

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA), in partnership with OCYF, has planned several activities and events during April, Child Abuse Prevention Month. For a complete list of all activities and information about Child Abuse Prevention Month, please visit pafsa.org. Below are two events scheduled to occur later in the month:

- April 16, 2026, 11:00 am, Spotlight Speaker Series Presentation: *Emerging Trends in Online Safety and Prevention* given by Sarah Bean, Director of Research and Programs at the Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI).
- April 29, 2026, at 12:00 pm, Spotlight Speaker Series Presentation: *Diving Deep: Online Child Sexual Exploitation & Prevention* given by Laila Mickelwait, founder of the Traffickinghub movement.

To participate in either event, please register at pafsa.org.

Throughout April: Blue Ribbon Campaign

The symbol for child abuse prevention is the blue ribbon. Wearing a blue ribbon (or blue clothing) is a visual way for individuals to demonstrate they are taking a stand against child abuse and encouraging others to do the same.

National Foster Care Month

May is National Foster Care Month. This year's theme, "Engaging Youth. Building Supports. Strengthening Opportunities," recognizes the important role that people from all parts of child welfare play in supporting children, youth, and families and highlights the need to create a child welfare system that authentically engages and supports young people who are preparing to leave foster care.

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 May. 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 Denise Sheffield at desheffiel@pa.gov. All requests must be in the form of a picture (jpg or png).

OCYF Trauma Team

The OCYF Trauma Team is proud to announce the release of the *Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Child Welfare Professionals* training. This training explores what it means to be trauma-sensitive and is the second module in a series designed to support Pennsylvania's Child Welfare organizations in becoming Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered. The OCYF Trauma Team extends thanks to their partners at the CWRC for their ongoing collaboration in this important work.

Additionally, the CWRC has announced the release of the *Trauma-Informed Supervision in Casework Practice in Pennsylvania* course. This six-hour in-person, Team-Based Learning™ module provides opportunities for skill growth and application, including developing plans and tools for immediate application by supervisors. It is about reexamining how and why supervisors do what they do, how they model trauma-informed behaviors, and how they can positively impact supervisees' well-being and that of children, families, and themselves by applying the principles of trauma-informed care.

This training is one of many trauma-informed courses available through the CWRC as part of the OCYF Trauma Team's broader efforts. To access the full list of trauma-informed trainings, please visit the E-learn site at e-learn.pitt.edu under the Well-being section.

As the OCYF Trauma team continues to expand trauma-informed courses through the CWRC, the team remains committed to education and to advancing trauma-informed care within the system. The trauma-informed courses available through the CWRC remain free of charge to all OCYF licensed providers.

Educational Stability

Pennsylvania School Code Update: Update to the Procedure When a Child is Truant

The Pennsylvania School Code, [§ 1333](#), has been updated by [Act 47 of 2025](#) to include new provisions regarding the procedure for when a child is truant. The update includes new language requiring that LEAs:

- (2.1) shall include notice to the person in parental relation that a child who is habitually truant may not transfer, during the school year, to a cyber charter school unless a judge determines that the transfer is in the best interest of the child;
- (2.2) shall include resources available to assist the child and the person in parental relation with returning the child to compliant compulsory school attendance and opportunities for further academic recovery in response to the truant behavior.

Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) new Data Point

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and the Center for Schools and Communities (CSC) have issued [guidance](#) on the new "Foster Student" data point within the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS).

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 were 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:

- 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.

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

NYTD collects information in the following areas: Baseline Population (surveys every youth who reaches age 17 while in foster care or enters foster care within 45 days of their 17th birthday), Follow-up Population (surveys a random sample of Baseline youth at age 19 and 21, depending on Cohort period), and Served Population (any youth or young adult receiving independent living services paid for or provided by the county regardless of age).

