

# Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panels' 2022 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.



2022 Annual Report Table of Contents

Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panels' 2022 Annual Report ..... 1  
Letter from the Deputy Secretary .....3  
Pennsylvania Introduction .....4  
Pennsylvania and the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act .....6  
Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panel Overview .....7  
Northeast Citizen Review Panel Report and Recommendations .....8  
South Central Citizen Review Panel Report and Recommendations .....14  
Southwest Citizen Review Panel Report and Recommendations .....19  
Statewide Youth Advisory Board Report and Recommendations .....23  
Attachment A .....29

**Letter from the Deputy Secretary**



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

May , 2023

Dear Citizens,

Thank you for taking a moment to read the Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panels' 2022 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 2022 CRP Annual Report contains an update on the CRPs' work throughout 2022 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 wants to specifically acknowledge the South Central Panel for their dedication and thank the panel for their hard work over the last 12 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 supports 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.

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.

To keep the Council informed of the work that the CRPs have focused on, the OCYF/CRP Liaison reviewed the 2022 CRP Recommendations with the Council on February 1, 2023.

## **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 the following:

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 to make recommendations for statewide improvements. To end 2022, there were three regional CRPs representing the Commonwealth: Northeast, South Central, and Southwest. It is vital that the CRPs be committed to a membership that welcomes and embraces equity and diversity.

There was 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.

The current rotation began by establishing a Southeast regional panel to include diverse representation from members that live and work in our largest and most diverse population center. Recruitment efforts for the Southeast panel resulted in 16 applications representing all six counties in the region. After the required screening and selection process, 12 applicants were selected to represent the Southeast region beginning in January 2023. As the new panel was created, the longest operating panel (South Central) wrapped up its current work in December 2022.

Over the course of 2023 and 2024, new panels will be established in the North Central and Northwest regions, while work in the Northeast and Southwest panels will adjourn. Each new panel will remain in operation for a period of five years, until the cycle of re-establishing panels in the South Central, Northeast, and Southwest 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.

**2022 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:**

When determining their focus area for the current term the NE CRP reviewed the [2017 Child and Family Service Reviews Final Report](#) (CFSR Final Report). The panel’s attention was drawn to areas in which Pennsylvania did not meet federal standards.

Ensuing discussions helped narrow the panel’s focus to an interest in identifying a practice model that might assist the Pennsylvania system in strengthening areas that had been identified in the CFSR Final Report as ‘in need of improvement’. Specifically, these areas were, “challenges with frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with both parents, involvement of parents in case planning, and assessing parents’ needs and providing services” (page 5, CFSR Final Report). The report acknowledged Pennsylvania’s established engagement strategies but noted that case reviews showed a lack of adherence to the strategies, leading to less effective family engagement (page 5, CFSR Final Report). “In the statewide assessment, Pennsylvania presented data showing that sufficient parental involvement in case planning occurred in less than half of the cases reviewed” (page 16, CFSR Final Report).

The panel also noted that many of Pennsylvania’s Areas Needing Improvement were directly linked to partnerships with support services and partnerships with the families themselves:

- Safety Outcome 2 / Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal of Re-Entry into Foster Care (page 7);
- Well-Being Outcome 1: / Sub-Item 12B: Needs Assessment and Services to Parents (page 11); and
- Well-Being Outcome 1 / Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning (page 12).



[Pennsylvania's 2020-2024 Child and Family Service Plan](#) also noted the state's dedication to CQI stating, "Curriculum and related training materials over the next five years and beyond will be continuously reviewed and updated as needed, as laws and regulations are enacted, workforce training needs arise, and as best practices evolve" (page 135).

In January 2022, the panel began researching and reviewing potential practice models. The panel eventually chose to focus on [Solution-Based Casework](#) (SBC) as a possible alternative to Pennsylvania's current casework practices. SBC is an evidence-informed casework practice model that prioritizes working in partnership with families, focuses on pragmatic solutions to difficult situations, and notes as well as celebrates change/improvement.

### **Summary of Work Completed:**

During the past year, the panel researched various aspects of the SBC model. It employed a literature search with the results being reviewed by the panel leadership. Summaries, as well as key writings, were chosen for dispersal to the panel members for review. Content was discussed during panel meetings. Information concerning SBCs adoption and utilization in key states was also reviewed and discussed. Key documents were also obtained from the SBC website.

The panel had the opportunity to meet with a retired SBC model trainer for the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, and former NE CRP panel member. This lengthy meeting consisted of an informative presentation, followed by an intensive Q and A covering topics such as the difficulties inherent in implementing the model and how those issues can be eliminated or minimized. Additionally, the group identified additional questions that were subsequently submitted to in writing and to which the presenter responded.

### Overview of SBC:

SBC is a child welfare practice model based on three theoretical foundations, (1) family life cycle theory; (2) relapse prevention/Cognitive Behavioral Therapy theory; and (3) solution-focused family therapy. Together, these theoretical foundations translate to the following assumptions of casework:

- That full partnership with the family is a critical and vital goal for each and every case;
- That the partnership of protection should focus on the patterns of everyday life of the family; and
- That solutions should target the prevention skills needed to reduce the risk in those everyday life situations.

A thorough SBC assessment utilizes the family life cycle to frame and locate the problem in the difficult developmental challenges that create safety threats to the family in their everyday life. SBC case planning then helps organize those challenges into a plan of action the whole family can work on, as well as plans for individuals within the family to work on so that the family challenges improve. The plans of action do not measure service compliance but are developed to be behaviorally specific to target needed skills in critical risk areas that can be demonstrated, documented, and celebrated. These plans must be developed by the family, provider, and caseworker.

### Positive Takeaways:

SBC is a holistic approach to casework that looks at the entire environment around the child and works to align all stakeholders to improve safety, permanency, and well-being. The panel is attracted

by the SBC focus on family engagement, which allows families to influence the treatment setting and determine a structure that embraces their culture and traditions.

The SBC model is flexible enough to be piloted in a variety of county sizes and structures. This has been shown to work in state-based systems as well as county-based systems and has been effective in multiple formats.

Its tenets are aligned with the current Foundations training, so the transfer of learning for caseworkers should be seamless. Through SBC, caseworkers would improve communication and relationships with clients by developing a strength-based, solution-focused interactive approach that would decrease power struggles.

#### Concerns/Drawbacks:

Dr. Dana N. Christensen and his team are the sole authorized source for SBC training and implementation. Pennsylvania would need to contract with Dr. Christensen to modify/adapt the model to Pennsylvania practice requirements/regulations.

