

September 2017

# STATE of the CHILD

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A look at the strengths and challenges of Pennsylvania's  
child-welfare system and the safety of at-risk children

A special report by **Auditor General Eugene DePasquale**

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## Executive summary

In 2016, 46 children died and 79 nearly died in Pennsylvania from abuse and neglect. Of those 125 children, nearly half of their families were already in the child-welfare system.

Pennsylvania's child-welfare system is broken. This is not hyperbole or exaggeration.

In the wake of the Jerry Sandusky child-sex-abuse scandal in 2011, state legislators tried to better protect children by passing 24 pieces of legislation amending the Child Protective Services Law. But they did not provide additional resources to implement those sweeping changes. At the same time, the use of opioids began to sky-rocket, creating even more dangerous situations for children — and therefore more work for children and youth caseworkers.

As one expert said for this report: “In 2015, the dam just broke. We didn’t have enough people or funding to keep up with the huge increases in workload for a staff that was already overworked and stressed out. And children suffered because of it.”

Today, the child-welfare system continues to struggle to achieve its primary mission of keeping children safe. In Pennsylvania, that task falls upon those on the front lines: county children and youth caseworkers, who respond to reports of suspected abuse and determine if children are safe.

Although a year-long review found passionate, dedicated professionals doing great work, it also found an extremely problematic system with deficiencies that put children’s lives at risk. The premise of this report is that assessing caseworkers’ ability to do their jobs effectively provides a basis for determining whether Pennsylvania’s children can be kept safe.

County children and youth agencies across the state face similar challenges, which are interlaced: Difficulty hiring qualified candidates and ineffective training for new hires leads to caseworkers who are not equipped to deal with overbearing caseloads and burdensome paperwork. Add remarkably low pay and dangerous situations, and the outcome is extraordinary turnover, which results in the hand-off of children’s cases to new, more-overwhelmed caseworkers.

Some of the challenges associated with keeping children safe underscore a well-known problem in Pennsylvania: All levels of government are financially strapped, so compliance with a costly but critical mandate creates a huge burden. Neither the state, particularly the Department of Human Services (DHS), nor county governments have extra money sitting in their coffers.

But DHS must take the lead in advocating for more money from the General Assembly, which must truly make protecting children the priority it deserves to be. Its officials must also take the lead in ensuring all available resources are used effectively and efficiently. Public pressure is paramount to assisting DHS and county-level efforts to achieve the necessary changes to keep children safe.

Child welfare is a complex, nuanced profession that requires skilled professionals working with other human-services agencies to provide the services troubled families need. It is time for a conversation about wholesale reform so that we, as a community, can better support caseworkers as they do their jobs. Without the support of the entire community, children will continue to die from abuse and neglect.

As a society, our goal must be clear: No child should ever be mistreated, because one abused child is one too many.

This report addresses the major challenges through five report observations:

**1. Finding qualified, dedicated professionals to work in child welfare is a pervasive struggle, particularly for those counties that use the State Civil Service Commission.**

To improve this situation, we recommend that the Department of Human Services (DHS) and other state agencies using the State Civil Service Commission:

- Update all job descriptions, including educational requirements, at least every two years.

We also recommend that DHS:

- Update the Caseworker I, Caseworker II and Casework Supervisor job descriptions by Jan. 1, 2018, to better reflect the demands of those jobs.

We also recommend that DHS' internal workgroup of county administrators:

- Evaluate the value or merits of using the State Civil Service Commission to hire children and youth caseworkers and supervisors.

**2. Adequately training caseworkers for the complex, potentially dangerous job they perform requires immediate and ongoing changes.**

To help prepare new CYS caseworkers, the state Department of Human Services contracts with the University of Pittsburgh: School of Social Work's Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC). To improve the training, we recommend that the CWRC:

- Continue to work with county administrators, caseworkers, instructors and others to gather feedback on how to improve the training for all new caseworkers known as "Charting the Course."
- Change "Charting the Course" to better prepare new caseworkers by replacing much of the in-class or group learning to more experiential learning, such as:
  - Training on how to interview hostile people,
  - Learning motivational interviewing techniques,
  - Practicing how to de-escalate a hostile situation,
  - Adding personal safety training similar to that provided by Service Access & Management Inc.,
  - Providing hands-on self-defense training,
  - Teaching hands-on lessons on illegal substances and substance abuse, and
  - Holding mock court hearings, perhaps with retired Family Court judges who would volunteer their time.

**3. Unmanageable caseloads and burdensome, redundant paperwork prevent CYS caseworkers from effectively protecting children from harm.**

To improve this situation, we recommend that DHS:

- Work to reduce paperwork requirements so that caseworkers can spend more time in the field.
- Encourage counties to budget to use clerical case aides to type up caseworkers' notes from the field, perhaps at a 1-aide-to-5-caseworkers ratio, to allow caseworkers to spend more time in the field.

- Work with the CWRC to evaluate whether safety and risk assessments can be combined into one form.
- Have its review board for CAPS, the primary county-level software used statewide, work with the vendor, Avanco International, to prioritize software time-saving improvements such as:
  - “All children” button or dropdown, “false allegation” button and “both parents” button,
  - Auto-populate personal and demographic information after first form, and
  - Allow for one case to be assigned to two caseworkers.

We also recommend that DHS and county CYS agencies’ management:

- Improve agencies’ invoice and review procedures performed by caseworkers to substantiate that invoiced In-Home Purchased Services were actually provided and were provided in adherence to the CPSL, DHS regulations and executed contract terms, where applicable.

We also recommend that the General Assembly:

- Give caseworkers the authority to receive necessary medical, drug-and-alcohol-treatment and school records without requiring releases, using language similar to 42 Pa.C.S. § 6342(d)(1), which provides Court Appointed Special Advocates with such powers.

**4. Pennsylvania caseworkers, particularly those at the entry level, earn a remarkably low salary given the educational requirements, daily work complexity, and potentially dangerous components of their jobs.**

The average starting salary for a new Caseworker I in the 13 counties we surveyed was \$30,018 — a full \$20,000 below the average starting salary for other baccalaureate-degree graduates in 2016. To improve this situation, we recommend that DHS, county commissioners (or other county-level administrations) and appropriate unions:

- Evaluate salaries for caseworkers and supervisors and, where possible, increase salaries based on experience, educational attainment and equivalent human-services positions.

**5. Because of the reasons highlighted in Report Observations 1 through 4, high turnover among caseworkers greatly inhibits Pennsylvania’s ability to effectively protect children.**

To improve this situation, we recommend that the suggestions offered for Report Observations 1 through 4 be followed to decrease caseworker turnover rates.

The Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General also discovered it is certainly not alone in its concern about county CYS caseworkers and their ability to protect at-risk children. The review yielded information for two more report observations:

**6. Other state-level groups and agencies are reviewing the same problems within Pennsylvania’s child-welfare system in an effort to find solutions.**

To make full use of the resources being expended on these examinations, we recommend that DHS and county CYS agencies:

- Review recommendations from other state-level workgroups and agencies and implement best practices.
- Continue to take part in caseworker retention reviews and hearings.

We recommend that DHS:

- Appoint an independent child protection ombudsman, who would review complaints and recommend system improvements.
- Review predictive risk modeling to determine its usefulness in all counties across the state.

**7. States such as Florida and Arizona are tackling similar challenges in their child-welfare systems and are applying divergent methods to achieve viable solutions.**

To make use of the best practices coming from other states' efforts, we recommend that DHS' Office of Children, Youth and Families:

- Task one person, perhaps the new child protection ombudsman, with communicating with other states about their child-welfare systems and recommending best-practice changes to Pennsylvania's system accordingly.



## Introduction

*"The caseloads are more than any one person can handle."*

*"It's a revolving door of workers."*

*"I can do an excellent job with 10 cases. I cannot do an excellent job with 30 cases."*

*"What we do is so important, and we've lost sight of that."*

*"It's unbearable."*

*"I don't know what the solution is, but this system isn't working."*

*"We're burning out good workers. It's tough for a lot of folks to deal with the emotional aspects, plus they just don't have enough time in the day to do the job."*

*"The bottom line is I don't think children in (this) county are safe."*

These are voices of child welfare workers from county children and youth agencies across Pennsylvania. They represent the opinions of veteran caseworkers and new caseworkers, and the sentiments expressed are common statewide.

They all point to the same significant issue: Pennsylvania's child-welfare system is broken.

**"PEOPLE GET IN THIS FIELD BECAUSE THEY WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, AND THEY LEAVE BECAUSE THERE'S NO TIME TO DO THAT."**

—GINA D'AURIA, ADMINISTRATOR,  
FAYETTE COUNTY CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES

Despite a major overhaul of Pennsylvania's child-welfare laws in 2013-15, the people charged with overseeing the safety of at-risk children say those children are no safer now than they were before the changes. In fact, some of those caseworkers and supervisors believe, children are even less safe now.

Our yearlong review of the commonwealth's child-welfare system has revealed five main areas that are severely impacting children and youth

caseworkers' ability to properly ensure the safety of at-risk children:

- Hiring difficulties,
- Inadequate training,
- Heavy caseloads and overly burdensome paperwork,
- Relatively low pay, and
- High turnover.

The review also yielded information pertaining to two related topics:

- Other state-level groups or task forces in Pennsylvania are also examining the child-welfare system and are finding similar problems, and
- States such as Florida and Arizona are tackling similar challenges in their child-welfare systems and are applying divergent methods to achieve viable solutions.

Together, these seven areas form the basis for this special report, which assesses the safety of Pennsylvania's at-risk children by evaluating how effectively child-welfare caseworkers and managers are able to perform their requisite job duties. To provide an overview of the various demographic

landscapes across the commonwealth, 13 counties were specifically chosen as a sampling to represent urban, rural and suburban communities:

- Allegheny,
- Bucks,
- Cambria,
- Centre,
- Crawford,
- Dauphin,
- Delaware,
- Erie,
- Fayette,
- Luzerne,
- Monroe,
- Philadelphia, and
- York.

Along with the aforementioned seven observations, this report offers 17 recommendations as a starting point to remedy the myriad issues confronting Pennsylvania's child-welfare system.



## Background

The idea that government has a responsibility to protect children and others who cannot manage their own affairs comes from an English Common Law doctrine known as *parens patriae*.<sup>1</sup> It can be defined as “a doctrine that grants the inherent power and authority of the state to protect persons who are legally unable to act on their own behalf.”<sup>2</sup>

This doctrine has been interpreted in the United States to mean that states are responsible for the health and well-being of their citizens, including children:

“The state is the supreme guardian of all children within its jurisdiction, and state courts have the inherent power to intervene to protect the best interests of children whose welfare is jeopardized by controversies between parents. This inherent power is generally supplemented by legislative acts that define the scope of child protection in a state.”<sup>3</sup>

In Pennsylvania, child welfare is administered through a complex mix of federal, state and county resources, as well as third-party vendors. The overall structure is known as state-supervised, county-administered — which means, in essence, that each of the commonwealth’s 67 counties has its own children and youth services (CYS) agency, all of which are overseen by the state Department of Human Services (DHS), which designates the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) to oversee the system. OCYF operates four regional offices: Southeast, Northeast, Central and Western. The regions comprise all 67 counties. (see “Department of Human Services’ Office of Children, Youth and Families” chart, page 9.)

The regional offices’ responsibilities include:<sup>4</sup>

- Monitoring, licensing and providing technical assistance to county CYS agencies and facilities,
- Investigating child abuse when the alleged perpetrator is a county agency employee or one of its agents,
- Monitoring county agencies’ implementation and ongoing compliance with the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) and associated regulations,
- Ensuring regulatory compliance of agencies and facilities by investigating complaints and conducting annual inspections,
- Assisting county agencies in the interpretation and implementation of new protective services regulations, and
- Reviewing and recommending approval of county needs-based plans and budget estimates.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.encyclopedia.com/law/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/parens-patriae> Accessed July 20, 2017.

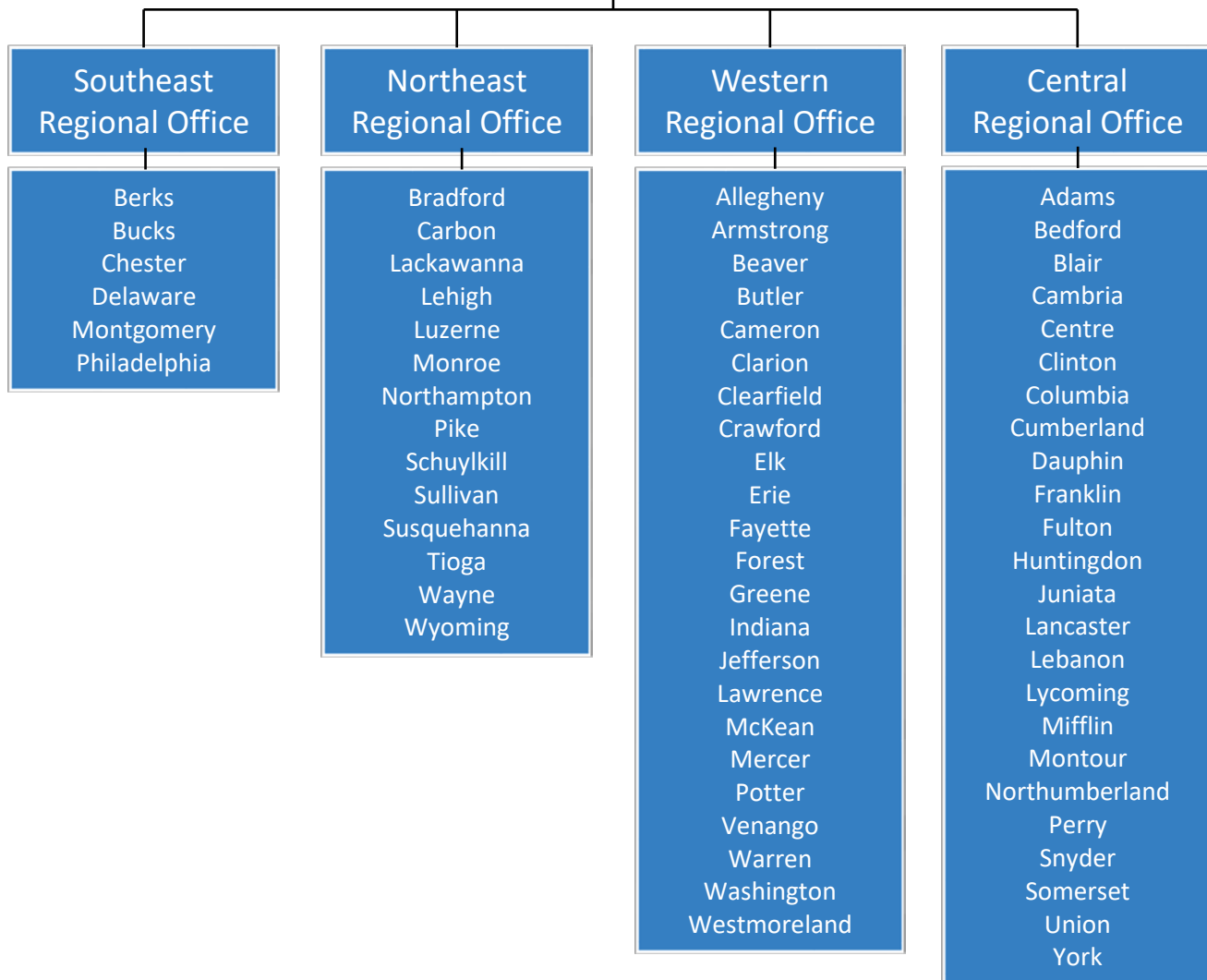
<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. *2015 Annual Child Protective Services Report*.

[http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/document/c\\_226999.pdf](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/document/c_226999.pdf) Accessed July 24, 2017.

## Department of Human Services' Office of Children, Youth, and Families



The bulk of child-welfare costs are split between the state and county agencies in a complicated reimbursement formula. Generally speaking, counties pay for all costs up front, then bill the state and federal governments for their portions.

In 2016, a total of \$1.811 billion was spent in Pennsylvania for child welfare, according to DHS' 2016 Annual Protective Services Report. That amount broke down as follows:

- **\$1.063 billion:** State funds
- **\$398 million:** County funds
- **\$350 million:** Federal funds

Of the \$1.461 billion in state and county funding, about 22 percent — \$232.727 million — was spent to investigate child-maltreatment reports. The largest chunk of that — \$217.079 million — was spent by

counties. The remaining \$15.648 million was spent by the state on personnel costs such as OCYF headquarters staff and ChildLine staff who performed child-maltreatment-related work. (For more on ChildLine, see “Audit: ChildLine Shortages,” page 13.)

Here’s a look at how much each of the 13 counties we surveyed spent on child-maltreatment assessments in fiscal year 2015-16 (investigating Child Protective Services and General Protective Services reports)<sup>4</sup>:

### Amount spent to investigate CPS and GPS reports

County	FY 2015-16
Allegheny	\$49,451,075
Bucks	\$11,488,413
Cambria	\$2,699,287
Centre	\$997,392
Crawford	\$2,181,171
Dauphin	\$3,520,121
Delaware	\$9,410,430
Erie	\$4,480,224
Fayette	\$1,496,998
Luzerne	\$6,666,887
Monroe	\$2,214,734
Philadelphia	\$33,837,429
York	\$3,331,512

Each year, the state allocates a budgeted amount for child welfare in general, then allocates a certain amount for each county based on a process known as needs-based budgeting. This process means management at each CYS agency must use historical data as well as its best estimates about future needs to anticipate how much money the agency will need to spend for the next two years.

Following is a breakdown of the total amounts the state and county CYS agencies spent in fiscal years 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 in our 13 sample counties:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. *2016 Annual Child Protective Services Report*. [http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/report/c\\_260865.pdf](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/report/c_260865.pdf) Accessed July 24, 2017

<sup>5</sup> Department of Human Services, Act 148 forms.

