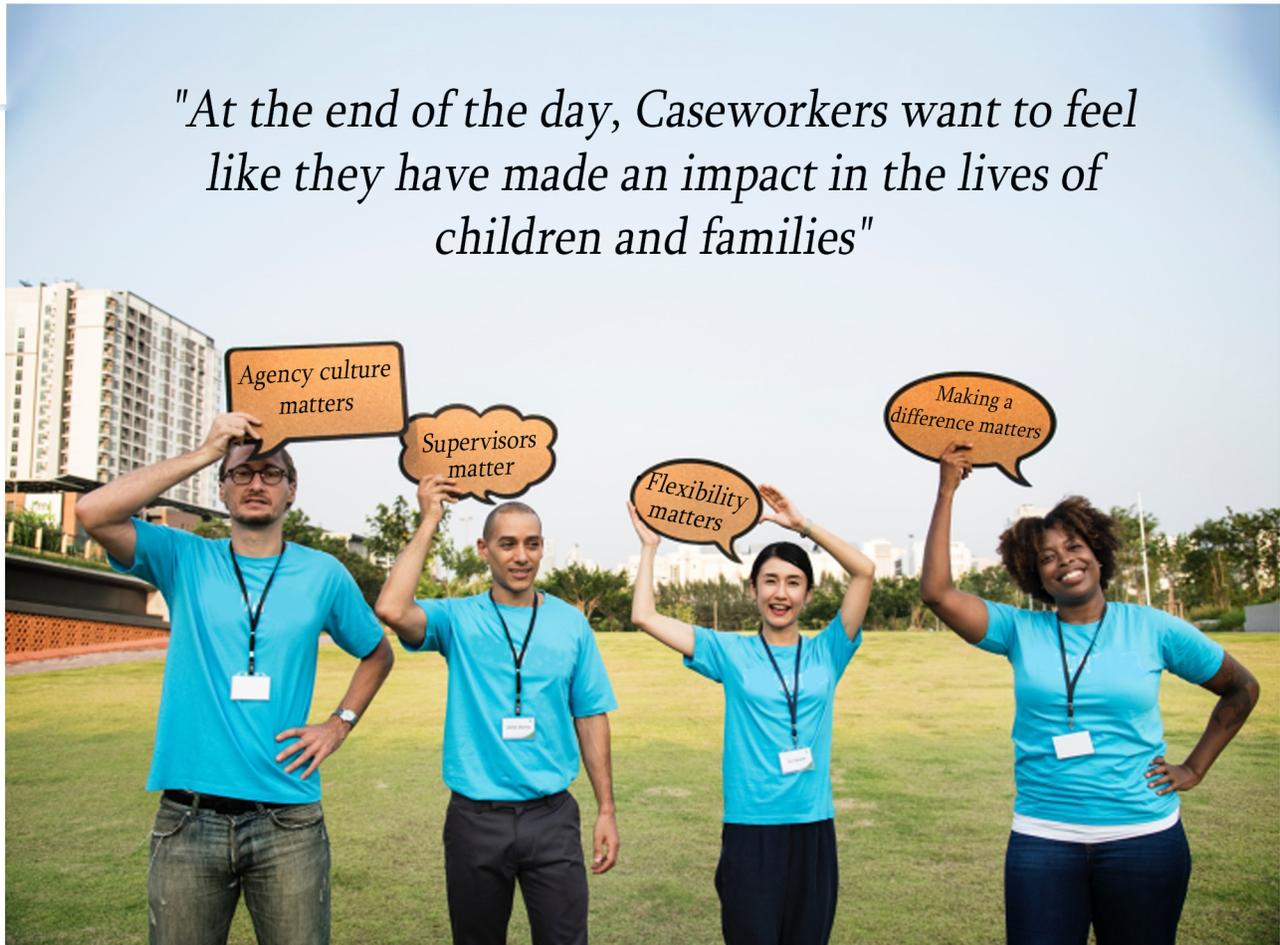




2019 State Roundtable Report Caseworker Retention

"At the end of the day, Caseworkers want to feel like they have made an impact in the lives of children and families"



Workgroup Co-Chairpersons

Honorable Linda Cordaro

Court of Common Pleas of Fayette County

Shara Saveikis

Executive Director

Westmoreland County Children's Bureau

Dear Members of the State Roundtable,

In 2015, this Workgroup was convened to explore the impact of caseworker turnover on the child dependency system in Pennsylvania. Our group has assessed and analyzed caseworker turnover not only statewide but nationally, and we have had the pleasure of presenting our findings and suggestions across the state. Although we are recommending that this is the final year for this Workgroup, the resources that have been developed through our Workgroup will remain available, and it is our sincere hope that the efforts of our Workgroup will continue to make a difference in the child dependency system. We are confident that the issue of turnover has been highlighted throughout the state, and we have provided the tools to enable counties to address this issue on an ongoing basis. Our Workgroup remains committed to making a difference concerning this issue, and any of us remain willing to discuss the resources we've provided over the past 4 years.