October 1, 2025 marked the beginning of Cohort 6 for the Baseline Population. All youth who reach age 17 while in care must be registered and provided with an opportunity to complete a survey within the required 45-day window of their 17th birthday. OCYF encourages youth to be compensated for completing their baseline survey. The 2026A reporting period ended on March 31, 2026, with all data being due by April 15, 2026. The 2026B period began on April 1, 2026 and will run through September 30, 2026.

Counties can log onto [Pennsylvania NYTD](#) to enter their served and survey data. NYTD questions can

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be directed to Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@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 2025–2026 academic year are available on PHEAA’s website at [Chafee Education and Training Grant \(Chafee ETG\) Program](#). The application for the 2026-27 academic year should be available on the PHEAA website soon.

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.

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 post-secondary 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 public (state) colleges and universities, community colleges, private post-secondary institutions and other eligible schools. Youth are eligible to receive waivers for 10 semesters, which need not be consecutive, or until age 26. All youth who apply for Chafee ETG are automatically evaluated for FosterEd.

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 when entering post-secondary education and financial aid packages are 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](#).

Additional information about the tuition waiver can be found at [PA Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver \(FosterEd\) Program](#). Questions regarding FosterEd can be directed to Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@pa.gov or at 717-787-7056.

Credit Reports

The Social Security Act §475 requires that CCYAs perform credit checks for all youth in foster care at age 14 and older by all three credit bureaus on a yearly basis. Each Credit Bureau has a specific contact person and a process to ensure foster care youths’ credit history checks are completed appropriately. If you have questions regarding credit reporting 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.

Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Initiatives – American Bar Association (ABA)

The ABA Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Project and Education Barriers Project are actively seeking new projects or technical assistance counties.

These projects work collaboratively with key county stakeholders from the child welfare agency, court, education system, private providers, and community by providing intensive on-site assistance to counties for two to three years, depending on needs.

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;
- Integrating a kin-first culture;
- Providing hands-on court skills and testifying training for case workers;
- Incorporating a race equity lens in child welfare;
- Implementing trauma-informed court practices
- Meeting the educational needs of youth in foster care;
- Improving school stability and education decision making;
- Special education advocacy; and
- Engaging parents in educational advocacy.

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For more information on Permanency Barriers technical assistance, visit [PA Permanency Project](#) or contact Heidi Redlich Epstein at heidi.epstein@americanbar.org.

For more information on the Education Barriers to Permanency Project, please visit the Education Barriers to Permanency Project [PA Permanency Project](#) or contact Kathleen McNaught at kathleen.mcnaught@americanbar.org.

Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA)

The Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA) is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Pennsylvania's foster, adoptive and kinship families. For more than 50 years, PSRFA has worked to strengthen families, elevate their voices and ensure they never feel alone on their journey. PSRFA provides advocacy, guidance and connection to trusted resources. Through our eight regions, we identify local needs and coordinate meaningful training opportunities across the Commonwealth.

PSRFA also hosts "1 Village 1 Voice," a virtual monthly training and support group held on the second Thursday of each month from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. The first hour (6:30–7:30 p.m.) consists of a free training session open to both resource families and professionals. The final 30 minutes (7:30–8:00 p.m.) provides a peer support space for foster, adoptive and kinship families, allowing for open discussion in a confidential and supportive environment. The support portion may extend slightly beyond 8:00 p.m., as needed. To register or request additional information, please email Gretchen Ray at 1village1voice@gmail.com.

National Foster Care Month – May 2026

In celebration of National Foster Care Month, PSRFA will host two Resource Family Appreciation events across Pennsylvania:

May 16, 2026 – At PNC Park as the Pittsburgh Pirates take on the Philadelphia Phillies.

May 30, 2026 – In Reading, PA, as the Reading Fightin' Phils face the Harrisburg Senators.

Both events include tickets, food and beverages for PSRFA member families as our heartfelt thank-you for their dedication and service to children across the Commonwealth. Tickets are limited and will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Families who are not yet members are invited to join and celebrate with us.