**Amounts spent by county CYS agencies and the state  
(per year for 13 focus counties)**

<b>County (county population)</b>	<b>FY2013-14</b>	<b>FY2014-15</b>	<b>FY2015-16</b>
<b>Allegheny (1,231,145)</b>			
County share	\$38,157,176	\$39,931,897	\$40,218,184
State share	\$112,170,566	\$119,687,480	\$126,951,879
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$150,327,742</b>	<b>\$159,619,377</b>	<b>\$167,170,063</b>
<b>Bucks (626,583)</b>			
County share	\$11,547,913	\$10,860,149	\$11,258,506
State share	\$31,832,445	\$30,788,753	\$31,697,660
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$43,380,358</b>	<b>\$41,648,902</b>	<b>\$42,956,166</b>
<b>Cambria (139,381)</b>			
County share	\$1,510,736	\$1,489,574	\$1,611,819
State share	\$4,801,836	\$4,982,234	\$5,065,771
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,312,572</b>	<b>\$6,471,808</b>	<b>\$6,677,590</b>
<b>Centre (157,823)</b>			
County share	\$1,665,170	\$1,724,417	\$1,729,809
State share	\$5,786,368	\$6,053,959	\$5,920,943
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,451,538</b>	<b>\$7,778,376</b>	<b>\$7,650,752</b>
<b>Crawford (87,343)</b>			
County share	\$1,399,185	\$1,372,010	\$1,505,134
State share	\$4,828,100	\$4,826,657	\$5,225,875
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,227,285</b>	<b>\$6,198,667</b>	<b>\$6,731,009</b>
<b>Dauphin (271,094)</b>			
County share	\$7,684,078	\$7,831,298	\$7,929,903
State share	\$17,364,056	\$18,276,740	\$19,549,388
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$25,048,134</b>	<b>\$26,108,038</b>	<b>\$27,479,291</b>
<b>Delaware (561,683)</b>			
County share	\$12,172,216	\$12,641,473	\$12,111,444
State share	\$33,570,356	\$35,330,992	\$33,613,381
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$45,742,572</b>	<b>\$47,972,465</b>	<b>\$45,724,825</b>
<b>Erie (279,858)</b>			
County share	\$7,660,379	\$7,734,439	\$8,005,213
State share	\$21,409,955	\$21,754,146	\$22,628,093
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$29,070,334</b>	<b>\$29,488,585</b>	<b>\$30,633,306</b>
<b>Fayette (134,851)</b>			
County share	\$1,616,566	\$1,570,613	\$1,725,126
State share	\$5,773,394	\$5,365,583	\$5,912,935
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,389,960</b>	<b>\$6,936,196</b>	<b>\$7,638,061</b>

<b>Luzerne (320,095)</b>	<b>FY2013-14</b>	<b>FY2014-15</b>	<b>FY2015-16</b>
County share	\$6,324,115	\$5,720,078	\$5,598,706
State share	\$20,120,685	\$18,484,366	\$18,530,061
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$26,444,800</b>	<b>\$24,204,444</b>	<b>\$24,128,767</b>
<b>Monroe (167,881)</b>			
County share	\$3,105,345	\$3,402,663	\$3,671,036
State share	\$8,694,936	\$8,848,756	\$8,827,564
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$11,800,281</b>	<b>\$12,251,419</b>	<b>\$12,498,600</b>
<b>Philadelphia (1,555,072)</b>			
County share	\$135,921,688	\$147,831,273	\$142,689,862
State share	\$345,907,113	\$349,373,257	\$343,495,981
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$481,828,801</b>	<b>\$497,204,530</b>	<b>\$486,185,843</b>
<b>York (439,660)</b>			
County share	\$8,740,719	\$9,305,388	\$9,192,850
State share	\$23,923,363	\$23,136,491	\$25,476,450
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$32,664,082</b>	<b>\$32,441,879</b>	<b>\$34,669,300</b>

## County CYs agencies

When a report of potential child maltreatment is made to ChildLine, either by phone or through its online portal, the report is then referred to the correct county CYs agency. Once the CYs agency receives the referral, a staff member screens the information received to determine if the report requires investigation by the agency.

Because each of Pennsylvania's 67 CYs agencies is independently run, each has its own unique structure. In general, however, most CYs agencies contain some form of the following units:

- **Screening:** Screeners evaluate the information in the referral and make determinations on whether a report requires investigation. (Counties screen out up to 50 percent of all calls, meaning those calls are deemed not in need of investigation, according to CYs administrators.) If a report is deemed in need of investigation, it then moves to the Intake unit. In some counties, screeners are part of the Intake unit.
- **Intake:** Intake caseworkers are the first to receive referrals that require investigation. These are the workers who make the initial contact with families and alleged perpetrators to tell them an allegation of maltreatment has been made, then evaluate whether the child or children named in the report are living in a safe environment. Intake caseworkers have strict timelines in which they must see the children named in the report, based upon the severity of the maltreatment alleged in the referral. The intake caseworker determines within 60 days whether a case is:
  - **Unfounded:** Meaning there is a lack of evidence that a child was maltreated;
  - **Indicated:** Meaning there is substantial evidence that abuse has occurred based on medical evidence, the CYs investigation or an admission by a perpetrator;
  - **Pending:** Meaning the caseworker cannot complete the investigation within 60 days because court action has been initiated; or

- **Founded:** Meaning court action has been taken, including a judicial ruling that a child was maltreated.

Even if a case is deemed unfounded, a family can still be accepted for social services, such as drug- and alcohol-abuse assistance, to help minimize potential future instances of abuse or neglect.

- **Ongoing:** Once an Intake caseworker determines that a family is in need of social services, whether a child is taken from the home or not, an ongoing caseworker takes on the responsibility of working with the family to facilitate parent/child visits, evaluate whether social services are being used as needed, and more. The main goal of ongoing caseworkers usually is to achieve family reunification.
- **Placement/adoption:** These caseworkers are focused on managing foster families and helping facilitate adoptions of children in the child-welfare system.

Again, each county has a unique make-up, so some have their Intake units divided into separate divisions, such as CPS (Child Protective Services, or suspected child abuse) and GPS (General Protective Services, which covers reports such as inappropriate discipline) units. In other counties, caseworkers handle their cases from screening and intake through placement, so there is no differentiation of units.

## AUDIT: CHILDLINE SHORTAGES

ChildLine is the state-run 24-hour child-abuse hotline and is the hub through which all child-maltreatment reports are to be made in Pennsylvania.

Its staff members are responsible for fielding calls and electronic submissions about potential child maltreatment, then referring those reports to the correct county CYS agency. ChildLine staff also complete background checks for those who want to work or volunteer with children.

When Auditor General Eugene DePasquale audited ChildLine in 2015-16, he found such significant problems that he issued an interim report in May 2016 sounding the alarm that immediate changes were necessary.

Among the significant matters in the report:

- 42,000 calls went unanswered in 2015 (22 percent of all calls),
- ChildLine was constantly understaffed in 2015, and
- Nearly one-third of all calls received in 2014 and 2015 were not tracked or documented.

In the final audit report, released in October 2016, DePasquale showed that 58,000 calls had gone unanswered between Jan. 1, 2014, and June 30, 2016.

DHS officials took several immediate actions to address the major problems. For example:

- **Understaffing:** After a robust round of hiring and a new policy on required minimum staffing level, DHS met the minimum call staffing level 90 percent of the time in late June 2016.
- **Tracking all calls:** Following the recommendations of the interim report, on Aug. 1, 2016, DHS began tracking the reason for all calls. Until then, the reasons for 124,000 calls that did not result in referral reports were simply not documented. ■

In most counties, the casework units are supplemented by clerical staff, legal staff, fiscal staff and others, depending upon the size of the agency.

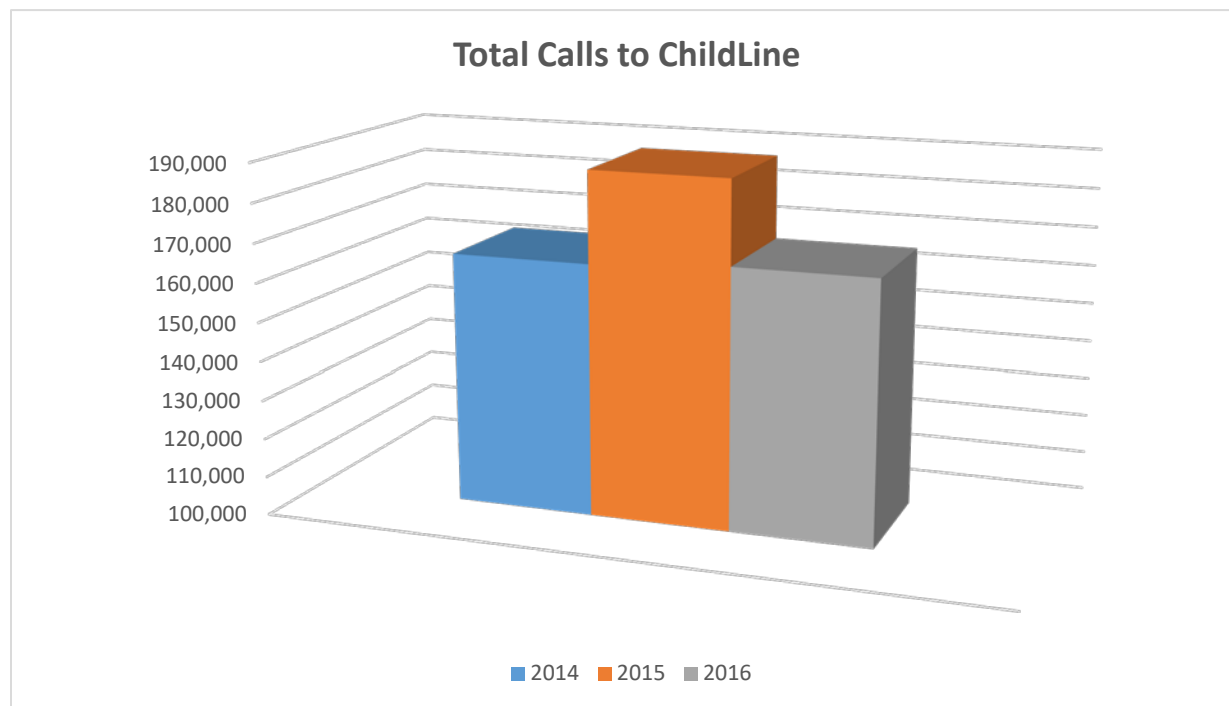
### 2013-15 state law changes

As a direct result of the child-abuse case against former Penn State University football coach Jerry Sandusky, Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law (CPSL)<sup>6</sup> underwent major changes in 2013, 2014 and 2015. In total, 24 pieces of legislation were passed and signed into law amending the CPSL. Among the changes were the following:

- An expanded definition of child abuse,
- An expansion of those considered mandated reporters, and
- An expansion of those required to pass a state background check to work or volunteer with children.

These changes had a significant impact on the reporting, investigation, assessment, prosecution and judicial handling of child-abuse and neglect cases. Most notable was the immediate, sudden increase in child-abuse reports coming into ChildLine, which was suffering from its own shortage of resources and personnel. (See "Audit: ChildLine Shortages," page 13.)

Data provided by DHS shows that the number of calls coming into ChildLine rose a total of 14 percent from 2014 to 2015, then decreased by 11 percent from 2015 to 2016, as shown below:<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> 23 Pa.C.S. § 6301 *et seq.* Act 15 of 2015, effective July 1, 2015, was the last act in this series of 24 acts to be enacted.

<sup>7</sup> Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. *2016 Annual Child Protective Services Report*. [http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/report/c\\_260865.pdf](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/report/c_260865.pdf) Accessed July 17, 2017

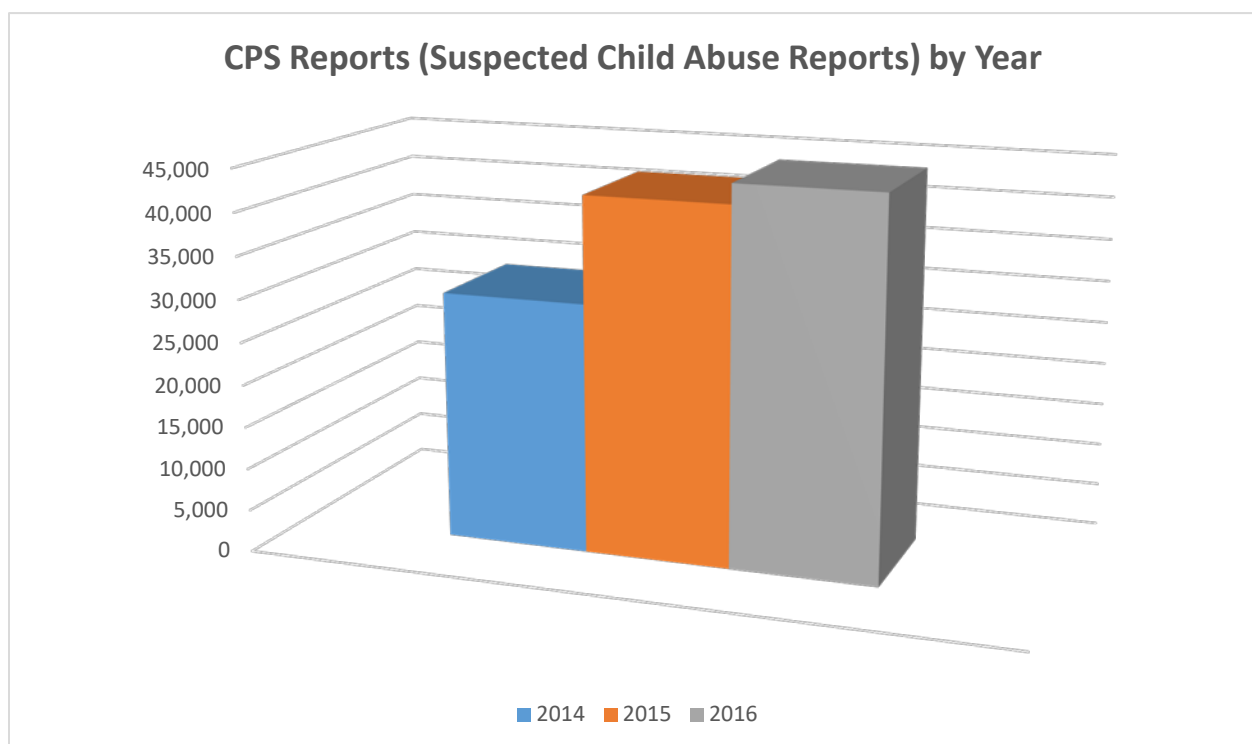


Although the overall number of reports rose 14 percent overall from 2014-15, some individual counties — such as Dauphin — saw increases of 65 percent or more in the number of reports they received.

Of all the reports to ChildLine, only a portion were categorized as Child Protective Services (CPS) reports, which include an allegation that a child might have been a victim of child abuse. CPS cases require a county agency to see children either immediately or within 24 hours to determine their safety.

Other calls were categorized as General Protective Services (GPS) cases, meaning they do not rise to the level of suspected child abuse but allege a need for intervention to prevent serious harm to a child; or they were given another designation, such as a law-enforcement-only referral. GPS cases allow for a longer response timeframe since they do not allege immediate danger to a child.

According to DHS, there were 29,517 CPS reports in 2014; 42,018 reports in 2015; and 44,359 reports in 2016, as shown below:<sup>8</sup>



That's a 42 percent increase in calls specifically alleging child abuse from 2014 to 2015 — a workload change that affected not only ChildLine but also county CYS agencies, which saw a proportionate increase in the number of referrals caseworkers needed to investigate. Much of the burden fell on Intake caseworkers, who saw a sudden spike in the number of cases they were required to begin investigating either immediately or within 24 hours.

<sup>8</sup> Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. *2016 Annual Child Protective Services Report*. [http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/report/c\\_260865.pdf](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/report/c_260865.pdf) Accessed July 17, 2017.

To make matters worse, as the 24 pieces of legislation that eventually became the amendments to the CPSL were being debated and passed in the legislature, many CYS agencies were already dealing with high turnover and a lack of resources, particularly funding. Many of the county agencies — whose top officials are known as administrators or directors — were also trying to tell DHS that the CPSL changes were going to put a massive strain on their workers and would require additional resources, including funding, to meet the increased demand for services.

Part of the problem, DHS and county administrators interviewed for this report agreed, was that 2015 was the mid-year point of a two-year needs-based budgeting cycle, so administrators were unable to ask for more staff and funding until at least 2016.

Another part of the problem, administrators agreed, was that the General Assembly did not provide for additional funding to help CYS agencies handle the anticipated increase in need for investigations and services. And the Department of Public Welfare under then Gov. Tom Corbett did not request any additional funds from the legislature at the time specifically to handle the inevitable increased number of child-abuse reports.

## USING RESOURCES: CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS

When adults suspect a child has been abused, they begin asking the child questions. It's a natural reaction — for nurses, doctors, CYS caseworkers, law enforcement officials, district attorneys, defense attorneys, judges, therapists, psychiatrists and more.

But each time an adult asks what happened, the child must relive potentially the worst moments of their life.

That's where children's advocacy centers (CACs) can be crucial. CACs are "child-focused centers that offer a safe, neutral space for the child to tell their experience." According to the [National Children's Alliance](#) (NCA), "CACs emphasize the coordination of investigation and intervention services by bringing together professionals and agencies as a multidisciplinary team."

More than 750 NCA-accredited CACs exist nationwide, and they saw nearly 280,000 children in 2015. Pennsylvania has 16 accredited centers, including PinnacleHealth's Children's Resource Center (CRC) in Harrisburg, which serves seven counties regularly.

At the CRC, children are interviewed by a social worker trained in how to talk to children based on their age and developmental ability, according to CRC Manager Dr. Lynn Carson. Social workers ask questions in a non-leading, non-suggestive manner. The interview is done in a room with a camera and microphone, with only the social worker and the child present. Investigative agencies, including Children and Youth and law enforcement, can observe in a separate room through closed-circuit TV, and interviews are video-recorded.

The child is also examined by an abuse specialist and is treated for any abuse-related injuries. Many CACs also coordinate mental-health services.

