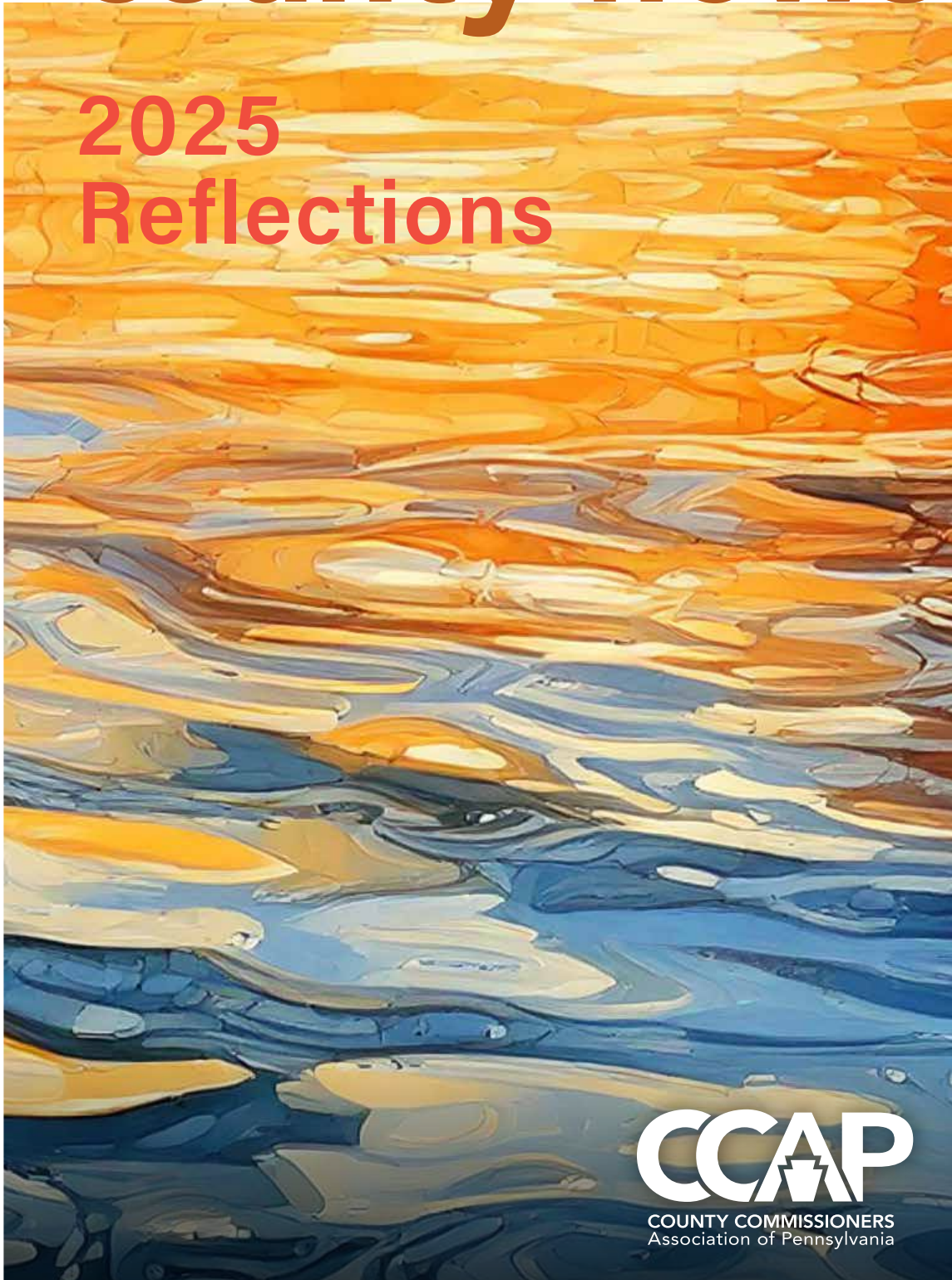


# PENNSYLVANIA county news

2025  
Reflections



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### Our Mission

CCAP advocates as the unifying voice of all Pennsylvania counties and provides leadership and support for excellence in county government.

### Our Vision

CCAP continually strives to be Pennsylvania's leading voice in local governance, across our Commonwealth and the nation, for all 67 counties.

*Founded in 1886, CCAP is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties (NACo).*

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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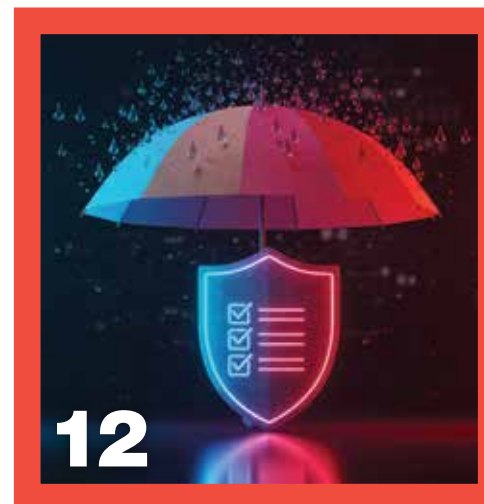
# PENNSYLVANIA county news

## VOLUME 4 2025



As we enter the new year, it's important to pause and recognize the journey we took in 2025. In this edition of County News, we'll reflect on the creativity, adversity and resilience of counties throughout the past year. As we do so, we hope that reflection provides a mirror of where we've been and a lens on where we are going.

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**KYLE C. KOPKO**  
**PH.D., J.D.**  
Executive Director  
County Commissioners  
Association of  
Pennsylvania

Dear Friends,

As 2025 draws to a close, many of our counties are trying to recover from the second longest state budget impasse in modern history, and the longest federal impasse in U.S. history. To say the least, this year brought unprecedented challenges for our counties. But you—our members—faced this challenge head-on with composure and a true sense of collaboration.

And others recognized this. I'll provide a brief anecdote to illustrate.

A few short weeks ago—amidst the dual government impasses—I had the chance to deliver remarks on local government opportunities and challenges in Philadelphia. I was also joined by representatives from one of our government sister associations. I began my presentation by noting that CCAP and our sister

associations represent the only levels of government that were fully functioning in Pennsylvania. The audience heartily laughed, recognizing the absurdity of the circumstance. But, as my presentation went on, everyone in the room understood the gravity of what our county officials face.

County officials do their jobs, make tough decisions, and meet their legal obligations, no matter the circumstance. That sense of dedication to the 13 million residents of our great Commonwealth is one of the many reasons why I am so proud to serve CCAP.

As we approach 2026, one of my top priorities in the New Year will be working with our staff, members of the General Assembly, and Executive Branch officials to pursue policies that will make our counties whole if, and when, we experience

"That sense of dedication to the 13 million residents of our great Commonwealth is one of the many reasons why I am so proud to serve CCAP."

another prolonged budget impasse. In addition, we will promote CCAP as an example of bipartisan cooperation that others should emulate.

Aside from these goals, I am excited that we are working on a newly adopted action plan, which includes more than 30 action items for the coming year. This includes launching a newly designed homepage for our website that will better organize information for CCAP members and the general public, and feature enhanced social media to elevate our brand.

In addition, we are in the early stages of building a CCAP studio with updated audio and video capabilities that will allow CCAP members and staff to "tell our story" in support of our policy priorities and communities. There is much more to come, and I look forward to sharing that news with you in the coming months.

I feel a true sense of optimism for the New Year, in large part due to all of you. I am grateful for your partnership in advancing our shared policy goals, sense of community and collaboration, and

most importantly, your willingness to do right by your constituents. Working with you all over the last few months has been truly inspiring and I am excited for CCAP's next chapter.

I wish you, and your loved ones, the very best for a joyful and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely, 🍷

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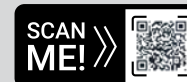


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Pennsylvania  
Department of Military  
and Veterans Affairs

# CONNECTING COUNTIES AND VETERANS

## Programs & Services offered by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

The Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) works closely with both the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs and the Pennsylvania County Directors of Veterans Affairs to provide state and local government programs and services that compliment the robust federal benefits system. Together we are proud to support our nearly 650,000 Veterans who live, work, and thrive within the Commonwealth.

Information about state benefits and programs is easily accessible on the DMVA website located at [www.pa.gov/agencies/dmva/pennsylvania-veterans](http://www.pa.gov/agencies/dmva/pennsylvania-veterans). These programs include state benefits programs like the Disabled Veteran Real Estate Property Tax Exemption (RETX) program, the Blind Veteran Pension Program, the Paralyzed Veteran Pension Program and others. The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) has also been a significant part of our strategic process. By working together to improve the regulations for our State Veterans Programs and updating the Veterans portion of the County Code, our collective advocacy is unmatched. Together we continue to work toward creating new programs and improving legacy programs.

You will notice that we provide direct contact information to the 67 county directors of veteran affairs. We think veterans and their families are best served by connecting them to the county experts where they live. The DMVA continuously supports the county veterans offices through accreditation and training as a Veterans Service Officer (VSO). Accreditation as a VSO is a professional license demonstrating a skill set and understanding of the administrative process of filing claims. The DMVA maintains an active training program that keeps county VSOs up to date on new laws, informed with strategies for appeals and advocacy, and connected with peers from all levels of government and non-profit organizations. Our five regional outreach teams allow us to support the needs of veterans in defined geographical areas. Importantly, these areas are managed in consideration of the county offices of veterans' affairs. This collaboration

is essential to better assist service Members, veterans and their families.

From 2024 to 2025, veteran's benefits realized \$4.2 billion into the Commonwealth. Our partnership with county directors represents \$1.275 billion of that total. Veteran's benefits build houses, create jobs, and much more. The quality of life for Veterans and their families improves with Veterans Disability Compensation. State benefits last year provided grant funding to non-profit providers, including grants to county veterans affairs offices, financial aid and compensation programs provide another \$6 million in funding across the Commonwealth further energizing local economies.

