

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

Department of Human Services

OCYF Personnel Updates

New Deputy Secretary, Office of Children, Youth and Families:

We are pleased to announce that **Laval Miller-Wilson** (he/him) joined the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) on Monday, March 13, 2023, as the Deputy Secretary for the Office of Children Youth and Families (OCYF). Mr. Miller-Wilson, an attorney, is deeply committed and passionate about ensuring that vulnerable populations get the care they need and deserve.

Mr. Miller-Wilson has been the Executive Director of the [Pennsylvania Health Law Project](#) (PHLP) since 2009, a non-profit that protects and advances healthcare rights through free legal services, community education, and systems advocacy.

Prior to joining PHLP, Mr. Miller-Wilson worked for 14 years at [Juvenile Law Center](#) (JLC) representing children in the child welfare, juvenile and criminal justice systems. He was also the lead author of a [2003 assessment](#) of children's access to counsel and the quality of representation they receive in Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system that required surveying and visiting juvenile courts across the Commonwealth.

We are excited to have Mr. Miller-Wilson leading our team working towards OCYF's mission to support the provision of quality services and best practices designed to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of Pennsylvania's children, youth and families.

Gerry Lynn Butler joined OCYF's Division of Policy as a Human Services Analyst Supervisor in March 2023. Gerry Lynn previously worked for the Bureau of Children and Family Services, Northeast Regional Office. In her new role, Gerry Lynn will oversee the Well-Being and Cross-Systems Policy Unit, which includes topics such as prevention services, foster care, kinship, adoption, education, medical and behavioral health services, mandated report training, and many others. Gerry Lynn can be reached at gbutler@pa.gov.

Public Health Emergency Unwind

On February 9, 2023, the Federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared that the Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19 is set to expire on May 11, 2023. As a result, the flexibilities offered under the Stafford Act allowing youth to remain in extended foster care without meeting either the employment or education requirement will expire, and youth will be required to meet one of the requirements to remain in extended foster care. CCYAs should be working with their youth to assist them with meeting one of the requirements.

CCYAs are also expected to meet the previously enacted requirements for monthly caseworker visitation. In accordance with ACF guidance (ACYF-CB-PI-12-01), the total number of monthly visits made by caseworkers to children in foster care during a fiscal year occurring in the child's residence must be at least 50 percent.

As of December 6, 2021, DHS reinstated a number of suspended regulations, including regulations requiring in-person visits. Many agencies are currently conducting in-person visits, therefore this change should not significantly impact agencies in Pennsylvania.

Additionally, OCYF and the Office of Income Maintenance (OIM) continue to collaborate regarding the PHE unwinding. Multiple documents with updates have been shared through the HealthChoices (HC) Liaison listservs regarding children that may need additional steps to maintain Medicaid coverage. On February 24, 2023, OCYF provided each county's designated HC Liaison with a list of children that require additional action to maintain Medicaid coverage. Each County Assistance Office will be receiving instructions to assist in this effort and begin processing these cases in April. HC Liaisons are being asked to work with their County Assistance Liaison regarding the children that should remain active.

April - National Child Abuse Prevention Month

April is National Child Abuse Prevention month. Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA), in partnership with the Office of Children Youth and Families, is committed to working with professionals, families and communities across Pennsylvania to advocate and

Continued on p. 2

educate for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Through collective and strategic partnerships, we believe that communities can be strengthened to help protect children and support families. Throughout April, PFSA will host events to raise awareness and provide education on child abuse prevention in Pennsylvania. Please join in these events and learn more about what can be done and how you can help prevent child abuse and neglect in your community and across the Commonwealth.

Events include:

- *Annual Flag Planting*: On, April 4, 2023, a group of PFSA staff, local board members, and stakeholders will plant 5,036 blue flags to represent the number of substantiated child abuse cases and 58 black flags to represent the number of child deaths due to child abuse in Pennsylvania over one year.
- *Blue Ribbon Champions for Safe Kids*: PFSA will virtually honor Blue Ribbon Champions from across the Commonwealth who have gone the extra mile to protect PA children. These individuals are recognized for their exceptional contributions as we continue to make every effort to prevent child abuse and neglect throughout Pennsylvania.
- *Spotlight Speaker*: Event April 12, 2023, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. This speaker event includes a panel of nationally renowned child abuse prevention experts and is facilitated by Jennifer Jones, Chief Strategy Office with Prevent Child Abuse America. Registration for this event is FREE and CEUs, CLEs and Act 48 creds will be available for anyone attending the live speaker session. Register for this event at www.pafsa.org.
- *Turn Pennsylvania Blue*: Blue is the national symbolic color of child abuse prevention. PFSA will call on Pennsylvania-based reporters, on-air media personalities, celebrities, influencers, and elected officials to "Turn Pennsylvania Blue" on April 4. Although April 4 is Go Blue Day, every day in April is a great day for sporting the color blue.
- *Children's Memorial and Interactive Data Map*: PFSA will display child abuse and neglect data through an interactive map on www.pafsa.org, which will also be accompanied by a memorial video honoring the children who were lost due to child abuse and neglect.