The CRC saw 1,200 children in 2016, said Carson, who said the center could handle serving many more children.

Using a CAC can save up to \$1,000 per investigation by streamlining the process and creating efficiencies for multiple agencies, according to the NCA.

Most importantly, Carson said, when agencies work together, there are better outcomes for the child. ■

Adelaide Grace, administrator for Monroe County Children & Youth, said she was one of those who advocated for more resources before the CPSL changes took effect.

“Although we were very frank and very open with our regional offices and with OCYF about our needs, it fell on deaf ears,” Grace said in 2017. “If we couldn’t demonstrate the need ahead of time, they couldn’t get us the resources we needed.

“My agency has never recovered from that, and we’re almost two and a half years down the pike,” Grace continued. “It’s been a downward spiral ever since.”

## FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT

Although states bear the ultimate responsibility to keep children safe under the 10<sup>th</sup> amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment has been interpreted to recognize the rights of and need for the federal government to be involved in this critical mission.

In 2016, the federal government allocated more than \$8.6 billion nationwide for child-welfare-related services. The majority of that money came through the federal Social Security Act as follows:

- Title IV-B of the act authorizes funding to states to support a range of child-welfare-related services to children and their families.
- Title IV-E of the act entitles states to federal reimbursement for part of the cost of providing foster care, adoption assistance and kinship care. It also authorizes funding to support youth who “age out” of foster care.

Here is a look at the amount of federal funds allocated each year from 2012-16, according to the Congressional Research Service:

**Final Funding for Child Welfare Programs**  
(parts may not sum to total due to rounding)

Programs	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016
Title IV-B – all programs	\$730 million	\$688 million	\$689 million	\$664 million	\$668 million
Title IV-E – all programs	\$6.777 billion	\$6.710 billion	\$7.510 billion	\$7.424 billion	\$7.833 billion
All other programs	\$188 million	\$180 million	\$192 million	\$190 million	\$188 million
<b>Total funding</b>	<b>\$7.696 billion</b>	<b>\$7.578 billion</b>	<b>\$8.390 billion</b>	<b>\$8.279 billion</b>	<b>\$8.689 billion</b>

Most of the federal funds dedicated to child welfare are provided to state child-welfare agencies, such as Pennsylvania’s Department of Human Services (DHS), which oversees the Office of Children, Youth and Families. To receive these federal funds, state agencies typically must provide a portion of nonfederal resources — usually between 20 percent and 50 percent — of the programs’ cost. The state agencies must also abide by federal child-welfare policies.

Since 1974, one of the key federal laws in this area has been the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CAPTA provides for federal funding to states to support prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution and treatment activities related to child abuse and neglect.

CAPTA was most recently reauthorized by the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 and the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016.

Pennsylvania received roughly \$350 million in federal funds in 2016, according to DHS. That was an increase from 2015, when it received \$344 million. ■

## **Report Observation 1: Finding qualified, dedicated professionals to work in child welfare is a pervasive struggle, particularly for those counties that use the State Civil Service Commission.**

For approximately 50 of the state's 67 counties, when job seekers want to apply for county caseworker jobs in any human-services field, they begin by going to the State Civil Service Commission's (SCSC) [website](#).

There, job seekers create an online account and view all job openings available through the SCSC. Once they choose which jobs to apply for, they then choose a day, time and location to take a civil service examination, if applicable. Job seekers receive their examination results, which include a qualifications determination and overall examination scores, if applicable, in an average of eight days. Assuming verification of qualifications and passage of examination, the names of qualified job seekers are added to a civil service employment certification lists for the jobs for which they applied. From there, counties can request and obtain a list of candidates for their open positions.

Counties can canvass for interest and availability with as many of the job seekers on the list as they deem necessary to fill available vacancies. However, counties must initially consider at least the top three responding and available candidates — or more, if they have the same examination scores, according to Jeffrey Wallace, executive director of the SCSC.

"Agencies are required to interview the top available job seekers and, from that group, they can make a selection — or multiple selections," Wallace said.

Wallace highlighted two areas in which using the SCSC to hire is an advantage for counties: First, veterans have 10 points added to their examination results and receive hiring preference per the provisions of the Commonwealth's Military Affairs Code; second, "it's consistency in terms of qualification reviews," Wallace said.

The SCSC provides hiring services for multiple jobs within the human-services field, including County Caseworker I, County Caseworker II, County Caseworker III and County Casework Supervisor. As of August 2017, the SCSC had the following number of candidates in each of those categories,<sup>9</sup> according to Wallace:

### **State Civil Service Commission statistics**

	<b>Total # of positions (filled and vacant) in SCSC counties statewide</b>	<b>Vacancies</b>	<b>Candidates</b>
<b>Caseworker I</b>	440	116	1,014
<b>Caseworker II</b>	2,527	549	238
<b>Caseworker III</b>	289	74	155
<b>Casework Supervisor</b>	565	99	155
<b>Totals</b>	3,821	838	1,562

<sup>9</sup> Note that these numbers reflect positions for county children and youth positions as well as Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities positions.

The data shows that, although there are roughly twice as many candidates as vacancies, in some categories — such as Caseworker II — the vacancies significantly outpace the candidates.

Caseworker I is considered an entry-level position and is often filled by hiring from outside the agency, county administrators said. Caseworker II and III are steps up from Caseworker I and are often filled by internal promotions, Wallace said.

According to the Caseworker I job description provided by the SCSC, applicants must meet one of the following requirements:

- A bachelor's degree with 12 credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice or a related social science; or
- Two years as a County Social Services Aide 3 and two years of college-level course work that includes 12 credits in the above-listed social sciences; or
- Equivalent experience and training that includes 12 credits in the above-listed social sciences and one year as a paraprofessional performing case-management functions.

These requirements and the job descriptions that go with them are for caseworkers in various human-services fields in Pennsylvania, including the department of Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities. It is troubling that there is no specific test for CYS candidates.

Also troubling is the fact that the last time the job description and minimum qualification requirements were updated for Caseworker I positions was Feb. 21, 2004.

Its counterpart, the Caseworker II description, was last updated Aug. 31, 1994 — 23 years ago.

Administrators at some of the counties that hire through SCSC said they've encountered major problems trying to find quality candidates — or, frankly, any candidates willing to interview for the multitude of open positions they have.

"I really struggle with the civil service test because I do not feel it's sufficient to gauge a caseworker's abilities," said Gina D'Auria, administrator for Fayette County Children and Youth Services, which uses the SCSC.

## EDUCATING SOCIAL WORKERS

Administered through the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) and Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) programs are designed to make "undergraduate and graduate social work education available to qualified, prospective public child welfare workers and current county child welfare agency employees throughout Pennsylvania," according to [the university's website](#).

"Social workers are best suited to do this work," said Tim Seip, a former caseworker who now teaches at Kutztown University.

The goal of CWEB, for undergraduates, is to provide educational opportunities for social work majors seeking to work in a county children and youth agency after graduation. Students complete extensive internships in exchange for funding to help pay for their education, according to the website.

The goal of CWEL, for graduate students, is similar. The programs are a cooperative effort among the United States Administration for Children and Families, DHS, the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators and 12 accredited schools of social work in Pennsylvania. ■

“We can’t fill all our vacancies off of one (SCSC) list” of candidates, said Erie County Office of Children & Youth Administrator Lana Rees, who had nine open caseworker positions this spring. “We don’t really stop hiring anymore. We have decided to engage in a continual hiring process, which takes away a lot of administrative time. But in order to achieve a full staff complement, you cannot stop hiring.”

County administrators who struggle to hire through the civil service cited similar problems:

- Not enough candidates overall, particularly in rural counties,
- Not enough high-quality candidates,
- Inability to get quality candidates to come in for interviews and accept jobs, and
- Slow, burdensome process to obtain the list of candidates and complete the hiring process.

Others cited concerns with the test itself, saying that they are looking for qualitative skills such as interviewing families and the ability to communicate effectively with children, not quantitative skills — which is more what the SCSC test assesses. Many administrators said the test is not a good measure of

**“JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN SCORE WELL ON A TEST DOESN’T MEAN YOU SHOULD WORK WITH FAMILIES.”**

—KELLY SCHWAB, DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
OF CRAWFORD COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES

whether candidates could be excellent caseworkers.

“Just because you can score well on a test doesn’t mean you should work with families,” said Kelly Schwab, deputy director of Crawford County Human Services.

As of spring 2017, Erie County was just a few weeks away from no longer using the SCSC. “That’s taken us a very long time to accomplish,” Rees said.

For the roughly 17 other counties that no longer use SCSC to perform merit employment services<sup>10</sup>, the process to withdraw from using the SCSC was cumbersome, according to several county administrators. That is because “those positions must remain in some form merit based and must be certified as such by state funding agencies,” SCSC’s Wallace said. “That is so selection and hiring decisions are not influenced by political considerations.”

Cathy Utz, DHS’ deputy secretary for the Office of Children, Youth and Families, said she recognizes the pros and cons to using the civil service to hire caseworkers.

“In order to receive federal funds, we have to have some sort of meritorious hiring process,” she said. “(But) I agree there have been challenges with some components around civil service hiring. ... (For example,) how do we ensure the county caseworker test identifies the skills that we need our children and youth workers to have? How do we make sure that the test gets to the skill sets that we need to get to?”

The alternative — opting out of using the SCSC — is a lengthy process because counties must have their own human-resources-level services and must be able to demonstrate that they are adhering to the merit-hire process, Utz said.

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<sup>10</sup> Those counties are Adams, Berks, Bucks, Carbon/Monroe/Pike, Centre, Chester, Dauphin, Franklin, Green, Jefferson, Lancaster, Lawrence, Montgomery, Somerset, Venango and Warren, according to SCSC’s Wallace.



Before the CPSL changes began taking effect, Utz said, DHS was working with the SCSC to alter the test questions to better assess candidates' abilities and to update the job descriptions for Caseworker I, Caseworker II and Casework Supervisor. That work is only now being revisited because enacting the CPSL changes took such a sudden, intense effort.

"We're starting to begin to bring to the forefront some of the things that we had been discussing before the CPSL happened," Utz said.

Wallace agreed that DHS and the SCSC previously had conversations about making changes, including updating the outdated job descriptions.

"We work with the appointing authorities to get the specifications, but we are not the author of them," he said. "We talked with DHS on again and off again to get them to work with us and the counties to revise and update those specifications," but DHS has not yet done so.

Wallace agreed the Pennsylvania Department of Human Resources (DHS), counties, and SCSC previously had conversations about making changes, including updating outdated job specifications for the caseworker jobs classification series.

"We work with the state and county hiring authorities to get official job specifications revised and/or updated, but we are not the author of them. It is the responsibility of the hiring authorities and, if applicable, the governor's Office of Administration to initiate the review process," he said. "Although efforts have been made during the past years with DHS and counties to initiate a review process for the county caseworker job series, the project is still pending with DHS."

Wallace said, it is his understanding DHS has or plans to form an internal workgroup of DHS and county administrators to discuss the job specifications, and the SCSC is awaiting the recommendations of the workgroup.

"I'd do away with Civil Service," said Crawford County's Schwab.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that DHS and other state agencies using the State Civil Service Commission:

- Update all job descriptions, including educational requirements, at least every two years.

We recommend that DHS:

- Update the Caseworker I, Caseworker II and Casework Supervisor job descriptions by Jan. 1, 2018, to better reflect the demands of those jobs.

We recommend that DHS' internal workgroup of county administrators:

- Evaluate the value or merits of using the State Civil Service Commission to hire children and youth caseworkers and supervisors.



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## VOICES: CIARA MEYER'S FAMILY

Ciara “CeCe” Meyer was 4 years old when Dauphin County CYS first became involved with her family. Her parents, Donald and Sherry Meyer, were both abusing painkillers, according to family members, and one of them went to the emergency room because of an overdose. That’s when CYS was called.

“Her life was chaotic,” Ciara’s aunt Stephanie Cordas said during an interview in early 2017 for this report.

“When she was at home, she was the mommy and the daddy,” grandmother Alice Gehman said.

For the next eight years, Dauphin and Perry CYS agencies were called various times as Donald and Sherry Meyer continued to struggle with their addictions, family members said. Sometimes, CYS would check on Ciara and remove her from the home, but when new caseworkers would take over the case, they would give Ciara back without ensuring her parents were truly getting help for their addictions.

On Jan. 11, 2016, 12-year-old Ciara was home sick from school when a constable arrived to serve an eviction notice on her family in their Perry County home. Donald Meyer allegedly pulled a gun on the constable and threatened him. As Ciara pleaded with her father to stop, the constable pulled his own gun and shot Donald Meyer in the arm — but the bullet traveled through his arm and into Ciara’s chest, killing her. Police later determined Donald Meyer was legally unable to own a gun. He has been charged with homicide in Ciara’s death.

Ciara’s extended family talked extensively to Auditor General DePasquale for this report. The family — Cordas, Alice Gehman, uncle Jason Gehman, and Hope and Ron Rohde, whom Ciara called “aunt” and “uncle” — believes the children and youth system failed Ciara while she was alive. They say Ciara should not have been with her parents that day and should instead have been in the safety of one of their homes.

Three weeks after Ciara died, her family received a letter from Perry County CYS saying it was going to investigate the Meyers family and ensure Ciara was safe.

“They’re so out of touch,” Ron Rohde said. “They’re just going through the motions and aren’t really keeping kids safe.” ■

## **Report Observation 2: Adequately training new caseworkers for the complex, potentially dangerous job they perform requires immediate and ongoing changes.**

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Building a workforce of skilled and responsive child-welfare professionals is a multi-pronged task. Most new caseworkers are fresh out of college and have little to no real-world experience. Industry leaders highly prize caseworkers who have themselves lived through the child-welfare system because those caseworkers are so rare — and because they have the real-world experience most new college graduates are lacking.

For decades, training was done on the job, as new caseworkers shadowed veteran workers and used them as mentors. “Until 1992,” said Mike Byers, director of the University of Pittsburgh: School of Social Work’s Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC), “each county was left on their own to onboard and train their staff, and for some counties that was extremely difficult.”

In 1992, DHS — then the Department of Public Welfare — began working with Shippensburg University to provide training for all new caseworkers.

In 2001, “when there was a need to broaden it beyond training and go to practical learning,” Byers said, DHS signed an intergovernmental agreement with the University of Pittsburgh: School of Social Work, which continues to provide training for all new caseworkers.

OCYF’s current agreement with the University of Pittsburgh ends June 30, 2018. That agreement will be renewed, DHS’ Utz confirmed in September 2017.

“When (the training) started in the 1990s as a competency-based training program ... we sat folks in a room, gave them those competencies, and they went forth and did,” said Utz, whose background includes 11 years at county CYS agencies.

“Then it moved into skills-based training. Now, we’re looking at ‘How do we enhance the skill set that we have with workers?’” Utz continued. “Can we do some training online, and can we do some experiential training when we come together?”

### **‘Charting the Course’**

The current training required for all new caseworkers is called “Charting the Course towards Permanency for Children in Pennsylvania,” offered through the CWRC. The training consists of a 120-

hour series of day-long sessions, with six additional hours of individual online transfer-of-learning training.

“Charting the Course” was created when a series of groups came together to talk about essential training content for caseworkers, Byers said.

“This is an incredibly difficult job,” said Byers, who worked as a CYS caseworker, supervisor and manager in Pennsylvania and California before joining the CWRC. “The range of what you need to be good at and the range of what you’re exposed to day to day, it’s a long-term journey toward becoming competent and having all the skills you need.”

“Charting the Course” introduces caseworkers to that range of requisite skills through instructors who have long-term experience in the field, he said.

“Our trainers are contractors. We want folks that are still active and involved in the field doing the training,” Byers said. “It’s hard to train something unless you’ve been there and done that.”

The 10 sessions in “Charting the Course” are called modules — known among Pennsylvania’s child-welfare professionals as “Mods” — and are offered two to three days per week. In most counties, new workers must complete Mods 1 through 4 before they are assigned cases; however, some counties require caseworkers to finish all Mods before taking on cases.

“Administrators are in a real dilemma, with wanting to protect our new caseworkers and have them not get overwhelmed by a caseload, but the experienced caseworkers are dealing with really heavy caseloads,” Byers said.

Reviews of “Charting the Course” and its effectiveness vary widely across the state.

For example, Deirdre Gordon, director of Children and Youth Services of Delaware County, said she is a fan of the training. “I like ‘Charting the Course,’” she said. “They produce a good quality product ... (and) I’m happy with what they have. I feel they do a pretty good job in the design; they don’t just lecture to you.”

But many other current caseworkers and administrators offered criticism, some of it harsh.

“‘Charting the Course’ is a joke,” said one caseworker who asked not to be identified in this report. “I think it’s a complete waste of time. You need on-the-job training for this.”

## THE COST OF TRAINING

The price-tag to put one caseworker through “Charting the Course” is about \$4,500, according to Mike Byers, associate director of the University of Pittsburgh: School of Social Work’s Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC).

The money comes from a combination of federal funds through Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, and the state. An exact breakdown of dollars was unavailable.

In fiscal year 2014-15, the CWRC certified 340 caseworkers across the state, according to the [CWRC’s 2014-15 annual report](#).

That’s an estimated cost of \$1.53 million to train workers that year.

Even more caseworkers — 526 — were certified in FY 2013-14, according to the [CWRC’s 2013-14 annual report](#). Training those workers cost roughly \$2.367 million. ■

“I learned more by shadowing other workers in one day than I learned in all of ‘Charting the Course,’” said one Cambria County caseworker. “You don’t retain anything because you don’t know what to pay attention to.”

“You need a good mentor. Job shadowing is more important,” said another Cambria County caseworker.

Several supervisors and county administrators also said they feel the training should be improved because, in its current form, it requires a lot of supplemental learning that peers and supervisors must provide.

“‘Charting the Course’ gives them the foundation of child welfare and why we do what we do,” said Fayette County’s D’Auria. “But I think that it definitely needs to be supplemented. We do a lot of job shadowing here.”

