2016 State Roundtable

Permanency Practice Initiative

"Everybody has Somebody"

Co-Chairpersons

Honorable Eleanor Bush
*Court of Common Pleas
of Allegheny County*

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*Direcor of Children's Services
Lycoming County Children & Youth Services*

Dear Members of the Pennsylvania State Roundtable:

Over the past two years, the Permanency Practice Initiative (PPI) Workgroup has been gathering information, discussing, gathering more information and discussing again the topic of family engagement meetings. Today, we are pleased to share our recommendations regarding family engagement.

In August, counties were invited to join Phase 5 of the PPI. The workgroup welcomes Lancaster County as the 37th county participating in the PPI.

We also spent considerable time focusing on local Children's Roundtables (CRTs). The PPI Workgroup believes CRTs are the foundation of good court and agency practice in counties. In order to better support local CRTs, we authored the "10 Keys for a Successful Children's Roundtable". This document was presented at the annual PPI County Meeting in April. At that meeting, counties had the opportunity to discuss the "Keys" and share their strengths and experiences in order to learn from each other. It is our hope to share the "10 Keys for a Successful Children's Roundtable" with all counties in PA with the goal of creating stronger CRTs across the state.

At the last State Roundtable (SRT), the Workgroup recommended that Family Development Credentialing/Strength-based Family Worker (FDC/SFW) no longer be a required PPI element. However, the workgroup recognized the critical importance of supporting strength-based capacities within the provider community and required PPI counties to develop a plan for training providers and the community in strength-based work and philosophy. The workgroup provided follow-up to all PPI counties to assist with implementation of the new requirement.

Finally, the workgroup reviewed the Quarterly Data Reports completed by PPI counties. An overview of the 2015 data is included in this report. It is our hope that this data will serve as the baseline for comparison in future years.

Finally, we wish to thank each workgroup member for their time, expertise and commitment to improvement of the Permanency Practice Initiative. We would also like to thank the Office of Children and Families in the Court (OCFC) for giving us the opportunity to be involved with the Roundtable's efforts, and ultimately help improve permanency outcomes for dependent children in Pennsylvania.

Honorable Eleanor L. Bush   Rick Saylor

Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County   Director of Children's Services
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Permanency Practice Initiative Workgroup

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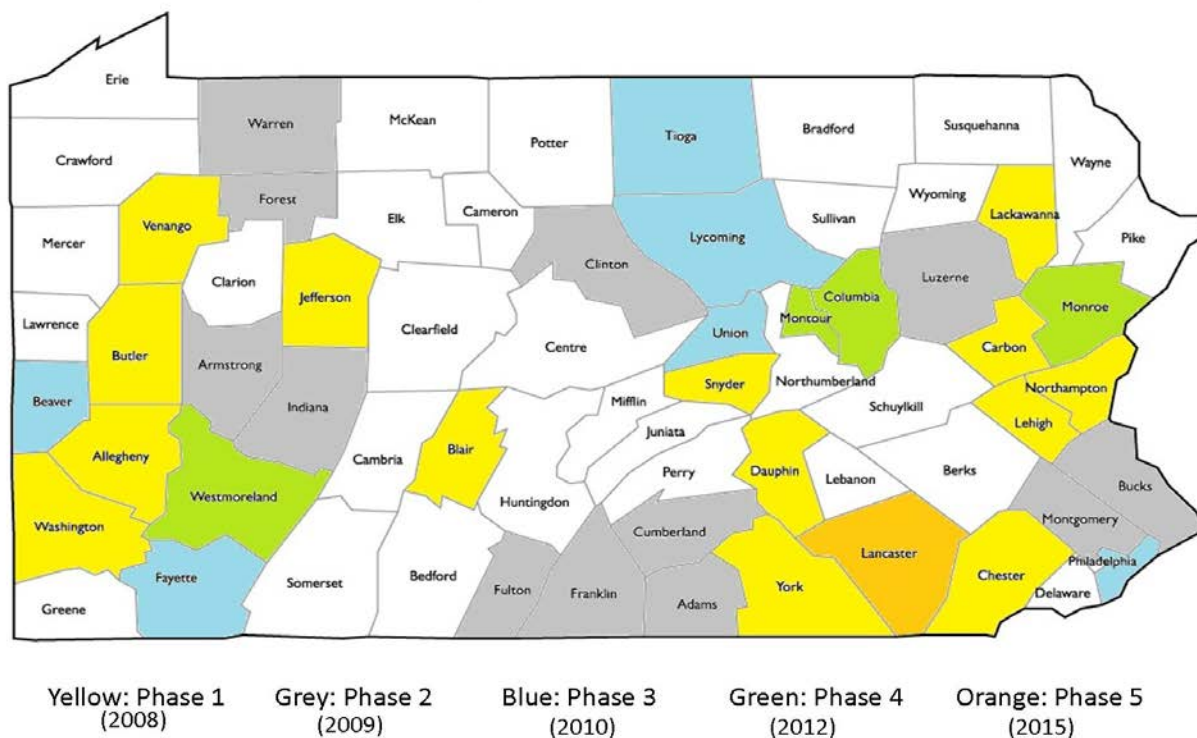
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Permanency Practice Initiative (PPI)

