

Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panels' 2023 Annual Report

Collaboration Statement

The Citizen Review Panels' Annual Report was produced in collaboration with individual citizen review panels, the Department of Human Services Office of Children, Youth and Families, the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center, and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators, Inc.

The Mission and Purpose of the Citizen Review Panels

Mission: To facilitate citizen participation and provide opportunities for citizens to partner with local child protection systems to ensure that these systems:

- Provide the best possible service;
- Prevent and protect children from abuse and neglect;
- Meet the permanency needs of children; and
- Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Purpose: To examine policies, procedures, and practices of State and local agencies to evaluate the extent to which State and local child protective services system agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities.



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Letter from the Deputy Secretary

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICE

May 28, 2024

Dear Citizens,

Thank you for taking a moment to read the Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panels' 2023 Annual Report. The Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) are represented by a wide array of citizen volunteers, including those with lived experience in the child welfare system, who partner with local child protection agencies to ensure that the needed support systems provide the best possible services, prevent and protect children from abuse and neglect, and meet the permanency needs of children. Furthermore, CRPs play an important role promoting positive child welfare outcomes for children and families.

The 2023 CRP Annual Report contains an update on the CRPs' work throughout 2023 and their recommendations for enhancements to policy, procedure, and practice within the Commonwealth's child protection system. The CRPs' recommendations and the Department's responses to these recommendations are contained in this report.

The Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) welcomes the CRPs' collaboration, including recommendations for improvement, and recognizes each member for their passion, time, and dedication to ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families. OCYF believes that working together to strengthen families leads to safe, nurturing, and healthy environments for children. By improving our child welfare system, Pennsylvania will be better prepared to support families as they strive to achieve their personal goals and dreams. OCYF expresses great appreciation to the CRP members for their ongoing work and dedication in these efforts. Additionally, OCYF would like to welcome and thank the Southeast CRP. They have concluded the first year of their work and made their first recommendations. Finally, OCYF wants to specifically acknowledge the Northeast Panel for their dedication and thank the panel members for their hard work over the last 13 years. Their work will resonate in the children of Pennsylvania for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laval Miller-Wilson'.

Laval Miller-Wilson
Deputy Secretary
Office of Children, Youth and Families

OFFICE OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Pennsylvania Introduction

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania consists of 67 counties covering 44,817 square miles and is home to approximately 13 million residents. The City of Philadelphia is the largest metropolitan area within the six-county Southeast region, which includes Philadelphia, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties and encompasses approximately 35 percent of the total statewide population. Allegheny County is the second largest metropolitan area and includes the City of Pittsburgh and its surrounding suburbs. The diversity across Pennsylvania's urban, suburban, and rural areas creates the need for both flexibility and consideration of regional, county, cultural, and other differences in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Structure of Child Welfare

Pennsylvania is one of nine states that operates a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system. The county-administered system means that child welfare and juvenile justice services are organized, managed, and delivered by 67 County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYAs), with staff in these agencies hired as county employees. Each county elects its county commissioners or executives who act as the governing authority. Pennsylvania has a rich tradition of hundreds of private agencies delivering the direct services and support needed by at-risk children, youth, and their families through contracts with CCYAs. The array of services delivered by private providers includes prevention, in-home, foster family, kinship care, permanency, and congregate care. A variety of related behavioral health and education programs are also provided.

The Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) is the state agency that supports the provision of quality services and best practices designed to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of Pennsylvania's children, youth, and families. There are some intrinsic differences in operating a state-supervised, county-administered system that impact statewide outcomes for children and families. Within this structure, Pennsylvania provides the statutory and policy framework for delivery of child welfare services and monitors local implementation. Given the diversity that exists among the 67 counties, this structure allows for the development of county-specific solutions to address the strengths and needs of families and communities. Each county, through planning efforts, must develop strategies to improve outcomes.

This structure also presents challenges in ensuring consistent application of policy, regulation, and program initiatives and has impacted Pennsylvania's performance on federal outcome measures. These federal measures require county-specific analysis to determine the factors that influence statewide data. Because of the variance in county practice, it is challenging to identify statewide solutions that would have the most impact on improving county outcomes.

To address those challenges, the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Council (Council) was formed to provide shared leadership and guidance to support collaborative, strategic visioning for Pennsylvania's child welfare system. The Council is comprised of multidisciplinary members who are broadly representative of the child welfare system and reflect the Commonwealth in geographic, racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Efforts of the Council are aligned with OCYF's mission, vision, and values and Pennsylvania's Child Welfare Practice Model. The Council utilizes quantitative and qualitative data to guide the establishment of priorities related to federal, state, and locally driven improvement efforts through the use of a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process/framework.

CQI serves as the vehicle to guide the achievement of Pennsylvania's child welfare goals. The Council exists to:

- Help build a sustainable structure to support collaborative strategic visioning for Pennsylvania's child welfare system;
- Foster a unity of effort to achieve common and shared goals by sharing ideas/expertise in guiding priorities for the child welfare system, sharing data to identify priorities/monitor achievement of goals, and considering how best to ensure the system has the capacity/resources to support achievement of common goals;
- Enhance communication based on shared values of respect and honesty by reinforcing clear and transparent communications regarding the strengths/challenges of the system;
- Increase proactive responses to address systemic issues and concerns; and
- Enhance capacity to use data to drive decision making.

The Council provides the means for key stakeholders to come together to provide shared leadership, purpose, and accountability to enhance their ability to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. By gathering feedback, the Council takes steps to be more proactive in response to system needs, be more responsible in the use of resources, and enhance and support the system's ability to function more efficiently. This leads to more strategic and effective efforts to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan focused on improving outcomes for the children, youth, and families served by the system. The Council was instrumental in the development of Pennsylvania's Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and serves as the primary stakeholder forum for development and ongoing monitoring of Pennsylvania's Federal Child and Family Services Plan. At this time, OCYF has temporarily paused Council convenings in order to work with system partners to evaluate the effectiveness of Council and identify strategies for fostering improved collaboration within the Council structure. These discussions with system partners will also help further clarify the scope of work and the specific projects the Council will take on in the coming year.

The CRPs, much like the Council, focus on driving Pennsylvania's Child Welfare System into the future. Both work to enhance the system that provides services to the children and families of Pennsylvania while being mindful to remain focused on preventing and protecting children from abuse and neglect; meeting the permanency needs of children; and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

OCYF is currently working on development of the state's federal Title IV-B five-year plan, also known as the CFSP, which will cover federal fiscal years 2025-2029. As part of this work, OCYF will be working with system partners to identify the appropriate goals and strategies that will guide Pennsylvania's improvement efforts over the next several years. To this end, the CRP recommendations will be shared for consideration as part of this development process.

Pennsylvania and the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

The key federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect is the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (Public Law (P.L.) 93-247), originally enacted in 1974. This Act has been amended several times and was most recently amended on January 7, 2019, when the Victims of Child Abuse Act Reauthorization Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-424) went into effect. For a full legislative history of CAPTA see: [CAPTA: A Legislative History](#).

CAPTA provides federal funding to states in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities. CAPTA also provides grants to public agencies and non-profit agencies for demonstration programs and projects as a means of promoting innovation and disseminating best practices. Additionally, CAPTA identifies the federal role in supporting research, evaluation, technical assistance, and data collection activities, establishes the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, and mandates the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information. CAPTA sets forth a minimum definition of child abuse and neglect. Some of the changes Pennsylvania adopted to become compliant with CAPTA required amendments to the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) and the Adoption Act. Other changes only required administrative implementation for which no legislation was needed. Pennsylvania is compliant with CAPTA.

Pennsylvania Legislation

To support compliance with CAPTA in Pennsylvania, House Bill 2670, Printer's Number 4849 was signed into law as Act 146 on November 9, 2006, by then Governor Edward G. Rendell. Act 146 amended Pennsylvania's CPSL (23 Pa.C.S. Chapter 63) to address the establishment, function, membership, meetings, and reports as they relate to CRPs in Pennsylvania. Act 146 required that DHS establish a minimum of three CRPs and that each panel examine:

1. Policies, procedures, and practices of state and local agencies and, where appropriate, specific cases to evaluate the extent to which state and local child protective system agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities under Section 5106 (a) of CAPTA.
2. Other criteria the panel considers important to ensure the protection of children include:
 - i. A review of the extent to which the state and local child protective services system is coordinated with the foster care and adoption programs established under part E of Title IV of the Social Security Act (49 Stat. 620, 42 U.S.C. § 670 et seq.); and
 - ii. A review of child fatalities and near fatalities.

Act 146 also set the following requirements for the composition and function of the panels:

- Membership – The panel shall be composed of volunteer members who represent the community, including members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect;
- Meetings – Each CRP shall meet not less than once every three months; and
- Reports – DHS shall issue an annual report summarizing the activities and recommendations of the panels and summarizing DHS's response to the recommendations.

Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panel Overview

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. To end 2023, there were three regional CRPs representing the Commonwealth: Northeast, 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. Recruitment for the YAB occurs at the regional and local levels and brings a youth voice to the CRPs. There are six regional boards, as well as local boards, whose members funnel in to form the diverse membership of the Statewide YAB. Youth leaders attending the Statewide YAB meetings volunteer or are appointed by their peers to represent their respective regions. The YAB membership ebbs and flows due to the availability of the youth. When OCYF established the YAB as a CRP, older youth in Pennsylvania were provided with a platform to advocate and communicate their diverse experiences, needs, and recommendations to inform policies and improve services for Pennsylvania's children, youth, and families involved in the child welfare system.

In 2022, Pennsylvania's Regional CRPs began a five-year rotation to ensure representation and inclusion of all regions in the Commonwealth. The counties to be represented within each region are proposed to be the same as those that make up the current YAB Regions, which can be viewed on the [YAB website](#). Over time, each region of the state will have representation while maintaining the same CRP program budget.

Recruitment in 2023 focused on the establishment of a regional panel in the North Central region, an area of the Commonwealth that has not previously hosted a CRP. Recruitment efforts for the North Central panel resulted in 16 applications representing seven of the 13 counties in the region. After the required screening and selection process, 12 applicants were selected to represent the North Central region beginning in January 2024. As the new panel was created, the Northeast panel concluded its work in December 2023.

Moving forward with the panel rotation, 2024 will begin recruitment for a new panel in the Northwest region, while work by the Southwest panel will adjourn. Each new panel will remain in operation for a period of five years, until the cycle of re-establishing panels begins again in 2028.

When looking for new panel recruitment or for mid-term recruitment, membership may include (but is not limited to) parents, individuals who have lived experience of the child welfare system, clergy, medical professionals, tribal representatives, corporate representatives, law enforcement, teachers/school administrators, child/parent attorneys, and child welfare professionals (including those retired from state or county children and youth agencies).

DHS and the CRPs strive to foster and empower inclusion of volunteer applicants and panel members and do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, creed, ancestry, disability, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. It is critical to have diverse representation on the CRPs.

2023 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report
Northeast Citizen Review Panel Report and Recommendations



Introduction:

The Northeast (NE) CRP serves 11 of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties. The NE CRP is dedicated to ensuring that the needs of Pennsylvania’s children are being met within the current system.

Overview of the Focus Area:

This year, the NE CRP focused on improving and ensuring the quality of services provided by CCYAs and finding sustainable ways to hold counties accountable for providing high quality services.

Some NE CRP members have had experience as a fostering/adopting family in multiple states. Through their experience working with multiple CCYAs, they noticed that some elements of practice do not always meet basic standards, not to mention best practice standards. For example, the [“Concurrent Planning Policy and Implementation”](#) bulletin issued in 2018 requires the use of “Teaming Meetings” between the child, parents, extended family, kin, CCYA staff, resource parents, and other stakeholders to help the family craft, implement, or change the family’s permanency plan. This is a practice that is offered to families in many states to provide an alliance of support for the family and facilitates the family’s participation in decision-making regarding safety, permanency, and well-being of their children. Panel members have experienced, in some state-run systems family meetings were held with fidelity and in other states family meetings were not happening at all. Unfortunately, their experiences in Pennsylvania have been on the lower end of quality services. This compelled the panel to investigate how to better monitor and improve quality of services throughout our CCYAs across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

On the continuum of meeting basic regulations to best practice standards, counties should be focused on best practice and should be held accountable to continuously improving above and beyond regulations. This conversation began last year, when the panel made recommendations regarding changes to casework practice standards. This year, the panel is more focused on providing the best services with the resources the counties already have.