“‘Charting the Course’ gives the basics, but of course it’s very general because then every county does something different,” said Luzerne County Children & Youth Administrator Joanne Van Saun. To help

**“TRAINING IS A PIECE OF WHAT WE DO.  
TRAINING IN AND OF ITSELF IS NOT  
GOING TO GET TO IMPLEMENTATION IN  
THE FIELD.”**

—MIKE BYERS, DIRECTOR,  
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH: SCHOOL OF SOCIAL  
WORK’S CHILD WELFARE RESOURCE CENTER

provide more experiential learning for her new caseworkers, Van Saun has contacted local colleges’ drama programs. “We might eventually ask the state if we could have a training unit so we could train them ourselves. I’m not sure that (the training now) does really meet our needs.”

Julia Sprinkle, director of Centre County Office of Children & Youth Services, agreed. “‘Charting the Course’ does a good job laying a foundation, but the problem, I find — and it’s not ‘Charting the

Course’s problem — there are 67 different counties, so there are 67 different ways to do everything,” said Sprinkle, who does not assign cases to workers until they’ve finished their training.

“More practical training rather than theory is better for the staff,” Van Saun said. Because most caseworkers already have at least a bachelor’s degree with 12 credit hours in social-science-related classes, “They’ve already had the theory,” she added.

Monroe County’s Grace agreed: “In terms of theory, they don’t need a pep talk on why you need to do the right thing for people. They’re already there.”

Even Delaware County’s Gordon, who likes the current training, said the curriculum could be improved. “I do support the Child Welfare Resource Center moving more to online training and more experiential (training),” she said. “Workers love the experiential stuff, and they need it.”

CWRC’s Byers admitted that there are limitations to how much the CWRC can do to prepare caseworkers for the job because the work specifics of doing the job vary widely across the state.

“Child welfare can look pretty different across those 67 counties,” he said. “We can only take that training to a certain level. Then it takes a lot of time for them to work with their peers, be mentored by experienced caseworkers and be supported by their supervisor.

“Training is a piece of what we do,” Byers continued. “Training in and of itself is not going to get to implementation in the field. The caseworker must be supported by their supervisor and organization as a whole to have the best opportunity to implement what they learned in the classroom.”

Byers said the last major revision of the program was in 2011, and his organization is in the midst of a “significant overhaul” of the Mods.

“The field has evolved,” he said. “More of the presentation of knowledge is going to shift online so that more face-to-face time can be devoted to skill building.”

That skill building will at times be experiential learning through simulations, Byers said, and “some will be team-based learning, which relies on the group in the room tackling a scenario together.”

“As we continue to get feedback from counties and the state, there will continue to be changes,” Byers said.

### **Safety training**

One optional training program — offered through the CWRC but not required to complete the Mods — is personal safety training offered by Service Access & Management Inc. (SAM), headquartered in Reading, Berks County.

Founded 20 years ago, SAM is a 600-person company that serves 37 counties in Pennsylvania and six in New Jersey.<sup>11</sup> Roughly 2,000 caseworkers and supervisors — approximately 50 percent of the state’s CYS staff — have gone through SAM’s experiential training, according to Ronald Frederick, personal safety director.

SAM’s training, held in facilities across the state, is an interactive experience where caseworkers enter set-up scenarios based on real-life experiences that are staffed by actors with a variety of backgrounds, as well as safety experts who have law enforcement or corrections backgrounds.

The goal in every scenario is for caseworkers to assess the situation, determine whether their personal safety is at risk as they attempt to do their job, and react accordingly. In most

## **VOICES: CASEWORKERS ON SAFETY**

During research for this report, more than three dozen caseworkers from at least 10 counties across the state spoke to us about their experiences and what their day-to-day lives are like.

Here are some of their views on their own safety in the field:

“Our safety is unimportant.”

“We’re not protected.”

“I’ve had things thrown at me.”

“I was once held hostage in somebody’s house.”

“This job is more dangerous than Crisis (Intervention) was.”

“We’re confronting families about difficult issues ... and we have to be confrontational but build a rapport. Training on how to handle that would be hugely helpful.”

“Police departments are understaffed, too, and don’t have the time to help us.”

“I thank Jesus that this (different) position opened up for me to move to, because the last several intakes I went out on ... I was terrified.” ■

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.sam-inc.org/> Accessed July 19, 2017

cases, the correct course of action is for caseworkers to leave, get to a safe location and contact their supervisor.

“For the caseworkers, they get an ‘as real to life as possible’ training without actually being put in harm’s way,” said Frederick, a former law-enforcement officer. “The caseworkers receive real-time feedback, and the biggest takeaway hopefully is that they need to be safe in order to help anyone else.”

Frederick said the situations presented in SAM’s scenarios are based on real-life situations he and his wife, Tracy — a former Dauphin County caseworker — encountered when they worked together in the field. In many cases, Frederick said, he was concerned about his wife’s safety because she would go to homes alone — holding only a clipboard and a pen — and enter situations that law enforcement professionals would approach only in pairs and with self-defense knowledge, as well as Tasers, guns, handcuffs and other defensive weapons.

“My hope is that caseworkers leave the training with a better understanding of ways of keeping themselves safe while still being able to complete their daily tasks,” Frederick said.

At a SAM training event in March 2017, Bucks County caseworkers moved through three scenarios, working in pairs. Each situation presented different challenges. For example, in one mock situation, an actively suicidal man in a home with an apparent meth lab pulled a knife and threatened to kill himself. In another, an obviously intoxicated mother living in a filthy home with dog feces and trash on the floor had sent her young child to a nearby park with the family dog as the baby-sitter.

Again, Frederick stressed, these scenarios are based on real-life situations that caseworkers have encountered.

Across the state, caseworkers, supervisors and administrators gave SAM’s safety training resoundingly high marks:

- “SAM’s training has been the most positive training that I’ve seen in 25 years,” Fayette County’s D’Auria said. “All caseworkers come back with glowing reports of the training.”

## SNAPSHOT: CAMBRIA COUNTY

**UPDATE: As of Oct. 31, 2017, we have learned that this information does not reflect an unduplicated count of children seen by Cambria County Children & Youth Services in 2016. County officials report that determining a reliable and accurate unduplicated count was not possible.**

Betzi White, Cambria County Children & Youth Services’ administrator, highlighted some facts from 2016 to show the incredible number of children they’ve assessed:

According to DHS, the total population of Cambria County is 139,381; the population under age 18 is roughly 27,000.

“Last year, we did a kid count,” White said of her agency determining how many individual children its caseworkers saw in 2016. “We came up with an unduplicated count of all kids at 9,840.

“That’s 37 percent of the entire population under 18.”

White added that her county in particular suffers from an extremely high percentage of drug abusers, particularly opioid users.

“Caseworkers are continually assessing parents and caregivers who are active substance abusers,” she said. “We know a lot of it’s heroin, and fentanyl and bath salts and meth.” ■



- “SAM’s training was the best training I’ve ever been to,” one Cambria County caseworker said.
- “I thought that SAM’s training was awesome,” Centre County’s Sprinkle said.

Byers said the CWRC has worked with SAM to create new safety training that is within the required 120 hours of coursework.

“My hope is that one day all newly hired caseworkers will have the opportunity to attend this training,” Frederick said. “I believe giving them the tools or knowledge of being safe while completing home visits will better prepare them for doing their jobs, and feeling safer when doing so.”

### Revamping ‘Charting the Course’

The overall feeling at this point is for “Charting the Course” to move much of the theory and “presentation of knowledge” exercises to prerequisite online courses and to use the classroom time for more interactive, experiential learning, Byers said.

**“JUST MORE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING — LIKE LEARNING HOW TO WRITE A REPORT, LEARNING HOW TO ENGAGE PEOPLE. IT SHOULD BE ABOUT HOW YOU APPLY THE THEORY THAT YOU LEARNED IN COLLEGE.”**

—JOANNE VAN SAUN, ADMINISTRATOR,  
LUZERNE COUNTY CHILDREN AND YOUTH

“It’s a really nice way to get the feel of being out in the field, learning without actual kids and families,” Byers said. “As we continue to get feedback from counties and the state, there will continue to be changes.”

In August 2017, Byers said via email that several changes in that vein were already being piloted at the CWRC — including a Simulation Lab that is “set

up with cameras and microphones to allow for a more authentic experience, as only the standardized client (actor) and participant are in the room,” Byers said. The CWRC’s goal is for the lab to go live possibly by mid-October 2017.

Administrators and caseworkers said they are on board with those types of changes, especially if motivational interviewing skills — including specific training on defusing hostile situations — and court hearing practice are incorporated.

“It would be great if they did more simulation-focused training,” Monroe County’s Grace said, “even if they’re talking about the same material and the same content. If they were able to present that differently, caseworkers would get a lot more out of it.”

“Mock court hearings would be helpful, just more experiential learning — like learning how to write a report, learning how to engage people,” Luzerne County’s Van Saun said. “It should be about how you apply the theory that you learned in college.”

Both Byers and DHS’ Utz stressed, however, that even with more experiential learning, casework supervisors, managers and administrators will continue to be key in helping new caseworkers learn to do the job properly.

“Training is an essential part, but it’s never going to get you the whole way there,” Byers said. “There’s strong evidence that ... workers need support in the classroom and an enhanced connection to the field, including making sure there’s enough support for new caseworkers in their agencies.”



“Supervisory coaching and mentoring is key in that transfer of learning,” Utz said. “I might be able to demonstrate some of the skills in that simulation training, but when I’m in the field it’s going to be very different.

“Having supervisors mentoring and coaching is really key to supporting the training that we do through the Resource Center.”

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that the University of Pittsburgh: School of Social Work’s Child Welfare Resource Center:

- Continue to work with county administrators, caseworkers, instructors and others to gather feedback on how to improve “Charting the Course.”
- Change “Charting the Course” to better prepare new caseworkers by replacing much of the “transfer of knowledge” learning to more experiential learning, such as:
  - Training on how to interview hostile people,
  - Learning motivational interviewing techniques,
  - Practicing how to de-escalate a hostile situation,
  - Adding personal safety training similar to that provided by Service Access & Management Inc.,
  - Providing hands-on self-defense training,
  - Teaching hands-on lessons on illegal substances and substance abuse, and
  - Holding mock court hearings, perhaps with retired Family Court judges who would volunteer their time.

### **Report Observation 3: Unmanageable caseloads and burdensome, redundant paperwork prevent CYS caseworkers from effectively protecting children from harm.**

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How many cases should a CYS caseworker have at one time? Caseload is a critical metric to determine whether caseworkers have enough time to see the children and families they are trying to serve, but the answer to that question varies widely across the industry.

For example, a 2007 study published in 2009 by the National Association of Social Workers looked at the number of available work hours per month (118.25) per caseworker, then determined the average number of hours per case (6.84).<sup>12</sup> By dividing those two numbers, researchers determined that the maximum number of cases per caseworker should be 17.

**“NO, I DON’T HAVE ENOUGH RESOURCES RIGHT NOW FOR CASEWORKERS TO EFFECTIVELY CARE FOR CHILDREN.”**

—GINA D’AURIA, ADMINISTRATOR,  
FAYETTE COUNTY CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES

Other state and national studies have pegged the optimal caseload number between 12 and 20 cases per caseworker, depending upon the unit the caseworker belongs to.

According to Brian Bornman, executive director of the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators (PCYA), a

program through the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), the current national recommendation is 30 cases per caseworker. But that number, he said, “was pulled out of thin air.”

To better determine a caseload size number, Bornman said, PCYA is working with the Penn State Network for Child Protection and Well-being to try to determine scientifically what the ideal caseload is. As of spring 2017, researchers were pulling data and quantifying factors based on an algorithm for how long it takes to handle each kind of case.

Bornman said he believes using caseloads is an unreliable method for determining how much a caseworker can handle, because one “case” could have one child involved while another “case” has 10 children involved. He’d prefer to see a case-weighting system.

“Every caseworker has one or two families or cases that take up 90 percent of their time,” said Bornman, a lawyer who has worked as a child-welfare caseworker and as legal counsel for a county child-welfare agency.

Administrators, caseworkers and supervisors from our 13 focus counties and beyond all cited unmanageable caseloads as a major source of stress for workers, particularly throughout 2015 and 2016.

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<sup>12</sup> Yamatani, Hide; Engel, Rafael; Spjeldnes, Solveig. “Child Welfare Worker Caseload: What’s Just Right?” *Social Work*, October 2009.

"No, I don't have enough resources right now for caseworkers to effectively care for children," Fayette County's D'Auria said. "The biggest complaint I hear from my caseworkers is that they don't have enough time to spend with the families."

"Right after the CPSL (changes), my caseworkers were at 30 to 1 (caseload), and they could not do it. It was not possible," she said.

D'Auria said in spring 2017 that her Intake unit was averaging 15:1 caseloads, and her In-home unit was averaging 20:1. "Even with that, they will tell you the amount of time, the meetings, there's just not enough time to ... engage the families, especially if they're dealing with addictions."

"Our intake caseworkers have nine to 10 new cases per *week*, when they should have nine to 10 per *month*," said one caseworker who requested anonymity for fear of retribution. "It definitely affects us, because we can't spend all the time we should be spending to find out the underlying causes of why a family is coming before us. We're just Band-Aiding cases."

"When I came here, they averaged 35 cases (per caseworker)," said Marc Cherna, director of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. "It was completely out of control."

## VOICES: YOUTH WHO HAVE BEEN THROUGH THE SYSTEM

(Note: Names have been changed to protect privacy.)

**Cassie:** Cassie was 8 when her mom took her to school one day and never picked her up. Over the next 10 years, she spent time living in multiple situations: with family members, in 10 to 15 foster homes, in mental-health facilities, in group homes and on the street.

She had eight caseworkers over those 10 years, and had good experiences and bad experiences with them. Most of all, she said, she wishes they would have believed her when she told them what she was living through, including being gang-raped at age 12.

**Sarah:** Sarah entered the system at age 16, after years of physical and emotional abuse by her mother. Sarah said her family was well known to county CYS: "I saw 14 different Intake workers, and none of them ever helped me," she said.

Even when she was removed from the home in 2013, her siblings continued to live in with their mother until 2015, she said. "My siblings, I raised them," she said. "I was so worried about leaving them that I didn't want anyone to know I was being locked down in the basement."

Sarah had two ongoing caseworkers in roughly four years: "I think I was one of the lucky ones."

**Lilah:** Lilah was 4 when her day care called CYS after seeing repeated bruises and black eyes. Over the next decade, she went back to live with her mom, who continued to abuse her. From age 13, Lilah was in and out of the system, living with foster families and in group homes.

When Lilah entered college, she majored in psychology so she could become a CYS caseworker. Having worked in the field for six years, she is now enrolled in the CWEL program. (See "Educating Social Workers," page 19.) ■

Of the 13 county administrators interviewed for this report, all said unequivocally that they did not have adequate resources to handle the demand of cases they receive.

“We are understaffed and overloaded based on the number of cases we have,” said Betzi White, Cambria County Children & Youth Services administrator. “Beginning in 2014, we had some idea of what the CPSL changes were going to bring. For example, when we were doing morning Intake review, we were tracking which reports were GPS then but would be a CPS report in 2015.

“We expected a 10 percent increase in reports,” she continued.

In fact, Cambria County saw a 29 percent increase in CPS reports from 2014 to 2015 — and had no more resources allocated to it.

### **Burdensome paperwork**

White was among county leaders who shared their frustrations for this report with the amount of paperwork caseworkers are required to complete.

“People seem to think because we’re using computers, we’re working faster. We’re not,” White said. “What nobody accounted for was the time it takes for a caseworker to come back from the field and enter all of the information they gathered into the computer.”

Several administrators and caseworkers interviewed estimated that, for every 45 minutes spent with a family, it requires between two and five hours of paperwork.

“You spend more time on paperwork than on helping families,” said one Cambria County caseworker.

“Caseworkers need to be able to spend more time with their families than on doing paperwork,” Crawford County’s Schwab said.

“The amount of paper we generate for a case is quite honestly ridiculous,” Centre County’s Sprinkle said. “Every time there’s a new initiative or change in the law, there’s more paper to fill out.

“We’ve been part of time studies, and we’ve clearly shown that it doesn’t matter what county you work in, the majority of your time is spent doing paperwork,” Sprinkle continued.

## **VOICES: CASEWORKERS ON PAPERWORK**

“A lot of the paperwork is redundant.”

“It’s never-ending.”

“It’s paperwork for the sake of paperwork.”

“Bureaucrats broke the system when they added so many assessments and paperwork requirements.”

“Paperwork is just a way for the government to cover their butts.”

“There’s just not enough time in the day to do all the paperwork I’m required to do.”

“The paperwork has doubled in the last 13 years, and 13 years ago we didn’t have computers.”

“A piece of paper doesn’t make a child safe.”

“I think the amount of paperwork is utterly ridiculous.”

“I simply don’t have enough time in the day to see families and do all of the required documentation afterward.” ■

One of the time studies Centre County participated in was done in 2014. In total, 19 counties took part in the study, which looked at how caseworkers spent their time each day from 2010 through 2014 — meaning the data was collected before the CPSL changes took effect.

Overall, the study found, caseworkers were spending nearly 30 percent of their time doing paperwork, more than any other job duty in any given day.

Now, said Crawford County's Schwab, "Doing paperwork takes 60 to 70 percent of a caseworker's time. It consists of multiple assessments that really get down to some of the root causes, but nobody took into account how time-consuming that is."

"We've lost a lot of long-term talent in child welfare" because of the increased paperwork requirements, PCYA's Bornman said.

For example, he added, before 2015, when a CPS referral came in, a caseworker could visit with the family, come back to the office, fill out a CY-48 form — which used to be one page front and back — in about 15 minutes, and then fax it to ChildLine.

Now, the CY-48 form<sup>13</sup> is roughly nine pages and takes about an hour to complete, Bornman said. And once a caseworker has finished the form and a supervisor approves it, often when it's sent to ChildLine for the final disposition to be registered, the form is sent back because "one box or another wasn't checked."

