

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

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

Department of Human Services

Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Trainings

Effective January 1, 2025, the Department of Human Services (DHS) will no longer accept new Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Training Curriculum for review and approval. All Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Trainings that are currently approved by DHS will maintain approval.

All Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Training Curriculum that were submitted to DHS prior to January 1, 2025, will be reviewed as outlined in the [Curriculum Approval Guidelines](#). All approved providers must update their curriculum and submit for DHS approval when legislative changes occur to the Child Protective Services Law.

Individuals or organizations who need to take a Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Training may still use any of the curriculums that are on [the approved list of courses](#).

Additional information related to approved providers of Mandated Reporter Training can be found on the Keep Kids Safe website. DHS will continue to monitor the number of approved curriculums to ensure there is sufficient training available for mandated reporters.

Child and Family Services Review - 2026

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF), in partnership with the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) is beginning to plan and prepare for Round 4 of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau oversees and administers CFSRs. While Pennsylvania's Round 4 of the CFSR is scheduled to begin in 2026, OCYF and CWRC are beginning to engage system and community partners in preparation for the upcoming CFSR. Please refer to the attached flyer on page 10, which provides a foundational overview of the CFSR process and requirements.

Promoting Educational Stability for Youth

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

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. Additional activities and information about Child Abuse Prevention Month can be found at [pafsa.org](#).

Blue Ribbon Campaign

The symbol for child abuse prevention is the blue ribbon. Wearing a blue ribbon during the month of April is a visual way for individuals to demonstrate they are taking a stand against child abuse and encouraging others to do the same.

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

- Wear blue in support of "Turn Pennsylvania Blue," as blue is the national symbolic color of child abuse prevention.
- Flag planting from Front Street to the Capitol steps in Harrisburg at 9:00 a.m.
- Annual PA Blue Ribbon Champions for Safe Kids Awards & Child Abuse Prevention Month Ceremony at the Capital Building Rotunda in Harrisburg, at 10:30 a.m.

National Foster Care Month

May is National Foster Care Month. This year's theme from the Children's Bureau is "Centered on Family, Strengthened by Connections," and will honor the importance of family connections and authentic family engagement in decision-making. Listening to families and supporting the relationships they value most can enhance trust and improve the well-being of children and families. 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. Mini-grant information will be released early March.

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

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

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

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

- Admission policies, safety, sanitation, and protection of civil rights;
- Use of the reasonable and prudent parenting standard; and,

- Procedures for criminal records checks, including fingerprint-based checks of national crime information databases.

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

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

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

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

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

Title IV-E/IV-B agencies must implement a process of notification of and request for Designated Placements which provides all children age 14 and over, and children under age 14 who have been removed from their home due to familial conflict about their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, or have disclosed their LGBTQI+ status or identity, or is otherwise known to the agency, with an opportunity to express their needs and concerns and safeguards their privacy and confidentiality. An LGBTQI+ child may request a Designated

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Placement or request that their current placement be offered services to become a Designated Placement. The notice must be provided in an age- or developmentally appropriate manner both verbally and in writing and must inform the child how they may request a Designated Placement, the process the IV-E/IV-B agency will respond to their request and information of the nonretaliation protections and the process by which a child may report a concern about retaliation.

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

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

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

504 and Title II of the ADA. To ensure compliance by DHS OCYF and the county children and youth agencies, OCR outlined several requirements that apply to OCYF and the county children and youth agencies. To transmit these requirements to CCYAs, OCYF has issued a series of Special Transmittals.

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

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

Cross System Updates

The Medicaid bulletin (MAB) [99-24-08, Pennsylvania's Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment \(EPSDT\) Program Periodicity Schedule](#) was released on October 29, 2024. The AAP made changes to footnotes in their 2024 Periodicity Schedule; however, none of the changes affected the content or requirements of Pennsylvania's Periodicity Schedule as reflected in the MAB.

Those who serve children with medically complex conditions may find the following websites helpful:

- [Children with Medically Complex Conditions | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)
- [Pediatric Complex Care Resource Centers | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)

The Office of Income Maintenance has announced that the SUN Bucks benefits were available for recipient use for four months from the date of issuance, and expungements of remaining SUN Bucks funds began on December 19, 2024. This will continue to be an annual benefit and must be used within the set timeframes.

OCYF Trauma Team

The OCYF Trauma Team would like to announce the release of trauma-sensitive training for Congregate Care providers entitled, *Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Congregate Care Staff*. This training can be found on the Child Welfare Resource Center's E-learn Catalog #2506. Trauma-sensitive training for foster care and adoption providers will be available in 2025.

Work continues on the DHS Trauma-Informed Care webpage at [OCYF Trauma-Informed Care \(TIC\) | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#). The webpage is currently under construction and will soon feature additional resources and information, along with a visual update. For any inquiries related to the OCYF Trauma Team's work, please contact the resource account at RA-pwocyftrauma@pa.gov.

Trauma Training Available for Child Welfare Professionals

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

organizations that work to improve the lives of children and families.

