

Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

Pennsylvania's plan for foster and adoptive parent diligent recruitment found below details the state's effort to meet the federal plan requirements.

A description of the characteristics of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

Pennsylvania relies upon available data to help drive foster and adoptive parent recruitment efforts. Two databases are used, AFCARS and a Pennsylvania specific database, the CY 890, which tracks information on all children in out of home care with a goal of adoption. Per AFCARS as of June 30, 2018, Pennsylvania had 16,681 children in out-of-home care, 7,390 (44%) of whom were over the age of 10. Of the total number of children in care, 8,490 (51%) were males and 8,191 (49%) were females.

The racial/ethnicity of the 16,681 children in out of home care is as follows (children can have more than one defined race):

- White = 10,025
- Black = 7,671
- Asian = 106
- Hawaiian/Pacific Islander = 27
- Indian/Alaskan = 57
- Hispanic = 2,175

In SFY 2017-18 a total 2,452 children were adopted from Pennsylvania's foster care system. 504 children, age 10 and older were adopted; a 25% increase from SFY 2016-17 and 1,948 children under the age of nine were adopted with 1,384 of them under the age of five. 80 percent of children adopted from the PA foster care system every year are under the age of 10. In SFY 2017-18, 1,257 (51%) males and 1,195 (49%) females were adopted from PA foster care.

Per the CY 890 as of June 30, 2018:

- 3,415 children had a primary goal of adoption.
- 2,747 (80.4%) had a primary goal of adoption and were in need of an adoptive resource. Of those:
 - 1,097 (39.9%) were 10 years and older;
 - 1,607 (58.5%) were of a minority race; and,
 - 1,465 (53.3%) were male; 1,282 (46.7%) were female.

- 1,692 children had a concurrent goal of adoption.
- 1,667 (99.99%) children who had a concurrent goal of adoption were in need of an adoptive resource. Of those:
 - 633 (37.9%) were 10 years and older;
 - 439 (26.3%) were of a minority race; and,
 - 731 (43.9%) were male; 936 (56.1%) were female.
- 551 children had both a primary and concurrent goal of adoption.
- 463 (84.0%) of the children who had both a primary and concurrent goal of adoption were in need of an adoptive resource. Of those:
 - 140 (30.2%) were 10 years and older;
 - 146 (31.5%) were of a minority race; and,
 - 268 (48.6%) were male; 283 (51.4%) were female.

Specific strategies to reach out to all parts of the community and diverse methods of disseminating both general information about being a foster/adoptive parent and child-specific information.

Resource family recruitment in Pennsylvania is provided through the SWAN Prime Contract, Pennsylvania's Media Contracts selected through the Commonwealths Procurement process and by CCYA, either directly or through private providers with whom they contract for foster and adoption services. Additional recruitment and awareness events are provided by the PSRFA.

Strategies include:

- DHS/OCYF has been recruiting foster and adoptive families through a media campaign since 1999. The media campaign generally consists of television, radio, print, and online advertisements.
- The current campaign, #MeetTheKids features older youth from the Pennsylvania foster care system who are in need of permanent families. The commercials are targeted to the Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Pittsburgh media markets as this is where the majority of the children are from and are also the areas in which most of our foster and adoptive families reside.
- DHS/OCYF pays for three Waiting Child segments that air on local television in Harrisburg, Pittsburgh and Scranton-Wilkes Barre markets.
- Philadelphia has a similar Waiting Child segment - Wednesday's Child - that is sponsored by Wendy's Wonderful Kids and the National Adoption Center.
- Radio, Facebook, YouTube and other online media sources are used to both highlight the statewide campaigns for foster and adoptive families and to feature specific children and youth in need of adoptive families.
- DHS has a website, www.adoptpakids.org that is used to feature all children waiting for a permanent family and as an informational resource for prospective and approved foster and adoptive families and a Facebook page as well: <https://www.facebook.com/adoptpa>

- DHS/OCYF supports local public and private foster and adoptive agencies National Adoption Awareness activities in November and National Foster Care Month Awareness activities in May.
- PSRFA supports annual events held in May during National Foster Parent Month that aide in the recruitment and retention of resource families.
- DHS/OCYF has several other recruitment strategies, including services provided through SWAN, such as the Older Child Matching Initiative (OCMI), which provides intense child-focused services to teens in need of adoptive homes by matching them with approved families who are registered with the Resource Family Registry (RFR) who indicated they will adopt older youth.
- SWAN provides training to prospective adoptive, formal kinship families and permanent legal custodianship families who are interested in providing permanency to children in the Pennsylvania child welfare system. Families interested in providing foster care to children in the system who they do not know are generally trained by their CCYA or by a private provider that is contracted with the county agency.
- All families who complete the SWAN Family Profile Process are provided with approximately 24 hours of training. The training includes information about the children are in out of home care and the types of on-going supports and services they may need and how to access them.
- The Family Profile process is designed to train families about the reality of becoming an adoptive family; it is not simply a Home Study. SWAN affiliate agencies often provide training, informational sessions and hold matching events in the evenings and on weekends. Many of the same agencies that provide adoptive family training offer foster family training and many families are approved to both foster and adopt (which is what OCYF recommends).
- Not all foster family training is provided by private agencies. Some CCYA prefer to train their own foster families and many use the PSRFA Parents as Tender Healers Training as part of their on-going training effort. Training is often done in the evening or on weekends as that is when families are available to attend.
- The SWAN Helpline responds to questions from the public about foster care and adoption, including assisting OCYF in responding to the SWAN Facebook page and mailing informational packets to prospective foster and adoptive families.
- All foster, adoptive and kinship families must be registered with the RFR, and whether or not they were approved to foster, adopt or provide kinship care. The RFR is a computerized database listing of all foster, adoptive and kinship families who have been studied to provide care to foster children.
- Other services, such as Child-Specific Recruitment, which is a targeted effort to find a specific child a family and matching services, where computer-generated “matches” are found between children who are waiting for permanent homes and those families who are registered with the RFR.

