

Pennsylvania Post-Permanency Profile

Updated: November 2024

State Population (2023 Census estimate)

- more than 11 million

Adoption/Guardianship Assistance Caseload (2022)

- more than 20,000
- Adoption assistance caseload — 21,545
 - Guardianship assistance caseload — 3,888
 - Total — 25,433

State Administration Type

- County administered

Pre-Service Training

Pennsylvania does not have a state-mandated pre-service training curriculum. Foster parents in Pennsylvania are required to participate in a minimum of six hours of approved training per year, although many participate in more training hours. For more information on requirements regarding foster parents and foster family homes, see [55 Pa. Code Chapter 3700. Foster Family Care Agency \(pacodeandbulletin.gov\)](#).

The Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) is a partnership among the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange, public and private adoption agencies, organizations, advocates, judges, the legal community, and foster and adoptive parents. The network is administered by DHS through a prime contractor. The SWAN program serves children in the custody of county children and youth agencies. The design of the network is to support the work of county agencies in expediting permanency services. Toward that end, 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.

The SWAN program does not train foster families unless they are formal kinship care families or permanent legal custodianship families interested in providing permanency to a specific child. Families interested in providing foster care to children in the system whom they do not know are generally trained by their county children and youth agency (CCYA) or by a private provider that is contracted with the county agency. The Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA) also provides Pennsylvania Parents as Tender Healers as training specifically for prospective foster parents.



All families who complete the SWAN Family Profile Process are provided with approximately 24 hours of training that covers the following topics:

- How the System Works
- Attachment
- Grief and Loss
- Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard
- Who the Children Are
- Child Development
- Parenting Skills
- Resources, including SWAN Post-permanency Services, which include:
 - Case Advocacy (to help families navigate services in their local communities)
 - Support Groups
 - Respite

Services Offered Through the State’s Post-Permanency Support Program

In 1992 Pennsylvania established the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) as an initiative to decrease the barriers that impede adoptions of children in foster care. SWAN is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF). The network is comprised of public and private child welfare agencies, adoption agencies, the legal community, parents, organizations, and individuals working together on behalf of children. OCYF contracts with a prime contractor that in turn contracts with approximately 74 private adoption agencies, referred to as SWAN affiliate agencies, across the state to deliver the direct services provided through SWAN including post-permanency services, which include case advocacy (assessment and case management), support groups, and respite.

CCYAs and private adoption agencies may also provide post-permanency services, however, most of these services are provided through SWAN, and SWAN’s services are separate and distinct from county child welfare services. Post-permanency services include:

- **Pre-permanency supports** — Adoption finalization is a direct service offered under the SWAN program to any child or youth in the legal custody of a CCYA who has a goal of adoption. This service includes transitioning the child to adoption, counseling, developing a support plan, and facilitating adoption finalization.
- **Case advocacy** — This is one of three post-permanency services offered through SWAN. This service ensures that families receive access to services designed to meet their needs after they have made a permanent commitment to a child or youth. Services are strength-based and emphasize collaboration. Case advocacy is comprised of two phases—case assessment and case management. When a family is referred to case





advocacy, the SWAN affiliate has 30 days to complete the case assessment, which includes a family support plan that outlines services to be implemented with and for the family. The case assessment process requires using several assessment tools, including Child and Adolescent Functioning Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS), Juvenile Inventory for Functioning (JIFF), Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES III), PA Risk Assessment, Child Safety Assessment, and a Home Safety Checklist.

After the assessment and family support plan are completed, the family may access services. All Pennsylvania's post-permanency services are designed to provide family support. Once assessed, the case management services offered to a family may include coordinating services with other systems, such as the mental health system; counseling, both individual and family; and advocacy services for the family, which may be with school districts, medical and therapeutic providers, as well as additional education about the child's needs.