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

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

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

Act 48 of 2023

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

Act 118 Data Requirements

Act 118 of 2022, signed by Governor Wolf on November 3, 2022, amends Title 67 (Public Welfare) and Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) to include provisions relating to family finding, Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), transition planning and data collection. Act 118 requires county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) to submit data to the department when the court terminates jurisdiction of a child/youth, age 18 years of age or older. Data for a child/youth who returns to care after terminating court jurisdiction, shall be reported to the Department again following termination of court jurisdiction. As a reminder, Act 118 requires specific information to be submitted via each county's DocuShare folder. Requirements related to the specific information that needs to be reported to the department are outlined within the [OCYF Special Transmittal-Act 118](#) (APPLA) released on June 28, 2023. If you need a copy of the Special Transmittal, have questions, or need assistance related to submitting your data, please contact Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@pa.gov or 717-787-7056.

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Federal Review

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

National Youth in Transition Database

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) collects information in the following areas: Baseline Population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17), Served Population (any youth or young adult receiving independent living services regardless of age) and Follow-up Population (youth surveys at age 19 and 21 depending on Cohort period). Pennsylvania is currently in Cohort 5 for 19-year-old Follow-up Surveys. The 2025 A period began on October 1, 2024, and ends on March 31, 2025. Counties will have until April 15, 2025, to submit follow-up surveys and served population data for this reporting period. Counties can log onto getnytdpa.org to enter their served and survey data. NYTD questions can 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 2024-2025 academic year is available on PHEAA's website at pheaa.org. The application deadline for the 2024-2025 academic year has been extended to March 31, 2025.

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 postsecondary institutions to award a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees for Pennsylvania resident youth who meet Chafee ETG eligibility requirements and have applied for all available federal and state grants. Tuition and mandatory fee waivers apply to both public (state) colleges and universities, community colleges, private post-secondary institutions, and other eligible schools. Youth are eligible to receive the waivers for 5 years, which need not be consecutive, or until age 26.

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

In addition to the waivers, each post-secondary institution must appoint a Point of Contact (POC) to assist youth with eligibility, technical assistance, and other resources that may be available to them on and off campus. County and private provider IL Caseworkers/Coordinators may be contacted by the POC to verify a youth's eligibility. This is a critical step in assisting youth with verifying their eligibility when entering post-secondary education and financial aid packages being awarded.

Each post-secondary education institution is required to have their identified POC listed on their website. A list of POCs can be found on the Center for Schools and Communities website at center-school.org.

Additional information about the tuition waiver can be found at PHEAA.org/FosterEd.

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

New Student Loan Repayment Loan Options

The US Department of Education announced the [reopening of two student loan repayment plans](#) to give borrowers more options to keep their payments affordable. Please share with anyone who might benefit from having this information.

The Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR) and Pay As You Earn (PAYE) repayment plans offer income-driven repayment (IDR) and credit for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) to eligible borrowers enrolled in the currently [enjoined Saving on a Valuable Education \(SAVE\) Plan](#), as well as other terms that borrowers may wish to consider.

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- As income-driven repayment plans, Income-Contingent Repayment and Pay As You Earn set monthly payments based on borrowers' earnings and family size and have allowed borrowers to earn loan forgiveness after 20 to 25 years. And many public servants use them to keep their payments low as they work to earn Public Service Loan Forgiveness after just 10 years.
- The Income-Contingent Repayment and Pay As You Earn applications are available at [StudentAid.gov/idr](https://studentaid.gov/idr).
- To apply, borrowers need to log in to their StudentAid.gov account and upload income information.
- The US Department of Education authorized new enrollments in the plans through regulatory changes.
- The Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR) and Pay As You Earn plans will remain available to new enrollments until July 1, 2027.

Credit Reports

All CCYAs are required to run a credit check for all youth in foster care beginning at age 14 from each of the three Credit Bureaus as required by the [Social Security Act §475](#). Each Credit Bureau has a specific contact person and process to ensure foster care youths' credit history checks are completed appropriately. If you have questions regarding credit report requirements or need assistance obtaining a credit history from one of the Credit Bureaus, please contact Lindsey Glezen at linglezen@pa.gov or at 717-787-7056.

Family First Prevention Services Act

The Office of Children Youth and Families has added Family First-related content to the Keep Kids Safe Website. For information about Pennsylvania-specific Family First information check out [Family First | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#).

For email PA Family First email updates, please subscribe [here](#).

Enterprise Case Management System

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

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

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

Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Initiatives – American Bar Association (ABA)

The ABA's Center on Children and the Law Permanency Barriers Project is actively seeking new projects or technical assistance counties.

Technical assistance can range from one training to a few months of engagement. Please reach out if you would like to discuss the ways in which we may be of assistance. Areas in which the ABA is available to help include:

- Improving collaboration and communication between CYS, court, attorneys, and local providers
- How to create a true kin-first culture in your county
- Implementing a race equity lens to child welfare work
- Achieving relational and legal permanence for older youth
- Implementing effective concurrent planning
- Conducting a successful testifying workshop for caseworkers

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

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

Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA)

PSRFA began as a small group in 1974. Since then, they have grown to support children and families involved with foster care, adoption, and kinship care along with local foster parent associations and agencies who care for the children they serve throughout the state. PSRFA are supporters for legislation and advocacy for family resource care and provides training and education for those seeking guidance. They are a fantastic resource for children and families in these scenarios.

You can learn more about the PSRFA at psrfa.org.

