



**statewide
adoption and
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network**

**SWAN PRIME CONTRACT MANAGEMENT
DIAKON LUTHERAN SOCIAL MINISTRIES
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
FAMILY DESIGN RESOURCES**

Administrative Update

2011 FALL QUARTERLY MEETINGS

More Counties Use LSI Paralegals from “Start to Finish”

One of the greatest benefits of the SWAN Legal Services Initiative program is that it allows counties to use a paralegal in a way that best supports that county’s needs. Over the past few years, a growing trend in a county is to assign a paralegal to a child’s case from start to finish.

Having the paralegal follow the child the whole way through the system helps to prevent delays and barriers that can arise and cause additional time spent in care.

For example, the SWAN LSI paralegals in Monroe County have worked on cases from start to finish since a paralegal was first placed in that county in July 2009. The paralegals work on cases from shelter care through termination of parental rights, TPR. Their duties include scheduling all hearings, preparing and filing all petitions and entering outcomes into the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, AOPC, common pleas court case management system, CPCMS, for all children. The paralegals have become very resourceful about keeping the agency administration and solicitor updated on all new legislation and laws recently passed. With their assistance, all new legislation has been fully implemented.

In Union County the SWAN LSI paralegal works on most cases from the initial intake through TPR, including the adoption paperwork and adoption hearing. SWAN LSI Coordinator Jamie Barrick says that the paralegal’s assistance in this process has reduced work for the caseworkers, allowing them to spend more

time with the families and children they serve. Additionally, her involvement throughout the entire process provides consistency to the case and the documents prepared, helping to assure for the timely filing of documents with the court. The county agency, solicitor and judge rely on LSI’s consistency, knowledge and ability to perform her job duties and have commented that her knowledge, work ethic and talent are “indispensable.”

Westmoreland County shares Union County’s sentiments and believes that the SWAN LSI paralegals are an integral part of their own process. Each of the four paralegals there is assigned to a case when a child enters placement. The paralegals are then responsible for all of the legal work on the case until permanency is reached. The paralegals’ work in Westmoreland County has expedited permanency for children and allows the caseworkers to focus on their casework.

From the east to west, more and more Pennsylvania counties are shifting to this approach and seeing tremendous benefits. Through the structured flexibility of the LSI program, we are continuously looking for new ways to support counties in achieving faster permanency for children and youth.

Look for more information about how paralegals are working “from start to finish” in an article by Troy Miller, SWAN LSI coordinator, in an upcoming issue of the Network News.

Special Points of Interest:

- Paralegals help counties through entire case
- Child’s case moves faster with paralegal to follow it
- Permanency is faster and has fewer barriers

Inside this Issue

Disposal of Information	1
Staff change “Dominoes”	2
Finalizations Stay Strong	2
Next U.S. Meeting	2
Act 101 Information	3
Understanding CY890’s	3

Confidential Information Disposal Explained

Are you confused about how long or where to keep confidential information obtained during searches or the preparation of SWAN units of service?

Please check your meeting packets for a copy of the new

protocol about confidential information. The protocol is titled, “Disposal of Confidential Information When Locating Connections or Kin Resources in SWAN Units of Service.” The protocol details when this sensitive material should be

destroyed and which agencies should maintain it.

If you have any questions about the protocol, please contact your regional technical assistant or the Warmline.



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Staff Changes Set off “Dominoes”

In the summer issue of the Administrative Update, we told you about the first of what has turned into a virtual wave of staff changes at the SWAN prime contract.

Heather Reigle, formerly a southeast regional technical assistant, RTA, has moved to the SWAN Legal Services Initiative as an LSI coordinator. Her position was then filled by **Tinnesha DeV Vaughn**, formerly of Tabor Services in Philadelphia.

At the same time, we were in the process of filling the

position vacated by **Cindy Walker**, Post Permanency program technical assistant. Cindy retired after many years of service to SWAN. Her program position was then filled by SWAN prime contract south central RTA **Sandra Bennett**.

Sandra’s open position was then filled by another network member, **Kelly Weston**, formerly an adoption supervisor for Berks County Children and Youth.

