo by email. Be sure the narrative ends with the worker's preferred contact information.

Richard Pais will confirm publication date with the worker once that is finalized. The worker can document the date of publication as part of their recruitment efforts and obtain a copy of the publication when it appears. The spotlight should also be shared with the youth and county caseworker.

# CSR Recipe #7: Wants and Needs in a Family Form

**Submitted by:**

Penny Stiles, Open Door International

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the *Wants and Needs in a Family* form is to find out what a youth wants in an adoptive family or permanent connection. The form also helps potential waiting families. The *Wants and Needs in a Family* form should be completed with the youth so they can highlight what is most important to them when choosing the best family.

**Materials Needed:**

1. Ample time to truly discuss and capture the youth's wishes on the *Wants and Needs in a Family* form.
2. *Wants and Needs in a Family* form (included on the next page).
3. Pen or pencil.
4. Extra paper.

**Eligibility:**

All youth with an active unit of Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) are eligible.

**Time Needed:**

Varies, and activity may be spread over multiple visits.

**Directions:**

Verify the youth's willingness and comfort level about searching for an adoptive family (a unit of Child Preparation is very helpful).

Support the youth and assure they are confident and comfortable with answering the questions. Never lead the youth into responding a certain way. This is a chance for them to be candid and open about what they are looking for and to explain their reasoning behind the "Wants and Needs."

Print a copy of the *Wants and Needs in a Family* form and schedule a time to meet with the youth to discuss it. Review and discuss the difference between needs, wants and doesn't want, and be prepared to discuss why they placed something in a particular category. Try to capture the explanation on the form. Have extra paper ready or a recorder to capture what the youth is saying.

Realize that as the youth ages and matures, their responses may change. Therefore this is a fluid document that can be revisited and revised at any point in the CSR process.

# WANTS AND NEEDS IN A FAMILY

| WHAT           | NEEDS<br>(PREFERS) | WANTS<br>(OK WITH) | DOESN'T WANT<br>(NOT OK AT ALL) | EXPLAIN |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| Parents        |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Race/Ethnicity |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Language       |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Children       |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Religion       |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Neighborhood   |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Pets           |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| School         |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Activities     |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| House          |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Bedroom        |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Food           |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Work schedule  |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Other:         |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Other:         |                    |                    |                                 |         |
| Other:         |                    |                    |                                 |         |

# CSR Recipe #8: Electronic Display

## Submitted by:

Diakon Child, Family and Community Ministries, Topton

## Purpose:

The purpose of the electronic display is to maximize a youth's exposure to potential waiting families. The electronic display should be created with the youth so they can showcase what is important to them while displaying photos of their choosing. You may run an existing TV segment or create your own with the youth. Historically, 40 percent of all youth who are featured in a television segment achieve permanency. Families who never may have considered adoption may see a youth and gain a broader view of them than from a flier alone.

The electronic display can be used at matching events in conjunction with display boards, fliers and other materials about the youth. The display can be viewed on a tablet or laptop computer set up at the event.

## Materials Needed:

1. The county of custody must approve use of child's image being displayed publically. This authorization will vary depending on county policy.
2. Review the handout *Tips for Social Workers* (Attachment 2), which helps prepare youth for public speaking.
3. Multiple copies of the final version to give to prospective families.

## Eligibility:

All youth with an active unit of Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) are eligible for an electronic display. County approval must be obtained for a youth to be displayed.

## Time Needed:

Varies based on the media used: PowerPoint, photos, tablet or TV recordings. Prep time generally takes one to two hours, and the display generally runs during the entire matching event, which can be from two to four hours.

## Directions:

1. Before Designing the Display  
Verify the youth's willingness and comfort level about being recorded or photographed for a public display. We recommend using the handout *Tips for Social Workers*. Ask the youth for suggested activities to do during the video and photo shoot.

If the youth has a goal of adoption, the caseworker should verify the youth or sibling group is registered and on active status with the appropriate PAE coordinator.

Review older photos of the youth and discuss the personal meaning behind some of them to help develop the story.

2. Designing the Display  
Make sure the youth looks their best. Try to pick appropriate clothing before the video or photo shoot. To capture different perspectives, personality traits, likes and dislikes, try to develop these over a series of days and during a series of events, if time permits.

Tip: Bring a personal care bag for the youth: e.g., deodorant, cologne, comb, mirror, moist wipes, hand sanitizer, bottle of water or drink (especially if the youth will be in an athletic venue), tissues,

lip balm, hand lotion, mouthwash or disposable toothbrush and a change of clothes, if applicable. If you are traveling for a video or photo shoot, allow ample time to arrive before the shoot and for youth to be comfortable in the environment. Use travel time to relieve anxieties and discuss the event with the youth.

3. Finalizing the Display

After the video or photo shoot, assure the selected photos meet with the youth's approval.

Create and edit the video, slide show or PowerPoint with the youth at the helm as much as possible. Transfer the information onto a tablet, USB drive or laptop that will be set up and transported to matching events, parties and adoption awareness events. Show the presentation in a continuous loop either individually or as a part of a group of youth for whom you are recruiting.

Offer to play a professional TV segment (*Wednesday's Child*, WHTM's *Val's Kids*, WBRE's *A Little Love*, KDKA's *Waiting Child*, *YourErie's Hearts Without Homes*) and have multiple copies on hand to share with interested families. See CSR Recipes #10 and #11 for more information about obtaining a TV segment.

