



The Blast NEWSLETTER

Holiday Edition 2025

YAB

YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

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

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County Shoutouts

Southwest Region



The Southwest Region held an annual Recruitment Picnic at Windber Rec on August 13th. The number of new youths who attended was 10. The youth listened to older youth who have been YAB leaders for years and their experiences. The youth did various outdoor activities, and some were able to swim.

Northeast / Local County YABs

Indiana County Local YAB has been working every Thursday to go to the Courthouse for their Coffee Cart. YAB youth help set up and welcome families and staff to the courthouse while they wait to be called back to court. The families can have coffee, tea, or hot chocolate and snacks. Youth assist with keeping items stocked and help pack up after a few hours. The families and workers have expressed appreciation because it can be up to several hours wait.



The Wyoming and Susquehanna County IL Group and YAB met on October 27th for their annual pumpkin carving night.

The Northeast YAB is currently collecting donations for the “Ready, Set, Snow!” Project! Donations are rolling in, and they are so grateful!

READY, SET, SNOW!

THE NORTHEAST REGIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD
IS LOOKING FOR DONATIONS OF:
COATS, HATS, SLEDS, GLOVES, SOUP, LONG SOCKS,
CARDS/COLORING BOOKS/CRAYONS, SCARVES, HOT
CHOCOLATE MIX

ALL DONATIONS WILL GO
DIRECTLY TO YOUTH IN
OUR COMMUNITY!

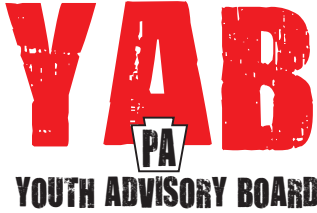
NOW ACCEPTING
DONATIONS UNTIL
DECEMBER 11TH

ENSURING KIDS IN FOSTER CARE
ENJOY THEIR WINTER SEASON!

DONATIONS ACCEPTED IN LUZERNE, LACKAWANNA, CARBON,
NORTHAMPTON, LEHIGH, WYOMING & SUSQUEHANNA COUNTIES.
PLEASE CONTACT SOMMER (570) 933-1410 WITH ANY QUESTIONS.

DONATIONS CAN BE MAILED TO:

TREHAB INDEPENDENT LIVING
36 PUBLIC AVE, MONTROSE, PA 18801



Statewide Update

The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) kicked off its 2025–2026 year with an exciting in-person meeting on September 18th! Youth from across Pennsylvania came together to connect, share ideas, and start planning for the year ahead. The meeting began with introductions and a quick review of the YAB Code of Conduct, helping set the tone for respectful and inclusive conversations.

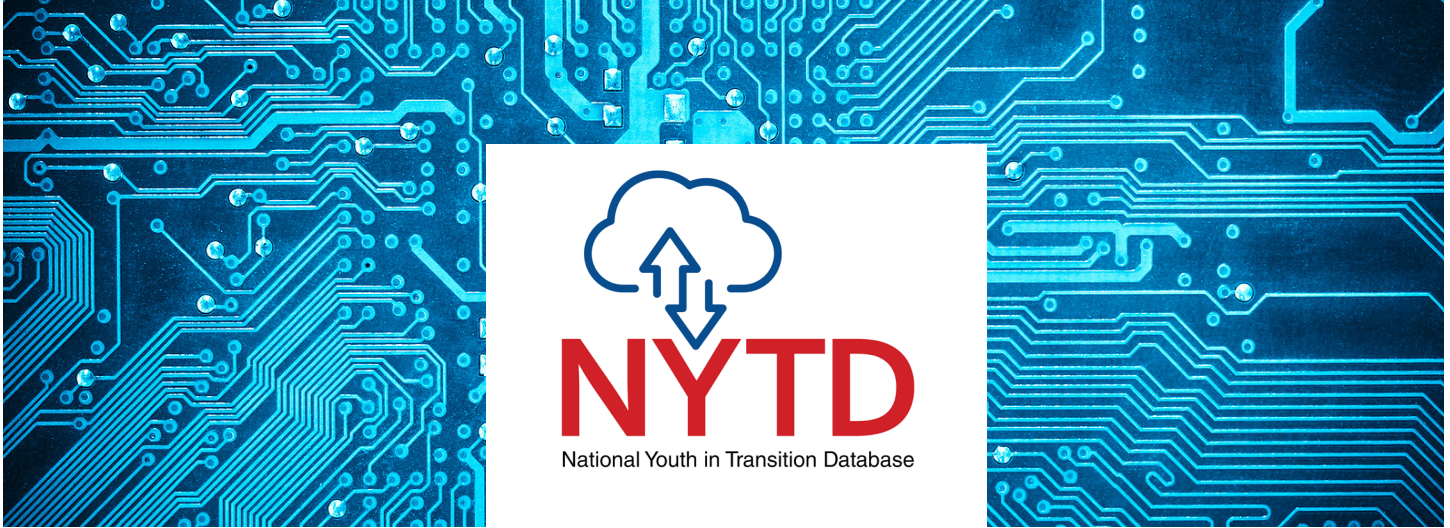
The Department of Human Services gave a live demo of the Compass App, which makes it easier to manage benefits like SNAP and Medical Assistance. With the app, youth can check their benefit status, upload documents, and get important updates right from their phone.