Also, please continue to visit www.KeepKidsSafe.pa.gov for information related to the protection of Pennsylvania's children.

May - National Foster Care Month

May is National Foster Care Month. The Children's Bureau's National Foster Care Month campaign recognizes the important role that members from all parts of child welfare play in supporting children, youth, and families. This year's theme, "Strengthening Minds. Uplifting Families." highlights the need to take a holistic and culturally responsive approach to supporting the mental health needs of those involved with child welfare. For more information about National Foster Care Month visit the [National Foster Care Month - Child Welfare Information Gateway](#).

OCYF will be awarding \$65,000, in min-grants to agencies and coalitions across the state to support awareness and recruitment events about the need for foster and adoptive parents. If you are having an event that you would like to have featured on the SWAN Facebook page, please contact Jamie Bailey at jbailey@pa.gov. All requests must be in the form of a picture (jpg or png).

To celebrate National Foster Care Month, PSRFA will hold a Regional Training on May 20, 2023, at the Double Tree by Hilton - Monroeville Convention Center, Monroeville, PA. The Regional Training includes six hours of training, lunch, and networking opportunities with other resource families. There is also the opportunity to participate in a dinner cruise on the Gateway Clipper from 6:30 – 9:00 pm. You can learn more about the Regional Training and Gateway Clipper dinner cruise at psrfa.org.

Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA)

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

You can learn more about PSRFA at psrfa.org. If you have any further questions, you can contact PSRFA Office at 1-800-951-5151 or email dkinard@psrfa.org or ktramper@psrfa.org.

Act 118 of 2022

Act 118 of 2022, signed by Governor Wolf on November 3, 2022, amends Title 67 (Public Welfare) and Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) to include provisions relating to family finding, Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), transition

Continued on p. 3

planning and data collection. While Pennsylvania has been a long-time supporter of family finding and kinship care, this Act focuses on enhancing a collaborative family approach to ongoing family finding. This Act is intended to ensure that family finding occurs on an ongoing basis for all children entering the child welfare system, to promote the use of kinship care when it is necessary to remove a child from the child's home and to ensure that each child leaving foster care at 18 years of age or older is prepared for the transition to successful adulthood.

Act 118 gives the statutory definition of family finding and accepted for service; requirements for when family finding must be conducted; specific times that family finding can be discontinued; rules about family finding resumption; and guidance on the documentation that needs to be in the child's case plan. Pennsylvania continues to focus on reducing the number of older youths aging out of the child welfare system without the support and guidance of a permanent connection. Act 118 ensures that each child leaving foster care at 18 years of age or older is prepared for the transition to successful adulthood. This Act requires independent living planning to begin at age 14 and transition planning to begin at least 6 months prior to a youth turning 18 for youth who are adjudicated dependent. Additionally, Act 118 now requires youth to be 18 years of age or older for APPLA to be approved by the court as a permanency option and for county agencies to identify at least two significant connections with supportive adults in the permanency plan. Act 118 also requires county agencies to submit data to the department when the court terminates the jurisdiction of a child, 18 years of age or older. All provisions of Act 118 took effect on January 2, 2023. OCYF will be releasing guidance related to Act 118 in the near future.

Trauma Training Available for Child Welfare Professionals

In partnership with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) is funding trauma training opportunities for all child welfare professionals in Pennsylvania via Lakeside Global. Pennsylvania child welfare professionals serving children in the state can take advantage of **FREE** trainings facilitated by the team at Lakeside Global to become trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-informed, or healing-centered through **September 30, 2023**. This also includes Train the Trainer sessions to support trauma-informed sustainability within a child welfare organization.

There are multiple cohorts for courses and workshops that have been scheduled on specific

dates and times available [here](#). Please see attached flyer for additional information.

If you have questions relating to any of these trainings, please email info@pacarepartnership.org.

