



# CCAP 2021 Legislative Priorities

## County Planning Guide



THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

# **CCAP 2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES PLANNING GUIDE**

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# The Power of CCAP Legislative Priorities at the County Level

## To inspire action, decision makers must hear the county story from all corners of Pennsylvania

The legislative priorities elected each fall by CCAP members are not just CCAP priorities – they are truly county priorities. And what better way to share county priorities than by having *counties* take an active role in announcing them to the public, to the media and to legislators?

Over the past year, counties promoted the 2020 priorities in a variety of ways, such as adopting resolutions, posting on social media, chatting with legislators and working with local media. As a result, counties have successfully shifted the conversation on funding needs for mental health, secured funding and passed legislation critical to broadband expansion, engaged the state in adult probation reform, continued to put counties into the conversations surrounding property tax reform, and built and renewed partnerships with state government. The need for county input and advocacy at the capitol remains critical as we look ahead to 2021.



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 SUPPORT:**

- Community based mental health services such as community residential programs, family based support, support groups and crisis intervention are vital for the well-being of our citizens and communities. Funding for county mental health services has direct impacts on whether these important community and family supports will be available. This includes increasing mental health care funds for expanded services, staff and resources, as well as expanding efforts to identify behavioral health clinics, which has provided important behavioral health services to some of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable community members.

**COUNTIES SUPPORT:**

- Commitment of full and sustainable state and federal funding for behavioral health services as well as state resources to expand and enhance services in counties.
- Prioritizing the state-county partnership in service delivery to continue efforts to integrate services.
- Prioritizing the Behavioral Health Choice program to counties to continue expanding local mental health services in the most difficult-to-serve counties.

For more information on increased funding for mental health services, contact Brenda Perrelli at (717) 731-4737 or bperrelli@pa.gov.

### GET EXCITED – GET INVOLVED

At the 2020 virtual Fall Conference, the 2021 legislative priorities, highlighting those issues of greatest importance selected by counties, were revealed during the general session on Tuesday morning. From that point, every county has an opportunity to get involved and take ownership of their priorities, harnessing our collective power to achieve our common goals.

**CCAP is encouraging all counties to take an active role in announcing the 2021 priorities using at least three of the activities in this planning guide to create a buzz about your county and what is important to you, as well as the services you provide.**

Counties proved to be efficient experts in navigating virtual meetings and conversations with legislators amid a pandemic. CCAP will provide counties with priority resources, including fact sheets, talking points and other sample materials in early January to aid you in conversations with your legislators. Consider using the materials to discuss the priorities and how the state and counties can partner to achieve them. Pair them with information on services your county provides if you are conducting newly-elected legislator education or take the opportunity to tie the priorities to what is happening locally, sharing with constituents how state policies affect the services they receive from counties on a daily basis. Send an editorial to your local newspaper. There is no one right way to discuss the issues that matter most to counties.

But announcing the 2021 priorities is just the first step. With all 67 counties working together, counties will continue their collective efforts to advance those priorities throughout the year, building on the interest generated across the commonwealth to add others to take action with them.

## 2021 Legislative Priorities Timeline

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### WEEK OF NOVEMBER 9, 2020

CCAP policy committees met prior to the CCAP virtual Fall Conference to develop their 2021 work plans.

### NOVEMBER 23 AND 24, 2020

CCAP members chose the 2021 legislative priorities at the Committee of the Whole at the virtual Fall Conference, which were revealed at the closing general session the following day.

### DECEMBER 2020

Begin planning your county's activities to announce the 2021 legislative priorities. We encourage you to choose three of the activities listed in this planning guide to engage legislators, the media, the public and county staff.

### EARLY JANUARY

Your county will receive a fact sheet, sample news release/editorial, talking points and other tools to use in your 2021 priorities announcement activities.

### JANUARY THROUGH FEBRUARY

It's time to execute your county's chosen 2021 priorities announcement activities! Let CCAP know how you will be sharing the priorities by contacting [PACountiesGR@pacounties.org](mailto:PACountiesGR@pacounties.org).

