

# Funding Pennsylvania's Child Welfare System

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## Overview

- The child welfare system is an array of government services designed to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children.
- The goals of the system include:
  - protecting children who have been, or are at risk of being, abused or neglected;
  - assisting children who have been temporarily or permanently removed from their parents' homes;
  - and supporting and preserving families

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## A state-supervised and county-administered system

- The Department of Public Welfare (DPW) is ultimately responsible for the child welfare system.
- The department's Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF):
  - reviews county plans and budget requests;
  - develops and implements policies and regulations;
  - monitors and evaluates policies and programs;
  - enforces program standards and requirements

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## A state-supervised and county-administered system

- Counties provide services to adjudicated dependent and delinquent children and their families.
  - Child welfare services are administered by county Children and Youth Agencies.
  - Juvenile justice services are administered by Juvenile Probation Offices.
- The county agency determines each child's need for services.

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## Statutory Authority

- Federal and state laws provide the legal framework for Pennsylvania's child welfare system.
  - The Public Welfare Code (gives DPW oversight authority and requires the state to reimburse counties for the cost of services);
  - The County Code (requires each county to provide services);
  - The Juvenile Act (defines dependent and delinquent children, establishes jurisdiction of the juvenile court, and provides for the placement of dependent and delinquent children);
  - The Child Protective Services Law; and
  - The Adoption Act.

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## Provision of Services

### County Responsibility

- OCYF regulations require each county to provide services designed to keep children in their own homes; prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation; and help families overcome problems that result in dependency and delinquency.
- Counties also are required to provide reunification services designed to reunite children in placement with their families and to provide a permanent home for a child in placement where reunification is not an option.
- Counties may also provide services that will prevent the entry of families and children into the formal Children and Youth system or Juvenile Probation system.

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## Provision of Services

### County Responsibility

- All counties are required to provide the following services:
  - Intake, investigation and assessment of children and families;
  - A full range of placement services for children removed from their families;
  - Placement prevention services that enable children to remain in their homes;
  - Adoption services; and
  - Other services or care ordered by the court.

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## Provision of Services

### Service Providers

- OCYF regulations require county employees to perform the following activities: intake, investigation, family assessment, case planning, and case management.
- Counties may contract with private providers for all other services.

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## Child Welfare Services

### IN-HOME SERVICES

- Include counseling, parenting skills training, treatment, and therapy.
- The overall goal is to improve the home environment to prevent abuse, neglect and placement.
- In-home services are provided to a family when there is a problem that does not require the child to be removed from the home.
- Also, in-home services may be provided to families with a child in placement when family reunification is an option.

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## Child Welfare Services

### PLACEMENT SERVICES

- Out-of-home living arrangements provided to children who have been removed from their families.
- Community-based placement includes kinship (relative) care, foster care, emergency shelter, and independent living.
- Institutional placement includes state-run juvenile detention centers and private residential treatment programs.

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## Child Welfare Services

### FAMILY PRESERVATION AND PREVENTION SERVICES

- Include:
  - after school programs and youth activities;
  - employment readiness and support groups for parents;
  - school assistance and family literacy;
  - and basic assistance such as food banks or health care services.
  
- The overall goal is to strengthen families to prevent abuse, neglect, or delinquency of children.

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## Child Welfare Services

### FAMILY REUNIFICATION SERVICES

- Assist families in achieving and maintaining a level of functioning that enables children to safely return and remain at home.
  
- Services include:
  - individual, group and family counseling;
  - substance abuse treatment;
  - mental health services;
  - domestic violence services;
  - and transportation to and from services.

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## Child Welfare Services

### ADOPTION SERVICES

- Provided to children in placement when the court orders that parental rights be terminated.
- Services include preparation of children for the adoption process and post-adoption services ranging from family counseling to respite care.
- Historically, larger counties had maintained their own adoption units. Recently, adoption services have been transitioning to the SWAN (Statewide Adoption Network) program funded and administered by DPW.

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## Funding

### Overview

- Child welfare services are funded primarily with state, federal and local revenue sources.
- DPW reimburses counties for a portion of expenditures incurred in providing certain child welfare services. These state reimbursements are often referred to as Act 148 payments.
- Counties are responsible for the difference, often referred to as a county match.

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## Funding

### State Reimbursement for Services (Act 148)

- The state reimbursement rate varies depending upon the service, as listed below:
  - 100% for adoption services;
  - 80-90 % for in-home services;
  - 80% for foster care and community-based placement services;
  - 60% for institutional placement services (other than detention placements for delinquent youth);
  - 60% for administrative costs of county children and youth agencies; and
  - 50% for juvenile detention costs.

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## Funding

### Funding Streams

- The state budget provides state and federal funding for child welfare services through the County Child Welfare Services appropriation.
  - **State funds** : reflect the Act 148 state payments for services
  - **County funds**: reflect the requisite county match.
  - **Federal revenues:**
    - **Title IV-E funds** are provided specifically to states for the maintenance of children in foster care, for the adoption of eligible children, and for certain administrative and training costs related to these services.
    - **Title IV-B funds** are provided specifically to states for improving services with the goal of keeping families together – this includes preservation, prevention and reunification services.
    - **TANF Block Grant funds** are provided to states for general purposes that include assisting needy families so they can care for their children at home.
    - **Social Services Block Grant funds** are provided to states for general purposes that include preventing or remedying the abuse and neglect of children.

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## Funding

### Needs-Based Budget Process (Act 30)

- Act 30 of 1991 requires, among other things, that DPW annually submit to the Governor its determination of statewide child welfare funding needs based on plans and budgets submitted by the counties.
- Each year, counties assess and identify service needs specific to the families and children in their county, outline strategies to institute services, and develop a supporting budget. Counties submit to OCYF their annual plans for providing services and their corresponding budget requests.
- After reviewing the county plans and budgets, OCYF certifies what it determines to be the county need. The OCYF-certified amounts serve as the basis for the Governor's budget request for the County Child Welfare Services appropriation.

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## 2009-10 Proposed Budget

### Needs-Based Budget Certification

- OCYF certified NBB total expenditures of \$1.785 billion
  - Includes increases for mandated services
  - No cost-of-living adjustment provided for purchased services
  - Paid with state, federal and local streams
- OCYF also approved \$93 million in state funds for special grants, outside of the NBB
  - \$25.5 million for evidence-based programs
  - \$21.7 million for PA Promising Practices
  - \$27.3 million for Adoption
  - \$11 million for independent living programs
  - \$3.7 million for housing initiatives
  - \$2 million related to information technology
  - \$1.8 million for State Reintegration

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## 2009-10 Proposed Budget

### Related Proposals

- Amending Act 30 - including changes to reimbursement percentages and making other requirements relating to the NBB process.
- Changes under a Residential Services – Contract Documentation Bulletin

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## HHS Subcommittee Hearing

- Provide a forum for stakeholders in the NBB process to have an open discussion about the 2009/10 proposed budget.
- Receive suggestions on how to sustain a stable and effective system long-term to protect the Commonwealth's children.
- Envision as the first step in examining how to improve the child welfare system in Pennsylvania.

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