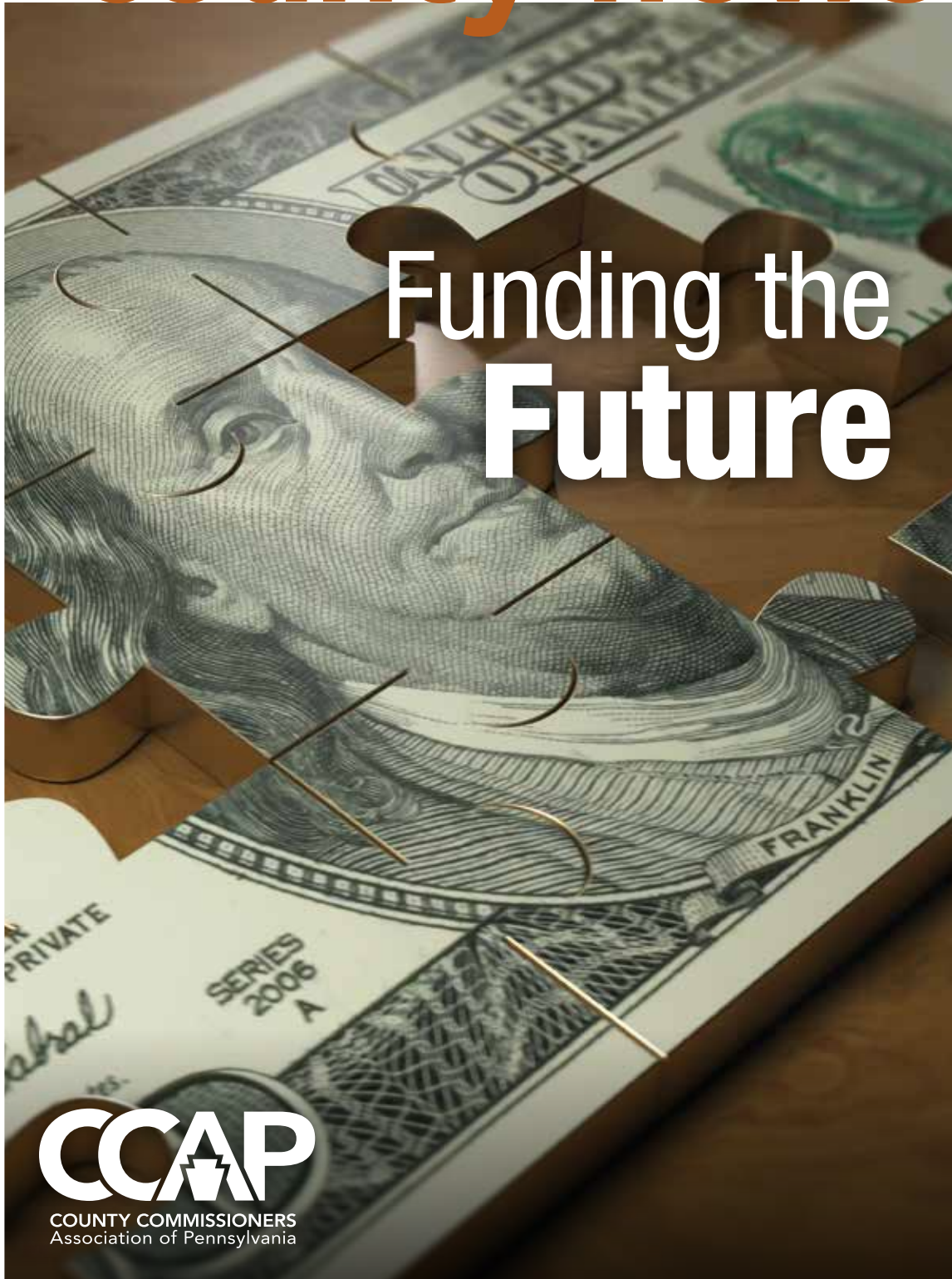


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The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) is the voice of county government; a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. CCAP members include county commissioners, council members, 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 a partner with the National Association of Counties.

To acquire an article idea submittal form for CCAP's *Pennsylvania County News* please email John Buffone at [jbuffone@pacounties.org](mailto:jbuffone@pacounties.org).

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winter  
**2023**

# PENNSYLVANIA county news

County government plays a part in almost every aspect of everyday life. For that to continue and thrive, counties have the tough job of applying for and responsibly allocating funds in their communities. But not all funding processes are the same. In this issue, we'll take a look at how counties fund their futures.

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2023 County Government Priorities



The State of Broadband Funding in Pennsylvania



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# president's commentary



## ALBERT "CHIP" ABRAMOVIC

President, County Commissioners  
Association of Pennsylvania  
& Venango County Commissioner

**If you look hard enough, there is a perfect metaphor for every life experience.** As my family, friends and colleagues know, bull riding has become a passion of mine. How and why it become one of my passions is a story for another time. But I cannot think of a better metaphor for my time in county leadership than a sport that requires fearlessness, drive and resiliency.

Right before I took office as a commissioner, I was filled with nervous energy. But while the task was daunting, there was a great excitement for was ahead of me, much like the seconds before the gate opens at a rodeo. As a commissioner, there are a whirlwind of items that come across your desk and responsibilities that require focus and determination, not unlike a wild ride on bull where everything is happening at warp speed.

But the perhaps the most significant similarity between bull riding and being a county commissioner is what happens when you get thrown to the ground. As county leaders, we have experienced

many falls to the ground. But the most important thing we can do, is stand up and get back on the bull.

As an association, we cannot stop fighting for 9-1-1 funding and reauthorization, a key function in public safety. We cannot stop advocating for appropriate funding for our crumbling mental health system in Pennsylvania as funding continues to lag behind demand. We can never the let conversation about broadband expansion fizzle out while large areas of our state still do not have access to high-speed internet. As an association consisting of members that care so deeply about their residents and the issues that impact them, we cannot stay on the ground when we get bucked off the bull.

