

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

Department of Human Services

Upcoming Events: Promoting Educational Stability for Youth

The Division of Policy continues to facilitate quarterly meetings with county children and youth agencies (CCYA) and the Office of Children, Youth and Families Regional Office to provide technical assistance, promote collaboration, and highlight new initiatives and successes promoting educational stability for children involved with dependency court. Quarterly sessions also help to bridge communication gaps when identified and support [the roles and responsibilities](#) of CCYAs. For more information please visit, [Education Stability by Child Welfare Services | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#). To find an appropriate contact for questions related to the education of children served by CCYAs, visit [center-school.org](#).

The 2024 Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference is scheduled for October 16-18, 2024 in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. This conference is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) and Educational Stability for Children and Youth in Foster Care programs and is held in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and Center for Schools and Communities. This conference is a unique learning opportunity to support children and youth experiencing homelessness and students experiencing foster care. For more information related to this conference and additional events, visit [Upcoming Events](#), located at [centerforschoolsandcommunities.org](#) or join the email distribution list at [Form \(hsforms.com\)](#).

National Adoption Month

November is National Adoption Awareness Month. This is also a terrific opportunity for agencies to celebrate children and Families and promote permanency. This year's theme is "Honoring Youth: Strengthening Pathways for Lasting Bonds." For more information on National Adoption Month 2024, please visit [Spread the Word - National](#)

[Adoption Month - Child Welfare Information Gateway.](#)

Once again, OCYF will be issuing \$65,000 in mini grants to agencies and coalitions across the state to support recruitment and/or awareness events during the month of November. If you are having an event that you would like to have featured on the SWAN Facebook page, please contact Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov or Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@pa.gov. All requests must be in the form of a picture (jpg or png).

Final Rule, Separate Licensing Standards for Relative or Kinship Foster Family Homes

On September 28, 2023, the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) issued a final rule amending regulations to allow Title IV-E agencies to claim Title IV-E federal financial participation for the cost of foster care maintenance payments on behalf of an otherwise eligible child who is placed in a relative or kinship licensed or approved foster family home when the agency uses different licensing standards for relative or kinship foster family homes and non-relative/non-kinship foster family homes. Prior to the publication of this new rule, federal regulations required Title IV-E agencies to use the same licensing standards for both kin and non-kin caregivers, disregarding the unique needs of kinship homes.

This new rule encourages Title IV-E agencies to develop separate kinship-specific licensing standards that place as few burdens on relative and kinship families as possible, limited to federal requirements only, such as the safety requirements in sections 471(a)(10)(A) and (a)(20) of the Social Security Act. In addition, the new rule requires Title IV-E agencies to provide all licensed or approved relative or kinship foster family homes with the same amount of Foster Care Maintenance Payments that would have been made if the child was placed in a licensed or approved unrelated foster family home.

According to the federal rule, states may elect to establish separate kinship specific licensing standards that are in accord with recommended standards of national organizations for foster family homes related to:

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- Admission policies, safety, sanitation, and protection of civil rights,
- Use of the reasonable and prudent parenting standard; and,
- Procedures for criminal records checks, including fingerprint-based checks of national crime information databases.

OCYF consulted with DHS Executive Offices, including the Office of General Counsel, Office of Legislative Affairs, and the DHS Executive Policy Office on the process to implement separate kinship-specific licensing standards. Upon consultation, it was determined that a legislative amendment would be required to allow for implementation of separate kinship-specific licensing standards.

OCYF continues to work closely with these offices on the process to introduce a legislative amendment. OCYF intends to share the proposed standards for comment and feedback from community partners. More information will be forthcoming in the next several months.

Final Rule, Designated Placement Requirements under Titles IV-E and IV-B for LGBTQI+ Children

On April 26, 2024, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) issued a Final Rule on Designated Placement Requirements Under Titles IV-E and IV-B for LGBTQI+ children. The Final Rule dictates that IV-E/IV-B agencies ensure that all placements including those for LGBTQI+ children are free from harassment, mistreatment, and abuse. The IV-E/IV-B agencies must ensure there are Designated Placements available for all LGBTQI+ children in foster care who request or would benefit from such a placement, although nothing in the Final Rule requires or authorizes an IV-E/IV-B provider to qualify or serve as a Designated Provider.

These designated placements must be trained with the appropriate knowledge and skills to provide for the needs of the child's self-identified sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression to establish an environment that supports the child's LGBTQI+ status. Designated Placements must facilitate the child's access to age- or developmentally-appropriate resources, services, and activities that support their health and well-being.

Title IV-E/IV-B agencies must implement a process of notification of and request for Designated Placements which provides all children age 14 and over, and children under age 14 who have been removed from their home due to familial conflict about their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, or have

disclosed their LGBTQI+ status or identity, or is otherwise known to the agency, with an opportunity to express their needs and concerns and safeguards their privacy and confidentiality. An LGBTQI+ child may request a Designated Placement or request that their current placement be offered services to become a Designated Placement. The notice must be provided in an age- or developmentally-appropriate manner both verbally and in writing and must inform the child how they may request a Designated Placement, the process the IV-E/IV-B agency will respond to their request and information of the nonretaliation protections and the process by which a child may report a concern about retaliation.

