



2019 CCAP Priorities Key Talking Points for Counties

BACKGROUND

- Each of these priorities showcases counties' commitment to the core services they provide to improve the well-being of the people and communities of Pennsylvania.
- Counties deliver these services in partnership with the state, and seek to re-engage the General Assembly and administration about the broad role counties play on behalf of the commonwealth.
- Collaboration between the state and counties will lead to solutions that better reflect the needs of Pennsylvanians, improve stewardship of taxpayer dollars, reduce cost, increase local flexibility and assure the quality of services counties provide.

Counties should tell their local stories, including examples of relevant impacts to their programs and those they serve, within each of the following priorities as appropriate.

ELECTION EQUIPMENT AND VOTING SYSTEMS

- Counties take their responsibility seriously to assure the integrity and security of the elections process.
- While there is general consensus that election equipment – while still fair and accurate – is nearing the end of its useful life, settlement of a federal lawsuit by the Department of State mandates a replacement schedule in time for the April 2020 primary election.
- Counties are wholly responsible for selection and purchase of voting equipment, and replacement costs for the state's nearly 24,000 voting machines – as well as central counting systems, supplies, programming and maintenance agreements – will quickly add up.
- For counties, full funding for replacement of voting systems is critical, as every dollar that does not come from the state or federal government is a local property tax dollar.
- Strong partnerships with the federal and state government will be necessary to address the voting system replacement needs across all 67 counties.

FORENSIC SERVICES FOR SERIOUSLY MENTALLY ILL COUNTY INMATES

- Counties have been leaders in addressing the need for alternatives to placing offenders with mental illness or developmental disabilities in the prison system.
- The state Department of Human Services and counties have formed a strong partnership to address the shortage of psychiatric, or forensic beds, in state hospitals and create ways for counties to obtain state funding to expand community-based services.
- Work must continue to assure all counties are served with expanded community capacity.

- There is also a critical need to address the support and resource needs of the mental health system as a whole, not just those involved with the criminal justice system.
- At all times, the care of the individual must remain the principal basis for all county efforts.

HUMAN SERVICES FUNDING AND SYSTEM REFORM

- Human services programs are delivered by counties on behalf of the state and federal government to protect our most vulnerable citizens.
- However, even though mandates and caseloads continue to increase, state funding support has been steadily declining for more than a decade.
- The state-county partnership in service delivery must again be prioritized, including a commitment to additional and sustainable funding for all human services programs.
- Assurances must also be put in place for ongoing funding availability to essential services in the event of any future state budget delay.
- Counties seek to be part of the decision making process when the General Assembly and administration seek changes to the traditional partnership in service delivery.

RURAL BROADBAND EXPANSION

- Approximately 800,000 Pennsylvanians still do not have reliable internet service, even though it is vital to business, education, health care, emergency services and other key parts of everyday life.
- Without broadband, a significant part of the population is missing access to opportunities, while rural areas find it harder and harder to attract and retain residents and encourage business development.
- The commonwealth must develop partnerships among federal, state and local government, as well as the private sector, that can help make meaningful progress on rural broadband expansion.
- We also need to identify successful approaches and best practices to replicate in other communities, and partner with higher education and other research entities to leverage data and resources.

ASSESSMENT REFORM

- The property assessment process has its challenges and expenses, but tools have been developed by a statewide Assessment Reform Task Force to improve the process and offer education and guidance for counties and vendors.
- These best practices include data collection standards, a self-evaluation tool, model contracting standards and public relations guidelines, as well as several pieces of legislation.
- The resources will be actively shared and promoted among counties to help ensure the system is transparent, accurate and uniform for all residents and businesses.
- CCAP also will be working with its affiliate, the Assessors Association of Pennsylvania (AAP), to develop training for appeals boards members, which will be required beginning in 2020.

PREVENTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Pennsylvania continues to face a crisis related to the opioid epidemic, as high rates of overdose and death persist.
- Counties also recognize that other substance abuse issues related to heroin, cocaine, prescriptions and alcohol are significantly affecting public health as well.
- Single County Authorities (SCAs) are responsible for developing and implementing comprehensive prevention, intervention and treatment programs, and work together with community leaders and stakeholders to develop programs that meet local needs.
- State and local authorities, including SCAs, hospitals and other organizations, need to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to addressing substance abuse in all of its forms.
- Pennsylvania also needs to work toward a broad and inclusive data system that removes the barriers to information sharing and allows the impacts of investments in programs and services to be tracked.