Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panels' 2024 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.

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.

pennsylvania DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

University of Pittsburgh

PCYA Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators

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Letter from the Deputy Secretary

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

May 22, 2025

Dear Citizens,

Thank you for taking a moment to read the Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panels' 2024 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 in promoting positive child welfare outcomes for children and families.

The Department of Human Services 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 Northcentral CRP. They have concluded the first year of their work and made their first recommendations.

Finally, as their service comes to an end, OCYF wants to specifically acknowledge the Southwest Panel for their dedication and thank the panel members for their hard work over the last five years. Their work will resonate with the children of Pennsylvania for years to come.

Sincerely,

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

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 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 the 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. While the council is not currently meeting, the last year has been spent re-evaluating the structure for stakeholder engagement. When active, the Council was comprised of multidisciplinary members who were broadly representative of the child welfare system and reflected the Commonwealth in geographic, racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. The efforts of the Council were aligned with OCYF's mission, vision, and values and Pennsylvania's Child Welfare Practice Model. The Council utilized 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 process/framework. OCYF will be looking to initiate a revised approach in 2025.

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's *2025 – 2029 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)* has been approved by Office of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The CFSP is a five-year strategic plan designed to strengthen Pennsylvania's child welfare system and support the development of the state's federal Title IV-B plan as part of this initiative. OCYF will continue to collaborate with system partners to address the identified goals and strategies that will direct Pennsylvania's improvement efforts over the coming years. Annually, OCYF will submit the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) to provide updates on the progress made toward achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the CFSP. The completion of the APSR meets federal regulations by offering updates on the state's annual progress for the previous fiscal year and the planned activities for the upcoming fiscal year. The CRP recommendations will be shared for consideration during 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 no 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 2024, there were three regional CRPs representing the Commonwealth: North Central, Southeast, and Southwest. It is vital that the CRPs be committed to a membership that welcomes and embraces equity and diversity.

There is also the statewide CRP consisting of Pennsylvania's longstanding Youth Advisory Board (YAB). The Statewide YAB is comprised of youth and alumni of the child welfare system ages 16 to 23 years of age. 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 2024 focused on the establishment of a regional panel in the Northwest region, an area of the Commonwealth that has not hosted a CRP since 2014. Recruitment efforts for the Northwest panel resulted in 11 applications representing five of the 13 counties in the region. After the required screening and selection process, 11 applicants were selected to create the Northwest panel, with nine accepting memberships beginning in January 2025. As the new panel was created, the Southwest panel concluded its work in December 2024.

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

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 the 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.

2024 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 an effort to collect data, the panel developed a survey for CCYAs in the southwest region. After receiving limited initial responses, the survey was expanded to include all 67 counties. Following this broader distribution, the panel received a total of 19 responses. In 2023, the panel reviewed the survey results and concluded that the counties did not believe that Pennsylvania has an issue with disrupted or failed adoptions. The panel believes that one disrupted or failed adoption is not acceptable and decided to continue researching this area to determine how to prevent adoptions from failing.

In 2024, the SW Panel continued its previous year's work on the issue of disrupted or failed adoptions in Pennsylvania. This topic was chosen due to personal experiences and interests. The panel's initial question aimed to determine whether data supports the concern that failed or disrupted adoptions are a significant issue. Following a review of information and data provided by OCYF, the panel determined there was insufficient data to answer this question.

Summary of Work Completed:

In 2024, the panel developed a survey of follow-up questions for the 19 counties to collect more detailed information regarding each disrupted or failed adoption in an attempt to identify possible trends. However, no responses were received. The panel concluded that counties did not prioritize the completion of a second survey because they previously indicated that disrupted and failed adoptions were not a concern or issue that needed to be addressed. Therefore, the panel began researching alternative data sources that could help identify possible trends leading to disrupted or failed adoptions.

The panel was informed that the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) had been revised to include additional questions and data points. To determine if the updated AFCARS would address the data sought in the statewide survey, the panel conducted a side-by-side comparison of data points. The panel's first observation was that the state is unable to track children after an adoption occurs because their identifying information (e.g., social security number, master control index (MCI) number) changes. The updated AFCARS still does not capture detailed historical information regarding the child's original adoption (e.g., number of placements prior to adoption, duration from placement to adoption, services provided to support the adoption). AFCARS focuses only on the current placement and disruptions of foster care placement.

The updated AFCARS will include more detailed information on the reasons children are entering care. Additionally, it will provide data that was not previously sought but could be beneficial for review, such as the child's sex, race, diagnosis, financial assistance received by the family, guardian's age and race, environment at removal, and the child's status at the time of exit from care.

Given the limited data, the panel sought additional resources for review, including "The State of Child Welfare in PA" report, AFCARS data from 2013-2023 for Pennsylvania, AFCARS data from 2018-2022 for the United States, and raw data on re-entries after adoption in Pennsylvania. The objective was to analyze these data sources to identify potential trends and reasons for adoption failures or disruptions.

The State of Child Welfare Report

In reviewing the State Snapshot from the 2023 State of Child Welfare in PA Report, the panel extracted data from 2018-2022 on demographics and children re-entering foster care after adoption. The panel took the data provided in the State Snapshot and calculated and established their own data points. Those data points led them to conclude that for children entering care for the first time, the 0-2 year age group had the highest 5-year average, among the other reported age groups, at 36.4%. Additionally, the panel calculated that the 15–17-year age group had the highest percentage, among the reported age groups of re-entries, with a 5-year average of 31.2%.