Youth also heard from the Blueprint Youth Collective, a group working to make systems like education, mental health, and child welfare better for youth. Everyone was invited to join the Collective.

Each region shared their 2025 Citizen Review Panel (CRP) projects. The Southwest region created resources for parenting youth, the Northeast region designed QR code stickers that link to info about “normalcy,” and the Southeast region focused on tools for budgeting and financial literacy. Looking ahead, youth brainstormed ideas for 2026 projects, including support for parenting and grieving youth, better transportation, culturally appropriate hygiene products, trauma-informed care, sibling connections, and more inclusive systems. These ideas reflect the real experiences and leadership of youth across the state.

Overall, the meeting set a strong and positive tone for the year, showing the power of youth voice and the importance of creating space for meaningful engagement and advocacy.





What is NYTD?

The **National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)** is a federal initiative designed to collect and track data on youth transitioning out of foster care in the United States. Established under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, NYTD aims to improve outcomes for youth aging out of the foster care system.

NYTD collects data at various stages of a young person's life to assess their progress and identify areas where additional support may be needed. This information helps states and federal agencies shape policies, enhance services, and ensure that youth receive the necessary resources for a successful transition to adulthood.

Building the NYTD Council

The NYTD Council for Youth is an exciting new initiative that empowers youth with lived experience in foster care to influence state-level policy decisions. The council provides a platform for youth to:

- Share their experiences and insights
- Discuss challenges and opportunities
- Help shape the future of youth services

Beyond policy input, the council also focuses on leadership development, advocacy, and peer support—fostering a strong sense of community and purpose.

If you are interested in becoming a part of the NYTD Council, you may reach out to Carl Butler at clb379@pitt.edu.

National Adoption Month



November is National Adoption Month. This is a time to celebrate families formed through adoption and honor the youth whose stories remind us of the power of connection.

This year's theme, "Honoring Youth: Strengthening Pathways for Lasting Bonds," highlights the importance of lifelong support and families that reflect the diversity of youth in care.

Together, we can strengthen pathways to permanency for every child.

Thanksgiving Day Fun Facts

Fun Facts: Thanksgiving Day - 4th Thursday of November



A History of Giving Thanks

- In the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims—early settlers of Plymouth Colony—held a 3-day feast to celebrate a bountiful harvest. Many regard this event as the nation's first Thanksgiving.
- The legacy of thanks and the feast have survived the centuries, with the event becoming a national holiday as of October 3, 1863. It was then that President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday of November as a national day of thanksgiving.
- Later, President Franklin Roosevelt clarified that Thanksgiving Day should always be celebrated on the fourth (not last) Thursday of the month to encourage earlier holiday shopping. Sometimes the last Thursday of November is the fifth Thursday.



Turkey Towns and Cranberry Counties

4 – The number of places in the United States named after the holiday's traditional main course.

- Turkey Creek, Louisiana (Population - 402)
 - Turkey, Texas (Population - 325)
 - Turkey, North Carolina (Population - 214)
 - Turkey Creek, Arizona (Population - 457)*
- *This data is from the 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

5 – The number of census places in the United States named Cranberry, a popular side dish at Thanksgiving.