The Final Rule indicates that training is required to all employees, including contractors and subcontractors, who have responsibility for placing children in foster care, making placement decisions, or providing services. Employees should be trained to implement the procedural requirements and are adequately prepared with the appropriate knowledge and skills to serve an LGBTQI+ child related to their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Title IV-E/IV-B agencies must follow the requirements of this section beginning on October 1, 2026. OCYF will be issuing guidance in the form of a Bulletin related to this Final Rule.

Voluntary Resolution Agreement between Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and the Federal Office of Civil Rights

In July 2023, the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Federal Office of Civil Rights (OCR) entered into a Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA) to resolve a complaint filed alleging discrimination, specifically withholding participation in services, based on an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-defined condition. DHS and by extension the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) receives federal funding including Foster Care Title IV-E, and Social Services Block Grant from the Administration of Children and Families. As a recipient of Federal financial assistance, DHS OCYF and its program offices, including county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) and agencies with which they contract, are obligated to comply with Federal civil rights laws and is subject to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and its implementing regulations. Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all operations of any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. Additionally, as a public entity providing state government services, DHS OCYF is obligated to comply with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and its implementing regulation. Title II prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by state and local government agencies, including denying

opportunities to benefit from services and failing to reasonably modify policies and procedures. By entering into the agreement DHS OCYF affirmed that it will comply with all provisions of Section 504 and Title II of the ADA. To ensure compliance by DHS OCYF and the county children and youth agencies, OCR outlined several requirements that apply to OCYF and the county children and youth agencies. To transmit these requirements to CCYAs, OCYF has issued a series of Special Transmittals.

OCYF and CCYAs have been working to meet the requirements set by the VRA. The first Special Transmittal, released on September 1, 2023, provided CCYAs with information on the development of a Notice of Nondiscrimination and the Grievance Procedure. The second Special Transmittal, released on December 21, 2023, provided CCYAs with information on the development and implementation of the county's Nondiscrimination Policy and Procedure. The third Special Transmittal, released on April 9, 2024, outlines requirements for staff training and verification of training. These training requirements extended to CCYAs and the agencies with which they contract. All staff involved in the provision of child welfare services to children and families were required to take the approved training, *Supporting Children and Families with Disabilities*, by July 31, 2024. OCYF worked in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) to create the *Supporting Children and Families with Disabilities* training. This training has been approved by the Federal OCR and meets the requirements of the VRA.

Pennsylvania has entered the second and final year of the Voluntary Resolution Agreement ([PA VRA](#)). The agreement stipulates that all child protective services programs, services, and activities that DHS administers, oversees, or provides directly or through the CCYAs or through sub recipients or contractors take the Supporting Children and Families with Disabilities Year 2 training, before July 30, 2025. Those who took the training in Year 1 must take the training again in Year 2, along with new staff who meet the requirement criteria. The Year 2 VRA training can be accessed via [Supporting Children and Families with Disabilities - e-learn.pitt.edu](#). Contracted agencies are required to use the new attestation form for year two to attest that all required individuals from their organization have taken the training. The form can be located at [Attestation of Supporting Children and Families with Disabilities Training - Year 2 \(office.com\)](#). If you have any questions about the training or the VRA, please reach out to ra-pwocyf-adaresource@pa.gov.

OCYF Trauma Team

The OCYF Trauma Team began the trauma-sensitive phase with the launch of the online training, "Developing Trauma Sensitivity in Therapeutic Foster Care," in August 2023. Since then, OCYF has been working towards internal implementation of trauma-sensitive practices. The trauma-sensitive training for OCYF staff was released in early 2024. Residential facilities can anticipate the rollout of trauma-sensitive training on the Child Welfare Resource Center's E-learn Catalog in October 2024. Training for county foster care and adoption providers will be available in 2025.

The 2019-2024 Trauma Team Report was issued to OCYF staff, detailing the collaborative efforts with child welfare agencies to implement trauma-informed care. More information on this work can be found on the DHS Trauma-Informed Care webpage at [OCYF Trauma-Informed Care \(TIC\) | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#). The webpage is currently under construction and will soon feature additional resources and information, along with a visual update. For any inquiries related to the OCYF Trauma Team's work, please contact the resource account at RA-pwocyftrauma@pa.gov.

Trauma Training Available for Child Welfare Professionals

OCYF is pleased to announce the continuation of our partnership with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services in contracting with Lakeside Global Institute to provide Pennsylvania child welfare professionals **FREE trauma training**. A child welfare professional includes anyone who serves children and families that who live in Pennsylvania. This applies to professionals or organizations that work to improve the lives of children and families.

Interested in workshops? Click here: lakesidelink.com/training/lgi-trauma-workshops-2024

Interested in the Intensive Courses? Click here: lakesidelink.com/training/course-registration-dhs-2024/

Questions relating to any of these trainings, shall be directed to Beth Hall at: bethh@lakesidetraining.org

Act 48 of 2023

Act 48 of 2023, signed by Governor Shapiro on December 14, 2023, amends Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) to outline new requirements for the provision of timely notification of hearings to potential kinship care resources. Pennsylvania continues to prioritize the use of kin for children who require out-of-home placement. Act 48 ensures that family and kinship care provider voices are heard, and additional kin supports and connections are identified and documented. All provisions of Act 48 took effect on February 12th, 2024. OCYF released guidance related to Act 48 in a Special Transmittal on July 15, 2024.