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

CWEL and CWEB Programs

Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL)

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

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

Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB)

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

Alvernia University

Cedar Crest College

Elizabethtown College

Juniata College

Lancaster Bible College

Messiah University

Misericordia University

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

The CWEL and CWEB Teams are available to provide presentations to County Commissioners, Advisory Boards, Agency Leadership Teams, Agency Staff Members, and Independent Living

Programs. For more information and to schedule a presentation, please contact Laura Borish, CWEL Agency Coordinator at lbb14@pitt.edu or 412-334-9122.

Pennsylvania Kinship Navigator Program, KinConnector

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

The website includes a comprehensive, guided search feature of resources in the following topic areas: childcare, clothing, financial assistance, food, legal, medical, school, and support groups. Also available on the website are training opportunities for both professionals and kinship caregivers, printable resources, a podcast series called "Kindred Voices," and a virtual Support Group called "Kindred Spirits."

OCYF encourages all county and provider agencies to connect to PA KinConnector and learn more about the services offered, provide new community resource information for website inclusion and to establish partnerships for program growth across the state. Any questions regarding this program can be directed to Diane Michel at dmichel@pa.gov or 717-705-2911.

Accurint

Accurint is an online search tool available to every county throughout the state. It is able to assist with family finding efforts, contact information, criminal checks and identifying individuals for any type of family engagement meeting. Each county must have a county employee who is designated as their Accurint administrator. Administrators can be Accurint users or non-users. Non-user administrators do not count toward the county's allotment of users. Counties may have more than one Accurint administrator. If you or your staff would like training on the Accurint software, please contact Accurint Education Consultant, Bill News, at William.News@lexisnexisrisk.com or 215-285-7108.

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

Mandated Reporter Training

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

Trainings include, "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse" which meets all the requirements for training on recognizing and reporting child abuse, as well as "Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse" and "Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect", for mandated reporters who have taken Mandated Reporter Training before and need to take it again. The "Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse" training is designed to help participants respond to disclosures of child abuse in a way that is sensitive and supportive to the child, but without tainting the child's memory. The "Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect", helps participants recognize the signs of neglect, determine when and how to make a referral, and increase understanding of General Protective Services and agency procedures.

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

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

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

Media Campaign

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

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

Waiting Child Segments

OCYF funds three waiting child segments across the state designed to find adoptive families for older youth in need of families. *Waiting Child* is aired on KDKA-TV, channel 2, a Pittsburgh CBS affiliate; *Val's Kids* is aired on abc27 WHTM in the Harrisburg area; and *A Little Love* is aired on WBRE-TV, channel 28, a Wilkes-Barre NBC affiliate. Waiting child segments have proven to be successful over the years in helping find permanent homes for children in foster care. Contracts are scheduled to begin November 2025 and run through June 2025. If you have a child you would like featured on KDKA's *Waiting Child*, please contact Ja-Neen Jones at TRAC Services for Families at jjones@tracpgh.org or Nikita Lewis at nlewis@diakion-swan.org.

If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WHTM's *Val's Kids*, please contact Alfredo Gonzalez at algonzalez@diakon-swan.org.

If you have a waiting child you would like featured on WBRE's *A Little Love*, please contact Crissy Crawford at ccrawford@diakon-swan.org.

SWAN/IL Google Groups

There are over 1,100 current members of the SWAN/IL Listserv through Google Groups. This is a great way to share confidential information across the network to seek colleagues' advice and announce upcoming events. Anyone wishing to join the group must be an employee of a county children and youth agency, SWAN affiliate agency or IL provider. If interested, please contact Isabel Madrigal at imadrigal@diakon-swan.org or 717-558-1223.

Interstate Compact Unit

The PA Interstate Unit does not have the ability to process USPS, FedEx, or UPS “paper mail.” When providing any case documents to the Interstate Unit, please use the unit’s Resource Accounts, fax, or the Interstate/County DocuShare collection. Case documents include request packets, completed Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) home studies, 100Bs, supervisory reports, Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA) documents, etc.

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 \(state.pa.us\)](http://Pennsylvania Child Welfare Information Solution (state.pa.us)). Applicants are able to view and print their results online.

CVU will also accept PA Child Abuse History Clearance applications in paper format for anyone who may not have access to the internet. Results for paper applications are mailed to the appropriate address noted on the form and within 14 days from the date that application is received in CVU.

The Commonwealth’s vendor for digital fingerprinting is IDEMIA (also referred to as Identogo or MorphoTrust). The fingerprint-based background check is a multi-step process. For general questions about FBI clearances, please contact the FBI Background Check Unit at 1-877-371-5422. For IDEMIA registration, processing, or billing questions, please contact IDEMIA/Identogo at 1-844-321-2101. To register online go to Identogo.com or call 1-844-321-2101 and listen to the options menu.

CVU is responsible for processing out of state clearances for resource parents, including adoptive and foster parents when a resource parent has resided outside of Pennsylvania within the past five years. Prospective foster and adoptive parents required to obtain an Out-of-State Child Abuse

clearance are **no longer required** to submit the clearance to ChildLine for interpretation **IF** the clearance shows *no result (or no record)*. Out-of-State Child Abuse clearances with **ANY** result or record, **are required** to be submitted to ChildLine for interpretation.