While SBC is listed on the [California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#) as a “promising research evidence” program, it is listed on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse as “does not currently meet criteria”. Therefore, Pennsylvania would not be able to utilize Family First prevention funding to support implementation.

Successful implementation requires the support and cooperation of the entire agency. With current staffing shortages, caseworkers and supervisors may consider this program one more responsibility and not accept SBC as a positive program change. SBC also requires extensive supervision responsibilities and may necessitate cultural changes within county agencies.

The panel is aware that SBC was presented to county administrators as a possible casework practice model several years ago, and it was rejected in favor of the current [practice model](#) due to funding and caseload concern.

#### Conclusion:

The panel is confident that SBC is a viable solution for the state of Pennsylvania’s Child Welfare concerns for engagement of families and is hopeful that the following recommendations will allow the state to implement solutions to the CFSR’s identified areas of improvement.

#### Key activities in 2022:

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

- The CRP National Conference hosted by California;
- The National CRP community’s June meeting with the CRP Coordinator and panel members from around the country;
- The Child Welfare Virtual Expo in September; and
- The Spring and Fall All-Panel Meetings and engaged in strategic planning for their focus areas with OCYF.

**Northeast Citizen Review Panel Recommendations for 2022:**Recommendation 1:

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.

OCYF's Response to Recommendation 1:

DHS appreciates the time the members of the Northeast CRP took in researching this topic area. Through outreach and collaboration with the counties, Pennsylvania has started the steps necessary to move towards the implementation of a Universal Assessment Tool (UAT). The UAT would end the use of the current Safety and Risk Assessment and promote a more holistic look at a family involved with the CCYA, the family's unique challenges, and what services could be most beneficial. Use of the UAT will create opportunities for better engagement and allow for families to have higher quality, ongoing evaluations with the potential to reduce the amount of time a family is involved with the child welfare system.

A Sponsor Team has been created to develop a strategic plan surrounding the development and execution of the UAT. The Sponsor Team is tasked with communicating with key stakeholders to understand the motivation and purpose of the UAT. An Implementation Team was also created and has goals related to assuring the alignment of the UAT process with other PA initiatives and priorities, providing consultation, and decision making to assure timely and successful statewide implementation. It is critical that a CQI process be developed and maintained to assure fidelity of the UAT, measure intended outcomes for children, youth and families, and address improvements needed.

Pennsylvania takes the CQI process very serious and is committed to improving the process of helping children and families served by Pennsylvania's child welfare system. With the current work and effort already dedicated to the UAT, Pennsylvania's plan is to focus on the implementation of the UAT; however, CCYAs are welcome to implement additional models and practices with the support of Needs Based Plan and Budget (NBPB) funding. Currently, SBC is listed on the California Evidence Based Clearinghouse as having promising research evidence. CCYAs who are interested in SBC can request funding to support this model through the Special Grants portion of the annual NBPB process and receive a 95% match in state dollars to assist with the program.

Recommendation 2:

The panel recommends that Pennsylvania strengthen policy and procedure to either create or enrich quality training programs through the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) as they exist with the 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.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 2:

DHS, along with the CWRC, continues to monitor and assess the strengths and needs of the Pennsylvania child welfare workforce. Both entities work to ensure that the competences of child welfare remain focused on safety, permanency, and well-being.

The Interactional Skill Model is a helping-oriented model and works in step to allow the caseworkers to meet the needs of the children and families involved with the child welfare system. The Interactional Skill Model promotes caseworkers' understanding their own personal beliefs and needs, identifying the needs and concerns of the family, diagnosing the steps needed to meet the needs of the family, initiating and monitoring the work needed to progress the family, and connecting the work to successful outcomes.

The current Foundations and Foundations of Leadership curriculum is delivered through a combination of team-based learning and simulation training, in conjunction with online coursework, in person lectures, and field work which promotes many of the same skills (engagement, teaming, planning, implementation, monitoring, professionalism, cultural awareness and responsiveness and advocacy) as the Interactional Skill Model. By using team-based learning activities, the session participants learn how to solve real world problems in a safe learning environment while collaborating in a team format. In simulation training, participants are able to practice skills in realistic scenarios and settings. DHS believes by using the Foundations curriculum, participants gain fundamental knowledge and skills as well as the abilities needed to achieve the desired outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being for the youth in Pennsylvania.

On an ongoing basis, DHS and CWRC collaborate with CCYAs to discuss and identify the necessary training and technical assistance needs to best support CCYAs. Those conversations are what has allowed CWRC to develop the current curriculum and continuing education opportunities for the CCYAs. DHS looks forward to continuing to building, educating, and supporting the child welfare workforce.

#### **Northeast Panel Proposed Focus Area/Activities for 2023:**

1. After Action Review of the Northeast Panel's work to date; and
2. Quality Rating System for casework based off PA's Keystone STARS initiative.

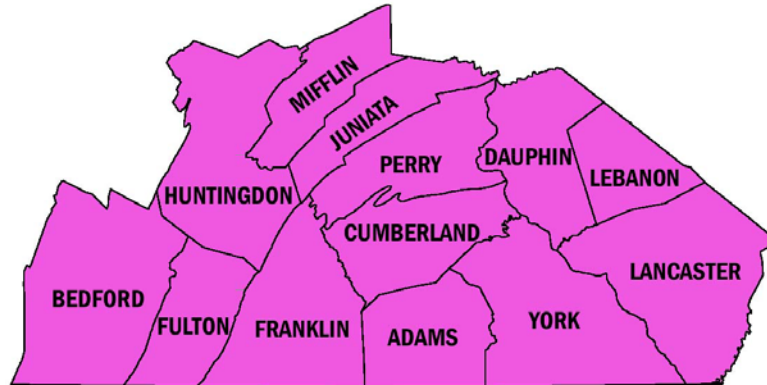
---

#### **Northeast Citizen Review Panel Current Members**

Roberta Daniels – Wyoming  
Marshall Davis – Wyoming  
Kathleen Donson – Pike  
Shelly Fairclough-Gumbs – Lehigh  
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>.

**2022 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report**  
**South Central Citizen Review Panel Report and Recommendations**



**Introduction:**

The South Central (SC) CRP serves 13 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. The SC 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 alignment with DHS' plan to rotate panels throughout the state, the SC Panel ended its term of service in December 2022. With that in mind, the panel spent 2022 reviewing all the CRP recommendations issued from 2010 – present. The rationale for this focus area was two-fold:

- Ensure that recommendations are being addressed and share thoughts on how to improve CRPs in the future; and
- Ensure that all the work that has been conducted in the past is memorialized.