# CSR Recipe #9: Allow Youth to Review Family Fliers

## Submitted by:

Matthew Steiner, Wesley Spectrum Services

## Purpose:

As professionals, the process of sharing family fliers can make the matching process more real and empower our youth to be more engaged. In addition, the process of sharing family fliers can neutralize some of the power differential between waiting families and waiting youth by increasing the youth's control of the matching process. Waiting youth know we make fliers about them, so when they realize that waiting families also have fliers, then this becomes an opportunity for the youth to have one shared experience with a waiting family.

Depending on a youth's development and level of (or readiness for) engagement in the Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) process, you can share fliers of "waiting families" from matching events with the youth. This activity can be approached several different ways. You can bring a large stack of fliers that are not sorted, or you can pre-sort the fliers for a more focused and controlled activity. Having too many fliers can be overwhelming for some youth, while having a small amount of fliers might be very discouraging for others. Ask for feedback from the youth and his or her team to determine whether you should try this activity and determine how to go about delivering it.

## Materials Needed:

Family fliers, various colored highlighters, scissors, blank paper and tape or glue.

## Eligibility:

All youth with an active unit of CSR are eligible for this activity.

## Time Needed:

Varies, depending on the number of fliers and the youth's readiness.

## Directions:

1. Obtain permission from the youth and give them a head's up before bringing the fliers to your session.
2. Get materials ready beforehand and become familiar with the fliers.
3. Choose one flier to review with the youth first. This lets you explain how the fliers are formatted, why certain information is or is not on the fliers, etc. Some youth may need more assistance throughout the process of exploring the fliers than other youth.
4. Explain the purpose of this activity. You can say that it is to make the process "more real" for them and to get them more involved. You may also explain it will give them a better idea of what types of families are considering adoption.
5. Encourage the youth to highlight what they do and do not like in the fliers. Ask them to sort the fliers into different piles (e.g., yes, no, maybe). Allow the youth to cut out photos of families from the fliers that represent how they envision their potential pre-adoptive family. With some cutting and pasting, the youth could even create their own flier of an ideal adoptive family with bits and pieces from various fliers.

**Sorted/Controlled Version:** You can sort fliers by location or by whether or not they appear close to a potential match for your youth.

# CSR Recipe #10: OCYF-Sponsored Waiting Child Segments

## Purpose:

OCYF's 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 youth who are featured in a television segment achieve permanency. Families who never may have considered adoption may see a youth they may want to adopt.

There was a case with a 16-year-old who entered care at age three in Philadelphia. His Val's Kids taping was viewed by a family in central Pennsylvania who had never considered adoption. However, once they saw the taping, they pursued and adopted — their connection, "he looked like he belonged in their family." He is now a successful young man, married and raising children of his own.

Youth can be recorded once per year. We recommend every youth be recorded for a television segment.

## Materials Needed:

County of custody must sign the *SWAN Authorization for Filming, Photographing, and Release of Materials for Youth Specific Recruitment* form (Attachment 3). The person authorized to sign the release may vary depending on county policy.

Review the *Tips for Social Workers* (Attachment 2) handout, which helps prepare youth for public speaking.

## Eligibility or Age Range:

Youth who are on active status with Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) and have information posted to [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org).

## Time Needed:

Varies based on the shoot location and the youth's preferences. The actual recording typically takes an hour. Allow for travel time to and from the location.

## Directions:

### 1. Before the Shoot

Verify youth's willingness and level of comfort with being recorded for public speaking. We recommend using *Tips for Social Workers* (Attachment 5). Ask the youth for suggested activities to do during the shoot. The caseworker also may be interviewed — please be prepared to be on video as well. (e.g., When Valerie Pritchett asks: "What do you like about this youth?")

Contact a PAE coordinator to schedule the shoot:

- Central PA – *Val's Kids* (WHTM): Robert Brockman, at 724.954.5048 or [rbrockman@diakon-swan.org](mailto:rbrockman@diakon-swan.org).
- Northeast PA – *A Little Love* (WBRE) Rachel Paashaus at 888-793-2512 ext 7292 or [rpaashaus@diakon-swan.org](mailto:rpaashaus@diakon-swan.org).
- Western PA – *Waiting Child* (KDKA) Jon Douglas at 800.227.0225 ext. 5352 or [jdouglas@diakon-swan.org](mailto:jdouglas@diakon-swan.org).

The caseworker verifies with the appropriate PAE coordinator that youth or sibling group is PAE-registered and on active status.

The caseworker should provide some information about the youth such as what he or she enjoys doing, and identify if they require any special accommodations. Youth who are not yet free for adoption must use an alias.

Provide some possible dates for the shoot. The PAE coordinator will confirm the dates and venue with the television station. All details will be forwarded in an email to the worker.

2. Day of the Shoot

Make sure the youth looks their best. Try to pick appropriate clothing with the youth before the event.

Bring a personal care bag for the youth: e.g., deodorant, cologne, comb, mirror, moist wipes, hand sanitizer, bottle of water or drink (especially if the youth will be in an athletic venue), tissues, lip balm, hand lotion, mouthwash or disposable toothbrush and a change of clothes, if applicable.

Allow ample travel time to arrive before the shoot and for youth to be comfortable in the environment. Use travel time to relieve anxieties and discuss the event with the youth.

3. During the Shoot

A PAE coordinator or SWAN representative will be present during the shoot. The caseworker should be prepared to speak and answer questions about the youth. Support the youth and assure they remain confident and comfortable. We suggest the caseworker be prepared to take photos to document and capture the experience for the youth.