As a secondary focus, the panel also reviewed previous NE CRP recommendations to close out this chapter of the NE CRP and offer suggestions for best practices with CRPs moving forward.

Summary of Work Completed:

Ensuring and Improving Quality of Services

The panel recognizes Pennsylvania's unique challenge of having a 67-county system in which the counties hold autonomy in how they serve their children and families. To be sensitive to that challenge, the panel focused on programs/systems that are already effectively working in Pennsylvania that can be duplicated, modified, or used as a model for a more unified, robust quality assurance system.

After hearing about the negative experiences of some foster/adoptive families, it is the opinion of the panel that state-run systems have provided a better-quality service than county-run systems. Panel members have had negative experiences with the county-run system, including caseworkers not following state-wide laws, procedures, policies, and best practices. For example, in state-run systems, panel members have participated in a Family Impact Team Meeting within 10 days of a placement. In the county-run system, panel members have never been invited to take part in these meetings and have no reason to believe the meetings happened at all. Noticing that the county-run systems may lead to decreased quality, the panel began to brainstorm supports the Commonwealth might offer to counties to boost the quality of services across the state.

Some NE CRP members have had experience working under Pennsylvania's DHS and the Office for Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) through licensed childcare facilities. OCDEL's [Keystone STARS \(Standards, Training & Professional Development, Assessment, Resources, and Support\)](#) Program supports all early care and education programs to improve program quality. Their experience working under the Keystone STARS Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) has been positive. The panel investigated this model, which is already proven to work in a county-based state-run system, as a potential model to be replicated to better support quality improvement in child welfare across the Commonwealth.

Specifically, the panel is interested in how the STARS QRIS offers Quality Coaches to all licensed programs, free of cost, to help program staff improve the quality of their childcare centers. In the STARS system, Quality Coaches are never used punitively but are made available to offer resources and expertise through one-on-one coaching. The STARS system also offers a number of standards above and beyond state regulations for childcare centers to aspire to. To be rated as a STAR4 childcare center, the facility must earn a certain number of "points" based on the standards, but it is up to each facility which standards they will meet to earn their points. This flexibility per childcare site lends itself well to an adaptation to a county-based quality assurance system. The STARS program is one example of another Pennsylvania Department supporting the safety of children while still honoring the individuality of each county and program as they continuously support quality services.

Some NE CRP members have had experience with the Quality Service Reviews (QSRs). While these reviews have been able to identify excellent services and deficiencies within the county agencies, participation is voluntary. The counties receive their results/ratings following each review and have the opportunity to create a County Improvement Plan to set goals in the areas that can be improved.

Counties that have taken advantage of the review processes and follow-up technical assistance have been satisfied with the experience and are able to make positive changes based on the results of the review process.

The section of the QSR that drew the attention of the panel was the rating system for the eleven “Practice Performance” indicators because they are rating the quality of the services that CCYAs are providing to families. Many of these indicators focus on the CCYAs’ adherence to Pennsylvania’s child welfare practice model, such as:

- Engagement efforts;
- Teaming;
- Cultural awareness and responsiveness;
- Assessment and understanding;
- Planning processes; and
- Tracking and adjustment.

The “Practice Performance” indicators also rate CCYAs on their:

- Efforts and timeliness;
- Intervention adequacy;
- Resource availability; and
- Maintaining family relationships.

Body of Work

Recognizing that the Northeast Panel is closing at the end of 2023, panel members decided to review all the NE recommendations made between 2010 and 2022 (see [Attachment A](#)). During this review, the panel sorted the recommendations into three categories: Complete/Obsolete; Watchlist; and Requires Action. The Complete/Obsolete recommendations are those that no longer need attention. The Watchlist includes recommendations that are not a top priority but still convey some important concerns about the services provided. The Requires Action category includes recommendations that have not been acted upon or those that have been acted upon but have reemerged as important issues since they were last addressed.

The panel included this archival information so future panels can use this information to support their work.

Key activities in 2023:

Members of the NE CRP attended and participated in the following:

- Spring All-Panel Meeting;
- Fall All-Panel Meeting;
- Quarterly meetings; and
- Lakeside Global Trauma Series, including the following sessions:
 - Expanded Understanding of Trauma for Health Professionals;
 - Basic Skills of Trauma Informed Care;
 - Trauma Informed Cultural Sensitivity; and
 - Trauma in a Pandemic.

Northeast Citizen Review Panel Recommendations for 2023:Recommendation 1:

The panel recommends that the State holds county agencies accountable for quality/fidelity of services being provided without funding impact. This accountability process could happen by revisioning the auditing process to include both regulation and quality/fidelity of service reviews utilizing standards outlined in other established review processes:

- OCDEL's Keystone STARS, which is required for licensing at different levels (STAR1, STAR2, STAR3, and STAR4). The STARS program provides resources including coaching, training, and a library of templates; offers quality reviews that provide the agency with minimum standards to meet along with multiple levels of standards to help improve their practices; and allows for flexibility in how an agency meets its goals; and
- Quality Services Reviews – Specifically, rating CCYAs on the “Practice Performance” indicators and follow-up on any “areas in need of improvement” with technical assistance and County Improvement Plans.

The panel suggests, specifically, that the state use the model of the Keystone STARS system with established indicators from the QSRs to improve the quality of services across the Commonwealth. This model has been proven to work in a county-based system to ensure the quality of services across the state.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 1:

DHS recognizes the time and effort that the NE CRP invested into researching OCDEL and Keystone STARS. It is important to explain that DHS is committed to improving the quality and fidelity of services provided by CCYAs, while explaining that mandated services of a CCYA are often bonded by geographical, jurisdictional, and legislative requirements. Current statutory and regulatory limitations make it difficult for OCYF to hold counties accountable for the quality of services beyond minimum regulatory requirements; however, counties are always encouraged to take steps beyond minimum requirements and work towards best practice standards.

In efforts to hold CCYAs accountable for the quality and fidelity of services delivered, Pennsylvania has a statewide licensing system that evaluates all 67 CCYAs, private service providers and facilities for compliance with federal and state laws, regulations, and policies. The OCYF Regional Office staff conduct the annual licensing inspections by means of a random sample record review, interviews with administrative, supervisory, and casework staff, internal policy/procedures review, personnel record review, and agency fiscal documentation review. OCYF is committed to reviewing and providing support to CCYAs and to the quality and fidelity of services provided by CCYAs; therefore, occasional updates are necessary during the licensing process.

Additionally, as a way to improve the quality of services, OCYF continues to be committed to the reduction of children and youth placed in congregate care settings, but also to the level of care provided in those settings. While there are specific circumstances where a congregate care setting is the most appropriate and least restrictive, it is important to OCYF that the care provided is appropriate for the youth in the least restrictive setting. In addition to congregate care facilities,

Pennsylvania now has Specialized Settings, that were created through the Family First Prevention Act. Specialized Settings are congregate care facilities that must meet and maintain certain heightened requirements based on the population served. While, becoming a Specialized Setting is voluntary, providers who become certified must meet enhanced standards that are directed at providing the best possible care for children/youth accepted into the programs.

DHS appreciates that the panel provided information about how the STARS program provides resources including coaching and training to help improve county practices. Currently, DHS partners with the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) to provide CCYAs with access to Practice Improvement Specialists (PI) who are expert facilitators and practice model specialists. At the request of a CCYA, a PI will voluntarily work with the CCYA to complete an assessment to determine the needs of the agency and the root cause of any concerns. Through the assessment, CWRC and the assigned PI can align the services and trainings provided with the need of the CCYA. CCYA staff engagement is essential to this process. Many times, the need mirrors one or more of the indicators from Pennsylvania's Child Welfare Practice Model.

A few services that can be provided to a CCYA from a PI include:

- Practice support
 - Safety and risk assessment knowledge and understanding;
 - Planning processes; and
 - Assessment and planning.
- Understanding of organizational effectiveness
 - Reviewing the leadership culture;
 - Utilizing agency resources; and
 - Teaming within an agency.

Through the collaborative work between CWRC and DHS, the goal is for the CCYA to intentionally improve the quality and fidelity of provided services and programs. Much like the Quality Coaches offered by STARS, the PI services are free of charge and there are no punitive actions connected to their services.

Additionally, DHS is working on new regulations that would update Title 55 Pa. Code Chapter 3130 regulations, which, as a whole, have not been updated since 1982. The purpose of the new regulations is to codify updates to the Chapter 3130 regulation that includes 40 years of Federal and State law related to child welfare social services programs. These updates are paired with provisions such as practice requirements for conducting reviews to ensure quality child welfare program delivery and to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of the Commonwealth's children, youth, and families.

The proposed regulation is intended to improve operation and administration of CCYAs and include measures to strengthen or add provisions for:

- The care, protection and safety of children;
- Preservation of family unity whenever possible, or provision of an alternative permanent family when the unity of the family cannot be maintained;
- Achievement of the foregoing purposes in a family environment whenever possible, separating the child from parents only when necessary for the child's welfare, health or safety, or for public safety;

- The fostering of child well-being, which includes cognitive, emotional, behavioral and social functioning, and educational, physical health, and developmental needs;
- Supports and services necessary to empower youth ages 14 and older to participate in the early and ongoing development and implementation of case planning, and to facilitate permanency and transition to adulthood;
- Means through which this chapter is executed and enforced; and
- Means through which the parties are assured a fair hearing and their constitutional and other legal rights recognized and enforced.

DHS is supportive of partnering with county agencies for the improvement of the quality and fidelity of services being provided but has the obligation to follow statutory and regulatory limitations. Initial steps have been taken to make regulatory changes to improve services while being mindful of the geographical, jurisdictional, and legislative requirements. The process may look different than the Keystone STARS Program.

Recommendation 2:

The NE Panel recommends that all CRP recommendations should be revisited periodically to provide updates on the progress being made. A periodic review will provide ongoing accountability to the state, more comprehensive onboarding of new panels, and a recognition of ever-changing needs in the world of child welfare.

The NE Panel is also requesting an update on the recommendations with the Requires Action label, which have been recreated in the chart below. Blue text is used to distinguish direct requests from the panel written for this report.

Year	Recommendation
2012	<p>Increase access to mental health services and improve the delivery of existing services through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding; and • Best practice <p>The COVID19 pandemic and policy changes like Family First have had a significant impact on our community’s mental health and the way funding is allocated to support issues of mental health. The panel is requesting an update from the state on how it is addressing the increased need for mental health services, specifically in complex cases that require cooperation between CCYAs and mental health professionals.</p> <p>In 2012, OCYF responded that the department allocates state and federal funds to counties as direct grants to pay for community mental health programs. The department explained how it was reexamining county implementation of evidence-based programs (EBP), the Needs Based Plan and Budget (NBPB), funding for mental health services, and the collaborative relationship with system partners.</p> <p>Significant changes have occurred since 2012. As part of the NBPB process, counties have been able to request funding to support EBPs. Counties must provide detailed narrative information to support their request including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the program and justification for selection

- The EBP registry from which the program was selected, and
- How the county plans to monitor the fidelity/integrity of the program.

OCYF knows that increasing access to mental health services is a multifaceted need and agrees with the panel that cooperation between CCYAs and other professionals who serve children is necessary. In the Family First Prevention Plan, DHS outlines collaboration between OCYF, OCDEL, and the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports.