"That's part of what's breaking the system," Bornman said.

Among other demands on county CYS agency employees' time is the need to more closely monitor third-party vendors who provide In-Home Purchased Services for children and families. When a vendor submits an invoice claiming to have provided a service, such as in-home counseling or an after-school program, CYS fiscal staff must verify that:

1. The service was indeed provided, and
2. The service was provided in accordance with statutory requirements and associated regulations, as well as relevant DHS guidelines.

Multiple audits by the Department of the Auditor General's Bureau of Children & Youth Audits have found that these checks are often not performed, creating an environment where fraud is a possibility.

### **Separate computer systems**

In terms of inputting the information, caseworkers, supervisors and administrators actually work with two different computer systems: one at the state level, and one at the county level.

Currently, each county is using one of five software products. For example, Philadelphia and Allegheny counties each have their own systems. In 56 counties, though, the software used is called CAPS, which stands for Child Accounting and Profile System.

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<sup>13</sup> Titled "Child Protective Services Investigation Report." See Appendix B

CAPS' vendor, Avanco International Inc., is headquartered in Fairfax, Va., with a satellite office in Camp Hill, Pa. Regional Director Steve James said CAPS got its start in 2006 in Crawford County. Over the years, as other counties began to see the electronic paperwork process, they joined.

From there, he said, the company expanded its service to the current 56 counties, which have more than 4,000 users on the system. Each county has its own contract with Avanco, which customizes CAPS based on county leadership's preference, he said.

"The thing that's unique about it is that CAPS was really developed with the counties," James said.

"Avanco did not built CAPS and then market it to counties. Counties have been involved with design, testing and production since it began."

James highlighted that CAPS is "100 percent web-enabled, which means they can use it in the field."

"I think that really helped with the adoption of it," he said.

Despite county caseworkers' involvement in developing the software, it — and its state-level counterpart, the Child Welfare Information System (CWIS) — remains one of the most-cited examples of what negatively affects caseworkers across the state.

"CAPS could be a great tool, but it wasn't thought out completely," said one Cambria County caseworker. "It doesn't do much of what we need it to do to help us be efficient."

At the state level, CWIS was implemented in 2015 with a strict, hard-and-fast deadline at the same time the CPSL changes went into effect. Even though they are different software systems produced by different vendors, CWIS and CAPS must "talk" to each other seamlessly.

"CWIS — that was like a tsunami hit," James said of its rushed implementation. "It basically took all of our priority. We really didn't work on much else during that development period."

"The implementation was pushed into production quickly," he continued. "There were deadlines that had to be met, and we met them. But we kind of paid the price for it for about a year."

## PAPERWORK: STREAMLINING THE PROCESS

One of the paperwork issues that caseworkers frequently highlighted for this report was the need to fill out and have families sign a multitude of releases so that caseworkers can access a family's medical records, human-services files, school records and more.

"Each place has its own special form that we have to fill out, and it takes forever to gather them all, get them filled out completely and correctly, get them signed, then fax them to the appropriate agency," said one caseworker. "It takes up a ridiculous amount of my time."

One solution might be for the General Assembly to give CYS caseworkers the same rights as Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), who are volunteers that advocate on a child's behalf in court.

According to the statute creating CASAs (42 Pa.C.S. § 6342), CASAs shall have "full access to review all records, including records under 23 Pa.C.S. Ch.63 (relating to child protective services) relating to the child and other information, unless restricted by the court."

This unfettered access would provide caseworkers the ability to gather applicable records for the children they are tasked with protecting. ■

James said Avanco went from having approximately 800 support inquiries per month to about 1,700 per month. “It was just constant support. ... That did start to tail off some after about a year.”

James said he sympathized with caseworkers, especially those in 2015, when CWIS had to be implemented suddenly and the CPSL changes took place.

“Not only did they have to get through all these technical difficulties, but they also had brand-new (CPSL) guidelines, which required much more reporting,” James said. “So not only did they have to struggle with system challenges, but they had to report at a higher rate.”

PCYA’s Bornman testified before the state House Children & Youth Committee in April 2016, and he addressed the caseload ratios and “unrealistic demands” on caseworkers, including the new documentation requirements in CWIS, which at that time wasn’t yet functional:

“Most counties have seen a 35 to 50 percent increase in the number of investigations they must complete, with some counties seeing sustained increases over 2014 investigations of over 100 percent for 2015. I have seen caseworkers carrying upwards of 50 to 75 cases.

“Caseworkers are so overwhelmed that they have only two options. They can either spent all their time working to try and get everything done, to the detriment of their own families and health, or they make choices about what is most important and the other responsibilities simply get pushed down the road.

“These increased demands have created a situation in which the overload of cases has been going to the most-seasoned caseworkers out of necessity; however, those workers then get burned out and move on to other jobs with less pressure and frustration. This has resulted in newer caseworkers having more difficult and larger caseloads, and many of them burn out quickly.

“I have recently been to one county which had only two-thirds of their caseload-carrying caseworkers filled. Another had half of the caseload-carrying caseworkers leave within a two-week time period. These types of vacancies are unsustainable, and it should be little surprise that the quality of the work suffers.”

In Cambria County, one caseworker summed up the challenges of her job succinctly.

“We love what we do. We love to make a difference in a child’s life — but we don’t have time to do that anymore,” she said.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that DHS:

- Work to reduce paperwork requirements so that caseworkers can spend more time in the field with their families. Specifically, DHS should work with the General Assembly to eliminate the requirement that CY-48 forms must be filled out for all GPS referrals.
- Encourage counties to budget to use clerical case aides to type up caseworkers’ notes from the field, perhaps at a 1-aide-to-5-caseworkers ratio, to allow caseworkers to spend more time in the field with their families.



- Work with the CWRC to evaluate whether safety and risk assessments can be combined into one form.
- Have its CAPS review board work with the vendor to prioritize software time-saving improvements such as:
  - “All children” button or dropdown, “false allegation” button and “both parents” button
  - Auto-populate personal and demographic information after first form
  - Allow for one case to be assigned to two caseworkers

We recommend that DHS and county CYS agencies’ management:

- Add procedures to agencies’ invoice and review procedures performed by caseworkers to substantiate that invoiced In-Home Purchased Services were actually provided and were provided in adherence to DHS regulations and executed contract terms, where applicable.

We recommend that the General Assembly:

- Give caseworkers the authority to receive necessary medical, drug-and-alcohol-treatment and school records without requiring releases, using language similar to 42 Pa. C.S. §6342(d)(1), which provides Court Appointed Special Advocates with such powers.

## **Report Observation 4: Pennsylvania caseworkers, particularly those at the entry level, earn a remarkably low salary given the educational requirements, daily work complexity, and potentially dangerous components of their jobs.**

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Average salaries for new bachelor's degree graduates has been on the rise. In fact, for 2016, the average salary for new bachelor's degree graduates was \$50,556, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers — a 5 percent increase from 2014, when new grads averaged \$48,217.<sup>14</sup> More specifically, social sciences majors averaged \$46,585 for 2016.

By contrast, starting salaries in Pennsylvania for Caseworker I positions — those most commonly filled by new college graduates — averaged \$30,018 in 2016 in our 13 focus counties. Based on a 40-hour workweek, that means these caseworkers earn on average only \$14 per hour.

**“WE REALLY NEED TO MAKE THEIR PAY COMPARABLE TO OTHER PROFESSIONS THAT DO SIMILAR DUTIES.”**

—JULIA SPRINKLE, DIRECTOR,  
CENTRE COUNTY OFFICE OF CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES

Nearly all county administrators interviewed for this report advocated for higher pay for their caseworkers. Several administrators said their starting salaries are so low that they have workers receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, formerly known as food stamps.

“I would increase the salaries of all staff significantly,” said Luzerne County’s Van Saun, who is among those with workers receiving SNAP benefits.

“I wish they could have higher salaries,” agreed Erie County’s Rees. “I wish that we could compensate them adequately for the type of work that they’re doing.”

“My starting salary is \$29,484,” said Fayette County’s D’Auria, who added that her county’s most-recent union contract takes workers from Caseworker I to Caseworker II after about 18 months, giving them a raise to \$35,000. “Our goal (with the contract) was to get them to the point where they were carrying cases on their own and making a decent living.”

However, D’Auria added, she has predominantly Caseworker I staff because once workers are promoted to Caseworker II, they usually move to another social-service agency, such as Parole or the Department of Public Welfare, where they make more money. “It seems like we’re always behind,” she said of her agency’s salaries compared with other county-level social-services agencies.

“We really need to make their pay comparable to other professions that do similar duties,” Centre County’s Sprinkle said. “This should be competitive pay, akin to a teacher or police officer.”

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<sup>14</sup> “Here’s What the Average Grad Makes Right Out of College.” *Time: Money*. April 22, 2015. <http://time.com/money/collection-post/3829776/heres-what-the-average-grad-makes-right-out-of-college/> Accessed Aug. 3, 2017.

Monroe County's Grace agreed that caseworkers' salaries should be comparable. "I would increase their salary to be never a penny less than a teacher or a probation officer or a county assistance maintenance worker makes," she said.

Cambria County CYS Administrative Officer Matthew Conjelko recommended a similar pay scale:

"Staff starting salaries and benefits for workers should be no less than 3 percent below the average starting salaries of teachers in the county of operation, with supervisory and management salaries reflecting an appropriate proportional increase in line with responsibilities and experience. Current workers should also have similar compensation based on a similar formula with teacher's salaries."

White, Cambria County's administrator, said she takes particular issue with some of the duties her caseworkers must perform. "They have to watch people pee in a cup. They have to notice if someone's trying to use someone else's urine," she said of her staff having to administer drug tests. "I'd like them to feel like they're being compensated commensurate with what they're doing."

**"I'D LIKE THEM TO FEEL LIKE THEY'RE BEING COMPENSATED COMMENSURATE WITH WHAT THEY'RE DOING."**

—BETZI WHITE, ADMINISTRATOR,  
CAMBRIA COUNTY CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES

One of White's caseworkers who agreed with her assessment said, "How can anybody justify the salaries in this job? With what we see and what we have to do?"

Many administrators and experts stressed that one of the major problems is that the cost of salaries is

split among the county, the state and the federal government.

PCYA's Bornman said the breakdown is roughly 17 percent paid by the county, 69 percent paid by the state and 14 percent paid by the federal government.

Though counties pay the smallest portions, decisions on whether to fill vacant positions are often made by a county's commissioners or executive board — and that sometimes can cause a rift between county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) and commissioners.

For example, several administrators said, county commissioners sometimes see open caseworker positions as a way to potentially save money, so they will not allow the administrator to hire to fill the caseworker spot for a given length of time.

White has dealt with that issue in Cambria County. "Our commissioners have to approve to fill vacancies or create new positions," she said. "We got new commissioners a few years ago who support filling vacancies when they occur, but our previous commissioners liked us to wait for a period of time before filling a position to save them money."

However, she added, she also had to keep overtime down. In 2016, she said, she spent time every day with a spreadsheet, repeatedly having to explain to county commissioners why her caseworkers had overtime.

White's struggle between hiring caseworkers and minimizing overtime was a common theme among most of the 12 other county administrators. And though administrators overall believed that an across-the-board salary increase is warranted, all agreed that pay is certainly not the only reason for high turnover.

"I don't feel it's all about money, but it's a factor," said Delaware County's Gordon, who added she would bump all workers' salaries by about \$3,000 if she could.

Gordon was among the many administrators those who expressed pride in their staffs, calling them "dedicated" and "committed."

"This work has to be in your blood," Gordon said. "It is, like, 'The Few, The Proud, The Child-Welfare Workers.'"

"It isn't only about money for people," Monroe County's Grace agreed. "Yes, they want to be fairly compensated, but it's about having that ability to truly do the work that they set out to do in the first place."

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that DHS, county commissioners (or other county-level administrations) and appropriate unions:

- Evaluate salaries for caseworkers and supervisors and, where possible, increase salaries based on experience, educational attainment and equivalent human-services positions.

**Report Observation 5: Because of the reasons highlighted in Report Observations 1 through 4, high turnover among caseworkers greatly inhibits Pennsylvania’s ability to effectively protect children.**

Given the sudden dramatic spike in the number of child-abuse reports that county CYS agencies were dealing with in 2015, after the CPSL changes went into effect, a rational expectation would be that there would be more caseworkers now than before.

However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of child, family and school social workers in local government agencies in Pennsylvania has remained stable since 2012 and is expected to continue to remain relatively stable:

**Number of social workers in Pennsylvania**

	2012	2014	2024
Child, Family & School Social Workers	4,050	4,000	3,950

As a result, the number of caseworkers remaining stable as work increased — plus too little training, too many cases and too little pay — created high turnover rates.

In 2016, PCYA surveyed 66 counties to determine their turnover percentages during the 2014-15 fiscal year. Here is the data for the 12 of our 13 focus counties that participated:

**Turnover rates (per year for 13 focus counties)**

County	Total # CYS staff	Total # direct CYS staff	% turnover during FY14-15 (Agency)	% turnover during FY14-15 (Direct service)
Allegheny	542	264	12.5	18.5
Bucks	191	113	15.0	16.0
Cambria	69	40	14.5	20.0
Centre	45	27	11.1	11.1
Crawford	53	28	26.0	43.0
Dauphin	153	68	31.0	50.0
Delaware	246	100	10.0	16.0
Erie	216	92	11.0	12.0
Fayette	53	36	9.7	17.7
Luzerne	201	129	10.4	12.4
Monroe	75	41	32.6	32.6
York	146	75	23.0	40.0

In the worst cases, counties saw direct-service turnover as high as 50 percent (Dauphin), 43 percent (Crawford) and 40 percent (York).

“Being a children and youth caseworker is the most difficult job you can do,” said Allegheny County’s Cherna. “People are going to continue to leave; it’s the nature of this business. I always expect 10 to 20 percent to leave. It’s pretty entry-level, and many of our workers are young, so they have life events that keep them moving, so there’s a normal amount of turnover to be expected.”

“There’s actually a disincentive to stay at Children and Youth in comparison with other human-services jobs,” said Lynne Kallus-Rainey, director of Bucks County Children & Youth Social Services Agency. “At other agencies, you have a regular work schedule, and you don’t have the stress.

“(Caseworkers) are susceptible to child tragedy every day, to being called every name in the book any day, and the caseloads are much higher than they can manage,” Kallus-Rainey continued. “The job just keeps getting bigger, and you can’t expect one person to do the type of job that’s now expected of a caseworker.”

Fayette County’s D’Auria agreed: “People get in this field because they want to make a difference, and they leave because there’s no time to do that,” she said. “I’ve lost many, many good workers because they burn out. It becomes very overwhelming, and for their own mental health and well-being, they have to leave.

“Child welfare is not a respected profession; we’re never right in anything we do.”

“When people leave, they mostly leave not because of the office but because of the job,” Centre County’s Sprinkle said. “We do a lot of in-house things for morale and acknowledgement. There’s so much negativity out there, so I try hard to infuse the office as a safe place, a place where we care about each other.”

“The turnover in our agency is not helpful to the families we work with,” said Crawford County’s Schwab. “It’s causing them to have to tell their story and restart from the beginning with yet another worker. It causes them to be in the system longer.

“And we have a lot of workers whose heart is in the right place, but they’re just overwhelmed by the paperwork,” Schwab continued. “You’re making decisions about the future of children; what’s more stressful than that?”

## **VOICES: CASEWORKERS ON JOB DEMANDS AND TURNOVER**

“A lot of my co-workers are having breakdowns. A few of them cry every week because they’re so overwhelmed.”

“We’ve been at half staff for pretty much the whole two and a half years I’ve been there.”

“The turnover is out of this world.”

“People start here wanting to make a difference, but then because of the pay and the stress, they just leave.”

“We can’t give our (clients) enough time; we can’t focus on them the way we should be able to.”

“Nobody can do this job. Nobody.”

“You sacrifice your own kids for everyone else’s. I didn’t see my own kids last night, or the day before.”

“Caseworkers are leaving faster now than they used to.”

“It’s totally different from even two years ago, because now it’s nonstop.”

“I don’t want to tell anybody what I do because they won’t understand that I’m not a baby-snatcher.” ■

“The county is proactive in recruiting new staff, but because it’s so hard to fill vacancies partially due to the nature of the challenging work, there’s too much work for the number of people we have,” said Delaware County’s Gordon. “Is there a possibility mistakes will be made? Yes, especially if you have a work unit that’s stretched so thin.”

Erie County’s Rees agreed that turnover at her agency has affected the quality of care her caseworkers have been able to provide: “The increase in the workload due to the changes in the CPSL has not been proportionate to an increase in staff complement or funding.

“When the workload is unmanageable, it is natural that there will be mistakes,” she continued. “With the vulnerable children we work with, mistakes are not acceptable, but without adequate resources our concern is that they are inevitable.

“No one wants to be in that position, but that is the reality that our system is living with at this point.”

“My workers don’t feel like they can have a life outside of Children and Youth,” said Monroe County’s Grace. “They’re dealing with constant, constant changes and the constant monitoring that has to take place to make sure that we’re doing our best to keep kids safe. It’s an almost insurmountable task with the kind of turnover we have.”

Grace said she believes the profession suffers from a lack of incentives for caseworkers to retain their jobs.

“Caseloads are out of control, their pay is low — in fact, in some respects, I don’t know that there is enough money to keep people in this job.”

## A DIFFERENT MODEL: PHILADELPHIA COUNTY

As counties across the Commonwealth continue to struggle with high turnover, heavy caseloads and difficulty hiring, Philadelphia County has taken the lead in creating new systems that, according to county DHS Commissioner Cynthia Figueroa, are having a big impact.

The reform, Improving Outcomes for Children (IOC), began in 2013 after county leaders realized major changes were needed to make the CYS system functional again. IOC focuses on each family having one case manager and one plan, with services in the community, Figueroa said.

Now, instead of the county’s DHS handling all CYS cases from beginning to end, case management is done by private, community-based organizations—similar to the way Florida handles its system.