4. After the Shoot

During the ride home, debrief the youth. Inform the current caregivers about the day.

The time it takes to air the segment varies, however, the caseworker will be notified of the date and time of broadcast. A link on the television website allows you to view the segments. Links will be included on the youth's narrative page at [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org) after they are aired.

The caseworker will receive a DVD of the segment.

Viewers are directed to call the SWAN Helpline at 800.585.SWAN (7926) to get additional information. The Helpline provides information about the youth and the caseworker's contact information to families approved to adopt.

It is very important to notify the PAE coordinator if the youth is no longer available. This will prevent a rebroadcast of the segment.

# CSR Recipe #11: YourErie.com's *Hearts without Homes* Television Segment

## Submitted by:

Family Services of Northwest Pennsylvania

## Purpose:

This is a recorded video segment that is broadcast and then archived on the television station's website that features a waiting youth, maximizing their exposure to waiting families. Historically, 40 percent of all youth who are featured in a television segment achieve permanency. Families who never may have considered adoption may see a youth they may want to adopt. These video segments are shown on both WJET and WFXP in the Erie, Pennsylvania, region, but also extend into the Eastern Ohio and Southern New York state regions.

## Materials Needed:

The *Hearts without Homes* referral form. The referral lists the youth's interests and helps identify a youth's interests.

After the segment is featured, a link will be available on the YourErie.com website where the youth's segment can be seen. *Hearts without Homes* has proven to help expand recruitment efforts for waiting youth.

## Eligibility or Age Range:

Youth who are on active status with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) and have information posted to [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org).

## Time Needed:

The time needed for a *Hearts without Homes* shoot can vary depending on the activity chosen to feature the youth. Shoots generally take one to two hours, but sometimes more time is needed for more involved activities.

## Directions:

1. If you don't have a copy of the referral form, contact Meredith Rodenbaugh at Family Services at 814.866.4597 or by email at [mrodenbaugh@fsnwpa.org](mailto:mrodenbaugh@fsnwpa.org) or your PAE coordinator.
2. Complete the form, concentrating on the youth's interests and by thinking outside the box. Many kids will say they love video games, fishing and sports but if you can add favorite teams, what they want to be when they grow up, or other talents, the segment will be extra special. A youth is going to shine when they talk about what really interests them, and their segment gives them a special experience doing something they love!
3. Have the county caseworker sign the referral document. A custody order must be attached to the referral.
4. Send the referral to Meredith Rodenbaugh: by fax 814.864.2677; by mail to 5100 Peach Street, Erie, PA 16509; or by email [mrodenbaugh@fsnwpa.org](mailto:mrodenbaugh@fsnwpa.org).
5. A Family Services adoption worker will be in touch to let you know the referral was received and to give you an approximate time when the segment will be recorded. The worker will also go over the youth's interests and discuss different venues for the shoot.
6. Once the shoot approaches, the Family Services worker will call and finalize dates, times and locations.
7. Be sure to check with the youth and their caregivers to assure the youth has a fresh hairstyle and a nice outfit to wear.

8. Once the shoot day arrives, bring the youth to the arranged location and bring your camera: kids love having pictures of their special day and they make great additions to lifebooks. During the shoot, find out the proposed airing date and make sure someone will be in touch once it airs.

# CSR Recipe #12: Matching Moments

## **Purpose:**

The purpose of the Matching Moment is to maximize opportunities for a youth, their profile and/or their narrative to be seen. Matching Moments fulfill one of the requirements of the Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) benchmarks.

Matching Moments occur at SWAN/IL quarterly meetings, statewide meetings and affiliate matching events. The audience for most Matching Moments is primarily professionals in the SWAN network. Matching Moments are also a great way to get to know your youth and share their qualities. Youth have the opportunity to present themselves in a positive light. Many youth who have participated in Matching Moments continue with future matching opportunities that feature public speaking.

## **Materials Needed:**

Review the document *Tips for Social Workers* (Attachment 2), which helps prepare youth for public speaking. This document provides talking points for public speaking and should be reviewed in advance.

## **Eligibility or Age Range:**

Legally free youth registered on active status with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) and posted to the [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org) website are eligible for a Matching Moment. County approval must be obtained. The youth must either attend the matching event or an identifying photo must be displayed.

## **Time Needed:**

Presentations should be developed with the youth. Preparation can take from one to three hours, depending on the style of presentation chosen. Your PAE coordinator will be happy to assist and advise. Presentations have a specific amount of time and should include the youth's PAE number and contact information for the recruiter.

Allow adequate travel time to and from the event if you are bringing a youth.

## **Directions:**

1. Before the Matching Moment:

If a youth will attend and conduct their own presentation, verify their willingness and comfort level with public speaking. Be prepared for last-minute jitters and have an alternative presentation in place. **KNOW YOUR YOUTH!!!**

If you are presenting in the youth's absence, **a photo is required**. We highly recommend a PowerPoint, video or similar format to engage the audience, which is key to their remembering the youth. Relate personal anecdotes as well as basic information. Remember, empower the youth to create his or her own presentation! Focus on their strengths and what makes him or her unique. Determine who will accompany the youth to the event, and if it is not the original worker, write a note of encouragement for the youth to read before presenting. PAE coordinators will confirm date and time if the event is a SWAN/IL quarterly or other statewide sponsored event. Details will be forwarded in an email to the worker.