- Most populous: Cranberry township, Butler County, Pennsylvania (Population - 34,516)
- Second most populous: Cranberry township, Venango County, Pennsylvania (Population - 6,242)



What's the sleepest thing at the Thanksgiving table?
Napkins!

Which states were forecasted to raise the most turkeys in 2024?*

- Minnesota (33.5 million)
- North Carolina (27.5 million)
- Arkansas (25.0 million)
- Indiana (20.0 million)
- Missouri (15.5 million)
- Virginia (15.4 million)



Did You Know? The six largest turkey producing states account for 67% of all turkeys produced in the United States.

Food for the Big Feast

In the United States in 2022, there were approximately:

- 63,000 supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores.
- 2,800 baked goods stores.
- 3,900 fruit and vegetable markets.



Sources: Data on this page come from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2023 Population Estimates, 2022 County Business Patterns, Quickfacts and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Thanksgiving Fun Facts



Q: Is turkey the real cause of feeling sleepy after a Thanksgiving Day meal?

A: Turkey does contain Tryptophan which could make us feel sleepy; however, sleepiness is likely caused by the over-consumption of alcohol and food, especially desserts.



Q: Is Thanksgiving the biggest drinking night of the year?

A: Yes, more alcohol is consumed on Thanksgiving than any other holiday of the year. So be careful on the roadways if you're traveling Thursday evening.



Q: Did the pilgrims officially declare Thanksgiving as a public holiday?

A: No, Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving a public holiday in 1863.



Q: Why did the Pilgrims first celebrate Thanksgiving?

A: The feast they celebrated in 1621 in Plymouth was the result of a good harvest.

Historians believe the Pilgrims served wild game and vegetables, instead of turkey, at the first Thanksgiving.

Approximately 46 million turkeys are eaten on Thanksgiving every year!

The Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade began in 1924 with only 400 employees.

Pilgrim means foreigner or traveler from afar!

The state of California consumes the most turkey!



www.TheSilverLining.com

SOURCES:

www.buffingtonpost.com/2015/11/01/thanksgiving-trivia-facts
www.businessinsider.com/fun-thanksgiving-day-facts-statistics-and-trivia-2011-11
www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanksgiving

Southpointe Town Center

Christmas in the Park 2025

Back by Popular Demand!
SOUTHPOINTE TOWN CENTER

Christmas in the Park 2025

Join us for two magical nights of holiday cheer,
community connection, & winter wonderland fun.

Featuring a 24-ft Christmas Tree, carriage rides, Santa, live music, & more!

LIGHT UP NIGHT

Thursday, November 20th

5PM-7PM

Santa's Arrival, Tree Lighting, Horse and Carriage Rides, Cookie & Cocoa Bar, sELFie Photo Ops, Creation Stations, Kids Activities, and more festive fun for all ages.

WINTER WONDERLAND

Thursday, December 4th

5PM-7PM

Karaoke Caroling, Kids' Sing-Alongs, Cocoa & Cookie Bar, Santa and Friends, Horse and Carriage Rides, Holiday Market, and more seasonal fun to warm your night.

FREE to Attend ♦ Full of Family Fun ♦ Pet Friendly

**We Can't Wait to Light it up and
Make Memories with YOU!**

Vendor and sponsorship opportunities are available.
Message Amy Taylor at amy@thinkminc.com for
more information.



Southpointe Town Center



Benefitting:



Adoption Connection, PPA
Families Grow Here.

Nate's

THURSDAY

AMERICAN GLOBAL

HILL'S

SAKURA'S

BAR

Brought to You By:

AC

AC

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Platt Park Canonsburg, PA
SOUTHPOINTE TOWN CENTER

on Pointe

MINC

DAVID

PARLOIRJAX The Skin Center



The Holiday Checklist For LGBTQ+ People

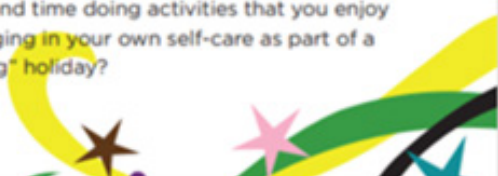


The Holiday Checklist for LGBTQ+ People

Holidays can be challenging times for LGBTQ+ folk. It is a time when families traditionally get together and engage in family and religious rituals. For LGBTQ+ folk whose families are not affirming, it may mean making a choice between being with your family of origin, being with a family of choice, or celebrating alone. Here are some tips to navigate the holidays from some of our LGBTQ+ experts:

