

**Statewide Adoption and Permanency**

**Network and Independent Living Services**

**2014 Fall Quarterly Meeting**

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

**National Adoption Month:**

November is National Adoption Awareness Month. The Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) distributed $50,000 to 39 adoption coalitions/agencies to support their adoption awareness events across Pennsylvania.  If you would like to have your event featured on the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) Facebook page, please contact Joe Warrick at jwarrick@pa.gov or (717) 214-6765. For more information, visit [www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/nam](http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/nam).

**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).

Participating photographers will submit new portraits electronically to PAE staff for inclusion on PAE’s website, [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org).   For more information on the process contact Karen Lollo at klollo@diakon-swan.org or at (717) 558-1242. Please use the volunteer photographers in your area and work together to capture Pennsylvania’s waiting children in a beautiful portrait.

**Chafee Education and Training Grant Program:**

The Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application for the 2014-2015 school year and directions on how to apply is available online.  The 2014-2015 maximum ETG award is tentatively $4,500 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 PHEAA at 1-800-831-0797.  If you work with youth receiving services who plan 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 at (717) 214-6765.

**Higher Education Financial Preparation for 2014-2015:**The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available online for the 2014-2015 academic year.  The website address is fafsa.ed.gov. Students must complete (or update) the FAFSA to become eligible for federal and state financial aid.  Prospective students do not need to have finalized their school of choice however they must list their school preferences. Adding or changing schools after the application is submitted is a simple, online process.  Staff and adults are encouraged to assist youth as necessary and to inform them how to answer the dependency related questions, specifically question number 53 (Were you in foster care or a dependent ward of the court?)

**National Youth In Transition Database:**

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) implementation is ongoing with the Baseline Population (every youth in foster care who reaches age 17) and the Served Population (any youth receiving Independent Living (IL) service regardless of age.) October 1, 2014 begins the Follow-up 21 Population collection period. OCYF expects to offer WebEx sessions and additional resources to those counties who have participated in the Follow-up 19 Population collection period. NYTD questions can be directed to David Derbes at dderbes@pa.gov or (717) 705-2911.

**SWAN ListServ through Google Groups:**

The SWAN ListServ 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 by email at** jwarrick@pa.gov or at **(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 are 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.

 **Credit History Reporting:**OCYF is finalizing the revised Independent Living (IL) Services Bulletin to include additional policy and assistance for counties to comply with Section 475(5) of the Social Security Act is 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.”

As most county staff are aware, implementation of the new requirements has been challenging and confusing.  Part of this challenge is because of the way the Credit Reporting Agencies are attempting to meet the new requirements as well as the influx of state and county requests.  All credit reporting agencies will accept paper submission. The below information is how to access each of the credit reporting agencies online process:

* **Experian:** Experian has officially started their online process, there are no charges to use Experian however, counties are required to sign a user agreement to access their online credit history reports.  Counties may still submit paper submissions. Contact: Paul Hernandez at paul.a.hernandez@experian.com
* **TransUnion:** TransUnion has provided information that they prefer online submission but are requiring counties to sign an agreement.  TransUnion is waiving fees for child welfare agencies.  Counties may also submit paper submissions. Contact: Angela Pescatore at fostercare@transunion.com or AHARP@transunion.com
* **Equifax:** Equifax also prefers online submission and recently started to waive fees if counties edit their user agreement by omitting the language concerning fees.  Counties with an Equifax agreement should remove any language concerning fees. Before signing the agreement, counties should make sure Equifax agrees to all the changes.  If so, counties may sign and start enrollment.  Contact: cfs@equifax.com. **Please note we do not want counties paying any fees** to Equifax. If for some reason Equifax is not willing to omit the fees related to this service, please contact OCYF.

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.

**Continuous Quality Improvement**

On August 13, 2014, a letter was sent to all county children and youth administrators announcing the beginning of Phase V of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) effort.  Counties interested in participating in the next phase were asked to submit a letter of interest by September 12, 2014, and a completed self-assessment by September 26, 2014.  OCYF regional office staff, Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) staff and the CQI/Quality Service Review (QSR) project managers will be meeting in early October to review the self-assessments and plan for providing support to counties during the next round of QSRs.  The counties accepted for Phase V of the CQI effort will be announced in late October/early November.  Please contact Natalie Perrin at nperrin@pa.gov or at (717) 783-7376 for more information on CQI.

**SWAN Online:**

Be sure to check out SWAN’s Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/adoptpa](http://www.facebook.com/adoptpa), and our YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/adoptpakids](http://www.youtube.com/adoptpakids).

**Child Welfare Information Solution:**

In 2012, The Department of Public Welfare began a project to design and implement a modernized child welfare system over the course of several years. Some of the goals of the project are:

* Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Pennsylvania’s child welfare programs through systematic automation and process modernization
* Integrate state level systems with County Children and Youth Agencies’ case management systems
* Improve the timeliness of child welfare reporting
* Enable data driven decision making that will result in improved outcomes for children

The Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) incorporates the changes to the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) and establishes a central database to hold all critical statewide child welfare information, most of which will be available real time, and functionality for state level services with access to case level data.

CWIS Phase I will be operational on December 31,, 2014 when Act 29 of 2014 goes into effect. Act 29 of 2014 amended the CPSL, establishing a statewide database of protective services. The legislation expanded the information to be included in the database to include Child Protective Services (CPS) and General Protective Services (GPS) referrals. Only authorized personnel will have access to the central database.

Additional features of CWIS in Phase I include:

* Electronic transfer of CPS and GPS referrals and outcomes between the State and counties
* A web site for mandated reporters to submit CPS and GPS referrals online
* Ability to electronically submit and receive a child abuse history clearance through on-line capabilities