We are proud to partner with CCAP and our county directors of veteran affairs to ensure we provide comprehensive support to our veterans and their families. This collaboration has been the birthplace of best practices such as developing a matrix of when to add staff and identify core deliverables for a county veterans office. It is our mission to ensure that our Veterans receive the full measure of every benefit they have earned through service to our nation. One Team, One Mission. ▾



# CCAP's Insurance Programs Grants

AND THEIR POSITIVE IMPACT ON OUR MEMBERS

The CCAP Insurance Programs have always focused on providing quality member services to counties and county related entities. Any reasonable assistance to make your workplaces and operations as safe as possible for the public and employees is of the utmost importance to us. Creating value-added programs based on your needs is at the forefront of everything we do.

CCAP's Insurance Programs offer four grant programs to support safety improvements, risk mitigation and wellness initiatives.

## PCOMP – PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES WORKERS' COMPENSATION TRUST

PComp offers two grant programs, the Sallade Safety Improvement Program Grant (SSIP) and the Wellness Improvement Program Grant (WIP). The SSIP grant program supports safety committees and administrations by awarding grants to offset the costs of safety improvements to protect employees, assist workers' compensation efforts in reducing accident frequency and severity while enhancing their safety and risk management programs. Approved Sallade Safety Improvement projects include the purchase of ergonomic related items, automated external defibrillators, personal protective equipment including body armor, safety equipment as well as security enhancements to county facilities. One of our members' Sheriff's Office utilized grant funding to purchase and implement a body worn camera (BWC) system aimed at enhancing officer safety, transparency, accountability and community trust in law enforcement.

The WIP Program Grant provides PComp members with financial support to fund programs for employees with the goal of implementing, improving and increasing wellness related activities. Approved wellness improvement projects include the purchase of fitness related items, automated external defibrillators, financial support for wellness fairs, wellness educational sessions/trainings and items for employee lunchrooms. One PComp member provided a 5% premium discount off the single rate of healthcare coverage to employees who participated in the wellness program and a 25% premium discount off the single rate of healthcare coverage for those who met the "Smart Steps" benchmarks or worked with a health coach at their local hospital to work on meeting those benchmarks. The grant money was utilized to offset the cost to the county for providing these discounts to employees.

## PCORP – PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES RISK POOL – PROPERTY AND LIABILITY COVERAGE

The PCoRP Loss Prevention Grant Program provides members with the opportunity to fund loss prevention projects for their county or county related entity. The Loss Prevention Grant program is designed to support safety committees and administration to offset the costs of enhancing the members' safety, maintenance and risk management programs. A few examples of approved loss prevention projects include the funding to support the purchase of new vehicles, equipment for snow removal, security enhancements at county facilities, automated external defibrillators, repairs/upgrades of county parking locations. Notably, a member submitted a grant which was used to cover the cost of multifactor authentication (MFA) tokens. The tokens enhanced their cybersecurity by requiring both standard login and a physical key to access county computers. This enhancement will reduce the risk of data breaches, hacking and unauthorized access to confidential information, thereby protecting sensitive data.

## PELICAN – PROFESSIONAL AND GENERAL LIABILITY FOR NON-PROFIT NURSING HOMES

The PELICAN Loss Prevention Grant Program is designed to support the nursing home's safety committee and administration by awarding grants to offset the costs of enhancing safety, maintenance and risk management programs. Approved projects include the purchase of lights for facility parking lots, equipment to maintain appropriate temperatures as required by regulations, fire sprinkler heads and safety enhancements of the property. One of the nursing homes submitted a grant to pay for replacement of 20 corroded sprinkler heads in the kitchen to mitigate potential safety hazard.

We appreciate our members' participation in these programs and are always willing to discuss new and innovative ways to invest these funds. For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your Risk Control Specialist or email Keith Wentz, Risk Management Director, at [kwentz@pacounties.org](mailto:kwentz@pacounties.org).



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## SAMHSA-Merakey Philadelphia

**T**he Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) awarded \$2 million in supplemental funding to Merakey Philadelphia to launch a pilot program expanding Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic services to the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia. This targeted investment will provide vital resources to assist homeless individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders. The initiative is designed to expand treatment and recovery supports, so that individuals can transition off the streets and into care that addresses their behavioral health needs.

In June, SAMHSA officials had the opportunity to visit Merakey and witness firsthand the dedicated work they are undertaking. They also visited Kensington,

where, on a random weekday afternoon, a man nearly lost his life to an overdose on the sidewalk. That experience was a stark reminder of the devastating realities this community faces each day and reinforced the urgent need for expanded services and resources.

This pilot program exemplifies SAMHSA's work to provide direct support to communities in need that are confronting the challenges of addiction and homelessness head on. It represents an important step forward to addressing substance use, mental illness, and homelessness nationwide. Kensington is a community that has shown remarkable resilience and could be a model for other communities facing similar challenges. ▾



# CCAP Department Spotlights

## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The Government Relations team, led by Frank Mazza and Sophia Eyer, plays a pivotal role in shaping legislative outcomes that affect Pennsylvania's counties. Each day, the team actively monitors policy developments at the Capitol and engages with legislators to advance public policy that supports local governments and the residents they serve. Their work includes participating in collaborative meetings, providing feedback, and testifying at legislative hearings. In addition, the team continues to strengthen relationships with legislators, the Governor's Office, and state agencies to ensure county priorities are clearly communicated and strongly represented at every stage of the legislative process.

In addition to direct lobbying, the team is responsible for implementing CCAP's comprehensive lobbying and advocacy strategies and overseeing the day-to-day operations of the government relations program. This includes coordinating closely with CCAP members and affiliates to build unified grassroots advocacy efforts, develop compelling legislative messaging, and ensure that county voices are heard by key audiences. They also support the coordination of policy development for assigned committees, helping shape CCAP's positions and recommendations on critical issues.

Through strategic engagement, relationship-building, and constant communication, the Government Relations team works to advance policies that strengthen county government and improve services for residents across the Commonwealth. Their commitment and expertise make them an essential resource for counties navigating the complexities of state government.

## INSURANCE

CCAP Insurance Programs is dedicated to helping counties and county-related entities protect their employees, clients, property, financial assets, and the public they serve.

Our commitment extends beyond traditional insurance by offering a broad range of coverages and value-added services designed to promote safety, stability, and operational excellence. Our focus is on rate stability, comprehensive coverage, and personalized support in key areas such as risk management, training, grant and incentive programs and customized claims handling.

Through our integrated approach, we help build stronger, more resilient counties - equipping our members with the tools, knowledge, and resources they need to serve their communities with confidence.



### PCoRP - PROPERTY AND LIABILITY COVERAGE

PCoRP is a unique combination of self-insurance, reinsurance and risk management. Lines of coverage include property, crime, general liability, law enforcement, auto, public officials' liability and cyber security liability. Members receive a full-service package including in-house claims management, grant programs, risk management and educational opportunities.



### PComp - WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE

PComp provides full statutory workers' compensation coverage to Pennsylvania counties. Rates are based solely on county loss data. Members receive a full-service package including in-house claims management, grant programs, risk management and educational opportunities.



### UC Trust - UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

UC Trust is a totally self-insured program and provides member counties with a full-service package including claims management, hearing representation, benefit charge auditing, educational opportunities and a robust Employee Assistance Program.



### CCAP HEALTH ALLIANCE - HEALTH, DENTAL, VISION AND PRESCRIPTION

Health Alliance offers a complete range of medical, dental, vision and prescription plans, fully customized to meet the needs of each individual county or entity. Members enjoy guaranteed rates, low administrative costs, an incentive-based wellness program, COBRA administration, compliance assistance with the Affordable Care Act and access to FSA, HRA and HSA administrators.



### PELICAN - LIABILITY INSURANCE FOR NURSING HOMES

PELICAN provides professional and general liability for non-profit nursing homes and is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Association of County Affiliated Homes (PACAH). Subscribers receive a full-service package including in-house claims management, risk management and educational opportunities.



### PIMCC - PRISON INMATE MEDICAL COST CONTAINMENT

PIMCC provides medical cost management and education to assist county prisons with the containment of costs related to inmate medical expenses. Services include inmate medical bill auditing, case management/concurrent inpatient review, group prescription purchasing program, medical provider fee negotiations and correctional care educational opportunities.



### TAX COLLECTOR BONDS - TAX COLLECTOR SURETY BOND PROGRAM

The Tax Collector Bond program provides surety bond coverage for tax collectors as required by state law. Protection applies only to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the named county, the named municipality and the named school district.



### VOLUNTEERS - SPECIAL RISK ACCIDENT INSURANCE FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers program provides insurance coverage for accidental death, dismemberment and medical expenses for county volunteers. Volunteers are not covered under the Pennsylvania Workers' Compensation Act, and this program can provide this special risk service for your county. Coverage also extends to court-referred alternative sentencing, work release and juveniles participating under the Juvenile Tobacco Enforcement Program. This insurance is in excess of any other insurance in place for volunteers.



### PACAH BONDS - PATIENT TRUST FUND BONDS FOR NURSING HOMES

PACAH Bonds are patient trust fund bonds for nursing home residents and are provided to meet the requirements of federal law. The bond program is available for Pennsylvania Association of County Affiliated Homes (PACAH) members through Travelers Casualty and Surety Company at very competitive group rates. Bonds are written for a two-year period.

*Note: These are summary explanations of each program. Please see each program's detailed coverage descriptions, coverage documents and bylaws for full details.*

*Continued on page 18*

## LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

The 2025 CCAP Leadership and Engagement team consisted of the following members:

- Terry Cochran
- Kim McDonnell
- Todd Snovel
- Lori Lawyer
- Lindsay Price
- Patty Stroble

The team interacted with CCAP members while working diligently to organize the following 2025 conferences:

- o 2025 Spring Conference and Day on the Hill, Harrisburg, PA
- o 2025 County Administration Conference, Altoona, PA
- o 2025 Annual Conference, Somerset, PA
- o 2025 Solicitor's Conference, Harrisburg, PA
- o 2025 Fall Conference, Hershey, PA

The team also organizes all educational cohorts and programs in conjunction with the CCAP Education Committee. The current cohort in the Academy for Excellence in County Government participated in several core and elective courses within their program requirements. The Center for Excellence in County Government (CEL) graduated another full class, participating in the immersive 2.5-day leadership program in 2025.