Family Membership: \$25 per year

Agency Membership: \$60 per year

Membership provides access to statewide support, National Foster Care Month activities, training opportunities, advocacy updates, scholarships, discounted or complimentary registration for PSRFA's annual October conference and a connected community of resource families.

Board Representation Opportunities

To strengthen regional representation and ensure local voices are reflected in statewide advocacy efforts, PSRFA is currently seeking volunteer Board Members for:

Region 4: Lycoming, Union, Snyder, Montour, Columbia, Northumberland, Schuylkill, Berks and Lehigh Counties

Region 7: Erie, Crawford, Warren, McKean, Cameron, Elk, Jefferson, Clarion, Forest and Mercer Counties

Resource parents are strongly encouraged to apply. Professionals are also welcome to serve, in accordance with PSRFA's bylaws requiring that at least two-thirds of the Board be comprised of resource families.

Individuals interested in leadership and statewide collaboration are encouraged to connect with us.

For more information about becoming a member or joining our Board of Directors, please visit www.psrfa.org or contact Executive Director Melissa Geesaman at mgeesaman@psrfa.org or 1-800-951-5151.

CWEB and CWEL Programs

Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) The CWEB program is now present in 22 schools across the state, which provides ample opportunity for senior social work majors to prepare for public child welfare employment. CWEB students 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. During the summer

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and fall terms of 2025, 7 students completed their studies and began agency employment. This brings the total number of CWEL graduates to 1,439 since the program began in 2001. For more information, visit Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates at [Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates | School of Social Work](#).

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. Nine programs offer a fully online course of study. 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 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. During the summer and fall terms of 2025, 20 students completed studies and resumed agency employment. This brings the total number of CWEL grads to 1,804 since the program began in 1995. Additional information is available at [Child Welfare Education for Leadership | School of Social Work](#).

The CWEL and CWEL 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/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 helpline can be reached at 866-546-2111. The website, Kinconnector.org, 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." You can also view highlighted stories of kinship families [here](#).

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 Jessica Kraft at Jessica.Kraft@lexisnexisrisk.com or 937-286-7660.

Additionally, you can look up trainings on the National Training Calendar ([Home page - LexisNexis® Risk Solutions Learning Center](#)).

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 Curriculum

OCYF contracts with three entities to provide free of charge mandated reporter training. These contracts are as follows:

- The Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA), which offers mandated reporter training both in-person and through live virtual sessions.
- The Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (PA-AAP), which operates the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) program for physicians and medical personnel.
- The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC), which operates a self-paced online curriculum.

All trainings offered through these contracts 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

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(DOS) for persons requiring continuing education credit toward licensure or certification.

PFSA

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. PFSA also offers MRT for Amish Foster Parents and Amish Mandated Reporters conducted by an Amish instructor.

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 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" training 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 individuals 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.

Additional information and training dates can be found at [Home | Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance](#). For questions or to schedule a specific session for your organization, please email PFSA at training@pa-fsa.org.

PA-AAP

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.

CWRC

CWRC continues to offer a free, virtual, on-demand Mandated Reporter Training. The course is available at reportabusepa.pitt.edu.

Media Campaigns

The **#MeetTheKids** media campaign is designed to support recruitment efforts for foster and adoptive families across Pennsylvania. OCYF will continue the previous campaign, which will begin airing in April 2026 and run through the end of July 2026 on network and cable television in all six media markets in Pennsylvania. This will also include radio advertisements. In addition to television and radio, the media campaign includes online media advertisements on Google, Hulu, Facebook, Instagram and Cumulus.

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

To view **#MeetTheKids** public campaign materials, visit: [Meet The Kids | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#).

The PA **KinConnector** media campaign is designed to create awareness to kinship caregivers about the PA KinConnector program. PA KinConnector is a specialized information and referral program that assists kinship families in finding financial, legal and healthcare related services. PA KinConnector's goal is to help stabilize kinship caregivers so they can provide a permanent, loving home to the children in their care. The media campaign will run from April through August 2026, and includes online, television and radio advertisements.

