



# 2022 State Roundtable Report

## Congregate Care



### Workgroup Co-Chairpersons

Honorable Walter Olszewski  
Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County

Honorable Michael Sholley  
Court of Common Pleas of Snyder/Union Counties

William Browning, Director  
Lackawanna County Department of Human Services



## **Congregate Care Workgroup Members**

### **Chairpersons:**

**Honorable Walter Olszewski, Supervising Judge**  
Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County

**Honorable Michael Sholley**  
Court of Common Pleas of Union and Snyder Counties

**Bill Browning, Director**  
Lackawanna County Department of Human Services

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Union and Snyder Counties

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Court of Common Pleas of Venango County

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Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County

**Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts**  
**Office of Children & Families in the Courts**

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*Director*

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## **Background and History:**

In May 2018, the Pennsylvania State Roundtable (SRT) commissioned the Congregate Care Workgroup to examine the use of congregate care for dependent youth. The Workgroup was tasked with the following:

- 1. Examine congregate care for the purpose of significant reduction/elimination of congregate care.**
- 2. Identify effective alternatives to the use of congregate care for dependent youth.**
- 3. Assist Pennsylvania in the implementation of the Family First Prevention Act.**

Chairing the Workgroup is the Honorable Walter Olszewski, Supervising Judge, Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County; the Honorable Michael Sholley, President Judge, Court of Common Pleas of Snyder and Union Counties; and Bill Browning, Director, Lackawanna County Youth and Family Services, Department of Human Services, with the Workgroup membership reflecting the diversity of Pennsylvania.

In its initial year of work, members heard from various state, county, and provider entities. In addition, the Workgroup analyzed national and state data, reviewed national studies regarding teen psychosocial development, and analyzed earlier efforts of the SRTs Transitional Youth Workgroup.

During its second year, the Workgroup turned its attention to identifying alternatives to congregate care and developed several tools, including:

- The "Array of Local Service Alternatives" - a list of potential resources, services, and practices that were proven to reduce the use of congregate care.
- The "Congregate Care Oversight Process and Report to the Court" – a process and tool that provides greater oversight for any initial or ongoing congregate care placement requests.
- The "Congregate Care Contract Provision Tool" – a guide to the many considerations needed for youth residing in congregate care settings.

The Workgroup also made considerable attempts to identify an evidence-based level-of-care assessment tool for dependent youth. However, both statewide and national searches were unsuccessful. In addition, Workgroup members concluded that most level-of-care assessments encouraged the use of congregate care. The members recommended that assessments focus on individual child and family functional needs rather than "levels of care."



Throughout 2020-2021, the Workgroup:

- Disseminated and provided training on "The Array of Local Service Alternatives" tool and encouraged its use at Local Children's Roundtables.
- Encouraged the consistent use of comprehensive child and family assessments that identify needs and match or create services to meet the individualized needs of children and families.
- Disseminated and provided training on the Congregate Care Oversight Process to county child welfare agencies and courts and encouraged its use.
- Disseminated and provided training on the model Congregate Care Report to the Court document and encouraged utilization of the tool in combination with the Congregate Care Oversight Process noted above.
- Disseminated the "Congregate Care Contract Provision Tool" to counties and encouraged its utilization in new or ongoing contract development.
- Examined the concept of Specialized Congregate Care settings created as a result of the Federal Family First Prevention Services Act.
- Designed, offered, and presented a PowerPoint presentation to share the substantial congregate care knowledge gathered by the Workgroup. This information included research, data, presentations from stakeholders, and presentations from both parents and youth with congregate care experience.

(For additional details, 2019, 2020, and 2021 Congregate Care Reports to the State Roundtable are available at <https://ocfcpacourts.us/childrens-roundtable-initiative/state-roundtable-workgroupscommittees/congregate-care/congregate-care-reports/>)

### **Progress and Updates:**

In September 2021, the SRT approved the following recommendations:

1. Continue to promote the use of Workgroup tools and assess results
2. Continue to offer presentations on the topic of congregate care
3. Analyze and share congregate care placement data
4. Collect and share county successes in reducing congregate

- Continue assisting in the implementation of the Family First Prevention Act

**Workgroup Tools - Promotion and Assessment**

Since its approval by the SRT in 2020, the Congregate Care Report containing the tools described above has been widely circulated. Information from the report has been shared with all LRTs. In addition, the Workgroup Chairpersons emailed all LRT Judges and Administrators information on the report and the tools. Finally, the various Workgroup members provided presentations regarding these tools to several counties and the Statewide Family Group Decision Making Conference.