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 planning and data collection. Act 118 requires county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) to submit data to the department when the court terminates jurisdiction of a child/youth, age 18 years of age or older. Data for a child/youth who returns to care after terminating court jurisdiction, shall be reported to the Department again following termination of court jurisdiction. As a reminder, Act 118 requires specific information to be submitted via each county's DocuShare folder. Requirements related to the specific information that needs to be reported to the department are outlined within the OCYF Special Transmittal-Act 118 (APPLA) released on June 28, 2023. If you need a copy of the Special Transmittal, have questions, or need assistance related to submitting your data, please contact Lindsey Glezen at liglezen@pa.gov or 717-787-7056.

Act 131 of 2022

The Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) Bulletin #3700-23-01, entitled Implementation of Act 131 (Resource Family Legislation Act), repeal of Act 68 of 2005 (The Resource Family and Adoption Process Act), and repeal of Act 73 of 2005 (The Resource Family Care Act), was issued on June 28, 2023. Act 131 defines "resource family", addresses the legal responsibilities of public and private children and youth agencies, and protects a resource family's fair consideration as a permanent resource. Bulletin #3700-23-01 provides clarification and direction to both public and private children and youth agencies regarding the implementation of Act 131. This Bulletin rescinds and replaces Bulletin 3700-08-01

Implementation of Act 68 of 2005 (The Resource Family and Adoption Act), Act 73 of 2005 (The Resource Family Care Act) and Act 76 of 2007.

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Federal Review

Pennsylvania participated in a modified NYTD Review by the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) on January 17-18, 2024. The modified review focused on the technical data reporting aspects of NYTD. This modified technical data review will allow Pennsylvania the opportunity to address identified technical challenges to better improve NYTD data collection. OCYF received ACF's findings and recommendations on September 16, 2024. Additional information will be provided in the near future. Questions related to the NYTD Review can be directed to Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov.

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 19-year-old Follow-up Surveys. The 2025 A period began on October 1, 2024, and ends on March 31, 2025. Counties will have until April 15, 2025, to submit follow-up surveys and served population data for this reporting period. The 2024 B reporting period ended on September 30, 2024 with all survey and served data due on October 15, 2024. Counties can log onto www.getnytdpa.org to enter their served and survey data. NYTD questions can be directed to Lindsey Glezen at liglezen@pa.gov or 717-787-7056.

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 getnytd@pcgus.com.

Chafee Education and Training Grant Programs

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application and instructions for the 2024 – 2025 academic year is available on PHEAA's website at [Chafee Education and Training Grant Program \(phea.org\)](http://Chafee Education and Training Grant Program (phea.org)). The application deadline for the 2024-2025 academic year is March 31, 2025.

As a reminder, current ETG award recipients will automatically be enrolled for the next academic

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year and do not need to complete another ETG application. The ETG award amount cannot exceed the student's cost of attendance.

Questions regarding the ETG program can be directed to Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@pa.gov or at 717-787-7056. Youth who have questions related to their ETG application can contact PHEAA at 1-800-831-0797.

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.

All youth who apply for Chafee ETG are automatically evaluated for FosterEd. There is no separate application.

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.

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 at [Foster Care Contact Directory \(center-school.org\)](https://www.center-school.org).

Additional information about the tuition waiver can be found at [PHEAA.org/FosterEd](https://www.pheaa.org) located at [PA Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program \(pheaa.org\)](https://www.pheaa.org).

Questions related to the FosterEd program can be directed to Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@pa.gov or at 717-787-7056.

Credit Reports

All CCYAs are required to run a credit check for all youth in foster care beginning at age 14 from each of the three Credit Bureaus as required by the Social Security Act §475 (5)(I) [Social Security Act §475 \(ssa.gov\)](https://www.ssa.gov). Each Credit Bureau has a specific

contact person and process to ensure foster care youths' credit history checks are completed appropriately. If you have questions regarding credit report requirements or need assistance obtaining a credit history from one of the Credit Bureaus, please contact Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@pa.gov or at 717-787-7056.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) issued guidance to school entities on August 30, 2023, regarding *Change in Age of Eligibility for Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)*. The communication informed school entities that effective no later than September 5, 2023, all students entitled to FAPE and the rights and procedural safeguards under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Chapter 14 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code may remain enrolled in public school until they turn 22 years of age. This includes students who turned 21 and exited during or after the 2022-2023 school term.

PDE will be contacting students with disabilities who turned 21 and exited during or after the 2022-2023 school term. Local Education Agency (LEA) should also contact those students and provide them the option to re-enroll and access FAPE until their 22nd birthday.

How does this apply to youth in care with County Children and Youth Agency (CCYA):

If you have a student who is eligible under IDEA, they are entitled to FAPE until last day of the age of 21. If you have a student on or around the age of 21, contact education decision makers and school entities regarding Individual Education Plan (IEP) re-evaluations and revisions, to assure their plans reflect the new changes.