The **Keep Kids Safe (KKS)** media campaign is designed to educate the public about reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. The campaign runs on an annual basis and includes television, radio and online and print advertisements and directs viewers to the www.KeepKidsSafe.pa.gov and to call ChildLine (1-800-932-0313) to report suspected child abuse or neglect. This year, the KKS media campaign will run from April through August 2026 and includes online, TV and radio ads.

For both PA KinConnector and KKS public campaign materials, which include print, online and television advertisements, visit: [Keep Kids Safe Media | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#).

Waiting Child Segments

The Department of Human Services, Office of Children Youth and Families funds five waiting child segments across the state designed to find adoptive families for older youth in need of families. Waiting child segments have proven to be successful over the years in helping find permanent homes for children in foster care and providing the opportunity to enhance child-specific recruitment efforts across the Commonwealth.

If you'd like to feature a waiting child, please reach out to the representative listed below.

Waiting Child, KDKA-TV, Channel 2, CBS, Pittsburgh

Nikita Lewis at nlewis@diakon-swan.org

Val's Kids, ABC27 WHTM, Harrisburg

Alfredo Gonzalez at algonzalez@diakon-swan.org

A Little Love, WBRE-TV, channel 28, NBC, Wilkes-Barre

Sarah Reiss at sreiss@diakon-swan.org

Finding Forever, WJAC, channel 6, Johnstown

Katie Juliana at kjuliana@diakon-swan.org

A Family for Life, WSEE, channel 35, CBS and WICU, channel 12, NBC, Erie

Nic Landon at nlandon@diakon-swan.org

SWAN/IL Google Groups

The SWAN/IL Listserv, hosted through Google Groups, serves as an excellent platform for network members to share confidential information, waiting families, waiting children, matching events, and post-permanency resources. It also provides opportunities to seek advice from colleagues and announce upcoming events. Membership is limited to employees of county children and youth agencies, SWAN affiliate agencies, or IL providers. 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.

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.

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. Applicants can 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.Indentogo.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

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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.

Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

P.O. Box 2675
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2675
717-787-3984
www.dhs.pa.gov

From the SWAN Prime Contract

Diakon-SWAN, LLC/Voce

SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet: New Edition Coming Soon

The *SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet*, located on the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#), is being updated to ensure access to the most current resources. We anticipate a summer release of the new *SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet* (10th edition).

The *SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet* is a tool developed for the network to support concurrent planning, search and engagement and best practices. The *Diligent Search Packet* is the go-to resource for anyone conducting a search for missing parents, locating and engaging kin in case planning, or when out-of-home placement is needed.

SWAN LSI paralegals support searches for: locating parents, Fostering Connections (within 30 days of a child entering care), connections for older youth, locating connections for case planning, child-specific recruitment or Older Child Matching Initiative referrals and compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act. Nearly every child involved in child welfare services will benefit from search activities at some point in their case.

If you would like to request training on diligent search, contact your assigned SWAN LSI coordinator (counties) or SWAN regional technical assistant (affiliates).

Working With Incarcerated Parents to Impact Permanency and Improve Outcomes for All

The Pennsylvania State Roundtable's Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup reminds us in their mission statement that, under the law, "incarcerated parents have the same rights as parents who are not incarcerated—to fully participate in the court process, to fully participate in case planning, to require the agency to make reasonable efforts toward reunification, and to have visitation and contact with their children." Additionally, research finds that "maintaining parent-child contact is critical for decreasing negative outcomes for both incarcerated parents and their children." ([Source](#))

SWAN LSI emphasizes engaging incarcerated parents throughout the life of a child welfare case, recognizing its impact on achieving permanency for children in care. The [SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual \(IRM\)](#) remains a valuable, comprehensive tool for child welfare professionals to use in case planning with incarcerated parents

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and to support the county agencies’ efforts to engage with these parties. The manual provides protocols for each county correctional facility in Pennsylvania, including:

- Guidance on written and telephone communication to support contact between the incarcerated parents and children;
- Visitation schedules or video visitation to support parent-child visitation; and
- Services available to the incarcerated parent to support reunification and permanency efforts.