In addition, while all that was going on, a coordinator position with SWAN’s Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange was open. That was filled by **Jon Douglas**, a SWAN western region RTA. Now his former position is in the process of being filled by a SWAN prime contract candidate. Stay tuned for the rest of the dominoes to fall!

Congratulations and good luck to everyone in their new positions!

Finalizations Remain Strong

In August 2011, 499 children were finalized using SWAN’s finalization unit of service. This number is a little less than the same period in 2010 where finalizations were used for 654 children.

SWAN finalization services are used for children of all ages who are in the care and custody of their county children and youth agency. The following are some of the highlights for the month:

The 250 children finalized in the first quarter of 2011 is

consistent with the same period in 2010 (253 finalized in Jan – Mar 2010). These figures represent a significant increase over the number of finalization units of service used in the first quarter of 2005 where 136 children were finalized through the contract.

A significant population of those finalized during the first eight months of 2010 were age 10 or above. Children in the 10 + age group accounted

for 17% (N=214) of all children finalized during 2011.

Children age 0-5 also represent a large percentage of the children finalized. During the first eight months of 2010, 694 children or 57% were in this age group.

Overall, these totals are a 167% increase in the use of finalization units of service since 2005 and 2010 (N=500 and 1,335).

Next U.S. Meeting Topics Announced

The next SWAN Units of Service, U.S., meeting is scheduled for November 8, 2011. The meeting is for affiliate agencies to network and discuss specific practice within the SWAN units of service.

The November session will continue work on the Family Profile, Placement and Finalization benchmarks. Attendees will also begin discussion of the Child Profile benchmarks.

As with previous U.S. meetings, the sessions will be held at CWTP in Mechanicsburg with two other sites, which will be announced shortly, joining by Webex. Please remember to register online for this important meeting when the locations are finalized.

2011 Fall Quarterly Meetings

Act 101 Implementation and Information

As Act 101 continues to be implemented around the state, portions of the implementation are supported by the SWAN prime contract.

For those wanting to send information to the Pennsylvania Adoption Information Registry, PAIR, the www.pagov-pair.org site is for agencies ONLY to upload required information about adoptions and adoptees.

Adoptees and birth families must submit information to PAIR on hard-copy forms, at least for now.

The www.adoptpakids.org website includes all the forms needed for families to register or request information, as well as to withdraw consent. Also located on this page is the text of the Act 101 Bulletin and a brochure explaining the act.

Whenever questions arise about the act, the forms or anything relating to Act 101 and PAIR, please contact the SWAN LSI Warmline. You may call the Warmline at 888-793-2512, ext. 5376 or by email at lsiwarmline@diakon-swan.org.

Visit us at

www.diakon-swan.org

Understanding CY890's in the SWAN Portal

The first and most important point to know about the new portal is that a **single child record** now exists.

All the information in a child's record is compiled from all the forms entered for a child. For example, if a child's goal and goal date were entered from a referral form, then that information does not need to be re-entered when completing the CY890 form. It will be shown automatically, or pre-populated, whenever a new form is created that uses some of the same information from previously-entered forms.

Other important things to know about forms and the CY890's:

- For any child with a goal of adoption it is important to

establish a baseline CY890 as soon as the child's goal becomes adoption. CY890's are **not** to be initiated when the goal is anything other than adoption, such as when the goal is reunification. This information could, however, be entered for a potential update to a CY890.

- CY890 forms in the portal are processed within 2-3 business days of SWAN receiving them unless the information is incomplete. In that case, SWAN will contact the caseworker by email to request the missing information.
- It is **critical** to include dates when entering any status for a child. For example, the date a child's goal becomes

adoption must be entered, not just that the goal is now adoption. This is equally true for all the other statuses, including placement, TPR, intents and finalization. A first-time CY890 will not be approved unless it includes the dates that a goal becomes adoption as well as the dates of the child's placement type.

- Finally, at least one CY890 must be completed for the child to show up on the county's CY890 report.

For questions about any part of completing the CY 890's, the SWAN RTA is your first point of contact. Please contact them for any help you need.

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