

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROJECT UPDATE

WINTER 2004

Chafee Education and Training Grants for 2004-2005

The Office of Children, Youth and Families has been working closely with the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) to implement a new program that provides tuition assistance to foster and adopted youth.

The Pennsylvania Chafee Educational and Training Grant program (ETG) is an exciting opportunity that provides educational and training grants of up to \$5,000 per year per youth for education and training, including post secondary education and training. Pennsylvania's approved allocation is \$1,660,667.

OCYF and PHEAA plan to be able to distribute these new tuition funds prior to September 30, 2004 and expect continued annual funding.

Individuals that may be eligible to receive tuition grant monies under this program are:

- (1) youth otherwise eligible for services under the State Chafee Foster Care Independence Program;
- (2) youth adopted from foster care after attaining age 16; and
- (3) youth participating in the voucher program on their 21st birthday, until they turn 23 years old, as long as they are enrolled in a post secondary education or training program and are making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

In order for an eligible youth to be involved in the program they must complete a Chafee ETG application, which will soon be sent to IL coordinators, high schools and post-secondary institutions as well as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form available now. OCYF and PHEAA will distribute the Chafee ETG applications to IL program coordinators, high school guidance counselors and college financial aid offices in the coming weeks.

If you are aware of a child adopted from the foster care system after age 16 who has had a name change and who is attending college or a post-secondary institution, please notify Lorrie Deck at lodeck@state.pa.us. Lorrie will work with PHEAA to make sure that identified youth are entered into the PHEAA system for Chafee eligibility.

Independent Living Partners with SWAN

The Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN) and the Pennsylvania Independent Living Program serve the same children...children in foster care and children previously in the foster care system. Children with a goal of adoption have the same needs as other children in foster care, including a need for Independent Living Services.

Additionally, youth currently involved in the Independent Living Program can benefit from SWAN services. SWAN serves children who are in the legal custody of county agencies, regardless of whether or not they have a goal of adoption. Children without a goal of adoption are eligible for child profile, child specific recruitment and child preparation services. Additionally, children who have achieved permanency are available for post-permanency services through SWAN including:

- Advocate for Post-permanency Services
- Support Group
- Respite

If you have any questions about how to access SWAN services, please contact the SWAN Helpline at 1-800-585-7926.

Pennsylvania Independent Living On-line Tracking System (PILOTS)

Sally Logan reminds IL staff that there are seven reporting forms that counties use to report program activity for individual youth receiving Independent Living Program (ILP) services.

Regular Independent Living Program includes – Any youth participating in any component of the ILP while still in subsidized care (out of home placement) is considered to be in the regular ILP. Any youth who is sixteen years of age or older who is in placement is eligible for the regular ILP. Forms # 1, 2, 3 and 5 all relate to youth in the regular ILP.

Aftercare Program – Any youth that has been discharged from substitute care (no longer in placement) can participate in the same services provided to youth in the regular ILP, but these youth would be considered to be in aftercare. Any youth that is no longer in placement but was adjudicated dependent or dependent and/or delinquent with shared case management and in placement at any point after they turned sixteen years of age is eligible for the Aftercare Program. Forms # 7, 8 and 9 all relate to youth in aftercare.

The definition for eligibility from the annual DPW Bulletin is that youth must:

1. Be at least age 16, but no more than 21 years of age.
2. Be in or have been in out-of-placement on or after age 16; and
3. Have been adjudicated dependent and/or delinquent with shared case management.