The IRM is focused on sharing information specific to Pennsylvania’s county prison facilities. However, the IRM also includes links to resources available to assist in case planning for parents incarcerated in state or federal facilities. If you have any questions about the IRM or have updates about a facility’s protocols, contact lsirmupdates@diakonswan.org.

SWAN Legal Services Initiative (LSI) Stays the Course

Recent data reviews and five-year trend analyses indicate that SWAN LSI paralegals remain a driving force in removing legal barriers to permanency for children in Pennsylvania’s foster care system. In 2025, LSI paralegals were involved in the cases of 24,724 unique children, comparable to 24,650 unique children served in the previous year.

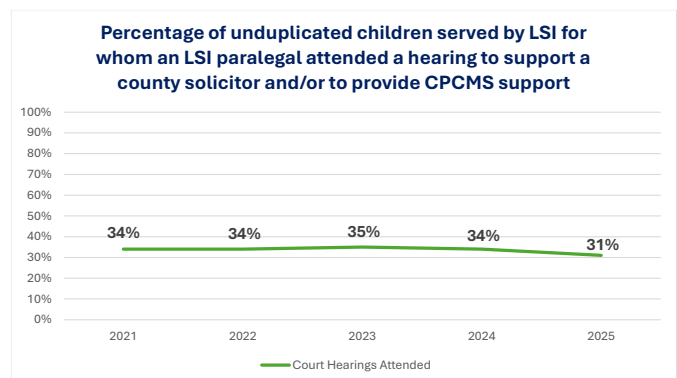
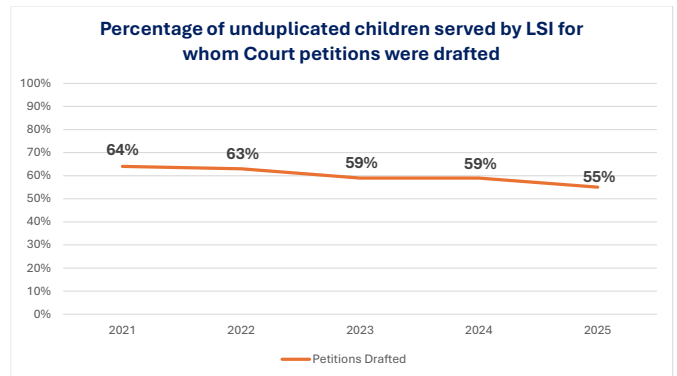
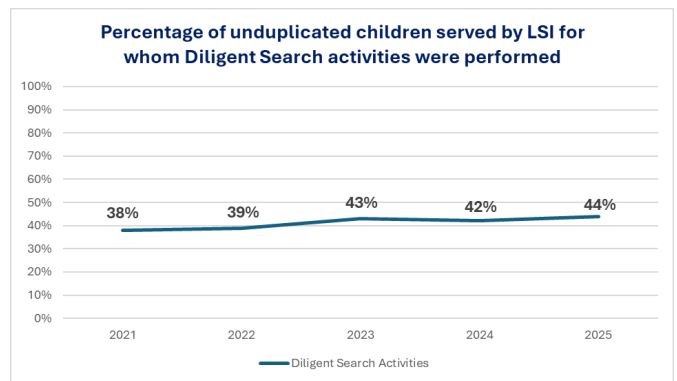
From January 1st through December 31st of 2025, LSI paralegals performed a total of 20,319 diligent search activities, an increase from 18,760 total searches in 2024. Diligent search activities were performed for 10,853 unique children representing 44% of the 24,724 total children served by LSI during this time. The percentage of children receiving diligent search intervention has increased by 6% over the last five years, as illustrated in the graph below.