The panel's initial discussions hypothesized that adoptions were disrupted sooner due to a lack of training, support, or understanding of children's behaviors. However, the data does not support this hypothesis. According to their calculations, the 5-year average from 2018-2022 shows that the racial composition of children entering care for the first time calculated out to be non-Hispanic white at 49.14% and non-Hispanic black/African American at 26.08%. For children re-entering care, the calculated averages were 40.42% for non-Hispanic white and 39.66% for non-Hispanic black/African American. This data includes all entries and re-entries, not just failed adoptions. Although there is no data to support their thoughts, it is the panel's assumption, based on their calculations, that children are often adopted at a young age and experience disruptions during their teenage years.

There also appears to be a disparity between the racial composition of children entering care for the first time and those re-entering care. Without additional information, such as the race of adoptive families or reasons for disruption, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions. The report identified the top reason for first-time entries into care as parent drug abuse at 35.9%, while the top reason for re-entries was child behaviors at 29.2%. This indicates a need for increased support for parents during their child's teenage years, as behavioral problems may develop or worsen despite previous stability.

AFCARS Data

The panel requested various data regarding youth re-entry into foster care following an adoption. OCYF was able to create a specialized report that included data from AFCARS to help answer some of the panel's questions. There were some questions that did not have data points available to assist the panel.

In 2022, the age at initial discharge was highest for the 2-5 year age group, with 37 out of 340 individuals (7.9%). However, 235 out of 340 individuals (69%) were listed as unknown age, suggesting that the age at which they were originally adopted is not being captured. The age at re-entry in 2022 was highest for the 13-15year age range, with 136 out of 340 individuals (40%) and no unknown ages. Using the information available, the panel inferred that the time from adoption to disruption was highest at 5 or more years, with 63 out of 340 individuals (18.5%) and 235 (69%) being marked as "unknown".

From data in the State Snapshot extracted from the 2023 State of Child Welfare Report, the panel concluded that in 2022, a higher percentage of African American children (161 out of 340, 47%) re-entered the foster care system after adoption compared to white children (121 out of 340, 35%). The primary reasons for re-entry were child behavior problems (169 out of 340, 50%) followed by the parent's inability to cope (70 out of 340, 21%). This adoption-specific data aligns with the findings in the Pennsylvania State of Child Welfare Report.

Additional Research

While researching data on this topic, the panel found a 2022 article published by *USA Today*, "'A broken system' leaves tens of thousands of adoptees without families, homes", that analyzed broken adoptions in the United States. The article reviewed AFCARS data from 2008 to 2020 and highlighted similar concerns to those the panel identified regarding data collection. The article states that more than 400,000 children were marked as missing adoption status or had information listed as "unable to determine." Additionally, children adopted privately or by family members, rather than through foster care were not included in this data. The article also identified challenges with tracking children by their identification numbers, noting that only 16 states record information for AFCARS in this manner. These states typically have state-run systems as opposed to county-administered/state-supervised child welfare programs. The information in this article supported the panel's challenges with accurate data reporting, which is essential for further examining this issue.

In conclusion, after reviewing the panel's survey, state data, and national data, the panel identified both current strengths and areas needing improvement. Enhancing data collection is the first area of focus required to examine the issue of failed and disrupted adoptions. Based on the data the panel was able to extract, the panel recommends several preventive measures for disruptions that appear to occur after significant periods of stability, particularly during the teenage years. Additional concerns include private and kinship adoptions and the need to provide resources to all qualifying families.

Key activities in 2024:

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

- Four quarterly meetings;
- Two All-Panel Meetings; and
- One panel member attended, and presented, at the National CRP Conference in San Diego.

Southwest Citizen Review Panel Recommendations for 2024:

Recommendation 1:

Improving Data Collection:

- **Reduce "Unknown" as a Choice**: In the new AFCARS, minimize the use of "unknown" as an option (e.g., age when entering care, duration in care before disruption);
- **Mandatory Fields**: Ensure that all fields are required to eliminate gaps in data; and
- **Enhanced Interview Techniques**: Improve interview methods and utilize existing databases to enhance data extraction capabilities.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 1

DHS recognizes the importance of gathering accurate data and acknowledges that data is used to assist with decision-making, problem-solving, heightened understanding, and improving processes, related to the permanency and well-being of the children served by Pennsylvania's child welfare system. At present time, the value of "unknown" is permitted in certain scenarios and data systems, but OCYF exercises diligence in attempting to limit the use of this value to the greatest extent possible, based on business needs, rules and processes.

Processing data can be a complex process. When data reflects "unknown" as a category, it could be an instance where information is required but was not populated in error. An "unknown" category does not necessarily indicate that "unknown" was selected or entered. An example of this could be race/ethnicity on suspected child abuse reports. In that data field, there is a value of "worker did not ask" which would also map to "unknown" on reports such as the Annual Child Protective Services Report. In those instances, it is shown as "unknown" on the output because the more specific value is used for internal purposes only, to target training needs.