2. Day of the Matching Moment:

If a youth is presenting their own material, make sure they look their best! Try to pick appropriate clothing with the youth before the event. Bring a personal care kit for the youth: e.g., deodorant, cologne, comb, mirror, moist wipes, hand sanitizer, bottle of water or drink, tissues, lip balm, hand lotion, mouthwash or disposable toothbrush and a change of clothes, if applicable. Allow ample travel time before the matching moment and for the youth to be comfortable in the environment.

Use travel time to relieve anxieties and discuss the event with the youth. Check in with your PAE coordinator to confirm details at state sponsored events.

3. During the Matching Moment:  
Sit close to the front of the room. A PAE coordinator will introduce the matching moment at SWAN/IL-sponsored events.

Both the caseworker and the youth should be prepared to speak. If it's an in-person presentation, support the youth and assure he or she remains confident and comfortable. If you are presenting in the youth's absence, be familiar with the information.

4. After the Matching Moment:  
During the ride home, acknowledge the strengths of the presentation and debrief the youth. Always give encouragement for the effort put forth, even if they just showed up: This is difficult for professionals, let alone youth! Thank you notes and small gift cards are always a nice touch for a youth who presented.

Inform the current caregivers about how the day went before leaving the youth.

# CSR Recipe #13: Newsletter-Featured Youth Article

## **Purpose:**

Articles are written for various newsletters across the state, including SWAN/IL *Network News* and Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA). Publications occur two to three times per year.

An article should engage readers with a fresh perspective of the youth, so their matching opportunities are maximized. As with the narrative, youth should be involved in writing the article. If not written in first person, quotes from the youth should be included. The more the youth are involved, the more empowered they become. Articles can be a part of the Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) plan and are referenced in the CSR benchmarks.

Please note: The audience for these newsletters is typically professionals within the network and foster adoptive families, but they are also available to the public.

Articles are a great way for others to get to know more about your youth and their qualities. It also gives your youth an opportunity to present themselves in a positive light. We encourage you to share a copy of the newsletter with the featured youth.

## **Materials Needed:**

County permission for the article and photograph. Articles must include, but are not limited to, the youth's current narrative, PAE number, and recruiter information, which are published at [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org). A current high quality photo of the youth is required in jpeg format.

## **Eligibility:**

Youth who are on active status with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) and have information posted to [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org).

## **Time Needed:**

Time to prepare articles varies according to the amount of information provided; they are not limited in length, but they are subject to editing.

Gather information from a variety of sources such as the youth's existing flier or narrative. Please make sure that information is current. We encourage you to add new information to the narrative.

Your PAE coordinator will be happy to assist and advise. Articles need to be emailed to the appropriate coordinator.

## **Directions:**

1. Review activity with the county and the youth as a recruitment strategy.
2. Contact your PAE coordinator to request a spot in one of the newsletters.
3. Obtain current JPEG photos.
4. Construct a strength-based article that includes quotes from youth or is written in first person.
5. Develop a creative approach to sharing your youth's information (e.g., focus on a recent achievement or highlight something current in youth's life).
6. The PAE coordinator can share some suggestions and ideas for articles.
7. The PAE coordinator will confirm the date of the publication featuring the article.

# CSR Recipe #14: Thinking Outside the Box with Recruitment Videos

**Submitted by:**

Robin Kline, Crawford County CYS and Sherri Crawl, Child to Family Connections

**Purpose:**

Use community resources to create a more interesting and creative video that can be used for recruitment efforts. For example, we worked with a local college and used students with access to equipment and ideas that helped them learn their craft while also producing a unique recruitment video. The activity can be beneficial for youth with disabilities, highlighting their abilities rather than any deficits.

**Materials Needed:**

Cooperation of all appropriate team members, signed consents, technical skills and patience!

**Eligibility:**

All youth with an active unit of Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) are eligible for this activity.

**Time Needed:**

Varies, but overall process may take many weeks or even months to capture the youth's personality.

**Directions:**

1. Consult with the youth's treatment team (placement facility, resource family, nurse, therapist, psychiatrist, court appointed special advocate (CASA) or guardian ad litem, CSR worker) to assure their support for your idea.
2. Think through confidentiality; people in the community will be working with you and the youth on this project. Children and Youth Services (CYS) should advise about any forms that will be needed.
3. Think about resources in your community: For example, contact a local college photography or graphic arts department chair.
4. Work with the identified resource about expectations: use of first name only (or alias, if one exists) and specific information you do want included, such as the youth's Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) number, date of birth, recruiter contact info, etc.
5. Involve the youth as much as possible in the video: What kind of music, colors and effects might be used? How will the finished video keep viewers' attention and draw interest towards the youth?
6. Schedule multiple filming sessions, doing a variety of tasks that illustrate the strengths and personality of the youth. Try to include scenes in different settings.
7. Be prepared for a fairly long editing process: Viewing the raw footage, picking out start and stop points, ordering the clips, the music, the volume — all need to be balanced. Fight the urge to include too much; it's better to keep it shorter but more interesting than too long.
8. Work with the PAE coordinator to get the video shared, noting where and when it will air.
9. Ensure the link is posted to appropriate websites (adoptpakids, AdoptUSKids).

Be prepared for requests from other youth who will want the same thing!

# CSR Recipe #15: Picture ME

## Submitted by:

Amanda Deisroth, Catholic Social Services

## Purpose:

Picture ME is an opportunity for youth to gain a new view of themselves. Selected images can highlight their favorite celebrities, athletes, musicians or activities by putting their own face in the action! This activity goes far beyond the idea of a “selfie.”