OCYF has a Human Service Analyst in the Division of Policy who's work includes partnering through numerous systems to benefit the children, youth and families served. This Human Service Analyst attends and participates in several meetings/conferences to bridge cross system collaboration. Some of those meeting/conferences are:

- Dual Diagnosis Conference
- Quarterly Children with Medically Complex Children Cross Systems Team Meeting
- Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) Stakeholder Quarterly Meetings
- Medical Assistance Advisory Committee Meeting
- HealthChoices Advisory Committee Meeting
- Mental Health Planning Council Meeting
- Quarterly Statewide Positive Approaches & Practices (Office of Developmental Programs & OMHSAS) Meeting
- Quarterly Mental Health Planning Council (MHPC) Meeting
- Everyday Lives Conference

In July 2023, Pennsylvania DHS convened a Blueprint Workgroup that helped to identify recommendations addressing identified challenges in areas of communication, services and programs, resource navigation, staffing/workforce, and trauma-informed supports for the children and youth served. The group met diligently from July through November and presented recommendations that address a wide variety of challenges and barriers encountered by youth with complex needs, their families, and the systems supporting them. The report of the Blueprint Workgroup was released publicly and available on the DHS website [Youth-with-Complex-Needs-A-Blueprint-Workgroup-Report.pdf \(pa.gov\)](https://www.dhs.gov/youth-with-complex-needs-a-blueprint-workgroup-report).

DHS has already begun the work of identifying next steps in the implementation of the workgroup's recommendations. Moving forward, DHS and Blueprint Workgroup members will begin to determine work necessary to implement recommendations and identify barriers to implementation at the state and local level. The recommendations outlined in the workgroup's report are the first steps to strengthen supports for children and youth with complex needs and their families.

DHS will add that the Southwest (SW) CRP focused on Complex Cases since February 2020. Their work is highlighted in the [2022 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report](#). Ultimately, the SW CRP asked to be permitted to continue to provide feedback to the Complex Case Steering Committee. DHS acknowledged the panel's diligent efforts and encouraged the panel's continued work on the project.

	<p>OCYF appreciates the request by the NE panel for an update and is pleased to be able to share the continuous progress taken by the department.</p>
<p>2012</p>	<p>Find ways to recruit and retain qualified children and youth caseworkers through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment efforts such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creation of materials to recruit qualified individuals; ○ Development of realistic job preview materials; and ○ Funding to support county recruiting efforts. • Retention efforts such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of training to address issues related to vicarious trauma; ○ Provision of services to address issues related to vicarious trauma; and ○ Training on how to manage stress and burnout and increase resiliency as a social worker in child welfare. <p>Staff recruitment and retention is an ongoing issue that has been exacerbated by the pandemic. The panel is requesting an update from the state on how it is addressing the staffing crisis.</p> <p>DHS agrees that staff recruitment and retention is an ongoing issue. Following the pandemic, DHS has identified workforce recruitment and retention as a top priority. Many CCYAs are struggling with recruitment and/or retention, resulting in high vacancy rates. In recent years, counties have reported vacancy rates as high as 80 percent. Frequent turnover can impact the efficiency and effectiveness of critical family services; high vacancy rates resulting in higher caseloads for case managers and can ultimately impact the safety and wellbeing of children and families who need assistance.</p> <p>As a way of coordinating the sharing of information across different county agencies on July 13, 2023, OCYF offered a Quarterly Information Session that was facilitated side by side with CCYAs. The intended purpose of this session was to give CCYA leadership teams an opportunity to share staff recruitment and retention strategies and success stories that have occurred within their own organization with other CCYA agencies.</p> <p>Additionally, in an effort to understand the issue, DHS partnered with Public Financial Management (PFM) to develop and launch a CCYA Recruitment and Retention Project.</p> <p>The project consisted of an eight-month timeline. DHS asked for 10 CCYA's, that were able to dedicate the time and resources, to voluntarily participate in the project. A Steering Committee was created and consisted of DHS, 10 participating CCYAs, providers, and other leaders involved in child welfare. PFM conducted focus groups to obtain insight and perspective on the challenges of recruitment and retention that existed within the county. Using this information, the PFM team identified key recruitment and retention trends and recommendations. The project has concluded, and the department is waiting on a finalized report from PFM.</p> <p>Given the variety of service delivery models among CCYAs, the final report is expected to include a high-level framework for consideration of contracting of some CCYA functions. The report is expected to include a matrix outlining alternative recruitment and retention models identified across the Commonwealth's CCYAs, experienced-based and potential pros and</p>

	<p>cons relative to service quality and impact on outcomes, fiscal considerations, lessons learned, etc. The report will also highlight other methods to try to improve recruitment and retention for consideration. Once finalized, this report will be released and can be forwarded to the CRPs.</p>
<p>2020</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: Pennsylvania should fund Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) programs as outlined in Governor Wolf’s original budget in the amount of \$1.345 million (February 2020).</p> <p>Recommendation 2: DHS should develop a task force inclusive of juvenile court judges, OCYF, Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators (PCYA), the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC), and PA CASA to begin collaboration for the development of new CASA programs as well as the support of existing CASA programs. PA CASA should also have a seat at the Statewide Dependency Roundtable.</p> <p>Recommendation 3: DHS should coordinate with PA CASA to develop a CASA data collection system that should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of youth assigned a CASA; • The number of youth who qualify for a CASA but one isn’t available; • Types of cases CASA are assigned; • The point during the placement when a CASA was assigned (the adjudication hearing, a permanency review hearing, after a specific number of months in care, etc.); and • Placement data specific to youth who are assigned a CASA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The number of months in care; ○ The average length of stay; and ○ Rate of reentry into care. <p>There is still not enough funding to support enough CASA programs to cover the state’s caseload. Although some counties have added CASA programs since 2020, many more still lack the funding to support these programs. This is an ongoing issue, and the panel requests an update on the state’s response.</p> <p>In the Governor’s Executive Budget 2022-2023, \$1.8 million is set to support the CASA Program. In addition to the funds allotted in the state budget, CCYAs are encouraged to request funds through the OCYF NBPB process.</p> <p>Since this was first addressed in the 2020 CRP Annual Report, DHS continues to provide funding through the NBPB process. CCYAs can request state funding for programs, services, and resources that meet the needs of those being served, while committing to a local match. DHS continues to be supportive of counties in the Commonwealth who have a desire to establish CASA programs. As Pennsylvania operates as a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system, DHS encourages each CCYA to work collaboratively with their judicial district to determine the local need and the local court desire for CASA volunteers.</p> <p>According to the PA CASA 2021-2022 Annual Report, the CASA program has grown. New programs were developed in Fayette and Pike Counties. In Fayette County, the program was</p>

	<p>established at the request of the judge and 12 volunteers were trained to serve as CASA volunteers. In Pike County, the program was also established at the request of the judge and 16 volunteers were trained. Additionally, PA CASA is assisting with the Lancaster – Lebanon Expansion efforts. This court supported expansion includes a goal to serve 48 children with 24 new volunteers in the first year.</p> <p>DHS supports empowering local courts to create, strengthen, and support local CASA programs and encourages the CCYAs to have open lines of communication with their courts and regional office staff and to request funds through the NBPB process for implementation and support. There is no regulation in place that allows DHS to mandate the use of local CASA’s, but DHS continues to invite CCYAs interested in supporting the development of new CASA programs or supporting existing CASA programs to submit a NBPB request if they have not already done so.</p>
<p>2021</p>	<p>Currently, there is no formal script for ChildLine or CCYA workers receiving child abuse referrals to ask questions about substance abuse in the household. The NE CRP recommends standardized, nonjudgmental wording for questions and clear training for ChildLine and CCYA staff that receive child abuse referrals about substance abuse. This script and training should be written by individuals with expertise in substance abuse and should consider whether the substance abuse negatively affects the welfare and/or safety of the child(ren).</p> <p>The CY47 hasn’t been updated since 2014 and still has a question specifically asking about substance abuse and addiction in the household. On ChildLine, reporters are often asked if there is a history of substance abuse or addiction in the household, regardless of whether that history is relevant to the case. Although our understanding of substance abuse disorder has evolved, stigma has not, and the CY47 has not been updated to reflect our current understanding. The panel is requesting an update on how the state is working to address substance use disorder stigma during ChildLine calls and reports of child abuse on the CY47.</p> <p>DHS appreciates that the CRP reviewed the 2021 recommendation. When receiving a call, ChildLine Caseworkers are required to conduct preliminary risk and safety assessment questions. They are also instructed to “meet the caller where they are” and this may result in questions being asked differently, dependent on the individual caller and situation. However, ChildLine Caseworkers are expected to maintain a non-judgmental attitude while communicating with hotline callers and apply policy and procedure when making processing decisions, without personal bias. In March 2022, ChildLine initiated a new Human Services Analyst position within the Division of Operations, whose main responsibility is quality assurance. This role reviews referral documentation and hotline calls to ensure that policy and procedures are followed while the caseworker is recording the information relating to the allegations of abuse. The number of monthly hotline calls monitored, as performed by Hotline Supervisors, has increased over the past several years to support a more high-quality output.</p> <p>CCYA’s utilize information gathered by ChildLine Hotline referrals in a variety of ways through the course of their risk and safety assessments. ChildLine preserves the CCYA’s determination as to what history is relevant to the case, while also assessing any reported current concerns for substance use per General Protective Services and Child Protective Services referral type thresholds. One domain, Adult Functioning, includes the screening for substance use as identified on the CY-47 and incorporated in best practice modules of</p>

	<p>assessment. A safety assessment includes gathering necessary information to identify the presence of present and impending danger, threat, and protective capabilities. A risk assessment, however, evaluates the future threats of harm to a child. Per § 3490.321 standards for risk assessment, factors which shall be assessed by the county agency include history of drug and alcohol abuse for the parent, caregiver, household members, primary person responsible for the welfare of a child, and perpetrator. The concern is with whether role performance is influenced by substance abuse. This factor is rated on a continuum of No Risk, Low Risk, Moderate Risk, and High Risk. In the event this information is unable to be asked during a ChildLine Hotline interview, or the referral source does not know this information, the CCYA would likely inquire further during their intake assessment.</p> <p>The Department understands that substance use disorders have evolved. In 2023, OCYF's Deputy Secretary signed a Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA) with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights (OCR). As part of the VRA, DHS acknowledged that drug addiction and substance use disorders, including opioid use disorder, are disabilities. OCYF helped the CCYAs develop Nondiscrimination Notices, Grievances Procedures, and Nondiscrimination Policies and Procedures relating to the VRA. These documents are to help CCYAs increasing knowledge of resources and methodologies available to assist Participants with disabilities to achieve appropriate goals. Additionally, OCYF worked in collaboration with the CWRC to create <i>Supporting Children and Families with Disabilities</i> training which CCYAs, licensed providers, and non-licensed contractors will be required to successfully complete this training by July 30, 2024.</p>
<p>2021</p>	<p>The NE CRP recommends the Commonwealth develop a more integrated process for delivering non-biased services for families, including mental health, substance abuse recovery, and children and youth services. Counties should employ or contract drug and alcohol specialists to work within CCYAs so that they can work directly with parents and caregivers throughout their treatment and recovery. Mental health and drug and alcohol training should be included in the Foundations training for all new caseworkers.</p> <p>Substance use disorder continues to ravage Pennsylvania households. The panel is requesting an update on how the Commonwealth is supporting families with substance abuse recovery needs and mental health needs.</p> <p>DHS has a mission to improve the quality of life for Pennsylvania's individuals and families. As a state supervised, county-administered child welfare system, each county is responsible for the provision of direct services to children and families, with DHS providing statewide oversight and technical assistance. CCYA administrators submit yearly plans that describe how the county will meet the needs of the children and families served by the agency. In practice, this gives each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties flexibility in determining which services and interventions are most critical to meet the needs of their populations. Mental health services in Pennsylvania are overseen by the OMHSAS and are administered through county Mental Health and Intellectual Disability (MH/ID) offices. DHS encourages the CCYAs and the MH/ID office to work in collaboration to best serve the children and families. These services are delivered by county or local provider agencies who contract with the county MH/ID office or behavioral health managed care organizations. DHS continues to support families in obtaining non-biased mental health services and substance abuse recovery services for the children, youth and families that are served. There are currently several</p>

initiatives providing support to families with substance abuse recovery needs and mental health needs.