Overview

The Pennsylvania Permanency Practice Initiative (PPI) was commissioned by the State Roundtable in June 2007. The PPI forms the practice change foundation for Pennsylvania's Dependency System. Currently, thirty-seven (37) counties are participating in the PPI. These counties represent 79% of all children in Pennsylvania's out-of-home care system.

Permanency Practice Initiative Counties

Yellow: Phase 1 (2008) Grey: Phase 2 (2009) Blue: Phase 3 (2010) Green: Phase 4 (2012) Orange: Phase 5 (2015)

The underlying premise of the PPI is that enhanced judicial oversight combined with strength-based, family-led social work practice will ultimately increase the number of children safely maintained in their own homes and support expedited permanency either through safe reunification or the finalization of another permanent plan.

Counties entered the PPI in five phases. Counties wanting to participate submitted a letter of intent signed by the lead Dependency Judge, Child Welfare Administrator, Human Service Director and County Commissioner. They further agreed to implement the PPI required elements within 6 months of acceptance and selected a target population of dependency cases upon which to apply these practices. Data reports to measure the progress of the PPI elements would be submitted quarterly by the counties.

The PPI practice combination includes:

- Local Children's Roundtable – Co-convened by the lead Dependency Judge and Agency Administrator

- Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS) - Dependency Module

- 3 Month Judicial Reviews

- Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

- Family Finding (FF)

- A plan for training providers and the community in strength-based practice/philosophy

- Grief & Loss Education

Charge from the 2015 State Roundtable:

During the 2015 State Roundtable, the PPI Workgroup was tasked with the following:

1. Continued examination of family involved meetings and development of a multi-tier practice model addressing a continuum of needs, from emergency response through long range planning.

2. Implementation of Phase Five of the Permanency Practice Initiative.

3. Strengthen local Children's Roundtables across the state.

4. Support county implementation of a new PPI requirement that PPI counties develop a plan for training providers and the community in strength-based practice/philosophy.

Accomplishments

Family Engagement Meetings

During the 2014 State Roundtable the Honorable Max Baer, Supreme Court Justice, Sandy Moore, OCFC Administrator and Erin Wick, Esq., Law Clerk presented an overview of a research paper on Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) authored by Ms. Wick. The research paper, "FGDM: From Research to Application" compared various models of family meetings, including Family Group Conferencing (FGC), Family Team Conferencing (FTC) and Team Decision Making (TDM). Each model incorporates various elements and degrees of family involvement. The paper further included definitions of terms being used in various models, a brief background discussion as to why the paper was commissioned, and a discussion of the various elements which seemed most important in any family engagement model such as the referral process, type of facilitator, timing, participants, decision-making, planning, training and follow up. The paper concluded that existing research suggests no one model is capable of meeting all child welfare system needs.

At the 2014 State Roundtable, the PPI Workgroup was tasked with exploring a tiered approach to family engagement meetings. Over the next year (2014-2015) the workgroup collected information regarding various family engagement models being utilized across Pennsylvania as well as in various states (Hawaii, Minnesota and North Dakota).

At the 2015 SRT, the workgroup requested and was given additional time to further explore a tiered approach to family engagement meetings. As a result, throughout 2015-2016, the PPI Workgroup continued to collect additional information from across Pennsylvania. This next step included inviting members from the PA FGDM Leadership Team to one of the PPI Workgroup meetings. Representatives of the Western, Central and Northeast Regions of Pennsylvania participated and provided a wealth of information reflecting everyday practice.

