

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

OCYF Personnel Update

Ms. Jacquelyn Maddon, Bureau of Children and Family Services, northeast regional director has retired. OCYF thanks Ms. Maddon for her dedication and efforts in protecting and supporting Pennsylvania's children, youth and families during her career. **Mr. Brian Waugh** is currently serving as acting regional director and can be reached at bwaugh@pa.gov.

Extension of Aftercare Services and Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG)

Under the provisions of the *Family First Prevention Services Act*, Pennsylvania will extend aftercare services to age 23 and Chafee ETG to age 26 beginning state fiscal year 2020-21.

The extension of aftercare services from ages 21 to 23 will allow former foster youth to receive IL services, which include needs assessment/case planning, life skills training, prevention services, education, support services, employment, location of housing, room and board, retreats and camps, indirect services, and program administration. Youth who achieved permanency through adoption or permanent legal guardianship prior to age 16 are not eligible for stipends, ETG or the Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program, known as FosterED.

In addition, Family First amended the Chafee ETG program and allowed states to extend eligibility to youth up until their 26th birthday (previously 23rd birthday) and allow youth to participate in the program for up to five years, whether or not the years are consecutive. Pennsylvania opted into this provision effective July 1, 2020.

Family First Prevention Services Act

The Administration for Children and Families approved Pennsylvania's request to delay full implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act until July 1, 2021.

This delay permits the time needed to support the successful implementation of the remaining provisions. A delay does not mean Pennsylvania has become less focused on this effort, but that we continue to work collaboratively to build the infrastructure needed to support the remaining provisions in the law. Between now and July 1, 2021, our goal is to support, through guidance and technical assistance, the child welfare system's shift to trauma-focused and evidence-based preventative services to keep children safely at home whenever possible and in family-like or specialized settings when placement must occur.

Additional information regarding Pennsylvania's implementation of Family First will be made available on the KeepKidsSafe website located at www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov in the next few months.

Child Welfare Case Management System

Child Welfare Case Management (CW CM) is a subsystem of Enterprise Case Management (ECM). The Project Charter/Governance document was approved by the project's Steering Team and Advisory Board in March 2020.

Representatives from numerous counties and Commonwealth staff participated in simultaneous live and virtual meetings from January through early March to discuss opportunities to incorporate innovative and best practices in "future state" process flows and to document business requirements/user stories related to child welfare operations, specifically eligibility, financial and provider management.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CW CM project activities that include county representatives were put on hold. During this period, Commonwealth and KPMG staff continue to prepare meeting materials for the remaining child welfare operational topics.

Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program

The Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program, known as FosterED, takes effect the fall semester of 2020. The FosterED program requires Pennsylvania postsecondary institutions to award a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees for Pennsylvania resident youth who meet Chafee ETG eligibility requirements and who 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 schools and other eligible schools. Youth are eligible to receive the waivers for five years, which need not be consecutive, or until age 26.

In addition to the waivers, each post-secondary institution must appoint a Point of Contact (POC) to assist youth with eligibility, technical assistance, and other resources that may be available to them on and off-campus. As post-secondary institutions begin to process admission applications and financial aid packages, 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 determining the eligibility of a youth entering post-secondary education.

Each post-secondary education institution is required to have its identified POC listed on their website. Additional information about the tuition waiver can be found at PHEAA.org/FosterEd located at <https://www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/other-educational-aid/foster-education.shtml>.

Questions related to the FosterED program can be directed to Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov.

Chafee Education and Training Grant Programs

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application and instructions for the 2020–2021 academic year can be found online at: www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/other-educational-aid/chafee-program.shtml. The ETG award amount cannot exceed the student's cost of attendance.

All current ETG award recipients will be automatically enrolled for the next academic year and do not need to complete the ETG application. Please contact the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency at 1-800-831-0797 with questions about current Chafee applications or a youth's status. If youth have questions regarding the ETG program, contact Teresa Musser at temusser@pa.gov or 717-214-7385.