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

Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

P.O. Box 2675

Harrisburg, PA 17105-2675

717-787-3984

www.dhs.pa.gov

Please be advised that the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF), in partnership with the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) is beginning to plan and prepare for Round 4 of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau, oversees and administers CFSRs. While Pennsylvania’s Round 4 of the CFSR is scheduled to begin in 2026, OCYF and CWRC are beginning to engage system and community partners in preparation for the upcoming CFSR. We are reaching out to provide you and your colleagues with the information below, which provides a foundational overview of the CFSR process and requirements. Please feel free to share as you see fit.

CFSR Round 4 is Coming to Pennsylvania!

Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) are a joint local, state, and federal effort designed to:

Ensure compliance with federal child welfare requirements;

Learn what is happening with children and families in the child welfare system; and

Help states to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families.

CFSR involves the following phases:



Planning and preparations are underway for CFSR Round 4 to begin in 2026.

Look for more information to come as planning continues!



Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services
Office of Children, Youth, and Families



To learn more now, go to [Understanding the CFSRs](#).

Email PACFSR@pitt.edu with any questions or requests for additional information.

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

2024 Cost & Time Review

The SWAN prime contract is compiling the SWAN Units of Service cost/time data reported in calendar year 2024. This is an annual initiative to inform SWAN service rates for the coming fiscal year. Once approved by the Department of Human Services, updated rates will be shared with the network.

Coming in 2025: SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual, 5TH Edition

SWAN LSI looks forward to the release of the 5th edition of the SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual (IRM) in 2025! Over six years ago, SWAN LSI released the original IRM to help address the impact of parental incarceration on children in the child welfare system. The IRM was developed as a comprehensive tool for child welfare professionals to use for case planning with incarcerated parents and as a resource to support the county agencies' efforts to engage with these parties. The information contained within can be applied in many ways to strengthen the child/parent connection, including contact between the incarcerated parent and child, parent-child visitation and permanency.

The IRM 4th edition is available in the SWAN Permanency Toolkit: <https://swantoolkit.org/toolkit/09-lsi-legal-services/swan-lsi-incarceration-resource-manual/>. If you have any updates about county prison policies or procedures, email lsi-irmupdates@diakon-swan.org.

SWAN LSI Diligent Search Services

SWAN LSI paralegals have provided diligent search services on behalf of Pennsylvania's children for over two decades. In doing so, paralegals have become experts in the search process while expanding search activities. SWAN LSI paralegals can support searches for:

- Missing parents;
- Fostering Connections (within 30 days of a child entering care);
- Connections for older youth;
- Locating connections for involvement with FGDM;
- Child Specific Recruitment or OCMI referrals;
- Family connections when a case is accepted for service and annually thereafter; and

- Compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act. Nearly every child in care will benefit from diligent search activities at some point in their case. The *Diligent Search Packet, 9th edition*, is the go-to resource for anyone conducting a search and is available on the SWAN Permanency Toolkit: <https://swantoolkit.org/toolkit/09-lsi-legal-services/diligent-search/>.

If you have any questions about SWAN LSI diligent search services or to request a diligent search training, contact your county's SWAN LSI coordinator: <https://diakon-swan.org/swan/network-map/>.

SWAN LSI Paralegals Commemorate National Adoption Month and Strive to Break Down Legal Barriers to Adoption

November 2024's celebration of National Adoption Month saw SWAN LSI paralegals (LSIPs) actively organizing Adoption Day events across the Commonwealth. Their involvement speaks to the depth of SWAN LSI's partnership with county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) as well as paralegals' vital role in Pennsylvania's Juvenile and Orphans Court systems.

The legal work that leads to these celebrations is a testament to SWAN LSIPs' drive and dedication. In state fiscal year (SFY) 2023-2024, LSIPs prepared 784 documents required for the adoption of a child. In many counties, LSIPs' efforts focus on the termination of parental rights process. In SFY 2023-2024, SWAN LSIPs prepared 3,820 petitions for termination of parental rights and completed 18,810 Orphans Court-related activities for 3,870 unique children. These numbers are on pace to be slightly lower in SFY 2024-2025, which is consistent with the trending reduction of Pennsylvania children in out-of-home care. This trend further highlights the relentless efforts of county child welfare workers with the support of the network.

The 2024 LSI County Partner Survey revealed that 93% of all respondents either agree or strongly agree that SWAN LSIPs' work increases the timeliness of filing of petitions for termination of parental rights and also helps to ensure the meeting of statutory guidelines under the Adoption and Safe Families Act. These results further speak to SWAN LSI's efforts to shorten the time children spend in foster care and to increase the achievement of permanency through adoption.

In 2025, SWAN LSI remains committed to reducing legal barriers to permanency and supporting adoption efforts across Pennsylvania. In partnership and ongoing collaboration with CCYAs, we hope to continue the positive trend of reducing the number of Pennsylvania children in

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out-of-home care and achieving permanency for all.

If CCYAs have questions about how LSIPs can support adoption finalization or Adoption Day activities, contact your assigned LSI coordinator: <https://www.diakon-swan.org/swan/network-map>.

Research and Quality Assurance (RQA) Report Updates

The Past Due Report, which collects data from affiliates on services not submitted for invoicing by their expected completion date, has been updated with enhanced functionality. Scheduled for release in January, the updated report was piloted this fall. Feedback highlighted that it is less time-consuming, easier to navigate, and helps affiliates have more discussions about late work. The report also compares an affiliate's late work to statewide performance, allowing them to see how they compare to the state.

