

# ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

## OCYF Staff Update

**Teresa Musser** has accepted the Human Services Program Specialist position within the Division of Programs, SWAN/Independent Living (IL) unit. Teresa has worked for the Office of Children, Youth and Families for the past six years and most recently in the Cross Systems unit, within the Division of Policy, where she provided assistance to county children and youth agencies in accessing and coordinating physical and behavioral health care for the clients they serve. This included working with HealthChoices liaisons and the Managed Care Organizations by providing training and technical assistance related to the Psychotropic Medication Dashboard Report. Additionally, Teresa responded to inquiries related to the Child Protective Services Law and reviewed and approved Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting curriculum on behalf of the Department of Human Services. Prior to working in the Division of Policy, Teresa was a Per Diem Analyst for the Bureau of Budget and Fiscal Support where she reviewed and approved county and private providers foster care and residential placement budgets. The majority of her work experience has been in the private sector where she served as the Intellectual Development Disabilities Director for Northwestern Human Services.

Teresa will serve as Pennsylvania's Independent Living Coordinator and will be the primary contact for all county IL Coordinators. In addition, Teresa will be responsible for the Chafee Education and Training Grant, National Youth and Transition Database and serve as the Chair of the Conference Planning Committee as well as assisting with other aspects of the SWAN program.

## Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018

On February 9, 2018, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 was signed into law. Included in this legislation is the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) which provides long awaited, and strongly advocated for, federal finance reform; specifically, it restructures how Title IV-E funds are used in child welfare. States have repeatedly presented data to support reduced costs and the unity of families if Title IV-E funding can be used for prevention services. The legislation makes Title IV-E funding available to states who opt in for certain evidence-based prevention services that promote a holistic approach to addressing mental health and substance use prevention and treatment.

The law also aims to reduce the number of children inappropriately placed in congregate care by directing Title IV-E funds towards the use of foster family care except in certain situations.

The Department of Human Services is still analyzing the practice and budgetary impact of this legislation.

## 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 Carrie Keiser at [ckeiser@pa.gov](mailto:ckeiser@pa.gov).

### **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 Teresa Musser by email at [temusser@pa.gov](mailto:temusser@pa.gov) or at 717-214-7385.

### **Independent Living (IL) Site Visits**

Site visits are underway for IL programs for State Fiscal Year 2018–19 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](mailto:meo43@pitt.edu) or 717-795-9048. Questions regarding IL funding should be directed to Teresa Musser, Office of Children, Youth and Families, at [temusser@pa.gov](mailto:temusser@pa.gov) or at 717-214-7385.

### **Child Abuse History Clearance Fee Increase**

On July 1, 2018, the fee for Pennsylvania child abuse history clearances increased from \$8.00 to \$13.00. Amendments to the Child Protective Services Law in 2014 and 2015 expanded who is required to receive child abuse clearances. Clearances must be renewed every five years, resulting in the number of Pennsylvania child abuse history clearance applications increasing exponentially. The passage of Act 40 of 2017 included a maximum fee increase to \$13.00 for Pennsylvania child abuse history clearances to assist in covering actual costs for processing these clearances.

### **SWAN Rates Workgroup**

On August 29, 2018, the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) reconvened the SWAN Rates Workgroup. The SWAN Rates Workgroup is comprised of more than 40 participants representing SWAN affiliates, the SWAN prime contractor, Diakon-SWAN, LLC, the Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services, and OCYF. Kimberly Young, Vice President, The Bair Foundation and Carrie Keiser, OCYF, serve as the co-chairpersons for the workgroup. Members will participate in quarterly meetings through June 30, 2020. Members will make recommendations to OCYF on how best to determine the rates to complete SWAN services. The primary focus of the group will be to examine the collection of time and cost information pertaining to completion of SWAN Post-permanency services. The workgroup will also review the comprehensive cost analysis survey that will be used to obtain the administrative costs (indirect, overhead and caseworker rates) associated with completed SWAN services and the progress of the new Benchmark Cost/Time Log.

The next SWAN Rates Workgroup is scheduled for November 9, 2018 at Diakon Adoption and Foster Care's Mechanicsburg office. If any SWAN affiliate agency is interested in participating on the SWAN Rates Workgroup, please contact Carrie Keiser at [ckeiser@pa.gov](mailto:ckeiser@pa.gov). OCYF remains committed to reimbursing SWAN affiliates for the actual costs incurred to deliver permanency services to children and families served through the SWAN program.