Through the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First), DHS' approach to participating in the Prevention Services program is designed to fulfill all federal requirements while allowing counties the maximum flexibility possible to meet the specific needs of the children and families in their communities. Family First is just one tool used to enhance and promote DHS' work to strengthen and preserve families. DHS' focus continues to be on services that can prevent abuse and neglect; however, prevention services do more than prevent an incident from occurring. Prevention services also strengthen family units, increase protective capacities of parents/caregivers, encourage family engagement and empowerment, increase kinship and community supports, and provide community resources to avoid initial or future child welfare involvement. DHS' focus continues to be the implementation of prevention services that best fit the needs of the community, children, and families they serve. Family First Prevention Services that include trauma-informed, evidence-based programs (rated on the Federal Clearinghouse) allow CCYAs access to additional funds when looking to provide eligible services including:

- Mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment services provided by a qualified clinician;
- In-home, parent skill-based programs, which include parenting skills training, parent education and individual and family counseling; and
- Pregnant, expecting, and parenting youth in care

Additionally, in an effort to prioritize the safety and well-being of substance-affected infants (SAI) and their caregivers, the Pennsylvania Departments of Health, Drug and Alcohol Programs, and DHS have worked collaboratively with the members of the Multi-Disciplinary Workgroup on Infants with Substance Exposure to develop the Plan of Safe Care (POSC) guidance for county children and youth agencies and other county level service providers. CCYAs were offered grant funding to establish their teams and are encouraged to request funds to maintain their teams through the NBPB.

POSC differ from other safety or family service plans by including services for the infant and their substance affected caregiver(s). Developing an individualized POSC for SAIs and caregivers requires intentional collaboration across multiple systems to ensure both the safety and well-being of the child and address the health and substance use disorder treatment needs of the family or caregiver.

Additionally, DHS would again reference OCYF's collaboration with OCR and the work and dedication that has gone into ensuring that each of the Commonwealth's 67 counties have approved Nondiscrimination Notices, Grievance Procedures, and Nondiscrimination Policies and Procedures in place, in addition to the *Supporting Children and Families with Disabilities* training which CCYAs, licensed providers, and non-licensed contractors will be required to successfully complete by July 30, 2024.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 2:

DHS agrees that a periodic review of prior recommendations will allow for there to be up-to-date information on the status of prior recommendations. DHS will review the prior recommendations on a schedule that coincides with the rotation of the onboarding and recruitment and the retirement of panels. Updates will be shared with new panels as they complete the on-boarding process and with established panels through the CRP Spring Meetings.

DHS has responded to each of the prior recommendation inquiries, in the space above.

Northeast Citizen Review Panel Members

Roberta Daniels – Wyoming
Marshall Davis – Wyoming
Kathleen Donson – Pike
Kerrie Fitzsimmons – Wayne
Moneefah Jackson – Northampton
Kelly Langan – Lackawanna
Benjamin Toll – Luzerne

Biographies for each member can be found on the CRP website at the following link:
<http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CRP/Northeast.html>.

2023 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report
Southwest Citizen Review Panel Report and Recommendations



Introduction:

The Southwest (SW) CRP serves 16 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. The SW CRP is dedicated to ensuring that the needs of Pennsylvania's children are being met within the current system.

Overview of the Focus Area:

In July 2022, the panel held a strategic planning meeting to review Pennsylvania's current child welfare priority areas, areas of concern, and current statistics. As part of this meeting, the panel reviewed and discussed the following information:

- [2021 CRP Annual Report](#);
- [2020 Child Protective Services Annual Report](#);
- [2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan](#); and
- [2021 State of Child Welfare: Navigating the Uncertainty of the Pandemic to Strengthen the System](#).

After much discussion, the panel decided to focus on failed or disrupted adoptions in Pennsylvania to improve permanency outcomes. Several panel members working with this population, as well as a panel member with personal experience, expressed a need to research this area.

Summary of Work Completed:

Beginning in July of 2022, the Southwest panel was concluding its work on complex case planning and met to research and choose a new focus area. As the panel reviewed state and national data, discussions around disrupted/failed adoptions occurred. A panel member shared her personal experience as a child in the Pennsylvania foster system and discussed how her own adoption had been suddenly disrupted. Other panel members who work more closely with the foster care and adoption systems drove the discussion towards asking several key questions, specifically why are counties seeing an increase in disrupted adoptions, why are adoptions disrupting, and how can this

be prevented in the future? The panel went back to the data being presented and determined it could not answer these questions. At the conclusion of that meeting a request for additional data was made that could include, but was not limited to, number of failed adoptions, number of post-permanency services provided, any outcomes that the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) tracks regarding post-permanency services, etc.

In September of 2022, the panel received additional information requested. OCYF confirmed that data around post-permanency services was not available. However, the SWAN team was able to provide post-permanency data collected for the last three years. Based on this information, the panel posed additional questions for OCYF:

- Has OCYF identified what information/data the new Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) will collect regarding the disruption or dissolution of adoptions?
- Will follow-up information be collected on those disrupted/dissolved adoptions to learn “what went wrong” so the concerns can be fixed to ensure successful adoption in the future?
- Will this be information provided by counties or SWAN affiliates?
- Will counties be instructed on how to report disruptions/dissolutions of adoptions to ensure consistent reporting?

The panel received the following response from OCYF regarding the information requested:

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) is in the process of developing a statewide Child Welfare Case Management System (CWCM). OCYF has identified adoption disruption and dissolution as an area in which the CWCM will collect information. OCYF is creating the system with the mindset of capturing information related to the causality of adoption disruption/dissolutions. At this time OCYF is not able to provide the detail asked by the Southwest Citizen Review Panel related to adoption disruption/dissolution based upon the current developmental stage of the CWCM.

In October of 2022, panel members reviewed all information received and concluded that more information was needed to support this focus area. The panel developed a survey ([See Attachment B](#)) that would target the Southwest Pennsylvania CCYAs to determine if they individually were tracking data.

The panel met in February of 2023 to review initial survey results, which included a limited number of responses. The panel noted counties that did not respond, and panel members then initiated contact with CCYA administrators to encourage completion of the survey. While the panel received additional responses, it was decided that more data was needed. In May 2023, the survey was sent to all counties in Pennsylvania.

In May 2023, the Southwest panel had the opportunity to meet with staff from SWAN to discuss areas of concern that the panel had regarding services offered to youth and families to prepare them for adoption. One of the primary concerns discussed was focused on the lack of data that is currently available. The panel questioned why SWAN does not require outcomes to be tracked. The panel wanted more information on the successes and failures of each of SWAN’s units of service and Adoptions and Permanent Legal Custodianships (PLC). It was noted that data was only tracked regarding how many adoptions occur and the number of units that are referred/paid because that is a

direct outcome of the services provided. The CCYAs would be the only entity that could track if the services were successful.

In July, the panel reviewed the benchmarks (requirements) for SWAN's current units of service, which include the [child profile](#), [child preparation](#), [child specific recruitment](#), [family matching](#), [family profile](#), [placement](#), and [finalization](#). The goal of the review of this information was to see if the current lines of service were supporting preventing disrupted/failed adoptions from happening. Panel members began looking at the services through their own lens and noted several areas of concern. For example, children who are placed in their permanent home as a result of an emergency placement are not eligible to use the family matching service because they are considered to already be matched.

Panel members also engaged in a lengthy discussion regarding the fidelity of child and family profiles with respect to full disclosure. Panel members shared that some CCYAs do not consider the child profile to be a complete document and ask providers to leave information, such as: specifics regarding child's behaviors, occurrences of sexual abuse, and information regarding the child's abuser, out of the profile. When caseworkers are asked why they want information left out, providers are told that the youth are able to obtain copies of their child profile and don't need to see all of those details. However, leaving out these details could contribute to failure to provide full disclosure to families.

SWAN requires that all child profiles include the following disclaimer:

This report should not be considered an exhaustive history of the child, as certain events or evaluations may have occurred that were not documented or reported and were, therefore, not included in this report. Information and events chronicled within were subject to the interpretation of individuals involved in the child's case. As well, historians may have provided inaccurate information regarding the birth family or early history of the child. All efforts were made to ensure accuracy and completeness of information.

The wording of the disclaimer may provide an opportunity for counties/providers to not disclose information in the child profiles.

In September 2023, the panel reviewed the survey results again, which now included responses from 19 CCYAs ([See Attachment C](#)). Even though this is still a fraction of the state data, a cross section of both rural and urban counties was represented.

As a result of the survey that was sent out, multiple counties responded that they did not believe their disruption rates were a concern because these rates are below the national average. The panel recognizes this; however, the panel members are still concerned that even one disruption is too many and there is a need for better tracking, contract monitoring, and proactive post-perm outreach to improve these outcomes.

The panel is also planning to do a follow-up survey to obtain individual case circumstances for each disruption (need for services for child, race, age, geographical location, length of time in care, etc.) to identify any themes for these disruptions and help pinpoint specific areas for improvement.

This will be a multi-year project, and the panel is looking to work collaboratively with OCYF to understand the adoption process and make realistic recommendations to improve permanency outcomes.

Key activities in 2023:

Members of the SW CRP attended and participated in the following:

- Spring All-Panel Meeting;
- Fall All-Panel Meeting;
- Quarterly meetings; and
- Lakeside Global Trauma Series, including the following sessions:
 - Expanded Understanding of Trauma for Health Professionals;
 - Basic Skills of Trauma Informed Care;
 - Trauma Informed Cultural Sensitivity; and
 - Trauma in a Pandemic.

Southwest Citizen Review Panel Recommendations for 2023:

Recommendation 1:

The SW Panel recommends that OCYF develop and require a mechanism for collecting and reporting data specific to disruption of adoptions and PLC agreements.

This could include:

- Detailed intake surveying/assessments when an adoptive family seeks the assistance of CCYAs; and
- Follow-up surveys with adoption families, like the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), that could be sent to families along with their subsidy renewal paperwork.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 1

DHS appreciates the SW Panel for its interest in the data specific to disruption of adoptions and PLC agreements. DHS would like to reiterate what the panel is already aware of, that the department is in the process of developing a statewide CWCM system. DHS has identified adoption disruption and dissolution as an area in which the CWCM will collect information. DHS is creating the system with the mindset of capturing information related to the causality of adoption disruptions/dissolutions. The CWCM system will also track permanent legal custodianship agreements as well as other forms of permanency received on behalf of children in foster care.

Through the use of the CWCM already in development, it will allow DHS to intergrade the collection data specific to disrupted adoptions and PLC agreements without the need for a regulation change or a new law. As the CWCM project advances and moves forward, DHS would be able to provide periodic updates.

Recommendation 2:

The Southwest Panel recommends DHS implement additional training in the following areas:

Foster/Adoptive Training Needs:

- Specific training for kinship caregivers to prepare them for permanency;
- Require biological children of the adoptive family to participate in permanency preparations and training sessions;
- Trauma, Grief, Loss, and Attachment trainings to help adoptive families understand what the child is experiencing and how to navigate those concerns/issues; and
- Planning for the “what-ifs,” especially for adoptive parents who adopt young children who have not begun to display any behaviors that result from previous trauma.

For caseworkers/providers:

- More intensive training to learn how to prepare families for finalization, including:
 - Understanding the importance of “Full Disclosure”; and
 - How to navigate inter-state and inter-county adoptions to ensure the adoptive family is prepared prior to finalization.
- To aide in the retention of caseworkers as well as supporting focuses on successful adoptions the panel recommends a higher classified tenure position for adoption specialists in every county. This would bring the potential to, at a minimum, improve both tracking and success in adoptions.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 2

DHS will consider the recommendation to offer specific training to foster, kinship, adoptive families as well as caseworkers and providers as outlined by the SW CRP. DHS will work with CWRC as well as other contractors to consider these recommendations and enhancements to current trainings that are already provided by and supported through DHS.

In July 2020, Governor Wolf declared that Pennsylvania would become a Trauma-Informed state. The process will transpire over the next 10 years and will occur in a phased approach. The four phases include: Trauma Aware, Trauma Sensitive, Trauma Informed and Healing Centered. DHS plays a critical role in this process and steps to develop policies and practices across Pennsylvania have occurred over the past four years. For specific information, please visit; <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Trauma-Informed-Care/Pages/default.aspx>

In addition to steps taken by OCYF’s Trauma Team, DHS/OCYF through partnership with OMHSAS has contracted with Lakeside Global Institute to provide Pennsylvania Child Welfare Professionals as well as foster and adoptive parents, free trauma training. Anyone who serves children and families and lives in Pennsylvania may utilize these trainings. Workshops can be found by visiting the following links:

<https://lakesidelink.com/training/lgi-trauma-workshops-2024/>
<https://lakesidelink.com/training/course-registration-dhs-2024/>

The Lakeside workshops are available through September 30, 2024.