The team strives to engage all CCAP members and find ways to connect with them and to maximize their investment with the association. The year included organized visits to nine counties and support of three in-district regional meetings. We also facilitated nine membership calls throughout the year to update members on key issues and updates. We launched a new e-marketing template which allowed us to better maintain brand consistency between communications. A refreshed and consolidated branding guide, along with a coordinated training, has also been developed.

L&E team members also provide leadership to two of our affiliated organizations – the Assessors' Association of Pennsylvania (AAP) and the County Planning Directors' Association of Pennsylvania (CPDAP). Accomplishments included several successful conferences and quarterly meetings, board and committee meetings, newsletters, surveys, and financial and member management.

## POLICY TEAM

The CCAP Policy Team serve as subject matter experts and affiliate administrators for a variety of county functions. Policy staff work directly with Commonwealth human services-related agencies, assist the CCAP Human Services committee, and support the

Government Relations Team in advocacy within their individual expertise.

The team is led by the Human Services and Criminal Justice Policy Director, who is the staff expert in county criminal justice functions, staff liaison to the CCAP Human Services and Courts and Corrections Committees, liaison to the Commonwealth's criminal justice agencies and courts, and connection with statewide associations of county criminal justice and courts staff.

Policy Team members act as Executive Directors, Administrator, and support staff for six affiliate associations, COMCARE, and the PA Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust:

### **Pennsylvania Association of County Administrators of Mental Health and Developmental Services**

(PACA MHDS) represents county mental health and intellectual disability program administrators from all of Pennsylvania's counties. The Association provides support and assistance in their roles as the responsible planners, program and fiscal managers, and monitors of services and supports to consumers and their families in their communities.

### **Pennsylvania Association of County Drug and Alcohol Administrators**

(PACDAA) represents the Single County Authorities across the commonwealth who receive state and federal dollars through contracts with the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), to plan, coordinate, programmatically and fiscally manage and implement the delivery of drug and alcohol prevention, intervention, and treatment services at the local level.

### **Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators**

(PCYA) represents county Children and Youth Administrators to enhance the quality of service delivery for children, youth and their families by providing a forum for the exchange of information, assistance in educating the general public and its constituencies, and an environment of support for the Association membership.

### **Pennsylvania Association of County Human Services Administrators**

(PACHSA) is a statewide, nonprofit association representing the needs of county human services administrators, directors, and their counterparts across Pennsylvania. PACHSA serves to educate and advocate for the effective, efficient, and coordinated delivery of human services at the county level.

### **Pennsylvania Coalition of Affiliated Healthcare & Living Communities**

(PACAH) represents long-term living and supports providers and associated businesses, including county, veterans, private, and non-profit nursing facilities, and is dedicated to advancing excellence and improving the quality of care and life

through legislative and regulatory advocacy, innovation, education, and professional networking.

**Society of County Human Resource Professionals of Pennsylvania** (SCHRPP) is a not-for-profit organization created to meet the unique needs of human resources professionals and staff within Pennsylvania's counties and county related entities by improving professional development and enhancing the services available.

**COMCARE** assists members in each of the 67 counties in the implementation of Behavioral HealthChoices, Pennsylvania's mandatory managed care for Medical Assistance recipients, by focusing on dissemination of information and training.

### **PA Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust**

is governed by a Board of Trustees consisting of thirteen (13) members. The Trust receives funds from settlements entered into by the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General and opioid manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacy chains. The Trust distributes those settlement funds exclusively to abate the opioid crisis in Pennsylvania. The Trust is responsible for receiving and investing settlement money, disbursing annual settlement shares to the state, counties, and litigating subdivisions, reviewing county and subdivision certifications and annual reports on spending, and preparing an annual report and accounting for the authorizing court.

## TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS

Running a county technology department is no small task. CIOs and County technology teams are constantly balancing cybersecurity threats, election technology, day-to-day operations, and tight budgets. Our Technology Programs and Partnerships team at CCAP is here to make that job easier. We provide statewide agreements, strategic partnerships, and hands-on support that deliver measurable cost savings and efficiencies for Pennsylvania counties. Through aggregate licensing agreements with major vendors such as Microsoft, Adobe, Sentinel One, Zscaler, and others, counties gain access to enterprise-grade tools at prices far below what they could negotiate alone. These aren't small savings, one county recently saved more than \$20,000 on its software licensing through our agreements! That kind of impact allows CIOs and technology departments to redirect scarce resources into staff, services, and innovation rather than inflated licensing costs.

But our work goes well beyond contracts. When cyber incidents strike, we provide CIOs with a direct lifeline to resources like PA CyberCom, the National Guard, and the Department of State, reducing downtime and ensuring public services stay online. During elections,

we work side by side with technology teams to troubleshoot issues, coordinate communications, and secure systems from threats. Proactive programs like IT Quarterlies, Lunch & Learn demos, and the PA County AI Collaborative give counties timely knowledge and practical tools to make smarter technology decisions, faster. The benefits extend into long-term innovation as well. Through initiatives like the PA County AI Collaborative, we are positioning counties to adopt emerging technologies responsibly, with shared policies, toolkits, and vendor strategies that would otherwise require significant individual investment. Coupled with our sponsorship prospectus and vendor partnerships, we generate sustainable revenue streams that reinforce CCAP's programs while delivering measurable value to counties. In short, our members benefit from reduced costs, stronger vendor leverage, better access to federal and state funding, and a trusted team that helps them meet today's challenges while preparing for tomorrow.

Just as important, our Technology Committee works closely with CCAP's Government Relations team to ensure county technology priorities are heard in Harrisburg and Washington. We advocate for long-term, sustainable cybersecurity funding and push for policies that address the real needs of county CIOs and IT departments. By giving technology a strong voice in policy discussions, we make sure counties have not only the tools and vendor agreements to succeed today, but also the legislative support and funding streams they'll need to stay secure and effective in the years ahead. At the end of the day, our mission is simple: to be a force multiplier for county technology leaders. We cut costs, boost efficiency, and ensure every county, large or small have access to the tools, partnerships, and support you need to succeed. If your county is looking for smarter licensing options, vendor savings, or general IT support, we would love to help. Reach out to us today at [techprograms@pacounties.org](mailto:techprograms@pacounties.org) to learn how your county can start saving. 📈



# The Bullseye Challenge

## THE FED'S BALANCING ACT BETWEEN INFLATION & JOBS

By Brian Allen & Jason Thon (CS McKee)

Since its founding, the Federal Reserve has operated under what's known as their dual mandate: to promote maximum employment and price stability. These two goals sit at the core of U.S. monetary policy and, as many county and municipal officials know, have far-reaching implications.

In recent months, Fed Chair Jerome Powell has spoken frequently about the delicate balance between these objectives. Although inflation has come down from its pandemic-era highs, it remains above the Fed's 2% target—starting to edge higher again since March 2025. Similarly, unemployment has also started to rise. This shift has put the Fed in a familiar but uncomfortable position: weighing the risks of higher prices against the risks of weaker job growth. Adding to the challenge are new tariffs and immigration policy changes that affect both costs and hiring trends.

As is often the case when the economy reaches a potential turning point, attention has shifted to what the Federal Reserve will do next. Strong stock markets

and healthy consumer spending typically do not support lower interest rates. However, early signs of cooling in the labor market tell a more cautious story. Employers appear to be slowing their pace of hiring compared with the previous year, suggesting that economic momentum may be softening.

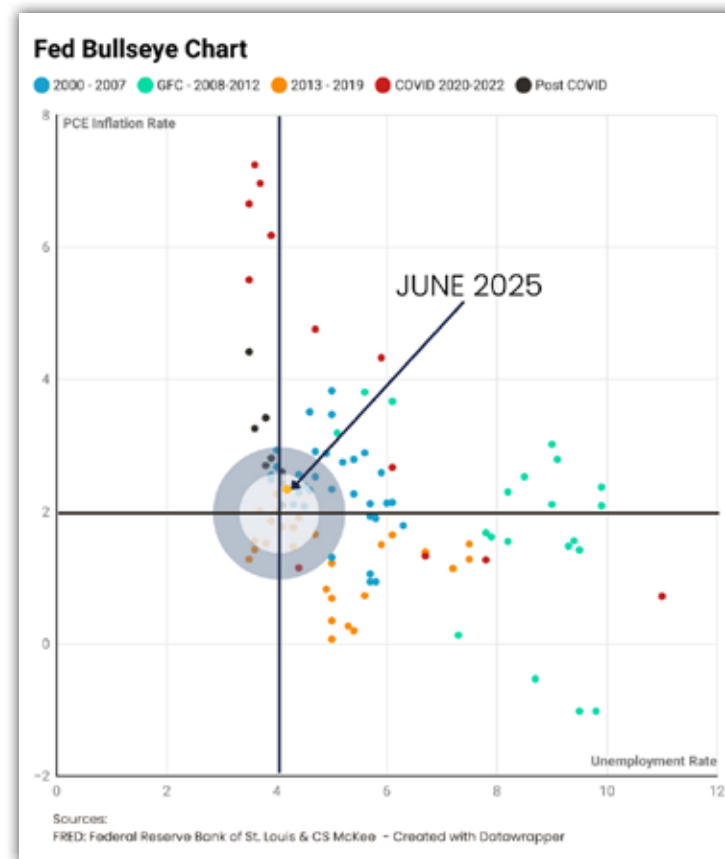
The Fed's challenge is not simply choosing when to cut or raise rates, but deciding which side of the mandate requires more attention right now. Cut rates too quickly, and inflation could re-accelerate. Wait too long, and rising unemployment could take hold. Powell has commented "There is no risk-free path for policy as we navigate the tension between our employment and inflation goals," emphasizing that the Fed's decisions will remain data-dependent, not on a preset course.

A helpful way to visualize this trade-off is the "Bullseye Chart," which plots unemployment on the horizontal axis and inflation on the vertical (see graphic). At the center is the Fed's long-run target: roughly 4% unemployment and 2% inflation. Surrounding that point is a shaded zone representing an acceptable

range where both objectives are reasonably met. Historical data going back to 2000 show that the economy rarely sits at that exact bullseye. During the Global Financial Crisis, unemployment surged; during the COVID recovery, inflation spiked. Most of the time, the economy drifts somewhere around that target zone rather than squarely inside it.