Following these activities, the Workgroup wanted to evaluate the awareness and effectiveness of these tools. Therefore, the Workgroup developed a survey to measure both. The survey was sent to all LRT Judges and Child Welfare Administrators. The survey also went to all Juvenile Court Hearing Officers (JCHO). The survey measured the awareness, use, and effectiveness of the tools. The survey results are listed below.

**Survey respondents:**

- 55 counties replied
- 118 individual responses
- 19% Judges
- 46% Child Welfare Administrators
- 35% Juvenile Court Hearing Officers

Of all the respondents, 60% indicated they were aware of the tools, with 24% of respondents using the tools. The chart below shows who is utilizing each tool by professional roles.

<u>Use of Individual tools by role:</u>	Judges	JCHOs	Administrators
Congregate Care Report to the Court	45% (5)	22% (3)	14% (3)
New Congregate Care Placement Recommendations	45% (5)	22% (2)	32% (7)
Ongoing Congregate Care Placement Recommendations	55% (6)	33% (3)	36% (8)
Array of Services and Practices	55% (6)	22% (2)	36% (8)
Contract Provision Tool			23% (5)

The chart below addresses the effectiveness of the tools. The majority of respondents using the tools reported a reduction in congregate care placement.

Since implementing the tools, congregate care:

	Judges	JCHOs	Administrators
Increased	0	0	5% (1)
Decreased	<b>55% (6)</b>	<b>33% (3)</b>	<b>32% (7)</b>
Remained the same	9% (1)	0	32% (7)
Not using tools	36% (4)	67% (6)	32% (7)

### Congregate Care Presentations

As part of the survey referenced above, counties had the opportunity to request a presentation from the Workgroup. Presentations contain the substantial congregate care knowledge gathered by the Workgroup, including research, data, and information from facility staff and successful counties, parents and youth with congregate care experience. Each presentation is conducted by a judge, administrator, and attorney addressing their specific roles and responsibilities in reducing congregate care. Sixteen counties requested a presentation. Follow-up and scheduling of these presentations are currently underway. The Workgroup intends to continue offering presentations to allow for ongoing education on this critical issue.

Finally, Workgroup members discussed the need for continued education of all dependency system professionals. Members discussed the need to integrate the information gathered by the Workgroup into future educational sessions and resources for child welfare caseworkers, casework supervisors, administrators, judges, hearing officers, attorneys, and other stakeholders.

### Congregate Care Placement Data

The Workgroup reviewed and analyzed the Statewide Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS) data for congregate care placements to measure trends and impact. CPCMS congregate care data includes any placement in a shelter care, group home, residential, and residential treatment facility. The data reviewed most recently by Workgroup members covered the period from July 31, 2018, through December 31, 2021. This time period mirrors the existence of the Workgroup. The information is arranged by Leadership Roundtables to allow for comparison across like-sized counties. (Attachment A)

While there may be numerous factors in the statewide congregate care placement reduction, CPCMS data shows that since the inception of the Workgroup:



- **Congregate care placements decreased from 2049 (2018) to 1395 (2021), reflecting a thirty-two percent (32%) decrease. This reduction occurred incrementally over these three years.**
- There were 654 fewer youth placed in congregate care
- Congregate care placements decreased in 48 counties, and
- A reduction in congregate care occurred in 6 of 7 LRTs

It should be noted that the 2018 CPCMS data contained inaccuracies. Baseline CPCMS data appears significantly under-reported in at least three counties. This under-reporting in these counties resulted in an artificially inflated use of congregate care in those counties. Therefore, the Workgroup also reviewed the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data. (Attachment B) AFCARS collects case-level information from state and tribal title IV-E agencies on all children in foster care and those adopted with title IV-E agency involvement. Congregate care data in AFCARS is a term that refers to larger foster care placement settings such as group homes and institutions. The data reviewed covered the period from September 30, 2018, through September 30, 2021. This timeframe also represents the term of the Congregate Care Workgroup.