The RQA division is working to enhance existing reports (like the Past Due Report) and develop new ones. This process requires the help of volunteers from the network to pilot these tools. Volunteers are required to attend meetings, including an orientation to introduce the project, and test the product. They also attend follow-up meetings to provide feedback, which helps the SWAN team make any suggested changes or improvements. Pilots offer a valuable opportunity to provide input from the network perspective on reporting and other areas of SWAN service delivery. SWAN regional technical assistants (RTAs) will notify affiliates when volunteers are needed.

If you are interested in improving reporting for SWAN services, service delivery, and permanency outcomes for children and youth, we encourage you to participate as opportunities arise. If you would like more information or are interested in participating in future pilots, reach out to your SWAN RTA.

Tips for Ensuring Child/Youth Photo Quality

Over the past few years, SWAN permanency professionals have risen to the challenge of improving the quality of recruitment photos featuring Pennsylvania's waiting children and youth. To ensure all recruitment photos are always of the highest quality, highlighting the children's/youths' strengths and capturing their spirit and personality, we offer some additional tips, specifically regarding non-identifying photos.

- Do not paste graphics or emoji images over a child's face. It usually does little to de-identify the child if someone who knows the child sees the picture, and it does not fulfill our goal of

presenting the children/youth in the most respectful and flattering manner.

- While objects relevant to the child/youth's interests or hobbies can help de-identify a photo, be mindful of the object's scale and how the child/youth is positioned. For example, a child/youth reading their favorite book creates a more enjoyable and honoring image than a child/youth covering their face with their hands. If the child/youth is holding up artwork they have created or a book over their face, please ensure it does not cover their *entire* face. Seeing the child/youth's face from the eyes up makes for a better image.
- Be mindful of backgrounds (especially those that imply congregate care, such as glossy painted cinderblock or what appears to be a group activity room). Use free photo editing software, such as what comes on your phone or computer, or even a program such as Canva, to remove or change a distracting background to a solid color.

For creative examples of non-identifying



photographs, check out our Dropbox folder:

We recommend updating all child/youth's photos at least every six months. Want other photo tips? Check out Tip Five in the *PAE Strategies for Permanency* for some great ideas. You can find that in the SWAN Permanency Toolkit: <https://swantoolkit.org/toolkit/10-pae-toolkit/recruitment-strategies/>.

November Adoption Awareness Mini-grants

In November, agencies across the Commonwealth held events to raise awareness of adoption and recruit foster and adoptive parents. Funding for 51 awareness grants totaling \$65,000 was approved. The grants included 46 individual agencies and five coalitions/agencies teaming up to hold events throughout November. Events included carnivals, matching events, "home for the holidays" events, and celebrations. While not all after event reports have been submitted, we are aware of at least 44 families seeking more information on the process to become a foster or adoptive parent.

Conquering Courtrooms Across Pennsylvania

The SWAN legal training team successfully delivered 62 rounds of the *Conquering the Courtroom* training across the state in 2024, equipping county agency caseworkers and other child welfare professionals with essential legal knowledge and practical courtroom skills. This comprehensive training covers a wide range of topics relevant to their work, including courtroom procedures, effective case preparation, and testimony tips and strategies. Additionally, it can be tailored to fit each county's needs. By enhancing their legal understanding, workers are better positioned to effectively represent the interests of their clients and the agency and navigate courtroom challenges they might encounter. To schedule a *Conquering the Courtroom* training, or to learn of the many other legal trainings available, contact your assigned SWAN LSI coordinator.

Helpline News & Happenings

After 25 years of serving Pennsylvania children and families, **Jan Scherer**, SWAN Helpline supervisor, has retired. Her last day with the SWAN Helpline was on January 3, and she looks forward to traveling the nation by RV with her husband.

Jennifer Bornman has been promoted to the role of SWAN Helpline supervisor, effective December 19, 2024. She has been with the Helpline for 21 years. Please welcome Jennifer to her new position. She has been training over the last year to make this succession a smooth transition.

Zoom In On Practice Virtual Trainings

Virtual trainings for each Post-permanency unit are available for new staff and as refreshers for seasoned staff. Participants will gain a better understanding of best practices for completing each Post-permanency Unit of Service. Each updated, interactive training will be held from 10-11:30 AM.

February 5: Post-permanency Assessment

- This training will start with the referral and continue through a discussion about the assessment tools, finishing with the Family Support Plan.

February 11: Post-permanency Case Advocacy/ Case Management

- The session will highlight the benchmark's definition of services that can be provided and will continue with a conversation about how that definition can be expanded to meet the

needs of the family.

February 19: Post-permanency Respite

- Respite guidelines will be used as a basis for conversation about this unit. The discussion will center on the purpose of respite and what a family hopes to gain by using it.

February 26: Post-permanency Support Group

- Support groups come in all shapes and sizes in this underused unit. Presenters will facilitate a conversation about the types of groups asked for and currently offered.

In addition, the following *Zoom In On Practice* virtual trainings will be offered:

February 20: Child Specific Recruitment: Role of the County | 10-11:30 AM

- This training will provide an overview of SWAN Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) Unit of Service. The CSR benchmarks and reports will be explained with an emphasis on the importance of team collaboration and the **role of the county worker** in the CSR process.