OCYF Trauma Team

The OCYF Trauma Team is focusing on the trauma-awareness phase of the Trauma-Informed PA (TIPA) Continuum, ensuring that all county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) and licensed foster care and adoption providers will become trauma-aware by the conclusion of 2023. As defined in the TIPA Plan, trauma awareness occurs when, "the entity becomes aware of trauma, the prevalence of trauma and considers the potential impact on customers and staff."

Additionally, the Child Welfare Resource Center has begun to collaborate with the Trauma Team to hold needs assessments as the first step in developing a trauma-sensitive training. Once the training is completed, it will be made available to all child welfare providers licensed by OCYF through the E-Learn platform. Stay informed with the OCYF Trauma Team newsletter that is distributed monthly.

The OCYF Trauma Team continues to distribute the Trauma Newsletter. This newsletter will continue to provide the most current information regarding the status of OCYF's trauma-informed initiative. We encourage continued communication with all providers through informative newsletters, updates such as this, and by utilizing the resource account RA-PWOCYFTRAUMA@PA.GOV.

Family First Prevention Services Act

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

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

Pennsylvania's Round 3 Child and Family Service Review

Pennsylvania is currently in Round 3 of the federally required Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR). As part of this process, Pennsylvania was required to implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and show increased performance on 10 case review measures relative to a baseline set using 2017 case review findings. Pennsylvania successfully completed implementation of the PIP strategies in May of 2022 and successfully

Continued on p. 4

increased performance in nine areas, however, Pennsylvania has not yet been able to achieve the required measurement goal for one remaining case review measure item. As a result, Pennsylvania could be subject to a significant federal financial penalty if improvement to this final measure cannot be satisfactorily demonstrated through case reviews by November 2023. Case reviews are scheduled to begin April 4, 2023 and will continue through August 17, 2023.

Chafee Education and Training Grant Programs

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application and instructions for the 2023 – 2024 academic year are available on PHEAA’s [website](#). Please assist youth with completing the correct academic year application.

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

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

Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program

The Fostering Independence through Education Program, known as FosterED, requires Pennsylvania postsecondary institutions to award a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees for Pennsylvania resident youth who meet Chafee ETG eligibility requirements and have applied for all available federal and state grants. Tuition and mandatory fee waivers apply to both public (state) colleges and universities, community colleges, private post-secondary institutions, and other eligible schools. Youth are eligible to receive the waivers for 5 years, which need not be consecutive, or until age 26.

In addition to the waivers, each post-secondary institution must appoint a Point of Contact (POC) to assist youth with eligibility, technical assistance, and other resources that may be available to them on and off campus. County and private provider IL Caseworkers/Coordinators may be contacted by the POC to verify a youth’s eligibility. This is a critical step in assisting youth with verifying their eligibility when entering post-secondary education and financial aid packages being awarded.

All youth who apply for Chafee ETG are

automatically evaluated for FosterEd. This is no separate application.

Each post-secondary education institution is required to have their identified POC listed on their website. A list of POCs can be found on the Center for Schools and Communities [website](#).

Additional information about the tuition waiver can be found at PHEAA.org/FosterEd.

Questions related to the FosterED program can be directed to Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov or 717-214-7385.

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Federal Review 2023

Pennsylvania has been selected to participate in an NYTD Review by the Administration of Children and Families. The review is scheduled to take place the week of November 13 – 17, 2023. OCYF, along with CWRC and Public Consulting Group are preparing for this federal review. Requirements include participation from stakeholders who actively work on NYTD data collection or who assist with youth transitioning to adulthood and included county caseworkers, youth, contracted service providers, IL Coordinators, foster parents, NYTD Administrators and technical staff. Additional updates will be provided in the future.

National Youth in Transition Database

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) collects information in the following areas: Baseline Population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17), Served Population (any youth or young adult receiving independent living services regardless of age) and Follow-up Population (youth surveys at age 19 and 21 depending on Cohort period). Pennsylvania is currently in Cohort 5 for Baseline Surveys as of April 1, 2023 through September 30, 2023 (2023 B Period.) Counties have until October 15, 2023, to submit their baseline surveys as well as served population data. Counties can log onto www.getnytdpa.org to enter their served and survey data. NYTD questions can be directed to Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov or at 717-214-7385.

If you have new staff, need assistance with resetting your password, forgot your username, or have other technical assistance questions related to NYTD, please contact the NYTD Help Desk at 800-436-4105 or support@getnytdpa.org.