In life, there are ups and downs. There are challenges and triumphs. But as long as we always get back up, we can accomplish incredible things at the county level. I look forward to taking this wild ride with you and serving as your CCAP president in 2023. 🐮



As an association consisting of members that care so deeply about their residents and the issues that impact them, **we cannot stay on the ground when we get bucked off the bull.**



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**For more information about our vendor opportunities, please contact Patty Stroble, Director of Vendor Relations, at (717) 736-4739 or [pstroble@pacounties.org](mailto:pstroble@pacounties.org).**

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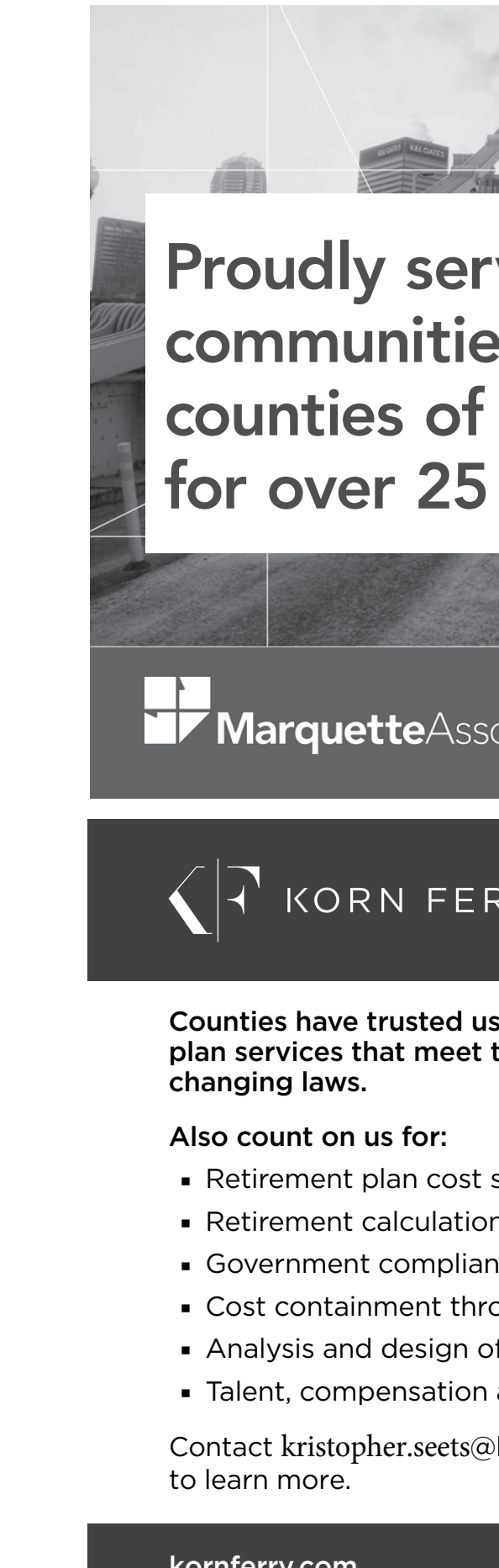
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# 2023

## County Government PRIORITIES



*Committed to the core responsibilities of county government – and ultimately to the people and communities of Pennsylvania*

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**County governments are responsible for a wide variety of critical services**, including provision of human services (mental health, intellectual disabilities, 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), a non-profit, non-partisan association, advocates as the unifying voice of all 67 Pennsylvania counties and provides leadership and support for excellence in county government. CCAP members include county commissioners, council members, county executives, administrators, chief clerks and solicitors. CCAP advocates as the unifying voice of all Pennsylvania counties and provides leadership and support for excellence in county government. Founded in 1886, CCAP is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties (NACo).

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# 2023

## County Government PRIORITIES

*Counties are proud to provide one of the key functions in public safety—the operation of the 911 call-taking and dispatch system. As technologies continue to evolve and funding streams no longer align with current realities, counties need to be able to rely on consistent and sustainable funding to maintain their responsibility as the first line of emergency response.*

### THE BIG PICTURE

**Achieving this priority would ensure all Pennsylvania residents and visitors will continue to have a quick and efficient connection to a 911 operator and services in any situation, regardless of geographic location or time of day.**



## 911 Funding and Reauthorization

Counties are actively working with PEMA, legislative committees, emergency management professionals, the communications industry and other interests on improvements to the 911 system. Center to this effort is forward movement and investment in Next Generation 911 (NG911) to take into account both current and future ways that people can communicate in an emergency, improvements in system efficiency through shared infrastructure and network connection for 911 public safety answering points statewide, accurate GIS information and data and better regional systems to assure availability and reliability. A strong, connected 911 system is critical to ensuring services can still be provided efficiently in situations of mass emergency and can keep up with the pace of ever-changing technological advances to maximize emergency services delivery.

### COUNTIES SUPPORT

- Development of a funding formula, well ahead of the January 31, 2024, sunset of the state's 911 statute, that adequately supports current county needs and also ensures that funding sources and distribution support needs into the future.
- Continued strategic planning and investment for evolving technologies and GIS data to ensure NG911 is properly supported and maintained.
- Opportunities for system and funding consolidation, including regional resource sharing and collaboration to ensure system and service continuity.



# 2023 County Government PRIORITIES

## County Inmates with Mental Health Issues

County jails are reporting a steady growth in the population of inmates within the jail who have mental health issues. Further, more of those same inmates are experiencing severe mental illness, making it very difficult to address their needs in the jail setting. Without community-based resources and appropriate funding to support them, individuals may continue to cycle through the corrections system when adequate behavioral health supports would be a more appropriate and cost-effective solution.

*County jails have become de-facto state hospitals following years of deinstitutionalization of individuals with mental illness. When unmet behavioral health challenges lead to criminal charges, individuals are often committed to jails that are not equipped to address needs of people who need mental health treatment, resulting in poor outcomes for those individuals and for their communities.*

### COUNTIES SUPPORT

- Working closely with the Shapiro administration and the legislature to find alternatives to placing inmates who have mental illness in jail.
- Working with our partners to create better diversion and re-entry options in order to avoid jailing people as a result of their illness.
- Assuring that counties have access to state hospital beds when they are needed and stopping unrealistic measures to control beds at the expense of county jail inmates who need them.
- Cooperation with other providers to maintain continuity of care for inmates returned to the county.

### THE BIG PICTURE

**Achieving this priority would mean individuals with mental health issues would have access to services and diversion programs to keep them out of jail. Further, those who end up in the correction system could have services to help rehabilitate them and reduce further costly interactions with the criminal justice system.**

For more information about any of the 2023 County Government Priorities, please visit [www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org) and click on Priorities under the Advocacy tab or email [PACountiesGR@pacounties.org](mailto:PACountiesGR@pacounties.org).