**Summary of Work Completed:**

In January 2022, the panel received a comprehensive spreadsheet addressing all areas of CRP focus since 2010, including all recommendations and responses from DHS. The data was examined through panel discussion and clarity was sought relating to the historical significance of the recommendations and responses or sometimes lack of responses in the earlier years. Once these discussions were completed, the panel categorized the data in very broad themes ([Attachment A](#)). All the data was examined through the lens of what had been completed, what was in progress, and what was not addressed based on documentation. Of importance to the panel was the identification of gaps in work that could be completed through the CRP process. The panel conceptualized strengths of panel and OCYF collaboration through the years. The data then was categorized in the final three broad categories:

- Best practices - Examples: Caseload reductions, services to families (Drug and Alcohol/Mental Health);
- County operations - Examples: Staffing, retention, recruitment
- Community services/Outreach - Examples: Health services, support for resource parents

The panel then compiled the data for a report to OCYF that was presented at the Fall All-Panel meeting. Several recommendations were made to OCYF. The panel strongly recommended all future

panels and OCYF address components of diversity, equity, and inclusion in work to be accomplished for the state.

#### Key activities in 2022:

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

- The CRP National Conference hosted by California;
- The National CRP community's June meeting with the CRP Coordinator and panel members from around the country;
- The Child Welfare Virtual Expo in September; and
- The Spring and Fall All-Panel Meetings and engaged in strategic planning for their focus areas with OCYF.

#### **South Central Citizen Review Panel Recommendations for 2022:**

##### Recommendation 1: Increased accountability of OCYF to ensure CRP recommendations are being addressed.

The SC Panel recognizes the efforts of all the panels and the collaborative work with OCYF. There were 125 recommendations made over the past 12 years. Efforts were made to support the panel work through the years, including diverse voices with varying experience of panel members included in many recommendations. The panels included representation from three different regions: Northeast, Southwest, and South Central as well as the YAB. The various meetings between OCYF and panel members supported ongoing communication.

Analysis of the panel data included themes through the years. The panel recommends a further post-data gathering evaluation in the areas of best practice, county operations, and community services/outreach.

##### OCYF Response to Recommendation 1:

DHS thanks the panel for reviewing this data and bringing the accomplishments of the panels to the forefront while also recognizing areas where system improvements could be made. Of the 125 panel recommendations in the last 12 years, it was noted by the panel that DHS has implemented 49 recommendations and currently have 54 recommendations that are in the process of being implemented. DHS believes of the 22 recommendations that the panel noted as being unchanged, several of them are in the process of being implemented or have been initiated and remain an ongoing effort. DHS is very thankful for the work and recommendations of the CRPs. The recommendations from the panels have improved community services and outreach collaboration; enhanced and expanded Independent Living Services; improved Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children tracking, assessment, and monitoring; and helped guide DHS in creating steps necessary to build trauma informed practices. It is noted that 22 of the recommendations have not produced results or change within DHS at this time. It is critical to understand that while DHS cannot make every recommendation a priority when it is received, an ongoing review and evaluation of all recommendations is conducted to ensure Pennsylvania's child welfare system remains focused on the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families.

It is important to note that change is often multi-systematic, therefore when a decision is made to implement new child welfare practices, implementation may take several years while the phases of change are thoroughly planned and executed. When looking to identify priority projects, OCYF must share the focus of their work between CRP recommendations, legislative changes, changes to case law, priorities of the Governor's Administration, etc.

Recommendation 2: OCYF assumes a proactive approach to topics that may not be on the state's immediate agenda and recognizes the unique needs of the counties.

There continues to be a disconnect between OCYF and the county experience that is quite wide. Through review of the data (themes) and the panel members' shared experience, this gap has significant impacts on child and family practice. Some examples include work by panels to address the need for consistent trauma training and application of learned concepts for all child welfare staff, services directed toward undocumented youth, and the need for comprehensive attention for medical services for children. It would be important for the panels and OCYF to evaluate power differentials that exist between various child welfare constituents to support change in practice versus a compliance mindset.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 2:

DHS is open to collaborating with the CCYAs and other child welfare agencies. Each CCYA is assigned a Human Service Program Representative 1 and a Human Service Program Representative 2 from their assigned OCYF Regional Office. Those two staff, along with the Regional Director are available to the CCYAs for guidance, clarifications, questions, or concerns.

Many things that DHS implements are the direct result of state or federal laws. When new legislation is introduced at the federal and state level, legislation may move at a fast rate and be effective before DHS is aware or can prepare for the implementation of the new law. Oftentimes this proves to be a challenge for DHS. When change and new policies or procedures are necessary, DHS communicates the new requirements out to those that are impacted by the change and typically sends guidance on how to implement the change in the best possible manner. DHS collaborates with agencies to determine the most efficient manner to implement the new practice and roll-out of new initiatives when the law allows for flexibility.

The Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrator's Conference (PCYA) is held three times a year and allows DHS staff to provide information to CCYA administrative staff. CCYAs are encouraged to submit questions prior to the meeting to allow DHS to bring specific topics of interest to the meeting for discussion. DHS offers 'Policy Days' to help support policy changes. Additionally, there have been a significant number of recently released special transmittals, policies, bulletins, and other written guidance finalized and provided to the CCYAs and providers for support.

In late 2022, DHS (along with other state agencies) announced free trauma training, using a trauma informed approach, that will help build sustainability within child welfare organizations. These trainings build trauma skillsets, enhance and enrich professionals' knowledge and skills, and create a shared foundation and philosophy of information, concepts, approaches, principles, and skills which raise overall quality, professionalism, and predictability of those who serve others.



Recommendation 3: CRPs and OCYF integrate concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their decision-making processes at all levels of child welfare practice in Pennsylvania.

The data that the panel examined lacked information relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In response to the diverse needs of families and the child welfare workforce, it is imperative that child-serving institutions empower their constituents to examine aspects of diversity. Panels are tasked to interact with facets of practice that have impact on stronger outcomes for children and families and collaborate as system partners to ensure that diverse voices are represented.

The panel recognized that directed attention should focus on areas of disproportionality, policy consideration, assessment considerations in practice, service delivery and contracting processes, and hiring and staffing. It is recognized that these efforts will entail ongoing training and support for all child welfare constituents.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 3:

DHS is committed to continuous quality improvement and the use of data driven decision-making. DHS is a large employer within the Commonwealth and an active participant in the fight against racism and its impacts. DHS focuses on racism and equity through both the public facing work as well as through its employees.