### THROUGHOUT 2021

CCAP will be engaging legislators, the Administration and their staff at the Capitol as the General Assembly begins the 2021-2022 legislative session, and looking for opportunities to leverage media attention and other communications about the 2021 priorities. County efforts will also remain very important throughout the year, and CCAP will be sure to highlight other opportunities for counties to engage all of their audiences on key policy and priority issues.

### ***Want to get your county involved but not sure where to start?***

*Check out the ideas in following pages, or contact the CCAP Government Relations team at [PACountiesGR@pacounties.org](mailto:PACountiesGR@pacounties.org) for assistance and feedback.*

## What Can You Do Now?

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You can begin taking steps now to plan for how you will share the priorities and what they mean to your county throughout January and February.

### CHOOSE YOUR AUDIENCES

With whom will you share the 2021 priorities?

- **Legislators** are key decision makers who can advance the policies that are important to counties.
- **Media** – from newsprint to television to radio – can provide a forum for you to tell your story and why the counties' priorities are *your* priorities.
- **Public** – your constituents, your clients, local businesses and organizations, county staff and other partners want to know how you are taking action to improve the county and the well-being of its citizens.

### CHOOSE YOUR ACTIVITIES

How will you share the 2021 priorities? See pages 6 through 10 for a variety of ideas for reaching your chosen audiences; some of the suggested activities may even serve a dual purpose in reaching multiple audiences at once. We encourage each county to choose at least **three** activities to announce your priorities.

### CHOOSE YOUR TIMING

When will you share the 2021 priorities? CCAP is focusing on January and early February for a concentrated effort across the state for counties to announce their priorities, in the lead up to the Governor's FY 2021-2022 budget address. You can start now to pick dates for events (such as legislative meetings) and issue invitations, reach out to your local media representatives and build anticipation for your activities.

### KNOW WHO YOU NEED

Who will help you craft your local story and what the 2021 priorities mean to your county? Identify the county staff who are subject matter experts that you will turn to if you need local information on a particular issue, such as human services, taxes or county budgets. Other staff may be able to assist in drafting a local media release or editorial, preparing a county resolution, posting social media messaging, or setting up a legislative roundtable. Get them involved early so you can hit the ground running once the 2021 priorities are selected.

### CONTACT CCAP FOR ASSISTANCE

Additional resources can be found in this planning guide, or you can contact Melissa Gates, CCAP Government Relations Associate, [mgates@pacounties.org](mailto:mgates@pacounties.org) or Ken Kroski, CCAP Director of Media and Public Relations, [kkroski@pacounties.org](mailto:kkroski@pacounties.org).

### LET CCAP KNOW WHICH ACTIVITIES YOU ARE CHOOSING AND WHEN YOU PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THEM

Let us know how you will be sharing the priorities by contacting [PACountiesGR@pacounties.org](mailto:PACountiesGR@pacounties.org).

## Announcing the 2021 Legislative Priorities ... to Legislators

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Your legislative delegation can introduce and cosponsor bills that advance county priorities, and they have important votes in the House and Senate. Your education and advocacy will help legislators to be effective advocates on behalf of your county, and help to create a critical mass of legislators talking about county issues at the Capitol.

### ACTIVITY: SCHEDULE A VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE OR INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH LEGISLATORS

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#### Materials you will get:

- Fact sheets providing an overview of each priority
- Talking points related to each priority
- Sample presentation that can be customized with local information

#### What you can do now:

- Legislative schedules fill up quickly, so choose a date now for your roundtable and extend the invitation to your delegation. Note that with the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings or phone calls can also be a good option.
- Identify key county staff who will be able to assist with crafting an agenda, providing county information for priorities and preparing any handouts that may be needed.
- Consider whether a tour of county facilities could be added to your meeting once it is safe to do so.

### ACTIVITY: SEND A LETTER TO YOUR LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

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#### Materials you will get:

- Fact sheets providing an overview of each priority
- Sample letter that can be customized with local information

#### What you can do now:

- Plan ahead – gather mailing or email addresses in advance (CCAP can help!)
- Identify key county staff who will be able to assist in customizing your letter with county information and sending the complete letter and fact sheets to legislators

## Announcing the 2021 Legislative Priorities ... to the Media

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An effective media strategy can build understanding about the role and responsibilities of county government to a wide variety of audiences at once, and create positive coverage for your county and the 2021 priorities. Numerous options exist for you to tell your story.