# 2023

## County Government PRIORITIES

*Counties deliver critical mental health services – such as community residential programs, family-based support, outpatient care and crisis intervention – on behalf of the state, and these services must be properly funded to ensure that the residents are able to access the care that they need. Lack of adequate state funding that has failed to keep up with demand, coupled with growing caseloads and cost inflation, have pushed the community mental health system to the point of collapse.*

### THE BIG PICTURE

**Achieving this priority would mean anyone in the commonwealth would be able to access appropriate mental health treatment and services where they are without undue burden.**



## County Mental Health Base Funding Increase

Counties currently administer direct services to support their community's mental health system. Thanks to the flexibility of the county mental health base funding allocated by the state, counties have been able to continue to serve their residents, but are stretching ever more limited state funding to its breaking point. With additional state funding for the county mental health base, counties would be able to better and more fully address specific needs such as children's mental health and older adult mental health, crisis intervention and capacity, peer supports and other diversion services. If the commonwealth cannot make a commitment to long-term, sustainable funding for mental health services, residents will suffer as it becomes harder and takes longer to find the supports they need.

### COUNTIES SUPPORT

- Increasing annual investments in the state's mental health community base funding to help counties maintain and rebuild the existing safety net of services, before adding any additional programs and services.
- Investing substantial state dollars to rebuild and strengthen community crisis services, residential mental health programs and other locally provided care that will stabilize mental health services and assist hospitals with capacity concerns.
- Maintaining local flexibility and preserving programs such as the Behavioral HealthChoices program, so that counties can continue to provide local mental health services in an effective way.
- Prompt action to allocate the \$100 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to mental health in line with the Behavioral Health Commission's recommendations, while continuing to work toward a longer term, sustainable funding solution.



# 2023

## County Government

### PRIORITIES

## Address the Needs of Children and Youth Who Have Complex Behavioral Health Issues

In recent years, there have been an increasing number of children in need of mental or behavioral health services outside of the home whom no provider is willing or able to accept because they require more intensive treatment or create a safety threat to themselves and others. This has created many situations where there have been no appropriate places capable of meeting the needs of these children. In these cases, the county agencies with custody of the children are forced to find any possible placement, including less-than-ideal settings such as hotels or hallways of the children and youth office. Additionally, the caseworkers and staff providing supervision are not trained mental health counselors or residential staff and cannot provide the youth with the services or environment they need.

*When a child is unable to remain in his or her own home due to complications created by complex needs, such as acute substance abuse, mental health and/or developmental disabilities that occur simultaneously, counties have extreme challenges in obtaining a safe place for the child to stay while receiving the right services. Often referred to as "complex cases," the prevalence of youth in these situations are a growing concern where counties have few, if any, resources for referrals and treatment, leading to youth being held in settings that are not able to meet their unique set of needs.*

### COUNTIES SUPPORT

- Working closely with the Department of Human Services to develop a partnership role for addressing complex cases and plans to educate the General Assembly and request needed support.
- Developing contracting standards for "no eject, no reject" policies.
- Providing adequate support to county mental health base funds to better ensure services to address children's mental health needs are available within their communities.

### THE BIG PICTURE

**Achieving this priority would mean children with mental health issues are able to have appropriate placements where they can have adequate oversight and proper treatment based on their individual needs.**

For more information about any of the 2023 County Government Priorities, please visit [www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org) and click on Priorities under the Advocacy tab or email [PACountiesGR@pacounties.org](mailto:PACountiesGR@pacounties.org).

# 2023

## County Government PRIORITIES

*The collective future of Pennsylvanians hinges on addressing the challenges to broadband expansion that are preventing access to opportunities and information to many of our residents. Counties have been engaged in assessing availability and connections as well as working with community partners to ensure the commonwealth's communities have safe, affordable and reliable connection to the internet.*

### THE BIG PICTURE

**Achieving this priority would mean every Pennsylvanian would have the ability to adequately, safely and affordably access the internet, regardless of income, geography or individual circumstance.**



## Broadband Access and Development

Many counties have taken a leadership role in working with local partners to identify gaps in broadband service and have developed best practices and innovative ideas, such as regional cooperative models, to address them. We have come a long way in addressing the digital divide, but funding remains one of the greatest needs to expand access to broadband. With the promise of billions of dollars in federal investment, the development of a state broadband plan, and maps now publicly available from the FCC, Pennsylvania is on the path forward, but these steps are just the beginning of implementing strategic, thoughtful approaches to bring broadband access to all Pennsylvanians.

### COUNTIES SUPPORT

- Working together with federal, state, local and private stakeholders to develop strategies for successful broadband expansion that maximize resources and minimize overbuild.
- Identifying successful approaches and sharing best practices that can be successfully used by other communities.
- Partnering with the state and other stakeholders to leverage data, develop needed informational resources and build on strategies that help increase broadband infrastructure and services.
- Identifying funding and working with stakeholders to ensure those investments are responsibly allocated to best fit the areas of greatest need.



# 2023

## County Government PRIORITIES

*Counties take their responsibility for the fair, secure and accurate administration of Pennsylvania's elections very seriously, and need clear rules that enable consistent implementation across the commonwealth. Reforms to Pennsylvania's Election Code are needed to resolve ambiguities and help counties continue to promote the integrity of our elections. Pre-cavassing and extending the mail-in ballot application deadlines remain the most important changes counties are seeking to improve election administration.*

## Promote Election Integrity

Since the enactment of Act 77 of 2019, counties have identified areas of the Election Code that need to be addressed and clarified in the wake of multiple court decisions and appeals to help counties meet their responsibilities for election administration and to provide efficient and accurate results. Pre-cavassing and unrealistic mail-in ballot application deadlines remain two of the most important changes that would significantly improve the election experience for both counties and voters, without sacrificing ballot security or access to voting. But counties also need the support of the legislature and administration to update other parts of the Election Code so that counties have clear rules to help restore the public's confidence in the integrity of our elections.

### THE BIG PICTURE

**Achieving this priority would give counties the tools they need to continue to run fair, secure and accurate elections, while restoring public trust in the election system.**

### COUNTIES SUPPORT

- Extending the pre-cavassing period to allow ample time for counties to prepare mail-in and absentee ballots for tabulation so that accurate results can be provided as soon as possible.
- Moving back the deadline for absentee and mail-in ballot applications to 15 days prior to an election, so that voters can be confident there is plenty of time for their county to process the application and for the ballot to be mailed from county to voter and back again.
- Ensuring that counties are involved in discussions on any election law reforms at the earliest possible point, to create positive, meaningful and effective election policy moving forward.