In Pennsylvania, the child welfare system is state supervised, county administered. DHS is dedicated to partnering with counties to address racial disparities. DHS has a long-standing partnership with CWRC to ensure that the child welfare professionals working in the Commonwealth have the training and resources necessary to better understand how structural inequalities, racism, and injustice can affect them as both employees and child welfare professionals.

In order to take steps to respond to the challenges individuals face recognizing their own implicit bias and to confront all forms of systemic racism, harassment, and discrimination, the Diversity Taskforce was created. The Diversity Taskforce is comprised of child welfare professionals and community members who are committed to issues of human diversity in child welfare. The Task Force has been an integral part of the CWRC by providing support to child welfare professionals towards the goal of building cultural competence in training and practice. For additional information about the Diversity Task Force, visit [University of Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center - Diversity Task Force](#) .

As part of the ongoing commitment to equity, the 2021 Annual Child Abuse Report was updated to include race/ethnicity metrics for the victims and perpetrators listed on Substantiated reports of child abuse, including Substantiated Fatalities and Near Fatalities. DHS will continue to review the content of the Annual Child Abuse Report to determine other ways in which available race and ethnicity data may be further incorporated into future versions of the report. DHS is committed to continuing to analyze the quality and content of this data in order to make decisions in the best interest of children and families in Pennsylvania.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are high priority areas for DHS and will continue to be a focus area. As part of the DHS racial equity initiative, OCYF convened the Strengthening Equity Workgroup (SEW). SEW is represented by a diverse group of staff from across all bureaus within the program office. The SEW was formed to review policies and practices to identify opportunities to reduce racial disparities and improve outcomes for children and youth of all backgrounds and ensure racial equity considerations. Some of the key areas of focus proposed by the group include increasing culturally relevant prevention efforts, building partnerships and opportunities within the community, and increasing cultural competency for responding to crises.

---

### **South Central Citizen Review Panel Members**

Erich Batra – Lebanon County  
Jessica Crouse – Franklin County  
Kait Gillis – Cumberland County  
Kurt Miller – Lancaster County  
Lisa Kennedy – York County  
Lynn Carson – Dauphin County  
Robin Nickel – Cumberland County  
Robin White – Mifflin County  
Wendy Hoverter – Cumberland County  
Whitney Barbusca – Lancaster County

Biographies for each member can be found on the CRP website at the following link: [South Central Citizen Review Panel](#).

**2022 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:**

The SW panel originally chose Complex Case Planning in February 2020. After gathering data, the group was made aware that DHS had a [Complex Case Planning for Children and Youth Under Age 21](#) Bulletin (14-Bul-110) in the draft stages. The Bulletin was officially issued in October of 2020. The Bulletin was the only resource for counties at that point for implementation of the process. The group determined that a physical Implementation Guide would be essential in streamlining the process across the state. The panel then began work on an Implementation Guide and in the first year developed an outline, including notes and questions that the panel requested feedback on from the DHS Complex Case Steering Team (Steering Team) that had already been developed. From April 2021 to April 2022, the panel had been sharing the guide and met with the Steering Team several times for discussion and collaboration.

**Summary of Work Completed:**

In August 2021, the SW CRP was notified that the Steering Team was planning to issue another update/revision to the Complex Case Planning Bulletin, after receiving considerable feedback from counties, the SW CRP, and other stakeholders. When the SW CRP was notified, it provided the Steering Team with an updated draft of the Implementation Guide by sharing possible ideas to consider that may be helpful to include during the process of rewriting the bulletin.

During the Fall All-Panel meeting, the collaboration between the SW CRP and the Steering Team continued. The Steering Team provided feedback to the SW CRP on the draft Implementation Guide, while once again engaged in a meaningful and significant discussion regarding the panel's next steps. The SW CRP proposed that instead of issuing recommendations in 2021, the panel would

continue to work on finalizing the Implementation Guide. The SW CRP did continue collaborating with the Steering Team to ensure that the Implementation Guide aligns with the Complex Case Planning Bulletin re-write.

Prior to the Spring All-Panel Meeting, the Steering Team shared their vision of the updated bulletin, with a comprehensive resource section with the panel. The panel had an opportunity to review that information and have a detailed discussion with the Steering Team to ask questions to ensure the following information would be included:

- The use of a “Trauma-Informed” approach to handling complex cases. The Steering Team talked about some aspects of “trauma-informed” or “trauma-focused,” but the panel didn’t hear any details about whether a “trauma-informed” approach would be used;
- The need for or recommendation to utilize a “comprehensive/universal treatment plan” that would meet the needs of all departments involved in a complex case team. As the Steering Team is aware, Children and Youth Services, Mental Health, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Drug and Alcohol, etc., all use different formats for treatment/service planning. The panel recommends providing a template for a universal treatment plan that will help bring the different departments together and help them understand the needs of each department; and
- Older Youth Transition Planning: The Steering Team talked about the need for enhancing discharge and transition planning, but the panel wants to make sure there will be a section that focuses on the needs of older youth transitioning from youth treatment to adult treatment and from placement to out-of-placement.

At the All-Panel meeting, the panel met with the Steering Team and discussed the panel’s decision to stop work on the current Implementation Guide. The panel acknowledged that continuing the Implementation Guide would be a duplication of work because all of the missing pieces will be included in the updated bulletin. The panel did ask to continue as consultants with the Steering Team to provide feedback as they finalize the new bulletin.

After concluding that the panel no longer needed to focus on Complex Cases, a new topic needed to be selected. 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. The panel requested any data that Pennsylvania collects with respect to disrupted adoptions and permanent legal custodian agreements. As of the writing of this report, the only data Pennsylvania collects is with respect to Post-Permanency services offered by the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN). Of all the data provided, the panel did not see enough information being tracked on this particular area. Therefore, the panel decided to develop a survey for counties in the southwest region to determine whether they are tracking data on disrupted adoptions and/or if they are experiencing

issues related to failed or disrupted adoptions. The survey will be distributed to counties in early 2023. The panel will spend next year reviewing survey results, identifying gaps or areas of need to make recommendations to improve permanency outcomes.

Key activities in 2022:

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

- The CRP National Conference hosted by California;
- The National CRP community's June meeting with the CRP Coordinator and panel members from around the country;
- The Child Welfare Virtual Expo in September; and
- The Spring and Fall All-Panel Meetings and engaged in strategic planning for their focus areas with OCYF.