Additionally, trauma trainings have been created for the child welfare community. *Raising Trauma Awareness in Child Welfare Caseworker Practice in PA* is a self-paced training available to caseworkers, providers and foster/adoptive parents. This training introduces child welfare professionals to a model of care that seeks to prevent trauma for youth, families, caregivers, and communities. Participants gain an awareness of trauma, its prevalence, and its impact on children,

youth, families, and child welfare professionals. This course was developed with the aide and guidance of the OCYF Trauma Team and has been made available to any child serving agency that is licensed through OCYF, at no cost. This list includes residential facilities, group homes, foster and adoption agencies and CCYAs.

Additionally, in collaboration with the CWRC, OCYF's Trauma Team helped expand the already existing trauma series to include a trauma-sensitive curriculum that is individualized for staff in child welfare serving systems. The first iteration of trauma-sensitive training was released on the E-Learn platform August 2023, entitled *Developing Trauma Sensitivity in Therapeutic Foster Care*. The sections within this module focus on fundamentals of trauma-sensitivity, attachment, relationships, the brain, signs and symptoms of trauma, implementing trauma-informed principles to respond to trauma, self-care, and resources. This training is designed for therapeutic foster care staff but is available to foster/adoptive parents at no cost.

OCYF agrees that the retention of caseworkers, specifically adoption specialist, could reduce the instability of cases throughout the adoption process. If CCYAs have a desire to designate a tenure position as an adoption specialist within the agency, DHS would encourage them to request the funds through the NBPB process, which would allow for such expenses.

Recommendation 3:

The Southwest Panel recommends that DHS provides more opportunities to adoptive families for follow-up services, which could include:

- A new unit of service provided by SWAN affiliates that starts at finalization and follows the family for 6+ months;
 - This service would provide regular check-ins with the family to ensure services were transferred after finalization and ease the family into not having people in their home all the time; and
- Enhanced post-permanency services that include crisis management.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 3

DHS appreciates the recommendation from the SW panel related to developing a new unit of service that would begin after adoption finalization through the SWAN program. Unfortunately, this is outside of the scope of the current SWAN contract and cannot be considered at this time.

Since 2003, SWAN Post-Permanency services are available to adoptive families (whether or not they adopted a child from foster care) and to families who have provided permanency to children from the Pennsylvania child welfare system through PLC or formal kinship care. Formal kinship care and permanent legal custodianship families are those who provide permanency to a Pennsylvania foster child. SWAN Post-Permanency services include Advocacy, Support Groups and Respite. SWAN Post-Permanency services are not crisis driven and are not intended to be used for crisis intervention. In crisis situations, the family should be directed to contact their local crisis intervention services.

Additionally, the SWAN contract, includes research and analysis that will be conducted on state and national levels as it relates to the post-permanency services offered through the SWAN program. The research and analysis will afford DHS the ability to access whether or not the same three post-permanency services remain the top needs for families and to revisit policy and practices around the services provided.

Proposed Focus Area/Activities for 2024:

The panel is looking forward to continued collaboration with OCYF to understand the adoption process and make realistic recommendations to improve permanency outcomes.

Southwest Citizen Review Panel Members

Karynn Davis – Westmoreland
Tracey Finn – Allegheny
Carla Smith – Cambria
Emily Snow – Butler
Lisa Snyder - Armstrong
Gwendolyn Steiner – Allegheny
Robin Thompson – Beaver
Richard Wynn – Allegheny
Paula Eppley-Newman – Somerset
Jo Ann Jankoski – Fayette
Jennifer Kalie – Westmoreland

Biographies for each member can be found on the CRP website at the following link:
<http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CRP/Southwest.html>.

2023 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report
Southeast Citizen Review Panel Report and Recommendations

**Introduction:**

In accordance with the pre-established rotation schedule, the Southeast region was established in 2022.

The six-county Southeast region includes Philadelphia, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties and encompasses approximately 35 percent of the total statewide population. The Southeast region is the most diverse within the Commonwealth and is home to the Commonwealth's largest African American population. More children and families are served by CCYAs (and their extension Community Umbrella Agencies (CUAs)) in the Southeast than in any other region. Before 2022, the Southeast region has never been represented by a regional CRP.

The 12 applicants selected to join the Southeast Panel are dedicated to ensuring that the needs of Pennsylvania's children are being met within the current system. During their tenure, the panel will review regulations, policies, and procedures before making recommendations to improve the child welfare system in Pennsylvania.

The Southeast CRP officially began its work in January 2023.

Overview of the Focus Area:

To assist the Southeast CRP with selection of their topic(s) to research, each member was required to participate in "Citizen Review Panel New Member Orientation." This newly developed orientation consisted of two components, a six-module online orientation series and a one-day in-person meeting.

The online modules included:

- Introduction to the CRPs;
- Policy and Procedure Manual Overview;
- Child Welfare in Pennsylvania Overview;
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act Overview;
- Mandated and Permissive Reporter Training; and
- Implicit Bias Training.

October 18, 2022, new member orientation was held in-person at the PA CWRC - Norristown Training Room. This meeting included:

- A presentation by the OCYF CRP Liaison, which included:
 - A general overview of OCYF’s role and responsibilities;
 - A breakdown of the current Child and Family Services Plan; and
 - An outline of OCYF’s priority areas:
 - Goals outlined in the Pennsylvania Child and Family Services Plan;
 - Family First Prevention Services Act;
 - Addressing racial disparity in child welfare;
 - Continuous quality improvement;
 - Prevention of child maltreatment fatalities and near-fatalities;
 - Enhancing cross-system collaborations; and
 - Trauma-Informed Care.
- A presentation by the OCYF Southeast Region Director, which included:
 - A general overview of the regional offices’ role and responsibilities, and
 - A breakdown of the priority areas in the Southeast region:
 - Family First Prevention Services Act;
 - Trauma-Informed Care;
 - Reduction of Fatalities/Near-Fatalities; and
 - Medically Complex Cases – transition home planning.
- A panel discussion with representatives from five counties (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia) in the region, which outlined the strengths, weaknesses, and gap areas of child welfare in the Southeast region:
 - Some of these concerns included:
 - Family First Prevention Services Act implementation differs from county to county;
 - Child welfare in Pennsylvania is a “regulation-driven” system;
 - Lack of placement options for youth with complex behaviors; and
 - Workforce recruitment and retention struggles.
- During the afternoon, panel members met to:
 - Review the following resources:
 - PA Child Welfare Resources:
 - [2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan;](#)
 - [PA Round 3 Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan;](#)
 - 2022 PA Annual Progress and Services Report;
 - [2021 Child Protective Services Annual Report;](#)
 - [2021 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report;](#)
 - [2022 State of Child Welfare](#), published by PA Partnerships for Children; and
 - [Child Welfare Practice Model.](#)
 - Race Equity Resources:
 - [2021 DHS Race Equity Report;](#)
 - [Key Equity Terms and Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding](#), published by the Center for the Study of Social Policy;

- [Three Tools for Getting Started with the Race Matters Toolkit](#), published by Annie E. Casey Foundation; and
 - [Child Welfare Resource Center Diversity Task Force](#) website.
- Discuss information they learned from the morning session;
 - Share what brought them to join the panel; and
 - Brainstorm potential focus area(s) for the next five years.

During the panel orientation, a panel member shared a story about foster parents being inefficiently informed of a youth's needs in an attempt to "just find them a bed," causing not only a disruption of placement for that child, but also other children in the home. In response, a county representative shared a story of youth sleeping in CCYA offices while waiting for appropriate placement options to be secured. They referred panel members to a report published in [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#), highlighting that youth were increasingly placed in inappropriate and unnecessarily restrictive setting conditions, including hospitals, emergency rooms, and juvenile detention centers, for weeks and months. The article also stated that the number of youth placed in such situations has tripled over the last couple of years, without enough placement settings available to meet their needs. Another article explained that an increasing number of youth are sleeping in child welfare offices for extensive periods while awaiting placement in the most appropriate setting.

Based on all of the information reviewed and in-depth discussions, the panel ultimately decided to focus, primarily on the need for more placement options for youth with complex needs. For the purposes of this report, the panel defines complex needs as youth who display significant behavioral problems, mental health concerns, misuse or abuse of drugs and/or alcohol, intellectual disabilities (including autism spectrum diagnoses), complex trauma, and other specialized populations.

During their preliminary discussions regarding lack of placement options, the panel recognized that child welfare is struggling with recruitment and retention of a stable workforce. This acknowledgement led to a secondary focus of improving the image of child welfare in Pennsylvania to improve the public's view and opinion of the child welfare system.

It should be noted that while the panel recognizes that diversity, equity, and inclusion; workforce recruitment and retention; and trauma-informed child welfare practices are extremely important, there are many workgroups throughout Pennsylvania currently addressing those topics. The panel chose topics that are important to their region and committed to researching those topics with a wide-angled lens that would incorporate all of these needs when making recommendations.

Summary of Work Completed:

Lack of Placement Options:

Once the Southeast CRP decided to focus on the lack of placement options for youth with complex needs, the members developed a list of concerns that would help guide their research. These concerns included:

- Counties are anecdotally reporting an increase in the number of referrals involving adolescents with complex needs;
- When behaviors require the youth to be placed in out-of-home care, there is a lack of placement options to accommodate the older youth and their behaviors;

- Because there are behavioral issues, youth do not qualify for mental health facilities (residential treatment facilities or community residential rehabilitative homes) and CCYA placement providers don't have the staff or want the liability of taking on a youth with behaviors; and
- There is a concern that if you can find a placement for these youth, the youth have the ability to refuse mental health and/or drug and alcohol treatment.

Once the primary concerns were identified, the panel outlined the information that was needed to begin researching this multifaceted issue. Some of the informational/data requests made included:

- The number of referrals made over a five-year period regarding youth with complex needs. The panel asked for a total and a breakdown of each complex need;
 - Of that number:
 - Information or data regarding services provided to the families to prevent removal from the home; or
 - Number of youth removed from the home due to their complex needs.
- The number of placements available to service this population;
 - This could include emergency shelters, specialized congregate care settings, foster homes with specialized training, etc.
- Have placements/services been denied by counties for lack of resources; and
- Any data the Commonwealth may collect regarding youth who refuse treatment after it has been recommended. This request is specific to youth 14 years of age or older who can refuse mental health and/or drug and alcohol treatment services.

Unfortunately, DHS does not collect much of the data or information that was requested. Many of these answers would only be obtained by asking individual counties, providers, or the youth and their families. While the DHS was able to provide basic referral and removal data, the panel was asked to be more specific with their request in order to receive the information that is necessary to answer the panel's primary concerns.

The panel reviewed the [Act 65 of 2020, Allowing Minors To Consent To Mental Health Treatment And Release Of Medical Records](#), which outlined that a minor 14 years or older may consent on their behalf to outpatient mental health treatment. However, this law also took away the minor's ability to sign themselves out of treatment if the services were initiated by their parent. The panel began to understand that some data regarding mental health treatment would not be easily accessible due to confidentiality laws. To access such data, the panel members would need individual consent.

The panel also reviewed the limited data through the Family First Prevention Services Act, which reported the number of congregate care settings that are approved as a "Specialized Setting for Children and Youth." These placements are defined as:

- A trauma-informed child residential facility or supervised independent living (SIL) program specializing in providing care and treatment to one or more specific populations:
 - Pregnant, expecting and parenting youth;
 - Youth who are transitioning to adulthood; or
 - Youth who are, or who are at risk of becoming, sex trafficking victims.

Based on the information reviewed, the panel is not able to make any recommendations at this time. However, the panel will continue to research this topic moving forward. The panel will be requesting

more data from the Commonwealth regarding placement options for members of this population, ease of access to those placement options, and more specific data regarding this population and its needs.