For public officials, this tug-of-war has meaningful implications. When inflation runs high, local governments face rising costs for everything from building materials to employee healthcare. When the Fed raises interest rates to combat inflation, borrowing for capital projects becomes more expensive; however, pension portfolios often benefit from stronger fixed-income yields. Conversely, when the Fed eases policy to support employment, local economies and tax revenues may improve, but investment returns can be pressured if bond yields fall.

Understanding this balancing act helps municipal leaders better interpret the Fed's actions and their potential downstream effects on county planning, budgeting, and pension assumptions.



Currently, financial markets are expecting one more 25-basis-point rate cut before year-end, with the federal funds rate falling between 3.5% and 3.75%. However, given ongoing inflationary pressures tied to consumer spending, tariffs, and potential fiscal stimulus under the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," these expectations

may be optimistic. Unless the Fed raises its long-term inflation target—or external factors like tariffs fade in significance—there may be less room for rate cuts than anticipated.

Over the past two decades, the U.S. economy has landed within the Fed's broader "comfort zone" of roughly 1% to 3% inflation and 2.75% to 5% unemployment only about a quarter of the time. That reality underscores how complex and imperfect monetary policy can be. The Fed's task is not to hit the bullseye exactly, but to keep the economy close enough to the center to foster both price stability and sustainable growth.

For counties and municipalities, this ongoing balancing act will continue to influence investment performance, borrowing conditions, and long-term planning assumptions. As Powell often reminds audiences, success under the dual mandate isn't about perfection—it's about maintaining the confidence and stability that allows stakeholders to plan for the future. ▀

For information on CS McKee and their capabilities contact Shane Nickolich at [snickolich@csmckee.com](mailto:snickolich@csmckee.com) or 724-972-2223, or visit [www.csmckee.com](http://www.csmckee.com).

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# Pennsylvania Counties Help Shape National Opioid Response Through NACo Opioid Solutions Leadership Network

Annie Qing, Senior Program Manager, Substance Use Disorder, National Association of Counties

Alex Waskiewicz, Program Associate, Health and Human Services, National Association of Counties

In 2023, 4,757 Pennsylvanians died from a drug overdose, a rate 14% higher than the national average. Counties are on the frontline of the opioid epidemic – staffing 911 call-centers, coordinating emergency response when an overdose happens and supporting programs that facilitate recovery from substance use disorder. Local governments have been contending with an increasingly volatile drug supply and dwindling funding to address the crisis’s impact.

From 2016-2020, state and local governments filed thousands of lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies to resolve their liabilities in fueling the opioid epidemic. Today, over \$20 billion is in the hands of county governments across the country to invest in programs that will abate a future crisis.

Pennsylvania currently has a reported \$2.01 billion in opioid settlement funds, split 15% to the Pennsylvania General Assembly and 85% to local governments. In 2022, the Pennsylvania Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust (PA Opioid Trust) was created to disburse and review all local expenditures of settlement dollars.

Recognizing the need to support counties with stewarding this complicated and delicate funding

source – NACo launched its Opioid Solutions Center in 2022, to provide custom resources for county governments about best practice use of opioid settlement funds.

To complement this resource hub, NACo also selected 30 county leaders from across the nation to participate in a pioneering peer learning cohort – the Opioid Solutions Leadership Network (OSLN). Three of these leaders are from Pennsylvania:

- Hon. Kevin Boozel, Commissioner, Butler County, Pa.
- Dr. Scott Coughenour, Executive Director, Erie County Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- Keli McLoyd, Director, Overdose Response Unit, Philadelphia, Pa.

Over the past three years, these leaders and their 27 peers from across the country have visited county programs in rural North Carolina, Milwaukee County, Wis. and King County, Wash. to learn about innovations in supporting people affected by substance use disorder with settlement dollars.

Dr. Coughenour, representing Erie County, has been involved from the OSLN’s inception in 2023 and highlighted the benefit of a national learning community for local leaders.

“The OSLN program has truly been pivotal in bringing together a diverse and multifaceted team of experts from around the country to share innovative strategies, foster collaboration across systems and accelerate the development of sustainable, data-driven and results-oriented solutions that strengthen our collective response to the opioid crisis,” he said.

Work with the county leaders in OSLN illuminated many state-specific challenges that a national approach could not solve, including understanding reporting requirements and state policy contexts. So, recognizing the crucial role of state associations of counties in fielding these questions and liaising with state partners, NACo expanded the network to include staff of state associations – to be known as Opioid Solutions Ambassadors.

In February 2025, CCAP was selected to join eight other state associations in OSLN. And over the past nine months, CCAP – as an Opioid Solutions Ambassador – has participated in in-person peer exchange events, virtual group calls and quarterly meetings with NACo to work through challenges in Pennsylvania and create a plan for the association to take action in supporting counties.

This November, after learning from other associations’ approaches and working with NACo, CCAP visited Washington, D.C. to debut this action plan, including:

- Increased partnership with the PA Opioid Trust and stakeholder partners
- Creating further opportunities for counties to exchange information with their peers and receive technical support in the use of settlement funds

Better state-local coordination will allow Pennsylvania to maximize the impact of this time-limited resource and reduce the administrative burden for local governments associated with the PA Opioid Trust’s approval process for expenditures.

As counties anticipate another 13 years of settlement fund payments, support from state associations will be crucial in ensuring counties are equipped with the information they need to make investments in their communities. As NACo convenes a growing network of these county associations across the country, they will look to CCAP as a leader.

Said Melanie Gordon, Human Services and Criminal Justice Policy Director at CCAP, “We are grateful to NACo for the opportunities provided by the OSLN to enhance our core mission in support of excellent in county government. Partnerships with our counterparts in other state associations and leading national experts in opioid abatement has positioned CCAP to enhance support to our members with these crucial and life-saving funds.”

To access planning resources for county opioid settlement spending, please visit [NACo’s Opioid Solutions Center at naco.org/opioid](https://naco.org/opioid).



NACo’s Opioid Solutions Leadership Network, including Boozel and McLoyd, pictured in front of King County, Wash.’s Recovery Café, September 2024

Melanie Gordon, CCAP’s Human Services and Criminal Justice Policy Director, sharing insights from Pennsylvania and plans to support counties with peers from other county associations and national experts, November 2025



SPOTLIGHT ON SETTLEMENT FUNDED PROGRAMS IN OSLN COUNTIES		
Butler County, Pa. Population: 200,503	Erie County, Pa. Population: 270,876	Philadelphia, Pa. Population: 1,603,797
• Courage to Change • Journaling Allocation: \$40,000/year	• Recovery Houses Allocation: \$750,000	• Overdose Prevention • Canvassing Allocation: \$373,725
Cognitive-behavioral interactive journaling system for justice-impacted people affected by substance use disorder and referred by the Adult Probation Department to record commitments and progress toward positive behavior change	Startup costs for recovery houses that provide safe, structured, recovery-oriented and affordable housing for individual recovering from opioid use disorder and substance use disorder	Door-to-door canvassing to engage residents in conversations around substance use, overdose prevention and treatment, distributing naloxone and fentanyl test strips in ZIP codes with high fatal overdose rates



# Commissioner Of The Year

*Brian Smith*

Wayne County



Brian Smith

*When he first considered running for county commissioner, his wife asked, "what is the worst that could happen," to which he replied, "I could win!"*

**Q What does it mean to you to serve as a county commissioner?**

**A** It has been a great honor to serve the people of Wayne County and to have them vote for me. I never thought I would ever actually be a commissioner. I was a dairy farmer and with the difficulties of farming I thought I should get involved in supporting agriculture and wanted a voice of the table

**Q How do you describe the role of a commissioner in shaping your community's future?**

**A** Simply put it is to develop a budget, oversee finances but as a leader get involved in what will guide the future of your county. Together we formed a group called Wayne Tomorrow to discuss what is best for the county, and how do we improve. We conduct feasibility studies on what is important to our communities and are constantly shifting due to various industries in our county. Agriculture is still one of the largest – so we worked closely with the schools to hire an agricultural teacher and brought the FFA program back to the schools. We hope that this will keep younger people involved and interested in farming. I have 6 kids and 17 grandkids and that always keeps me focused on how what we do today will impact future generations.

**Q What guiding principles or values shape your leadership and decision-making?**

**A** Honesty and transparency and taking all opinions into consideration. Fostering an environment that everyone can be heard and just be open to sit down and talk to them. You get a great amount of information from those conversations that hold a lot of value. It can be tough sometimes but also meaningful – even the most difficult of conversations can turn into important information that will make things better – even if we disagree, we are not going to walk away not friends. Talk it out when you come to the table – listen and respect each other and care about the people you serve. We should always be willing to explain how we got there and why we implemented what we did – be transparent – and while people might not agree with the answer, they walk away knowing they were heard.

**Q What project or accomplishment are you most proud of during your time as commissioner?**

**A** We have done so many good things during my time as commissioner. A few that come to

mind are the Park and Recreational funding we received. We were able to match grants and put in several parks that everyone could use. There was a Dam that was going to be ripped apart, but with the help of various partners we were able to preserve it for people to enjoy. We also established an eTech hub where entrepreneurs who are interested in starting their own business can come together to work. I am also proud of what we have done to help kids learn about agriculture and prepare for their future in that industry.

**How has your involvement with CCAP influenced your work and perspective as a commissioner?**

CCAP provides great opportunities to collaborate with other commissioners who may be experiencing the same thing in their counties. My fellow commissioners often have various solutions or opinions that I can then take home to implement and apply. I am a lifelong learner and am always open to new ideas. CCAP provides the ability to learn through the breakouts at conferences and offers many programs to benefit our community. When I come home from a conference, I am always equipped with new ideas that will help my county. We are all trying to do the best for our communities and CCAP helps us be better.

**How do you approach collaboration with fellow leaders and community partners?**

I am always willing to sit down and have a conversation and talk to people. We also have a great group of legislators and senators who are aware of who we are and what our concerns are and when we need their help we can call them. I always stay engaged. Our offices are set up to be very collaborative where we can gather and talk about the conversations we have with our citizens – it works well.