- **Support groups** — This is one of three post-permanency services offered through SWAN. SWAN affiliate agencies that provide post-permanency services provide support groups as part of their contract. A variety of support groups are provided and aimed at meeting the needs of the adoptive families in their region. These include support groups for adoptive parents, adopted teens, younger adopted children, and birth children. Support groups may be held in person or virtually. Childcare is typically provided for in-person groups, and groups can be facilitated by either parents or professionals.
- **Educational advocacy** — Through SWAN's case advocacy post-permanency service, support is offered to help families address educational and school challenges. Services are family-driven and individualized to meet their needs, which allows for services to include attending school meetings with parents as outlined in the family support plan or at family request.
- **Respite care** — This is one of three post-permanency services offered through SWAN. SWAN affiliate agencies that provide post-permanency services provide planned respite as part of their contract. Respite services are open and flexible to meet the child and family needs and agencies are committed to doing careful assessment and matching for respite care. Respite can be either inside or outside the family home and can also include camp experiences for the children.
- **Information and referral** — The SWAN Helpline (1-800-585-7926 or swanhelpline@diakon-swan.org) is the initial point of contact for information and referral. The Helpline is staffed by permanency specialists who evaluate the request for assistance. SWAN maintains a resource directory of more than 500 providers across the state. In addition, the SWAN Helpline distributes educational materials at the request of families. Affiliate agencies provide a variety of educational support services for adoptive families including lending libraries, newsletters, and trainings on topics such as





attachment, interracial adoption issues, educational issues, and parenting a child who has been sexually abused.

- **Training** — In addition to the pre-permanency training described above, SWAN provides quarterly trainings and an annual permanency conference. These trainings provide CCYAs and private agency staff, workers in adoption and independent living, and resource families with the opportunity to learn about the services, the importance of each, and how to access them. Topics covered include foster care, kinship, adoption, independent living, family engagement, family matching, trauma (including secondary trauma), mental health, concurrent planning, permanency, and recruitment and retention of resource families with cultural, racial equity, LGBTQIA2S+ and socioeconomic variations, as well as legal trainings relative to prudent parenting and resource family rights. The annual permanency conference has tracks for independent living workers, child welfare professionals, legal professionals, and families.

For more information, visit:

- SWAN's post-permanency services — <https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/dhs/resources/adopt-pa-kids/post-permanency-services.html>
- SWAN — <https://swantoolkit.org/>

In federal fiscal year 2023, 931 families received post-permanency services through the SWAN program.

In addition to training offered by SWAN, the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA) also conducts regional trainings as well as an annual conference. Training, resources, and information are also available to formal and informal kinship caregivers through Pennsylvania's kinship navigator program, PA KinConnector (www.kinconnector.org).

Geographic Area Covered

Pennsylvania's SWAN post-permanency services are offered statewide.

Eligible Population for the Overall Post-Permanency Program

- All families who adopted from the state's foster care system
- All families who adopted from foster care in other states, territories, or tribes
- All families who adopted through intercountry adoption
- All families who adopted through private adoption
- All families who have guardianship of a child from foster care
- Other: Formal kinship families



Variations in Eligibility for the Post-Permanency Program

SWAN post-permanency services are available to Pennsylvania adoptive families (whether or not they adopted a child from foster care) and to families who have provided permanency to children from the Pennsylvania child welfare system through Permanent Legal Custodianship (PLC) or formal kinship care. Formal kinship care and permanent legal custodianship families are those who provide permanency to a child who was in Pennsylvania foster care.

Accessibility

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, gender identity, culture or race, and that families not be denied the opportunity to adopt based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, income, marital status, education, employment status, citizenship, or geography. To ensure equality of service delivery, DHS requires all SWAN affiliate agencies to abide by the same contract language.

The SWAN Helpline uses LanguageLine Solutions® to serve callers who do not speak English. A toll-free number allows the caller to choose the desired language and be assigned an interpreter. A three-way call between the caller, the Helpline staff and the LanguageLine Solutions® interpreter ensues. SWAN affiliate agencies use translation services when needed to provide services to the families in their communities. SWAN has a variety of agencies that try to meet diverse needs, including some where Spanish is the primary language spoken and others that focus on meeting the needs of religious families such as Jewish Family Services.

SWAN's trainings include sessions on recruitment and retention of resource families with cultural, racial, LGBTQIA2S+, and socioeconomic diversity.

Outreach and Engagement

The SWAN prime contractor is contractually obligated to conduct outreach and engagement related to SWAN post-permanency services. Information about SWAN post-permanency services is also provided through the following:

- SWAN Helpline staff
- Annual trainings, events, and conferences
- Websites such as www.adoptpakids.org, www.diakon-swan.org, and www.swantoolkit.org
- SWAN Facebook page
- Promotional and educational materials
- Department listservs
- SWAN network



CCYAs are also encouraged to share information about SWAN's post-permanency services during adoption finalization hearings and during annual determination of adoption subsidy agreements.

