



Outlooks

Annual Newsletter for Stakeholders
for Fiscal Years 2011 & 2012

F.U.N. is C.O.A. and Hague Re-Accredited

Families United Network, Inc. was re-accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA), according to an announcement made by Thomas A. Neuhard, President and Chief Executive Officer of the organization in June 2011.

COA is an international, independent, not-for-profit accrediting body of social and behavioral health care services. COA's mission is to "promote best-practice standards; champion quality services for children, youth, and families; and advocate for the value of accreditation". COA accreditation attests that an organization meets the highest national standards and is delivering the best quality services to the community it serves.

While COA's Community of Excellence includes more than 1,800 private and public organizations that serve over 7,000,000 children, individuals, and families in the United States and Canada, less than 2% of foster care/adoption and inter-country adoption providers in Pennsylvania have obtained this objective and reliable verification. "We were originally accredited in 2007 and have maintained diligence in the quality and outcomes of our programming. This rigorous reaccreditation is evidence of the dedication and commitment of all of our staff in continuously striving for the very best programs for the youth and families we serve," said Neuhard.

The COA accreditation process involved an in-depth examination of the organization's compliance with best practice standards in the areas of human resources, financial and risk management and continuous quality improvement. The service standards address a full array of child, family and behavioral health care services, including financial and debt management, foster care and a host of other service areas.

Families United Network also completed the Hague re-accreditation process in August of 2011. The agency received full accreditation and received top scores. This is an outstanding accomplishment. In addition, one staff person became trained to be a peer reviewer for COA for other agencies seeking Hague Accreditation. Families United Network, Inc. continues to be one of a few agencies in the state of Pennsylvania with a Hague Accreditation.

Families United Network staff with COA inspectors at conclusion of site visit. Pictured from left to right: Leo McLaughlin (Exec Dir), Janna Brubaker (Dir of Special Services), Jennifer Ethridge (COA Inspector), Warren Heinke (COA Inspector), Sharon Sutkins (Board Member), Tom Neuhard (Pres & CEO) and Vickie Johnson (Exec Asst).



Embryo Adoption - Giving Families New Options

In the past, couples struggling with infertility would turn to adoption as a way to build their families. With the development of modern science, families are now turning to medical technology such as In Vitro Fertilization and other fertility treatments before they seek out adoption services. During the IVF process, dozens of embryos are created in an effort to help the family achieve a successful pregnancy. However, while this is occurring, the family is not thinking of what to do with the remaining embryos once they have given birth to their child. As a result, an accumulation of embryos has occurred. In 2010, it was estimated that over 500,000 embryos are in storage at fertility clinics in the United States. This has now presented a new option for families. They have several options for the unused embryo such as keeping them frozen indefinitely, discarding them, donating them to science, or donating them to another couple.

Who Are The Children We Served

FY 2011	Gender: 47% female		53% male	
	Age:	5% 0 - 11 months	15% 11 - 15 years	45% 1 - 5 years
		25% 6 - 10 years		
	Race:	57% Caucasian	31% African American	12% Hispanic
FY 2012	Gender: 55% female		45% male	
	Age:	6% 0 - 11 months	19% 11 - 15 years	31% 1 - 5 years
		30% 6 - 10 years		
	Race:	51% Caucasian	37% African American	12% Hispanic

F.U.N. Providing Services for Unplanned Pregnancies

Families United Network has launched a marketing campaign targeting potential birth mothers. The agency has designed the program to offer free support, advocacy and guidance to women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. The program is designed to assist the women in accessing community resources and to help them explore their options.