CCYAs and Independent Living (IL) workers are encouraged to coordinate IL services with a student's IEP transition planning team to maximize the benefit to the youth. Transition services within the IEP often overlap with service plans within IL services. The IEP and IL transition plan must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment and, when appropriate, independent living skills. Both transition plans must be based on the student's needs and interests, and for IEPs, must be updated every year. Transition services can include instruction in using public transportation, budgeting, cooking, access to college preparation programming (including information on application for Chafee Grants and other financial aid resources), high school and post-secondary vocational programming and linkages to OVR.

While FAPE under the IDEA does not include

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education beyond grade 12, there is a requirement to continue to offer to develop and implement an IEP for eligible students with a disability who graduates from high school with a credential other than a regular high school diploma until the student has exceeded the age of eligibility for FAPE.

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 check out [Family First | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#).

For email PA Family First email updates, please subscribe at [LISTSERV - Subscription Management - LISTSERV.DHS.PA.GOV](#)

Enterprise Case Management System

The Office of Children Youth and Families has developed a website for the Enterprise Case Management (ECM) System. The website contains a section for Child Welfare Case Management (CWCM) Subsystem. As public updates are obtained, they will be shared via the website.

The websites are:

ECM Site: [Enterprise Case Management \(ECM\) | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)

CWCM Specific Page: [ECM Child Welfare Case Management Subsystem | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)

Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Initiatives – American Bar Association (ABA)

The ABA's Center on Children and the Law Permanency Barriers Project is actively seeking new project 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
- Implementing a race equity lens to child welfare work
- 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: [PA Permanency Project \(americanbar.org\)](#) or contact Heidi Redlich Epstein at heidi.epstein@americanbar.org.

For more information on the Education Barriers to Permanency Project please see: [Education Barriers to Permanency Project \(americanbar.org\)](#) or contact Kathleen McNaught at kathleen.mcnaught@americanbar.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 for 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 the PSRFA at [Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association | Support For Foster, Adoptive, And Kinship Families \(psrfa.org\)](#).

If you have any questions or would like additional information, you can contact the PSRFA office at 1-800-951-5151 or email dkinard@psrfa.org or klramper@psrfa.org.

CWEL and CWEB Programs

Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL)

The CWEL Program strengthens Pennsylvania public child welfare services by providing graduate-level educational opportunities for current public child welfare professionals at 13 partner graduate schools. Counties and OCYF approve students for either full-time or part-time participation; all students accepted into the program receive tuition and fees at the in-state rate, reimbursement for books, and other benefits. Full-time students are also granted an educational leave from their jobs and their county employers receive reimbursement for the student's salary and benefits. Upon graduation, a work commitment at their county agency is required. This fall, 51 new students were admitted to the CWEL program.

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE: Information sessions for those considering applying for Summer/Fall 2025 admission will be held on Friday, November 15, 2024, from 1-2 pm and on Friday,

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January 10, 2025 from 9-10 am.

Additional information is available at: [Child Welfare Education for Leadership \(CWEL\) | School of Social Work | University of Pittsburgh](#).

Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB)

We are pleased to welcome seven new schools to the statewide CWEB consortium. Starting with this new academic year, partnership has expanded to include these undergraduate social work programs:

Alvernia University

Cedar Crest College

Elizabethtown College

Juniata College

Lancaster Bible College

Messiah University

Misericordia University

The CWEB program is now present in 22 schools across the state, which provides additional opportunities for senior social work majors to prepare for public child welfare employment. CWEB student's complete child welfare coursework, enroll in Foundations training, and engage in a child welfare practicum in one of the 67 county child welfare agencies. They are ready to join the workforce immediately following graduation. Students accepted into the program receive tuition and fees at the in-state rate for their senior year, fellowship payments during their internship, a bonus upon graduation, and more. Upon graduation, a one-year work commitment in a Pennsylvania public child welfare agency is required. This fall, 38 new students were admitted into the CWEB Program. For more information, visit [Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates | School of Social Work | University of Pittsburgh](#).

The CWEL and CWEB Teams are available to provide presentations to County Commissioners, Advisory Boards, Agency Leadership Teams, Agency Staff Members, and Independent Living Programs. For more information and to schedule a presentation, please contact Laura Borish, CWEL Agency Coordinator at lbb14@pitt.edu or 412-334-9122.

Pennsylvania Kinship Navigator Program, KinConnector

The PA KinConnector Program offers kinship caregivers and professionals who work with kinship caregivers support, guidance, training and resources. Please provide kinship caregivers with information about PA KinConnector. The PA KinConnector website is Kinconnector.org and helpline can be reached at 866-546-2111.

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 caregivers, printable resources, a podcast series called "Kindred Voices," and a virtual Support Group called "Kindred Spirits."

OCYF encourages all county and provider agencies to connect to PA KinConnector and learn more about the services offered, provide new community resource information for website inclusion and to establish partnerships for program growth across the state. Any questions regarding this program can be directed to Diane Michel 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. Each county must have a county employee who is designated as their Accurint administrator. Administrators can be Accurint users or non-users. Non-user administrators do not count toward the county's allotment of users. Counties may have more than one Accurint administrator. If you or your staff would like training on the Accurint software, please contact Accurint Education Consultant, Bill News, at William.News@lexisnexisrisk.com or 215-285-7108.