The Negative Image of Child Welfare in Pennsylvania

The Southeast CRP members were also concerned about the recurring negative perception of the child welfare system in Pennsylvania and decided to take this matter on as a secondary focus for 2023. Panel members engaged in regular discussions regarding the damaging messages that were being portrayed in the media, which did not accurately depict the actual work of many child welfare professionals. More specifically, the reality that the public only reads about child welfare in the news if a child dies or a child welfare worker is being arrested.

During the quarterly meetings, the Southeast CRP reviewed the goals and objectives outlined in the Child and Family Service Plan 2020-2024 and 2022 Pennsylvania Annual Progress and Services Report to improve the negative stigma of child welfare.

The panel requested information from DHS about what the Commonwealth is currently doing to improve the image of child welfare, specifically requesting information regarding any active media campaigns. At that time, DHS provided the following response:

- The importance of elevating the public image of child welfare work has been discussed by the PA Child Welfare Council in relation to workforce issues and addressing the decline in the pool of individuals interested in working in the field;
- While there is not currently a strategic, coordinated media campaign in place to improve the image of child welfare, OCYF, CWRC, and the CCYAs all work to identify opportunities to promote the work of child welfare when able, often using social media in this effort;
 - For example, DHS highlights the work of child welfare professionals through press releases and social media related to the annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference; and
 - DHS periodically releases information to promote available careers in child welfare work through its social media sites.
- In June of each year, the Governor has issued a [proclamation](#) to identify child welfare professional's appreciation week to publicly recognize the profession and workforce. DHS releases similar appreciation messages through its social media sites during this time;
- Many CCYAs have worked to put together media campaigns to highlight the importance of work in child welfare as part of hiring recruitment campaigns. OCYF often provides state funding support for these efforts through the annual NBPB process. York and Dauphin County are examples of two counties that have put together recruitment videos and campaigns;
- As part of the ongoing #MeettheKidsCampaign, a segment titled "Meet the Families" was created in 2018 to highlight stories from foster and adoptive families and their support of children and families involved in the child welfare system; and
- In conversations and formal testimony with legislators, county commissioners and other stakeholders, OCYF educates these stakeholders on the mission, vision, and work of child welfare.

Based on the information received and discussions during quarterly panels, the panel is prepared to make a recommendation specific to improving the image of child welfare in Pennsylvania. While the panel supports the work that is already being done, the members would like to hear more success stories about reunification and family preservation services, the success of locating family members to help support their family in times of need, and supportive services that CCYAs can provide to families in their community.

Key activities in 2023:

Members of the Southeast CRP attended and participated in the following:

- Spring 2023 All-Panel Meeting;
- Fall 2023 All-Panel Meeting; and
- Quarterly meetings.

Southeast Citizen Review Panel Recommendations for 2023:

Recommendation 1:

The Southeast Panel recommends that OCYF develop and implement a marketing and public relations campaign to promote the successes and positive experiences within the child welfare system in Pennsylvania.

As part of this campaign, OCYF should consider the following:

- Utilize “lived experience” voices (quotes/sound bites/video clips) and real data to articulate the positive services provided by CCYAs, such as:
 - Prevention services;
 - Family preservation services;
 - Reunification services;
 - Supportive services; and
 - Community outreach.
- Consider utilizing:
 - Radio;
 - Television;
 - Billboards;
 - Social media;
 - Recognition awards (county and statewide); and
 - Pair with Family First efforts and other awareness campaigns.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 1

DHS appreciates the SE CRP’s concerns about the recurring negative perception of the child welfare system in Pennsylvania. OCYF welcomes the panel’s ideas and appreciates the effort that went into their recommendation. DHS is always looking for ways to collaborate with community members to help spread positive messages about how child welfare can support families and the critical role the system plays in aiding to build healthy communities. DHS/OCYF is supportive of this recommendation. While media campaigns such as #MeettheKidsCampaign already exist, the department can agree using lived experience voices to emphasize CCYA efforts toward prevention

and supportive services, would highlight and promote the successes and positive experiences within the child welfare system.

While there have been and currently are media campaigns through Facebook and other social media platforms, DHS/OCYF agrees that additional efforts would be beneficial. DHS/OCYF would like the opportunity to communicate with CCYAs to identify their visions for such efforts and work towards a collaborative approach to develop and highlight a media campaign that would benefit DHS/OCYF, and the CCYAs. DHS/OCYF would also like to incorporate the recommendations from PFM (regarding recruitment and retention) into any campaign.

Additionally, CWRC and the OCYF's Deputy Secretary's Office is currently seeking input from parents who have had past involvement with the child welfare system. CWRC is hosting town hall style meetings across the commonwealth to hear directly from those with lived experience (as parents) in Pennsylvania's child welfare system. The purpose of the meetings is to promote parents as leaders and strategic partners. The emphasis is not on individual case details but on the parent's experience with the system. Insights gained from parents has the potential to inform how child welfare services are provided in the Commonwealth. To date, two town hall meetings have been held. OCYF plans to hold additional meetings in SFY 24-25.

Parents identified to participate in a town hall meeting must meet the following criteria:

- Have had past involvement with a Pennsylvania CCYA including in-home and out-of-home placement in which reunification has occurred;
- The family's case must be closed with the CCYA at the time of application; and
- The family cannot have connection to an open case with a CCYA through a family member.

The goal of this project is to improve family engagement at all levels of Pennsylvania's child welfare system.

Southeast Citizen Review Panel Members

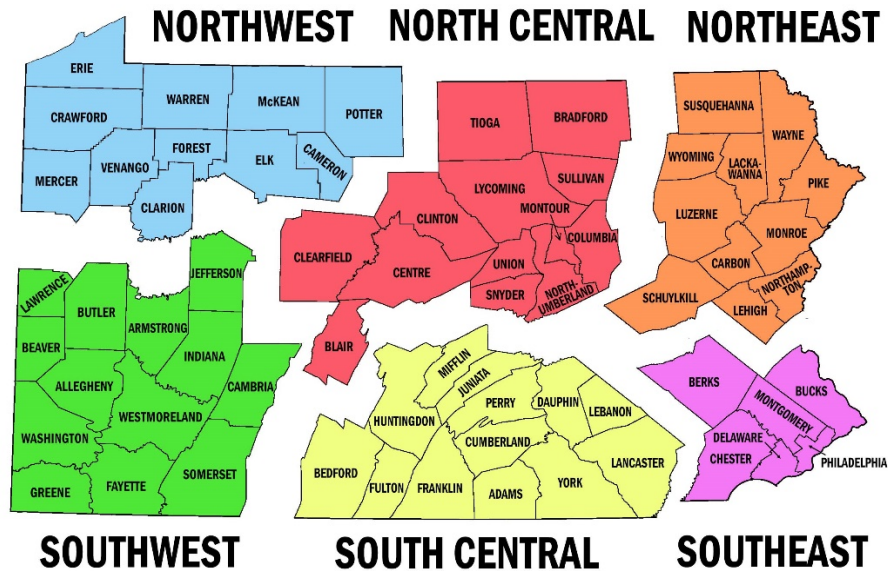
Nakeya Berry – Philadelphia
Happi Grillon – Philadelphia
Keith Haury – Delaware
Michelle Mattera – Bucks
Sarah Patschke – Berks
Abigail Rich – Chester
Jennifer Roe – Berks
Leslie Slingsby – Montgomery
Maureen Stoll – Bucks
Noelle Torres – Delaware
Tamara Wilson – Chester

Biographies for each member can be found on the CRP website at the following link:

<http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CRP/Southeast.html>

2023 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report
Statewide Youth Advisory Board Report and Recommendations

YAB REGIONS/BOARD



Introduction:

The mission of the Pennsylvania YAB is to educate, advocate, and form partnerships to create positive change in the child welfare system. The YAB is funded by the Pennsylvania OCYF and is supported by the CWRC.

The YAB is formed by youth and alumni of the child welfare system ages 16 to 23. There are local boards and six regional boards that funnel into the Statewide YAB. Regional YABs and the Statewide YAB meet every other month. The meeting schedule for the Statewide YAB is listed under the “About” section of the YAB website here: [YAB Website](#).

Overview of the Focus Area:

The YAB has transitioned back to in-person meetings following a period of virtual gatherings. Youth members found it challenging to navigate and actively participate in multiple virtual platforms during the pandemic and expressed a strong desire to reconnect in person. The YAB remains dedicated to restoring its regional membership and participation to pre-pandemic levels, while also continuing its mission to make a positive impact on the child welfare system.

This year marked a successful period for the YAB. The Regional YABs diligently organized recruitment events to reinvigorate membership and recruit foster homes for older youth. One significant event was the movie night at a local theatre hosted by the Northeast Regional YAB. The featured film was “Instant Family,” a heartwarming 2018 comedy and drama depicting the journey of a young couple adopting a child. Following the movie, a panel of older youth in foster care engaged in a discussion to raise awareness of and promote permanency and adoption for older youth.

DHS/OCYF engaged the Statewide YAB to assist in the rewrite of the Title 55 Chapter 3800 Regulations for Child Residential and Day Treatment Facilities. Youth participated in focus groups offering valuable input to ensure that the youth perspective was integrated into the development and execution of these regulations. Youth also created and distributed mental health wellness kits containing various items to help improve mental health, well-being, and connectedness across the state. Additionally, they developed marketing resources for NYTD and independent living (IL) site visits to increase efforts to educate youth about the importance of participating in the NYTD survey and IL site visits.

Summary of Work Completed:

The YAB maintained its commitment to in-person meetings throughout the year, convening in January, March, May, June, September, and November.

During the March Statewide meeting, representatives from various counties including Allegheny, Cambria, Cameron, Carbon, Dauphin, Elk, and Erie came together. The DHS Director of SWAN provided an overview of current available grants and educational opportunities for youth. She also discussed the impact of Pennsylvania's Act 118 on foster youth. The meeting featured a presentation by the University of Pittsburgh Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) program, focusing on careers in child welfare through Pennsylvania's Title IV-E programs. They delved into opportunities for youth to pursue educational pathways to becoming a child welfare caseworker. Representatives from the CWRC Curriculum Development Department conducted a focus group engaging youth in congregate care facilities. This was a youth-only session where members of YAB were invited to share their insights. Valuable feedback was gathered during this session and will be incorporated in training for child welfare professionals.

At May's Statewide meeting, the DHS Director of SWAN delivered a presentation on the NYTD database, providing statistical insights into the baseline population survey and data. Additionally, representatives from OCYF followed up with responses from last year's recommendations made by the YAB. In addition, they allowed new recommendations to be made for the following year. One notable outcome of the meeting was the active involvement of the youth in reviewing and proposing improvements to a "Top Ten Tips for Caseworkers" resource. Youths' contributions included suggestions to incorporate a more welcoming tone in the poster, to modify the wording, and adjust the color scheme for greater impact.

The YAB successfully hosted their two-day annual Leadership Summit in June, bringing together 42 participants, including both youth and staff members from six different regions. The summit featured a presentation by Da'Shon Forrest, focusing on the significance of resilience. Additionally, the youth had the opportunity to participate in professional workshops, including topics such as "Know Your Rights" and "Strategic Sharing." A dedicated sacred circle was created exclusively for the youth to engage in meaningful discussions.

The September Statewide meeting, facilitated by the Southwest regional YAB members, included representatives from 13 different counties across the state. Youth attendees had the opportunity to review and complete the Speakers' Bureau application. Additionally, there was a collaborative brainstorming session where youth worked together to generate ideas for upcoming CRP projects. Some of the proposed projects involved creating a credit booklet to educate youth on building and maintaining good credit, the implementation of the speakers' bureau, creating a hair care guide for

black and brown youth, and creating a resource/guide to help caseworkers talk to youth about race. The afternoon concluded with a presentation on NYTD, Chafee ETG, and the FosterEd programs.