Completed fun photos can be used throughout recruitment. Photos can help families visualize a youth’s interests in a different light. Photos can also be used in a youth’s Lifebook or simply as special memories.

Workers should always use professional discretion and encourage youth to make appropriate decisions when selecting photo backgrounds.

## Materials Needed:

Digital camera, computer or tablet and access to free creative internet websites such as [www.faceinhole.com](http://www.faceinhole.com), [www.facetinks.com](http://www.facetinks.com), [www.funphotobox.com](http://www.funphotobox.com), [www.newspaperme.com](http://www.newspaperme.com), [www.befunky.com](http://www.befunky.com) and [www.photofunia.com](http://www.photofunia.com).

## Eligibility or Age Range:

All youth with an active unit of Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) are eligible for this activity.

## Time Needed:

Worker should take time to prepare the youth and get ideas from them. Worker may need up to an hour to prepare for the actual activity and time to recap once the activity is completed.

## Directions:

1. To prepare, the worker gathers all needed supplies and schedules time with the youth in an environment or setting that is comfortable for them.
2. Day of the activity, explain that photos gathered will be used in several ways: in lifebooks, shared with interested families during recruitment and other ways they choose.
3. The activity begins with the worker asking about a youth’s favorite things. These things can include favorite activities, interests, cartoons, movie characters, musicians, etc.
4. The worker takes a variety of photos of the youth — including the youth smiling, being silly, making faces, etc. Preview the captured photos with the youth, who should agree which photos will be used.
5. Once photos are selected, the worker and youth can visit websites such as [www.faceinhole.com](http://www.faceinhole.com) to select silly “face in a hole” youth-friendly backgrounds. The websites used will be determined by the favorites reported earlier in the session. Youth can select a few photos to be inserted into the templates available at the websites. They can then be saved on the worker’s computer or tablet for later printing and use.
6. Take some time to recap this fun activity with the youth. Ask them what he or she liked about the project. Let them know they will get printed copies during next visit.
7. Create fliers with photos or photo collages for recruitment purposes.

# CSR Recipe #16: Airplane Activity

**Submitted by:**

Abi Aswegen, The Bair Foundation

**Purpose:**

This activity gives the youth a voice, honors their past and helps the youth make connections. It also helps identify supports and people important in the youth's life. Note that this activity, or a similar one, may have been done in a Child Preparation unit. It is best practice to consult with the worker providing that service.

**Materials Needed:**

The airplane seating diagram, below.

**Eligibility or Age Range:**

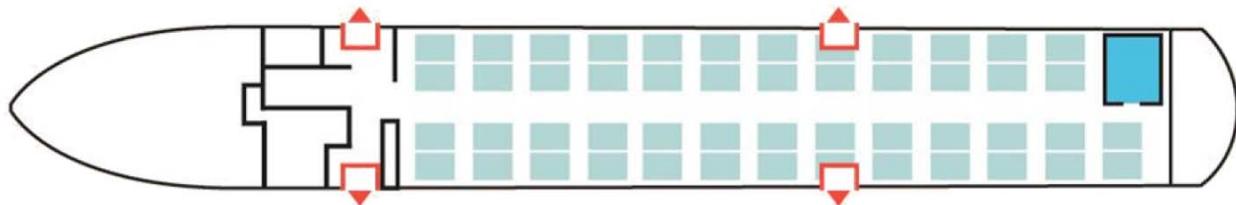
All youth with an active unit of Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) are eligible for this activity. Age range should be developmental age of eight years old and up.

**Time Needed:**

Varies.

**Directions:**

1. Tell the youth they are able to travel to a remote island with only one airplane full of people (50 passengers, in this literal interpretation); however, they will be stranded there for the rest of their lives with only these people.
2. Ask them to consider the airplane seating diagram below and ask them to write the names of people who they would take with them to the deserted island. Encourage them to share details regarding why they picked each person.



# CSR Recipe #17: Game of Life

**Submitted by:**

Abi Aswegen, The Bair Foundation

**Purpose:**

This activity gives the youth a voice, makes connections and looks to the future. It also helps identify supports and people important in the youth's life and can be done early on in sessions and visits. Note that this activity, or a similar one, may have been done in a Child Preparation unit. It is best practice to consult with the worker providing that service.

**Materials Needed:**

The board game *Game of Life* and paper for notes.

**Eligibility or Age Range:**

All youth with an active unit of Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) are eligible for this activity. Age range should be developmental age of eight years old and up.

**Time Needed:**

Varies.

**Directions:**

1. Bring the *Game of Life* to the session and begin playing it with the youth.
2. As you play, talk to the youth about what they would like their life to look like. When each player has to decide if they are going to college or beginning to work, ask questions about the youth's long term goals about college or professional careers (this could be helpful when creating a flier for matching events).
3. When each player "gets married," ask questions about the kind of parent(s) they would feel most comfortable with and what their hopes are for a family in the future. Specifically, ask the youth a series of questions about their preferences in parents, including race, marital status, sexual orientation, religious preference, etc.
4. When each player in the game buys a house, ask the youth their preferences about where they would like to live (a city or the country, in an apartment or condo, in a house, etc.).
5. When each player begins having or adopting children, ask how many children they would prefer in their potential permanent placement. Be sure to ask not only about the number of other children in the home, but the ages (older or younger than the youth you are meeting with), race, adopted or biological, etc.
6. As the youth acquires "Life" tokens, ask them to create a "bucket list" of experiences they want to have in their lives. Are there specific places they want to travel, for example, or accomplishments they want to achieve? Again, this information would be helpful when creating a flier for matching events.
7. Towards the end of the game, begin asking questions about who they want to still be in contact with later on in their lives. Ask about the relationships they feel are significant and could be lifelong. Encourage them to talk about people from their past they would like to reconnect with or those currently in their lives they hope to still be in contact with (friends, family members, foster families, etc.). This may help you discover new resources to contact. This is a very nonthreatening approach to a lot of questions about Child Specific Recruitment that can be a lot of fun, and help youth open up more about their hopes for the future and the connections that are important to them.