Our Workgroup members met in person and by teleconference throughout the year, and there was just as much enthusiasm during the last meeting as there was when we first met in 2015. It has been an honor and pleasure to work with such a dedicated and impassioned group of professionals who continue to strive to make a difference in the lives of the children and families served through the dependency court process.

As co-chairs, we would once again like to thank the State Roundtable for the opportunity to focus our efforts on the issue of turnover, which is such a crucial factor in the child welfare system in Pennsylvania. Also, we are so grateful for the members of this Workgroup who have demonstrated such commitment and insight about this issue and have been completely motivated to make a positive impact across the state. We'd also like to express our gratitude to the Office of Children and Families in the Courts for all the support throughout the past year.

Finally, we cannot thank Christy Stanek enough for her commitment, her knowledge, and her motivation. Christy's energy is contagious, and she approaches each task and every meeting with a level of preparedness that is second to none. It is bittersweet to come upon the end of this Workgroup, but we all know that our work in the child dependency system will never end!

Sincerely,

Linda Cordaro, Co-Chair

Shara Saveikis, Co-Chair

Caseworker Retention Workgroup

Co-Chairpersons

Honorable Linda Cordaro

Court of Common Pleas of Fayette County

Shara Saveikis, Executive Director

Westmoreland County Children's Bureau

Brian Bornman, Esquire
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Children & Youth
Administrators Association

Mike Byers
Director
Child Welfare Resource Center
University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Helen Cahalane
Principle Investigator
Child Welfare Education and Research
University of Pittsburgh

Errone Cody
Regional Director
Justice Works youth Care

Kathleen Creamer, Esquire
Managing Attorney
Community Legal Services Philadelphia

Gina D'Auria
Administrator
Fayette County Children and Youth

Diane Ellis-Marseglia
Commissioner
Bucks County

Ashley Gehrdes
Administrator
Blair County Children and Youth

Luann Hartman
Administrator
Venango County Children and Youth

George Hartwick, III
Commissioner
Dauphin County

Sheri Irvis-Hill
Regional Supervisor
Office of Children, Youth and Families
Department of Human Services

Cheneta Johns
Representative I
Office of Children, Youth and Families
Department of Human Services

Trudi Krick
Program Specialist
Chester County Children and Youth

Jessica Laspino
Executive Director
Court Appointed Special Advocate
Lancaster County

Deb Maccariella
Human Services Deputy Director
Chester County

Larry Maggi
Commissioner
Washington County

**Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts/
Office of Children and Families in the Courts**

Belinda Muschar
Senior Division Manager
Statewide Adoption Network/Diakon

Honorable Jennifer Lynne Rogers
Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County

Casie Rockey
Supervisor
Centre County Children and Youth

Richard D. Steele
Executive Director
Juvenile Court Judges' Commission

Cathy Utz
Former Deputy Secretary
Office of Children, Youth and Families
Department of Human Services

Catherine Volponi, Esquire
Parent Advocate
Juvenile Court Project for Parent Attorneys

Lisa Wilcox
Director
Sullivan County Children and Youth

Amie Wood-Wessell
Quality Assurance/Training
Venango County Children and Youth

Christy Stanek, MSW
Judicial Programs Analyst

Jennifer Horn, MSW, MBA
Judicial Programs Analyst

Sandra Moore, MSW
Director

Elke Moyer
Administrative Associate/Graphic Designer

FINAL REPORT

In May 2015, the State Roundtable (SRT) convened the Caseworker Retention Workgroup (CRWG), following concerns raised by Leadership Roundtable members of its impact on the child dependency system. An impressive 38 professionals representing dependency court, child welfare, county and state partners participated as workgroup members. Since its convening, the CRWG has assessed and analyzed the impact of caseworker turnover both nationally and statewide, provided education to numerous entities, developed resources to assist Pennsylvania in retention efforts and worked collaboratively with state partners to enhance data collection methods, documentation reduction and revisions to statewide training of supervisors. A chart recognizing the workgroup's accomplishments from 2015 to the present can be found at the end of this report. The following section will provide a brief summary of each SRT report and recommendations, followed by progress over the past year. Finally, at this year's SRT, the CRWG will ask to conclude its work.

