



CCAP 2019 Priorities Status Report March 2019

CCAP members identified a total of six priority issues for 2019. Grassroots activity on the priorities began following their adoption at the 2018 Fall Conference. After a formal announcement in January, officers and staff launched efforts to work with the General Assembly and the administration to introduce and advance proposals.

The current status is presented in priority order, as established by CCAP members:

Election Equipment and Voting Systems

The start of the new session has brought additional legislative attention to the mandate on counties to purchase new voting machines in time for the April 2020, stemming from the state's settlement agreement with the Stein campaign to resolve pending litigation. In particular, the Governor's budget address, in which Gov. Wolf proposed \$75 million (\$15 million annually over five years) to counties to cover about half of the cost for the new machines, gave counties new opportunities to advocate the issue with their House and Senate members.

CCAP met with the new House State Government Committee chair, Rep. Garth Everett, as well as Senate State Government Committee chair Sen. Mike Folmer, to discuss elections-related issues, and meetings are also scheduled with their counterparts Rep. Kevin Boyle and Sen. Anthony Williams. This top county priority was the significant topic of discussion by Board members during meetings with House and Senate leadership in late January as well, and CCAP continues to communicate with Acting Secretary of the Commonwealth Kathy Boockvar and Deputy Secretary for Elections and Commissions Jonathan Marks.

On Jan. 29 Sen. Folmer led his colleagues, former Berks County commissioner Sen. Judy Schwank, former Delaware County council member Sen. Tom Killion, former Lancaster County commissioner Scott Martin and Sen. Pat Stefano, at a press conference introducing several election reform bills. CCAP President Kathi Cozzone issued a media statement thanking the senators for opening the door to consider important updates to the Election Code and including county elected officials and election directors in discussions as the bills were developed.

As part of counties' advocacy on voting systems, CCAP also wrote an editorial highlighting the important work of counties and the 2019 county priorities, focusing in part on the need to work with state partners to achieve maximum funding for equipment replacement and asking for the funding timeline to be shortened to a single year. The editorial was picked up by a number of media outlets statewide.

Snyder County commissioner Joe Kantz, co-chair of CCAP's elections reform committee, and Dauphin County commissioner Jeff Haste will be testifying at a Senate State Government hearing on March 26 regarding the process for state decertification of voting equipment. In addition, former Clarion County commissioner Rep. Donna Oberlander has invited CCAP to provide a roundtable on voting machines and election reforms to the House Republican Policy Committee she chairs; that roundtable will be held on April 17.

Forensic Services for Seriously Mentally Ill County Inmates

The CCAP Comprehensive Behavioral Health Task Force continues to drive state/county relationship-building that is resulting in funding for county projects. Counties are working collaboratively to design and implement local options for forensic evaluations as well as restoration. Prospective stakeholders have been invited to the April meeting of the Task Force to discuss the potential for staging an annual Forensics Conference along the lines of the conference held in December 2018, bringing together judges, district attorneys, commissioners, law enforcement, jail administrators, treatment professionals and the Department of Human Services to expand understanding around the appropriate usage of state hospital beds for forensics and to encourage additional partnerships for developing local community capacity.

Human Services Funding and System Reform

In January, ahead of Gov. Wolf's FY 2019-2020 budget address, CCAP released its historical funding overview analyzing the multi-year trends in state funding for services that counties provide on behalf of the state. For the first time, this overview presents graphically the flat, and often decreasing, funding across many critical human services programs. The analysis was also highlighted in an article in the February County News magazine, and the full report is posted on the CCAP [Budget News web page](#) as an advocacy resource for counties.

Analysis of the Governor's FY 2019-2020 budget proposal, unveiled in his Feb. 5 address, has been completed and is available on the CCAP website. The \$34.1 billion proposal represents generally level funding across county line items, particularly in human services. As noted earlier, following the Governor's address CCAP offered an editorial highlighting the 2019 priorities and the important work of counties, which noted that counties find themselves in the same scenario each year, advocating against a decade's worth of cuts while hoping this could be the year when critical increases could be achieved. In addition to meetings with House and Senate leaders in late January, CCAP will be following up with Appropriations chairs now that budget hearings are complete and negotiations begin to take place over the next several months.

Counties are also focused on efforts to protect the Behavioral HealthChoices program in the face of legislative threats to dismantle the carveout. The COMCARE Board is actively working on direct lobbying, local grassroots and media outreach to defeat these threats, and several counties have authored local editorials and other media efforts highlighting the positive effects the current system has offered clients over the past 20 years. Legislative roundtables were also scheduled on March 21 in the Lehigh Valley and in April in York.