Currently, OCYF and CCYAs use a multitude of software and data reporting programs, and case level data is maintained in the individual county case management systems, rather than a state IT system. In the future, OCYF will be undergoing an effort to implement a statewide Child Welfare Case Management (CW CM) system which is intended to replace the existing Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) system, as well as the five county-level case management systems currently used in Pennsylvania. The future CW CM is intended to increase data quality and streamline processes. During system design, it will be considered what fields should and should not be made mandatory, based on a number of factors including, but not limited to, federal regulatory requirements, state legislative and regulatory requirements, and agency business rules. It would not be reasonable to require all fields to be completed in the future system, but the system will support business rules which will dictate when entry of certain information may be required. This new platform will be a comprehensive, integrated system that will support best practices across the Commonwealth, implement standardization when possible, and allow flexibility to support unique processes considered critical by the counties while enhancing data extraction capabilities. The department looks forward to having enhanced baseline data and the overall improvement of data collection.

If specifically looking at AFCARS data, all fields and responses that are required by the statewide data collection system support the requirements of the AFCARS federal technical bulletins. The system rules implemented by the state-level data collection system for AFCARS data only permits a response of "unknown" in situations where unknown is listed as an acceptable response value as per the federal technical bulletin. If a response is left blank in error, the county who provided the data will

receive an error noting that this is not acceptable. However, if the error is not corrected prior to the finalization of the data, outputs generated by OCYF may count the missing response as “unknown”. DHS/OCYF continues to work with the CCYAs to ensure all required fields are being sent to the state correctly and completely and that triggered errors are being addressed.

CCYA caseworkers are educated on positive engagement and interviewing skills when they complete the *Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice (Foundations)*. These courses are necessary to become a county caseworker. In addition to the *Foundations* training, CCYAs also provide their new caseworkers with training specific to their county. The specific material covered, length, and format in each of these county-level trainings vary considerably among CCYAs, but they are often focused on hands-on learning.

CCYAs are encouraged to contact their respective OCYF Regional Offices if they need any additional assistance in providing training to their staff.

Recommendation 2:

Prevention:

- **Post-Permanency Brochures**: Courts should provide post-permanency brochures at the finalization of private adoptions;
- **Annual Subsidy Redetermination**: Include a questionnaire on the back of the annual subsidy redetermination paperwork to capture any issues and concerns. Additionally, send the post-permanency brochure with the redetermination paperwork;
- **Follow-Up Phone Calls**: Conduct follow-up phone calls to families that indicate potential concerns. Interns or clerical staff, rather than direct care staff, could handle these calls to gather more information; and
- **Dedicated Follow-Up Care**: Identify a specific staff member or service provider (via Request for Proposal) to offer follow-up care and case management for post-adoption. The goal is to reduce the number of children re-entering care, thereby minimizing trauma and long-term costs.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 2

OCYF appreciates the work and effort that the Southwest CRP put into reviewing concerns related to the permanency of youth served in Pennsylvania. The Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) is in a partnership with DHS, the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange, public and private adoption agencies, organizations, advocates, judges, the legal community, and foster and adoptive parents. As each of the 67 counties within Pennsylvania have their own operation process, it is hard for OCYF to know the procedures of each CCYA and court system. According to SWAN, there are no known courts that provide post-permanency brochures; however, OCYF will discuss the benefits of providing this information with its partners within the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) and the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC) to determine if there are pathways that could be utilized to make this information available to all courts that finalize private adoptions.

For families that achieve permanency through either Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship (SPLC) or adoption, CCYAs are directed by OCYF Bulletin #3130-23-01/3140-23-05 and OCYF Bulletin # 3140-21-04 to make annual contact with the permanency family. For cases that achieve permanency through SPLC, the agency is required to send annual communication to each approved custodian with whom they have entered into an SPLC agreement. The Annual Subsidy Contact/Evaluation Form provides an avenue for the agency to confirm an identified Successor and

inquire regarding any changes that would trigger the need to amend the existing SPLC agreement. While the agency is required to send an annual evaluation to custodians, the custodians are not required to complete and return the form if they decide they do not want to do so.

For cases that achieve permanency through adoption, the agency is required to contact the adoptive parents annually to assess the child or youth's ongoing needs. Adoptive parents must be reached yearly by phone and/or mail to complete the Annual Evaluation Form for Children in Receipt of Adoption Assistance. The adoption assistance payment must consider the circumstances of the adopting parents and the needs of the child or youth being adopted and may be readjusted periodically. If an CCYA contacts a family by phone, it should also follow up by sending the Annual Evaluation Form for Children in Receipt of Adoption Assistance for the adoptive parents to complete. While every effort should be made to involve the family in filling out this form, the agency cannot automatically suspend the adoption assistance agreement if the parents refuse or decline to complete the Annual Evaluation Form.

As OCYF agrees that capturing any post-adoption issues and concerns holds value, as part of the annual subsidy redetermination for both SPLC and adoption finalization, the permanency family is asked:

- Have there been any changes in the youth's development, care, medical and/or behavioral condition that would require a change in the subsidy agreement?