Make a plan

☒ Before you go to family events, think about what you are anticipating will occur, what you are willing to ignore, and what you will not stand for.	☒ Have a supportive person on speed dial or ready by text when you need them. Sometimes a friend tasked with sending cute gifs or funny memes can help brighten up a heavy mood.
☒ If your family belongs to a religious community that is not accepting of your identity, let them know that you may want to skip or limit that part of the family holiday ritual.	☒ Be sure you have plans to have some fun while you are home with people and in places that affirm and celebrate YOU! This could be planning a fun or relaxing activity after your family event that will give you something extra to look forward to.
☒ If you typically visit with an extended family member who is not accepting of you and you prefer not to visit with that person, let your family know you don't want to join activities with that family member.	☒ If not being around your family during the holidays is the plan, that is okay too! How would you like to spend the holiday? Perhaps you can create new alternative traditions with those who love and affirm you. Or perhaps you would rather spend time doing activities that you enjoy and engaging in your own self-care as part of a "me-giving" holiday?
☒ Develop a plan for how non-supportive behavior will be addressed. For example, if someone misgenders you, do you want your mom to jump in with a correction? It might be helpful for her to role-play that correction so she knows how to address it if it comes up. How will you address behavior if it is not supportive?	



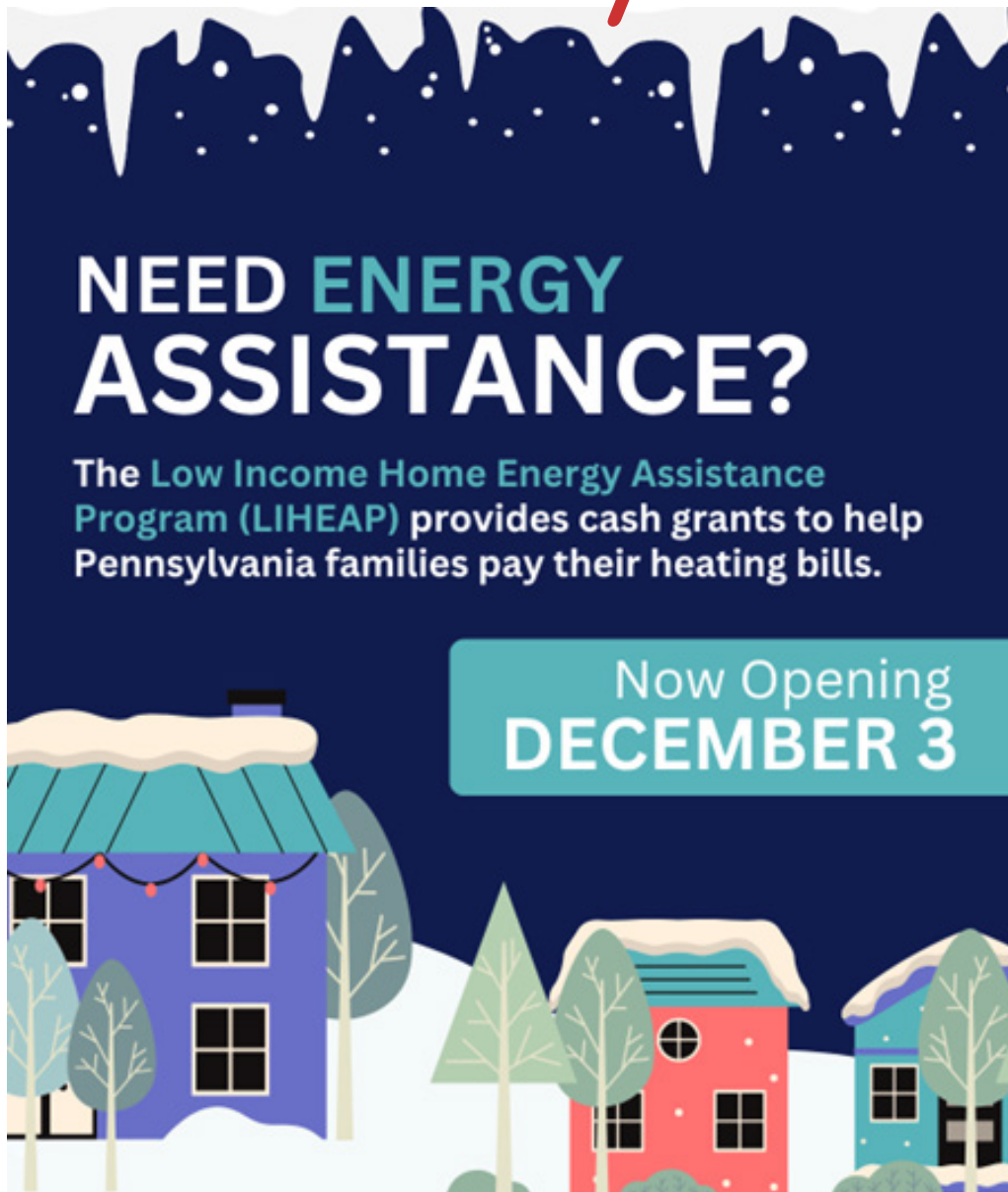


Fostering During the Holidays



The holiday season can be joyful yet challenging for foster youth. Be mindful of their unique needs, create meaningful new traditions together, and offer a safe space for their emotions.

LIHEAP *Update*



Because of the federal government shutdown, Pennsylvania is being forced to delay the [Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program](#) – vital home-heating assistance for 300,000 families – by a full month.

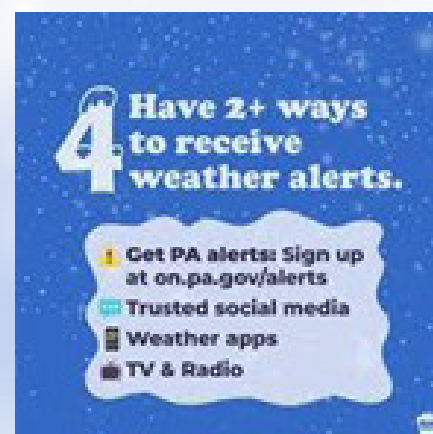
