

The County Commissioners Association Of Pennsylvania
The Voice Of Pennsylvania's Counties

2009 Human Services Budget

Children And Youth

Since the passage of Act 30 of 1991, the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), the county children and youth agencies and county juvenile probation offices have followed a needs-based plan and budget process. This allows counties to express their service needs along with the federal, state and local funding required to meet the needs of children, families and communities, as well as the mandates of state and federal law. This has been an evolutionary process and one that had brought considerably more federal and state financial resources to bear on the needs of Pennsylvania's neglected, abused, and delinquent children and their families.

However a new process of "special initiatives" threatens to distort this process by removing funding from the "base" of each county's budget. It is the counties, the service delivery component of the state and county partnership, who are the ones who must first pay the bills. Counties are working with the legislature and DPW to restructure the reimbursement process to counties by proposing quarterly advances that better reflect county expenditures and to reduce the stressors on county cash flow.

Counties are dependent upon local property taxes to fund their fair share of the children and youth budget. The federal share of the children and youth budget is decreasing while the state and county shares are increasing. The needs of clients, however, do not diminish based upon the availability of funding. During times of economic stress and reduced funding, as is presently being experienced, the only variable becomes the priority order of those who are or are 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 state and federal revenue sources, as well as different fiscal calendars for federal, state and county funding, magnifies the impact of any change in funding and cash flow at the county level.

Counties ask DPW and the legislature to continue to assist counties in finding ways to fairly, adequately and predictably address and fund children and youth services.

For more information on children and youth services, contact Chuck Songer at (717) 232-7554 x 3107 or csonger@pacounties.org.



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