**Southwest Citizen Review Panel Recommendations for 2022:**

Recommendation 1:

While the Southwest CRP has no formal recommendations, the panel would like to continue collaborating and providing feedback to Steering Team as they continue their work on the updated complex case bulletin.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 1:

DHS recognizes the necessity for an effective system of care that engages social, emotional, behavioral, and/or physical health needs of children, youth, and young adults. DHS appreciates the panel's continued work on the topic of complex cases. When looking at the Complex Case Planning for Children & Youth Under Age 21 Bulletin (#14-Bul-110) (Complex Case Planning Bulletin), it requires a multifaceted approach and requires collaboration from the county, regional and state levels. DHS encourages the SW CRP members to continue this work into 2023. Complex case planning is a priority topic for DHS as DHS continues to make improvements to policy and practice. Efforts to assist counties in their understanding and use of the Complex Case Planning Bulletin issued in April 2021 are on-going with much of this work being addressed through the Complex Case Planning Steering Team.

For more information on complex case planning in PA see [Complex Case Planning \(pa.gov\)](https://www.pa.gov). DHS would like to thank the SW CRP for their diligent efforts working on the Implementation Guide. The feedback that was provided by the SW CRP was invaluable in assessing the stakeholder's needs. The feedback will be taken into consideration in the upcoming rewrite of the Complex Case Planning Bulletin. The SW CRP and the Complex Case Steering Team have agreed that in effort to reduce duplicate work, the Implementation Guide will no longer be a project for the panel; however, the panel will serve as consultants and provide feedback as the new bulletin is finalized. DHS looks forward to continued work with this panel on the topic of complex cases.

**Proposed Focus Area/Activities for 2023:**

The panel plans to review survey data related to failed and disrupted adoptions and identify gaps or areas of need and concern.

The panel's ultimate goal will be to make recommendations to help prevent disruptions from occurring and improve permanency outcomes throughout the state.

---

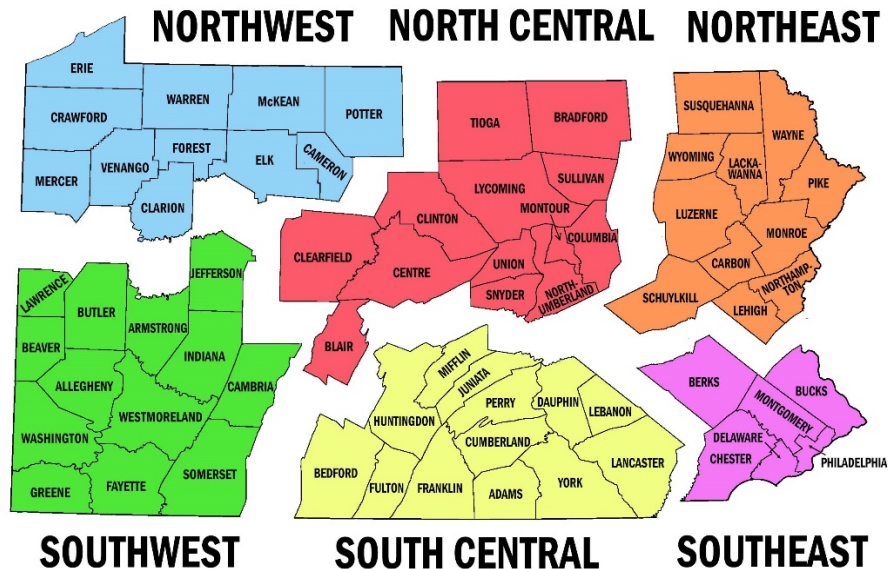
**Southwest Citizen Review Panel Members**

Karynn Davis – Westmoreland  
Tracey Finn – Allegheny  
Patricia Parenti – Allegheny  
Carla Smith – Cambria  
Emily Snow – Butler  
Lisa Snyder – Armstrong  
Gwendolyn Steiner – Allegheny  
Robin Thompson – Beaver  
Richard Wynn – Allegheny

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

**2022 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 Youth Advisory Board website here: [YAB Website](#).

## Overview of the Focus Area:

Although the height of the COVID-19 pandemic had peaked, its disruption and impact on youth’s experience of normalcy still lingered. YAB participation and engagement were not at the level that they once were, and the YAB was determined to change this. The YAB set its sights on rebuilding its membership and progressing in its mission to positively impact the child welfare system.

Overall, this was a year of refocusing and growth. At the end of 2021, the YAB hosted a hybrid statewide meeting, allowing for a small group of members to attend in person. Consistent with the previous year’s interest, the youth expressed concern about the declining mental well-being that not only they experienced personally, but that they noticed with their peers. As a result, the YAB focused its projects on supporting positive mental well-being by sharing resources and providing mental health wellness kits for older youth and alumni across the state. Each kit contained crisis hotline numbers, YAB HOPE mugs, therapeutic adult coloring books, and fleece blankets. Youth were also given

access to an online platform created and developed by the YAB that holds positive and encouraging messages written by their peers.

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey showed a decline in youth participation. The YAB embarked on a campaign to freshen up NYTD resources and spread the word to reach older youth across the state. This included updating the NYTD brochure and creating infomercials to educate youth about NYTD. The YAB is committed to ensuring youth's voices are heard through NYTD surveys and is dedicated to continuing its outreach efforts to more effectively engage youth. Finally, the YAB wanted to ensure that the youth voice was incorporated into Independent Living (IL) site visits. The YAB addressed the gap by developing an informative IL brochure for youth.

### **Summary of Work Completed:**

The YAB returned to in-person meetings following COVID's social distancing protocols and held meetings in January, March, May, September, and November of 2022 at the CWRC. The meetings were hosted in a hybrid platform to accommodate youth who were still under travel restrictions. A summary of the work that took place throughout 2022 is detailed below.

At the March Statewide Meeting, youth took part in a focus group with the Curriculum and Trainer Development Supervisor from the CWRC. Youth provided feedback to inform trainings regarding congregate care visits. Teresa Musser, the DHS Director for SWAN also conducted a focus group with youth centered around the Transitional Living section of the 3800 site regulations. Teresa shared an update at the May Statewide meeting on how youth feedback was considered and incorporated into the updated policies.

The YAB held its first online Youth Professional Development Training series in March. The purpose of this series was to enhance youth's leadership skills and promote self-advocacy. Topics included YAB 101, Money and Time Management, How to Conduct Yourself in Court, Strategic Sharing, and Know Your Rights. The trainings were co-facilitated by YAB leadership and regional consultants.