While information received through the annual evaluation process is used to capture any issues and concerns following finalization, the process, on behalf of the family, is voluntary. Additionally, after finalization, communication between the family and the agency is driven by the family. OCYF appreciates that the CRP wants to reduce the number of children re-entering care and lower trauma; however, there are concerns that ongoing outreach from the CCYAs to the families – outside of the required annual communication – can be viewed as unwanted.

OCYF does not have legal authority to ask CCYAs and providers to make follow-up calls or to provide dedicated follow-up care after finalization. Some CCYAs have caseworkers that only carry cases that are expected to end in SPLC or adoption, which allows for them to have expertise related to finalization and the unique needs of families.

As soon as a child enters the foster care system, every child is eligible to receive SWAN services, and they remain eligible. After finalization, SWAN offers post-permanency services (often referred to as post-adoption services) to eligible Pennsylvania families who have provided children permanency through domestic or international adoption, private adoption, permanent legal custodianship, or formal kinship.

CCYAs are encouraged to refer children and adoptive families to the Adoption Finalization unit of service. This unit applies only to adoption and foster to adoption cases, and it includes services provided to the child, the adopting family, and the CCYA with custody of the child/youth leading to the issuance of a decree of adoption by the court. This is an eight-month unit of service (which can be eligible for a four-month extension). This unit is designed to provide activities, supportive services, home visits, safety assessments, and supervisory reports to assist the family and youth as they transition to adoption prior to the adoption finalization hearing, and it encourages collaboration with attorneys, counties, and courts to complete legal requirements. To be eligible, the youth must have a goal of adoption, and the family must have an approved SWAN Family Profile.

OCYF will explore ways to share the CRP's concerns and recommendations for phone calls with SWAN, SWAN Affiliates, and CCYAs.

Recommendation 3:

Addressing Additional Concerns:

- **Access to Post-Permanency Services**: Ensure that private and kinship adoptions have access to information about post-permanency services;
- **Data Collection on Private Adoptions**: Capture data on failed or disrupted private adoptions; and
- **Identification and Support**: Develop methods to identify and provide resources to those who do not receive annual paperwork.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 3

OCYF recognizes that families need support and encouragement, and SWAN services provide families the needed support to inspire a positive, life-long experience. Specifically related to post-permanency services, families are eligible for case advocacy services, support group services, and respite services. These services are available by contacting the SWAN Helpline. While DHS/OCYF agrees that all families who finalize adoptions, both through the child welfare system and through private adoptions, could benefit from post-permanency services, neither DHS nor OCYF has any oversight over private adoptions, but again OCYF will discuss the benefits and paths of providing this information with its partners within AOPC and the OCFC.

Just as OCYF does not have oversight over private adoptions, neither OCYF nor the CCYAs are privileged to know when private adoptions occur. It is highly improbable that a child who is adopted through a private adoption will be eligible for Title IV-E adoption assistance if the child is not an "applicable child" since many of these children are voluntarily relinquished at birth directly to an adoptive family. Children who are voluntarily relinquished are eligible only in certain limited circumstances. Due to the nature of private adoptions, OCYF does not foresee any additional circumstances where they would have access to private adoption data, and there is nothing in statute or law that would allow the department to make such a request of the court system.

As referenced above, the CCYAs are required to send out Annual Evaluation Forms, and CCYAs are not allowed to suspend subsidy payments based on the families' lack of response. Each CCYA Administrator and Fiscal Officer would need to develop internal policies and procedures regarding the steps to be taken if annual evaluation forms are returned undeliverable or not received back by the agency. In situations where a permanency family does not receive a subsidy, it is acknowledged that the family would not receive an annual form. Again, the CCYAs are limited to what is outlined in statutes or laws.

Southwest Citizen Review Panel Members

Emily Snow – Butler
Lisa Snyder – Armstrong
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.

2024 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report
Southeast Citizen Review Panel Report and Recommendations

Introduction:

The Southeast (SE) CRP serves six of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. The SE CRP is dedicated to ensuring that the needs of Pennsylvania's children are being met within the current system. If you are interested in joining our effort, e-mail the CRP Coordinator at pacrp@pitt.edu.

Overview of the Focus Area:

In 2023, the SE CRP chose to focus its research on helping find community supports and/or local placement options for Pennsylvania youth with complex needs (e.g., autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disabilities, trauma, medically complex, multi-system involvement, and the LGBTQIA+ community). This work continued into 2024.

Summary of Work Completed:

The SE CRP began in 2024 by continuing to research the shortage of resources, services, and placement options for youth with complex needs. The panel asked OCYF for any information or data available regarding this topic, including demographic statistics regarding this population, the number of beds available, information regarding specialized placement settings, and more.

At the Spring All-Panel Meeting, the panel heard a presentation from the Blueprint Workgroup, a statewide workgroup that published a report outlining 18 recommendations for Improving the Lives of Children, Youth, and Young Adults with Complex Needs and Their Families. After listening to this presentation and reviewing all of the recommendations, the panel decided that DHS is doing significant work in this area and continuing this topic would be a duplication of work.

Therefore, the panel requested information and data from OCYF regarding numerous topics, such as licensing, medical staff employed by counties to assist with abuse investigations, sibling visitation, mandated reporters, and different types of foster homes available to youth, to assist in identifying a new topic to research.