Credit Reports

The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 requires all CCYAs to run a credit check for all youth in foster care beginning at age 14 through age 18 from each of the three

Continued on p. 5

Credit Bureaus. Each Credit Bureau has a specific contact person and process to ensure foster care youth credit history checks are completed appropriately. If you are unsure of this information, have questions regarding the credit report history of foster care youth or are having issues obtaining a credit history from one of the Credit Bureau, please contact Jamie Bailey at jbailey@pa.gov or 223-666-2095

American Bar Association (ABA): Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Initiatives

The ABA's Center on Children and the Law Permanency Barriers Project is actively seeking new projects or technical assistance counties. Technical assistance can range from one training to a few months of engagement. Please reach out if you would like to discuss the ways in which we may be of assistance. Areas in which the ABA is available to help include:

- Improving collaboration and communication between CYS, court, attorneys, and local providers
- How to create a true kin-first culture in your county
- Assessing current practices and exploring solutions with a race equity lens
- Achieving relational and legal permanence for older youth
- Implementing effective concurrent planning
- Conducting a successful testifying workshop for caseworkers

For more information on Permanency Barriers technical assistance please see [here](#) or contact Heidi Redlich Epstein at Heidi.epstein@americanbar.org.

Act 1 of 2022- Assisting Students Experiencing Education Instability

[Act 1 of 2022](#), known as "Assisting Students Experiencing Education Instability" was approved by Governor Wolf last year. The Act strengthens school supports and increases education equity to foster academic achievement and graduation for certain students experiencing education instability. The law is applicable to students that have had one or more changes in school enrollment during a single school year as a result of dependency, delinquency, homelessness as defined by the McKinney Vento Act, or a court-ordered voluntary placement agreement or court-ordered custody agreement. It applies to students returning to their former school, starting at a new school, or re-engaging in school after an extended absence. On August 1, the Pennsylvania Department of

Education issued a Basic Education Circular providing guidance to schools. The guidance can be found [here](#). Child welfare staff are advised to identify and advocate for eligible students to receive supports required to be provided by schools under this new law.

Identification of Students in Foster Care to Schools

OCYF recently issued a [memo](#) to advise County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYA) about information sharing with schools. CCYAs are encouraged to maintain continued communication and collaboration with schools to support students while maintaining that confidential information is kept confidential. CCYAs are advised to utilize the Identification of Students in Foster Care to School Points of Contact form to notify K-12 schools of a student's entry into foster care or change in foster care placement. The form, which can be found on the Department of Human Services Education of Students Served by Pennsylvania County Children and Youth Agencies [website](#), should be provided to school points of contact.

If you have any questions or concerns related to the memo or form, please contact RA-PWOCYFEDUCATION@pa.gov

Pennsylvania Kinship Navigator Program, KinConnector

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

The website includes a comprehensive, guided search feature of resources in the following topic areas: childcare, clothing, financial assistance, food, legal, medical, school, and support groups. Also available on the website are training opportunities for both professionals and kinship families, resources that agencies can print out and make available to kinship families, a kinship blog section, a podcast series called "Kindred Voices," and a newly established virtual Support Group called "Kindred Spirits."

OCYF encourages all county and provider agencies to outreach to the KinConnector program to learn more about the services they offer, to provide new resource information to be included on the website, and to form partnerships that could help inform how this program can grow. Any questions regarding this program can be directed to Diane Michel at OCYF at dmichel@pa.gov or 717-705-2911.

Accurint

Accurint is an online search tool available to every county throughout the state. It is able to assist with family finding efforts, contact information, criminal checks and identifying individuals for any type of family engagement meeting. Please be aware that only county employees may be an Accurint Administrator for your county's account. If you or your staff would like training in the Accurint software, please contact Accurint Education Consultant Jessica Kraft at Jessica.Kraft@lexisnexisrisk.com or 937-286-7660

Additionally, you can look up trainings on the National Training Calendar. If you have any questions about Accurint, please contact Jessica Slagel at OCYF at jandrewssl@pa.gov or 717-787-2726.

Mandated Reporter Training

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

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

Additional information and training dates can be found at pafsa.org. For questions or to schedule a session specifically for your organization, please email PFSA at training@pa-fsa.org

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

Media

The #MeetTheKids media campaign is designed to recruit foster and adoptive families across Pennsylvania. The campaign is currently airing on network and cable television in all six media markets in Pennsylvania during the months of January through September 2023. Radio advertisements will also air during the months of February, May and June 2023. In addition to television and radio, the media campaign includes online media ads on Google, Hulu, Facebook, Instagram and Cumulus that will run from January through September 2023.

While this media campaign airs, agencies should be prepared to promptly respond to phone calls from prospective foster and adoptive families.