So, Figueroa explained, “As a department, we retain many essential functions of the system: We run the (county’s) 24/7 child-abuse hotline, conduct investigations, identify placements and assist with permanency for children whose parental rights have been terminated.”

But once children and families are accepted into the system, one of seven nonprofits steps in and handles the ongoing work with the families. The agencies are known as Community Umbrella Agencies (CUA).

Although this model seems to be a viable option, it is still too early to fully assess its effectiveness.

Figueroa also touted the 2010-11 creation of DHS University (DHSU), the county’s own training system. All new staff still attend “Charting the Course,” but Figueroa said DHSU is able to adapt its curriculum to adjust to the ever-changing needs of children and families in Philadelphia.

To address caseload size, in fall 2016, Philadelphia committed to funding a case ratio of 10:1. Figueroa said caseloads are now down to roughly 11:1. ■



“The problem is always trying to retain the staff,” agreed York County Administrator Terry Clark, who saw almost 90 percent caseworker turnover in the course of 24 months. “I don’t know which comes first: Getting the caseload sizes down or getting the right amount of staff. But we can’t decrease the caseload sizes because people keep leaving.”

Like other administrators, Clark said the highest turnover occurs in his Intake unit, which notoriously has the most stressful positions. “That’s where it really just keeps turning over,” he said. “Even when you have to hire new caseworkers, what a lot of people forget is they can’t just come on and take cases. They still have onboarding and training to go through. It takes at least six months to a year before you can give a caseworker a full caseload. But we don’t have the luxury to wait that long anymore.”

Clark, whose background includes time as a caseworker as well as time working on policy at the state level, said in spring 2017 that most of his casework staff had been on the job for fewer than two years.

“In Intake, 80 percent of them are here under a year,” he said. “To have a workforce that’s predominantly under one year, I’ve never seen that in my 25 years of doing this. It’s unprecedented.”

### **Recommendation**

We recommend that the suggestions offered for Report Observations 1 through 4 be followed to decrease caseworker turnover.

## **Report Observation 6: Other state-level groups and agencies are reviewing the same problems within Pennsylvania’s child-welfare system in an effort to find solutions.**

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The Department of the Auditor General is not the only state-level agency to have been made aware of the problems that exist within Pennsylvania’s child-welfare system. Since at least 2015, other groups have been examining the struggles facing caseworkers, including extreme job stress, low salary and high turnover.

### **AOPC Caseworker Retention Workgroup**

Among the task forces or roundtables created was the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts’ Office of Children & Families in the Courts’ Caseworker Retention Workgroup. Established in May 2015, this workgroup comprises 38 professionals involved in all levels of child welfare across the state, including juvenile court judges, county commissioners, county administrators, state officials, dependency attorneys, PCYA, the CWRC and the Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN).

For the workgroup’s 2016 State Roundtable Report,<sup>15</sup> members examined three topics, including the impact of caseworker retention on permanency for children. The group highlighted the same issues detailed in this report:

“Caseworkers who lack the education and training, who carry caseloads that are too high to manage, who struggle with the impact on their personal lives and who lack the organization structure or necessary supervisory support often become overwhelmed and leave their jobs.”

Specifically, the workgroup broke down the impact of caseworker turnover on the courts, CCYAs, county commissioners and the state, and children and families, as well as the fiscal implications associated with turnover.

Among the impacts the workgroup found:

- Turnover creates a ripple effect: One caseworker leaves, creating increased workloads for other caseworkers, which results in more resignations;
- Increased liability with less-experienced staff;
- Increased continuances in court because a new caseworker does not have the knowledge or information readily available during the hearing. Continuances can lead to children staying in care longer;
- Increased cost and liability to the county; and
- Difficulty filling positions with qualified staff through the Civil Service.<sup>16</sup>

Among the impact the workgroup found specifically on children and families:<sup>17</sup>

- Having to relive the trauma by telling their story over and over again;
- Delays in reunification;
- Information getting lost in translation or lost completely;
- Delays due to newer caseworker’s time to familiarize themselves with the case;

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ocfcpacourts.us/assets/files/page-447/file-1507.pdf> Accessed Aug. 8, 2017

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

- A new caseworker taking a different approach to the case, which requires children and parents to have to learn the rules all over; and
- Delays in a family sharing their needs and struggles with someone unfamiliar.

The workgroup's second report, the 2017 State Roundtable Report,<sup>18</sup> also highlighted the fiscal implications of high turnover. Specifically, it surveyed counties and examined the costs associated with individual turnover during 2015-16, then multiplied that amount by the number of caseworkers who resigned during the year. The amount varies based on factors such as distance traveled for training:<sup>19</sup>

### Turnover costs per county

County	Starting salary	Lost investment with turnover of one caseworker	Number of caseworkers who left the agency	Total turnover cost for 2015-16
Bucks	\$44,791.00	\$33,760.98	12	\$405,132.00
Westmoreland	\$38,863.50	\$10,469.22	7	\$73,284.54
Northampton	\$39,466.00	\$14,944.40	19	\$283,943.60
Erie	\$33,910.00	\$14,734.77	9	\$132,612.93
Lycoming	\$36,296.00	\$18,568.26	2	\$37,136.52
Greene	\$34,216.00	\$7,323.86	15	\$109,857.90
Tioga	\$30,160.00	\$6,513.57	12	\$78,162.79

In the 2017 report, the workgroup offered suggestions to help improve caseworker retention, including ones that cost nothing, ones that cost a little and ones that can cost a lot but do little (such as raising pay without changing organizational structure to better support caseworkers).

The report also found that “caseworker retention directly impacts child safety”:

“A highly-skilled child welfare workforce is necessary to meet the complex and critical needs of the children and families it serves.”

### House Children & Youth Committee

In 2016, the state House of Representatives' Children & Youth Committee began hearing testimony from professionals associated with all level of the child-welfare system in Pennsylvania. Among those who have testified are DHS Secretary Ted Dallas, DHS' Utz, county caseworkers, county commissioners and PCYA's Bornman.

Greg Grasa, the committee's executive director, said in May 2017 that, since he's been working with the House committee, “Every day in one way or another, I've seen how the child-welfare system is struggling.”

The committee has identified the same issues with the system, he said:

- Hiring difficulties, especially for those using civil service;

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.ocfcpacourts.us/assets/files/page-447/file-1636.pdf> Accessed Aug. 8, 2017

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

- Inadequate training;
- Heavy caseloads and too much paperwork;
- Relatively low pay; and
- High turnover.

“All of those lead to people leaving the profession,” Grasa said.

What committee members have learned most, Grasa said, is that “the system was already strained prior to the mandates we put on with the Child Protection legislation.

“And it’s unsustainable if it continues the way it’s going.”

When Utz testified before the committee in April 2016, she provided a grim picture of the national state of caseworkers:

“Recruitment and retention of public child welfare staff is a challenge nationwide. Data suggests that less than one-third of staff have formal social work education, with an annual turnover rate of 30-40 percent. The average length of employment in public child welfare is less than two years. Supervisors generally have three years of experience, and caseload averages are 24 to 31 cases per caseworker. The average salary nationwide is \$33,000.”

Utz stressed that “Pennsylvania data closely mirrors these nationwide trends.”

“We must remember that we are not alone when it comes to high turnover rates, because other states share our challenges and are also seeking to find viable solutions,” Utz testified.

One of the committee’s goals is to find ways to raise the profession in the eyes of the public, Grasa said.

## A NEW TOOL: PREDICTIVE RISK MODELING

Before going out to talk with a family for the first time, Intake caseworkers should ideally have checked background information on the family members first. Are any of the adults in the report convicted criminals? Is the home known to local police as a drug house? Has there ever been a prior CYS call for this family?

Along with details in the referral, this information can help a screener determine whether to accept a referral for assessment. Yet the time it takes to compile this information is prohibitive because it must be pulled from separate databases.

In Allegheny County, that’s where the Allegheny Family Screening Tool (AFST) comes in, said Marc Cherna, director of Allegheny County Department of Human Services. AFST is a predictive risk modeling tool used to help screeners decide more quickly and more objectively whether to accept a referral for investigation.

AFST assesses more than 100 predictive factors for each child, then produces two numbers (both on a 1-20 scale) assessing the child’s risk of placement and risk of re-referral. So far, only screeners see the risk numbers; Intake workers do not see them.

Paid for through a private foundation, AFST was implemented in August 2016.

“Preliminarily, we think we’re going out on more appropriate cases,” Cherna said. “We get a lot of gray-area cases, and this helps reduce subjectivity.

“But the tool is only one support. It’s not the answer. There is no answer. There is no magic bullet. But it helps. And anything that can help I think we should pursue.” ■

“(They) would like to look at elevating the image of the profession, like we did in the past for nurses and teachers,” he said. “This is good work, and it’s necessary work.”

To that end, the committee is considering whether to recommend legislation to incentive caseworkers to stay in the profession, he said.

Utz agreed that a concerted effort must be made to improve the public’s view of CCYAs and caseworkers.

“Child welfare staff should be respected and valued in their communities,” she said. “It’s critical to the morale and the health (of our workers), and in helping to eliminate some of the workforce issues that we have.”

The Children & Youth committee’s hearings will continue in the fall of 2017, according to Grasa. That hearing will focus on hiring methodologies, including the difficulties counties that use the SCSC have.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that DHS and county CYS agencies:

- Review recommendations from other state-level workgroups and agencies and implement best practices.
- Continue to take part in caseworker retention reviews and hearings.

We recommend that DHS:

- Appoint an independent child protection ombudsman, who would review complaints and recommend system improvements.
- Review predictive risk modeling to determine its usefulness in all counties across the state

## Report Observation 7: States such as Florida and Arizona are tackling similar challenges in their child-welfare systems and are applying divergent methods to achieve viable solutions.

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### Florida

When Pennsylvania was passing amendments to its CPSL in 2014, Florida was making sweeping reforms to its child-welfare system. The reforms came about because of a *Miami Herald* series called “Innocents Lost,” which focused on 477 child deaths in the state over a six-year period, according to Dr. Patricia Babcock, co-director of the Center for Behavioral Health Integration at Florida State University College of Medicine.

“If the article was never written, nothing would have changed,” Babcock said in spring 2017.

Before 2014, Florida’s child-welfare system was struggling with many of same problems as Pennsylvania’s, Babcock said. Exacerbating the problem was that, in 2013, Florida’s legislature cut funding to the state’s Department of Children & Families (DCF) by \$80 million — which, according to the *Miami Herald*, eventually grew to about \$100 million.

And Florida’s children suffered because of it.

#### **“WE NEED TO PUT ALL THE SILOS ON THE SAME FARM.”**

—DR. PATRICIA BABCOCK, CO-DIRECTOR,  
CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INTEGRATION AT  
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Prior to 2014, “We never really had a true practice model where, from beginning to end, everybody was looking at the case through a common lens,” Babcock said.

Like Pennsylvania, Florida has 67 counties and used to operate a state-run, county-administered system. But Senate Bill 1666 of 2014, which came about because of the “Innocents Lost” project,

made a sweeping overhaul.

“We converted to a completely different system that now has a true practice model,” Babcock said.

Now, when a call comes into Florida’s child-abuse hotline, a state employee screens whether the call warrants an investigation. A community-based investigator, also a state employee, then does the child protective investigation and determines whether ongoing case management is needed.

But once a family is accepted for services, the state’s direct involvement ends, Babcock said. The rest of the process is managed by case-management organizations throughout the state.

“DCF contracts with what we call community-based care entities, which are specific to each community,” she said. “They are responsible for all of the case-management services, foster care, kinship care, etc.”

Because the changes are relatively new, Babcock said, it’s tough to assess how well the new system is working. For example, she said, the complaints about burdensome paperwork and heavy caseloads persist. “It’s creating the right efficiencies,” she said. “We need some organizational psychologists to come in and say, ‘This is a better way to do more efficient work.’”

Babcock said she sees positives and negatives about the new system. But does she think at-risk children in Florida are safer now than they were before 2014-15?

“I think there is the potential for them to be safer,” she said. “Do we do a better job of identifying them? Absolutely. Do we do a better job of getting them the right services at the right time? Absolutely not. Because we don’t have the resources to meet those demands.”

Babcock also echoed sentiments expressed by several Pennsylvania experts about the need for a community approach to look out and care for at-risk children.

“By the time kids come to the attention of DHS, they have gone through the medical system, they’ve been in the community, they’ve been in an early-learning or a school environment, sometimes their parents have been through the criminal justice system,” she said. “But when things go wrong, it’s the child-welfare system that gets blamed.

“Safety, permanency and the well-being of children should be a collective priority for all of these systems rather than a silo approach,” she said. “We need to put all the silos on the same farm.”

## Arizona

Until 2014, Arizona was facing problems much like Pennsylvania’s.<sup>20,21</sup> For example, when caseworkers quit, they would often cite the following reasons:

- High caseloads (caseworkers were handling an average of 145 cases, seven times the recommended caseload of 20);
- A lack of training;
- Inadequate compensation; and
- Poor supervision.

Other child-welfare experts cited the constant understaffing, underfunding and lack of technology as severe stressors for caseworkers. In 2014, the average annual turnover rate for caseworkers was about 35 percent.

Arizona’s solution was for then-Gov. Jan Brewer to create an agency, called the Division of Child Safety and Family Services, dedicated to child welfare. Previously, Arizona’s Child Protective Services had been embedded in the Department of Economic Security, a catch-all department much like Pennsylvania’s DHS. Now, the division is its own cabinet-level department, with a different model for approaching problems, according to *Governing* magazine, which spoke to Shalom Jacobs, deputy director of the new Department of Child Safety:

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<sup>20</sup> Wogan, J.D. “How Arizona Fixed Its Broken Child Welfare System in 2 Years.” *Governing*, April 27, 2017. <http://www.governing.com/topics/health-human-services/gov-arizona-child-welfare-greg-mckay.html> Accessed Aug. 21, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Wogan, J.D. “Arizona Makes Child Safety a Priority.” *Governing*, Jan. 28, 2014. <http://www.governing.com/topics/health-human-services/gov-arizona-makes-child-safety-priority-sets-up-standalone-agency.html> Accessed Aug. 21, 2017.



“In the past, the agency relied on ad hoc groups that would study an issue for a few months and recommend solutions. Jacobs says that previous leadership never focused on the processes and systems that kept breaking down,” according to *Governing* magazine.

“Now it’s the staff themselves who diagnose problems, propose solutions and then try out their ideas.”

Jacobs, a former foster parent and police officer, told *Governing* magazine for its April 2017 article that Arizona decided to change its wholesale approach to child welfare:

“Historically in Arizona, and in every state around the country, child welfare is riddle with events that cause constituencies to react heavily. They’re usually followed by public outcry, knee-jerk policymaking, funding swings, priority swings and failure.

“We put in systems of standard work and visual management. Now this place, which was crisis-driven every day for decades, has become a very stable and calm organization that responds to the demands but does it with a certain process in place, and it’s working.”

Jacobs said he believes the system is not fixed, but “I would definitely say we’re on the mend.”

### **Recommendation**

We recommend that DHS’ Office of Children, Youth and Families:

- Task one person, perhaps the new child protection ombudsman, with communicating with other states about their child-welfare systems and recommending best-practice changes to Pennsylvania’s system accordingly.

## Conclusion

The child-welfare system is not the sole party responsible for keeping children in Pennsylvania safe; that process involves stakeholders across the broader community who see at-risk children on a regular basis, such as pediatricians, teachers, principals, day care workers, therapists, guidance counselors, human services employees, family members and more.

Changes to the CPSL have helped to raise awareness of child maltreatment among mandated and permissive reporters, so ChildLine is seeing more calls alleging child abuse. But that increase in calls in turn means an increase in the workload for CYS caseworkers, particularly Intake caseworkers, who must assess the safety of children in a short amount of time while being overburdened with cases and paperwork.

Despite the necessary involvement of the full community, CYS caseworkers take the brunt of the blame when a child dies — and yet they are not trained well enough, are not paid well enough, are not given access to the resources they need to properly protect these children.

As Cambria County Administrator Betzi White said, “We can’t take the stress anymore. But if we don’t do this job, then who will? Someone has to fight every day to keep children safe.”

## Recommendations

We recommend that DHS and other state agencies using the State Civil Service Commission:

1. Update all job descriptions, including educational requirements, at least every two years.

We recommend that DHS:

2. Update the Caseworker I, Caseworker II and Casework Supervisor job descriptions by Jan. 1, 2018, to better reflect the demands of those jobs.
3. Work to reduce paperwork requirements so that caseworkers can spend more time in the field with their families. Specifically, DHS should work with the General Assembly to eliminate the requirement that CY-48 forms must be filled out for all GPS referrals.
4. Encourage counties to budget to use clerical case aides to type up caseworkers' notes from the field, perhaps at a 1-aide-to-5-caseworkers ratio, to allow caseworkers to spend more time in the field.
5. Work with the CWRC to evaluate whether safety and risk assessments can be combined into one form.
6. Have its review board for CAPS, the primary county-level software used statewide, work with the vendor, Avanco International, to prioritize software time-saving improvements such as:
  - "All children" button or dropdown, "false allegation" button and "both parents" button,
  - Auto-populate personal and demographic information after first form, and
  - Allow for one case to be assigned to two caseworkers
7. Appoint an independent child protection ombudsman, who would review complaints and recommend system improvements.
8. Review predictive risk modeling to determine its usefulness in all counties across the state.

We recommend that DHS' internal workgroup of county administrators:

9. Evaluate the value or merits of using the State Civil Service Commission to hire children and youth caseworkers and supervisors.

We recommend that the University of Pittsburgh: School of Social Work's Child Welfare Resource Center:

10. Continue to work with county administrators, caseworkers, instructors and others to gather feedback on how to improve "Charting the Course."
11. Change "Charting the Course" to better prepare new caseworkers by replacing much of the in-class or group learning to more experiential learning, such as:
  - Training on how to interview hostile people,
  - Learning motivational interviewing techniques,
  - Practicing how to de-escalate a hostile situation,
  - Adding personal safety training similar to that provided by Service Access & Management Inc.,
  - Providing hands-on self-defense training,
  - Teaching hands-on lessons on illegal substances and substance abuse, and
  - Holding mock court hearings, perhaps with retired Family Court judges who would volunteer their time.