In May 2024, several members of the SE CRP attended the National CRP Conference in San Diego and shared information with panel members regarding other possible topics of interest. Some of these topics included changes to mandated reporting procedures throughout the country, Project

Hope, an initiative to focus on positive childhood experiences, and the use of lived experience in informing child welfare practices.

During the remainder of the year, the SE Panel reviewed data and information available regarding all of the topic areas listed above. Based on this information and in-depth discussions, the SE Panel decided to focus on visitation of children in out-of-home placement. While this focus area will encompass all aspects of visitation (including caseworker visits with the child and child visitation with the parent), the main focus will be on the consistency of visitation between siblings in out-of-home care.

Due to changing topics mid-way through 2024, the SE Panel does not have any recommendations for OCYF but looks forward to collaborating as work begins on their new topic area.

Key activities in 2024:

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

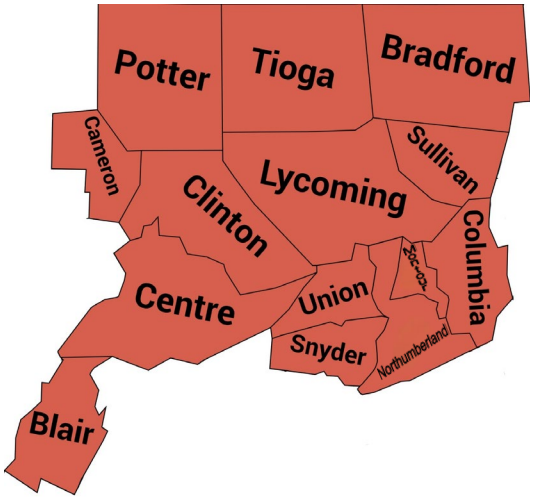
- Three quarterly meetings;
- Two All-Panel Meetings; and
- Five panel members attended the National CRP Conference in San Diego.

Southeast Citizen Review Panel Members

Nakeya Berry – Philadelphia
Happi Grillon – Philadelphia
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.

2024 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report
North Central Citizen Review Panel Report and Recommendations



Introduction:

In accordance with the pre-established rotation schedule, the North Central (NC) CRP was established in 2023 and serves 14 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

The nine applicants selected to join the North Central 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 NC CRP officially began its work in January 2024.

Overview of the Focus Area:

To assist the NC CRP in selecting a topic(s) to research, each member was required to participate in the "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;
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act;
- Mandated and Permissive Reporter Training; and
- Implicit Bias Training.

On October 17, 2023, an in-person new member orientation was held at the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center in State College. This meeting included:

- A presentation by the OCYF State Liaison for the Citizen Review Panels, which included:
    - A general overview of OCYF's roles and responsibilities;
    - A breakdown of the current Child and Family Services Plan; and

    - An outline of OCYF's current priority areas (Family First Prevention Services Act, Voluntary Resolution Agreement, Human Trafficking, and Trauma Informed Care).
- A presentation by Caitlin Robinson (Director for the Bureau of Children and Family Services for OCYF), Gabi Williams (Central Region Director), and Brian Waugh (Northeast Region Director), which included:
    - A general overview of the regional offices' roles and responsibilities; and
    - A breakdown of the priority areas in the North Central region (Trauma Informed Care, Reduction of Fatalities/Near-Fatalities, Complex Cases, and Workforce Recruitment and Retention).
- A panel discussion with representatives from three counties (Sullivan, Bradford, and Potter) in the region, which outlined the strengths, weaknesses, and gap areas of child welfare in the North Central region. Some of these concerns included:
    - Workforce recruitment and retention struggles; and
    - General lack of resources and/or access to services.
- A breakout session for panel members to:
    - Review the following resources:
        - Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resources:
            - 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan
            - Pennsylvania Round Three Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan
            - 2023 Annual Progress and Services Report
            - 2022 Child Protective Services Annual Report
            - 2022 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report
            - 2022 State of Child Welfare, published by Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
            - Child Welfare Practice Model
        - Race Equity Resources:
            - Racial Equity Report 2021
            - 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 the Annie E. Casey Foundation
            - 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, discussions focused primarily on workforce retention and recruitment concerns, the continuous quality improvement efforts, the state's rulemaking processes, and the panel's desire to review previous CRP recommendations. Information and data requests were made with respect to these topics to help the panel narrow down its focus area.

Summary of Work Completed:

The NC CRP attended meetings in January, April, June, September, and October 2024. During these meetings, the panel reviewed numerous documents and reports provided by OCYF to help the panel continue to navigate its first year as a panel and assist in the selection of a topic to research.

One area of concern that kept coming up during discussions was workforce recruitment and retention. The panel acknowledged that the state is already doing an immense amount of work in the area but recognized a potential gap area. The panel noticed that a lot of focus was being given to post-secondary education for the recruitment of caseworkers, such as the promotion of the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) and Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) programs. However, there was nothing at the high school level to help get younger students interested in the field of social work. The panel believes that grabbing the attention of students prior to college may help increase the workforce, as well as grow the CWEB and CWEL programs even further.