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 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 4 for Baseline Surveys for all 17-year-old youth in foster care as of April 1, 2020–September 30, 2020 (2020 B). Counties have until October 15th to submit baseline surveys for 17-year-old youth as well as served population data for this period. However, counties should be entering survey data as they are completed.

Counties can log onto www.getnytdpa.org to enter their survey data. NYTD questions can be directed to Teresa Musser, Office of Children, Youth and Families, at temusser@pa.gov or at 717-214-7385.

If you have any problems with password reset, or you don't remember what your username is (or have any other technical assistance questions related to NYTD), please contact the NYTD Help Desk at evalsupport@pcgus.com.

Accurint

Accurint is an online search tool available to every county throughout the state. It is able to assist with family finding efforts, contact information, criminal checks and identifying individuals for any type of family engagement meeting. Please be aware that only county employees may be Accurint administrators for your county's account. If you or your staff would like training in the Accurint software, please contact Accurint Education Consultant Bill News at William.news@lexisnexisrisk.com or 215-285-7108.

If you have any questions about Accurint, the number of Accurint users your county has, who your users are, etc., please contact W. Donald Dickinson at wildickins@pa.gov or 717-787-2726.

Pennsylvania KinConnector Program

The Pennsylvania KinConnector program was created by Act 89 of 2018 to be a resource for grandparents and other relative or non-relative caregivers who are raising children in the state of Pennsylvania. The KinConnector program is a telephone support line that serves as a bridge for kinship care families to help them identify multiple sources of assistance, including local, state, federal, and private resources. It is staffed by KinConnectors, compassionate and knowledgeable social service professionals dedicated to helping kinship care families thrive. For more information, contact the KinConnector support line at 1-866-KIN-2111 or visit their website at www.kinconnector.org.

Quality Service Reviews

The Quality Service Review (QSR) is one critical component of Pennsylvania's child welfare Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system. The QSR involves a team of certified QSR reviewers gathering information directly from families, children and service team members so that they can assess the current safety, permanency and well-being of a child/youth while also evaluating the system's ability to implement Pennsylvania's Practice Model. All QSRs that were scheduled for the 2020 calendar year have been canceled due to COVID-19. If you would like to volunteer as a reviewer in the future, information on QSR training and onsite dates can be found on the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center website at <http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CQI.htm>.

Child and Family Service Reviews

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) was established by the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Children's Bureau (CB) to ensure states' conformity with federal child welfare requirements, to determine what is experienced by children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services and to assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes. The CFSR focuses on the assessment of safety, permanency and well-being outcomes, as well as seven systemic factors. Pennsylvania conducted CFSR case reviews in 2017 and has developed a program improvement plan to address outcomes where Pennsylvania did not meet federal performance standards. Pennsylvania has completed all case reviews in Butler, Mercer, and Centre, Lycoming, Northampton, Philadelphia and Lehigh counties as part of the program improvement plan monitoring phase of the federal CFSR process. Based on a preliminary review of findings from 2019, Pennsylvania did not meet all the federally required targets for improvement. Pennsylvania canceled all reviews that were scheduled for 2020 due to COVID-19. Counties have already had preliminary discussions for the 2021 reviews. Information on CFSR training and onsite dates, as well as information on how to sign up to volunteer as a reviewer can be found on the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center website at <http://forms.cwrc.pitt.edu/cfsrapplcation>.

Mandated Reporter Training

In-person mandated reporter trainings cannot be conducted at this time due to COVID-19, however, the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) are offering virtual training opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic so that professionals and volunteers can participate in a safe environment. In-person trainings will be made available once again when it is appropriate. To schedule a virtual training with PFSA, contact their office at info@pafsa.org or 1-800-448-4906. If you are in the medical profession and wish to schedule training with AAP for the Educating Physicians in their Communities-Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (EPIC-SCAN), contact AAP at scan@paaap.org or 1-866-823-7226.