BACKGROUND

2016 State Roundtable

The CRWG provided its first report. This report included an analysis of caseworker turnover nationally and statewide. In addition, the report outlined the impact caseworker retention has on the court, state, county, child welfare agency, and, most importantly children and families. Two best practices identified in Pennsylvania, onboarding and stay interviews, were also highlighted, along with the results of a Stay Interview, administered to 1359 Caseworkers throughout Pennsylvania.

2016 State Roundtable Recommendations

1. Develop strategies to enhance knowledge, understanding and respect for the profession of child welfare caseworker;
2. Calculate cost associated with Pennsylvania Caseworker turnover;
3. Identify specific evidence based strategies as well as promising practices aimed at reducing caseworker turnover and provide a list of such to the 2017 State Roundtable;
4. Participate, as requested by the Department of Human Services and Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrator's Association, on the analysis of data to determine an appropriate caseload size and present recommendations to the 2017 State Roundtable;
5. Collaborate with the University of Pittsburgh in analyzing quantitative and qualitative data from the Stay Interview and present outcomes to the 2017 State Roundtable;
6. Collaborate with the Trauma Workgroup to develop strategies around reducing courtroom stress experienced by caseworkers;
7. Assess documentation requirements to develop reduction strategies and recommendations to eliminate unnecessary duplication of documentation;
8. Provide information and findings from the Workgroup, if given the opportunity, to key stakeholders;
9. Collaborate with the Child Welfare Resource Center to develop supervisory trainings specific to the findings of the Workgroup; and
10. Request caseworker retention be a priority topic at the 2017 Children's Summit.

2017 State Roundtable

Several resources were provided to assist counties in examining their local retention and turnover. These resources provided guidance for calculating the cost of turnover within the local child welfare agency; evidence based approaches to addressing turnover, including a tool, “Targeted Solutions for Reducing Turnover”, which highlights several options to fit each county's cause of turnover; results of the Stay Interview Outcome analysis completed by the University of Pittsburgh; and a tool for Judges, Juvenile Court Hearing Officers and Attorneys, “Reducing Caseworker Stress in the Courtroom.” Also during this report period, there were two presentations on the Stay Interview analysis and calculation of county turnover cost. The first was on March 27, 2017 to the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), which included both plenary and breakout presentations. As per the deputy director for CCAP, the breakout session for this presentation was the largest ever attended at a CCAP meeting. The second presentation was on April 26, 2017 at the Pennsylvania Children's Summit. This presentation provided the same information as the CCAP session, with the addition of a panel presentation that included a caseworker sharing “A Day in The Life.”

2017 State Roundtable Recommendations

1. Approve the distribution of the Stay Interview data analysis;
2. Approve the distribution of the guide: Reducing Caseworker Stress in the Courtroom;
3. Approve the distribution of recommended targeted solutions for reducing turnover;
4. Continue to develop strategies to enhance knowledge, understanding and respect for the profession of child welfare caseworker;
5. Continue to assess evidence based strategies and promising practices aimed at reducing caseworker turnover and provide a comprehensive list to the 2018 SRT;
6. Develop and implement a plan to gather additional statewide and local data to better assess Pennsylvania's turnover and vacancy rate;
7. Collaborate with key stakeholders, including Department of Human Services and Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators Association to assess documentation requirements and provide strategies, to streamline documentation at both the state and local level, to the 2018 State Roundtable;
8. Continue to collaborate with the Child Welfare Resource Center to refine and enhance supervisory trainings specific to the findings of the Workgroup; and
9. Consideration, by the Office of Children and Families in the Courts, to develop and convene a training specific to Solicitors and Child Welfare Supervisors on their role in preparing and

2018 State Roundtable

The majority of the CRWG's time, during this report period, consisted of creating a county “Monthly Media Messaging Guide”, to highlight positive efforts by county child welfare agencies, dependency courts and other collaborative partners supporting Pennsylvania's foster youth. In addition, this report highlighted two Governor Proclamations; one specific for child welfare professionals and the other for child welfare service providers. These proclamations were collaboratively drafted by members of the CRWG and Pennsylvania

Children and Youth Administrators Association (PCYA) to recognize professionals providing direct service to children and families. This report also contained a summary of strategies and promising practice approaches to reducing turnover and retaining casework staff. Finally, through discussions with the CRWG, the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF), enhanced data collection methods were added to the County Needs Based Plan and Budget to better assess turnover in Pennsylvania. Counties are now asked to not only report their staff turnover, but identify the cause of turnover (i.e. voluntary resignation, retirement, etc.). These changes became effective during the 2017-2018 Needs Base Plan and Budget (NBPB) fiscal year.