The panel began its research by looking at the Department of Education's Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) that are offered at the high school level. While there is a human services CIP, there is nothing specific to social work. The human services CIP "...focuses on the general study and provision of human and social services...to work in public and private human services agencies and organizations. Includes instruction in the social sciences, psychology, principles of social service, human services policy, planning and evaluation, social services law and administration and applications to particular issues..." (mtu.edu). The panel believes that by creating a social work CIP that is more tailored to the educational needs of caseworkers (such as socialization, communication skills, and engagement skills), high school students could graduate with a certification to help them transition directly into the workforce or ease the transition to post-secondary education programs.

By increasing social work's Attraction, Preparation, and Retention through the creation of an education pathway from high school to post-secondary training with attainment of a certification, the panel believes that OCYF will address deficits in recruitment and retention of the child protective services workforce.

Focus for 2025:

The NC CRP plans to focus on the educational stability of youth in care to ensure school placement continues without disruption or transfer to a new school and that it follows all of the appropriate steps to be completed in a timely manner. The panel will be looking to meet with the OCYF school liaison and possibly survey counties/school districts to identify strengths and gaps.

Key activities in 2024:

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

- Three quarterly meetings;
- Two All-Panel Meetings; and
- One panel member attended the National CRP Conference in San Diego.

North Central Citizen Review Panel Recommendations for 2024:

Recommendation 1:

The NC CRP recommends that the DHS work in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to develop a high school program for social work under CIP 44.00 Human Services (General). This new program should include topics of education to align with existing program

expectations and allow participants to graduate with a certification to transition directly into the workforce or ease their transition to a higher education program. The course should include:

- Child and Human Development;
- State and Federal Child Protective Services Laws;
- Develop Awareness of: Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Co-Occurring Conditions;
- Mandated Reporting;
- Effective Communication and Mediation;
- Trauma Informed Care;
- Managing Stress and Burnout/Self-care;
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and
- Participation in an internship.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 1

OCYF is appreciative of the NC CRP recommendation and recognizes that this recommendation calls for change outside of OCYF, but it affords OCYF the opportunity to engage in collaboration with PDE to add a high school program for social work under CIP 44.00 Human Services (General).

OCYF has initiated communication with the DHS Office of Policy Development, and that office has engaged with PDE to obtain clarification on the process and the possibility of adding this as a CIP. Additionally, the office has provided feedback to OCYF that this topic would be discussed at the All-Policy Meeting with the Governor's Policy Office. Both OCYF and the DHS's Office of Policy Development applaud the CRP for the recommendation and for great forward thinking.

Additionally, OCYF has communicated the panel's recommendation with the Child Welfare Education and Research Program, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work. The Child Welfare Education and Research Programs provide a continuum of professional development programs designed to prepare, strengthen, and enhance the child welfare workforce. These programs are a cooperative effort among ACF, DHS, Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators, and 24 schools of social work. It was also noted by the DHS Office of Policy Development that the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges be included in these discussions since community college can make the first step into higher education less overwhelming and it can lay out a path for students who may want to stay in their local area as well as for those who are not ready to commit to a four-year college/university.

While this addition would not allow for a student to leave high school and enter the workforce as a CCYA caseworker, it could spark a desire to enter the social work field and would allow students to apply to be a County Social Services Aide (SSA) 1, which requires no post-secondary school. After gaining experience and years of service, those individuals could seek employment as a SSA 2 or SSA 3 in counties where applicable. After gaining two years of experience as a SSA 3 and with two years of college level course work (which would need to include 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences) individuals could be qualified to apply for casework positions.

Finally, OCYF and DHS acknowledge and recognize the importance of building a strong, resilient workforce. To be part of the solution, OCYF and other stakeholders participated in a Caseworker Recruitment and Retention Study. The study resulted in a report that includes 43 recommendations across six themes: cross-cutting; compensation; recruiting; caseworker workloads; training; and safe, supportive workplaces. OCYF recognizes that not every recommendation will be applicable, viable, or appropriate for every CCYA; however, some recommendations support strengthening recruitment

relationships with universities and colleges, expanding the CWEB program, and improving the communication between CCYAs and the Civil Service Commission.

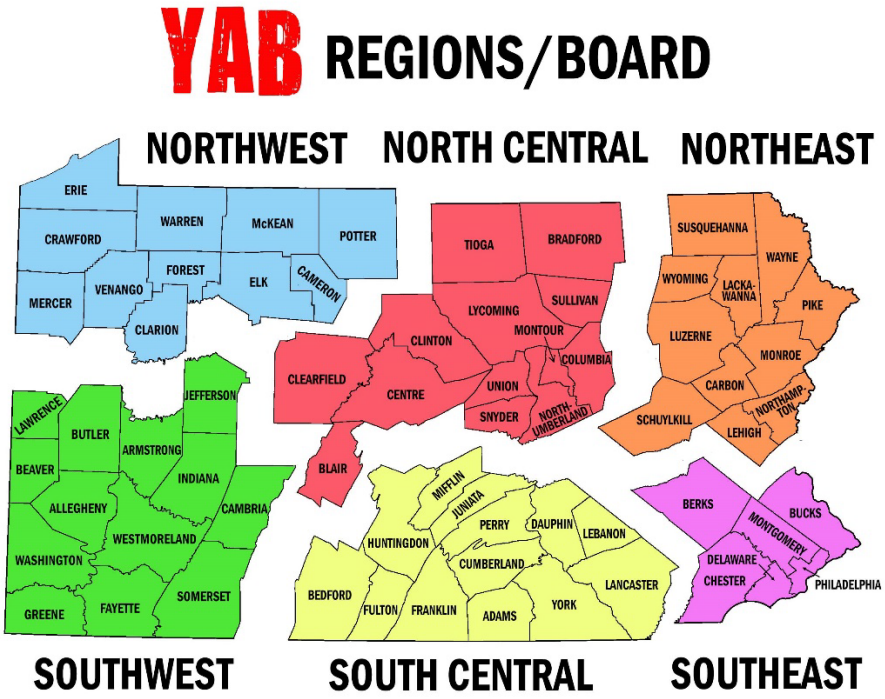
OCYF agrees that by sparking an interest in the social work field with high school-aged students, it would be anticipated that this recommendation could provide enhanced depth to recruitment and retention efforts in Pennsylvania. While it is recognized that ongoing collaboration is needed to support this suggestion, both OCYF and the DHS Office of Policy Development perceive value in normalizing education focused on social work while students are attending high school and technical schools.