Waiting Child Segments

OCYF 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, channel 2, a Pittsburgh CBS affiliate; *Val's Kids* is aired on abc27 WHTM in the Harrisburg area; and *A Little Love* is aired on WBRE-TV, channel 28, a Wilkes-Barre NBC affiliate. Waiting child segments have proven to be successful over the years in helping find permanent homes for children in foster care. Contracts will be in place through September 17, 2023.

If you have a child you would like featured on KDKA's Waiting Child, please contact Ja-Neen Jones at TRAC Services for Families at jjones@tracpgh.org or Nikita Lewis at nlewis@diakion-swan.org.

If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WHTM's Val's Kids, please contact Alfredo Gonzalez at algonzalez@diakon-swan.org.

If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WBRE's A Little Love, please contact Crissy Crawford at ccrawford@diakon-swan.org.

SWAN/IL Google Groups

There are 1,134 current members of the SWAN/IL Listserv through Google Groups. This is a great way to share confidential information across the network to seek colleagues' advice and announce upcoming events. Anyone wishing to join the group must be an employee of a county children and youth agency, SWAN affiliate agency or IL provider. If interested, please contact Bobbi Whary by email at bwhary@diakon-swan.org or 717-558-1223.

Interstate Compact Unit

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

RA-PA-ICPC@pa.gov for ICPC cases

RA-PA-ICAMA@pa.gov for ICAMA cases

717-425-5562 fax

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

Clearance Verification Unit

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

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

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

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

with **ANY** result or record, **are required** to be submitted to ChildLine for interpretation.

Please visit our website at www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov for additional information regarding the clearance or call us at 877-371-5422.

Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

P.O. Box 2675

Harrisburg, PA 17105-2675

717-787-3984

www.dhs.pa.gov

Upcoming Events

SWAN and the Adoption Center are hosting two upcoming matching events:

Greater Philadelphia Area

May 6, 2023

American Helicopter Museum

Western PA

June 3, 2023

Camp Lutheryn

Pre-registration is required. For more information, please visit <https://diakon-swan.org/swan/events/upcoming/>

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

- County children and youth agencies are required to have a child assigned to a family before making a Family Profile referral.

New SWAN Program Administrator Named

Tammy Hendrix, PhD, MSW, LCSW assumed the position of SWAN Program Administrator effective March 27. Tammy, formerly a regional technical assistance division manager, succeeds Judi Damiano who retired in February.

Tammy has worked within the SWAN prime contractor in various technical assistance roles since 2004. She is a licensed clinical social worker with a master's degree in social work from San Francisco State University and a doctoral degree in social work from Millersville University. Throughout her years with the prime contractor, Tammy's active leadership could be observed at Casey Family Children's Permanency Roundtables, on Voce's DEI Strategic Council, in training rooms at SWAN events, and in many other forums.

Tammy joined Voce in the early years of the Diakon/Voce partnership in the SWAN prime contract. Her tenure with the SWAN prime contract is a benefit to all. "As the SWAN program administrator, I look forward to working with all of you to actualize the vision of a small group of people who years ago envisioned a better world for children who find themselves in foster care and for the families that provide them with a permanent home." Congratulations, Tammy!

SWAN Portal 3.0 Development Continues

Development continues on SWAN Portal version 3.0. Construction of the new family record, which was tested this winter by four affiliates and one county, is now complete. Test feedback was positive and recommendations for future enhancements were shared. Specifically, users supported the offering of a new record update feature. Version 3.0 will allow affiliate and county users to update specific child and family data without having to submit a form, thereby streamlining portal transactions. Additional updates will be provided as we approach implementation.

Practice Reminders

The SWAN technical assistance team has a couple of practice reminders:

- All visits with families and children connected to SWAN units of service are in-person visits unless otherwise specified within the unit's Benchmarks. Any need for an exception due to special circumstances should be directed to your regional technical assistant who will provide guidance.

Automated Cost and Time Reports

To improve accuracy of cost and data entry, the SWAN prime contractor has recently enhanced the cost and time reports sent to affiliates on a quarterly basis. This automated version, developed in consultation with affiliates from across the state, will provide an easier way to:

- review and analyze cost and time data by service;
- review and analyze cost and time data by worker or office;
- compare cost and time averages with the state averages and SWAN established timelines; and
- compare data across quarters.

Affiliates will be emailed their automated quarterly cost and time utility report in April 2023. Please contact your SWAN RTA if you would like to schedule a consultation on using the utility to better understand your agency's cost and time data.