The reviewed AFCARS data was similar to that seen in CPCMS. Since the inception of the Workgroup,

- **Congregate care placements decreased from 2314 (2018) to 1445 (2021), reflecting a thirty-eight percent (38%) decrease. This reduction occurred incrementally over these three years.**
- There were 869 fewer youth placed in congregate care
- Congregate care placements decreased in 48 counties, and
- A reduction in congregate care occurred in all 7 LRTs

In reviewing the data, it should also be noted that data from small counties or counties with fewer placements should be viewed in perspective. For example, adding a second placement in a county with only one congregate care placement will result in a 100 percent increase.

Additionally, CPCMS and AFCARS data will never match exactly as they measure slightly different populations over different timeframes. CPCMS and AFCARS data were very similar.

## County Success in Reducing Congregate Care Placements

During the 2022 Spring LRT meetings, the Congregate Care Workgroup sought input from counties that successfully reduced their congregate care use. The following list identifies the practices and programs that contributed to their success.

- Utilizing Family Finding from the time a family was accepted for service and ongoing throughout the life of the case
- Requiring administrative approval for all congregate care placement recommendations
- Developing mobile crisis response teams to immediately calm emergency situations
- Collaborating with Juvenile Probation regarding shared cases
- At every hearing or case review, continue to ask, *What is this youth getting in congregate care not available in their community?*
- Increasing the frequency of Agency and Court reviews for all youth in congregate care placements
- Defining clear expectations for congregate care providers in court orders and agency contracts
- Implementing a county-specific congregate care team to evaluate resources, needs, placement data, and policies
- Identifying and creating necessary local resources that allow youth to remain in their communities, including diversionary, enhanced in-home, and evidence-based services
- Developing services that provide for a "cooling off" period for families
- Developing community-based prevention services and evidence-based practices
- Bringing mental health partners to the table to address inadequacies in the behavioral health systems
- Enhancing trauma-informed services

- Educating the community on the realities of congregate care
- Increasing per diems and providing training opportunities for kin and resource families willing to work with older/more challenging youth
- Removing congregate care placements as an option
- Utilizing the tools created by the Congregate Care Workgroup

### **Family First Prevention Services Act**

The Workgroup hosted two conversations with Jon Rubin, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Human Services' Office of Children, Youth, and Families. The discussions addressed the Department's actions to reduce congregate care as a result of the Family First Prevention Services Act. Deputy Secretary Rubin indicated the Department's primary focus was reducing all placements by supporting prevention and evidence-based services. The Department is working to eliminate barriers by supporting county-specific programming with flexible funding.

Deputy Secretary Rubin also announced that the Department is convening a new committee, "Building Strong Communities and Healing Families." One task of this committee is to assist in identifying and developing community resources aimed at keeping or returning youth to their community.

Because the Workgroup recognizes family finding as an effective practice in reducing congregate care placements and supporting increased kinship placements, questions regarding the pending family finding transmittal were asked. Deputy Secretary Rubin explained that the issue of confidentiality has yet to be resolved. Does the Agency violate parental confidentiality by contacting relatives or kin without a release?

After significant discussion, the Workgroup and the Department agreed it is better to engage families than to demand cooperation or override the family's choice in identifying family and kin. There was no consensus regarding whether or not this necessitated a signed release of information document. Additionally, there was a discussion regarding the need for more workers with well-honed family engagement skills. It appears this topic will remain a relevant source of conversation moving forward.

## **Conclusion:**

While there is likely to be a continuing need to keep focused on the safe reduction of congregate care at all levels (County, LRT, and SRT), Workgroup members believe they have completed the SRT charges. Extensive research and examination of congregate care usage has occurred. Tools for individual case practice, agency contracting, and community resource development have been developed and distributed. Education has been provided to counties requesting such, with additional presentations being scheduled.

Workgroup members encourage the inclusion of this topic in future education and resources developed for system and partner professionals. Finally, review of both CPCMS and AFCARs data show a significant reduction in the use of congregate care for dependent youth since 2018.