Key Activities in 2023:

- The YAB partnered with SWAN to organize a regional event featuring a youth panel focused on the recruitment of foster families for older youth. The event was held in conjunction with the local movie cinema. Foster Care Recruitment Event;
- The YAB presented, “The Youth and Family Engagement,” training at the 2023 SWAN Permanency Conference. The training focused on the importance of preparing stakeholders to collaborate with youth on committees and workgroups;
- The YAB played a pivotal role in a focus group dedicated to revising policies and developing curriculum for the Title 55 Chapter 3800 Regulations concerning Child Residential and Day Treatment Facilities. Within these focus groups, youth participants actively contributed their insights to ensure that their voices were infused in shaping and implementing these regulations;
- The YAB leadership supported the SWAN/IL matching event at the 2023 SWAN Permanency Conference by setting up a resource table with information that included coloring books and brochures about YAB and IL; and
- The YAB launched a campaign and developed marketing resources for NYTD in preparation for the 2023 NYTD review. The youth created informative vignettes aimed at educating their peers on the significance of NYTD.

Youth Advisory Board Recommendations for 2023:

Recommendation 1:

The YAB recommends OCYF support a campaign focused on the promotion of positive mental health as well as resources to support older youth. Additionally, for OCYF to provide wellness kits that include items to help improve mental well-being and connectedness for youth across the state.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 1:

DHS agrees that youth should have access to and receive tools that help promote positive mental health. As Pennsylvania is a state supervised, county administered child welfare system, DHS has supported the purchase and distribution of items that would support youth, including wellness kits, in the child welfare system. CCYAs and private providers continue to have the ability to purchase items and incorporate programming to benefit youth served by the county. CCYAs can utilize John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood Program funds as well as state dollars through their IL Grant for youth in out-of-home placement as well as youth receiving and participating in IL services. On an annual basis CCYAs assess their needs to support older youth and can request additional funds through their NBPB process to support older youth. DHS supports the ongoing efforts of the YAB website to keep youth, young people and staff informed of available resources that include links to national organizations and tools for mindfulness. The link to the YAB website can be found at [Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board \(pitt.edu\)](https://pitt.edu/yab).

Recommendation 2:

The YAB recommends OCYF remake of NYTD resources and increase efforts to educate youth about the importance of participating in the NYTD survey.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 2:

DHS/OCYF supports the YAB's recommendation to remake NYTD resources and increase efforts to educate youth about the importance of participating in NYTD.

Over this past year, DHS/OCYF supported the YAB in development of a new NYTD video, which can be viewed online at [National Youth in Transition Database - Video \(pitt.edu\)](#), a brochure, located at, [NYTDBrochure.pdf \(pitt.edu\)](#), and a new youth designed logo, in an effort to increase youth engagement for NYTD.

DHS will continue to work with the CWRC Independent Living Project and YAB to provide opportunities for education on NYTD participation and the creation of NYTD materials.

Recommendation 3:

The YAB recommends OCYF develop resources to educate youth on IL site visits along with ensuring outreach for youth participation, as youth voices should be incorporated.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 3:

DHS agrees with the YAB recommendation to develop resources to educate youth on the county IL site visit process and work to ensure outreach for youth participation and youth voices are incorporated. Youth with lived experience is of the utmost importance to DHS/OCYF and wholeheartedly agrees that youth should participate in the CCYA IL site visit process. DHS/OCYF has encouraged CCYAs to include youth voice in all aspects of IL programming, including IL site visits. Youth participation provides DHS/OCYF and CCYAs a better understanding of the programs and services offered through the CCYA IL program as well as identifying any areas of need or gaps for youth.

DHS/OCYF will work with CWRC and the YAB to identify and develop resources to meet this recommendation.

Proposed Focus Area/Activity for 2024:

In 2024, the YAB intends to focus on four significant projects. The projects are an instructional hair guide for African American youth, creating a guide to help caseworkers better understand the needs of the youth, changing and collaborating with counties to ensure all youth have access to baseline stipends, and establishing a speaker's bureau for youth to share their insights on the Child Welfare system. These efforts reflect the YAB's commitment to empowering youth and improving the Child Welfare system.

Attachment A
Northeast CRP Recommendations (2010 – 2022)

Year	Recommendation	Category
2010	Educate youth regarding the advocacy role of the Guardian Ad Litem in their life	Complete /Obsolete
2010	Examine case management practices across Pennsylvania and ensure uniformity and accountability	Watchlist
2012	Reduce the amount of paperwork with caseworkers to allow them more time to spend with families. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate paperwork responsibilities to determine if they are needed to ensure the safety of PA’s children, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Voter registration; ○ New educational forms; and ○ Developmental screening tools. • Streamline/combine required paperwork, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Risk Assessment/Safety Assessment; and ○ Family Services Plans. 	Watchlist
2012	Increase access to mental health services and improve the delivery of existing services through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding; and • Best practice. 	Requires Action
2012	Find better ways of reporting and tracking child abuse allegations through the use of technology by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using technology to increase the efficiency of PA’s Child Abuse Hotline; and • Creating a statewide database containing all reports of child abuse. 	Complete /Obsolete
2012	Increase the use of technology by caseworkers to improve services for children and families through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile technology support to counties; and • Mobile technology access to counties. 	Complete /Obsolete
2012	Find ways to recruit and retain qualified children and youth caseworkers through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment efforts such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creation of materials to recruit qualified individuals; ○ Development of realistic job preview materials; and ○ Funding to support county recruiting efforts. • Retention efforts such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of training to address issues related to vicarious trauma; ○ Provision of services to address issues related to vicarious trauma; and ○ Training on how to manage stress and burnout and increase resiliency as a social worker in child welfare. 	Requires Action
2013	Ratify the new national Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) and encourage the contiguous states of New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and West Virginia to do the same	Complete /Obsolete

2013	Update the current tracking system to allow for electronic tracking of information	Complete /Obsolete
2013	Implement a monitoring system to ensure that information is available on the out-of-state children being placed in PA as well as PA children being placed in other states	Complete /Obsolete
2013	Implement a quality assurance system to verify whether visits occur within required time frames	Complete /Obsolete
2013	Make ICPC training available and mandated for Juvenile Court Judges and masters	Complete /Obsolete
2013	Invite CRP participation in any work groups formed by the department to address the ICPC.	Complete /Obsolete
2014	The panel is recommending that the OCYF regional offices audit at least one ICPC case during the annual inspection of the County Offices and private service providers. More than one ICPC case should be audited, if possible, especially in counties that border on other states. Additionally, the panel is requesting that the state report back on the audits with specific information relative to how long each case is taking and how many cases are taking longer than six months.	Complete /Obsolete
2014	The panel is recommending that the ICPC office, with the support of OCYF, advocate to the Human Services Committee of the General Assembly to ratify the updated Interstate Compact, which has not been changed in over 40 years. The panel understands that the new compact will not resolve all of the issues with the ICPC process, but it will be an improvement to the existing system.	Complete /Obsolete
2014	The panel is recommending that the ICPC Office flag any case in which the child is non IV-E eligible and alert the receiving state of the child's non-eligibility.	Complete /Obsolete
2014	The panel is recommending an increase in the staffing resources allocated to the ICPC Office due to the increase in ICPC cases over the past two years.	Complete /Obsolete
2014	The panel is recommending that when the Child Welfare Information Solution system is fully operational, it captures ICPC data and is able to produce reports on the timeliness of ICPC packets and disposition of cases.	Complete /Obsolete
2014	After reviewing last year's response, the panel is recommending that the state begin collecting data in 2015 regarding the following two items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many concerns the ICPC Office brings to the attention of the regional offices; and • How many times ICPC compliance appears on the monthly technical assistance meeting agenda. The panel is requesting to be provided a report of the above data each year. 	Complete /Obsolete
2014	The panel would like to participate if any work groups that are formed focusing on any part of the ICPC.	Complete /Obsolete
2015	Leverage resources from the national community – DHS should volunteer to be one of the 12 states participating in the rollout of the new ICPC database in 2016	Complete /Obsolete
2015	Ensure that the state Interstate Compact Unit has adequate staffing resources	Complete /Obsolete

2015	Advocate for the ratification for the new ICPC	Complete /Obsolete
2016	It is the panel's recommendation that the State develop and implement a database to keep track of placements for children in care when they move among counties in the state. This will help with finding permanent connections for the youth prior to the youth aging out of care.	Complete /Obsolete
2016	It is the panel's recommendation that the State create a system to ensure that the most recent foster/resource parents are notified of their past foster youth returning into care after the age of 18. This is contingent upon consent of the youth.	Watchlist
2017	Provide current statistics for a revision of former HB 453 (2015 Session): "Provision of financial assistance to foster and adopted youth...by assisting families with financing of post-secondary education." Specifically, the panel are requesting the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of youth in foster care in 2015 and 2016; • Number of youth who age out of care each year (average); • Percentage of individuals with a bachelor's degree who were unemployed in 2015 and 2016; • The percentage of those individuals who were unemployed with a bachelor's degree in 2015 and 2016 who relied on any form of public assistance; • Percentage of foster youth who graduate from high school; • Percentage of children not in foster care who graduate high school; • Percentage of high school graduates who enter college (not in foster care); • Percentage of foster youth in PA who enter college; • Number of youth between ages 16 and 21 who were discharged from the child welfare system and were adopted in 2015 and 2016; and • The number of youth in the child welfare system currently who are still waiting to be adopted. 	Complete /Obsolete
2017	Provide any additional data the panel may request for the purpose of drafting proposed legislation to help youth with driver's license and insurance issues.	Complete /Obsolete
2018	The NE CRP recommends that DHS authorize funding for regional resource workers within county IL programs across the state. The function of these roles will be to assist older youth with completing and submitting applications for post-secondary education, including college and trade/technical schools, by providing support and guidance to IL workers assisting older youth in these tasks. Another goal of this position would be to assist older youth in applying for financial aid.	Complete /Obsolete
2018	The panel understands that counties have the ability to apply for additional funds to support the work of assisting older youth with postsecondary applications and financial aid via their Needs Based Budget. The panel requests that DHS inform counties of this opportunity.	Complete /Obsolete

2018	The NE CRP recommends that DHS include initiating the process to obtain a driver's license at least six months prior to transitioning out of care to youths' transition plans, when appropriate.	Complete /Obsolete
2019	The Department should adopt the National Model Licensing Standards for resource parents.	Watchlist
2019	<p>The Department should update 55 Pa Code §3700.62(b), as it relates to communicable diseases. Section 3700.62(b) currently states, "Foster parents shall pass an initial medical appraisal by a licensed physician prior to being approved. The appraisal must establish that the foster parents are physically able to care for children and are free from communicable disease."</p> <p>Due to the advancement in medical treatments since 1982, the panel recommends that applicants with communicable diseases should have the opportunity to be approved after obtaining verification from a medical physician that their disease is being appropriately treated without going through a waiver process.</p>	Watchlist
2019	<p>The Department should update 55 Pa Code §3700.64(a)(2) as it relates to obtaining psychological evaluations for resource parent applicants. Section 3700.64(a)(2) currently states, "The [Foster Family Care Agency (FFCA)] shall consider the following when assessing the ability of applicants for approval as foster parents... A demonstrated stable mental and emotional adjustment. If there is a question regarding the mental or emotional stability of a family member that might have a negative effect on a foster child, the FFCA shall require a psychological evaluation of that person before approving the foster family home."</p> <p>The panel is concerned that this wording leaves too many questions regarding when a psychological evaluation should be required and how it should be used. It is recommended that more guidance be provided to FFCAs and provider agencies regarding when a psychological evaluation should be required and how that evaluation should be used in approval or denial of an applicant.</p>	Watchlist
2019	<p>In addition to adopting the National Model Licensing Standards, the following enhancements should be made to the training requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All PA resource parents shall participate in a minimum of 27 hours of pre-service training to include the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Orientation; ○ Mandated Reporter Training; ○ PA's Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standards; ○ First Aid/CPR; ○ Trauma 101; ○ Impact of Trauma (problems that lead to family breakdown, reactions of children upon separation), Drug and Alcohol, and Mental Health; ○ Managing Behaviors & Discipline; ○ Attachment & Development; and ○ Planning for Change, Community Resources, and Natural Supports. 	Watchlist