Volunteer Photographers Wanted

If you know anyone who would like to donate their photographic talents to Pennsylvania children waiting for permanency, please invite them to join our team of volunteer photographers. Volunteer photographers work with kids to showcase their unique talents and personalities in photos that can be used for profiles on adoptpakids.org, matching flyers and events and more. If you or someone you know may be interested, send an email to pae@diakon-swan.org for more information.

Child and Family Recruiters to Update Contact Information

Prior to invoicing a Child Specific Recruitment or Family Matching unit of service, recruiters are responsible to update the CY130 and CY131 forms with the current worker's contact information. Quick tip: before invoicing a unit of service, check over the "contact information" for accuracy and make any changes directly in the SWAN Portal. This small step goes a long way in the matching process! Questions? Check in with your direct supervisor, and you can also contact your agency's SWAN RTA or any PAE coordinator.

Predictions Form Training

A virtual training on the completion and implementation of the Predictions Form is scheduled for July 12, 2023. Be on the lookout for an electronic invitation to this training. Additional training dates are also being planned.

The Predictions Form is required within the Family Matching unit benchmarks, and its use is recommended in the Placement and Finalization units. It is designed to better prepare potential adoptive parents for upcoming placement and finalization and provide them with resources to help meet the joys and challenges of parenting a child with special needs.

The Predictions Form is a tool that can assist in presenting information to potential adoptive parents that includes predictions for a child's future needs and functioning based on the history and experiences of the specific child matched with the family. The information on the form is candid and depicts a realistic view of what parenting the child may look like in the future while remaining strengths based and offering management techniques, services, resources and solutions that focus on a cohesive, stable family unit.

Resource parents are encouraged to add to the form by listing challenges or issues they feel they may face as they prepare for permanency.

If you have any questions related to the Predictions Form or upcoming trainings, please reach out to your regional technical assistant.

The Revised Individual Permanency Service Plan (IPSP): What's New?

The IPSP frames the work of the Placement and Finalization units of service by facilitating thorough planning for tasks, timelines and responsibilities within those units of service. That ensures best practice and, therefore, best potential for success for families. Recent revisions to the IPSP enhance pre-placement planning. In addition to the charts documenting visitation and transition planning, there is now space to describe preparation of the child and family, explore issues to address with family and discuss transportation details. Planning for safety is still included in this section.

In other sections of the IPSP, format changes allow users to acknowledge how foster-to-adopt families may already be meeting the needs of a child who has been in their home for a while. It is important when engaging families in the development of the IPSP that their care and nurturing of the child up to that point is not disregarded. Whether the child has been in the home for a time or is new to the family, the format allows for planning to meet all safety, medical, emotional and educational needs of the child.

A new section of the IPSP focuses on family functioning in four areas—family relationships, parenting, birth family and support /resources. Planning in this section is the essence of supervising the placement during the Finalization unit of service. It is what brings to light the needs of the family to stabilize the placement. Tasks and strategies developed here direct the work with the family, which is then documented on the supervisory reports.

The [IPSP Template](#) and the [IPSP Guidelines](#) (step-by-step instruction for completing the IPSP) are in the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#). Completing the IPSP will be the topic of the Units of Service Meeting on May 8 from 9:30 to 11:00. Watch your email for registration and contact your program technical assistant with any IPSP questions.

Important Guidelines for using SWAN/IL Google Groups

The SWAN/IL Google Groups is a private listserv for the Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) and Independent Living (IL) services. The goal of this group is to facilitate and support the work of expediting permanency and providing IL services throughout Pennsylvania. As a reminder, while all information posted on the listserv is confidential, we do ask that users adhere to the following tips to ensure a high standard of practice throughout the network:

- **Do not** send identifying client information (e.g., full legal name or address). Instead, use first names, aliases, general locations, etc.
- **Do not** disclose detailed information on children such as diagnoses, medication and reasons for placement.
- **Do not** invite others to join. Membership in this group is monitored due to the confidential nature of the information being shared.
- **Do** include PAE numbers for children and families when applicable.
- **Do** vary the days and times you send your flyers.
- **Do** be creative and descriptive in your subject lines.
- **Do** reply individually to emails whenever possible. If you must communicate to the entire group, double-check the recipient line to ensure the email is being sent to the intended audience.
- **Do** provide links and PDF attachments when you send information about permanency, awareness or matching events, forums, educational trainings and conferences.

Continued on p. 10

- **Do** include multimedia (links, high-quality photos, graphics, videos, etc.)