Families United Network, Inc. Board of Directors



Pictured left to right: Mary Ann Tarantino, Secretary; Sheila M. Ross; Robert Wagner, Chairman; Thomas A. Neuhard, President and CEO; Joseph O. Smith, Vice Chairman; Sharon Sutkins, Treasurer; David C. Raker, Esq. and John R. Brunette

Ashler Manor Advisory Board

Chris Smith, Capt. Chris McKibben, Mort Neely, Deenie Keeler and Paula Miller

Foster Care, Adoption & Permanency Program Offices

South Central PA Office
2 Market Plaza Way
Suite 4
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

North Central PA Office
1601 Sycamore Rd.
Suite 3B
Montoursville, PA 17754

Scranton PA Office
1006 Pittston Avenue
Suite 200
Scranton, PA 18505

Western PA Office
One Rodi Plaza
655 Rodi Road, Suite 300
Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Mount Joy PA Office
412 South Angle Street
Mount Joy, PA 17552

Administrative Office
276 Ashler Manor Drive
Pennsdale, PA 17756

Residential Program Offices

Arborvale Manor
2016 Millersville Pike
Lancaster, PA 17603

Ashler Manor
276 Ashler Manor Drive
Pennsdale, PA 17756



PENNSYLVANIA STATE
FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION



South Central Coalition of Foster Care Providers
The Northeast Foster Care Coalition

Residential Program: A Year in Review

2011 The 2011 fiscal year has been one of tremendous growth and development for the residential programs at Ashler Manor and Arborvale Manor. The greatest change came with the resignation of our previous Residential Services Director, Jennifer Colna. Jennifer had been with Families United in various roles for over ten years. The subsequent search process for a new Residential Services Director ended with the hiring of Mort Neely. Mort has a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, a Master's degree in Education, and has worked with at-risk youth for almost 20 years – 15 of which have been in the residential setting. Although the past year has not been without its ups and downs, the residential programs at both Ashler Manor and Arborvale Manor experienced significant growth and experienced a strong census throughout the year.

2012 The 2012 Fiscal Year saw continued development of our residential services into the best available. Whether the discussion surrounds adding to the variety of educational and enrichment activities available to clients or adding to our physical site, the goal will be to build on our ability to provide clients with the best residential experience possible. Examples of development that occurred during the previous fiscal year include the addition of a 55 inch smart board in our academic classroom (Ashler Manor), a 39 inch wall-mounted flat screen television at our Life Readiness Program (Ashler Manor), new window trimmings at our Life Readiness Program (Arborvale Manor), and the construction of new pavilion (Ashler Manor). The enhancements to our physical sites are intended to communicate the care we have for our clients in that it is a direct communication of the worth those clients have in our eyes. From that perspective, we wish to show clients that their worth, in our eyes, is without limits.



Mort Neely
Residential Services Director

“ Clients discharged from the Arborvale Manor's Life Readiness Program in 2012 had an average savings of \$4,136. 100% of clients without a diploma obtained ” or left on schedule to obtain their diploma.



Family Group Decision Making - November 2010 the North Central Office took the lead in planning a three day seminar on Family Group Decision Making (FBDM), led by Jim Nice, who introduced the practice to the US. Staff from Residential, Foster Care and Adoption all participated in the sessions. Thank you staff for making the time in your busy schedules to learn more about this successful, accepted practice.



SWAN Adoption Program: A Year in Review

2011 The Families United Network, Inc. SWAN Permanency Program continued to experience growth and expansion during the 2011 fiscal year. Over the course of the year, the agency received 573 referrals through the Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network and billed for 446 completed units of service. The majority of the SWAN referrals received were generated by Allegheny, Luzerne, Lancaster, Dauphin, Lackawanna and York County Children & Youth. Based on referral demands, three new positions were approved and added in the Western, South Central and Mount Joy office locations. One of the workers added was bilingual which was instrumental in eliminating some of the potential language barriers in communicating with specific Spanish speaking birth families.

All adoption agencies experienced some changes in practice with the implementation of Act 101 which amended the Adoption Act on April 25, 2011. Families United Network incorporated agency wide training on Act 101 in our Adoption Orientations that are required of potential adoption resource families. Adoption resource families are informed of the opportunity to enter into voluntary placement agreements with members of the child's birth family which are then approved by the court prior to an adoption finalization. Adoption resource families are also informed of the requirement to have any adoptive child's social and medical information loaded to the Pennsylvania Adoption Information Registry (PAIR) which is ultimately creating a file so the adoptee, adoptive family or birth family can request any information that might be needed in the future.