Additionally, you can look up trainings on the National Training Calendar ([Learning Center | LexisNexis Risk Solutions](#)). If you have any questions about Accurint or to set up a non-user administrator account, please contact Jessica Andrews-Slagel at jandrewssl@pa.gov or 717-787-2726.

Mandated Reporter Training

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) offers virtual and in-person, three-hour, Mandated Reporter Trainings (MRT) at no cost to mandated reporters in Pennsylvania. PFSA also offers trainings with Spanish translators, American Sign Language and Certified Deaf Interpreter translations.

Trainings include, "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse" which meets all the requirements for training on recognizing and reporting child abuse, as well as "Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse" and "Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect", for mandated reporters who have taken Mandated Reporter Training before and

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need to take it again. The “Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse” training is designed to help participants respond to disclosures of child abuse in a way that is sensitive and supportive to the child, but without tainting the child’s memory. The “Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect”, helps participants recognize the signs of neglect, determine when and how to make a referral, and increase understanding of General Protective Services and agency procedures.

PFSA also offers a specialized Residential Care Facility Training (RCFT) for mandated reporters who are employed by organizations and agencies licensed under Title 55, Chapter 3800, Child Residential and Day Treatment Facilities. The RCFT Program provides information to appropriately identify recordable, reportable, and suspected child abuse incidents, as well as information about documentation, minimal facts interviewing and development and implementation of plans of supervision for staff who are under investigation of suspected child abuse.

All trainings utilize a child abuse recognition and reporting training curriculum approved by DHS in consultation with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) as well as approved by the Department of State (DOS) for persons requiring continuing education credit toward licensure or certification. Additional information and training dates can be found on the PSFA website at [Home | Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance \(pafsa.org\)](https://www.pafsa.org). For questions or to schedule a specific session for your organization, please email PFSA at training@pa-fsa.org.

The Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (PA-AAP) offers Mandated Reporter Trainings, specifically for Primary Care Physicians (and their staff), Hospitals, Emergency Medical Services and School Nurses, through their Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) program. To schedule in-person or virtual training for medical professionals, contact PA-AAP at scan@paaap.org or call 866-823-7226.

Media Campaign

The #MeetTheKids media campaign is designed to recruit foster and adoptive families across Pennsylvania. The campaign is scheduled to begin airing in November 2024 and will run through February 2025 and again in May 2025 airing on network and cable television in all six media markets in Pennsylvania. Radio advertisements will also begin airing in November and will continue through December and again in May 2025. In addition to television and radio, the media campaign includes online media ads on Google, Hulu, Facebook, Instagram and Cumulus. These will also start in November and will continue

through February 2025 and then again in May 2025.

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 are scheduled to begin November 2025 and run through June 2025.

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@diakon-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 over 1,100 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 Isabel Madrigal at imadrigal@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 Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) home studies, 100Bs, supervisory reports, Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA) documents, etc.

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Resource Accounts:

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

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

Interstate Unit Fax Number:

717-425-5562

In a runaway situation, email Amanda Behe at abehe@pa.gov or Natalie (Primak) Mwaniki at nmwaniki@pa.gov.

Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

P.O. Box 2675

Harrisburg, PA 17105-2675

717-787-3984

www.dhs.pa.gov

Clearance Verification Unit

Childline's Clearance Verification Unit (CVU) 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 \(state.pa.us\)](http://Pennsylvania Child Welfare Information Solution (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 applications 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. 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.

Visit [Keep Kids Safe | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#) for additional information regarding the clearance or call us at 877-371-5422.

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

SWAN Portal Version 3.0 Implemented

On September 16, the SWAN prime contractor released SWAN Portal Version 3.0. New features offered via this update:

- Ability to upload documents;
- Ability to update Child/Family records without having to submit a form;
- User notifications & dashboard;
- Access to (view only) services list (despite referring county/assigned affiliate);
- Cross-device compatibility & mobile optimization; and
- Compatibility with multiple browsers.

In August, the prime contractor hosted trainings for more than 850 county and affiliate SWAN Portal users to prepare for this release. Users may still access training opportunities or consultation on SWAN Postal Version 3.0 by contacting their SWAN RTA. Post-permanency technical assistants and/or PAE coordinators can also participate in Version 3.0 training sessions.

Another training resource is the *SWAN Portal Version 3.0 User Guide*. This guide is housed in the "Support Documents" section of the SWAN Portal.

The SWAN prime contractor is excited to share this milestone implementation with the network. The portal supports the vital work that affiliate and county agencies deliver on behalf of Pennsylvania's waiting children and families.

Reminder: New PO Box Address

As a reminder, the SWAN prime contractor offices moved in 2023. Both the physical address and PO Box number have changed. Although most forms are processed electronically through the SWAN Portal, take note of the proper address for mailing paper forms (CY130, CY131, CY890, or PAIR): PO Box 959, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0959.