2018 State Roundtable Recommendations

1. Collaborate with key stakeholders, including Department of Human Services and Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators Association to continue assessing documentation requirements and streamline documentation at both the state and local level;
2. Continue to collaborate with the Child Welfare Resource Center to refine and enhance supervisory trainings specific to the findings of the Workgroup;
3. Assess the success of statewide turnover and vacancy rate data collection;
4. Approval and distribution of the Pennsylvania Dependency System: Monthly Media Messaging Guide, including accompanying tools; and
5. Provide an update regarding the Pennsylvania Dependency System: Monthly Messaging strategy, to the 2019 State Roundtable.

2018 STATE ROUNDTABLE REPORT UPDATE

Throughout the past year, the CRWG has focused on documentation reduction strategies. Recognizing that a strong collaborative effort amongst state partners was necessary, the CRWG sought assistance from workgroup members, Cathy Utz, Deputy Director of OCYF, Shara Saveikis, PCYA Board President and Attorney Brian Bornman, PCYA Executive Director. To this end, several things occurred to better assess, understand and streamline documentation.

- **A 13 county site visit by OCYF** to better understand documentation challenges for children and youth professionals
- **Changes to the Safety Assessment Intervals** including extended time frames, elimination of unnecessary intervals, removal of safety work plan templates when an unsafe child is placed through a court order, and only requiring documentation to support safety threats
- **Statewide training on the changes to Safety Assessment**
- **National search for effective county run/state supervised child welfare case management systems** to assess the pros/cons of changing to a more efficient system that would decrease documentation duplication and eliminate unnecessary steps to obtain documents
- **Implementation of quarterly Child Welfare Administrator/OCYF Administrators and Regional Directors meetings**, increase consistency across regional offices regarding documentation and licensing requirements
- **Revisions to OCYF's Survey and Evaluation Manual** to bring the manual's documentation and licensing requirements up to date, which will provide counties the guidance needed to eliminate current documentation requirements that are unnecessary or duplicative

- **Review of OCYF regulations** pertaining to when petitions should be filed, to determine whether the regulation is consistent with Rules of Juvenile Court Procedure, Law and current dependency language (i.e. permanency hearing versus review hearing). OCYF anticipates a proposal of the updated regulations sometime in the spring 2020

Through the OCYF county reviews, it was determined that while OCYF guidance was certainly needed to further examine this issue at the state level, conversations also need to occur at the local county level. While the majority of documentation is required by laws and regulations, some is attached to local county policies and internal practice. **It is recommended that counties review local documentation for duplication and current relevancy.** OCYF and PCYA leadership will continue to carry out the progress started on identifying the required documentation and recommending reductions when possible.

Additional progress includes the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) extending an invitation to CRWG members interested in serving as “content experts” in the curriculum revisions to its trainings for Child Welfare Supervisors. The 2017 Stay Interview Survey informed the CRWG of just how important supervisors are to whether or not caseworkers stay. The majority of Caseworkers who completed the survey had marked their supervisor “important or extremely important” to their continued desire to stay. As CWRC begins efforts to strengthen the skills of child welfare supervisors, four major components will be of focus:

1. An extensive revision and redesign of the Supervisor Training Series (STS) and Transfer of Learning activities;
2. The development and implementation of in-depth, topic-specific training courses for new and experienced Supervisors, which will provide opportunities for specialized certifications to support the professional development of all Pennsylvania Child Welfare Supervisors;
3. The development and implementation of individualized and organizational Technical Assistance (TA); and
4. The development and implementation of a supervisor support networking plan designed to promote peer support for supervisors regionally and across Pennsylvania.