# CSR Recipe #18: Future Graduation Invitations

**Submitted by:**

Abi Aswegen, The Bair Foundation

**Purpose:**

This activity gives the youth a voice, makes connections and looks to the future. It also helps identify supports and people important in the youth's life and can be done early on in sessions and visits. Note that this activity, or a similar one, may have been done in a Child Preparation unit. It is best practice to consult with the worker providing that service.

**Materials Needed:**

The invitation list, next page.

**Eligibility or Age Range:**

All youth with an active unit of Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) are eligible for this activity.

**Time Needed:**

Varies.

**Directions:**

1. To help your youth identify additional positive supports from their past and present and encourage them to plan their ideal graduation party, find cute "Class of \_\_\_\_" clipart for the page. Then use the invitation list on the next page to help them think about people they want to invite: peers, family members, community members, people from school, etc. This may help trigger thoughts about additional people they've forgotten to mention before.
2. Include these pages in the Discovery Book or lifebook.



# CSR Recipe #19: Jenga Support Tower

**Submitted by:**

Abi Aswegen, The Bair Foundation

**Purpose:**

This activity gives youth a voice and helps makes connections. It also helps identify supports and people important in the youth's life and can be done early on in sessions and visits. Note that this activity, or a similar one, may have been done in a Child Preparation unit. It is best practice to consult with the worker providing that service.

**Materials Needed:**

A set of Jenga blocks.

**Eligibility or Age Range:**

All youth with an active unit of Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) are eligible for this activity.

**Time Needed:**

Varies.

**Directions:**

1. Bring a set of Jenga blocks with you to the session and build the tower.
2. Tell the child that each block represents a supportive person or connection in life. When a person has lots of positive supportive connections it is like the initial Jenga tower. It is fairly stable. Things can happen to the tower (a fan can be turned on, someone can bump the table it is sitting on, etc.), but it won't tip over. Likewise, when a person has a large support system, they can withstand problems and crises that arise fairly well. They are more likely to be stable.
3. However, as you begin playing the game of Jenga, holes begin appearing in the tower and it is much more likely to fall over when the slightest thing changes (for example, if it is bumped or a fan is turned on). Likewise, if someone moves to a new community or is placed in foster care and does not know how to contact their family members, they are much more likely to struggle to survive the challenges that life throws at them. (This can be a very helpful visual for children to understand the importance of having supportive resources in their lives; particularly for teenagers resistant to services.) Use this as a way to address the grief and loss the child feels at being so isolated from the people they would consider supportive contacts and how vulnerable it can make someone feel when they have no one to call or rely on.
4. Continue to play Jenga, and every time the child removes a block from the tower, ask them to identify one person (past or present) who was a positive support or connection for them, who was there for them when they needed someone most, who helped them feel less like they were falling apart, etc. Take notes of any new names that come up in this conversation, and ask questions about new resources they identify (such as, "Do you know what city they live in?" or "Is there someone in your family who may know how to contact this person?").

## CY 130 Critical (\*) and Important (☆) Characteristics

### HEALTH

- 1 Does child have significant health issues?
- 2 Does child have allergies or asthma? (may require treatment)
- ☆ 3 Is child hyperactive? (may require treatment)
- 4 Does child have speech problems? (may require treatment)
- 5 Does child have hearing problems? (may require treatment)
- 6 Is child legally deaf?
- 7 Does child have vision problems? (may require treatment)
- ☆ 8 Is child legally blind?
- ☆ 9 Does child have dental problems? (may require treatment)
- 10 Does child have orthopedic problems? (special shoes, braces, etc.)
- 11 Does child have seizures?
- 12 Does child have other health concerns?

### EDUCATION

- 13 Is child a high achiever in school?
- 14 Does child achieve at grade level in regular classes?
- 15 Does child achieve below grade level in regular classes?
- 16 Is child in special education classes?
- 17 Does child have a learning disability?
- 18 Does child need classes for the emotionally or behaviorally handicapped?
- 19 Does child need tutoring in one or more subjects?
- ☆ 20 Does child have serious behavior problems in school?

### CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIORS

- 21 Is child generally quiet and shy?
- 22 Is child generally outgoing and noisy?
- 23 Does child have emotional issues that require therapy?
- 24 Does child tend to reject father figures?
- 25 Does child tend to reject mother figures?
- 26 Does child have difficulty relating to others and relating to other children?
- 27 Does child frequently wet the bed?
- 28 Does child frequently soil him/herself?
- \* 29 Does child masturbate frequently or openly?
- 30 Does child have poor social skills?
- ☆ 31 Does child have problem with lying?
- ☆ 32 Does child have problem with stealing?
- ☆ 33 Does child frequently start physical fights with other children?
- \* 34 Does child abuse animals?
- 35 Is child destructive with clothing, toys, etc.?
- ☆ 36 Does child use foul or bad language?
- 37 Does child have frequent temper tantrums?
- 38 Does child have difficulty accepting and obeying rules?
- \* 39 Does child exhibit inappropriate sexual behavior?
- \* 40 Does child have a history of running away?
- \* 41 Does child have history of playing with matches, setting fires?