	All PA resource parents shall participate in 12 hours of training annually.	
2020	<p>Recommendation 1: Pennsylvania should fund CASA programs as outlined in Governor Wolf's original budget in the amount of \$1.345 million (February 2020).</p> <p>Recommendation 2: DHS should develop a task force inclusive of juvenile court judges, OCYF, Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators (PCYA), the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC), and PA CASA to begin collaboration for the development of new CASA programs as well as the support of existing CASA programs. PA CASA should also have a seat at the Statewide Dependency Roundtable.</p> <p>Recommendation 3: DHS should coordinate with PA CASA to develop a CASA data collection system, which should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of youth assigned a CASA; • The number of youth who qualify for a CASA but one isn't available; • Types of cases CASAs are assigned; • The point during the placement when a CASA was assigned (the adjudication hearing, a permanency review hearing, after a specific number of months in care, etc.); and • Placement data specific to youth who are assigned a CASA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The number of months in care; ○ The average length of stay; and ○ Rate of reentry into care. 	Requires Action
2021	Currently, each CCYA collects and reports data on parent substance abuse differently, which led the NE CRP members to have difficulty interpreting the data. The NE CRP recommends OCYF provide more clarity to CCYAs on how to collect and report AFCARS data on parental/caregiver substance abuse and child removal and abuse in a uniform fashion.	Watchlist
2021	Currently, there is no formal script for ChildLine or CCYA workers receiving child abuse referrals to ask questions about substance abuse in the household. The NE CRP recommends standardized, nonjudgmental wording for questions and clear training for ChildLine and CCYA staff that receive child abuse referrals about substance abuse. This script and training should be written by individuals with expertise in substance abuse and should consider whether the substance abuse negatively affects the welfare and/or safety of the child(ren).	Requires Action
2021	The NC CRP believes that the evidence-based programs that OCYF has chosen to include in their five-year prevention plan do not address parental/caregiver substance abuse. The panel recommends that OCYF identify and implement evidence-based programs that support parents/caregivers with substance abuse regarding treatment and rehabilitation.	Complete /Obsolete
2021	The panel recommends the Commonwealth develop a more integrated process for delivering non-biased services for families, including mental	Requires Action

	health, substance abuse recovery, and children and youth services. Counties should employ or contract drug and alcohol specialists to work within CCYAs so that they can work directly with parents and caregivers throughout their treatment and recovery. Mental health and drug and alcohol training should be included in the Foundations training for all new caseworkers.	
2022	The panel recommends the state be proactive with CQI by offering administrative and financial support for a pilot program through which interested counties could implement the SBC model, which directly addresses many of the State's Areas Needing Improvement.	Watchlist
2022	The panel recommends that Pennsylvania strengthen policy and procedure to either create or enrich quality training programs through the CWRC as they exist with the Solution-Based Casework (SBC) practice model. Specifically, the panel recommends that the state reinstate the previous Interactional Skills training for all caseworkers, as this training directly addresses many characteristics of the SBC model.	Complete /Obsolete

Attachment B
Southwest CRP's Survey

Improving Permanency Outcomes in Pennsylvania

In 2023, the Southwest Citizen Review Panel has decided to focus its work on improving permanency outcomes in Pennsylvania. While the panel has requested data from the state regarding adoptions and permanent legal custodian (PLC) agreements, there is a gap in the data that is collected regarding disruptions or failed adoptions and PLCs. Therefore, the panel is requesting your help to determine whether counties are tracking data on disrupted permanency arrangements, and if you are experiencing any issues related to failed or disrupted adoptions and/or PLCs. Based on the answers provided in this survey, the panel may reach out to some counties for more detailed information regarding their experiences. The survey will take approximately 6 minutes to complete.

Demographic Information:

1. County:
2. Name and Title:
3. Email Address:
4. Length of Time in this Position:

Survey Questions:

5. Number of adoptions finalized in your county between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2022:
6. Did your county experience any disrupted or failed adoption between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2022?
A child who was previously adopted from the child welfare/foster care system. After finalization, the child is returned to foster care (disruption) and/or the adoptive family has little or no involvement with the child and they are not actively working toward reunification (failed).
7. Number of Disrupted/Failed Adoptions between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2022:
8. Number of Permanent Legal Custodianships (PLC) finalized in your county between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2022:
 - a. For this survey's purposes, PLC agreements can be subsidized or unsubsidized.
9. Did your county experience any disrupted or failed PLC agreements between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2022?
A child who was previously placed in a Permanency Legal Custodian arrangement from the child welfare/foster care system. After finalization, the child is returned to foster care and the Legal Custodian family has little or no involvement with the child and they are not actively working toward reunification.)
10. Number of Disrupted/Failed PLCs between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2022:
11. Do you think adoption/PLC disruptions and failures are an issue in your county? Please explain your answer.

Attachment C
Southwest CRP's Survey Results

County:	Number of adoptions finalized in your county between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022;	Did your county experience any disrupted or failed adoption between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022?	Number of Disrupted/Failed Adoptions between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022;	Number of Permanent Legal Custodianships (PLC) finalized in your county between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022;	Did your county experience any disrupted or failed PLC agreements between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022?	Number of Disrupted/Failed PLC between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022;	Do you think adoption/PLC disruptions and failures are an issue in your county?
Mifflin	81	No	0	9	Yes	1	no-we have more of an issue of other counties kids getting adopted here and then having to remove those kids from their adoptive homes
Bedford	42	No	0	8	No	0	No. Within this time period, there were none.
Huntingdon	89	Yes	3	14	Yes	3	No, I believe that the disruptions are involving a few certain families and child specific situations.
Lycoming	51	No	0	18	No	0	Not really.
Perry	5	Yes	6	15	No	0	Most of the disrupted adoption placements that we see are with children who were adopted thru other counties. Of all the failed adoptions, none of the parents are willingly or able to reunite with the child. I think adoption disruptions are an issue across the state.
Juniata	35	No	0	8	Yes	1	No, We really haven't had any. The only disrupted PLC was due to a death of a PLC caregiver.
Cambria	129	Yes	3	52	Yes	5	Cambria County does not seem to have a major issue with our disruptions as reflected in our numbers. However, more, different or quicker available services (respite services) seem to be needed for SPLC or adoption families for youth when they become adolescents. Our county is a big supporter of family finding and always want to provide the most permanent option, but when adoption is ruled out and SPLC (or relative placement) becomes the more appropriate permanency option when adolescent issues come up disruptions seem to come back to our office as neglect reports.
Franklin	85	Yes	2	28	No	0	I don't believe that PLC disruptions are an issue in our county as there were 0 in a 5 year period of time. In the last 5 years, there have only been 2 adoption disruptions. Both of these disruptions were children that were finalized by another county and the family resided in Franklin County. We attempt to provide the family with support and information about Post Permanency Services; however, efforts were unsuccessful.
Centre	77	Yes	1-adoption finalized in Centre County, was facilitated by another County who had custody of child	9	Yes	1	Yes, but the majority of what we are dealing with are not the adoptions or PLC that are completed by our county. We currently have 6 children/youth in placement who are in care as the result of disrupted adoption or PLC from other counties in PA or other states. We become involved after a crisis, or many, have ensued and the adoptive or custodial family is no longer willing to be a resource for the child/youth. Our disrupted PLC occurred in another county, resulting another county taking custody of the child.

County:	Number of adoptions finalized in your county between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022:	Did your county experience any disrupted or failed adoption between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022?	Number of Disrupted/Failed Adoptions between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022:	Number of Permanent Legal Custodianships (PLC) finalized in your county between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022:	Did your county experience any disrupted or failed PLC agreements between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022?	Number of Disrupted/Failed PLC between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022:	Do you think adoption/PLC disruptions and failures are an issue in your county?
Washington	321	Yes	15	116	Yes	5	No, I think that it is a system-wide issue that is complicated. Many of the children that are adopted/PLCed have been through significant trauma that can lead to mental health and/or behavioral issues that can cause conflict the permanency resources weren't expecting or able to hand, leading to re-entry into the system.
Indiana County	50	Yes	3	28	No	0	No
Fayette	149	Yes	We do not track this at this time.		55 Yes	We don't track at this time.	Any failed permanency placement is an issue. We do see an increase of youth that are placed as young children however as they age the problems become too much for the parents and they are then returned to the agency. Many of these placements are a result of mental health issues of the child and the parents' inability to obtain needed supports and services.
Allegheny	1031	Yes	11	878	Yes	40	No. Only 1% of adoptions and 5% of PLCs disrupt, both are far below the national average.
Beaver	47	Yes	2	9	Yes	2	Yes. We do not specifically track this number, but it has been a recurring issue in our county. Many of the disruptions do not occur until years after the adoption when the youth enter adolescence, and most are arrangements that were developed outside of our county. Some of them are neighboring counties, but we are also working with disrupted adoptions from North Dakota and Alabama. Currently, 33% of the youth in court ordered care are permanency disruptions (all but 1 originated outside of our county). When these disruptions occur, these youth also have significant needs. Last fiscal year 38% of the youth that were in a congregate care setting, and currently 60% of the youth in congregate care settings, had been disrupted permanency placements. We do not have numbers, but we are also involved with numerous children who are placed in mental health facilities that were previously adopted. These youth often come into child welfare custody when the mental health system feels they can no longer meet their needs, yet their placements refuse to allow them home because they feel like they still are not safe to be returned home. I would love to talk about this in more depth to help further address this need.
Snyder	8	Yes	1	4	No	0	Adoption failure is an issue in our County and these are originating from the adoption of children to families who are residents of Snyder County and or move to Snyder County where the adoptions are performed by other Counties and other states. These failures occur in children and families who were adopted as young children and are presenting with intensive behavioral health issues by mid-adolescence. Parents feel unsafe, unprepared, and unable to handle these complex behaviors. Families report that post-permanency services are useless to them and that when they have reached out for Medicaid-funded behavioral health services there are waitlists months into the future. Snyder County has often not been informed of any needs until the parent refuses to pick the child up at the hospital or wants the child sent to an RTF level of care. Other CCYAs are reporting the same.
Clinton	21	No	0	22	Yes	5	Not typically.
Fulton	3	Yes	1	0	No	0	Fulton County experienced one disruption in this time period. I would say it is not an issue at this time.
Northumberland	162	Yes	6	70	Yes	1	Yes

County:	Number of adoptions finalized in your county between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022:	Did your county experience any disrupted or failed adoption between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022?	Number of Disrupted/Failed Adoptions between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022:	Number of Permanent Legal Custodianships (PLC) finalized in your county between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022:	Did your county experience any disrupted or failed PLC agreements between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022?	Number of Disrupted/Failed PLC between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2022:	Do you think adoption/PLC disruptions and failures are an issue in your county?
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Montour	8	Yes	1	2	No	0	<p>I think that disruptions and failures are an issue even if it is just one case. Even one case can be extremely expensive and overwhelming for a small staff/county, let alone the trauma that is inflicted upon that child/youth learning that they are no longer wanted.</p> <p>I feel that more pre and post adoption services could be beneficial in preventing disruptions and failures. Services to assist with family cohesion should be provided to pre-adoptive families as a requirement of adoption and could be provided from the foster care agency and should occur post adoption annually. Foster care agencies pour all these trainings into foster parents prior to fostering, but after adoption there is no requirement. We have been sending out information during our annual contract renewals regarding any new services that become available and reminding parents of post adoption SWAN services.</p> <p>The disrupted adoption did not originate in our county, and we are aware of several other youth that were prior adoptions from other counties that could result in disruption at any time. Many of these youth are involved with mental health and that is usually how they are referred to us when the parents refuse to pick up the child. We end up being put into a very reactive position rather than preventative. For disrupted adoptions I feel that originating counties could be more helpful in providing information that is requested from the current county of residence, especially in cases where the adoptive parent has become incapacitated and unable to provide history.</p> <p>I don't feel that mental health puts enough services in place to prevent crisis, during a crisis, and after. I feel like any time a child or youth comes in for any kind of assessment that the family should be referred for some type of service to help give parents the tools to help their family.</p> <p>While a child is in a mental health facility, I feel that parents should be referred to family counseling with the child at the placement, that keeps the parents engaged and involved. And that they are given tools to prepare for the child's discharge and that discharge planning with services in the home/community should be put into place before that child ever leaves the facility. But this does not happen and then we are faced with a crisis.</p>
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