Next, as mentioned in the previous section, revisions were made and implemented in the 2017-2018 Needs Based Plan and Budget (NBPB) to improve the accuracy of data collection related to caseworker and child welfare staff turnover (see *APPENDIX A: Categorical Turnover Data Collection*). Counties provided data specific to salaries, vacancies, reasons for turnover, and current staff compliment based on last year’s NBPB. This year, the CRWG assessed and analyzed the success of the data collection method. The CRWG believes the added categories will give the state and counties better data for ongoing assessment of Pennsylvania’s turnover and retention. Further analysis is being done, by the University of Pittsburgh and CWRC, to determine the accuracy of collected data.

Finally, following the 2018 SRT, the approved Monthly Media Messaging Guide was distributed to all Leadership Roundtable (LRT) Judges and Administrators, including accompanying tools. During the 2019 spring LRT meetings, counties reported that progress with the Monthly Media Messaging has been difficult due to the time it takes to fully, and correctly, implement this type of media campaign, particularly counties continuing to struggle with staff turnover. With that said, some counties have used the guide to seek topic ideas, while others have utilized their local children’s roundtable to assist with implementation.

The CRWG believes each county will need to figure out how to best implement this type of messaging and that no further effort is necessary by the workgroup on this charge.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

In addition to the progress made over the past year, the CRWG would like to acknowledge and celebrate accomplishments since it convened in 2015. The dedicated members of this workgroup are responsible for the progress made in Pennsylvania to highlight the issue of Caseworker Retention.

CRWG Workgroup Accomplishments

Statewide and National Analysis of Turnover	Governor’s Proclamation for Child Welfare Professionals and Child Welfare Service Providers
Statewide data collection of 2015-2016 FY turnover data	Enhanced the collection of turnover data through NBPB revisions
Categorized the impact of turnover to the court, agency, fiscal budget and families	Documentation reduction efforts 2018-2019
Presented two statewide best practices: Onboarding and Stay Interview	Presentation at the CCAP Plenary and breakout session on March 27, 2017
Revised Stay Interview to implement statewide	Presentation at Pennsylvania Children’s Summit on April 26, 2017
Conducted a Stay Interview statewide survey receiving 1350 responses from caseworkers and supervisors	Presentation to Blair County Commissioners and County Team on September 7, 2017
Collaborated with the University of Pittsburgh to analyze the Stay Interview	Presentation at Juvenile Detention Centers Association of Pennsylvania on September 28, 2017
Provided resource tool “Targeted Solutions for Reducing Turnover”	Presentation to Mercer County Child Welfare Supervisors on April 10, 2018
Created resource tool “Reducing Stress in the Courtroom” for Judges, Juvenile Court Hearing Officers and Dependency Attorneys	Presentation to Allegheny County Child Welfare Supervisors on April 13, 2018
Created a caseworker turnover cost analysis representing all Leadership Roundtables	Presentation to CCAP, Human Services retention subcommittee on July 10, 2018
Created a Monthly Media Messaging Guide	Presentation at Allegheny County Children’s Roundtable on August 29, 2018
Provided resource tool “Strategies and Promising Practices for Reducing Turnover and Increasing Retention”	

MOVING FORWARD

In conclusion, the CRWG believes that all charges have been met and that no CRWG further work remains. ***The CRWG wants to be clear that its recommendation to end the group at this time is due to the fact that***

there is nothing further that can be done by this collective group of state partners and not because the issue is resolved or no longer impacting the children and families served by Pennsylvania's child welfare/dependency system. Much effort and progress has been made over the past 4 years to highlight the impact of caseworker retention. We learned that this is a multi-faceted systemic problem. In a county run, state supervised child welfare system, there is not any one thing that will solve the problem. Counties need to assess and analyze their own "drivers" of turnover, by utilizing the recommendations and tools provided by this workgroup and determine the best plan of action for their county. In addition, Professionals within the system need to have self-awareness of their helpfulness or hindrance toward caseworker retention. How we treat each other and the families with whom we work matters.

It is the hope of the CRWG that this topic continues to be a focus for Pennsylvania and that counties continue to collaborate on building a strong workforce. Statewide efforts that will continue to address this issue include:

- PCYA meetings
- Continued quarterly meetings between OCYF and PCYA Administrators
- CCAP's Human Services Administrator Subcommittee on Staff Recruitment and Retention
- Release of a Penn State study on caseload size recommendations
- Continued work on revising the DHS Survey and Evaluation manual for continued documentation reduction
- Office of Administration assuming oversight of Civil Service Hiring Process

The CRWG respectfully makes the following recommendation to the 2019 State Roundtable.

2019 State Roundtable Recommendations

- 1. The Caseworker Retention Workgroup ends, as all charges since 2015 have been met.**