## **Recommendations:**

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

1. Workgroup members continue congregate care presentations to Local Children's Roundtables and other groups, upon request.
2. OCFC Judicial Analysts continue to educate, promote, and support counties using the tools created by the Workgroup.
3. Workgroup refer the issue of congregate care to the Benchbook Committee for possible development of a congregate care chapter, including:
  - the substantial information collected by the Workgroup, and
  - the tools created by the Workgroup.
4. Workgroup refer the issue of congregate care to the Child Welfare Resource Center for inclusion information and congregate care alternatives in the core training of child welfare caseworkers and supervisors.
5. OCFC conduct an ongoing review of congregate care placement data and reconvene the Workgroup prior to the 2023 SRT, if congregate care placement data trends upward.

6. Workgroup sunset, as it has completed all the tasks assigned by the State Roundtable.

Attachment A - CPCMS Congregate Care Placement Data  
Attachment B - AFCARS Congregate Care Placement Data





# PA Dependent Children in Congregate Care—CPCMS Data

Categorized by Leadership Roundtable Trend Data 2018-2021

## Statewide Data

	July 2018	December 2021	% Change 2018-2021
	2,049	1395	-32%

## Leadership Roundtable 1

County	July 2018	December 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Allegheny	168	117	-30%
Bucks	21	20	-5%
Delaware	2	22	+1000%
Montgomery	7	47	+571%
Philadelphia	753	356	-52%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>-41%</b>

**Statewide Congregate Care Placements**  
**Decreased by 32%**  
 from  
**July 2018 - December 2021**

**654 fewer children**  
**in congregate care placements**

## Leadership Roundtable 2

County	July 2018	December 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Berks	88	40	-54%
Chester	25	2	-92%
Lancaster	84	45	-46%
Westmoreland	39	24	-38%
York	74	77	+4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>-39%</b>

**6 out of 7 Leadership Roundtables**  
 saw a congregate care placement reduction

## Leadership Roundtable 3

County	July 2018	December 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Dauphin	55	42	-24%
Lackawanna	1	2	+100%
Lehigh	28	41	+46%
Luzerne	51	30	-41%
Northampton	41	29	-29%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>-18%</b>

**38 counties**  
 experienced a reduction in congregate care

## Leadership Roundtable 4

County	July 2018	December 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Beaver	2	4	+100%
Butler	11	10	-9%
Cumberland	21	17	-19%
Erie	114	66	-42%
Washington	25	14	-44%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>-36%</b>

### Leadership Roundtable 5/6

County	July 2018	December 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Adams	6	2	-67%
Blair	28	4	-86%
Cambria	13	9	-31%
Centre	11	17	+54%
Fayette	12	10	-17%
Franklin	23	17	-26%
Fulton	2	1	-50%
Lebanon	13	12	-8%
Lycoming	5	1	-80%
Monroe	7	15	+114
Northumberland	15	7	-53%
Schuylkill	32	26	-19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>-28%</b>

### Leadership Roundtable 8

County	July 2018	December 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Bradford	17	15	-12%
Carbon	13	12	-8%
Clinton	9	5	-44%
Columbia	6	8	+33%
Juniata	1	2	+100%
Montour	0	0	0
Perry	2	6	+200%
Pike	4	10	+150%
Potter	3	1	-67%
Snyder	3	0	-100%
Sullivan	0	0	0
Susquehanna	5	0	-100%
Tioga	11	7	-36%
Union	3	1	-67%
Wayne	10	12	+20%
Wyoming	3	6	+100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>-5%</b>

### Leadership Roundtable 7

County	July 2018	December 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Armstrong	8	7	-13%
Bedford	6	4	-33%
Cameron	2	1	-50%
Clarion	6	8	+33%
Clearfield	17	15	-12%
Crawford	33	12	-63%
Elk	1	2	+100%
Forest	0	0	0
Greene	3	4	+33%
Huntingdon	5	6	+20%
Indiana	18	23	+27%
Jefferson	20	16	-20%
Lawrence	11	18	+63%
McKean	25	24	-4%
Mercer	3	2	-33%
Mifflin	5	6	+20%
Somerset	14	19	+35%
Venango	0	12	+1200%
Warren	5	5	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>+1%</b>

Congregate care is defined in CPCMS as children residing in: Shelter Care; Group Homes; Residential Facilities; and Residential Treatment Facilities. This data set includes children adjudicated dependent and children dually adjudicated dependent and delinquent. Data was pulled on the last day of July for 2018 and the last day of December for 2021. This timeframe represents the term of the Congregate Care Workgroup.