During the same 2025 calendar year, LSI paralegals prepared 36,155 combined Juvenile and Orphans’ Court petitions for 13,481 unique children. This means that at least one petition was drafted for 55% of all LSI-involved children. Additionally, LSI paralegals attended court hearings for 7550 unique children representing 31% of all LSI-involved children. LSI paralegals regularly attend court hearings to support county solicitors, and some attend to draft hearing outcome orders in Pennsylvania’s Common Pleas Criminal Court Case Management System.

The complete five-year breakdown of these three LSI activity types is shown in the graphs below. Each of the line graphs represents the percentage of all children served by LSI who received each

type of activity. While these total numbers and percentages can vary from year to year and are subject to trends in placement and court procedures, they consistently show that LSI paralegals provide essential legal services that affect the cases of most Pennsylvania foster children.

In 2026, the Research and Quality Assurance Division of the SWAN prime contractor will continue evaluating LSI program data to identify where the program is making the greatest impact and where additional support can be provided to county agencies to address legal barriers to permanency.



Have You Been Looking Forward to the Next Statewide Virtual Matching Event (VME)?

Great news — we have too!

The 2026 Statewide VME will be live **November 13 –20, 2026**. Affiliate agencies will receive early access beginning **October 26th** to update and refresh your booth. This is a perfect time to remove outdated materials and prepare new content that highlights your families and youth.

Consider incorporating creative and engaging elements such as:

- Virtual Lifebooks for families;
- Waiting child feature segments;
- Video family flyers;
- Youth introduction videos; and
- Creative flyers for youth and families.

Be sure to save the dates **October 26–November 6, 2026** to set aside time for “booth remodeling.”

In the meantime, please work to identify who at your agency will serve as your booth point person and/or booth designer.

SWAN Helpline Upgrades Phone System

The SWAN Helpline has been upgraded with a new phone system, enhancing how we support families at every stage of the foster and adoption journey. Callers can still speak directly with a SWAN technical specialist or leave a message after hours, but the new system offers improved reliability and responsiveness.

A key enhancement is the addition of a call queue, which allows us to manage incoming calls more effectively and reduce missed connections. This means families experience shorter wait times and more consistent support when reaching out for information and guidance.

Overall, these improvements strengthen our ability to respond promptly and ensure families receive timely assistance.

Authorized Representative Quarterly Support Group

The next Authorized Representatives Quarterly Support Group will be on **April 20th from 10 – 12:00**. This will be a virtual meeting at the Zoom link below. All Authorized Representatives who are appointed by their agency or court to conduct adoption searches per Act 101 of 2010 are invited to participate. If you have questions, please reach out to Central Region Technical Assistance Division Manager Kelly Weston at kweston@diakon-swan.org.

<https://zoom.us/j/96986588826>

SWAN Prime Contract

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www.diakon-swan.org

www.dhs.pa.gov/AdoptPAkids

 /adoptpakids

 /adoptpa

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

2026 Older Youth Retreat

Please save the date for the 2026 Older Youth Retreat, which will be held July 27 – 31, 2026. Additional information regarding the event can be found at [IL Older Youth Retreat - Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board](#).

Independent Living Worker of the Year Award Nomination Form

This year at the Older Youth Retreat, an individual will be recognized as the Independent Living Worker of the Year. The Independent Living Worker of the Year Award offers an opportunity for youth to recognize independent living staff in Pennsylvania who have positively impacted their life. The staff member can be nominated by any youth or alumni of the child welfare system ages 14-23 who currently receive independent living or aftercare services through a County Children and Youth or private provider agency. To nominate staff, youth must complete the form located at [Independent Living Worker of the Year Award Nomination Form](#) no later than May 1, 2026.

The award will be presented at the 2026 Older Youth Retreat. If you have any questions regarding the form or nomination process, please contact Meghan O'Hare at meo43@pitt.edu.