In May, Jon Douglas, Southwest Division Manager for SWAN, attended the Statewide meeting to discuss the adoption versus permanent legal custodianship (PLC) youth-friendly resource developed by SWAN. Youth were given an opportunity to review and provide feedback to guide the revisions. Additionally, the YAB sent its first youth representative to the May 2022 National CRP Conference in California. The CWRC worked with internal and external stakeholders to ensure funding and support for the youth and their chaperone. Participants shared their experience at the Statewide YAB Kickoff meeting hoping to spark youth's interest in attending future CRP conferences.

The YAB was able to resume its annual two-day Leadership Summit in June at the CWRC. There were 65 participants including youth, staff, and stakeholders representing the six YAB regions. Teresa Musser from DHS welcomed participants and shared information about the Chafee Education and Training Grant along with the FosterEd tuition waiver. Anthony Stukes, Director of Diakon Youth Services, provided a keynote presentation aligning with the YAB's focus on mental health, reminding participants that self-investment is essential to long-term success. The day's events included professional workshops such as Landing Your Dream Job, Apartment 101, and How to Conduct Yourself in Court. Following the workshops, the youth participated in a discussion about mental health and navigating returning to normalcy post-pandemic. Youth shared ways to practice self-care and mindfulness while encouraging their peers to connect with professional support as needed. The day's events ended with an escape room adventure and bowling activity. Day two of the Summit concluded



with a presentation and trivia game about SWAN units of service from Ashley Petch, Regional Technical Assistant from SWAN.

In September, the YAB held its 2022/2023 kickoff meeting with over 30 youth participants. This was the largest in-person attendance for the Statewide YAB since the COVID pandemic began. This was the first Statewide meeting for many of the attendees. Therefore, a short overview of the statewide structure and expectations was shared with participants. The afternoon concluded with an overview of the CRPs and the 2022 National CRP Conference to inform youth about their role as participants and allowed for interested youth to sign-up to participate in upcoming CRP conferences. The youth also discussed potential projects for the 2022-2023 year, which included ongoing resources for mental health, housing, money management, and helping youth understand their rights while in care.

#### Key activities in 2022:

- The YAB leadership supported the SWAN/IL virtual matching event by creating an interview-style video centered around IL services and the importance of permanency from an older youth's perspective;
- The YAB collaborated with SWAN in the revision of SWAN's youth-friendly document;
- The YAB was represented at the National CRP Conference as the Statewide YAB continues to be the fourth CRP for the state;
- The YAB hosted a virtual professional development series to support older youth in enhancing both personal and professional skills;
- The YAB provided feedback during a focus group with the DHS Director of SWAN regarding transitional living of the Pennsylvania Code Title 55 Chapter 3800 Regulations for Child Residential and Day Treatment Facilities;
- The YAB participated in an interview-style focus group to inform the CWRC Congregate Care Visits Training; and
- The YAB presented, "The Journey to Finding Permanency," which focuses on the importance of permanency for older youth at the 2022 SWAN Permanency Conference.

#### **Youth Advisory Board Recommendations for 2022:**

##### Recommendation 1:

The Pennsylvania YAB recommends that Pennsylvania consider additional permanency options for youth who live on their own, independently, and are not interested in any legal permanency.

##### OCYF Response to Recommendation 1:

DHS is committed to assuring all children and youth who are unable to be reunited with their family find permanency or have permanent connections. Federal and state laws and policies provide guidance for achieving permanency for children and youth served by child welfare agencies. Permanency goals must be approved by the courts, and periodic court hearings are held to review permanency plans for children and youth in foster care to ensure adequate progress is being made toward those goals. Pennsylvania defines permanency as the establishment of an identified adult or family who has made a commitment to care for and to support a child up to and beyond the age of majority. Permanency options as defined by the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) in hierarchical order are as follows: (1) return to the parent, (2) place for adoption, (3) placement with a permanent legal custodian, (4) placement with a fit and willing relative or (5) another planned

permanent living arrangement (APPLA). DHS acknowledges that all youth and young people may not be interested in achieving legal permanency through adoption or legal guardianship. However, DHS believes it is important for youth/young people to have a better understanding of what permanency means through education and resources. This includes educating youth/young people that permanency can come in many forms including relational permanency.

With the recent passage of Act 118 of 2022, young people aged 18 and older can have APPLA as a primary or concurrent permanency goal. Act 118 also ensures CCYAs work with youth to identify two supportive adult connections that are willing to be a support as they transition out of foster care. This allows young people to live independently without achieving legal permanency but still have relational permanency.

To focus on ensuring all youth and young people understand their permanency options and rights to have their voice heard, DHS and the Independent Living Project through the CWRC have been collaborating with SWAN to educate and provide youth and young people with resources about their permanency goals. This includes helping youth to understand their right to be involved in their permanency plan and have their voice heard when it comes to their permanency goals and court appearances. Additionally, if the YAB CRP recommends a specific permanency goal option that does not already exist, DHS is willing to explore that recommendation.

#### Recommendation 2:

The Pennsylvania YAB recommends continued collaboration efforts in contributing to the development of how the Pennsylvania Code Title 55 Chapter 3800 Regulations for Child Residential and Day Treatment Facilities site regulations are audited and monitored.

#### OCYF Response to Recommendation 2:

DHS will continue to collaborate with youth/young people on the rewrite for the Title 55 Chapter 3800 Regulations for Child Residential and Day Treatment Facilities.

#### Recommendation 3:

The Pennsylvania YAB recommends that the State monitor and require that all youth in foster care receive Know Your Rights (KYR) information in a way that they can understand. Additionally, the Bill of Rights Coloring Books exist as a resource for younger youth in care. YAB is recommending the coloring books are utilized in the education of younger youth about their rights while in care.

#### OCYF Response to Recommendation 3:

DHS concurs that all youth in foster care should be afforded access and be educated regarding their rights in a manner they are able to understand to have the ability to advocate for themselves. DHS is aware that the Statewide YAB is working on a new KYR quick reference guide that will include a glossary of terms to help youth better understand terminology used by child welfare professionals. DHS supports the development of a new KYR quick reference guide to provide youth entering foster care with a reference of rights youth feel is most important for them to know.

