

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

National Adoption Month

November is National Adoption Awareness Month. OCYF will once again be awarding \$60,000 in mini-grants to agencies and coalitions across the state to be used for recruitment and/or awareness events throughout the month.

This is also a terrific opportunity for agencies to host special Adoption Day events to celebrate their children and families and promote permanency in their counties and via social media. If you would like to have your event featured on the SWAN Facebook page, please contact Joe Warrick at jwarrick@pa.gov or 717-214-6765. For more information, visit the National Adoption Month 2017 website at: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam/about/>.

Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)

On July 27, 2017, Pennsylvania officially completed the required evaluation components of the federal CFSR. Between the months of April and July, an in-depth review of 65 cases was conducted across seven counties (Butler, Centre, Lehigh, Lycoming, Mercer, Northampton and Philadelphia) to determine PA performance on federal safety, permanency and well-being outcomes. Any state that fails to achieve a rating of substantial conformity on an outcome in 95% or more of the cases reviewed is required to address that outcome in a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). PA did not meet the 95% threshold for any of the seven outcomes and therefore will be required to address all seven outcomes in the PIP. At the national level, of the reviews conducted in other states during 2015 and 2016 for which data is available, there has been no state yet to achieve the 95% threshold on more than one of the seven outcomes.

In addition to the case reviews, interviews with 21 different stakeholder groups were conducted to help assess PA performance on the seven CFSR systemic factors, which include areas such as staff and provider training, as well as diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive parents. Results regarding PA's performance on the systemic factors will be provided upon issuance of the Final Report from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Children's Bureau (CB), which is anticipated to be released sometime between late October and early November. The Final Report, which includes findings from the case reviews and stakeholder interviews, will be made available to stakeholders and the public through the ACF website.

OCYF would like to thank all those who volunteered their time to participate in the CFSR as reviewers or through the stakeholder interview process.

National Youth In Transition Database

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) implementation is ongoing with the baseline population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17), 21 year-old follow up population from Cohort 2, and the served population (any youth receiving independent living services regardless of age) collection period, which begins October 1, 2017. NYTD questions can be directed to Joe Warrick at jwarrick@pa.gov or 717-214-6765.

Independent Living (IL) Site Visits

Site visits are underway for IL programs for 2017-18 across the Commonwealth. The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) practice improvement specialist assigned to your county will be contacting IL coordinators directly to set up the site visit.

In order to continue to strengthen services and outcomes for IL youth and to build partnerships, it is strongly recommended that counties select and invite the appropriate persons to participate in the

site visit. If you have any questions or need additional information about IL site visits, please contact your CWRC practice improvement specialist or Meghan O'Hare at meo43@pitt.edu or 717-795-9048. Questions regarding IL funding should be directed to Joe Warrick, Office of Children, Youth and Families, at jwarrick@pa.gov or 717-214-6765.

SWAN/IL Google Groups

There are currently over 700 members of the SWAN/IL ListServ through Google Groups. This is a wonderful way to share confidential information across the network to assist in sharing waiting children, asking colleagues for advice, and announcing upcoming events. Anyone wishing to join this group must be an employee of a county children and youth agency, SWAN affiliate agency, or IL provider. If interested, please contact Joe Warrick by email at jwarrick@pa.gov or at 717-214-6765.

Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant Program

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application for the 2017-2018 school year and directions on how to apply are available online at: <https://www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/other-educational-aid/chafee-program.shtml>. The 2017-2018 maximum ETG award is \$5,000, not to exceed actual costs. All current ETG award recipients will be automatically enrolled for the next academic year and do not need to complete the ETG application. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) renewal forms must be completed every year. For questions about current Chafee applications or a youth's status, please contact PHEAA at 1-800-831-0797. If you have questions regarding the ETG program, contact Joe Warrick at jwarrick@pa.gov or at (717) 214-6765.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Changes

Students who will graduate from high school or complete a GED in 2018 can apply for financial aid starting on October 1, 2017, rather than waiting until January of their senior year. This change will allow students to apply for financial aid using actual data rather than estimates at the same time that they typically start to apply for college admission.

It's hoped that students will make more informed college decisions if they have financial aid information at the same time as admissions decisions.

To make that possible, FAFSA and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) will use the prior year's tax return for aid consideration in 2018-19. For example, an application for 2018-19 financial aid will use income from the 2016 tax return. Youth and independent living/transition staff should look for financial aid nights in your local area in late spring or early in the fall of 2017—and be aware that financial aid deadlines for priority processing may change at some colleges and universities. Please note, some funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

SWAN/IL Network Newsletter

Tell the Network about all of the wonderful things you, your agency, your community, a youth or a colleague are doing to promote improved outcomes for PA's foster youth. If you have something exciting, interesting or informative to share with your colleagues, please forward your articles, success stories, matching events or ideas to Jennifer Casner-Hockenberry at jcasner-hockenberry@diakon-swan.org. Pictures are always a great addition to any article. You can find the latest and past editions of this newsletter at www.adoptpakids.org under the Network Newsletter link.

