




The **Blast** NEWSLETTER

Winter Edition 2022

**Official newsletter of the
Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board**

YAB

YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

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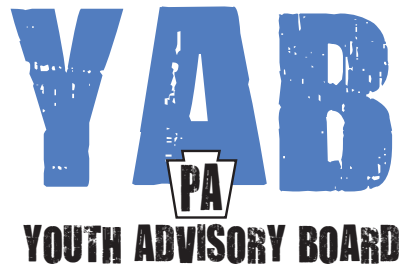
County Shoutouts!

County Shoutouts acknowledges the work that youth are doing within their local YAB.

This is a great way to highlight youth leadership, community engagement, and to simply share YAB experiences with others. If you would like to have your local Youth Advisory Board highlighted in the YAB BLAST Newsletter, please email your YAB leaders.



Youth Ambassador Norma Cutting at Nos39@pitt.edu
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Statewide Updates

On January 20th, the Pennsylvania Statewide Youth Advisory Board (YAB) hosted its first meeting of 2022! This was the second in-person meeting for YAB since the COVID-19 pandemic started. Using a hybrid approach, the YAB can accommodate both in-person and virtual participants, which makes for a very engaging meeting!

The meeting started with introductions and ice breakers, which allowed youth a chance to reconnect and meet new peers. After YAB expectations were covered, youth went straight to work on several YAB projects as well as learning about important matters for foster care and alumni across the state. Youth met with Teressa Musser, Director of the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN). She talked about the Chafee Education and Training Grant, informing attendees that the application was extended from its original deadline of December 31st, 2021, until May 1st, 2022. Additionally, youth were informed of a potential opportunity to have their voice heard regarding policies surrounding youth in care.

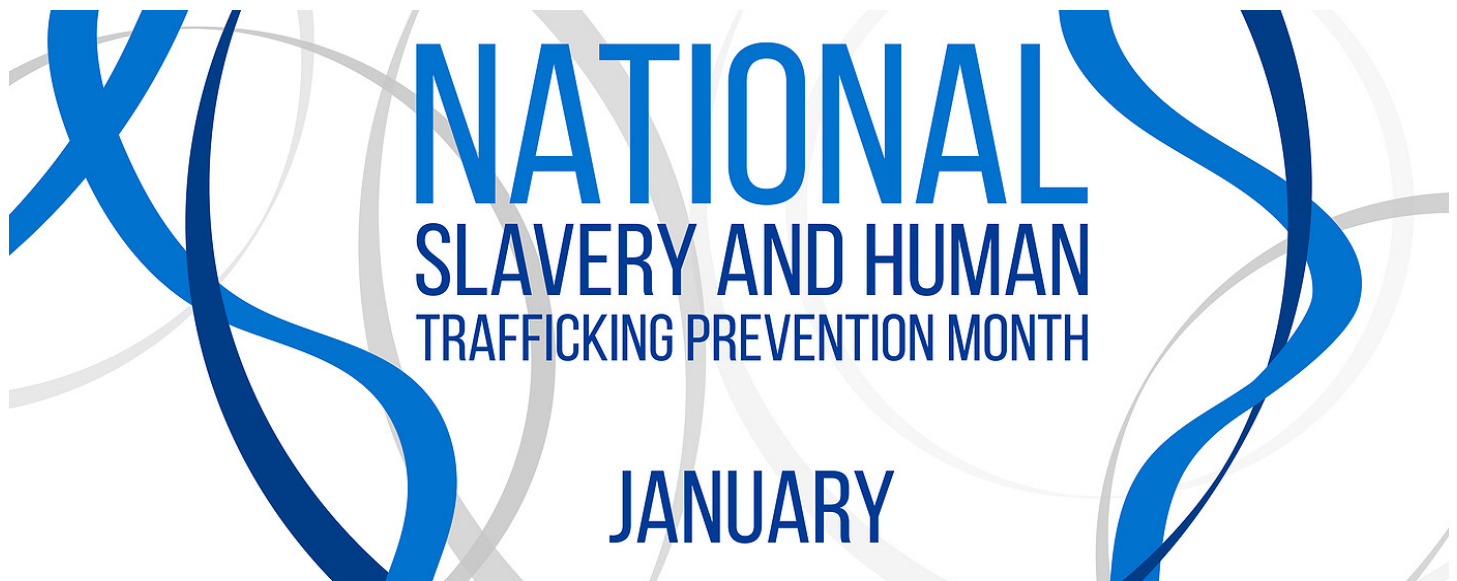
Next, youth discussed the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). Not only did youth provide feedback regarding NYTD, but youth also reviewed the NYTD campaign material offering feedback on the final version of the new NYTD brochure. Youth pitched ideas about how the NYTD flyer should be made and shared ideas to create a second NYTD video.