March 7: Behavioral Interviewing and Strengths-Based Writing | 10 AM-12 PM

- This workshop addresses behavioral and theoretical interviewing styles. It demonstrates why behavioral interviewing is most conducive to obtaining information that shows a family's ability to provide safety, nurturing and commitment to a child. Strengths-based writing tips help participants effectively present gathered information in written documents.

March 14: SWAN and Permanency: A Collaborative Journey | 10 AM-12 PM

- This is an interactive training designed to be presented to individuals unfamiliar with the SWAN program or as a refresher to experienced staff. The training explores the importance of permanency for all youth placed in out-of-home care and how incorporating the SWAN Units of Service supports the permanency journey. An introduction to Permanency Roundtables as a tool to expedite legal permanency is included.

March 18: Recruitment Strategy Review: Tips and Techniques for Finding Permanency | 10 AM-12 PM

- This training provides a broad overview of recruitment strategies commonly used to facilitate youth permanency. It is intended to help county workers better understand these strategies and what they can expect from recruiters working with their youth. County workers need general information about these strategies to participate actively in recruitment planning meetings and co-create the CSR Plan

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so youth can get the most out of each strategy. Strategies that will be reviewed are documented through individual tips and techniques in the *Strategies for Permanency* document in the SWAN Permanency Toolkit.

An electronic invitation to register for these SWAN *Zoom In On Practice* trainings has been sent to agency SWAN contacts in the network. If you have any questions about registering, contact your SWAN regional technical assistant.

Staff can register using the links found on the www.diakon-swan.org website.

Newly Released: Updated SWAN Placement and Finalization E-learning Training

We are pleased to announce the updated Placement and Finalization e-learning training course is now accessible at www.swan-online.net. This course was updated to include the changes made to the Placement Benchmarks upon implementation of the Family Matching Unit of Service. The course also contains enhancements on topics such as the benefits of the Post-Adoption Contact Agreement and creating an Individualized Permanency Service Plan. New videos and completed sample documents have been added to the course. In addition to the Placement and Finalization training course, SWAN's e-learning site includes interactive and comprehensive courses on the Child Preparation, Child Profile, Child Specific Recruitment, Family Profile and Post-permanency Units of Service. A Family Matching course is also currently in development so stay tuned!

Courses are easily accessible to anyone in or out of the network and can be taken at any time. A user can begin the course, stop to attend to other duties and later re-enter the course to pick up where they left off. Be sure to check out available courses, which are invaluable to new workers and great refreshers for seasoned workers and supervisors.

Contact your SWAN regional technical assistant with any questions.

Post-permanency Support Group: Service Timeline and Invoicing Reminder

The Post-permanency technical assistants would like to remind affiliates that the service timeline for the Post-permanency Support Group Unit of Service is six months. Payment for the service is divided into two three-month instances. The participation threshold requires support group attendance during at least two of the three months within each three-month instance. Affiliates have the flexibility to determine the length and frequency of their support groups. However, to invoice for the full unit, the participation

benchmark must be met in both three-month instances. Note that emphasizing the six-month service period helps reinforce the importance of meeting these expectations.

If you have any questions, contact a SWAN Post-permanency technical assistant.

SWAN Prime Contract

200 Corporate Center Drive Suite 100B
PO Box 959

Camp Hill, PA 17011

Ph: 717-236-8490 | Fax: 717-236-8510

www.diakon-swan.org

www.dhs.pa.gov/AdoptPAkids



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

Older Youth Retreat

The Older Youth Retreat is a week-long experience for youth, between the ages of 16-20, who are currently in, or were formerly in, foster care. The Older Youth Retreat is held at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown campus (UPJ) and planned by a steering committee comprised of both youth and staff from across the state, who dedicate their time and effort to select activities, events, and keynote speakers to ensure that a good time is had by all. Youth will be encouraged to participate in planned activities, which will allow them to learn new things and meet new people. The retreat is a fun, enlightening, and very busy week!

The 2024 Older Youth Retreat took place at the UPJ campus from July 29 to August 2, 2024. A diverse group of nearly 60 youth, representing 24 counties across Pennsylvania, participated in the event. The theme of the week, "Do What Is Right, Not What Is Easy", was modeled by youth and staff alike, demonstrating how determination and teamwork can lead to great outcomes.

Throughout the week, the youth had the chance to learn, meet new people and of course have fun together, while residing in dorm rooms to obtain a glimpse of the college life experience. Some highlights from the week included activity sessions, youth-led peer group sessions, swimming and recreation, a presentation by the PA Youth Advisory Board, a dance with a photo booth to capture retreat memories, two keynote speakers (one of whom focused on the significance of embracing diversity), youth vs. staff competitions, field games, activity presentations, a picnic and a talent show highlighting participants talents and creativity. Youth also participate in focus groups to help shape policy and improve services impacting older youth. By the end of the week, many of the youth made new friends, formed meaningful connections with their peers and made memories that will last a lifetime.

To get a glimpse of what you missed, check out the 2024 Retreat Video here: [2024 Older Youth Retreat Video \(pitt.edu\)](#).

Plans for the 2025 Older Youth Retreat are already in full swing, and we are excited to share the dates for the event so you can begin planning for your youth and staff to attend. The 2025 Older Youth Retreat will be held **July 28-August 1, 2025**.

If you have questions about the Older Youth Retreat, please contact Meghan O'Hare at meo43@pitt.edu.

