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Auditor General DePasquale Says York County Children & Youth Agency Overwhelmed by Staff Shortages in 2010-14, Owes State \$578,400

Announces start of special report on "State of the Child" to be released later this year

HARRISBURG – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale said today that a recent audit of the York County Children and Youth agency showed it was overwhelmed by high staff turnover and owes \$578,400 to the state for disallowed costs.

"More important than the financial issues, the York County Children and Youth agency audit raises more questions about the burden and demands placed on caseworkers to protect our children," DePasquale said. "Changes in recent years to the Child Protectives Services Law only exacerbated the problem by increasing the agency's caseload.

"I am pleased the York Children and Youth agency has made improvements in staffing, training, and operations, during and following our audit; however, I worry about how many children may have fallen through the cracks while this agency had serious staffing issues and increased workloads."

DePasquale noted that the agency was operating under provisional licenses from the Department of Human Services (DHS) from November 2014 through November 2016. It has since implemented corrective actions, which included reorganizing its operation, developing an internal continuous quality improvement division, and increasing staff training. As a result, DHS issued the agency a full certificate of compliance for November 2016 through November 2017.

The audit, which covered July 2010 through June 2014, included a financial review of state funding and expenditures.

"My team identified a net amount of \$578,400 that the county agency owes to the state based on services and expenditures over the four-year audit period," DePasquale said.

The report now goes to DHS for review and settlement of the financial adjustment identified for each year.

He noted that the bulk of the amount owed to the state is because auditors disallowed costs claimed by the agency for health benefits paid for retired employees; agencies are permitted to claim only those costs related to health benefits paid for active employees.

The audit report, which is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov, also includes one finding related to services being provided by in-home service contractors.

The audit report commends the York agency for its efforts to verify that invoiced services provided by in-home service contractors are actually provided to children and their families. However, auditors noted

	State aid entitlement	State aid received	Amount due to state
FY10-11	\$19.2 million	\$19.1 million	(\$13,009)
FY11-12	\$22.1 million	\$22.3 million	\$196,831
FY12-13	\$22 million	\$22.1 million	\$188,519
FY13-14	\$23.7 million	\$23.9 million	\$206,059
Total			\$578,400

that the agency needs to strengthen controls to ensure all billing errors discovered during the agency’s on-site monitoring review are appropriately and timely addressed.

An observation in the report highlights a deficiency in state oversight of how counties ensure that providers and subcontractors have the background checks and child abuse clearances required by the Child Protective Services Law.

For contracted in-home preventative service providers, auditors were informed by DHS that these providers are not required to be licensed by the commonwealth and, thus, are not subject to annual DHS inspections.

“My report brings to light a potential hole in our safety net for children,” DePasquale said. “I will work with DHS to determine the best way to resolve this issue — through regulation or legislation — to ensure that no children are put at risk from the system that is supposed to help them.”

Special Report on State of the Child

“Unfortunately, our audits have increasingly found high staff turnover and heavy caseloads affecting the care that children and youth service caseworkers can provide across the commonwealth,” DePasquale said, noting that in 2015, 40,590 reports were registered at ChildLine, the state’s child-abuse hotline — a 39 percent increase in reports over 2014. York County had the fourth-highest total reports at 1,832 in 2015.

[According to statistics from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services](#), every county except Juniata received an increased number of abuse reports over 2014.

To better understand exactly what is causing deficient care and to make recommendations for improvement, DePasquale directed his team to examine the safety of at-risk children by assessing the state of children and youth caseworkers across the state.

This review will result in a special report that will:

- Examine the job stresses for caseworkers in 13 counties, including York;
- Evaluate the impact of high turnover rates and minimal training; and
- Offer recommendations to improve these stressors so that CYS agencies can improve the quality of care at-risk children receive.

This special report, called “State of the Child,” is expected to be completed by fall. In addition to York County, it will evaluate caseworker roles in the following counties:

- Allegheny,
- Bucks,
- Cambria,
- Centre,
- Crawford,
- Dauphin,
- Delaware,
- Erie,
- Fayette,
- Luzerne,
- Monroe, and
- Philadelphia.

“In the end, what matters most is protecting children from abuse and neglect,” DePasquale said. “I want to ensure Pennsylvania is doing all it can to effectively use its state resources to properly care for at-risk children.”

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