SWAN Media Campaign

The third round of the media campaign, #MeetTheKids, will begin airing this winter as television commercials featuring waiting youth and adoptive families (#MeetTheFamilies). Radio spots will air in November 2017. Waiting child segments designed to find adoptive families for older youth in need of families (aired on KDKA TV 2, a Pittsburgh CBS affiliate, Val's Kids is aired on WHTM ABC 27 in the Harrisburg area; and A Little Love is aired on WBRE TV 28, a Wilkes-Barre NBC affiliate) will also begin in November 2017.

While this media campaign airs, agencies should be prepared to promptly respond to phone calls from prospective foster and adoptive families. Please contact Joe Warrick for additional information at jwarrick@pa.gov or 717-214-6765.

Credit Reporting Requirements

Federal legislation requires that all youth in foster care who are 14 and older must receive a copy of their credit report annually and be given a copy of their credit history upon exiting care. If you are having trouble obtaining credit reports from Equifax®, Experian® or TransUnion®, or have any credit-reporting questions, including the recent Equifax data breach, contact Belinda Eigen at beigen@pa.gov or 717-787-2726.

Child Advocacy Studies Training Updates

The Child Advocacy Studies (CAST) II is an online training module that offers an opportunity to examine, evaluate, and comprehend information by identifying, developing and employing critical thinking skills across multiple topics. Recently, OCYF and CWRC released 3 updated modules and can be found at www.e-learn.pitt.edu. Additional information can be obtained by emailing cwtpreg@pitt.edu.

- **CAST II: Intimate Partner Violence and Child Maltreatment: An Overview Module 5**

This module discusses the relationship between intimate partner violence (IPV) and child maltreatment. This module will provide child welfare professionals with federal and state laws surround intimate partner violence.
- **CAST II: Intimate Partner Violence and Child Maltreatment: Protective Factors, Trauma-Informed Care and Services Module 6**

This module is designed to assist child welfare professionals as the work with children and families affected by intimate partner violence (IPV). Examples of long-term and short-term effects of children exposed to IPV and various ways to assist survivors/victims.
- **CAST II: Substance Use as a Risk Factor for Child Maltreatment: A Macro Perspective Module 7**

This module discusses the relationship between substance use disorder and child maltreatment and offers an opportunity to complete a virtual house tour to identify different substances and paraphernalia.

Office of Children, Youth and Families

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UPCOMING EVENTS

2017 SWAN/IL Fall Quarterly Meetings

October 4, Scranton
October 11, Clarion
October 12, Monroeville
October 25, Philadelphia
October 26, Lansdale
October 30, Enola

2018 SWAN/IL Winter Statewide Meeting

January 17-18

Penn Stater Conference Center
215 Innovation Blvd.
State College, Pennsylvania 16803

www.diakon-swan.org/swan/events/upcoming/

From the SWAN Prime Contract

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

Electronic PAE/RFR Registration Coming Soon

The SWAN prime contractor is excited to announce that the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) will now send electronic confirmations of PAE child registrations and Resource Family Registry (RFR) family registrations to caseworkers. A registration confirmation, also known as an Acknowledgement Letter, will be emailed rather than mailed to a caseworker if the registering agency has provided their email address.

To support this feature, agencies submitting the child CY130 form via the SWAN Portal are required to provide the county and/or child specific recruitment caseworker's email address. Agencies submitting the family CY131 form are required to provide the registering agency caseworker's email address.

In addition to the emailed registration confirmation, caseworkers now have electronic access to the Acknowledgement Letter. This includes Acknowledgement Letters moving forward and Acknowledgement Letters previously mailed.

The SWAN prime contractor is pleased to share this SWAN Portal enhancement with you. Please contact your SWAN RTA if you have questions about this new feature.

Photographers Donate Portraits to Youth

With over 400 volunteer photographers across the state, coordinating a beautiful photograph for your child/youth to use on adoptpakids.org, in a Lifebook or for the child profile is as easy as saying "cheese." There are photographers volunteering their services in every county of the state through the SWAN volunteer photography program. The only requirement is that the child must be registered with PAE; they can be registered as active or on hold. Check with your PAE coordinator to see if your child is registered.

Interested caseworkers should contact the photographers directly, state that they are inquiring about the SWAN Volunteer Photography Program, and provide the youth's first name and PAE number. The photographer and the caseworker can

coordinate the photo session and choose the best photos, along with input from the youth.