Older Youth Services Certification Series

The purpose of the Older Youth Services Certification series is to provide individuals working with adolescents with the knowledge, skills, techniques, and confidence to engage and empower youth involved in the child welfare system and their support. The courses within this series include foundational level information for working with older youth, and the certification track is a total of 13 credit hours. Courses will be offered mainly online via E-Learn with one instructor-led training. This certification series is eligible for all agencies and all position levels to enroll.

Courses include:

- Independent Living Services: An Overview – Module 1 Purpose and Policy (online) – 2 credit hours (PLEASE NOTE: This module is a prerequisite to the instructor-led session)
- Independent Living Services: An Overview – Module 2 Adolescent Issues: Risk and Resiliency (online) – 2 credit hours (PLEASE NOTE: This module is a prerequisite to the instructor-led session)
- Independent Living Services: Engaging Older Youth (online prerequisite) – 1 credit hour
- Independent Living Services: Engaging Older Youth (instructor-led session) – 6 credit hours, available in person or remote.
- Implicit Bias in Child Protection (online) – 2 credit hours

To register for this certification series, you can self-enroll in the courses or contact the Registration Account at cwtpreg@pitt.edu.

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 are available for students who are currently in high school. If a youth already graduated or did not graduate, but received their GED, the College Board will not accept the fee waiver. There are also a limited number of college application fee waivers. 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. If you need to obtain either waiver, please contact Sherri Krodell, slk114@pitt.edu, at the Child Welfare Resource Center.

Youth Advisory Board (YAB)

The Child Welfare Resource Center is seeking YAB Regional Consultants for the Northwest, South Central, and North Central regions. The purpose of the YAB consultants is to ensure grassroots advocacy efforts for older youth initiatives are supported at the local and regional levels. The consultants coordinate all activity and communication for the regional Youth Advisory Boards including quarterly meetings, statewide YAB meetings, community services events, and legislative initiatives. Each regional YAB is allocated funding to support advocacy efforts within their regions. The consultants assist with managing the funding including documents, stipends reimbursements and other purchase reimbursable items. Additionally, the consultants provide mentoring and coordinate professional development opportunities for the regional YAB. Please contact Cindy Gore at lcg7@pitt.edu for additional information.

YAB Resources

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board is in the process of finalizing the following resources that will soon be available on the YAB website (payab.pitt.edu):

- **Things Youth Need Entering Foster Care**

Entering foster care can be a challenging and emotional experience but understanding your rights and knowing where to find support can help make the transition smoother. This guide will provide essential information to help youth navigate the foster care system, covering important aspects such as establishing safety plans, managing personal belongings, and understanding your educational rights. It highlights the significance of accessing mental health resources, advocating for yourself legally, and staying connected with family members and support networks. This resource also emphasizes opportunities for stipends, connecting with peers, and the role of services like the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN). With these tools and resources, youth can feel empowered to advocate for themselves, maintain their identity, and transition more confidently toward independence.

- **Guiding Youth Through the Transition Out of Foster Care**

The transition out of foster care can be a complex and challenging process, but with the right tools and resources, youth can successfully navigate their journey to independence. This guide will highlight key

resources that support youth in areas such as education, career planning, financial management, housing, and mental health services. It empowers youth to understand their rights, advocate for themselves, and build strong, supportive relationships with peers, mentors, and community resources. The guide also covers important aspects such as reentering foster care if eligible, the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey for feedback, and specific support for parenting youth. It includes essential tools like the Aftercare Checklist, educational programs, housing resources, Independent Living (IL) aftercare services, and advocacy support. By utilizing these resources, youth can build resilience, develop life skills, and transition into adulthood with confidence, ensuring they have the support and knowledge necessary to thrive in their next chapter.

- **Youth Benefiting from Extended Foster Care: A Pathway to Successful Transition**

This document will emphasize the numerous advantages of remaining in foster care in Pennsylvania, showcasing the critical role that extended care plays in supporting youth as they transition into adulthood. By staying in care until age 21, youth gain access to a variety of essential resources and services that help them build a strong foundation for independent living. These include emotional support, stability, educational opportunities, health and wellness services, and life skills development, all aimed at ensuring a successful and secure future.

Key benefits include consistent emotional support from mentors, caseworkers, and professionals, fostering strong, trusting relationships that provide a sense of stability. Youth who remain in care are more likely to experience stable housing, financial independence, and higher education success, with significantly improved rates of high school graduation and college enrollment compared to peers who age out at 18.

Extended foster care also offers access to crucial health services, including regular check-ups, mental health support, and continued coverage under Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) until the age of 26. Additionally, programs like the Chafee Foster Care Program, the Pennsylvania Independent Living Program (ILP), and CareerLink provide financial literacy, housing support, career counseling, and job training that equip youth with the skills necessary for successful independence.

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Moreover, SWAN ensures that youth establish permanent connections with supportive adults, guiding them through their transition with resources, counseling, and permanency planning. These support systems, combined with financial aid, job search assistance, and housing resources, significantly reduce the risk of homelessness and economic hardship.

By remaining in care, youth can build the skills, confidence, and stability needed to navigate adulthood, significantly improving their chances of success and reducing the risks associated with prematurely aging out of the system. The document highlights the importance of extended care in fostering self-sufficiency, resilience, and long-term success for youth in foster care.

