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Auditor General DePasquale Says Immediate Action Needed to Better Protect Children at Risk of Abuse, Neglect

Provides an action plan to stem an emerging crisis

HARRISBURG – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today released his action plan to help keep Pennsylvania’s at-risk children safer.

The 43-page special report, “[State of the Child Action Plan](#),” details 28 recommendations for change to immediately give children and youth (CYS) caseworkers the time and resources they desperately need to help keep at-risk children safer.

“As promised, I have created a plan for the governor, the legislature, the Department of Human Services, county leaders and others to follow to improve the environment for CYS caseworkers, who are on the front lines of making sure at-risk children are safe,” DePasquale said. “Especially given the family-shattering effects of the opioid epidemic, the time to intervene on behalf of these children, to break the cycle of abuse and neglect, is now.”

The action plan is a follow-up to DePasquale’s “[State of the Child](#)” special report, which was released in September 2017 and found that Pennsylvania’s child-welfare system is broken. Since that time, DePasquale has crisscrossed the state, visiting nearly 20 counties to talk with child-welfare caseworkers, supervisors and managers, as well as child-abuse medical experts and nonprofit leaders, among others.

“The voices of those who work with these children and families every day were key in creating this report,” DePasquale said. “We found programs that are working well and that have the potential to be replicated across the state.

“These programs, many of which are preventive or diversionary, are helping to protect kids before their families experience major problems. These glimmers of hope show that Pennsylvania’s child-welfare system might be broken, but it does not have to stay that way.”

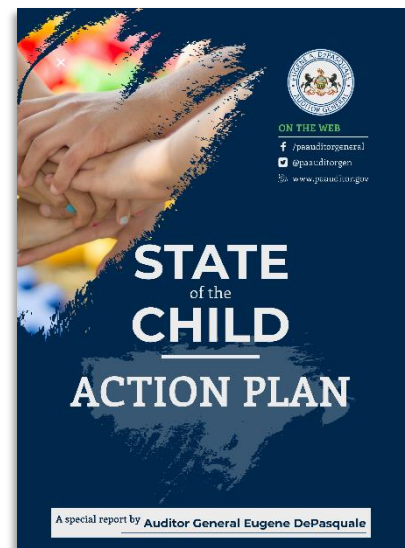
Top recommendations

The 28 recommendations are divided into categories and marked with icons so that readers can easily see which ones likely will cost additional money and which ones likely will not.

Recommendation categories

To provide easy use of the report, the 28 recommendations are broken into categories based on whom they are directed toward:

1. **Governor and General Assembly,**
2. **Pennsylvania Department of Human Services,**
3. **County leadership and CYS agencies,**
4. **University of Pittsburgh: School of Social Work’s Child Welfare Resource Center,**
5. **Pennsylvania State Police,**
6. **Private service providers, and**
7. **State Civil Service Commission.**



“Some of these recommendations do require additional funding,” DePasquale said. “But here’s what I know: If the General Assembly and the governor do not spend this money now, on protecting and helping children, the costs on the back end – in terms of foster care, the juvenile justice system and even lives – will be exponentially higher.”

During his eight-month listening tour, DePasquale said, he heard caseworkers begging over and over again for less bureaucracy so they could spend more time with the children and families on their caseloads.

“Pennsylvania cannot let abuse happen because it is buried in unnecessary paperwork,” DePasquale said.

Of the 28 recommendations, five stand out as potentially having the greatest impact on child-welfare workers’ time and, therefore, child safety:

- Where possible, the Department of Human Services’ Office of Children, Youth and Families should reduce unnecessary mandated data that must be entered for each case. (**Recommendation 11**, page 19)
- The Office of Children, Youth and Families should continue changes to the Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) which prevent incomplete forms from being submitted to ChildLine. (**Recommendation 13**, page 21)
- The General Assembly should increase funding to provide adequate resources for proven preventive and diversionary programs that help strengthen families and prevent children from formally entering the CYS and juvenile justice systems. (**Recommendation 3**, page 9)
- County CYS agencies should improve partnerships with children’s advocacy centers and child-abuse medical experts. (**Recommendation 19**, page 28)
- Third-party, private providers should adapt the services they provide as needed to address the changing needs of at-risk families. (**Recommendation 27**, page 33)

“Implementing these recommendations means that not only will the children of Pennsylvania be safer, but they will also have the resources available to help them learn to live full, productive adult lives,” DePasquale said.

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

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