How the Post-Permanency Program Is Operated

Other (listed below)

- The SWAN program is overseen by DHS and is managed by a prime contractor. The prime contractor maintains subcontracts with approximately 74 affiliate agencies who provide direct services to children in care and the families who serve them.

Notes About Who Provides Which Service(s)

SWAN, through the prime contractor and the affiliated agencies, provides the services described above, including information and referral, case advocacy, support groups, and respite care.

CCYAs and private adoption agencies can also provide post-permanency services.

Adoption/Guardianship Assistance/Subsidy Review and Changes

Adoption Assistance

Public county children and youth agencies (CCYA) are the only agencies that can determine whether a child is eligible for adoption assistance. Once determined eligible, an agreement is negotiated between the county children and youth agency and the prospective adoptive family.

CCYAs are required to contact the parents annually to assess the child's needs and the family's circumstances. The agency may request a renegotiation if significant changes are reported. Any changes must be made with the agreement of the adoptive parents and the county agency. Changes in the terms of the adoption assistance agreement require an amended agreement to be signed by both the county agency and the adoptive parents.

The CCYA or the adoptive parents may request a change in the adoption assistance agreement and renegotiate the terms of the agreement at any point while the agreement is in effect. The family must make a written request to their county agency to change the monthly adoption assistance payment due to changes in the child's needs or the family's circumstances. The family must provide documentation related to the change(s) that supports the requested change. If a parent does not receive a requested change, the parent may appeal the agency's decision.



The Adoption Assistance manual is available on the DHS website at:

https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/docs/publications/documents/forms-and-pubs-ocvf/OCYF-Bulletin-3140-21-04_Adoption-Assistance-Manual_issued073021.pdf

Permanent Legal Custodianship

The CCYA must make a written determination regarding child or youth eligibility and permanent legal custodianship (PLC) candidate eligibility prior to the execution of the Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodian (SPLC) subsidy agreement. The CCYA must negotiate a subsidy agreement with the PLC candidate outlining the terms of the agreement and the benefits available to the PLC candidate during the term of the agreement. The agreement must be signed by the agency and the PLC candidate prior to the legal establishment of SPLC.

The CCYA is required to send an annual contact to each approved family with whom they have entered into an SPLC agreement. The Annual Subsidy Contact/Evaluation Form provides an avenue for the county to notify custodians of the opportunity to name a Successor(s) (if that had not previously occurred); ability to change the identified Successor(s); and confirm the identified Successor remains willing and able to assume the role (if necessary). Any changes or additions identified in the form would trigger the need to amend the existing SPLC agreement. The naming of a new or different Successor(s) would also require the county to secure the certifications.

County agencies may use their own process and form for completing the annual contact/evaluation as long as it includes all the required elements outlined in the SPLC Policy. A proposal to adjust the subsidy amount may be made by the agency or SPLC custodian based on the results of the evaluation. Adjustments may also be made to the agreement prior to the evaluation at the request of the custodian(s) or CCYA with the concurrence of the custodian(s).

While the CCYA is required to send an annual evaluation to custodians receiving SPLC, the custodians are not required to complete and return the form. The CCYA is only required to document that an annual evaluation was sent to the custodian(s). Further, the CCYA shall not impose any sanctions on the custodian(s) (i.e., suspension, termination, or reduction of the subsidy) for not completing and returning the form.

The Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship (SPCL) Policy is available on the DHS website at:

https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/docs/publications/documents/forms-and-pubs-ocvf/3140-23-05_3130-23-01-Title-IV-E-Manual-Chapter-4-SPLC-Policy-Bulletin.pdf



Tracking Adoption/Guardianship Discontinuity

Pennsylvania tracks reentries into foster care through county reporting systems that are reported to DHS/OCYF. Currently, Pennsylvania does not track adoption/guardianship discontinuity. DHS/OCYF is actively developing a statewide case management system.

Post-Permanency Program Spending (FY 2023)

\$5 – 9 million

Funding Sources for the Post-Permanency Program (FY 2023)

1. Title IV-E funds
2. Title IV-B, Part 2 (Promoting Safe and Stable Families/PSSF)
3. State funds
4. Adoption/Guardianship Incentive Program Payments (AIPP)