PA Youth Advisory Board (YAB) and Citizen Review Panel (CRP)

The Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board (YAB) continues its leadership as the state's fourth designated Citizen Review Panel (CRP). Through its regional boards, YAB advances youth-driven initiatives that elevate lived experience, inform child welfare practice, and strengthen opportunities for young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood. Each region has identified priority areas for the 2026–2027 recommendation cycle, focusing on issues that directly affect youth well-being, permanency and long-term success.

Regional Priorities for 2026–2027

- *Southwest – Pregnant and Parenting Youth Continuation (Fathers)*
Goal: Develop a dedicated section on the YAB website featuring resources for fathers in care, including information on rights, supports, and

available services. Printed materials will also be distributed to high schools and community organizations to increase awareness and accessibility.

- *Northeast – Family Connection*
Goal: Strengthen sibling and family relationships by supporting youth in maintaining meaningful, consistent connections with their loved ones. This initiative emphasizes the importance of relational permanency and emotional support networks.
- *Southeast – What to Expect After Adoption*
Goal: Create a youth-friendly questionnaire to guide video interviews with adopted youth, highlighting their experiences and sharing adoption success stories. A companion brochure will be developed, including contact information for adoption networks and crisis support resources to ensure youth and families know where to turn for help.
- *South Central – Employment Resources*
Goal: Produce a comprehensive employment resource packet for youth ages 14–23 in the South Central region and across Pennsylvania. This packet will be accessible on both the Valley Youth House and YAB websites and will include job readiness tools, workforce programs, and other employment resources.

2026 YAB Leadership Summit

Planning for the 2026 Youth Leadership Summit continues. The event will be held on June 10–11, 2026, bringing together young leaders from across Pennsylvania for two days of growth, connection, and skill building. Throughout the Summit, participants will engage in training sessions focused on Advocacy, Child Welfare 101, and effective Engagement and Collaboration.

This year's keynote speaker, Jim Donovan, will lead a special session on music therapy, offering youth a unique opportunity to explore how rhythm, sound and creativity can support healing, focus, and personal empowerment.

Speaker's Bureau

CWRC held a Speaker's Bureau event on April 2, 2026, which provided youth with a full day of hands-on learning and leadership development. There was a session on Strategic Sharing in the morning. Participants engaged in core training sessions including, Child Welfare 101, Engagement, Collaboration and Trauma-informed Care, provided by curriculum partners.

Through these trainings, youth were able to deepen their understanding of the child welfare

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system and strengthen their voice, build confidence and develop the knowledge and skills needed to advocate effectively within their communities and across statewide child-serving systems.

PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)

403 E. Winding Hill Road

Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

717-795-9048 | www.payab.pitt.edu

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Council Engagement

In collaboration with OCYF, CWRC is expanding statewide awareness and participation in the NYTD. A recorded presentation is currently in development and will be distributed to counties and regional partners when complete. It will also be posted on the YAB website to help youth understand the purpose of NYTD surveys and how their participation influences services and policy. The NYTD Council aims to strengthen engagement at local YAB meetings, ensuring young people have a clear platform to share their experiences and perspectives.

YAB Consultant Recruitment

The YAB is seeking consultants for the north central, south central, and northwest regions. YAB consultants play a key role in supporting youth advocacy efforts regionally and advancing initiatives that improve outcomes for older youth in foster care. Responsibilities include:

- Coordinating activities and communication for regional Youth Advisory Boards;
- Organizing quarterly regional meetings and contributing to statewide YAB events;
- Supporting community service projects that empower and engage youth; and
- Assisting with legislative and policy efforts that elevate youth voices.

Individuals interested in learning more or applying may contact Carl Butler at CLB379@pitt.edu.

Resources

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board maintains a website with resources for both youth and staff at [Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board](#).