The legal rights and responsibilities of children is also included in OCYF Bulletin (3130-12-03), Concurrent Planning Policy and Implementation. One of the eight Core Components of Concurrent Planning is full disclosure. Full disclosure is a respectful and candid discussion that begins when a child/youth is placed in out-of-home care and continues through the life of the case. The discussion is offered to the parents, child/youth, and resource families as well as other team members and stakeholders involved in the case planning process. Issues to be discussed with parents, child/youth and resource families are outlined in the Concurrent Planning Policy and Implementation Bulletin. The legal rights and responsibilities including the child/youth rights under PA Act 119 of 2010, the Children in Foster Care Act is a key issue identified in the full disclosure process. OCYF issued Bulletin # 3130-12-02, 3700-12-01, 3680-12-01, 3800-12-01, Children in Foster Care Act, to clarify the requirements of Act 119 of 2010. All CCYAs are required to provide notification of the child/youth's rights and grievance policy when entering foster care. This is monitored through the licensing process of all agencies regulated under 55 Pa. Code § 3130.88, § 3680.48, § 3700.63 and § 3800.31 regulations.

DHS supported the creation and printing of the Bill of Rights Coloring Books for children ages five to seven and eight to ten. A total of 2,000 coloring books were printed and distributed to CCYAs to use with younger children entering care. The Bill of Rights Coloring Books are now available to print via the YAB website at [Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board \(pitt.edu\)](http://Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board (pitt.edu)).

DHS will continue to work with CCYA IL Coordinators and CWRC Practice Improvement Specialists to ensure this is a part of casework practice in each county and they are aware of the resources available to children and youth.

#### Recommendation 4:

The Pennsylvania YAB recommends that immediately upon entry into foster care, youth are made aware of IL services. There should be ongoing monitoring of this process.

#### OCYF Response to Recommendation 4:

DHS concurs that all youth aged 14 and older entering foster care be informed of their ability to receive and participate in IL services and supports through CCYAs. The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) of 2018 amended section 477 of the Social Security Act (SSA) by changing the name of the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program to the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee). FFPSA offered several changes to states regarding the program purposes and populations of youth eligible to receive services through Chafee including confirming that Chafee services and supports are available to youth who experience foster care at age 14 or older.

CCYAs are responsible to designate an IL Services Coordinator who is responsible to coordinate and make available services and supports designed to assist all Chafee eligible youth aged 14 and older. As outlined in the OCYF Bulletin "Fiscal Year 2023-24 Children, Youth and Families Needs-Based Plan and Fiscal Year 2022-23 Implementation Plan Instructions", IL services are to be provided to youth ages 14-21. One of the IL services to be provided include needs assessment/case planning. Youth in foster care must have their IL needs assessed to identify the appropriate services within a minimum of 45 days of attaining age 14 and within 30 days of the youth entering care or resuming dependency after age 18. This is an opportunity to review the IL services offered within the county.

The IL Bulletin also indicates that participation in IL services is voluntary for all youth entering or currently in foster care. Youth who initially refuse or elect to discontinue IL services, should be encouraged to participate and are eligible to request services at any time.

DHS will continue to work with CCYA IL Coordinators and CWRC Practice Improvement Specialists to monitor these efforts through the IL Site Visit process.

**Proposed Focus Area/Activities for 2023:**

The YAB's proposed focus area for 2023 will center around older youth understanding their rights while in care. This will include developing a YAB welcome packet that includes information about the YAB and YAB resources, a quick KYR Reference guide, and information surrounding IL Services. This packet would also include a quick reference checklist regarding documents and resources that workers should be reviewing with older youth.

YAB will also be focusing on:

- A campaign focused on the promotion of positive mental health as well as resources to support older youth. Additionally, the creation of wellness kits that includes items to help improve mental well-being and connectedness for youth across the state;
- A remake of NYTD resources and increased efforts to educate youth about the importance of participating in the survey; and
- Development of resources to educate youth on IL site visits along with ensuring outreach for youth participation as youth voices should be incorporated during IL site visits.

**Attachment A**  
**Categorized List of CRP Recommendations from 2010 – 2021**

<b>Date of Work</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Brief Summary</b>	<b>Changed</b>	<b>Not changed</b>	<b>In process</b>
2010	Best practices	Develop practice standards	x		
2010	Best practices	Develop a “best practice” guide			x
2010	State Administration	Children's Justice Act Subcommittee formed	x		
2010	State Administration	Office of Children Youth and Families (OCYF) conducted review	x		
2010	Community Services/Outreach	Recommend health passport		x	
2010	Independent Living	Help Independent Living (IL) youth understand role of Guardian ad Litem	x		
2010	State Administration	Support creation of an Ombudsman position	x		
2010	State Administration	OCYF and Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) worked on panel expansion	x		
2010	County Operations	Recommend caseworker to supervisor ratio 3:1			x
2010	County Operations	Recommend standards for supervisors			x
2011	State Administration	Update mandated reporting	x		
2011	State Administration	Increase number of hours for mandated reporting	x		
2011	State Administration	Improve accurate reporting of abuse numbers	x		
2011	Best practices	Streamline forms, the use of tablets in the field, teaming		x	
2011	Best practices	Recommend notebook tablets for all counties		x	
2011	Best practices	Upgrade technology for all counties		x	
2011	Best practices	Support counties with tablet usage		x	

Date of Work	Category	Brief Summary	Changed	Not changed	In process
2011	Technology	Engage Penn State University in development of a database for child abuse reports	X		
2011	Community Services/Outreach	Improvement of communication on health forms for all entities		x	
2011	Community Services/Outreach	Expand health reporting form for children		x	
2011	State Administration	Support creation of an Ombudsman office	X		
2011	Community Services/Outreach	Create a media campaign to educate Pennsylvania citizens on child abuse, and how to report abuse through ChildLine.	X		
2011	State Administration	Panel report attached to the Annual Child Abuse Report	X		
2011	County Operations	Increase male caseworker representation		x	
2011	County Operations	Limit number of caseworker to family transitions		x	
2011	County Operations	Create a skills checklist to use with caseworkers		x	
2011	County Operations	Improve clinical supervision		x	
2011	County Operations	Establish Supervisor networking sessions	X		
2011	County Operations	Provide technical support and assistance for supervisors			x
2011	County Operations	Develop a Mentoring program for new supervisors		x	
2012	State Administration	Use technology to track abuse cases	X		
2012	State Administration	Increase mobile technology			x
2012	State Administration	Perpetrator notice of report made	X		
2012	State Administration	Evaluate abuse reporting	X		
2012	State Administration	Expand mandated reporting requirements	X		
2012	Best practices	Evaluate and reduce paperwork			x