**What does being named CCAP's Commissioner of the Year mean to you personally and professionally?**

It was more than an honor than I can put in words, and I was totally surprised.

**What do you think contributed most to earning this recognition?**

My fellow commissioners and I have a great relationship – and they took the opportunity to nominate me. It meant the world to me, and I can't even express how much. We have a great board of commissioners and have a great group around us. Everyone in Wayne County has a piece of this award. I have been in office for 18 years and have always taken pride in fostering great relationships and being open and honest.

**How does this honor reflect the work of your team and your county as a whole?**

We are all in it together. We have a great chief clerk as well who is the nucleus of what we do. We listen, we explain, and we validate that all our residents' concerns are important no matter how small.

**What advice would you share with newer commissioners or those just beginning their journey in public service?**

Leadership that listens is a good place to start – there is a learning curve to becoming a commissioner and it takes time – best thing to do is listen-listen-listen. There is always lots to learn and be honest, transparent – and be willing to explain what you are doing and why you are doing it. Don't be dismissive to ANY-ONE as each person may provide a nugget to help you be a better leader. ▀

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## Lori Vargo Heffner Reflects After Winning CCAP President's Award

By Lori Vargo Heffner

As I sit here reviewing our county budget, preparing amendments, and looking forward to the upcoming fall conference, I feel an incredible sense of appreciation and awe. I never would have imagined the events that would unfold, the challenges I would face, the accolades that I would receive. In January 2025 I was prepared for this to be my last year on Northampton County Council, as I could not imagine running for another term. Several of my colleagues had already announced that they were not running again, and others were still on the fence, leaning closer to no. In February I made the decision to run for reelection and place my fate in the hands of voters of Northampton County once again. In addition to managing my full-time position as a psychotherapist for St. Luke's University Health Network, and presiding over Northampton County Council, I was able to participate in several lobbying efforts with other CCAP board members. I was privileged to continue serving on the Board as a region 6 coordinator and participate in several committees. These affiliations bring me closer to understanding how important it is to stay connected and lend my voice to the narrative, at home, within CCAP, in Harrisburg, and across the state. This July, I was able to attend the NACO conference in Philadelphia with several other members of our Pennsylvania delegation, honored to be part of the host team. In addition to the camaraderie, my favorite moments were watching "the men of CCAP" jog up the stairs to meet Rocky and taking in the beautiful art museum exhibits. In April I received the Governor's Award for Outstanding Service to Local Government from the Department of Community and Economic Development and in August I was selected for the CCAP President's Award. This was a total surprise and the only time that anyone at CCAP or anywhere for that matter will



Lori Vargo Heffner

ever be able to say that I was at a loss for words. I am truly honored and humbled for these awards, and I appreciate that my colleagues recognize that I truly put my heart and soul into my work.

This year I faced several unexpected personal challenges. I faced new issues with my health and unexpected damage to my home. My daughter also began to create her own path in a new city, which is an emotional mix of pride and sadness. I remember when I first thought about running for political office, years ago. I told myself it would be something to do when my daughter was grown and no longer in need of my "mothering" services. As the year draws to a close, I continue to try to build up my physical strength, my emotional reserves, put my house back together, and begin a new tradition as my daughter picks up the turkey and the torch, I am truly grateful. I would never have predicted what I have gained from serving my constituents in Northampton County, from growing personally and professionally, to meeting some amazing, wonderful people from across the state of Pennsylvania who faced their roles as commissioners with care and dedication. I have learned that leading with humility rather than hubris is essential, that listening is much more effective than reacting, and that collaboration and connection is more important than division and derision. I am proud to have been elected to serve another term on County Council and thrilled to be able to continue my participation with my CCAP colleagues. Thank you for being part of my adventures in government! I wish everyone a successful resolution to your budgets, much fun at our fall conference, and blessings for beautiful holiday season. 🍂

I am truly honored and humbled for these awards, and I appreciate that my colleagues recognize that I truly put my heart and soul into my work.

# CCAP Friend of County Government- Joseph Saeler

By Joseph Saeler, Executive Director, Community Development Corporation of Butler County

**D**uring 2025, Butler County had a positive year with many successful projects. Projects that were underway include infrastructure, stormwater, building renovations, water and sewer upgrades which all have been successful this year throughout Butler County. It is amazing how each project can be successful with the help of all levels of Government. Although these projects can be complicated and are often difficult to fund, working together allows for various grant opportunities to be applied for that help ensure that the project is successful for the communities we live in. From Federal, State, County and local Municipalities, each level of government has demonstrated that by working together we can complete various projects including water, sewer and infrastructure improvements to make the community a better place to live. Local municipalities are able to take advantage of Federal and State Grant funding opportunities to help them complete projects that may typically be out of their budget otherwise. For example, Chicora Borough applied for an H2O Grant that was available to be applied for through State funding. Chicora Borough has been supplying their residents with safe and clean drinking water for over 140 years. Over the years the Borough's water system has been significantly upgraded, however there are many upgrades and maintenance projects in need of attention. Failure to fix the failing water distribution system would affect over 1,100 residents in Chicora Borough. Chicora Borough will be successful in their water distribution project due to being successful in obtaining their H2O Grant, otherwise the project costs would have been too high for them to complete at once. Construction costs have increased, which made it more difficult for the dollar to go as far as it once did. For example, in partnership with Allegheny Township, Butler County secured \$4,761,231.95 in competitive grant funding for the Allegheny-Clarion Valley Business Park Sewer and Water Compliance Project. Allegheny-Clarion Valley operates a Wastewater Treatment Plant and Water Treatment Plant which services the Allegheny-Clarion Business Park in Butler County.



Joseph Saeler

Both treatment facilities are currently under a Consent Order and Agreement to correct various violations and to obtain the necessary permits. Failure to fix the failing water and sewer systems would affect those businesses and over 600 employees throughout Butler, Clarion, Venango, Armstrong, and Mercer Counties. Working together with engineers and contractors has allowed us to carry forward numerous projects as planned. It is never easy to carry a project to the end line and there are many players in the process and many opinions. However, by taking a moment to listen and understand everyone's concerns and opinions allows us to work together with one vision and understand each person's point of view. The success of a community is only from the leadership that is shown by local officials. I would like to thank our Senators, State Representatives, Butler County's Commissioners and local municipal leaders for showing great leadership and thank them for their willingness to help ensure projects are getting completed in the community to help better serve the citizens that live here. ▾

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# Reflections by CCAP Chief Clerk of the Year Roni Shilling, Mercer County

By Roni Shilling, Mercer County Chief Clerk

The day started out like any other typical workday, filled with emails, correspondence, conversations with department heads, and the new list of tasks needing attention. My schedule was full, and my mind was focused on staying organized, priorities, and preparing for a rather challenging meeting at the end of the day in a separate county building. The meeting was to be with a department head and an individual that had some issues with a county procedure. I had been reminded several times that this individual would be difficult to meet with and not to expect a cordial meeting. Before leaving the courthouse, I tried to tie up a few loose ends but unfortunately everyone I needed to speak with was unavailable. As I left the courthouse I was thinking of how I was going to get these issues resolved if no one was available. When I arrived at the other county building, I met briefly with the department head, having casual conversation as we went to the conference room. As I stepped inside the room, I froze. The room was full of people. There were department heads, employees, the same people I had been looking for earlier, and (surprise) some of my family. I

took one step back. I know I was wondering what I had walked into. I was completely confused and thinking "what is going on?". Commissioner Coleman stepped in front of me and announced, "Congratulations, you're Chief Clerk of the Year". At that moment I was speechless and the only words I could manage were "you're kidding me". Then my daughter appeared with a tiara for me that she placed on my head. The Commissioners, department heads, and fellow employees had somehow managed to orchestrate this entire celebration without me having the slightest clue. The special recognition was organized because I had been unable to attend the CCAP Conference where the annual awards are typically announced. To be honored as Chief Clerk of the Year is an incredible honor.

I have been with Mercer County for quite some time and stepped into the Chief Clerk's position at the beginning of 2024. During this time, I've learned countless lessons about the finer details of county government. Lessons that every chief clerk and county administrator across the Commonwealth understand well. The position requires balancing multiple priorities, involvement in complex projects, and aiding to ensure that county government serves the community effectively.

Being a Chief Clerk isn't just about paperwork and policy, it's about people. It's about communication (especially listening), problem-solving, and learning how to navigate the many layers of county government while keeping a human touch. Every day brings new challenges; projects to complete, issues to resolve, and moments where things just don't go according to plan. But it also brings opportunities; to



Roni Shilling

work alongside dedicated commissioners, to collaborate with department heads who care about their work, and responsible employees of the county, all of whom serve the community, our home.

I've attended the state conferences, along with other chief clerks and county administrators from across the state. At those conferences I would think of how experienced, confident, and composed they all seemed. I was often the one asking fundamental questions, gathering information from other chief clerks, and trying to learn from everyone I could. To be recognized among that same knowledgeable group is something I never expected.

Throughout this past year, Mercer County has continued to move forward through the combined efforts of the Board of Commissioners and dedicated county staff. I am proud to stand beside them as we work to improve our operations and implement initiatives that make a positive lasting impact on Mercer County and its citizens. Each

project comes with its own challenges, but the progress made is a testament to teamwork and commitment to public service.

Just like the day of my surprise celebration, there are many parallels to the past year. A year of projects to finish, new ideas, and on occasion, obstacles to overcome. With public service, no two days are alike but everyday is another opportunity to make a difference.

Receiving the award of Chief Clerk of the Year reminds me of how important it is to stay dedicated, adaptable, and appreciative of those who support our work. I am humbled by this recognition and proud to serve Mercer County with such exceptional colleagues. This honor is not mine alone. It belongs to everyone who makes daily contributions to making Mercer County a better place.

So, when you are having 'one of those days', remember who you are, who you represent, and what you mean to the development of your county. Put on your crown and don't let anything defeat you. 🏆




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# Reflections from Snyder County's Robert Cravitz, CCAP Solicitor of the Year

By Robert M. Cravitz, Solicitor for Snyder County, Pennsylvania



Robert Cravitz

The year 2025 will mark the end of the first quarter of the 21st century which quarter involved a turbulent time in world affairs given the events following the 911 attacks, in access to digital information, in wide ranging improvements in communication devices, and in the recovery from the abridgment of civil liberties and the bending of employment norms during the Covid 19 pandemic. In rapid fire, a succession of events, individuals, and ideas have not only improved our collective life experiences but also to some extent diminished those experiences due to lack of time to stop and appreciate what is and has been experienced. It seems that we obtain information by way of sound bites and experiences digitally through our telephones, televisions and computers.