North Central Citizen Review Panel Members

Robin Adams – Tioga
Suzanne Delaney – Tioga
Brittney Eiklor – Bradford
Janilyn Elias – Bradford
Zabrina Finn – Montour
Sheri Larson – Potter
Amy Martell – Bradford
Jennifer Turner – Blair
Virginia Williams – Blair

Biographies for each member can be found on the CRP website at the following link: https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CRP/NorthCentral.html.

2024 Citizen Review Panel Annual Report
Statewide Youth Advisory Board Report and Recommendations



Introduction:

The mission of the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is to educate, advocate, and form partnerships to create positive change in the child welfare system. The YAB is funded by the Pennsylvania DHS, OCYF, and is supported by the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania CWRC.

The YAB is comprised of youth and alumni of the child welfare system aged 16-21 years of age. There are also local 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 http://www.payab.pitt.edu/YABRegions.htm.

Overview of the Focus Area:

The Statewide YAB has experienced a revitalization, uniting both new and returning members who share a renewed commitment to advocating for themselves and their peers. Regional YAB recruitment efforts have driven membership growth at both the statewide and regional levels, resulting in participation rates that now match or exceed pre-pandemic levels.

This year has been particularly successful for the YAB, highlighted by a strong emphasis on tackling disproportionality and addressing the unique challenges faced by black and brown youth in care. The youth demonstrated a dedicated interest in fostering allyship and equipping caseworkers with the tools to engage in meaningful conversations about race and equity. During a Statewide meeting in March, the youth participated in an in-depth discussion focused on a guide designed to help caseworkers hold open, honest conversations with black and brown youth about the challenges they face within the foster care system. Although professionals often find conversations about race challenging, the youth approached the topic with honesty, respect, active participation, and rich

dialogue. Their willingness to learn from one another and incorporate diverse perspectives was evident throughout the discussion.

Furthermore, growing interest among older youth and caseworkers in tackling racism and advancing race equity has sparked several initiatives to address these issues. For example, Northumberland County leveraged the YAB *Protecting Crowns* resource to provide essential items for their youth of color. The agency expressed its gratitude, stating, ***"If it wasn't for you sharing this resource with us, we might not have found these items on our own... We're so overwhelmed with the daily demands of the agency, and focusing on the positive aspects is truly uplifting."***

Summary of Work Completed:

This year has been a remarkable one for the YAB, marked by continued growth in membership at both the statewide and regional levels. The YAB has maintained its collaborative efforts with community partners, hosting statewide meetings in January, March, May, June, September, and November. Below is an overview of the key accomplishments throughout 2024.

During the May Statewide meeting, representatives from various counties, including Allegheny, Cambria, Cameron, Carbon, Dauphin, and Erie, gathered to connect and collaborate. Attendees received an in-depth presentation, *YAB 101*, reviewing core principles and gaining a deeper understanding of the board's mission and responsibilities. A significant part of the meeting was dedicated to discussing the Blueprint Project, which focuses on supporting children and youth experiencing complex trauma. The youth actively participated in conversations about the project's implementation plans, demonstrating the YAB's commitment to community partnership and empowering youth in foster care to ensure that their voices are represented in decisions that affect them.

The annual Leadership Summit in June was another milestone event for the YAB. In partnership with OCYF, the summit showcased the launch of the pilot program for the Speaker's Bureau, which consists of a core group of youth who will undergo formal training for public speaking engagements and active participation in meetings. This platform is designed to amplify the voices of individuals with lived experience in foster care, enabling them to contribute to statewide permanency initiatives and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. Keynote speaker Ebony Bell, a visionary business owner, speaker, and leader in allyship, delivered an inspiring address highlighting the qualities of effective leadership and genuine allyship and emphasizing the importance of showing up for those in need of support. Participants also took part in workshops such as *The Roadmap to Youth and Family Engagement*, which provided valuable tools to promote and sustain youth and family involvement. The summit successfully attracted over 50 youth and staff participants from across the state.