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# The State of Broadband Funding in Pennsylvania

**By Brandon Carson**

Executive Director, PA Broadband Development Authority

Every Pennsylvanian should have access to reliable, high-speed internet service, yet some individuals and households still lack the connection they need. In 2021, the Pennsylvania General Assembly created the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (the Authority) to administer state and federal funding and to serve as a single point of contact for broadband efforts in the Commonwealth. The Authority is committed to closing the digital divide that exists across the state.

As we enter a new year, several funding opportunities will exist for the expansion of broadband infrastructure and digital equity initiatives. The first grant programs administered by the Authority will be through the American Rescue Plan Act's Capital Projects Fund

(CPF), which allocated \$279 million to Pennsylvania for reliable, affordable broadband infrastructure and other digital connectivity technology projects. While grant guidelines and applications are still under development, the following competitive grant opportunities will be available in 2023.

## Broadband Infrastructure Program

\$200 million for a *Broadband Infrastructure Program* that will target locations that do not currently have access to 25/3 Mbps reliable service. Projects chosen for funding must be capable of delivering service at a minimum of 100/20 Mbps and scalable to symmetrical service and can be completed in a reasonable timeframe. The program will allow for fiber and

fixed-wireless networks with a priority given to fiber projects. This program includes a line extension component, funding extensions of existing last-mile cable modem and fiber-to-the-premise broadband networks that can be constructed quickly.

## Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program

\$45 million for a *Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program*, offering grants to community anchor institutions and units of local government for community projects to construct, acquire, or improve buildings (shared office space, recreation centers, schools, libraries, etc.) that are, or will be open to the public and will directly enable work, education, and health monitoring at the respective facility.

## Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program

\$20 million for a *Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program* to support institutions equipped to distribute devices and equipment (equipment installed as part of public wi-fi infrastructure, such as access points, repeaters, and routers) to members of the public through short or long-term loan programs or to be made available for use in public facilities.

Moving into late 2023 and early 2024, focus will turn to a much larger allocation of federal dollars through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Below is a brief overview of the two main programs, and a description of the Authority's role.

## Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program

*Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program*: \$42.5 billion available (nationally) for the expansion of broadband infrastructure. Pennsylvania will receive a minimum of \$100 million through the program, which will be administered by the Authority through a competitive grant process to which local government entities, internet service providers, and other eligible entities can apply. Additional funds will be distributed to the states based on the recently announced National Broadband Map released by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). This new map provides broadband availability data at the address

level and will be used to allocate the remaining funds based on the number of unserved addresses in each state.

The Program's focus (in order of priority) will be on deploying broadband service to unserved locations (those without any broadband service at all or with broadband service offering speeds below 25/3 Mbps); underserved locations (those without broadband service offering speeds of 100/20 Mbps); and ensuring deployment of gigabit connections to community anchor institutions such as libraries and community centers. Eligible applicants for BEAD funding will include, but not be limited to, internet service providers, cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, and local governments.

This month, the Authority will launch a comprehensive planning process to complete its Five-Year Action Plan (Plan), establishing the Commonwealth's goals and priorities, in coordination with local governments, and outlining a comprehensive needs assessment for the use of BEAD funding. This Plan must be completed by mid-August 2023. Plan completion is a requirement to draw down additional federal funding through the BEAD program.

## Digital Equity Act Programs

*Digital Equity Act Programs*: \$2.75 billion (nationally) to promote digital inclusion and aim to ensure that all communities can access and use affordable, reliable high-speed internet. The three programs

under the Digital Equity Act include two state formula programs and one competitive program. Recently a \$1.6 million *State Digital Equity Planning Grant* was awarded to the Authority to start a one-year planning process to develop the Commonwealth's Digital Equity Plan. This Plan is required to access funding through the *State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program*, a \$1.44 billion formula grant program for states. Pennsylvania's allocation through this program is based on the same formula and final data available through the new FCC maps and will be determined later in 2023. It will fund an annual grant program for five years in support of digital equity projects and the implementation of digital equity plans. Finally, the *Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program* will fund annual grant programs for five years to implement digital equity projects. This is a \$1.25 billion grant program nationwide.

The Authority desires to work closely with local governments to fulfill the mission of fostering and creating equitable, affordable, and robust high-speed broadband internet infrastructure and services. The Authority's board, staff, and partners are keenly aware of the monumental opportunity available to the Commonwealth and recognizes the responsibility to administer and implement these grant programs in a transparent and timely manner. Please visit the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority webpage for more information and regular updates. 📌



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# GET TO KNOW YOUR NEW



# PRESIDENT

**By Albert "Chip" Abramovic**

Venango County Commissioner and 2023 CCAP President

Much like most of you reading this, my life and timeline started right in here in Pennsylvania. I was born and raised in the western side of the state and attended Robert Morris University, where I obtained a finance degree.

After graduation, I worked as a financial accountant in Pittsburgh before making the choice to move back home to help my family run a golf course. While helping my family, I also began work as a financial advisor at a local firm. It was through that choice that my passion for community involvement began to blossom.

Feeling the support from my community in all of my personal undertakings, I felt it was my duty to give back to those who gave so much to me. I began volunteering on a number of boards throughout my community and while I had no prior government experience, I decided to run for office because I knew that's where I could help our county the most.

I was honored to be elected, but just being elected wasn't enough. I knew that in order to best serve

my county, I needed to forego my personal endeavors and fully commit to being a commissioner and be an active and engaged member of CCAP. And that's where we are today.

## ABOUT MY HOME

Venango County is a county of 667 sq miles and 50,000 residents, situated in the rolling hills of the Allegheny River. At one time, it was one of the nation's leaders in the oil industry.

But as times change, so do the business climates. Venango County is still thriving with industry and boasts an abundance of machine shops, but now we are also an area of growing tourism with our beautiful waterways and outdoor landscapes.

Geographically, our southern border of Interstate 80 and our western boarder 15 minutes from Interstate 79, which can cause challenges. We are sometimes lumped into a gray area, where we aren't quite in the Erie market, but also aren't close enough to Pittsburgh. But with every challenge, there

is an opportunity to forge a new path and devise new and modern solutions.

My time as a county commissioner has opened my eyes to the daily challenges county residents face, and why it's important to fight to improve their lives every day. But understanding the issues is one thing, while having the tools to fix them is another. My county is not unique in the challenges we are facing (mental health funding, broadband expansion, 911 funding, etc.), which is why being a part of CCAP is such a valuable asset. I would never claim to be an expert in every field, but I have been afforded the opportunity to talk with experts in a variety of fields through my involvement with CCAP. Networking and collaborating with other counties can create new opportunities for everyone.