Funds for Transition from Foster Care to Independence

The Andrus Family Fund (AFF) supports projects and programs that promote positive social change through transition. One of the foundation's primary aims is to support successful transitions for youth from foster care to independence, especially through programs that go beyond job placement to career track planning, and beyond high school diploma equivalency to achieving postsecondary education goals. Grantees must be willing to explore and incorporate William Bridges' transition model as it applies to the transition from foster care to independence. Interested applicants should submit an AFF application form that includes a two- to three-page letter of inquiry. Applications are accepted year round and reviewed quarterly. Recent grants (for up to \$300,000) have been made to a number of programs that promote the transition to independence, including the Black Ensemble Theater (Chicago), the Buckeye Ranch (Grove, Ohio), the Independent Living Resource Center (New York), and the Oregon Social Learning Center. AFF does not fund provide funds to individuals, nor does it fund endowments, capital improvements, scholarships, or loans. For more information, visit www.affund.org.

A New Paradigm for Service

Making the case for increased investments in older youth during out-of-school time requires making the case for doing business differently — rethinking a range of strategic and conceptual decisions including recruitment and attendance, policy framing, program content and partnership development. The February 2004 issue of *Forum Focus* zooms in on some promising solutions, including how TASC (The After-School Corporation) is engaging teenagers after school in New York City. *Forum Focus*, a regular publication of the Forum for Youth Investment. Download a copy of the newest *Forum Focus*, High School: The Next Frontier for After-School Advocates? At www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/focus/focusv2i1feb04.pdf (8-page PDF). Back issues of *Forum Focus* can be downloaded at www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/forumfocus.htm.

PA Board of Education approves regulations for foster children

The State Board of Education unanimously adopted a final version of regulations that make it easier for foster children to enroll in public schools. The proposal would establish deadlines for districts to process the enrollment of applications of all students, including nonresident children who live in institutions or foster homes. State law requires public schools to accept foster children, but current regulations do not establish a uniform timetable for schools to process their enrollment paperwork. Under the new regulations, school districts and charter schools must enroll all children, including foster children, no later than five business days following an

application, provided that the student's parent or guardian has supplied required documentation such as proof of age and immunization records. Additionally, the school that the child previously attended would have to forward the student's records to the new school within five business days of receiving a request for the records. The nonprofit Education Law Center, a children's rights organization based in Philadelphia, found in an informal survey of foster care providers during the 1999-2000 school year that children have waited anywhere from a week to a month or longer to be enrolled in school. The regulations must now undergo a review by the House and Senate Education Committees, an independent regulatory review panel, and the state attorney general's office before they can take effect.

PaTTAN and Transition

The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) is an exceptional organization with excellent values and a passionate purpose, which is "to support the efforts of the Bureau of Special Education and its initiatives and to build the capacity of local educational agencies to provide appropriate services to students who receive special education services."

The partners in this network are as follows: Parents, Higher Education, Local Educational Agencies, Intermediate Units, Bureau of Special Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, US Department of Education, Parents, Higher Education, and Local Educational Agencies. PaTTAN has offices located in Harrisburg, King of Prussia and Pittsburgh, which serve 29 Intermediate Units throughout Pennsylvania. One of the many tasks completed by PaTTAN is to empower youth with disabilities to successfully transition into productive futures. Their goal is to make transition as smooth as possible according to the ability of the youth using a strength-based perspective. Adolescents with mental and physical challenges have been empowered by the organizations muscle and persistence. Many adolescents have completed high school, college or trade school and have completely transitioned to become productive members of local communities because of the support systems developed by this agency.

The Pennsylvania Communities of Practice transition work group is comprised of members across systems including the Bureau of Labor and Industry, Department of Public Welfare, Department of Health, Department of Education as well as parents and consumers. Staff members at OCYF and the University of Pittsburgh Independent Living Program are part of the Transition Team. Becoming a part of this collaborative effort affords us an opportunity to share our expertise and to collect information first hand to distribute to county and private provider Independent Living programs. PaTTAN offers many outstanding services to each professional working in the field of social work or human services. Log on to <http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us/> to discover what the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network can offer you and your consumers.

E-Update in April

The Update is going to be published on-line starting in April. Paper copies will not be mailed after the March issue. Please send your e-mail address to Steve Eidson at the ILP by 20 March 2004.

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