



POST ON POLICY

OCYF Division of Policy

JANUARY 2025

WELCOME TO THE POST ON POLICY (POP) NEWSLETTER

This newsletter was designed to inform and update on all things policy in the Office of Children, Youth, and Families/Bureau of Programs, Policy and Operations/Division of Policy. This quarterly newsletter highlights policy updates, workgroup activity, staff contacts, upcoming changes, and special events. Please share with all interested staff and submit your questions or ideas for future newsletter information to: gebutler@pa.gov and asweaver@pa.gov.

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OCYF Bureau of Policy, Programs, and Operations 2024 Holiday Wish Program



OCYF-BPPO had another successful year of making a family's holiday wish come true, with contributions allowing all of the items on the family's holiday wish list to be purchased! Thank you to all who contributed and wrapped the gifts!



January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Subject matter expert: Shannon Walborn, Human Services Analyst Supervisor

January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month – an important time to reflect on the resilience of trafficking survivors and recognize the efforts of those who work tirelessly to prevent and eliminate this inhumane and devastating form of abuse and exploitation.

This month, federal and state agencies, community partners, advocates, and individuals seek to raise awareness of this crime, recognizing that every one of us can play an important role in the fight against human trafficking. OCYF advocates to grow awareness about this crime. Human trafficking continues to increase because of its covert nature, misconceptions about its prevalence and what types of individuals are vulnerable to become victims, and the lack of awareness about its indicators. In addition to the [Serving Child Victim of Human Trafficking in Pennsylvania Bulletin](#), the Policy Division has hosted a wide array of trainings and is ready to provide technical assistance to CCYAs in their efforts to better support the children and families they serve.

DID YOU KNOW?



January 11th was National Human Trafficking Awareness Day aka #WearBlueDay

IN THE WORKS

- Education Bulletin
- Act 8—Kayden's Law Bulletin
- Kin Specific Standards
- Act 114 of 2024—Pregnant, laboring, or postpartum children in Child Residential and Day Treatment Facilities Bulletin
- LGBTQI+ Bulletin
- Investigations in Camps Policy Clarification



Topic Updates

CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS (CRPs)—Shannon Walborn

The CRPs are comprised of volunteer members who meet in their respective regions and, while influenced by local, regional, and statewide concerns, are charged with making recommendations for statewide improvements. The CRPs and the Department of Human Services collaborate each year to release the Citizen Review Panels' Annual Report.

To end 2024, three regional CRPs were representing the Commonwealth: North Central, Southeast, and Southwest. It is vital that the CRPs be committed to a membership that welcomes and embraces equity and diversity. There is also the statewide CRP consisting of Pennsylvania's longstanding Youth Advisory Board (YAB). The Statewide YAB is comprised of youth and alumni of the child welfare system ages 16 to 23 years of age.

In 2022, Pennsylvania's Regional CRPs began a five-year rotation to ensure representation and inclusion of all regions in the Commonwealth.

Recruitment in 2024 focused on the establishment of a regional panel in the Northwest region, an area of the Commonwealth that has not hosted a CRP since 2014. Recruitment efforts for the Northwest panel resulted in 11 applications representing five of the 13 counties in the region. After the required screening and selection process, 11 applicants were selected to represent the Northwest region, with 9 accepting membership beginning in January 2025. As the new panel was created, the Southwest panel concluded its work in December 2024.

Moving forward with the panel rotation, 2025 will be used for mid-term recruitment to the Southeast, North Central, and Northwest panels, if necessary.

The 2024 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report has been received by OCYF. The panels have made various recommendations and OCYF is currently drafting responses to those recommendations. Once finalized, this report will be released to the public and is able to be viewed on the Child Welfare Resource Center [Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panels - Annual Reports \(pitt.edu\)](https://www.pitt.edu/cwrcenter/citizen-review-panels-annual-reports) webpage.

EDUCATION—Dawn Trill

On November 15, 2024, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services released joint federal non-regulatory guidance to promote educational stability and success for students in foster care. This non-regulatory guidance is an update and rescinds the 2016 non-regulatory guidance.

[ACF Updated Nonregulatory Guidance from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services on Ensuring Educational Stability and Success for Students in Foster Care](#)

DHS and PDE will collaborate to update joint guidance for Pennsylvania.

On January 16, 2025, OCYF Policy Division staff Dawn Trill co-presented an interactive workshop with Emily Peeler from the American Bar Association. This interactive workshop was designed for County Children and Youth Agency staff to engage with peers and experts to share best practices, insights, and strategies for success. This session guided participants in developing SMARTIE — Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable — goals designed to promote educational stability for children and youth in agency custody that can be implemented in their county.

UNIVERSAL ASSESSMENT (UA) TOOL—Erik Walters

The Division of Policy remains active with its support of system partners as planning, development, and eventual implementation of the Pennsylvania Universal Assessment continues into the New Year. While the final months of 2024 placed an emphasis on making decisions regarding intervals, safety, family service planning and best practices when it comes to safety planning, the UA Statewide Meeting will begin work in 2025 by placing an emphasis on case documentation. The first UA Statewide Meeting was held on January 9, 2025. The next UA Statewide Meeting is scheduled for February 13, 2025.

In addition to monthly UA Statewide Meetings, the UA Implementation Team continues to convene with efforts focused on Communication Planning and Vignette Development to support the UA Certification Process; the next UA Implementation Team Meeting is scheduled for January 23, 2025.

Lastly, the New Year will usher in the formation of two intersession work groups: Pilot Design Workgroup and Response Times Workgroup.