I am very fortunate to be able to call where I grew up home again, to be close to my family and be in a position to help my community. It's safe to say that being a county commissioner is my passion, and it something I'll never take for granted. 🍷

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# ARP Funding

## What it is and how it's being used in Pennsylvania Counties

Complied by CCAP Staff

Counties across the Commonwealth have received and are currently in the process of dispersing funds acquired through the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP). These funds can be used for economic recovery efforts across a myriad of areas negatively impacted by COVID-19.

But as unique as Pennsylvania counties are (geographically, demographically, etc.), they will also be unique in how they best serve their residents with their ARP funds. Here is how some counties across the state are using their ARP funds.

*Note: All funds listed are State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds under the ARP unless otherwise noted.*

### BERKS COUNTY

**ARP Funds received:** \$81.8 million

**How much has been allocated** (*as of this publication*):

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Legacy projects to non-profits, municipalities and business
- A new county satellite campus and renovations to other satellite campus
- Renovations and upgrades to Santander Stadium
- Broadband Access

**Biggest areas of need:**

- County capital projects
- Local government/municipal authorities capital projects (water and sewer)
- Infrastructure and broadband

**Potential future uses:**

- Economic development plans implementation
- More broadband-related projects
- County-specific projects that otherwise would be unfunded

### BLAIR COUNTY

**ARP Funds received:** \$23,663,855

**How much has been allocated** (*as of this publication*): \$8,122,860

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Provision of governmental services

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Revenue replacement
- Broadband
- Upgrades to accommodate aging county infrastructure and systems

**Potential future uses:**

- Governmental services
- Broadband Infrastructure and implementation

### BUTLER COUNTY

**ARP Funds received:** \$36,488,243

**How much has been allocated** (*as of this publication*): \$30,000,000

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- County revenue replacement for the Capital County Budget, airport, parks and public safety/EMS
- Municipal water, sewer and stormwater projects

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Infrastructure and broadband
- Public health and services
- County revenue replacement

**Potential future uses:**

- Broadband
- Public health services for disproportionately impacted communities
- Food banks
- Veteran services
- Workforce crisis
- Homelessness
- EMS services

**CAMERON COUNTY**

**ARP Funds received:** \$863,778

**How much has been allocated**  
*(as of this publication):* \$432,279.24

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Computer security upgrades
- Emporium Ambulance
- COVID-19 vaccines and boosters for employees
- Local nursing homes upgrades

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Emergency services

**CHESTER COUNTY**

**ARP Funds received:** \$101,972,959

**How much has been allocated**  
*(as of this publication):* \$82,139,701

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Internal county uses
- Behavioral health
- Public health
- Housing
- Public safety
- Community facilities and programs
- Sewer/stormwater
- Workforce development
- Food security
- Child care

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Infrastructure
- Behavioral Health
- Child care

**Potential future uses:**

- Healthcare systems
- Affordable housing
- Additional infrastructure investments

**CLEARFIELD COUNTY**

**ARP Funds received:** \$15 million

**How much has been allocated**  
*(as of this publication):* \$6 million

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- County jail renovations through lost revenue provision

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Broadband
- Infrastructure
- County initiatives

**Potential future uses:**

- Broadband
- Local municipality infrastructure projects

**DELAWARE COUNTY**

**ARP Funds received:** \$110,083,961

**How much has been allocated**  
*(as of this publication):* \$110,083,961

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Lost public sector revenue replacement
- Administrative costs
- Economic impacts
- Infrastructure
- Premium pay for workers

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Supporting economic recovery
- Community health
- Revenue replacement

**Potential future uses:**

- Support economic development
- Implement health and community justice initiatives
- Support qualifying capital projects
- Address services to underserved communities

**FOREST COUNTY**

**ARP Funds received:** \$1,407,645

**How much has been allocated**  
*(as of this publication):* \$867,912.42

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Broadband build-out
- Ambulances
- Revenue replacement

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Broadband
- EMS
- Public safety

**Potential future uses:**

- Continued broadband expansion

## GREENE COUNTY

**ARP Funds received:** \$7,000,000

**How much has been allocated**  
*(as of this publication):* \$3,200,000

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Operating deficits

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Operating deficits
- Capital investment facilities project
- Critical infrastructure investments

**Potential future uses:**

- Grant matching opportunities
- Capital investments in facilities
- Unfunded economic development projects

## LEBANON COUNTY

**ARP Funds received:** \$27,200,000

**How much has been allocated**  
*(as of this publication):* \$25,600,000

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Emergency preparedness
- Tourism
- Workforce development
- Critical worker compensation/incentives/retention

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Tourism
- Infrastructure
- Worker incentives

## MCKEAN COUNTY

**ARP Funds received:** A total of \$8,744,402, which includes the State and Local Fiscal Recovery

Funds (SLFRF) Allocation of \$7,878,969 and the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Funds (LATCF) Allocation of \$865,433.

**How much has been allocated** *(as of this publication):* Because the Treasury's Final Rule final rule offered a standard allowance for revenue loss of up to \$10 million, the McKean County Commissioners elected to draw down the entire ARPA allocation as revenue loss to continue to provide government operations and services. As of the end of December 2022, the county has disbursed a total of approximately \$3,211,643.

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- County staffing, government operations, and county-wide projects
- County emergency services and communications
- Community development
- Small business recovery projects
- Municipal recovery projects
- Non-profit recovery projects
- County broadband projects

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Workforce and business development
- Broadband deployment
- Community development
- Infrastructure

**Potential future uses:**

- Investments to improve non-profits, small businesses and municipalities across the county

## PIKE COUNTY

**ARP Funds received:** \$5,420,122

**How much has been allocated**  
*(as of this publication):* \$4,910,877.93

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- ARP Non-Profit Grant Program
- IT improvements

**Biggest areas of need:**

- County revenue replacement
- IT infrastructure
- Non-profit assistance

**Potential future uses:**

- Administrative
- Reporting

## SULLIVAN COUNTY

**ARP Funds received:** \$1,100,000

**How much has been allocated**

*(as of this publication):* \$950,000

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Communications tower
- Flood mitigation projects
- Playground improvements

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Emergency communications
- Flooding
- Broadband

## WESTMORELAND COUNTY

**ARP Funds received:** \$105,319,216

**How much has been allocated**

*(as of this publication):* \$55,994,330

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Food insecurity
- Blighted properties
- Municipal water and sewage
- Revenue replacement
- Workforce development
- Public safety