### **Child Welfare Information Solution Child Welfare Portal (self-service)**

Mandated Reporters have the option of electronically reporting suspected child abuse and applying for clearances in the Child Welfare Portal at: <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>

Once an individual account is created, this option allows the mandated reporter to provide reports of suspected abuse electronically. If an oral report is made to ChildLine, a report of suspected child abuse (CY 47) must also be completed and forwarded to the county children and youth agency within 48 hours of making the report. If a report is made electronically, completion of a CY 47 is not required. Submitting reports electronically via the Child Welfare Portal also assists ChildLine in quickly assessing concerns and transmitting them to the appropriate investigating agency. You can access additional information on self-service at <http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/resources/reportabuse/index.htm> by clicking on the blue 'Report electronically' link.

### **The Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children and the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE)**

The Pennsylvania Interstate Compact Office is in the process of implementing NEICE with go-live planned for November 5, 2018. NEICE will automate the transfer of information and documents required under the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC). This automated transfer will assist in timely placement of children across state boundaries. Ensuring children's safety in foster care, guardianship, or adoption placements is priority, including required home studies and background checks for the placement of a child. NEICE will replace hard-copy ICPC forms and U.S. Postal Service delivery with near real-time communication among local child welfare caseworkers and state ICPC administrators in both sending and receiving states.

### **Quality Service Reviews**

The Quality Service Review (QSR) is one critical component of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process. The QSR supports a team of certified QSR reviewers to gather 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 which provides a basis for promoting and strengthening best practice. Quality Services Reviews will occur during the fall of 2018 in the following counties: Washington, Adams, Dauphin, Luzerne, and Philadelphia. Information on QSR 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://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CQI.htm>.

#### **Office of Children, Youth and Families**

P.O. Box 2675

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717-787-3984

[www.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.dhs.pa.gov)

**From the SWAN Prime Contract**

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

**PRTs Aid Older Youth Permanency**

A total of 464 children completed the SWAN Finalization Unit of Service during the fourth quarter of state fiscal year (SFY) 2017/18 (April-June 2018), which included 44 youth age 13 and older, according to finalization data from the SWAN Portal.

Casey Permanency Roundtables (PRTs) can be a process to assist all children, including older children, with finding permanency. PRTs are structured case consultations that bring together the child/youth, caseworkers, casework supervisors, and experts from inside and outside the organization to review cases and brainstorm ideas for achieving permanency for the child/youth. By the end of the last fiscal year, 535 SWAN children participated in PRTs, and 63% of those were youth age 13 or older. Regional technical assistants are working directly with counties to coordinate the implementation of PRTs.

**New Portal Tool: Benchmark Cost/Time Log**

The Benchmark Cost/Time Log, a new SWAN Portal utility for tracking and searching on costs and time incurred when delivering SWAN services, was released to all SWAN affiliates on August 8. The log is an outcome of the SWAN Rates Workgroup.

The log is designed to streamline casework activity tracking and support standardization of cost/time reporting. We encourage affiliates to now use the log to fully realize its benefits.

For help using the log, access the training and documentation resources located in the SWAN Portal help section or contact your regional technical assistant.

**TPR Appeal and PAE Status**

According to the Pennsylvania Adoption Act, a child for whom termination of parental rights is being appealed in a court shall not be registered with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) as available for adoption. Therefore, the child will not be receiving matching services or listed on [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org). Please contact your PAE coordinator with any questions.

**Family Profile Authorization Form Updated**

The Family Profile Authorization Form has been updated to reflect adjustments to payment rates for SWAN direct units of service as detailed in OCYF Bulletin 3350-18-02: SWAN Unit of Service Payment Rates & Programmatic Changes. The Family Profile Authorization Form is linked in the benchmarks received with the Family Profile referral. Portal users can also find this form in the SWAN Toolkit under Section 8: Benchmarks & Templates at [www.swantoolkit.org](http://www.swantoolkit.org) or at [www.diakon-swan.org](http://www.diakon-swan.org) under "Publications."

**Let the SWAN Helpline Help You!**

Autumn is in full swing, which means that National Adoption Month is just around the corner in November. As a reminder, the SWAN Helpline can assist with promoting matching events by calling active families registered with the Resource Family Registry in your area prior to the event to follow-up on invitations or to extend invitations directly. To initiate these calls, contact Tonya Hottenstein, Helpline supervisor, at [thottenstein@diakon-swan.org](mailto:thottenstein@diakon-swan.org), or contact your PAE coordinator with the specifics about the event and its location. Please send requests for SWAN Helpline support no later than two weeks prior to the date of the event.

