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News for Immediate Release

Feb. 6, 2017

Auditor General DePasquale Says Audit Confirms Dauphin County Children and Youth Agency Struggled with Staffing Shortage, Casework Overload *Agency also failed to obtain documentation from in-home service providers*

HARRISBURG – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale said today a recent audit of the Dauphin County Social Services for Children and Youth (SSCY) confirms that the agency had serious staffing shortages while dealing with increased caseloads as the result of amendments to the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL).

“While it is encouraging that Dauphin County Social Services for Children and Youth has since made improvements in staffing and general operations — and has been able to receive a full certificate of compliance from the state Department of Human Services (DHS) — I worry about how many children may have fallen through the cracks in the past,” DePasquale said.

DePasquale noted that the Dauphin County SSCY was operating under a provisional license from the state during the audit and has since implemented corrective actions which included: filling vacant staff positions, increasing supervision of casework staff, increasing staff training, and updating and revising policies and procedures. As a result DHS issued the agency a full certificate of compliance for July 24, 2016 through July 24, 2017.

“I encourage Dauphin County SSCY — and every county children and youth services agency — to continuously strive to improve by frequently reviewing staffing and caseload operations,” he said. “Even one child lost in the system or neglected or abused is one child too many.”

The audit, which covered July 2010 through June 2014, had one finding and two observations.

High staff turnover, significant caseload increases

DePasquale’s audit noted that the agency had significant staff turnover, including in 2014 alone, the resignation of 28 of 166 staff members at a time when amendments to the CPSL resulted in significant increases in child abuse referrals and child abuse investigation and cases.

“Coincidentally it was during 2014 that neglected and abused Jarrod Tutko, Jr. was found dead in a home on Green Street in Harrisburg,” DePasquale said. “I am not alleging that SSCY staffing shortages led to Jarrod’s death, but having a fully staffed agency could well have helped prevent his tragic passing.”

During the 2014-2015 fiscal year, auditors found that the agency experienced a 24 percent increase in child abuse referrals and a 34 percent increase in cases when compared to the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

Lack of supporting documentation from service providers

The audit report also found that Dauphin County SSCY failed to provide supporting documentation evidencing that \$408,047 — 3.1 percent of the total — paid for in-home purchased services were actually provided by the contracted providers over four years.

In-home purchased services include:

- Family counseling,
- Temporary housing for children when parents experience unmanageable or critical circumstances,
- Child abuse prevention,
- School safety programming,
- Truancy programs, and
- Youth mentoring programs.

Although the Dauphin County SSCY required providers to submit invoices detailing services provided before being paid, agency officials did not do anything to verify that services listed on the invoices were actually performed.

“Beyond the fiscal implications of not verifying service delivery, it is impossible to know whether or not these children and their families received the help they so desperately needed,” DePasquale said.

Department of Human Services CPSL oversight deficiencies

Auditors noted that the safety of children receiving services through counties may be at risk because of the poor oversight by the state DHS. Specifically, DHS does not have adequate procedures in place to determine whether county agencies are monitoring their respective service providers’ and subcontractors’ adherence to Child Protective Services Law requirements. Auditors also found DHS is behind in its completion of these inspections.

The Dauphin County Social Services for Children and Youth audit report is available online at: www.PaAuditor.gov

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Media contact: Susan Woods, 717-787-1381