Supervisory Manual: Using and Monitoring SWAN Benchmark Cost/Time Log Data

The SWAN prime contractor is pleased to announce the revision of the *Supervisory Manual: Using and Monitoring SWAN Benchmark Cost/Time Data*. This manual, located on the SWAN Portal and on the SWAN Permanency Toolkit, was originally created to help SWAN affiliate agency supervisors capture all of the data associated with the completion of

SWAN Units of Service through the SWAN Benchmark Cost/Time Log. The current version, edited in collaboration with several SWAN affiliates, now contains detailed instructions and screenshots on the following:

- Opening the automated cost and time quarterly and yearly report,
- Running the automated cost and time analysis feature in the quarterly and yearly reports, and
- Creating a "by worker" view.

Countdown to National Adoption Month!

There are only a few short weeks until November's National Adoption Month! Throughout the month, our network celebrates adoption, enhances awareness about the need for permanent families, and hosts matching events to promote opportunities for children to experience the belongingness, security and love of a forever family. The SWAN prime contractor has two resources to help plan National Adoption Month events: [Adoption Day Events: A Planner's Guide](#) and [Adoption Awareness and Matching Events: Planning for Success](#). Both guides are housed in the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#).

SWAN LSI Resources Support Casework Practice

Concurrent planning is foundational to casework practice. The four goals of concurrent planning align with the efforts of SWAN:

To promote safety, **permanency** and well-being of children and youth in out-of-home care;

To achieve timely **permanency** for children and youth through early permanency decisions;

To reduce the number of moves in the foster care system for children; and

To **engage families and relatives** early and foster significant relationships between children in out-of-home care and their family/kin.

The *SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet* and *Incarceration Resource Manual (IRM)* are tools developed for the network that support concurrent planning, search and engagement and good casework practice. *The Diligent Search Packet* is the go-to resource for anyone conducting a search for missing parents and to locate and engage kin in case planning or if out-of-home placement is needed. The IRM was developed as a comprehensive tool for child welfare professionals to use for case planning with incarcerated parents and as a resource to support agencies' efforts to engage with them. Both resources are available on the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#). If you would like to

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request training on diligent search or incarcerated parents, contact your assigned SWAN LSI coordinator (counties) or SWAN regional technical assistant (affiliates).

Farm Show: Save the Date

The 2025 PA Farm Show will be held January 4-11, 2025 in Harrisburg. In addition to milkshakes, baby goats, rodeos, and unique food, this is a fun opportunity for the network to interact with the public and raise awareness about foster care, adoption and permanency, including your agency's services. Consider volunteering to help staff the SWAN booth and interact with thousands of members of the public. Be on the lookout for additional information in November. Questions? Contact PAE coordinator Alfredo Gonzalez at algonzalez@diakon-swan.org.

CORE Teen and SWAN Units of Service

CORE (Critical Ongoing Resource Family Education) Teen is a FREE state-of-the-art training program, equipping current and prospective resource parents with skills necessary to meet the needs of older youth with moderate to serious emotional and behavioral health challenges. It is accessible at spaulding.org/professionals/spaulding-institute/core-teen-curriculum and can be downloaded.

The CORE Teen program consists of three components: Self-Assessment, Classroom Curriculum and Right Time Videos. The versatility of CORE Teen is limitless! These can be delivered in the original format or provided to participants separately. Pertinent pieces of a component may also be used to meet specific needs of a resource parent. CORE Teen can be delivered in person or virtually and in a group setting or individual sessions.

Training on CORE Teen provided by the prime contractor will be enhanced to include innovative ways CORE Teen can be incorporated into SWAN Units of Service. Be on the lookout for upcoming dates and registration. If you have any questions, reach out to your SWAN regional technical assistant.

Best Practice Reminders: Child Specific Recruitment

The Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) Unit of Service is complete after six months and with documentation of fulfillment of the activities in the written CSR Plan and/or upon the identification of a family. In keeping with the SWAN services continuum, the Placement Unit of Service should be referred upon identification of a family for a child. This unit covers the tasks necessary to

transition the child into the identified home, including coordinating and participating in any pre-placement visits, follow up from visits, input into the pace of visits and monitoring safety. With a formal placement agreement in place and upon child's move into the home, the Finalization Unit of Service begins. *It is highly recommended that children receiving CSR also receive the Child Preparation Unit of Service. This ensures that when the CSR unit ends, the Child Preparation worker, alongside the family's worker, continues the work to support the child and family throughout the Placement and Finalization process.*

Teaming on Behalf of Permanency

The SWAN Units of Service are strongest when a team is identified to help support permanency goals for children and youth. This is an important reminder that team involvement needs to be a priority early when delivering SWAN services and developing plans for providing the services. The team should include at a minimum, a youth's county worker, caregivers, Independent Living (IL) worker, and if appropriate, the youth. Any individual who could support the child or family, such as a child's therapist, can be included on the team.

The SWAN Benchmarks for Child Preparation, Child Specific Recruitment (CSR), Placement, and Finalization all require writing a formalized plan. These plans should be completed within 30 days of referral. Team members should be identified shortly after the referral so their input can be included in the plan.