Public Data

Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, data retrieved 03/01/2020. See Stephenie Strayer for latest updates and revisions.

Last updated on 3/1/2022

# PA Dependent Children in Congregate Care—AFCARS Data

Categorized by Leadership Roundtable Trend Data 2018-2021

## Statewide Data

September 2018	September 2021	% Change 2018-2021
2,314	1445	-38%

### Leadership Roundtable 1

County	September 2018	September 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Allegheny	199	132	-31%
Bucks	60	23	-62%
Delaware	67	40	-40%
Montgomery	66	37	-44%
Philadelphia	737	293	-60%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1129</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>-47%</b>

Statewide Congregate Care  
Placements  
Decreased by 38%  
September 2018 - September  
2021

869 less  
children  
in congregate  
care placements

### Leadership Roundtable 2

County	September 2018	September 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Berks	88	48	-45%
Chester	13	7	-46%
Lancaster	85	61	-28%
West- moreland	42	23	-45%
York	65	65	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>-30%</b>

### Leadership Roundtable 3

County	September 2018	September 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Dauphin	75	48	-36%
Lackawanna	4	4	0
Lehigh	38	29	-24%
Luzerne	40	22	-45%
Northampton	41	36	-12%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>-30%</b>

Every Leadership  
Roundtable  
saw a congregate care  
placement reduction

48 counties  
experienced a  
reduction in  
congregate care

### Leadership Roundtable 4

County	September 2018	September 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Beaver	6	9	+50%
Butler	11	10	-9
Cumberland	39	25	-36
Erie	107	65	-39
Washington	22	15	-32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>-33%</b>

### Leadership Roundtable 5/6

County	September 2018	September 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Adams	6	4	-33%
Blair	29	4	-86%
Cambria	23	9	-61%
Centre	9	13	+44%
Fayette	13	12	-8%
Franklin	26	23	-12%
Fulton	2	1	-50%
Lebanon			
Lycoming	20	11	-45%
Monroe	49	23	-53%
Northumberland	17	11	-35%
Schuylkill	42	25	-40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>-47%</b>

### Leadership Roundtable 8

County	September 2018	September 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Bradford	19	21	+11%
Carbon	12	17	+42%
Clinton	9	5	-44%
Columbia	12	8	-33%
Juniata	2	4	+100%
Montour	1	1	0
Perry			
Pike	15	10	-33%
Potter	2	0	-100%
Snyder	4	0	-100%
Sullivan	1	0	-100%
Susquehanna	5	0	-100%
Tioga	8	7	-13%
Union	2	0	-100%
Wayne	9	11	+22%
Wyoming	3	7	+133%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>-13%</b>

### Leadership Roundtable 7

County	September 2018	September 2021	% Change 2018-2021
Armstrong	9	5	-44%
Bedford	4	4	0
Cameron	2	1	-50%
Clarion	8	8	0
Clearfield	14	10	-29%
Crawford	27	8	-70%
Elk	3	5	+67%
Forest	1	2	+100%
Greene	9	8	-11%
Huntingdon	3	6	+100%
Indiana	20	18	-10%
Jefferson	16	18	+13%
Lawrence	24	22	-8%
McKean	31	22	-29%
Mercer	12	4	-67%
Mifflin	7	7	0
Somerset	16	11	-31%
Venango	14	13	-7%
Warren	14	11	-21%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>-22%</b>

The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) collects case-level information from state and tribal title IV-E agencies on all children in foster care and those who have been adopted with title IV-E agency involvement. Congregate care data in AFCARS. Congregate care in AFCARS is a term that refers to **larger foster care placement settings such as group homes and institutions**. Data was pulled on the last day of September 2018 and the last day of September 2021. This timeframe represents the term of the Congregate Care Workgroup.



Public Data

Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, data retrieved 03/03/2022. See Stephenie Strayer for latest updates and revisions.