Waiting Child Segments

The Department's 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 the children of Pennsylvania.

- If you have a child you would like featured on KDKA's *Waiting Child*, please contact Nikita Lewis at nlewis@diakon-swan.org. The contract with KDKA began on January 20 and will end June 21, 2020.
- If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WHTM's *Val's Kids*, please contact Alfredo Gonzales at agonzales@diakon-swan.org. The contract with WHTM began on January 6 and will end June 21, 2020.
- 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. The contract with WBRE began on January 6 and will end June 21, 2020.

SWAN/IL Google Groups

There are over 700 members of the SWAN/IL ListServ through Google Groups. This is a great way to share confidential information across the network to seek a colleague's advice and announce upcoming events. Anyone wishing to join the group must be an employee of a county children and youth agency, SWAN affiliate agency or IL provider. If interested, please contact Bobbi Whary by email at bwhary@diakon-swan.org or 717-558-1223.

Credit Reports

Did you know that every Credit Bureau has a specific contact person and process to ensure foster care youth credit history checks are completed appropriately? If you are unsure of this information, have questions regarding credit report history of foster care youth, or are having issues obtaining a credit history from one of the Credit Bureau's, please contact W. Donald Dickinson at wildickins@pa.gov or 717-787-2726 for assistance.

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From the SWAN Prime Contract

Diakon-SWAN, LLC/Family Design Resources, Inc.

SWAN Prime Contract Extension

The Department of Human Services has issued a three-month extension of the current SWAN prime contract. The extension term is July 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020. All primary contacts for affiliate agencies have received a contract extension email. To extend the contract agreement, affiliate agencies need to simply reply to the email acknowledging extension participation.

State Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Referrals

While the end of state fiscal year (SFY) 2019-2020 quickly approaches, county agencies should continue to make referrals for children and families who need services.

For referrals to be applied to the SFY 2019-2020 Needs Based Plan and Budget (NBPB), county agencies must submit referrals to the SWAN prime contractor by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, June 30, 2019. Any referrals received after this cut-off time will be held and then processed in SFY 2020-2021.

Pivoting to Virtual Matching Events

In mid-March, the state enacted stay-at-home orders to slow the spread of COVID-19 and travel came to a standstill. As a result, matching events scheduled for waiting children/youth and prospective adoptive families were cancelled. Knowing how important these events are for permanency, SWAN, along with many agencies rose to the challenge to fill this void. Quickly, a plethora of virtual matching events were arranged by SWAN's Older Child Matching Initiative, TRAC Services for Families, Central Region Recruiters' Coalition, and the Adoption Center. More events are scheduled for the upcoming months as well. All agencies are to be commended for being creative and adapting to continue to provide these important opportunities for children and families.

Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange coordinators (PAE) have learned a lot about hosting virtual events in a very short time. PAE coordinators plan to update [Adoption Awareness and Matching Events: Planning for Success](#) along with the PAE Events section of the *SWAN Permanency Toolkit* to include tips for planning and hosting virtual events. Stay tuned and be sure to reach out to your PAE coordinator if you have any questions about virtual matching events.

Continuing SWAN LSI Permanency Efforts Amid COVID-19

COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on child welfare, forcing some Pennsylvania county offices to close, courts to continue hearings or conduct proceedings virtually, and SWAN LSI paralegals to work remotely. While the working environment changed, through the collaboration with county children and youth agencies, SWAN LSI paralegals were able to continue to fulfill important permanency duties on behalf of children and youth across the Commonwealth.

During March and April, SWAN LSI paralegals conducted 3,133 diligent searches on behalf of 2,140 children. More than 1,100 of these searches were marked as “address found and verified,” which indicates that the searcher successfully verified the address using official sources (postmaster, court records, county assistance office, etc). Additionally, many other searches provided contact information for potential kinship resources.

