

THE COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS
ASSOCIATION OF
PENNSYLVANIA

CHILDREN'S
POLICY

Policy Principles

This document represents a set of principles we believe are essential to an effective system of services for children and their families. The policy principles, developed by the CCAP, are intended as guidelines for policy makers at all levels in the development and advocacy of all legislation, regulation and other policy matters related to services for children and their families. In striving to achieve this objective, the intent is to develop a flexible system of services, responsive to local needs, which helps children and their families to attain their maximum potential. These policy principles were adopted by the CCAP on March 27, 2001.

I. Children & Their Families Generally

Children have a right to live in a safe, nurturing, and stable environment free from abuse, neglect, domestic violence and substance abuse in order to enhance their ability to stay healthy, grow and learn and to become responsible citizens.

- A. Policy should be developed in partnership with families and reviewed for the impact it has on children and their families.
- B. Policy should support opportunities for prenatal, early childhood, and on-going family education in the community in order to promote nurturing, trusting and healthful environments for children.
- C. Policy should promote family involvement, unless determined unsafe, when any family services are engaged, whether voluntary or mandatory, in-home or out-of-home.
- D. Policy should support and enhance the ability of children and their families to strive for positive personal outcomes.
- E. Policy should support affordable and accessible health care, including treatment for mental illness and substance abuse disorders, for all children.

II. Interagency Relationships of Child Serving Organizations

Children and their families have a right to compassionate, culturally appropriate, coordinated, competent, affordable, and accessible assistance in overcoming barriers, which build on their strengths in the pursuit of their full growth and development.

- A. Policy should support the implementation of principles embodied in the Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP).

- B. Policy should support cross-system training of agency staff and service providers on the mechanisms to promote professional communication and referral. This training should have an emphasis on service mandates and the core child and family service skills (e.g. communication and family dynamics).
- C. Policy should support a seamless, sufficiently funded, coordinated, and cross-categorical approach to child and family assessment, treatment planning and service delivery.
- D. Policy should support interagency information sharing and simplified authorization processes, while maintaining reasonable confidentiality measures that include informed consent, to promote effective and accessible service.
- E. Policy should recognize the uniqueness of each community and support a flexible service delivery system at the county level that partners with children and their families to assist in achieving positive outcomes.

III. Community Support of Families

Children and their families have a right to live in a community where access to services and supports that are used by the general public (natural supports), as well as public and private services, enables them to fulfill their personal and civic responsibilities.

- A. Policy should optimize the development of services that positively affect critical development periods in order to promote health, remediate or reduce risk factors, and improve resilience of children and their families.
- B. Policy should support initiatives that develop effective partnerships between the community, families, agencies, and schools to serve children and their families.
- C. Policy should promote the development and enhancement of natural supports and community environments that are defined by families as family friendly.
- D. Policy should support families' efforts as they strive to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.

IV. Accountability of Agencies and Community to the Family

Children and their families have a right to expect all the components of the child and family service system in their community to follow standards of ethics and accountability.

- A. Policy should support coordinated efforts for prevention and intervention activities at the earliest possible stage in order to make the most of human and financial potential.
- B. Policy should support initiatives to promote the highest level of knowledge among staff and children and their families about the roles and responsibilities of child serving agencies (interagency and inter community.)
- C. Policy should promote and support efforts to measure and achieve outcomes necessary for agencies to deliver effective services to children and their families, and provide adequate resources for agencies to achieve those outcomes. (e.g. staffing, training, funding, and technology.)
- D. Policy should pursue the most effective use of all available funding streams at the Federal, State, County and Community levels, and other resources to enhance services to children and their families.
- E. Policy should promote practice that provides stability and continuity of services in the community.
- F. Policy should support initiatives to identify and eliminate categorical and local barriers that prevent agencies from assessing and evaluating their service capacity, efficiency and effectiveness within the context of a comprehensive child and family service system review.
- G. Policy should promote accountability of private resources, including insurance.
- H. Policy should promote equal access to and payment for benefits based on individual child and family needs, regardless of diagnosis.