

Human Services Funding and System Reform

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, developmental disabilities, and child abuse and neglect.

Pennsylvania counties deliver crucial human services on behalf of the state and federal government—services that protect our most vulnerable citizens, among them children suffering from abuse, those fighting substance abuse addictions, individuals with mental illness and developmental disabilities, and seniors in need of long-term care.

However, even though mandates and caseloads continue to increase, state funding support has been steadily declining for more than a decade. A ten percent aggregate cut to seven line items that impact core services in all 67 counties in FY 2012-2013 only compounded an already dire situation.

Counties continue to deal with the daily challenge of serving the ever-growing needs of their residents, such as the significant increases in workloads to county child welfare agencies following a series of nearly 30 new child welfare laws enacted in 2015 and the toll of the opioid epidemic on families and their children. Yet counties must also face the reality of ever-stagnant state funds to support those needs.

Each year, counties find themselves advocating to prevent state funding for human services from being cut, much less achieving the increases that are so critically needed just to catch up from years of underfunding. The state-county partnership in service delivery must again be prioritized—including a commitment to additional and sustainable funding for all of our human services programs and assurances of continued funding to essential services in the event of any future state budget delay—before the safety net becomes so frayed it can no longer support those who need it most.

But it is not just funding. The General Assembly and administration must bring counties to the table earlier in the decision making process when seeking to alter the traditional partnership between the state and counties for service delivery. Failure to do so often has unintended consequences, as recently experienced with changes to the medical assistance transportation program. Counties also seek a partnership with the state on program reform, including efforts for better planning and integration of services. Experience tells us there are many more statutory and regulatory opportunities to deliver services more efficiently.



COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- Commitment of full state and federal funding for human services at a level that responds to societal and economy-driven increases in caseloads.
- Assurances of ongoing funding availability for essential services in the event of any future budget delay.
- Collaborative review of the scope, objectives and administration of human services programs to better reflect the state-county partnership.



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Association of Pennsylvania

THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

For more information on **human services funding and system reform**, contact **Brinda Penyak** at (717) 736-4737 or bpenyak@pacounties.org.