Some resources that may be helpful to your work with older youth include the following:

Teen Success Agreement developed by the Juvenile Law Center

[TeenSuccessAgreementFINAL_0.pdf](#)

Permanency Pact developed By FosterClub

[PermPact.pdf](#)

CFSR Round 4 Stakeholder Interviews

As of October 23, 2025, Pennsylvania was approved by the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) to proceed with a State-Led CFSR for Round 4. The CFSR consists of multiple phases. The first phase includes a written Statewide Assessment that provides qualitative and quantitative evidence on how well Pennsylvania's child welfare system is functioning. On February 2, 2026, Pennsylvania's Statewide Assessment was submitted to ACF. ACF will review the state's assessment and upon their review it is anticipated that they will identify areas that may need additional information.

Areas of the Statewide Assessment that require further information to evaluate systemic functioning will be supplemented through a series of Stakeholder Interviews with system and community partners. Stakeholders will be selected by OCYF in collaboration with ACF and may include individuals, such as families and youth involved in Pennsylvania's child welfare system, members of the judicial and legal communities, as well as county caseworkers and supervisors. Stakeholder interviews are scheduled to occur during the week of May 18-22, 2026, will be conducted virtually, and facilitated by ACF. While ACF has yet to provide a list of groups they want to interview, OCYF is preparing in advance to identify and schedule these groups based upon Round 3 CFSR experience and ACF guidance.

OCYF is seeking 15-20 county caseworkers as well as 15-20 county supervisors to volunteer and participate in the interview process. The interviews for caseworkers, independent living caseworkers, and supervisors will be held in separate group sessions lasting one hour during the following dates and times respectively:

- **Caseworkers:** May 18, 2026 – 1:00-2:00 pm
- **Supervisors:** May 22, 2026 – 1:30-2:00 pm

Participants will be provided with a list of questions in advance. However, in the meantime, the following topics are anticipated to be covered during the interviews:

- Family Service Plans and Child Permanency Plans
- Permanency Hearings and Timeframes
- Quality Assurance System
- Caseworker and Supervisor Training
- Data and Information Collection/Utilization/Reliability

These interviews are critically important, as they will help in the determination of how well Pennsylvania's child welfare system is functioning.

We appreciate your consideration and collaboration in identifying individuals for the CFSR Round 4 Stakeholder Interviews.

When you have identified individual(s) to participate, please email Valerie Zitterbart at vzitterbar@pa.gov

Participation responses are requested by Tuesday, March 31, 2026. Participants will receive a Teams meeting virtual invitation for the respective date and time as indicated above.



AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

Center on Children
and the Law



Trial Skills

for Child Welfare Caseworkers

TESTIFY WITH CONFIDENCE!

Bridge case work and law through an **interactive training** conducted by national child welfare experts from the ABA Center on Children and the Law, aimed at building the necessary skills to testify with clarity, professionalism, and confidence.

Available in two formats **designed to meet your jurisdiction's needs**, this training is **offered at no cost** to your county through the ABA Permanency Barriers Project, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

Format #1

Full Day Trial Skills Training for Caseworkers

A dynamic, in-person program designed to strengthen courtroom skills through lecture and testimony practice. Each caseworker will participate in exercises based on a child welfare case scenario and receive personalized constructive feedback from experienced attorneys.

Format #2

The Art of Trial Advocacy Interactive Training for Caseworkers

This half day training is available in-person or virtually and is designed to strengthen caseworkers' knowledge and skills through lecture, discussion, and practical exercises. Each participant will receive a Pennsylvania resource notebook to assist with future cases.

+ Benefits of Trial Skills for Caseworkers

- **Understand Your Role** – Learn how to navigate each stage of the court process by understanding its purpose, procedures, and potential outcomes.
- **Turn Casework into Impactful Testimony** – Present your documentation and advocate for the agency's position with clarity and credibility.
- **Leave Court-Ready** – Implement effective strategies to prepare for and deliver persuasive testimony under both direct and cross-examination.

ABA staff will collaborate with county agency leadership to assess training needs, align content with county priorities, and develop resource materials to reflect state laws and county-specific procedures.



To bring this training to your county contact Rhonda Serrano at Rhonda.Serrano@americanbar.org