Participants began brainstorming what the 2-day, in-person YAB Leadership Summit would look like. Members discussed potential keynote speakers, professional development trainings, as well as exciting evening activities.

Next, an update of YAB projects was given, allowing members to catch up on project details as well as provide their own input.

The next Statewide meeting is scheduled for a hybrid format on March 17th, 2022.

Please be sure to reach out to your IL worker or regional consultant to RSVP!



In 2010, by presidential proclamation, President Barack Obama declared January “National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month” and since, each president maintained this tradition. So, we use this time to educate and raise awareness in efforts to promote prevention.

In 2020, it was reported by the FBI that nearly 100,000 children in the United States are exploited. Human trafficking, known as modern day slavery, greatly impacts vulnerable populations. The most vulnerable to human trafficking: youth in foster care. According to the National Foster Youth Institute, an estimated 60% of victims were involved at one point in the child welfare system. So, what can you do?

First, be mindful of your environment. Traffickers often target areas such as malls, schools, group homes for foster care youth, and even bus stops. If you know of a homeless youth, encourage them to reach out to the National Runaway Hotline or even an Independent Living worker you trust. Youth are often roped into trafficking because they are promised food, clothing, and a safe place to live. Furthermore, youth without permanency and supports are at high risk for trafficking as well.

Next, continue to educate yourself on recognizing the signs of potential traffickers or victims. Please, do NOT confront anyone who you may suspect is trafficking others. Instead, report it to the police. You may also contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline if you believe someone is a victim of trafficking.

For more information, visit the Human Trafficking Hotline website at:
<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/>

Reach out to someone for confidential support. Call: 888-373-7888 or text 233733 24/7

Black History Month

Black history is celebrated across the nation and in Canada throughout the month of February. It's a time spent reverencing those before us and time spent honoring the strides and accomplishments made by black people. It is well known the adversity that youth in care face, those challenges are even greater for youth of color. Did you know that black youth in PA make up 14% of the total population but represent 35% of youth in care? Black youth also make up 42% of those spending two or more years in foster care. However, we all know that anyone can rise above and overcome the barriers and obstacles faced in life. Youth in care have always shown tremendous resilience and perseverance. In honor of Black History Month, we would like to look at two famous Black Americans, who were once in care, pressed on, and are now leaving their legacy in our world.



First, meet Simone Biles. Yep, that's right! This 3-time world all-around champion was once in foster care. At the age of 5, Simone and her siblings entered care because of her mother's struggles with substance abuse. Simone and her siblings were in foster care for three years in Ohio until they moved in with their grandparents in Texas who later adopted Simone. Now known as the G.O.A.T. (Greatest of All Time), Simone Biles has won 32 Olympic and World Championship medals. Simone was also chosen by her fellow teammates to carry the country's flag in the closing ceremonies. That's a powerful story to go from foster care to America's most decorated gymnast!

Next, meet Edward Regan Murphy, more commonly known as Eddie Murphy. This world-famous actor, comedian, producer, writer, and singer was in foster care and even credits his time in care as a factor in his success. Eddie's biological father was an amateur comedian, whom he looked up to. However, at the age of 3, Eddie's parents divorced, and at the age of 8, Eddie Murphy's father passed away. Eddie's family struggled financially and then Eddie's mom became severely ill, needing to be hospitalized. It was at this point Eddie entered into foster care. "Those were baaaaaad days. Staying with her was probably the reason I became a comedian" Eddie reported. By the age of 8, Eddie reunified with his family. From financial struggles and foster care, Eddie has become one of the most successful comedians and actors now worth \$200 million dollars!