**CONNECTIONS AND HISTORY**

- ☆ 42 Does child have strong ties to birth family?
- 43 Does child have strong ties to foster family?
- 44 Is continued contact with siblings desirable?
- 45 Does child have a previous adoption disruption?
- ☆ 46 Was child sexually abused?
- 47 Was child physically abused?
- ☆ 48 Was child exposed to promiscuous sexual behavior?
- 49 Was child conceived by rape?
- 50 Was child conceived as a result of prostitution?
- 51 Are one or both parents addicted to alcohol?
- 52 Are one or both parents dependent on substances other than alcohol?
- 53 Do one or both parents have a criminal record?
- 54 Are one or both parents intellectually disabled?
- ☆ 55 Do one or both parents have a mental illness?
- 56 Does the agency lack information about one or both parents?

**CONTACT WITH BIRTH FAMILY**

- 57 Is child in contact with birth parents?
- 58 Is child in contact with siblings?
- ☆ 59 Is child in contact with extended birth family?
- 60 Is child in contact with former foster family?

## **TIPS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS: PREPARING CHILDREN FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING**

A youth's voice is the most important and powerful recruitment tool

### **CASEWORKER PREPARATION**

Consider this about your role:

1. Do you believe all children deserve a family?
2. Do you believe all children can find a family?
3. Do you believe all approved adoptive families are prepared to accept older children?
4. Do you believe a particular child will be difficult to place?

Whether you are new to recruiting families for children or a seasoned veteran, you should assess your own feelings about finding permanent families for children. Be honest with yourself about what you think and believe. Your attitudes and beliefs are conveyed in subtle ways to a system-savvy youth.

1. Good adoption casework requires you to be strength-based. Case records contain all of a child's deficits. Family recruitment for older children requires that you know the deficits but also see the strengths. Communicate with other important people in a youth's life, such as caseworkers, caregivers, therapists, etc. This will give you better insight into their current circumstances and help you to engage the youth.
  - a. Reframe the deficits and make it your goal to see the real child.
  - b. Children are products of their environment, and a new environment can result in you seeing the real child.
  - c. Most adoptive parents know our kids have challenges and see that as a part of the package.
  - d. When reading a child profile, ask yourself what is missing. What are you not seeing that will better offer a strength-based picture of this child?
  - e. We apply labels to children, and they help explain the challenges a child faces. Remember that anyone's goal in life is to overcome negative labels. Michael Jordan was labeled in high school as a bad basketball player, but he overcame that label. Our children have that potential, too. Sometimes the label has a "strength" counterpart.
  - f. Finding a child's first strength will lead you to other strengths.
  - g. Know that you will be challenged at times and that this is expected.

### **SELECTING THE YOUTH**

1. Not every youth is an appropriate choice to speak publicly or attend a matching event. No one should be forced to attend. You and your agency must decide who should attend based on their personality and needs.
2. For each youth you consider, ask these questions:
  - a. Is the youth ready for a family?
  - b. Do they understand adoption?
  - c. Have they been through the adoption process?
  - d. Does the youth understand the word family?
  - e. Do they want to belong to a family?
3. Assess each youth and discuss the idea with them to help you determine if they are interested and comfortable with participating.
4. Some youth are enthusiastic about attending. Others feel too vulnerable and don't want to face what they may interpret as rejection if no one seems interested in them. Others have attended matching events in the past and are reluctant to try again.
5. If one tells you: "I don't want to attend," talk with them about those feelings.

- a. Why are they reluctant?
  - b. Is this their first matching event?
  - c. Would more discussion about what will happen make the youth more comfortable?
6. Sometimes, letting a youth know this is a chance to meet other youth who are also waiting to be adopted may encourage participation.
  7. Describe the event to the youth and explain what they should expect. You never know what a youth might imagine about the event.

## **YOUTH PREPARATION**

1. Make sure all who attend have a good time and meet other youth, as well as prospective adoptive families. Let them know exactly what to expect.
2. Be honest. Answer any questions to the best of your ability. Find the answers to the questions you can't immediately respond to. Explain to them that this is one of the many ways you are trying to find a family for them. Reinforce the idea that adoption is a process, and it does not happen that day. The event is an opportunity for everyone to learn more about them and about adoption.
3. Listen to their concerns. Use reflective listening to respond to their concerns, fears, anxieties and general questions. Let them know you will be there throughout the event to offer support and assistance.
4. Talk to the youth about the room setup, who will be there and the different roles of those who will attend. Show a video or pictures of where the event will take place. All of these activities will help prepare the youth and reduce anxiety of the unknown.
5. Roleplay the event. Explain the side benefits of attending, such as becoming more comfortable with public speaking or helping other children find a family.
6. Discuss what they plan to wear. Encourage them to get a good night's rest, ready their clothing ahead of time and eat a healthy meal before the event.
7. Assess the level of support the child's current caregiver can provide. Can they support the child's decision to attend and reduce their anxiety? Share information about the event with the caretaker and request they support the child's participation.
8. Also ask for the caregiver's support before the event. Suggest they take the youth for a haircut or style, encourage a good night's rest, prepare or select a healthy meal before the event, help them choose clothing that reflects the child's personal style and confidence. Listen to the youth's excitement or fears about the event.
9. An adoption event is a good opportunity to enhance your own relationship with the youth. Explore some of the feelings they have about being adopted. Spend time before and after the event discussing the experience with them.
10. Offer realistic expectations. Youth need to understand that matches don't happen instantaneously. Explain the adoption process and time lines:
  - a. How families become approved,
  - b. How communication occurs between child and family caseworkers, and
  - c. How a family is selected.
11. Listed below are some suggested topics of discussion. Encourage the youth to pick several to discuss, either through a presentation, question and answer or interview format:
  - a. What games do you like to play?
  - b. What are your favorite toys, video games, movies, books, television shows or music?
  - c. What is your favorite thing to do outdoors?
  - d. What job would you like to have as an adult?
  - e. What is your best subject in school? Least favorite subject? What do you like and dislike about it?
  - f. Who is your favorite teacher? Why?
  - g. What do you like to eat?
  - h. What chores do you help with around the house?