As a county solicitor my professional world has always been in flux given the endless stream of court decisions interpreting the law and of legislative enactments that change or terminate or expand municipal law on an almost daily basis. Two areas of municipal law in particular have been subject to change and uncertainty over the last ten months, i.e. election law and the right-to-know law.

When I became a county solicitor in 2007, except for absentee ballots, the electorate voted on election day, the votes were tabulated, and the election results were totaled for the most part by the end of election night. Now the Pennsylvania Department of State and the judiciary issue new policies almost daily with regard to signatures and dates on mail-in ballots. Elections stretch over days, and sometimes weeks, rather than hours on election night. Court challenges have become the norm rather than the exception. Being from an older generation such a state of flux is not better than the decisive certainty that election day was the date that the electorate voted. Now there is even discussions about creating new election centers that could be open 24/7 weeks before an election for the "convenience" of the electorate. Will there even be opportunities to revise or even revoke mail-in ballots after they were mailed and if so under what circumstances or whims of the voters? In my opinion, such uncertainty would not increase the integrity of our elections. The appellate courts have determined that the election code is meant to enfranchise voters and not disenfranchise them but when will the current uncertainties end?

The Right-To-Know Law has spawned a cottage industry for lawyers to the financial detriment of local governments. From the common feeling of malaise over the previous four years, While the overall purposes of promoting transparency and, thereby, preventing abuses of governmental power, the RTK Law, causes local government administrators to spend significant time and money searching government records, copying the same, and furnishing the results to an applicant who often times has limited, or no, tangible interest in the results of their inquiries. Certainly, transparency in the processes of government is paramount but the deluge of fishing expeditions and/or inconsequential requests over the



Reflecting over the last 10 months of this year, I am hopeful not only for my country but also for my county.

last several years have become abusive. The case law on the RTK Law is legion and certain law firms specialize in navigating its intricacies with the certainty that should a municipality error in its response a judge will award their clients legal fees and possible penalties. Such awards do not benefit the public who pay their taxes to promote the common good through the rendering of services. The abuses under the current RTK Law must be legislatively addressed starting with the inclusion of the legislature under it.

Overall, though, since January of this year I have been heartened by the lifting of the public spirit. I have observed heightened sense of purpose and opportunism in local businesses, at public meetings, and at religious observances. People are getting involved and are more willing to offer their time and opinions for a variety of causes. Traditional values appear to be coming back

together with a pride that the future is not all gloom and doom but that nationally and locally government can work with and for the public and not be a constraint on them. This strong sense of optimism is only going to grow with the coming celebration of the 250th year celebration of the founding of our republic next year, the planning for which has already started. Reflecting over the last 10 months of this year, I am hopeful not only for my country but also for my county. My only advice for the future comes from President Theodore Roosevelt who once wrote "Be practical as well as generous in your ideals. Keep your eyes on the stars, but remember to keep your feet on the ground." As a county solicitor my career has been spent assisting my commissioners to keep grounded in the law and yet focused on the future development of our county.

As I said at the awards dinner, although I am truly grateful for the honor of being named CCAP Solicitor of the Year, I just did my job which means that I just offered my legal opinions on the issues and kept my personal opinions to myself, I tried to protect the county and its residents to the best of my abilities, and I always reminded the decision-makers that they were spending the public's money and not their own. I hope \_and pray that prosperity and good government prevail into the future for our County. 🍷

# Reflections on a Once-in-250-Years Moment

By Matt Darragh, Chief of Staff, America250PA

Over the past year, our team at America250PA has spent a lot of time on the road—listening, learning, and planning alongside county leaders, historical societies, libraries, educators, veterans’ groups, and volunteers. In every corner of the commonwealth, the conversations sound a little different, but the themes feel the same: pride in place, excitement for what comes next, and a deep desire to give the next generation something worth carrying forward.

That spirit is shaping everything we do as we move into the final stretch before 2026.

Our goal is simple: every Pennsylvanian should have a clear, nearby way to take part in the Semiquincentennial.

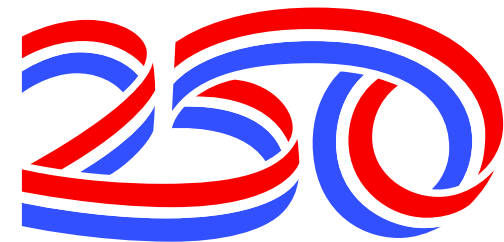
## LOOKING BACK: A YEAR OF GROUNDWORK AND PARTNERSHIP

The last year has been about building the scaffolding for a statewide commemoration that feels local, accessible, and meaningful.

Counties have been at the center of that work. Many of you have passed resolutions, created planning committees, and identified key sites and stories that define your communities. Others have folded America250PA into existing events—fairs, parades, heritage days, and seasonal festivals that already bring neighbors together. In each case, your leadership has helped us understand what success looks like on the ground.

At the state level, our commission has focused on creating programs and tools that reinforce our common identity as Pennsylvanians and build anticipation for the Semiquincentennial. Through programs like the Keystone Classroom Initiative, the Direct Effect Innovation Chal-

# AMERICA



lenge, and our Semiquincentennial Scholarship program, we are inviting students to learn, serve, and lead in their home communities. Through projects like Bells Across PA and the Liberty Tree initiative, we are helping local partners highlight the places and traditions that anchor civic life.

Most importantly, we have tried to listen. As commissioners and county staff, you know which partners are trusted, which spaces feel welcoming, and which stories resonate. Your feedback has sharpened our plans and kept us grounded in the lived experiences of communities across Pennsylvania.

## ANTICIPATING THE KICKOFFS

We’re preparing for the America250PA Kick-Off Events this January as we begin the final countdown to our nation’s 250th anniversary. Starting January 16 in Philadelphia, our team will travel to all 67 counties in just under two weeks—bringing a moment of celebration to every courthouse or historic site on the route. Each stop will be a rally-style gathering designed to draw residents in, spark local pride, and introduce the many ways communities can take part in the Semiquincentennial throughout the year.

America250PA will handle the logistics so counties can focus on welcoming their neighbors. Our staff will provide tailored signage, promotional materials, and branded items for each event. We’ll also coordinate with a local restaurant—or a PA Preferred vendor when possible—to provide light refreshments that reflect the flavor of the community. America250PA Executive Director Cassandra Coleman will represent the commission at every stop, ensuring each county has a clear connection to the statewide story we’re building together.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026 AND BEYOND

When we turn the calendar page to 2026, the nation will look to Pennsylvania. Our role is not only to remember what happened here in 1776, but to honor the generations of Pennsylvanians who have carried that promise forward—workers, veterans, immigrants, caregivers, educators, and young people stepping into leadership.

Our goal is simple: every Pennsylvanian should have a clear, nearby way to take part in the Semiquincentennial. That might mean attending a Commonwealth Concert Series show, joining a talk in our upcoming lecture series, volunteering at a Pennsylvania Day clean-up, enjoying a fireworks display supported by a Semiquin Grant, or exploring our Countdown to 250 Mobile Experiential Unit when it arrives in town.

## A SHARED INVITATION

The “Reflections” theme for this issue of County News comes at the right time. We are close enough to 2026 to feel the urgency, and still early enough to shape the story we will tell.

When Pennsylvanians look back on this anniversary 50 years from now, they will not remember every meeting or planning call. They will remember how it felt when their community came together. They will remember the pride of seeing their own county on the map of a nationwide celebration. They will remember who invited them in.

Together, we have a chance to give the next generation a clear message: Pennsylvania showed up for this moment. Every county had a part. Every community had a way in.

That is the story we are building with you—and the story we will carry into 2026. 🍷



# CCAP Affiliates Strengthen County Programs

By John DiMattio, Erie County Department of Human Services

**W**orking in human services administration for the past 30 years I can say without hesitation 2025 has provided an unusual roller coaster ride of a year. I guess that should be expected when you choose a career that deals with helping people. The only thing that is regular is the need to be agile when it comes to funding, staffing and community.

Locally in 2025, our county programs/systems have been challenged by; a growing number of individuals needing housing and homeless services, the ending of American Rescue Plan funds that have supported many local service initiatives, uncertainty of eligibility/funding for SNAP benefits and increasing acuity of our Mental Health and Drug/Alcohol consumers that seek care. Additionally, one of the most unfortunate scenarios played out in having us simultaneously face both a federal and state budget impasse.

These challenging situations created undo anxiety and often sent our staff scrambling for local solutions to help needy people in our communities. Pennsylvania's local county human services teams often found these challenges insurmountable.

I have found the most powerful support for those of us that work in PA Human Services is the support and idea sharing that occurs within our CCAP affiliate organizations like PACHSA, PACA MH/DS, PCYA, PACDAA, and COMCARE. I've been fortunate enough to be a member of several of these groups for 20 years.



Joe Kantz, Sherene Hess, John DiMattio, Kyle Kopko

These organizations have brought our county members together and continued work throughout the most recent impasses, the COVID-19 pandemic, the opioid crisis and every other community challenge. Each of these organizations is powered by your local staff working together on shared, creative community-based solutions. There are no universal answers that will work in every county in Pennsylvania but listening and learning from one another works to build effective local human service programs.

My urging to all Commissioners, Council Members and County Executives is to encourage your staff to not only belong to the CCAP affiliate organizations, but to become active members in the operation, boards and committees. Our strength via your staff participation is a win for each of our counties and the services across Pennsylvania. 🍷

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# Reflections on 2025: Pennsylvania's Energy Crossroads and the Push for Smarter Utility Management

By Chrislynn Energy Services

As Pennsylvania counties look back on 2025, one theme has defined the year more than any other: the rising cost and complexity of managing energy. Volatile markets, shifting state policies, and renewed discussions around the regional power grid have created an environment that demands stronger data, smarter planning, and more strategic decision-making at the local level.