Many of our waiting youth have received amazing photographs from this program, photos that have captured their personalities and showcased what makes them unique. These photos have helped to catch the eyes of families perusing the PAE website. Since the photographers can take both identifying and non-identifying photos, youth who are not yet legally free can benefit from a photo for their website page and for their lifebook all in one session. Let's give our youth every opportunity to achieve permanency by using this great free service. Additionally, it's good to remember that our youth change so quickly as they grow, so update their photos every year or more frequently if possible.

Please also remember that the youth should not be alone with the photographer at any time and all communication from the photographer prior to, or after the session, should be with the caseworker. Youth should be dressed appropriately for the photo session and should not be wearing any clothing that identifies their location (i.e., their school, town, or residence site).

To access the current list of SWAN photographers, go to the SWAN website at <http://www.diakon-swan.org/swan/documents/item/141/> or talk to your PAE Coordinator for more information.

Introducing SWAN Connect

Pennsylvania's Seamless System has a new name: SWAN Connect. The services—helping families connect with Pennsylvania's waiting children—are the same. For more information on SWAN Connect, please contact the SWAN Helpline at (800) 585-7926, swanhelpline@diakon-swan.org. Please spread the word!

Family Preparation/Profile Unit of Service Evaluation

At the most recent Units of Service (US) meeting, enhanced outcome data collection for the Family Preparation and Profile was discussed. This service is designed to educate parents in several areas related to parenting children who have resided in foster care, including teaching them skills and giving them confidence. It is necessary to implement a parent survey both to assess skills learned upon completion and to follow-up with the parents several months later to ascertain if they benefitted from the service.

When the unit of service is completed, the portal can generate a survey sent via email to the family with questions specific to the gains they have made from participation in family preparation. Family preparation providers at the US meeting were asked to provide e-mail information on referral forms or the CY131 when it is submitted. Currently, data fields for contact information are not required fields and therefore not consistently provided. Family preparation workers were also asked to inform the families during the service that a survey would be coming to them.

While the survey is not yet completed, a general overview was provided at the US meetings. The final format of the survey will not contain any identifying information about the affiliate agency with which the family was working. The evaluation is designed to provide an overall view of the outcomes families are experiencing with family preparation services.

Once the survey is developed and finalized, it will be shared with those in attendance at the US meeting. Affiliates will be notified when this data collection begins. Please contact Mike Kovacevic, Research and Quality Assurance Manager with any questions at mkovacevic@diakon-swan.org.

UPCOMING UNITS OF SERVICE MEETINGS

Nov. 15, 2017

Units of Service, Post-Permanency meeting

Diakon/FDR (Large Conference Room)
Family Pathways (Family Hall)

Nov. 16, 2017

Units of Service, Post-Permanency meeting

Montgomery Co. CYS (G Room)
Thomas P. Saxton Medical Pavilion (Auditorium)

Dec. 8, 2017

Units of Service, Programming meeting

Diakon/FDR (Large Conference Room)
Montgomery Co. CYS (Community Room)
Family Pathways (Chimney Hall)
Thomas P. Saxton Medical Pavilion (Auditorium)

Feb. 16, 2018

Units of Service, Post-Permanency meeting

Diakon/FDR (Large Conference Room)
Family Pathways (Chimney Hall)

Feb. 23, 2018

Units of Service, Post-Permanency meeting

Church on the Mall
Thomas P. Saxton Medical Pavilion (Auditorium)

March 9, 2018

Units of Service, Programming meeting

Diakon/FDR (Large Conference Room)
Church on the Mall
Family Pathways (Chimney Hall)
Thomas P. Saxton Medical Pavilion (Auditorium)

April 13, 2018

Units of Service, Programming meeting

Diakon/FDR (Large Conference Room)
Church on the Mall
Family Pathways (Chimney Hall)
Thomas P. Saxton Medical Pavilion (Auditorium)

All times: 9:30am - 12:30pm

Upcoming Permanency Roundtable Convening

The next Permanency Roundtable (PRT) county convening is scheduled during the winter statewide meeting on January 17, 2018 from 1:00-4:00 p.m. Look for an invitation to register separately for this event. This meeting provides an opportunity for counties who are implementing PRTs to get program updates, share ideas and problem solve concerns. Any county interested in implementing PRTs is also welcome to attend.

Permanency Roundtables (PRTs) are available to any county children and youth agency looking for additional strategies to break down barriers and expedite permanency for their youth in foster care. As of June 2017, close to 500 Pennsylvania foster youth have been presented at PRTs and of those who exited care, 28% have either reunified, been adopted or achieved legal custodianship. Contact your RTA if interested in this cost-free strategy.

For more information about PRTs or the county convening meeting, please contact Tammy Hendrix at thendrix@diakon-swan.org.