SWAN LSI paralegals also supported permanency work through court hearings and document preparation. Court hearings in many counties have occurred via teleconference, and SWAN LSI paralegals provided support to hearings for 2,055 children in March and April. Court documents were prepared for 5,445 children over the same period. The SWAN prime contractor greatly appreciates the opportunity to work in partnership with county agencies to expedite permanency for children despite the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Diligent Search Packet Supports Best Practice and Legal Compliance

Diligent searches are a key component of family finding, *Fostering Connections*, concurrent planning and building connections for all youth, regardless of placement status or goal. SWAN LSI defines a diligent search as a search conducted to locate parents, relatives or other permanency resources or connections for a child receiving services from or in the custody of a county agency.

The *SWAN LSI Diligent Search Packet* contains guidance and forms to help the network achieve best practice with searches and comply with various state and federally mandated search efforts. The packet, updated biennially, is available in the [SWAN LSI section](#) of the *SWAN Permanency Toolkit*. We also offer trainings that detail how to conduct a diligent search and explain the legislative mandates involving search and engagement.

If you have any questions about diligent search practice, or if you would like to explore training options, please contact your SWAN LSI coordinator or SWAN regional technical assistant.

Coming Soon: SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual, Third Edition

Planned revisions to the *SWAN LSI Incarcerated Resource Manual (IRM)* are currently underway. This manual, first released to the network in 2016, is a tool for caseworkers and supervisors to engage incarcerated parents with case planning. The *SWAN LSI IRM* lists Pennsylvania county prison policies and procedures as well as links to state and federal facilities. The SWAN prime contractor always seeks to be innovative with revisions to the *SWAN LSI IRM* and welcomes your feedback. Please direct ideas or questions about county prison policies and procedures contained within the manual to lsi-irmupdates@diakon-swan.org.

The Second Edition of the manual can be accessed in the [SWAN LSI section](#) of the *SWAN Permanency Toolkit*.

137 Days Until National Adoption Month

There are only 137 days until National Adoption Month (November) when the network celebrates permanency through adoption, enhances awareness about the need for permanent families and hosts matching events to promote opportunities for children and youth to experience the belongingness, security and the love of a forever family.

You may find two resources helpful when planning National Adoption Month events. Both the [Adoption Day Events: A Planner's Guide](#) and the [Adoption Awareness and Matching Events: Planning for Success](#) are housed in the *SWAN Permanency Toolkit*.

We also want to recognize the collaboration and ingenuity of the courts, counties and affiliate agencies who hosted virtual finalizations and matching events during social distancing and COVID-19 restrictions. The unwavering commitment to permanency for children in Pennsylvania's foster care system brought a sense of hope and normalcy to our network at a time it was needed most.

Electronic Matches in the SWAN Portal

Caseworkers for families and children can run matches electronically in the SWAN Portal. This update provides numerous advantages for the network, including immediate access to information about adoption-eligible families and/or children. Caseworkers can instantly review family and child narratives, the strength of the matching results and a history of previous matches.

To learn how to navigate these new features, refer to the user guides available in the Help section of the SWAN Portal. To see a demonstration of these features, contact your SWAN regional technical assistant or PAE coordinator.

Resource Family Registry Record Maintenance

According to Act 160 of 2004, all families (foster, adoption and kinship) who apply to be a resource parent for children through Pennsylvania's child welfare system must be registered in the Resource Family Registry (RFR). Public and private children and youth agencies that approve resource parents are required to register them and are responsible for keeping the records updated until the families are no longer working with the agency. Closing families who are no longer active is just as important as registering families with the RFR.

The SWAN Portal's matching process relies on accurate family records to ensure that the families and children matched are truly eligible for matching. Agencies should update information if needed; some of the most important fields include **matching status**, the **caseworker** listed on the individual record, the **family's email address** and any **characteristics** the adoptive family is willing to consider.

Agencies may access a list of their families registered with the RFR through the SWAN Portal. Updates can be made quickly via the Resource Family Registration and Update Form (CY131) in the SWAN Portal. Workers should also make sure Child Registration Forms (CY130) and fields are updated in the same manner. Contact your SWAN regional technical assistant for support.