### ACTIVITY: SEND A NEWS RELEASE TO LOCAL MEDIA

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#### Materials you will get:

- Sample news release that can be customized with local information

#### What you can do now:

- If your county does not already have a list of key media outlet representatives (newspaper, radio and TV) in your area, begin compiling contact information.
- Identify key county staff who will be able to assist in customizing your news release with relevant statistics and stories, and with sending the news release to your identified media contacts.

### ACTIVITY: SEND AN EDITORIAL TO YOUR LOCAL NEWS OUTLETS

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#### Materials you will get:

- Template for a draft editorial that can be customized with local information

#### What you can do now:

- If your county does not already have a list of editorial board contacts for local newspapers, begin compiling contact information.
- Enlist your county's subject matter experts to provide clear, succinct information, including relevant stories and statistics that are meaningful to your audience.
- Identify key county staff who will be responsible for producing the final version of your editorial and sending to local newspapers.

### ACTIVITY: USE YOUR LOCAL RADIO/TV CONNECTIONS

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#### Materials you will get:

- Fact sheets providing an overview of each priority
- Talking points related to each priority
- Sample news release/editorial that can be customized with local information

#### What you can do now:

- Schedule time to ask for individual meetings with key media representatives to educate them on the issues and tell your story; during the COVID-19 pandemic virtual meetings are also a good option. Nothing beats face to face. Direct contact by email and phone also works well to share information and related documents.
- Reach out to your local radio and/or TV outlets to request time on local talk shows or news programs. Many are facilitating remote opportunities for participation.
- Identify individuals who will participate in the program or interviews, and begin to consider who would be best suited to speak on certain issues.

### **ACTIVITY: HOLD A VIRTUAL PRESS CONFERENCE**

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#### **Materials you will get:**

- Fact sheets providing an overview of each priority
- Talking points related to each priority
- Sample news release/editorial that can be customized with local information

#### **What you can do now:**

- Consider whether local media representatives would attend a virtual press conference.
- Choose a date and location, and begin thinking about an agenda/script.
- Enlist key speakers and identify other subject matter experts who could be available for interviews to help relate the big picture and the details.
- Identify staff who can assist with logistics and technical issues the day of the event.

### **ACTIVITY: SCHEDULE A VIRTUAL EDITORIAL BOARD MEETING**

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#### **Materials you will get:**

- Fact sheets providing an overview of each priority
- Talking points related to each priority
- Sample news release/editorial that can be customized with local information

#### **What you can do now:**

- Schedule time to work with your local paper's editorial board or primary editor.
- Identify individuals who will participate in the meeting, and begin to consider who would be best suited to speak on certain issues.

## Announcing the 2021 Priorities ... to the Public

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Sharing the priorities in a way that is relevant to your community will bring a better understanding of who your county is and the services you provide to your residents.

### ACTIVITY: INCLUDE THE TOPIC AT COMMUNITY MEETINGS

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#### Materials you will get:

- Fact sheets providing an overview of each priority
- Talking points related to each priority
- Sample resolution supporting the 2021 priorities that can be customized with local information

#### What you can do now:

- Place the priorities on the agenda for existing community meetings.
- Link priorities materials to meeting minutes or post them on your website or social media for easy constituent access.
- Identify your county's subject matter experts who can provide clear, succinct information, including relevant stories and statistics that are meaningful to your audience as you tell your county's story.

### ACTIVITY: ENLIST OTHER VOICES

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#### Materials you will get:

- Fact sheets providing an overview of each priority
- Talking points related to each priority
- Sample resolution supporting the 2020 priorities that can be customized with local information

#### What you can do now:

- Identify partners and those affected by issues surrounding the legislative priorities who may add information and a human touch as another voice to help tell your story.
- Prepare and schedule emails and phone calls in order to share information with community leaders who may be able to assist with messaging.
- Plan to inform all county staff via email or staff newsletter about the priorities and your local story so they can communicate with others.

## Announcing the 2021 Priorities ... to Multiple Audiences

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Many activities can have a broader reach to multiple audiences. Consider the following for maximum visibility with a single effort.