Team member input and support is vital to the work of each unit of service and is especially instrumental in mitigating barriers that may arise. For example, an IL worker, having formed a trusting relationship with a youth, may be able to help the CSR worker with engaging the youth who is hesitant to participate. Prioritizing teamwork to plan and deliver a SWAN unit of service ensures the use of all available supports and resources to move a youth's permanency plan forward.

SWAN Family Matching Unit of Service Clarification

The SWAN Family Matching Benchmarks, Family Matching Extension Benchmarks, Family Matching Plan and Family Matching Plan Guidelines include the unit's eligibility requirements. One of the criteria within the requirements, searching for children over the age of ten years, has been changed to searching for a child aged ten and over. The revision was made to match the language used within the eligibility criteria for the Affiliate-Referred Family Profile and to clarify the age range.

Post-permanency Service Updates

SWAN Post-permanency services have been updated recently:

- The case advocacy/case management unit of service benchmarks now reflect the network's ability to conduct contact in person, virtually, by phone and by text.
- The benchmarks have been updated to define meaningful contact and how contact should be documented to meet the criteria to invoice a service instance.

Post-permanency Invoicing/Payment Reminders

- Remember to put your respite costs in the "purchased service" section in the respite cost and time log.
- Don't forget! The support group rate has increased to \$1,050/per family/per quarter. Now is a great time to think about starting a group! Contact your Post-permanency Technical Assistant if you have any questions about how to get started.
- Be mindful in completing cost and time. Complete it on a weekly basis to keep an accurate accounting of your practice and travel time.

Changes to SWAN Connect and Additional Information Guidelines

There have been some exciting changes to SWAN Connect. The SWAN Helpline is now asking recruiters to differentiate whether something listed in the child's Additional Information is a *recommendation* or a *requirement* by the child's team. The Additional Information section on the child's CY130 lists information that child recruiters (CSR or OCMI workers) want families to know and consider if they are interested in a particular child.

This will allow the SWAN Helpline to discuss a child's requirements with potential families more precisely while maintaining confidentiality. For example, if a family calls about a child and the Additional Information says the team requires that a child be an only child, the SWAN Helpline will ask if the family has other children in the home. If the family does, they will not initiate a SWAN Connect for the family; instead, they will suggest that the family's caseworker reach out to the child's caseworker to discuss the family's strengths and family composition to see if they might be considered.

Completing the additional information section on a child's CY130 form to include what matching criteria are recommended and what is required is

critical so that the SWAN Helpline can help families make more informed decisions about a child's future needs and suitability for matching.

If you have any questions about how to phrase these differences, contact the PAE coordinator for the specific child.

SWAN Service Referrals in FY 2023-24

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, more than 12,500 units of services were assigned to children and families across Pennsylvania, with Child Preparation and Child Profile making up over 7,100 of total referrals (57%). These two services are essential for promoting stability and permanency and can be provided to any child or youth in the legal custody of a county's children and youth agency regardless of their permanency goal. Ensuring these services are available to all eligible children lays the groundwork for permanency.

2024 SWAN LSI County Partner Survey

The SWAN prime contractor's Research and Quality Assurance (RQA) Division successfully deployed the 2024 SWAN LSI County Partner Survey in April 2024 to a diverse group of county staff and child welfare professionals who regularly interact with LSI paralegals (LSIPs). The purpose of the survey is to measure the SWAN LSI program's effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes based on its perceived impact from the perspective of county partners.

Key Findings:

- **High Satisfaction:** The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the SWAN LSI program's effectiveness in locating parents, finding permanent resources for children, ensuring compliance with statutory guidelines and increasing the timely preparation of legal documents and filings.
- **Valuable Training:** Respondents generally found the training opportunities provided by SWAN LSI to be effective and informative.
- **Positive Impact:** The survey indicated that SWAN LSI has a positive impact on expediting permanency for children within the participating counties.

Overall, the survey results demonstrate that the SWAN LSI program is meeting the needs of county partners and is making a positive contribution to child welfare services in Pennsylvania. To read about these survey results in more detail, see diakon-swan.org/news/2024/2024-lsi-county-partner-survey-results.

SWAN LSI Year in Review SFY 2023-2024

With the close of the 2023-2024 State Fiscal Year, data collected from the SWAN Portal shows the indispensable role that SWAN LSI paralegals (LSIPs) play, providing essential legal services that impact the lives of children and families across Pennsylvania.

From July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, SWAN LSIPs impacted the cases of 27,252 individual children. This number is down from 28,524 in SFY 2022-2023 and 31,479 in SFY 2021-2022, reflecting the encouraging decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care throughout Pennsylvania. There is no doubt that the efforts of SWAN LSI have contributed to this positive trend.

Diligent Searches performed by SWAN LSI remain an invaluable tool as counties rely on LSIPs to locate individuals and help identify connections for youth in care. In SFY 2023-2024 LSIPs completed a total of 18,197 diligent searches. Approximately 47% of all searches were performed for the purpose of locating a missing parent while approximately 50% were performed to support family finding or to identify permanent connections for children in care.