We recommend that the General Assembly:

12. Give caseworkers the authority to receive necessary medical, drug-and-alcohol-treatment and school records without requiring releases, using language similar to 42 Pa. C.S. §6342(d)(1), which provides Court Appointed Special Advocates with such powers.

We recommend that DHS, county commissioners (or other county-level administrations) and appropriate unions:

13. Evaluate salaries for caseworkers and supervisors and, where possible, increase salaries based on experience, educational attainment and equivalent human-services positions.

We recommend that DHS and county CYS agencies' management:

14. Review recommendations from other state-level workgroups and agencies and implement best practices.
15. Continue to take part in caseworker retention reviews and hearings.
16. Improve agencies' invoice and review procedures to substantiate that invoiced In-Home Purchased Services were actually provided and were provided in adherence to DHS regulations and executed contract terms, where applicable.

We recommend that DHS' Office of Children, Youth and Families:

17. Task one person, perhaps the new child protection ombudsman, with communicating with other states about their child-welfare systems and recommending best-practice changes to Pennsylvania's system accordingly.

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*The 37 families who contacted the Department of the Auditor General seeking to share their experiences with Pennsylvania’s child-welfare system*

*The 12 caseworkers who contacted the Department of the Auditor General to share their experiences working in the child-welfare system*

## Glossary

**CYS:** children and youth services (page 8)

**CPSL:** Child Protective Services Law (page 8)

**DHS:** Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (page 8)

**OCYF:** Office of Children, Youth and Families (page 8)

**ChildLine:** Pennsylvania’s 24-hour child-abuse hotline (page 10)

**CPS:** child protective services (page 13)

**GPS:** general protective services (page 13)

**CAC:** child advocacy center (page 16)

**CRC:** PinnacleHealth’s Children’s Resource Center (page 16)

**CAPTA:** Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (page 17)

**SCSC:** State Civil Service Commission (page 18)

**CWEB:** Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (page 19)

**CWEL:** Child Welfare Education for Leadership (page 19)

**CWRC:** University of Pittsburgh: School of Social Work’s Child Welfare Resource Center (page 23)

**SAM:** Service Access & Management Inc. (page 26)

**PCYA:** Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators (page 30)

**CCAP:** County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (page 30)

**CWIS:** Child Welfare Information System (page 34)

**CAPS:** Child Accounting and Profile System (page 33)

**CASA:** Court-Appointed Special Advocates (page 34)

**CCYA:** county children and youth agency (page 38)

**SWAN:** Statewide Adoption Network (page 44)





# Appendix A

## **Caseworker Job Descriptions**

**Job Title:** COUNTY CASEWORKER 1

**Job Code:** L0623

**Definition:** This is entry level professional social service work in a County Children and Youth, Mental Health/Mental Retardation, or Human Services Agency.

Employees in this class participate in formal and informal county agency training programs which provide knowledge of the methods, procedures, rules and regulations necessary to perform social service and case management supportive services to children, youth, and families, people who are mentally disabled, people who are physically challenged, and others to assist them in attaining a more satisfactory social, economic, emotional, or physical adjustment. The work assigned is limited in scope and difficulty, and is performed under close supervision, but as knowledges and skills are acquired, more latitude in judgment and decision making is permitted. Work is performed under the close supervision of a professional social service or administrative supervisor and is reviewed through individual and group conferences, assignment of professional reading, attendance at training programs, and the reading of records and reports.

**Examples of Work:** Participates in formal and informal training programs which provide basic knowledge relative to agency purpose, services provided, client population characteristics, and applicable laws, methods, procedures, rules and regulations governing the operation of the agency.

Learns about the network of available community resources by reviewing resource files, site visits, and working with and observing higher level caseworker staff.

Receives instruction regarding the reason for and proper completion of applicable forms and paperwork.

Performs a variety of entry level social services and case management duties designed to provide supportive services to children, youth and families, people who are mentally disabled, people who are physically challenged, and others.

Assists clients and their families in developing and using their own potential for more adequately resolving their social, health, emotional and economic problems.

Provides or assists in the provision of social services, such as placement of children and adults in foster or adoptive homes, day care centers, domiciliary care facilities, or institutions.

Guides clients in home and budget management, housing, child care and parenting skills, employment, recreation and living arrangements.

Schedules and conducts interviews and follow-up visits to provide service and counseling.

Prepares and provides testimony in court under supervision.

Makes referrals to other public and private social services and community agencies and resources to meet client needs; assists clients and their families in understanding and utilizing these resources.

Attends and participates in case reviews and supervisory conferences and is exposed to a variety of learning experiences, including forms and on-the-job training programs, designed to develop professional and technical skills.

Documents activities and services using designated agency methods and procedures, including social service summaries, correspondence and reports.

Performs related work as required.

**Required Knowledges, Skills, and Abilities:** Knowledge of the basic principles of economics, sociology, psychology, and other social sciences.

Knowledge of current social, economic, and health problems and their impact on the growth and development of people.

Knowledge of human development and behavior including the individual, family, and group.

Ability to understand and accept the needs and rights of others and to work with adults and children who are physically challenged, mentally disabled, emotionally troubled, and economically disadvantaged.

Ability to learn, interpret, and apply relevant laws, regulations, and policies governing agency services.

Ability to learn how to conduct individual and family interviews and to use them to identify individual and family problems.

Ability to learn how to effectively interact with individuals, families, and as a member of a treatment team.

Ability to plan and organize work, prepare adequate records and reports, set priorities, and learn to maintain a caseload in an effective and timely manner.

Ability to adequately express ideas orally and in writing.

**Minimum Experience and Training:** A bachelor's degree which includes or is supplemented by successful completion of 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences;

or

Two years of experience as a County Social Services Aide 3 and two years of college level course work which includes 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences;

or

Any equivalent combination of experience and training which includes 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences and one year of experience as a County Social Services Aide 3 or in a similar position performing paraprofessional case management functions.

**Job Title: COUNTY CASEWORKER 2**

**Job Code: L0624**

**Definition:** This is professional social services work in a County Children and Youth, Mental Health/Mental Retardation, or Human Services Agency.

Employees in this class provide a full range of social and case management services to children, youth and families, people who are mentally disabled, people who are physically challenged, and others to assist them in attaining a more satisfactory social, economic, emotional, or physical adjustment. An important aspect of this work is the employment of casework skills in obtaining essential information, counseling clients and members of their families, and helping them to utilize all available resources. Work also involves the application of problem solving techniques, providing counseling to maximize service delivery and to achieve service plan goals, monitoring client behavior, and interacting with agencies which make up the service network. Work is performed in accordance with established regulations, policies, and procedures, but employees are expected to exercise initiative and judgment in discharging their duties. Supervision may be exercised over paraprofessional and/or clerical staff. Work is reviewed by a professional social service or administrative supervisor through regularly scheduled individual and group conferences, and the review of records and reports.

**Examples of Work:** Obtains information from clients, members of their families, and others, necessary for the identification of social, economic, emotional, health or physical problems and for assisting clients in obtaining a wide variety of services on the basis of established policy, regulations and statutes.

Provides casework and counseling services to clients and members of their families to aid them in achieving a more satisfactory adjustment to their specific problems or situations.

Provides protective and supportive services for abused or neglected children and adults.

Prepares documents and provides testimony in court according to agency procedure.

Provides protective and supportive services for clients who are in situations detrimental to their well-being or that of the community, or who are undergoing treatment or hospitalization.

Participates in team meetings for the purpose of developing service plans to address the needs of clients and their families.

Continually assesses the adequacy of client service plans and revises, when necessary, to achieve goals and objectives.

Identifies appropriate community resources for clients, refers and links them to those resources, and advocates on behalf of client for resource service delivery.

Works collaboratively with social agencies, hospitals, clinics, courts, and other community resources.

Teaches clients home and budget management, child/adult care, and parenting skills; and assists with housing, employment, recreation and living arrangements, as required.

Interprets agency programs, policies, and procedures to individuals, groups, and other agencies.

Attends staff meetings, individual and group supervisory conferences, and training programs designed to develop performance and case management skills and that continuously familiarize staff with current methods and techniques in the field of social services.

Documents case activity through records, social studies, case histories, correspondence, and reports according to applicable policies and procedures.

May supervise paraprofessional and/or clerical staff.

May serve as a lead worker for professional staff and student interns.

Performs related work as required.

**Required Knowledges, Skills, and Abilities:** Knowledge of current social case management principles, techniques, and methods.

Knowledge of current social, economic, and health problems and resources and the recognition of their impact on the growth and development of people.

Knowledge of individual and group development and behavior and ways of working effectively with adults and children who have social, economic, emotional, or health problems.

Knowledge of the basic principles and methods of program interpretation and community organization.

Knowledge of social welfare policy and law as they relate to agency function and purpose and societal structures.

Ability to work effectively with people and aid them to grow in the constructive use of their potential in adjusting to their specific problems.

Ability to understand and accept the needs and rights of others and to work with adults and children who are physically challenged, emotionally troubled, or economically disadvantaged.

Ability to conduct individual and family interviews and to use them to identify individual and family problems.

Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with clients, their families, other staff, outside agencies and institutions, and the general public.

Ability to plan and organize work, prepare adequate records and reports, set priorities, and maintain a caseload in an effective and timely manner.

Ability to plan, organize, and direct the work of others.

Ability to interpret and apply relevant laws, regulations, and policies governing agency services.

Ability to adequately express ideas orally and in writing.

**Minimum Experience and Training:** Six months of experience as a County Caseworker 1;

or

Successful completion of the County Social Casework Intern program;

or

A bachelor's degree with a social welfare major;

or

A bachelor's degree which includes or is supplemented by 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences and one year of professional social casework experience in a public or private social services agency;

or

Any equivalent combination of experience and training which includes 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences.



## **COUNTY CASEWORK SUPERVISOR**

### **NATURE OF WORK**

This is professional social service work of a supervisory nature. Employees supervise the provision of case management services to children, youth and families; persons with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities; and others, to assist them in attaining a more satisfactory social, economic, emotional or physical adjustment. The work involves supervising and training a small group of professional social service workers, paraprofessionals and clerical staff. An employee may also carry a caseload.

### **JOB REQUIREMENTS**

You may be tested before your qualifications are reviewed. Your test results will count only if you meet all job requirements. If after reading the requirements you are not sure you qualify, contact one of the Commission's offices listed at the end of this announcement.

You must be a Pennsylvania resident, of good moral character and able to perform the essential functions of the job.

Some of the positions in this job title come under the provisions of the Child Protective Services Law. If you are a final candidate for one of these positions, you will have to provide reports on your background from such sources as the Pennsylvania State Police and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. If your background is unacceptable, you will be disqualified for employment in such positions. You will receive information about these requirements and how to obtain the required reports at the time you are being considered for employment.

Some of the positions in this job title come under the provisions of the Older Adults Protective Services Act. If you are a final candidate for one of these positions, you will have to obtain a report of criminal record information from the Pennsylvania State Police or a statement that the State Police Central Repository contains no information relating to you. If you are currently a Pennsylvania resident and a final candidate but have not been a resident for two years prior to the date that you received notification that you are a final candidate, you are also required to furnish a report of Federal Criminal History Record Information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. If your background is unacceptable, you will be disqualified for employment in such positions. You will receive information about this requirement and how to obtain the required reports at the time you are being considered for employment.

Minimum Requirements:

Two years of professional experience in public or private social work and a bachelor's degree with major coursework in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences;

OR an equivalent combination of experience and education, which includes 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences.

Clarification of Requirements:

The equivalency statement under "Minimum Requirements" means that related advanced education may be substituted for a segment of the experience requirement and related experience may be substituted for required education, except for 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice or other related social sciences. Unrelated experience or education will not be accepted.

## Appendix B

# Investigation/Assessment Outcome Report

## I. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

A. DATE OF INCIDENT BEGIN		DATE OF INCIDENT END		REFERRAL RECEIVED DATE	REFERRAL ID	REFERRAL TYPE
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
ESTIMATED INDICATOR	<input type="checkbox"/>	ESTIMATED INDICATOR	<input type="checkbox"/>			
ALLEGED VICTIM / SUBJECT CHILD						
UNKNOWN NAME INDICATOR		ANONYMOUS INDICATOR		DOES NOT EXIST INDICATOR		
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
NAME						
PREFIX	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME	LAST NAME		SUFFIX	
	[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]			
AKA NAME:						
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN)		DATE OF BIRTH	AGE	MCI ID	CWIS ID	
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
SSN UNKNOWN INDICATOR	<input type="checkbox"/>	SSN NONE	<input type="checkbox"/>	DATE OF BIRTH UNKNOWN	<input type="checkbox"/>	ESTIMATED
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GENDER	RACE	ETHNICITY			DATE OF DEATH	ESTIMATED
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]				
ROLE AT INTAKE			RELATIONSHIP			
[REDACTED]			[REDACTED]			
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	CHILD LIVING ARRANGEMENT AT TIME OF INCIDENT/ABUSE			CURRENT LOCATION IND	
		[REDACTED]			[REDACTED]	
ADDRESS TYPE	BUSINESS NAME	ADDRESS UNKNOWN <input type="checkbox"/>				
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]					
ADDRESS LINE 1						
[REDACTED]						
ADDRESS LINE 2						
ADDRESS LINE 3						
CITY	[REDACTED]	STATE	[REDACTED]	REGION/PROVINCE	[REDACTED]	
ZIP/POSTAL CODE	[REDACTED]	COUNTY	[REDACTED]	COUNTRY	[REDACTED]	
SCHOOL OR DAYCARE (NAME & ADDRESS)						
ADDRESS TYPE	ADDRESS LINE 1					
ADDRESS LINE 2						
ADDRESS LINE 3						
CITY		STATE		REGION/PROVINCE		
ZIP / POSTAL CODE		COUNTY		COUNTRY		
GRADE		CLASS TYPE		ROOM	HOURS CHILD PRESENT	
CONTACT TYPE	CONTACT	CONTACT ADDITIONAL INFO				
DIRECTIONS/LOCATION						

# Investigation/Assessment Outcome Report

## PARENTS / LEGAL GUARDIAN / CARETAKER

UNKNOWN NAME INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		ANONYMOUS INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		DOES NOT EXIST INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>	
NAME					
PREFIX	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME	LAST NAME	SUFFIX	
AKA NAME:					
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN)		DATE OF BIRTH	AGE	MCI ID	CWIS ID
SSN UNKNOWN INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/> SSN NONE <input type="checkbox"/>		DATE OF BIRTH UNKNOWN <input type="checkbox"/>	ESTIMATED <input type="checkbox"/>		
GENDER	RACE	ETHNICITY	MILITARY SERVICE	DATE OF DEATH	ESTIMATED
ROLE AT INTAKE			RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM/SUBJECT CHILD		
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	PRISON INMATE ID		CURRENT LOCATION IND	
ADDRESS TYPE	BUSINESS NAME	ADDRESS UNKNOWN <input type="checkbox"/>			
Home					
ADDRESS LINE 1					
ADDRESS LINE 2					
ADDRESS LINE 3					
CITY	STATE	REGION/PROVINCE			
ZIP/POSTAL CODE	COUNTY	COUNTRY			

## ALLEGED PERPETRATOR / RESPONSIBLE PERSON

UNKNOWN NAME INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		ANONYMOUS INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		DOES NOT EXIST INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>	
NAME					
PREFIX	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME	LAST NAME	SUFFIX	
AKA NAME:					
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN)		DATE OF BIRTH	AGE	MCI ID	CWIS ID
SSN UNKNOWN INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/> SSN NONE <input type="checkbox"/>		DATE OF BIRTH UNKNOWN <input type="checkbox"/>	ESTIMATED <input type="checkbox"/>		
GENDER	RACE	ETHNICITY	MILITARY SERVICE	DATE OF DEATH	ESTIMATED
ROLE AT INTAKE			RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM/SUBJECT CHILD		
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	PRISON INMATE ID		CURRENT LOCATION IND	
EMPLOYED BY SCHOOL OR CHILD CARE					
ADDRESS TYPE	BUSINESS NAME	ADDRESS UNKNOWN <input type="checkbox"/>			
Home					
ADDRESS LINE 1					
ADDRESS LINE 2					
ADDRESS LINE 3					
CITY	STATE	REGION/PROVINCE			
ZIP/POSTAL CODE	COUNTY	COUNTRY			

# Investigation/Assessment Outcome Report

## FAMILY HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

UNKNOWN NAME INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		ANONYMOUS INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		DOES NOT EXIST INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>	
NAME					
PREFIX	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME	LAST NAME	SUFFIX	
AKA NAME:					
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN)		DATE OF BIRTH	AGE	MCI ID	CWIS ID
SSN UNKNOWN INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/> SSN NONE <input type="checkbox"/>		DATE OF BIRTH UNKNOWN <input type="checkbox"/>	ESTIMATED <input type="checkbox"/>		
GENDER	RACE	ETHNICITY	MILITARY SERVICE	DATE OF DEATH	ESTIMATED
REFERRAL ROLE			RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM/SUBJECT CHILD		
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	PRISON INMATE ID		CURRENT LOCATION IND	
ADDRESS TYPE	BUSINESS NAME	ADDRESS UNKNOWN <input type="checkbox"/>			
ADDRESS LINE 1					
ADDRESS LINE 2					
ADDRESS LINE 3					
CITY		STATE		REGION/PROVINCE	
ZIP/POSTAL CODE		COUNTY		COUNTRY	
DIRECTION/LOCATION EXPLANATION					
CONTACT TYPE	CONTACT	CONTACT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION			

