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## Children and Youth Services

Since the enactment of Act 30 of 1991, the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and the county Children and Youth (C&Y) and Juvenile Probation Office agencies have followed a “needs-based plan and budget process.” This has been an evolutionary process and one that has brought, over the years, considerably more federal and state financial resources to bear on the needs of Pennsylvania’s neglected, abused and delinquent children and their families.

Unfortunately, the federal/state/county cost-sharing ratio has not kept pace with the increased needs, entitlements and mandates addressed by counties. It is the counties who are the service delivery component of the state and county partnership and the ones who pay the bills up front. It is not unusual for counties to wait three months or longer for reimbursement from the state or federal funding sources. Counties are dependent upon local property taxes to fund their fair share of the C&Y budget. The federal share of the C&Y budget is decreasing while the state and county share is increasing. The needs of clients, however, do not diminish based upon the availability of funding. In fact, during times of reduced funding, the only variable becomes the priority order of who is and who is not served, and society’s tolerance for either the resultant pain and suffering, or the increased juvenile crime in the community.

The varying eligibility criteria and reimbursable rates among the various state and federal revenue sources, as well as different fiscal calendars for federal, state and county funding, magnifies the impact of any federal or state change in funding at the county level.

With this in mind, the county C&Y services system expresses its funding requirements to the DPW (through the needs-based plan and budget request) to attempt to meet the needs of children, families and communities, as well as the mandates of state and federal law. We ask the DPW and the legislature to assist counties in finding ways to fairly and adequately address and fund these services.

**For more information on children and youth issues, contact Chuck Songer at 717-232-7554 x3107, or [csonger@pacounties.org](mailto:csonger@pacounties.org).**

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