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Auditor General DePasquale Says Allegheny County Taking Innovative Approach to Improving Child-Welfare System

PITTSBURGH – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today visited the Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families’ to learn about the agency’s use of technology to help call screeners prioritize which child-abuse calls to investigate.

DePasquale visited the CYF office today to hear about the Allegheny Family Screening Tool and to talk with some of the department’s 40 Youth Support Partners, child-welfare system alumni who work with youths currently in the system.

“While county children and youth services agencies statewide are struggling to work within a broken system, Allegheny County is attempting to use technology so it can more efficiently deploy the resources it has,” DePasquale said of the screening tool.

“However, it’s important to remember that even the best technology cannot replace dedicated, skilled child-welfare workers who strive every day to protect children.”

Last month, DePasquale released an 80-page special report, [“State of the Child,”](#) which assesses the strengths and challenges of Pennsylvania’s child-welfare system. A yearlong review of 13 focus counties, including Allegheny, found poorly trained, underpaid caseworkers wrestling with heavy caseloads and dangerous situations in the field — all of which leads to high turnover rates and impacts services to children.

DePasquale said today’s demonstration of the screening tool showed him the value of using technology to lessen the administrative burden on caseworkers so that they can spend more time in the field with at-risk children and families.

“One of the first steps in the process is making informed decisions about which cases to investigate, and that’s exactly what the screening tool helps do,” he said.

DePasquale also said he was impressed by the Youth Support Partners, who use their experience in the child-welfare system to help current young people in the system.

“These young adults provide a unique support system for at-risk youths in the county,” DePasquale said.

The “State of the Child” special report is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov.

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