**Legal Reports Provide Topical Updates**

Each month the SWAN legal training division creates a legal report summarizing the most recent precedential case-law and important developments in statutes, rules and regulations in child welfare. We work hard to locate and compile this information so that our network can remain current in its knowledge and practice. This report is published on the prime contractor website at [www.diakon-swan.org](http://www.diakon-swan.org) under "Publications," along with an archive of previous reports. Should you encounter any questions upon reading the monthly SWAN LSI Legal Report, you can always reach a SWAN legal training specialist by emailing the Warmline at [lsiwarmline@diakon-swan.org](mailto:lsiwarmline@diakon-swan.org).

### Resource Family Registry 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. SWAN regional technical assistants (RTAs) will be working with agencies to ensure that both family registrations and closures are accurate in the RFR. Agencies may access a list of their families registered with the RFR through the SWAN portal. Updates to the family's Resource Family Registration and Update Form (CY131) can be completed in the SWAN portal. Please contact your RTA for support.



**/adoptpa**



**/adoptpakids**

**[www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org)**

#### **SWAN Prime Contract**

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Harrisburg, PA 17111-0560

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**[www.diakon-swan.org](http://www.diakon-swan.org)**

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **SWAN/IL Winter Statewide Meeting**

January 23, 2019—January 24, 2019

Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center  
215 Innovation Blvd.  
State College, PA 16803

### **2019 Spring Quarterly Meetings**

Scranton — March 27, 2019

Clarion — April 3, 2019

Monroeville — April 4, 2019

Philadelphia — April 17, 2019

Lansdale — April 18, 2019

Harrisburg — April 23, 2019

### **2019 SWAN/IL Summer Statewide Meeting**

June 11, 2019 — June 12, 2019

### **27th Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference**

June 12, 2019 — June 14, 2019

Kalahari Resorts and Conventions  
250 Kalahari Drive  
Pocono Manor, Pennsylvania 18349

[www.diakon-swan.org/swan/events/upcoming/](http://www.diakon-swan.org/swan/events/upcoming/)

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

### **Older Youth Webinars available online**

Recently, CWRC partnered with the Foster Care to College Program to offer the *Fostering the Future: Making College a Reality for Pennsylvania Foster Youth* webinar. Data tells us that the majority of foster youth aspire to go to college, yet they attend at less than half the rate of their peers. In this webinar, participants learned about the challenges foster youth face in accessing college, as well as obstacles to retention and completion. Exciting and innovative practices and programming in Pennsylvania and across the country are presented.

A National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) webinar was held on September 13, 2018. This webinar is intended for NYTD coordinators and provides an overview of NYTD and information related to the current and upcoming data collection periods.

On September 17, 2018, CWRC partnered with the Youth Thrive Initiative to host a *Relationships Matter* webinar. When young people who have faced serious challenges tell the story of how they made positive changes in their lives, they often talk about a relationship with a caseworker as a critical part of that positive change. This webinar highlighted findings from the Center for the Study of Social Policy's new report, *Transformational Relationships for Youth Success*, which explores powerful relationships and includes real-life examples from interviews with youth, staff and organization leaders. Participants learned about what workers actually do to form transformational relationships with youth, ways to apply these ideas, recommendations for what public agencies and organizations can do to support relationship-building, and heard from a Pennsylvania youth who shared their own personal experience.

These webinars along with others can be found on the CWRC website at <http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Webinars.htm>.

### **SAT Waivers**

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 four SAT fee waivers during their academic career – two for the SAT Reasoning Test and two for the SAT Subject Tests. Fee waivers for the SAT Reasoning Test are available for *juniors and seniors only*. Fee waivers for the SAT Subject Test are available for *freshmen, sophomore, junior, or senior years*. A fee waiver can cover as many as three subject tests on one test day. Students who are not yet in ninth grade may not use the subject test fee waivers.

If you need to obtain either waiver, please contact Stephanie Brooks at [stb101@pitt.edu](mailto:stb101@pitt.edu). To learn more about SAT test day requirements and general SAT questions, please visit: <http://www.sat.org/test-day>.

### **Foster Care Welcome Book**

Recently the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board (YAB) created a booklet to support older youth entering foster care. The booklets were designed to encourage and assure youth that they are not alone in their foster care journey. The booklet contains drawings, poems, and messages of inspiration from former and current foster youth. You can access the welcome book and a video of Phyllis, a YAB member, explaining the purpose of the book at <http://www.independentlivingpa.org/FosterCareBook.htm>. If you are interested in receiving copies of the welcome book for your youth, please contact Meghan O'Hare at [meo43@pitt.edu](mailto:meo43@pitt.edu).

**PA Child Welfare Resource Center**  
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