SWAN LSI's impact in the courtroom also continues to be felt as agencies rely on LSIPs to maintain the efficiency of both the Juvenile and Orphans' Court processes. In SFY 2023-2024, LSIPs performed 100,815 total Juvenile Court activities including attending 21,776 hearings and preparing 43,966 documents. LSIPs also performed 18,810 total Orphans Court activities, including drafting 3,820 petitions for termination of parental rights. Additionally, SWAN LSIPs completed 1,558 activities related to the adoption of a child in Pennsylvania.

SWAN LSI looks forward to continuing to work toward positive outcomes for children and families through ongoing collaboration with county children and youth agencies as we move forward in SFY 2024-2025.

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

Older Youth Retreat

The Older Youth Retreat was held at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown Campus July 29 – August 2, 2024. There were fifty-eight youth in attendance on the first day representing twenty-four counties. You can view a recap of the older youth retreat at: payab.pitt.edu/2024_Retreat_Video.

Next year's retreat is already set for July 28 – August 1, 2025, so mark your calendars!

Please feel free to contact Meghan O'Hare, meo43@pitt.edu with any questions regarding the event.

Older Youth Training and Resources

There are several sources of information related to older youth maintained by the Child Welfare Resource Center. These include:

- PA Youth Advisory Board website, which includes information for youth and staff www.payab.pitt.edu.
- PA Child Welfare Resource Center website www.pacwrc.pitt.edu.
 - Including webinars specific to older youth www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Webinars.htm
- PA Youth Advisory Board Facebook page www.facebook.com/PAYouthAdvisoryBoard

SAT Waivers

As another year of school is approaching, many of our high school juniors and seniors are not only looking to achieve their high school diploma or GED certificate, but they may be considering their options regarding post-secondary education. The process of applying for college admission can be expensive. Costs may include SAT fees and institutional application fees. To reduce this financial barrier, the College Board provides SAT fee waivers to various agencies to distribute to qualified, economically disadvantaged students who plan to take the SAT tests. As a reminder, the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) is one of the agencies designated to distribute SAT fee waivers. Below you will find some additional information about the waivers, as well as the process on how to obtain a waiver code for your youth.

SWAN Prime Contract

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PO Box 959
Camp Hill, PA 17011
Ph: 717-236-8490 | Fax: 717-236-8510
www.diakon-swan.org
www.dhs.pa.gov/AdoptPAkids



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- The Child Welfare Resource Center will be distributing SAT Reasoning and SAT Subject Test Electronic Fee Waiver codes to aid Pennsylvania's Older Youth in continuing their higher education.
- An SAT Fee Waiver Request Form should be completed by the county children and youth agency, or the private provider agency contracted by the county.
- Completed forms should be emailed, as an attachment to Sherri Krodel, slk114@pitt.edu. Please keep in mind the deadline for each testing date and allow enough time to process the paperwork.
- Upon receipt of the request, an electronic fee waiver code will be sent to the requestor.

Students receive two (2) College Application Fee Waivers on their College Board account after they take an SAT test using a fee waiver code. The same code can be used for both SAT tests.

In previous years, the high absentee rates raised concerns from the College Board. Test-day absenteeism among fee-waiver recipients not only results in a monetary loss, but it also results in lost opportunities for students. Below are four main concerns students have identified as reasons for missing the test.

- Access to transportation/directions
- Better preparation and more confidence
- A closer test center location
- More encouragement and reminders

With this in mind, we are asking that every effort be made to ensure youth have the support they need to be prepared to take the test. Specific questions regarding the SAT waiver should be directed to the College Board: Middle States Regional Office at satsuite.collegeboard.org/contact-us. Questions regarding how to obtain an electronic fee waiver code may be directed to Sherri Krodel at slk114@pitt.edu.

PA Statewide Youth Advisory Board

The Youth Advisory Board is in the process of finalizing the following resources which will be available at www.payab.pitt.edu along with other relevant information related to older youth work across the state.

Guide to Bonding with Black & Brown Youth

Black and Brown youth are disproportionately represented in the foster care system, facing unique challenges and systemic disparities. To effectively support these youth, caseworkers should educate themselves about key concepts like allyship, marginalization, and white privilege. Recognizing and addressing personal biases, embracing uncomfortable conversations about racism, and using trauma-informed practices are crucial. Engaging authentically, actively listening, and providing culturally relevant support will help build trust and empower these youth. Acknowledge your own privilege and approach interactions with humility and respect. Utilize available resources such as training programs, community contacts, and relevant literature to deepen your understanding and improve your practice.

Stipend Policy Recommendations

The PA Youth Advisory Board's stipend policy recommendations aim to support older youth in Pennsylvania's Independent Living (IL) programs by addressing their needs in education, lifestyle, necessities, and additional support. Stipends should cover academic bonuses, school fees, books, computers, and tutoring, as well as goals and financial needs like job clothing, transportation, housing, and childcare. Additional support includes financial incentives for participating in events, savings match programs, and transitional supports. Considerations should include respecting youth autonomy, providing resources for financial skills, and addressing barriers like lack of financial literacy, banking access, and transportation issues. Youth should also have access to age-appropriate savings accounts. Each county should adapt support to meet individual needs, as highlighted by youth testimonials about the positive impact of such assistance.

PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)

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