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Human services (Mental health, household assistance)
- Revenue replacement
- Broadband

**Potential future uses:**

- Revenue replacement
- Human services/mental health programs
- Broadband

## YORK COUNTY

**ARP Funds received:** \$87,000,000

**How much has been allocated**

*(as of this publication):* \$74,500,000

**How it's been allocated so far:**

- Emergency relief to businesses and non-profits
- Continued enhancement of York County's emergency response capacity
- Tourism
- Implement the YoCo Fiber countywide broadband strategy to continue closing the digital divide

- Childcare
- Investment in vulnerable populations (seniors, veterans, early childhood learners)
- Workforce
- include:
- Housing
- Revenue replacement

**Biggest areas of need:**

- Equitable broadband access throughout the county
- Assistance to non-profits that provide social services to vulnerable populations
- Revenue replacement due to COVID-19 impacts

**Potential future uses:**

- Revenue replacement 📌



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# Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust

## FACTS AND QUESTIONS

**John Buffone**

CCAP Director of Media and Public Relations

**T**he Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust was formed in Pennsylvania to disperse funds from the \$1 billion drug manufacturer settlement that resulted from the nationwide resolution of several thousand lawsuits against drug manufacturer Johnson & Johnson and three major pharmaceutical distributors: AmerisourceBergen, McKesson, and Cardinal Health. The settlement money is intended to be used for drug treatment and prevention.

All 67 of Pennsylvania's counties signed on to the settlement, maximizing the amount that could be distributed to the state.

But as the funds are beginning to come to Pennsylvania counties, it's important to remember how these funds can be used and how the Trust can provide help. At the 2022 CCAP Fall Conference, then Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Secretary Jennifer Smith provided updates to attendees.

## What does the Trust do?

In addition to overseeing all settlement funds, the Trust is responsible for:

- Disbursing funds according to agreed-on formula
- Ensuring funds are spent according to settlement terms
- Providing guidance on compliance to counties and other recipients
- Tracking and reporting on use

## How are the funds being dispersed in the short and long term?

Pennsylvania's share of \$1.07 billion will be paid out over a ten-year period as follows:

- 70% directly to counties through a formula
- 15% to litigating counties, subdivisions, district attorneys and special districts
- 15% to the commonwealth
- After two payments in 2022, funds are to be paid each December going forward

## How can counties use their settlement funds?

Counties can use their funds for any of the purposes outlined in what is known as Exhibit E to the Distributors Settlement Agreement and J&J Settlement Agreement. This document includes a wide range of abatement strategies, evidence-based or evidence-informed programs including treatment, recovery, prevention and coordination, offering maximum flexibility for counties to invest these dollars where they see the most need in their communities.

## In 2022, the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) was allocated \$16.5 million by the General Assembly. What is that money going toward?

Here is a breakdown of how DDAP will allocate the \$16.5 million:

- ***SUD crisis service***

DDAP will issue a grant opportunity for entities who wish to establish or expand substance use disorder crisis services in their communities.

- ***Support BIPOC communities***

DDAP will issue a grant opportunity for organizations with a specific focus on serving Black, Indigenous, and people of color in the areas of harm reduction, low-barrier MAT and SUD treatment access, recovery and peer supports, addressing stigma, and other activities.

- ***Address workforce capacity***

As follow-up to DDAP's recent popular loan repayment opportunity for professionals, the department will provide additional incentives to attract and sustain talent among the SUD workforce.

- ***Assistance for Kensington***

DDAP will partner with legislators local to the Kensington neighborhood in Philadelphia to fund specific initiatives to assist with needs in that area.

### **What should counties consider when it comes to serving individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders?**

“Because there is such an overlap between mental health and substance use disorders, and counties want to use the money to help both populations, there are some concerns about not wanting to use opioid-specific dollars that would help those with mental health issues, who don’t necessarily have a substance use disorder,” said then DDAP Secretary Jennifer Smith at the CCAP 2022 Fall Conference. “So, it’s great if they (counties) reach out and we can talk through those scenarios. In most cases, if the intention is to help people with substance use disorders and helping other people is a by-product of that, it isn’t a concern.”

### **Pennsylvania opted for a “backend” formula, which means counties report what they have used the funds for after the money has been spent. Why?**

“It was set up this way in Pennsylvania to make sure the counties were receiving the bulk of the dollars, because that’s where the programming needs to happen. Our goal was to get the money out to the communities that need it as quickly as possible,” Smith said. “That means there is a bit of delay of how we report this and what the outcome studies look like. We put that on the back burner so the money can get to the people that need it as quickly as possible.”

### **What can settlement dollars be used for that federal dollars couldn’t provide?**

Federal dollars come with limitations. Unlike with federal dollars, settlement money can be used to build brick-and-mortar facilities.

“It’s a tremendous opportunity for counties that would otherwise have to do fundraising or dip into other county money. Now, they can use the settlement dollars to do that work,” Smith said. 🍷





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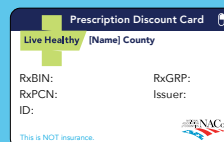
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RISK MANAGEMENT IN COUNTY JAILS:  
**Be Proactive, Not Reactive**



**A substantial number of claims are filed each year by inmates housed in Pennsylvania county jails.** These claims are time consuming, and even the most minor claims require the expenditure of funds. A meritorious jail claim can be extraordinarily costly. As a result, active risk management is a must. Considering available technology and implementing the latest techniques and practices will help to alleviate the significant time and expense connected with these claims.

## OVERVIEW ON LEGAL BASIS FOR CLAIMS

Inmates typically pursue claims alleging a violation of their rights in federal court under the Civil Rights Act, 42 USC §1983. A large percentage of civil rights actions allege that the constitutional right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment has been violated by the conditions in jail. These conditions extend beyond the size or content of a jail cell and relate instead to the provision of medical and mental health care, or safety, or otherwise address the overall welfare of the inmate.

Counties and county officials are typically named in these suits, and federal court litigation is time consuming for everyone involved and is expensive. While some tools available to counties to address the efficient and safe operation of jails are not inexpensive either,

conducting a risk/reward analysis is useful to decide which techniques, practices or technology are worthwhile to minimize claims and litigation. Some of these tools and considerations are addressed below.