### ACTIVITY: DISCUSS THE PRIORITIES DURING YOUR COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

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#### Materials you will get:

- Fact sheets providing an overview of each priority
- Talking points related to each priority

#### What you can do now:

- Consider upcoming agenda items to which you could tie the 2021 priorities – for instance, when your county reviews or votes on your 2021 budget, are there programs or services in your budget that can be highlighted in context of the priorities?
- Identify your county's subject matter experts who can provide clear, succinct information, including relevant stories and statistics that are meaningful to your audience
- Invite media representatives to attend and conduct interviews.

### ACTIVITY: ADOPT A COUNTY RESOLUTION

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#### Materials you will get:

- Sample resolution supporting the 2021 priorities that can be customized with local information and shared with media and legislators

#### What you can do now:

- Select a meeting at which you would like to adopt your resolution.
- Identify key county staff who will be able to assist in customizing your resolution with county information.
- Plan ahead – prepare mailing labels and envelopes in advance, or gather email addresses so that you can send a copy of your resolution to legislators.

### ACTIVITY: USE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

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#### Materials you will get:

- Social media templates and graphics that can be incorporated into county and individual social media feeds
- Links to fact sheets on CCAP website

#### What you can do now:

- Identify key county staff who can incorporate information prominently on your county's website, social media accounts, emails, newsletters and other constituent communications.
- Enlist partners and those affected by issues surrounding the legislative priorities who may add information and a human touch as another voice to help tell your story on their communications platforms.

## General Resources

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The below links are full of helpful information, tips and tricks to get your initiatives started. If you have any questions about available materials or how to set up a virtual meeting or press event, CCAP can help! Contact a member of the CCAP team or send a note to [PACountiesGR@pacounties.org](mailto:PACountiesGR@pacounties.org).

**[CCAP Priorities Webpage](#)**. Each year the CCAP membership selects several issues that rise to the top of the legislative agenda for that year. The Priorities webpage hosts resources including fact sheets, talking points, sample social media posts and even a specialized planning guide that can be used for grassroots activities with legislators.

**[Legislative Action Center](#)**. The CCAP Legislative Action Center, located at [www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org) under the Government Relations tab, serves as a hub for different advocacy material links and resources including fact sheets, talking points, sample letters and background information. The Legislative Action Center serves as a reference page to link you out to the General Assembly website. You can find contact information for Pennsylvania House and Senate members as well as other commonwealth employees.

**[Grassroots Toolkit](#)**. This toolkit holds a host of good tips and tricks, from strategies for effective communication to human services advocacy advice. It also features a crash course in the Pennsylvania legislative process.

**[Guidelines for Organizing Legislative Visits](#)**. This quick one-pager helps to guide the process of setting up meetings in the county. These could be a sit-down meeting in an office or a guided tour of a county facility. Organizing meetings is more than just logistics, but also careful consideration and preparation of the goal of the meeting.

**[Articles on Special Topics](#)**. Often articles related to tips, tricks and best practices are featured in the CCAP magazine, *County News*. For quick access, they also can be found on the Legislative Action Center. Some topics include legislative engagement, messaging and speaking skills, connecting with media, and how to explain what counties do.

**[Twitter \(@PACountiesGR\)](#)** While social media certainly is not for everyone, it is a great way to find and share information quickly and broadly. Consider following CCAP on Twitter (@PACountiesGR) to stay in the know about different county and legislative happenings in real time.

### Other helpful links:

- [NACo Media Relations Guide for Counties](#)
- [Pennsylvania Counties Are Fact Sheet](#)
- [Pennsylvania County Human Services Are Fact Sheet](#)

# 2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES Planning Checklist

## HAVE YOU ...

- Chosen at least three activities in this planning guide to announce the 2021 legislative priorities?
- Talked to your key county staff to engage them in developing messaging that will show why the priorities are important to your county?
- Shared your chosen activities with CCAP's government relations team at [\*PACountiesGR@pacounties.org\*](mailto:PACountiesGR@pacounties.org)?
- Bookmarked [\*http://www.pacounties.org/GR/Pages/Priorities.aspx\*](http://www.pacounties.org/GR/Pages/Priorities.aspx) for the most up-to-date information and resources about the 2021 priorities?
- Gotten excited to get involved and join your fellow counties in announcing the priorities?