2012 The Families United Network, Inc. SWAN Permanency Program marked one of their most successful years in 2012. The agency received a record number of referrals in 2012 which ultimately resulted in being one of our busiest years in providing SWAN permanency services to children and families. The SWAN Permanency Program completed approximately 515 billable units of service. The most requested units of service were for child profiles and child preparation services as these 2 units are frequently referred as a package by a County Children & Youth agency. Families United Network, Inc. provided approximately 149 children with child profiles and 115 children with child preparation services. This work aided in helping children process their placement in foster care with the ultimate goal of achieving a sense of permanency and belonging in the future. The agency also directly assisted in providing 27 children with permanency through adoption by completing the adoption finalization unit of service. The SWAN Program is operating with fifteen full time permanency specialists and three contract workers that are knowledgeable with the SWAN service requirements and are dedicated solely to providing SWAN units of service.

In January of 2012, Families United Network, Inc. was one of five SWAN affiliate agencies that Dauphin County Social Services for Children & Youth identified to serve children under a new Family Finding Initiative. Dauphin County accepted proposals and sponsored staff trainings on their initiative to serve older youth that may have been in care over 5 years and were in need of supports and connections to aid in preparing a successful future. Dauphin County frequently made package referrals that included the Child Specific Recruitment unit of service that was utilized to revisit birth family members, former foster care resources and connections within the child's history to establish a support system for the child's future. In many cases, Families United Network, identified and initiated contact with individuals that may have been familiar with the child but were not aware of the child's current placement details. After contact was established, these individuals were engaged in Blended Perspective

Private Adoption Program: A Year in Review

2011 Families United Network's private adoption program continued to grow dramatically. Units of service increased by 26% from the prior year. Services include the completion of home studies, post-adoption services and domestic placements. During the year the agency made its second domestic placement assisting a family in the placement of their newborn son. The agency also continues to be successful in developing relationships with other private providers who offer placement services. Families United Network, Inc. is one of a few Pennsylvania providers who are Hague approved to provide home study and post adoption services to families adopting internationally.

2012 Units of service in continued to increase by 22% from 2010 to 2011. Despite the increase in units of services there was a decline in the financial growth of the program. This has been caused by the increasing cost to complete an adoption home study. For this reason, the private adoption fee was adjusted effective July 1, 2012. Families United Network, Inc. continues to pride itself in offering families the highest quality service for one fee. One of the attributes that sets our agency apart from some of the others is our ability to include three post placement reports, training, clearances, and mileage in the cost of the home study fee.

Also during the fiscal year 2012, the agency began and completed the re-accreditation process to be one of the few agencies in Pennsylvania that is Hague accredited. The agency received all positive marks and was awarded full approval status for the next four years. Families United Network, Inc. continues to be one of only a few approved agencies in the state of Pennsylvania to provide services to families adopting internationally from a Hague country.

Future developments in the field of international adoption continue. Families United Network, Inc. continues to research the possibility of placements; however the international climate can be unsettled. Therefore, growth in this area is slow and cautious.

Drug & Alcohol Program: A Year in Review

In 2011 the agency began a drug and alcohol testing program with York County Children and Youth. The staff of three full time and one part time staff completed 1,673 tests during the 2012 Fiscal Year. York County referred an average of 45 individuals per month for monitoring during Fiscal Year 2012.

Marijuana is the most common drug found followed by cocaine, and prescription drugs. Another trend the program has identified is that the age of clients is decreasing. Many of the clients are now in high school and middle school, the youngest person tested was age nine. The program is averaging 50 or more clients each month.



Families United Network, Inc. is dedicated to strengthening families by providing children and youth with a safe, nurturing, community environment through a continuum of services, which focuses on reunification or permanency.

We welcome your feedback! Please direct any questions or comments to Melinda Lyon at mlyon@families4kids.org.