## AVAILABLE TOOLS

### Body scanners and body cameras

Not unlike at TSA checkpoints in airports, body scanners serve to protect those persons who work inside the facility and those who cross the threshold to be detained in a jail. Scanners have proven to be effective deterrents to bringing in contraband, including weapons and drugs. Stopping one overdose death of an inmate or preventing injury to one employee justifies the cost of this technology. Use of a body scanner is considered less intrusive and less disruptive than conventional searches, including strip searches.

Traditional law enforcement utilizes body cameras to improve police practices and address concerns of the public about potential use of force. These cameras can also act as a surveillance tool to promote both officer safety and prevent crime, as well as provide evidence of police behavior. Providing body worn cameras in jails can serve similar purposes. In a correctional setting, where there is less of an expectation of privacy for inmates, the use of body worn cameras can be effective. Inmates may show more restraint in interactions with correctional staff. Freedom of movement of correctional officers is enhanced if handheld cameras are not necessary in capturing critical events. Multiple persons wearing cameras can cover incidents from multiple perspectives. And correctional officers will know their actions are recorded, which may curb inappropriate behavior.

## **Telehealth for specialized medical conditions or for behavioral health issues**

Counties have a constitutional obligation to provide for the medical and mental health needs of their inmates. A high percentage of correctional facilities contract for medical and mental health services due to limited resources. Tele-medicine provides access to services and can meet required standards for provision of health care within a jail so long as its availability is consistent with in-person care.

Particularly in the field of behavioral health, resources in many counties are limited. The use of tele-medicine for mental health services broadens the provider base for counties in locations with limits on available mental health resources. When an inmate with mental health concerns is in crisis, a telehealth provider may be the only immediate option available for the inmate and county. It is important to have these telehealth contractual relationships in place, if in-person, crisis care is not immediately available for the inmate.

## **Medication Assisted Treatment**

Medication assisted treatment, also known as medication for addiction treatment (MAT) is becoming the medical standard of care to treat opioid use disorder, utilizing FDA approved medications like methadone or buprenorphine. MAT is an innovative program that allows these medications to be given to inmates to curb opioid cravings and allowing more to focus on rehabilitation. MAT is part of an overall treatment plan to manage

symptoms related to addiction and to address the dramatic withdrawal that occurs upon incarceration for such addicted individuals, which is clearly known as a key period of risk for suicide or other serious medical consequences. These therapies are being implemented more frequently, although appropriate medication management is necessary for these programs to be successful.

It is important for counties to discuss with their solicitors the scope of their obligation to provide MAT in a county jail. In April, 2022, the PA Commonwealth Court permitted a claim by a state inmate to proceed against the State Department of Corrections (“DOC”) where the inmate averred that DOC’s failure to provide him with MAT violated his Eighth Amendment rights and his rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”). DOC had a blanket policy which precluded the inmate, based on certain factors, from participating in its MAT program. Counties need to closely monitor this issue.

## **Policies and Procedures**

Inmate claims against counties usually include an allegation that the county does not have proper policies and procedures in place, and that employees have not been trained on appropriate policies and procedures. Implementing effective policies and procedures on the use of force, suicide prevention, medical care, the use of the tools referenced above, searches, as well as other matters impacting jail administration, is required. Correctional officers and other jail employees must be trained on those policies,

and act in accordance with those policies.

It is important that those policies and procedures be current and consistent with changes in the law. Either your solicitor or an attorney with experience in this area should periodically review the county’s jail policies and procedures to be certain that they are thorough and up to date. Waiting for defense counsel to make this assessment while litigating a jail-related claim is not effective and proactive risk management.

## **CONCLUSION**

Given the significant number and cost of jail related claims, proactive risk management must be a priority for counties. Correctional officers wearing body worn cameras may quickly negate a claim that excessive force was employed against an inmate. Tools, like MAT, may be somewhat controversial, but can avoid the high risks that opioid-addicted inmates present. It is important, therefore, that counties assess the costs and concerns of available technology and tools in relation to whether potential liability for the county could have been avoided, or mitigated, using these tools. ▼

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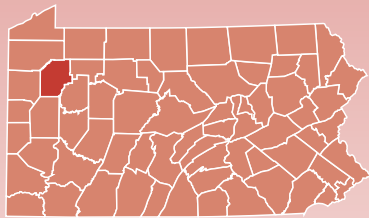
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JAKE



COUNTY HIGHLIGHT:  
**VENANGO**

**Loni Beer**  
Services Information Officer  
Venango County Human Services

# “Battle Buddies”

helps Venango County  
veterans adjust to  
civilian life

**A**ccording to the 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report released by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in September 2022, there were 6,146 veteran suicide deaths in 2020 in Pennsylvania, which was 343 fewer than in 2019. The veteran suicide rate per 100,000 individuals, decreased from 33.0 to 31.7 in the same time frame. 2020 had the lowest number of veteran suicides in Pennsylvania since 2006.

Although the numbers of suicides are trending downward in the Commonwealth, that is not the case in Venango County.

“On average, nearly half of the total suicides are among veterans, and we have seen an increase in suicides overall,” said Shannon Mahoney, Deputy Administrator for Venango County Human Services. Veterans make up nearly 10 % of the total population in the county.



Venango County VA Director Harry Whittemore often hears veterans talk of the loneliness and isolation. He says many times veterans feel as though nobody will understand what they are going through. From this, Whittemore had an idea for a program that would help to connect veterans so that they would always have someone to talk to.



"I think for the longest time we have waved the rally flag about veteran suicide and this is our chance to take action," said Whittemore.

Due to Venango County VA's determination, the Battle Buddies program was born. This collaboration project was developed between the county's VA and Suicide Prevention Task Force.

"The program goal is to have veterans sign up to take the two free trainings and then to get paired up with another veteran," stated Whittemore. "The main objective of this program is to provide connections."

Battle Buddies is designed for those veterans in our community who may need a support in their recovery of PTSD, suicide ideations, and other mental health conditions. Utilizing trained fellow military mentors ("buddies"), the program aims to reduce veteran suicide rates, increase morale and decrease stress while easing transitions to improve quality of life through support networks and service linkages.

Each participant is responsible for taking QPR Gatekeeper for Suicide Prevention training, which focuses on the basic components of suicide prevention for all walks of life. The second training is more geared toward the unique needs and concerns of veterans. The QPR for Veteran Care Providers program is intended to prevent suicide not just among veterans, but among colleagues, co-workers and family members.

The program is being promoted through a "Duck Program", where ducks are placed on area Jeeps with program information and asking them to pass the duck to another Jeep. A complete program description will be available on the Venango County website and posts will be ongoing on the Human Services Facebook page.