Updating the Resource Family Registry (RFR)

The RFR currently has 1,400 families seeking to adopt in Pennsylvania. These families are matched against children who are active on the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE). One of the most important ways to ensure the best possible match is to provide updated information on waiting youth and available families. Specifically, it is important to notify the PAE when both children and/or families are no longer available for matching. This step saves time and expedites the matching process, which enables the caseworkers to focus their energy on the families and children who are available for adoption.

If the family no longer needs adoption matching, please update the family's CY131 electronically in the SWAN portal to reflect the family's changes. Updates to characteristic preferences and also caseworker contact information are essential to the matching process and can be completed online in the CY131 record. These efforts will help ensure the family's information is updated accordingly and help the whole system work efficiently on behalf of children and families in need of matching.

Most questions regarding the CY131 can be answered through the FAQ on <http://adoptpakids.org/Forms.aspx>. If you require

assistance in updating your agency's RFR or have additional questions about the CY131, please contact your SWAN Regional Technical Assistant or the PAE Family Coordinator, Jennifer Casner-Hockenberry at jcasner-hockeberry@diakon-swan.org.

FDR Introduces Trauma-Informed Sexual Health Curriculum

Youth in foster care deserve our best. Family Design Resources (FDR) actively researches the unmet needs of foster youth and addresses those needs through focused programs. Over the last two years, we have been learning about the absence of trauma-informed practices in relationship to adolescent sexual health.

FDR is interested in meeting the needs of Pennsylvania's Independent Living youth who are required under the IL bulletin to have sexual health learning, and the permanency community has helped inform our efforts. A panel presentation called "What's Love Got to Do With It?" was held during the 2016 Summer Permanency/IL Conference, during which the audience was asked to participate in identifying IL youth needs relative to trauma-informed adolescent sexual health. Additionally, a survey of IL caseworkers administered in Spring 2017 confirmed the need for and opportunity to deliver trauma-informed sexual health programming for IL youth.

Standardized, public school-based sexual health curriculum may neither be available or relevant to trauma-exposed youth living in out-of-home care. FDR scrutinized multiple existing curricula and found one that addresses trauma to the standard of the Office of Adolescent Health. Specific to youth living in out-of-home care, Practice Self-Regulation (PS-R™) enables youth to develop critical thinking skills and build self-esteem and efficacy in self-advocacy. The curriculum is comprised of hour-long, one-on-one sessions between a trained facilitator and the youth for ten weeks. Between sessions, youth complete the self-reflective Trauma Outcomes Process workbook.

FDR's certified PS-R™ facilitator is currently supporting a pilot effort in collaboration with the Lancaster County IL program. Ultimately, FDR seeks to extend program capacity through a TOT model. For more information on PS-R™, becoming a pilot site, or acquiring facilitator training, contact Adrienne Miller at amiller@familydesign.org or 717-909-7502.

Older Children show Permanency Gains since State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2012/13

When observing prime contract closure reasons for older children (age 13-21), there have been considerable gains in achieving permanency. The number of older children receiving SWAN services who found permanency has increased by 633 (190%), from 377 in SFY 2012/13 to 976 in SFY 2016/17. Over this five year period, 3,297 older children exited from SWAN involvement; approximately 90 percent of them have found permanency. 2,114 (64%) were adopted, 503 (15%) were reunified with their family, 227 (7%) found guardianship and 118 (4%) were living with a relative.



/adoptpa



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SWAN Prime Contract

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From the PA Child Welfare Resource Center Independent Living Project

University of Pittsburgh

Older Youth Retreat

Save the date! The 2018 Older Youth Retreat will be held at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown Campus August 6-10. The 2017 Older Youth Retreat video can be viewed at www.independentlivingpa.org. This year 91 youth and 49 staff from over 30 Pennsylvania counties participated. Please feel free to contact Meghan O'Hare meo43@pitt.edu with any questions regarding the retreat.

YAB Regional Coordinators

Currently, we are looking for Regional Coordinators for the North Central and Northeast regions. Coordinators support the regional YAB activities, schedule meetings and support youth projects. This is a paid, part time, position that generally requires a few hours a month. If you are interested in additional information, please contact Cindy Gore at lcg7@pitt.edu.

SAT Waivers

An email was sent to all IL Coordinators and private provider agencies on August 15th making them aware that the 2017-2018 SAT Waivers are available. Fee waivers for both the SAT Reasoning test and the SAT Subject test are available for **current high school students** who cannot afford to pay the test fees. **SAT Waivers cannot be issued to youth who have obtained their GED, have graduated high school, or are not currently enrolled in high school.** Eligible students can receive a total of 4 SAT fee waivers during their academic career – 2 for the SAT Reasoning Test and 2 for the SAT Subject Tests. Students can use the fee-waiver card to register for the test online or by mail. For additional information or to request waivers, please contact Stephanie Brooks at STB101@pitt.edu.

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