The September Statewide YAB kickoff event was another notable achievement, drawing 50 participants, including approximately 35 youth from across the state. This event fostered collaboration and strengthened relationships among attendees. Lindsey Glezen from OCYF opened the meeting with a warm welcome and shared critical information on resources like College Ed, the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), and the Chafee Education Training Grant. Kari Coccagna, from CWRC, followed with an overview of the CRPs, emphasizing the YAB's integral role as Pennsylvania's fourth CRP. The youth engaged in an interactive discussion on the importance of voting, voter registration, and the development of a comprehensive voting plan. Overall, these events underscore the YAB's dedication to empowering youth in foster care, ensuring that their voices are heard, and supporting initiatives that drive meaningful change.

Key activities in 2024:

- YAB members represented their peers in the Blueprint Project, which aims to support children and youth facing complex trauma. Additionally, committee members from the work group conducted a focus group during the YAB Statewide meeting in March;
- The Speaker's Bureau project was piloted at the June 2024 YAB Leadership Summit, with five candidates participating in the initial launch;
- Regional YABs organized recruitment events statewide to raise awareness and promote the YAB;
- YAB leadership contributed to the 2024 Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network/Independent Living (SWAN/IL) matching event at the SWAN Permanency Conference by hosting a resource table with informational materials, including coloring books and brochures about the YAB and IL;
- YAB representatives participated in and assisted with presenting an overview of Independent Living (IL) at the 2024 NYTD review; and
- Two members of YAB were selected to attend the National CRP Conference in San Diego. This was an opportunity for our youth to connect with other youth from around the country and learn how other states promote the recommendations of the youth through the CRP process.

Youth Advisory Board Recommendations for 2024:

Recommendation 1:

The YAB recommends that OCYF support the revamp of NYTD resources and enhance efforts to educate youth on the importance of participating in the NYTD survey. Additionally, the YAB suggests the creation of a NYTD council consisting of system alumni to advise on marketing strategies aimed at educating youth, improving data collection, and supporting the ongoing implementation of NYTD.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 1
DHS/OCYF supports the YAB's recommendation to revamp NYTD resources and enhance efforts to educate youth about the importance of participating in the NYTD survey. DHS/OCYF will continue to work with the CWRC and the YAB on the revision of current NYTD materials and the creation of new materials. In 2023, DHS/OCYF supported CWRC and the Statewide YAB in the development of a NYTD brochure (NYTDBrochure.pdf) and a NYTD video (National Youth in Transition Database - Video). Additionally, the NYTD logo was updated according to youth recommendations. DHS/OCYF updated the Caseworker's Guide to NYTD and the Caseworker's Guide to the Baseline Survey, which will assist IL staff in understanding NYTD processes and requirements. These documents are resources that IL staff can use to educate youth. DHS/OCYF provides updates on NYTD to youth and staff at each Statewide YAB meeting and during each SWAN/IL Quarterly and Statewide meeting.

DHS/OCYF will continue to work with the CWRC Independent Living Project and YAB to provide opportunities for education on NYTD participation, which will include the development of a NYTD Council. This will ensure that the youth voice and perspective are included throughout the NYTD process as well as enhance engagement efforts. The NYTD Council will also be an integral part of Pennsylvania's NYTD Federal Review process once scheduled.

Recommendation 2:

The YAB is requesting OCYF's continued support as it moves forward with the implementation of the Speaker's Bureau project, particularly in recruitment efforts and engagement and training of community partners.

OCYF Response to Recommendation 2
DHS/OCYF is committed to continued support of the development and implementation of the Speaker's Bureau. The Speaker's Bureau was piloted at the 2024 YAB Leadership Summit. Youth in attendance were provided an opportunity to apply for the Speaker's Bureau with the intent for the program to be expanded to include older and younger youth and represent demographics of youth in child welfare. Speaker's Bureau members are provided training and support, including mentoring opportunities to assist youth and young people with support during and after their participation on a panel or workgroup.

DHS/OCYF understands that this platform provides an opportunity for youth and young adults with lived experience in the child welfare system to help inform policies and practices affecting children, youth, and families. Members of the DHS/OCYF team have been involved in the interview process and are dedicated to ensuring that the youth voice is heard.

Recommendation 3:

Over the past year, the YAB has focused on addressing disproportionality and the unique challenges faced by black and brown youth in care. The YAB is seeking support from OCYF to promote the resources and information it is developing to help caseworkers engage more effectively with black and brown youth, including initiatives like "Protecting Crowns" and the "Engaging Black and Brown Resources."

OCYF Response to Recommendation 3
DHS/OCYF agrees that youth should have access to and receive resources to address disproportionality and the unique challenges faced by black and brown youth in care. DHS/OCYF will continue to support YAB in developing resources that address racial disparities experienced by youth and young adults in the child welfare system. County children and youth agencies and private providers continue to have the ability to purchase items and incorporate programming to benefit youth served by the county through their IL grant funds. Staff trainings are offered throughout the year and across the state to help strengthen caseworkers' skills in engaging black and brown youth effectively and with cultural sensitivity.

Proposed Focus Area/Activity for 2025:

The YAB focus area for 2025 will center around the well-being and support of parenting teens in foster care, NYTD council collaboration, promoting normalcy for youth in foster care, and budgeting and financial literacy. By addressing these areas, the YAB aims to empower youth in foster care to overcome barriers, achieve personal growth, and transition successfully into adulthood. These initiatives reflect a commitment to creating a supportive, informed, and equitable foster care system.