What's in a Vote?

By now, we all know that we have a civic duty to vote, but what exactly does it mean to vote? Well, voting not only means selecting the person who will lead our country, it also means selecting those who will be the voice for our local communities as well as our state. However, before you can go cast your vote, there are a few things you need to know, like voter terminology or, simply put, “voter lingo.” Most likely, you have already heard many of these terms used, but do you know what they mean? If not, that’s okay, we have the answers, simplified!



- **Register To Vote:** This is the first step to becoming an active voter! It just means completing the necessary form to be added to a list (called an electoral roll) in the jurisdiction you live in.
- **Absentee Ballot:** This is casting your vote by other means that are not in-person. For example, you may vote by mail. This may be particularly important for college students.
- **Vote:** A vote is a valid mark on an official ballot that shows which candidate the voter selected.
- **Ballot:** Either electronic or paper, the ballot holds all the contents to be decided in the election. It lays everything out so that the voter can make their selection.
- **Cast:** When you “cast” your vote, it simply means you have made your candidate selections and finalized your decision. You cannot go back and make changes.
- **Candidate:** A person who is seeking to be nominated or selected for a specific office.

We hope this short rundown of voting terms has given some insight into what it means to vote. Be sure to check out the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania voting page to access the voting and election services guide. There you can learn more about registering to vote, voting by mail, where to locate your voting poll place, and more.

Visit: <https://www.pa.gov/guides/voting-andelections/>

Let's Talk



What is NYTD?

NYTD (pronounced “knighted”), stands for the National Youth in Transition Database. This is a survey designed to track how the state has served you, an older youth, in care. It measures how well states are helping foster youth prepare for adulthood.

How do you fit in with NYTD?

The information gathered from NYTD helps Pennsylvania determine what impact they have made on your life. The survey gives agencies, staff, and lawmakers real feedback, from real youth, about the services that are provided and whether they are making a difference for youth exiting, or who have exited foster care.

How do you get involved with NYTD?

Glad you asked! All you must do is complete the NYTD survey before the deadline when you are contacted to take it. Spreading the word to your peers and other youth in care helps. Talk to them about the survey and how it’s important to their lives as well.

Follow us on Facebook and the YAB website for more information.

Employment Opportunity!

We here at **CWRC** are now hiring Standardized Clients!

Who are we?

Resource for child welfare agencies in Pennsylvania, and a provider of simulation-based trainings for child welfare professionals in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

What are the job duties?

Your role as a standardized client would be to help with simulation-based trainings that provide a bridge from learning to implementation in child welfare practice. You will help to bring each simulation to life!

What is required?

Passionate about helping others! Able to accept feedback and direction. Interested in acting and improvisation.

What will your schedule look like?

This is a part-time position. The schedule is flexible.
(Available between 8am and 5pm)

Where to apply?

For full consideration, please apply at
www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/humanresources.html



Upcoming Events

Statewide YAB Meeting

When: March 17th, 2022

Where: Mechanicsburg, PA with an option to attend virtually

Info: This is a one day working meeting for YAB leaders to learn current news surrounding youth in care, work on various statewide projects, and gain professional development.

Youth Advisory Board Leadership Summit

When: June 16th – June 17th, 2022

Where: Mechanicsburg, PA

Info: The Summit is an opportunity for older youth to enhance their leadership and public speaking skills. It also provides professional development for older youth while also allowing them to connect with their peers.

2022 Older Youth Retreat

When: August 8th – 12th, 2022

Where: To be announced

Info: This is a fun-filled week for older youth to connect. There will be activities, speakers, and more. Stay connected as more details will be coming soon.



Resources

Mental Health

National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

National Crisis Text Hotline Text HOME to 741741

Housing

Homeless National Hotline 1-800-786-2929

National Youth & Teen Runaway Hotline 1-800-Runaway

Health & Safety National

Domestic Violence Support Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE

National STD Hotline 1-800-227-8922

Legal Support

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network 1-800-322-7572

References

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<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/national-hotline-overview>

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