If you need help heating your home this winter, a list of utility companies' assistance programs [is available here](#).

Immediate assistance resources:

- Visit PA Navigate at pa-navigate.org to find local resources
- Call 211 or visit www.pa211.org for local support

Climate Shifts:

Essential Points





Act 1 of 2022

Graduation Plan Toolkit



When students change schools due to homelessness, foster care, or court-ordered placement, they often face lost credits and barriers to graduation. Act 1 of 2022 ensures that students who experience educational instability are not penalized for circumstances beyond their control.

The Act 1 Graduation Plan Toolkit helps schools and districts put Pennsylvania's Act 1 of 2022 into practice — ensuring every student has a clear path to graduation. The Toolkit empowers schools to provide equitable, consistent support, and maintain strong communication across districts.

The Toolkit includes:

- Step-by-step guidance to identify eligible students and implement Act 1 protections
- Templates for assigning a school Point of Contact and developing individualized graduation plans
- Tools to support credit transfer, course waivers, and participation in extracurricular activities
- Strategies to reduce barriers such as fees, fines, or enrollment delays

[View Graduation Plan Toolkit resources.](#)

Kinship Legal Toolkit



Nearly 2.5 million children in the U.S. are growing up in kinship families being raised by relatives, or close family friends. Research is clear – when children can’t stay with their parents, they do their best with kin. Kinship families offer greater stability and permanency, stronger connections to cultural identity, better mental health and behavioral outcomes, and deeper community links than non-kin foster families. Unlike parents, kin do not have automatic legal rights, and they often step in unexpectedly, during a crisis, to raise a child for whom they did not plan. This Kinship Legal Toolkit was created to help judges and attorneys understand the value of kinship, the federal laws impacting kin, and their role in supporting kin who open their hearts and homes. In this Toolkit, you will find resources and practical tips to assist in day-to-day work with families and kin involved with the child welfare system.