## ORGANIZATION/FACILITY INFORMATION

FACILITY/BUSINESS NAME		SERVICE LOCATION NAME		MPI ID	SERVICE LOCATION ID
ORGANIZATION/FACILITY TYPE				MPI PROVIDER TYPE	
ADDRESS LINE 1					
ADDRESS LINE 2					
ADDRESS LINE 3					
CITY		STATE		REGION/PROVINCE	
ZIP/POSTAL CODE		COUNTY		COUNTRY	
DIRECTION/LOCATION EXPLANATION					

# Investigation/Assessment Outcome Report

## COLLATERAL CONTACTS

UNKNOWN NAME INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		ANONYMOUS INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		DOES NOT EXIST INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>	
NAME					
PREFIX	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME	LAST NAME	SUFFIX	
AKA NAME:					
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN)		DATE OF BIRTH	AGE	MCI ID	CWIS ID
SSN UNKNOWN INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		SSN NONE <input type="checkbox"/>	DATE OF BIRTH UNKNOWN <input type="checkbox"/>	ESTIMATED <input type="checkbox"/>	
GENDER	RACE	ETHNICITY	MILITARY SERVICE	DATE OF DEATH	ESTIMATED
REFERRAL ROLE			RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM/SUBJECT CHILD		
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	PRISON INMATE ID		CURRENT LOCATION IND	
ADDRESS TYPE	BUSINESS NAME	ADDRESS UNKNOWN <input type="checkbox"/>			
ADDRESS LINE 1					
ADDRESS LINE 2					
ADDRESS LINE 3					
CITY		STATE		REGION/PROVINCE	
ZIP/POSTAL CODE		COUNTY		COUNTRY	
DIRECTION/LOCATION EXPLANATION					
CONTACT TYPE	CONTACT	CONTACT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION			



# Investigation/Assessment Outcome Report

## THE INITIAL REFERRAL SOURCE

UNKNOWN NAME INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		ANONYMOUS INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>	
PREFIX	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME	LAST NAME
ROLE AT INTAKE		RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM	GENDER
ADDRESS TYPE		BUSINESS NAME	
Work			
ADDRESS LINE 1			
ADDRESS LINE 2			
ADDRESS LINE 3			
CITY		STATE	REGION/PROVINCE
ZIP/POSTAL CODE		COUNTY	COUNTRY
CONTACT TYPE	CONTACT	CONTACT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
Work			

## SECONDARY REFERRAL SOURCE

UNKNOWN NAME INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>		ANONYMOUS INDICATOR <input type="checkbox"/>	
PREFIX	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME	LAST NAME
ROLE AT INTAKE		RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM	GENDER
ADDRESS TYPE		BUSINESS NAME	
ADDRESS LINE 1			
ADDRESS LINE 2			
ADDRESS LINE 3			
CITY		STATE	REGION/PROVINCE
ZIP/POSTAL CODE		COUNTY	COUNTRY
CONTACT TYPE	CONTACT	CONTACT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	

# Investigation/Assessment Outcome Report

## II. NATURE OF ABUSE/NEGLECT

ALLEGED VICTIM/SUBJECT CHILD [REDACTED]	AGE OF VICTIM CHILD/SUBJECT CHILD AT START OF INCIDENT [REDACTED]
ALLEGED PERPETRATOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSON [REDACTED]	AGE OF ALLEGED PERPETRATOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSON AT START OF INCIDENT [REDACTED]
CPSL RELATIONSHIP	PERPETRATOR BY
DATE OF INCIDENT NARRATIVE	
CATEGORY OF ABUSE/NEGLECT [REDACTED]	SUBCATEGORY OF ABUSE/NEGLECT [REDACTED]
RESULTING INJURY	INJURY LOCATIONS
ALLEGATION OUTCOME [REDACTED]	ALLEGATION OUTCOME REASON [REDACTED]
OUTCOME EXPLANATION [REDACTED]	

## ADDRESS WHERE INCIDENT OCCURED

ORGANIZATION/BUSINESS NAME [REDACTED]					
ADDRESS TYPE	ADDRESS LINE 1 [REDACTED]				
ADDRESS LINE 2 [REDACTED]					
ADDRESS LINE 3 [REDACTED]					
CITY	[REDACTED]	STATE	[REDACTED]	REGION/PROVINCE	[REDACTED]
ZIP/POSTAL CODE	[REDACTED]	COUNTY	[REDACTED]	COUNTRY	[REDACTED]
DIRECTION/LOCATION EXPLANATION					

## ADDITIONAL ALLEGATION INFORMATION

DEATH IS SUSPECTED TO BE A RESULT OF NEGLECT OR ABUSE		DOCTOR HAS CERTIFIED THE CHILD TO BE IN SERIOUS OR CRITICAL CONDITION, BASED ON NEGLECT OR ABUSE	
RITUALISTIC ACT	RITUALISTIC ACT TYPE (NARRATIVE)	CHILD TRAFFICKING	CHILD TRAFFICKING TYPE
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
ABUSIVE HEAD TRAUMA	BIRTH HOSPITAL		
[REDACTED]			

## Investigation/Assessment Outcome Report

### II. NATURE OF ABUSE/NEGLECT

ALLEGED VICTIM/SUBJECT CHILD		AGE OF VICTIM CHILD/SUBJECT CHILD AT START OF INCIDENT	
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	
ALLEGED PERPETRATOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSON		AGE OF ALLEGED PERPETRATOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSON AT START OF INCIDENT	
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	
CPSL RELATIONSHIP		PERPETRATOR BY	
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	
DATE OF INCIDENT NARRATIVE			
[REDACTED]			
CATEGORY OF ABUSE/NEGLECT		SUBCATEGORY OF ABUSE/NEGLECT	
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	
RESULTING INJURY		INJURY LOCATIONS	
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	
ALLEGATION OUTCOME		ALLEGATION OUTCOME REASON	
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	
OUTCOME EXPLANATION			
[REDACTED]			
ADDRESS WHERE INCIDENT OCCURED			
ORGANIZATION/BUSINESS NAME			
[REDACTED]			
ADDRESS TYPE	ADDRESS LINE 1		
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		
ADDRESS LINE 2			
[REDACTED]			
ADDRESS LINE 3			
[REDACTED]			
CITY	[REDACTED]	STATE	[REDACTED]
ZIP/POSTAL CODE	[REDACTED]	COUNTY	[REDACTED]
DIRECTION/LOCATION EXPLANATION		REGION/PROVINCE	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		COUNTRY	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]			
ADDITIONAL ALLEGATION INFORMATION			
DEATH IS SUSPECTED TO BE A RESULT OF NEGLECT OR ABUSE		DOCTOR HAS CERTIFIED THE CHILD TO BE IN SERIOUS OR CRITICAL CONDITION, BASED ON NEGLECT OR ABUSE	
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	
RITUALISTIC ACT	RITUALISTIC ACT TYPE (NARRATIVE)	CHILD TRAFFICKING	CHILD TRAFFICKING TYPE
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
ABUSIVE HEAD TRAUMA	BIRTH HOSPITAL		
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		

# Investigation/Assessment Outcome Report

## II. NATURE OF ABUSE/NEGLECT

ALLEGED VICTIM/SUBJECT CHILD	AGE OF VICTIM CHILD/SUBJECT CHILD AT START OF INCIDENT
ALLEGED PERPETRATOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSON	AGE OF ALLEGED PERPETRATOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSON AT START OF INCIDENT
CPSL RELATIONSHIP	PERPETRATOR BY
DATE OF INCIDENT NARRATIVE	
CATEGORY OF ABUSE/NEGLECT	SUBCATEGORY OF ABUSE/NEGLECT
RESULTING INJURY	INJURY LOCATIONS
ALLEGATION OUTCOME	ALLEGATION OUTCOME REASON
OUTCOME EXPLANATION	

## ADDRESS WHERE INCIDENT OCCURED

ORGANIZATION/BUSINESS NAME					
ADDRESS TYPE					
ADDRESS LINE 1					
ADDRESS LINE 2					
ADDRESS LINE 3					
CITY		STATE	REGION/PROVINCE		
ZIP/POSTAL CODE		COUNTY	COUNTRY		
DIRECTION/LOCATION EXPLANATION					

## ADDITIONAL ALLEGATION INFORMATION

DEATH IS SUSPECTED TO BE A RESULT OF NEGLECT OR ABUSE		DOCTOR HAS CERTIFIED THE CHILD TO BE IN SERIOUS OR CRITICAL CONDITION, BASED ON NEGLECT OR ABUSE	
RITUALISTIC ACT	RITUALISTIC ACT TYPE (NARRATIVE)	CHILD TRAFFICKING	CHILD TRAFFICKING TYPE
ABUSIVE HEAD TRAUMA	BIRTH HOSPITAL		

## Investigation/Assessment Outcome Report

### III. CPS ACTIONS

	Yes/No
WAS CHILD ALLEGEDLY ABUSED WHILE IN A "CHILD CARE SERVICE" (As defined by CPSL)?	[REDACTED]
WAS CHILD REMOVED FROM ALLEGED ABUSIVE SETTING?	[REDACTED]
WERE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS NOTIFIED OF THE REPORT?	[REDACTED]
WAS THERE A RELIGIOUS BASIS FOR THE CHILD'S CONDITION?	[REDACTED]
DID THE CHILD DIE AS A RESULT OF THIS INCIDENT OF ABUSE/NEGLECT?	[REDACTED]
IS THERE A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION OR OUTCOME BASED ON THE SAME FACTUAL BASIS?	[REDACTED]

### IV. INVESTIGATION/ASSESSMENT STATUS

INVESTIGATION/ASSESSMENT DECISION		
[REDACTED]		
INVESTIGATION/ASSESSMENT OUTCOME REASON		
[REDACTED]		
ACCEPTED FOR SERVICE	DATE ACCEPTED FOR SERVICE	PRIMARY REASON CASE ACCEPTED /NOT ACCEPTED FOR SERVICE
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
PLEASE EXPLAIN IN DETAIL WHY THE CASE WAS ACCEPTED/NOT ACCEPTED FOR SERVICE		
[REDACTED]		
MULTIDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATIVE TEAM		
[REDACTED]		
IS THERE A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION OR OUTCOME BASED ON THE SAME FACTUAL CIRCUMSTANCES?		[REDACTED]
CPS GREATER THAN 30 DAYS		[REDACTED]
REASON FOR EXTENSION		
[REDACTED]		

INDICATED - CPS INVESTIGATION	INDICATED - MEDICAL EVIDENCE	INDICATED - PERP ADMISSION	DATE OF COURT ACTION
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
REASON FOR CHANGE OF STATUS			DATE OF STATUS CHANGE
[REDACTED]			[REDACTED]

PLEASE EXPLAIN IN DETAIL THE BASIS FOR THE INVESTIGATION OUTCOME AND CASE OUTCOME SELECTED AND SPECIFY CRIMINAL ACTION

[REDACTED]
COURT FINDINGS, IF FOUNDED
[REDACTED]

### V. NEED FOR PROTECTIVE SERVICES

SERVICES PLANNED OR PROVIDED			
[REDACTED]			
NEED FOR PROTECTIVE SERVICES			
[REDACTED]			
COUNTY WHERE ABUSE OCCURRED		INVESTIGATING COUNTY/REGION	
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	
INVESTIGATING WORKER NAME		SUPERVISOR NAME	DATE OF APPROVAL
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
ADMINISTRATOR/DESIGNEE	DATE OF APPROVAL	LEGAL REVIEW	DATE OF REVIEW
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
ADMINISTRATOR/DESIGNEE		DATE INVESTIGATION/ASSESSMENT RECEIVED	
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	

## Appendix C

During a visit to one county CYS agency for this report, a veteran worker took the time to create a list of the changes she felt were necessary to improve Pennsylvania's child-welfare system. Here are her words:

### **The system**

- The system doesn't work. We are not breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect. We are still seeing generations of the same families presenting with neglect and abuse issues.
- Additional paperwork does NOT ensure children's safety. It only creates situations where caseworkers have less time to do direct services with clients and ultimately places children at higher risk of abuse/neglect.
- There are unrealistic expectations. It is impossible for a CYS worker to complete everything that he/she is expected to do with the expectation that it all be done well. It doesn't matter how experienced or well-trained a worker is, one person can only accomplish so much within a work day.
- Continuing to expand what is expected of CYS agencies without providing them with the resources to do so only sets up a system where the quality of services is poor.

### **Reduction of paperwork**

- Paperwork should not be redundant. The Safety Assessment and Risk Assessment need to be made into one form. The areas (drug and alcohol, domestic violence, housing, etc.) being assessed are similar, so workers are unnecessarily documenting information twice.
- If there are 5 children and 5 different allegations, then there are 25 allegations listed within CAPS. CWIS/CAPS needs to be redesigned so that when there are 5 children with the same allegation (such as inadequate hygiene) that it isn't inserted 5 different times (once for each child) into CAPS. There should be one allegation that enables more than one person to be attached to it. It is time consuming to complete the way it is currently set up.
- If it is evident that ChildLine forwarded a report to law enforcement, then CYS should not have to forward the same report to law enforcement again. Of course, there would still be contact between CYS and LEO for investigative purposes. CYS would just not be wasting time doing a task that was already done by ChildLine.

### **The laws**

- Laws need to be geared toward ensuring children's safety. Documentation does not ensure children's safety; it only explains what actions were and were not taken — that is, if the worker even has time to provide thorough, detailed documentation.
- Current laws do not ensure children's safety from known sexual offenders. Megan's Law doesn't prohibit offenders from residing with children. There are often no criminal stipulations for criminally convicted sex offenders not to reside with children or not to be alone with children. There are no laws which would prohibit a judge from giving a sexual offender house arrest within a home where children reside. Even the CPS law (which is geared to ensure children's safety from their inappropriate caregivers) fails to recognize a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender having unsupervised contact with their own child as a form of child abuse.



- Laws should assist CYS in ensuring children’s safety from known sexual offenders. Instead, we hear convicted sex offenders state that their parole officer and the criminal court know they are living with children and are OK with it.
- The laws put up barriers to conducting thorough investigations/assessments. In order for CYS to obtain collateral information on a family, the family needs to sign releases to consent for this information to be disclosed. The parents/caregivers have the right to refuse to sign releases to consent for this information to be disclosed. Without this information, CYS is unable to fully and accurately assess if concerns exist. Sometimes families only cooperate just enough to make it difficult to justify filing a court petition to compel. Also, petitions to compel cooperation are time-consuming and delay the overall investigation/assessment into the children’s safety and well-being.
  - Even with a signed release, drug and alcohol treatment providers only provide CYS with limited information due to their confidentiality laws. With the rise in drug abuse issues, there should be more open communication by these providers. We should be working together to help resolve issues.
  - There is nothing to compel providers to respond to these releases or to respond in a timely manner. Sometimes CYS receives nothing back from a release or receives the information way past the 60-day timeframe in which the investigation is to be completed. Making additional phone calls to attempt to get the information within the 60-day investigative timeframe can be time-consuming.
- Parents of drug-exposed infants often do not want to let their child have an Ages and Stages assessment. These children are at higher risk for having developmental delays and therefore should be assessed for developmental services. However, there is nothing in place to compel these parents to do so.
- Some laws could be geared toward increasing the responsibilities of parents, the criminal justice system, and other service providers instead of solely relying on an overburdened CYS system.

## **Training**

- Caseworkers seem ill prepared for this job, even after completing “Charting the Course.”
- There should be tests attached to the trainings regarding the laws and regulations to ensure that the worker knows this information. Yes, it would require that they actually study the information and then hopefully retain it. In order to do a good job, they need to know the laws that apply to this job.
- More trainings should be interactive simulations of real situations such as the safety training or training where workers interview real children, not other caseworkers who are pretending to be children.
- Field training and hands-on training is extremely valuable. Therefore, a lot of training should involve the new caseworkers shadowing other experienced caseworkers in the field and learning the paperwork process this way as well. The more-experienced worker would be role-modeling for the newer worker. They would be completing the paperwork together. The new worker would then gradually start taking the lead in the field and completing the paperwork with the more-experienced worker overseeing this.
- There needs to be some upfront training on how to de-escalate hostile individuals and training on strategies/methods to gain the client’s cooperation and commitment to making changes.

Dealing with hostile individuals is not only a safety issue, but it impacts workers emotionally. Gaining the client's cooperation and commitment in making changes is key to resolving neglect/abuse issues.

- Just when workers feel like they know that the guidelines/laws/regulations/policies are, they change again.

### **Retention**

- This job is not for everyone, no matter how much training or what type of training is given.
- Workers feel overwhelmed for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to dealing with hostile individuals, having many time constraints/due dates for completion of tasks, having so many job tasks that they can't keep up, not being able to complete one task before some else needs their immediate attention, working long hours, and worrying if all the right decisions were made to ensure a child's safety. You see people at their worst, and it has an emotional toll on you. It is easy to become burnt out very quickly.
- Some staff (caseworkers and supervisors) do paperwork on their own time in order to keep up. No one is asked to work for free, but it is occurring. Adding extra hours to your day can be tiring, but knowing you're behind in your paperwork is also emotionally draining.
- Workloads need to be manageable for both caseworkers and supervisors. Supervisory staff is also overwhelmed with their workloads and have difficulty keeping up.
  - It is difficult to give everything the attention it needs. It can be difficult to spend quality time in direct supervision with caseworkers due to the extensive workloads of both the caseworker and the supervisor.
  - Sometimes supervisors are doing casework due to the agency being understaffed, or there being no available caseworker at that time to handle that particular situation, or the assigned caseworker does not have the time to complete a task on time.
- It is a vicious cycle when workers quit due to being overwhelmed, thus leaving the remaining workers with even more tasks to complete and feeling even more overwhelmed than they already were, resulting in additional workers wanting to quit. We very rarely are functioning at full staff.
- A caseworker who no longer works here said, "A supervisor can either make you or break you here." A supportive supervisory staff can help improve job satisfaction. At times, it can be a difficult balancing act to be supportive while at the same time ensuring that the necessary steps are being taken to assess/address children's safety/well-being and ensuring that regulatory requirements are met.
- Positive attitudes need to be presented from management. Grumpiness and negativity is contagious.





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# STATE of the CHILD

A special report by **Auditor General Eugene DePasquale**