For additional tips about using this listserv, refer to the [Strategies for Recruitment Tip #10](#). Anyone wishing to join this list must be a part of the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network or Independent Living Services and may contact Bobbi Whary at bwhary@diakon-swan.org.

SWAN LSI Diligent Search Services

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

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

The answer to all of these questions is: **YES!** Nearly every child in care will benefit from diligent search activities at some point in their case.

If you have any questions about diligent search services through SWAN LSI, please contact your county's SWAN LSI coordinator.

SWAN LSI Diligent Search in Action

SWAN LSI diligent search is a process conducted to locate parents, relatives or other potential permanency resources and connections for a child who is receiving services from or is in the custody of a county child welfare agency. SWAN LSI paralegals use multiple tools and methods to conduct searches as described in the *SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet*.

During the first eight months of the 2022-2023 state fiscal year (July 2022 – February 2023), SWAN LSI paralegals completed 12,783 diligent searches on behalf of 7,300 children. Diligent searches were completed in 55 counties by 162

different SWAN LSI paralegals. Of the over 12,500 searches, 5,947 were completed to locate a missing parent of 4,574 children; 4,180 were completed to comply with the location and notification requirements of the *Fostering Connections to Success Act* (1,970 children); 2,297 were for Act 55 compliance (1,226 children); and 359 were for other designated reasons (304 children).

Through the diligent search efforts of SWAN LSI paralegals, thousands of connections and resources for children in Pennsylvania's child welfare system have been identified. County children and youth agencies rely on these search results to facilitate a child's connections with family and other kin to expedite permanency for children across Pennsylvania.

Another Search Resource on the SWAN Toolkit

The *SWAN Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Search Guide* is designed to help children and youth agencies across the United States comply with federal laws, regulations and guidelines when working with an Indian child or family. Child welfare professionals may need to perform a comprehensive ICWA search when a child in care could have tribal connections. SWAN defines an ICWA search as a search completed to identify and locate potential tribal connections in order to allow the tribe to determine eligibility and placement under the *Indian Child Welfare Act* and to regulate placement proceedings involving Indian children, including Alaska Natives, who are unmarried and under the age of 18 (25 U.S.C. § 1901 et. seq.). ICWA regulations require "active efforts" to maintain and reunite an Indian child with their family or tribal community. For that reason, an ICWA diligent search must be conducted to "identify, notify and engage" representatives of the child's tribe. The *SWAN ICWA Search Guide* is a tool that will help streamline this process and ensure compliance with ICWA requirements. The guide, accessible from the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#), is intended to be used in conjunction with the law and as a supplemental tool within the full diligent search process.

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 | www.adoptpakids.org

 /adoptpa

 /adoptpakids

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

Older Youth Retreat

Please save the date for the 2023 Older Youth Retreat which will be held August 7-11. Additional information regarding the event can be found at <http://www.payab.pitt.edu/ILRetreat.htm>.



Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board (YAB) Leadership Summit

The Pennsylvania YAB will hold its 2023 Youth Leadership Summit for two full days, June 14 and 15, at the Child Welfare Resource Center. This event allows youth from across the state to participate in training, workshops and opportunities to work with and meet other youth and staff from different regions. This event is youth-led and continues to be an opportunity for youth to display leadership skills, develop youth-friendly resources, improve public speaking skills, and participate in many hands-on projects. The goal of the Summit is to educate youth, support them in advocating for themselves as well as build a network with others who have similar goals in mind. If you have questions regarding this event or may have youth who would be interested in attending, please contact Shayla Jones at shj93@pitt.edu.

YAB 2023 Projects

The members of the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board have begun work on their projects for 2023. These projects include the following:

- Tips to enhance the relationship between the caseworker and older youth. This resource will allow caseworkers the opportunity to learn directly from older youth how to best support them as they are navigating being in foster care.
- A quick reference guide to the larger Know Your Rights document.
- YAB Welcome Guide, which includes YAB resources and tools for older youth upon entry into foster care. This guide will include existing YAB resources and information regarding Independent Living Services, youth's rights while in care, and how to become connected to the PA Youth Advisory Board
- The statewide YAB also continues its efforts to support older youth's well-being by providing mental health wellness kits and resources for older youth. These kits include crisis hotline numbers, YAB HOPE mugs, therapeutic adult coloring books, and other stress-reducing tools. Youth are also provided access to an online platform that allows youth to share and view positive and encouraging messages written by their peers.

PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)
403 E. Winding Hill Road
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
717-795-9048
www.payab.pitt.edu

ABA Permanency Barriers Project

A project of the American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law

The ABA Permanency Barriers Project works with you to reduce the time children spend in foster care before achieving permanency.