Finally, legislation has now been introduced by Sen. Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne) to delay moving the Medical Assistance Transportation Program to a brokerage model, as required by last-minute amendments approved along with the FY 2018-2019 budget, until a more detailed review can be undertaken. CCAP will be seeking consideration of Senate Bill 390 by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, chaired by former Mercer County commissioner Sen. Michele Brooks; similar legislation is expected to be introduced in the House by Rep. Aaron Bernstine (R-Lawrence).

CCAP has met with several of the health and human services committee chairs in both chambers to continue building the state-county partnership, with more meetings on the schedule.

Rural Broadband Expansion

As the need for high speed and reliable internet access continues to gain importance as the backbone of business, and as a tool for education, health care, emergency services and other key parts of our everyday lives, counties have been at the forefront of broadband expansion in the commonwealth. Counties are looking for creative solutions that work to provide internet connectivity for their residents, especially in rural areas and better bandwidth capacity statewide.

CCAP has assisted in distributing information from the Pennsylvania Office of Broadband Initiatives about its stakeholder survey, seeking to identify successful approaches and other data on how broadband is already been addressed throughout the Commonwealth. Additionally, Pennsylvania's counties are partnering with the National Association of Counties (NACo) to assess broadband download and upload speeds. The Association has also shared information about NACo's new *TestIt* application for mobile devices, which will compile broadband speed data of users across the nation to provide a better picture of where service may be overstated and/or underfunded. The test is similar to one counties helped distribute on behalf of Penn State and the Center for Rural Pennsylvania in 2018.

Early in the legislative session, Sen. Wayne Langerholc (R-Cambria), the new chair of the Senate Communications and Technology Committee, reached out to CCAP for a conversation about counties' broadband priority. Sen. Langerholc expressed his interest in learning more about best practices and other county responses in addressing the roadblocks in broadband, and discussing potential next steps and solutions.

Assessment Reform

With the completion of several tools by the Local Government Commission's Assessment Reform Task Force in 2018, CCAP has been working to promote their use among the counties. Specifically, members of CCAP's affiliate, the Assessors Association of Pennsylvania (AAP) presented a breakout session at the 2018 Fall Conference on the self-evaluation tool that will assist counties with periodic reviews of their assessment systems. Two additional sessions at the 2019 Spring Conference will allow more in-depth review of the public relations guidelines as well as the steps of preparing for a countywide reassessment.

In 2018, the General Assembly approved SB 1007, signed into law as [Act 155 of 2018](#), to require all members of assessment appeals board to obtain training beginning in January 2020. Act 155 requires the training to be developed by CCAP, in coordination with AAP, and AAP has begun work developing these training modules. CCAP's Assessment and Taxation Committee will be providing input to AAP on the content and delivery methods of the training as well.

The Assessment Reform Task Force also recommended several other pieces of legislation around sales data verification, building permit reform and certification for third party contractors that have yet to be approved by the General Assembly. After the Local Government Commission reorganizes in late March, it is anticipated that its members will re-introduce the bills in short order.

Preventing Substance Abuse

With the beginning of the 2019-2020 session, a continued conversation and focus has been centered on the substance abuse and drug overdose crisis, particularly related to opioids. Recent efforts by the state legislature and administration have concentrated on the resources and systematic approaches needed to continue recovery and treatment and to continue education and service to those affected by addiction. However, as Pennsylvania makes progress addressing issues around opioids, alcohol abuse continues to impact health and human services and the state is seeing a resurgence of methamphetamines and other synthetic substances.

CCAP and its affiliate, the Pennsylvania Association of County Drug and Alcohol Administrators (PACDAA), continue to jointly engage the General Assembly and state agencies to highlight the critical role of the Single County Authorities in prevention, intervention and treatment, and the concurrent need for coordination and collaboration between state and local authorities in development and implementation of a comprehensive and holistic approach. Equally critical for the program is finding additional state resources for increased local capacity. As noted above, CCAP staff have been meeting with key committee chairs with jurisdiction over these issues in both the House and Senate to discuss areas of mutual priority and to raise awareness of how counties are experiencing substance abuse service needs beyond the opioid epidemic.

Counties also continue to offer input and solutions to substance abuse and drug overdose issues in other ways, such as the development and distribution of a "warm handoff" protocol with local emergency departments and the College of Emergency Room Physicians to help get overdose survivors directly into treatment of addiction. Other efforts include working with the Centers of Excellence to expand access to Medication Assisted Treatment for overdose survivors.

Finally, continuation of Behavioral HealthChoices funding is critical to maintaining the infrastructure that has been established, and counties are actively working to maintain the carveout and the local programs it supports.