	<p style="text-align: right;"><a href="http://www.C4CJ.org">www.C4CJ.org</a></p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Children's Justice &amp; Advocacy Report</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">To promote community responsibility so every Pennsylvania child is protected from child abuse, including sexual abuse.</p>
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## **Auditor General Keeps Spotlight on Child Welfare**

*Audit findings draw attention to "burden" on child welfare workforce and urge better documentation for in-home services*

**February 7<sup>th</sup>** – Today, Governor Tom Wolf will unveil his 2017-2018 budget.

Monday, Pennsylvania Auditor General Eugene DePasquale once again spotlighted how Pennsylvania – at the county and state level – funds services to children and families within a complicated and consequential child welfare system.

Woven inside the Wolf budget will be insight into the governor's commitment to funding this important work for vulnerable children and families.

As the governor's priorities take shape, DePasquale has demonstrated that long required and routine audits of county children and youth agencies will be anything but routine.

In releasing an audit last fall related to expenditures of the Erie County child welfare agency, DePasquale stipulated, "I'm putting all children and youth agencies on notice: During our audits, we will look at whether you are monitoring to ensure that children and their families are indeed receiving the in-home services you are paying for." He continued, "Simply accepting a submitted invoice and paying for it is not doing enough to ensure these children receive the help they so desperately need."<sup>1</sup>

Audits of children and youth agencies are a legal requirement of Pennsylvania's Office of Auditor General.

Act 148 of 1976 set forth a requirement that the state's auditor "shall ascertain the actual expense," as well as the "actual average daily cost" and "certify" state dollars incurred by a county children and youth agency "on behalf of its children."<sup>2</sup> Regulations further require that the county retain information about its expenditures until audited by the Auditor General "or for at least 5 years."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.paauditor.gov/press-releases/auditor-general-depasquale-says-erie-county-children-youth-agency-paid-nearly-17-million-to-providers-without-verifying-services>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?year=1975&ind=0&body=S&type=B&bn=852>

<sup>3</sup> § 3140.48. Audits retrieved at <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter3140/chap3140toc.html#3140.31>.

Monday, the Auditor General put the spotlight on Dauphin County Social Services for Children and Youth (DCSSCY) releasing an audit that covered July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2014.

These child welfare audits go beyond DePasquale’s duties to keep a watchful eye on Pennsylvania’s scarce fiscal resources. Instead he is able to leverage the weight of his office (and the power of his bully pulpit) to spotlight the critical work unfolding in county children and youth agencies and to elevate protecting the state’s children with policymakers.

Ultimately, he utilizes the audits to raise awareness about “how many children have fallen through the cracks in the past.”

***Restructuring and spike in child abuse reports placed a “burden on the direct service casework staff”***

For instance, the DCSSCY audit released Monday goes beyond dollars and cents to tackle the “burden” on caseworkers and to raise a red flag about staff vacancies and turnover.

The audit released this week provides some limited examination of DCSSCY’s 2014 reorganization – a reorganization envisioned as a way for caseworkers to be involved with the same family from the point of intake through case closure.

The audit notes that the theory was that this reworked approach would provide “continuity of service” for families.<sup>4</sup>

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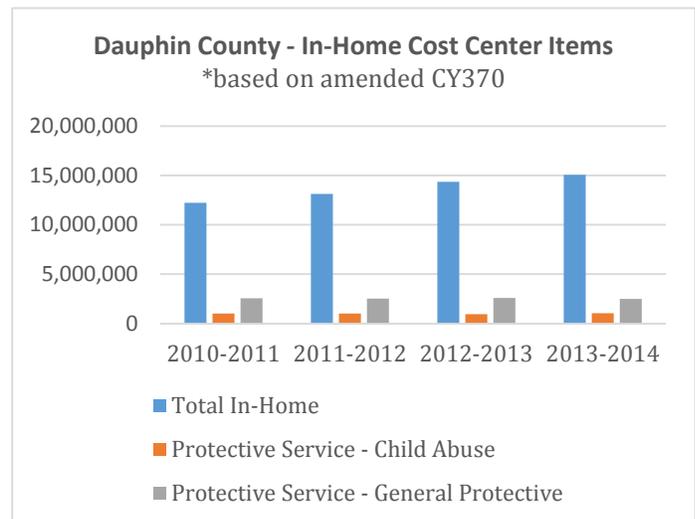
***For a 2<sup>nd</sup> time “lack of supporting documentation” cited***

In its October 2016 audit for Erie County Children and Youth services, the Auditor General said there was no “evidence substantiating” that \$16.9 million worth of in-home services were “actually provided.”<sup>5</sup>

During the audit period covered for Dauphin County, the agency contracted with 61 providers for in-home services. The providers invoiced for a total of \$13,161,351. Auditors looked at invoices for just over \$400,000 submitted by a segment of these providers. After this “detailed review,” the auditors found that while the agency could provide the submitted invoices, “the agency failed to provide supporting documentation evidencing that services related to the \$408,047 in service fees invoiced by these 26 providers and subsequently paid by the agency, were actually provided, and if

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***Child welfare financing is a mix of local, state and federal dollars***

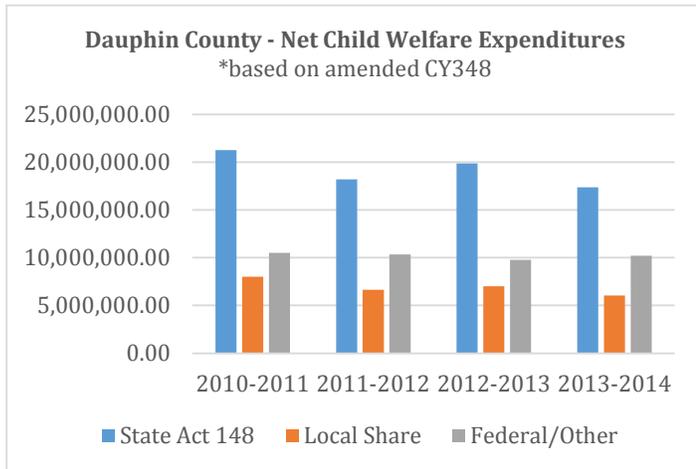


<sup>4</sup> <http://www.paauditor.gov/Media/Default/Reports/chiDauphinCountyCYS020617.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Erie County Children and Youth Agency audit released October 26, 2016. Retrieved at <http://www.paauditor.gov/Media/Default/Reports/ErieCountyChildrenAndYouthAgency102616.pdf>

County child welfare services are underwritten with a combination of federal, state and local dollars. The bulk of child welfare funding flows to counties from the state general fund budget with this state funding commonly referred to as Act 148 dollars.

Beyond Act 148 (of 1976), Pennsylvania enacted Act 30 in 1991 requiring counties to annually submit to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services a Needs-Based Plan and Budget (NBPB).



By August 15<sup>th</sup> of each year, counties prepare their NBPB for submission. By statute these plans must contain “their annual client and budget estimates and a description of proposed changes in their annual plan for the fiscal year beginning the following July 1<sup>st</sup>.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup><http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/LI/uconsCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&yr=1991&sessInd=0&smthLwInd=0&act=30>