

## Human Services Block Grant Update for Counties in Joinder Arrangements (June 6, 2012)

---

The Governor's proposed fiscal year 2012-13 budget proposes to fundamentally transform the relationship between the state and county governments for the delivery of certain critical human services programs. Through discussions between the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) and the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), substantial progress has been made on many of the elements that will be impacted by the implementation of the block grant, including joinder arrangements.

Beginning in the new fiscal year, July 1, 2012, DPW will calculate each county's pro rata portion of the joinder allocation using total county population. Each county's calculated share will then be combined with the other categorical allocations to compute the block grant allocation. Counties will receive a single quarterly payment for the block grant allocation with the expectation that each county within the joinder arrangement will pass through the appropriate portion to the joinder entity for that county. During the transition to the block grant, it is the expectation of DPW that joinder arrangements will continue to be honored by each involved county until such time as new or revised agreements are reached. DPW approval is required for any plan to withdraw from or dissolve current arrangements.

The FY 2011-12 categorical allocations as of April 1, 2012 will be used by DPW to calculate the total block grant allocation as well as to determine the required spending amounts on each categorical. The required match percentage will be based on the county's FY 2009-10 actual rate of match until fiscal year 2010-11 rates are determined. Joinders will need to apply match to cost centers that require match.

DPW has committed to make every effort to have block grant allocation letters to counties within 30 days following the passage of the Commonwealth budget. To assist in the transition to the block grant, DPW will detail the following information in the allocation letters that will be sent to the counties in joinder arrangements: FY 2011-12 categorical allocations as of April 1, 2012, the total block grant allocation, the required spending amounts in each categorical area, the allocations specific to the joinder agreement, the required match percentage and the methodology used to split allocations that were previously part of the joinder arrangements.

DPW is attempting to streamline the financial reporting and planning requirements associated with the services contained in the block grant. It is DPW's intent to have joinders continue to report on funding streams outside of the block grant, as they do currently. For the funding streams being consolidated into the block grant, the joinders will have categorical reporting requirements to the counties they serve. Joinders will need to report to counties on the categories of services they provide and must demonstrate in the reporting document the amount of funds all of the counties in joinder arrangement have agreed to contribute to that entity. Joinder plans will satisfy DPW requirements for the block grant services provided by the joinder for each county served by that entity.

The block grant will create flexibility and promote local decision making by permitting counties to prioritize funds to where they are needed most. County commissioners and councilmembers will be required to present their spending plans for the block grant funds at advertised public meetings. Stakeholder input has been and will continue to be a vital aspect of the creation and implementation of the block grant. Joinder administrators are encouraged to begin having discussions on cash flow and related issues with the county commissioners and councilmembers they serve. CCAP and DPW share a mutual goal that successful joinder arrangements can continue and new joinders can be created if desired in a block grant environment.