- i. What accomplishments are you most proud of?
  - j. What are your talents or skills?
  - k. What sports do you enjoy playing or watching?
  - l. What activities do you participate in at school or where you live (choirs, plays, clubs, Scouts, etc.)?
  - m. What do you do when you are with your friends?
  - n. If you could have one wish, what would that be?
  - o. What would a person learn about you by looking at your room?
  - p. What do you do during breaks from school?
  - q. What holidays do you like to celebrate? What do you do?
  - r. What school trips or vacations have you gone on and especially enjoyed?
  - s. If you could visit any place on Earth, where would you go? Why?
  - t. What does adoption mean to you?
  - u. Why would you like to be adopted?
  - v. What do you want your adoptive family to be like?
12. Offer several options to the youth about the day. Would they like to present themselves independently? With you? In a question and answer format? Do they want to be present while you talk about them? Be sure to encourage them to clarify anything you do not get exactly right.
  13. Prepare a script and practice the presentation with the youth. Try not to rely on a PowerPoint presentation but rather on the youth's interests. Maybe they could demonstrate a special talent like martial arts, or dress up and act out what they want to be when they grow up, like a news anchor. Be creative!

#### **AT THE EVENT**

1. Arrive early to give the youth time to adjust to the location.
2. Walk with them around the room or facility and explain who is present and what their roles are at the event.
3. You should have visual contact with the youth at all times throughout the event because you are their lifeline.

#### **MEETING THE FAMILIES**

1. Make the most of the event. Families will want to learn more about the youth.
2. Families will be interested in where the youth is living and how they are doing in school.
3. This is your chance to meet interested families and talk with them about the children who attend, as well as others on your caseload.

#### **AFTER THE EVENT**

1. You can make a big difference in how the youth experiences and reacts to an adoption event. The experience does not end when it is over. Processing feelings will go a long way toward making them comfortable and minimizing their anxiety. Remember they feel vulnerable and took a risk just by attending.
2. Encourage them to talk about their experiences at the event. Let them tell you what they liked and disliked. Understand that quiet time may be necessary to absorb and reflect on what took place. When it feels appropriate ask them easy questions:
  - a. Did you meet any other youth?
  - b. How was this experience for you?
  - c. Which activities did you like best?
 Or consider asking them scaling questions, such as:
  - a. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much fun was this; how scary was this; how was the food; how do you think you did?

Your role is to *listen* and let youth direct the discussion. If the event was troubling for them, what you learn from this discussion should be conveyed to the caregiver.

3. When you are asked if any family was interested, reiterate it is unlikely adoption will result immediately. Families often take time to talk about their wish to adopt and the youth they have met. You can also share that several families expressed interest, but it is a process before an adoptive family can be selected.
4. If appropriate, encourage the youth to talk about the experience with the foster parents, therapist, foster siblings and anyone else they feel close to. Processing it with other people often relieves tension or anxiety.
5. Make them more comfortable by sharing news about the event with the foster parents, residential treatment worker or group home worker and therapist. Tell them how the youth reacted and responded to you when the event was over. Tell them how the day went. Regardless of how the youth reacted to the event, help the caretaker understand how this experience could impact them—both positively or negatively—for several weeks to come.
6. When events are planned sensitively and children are well prepared and talk with their social workers afterward, they typically enjoy the experience. Particularly with older children, participation in their own recruitment efforts gives them a sense of mastery over their future. As one enthusiastic social worker said, “In a perfect world, we would not need adoption parties.” The reality is that nearly 130,000 children around the country are yearning for permanent families. Attending these events increases their chances dramatically.

**AUTHORIZATION FOR FILMING, PHOTOGRAPHING, AND  
RELEASE OF MATERIALS FOR CHILD SPECIFIC RECRUITMENT**

**STATEWIDE ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY NETWORK  
VAL'S KIDS  
KDKA's *WAITING CHILD* SEGMENT  
*A LITTLE LOVE SPONSORSHIP***

I/We, \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

hereby grant authorization to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), Harmelin Media, WHTM/Channel 27 News, WBRE/Channel 28 News and/or KDKA/Channel 2 News to film and photograph

\_\_\_\_\_, who is a minor in the custody of

\_\_\_\_\_ for the sole purpose of Child Specific

Recruitment and/or raising adoption awareness in the Commonwealth.

This authorization will be used to grant permission to DHS, Harmelin Media, WHTM/Channel 27 News, WBRE/Channel 28 News and/or KDKA/Channel 2 News to use and distribute the film and photographs to appropriate individuals and agencies identified as serving children who are waiting for permanency. No other use is intended, nor authorized.

I/We hereby acknowledge that we understand the terms of this authorization and consent to the release of the confidential information and materials as described above.

NAME: (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

(Date)