



Pennsylvania Child Dependency System: Monthly Messages Guide Using Media to Highlight Positive Efforts to Support Pennsylvania's Foster Youth

This is intended to assist Local Children’s Roundtables interested in highlighting positive efforts by county child welfare agencies, dependency courts and other collaborative partners supporting Pennsylvania’s foster youth. The monthly messages outlined below includes nationally identified commemorative or observances by month and suggested newsworthy topics related to the dependency system. The suggested topics are designed to spark ideas related to the monthly observances but stories should be customized to the county and tied directly to the *PA Dependency System’s Mission and Guiding Principles*. This allows individuality and creativity in media messaging and outlets while recognizing the core values and mission of the PA Dependency System. This includes a collaborative recognition and commitment that **“every child grows up in a safe, nurturing and permanent family”** and a pledge to *Protect Children, Promote Strong Families, Promote Child Well-being and Provide Timely Permanence*.

Families 4 Children

Monthly Messages - Year at a Glance

January Human Trafficking/
Mentoring

February Family Engagement/
Black History/LGBTQ

March Social Work

April Child Abuse Prevention

May Foster Care Awareness/
Trauma Awareness

June Reunification/
Father Engagement

July Mental Health Awareness

August Older Youth

September Education

October Substance Abuse Prevention

November Adoption Awareness

December Celebrating Families

January

National Human Trafficking Month
National Mentoring Month

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Community collaboration on safety awareness
- Cyber safety
- Trauma/Trauma informed programs
- Opportunities to mentor foster children
- Parents mentoring program
- *Human Interest Story: Mentoring*

February

National Family Engagement Month
Black History Month
LGBTQ History Month

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Family Finding/FGDM
- Increase in kinship care (add data)
- Engaging fathers
- Successful visitation programs or practices
- Family engagement initiatives
- Need for African American foster homes
- LGBTQ foster children
- *Human Interest: Using family engagement practices to keep children safe*

March

National Social Work Month

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Celebrate a unit, department or caseworker's successes
- Highlight "a day in the life" of a caseworker and their efforts to keep children safe
- Highlight efforts to engage families
- *Human Interest: A family commending the efforts of a caseworker, agency or program that helped them*
- *Human Interest: Art therapy for foster children*

April

National Child Abuse Prev. Month

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Prevention Programs
- "It takes a village" concept for community awareness and involvement
- Programs to enhance parents' protective capacities
- Highlight positive data on reduction in child abuse
- Difference between CPS and GPS

May

National Foster Care Awareness Month

National Trauma Awareness Month

Mother's Day

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Kin as foster parents—benefits of keeping children connected to family and community
- Promoting families for older youth
- College host programs
- Trauma experienced by children if foster care
- Highlight a trauma informed program—i.e. therapy dogs, trauma informed court
- *Human Interest:* Highlighting mothers, grandmothers, kin foster families, normalcy

June

National Reunification Month

National Father Engagement Month

Father's Day

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Increases in reunification rates
- Why visitation matters to reunify families
- Father Engagement
- Highlight a fatherhood program showing positive results
- Foster father's for older youth
- *Human Interest:* Highlighting fathers, grandfathers, a families successful efforts to reunify

July

Mental Health Awareness Month

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Use of therapy dogs to reduce trauma
- Early intervention/awareness of mental health
- Community response to mental health needs (i.e. childline, recognizing first responders, schools)
- Collaboration with partners on bully free programs, suicide prevention programs, school based programs
- Efforts to recruit and identify foster families and kin for children with mental health needs
- Mental health medication and foster children

August

Older Youth Month

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- How the county is addressing normalcy for older youth
- What it means to build and sustain a support network for older youth
- Importance of hearing the voice of older youth in court
- Highlight successful independent living programs
- *Human Interest:* An older youth going to college; efforts of local youth advisory board; youth attending the Independent Living Retreat

September

Education

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Truancy and Child Welfare: Behind the absences
- Attendance Improvement Planning
- LCR collaborating to combat truancy
- MDJ efforts to address truancy
- Using FGDM to address truancy
- College host programs / peer programs
- Develop a truancy public awareness campaign
- *Human Interest:* Highlight a school districts efforts to address truancy

October

National Substance Abuse Prevention Month

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Collaborative efforts to address the drug crisis
- Public awareness: Drug epidemic's impact on the foster care system
- Using Family Finding to provide family support for substance abuse
- Highlight "take back boxes" for unused prescriptions
- Highlight recovery programs
- *Human Interest:* Parent's success to recover and reunify

November

National Adoption Awareness Month

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Highlight Adoption Day—permanency
- Highlight kinship adoptions
- Efforts to provide timely permanence/positive data
- Families who have adopted special needs children
- *Human Interest:* Children waiting adoption, a unique and powerful adoption case
- Thanksgiving—Thankful for family helping family

December

Celebrating Families

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Collaborative efforts to help families in need around the holidays—i.e. highlight roundtable efforts
- Successful family preservation programs
- Enhancing visitation
- FGDM—Families making decisions for their own and celebrating family heritage—describe family centered process
- Efforts to connect older youth to family
- *Human Interest:* Family Finding story



Positive Media Message Planning Tool

Monthly Message

Communication Channel

- Newspaper
- Social Media
- Internal Publication
- video
- Collaborate with partnering publication
- Other _____

Topics for Consideration:

PA Dependency Guiding Principle(s):

- "Families 4 Children"
- Ensure that every child grows up in a safe, nurturing, and permanent family
- Protect Children
- Promote Child Well-Being
- Provide Timely Permanence

Possible Story Ideas:

Quotes, Data, Other Information:

Due Dates

Pitch Idea Date:

Reach out to Partners on:

Interview Dates:

Writing Dates:

1st Draft Due:

Final Draft Due:

Publication Dates

Other important Dates:



Positive Media Messages

5 Things your Local Children's Roundtable Can Do Right Now

1. Read the [Monthly Media Messaging Guide for Local Children's Roundtables](#).
2. Add Positive Media Messaging as an Agenda Item at your Next Local Children's Roundtable.
3. Share the PA Dependency Mission and Guiding Principles with Partnering Agencies.
4. Discuss with your partners how you would like to take a planned, collaborative approach to highlight the positive work happening in the dependency system in your county.
5. Just Start. Pick a "Topic for Consideration" and develop a strategy to educate the public or partners on the good work happening in your county. Remember to tie it to the Guiding Principles for PA Dependency System.



Positive Media Messages Strategies to Think About

- ◇ Start **planning as early as possible**. A good rule of thumb is plan at least 2 months out from the desired publication date.
- ◇ Pick topics that you think will be **interesting to the general public**.
- ◇ **Ask yourself why** this topic would matter to the public and build a story around the why.
- ◇ **Ask yourself what** are you trying to achieve by highlighting this topic.
- ◇ **Always consider who** the intended audience is: (general public, professionals, partnering agencies, etc.)
- ◇ Consider what will be the **best communications outlet** for the topic (media, news paper, internal publication, partner publication, etc.)
- ◇ When possible, **focus on collaborative efforts**.
- ◇ Tie the local story back to the PA Dependency **Mission and Guiding Principles**.
- ◇ **Utilize your Local Children's Roundtable** as the vehicle to **highlight the message**.
- ◇ Ensure your **statistics and quotes are accurate**.
- ◇ Ensure you have **permission to quote someone** and ask them to review their quote prior to publication.
- ◇ **Quotes from parents and youth** may make the **story more interesting**.
- ◇ **Consider human interest stories**—let the children and families tell the story for you.
- ◇ Don't leave your audience wondering how they can help after reading a story. **Make sure to include how the community can become involved**.