## Capacity & Commodity Pressures

Energy markets remained active throughout 2025, with continued cost increases across both capacity and commodity pricing. Results from the PJM capacity auctions - which determine the cost of maintaining reliable electricity supply across 13 states - rose significantly this year. Prices climbed from \$270 per megawatt-day for the June 2025–May 2026 period to \$329 for June 2026–May 2027, and forecasts suggest that rates will likely hold near that level through 2028.

At the same time, natural gas prices (the primary fuel source for electricity generation) have trended higher. The 2026 NYMEX calendar strip averaged around \$4.03 per MMBtu, roughly 15% higher than the previous year. These factors, combined with ongoing infrastructure and transmission investments, have continued to drive electricity costs upward for municipalities and county facilities across the Commonwealth.

For public-sector leaders tasked with balancing budgets and maintaining reliable service, this volatility highlights the growing importance of understanding how market mechanisms impact local costs.

## Pennsylvania's Energy Crossroads

Governor Josh Shapiro sparked headlines this year when he suggested that Pennsylvania could reconsider its membership in PJM, the regional grid operator responsible for reliability and market oversight. While any such move remains unlikely in the short term, it underscores a deeper frustration among state leaders with PJM's pace of renewable integration, regional pricing disparities, and the rising cost of capacity.

For counties and housing authorities, these policy discussions are more than political talking points - they directly shape how energy is bought, managed, and paid for. Questions about Pennsylvania's long-term relationship with PJM raise important considerations about how regional market rules and state priorities affect public-sector energy costs and reliability.

Regardless of where those conversations lead, one truth remains: affordable, reliable energy requires proactive planning, clear visibility into utility data, and the ability to make informed, data-driven decisions.



## Driving Efficiency Through Data

To help counties navigate this increasingly complex landscape, Chrislynn Energy Services spent 2025 expanding the deployment of CESI-IQ, our intelligent utility management platform. CESI-IQ centralizes and audits all utility data (electricity, natural gas, water, sewage, propane, and heating oil) across departments and facilities, creating a unified system for analysis and reporting.

By consolidating information into a single, secure database, counties can more easily identify billing errors, detect inefficiencies, improve forecasting accuracy, and prepare budgets with confidence. This centralized approach empowers county governments to manage utility spending strategically and respond to fluctuations in energy markets with greater agility.

For many Pennsylvania counties, these tools have already produced measurable savings and improved transparency, turning what was once a fragmented process into a streamlined, data-driven system.

## Looking Back...and Ahead

As Chrislynn Energy celebrates its 25th year serving Pennsylvania's public sector, we continue to reflect on the partnerships and progress that have defined our work. From our early roots in energy procurement to today's technology-driven solutions, our mission has remained constant: helping public agencies use less and pay less through innovation, transparency, and trusted advisory support.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on strengthening those relationships and expanding our impact through technology and education. As a COSTARS-approved vendor through the Pennsylvania Department of General Services, Chrislynn Energy provides compliant, secure solutions for energy procurement, bill auditing, and data management - helping county governments meet tomorrow's energy challenges with confidence.

The lessons of 2025 are clear: energy management is no longer a back-office function, it's a cornerstone of fiscal responsibility and environmental stewardship. By embracing data-driven strategies today, counties can take control of their energy futures and continue delivering reliable, cost-effective services to the communities they serve.

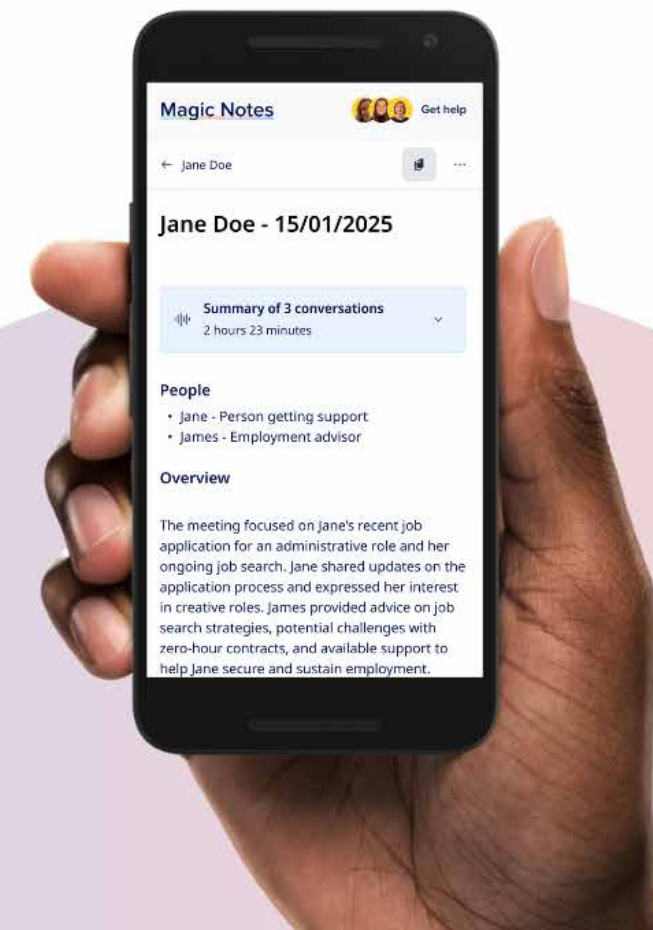
For more information, visit [www.chrislynnenergy.com](http://www.chrislynnenergy.com)

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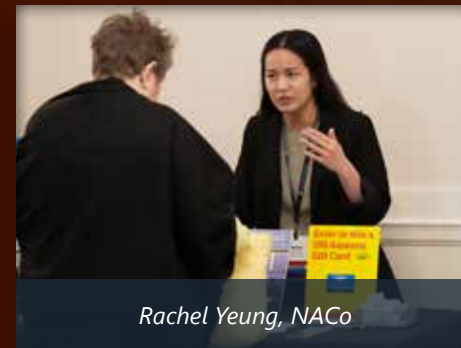
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We also offer solutions that go beyond legal advice including marketing, public and government relations, communications, human resources and municipal consulting through our ancillary businesses. Contact us to learn more about how we partner with Pennsylvania counties to support their legal and consulting needs.

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# AT&T Invests in Counties Across Pennsylvania in 2025

By David Kerr, president, AT&T Pennsylvania & West Virginia

In 2025, we continued to invest in our network infrastructure across Pennsylvania, turning on new cell sites, upgrading existing sites and even expanding our fiber network in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

AT&T\* has added new cell sites across Pennsylvania to enhance the state's 5G wireless coverage and capacity, enabling residents, businesses, and public safety on FirstNet® to get the most out of their mobile devices. The new sites boost coverage in counties across the Commonwealth, including Allegheny, Butler, Beaver, Berks, Butler, Cambria, Chester, Clearfield, Cumberland, Franklin, Lebanon, Lehigh, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Tioga, Wayne and Westmoreland.

These new sites will give our first responders the mobile broadband connections they need to keep our communities safe and respond to emergencies. No other carrier has a dedicated network like FirstNet. These new sites give more Pennsylvanians more access to mobile connectivity the need.

In September, AT&T joined representatives from the federal First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority), Congressman Rob



Bresnahan, local first responders, public safety officials, and community leaders in Drums, in Luzerne County, to announce a new cell site and highlight how FirstNet, Built with AT&T – the only 5G network built with and for America's first responders – is delivering unparalleled coverage, security and reliable connectivity to the nation's public safety community.

These sites also support first responders and the extended public safety community on FirstNet, Built with AT&T – America's public safety network. These new sites include Band 14 spectrum, which is nationwide, high-quality spectrum set aside by the government specifically for FirstNet. We look at Band 14 as public safety's VIP lane, delivering dedicated connectivity when needed. When not in use by FirstNet subscribers, AT&T customers can enjoy Band 14's added coverage and capacity.

Created by the U.S. Congress, FirstNet was shaped by the first responder community's vision following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It is built with AT&T in public-private partnership with the FirstNet Authority – an independent authority within the federal government.



AT&T 5G brings fast, reliable and highly secure connectivity to more than 315 million people in over 26,900 cities and towns nationwide. This helps Pennsylvania residents, businesses and government agencies get the best possible experience over the AT&T network wherever they live, work and play.

What's more, AT&T Fiber is now available to more than 15,000 residential locations in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area. The newly launched network will give customers access to super-fast internet speeds up to 5-Gigs.<sup>1</sup>

From 2020 to 2024, AT&T invested more than \$1.5 billion in our wireless and wireline networks in Pennsylvania. These investments boost reliability, coverage, speed and overall performance for residents and their businesses.

Go here to learn more about how AT&T is supporting Pennsylvania. For more about the value FirstNet is bringing to public safety, check out [FirstNet.com](http://FirstNet.com).



FirstNet and the FirstNet logo are registered trademarks and service marks of the First Responder Network Authority. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.

*Limited availability in select areas. Speeds based on wired connection. Actual speeds may vary. Single device wired speed maximum 4.7Gbps. For more info, go to [www.att.com/speed101](http://www.att.com/speed101).*

# Resilience

## IT'S PART OF YORK COUNTY'S DNA

By Julie Wheeler

**Resilience is often used as a term to describe an organization's ability to overcome challenges or threats, or an individual's remarkable ability to overcome adversity to achieve success.**

**But here in York County, resilience is something we don't talk much about. It's just part of who we are as a community – especially this year, when we endured horrible tragedy not once, but twice in the span of seven months.**

On Feb. 22, 2025, York County's 911 Dispatchers received the type of call they had been trained to handle. This call, and others that quickly came into our 911 center that day, was in response to a hostage situation at UPMC Memorial Hospital, located not far from the City of York.

York County's brave police, fire, EMS and other first responders jumped into action. Tragically, one of those heroic police officers, 30-year-old West York Borough Police Officer Andrew Duarte, died as he sacrificed his own life to save others.

As a community, we mourned the loss of Officer Duarte and came together to thank all those who responded to the scene on that fateful day – as well as our 911 Dispatchers and the brave hospital employees whose calm, steady actions helped save lives.

And in the months that followed, we remembered and honored Officer Duarte at public ceremonies and in private, solemn moments with his family and loved ones.