Your Work to Create Youth videos "PAEs" off!

Through the efforts of the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange, youth recruitment videos are now featured on www.adoptpakids.org. Videos are embedded on the youth's Waiting Children page, and waiting families and their caseworkers can now access videos previously created for matching moments at any time.

Videos of youth offer families an excellent way to get to know a youth's personality and interests and allow caseworkers to maximize their recruitment efforts. If you have created a recruitment video, email PAE@diakon-swan.org to request the submission form.

To learn more about creating a recruitment video for a waiting child or youth, contact your PAE coordinator.



www.adoptpakids.org

SWAN Prime Contract

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

PA Youth Advisory Board (YAB)

The regional YABs are hosting Zoom meetings to help youth connect with their peers during this challenging time. The meetings are planned and facilitated by youth and include many interactive activities to keep individuals engaged. These events are open to all older youth in foster care, regardless of their affiliation with the YAB. Please contact your Regional YAB Consultant at <http://www.payab.pitt.edu/YABRegions.htm> for meeting details.

YAB has also been collaborating with Youth MOVE PA to host virtual drop-in meetings for older youth. These virtual meetings allow youth to interact with other youth given the social restrictions, impacting school, sports, shopping or hanging out with friends, related to the health pandemic. YAB and Youth MOVE understand how stressful it can be when daily routines are disrupted along with general anxiety by being in the middle of a health pandemic. These virtual meetings are designed to help youth feel better about the outside world and eliminate stress by meeting new people who are a part of this group. Youth have the forum to talk about themselves, their likes and dislikes and have the opportunity to discuss selected youth-related topics during each meeting.

Meetings are hosted every Monday and Friday from 3:30 to 4:30 pm on Zoom.

Meetings are moderated by Zack Karenchak, Tristan Schnoke and Aaron Zimmerman.

Meeting ID: 410-999-098

Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/410999098>

Youth Quality Improvement Specialist

CWRC is currently looking to hire a Youth Quality Improvement Specialist (YQIS). The YQIS is an individual who has had involvement with the child welfare system as a youth. The YQIS will integrate the family and youth perspective through regular attendance at statewide workgroups and initiatives, participation in curriculum development, training delivery, and provide technical assistance to child welfare agencies. This individual will also provide feedback to CWRC staff in efforts to enhance child welfare practices for better outcomes for children, youth, and families. The YQIS must be able to effectively articulate experiences as a youth in out-of-home care and have the ability and willingness to share those experiences and make connections to other youth's experiences.

The YQIS functions as a team member of the Statewide Quality Improvement Department (SQID) for the Resource Center. This position is located in Mechanicsburg, PA. Bachelor's degree required, however, applicable experience may be substituted for degree requirement. Additionally, a minimum of one year of involvement as a youth in the foster care system within the past 15 years is required. Please follow the link for additional information about the YQIS position: <http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/HumanResources.html>.

Older Youth Retreat

The 2020 Older Youth Retreat has gone virtual! Please stay tuned for additional updates on the event, which will occur August 10-14, 2020. The virtual retreat will include activity sessions, informational sessions and even some of the retreat's most popular events. Information regarding the event can be found at <http://www.payab.pitt.edu/ILRetreat.htm>.

Independent Living (IL) Trainings

The Child Welfare Resource Center recently revised the Independent Living training series. Two of the three modules are now available online through the Resource Center's E-Learn site at <http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/ELearn.htm>. The third module, Engaging Older Youth, is an in-person training that involves application of theories learned in modules one and two, through simulation-based training. If you have questions regarding how to register for these trainings, please contact Rachael Ickes at cwtpreg@pitt.edu.

Independent Living (IL) Services: Module 1: Purpose and Policy (online)

Independent Living (IL) Services: Module 2: Adolescent Issues: Risk and Resiliency (online)

Independent Living (IL) Services: Module 3: Engaging Older Youth (in-person simulation)

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