In summary, each regional representative described an array of family engagement meetings determined by the need of the family. These meetings included all three models described in Ms. Wick's research paper (i.e. Team Decision Making Meetings, Family Team Conferencing Meetings and Family Group Decision Making). However, it should be noted that with 67 counties across the state, almost every county used unique titles to describe these meetings and regularly "tweaked" their models by altering, replacing or eliminating elements of the model as they saw fit, or as they felt better responded to family needs and circumstances.

After considering the information gathered and lengthy discussions, the PPI Workgroup recommends the following as best practices in regard to family engagement meetings. When it comes to family involved meetings, FGDM remains the family meeting model for PPI counties and cannot be replaced by any other family engagement model. The Workgroup came to this

conclusion because FGDM remains the only model that mandates private family time; thus making it truly a family meeting, distinct from an agency-driven meeting.

Examination of a Tiered Approach

While the Workgroup retains its commitment to FGDM, the Workgroup also recognizes that when it comes to family involved meetings, one size does not fit all. There are a variety of family meetings that complement each other and serve a useful purpose based upon the needs or desires of the family and timing. Other meeting models can function as a useful complement to FGDM. The workgroup stopped short of determining or suggesting specific models that counties should implement as part of a continuum.

However, regardless of the model, Workgroup members believe all family engagement meetings should maintain model fidelity. Model fidelity or faithfulness to elements is essential to effective and consistent practice. Altering, replacing or eliminating elements deemed to be parts of the model could negatively affect outcomes and lower practice standards. Examples of several family meeting models and their required elements can be found at http://www.aecf.org/resources/four-approaches-to-family-team-meetings/ Maintaining model fidelity will also allow counties to measure and compare outcomes. On an ongoing basis, counties should review their outcomes to monitor impact and make adjustments to ensure ongoing continuous quality improvement.

What stood out from the Workgroup's research was the need for counties to offer a **crisis/rapid response meeting** that will meet the needs of the family during or immediately following the initial contact with the agency. This need seems to be universally acknowledged. It also appears universally acknowledged that the full FGDM model cannot be followed due to time constraints created by the immediate emergency or crisis.

Unfortunately there is no national crisis response model that has proven sustainable, nor is there a consistent Pennsylvania model. There have been; however, various models developed throughout Pennsylvania which attempt to address this gap. With no national or state model to reference, the Workgroup believes we should look to our PPI counties who have developed/implemented crisis family engagement models, outline/examine the models, develop a statewide recommendation and present such to the 2017 SRT.

Over the next year, the Workgroup intends to focus on improved implementation and best practices for both FGDM and Family Finding. Specific emphasis will be placed on identifying emergency/rapid response models currently in use across the state, identifying best practices and presenting a recommendation to the 2017 SRT.

FGDM Best Practice Elements

The Workgroup also acknowledges the following elements as best practice when implementing FGDM:

Automatic Referral – All families should be given the opportunity to participate in a FGDM meetings throughout (or in order to avoid) their involvement with the system.

Facilitation – The meeting facilitator should be a trained, neutral party.

Coordination – Both family and professionals should be prepared to attend the meeting.

Planning – The family plan and list of those in attendance should always be presented to the court (when involved).   This practice will ensure that stakeholders and families are focused on one plan as opposed to having several different plans when numerous providers are involved.

PPI Phase 5

Beginning in 2008, 36 counties, serving 78% of all children in placement, have entered the PPI in 4 phases. The last phase of the PPI, Phase 4 was offered in 2012. Over the past year, the PPI Workgroup offered counties the opportunity to enter the PPI as a Phase 5 county. The PPI Workgroup is pleased to welcome Lancaster County as a Phase 5 county.

Strengthening Local Children's Roundtables (CRT)

CRTs are the foundation of PPI work in counties. Their significance is paramount as it is through the CRT process that important issues are prioritized, rise to the Leadership Roundtables and eventually reach the State Roundtable. Numerous counties requested assistance in enhancing their local CRT.   Therefore, in response the OCFC and the Workgroup focused on strengthening this particular element over the past year.