Date of Work	Category	Brief Summary	Changed	Not changed	In process
2012	Community Services/Outreach	Increase access to MH services		x	
2012	State Administration	OCYF create an Ombudsman office	x		
2012	County Operations	Recruit and retain staff		x	
2013	Best practices	Implement quality assurance for child visits		x	
2013	Best practices	Use Critical Thinking guide	x		
2013	Best practices	Combine Safety and Risk assessments			x
2013	Independent Living	Eliminate IL outcomes tracking			x
2013	State Administration	Revise Interstate Compact for Placement of Children (ICPC) process and standards	x		
2013	State Administration	Improve electronic tracking of information	x		
2013	State Administration	Monitor information for tracking placement of children	x		
2013	State Administration	Training courts on ICPC	x		
2013	State Administration	Invite Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) to ICPC workgroups	x		
2013	State Administration	OCYF asked to audit ICPC cases			x
2013	Community Services/Outreach	Recruit diverse resource families			x
2013	Community Services/Outreach	Increase support for foster family recruitment			x
2013	Community Services/Outreach	Recruit foster families	x		
2013	Community Services/Outreach	Improve training--parent support partner model statewide			x
2014	State Administration	Hold counties accountable for budgeting constraints			x
2014	State Administration	Evaluate OCYF funding of Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) monies			x

Date of Work	Category	Brief Summary	Changed	Not changed	In process
2014	State Administration	Evaluate how SWAN services are funded			x
2014	State Administration	Ratify the updated ICPC	x		
2014	State Administration	IV-E eligibility tracking (ICPC)	x		
2014	State Administration	Increase staffing resources (ICPC)			x
2014	State Administration	Capture ICPC in Child Welfare Information System (CWIS)			x
2014	State Administration	Track challenges with ICPC cases	x		
2014	State Administration	Include CRPs in ICPC workgroups	x		
2014	Community Services/Outreach	Improve quality of resource parents and tracking data			x
2014	Community Services/Outreach	Assess ongoing training of resource parents			x
2015	State Administration	Recommend Pennsylvania be part of the ICPC database rollout	x		
2015	State Administration	Ensure staffing levels in the ICPC office			x
2015	State Administration	Ratify the updated ICPC	x		
2016	Best practices	Track movement of children in the state	x		
2016	Best practices	Develop media campaign for older youth in foster care	x		
2016	Independent Living	Update IL documentation	x		
2016	Independent Living	Revise HB 453 about financial assistance for foster and adopted youth	x		
2016	State Administration	Include County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYAs) and Juvenile Justice as essential services	x		
2016	Community Services/Outreach	Notification of resource family when youth re-enter care			x
2017	Best practices	Enhance workers' knowledge of Drug and Alcohol (DA) and Mental Health (MH) issues			x



Date of Work	Category	Brief Summary	Changed	Not changed	In process
2017	Best practices	Support worker safety in the field			x
2017	Best practices	Address vicarious trauma for workers through training	x		
2017	Independent Living	Assist youth with driver's license and insurance issues	x		
2017	County Operations	Support the Caseworker Retention Workgroup			x
2018	Best practices	Support caseworker knowledge of DA and MH issues			x
2018	Best practices	Caseload reductions			x
2018	Best practices	Develop trauma-informed practice interventions	x		
2018	Independent Living	Assist youth with post-secondary applications			x
2018	Independent Living	Funding for counties to support IL youth	x		
2018	Independent Living	Driver's license to support IL youth	x		
2018	Independent Living	Creation of a welcome booklet	x		
2018	Independent Living	Assure all youth have access to Know Your Rights training	x		
2018	Independent Living	Provide services to IL youth through age 23	x		
2018	Independent Living	Provide support for LGBTQ youth			x
2019	Best practices	Define consistent language about trauma-informed practice	x		
2019	Best practices	Develop a trauma-informed practice approach initiative			x
2019	Best practices	All CCYAs should select providers based on their ability to provide a trauma-informed approach			x
2019	Best practices	County contractors should be trained in a trauma-informed approach			x

Date of Work	Category	Brief Summary	Changed	Not changed	In process
2019	Best practices	Define Trauma-Informed Care	x		
2019	Best practices	Train workers on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and child trauma assessments			x
2019	Best practices	Supervisor and administrator buy-in to address various levels of trauma for staff			x
2019	Best practices	Require trauma training for all CCYA staff		x	
2019	Independent Living	Assure all youth have access to the Youth Questionnaire			x
2019	Independent Living	Incorporate the Tools and Tips for Fostering Older Youth be part of foster parent training, and caseworker training			x
2019	Independent Living	IL aftercare services extended to age 23	x		
2019	Independent Living	All youth have access to the revised Know Your Rights training	x		
2019	Community Services/Outreach	State should adopt the National Model Licensing Standards		x	
2019	Community Services/Outreach	Update Foster Care regulations relating to communicable diseases			x
2019	Community Services/Outreach	Update foster care regulations pertaining to psychological evaluations			x
2019	Community Services/Outreach	Increase foster parent pre-service training to 27 hours		x	
2020	Best practices	Pennsylvania should convene a taskforce to examine the creation of new Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs			x
2020	Best practices	Develop a CASA data tracking systems for outcomes			x

Date of Work	Category	Brief Summary	Changed	Not changed	In process
2020	Best practices	Pennsylvania should have a system to track services for undocumented youth		x	
2020	Best practices	Encourage the use of the Critical Thinking guide			x
2020	State Administration	Pennsylvania should fund CASA programs			x
2020	State Administration	Develop a tracking system for undocumented youth and service expenditures		x	
2020	Independent Living	Permanency Game should be accessible for all youth			x
2020	Independent Living	Translate the Know Your Rights manual into Spanish			x
2020	Independent Living	Translate the Top 10 Tips brochure and video into Spanish			x
2020	State Administration	OCYF should develop a liaison position for tracking undocumented youth.		x	
2020	Training	DHS and CWRC should develop a training on undocumented youth		x	
2021	Best practices	Improve tracking for parental and caregiver substance abuse			x
2021	Best practices	Standard training and language for Childline staff relating to substance abuse			x
2021	Best practices	Develop evidence-based programs for parental/caregiver substance abuse			x
2021	Best practices	Delivery of services with a non-judgmental perspective for families involved with DA and MH issues			x
2021	Community Services/Outreach	Development of a universal medical health assessment			x
2021	Community Services/Outreach	Develop a training for staff on medical assessments			x

Date of Work	Category	Brief Summary	Changed	Not changed	In process
2021	Community Services/Outreach	Develop best practice standards for medical assessments			x
2021	Independent Living	Improve resources for younger youth and youth with intellectual disabilities			x
2021	Independent Living	Improve education for youth on voter education			x
2021	Independent Living	Access for youth for COVID-19 prevention			x
			49	22	54