Strategies for assuring that all prospective foster/adoptive parents have access to agencies that license/approve foster/adoptive parents, including location and hours of services so that the agencies can be accessed by all members of the community.

- All prospective foster and adoptive parents have access to any licensed provider in PA. SWAN supports and enhances timely permanency services for children in Pennsylvania who are in the custody of CCYA and provides post-permanency support services to families. Since the SWAN program began in 1992, DHS has required that the SWAN prime contractor ensure that services are provided to children in foster care regardless of their geographic location, gender, culture or race, and that families not be denied the opportunity to adopt based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, income, marital status, education, employment status, citizenship, or geography. To ensure equality of service delivery, DHS requires all affiliates to abide by the same contract language. There are approximately 80 SWAN affiliate agencies.

Strategies for training staff to work with diverse communities including cultural, racial, and socio-economic variations.

- SWAN provides annual trainings which include four trainings and an annual permanency conference to train staff. These trainings provide CCYA and private agency staff, workers in adoption and IL, and resource families the opportunity to learn about the services, the importance of each and how to access them. Topics covered include workshops on foster care, adoption, IL, family engagement, secondary trauma, concurrent planning, permanency and recruitment and retention of resource families with cultural, racial and socio-economic variations.
- PSRFA holds an annual conference to provide training to resource families and child welfare professionals. Training at this event helps resource families meet the state requirements for annual re-certification. PSRFA provides regional resource parent trainings as well.
- CCYA caseworkers and supervisors, through the CWRC, have access to trainings that include topics about working with diverse communities, racial and socio-economic variations.

Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers.

- The SWAN Helpline Information and Referral Specialists answer the Helpline Monday through Friday during the workday. An answering machine takes a call after hours. The Helpline uses Language Line to speak to callers who do not use English as their primary language and are able to answer questions regarding the foster care and adoption process and refer families to a SWAN affiliate in their area who can help them complete the Family Profile process.
- SWAN has a variety of agencies that try to meet multicultural and religious needs, including somewhere Spanish is the primary language spoken, such as Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha and others that meet the needs of other groups such as Jewish Family Services.

Non-discriminatory fee structures.

- SWAN Family Profiles are provided to all families who wish to adopt a child from the PA foster care system at no charge to the family. There are no requirements on what constitutes a family, as DHS/OCYF believes that family defines themselves. Therefore, we have a variety of families including single parents, married parents, same-sex couples, even siblings and mothers/daughters who are or have been, through the SWAN Family Profile Process.
- There are no fees charged for families interested in becoming a foster or adoptive family for a CCYA.
- SWAN post-permanency services (case advocacy, support groups and respite care) are available to any Pennsylvania family who has adopted, whether or not they adopted from foster care and to formal kinship and PLC families who have provided permanency to a Pennsylvania foster child. Families self-refer for services by contacting the SWAN Helpline. There is no charge to families for the services, which are funded with a mixture of Title IV-E, Title IV-B and state funds.

Procedures for the timely search for prospective parents for a child needing an adoptive placement, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, provided that such procedures ensure that placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement.

- Pennsylvania statute requires that Family Finding activities be offered to every family that is accepted for service. Therefore, Family Finding activities, including diligent searches, record digs (case mining), Accurint searches, etc., must be completed for every child in out of home care at least once per year, although OCYF recommends that it be done on a regular, on-going basis. To help complete the diligent search process, 66 of PA's 67 counties have SWAN Legal Services Initiative (LSI) paralegals. A copy of the Pennsylvania Diligent Search Manual can be found online at www.diakon-swan.org in the LSI section of the site.
- The Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) provides child-specific and family specific matching services. All children with a goal of adoption are required by Pennsylvania law to be registered with PAE. All families who obtain a SWAN Family Profile are required to be registered with PAE as well. When information is received on either a child or family, the information, including the type of family a child needs and the type of child a family is looking for, is entered into a database. That information is then compared to try to find potential "matches" between a waiting child and an approved prospective adoptive family. The potential match information is then shared with the family, the family's worker and the child's worker to be pursued further. Pennsylvania's adoptpakids.org also requires that every child eligible for adoption be posted.