The Workgroup developed a tool, "10 Key Components to a Successful Children's Roundtable", to assist counties. Development of this tool began by looking at the most successful CRTs across the state. Regardless of size or demographics consistent similarities were noted. Based upon these similarities, the Workgroup listed and defined these elements to create "10 Key Components to a Successful Local Children's Roundtable". It should be noted that it is no
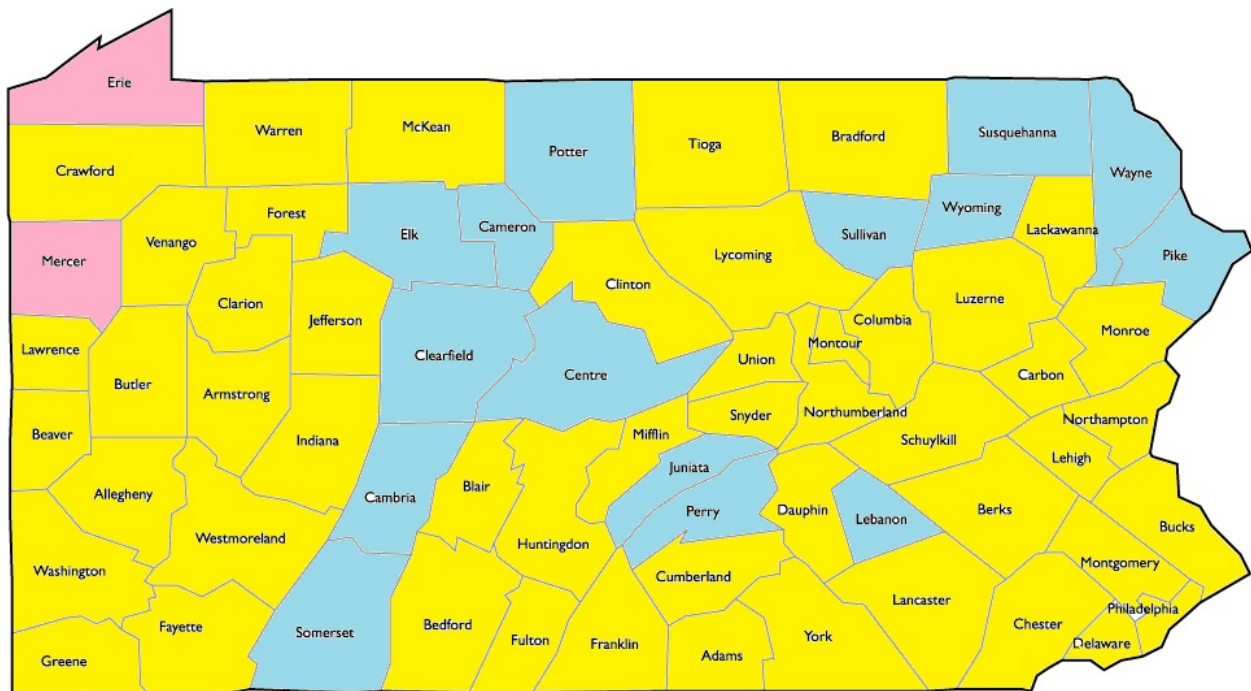
coincidence that the elements all coincide with the Mission and Guiding Principles for Pennsylvania's Dependency System.

Over the past year, this document was shared with Leadership Roundtables and their feedback was incorporated. More recently, it was tested at the annual PPI County Meeting in April. During that meeting, counties had the opportunity to evaluate their local CRT, share strengths and experiences and learn from each other. As a result of input from the PPI counties, final revision was completed and the document is attached for your consideration. (Appendix I and II)

It is our hope that the "10 Keys for a Successful Local Children's Roundtable" will be accepted by the SRT for use with all counties in PA with the goal of strengthening local CRTs through self-assessment and continuous quality improvement.

As of March, 2016, 50 counties across the state have an active CRT. The map (below) identifies the status of local CRTs across the state.

Map of Pennsylvania's Local Children's Roundtables

Yellow: Counties with a CRT   Blue: Counties without a CRT   Pink: Counties implementing a CRT

Data

The Workgroup reviewed the PPI Quarterly Data Reports for 2015. Initially, the Data Reports focused only on collecting data from the PPI target populations. These target populations were identified by the counties and varied significantly across the state. For example, one county may have identified older youth between 14 and 18 years of age while another county selected children 0-5. Consequently, meaningful data comparisons were difficult if not impossible. Over the past year, the data reports were improved to measure PPI practices for all children under court supervision. This change was in response to county requests. Counties felt their use of FGDM, in particular, reached well beyond their target populations.

The PPI data that is being addressed in this report represents 97% of all PPI counties. Only one county failed to provide 2015 data. The PPI Data Report collects data for PPI practices including Local Children's Roundtables, Three Month Permanency Reviews, FGDM meetings and Family Finding efforts.