Principles

1. Permanency begins on Day 1.
2. Small steps add up to change.
3. Full stakeholder engagement is key to realize and maintain system reform.

Project Approach

1 Focus on System Change

ABA staff help local stakeholders develop individualized county action plans. The action plans are based on a thorough assessment of needs, which includes:

- Case file review
- Court observation
- Data analysis
- Focus groups with stakeholders

2 County-Driven, County-Owned

Each jurisdiction encounters unique challenges. We form a county Advisory Board and issue-based subcommittees made up of lead decisionmakers, including:

- Child welfare agency administrators and staff
- Behavioral health providers
- Juvenile and family court judges
- School administrators
- Agency, parent, and children's attorneys
- Others, as identified by county

3 ABA as Neutral Facilitator and Strategic Partner

ABA staff are on site monthly working to develop and implement reforms.

- Our attorneys bring extensive firsthand knowledge and national perspective to guide your county.
- We ensure all stakeholders join the effort as equal partners.
- We focus on system barriers and engagement between the legal and nonlegal communities at both the county and state level.
- We provide individualized attention, which can include refining court and agency procedures, providing legal analysis, and conducting trainings.

4 Improved Outcomes

At the end of this two-year project, you will see:

- More efficient and effective pathways to permanency for every case;
- A reduction of time in foster care for children in your county; and
- Improved communication, network building, and stakeholder collaboration.

Measurable Results

At the end of the two-year project each county receives a final project report that summarizes results and provides recommendations to sustain system change. To date, the project has:

- ✓ served **55** different counties in **four** states,
- ✓ reduced the time children spend in foster care in all four states by an average of **nine months**,
- ✓ realized a positive impact on more than **3,000** children,
- ✓ saved counties and states over **\$30 million** in foster care costs.

Targeted Technical Assistance

As an alternative to the two-year model, we provide targeted technical assistance on permanency matters through on-site trainings, developing local protocols, facilitating meetings, and other solutions to address local challenges. ABA technical assistance can range from a one-day training to a multi-month engagement.

Get Started Today

The ABA Permanency Barriers Project can work with your county to promote permanency for children in foster care.

For more information, contact:
 Heidi Redlich Epstein, 202-662-1725
Heidi.Epstein@americanbar.org

This project is funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

Attention PA Child Welfare Professionals FREE Trauma Training Available – Act Now!

The Offices of Children, Youth and Families and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services have partnered with PA Care Partnership to provide any child welfare professionals in Pennsylvania **FREE** Trauma Training. These trainings will be facilitated by Lakeside Global Institute and are available until **September 30, 2023** or while funding is available. Available trainings will be offered in-person or live via web-based platform.

DO NOT DELAY for this exciting opportunity and schedule your trauma trainings now!

There are multiple cohorts for courses and workshops that have been scheduled on specific dates and times available through <https://lakesidelink.com/training/course-registration-2023/> Trainings available include the following:

- Enhancing Trauma Awareness
- Deepening Trauma Awareness
- Applying Trauma Principals
- Train the Trainers
- Trauma 101 through 109 Workshops

Full course descriptions are available here: <https://www.paproviders.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Lakeside-Trauma-Course-Descriptions.pdf>

There are also Trauma 101-109 workshops available for Pennsylvania organizations that provide services to children, youth and families. To schedule trauma workshops designated for your organization, please follow the steps below:

1. Click on this link: <https://www.pacarepartnership.org/community-partners/trauma-informed-training/>
2. Click on the Trauma Workshop Request which will take you to a brief survey to complete.
3. Submit your survey
4. Someone will be in touch with you to schedule your desired trainings.

Descriptions of workshops and courses can be viewed on the attached document labeled "Training Descriptions".

If you have questions relating to any of these trainings, please email: info@pacarepartnership.org.

Pennsylvania Adoptees Longitudinal Study (PALS)



ABOUT THIS STUDY

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

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

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

WHAT WILL PARTICIPANTS DO?

The child and parent will be asked to complete interviews, questionnaires and various tasks. Parents may also be asked to complete questionnaires online.

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

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

Compensation is provided to eligible participants.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO PARTICIPATE

Pennsylvania Adoptees Longitudinal Study Team

PALS@pennstatehealth.psu.edu

717-531-0003, ext. 32713

research.med.psu.edu/adoption

STUDY DIRECTOR

Brian Allen, PsyD | *Department of Pediatrics*



redcap.link/pals

