

Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network and Independent Living Services

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

**2013 Fall Quarterly Meeting**

**Act 80 and Act 91 Update:**

The Department anticipates issuance of final guidance regarding the implementation of Acts 80 and 91 in the form of a Special Transmittal in the imminent future. In addition to the Special Transmittal, the Department will also be sharing a question and answer document to further assist agencies with implementation of these Acts.

The extension of subsidies permitted through the enactment of Act 80 is available for those adoptions or permanent legal custodianship subsidy agreements in effect on or after July 1, 2012 for youth 13 years of age and older.  Many counties are already making the required concerted effort to reach all of those youth/families who have aged out of dependency, foster care and subsidy agreements from July 1, 2012 to the present and make payment for all appropriate retroactive subsidies and foster care payments to eligible youth/families due to the late implementation of the new laws. County agencies that have not yet begun to implement this process should be aware that this process is required.

Under Act 91, any youth under the age of 21, meeting the definition of child who had their dependency jurisdiction terminated by the court within 90 days prior to, on, or after their 18th birthday is able to request the court to resume dependency jurisdiction (up to and including placement) even if their dependency jurisdiction was terminated prior to July 5, 2012.  County agencies should be actively working to educate youth about the expanded definition of child and the Department is encouraged by reports that youth have been able to take advantage of the expanded definition of child and remain in foster care, resume their dependency jurisdiction and/or re-enter age appropriate foster care settings, as they continue to work towards achieving independence.

At this time, county agencies should continue their active education of all youth and families about the extension of services and begin updating documents and agreements accordingly.

**Chafee Education and Training Grant Program (ETG):**

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application for the 2013-2014 school year and directions on how to apply is available online.  The 2013-2014 maximum ETG award is $4,000 per student, not to exceed their cost of attendance.

Please continue to spread the word about the ETG for youth who are, or were, in out of home placement or adopted after age 16.  Youth ARE NOT required to participate in a formal IL program to be eligible to apply and receive an award.  Timely completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the Pennsylvania State Grant and ETG applications is important.

All current ETG award recipients will be automatically enrolled for the next academic year and do not need to complete the ETG application.

For questions about current Chafee applications or a youth’s status, please contact the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) at

1-800-831-0797. If you work with youth receiving aftercare services who plans to move to another state and establish residency there, they can find state information on the ETG programs at the Foster Care to Success website: [www.fc2sprograms.org](http://www.fc2sprograms.org).  Each state has its own individual application process.  If you have questions regarding the ETG program, contact Joe Warrick at jwarrick@pa.gov or (717) 214-6765.

**Remind yourself, remind your youth:**

PHEAA reports that a significant portion of Chafee ETG youth have not applied or reapplied for the PHEAA State Grant. This means that some youth may have taken out loans that must be repaid and/or have used limited ETG funds, resulting in the reduction in the maximum award amounts for ETG. Staff are encouraged to educate and assist all college students annually to apply for the PHEAA State Grant.

To apply for the State Grant, a youth must first complete the FAFSA. Most renewal students need only update their information to reapply. Please see the PHEAA website, Pennsylvania State Grant Program at [www.pheaa.org](http://www.pheaa.org).

Note that State Grant deadlines are different for first-time applicants and renewal applicants. If you find a youth has missed the deadline, apply anyway. Late applications may qualify for awards if funding permits.

**Credit History Reporting:**

OCYF is finalizing the revised Independent Living Services Bulletin to include additional policy and assistance for counties to comply with Section 475(5) of the Social Security Act amended by adding the requirement that “each child in foster care under the responsibility of the State who has attained 16 years of age receives, without cost, a copy of any consumer report of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) pertaining to the child each year until the child is discharged from care, and receives assistance (including, when feasible, from any court-appointed advocate for the child) in interpreting and resolving any inaccuracies in the report.”  The effective date of implementation was

October 1, 2011.

As most county staff are aware, implementation of the new requirements has been challenging and confusing.  Part of the challenge is the way Credit Reporting Agencies (CRA) are attempting to meet the new requirements as well as the influx of state and county requests.  Credit checks are to be run through three CRAs, **Experian, TransUnion and Equifax**.

At this point, **Experian** will only accept credit history checks in hardcopy(paper) from county agencies but has started enrollment in their online process for future use. There are no charges to use Experian however, states or counties are required to sign a user agreement.

**TransUnion** prefers that credit history checks be completed online but require counties to sign a user agreement.  There are no fees for child welfare agencies to use TransUnion.

**Equifax** prefers that credit history checks be completed online but requires a start-up fee and a signed user agreement.  However, counties should **not** make any payments to Equifax unless otherwise directed by OCYF.  OCYF is in the process of negotiating a statewide contract with Equifax that will allow their fees to be waived or chargeable to OCYF.  As part of that contract, it is expected that counties will be required to sign a user agreement with Equifax for online submission. OCYF will notify county child welfare agencies when this is finalized.

The Administration of Children, Youth and Families has informed all states that while there was a delay of implementation, the effective date of implementation remains at October 1, 2011.  Additional and current information will be available in the revised IL Services Bulletin.

**Photographers Available:**

Having beautiful portraits that capture the spirit and individuality of Pennsylvania’s waiting children in a single portrait is often the key to matching. To serve more waiting children, SWAN is using the talents of volunteer photographers from across the state to obtain artistic portraits of all youth registered with the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE).

SWAN has identified professional photographers located throughout Pennsylvania.  These photographers will donate their time and talent to create portraits that spotlight each child in a personal way.  Participating photographers will submit new portraits electronically to PAE staff for inclusion on PAE’s website, [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org).

Caseworkers need to follow the *Heart Gallery* *Caseworker Photography Process* which outlines the steps caseworkers must follow to participate. A copy of the process can be obtained by contacting Karen Lollo at 800-227-0225 ext. 1242 or klollo@diakon-swan.org. The document also explains where you can obtain the list of participating photographers.

Please use the volunteer photographers in your area and work together to capture Pennsylvania’s waiting children in a beautiful portrait.

**National Youth In Transition Database (NYTD):**

Effective October 1, 2013, all states begin a new “Baseline Population” cohort and collect information of every youth in foster care reaching age 17. The three NYTD Baseline Population Update WebEx sessions were well attended and provided county NYTD staff information to improve the quality of data received through the youth surveys. Additionally, the NYTD Baseline Population clarification for Juvenile Probation involved youth and new, optional guides were shared. OCYF will release to county NYTD Coordinators the answers to all questions asked during the WebEx.

The state also begins a new period for the “Served Population” (any youth receiving an IL Service regardless of age) in October.

**SWAN List Serve:**

The SWAN list serve through Google Groups **is comprised of county children and youth agency workers and SWAN affiliate agency workers. The goal of the group is to facilitate special needs adoptions throughout PA.  All information posted on this site is confidential.  Anyone wishing to join this group must be an employee of a county children and youth agency or SWAN affiliate agency. If interested, please contact** Joe Warrick at jwarrick@pa.gov or (717) 214-6765.

**SWAN-IL Network Newsletter:**

Tell the Network about all of the wonderful things you, your agency, your community, a youth or a colleague is doing to promote permanency for the youth of PA! If you have something exciting, interesting or informative to share with your colleagues, please forward your articles, success stories, matching events or ideas to Karen Lollo at klollo@diakon-swan.org or at (717) 558-1242. Pictures are always a great addition to any article. You can find the latest and past editions of this newsletter at [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org) under the Network Newsletter link.