Good morning,

Please see below/attached for information and resources related to your work with older youth.

- October 2026 OCYF Trauma Team Tip Sheet (attached)
- PHEAA: Foster Care to College (Resources for Higher Education) Webinar https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Webinars/Webinars_PHEAA.htm
- Employment Resources for Youth and Young Adults: https://www.payab.pitt.edu/files/EmploymentResourcesGuide_2026.pdf (newly developed by the South Central Regional YAB)
- Speakers Bureau Application
- The Aging Out Podcast
- Back to School: Services for Students with a Disability
- LGBTQ+ Resources

Speakers Bureau Application
The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center, in collaboration with the Office of Children, Youth, and Families, would like to provide individuals with lived experiences in foster care an opportunity to share their unique perspective of the child welfare system in Pennsylvania through a Speakers Bureau. This platform will provide an opportunity to enhance statewide permanency efforts and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.

This application helps to identify your areas of expertise based on your lived experience. Your information allows us to best connect you to committees and workgroups that share your interests. It is important that we have a selection of candidates who vary in age, race, demographics, and system experience to ensure the best representation of youth in foster care.

Please note that you will be compensated for your participation based on the hours involved in your role, which may include working on committees and workgroups with child welfare professionals or participation in speaking engagements, training, and panel presentations.



The Aging Out Podcast:



The Field Center's October Podcast is Here!

Episode 18: Interview with Dana Lopez, CEO of Dogwood Ranch, and Lisa Chrastina, Haven Care Coordinator (Ozark, MO)

Listen Now

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are pleased to announce the release of our October podcast episode, featuring **Dana Lopez**, CEO and **Lisa Chrastina,** Care Coordinator of Dogwood Ranch, a nonprofit organization based in rural Ozark, Missouri. Dogwood Ranch supports women who have aged out of foster care and are in need of additional support through animal-assisted therapy, life skills training and social-emotional learning.

Our MSW intern, **Amaya Saintal,** joined the Dogwood team for a thoughtful conversation about the organization's unique reasoning for choosing Ozark. Dana and Lisa highlight the need for services in rural areas where the lack of support can create additional barriers. Throughout the conversation, the team enthusiastically discussed the transformative impact Dogwood Ranch has on their participants, sharing some of their most memorable cases.

Listeners will learn more about the work of *Dogwood Ranch,* personal stories, and where there they hope to go in the near future.



Other Platforms:
Dogwood Ranch's episode is available on all podcast platforms, including **Spotify** and **Apple Podcasts**.

Happy listening!

The Field Center

The Field Center | 3815 Walnut Street | Philadelphia, PA 19104 US

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Back to School: Services for Students with a Disability.

Written by Larisa Yusko



There is nothing quite as exciting as sending a child off on their first day of school. But that excitement could include concern if that child has a disability. According to Pennsylvania State Data Centers's 2023-2024 Special Education in Pennsylvania Report, 336,850 students in the Commonwealth are enrolled in a Special Education program. That is over 20% of the total enrollment. But luckily, students have the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA).

The IDEA was originally enacted in 1975 as the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act and was reauthorized and renamed in 1990. It was created to address the inadequate education of students with a disability and sometimes their complete exclusion from

education. This federal law helps children from birth through High School graduation or age 21. There are 6 pillars of the IDEA, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Appropriate Evaluation, Parent and Teacher Participation, and Procedural Safeguard.

If a child has a medical diagnosis, or a parent or teacher suspects that child has a learning disability, there are steps to get them an IEP. First, the parent will request an evaluation. After the evaluation is administered, there will be an eligibility meeting with the IEP Team, specialists, teachers and parents. If the student is eligible for services, a written plan for them with be created. If the parents don't agree with the evaluation or IEP plan, they can file a dispute. At any point in this process, parents should maintain good communication with the IEP Team and advocate for their child's needs.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is another program that could help students with a disability. This is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with a disability in any program receiving federal funding, including schools. If a child has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, they could qualify for a reasonable accommodation rather than a special education instruction through a 504 Plan. Some examples of accommodations are extra time on tests, preferential seating, a notetaker, or access to an elevator.

If a parent thinks their child could benefit from either of these programs, they should reach out to their local school district. Pennsylvania also has a Special Education **Consult Line - Office for Dispute Resolution** that can help with special education and Section 504 questions and disputes. It takes a village to raise a child, and IDEA and Section 504 are a part of that village.

LGBTQ+ Resources:



An examination of the data and systemic patterns behind LGBTQ+ youth overrepresentation in intervening sys
experiences across these systems, alongside stories that highlight the paths young people travel through them
the way. Participants will explore root causes and practical strategies for interrupting bias at the point of entry i

About the Presenter

Avery Irons (She/Her) is a nationally recognized policy advocate and consultant with 20 years of experience st
LGBTQ youth in the juvenile justice system. A graduate of Columbia Law School, Avery has held leadership ro
Training & Technical Assistance at the NYS Youth Justice Institute, Training & Coaching Manager at the LA LG

Register now.

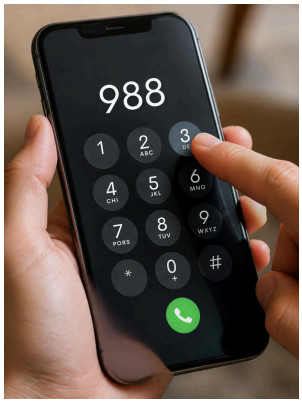
Webinar: Understanding LGBTQ+ Overrepresentation Across Intervening Systems
Wednesday, November 18 | 1:00–2:00 PM EDT

Coming Out with Care Guide

To honor this past October 11, National Coming Out Day, we're proud to share Coming Out With Care, a free guide from the National SOGIE Center and Unicorn Solutions for LGBTQ+ young people navigating one of life's most personal decisions. From building a plan and finding the right words to handling the moments that don't go as hoped, this guide meets young people wherever they are, and it ends where every one of them deserves to land: in queer and trans joy. Whether you're thinking about coming out or supporting someone who is, **explore the guide** and pass it along to someone who needs it.



"Press 3" Is Back: LGBTQ+ Youth Crisis Support Returns to 988



After more than 14 months offline, LGBTQ+ young people once again have a dedicated lifeline. On September 30, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline restored its LGBTQ+ Youth Specialized Services, known as "Press 3," which connects young people in crisis with counselors specifically trained to support them. First launched in 2022 and piloted by The Trevor Project, the service was averaging about 70,000 calls, texts, and chats a month when it was shut down in July 2025. Its return is a testament to the advocates, lawmakers, and young people who refused to let it disappear. While The Trevor Project is not part of the restored network, its own 24/7 crisis services remain available to LGBTQ+ youth at 1-866-488-7386 or by texting START to 678-678. If you or a young person in your life needs support, call or text 988 and select option 3. **Read The Trevor Project's full statement.**

Have a great weekend!

Thank you,

Meghan O'Hare, MSW