Topic Updates

CHILD ABUSE RECOGNITION AND REPORTING TRAININGS—Gerry Lynn Butler

Effective January 1, 2025, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is no longer accepting new Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Training Curricula 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 Curricula 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 curricula that are on [the approved list of courses](#).

Additional information related to approved providers of a Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Training can be found on the [DHS Keep Kids Safe Trainings webpage](#). DHS will continue to monitor the number of approved curricula to ensure there is sufficient training available for mandated reporters.

For questions related to these trainings, please contact RA-PWOCYFCPSL@pa.gov.

OCYF TRAUMA TEAM—Jennifer Newman

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 \(TIC\) webpage](#). 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.

CROSS SYSTEM UPDATES—Jennifer Newman

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 American Academy of Pediatrics (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](#)
- [Pediatric Complex Care Resource Centers](#)

The Office of Income Maintenance (OIM) 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.

VOLUNTEER RESOLUTION AGREEMENT (VRA)—Shannon Walborn

OCYF Policy would like to remind CCYAs, licensed providers, and non-licensed contractors that the second round of required VRA training is available through E-Learn (hosted by CWRC). This training has been approved by the Office of Civil Rights and meets the requirements of the VRA. This version is specific to the second round of training. Staff who took the training before July 30, 2024 must take the training again before July 30, 2025. All new staff must complete this training within sixty (60) calendar days of the employment start date.

Contact RA-PWOCYF-ADARESOURCE@PA.GOV for more information related to the VRA.

For all questions about the training platform, please contact helpcwt@pitt.edu.



Bulletins, Special Transmittals, Policy Clarifications, Publications, and Legislative Updates

Bulletins

There is no information to report for this quarter.

Special Transmittals

There is no information to report for this quarter.

Policy Clarifications

Policy Clarification #3490-25-01, which addresses the question, "When a county has a case rated at high risk, is the interpretation that the child is seen every seven days or once a week which could exceed seven days?", was released on January 13, 2025. Contact Erik Walters eriwalters@pa.gov for more information.

Publications

There is no information to report for this quarter.

Federal Legislative Updates

- The Supporting America's Children and Families Act was signed into law on January 4, 2025. The bipartisan act reauthorizes Title IV-B of the Social Security Act for five years and makes reforms to modernize the program. The Act:
 - * Requires the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to reduce paperwork and data reporting for state agencies and caseworkers by at least 15%
 - * Streamlines access to funding for Indian tribes
 - * Supports the expansion of evidence-based services to prevent child abuse and neglect and ensures children are not separated from parents solely due to poverty-related neglect
 - * Ensures caseworkers have access to training and support to improve retention and recruitment
 - * Strengthens support systems for kinship care providers
 - * Includes individuals formerly in foster care in state service planning and ensures youth have access to mental health services up to age 26
 - * Requires HHS to review post-adoption supports provided under Title IV-B and identify opportunities to strengthen them

(adapted from [Text - H.R.9076 - 118th Congress \(2023-2024\): Supporting America's Children and Families Act | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#) and [One-Pager_IVB-FINAL-1.pdf](#))

- The Jenna Quinn Law was signed into law on December 23, 2024, amending the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to provide grants in support of training and education to teachers and other school employees students, and the community about how to prevent, recognize, respond to, and report child sexual abuse among primary and secondary school students. [Text - S.1147 - 118th Congress \(2023-2024\): Jenna Quinn Law | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)
- The Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act was signed into law on December 23, 2024, requiring HHS to study the nature, prevalence, severity, and scope of child abuse, neglect, and deaths in youth residential programs. The Act also requires recommendations be made to improve the coordination and implementation of best practices regarding youth health, safety, care, and treatment in residential programs. [S.1351 - 118th Congress \(2023-2024\): Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)
- The Native American Child Protection Act was signed into law on December 23, 2024. This Act amends the Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act to encourage the use of grants for culturally appropriate treatment services and programs, and allows for the use of program funds for operational costs and child protective services. The Act also provides a requirement for the provision of additional support, training, and assistance to Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations. [H.R.663 - 118th Congress \(2023-2024\): Native American Child Protection Act | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)

Staff Updates

Shannon Walborn transitioned from a Human Services Analyst to a Human Services Analyst Supervisor position, effective January 6, 2025.



Presentations

CHANGE STARTS HERE! LEVERAGING POLICY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Policy Division staff will offer the presentation "Change Starts Here! Leveraging Policy to Make a Difference" at the 2025 Permanency Conference in June. The presenters will be Gerry Lynn Butler, Jennifer Newman, Dawn Traill, and Shannon Walborn. The presentation will explore how participants can use policy to empower advocacy and positive change for children, families, and staff. Participants will discover the crucial role of comprehending statute and regulation in enhancing resource availability and innovative service delivery. Additionally, the panel will highlight significant policy updates and changes in areas such as Kinship Care, LGBTQIA+, Family First Prevention Services, Community Pathways, Education, Trauma Informed Care, Human Trafficking, Cross Systems Work, and Recruitment and Retention.

Conferences

2025 SWAN/IL WINTER STATEWIDE MEETING

The 2025 SWAN/IL Winter Statewide Meeting will take place on January 29-30, 2025 at the Penn State Conference Center, State College, PA . The event will include a keynote by Michael Sanders titled "Permanency Is Everyone's Business, but MY Job," followed by seven concurrent sessions in the afternoon and the next morning. SWAN affiliates are required to attend, and county children and youth and private provider agencies are encouraged to participate. The event features a traditional matching event and networking opportunities, all aimed at promoting permanency for Pennsylvania's waiting children through collaboration and learning.

