



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Association of Pennsylvania

THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

2020 County Government PRIORITIES

Committed to the core responsibilities of county government—and ultimately to the people and communities of Pennsylvania.

Increased Funding for Mental Health Services

The commonwealth and its county partners must work together to fully support the needs of our citizens and our communities that are impacted by drug abuse, mental illness and developmental disabilities.

Community-based mental health services—such as community residential programs, family-based support, outpatient care and crisis intervention—are critical to the well-being of our constituents and communities. Funding levels for county mental health services have direct impacts on whether these important community and family supports will be available. This includes increasing mental health base funds for expanded services, beds and diversions, as well as abandoning efforts to dismantle Behavioral HealthChoices, which has provided important behavioral health services to some of Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable community members.

Counties have been able to coordinate and invest in those programs and services that meet local needs and challenges, and clients and their families have been highly satisfied with these local services.

COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- Commitment of full and sustainable state and federal funding for behavioral health services at a level that responds to societal and economy-driven increases in caseloads.
- Prioritizing the state-county partnership in service delivery to continue efforts to integrate services.
- Preserving the Behavioral HealthChoices program so counties can continue providing local mental health services in the most effective way possible.

For more information on **increased funding for mental health services**, contact **Brinda Penyak** at (717) 736-4737 or bpenyak@pacounties.org.

Solutions to the Emergency Medical Services Crisis

Our municipalities wrestle with a decline or outright lack of emergency services in many communities. Counties and the commonwealth are uniquely positioned to work together with our municipal partners to develop and implement EMS policy solutions that include securing sustainable resources and supporting systemic capacity building to meet the needs of our citizens.

Emergency medical services (EMS) in Pennsylvania are in crisis, affirmed by findings of multiple studies and most prominently in the 2004 SR 60 report, and reaffirmed in the report of the legislature's SR 6 Commission, released in 2018. CCAP membership expressed a need to develop the CCAP EMS Task force to explore whether counties could help address the issues raised in these reports. The Task Force developed a set of recommendations for each topic area, identified the related policy considerations, and noted opportunities for counties to contribute to the solution, including retention and recruitment, reimbursement rates, funding, coverage, service models, risk reduction, EMS Act and regulations, technology support and training requirements. Legislatively, the Task Force, working with CCAP's County Governance Committee, will seek to be an active partner with state policy makers in seeking policy and funding solutions to assist with this crisis in the coming year.

The full EMS Task Force report can be found at www.pacounties.org by clicking Resources and Reports under the Government Relations tab.

COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- Statutory authorization for county or multi-municipal authorities that would be capable of county-wide or regional EMS service delivery, including paid staffing, optimization of service deployment and service areas, and dedicated funding sources.
- Collaboration among state and federal agencies, the legislature and stakeholders to provide technology tools to municipalities, counties and EMS providers that enable them to better assess current strengths and vulnerabilities, improve dispatch efficiencies, and plan for current and future needs.
- Addressing system funding needs that support the variety of service models in operation in the commonwealth and provide sufficient resources to address community needs.

For more information on **solutions to the emergency medical services crisis**, contact **Ashley Lenker White** at (717) 736-4755 or awhite@pacounties.org.

County Property Tax Reform

If policymakers want to talk about real, comprehensive property tax reform, they must bring counties to the table as part of a conversation about the entire local tax system.

Demands on county services continue to grow, and counties face new and expanded mandates, while state and federal funding often fail to keep pace. This only puts more and more pressure on county property taxpayers, because counties have no other source of locally generated tax revenue. While counties must work with our state and federal partners to assure an appropriate balance of financial responsibility for programs and services, they also need a modernized tax base. And importantly, policy makers must understand that property tax reform is not just about schools. Counties seek additional taxing options, such as sales or income taxes, so that they can reduce their reliance on property taxes and decide locally what revenue sources work best for their communities.

See estimates of county optional tax yields at www.pacounties.org by clicking Government Relations, then Resources and Reports, under the Assessment and Taxation heading.

COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- Options for counties to levy a county sales, personal income or earned income tax of up to one percent to allow counties to reduce their reliance on the real property tax.

For more information on **county property tax reform**, contact **Lisa Schaefer** at (717) 736-4748 or lschaefer@pacounties.org.

Rural Broadband Expansion

The collective future of Pennsylvania hinges on addressing the challenges to rural broadband expansion that are preventing access to opportunities and information to many of our residents.

Counties have chosen rural broadband expansion as a priority for the second year in a row, to build on the partnerships developed in 2019 that can help deploy the resources and data needed to make meaningful progress on broadband expansion. For instance, state legislation was introduced and federal grants awarded, while counties also participated in hearings and began to look at creative local solutions. But there is still no comprehensive solution or strategy to help expand broadband services throughout the commonwealth. Counties will continue to explore ways to work together with public and private partners to address the critical need for internet access—as a tool for education, health care, emergency services and other key parts of our everyday lives. The health and future viability of our rural communities has an impact on the strength of our entire commonwealth, and broadband expansion will be a critical tool to move all of Pennsylvania forward together.

COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- Working together with federal, state, local and private stakeholders to develop strategies for successful rural broadband expansion.
- Identifying successful approaches and sharing best practices that can be replicated with other comparable communities.
- Partnering with higher education and other research entities to leverage data and other resources.

For more information on **rural broadband expansion**, contact **Melissa Anese** at (717) 736-4718 or manese@pacounties.org.

Adult Probation Funding

State funding for county adult probation services has been stagnant for many years, even while the expectations of the county probation system are increasing, limiting how effectively counties can use these programs as part of a comprehensive criminal justice system.

Nearly all of Pennsylvania's counties provide adult probation services, which support community supervision options for non-violent offenders and assist counties in making smart decisions about the use of jail and reducing recidivism. State funding provides adult probation grant-in-aid that helps offset county costs to train personnel and maintain and improve services, but has remained stagnant after years of decreases even as needs increase and shifts in focus to pre-trial supervision are further stressing already tight resources. Implementation of the second phase of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative is a critical first step in reexamining how the state and counties approach the judicial system and providing funding support. Without the less expensive and more effective option for community-based supervision, more non-violent offenders are likely to be diverted to more costly jail sentences. Increased and improved coordination of funding will allow the appropriate use of limited resources for increased public safety options.

COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- Increased state funding support for county adult probation services that correspond with growing need.
- Implementation of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative 2.
- Options for improved coordination of funds for supervision fees at the local level.

For more information on **adult probation funding**, contact **Brinda Penyak** at (717) 736-4737 or bpenyak@pacounties.org.



Touching the Lives of Every Pennsylvanian

County governments are responsible for a wide variety of critical services, including provision of human services (mental health, intellectual disabilities, juvenile justice, children and youth, long-term care, drug and alcohol services, housing) to people in need in our communities. In addition, counties are responsible for emergency management and 911 services, administration of the courts and corrections system, elections, maintenance of county bridges, and the county property assessment rolls, and also are involved in environmental and land use planning, protection of open space and community and economic development.

The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) is the voice of county government; a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. CCAP members include county commissioners, council members, county executives, administrators, chief clerks and solicitors. CCAP strengthens the counties' abilities to govern their own affairs and improve the well-being and quality of life for every Pennsylvania resident. It advocates for favorable state and federal legislation, programs and policies on behalf of counties. CCAP is committed to service excellence through education, information, insurance, technology and other programs that support effective county government. Founded in 1886, CCAP is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties (NACo).

For more information about any of the 2020 County Government Priorities, please visit www.pacounties.org and click on Priorities under the Government Relations tab or email PACountiesGR@pacounties.org.



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