<https://www.grandfamilies.org/Resources/Kinship-Legal-Toolkit>

The Toolkit provides practical tips to assist in day-to-day work, including:

- Kinship laws, policies, and social science research
- Building blocks for a kin-friendly court room
- Guidance on supporting placement and permanency with kin
- National resources
- Judicial Bench Card and Quick Guides
- Videos of voices from the field

Aging Out Podcast



Penn
Social Policy & Practice
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA



The Field Center
FOR CHILDREN'S POLICY,
PRACTICE & RESEARCH

THE AGING OUT PODCAST

Policy. Practice. Possibility.
A Podcast on Aging Out of Foster Care



New Podcast Episodes Available!

The sixth episode in The Field Center's Aging Out Podcast series is now available on our website and all major podcast streaming platforms!

[Click here](#) to hear conversations on improving outcomes for older youth exiting foster care.

Standardized Client Job Posting



University of
Pittsburgh

THE PENNSYLVANIA CHILD
WELFARE RESOURCE CENTER

Standardized Clients

Simulation-based training provides a bridge from learning to implementation in child welfare practice. Standardized Clients help bring simulation to life.

What is a Standardized Client?

Standardized Clients are trained professionals who work for the Child Welfare Resource Center and are provided extensive training and ongoing professional development to support their role on the educational team.

Standardized Clients are part of the educational team and are responsible for providing realistic role portrayals and role specific feedback during simulation-based training sessions to support learner skill development.

Who You Are

- Passionate about helping others learn
- Able to accept feedback and direction
- Looking for part-time, flexible schedules (available between 8am and 5pm)

Apply Here



Resources

Mental Health Support

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

Call: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

National Crisis Text Hotline

Text "HOME" to 741741

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Visit:

988lifeline.org

Available 24/7/365.

Call, chat, or text.

ASL Videophone available for

Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

Housing & Safety

Homeless National Hotline

Call: 1-800-786-2929

National Youth & Teen Runaway Hotline

Call: 1-800-Runaway

National Domestic Violence Support Hotline

Call: 1-800-799-SAFE

Visit: www.thehotline.org

Health & Wellness

National STD Hotline

Call: 1-800-227-8922

Legal Support

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network Call:

1-800-322-7572

Child Protection

National Child Abuse Hotline

Call: 1-800-422-4453

LGBTQ+ Support

988 LGBTQ+ Line

Dial 988, Press 3

Text "PRIDE" to 988

Talk with an LGBTQ+ trained crisis counselor, available 24/7 for individuals under 25.

Visit: 988lifeline.org/help-yourself/lgbtqi/

Call Blackline

Call or Text: 1-800-604-5841

24/7 support for Black, LGBTQ+, and Black Femme communities

Visit: callblackline.com

LGBT National Hotline

Call: 1-888-843-4564

Visit: lgbthotline.org

Hours: Mon-Fri: 1 PM - 9 PM PT /

4 PM - Midnight ET

Sat: 9 AM - 2 PM PT / Noon - 5 PM ET

Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity (MASGD)

Call: 717-QTM-INARA (717-864-6272)

Hours: Fri-Sat, 5 PM - 11 PM CT

Visit: themasgd.org/Inara-helpline

Youth Support

Q Chat Space

Chat with peers in live, facilitated chats (Ages 13-19).

Visit: qchatspace.org

The QTP Loveline

Call: 1-855-578-5683

24/7 on-demand service.

Visit: queertransproject.org

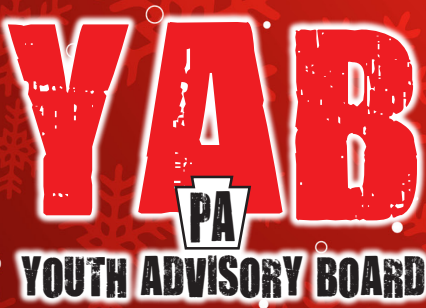
Upcoming Events

YAB Statewide Meetings:

- Thursday, January 22, 2026
- Thursday, March 19, 2026
- Thursday, May 21, 2026

YAB Leadership Summit 2026:

- Wednesday - Thursday, June 10-11, 2026



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