And then, on Sept. 17, 2025, tragedy struck again. On that date, three of our community's law enforcement officers were tragically shot and killed in the line of duty. Local police joined the York County Sheriff's Department to follow up on a domestic-relations con-

cern at a farmhouse in North Codorus Township.

When they arrived, they were ambushed. The Northern York County Regional Police Department lost three veteran officers – 53-year-old Mark Baker, 39-year-old Cody Becker, and 43-year-old Isaiah Emenheiser. Two other law enforcement officers were critically injured in the same police incident. Thankfully, both have recovered from their injuries.

Once again, the community of York County became the embodiment of not just resilience, but also of grace, compassion and human kindness. For a second time this year, we came together to mourn and to wrap our arms around those who lost so much.

First responders across York County organized a memorial procession in honor of their fallen law enforcement brothers, and when it came time for the memorial service and funerals, the response was even more profound. Hundreds of first responders came to York to pay their respects.

We cried. We hugged. And as a community, we came together to lift each other up and supported each other as we grieved as one united community.

And while we grieved, we also rallied around the victims of the incident – the family members of those fallen officers.



Cody Becker



Mark Baker



Isaiah Emenheiser



Andrew Duarte

A resilient community doesn't ignore the pain of tragedy but instead harnesses the deep well of compassion for one another to help each other get through it.

York County isn't defined by crisis and tragedy. We are defined by how we respond to it.

As an example, one of our local nonprofit agencies, the York County Safety Collab, took a lead role in both these incidents – working to ensure that those who lost loved ones were cared for, that those who were lost were honored, and that the first responders who still answer the call of duty every day are thanked.

From fundraising efforts to "thank you" cards and even a billboard campaign to recognize first responders for all they do, these initiatives were driven by collaboration between community leaders, organization and our local residents – all coming together, no matter their station.

And that's as it should be.

While it's true that crisis demands leadership, it's also true that leadership comes from within.

Officers Andrew Duarte, Mark Baker, Cody Becker and Isaiah Emenheiser were each a leader in his own right – making the split decisions to run toward danger and to protect, defend and save innocent lives. That's remarkable leadership, and that's what makes first responders so special.

For the rest of us, leadership is showing up, lending a helping hand and supporting one another – especially when tragedy strikes. And that's what we have seen time and again here in York County.

The thing about resilience is it only shows up in the hard times. Perhaps that's why we don't talk much about it.

While it's been true for our entire history, this year has certainly provided more than our fair share of hard times. But we are resilient. We are York County Strong.

Here in York County, resilience is just another word for community. It's who we are. It is how we have lived for generations, and it is why we have thrived as a community for more than 275 years. 🇺🇸



Julie Wheeler is President Commissioner of the York County Board of Commissioners and serves as Treasurer on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors for CCAP.

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# ADDRESSING PENNSYLVANIA COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH IN 2025:

## FROM CRISIS RESPONSE TO DATA-DRIVEN CARE



# THE STATE OF COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH IN 2025

Pennsylvania's county-based behavioral-health system remains under heavy strain in 2025. Counties are responsible for coordinating and funding critical services, but rising demand, stagnant budgets, and workforce shortages have left many systems stretched to their limits.

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services reports that over 1.8 million residents now receive behavioral-health services annually. Yet more than half of counties still face shortages of licensed professionals, especially psychiatrists and case managers. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania (2025) found that ~40% of counties lack a single psychiatrist, and vacancy rates for county-funded roles remain high.

A recent funding delay illustrates how fragile the system has become: one county's community mental health block-grant payment (about \$600,000) was frozen during the 2025 state-budget impasse. Officials warned that without those funds, crisis-response programs and case-management positions would be cut, leaving vulnerable residents without timely care. This issue vibrated across the state.

Meanwhile, the Pennsylvania 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline saw a 28% increase in calls this year, a sign of both rising need and greater public reliance on emergency supports. These data points underscore the same pattern: counties are doing more with less, often working reactively rather than proactively, without the unified data tools or workforce depth needed to prevent crises before they occur.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026: BUILDING A BETTER FRAMEWORK

2026 offers a turning point—an opportunity to move from reactive crisis management toward proactive prevention and coordination. County administrators and state partners are calling for three major shifts:

### Modernized Data and Analytics Infrastructure

Counties need integrated, privacy-secure platforms capable of consolidating data from intake, screening, treatment, and outcomes. Real-time dashboards would allow leadership to monitor service demand, track trends in youth anxiety or suicide risk, and deploy resources before small problems escalate.

### Strengthened Workforce and Early Intervention Capacity

Investment in peer supports, case-management pipelines, and mobile-crisis teams must accompany better data. Early-intervention programs have proven cost-effective but remain inconsistently funded.

### Outcome-Linked Funding and Transparency

Counties and the Commonwealth can maximize limited budgets by tying future allocations to measurable outcomes—using shared data to show what works, justify funding, and sunset ineffective programs. This will help fund initiatives that are effective, relieving county institutions such as over-crowded prisons and jails that are not equipped to handle mental health (a main concern in 2025).

## HOW DATA-INFORMED SYSTEMS CAN HELP

Niche mental health analytics platforms such as *DataNest* can support—not replace—county systems by offering:

- **Unified data flow:** automated, anonymized data collection across agencies within the county.
- **Visualization tools:** real-time dashboards to monitor participation, outcomes, and emerging risks.
- **Automated reporting:** professional, board-ready reports that meet state metrics and support funding requests.
- **Resource hubs:** staff-well-being and training modules to strengthen the workforce pipeline across agencies within the county.

The past year made clear that Pennsylvania’s behavioral-health system cannot continue to rely on crisis response alone, we must take a proactive approach.

Modern data tools—and the commitment to use them collaboratively—will allow counties to demonstrate results, secure resources, and ensure that every resident has access to timely, equitable mental-health care.

## CONTACT US



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## Chrislynn Energy: 25 Years of Supporting Pennsylvania Counties

For 25 years, Chrislynn Energy has been a trusted partner to counties across Pennsylvania—helping county leaders manage natural gas and electricity costs through tailored, no-cost consulting services. As a long time supporter of Counties across the Commonwealth, we are proud to serve the organizations that power our communities.

## Planning Ahead: What to Know About Rising Energy Costs

Energy markets continue to shift, and upcoming capacity cost changes will directly impact utility budgets. Chrislynn Energy is already working with counties to prepare for these increases, offering strategies to control spending and create long-term savings.

### Our Value-Added Services

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## Your Partner in Energy Management

We understand the operational and budgetary pressures counties face. Whether you're planning ahead or responding to change, our team is here to deliver practical, customized energy solutions with long-term impact.

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# PACA MH/DS

## A Legacy and Launchpad of County Mental Health Advocacy

The Pennsylvania Association of County Administrators of Mental Health and Developmental Services (PACA MH/DS) provides advocacy, outreach, training opportunities, and support in the form of a coalition to county mental health programs, their staff, and the constituents they serve. County programs are abundant in presence and varied in forms, to include single county administrative programs and multiple county joiners—representing a spectrum of geographic and demographic diversity that is emblematic of Pennsylvania itself.

### SERVICE

Member engagement is the cornerstone of our association. Our main priorities—to assist in the administration of county services and to secure sufficient support for county needs—necessitate engagement with government bodies at the municipal, state, and federal level. In the course of our outreach and interaction with these entities, we are constantly developing solutions to current issues and looking ahead to improve county responses to MH and DS needs. The most crucial aspect for our membership is having a resource to address questions and concerns as they arise and liaise with the appropriate partners. We provide this vital service.

### HISTORY

The Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities Act of 1966 codified that counties have program administrators providing a core suit of basic services. Since then, the mandate has grown in scope and complexity due in large part to the various Medicaid waivers that counties administer on behalf of the Commonwealth. We assist counties with interpreting and implementing these waivers as needed.

Our membership includes all 67 of Pennsylvania's counties, whether as single county authorities or joiners. We also have affiliate HealthChoices and Supports Coordination memberships.

### CURRENT PRIORITIES

Our members participate in five different committees, each with its own portfolio. They are Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, Fiscal and Data, HealthChoices, and Supports Coordination Organizations. These committees often have individualized workgroups of subject matter experts assembled to tackle any issue de jour within their ambit. All committees meet monthly and regularly interact with state officials from the Department of Human Services (DHS), including the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) and the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS). We are proud of our members' widespread and enthusiastic engagement.

### COMMITMENT

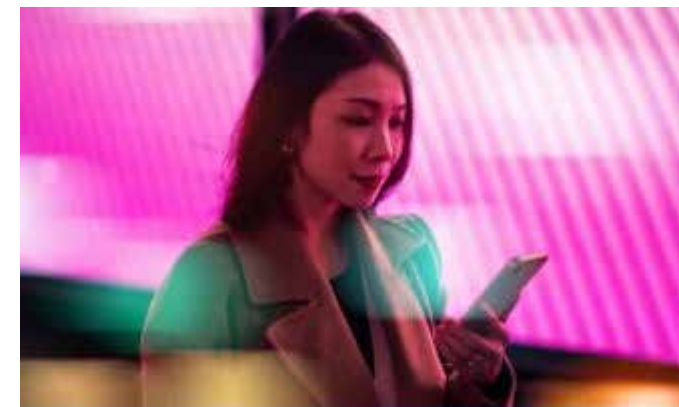
We are devoted to our mission of facilitating counties' abilities to address their needs based on the availability of state and federal funding and programming opportunities. Each county program and service system has its own unique set of requirements. The dovetailing of local needs to fiscal constraints is managed by county administrators. We are committed to facilitating the satisfaction of these needs through all possible means including funding, networking, and technical resources for counties.



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# WORK IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Check out the CCAP Job Center webpage, [www.pacounties.org/who-we-are/job-postings](http://www.pacounties.org/who-we-are/job-postings), where you'll find county government job openings across the state! You can also use this page to submit a county job posting.

For information on submitting a job posting, contact [CCAP@pacounties.org](mailto:CCAP@pacounties.org)



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For more information, contact Desiree Nguyen at [dnguyen@pacounties.org](mailto:dnguyen@pacounties.org)



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