NYTD Council for Youth

The NYTD Council for Youth is an exciting new initiative aimed at empowering youth with lived experience in foster care to provide valuable feedback and insights that will influence state-level policy decisions. The council will allow youth to engage in discussions about their needs, challenges, and opportunities, giving them a platform to shape the future of youth services. By fostering a sense of community and shared purpose, the council will also focus on developing leadership skills, advocacy, and providing a space for peer support. This new initiative underscores the importance of youth participation in policymaking and ensures that youth voices are integral in shaping the programs and services that affect them. More information will be provided as the council develops and as resources become available.

PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)

403 E. Winding Hill Road
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
717-795-9048
www.payab.pitt.edu

ABA Education Barriers

to Permanency Project

A project of the American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law

The **ABA Education Barriers to Permanency Project** improves school experiences and outcomes for children in foster care to promote permanency and life success.

Key Principles

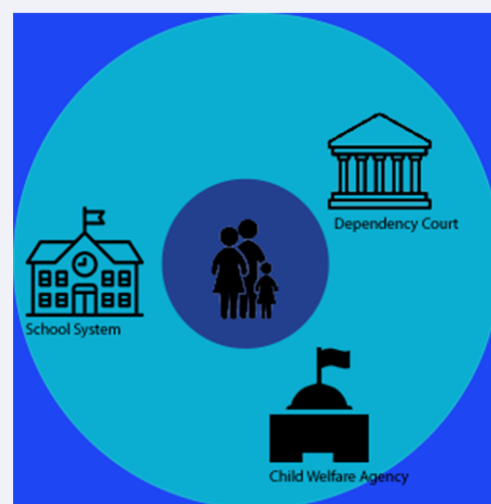
1. **School stability strengthens placement stability** and often speeds permanency for children and families.
2. **School success guides life success.** Focusing on the full educational experience (including needs and supports) improves school and life outcomes.
3. **Child welfare agencies, schools, and courts must work together** to create a support network for students in foster care.

How the Project Helps

The Education Barriers project can:

- ✓ **Identify strengths and challenges** child welfare agency, education, and court systems experience supporting education success for children in care.
- ✓ **Develop strategies, practices, and policies** to address challenges and improve education success for children in care.
- ✓ **Provide targeted technical assistance** to address needs and train educators, child welfare staff, and the legal community.
- ✓ **Collaborate on a long-term reform strategy** to address barriers and needs and implement reforms (see Full project components, right).

A Collaborative Approach



Full project components:

1. Identify education barriers.
2. Recommend and implement changes.
3. Work with child welfare, education, and court systems to develop and implement new policies and procedures.
4. Monitor improvements and changes.
5. Measure and report project results.

Get started today

The ABA Education Barriers to Permanency Project can work with your jurisdiction to promote permanency for children in foster care by addressing children's education needs. Contact us to get started or to learn more.



Kathleen McNaught, 202/662-1966



Kathleen.McNaught@americanbar.org



<http://www.abaeducationbarriers.org>

ABA Permanency Barriers Project

A project of the American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law

The ABA Permanency Barriers Project works with you to reduce the time children spend in foster care before achieving permanency.

Principles

1. Permanency begins on Day 1.
2. Small steps add up to change.
3. Full stakeholder engagement is key to realize and maintain system reform.

Project Approach

1 Focus on System Change

ABA staff help local stakeholders develop individualized county action plans. The action plans are based on a thorough assessment of needs, which includes:

- Case file review
- Court observation
- Data analysis
- Focus groups with stakeholders

2 County-Driven, County-Owned

Each jurisdiction encounters unique challenges. We form a county Advisory Board and issue-based subcommittees made up of lead decisionmakers, including:

- Child welfare agency administrators and staff
- Behavioral health providers
- Juvenile and family court judges
- School administrators
- Agency, parent, and children's attorneys
- Others, as identified by county

3 ABA as Neutral Facilitator and Strategic Partner

ABA staff are on site monthly working to develop and implement reforms.

- Our attorneys bring extensive firsthand knowledge and national perspective to guide your county.
- We ensure all stakeholders join the effort as equal partners.
- We focus on system barriers and engagement between the legal and nonlegal communities at both the county and state level.
- We provide individualized attention, which can include refining court and agency procedures, providing legal analysis, and conducting trainings.

4 Improved Outcomes

At the end of this two-year project, you will see:

- More efficient and effective pathways to permanency for every case;
- A reduction of time in foster care for children in your county; and
- Improved communication, network building, and stakeholder collaboration.

Measurable Results

At the end of the two-year project each county receives a final project report that summarizes results and provides recommendations to sustain system change. To date, the project has:

- ✓ served **55** different counties in **four** states,
- ✓ reduced the time children spend in foster care in all four states by an average of **nine months**,
- ✓ realized a positive impact on more than **3,000** children,
- ✓ saved counties and states over **\$30 million** in foster care costs.

Targeted Technical Assistance

As an alternative to the two-year model, we provide targeted technical assistance on permanency matters through on-site trainings, developing local protocols, facilitating meetings, and other solutions to address local challenges. ABA technical assistance can range from a one-day training to a multi-month engagement.

Get Started Today

The ABA Permanency Barriers Project can work with your county to promote permanency for children in foster care.

For more information, contact:
 Heidi Redlich Epstein, 202-662-1725
Heidi.Epstein@americanbar.org

This project is funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.