Foster Care Program - Year in Review

2011 Families United Network, Inc.'s Foster Care Programs experienced increasing pressures to provide enhanced services during fiscal year 2011. County children and youth agencies and the Department of Public Welfare's Office of Children, Youth and Families developed and passed along goals to reduce out-of-home placements, increase frequency and quality of legal family visitation, increase family engagement activities, reduce child welfare system re-entry rates and shorten the time to permanency. There was also a heavy emphasis on in-home and reunification services to support these goals. As counties worked to reduce the number of children placed in residential facilities, we saw an increase in the number of youth in foster care with complex problems, which created challenges for resource parents and case management staff. There was also a heavy push by referring and funding agencies to ensure that older adolescents aging out of the system were more adequately prepared to live independently.

In response to this environment, Families United Network's foster care offices expanded efforts to better serve both birth and resource families so the children in their lives had a smooth and positive transition to the most desirable form of permanency for each of them. To better serve resource homes, the agency added additional curriculum to the PRIDE Training that was geared specifically to kinship families. The agency also contracted with the U.S. developer of the Family Group Decision Making program and trained over 25 staff members in a three-day long program in Williamsport. Our staff took advantage of training in "Family Finding" and began to work to integrate that initiative into our Child Specific Recruitment and other matching work.

During fiscal year 2011, the agency applied for and was awarded a contract from Luzerne County to provide out-of-county and out-of-state visits and safety assessments to assist that county's children and youth agency with the demands of travel and time associated with this responsibility. Our drug and alcohol screening and testing program with York County Children and Youth Services commenced and was in full swing by the Spring of 2011. Additionally, we executed an agreement with Cumberland County MH/MR to provide short-term respite for qualifying families through our existing system of resource homes.

2012 The foster care programs started Fiscal Year 2012 strongly and maintained a high number of children in placement for the first two-thirds of the fiscal period. As county and state revenue came into question with the current Pennsylvania administration holding firm on Governor Corbett's promise of no new taxes, we began to see a decline in the number of children referred for foster placement. The referrals we did see were for older adolescents, sibling groups and behaviorally problematic youth. That trend has continued as county commissioners are dealing with declining revenue and in some instances, reduced funding from the state prompting drastic, fiscally driven decisions about where children needing placement should be.

As the fiscal year ended, we and other providers of foster care services were summoned to a number of county "brainstorming" meetings to discuss ideas about how to make more resource homes prepared and available for these placements. The rate of re-entry in the Commonwealth was also a point of discussion. The state was suffering a fairly high rate of children who were discharged from out-of-home placement and then re-entered the child welfare system. So, on one hand, county children and youth agencies and private providers were charged with reducing the time a child is in out-of-home placement; and on the other, with the sometimes monumental task of preparing children and the families to prevent future disruption.

System wide trends of reducing out-of-home placements and increasing frequency and quality of legal family visitation/engagement have carried over strongly from the prior year. Along with these high priority areas, county children and youth agencies are under regulatory pressure to significantly reduce the number of times a child moves within the system. Even the concept of moving a child to a less restrictive level of care for transition purposes counts as a negative move when county agencies are evaluated.

Even with these pressures, our foster care programs kept a busy pace of operations. The close linkage between our SWAN Permanency Programming and Foster Care Services have prompted internal initiatives toward earlier matching activities for resource families who wish to adopt. Discussions commenced to identify ways to better train and support our staff and resource families to prepare for the increasingly complex placements referred for foster care. The Western Pennsylvania Office aimed to expand its geographic service area to work with additional counties ranging from the southern state line to Lake Erie in the north. A Marketing Specialist position was created and filled to support this effort.

Overall, the agency foster care programs are still in high demand and showing positive results for the children and families served by them. The goal moving forward will be to continue to add value to foster care for children, their families and our referral sources.



Families United Network, Inc. Resource Family, Christy Noll and Molly Long were honored at the State Wide Adoption and Permanency Network's (SWAN) 2011 Annual Summer Conference in Lancaster, PA for their dedication in providing Permanency Services to Children and Families in the PA Child Welfare System. The Noll/Long family have been adopting and providing foster care to children for the last 13 years. Many of the children in their care have serious special needs from severe seizure disorders to Cerebral Palsy and Mental Retardation. The family has nine kids, two are Christy's birth children (one is an adult biological child who now lives on their own), six are adopted children and they have one foster child.