Funding for Battle Buddies includes a \$20,000 grant from the Veteran's Trust Fund and monies from the Human Services Block Grant are being utilized to set up and maintain the program.

In addition to the program, working partnerships with local organizations like social clubs, community foundations, and other donations have provided emergency assistance to our Veterans in need.

"We get a lot of gift cards donated for grocery stores and gas stations and those we give directly to the veterans," said Whittemore.

Another valuable resource within the Veteran's Affairs office is Karen Hall, the County Veteran's Service Officer (CSVO). She is the initial point of contact and mostly assists surviving spouses of veterans, who have passed away, with applying for survivor's benefits including VA headstones/medallions and burial benefits. Hall maintains the county veteran's burial records and coordinates with volunteers for the placement of grave flags and markers for the cemeteries throughout Venango County.

"We have a really great group of veterans in Venango County and it's a real blessing having the

opportunity to meet and interact with them every day," Hall conveyed empathetically. "It brings me a lot of satisfaction being able to help them and their family members in accessing benefits that they are eligible for, benefits that many times they may not even know are available to them."

The VA office in Venango County is guided by a mission statement much like other veteran offices across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: "Veterans Services' primary function is to help the veterans of Venango County and their dependents apply for benefits, when eligible, from the United States Government, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or Venango County."

County Veteran Service Officers perform their duties much the same as a lawyer does when preparing for trial. They assist in collecting paperwork, filing claims, and helping to build a case for their clients to receive benefits.

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Veterans Services' primary function is to help the veterans of Venango County and their dependents apply for benefits, when eligible, from the United States Government, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or Venango County.

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Whittemore commented: "I honestly feel that we have great services provided by the county and community, and we are working to make all veterans aware of all of our resources."

The team is diligently working to increase veteran outreach, so that veterans and their families know what services are available in Venango County. Every Tuesday, Whittemore broadcasts Voices for Vets, which is a half-hour spot on local radio station Rocky 107.7. He discusses topics that are important to veterans including Military Food Share, the PACT Act, and upcoming events, just to name a few.

There is an old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words, and the same holds true for logos. They need to convey aspects of your core values and they help to

create an emotional connection. A new veteran's logo has been developed in order to make a strong and congruent impression on all materials produced by the VA in Venango County. Whittemore has also created a new brochure, including the new logo that will be distributed throughout the county.

The VA Team strives to provide programs and services designed specifically to meet veteran needs in Venango County. Whittemore and Hall welcome each and every veteran in with open arms. They will do whatever it takes to make sure that they feel safe and that their basic needs are met.

"This is an ongoing process, and we look forward to making available programs and services that will improve the quality of life for all of our veterans," said Whittemore. ▾

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For more information, contact Todd Snovel, chief leadership and engagement officer, at (717) 736-4735 or [tsnovel@pacounties.org](mailto:tsnovel@pacounties.org).

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## Addressing County Staffing Issues



**Andrew Naugle**

President of PACAH and Nursing Home Administrator of Centre County Nursing Home

In the first ever CCAP Affiliate Spotlight, I believe it is important to highlight an issue that is relevant to any county organization at the moment: staffing issues.

As far as staffing goes, a large portion of the day-to-day routine care that goes into a long-term care facility is conducted by Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs). CNAs go through an arduous process to transition from Temporary Nurse Aides (TNAs) to CNAs. This includes qualified hours of experience, a written exam, a skills practicum exam, and other administrative hurdles to ensure they are qualified to become CNAs and rightfully so. We want to always make sure that those who help our loved one's bath or assist them in eating are qualified.

However, as many of us experienced, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a disruption in this qualifying/certification process. Centers for written test taking and sites for skills tests were completely closed until further notice. To combat this, the Dept. of Health and Dept. of

Education put in place a waiver process that allowed TNAs to use their experience during COVID-19 as a way to meet their practical experience requirements. TNAs still needed to take a written test and a skills test, which was initially difficult due to the limited exposure testing centers were allowing. Fortunately, this has gotten better with restrictions of exposure relaxing.

This leaves the last requirement: the skills practicum. My experience has shown that almost all county organizations have experienced one consistent ripple effect from COVID-19. The rise in pay for qualified staff.

To conduct the skills practicum, a Registered Nurse (RN) is needed as the proctor. At present, the going rate for an RN to conduct such a test is \$28.00 an hour. RNs working shifts at a hospital or long-term care facility can be much higher. Unfortunately, due to either a lack of communication, a lack of understanding, or a lack of incentives, there are not enough RNs

to conduct enough of these skills practicums to qualify all the TNAs in Pennsylvania.

We have been informed that the deadline for TNAs to get their skills tests completed and enrolled in the State Nurse Registry is the end of the Public Health Emergency (currently January 11, 2023) or April 5, 2023, whichever is earlier. After this deadline, TNAs will no longer be able to use their COVID-19 waiver that the Dept. of Health and Dept. of Education implemented regarding experience.

PACAH is encouraging all available RNs to register to be a skill test proctor and use just one "off-day" to conduct a skills exam for a TNA. Without an "all-hands" approach to this issue, county nursing homes will become even more shorthanded than we already are. One thing is for certain, better communication, better awareness and better funding is all needed to help us care for our loved ones. ▾

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*Todd Snovel, CCAP Chief Leadership and Engagement Officer congratulating members who graduated from the Academy*



*Perry County Commissioner Brian Allen*



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*Indiana County Commissioner Robin Gorman*



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*Awards given to Academy graduates*



*Indiana County Commissioner Sherene Hess*



*Members gathered at The Hotel Hershey*



**Academy Graduates**

*Top row (L to R) – Bobby Kagel, CCAP President and Bradford County commissioner Daryl Miller, Glenn Roth, Ernie King, Jeff Reber, Rick Wilbur, Paul Buber, Josh Maxwell, Linda Deatrich, Krista Gromalski, Elizabeth Arnold, CCAP executive director Lisa Schaefer*

*Bottom row (L to R) – Amy Webster, Robin Gorman, Pat Fabian, Judith Herschel, Stacy Richards, Nicole Hemminger*



*John Sallade, CCAP Managing Director, Insurance Programs*



Members attend the closing session at The Hotel Hershey.



Washington County Commissioner Larry Maggi



Desiree J. Nguyen, CCAP Deputy Managing Director, Insurance Programs



Berks County Commissioner and CCAP 2nd Vice President Michael Rivera (left) speaks with Venango County Commissioner and CCAP Vice President Chip Abramovic (right)



Members saying the Pledge of Allegiance



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