During 2015 a total of 172 local Children's Roundtable meetings were held across the state. There were 52 different topics discussed. The top 10 CRT Topics for 2015 are presented below in order of most frequently to least frequently discussed.

CRTs Top Ten Topics for 2015

1. Truancy
2. Family Engagement
3. Concurrent Planning
4. Visitation
5. Transitional Youth
6. Permanency Trends
7. Family Finding
8. Legal Representation
9. FGDM
10. Father Engagement

The PPI Data Reports also capture the number of Three Month Court Reviews. It is important to note that there were over 49,578 Three Month Permanency Reviews.

The data regarding FGDM and Family Finding were less encouraging. Only 1,552 FGDM conferences were held for children under court supervision (both in-home and placement cases). Since one family might have several conferences, it was important to look further at the data to determine the number of children served through a FGDM conference. Only 5.84 percent of children had the benefit of a FGDM.

As for the Kevin Campbell model of Family Finding, the data is equally discouraging. The obligation to find family in all cases accepted for service was signed into law in June 2013. The law does not require the use of the Kevin Campbell model of Family Finding but does require more than a diligent search for family in cases active in the court. It requires that family finding begin when a case is accepted for service and continue throughout the life of the case (with certain exceptions). The PPI does require the use of Kevin Campbell's Family Finding model.

Subsequently, Juvenile Court Procedural Rules were written to require findings be made at every court hearing regarding the ongoing efforts and progress of family finding. Therefore, it is concerning to see only 14.7 percent of children in the Discovery Phase of Family Finding and only 23% of children receiving ongoing Family Finding.

As a result of this data, the Workgroup plans to look closely at the 2016 data on a quarterly basis using the 2015 PPI Data as baseline data. Furthermore, the Workgroup is asking the support of the SRT to focus our efforts on improving the implementation of both FGDM and Family Finding over the next year.

Strength-based Practice Implementation

During the 2015 SRT, it was decided that Family Development Credentialing/Strength-based Family Worker Credential (FDC/SFW) was no longer a required PPI element. Counties could certainly choose to continue to use the FDC/SFW Curriculum. However, if they choose not to continue with this curriculum, they were required to implement a replacement practice to train professionals and the community in strength-based work and philosophy.

The PPI Workgroup conducted a follow-up survey in January 2016 to learn about the replacement practices being used in counties. The replacement practices included the continuation of FDC/SFW, Motivational Interviewing, provider meetings with training conducted by the county and use of the Strengthening Families Curriculum. At the time of the survey 8 PPI counties had not yet implemented a replacement practice.

Judicial Analysts from the OCFC will continue to work with these counties to identify and implement a practice. It is the recommendation of the Workgroup that all PPI counties must implement a replacement model/practice October 1, 2016.

Recommendations

The PPI Workgroup respectfully submits to the Pennsylvania State Roundtable the following recommendations:

1. FGDM remains the family meeting model for PPI counties and cannot be replaced by any other family engagement model.

2. The Workgroup support the examination of an emergency/rapid response process that provides for family engagement within the time constraints of emergency or crisis situations through selected volunteer PPI counties, with results presented to the 2017 SRT.

3. All PPI counties must have identified a model/practice and implementation plan for training staff, providers and the community in strength-based practice and philosophy by October 1, 2016.

4. During 2016-17, the Workgroup will focus on improving FGDM/Family Finding implementation and best practice.

5. Accept the "10 Keys for a Successful Local Children's Roundtable" for use with all counties in PA with the goal of strengthening local CRTs through self-assessment and continuous quality improvement.

10 Keys to a Successful Children's Roundtable

- **Strong Judicial and Agency Leadership**

- **Cross Systems Representation of Key Stakeholders**

- **Meeting dates are provided at the beginning of each year**

- **The Roundtable conducts an honest assessment of the needs, services available and any gaps in resources available to children and families within the County**

- **Agendas are planned and purposeful**

- **Members have a clear understanding of their own and each other's professional role in relation to improving the dependency system**

- **Culture of Roundtable invites members to interact and have the opportunity to share information in a honest and safe environment**

- **Work is done outside of the meeting through tasks or sub-committees**

- **Discussions move to solution focused actions, celebrates successes, and utilizes data to improve outcomes**

- **The Roundtable helps to inform the county in making decisions regarding the child serving systems**

10 Keys to a Successful Children's Roundtable

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