



Governor Wolf puts forth new ideas about taxes and education

Investment in education is headliner, but health and human services initiatives are not neglected

March 4th – State budget season is officially underway. RSS feeds, Tweets, Face Book posts and even old fashioned press releases were moving at warped speed Tuesday as Governor Wolf sought to frame the message around the “largest” investment in public education in history and his commitment to reduce burdensome property taxes. Republicans, on the other hand, were content to portray the Governor as all about taxes (increased taxes).

Much is and will be written about Wolf’s significant rethinking of the Commonwealth’s approach to taxation, including adjustments to the state Personal Income Tax (PIT) and Sales and Excise Tax.

Also hard to miss is the fact the Governor intends to keep his promises.

He vowed to lead (to aggressively lead) on securing a greater share of state funding for public education, thus reducing the reliance on

[To keep reading, become a subscriber.](#)

Here’s a look at some other highlights of the spending plan about to get dissected and reconfigured over the next three months (and maybe longer depending on political temperaments):

- [Budget projects increased child abuse reports](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Solutions \(CWIS\) set for another funding installment](#)
- [Children’s Advocacy Centers lose official line in budget](#), but not funding
- [10% increase slated for domestic violence, rape crisis services](#)
- [State health center closures to be reversed, nurses rehired](#)
- [Fixing education in PA requires focus on childhood trauma](#)
- [\\$3 million boost for State Food Purchase](#)
- [Eliminating the child care waiting list](#)

Budget projects increased child abuse reports

As expected, the budget recognizes that county children and youth agencies are (and will continue) to receive more reports of suspected child abuse linked to the recent comprehensive child protection reforms.

In the Program Measure section of the proposed budget, there is also a signal the state is bracing for an uptick in the overall rate of reports that are substantiated as child abuse and the number of children receiving services in their home.

Program Measure	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Reports of child abuse that trigger an investigation	26,414	30,740	33,240	35,730
Percentage of child abuse reports substantiated as child abuse	12.3%	15.5%	17.5%	17.5%
Number of unduplicated children receiving child welfare service in their own home	167,582	171,580	174,230	176,230

[To keep reading, become a subscriber.](#)

Child Welfare Information Solutions (CWIS) set for another funding installment

PA's enacted FY 2014-2015 budget included \$5.784 million for "non-recurring development costs associated with the Child Welfare Information Solutions (CWIS)." This combined with \$4.085 million in federal funding for a total of \$9.869 for the initial development of CWIS.

DHS' Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) has planned CWIS to include 4 phases with the 1st phase launched in December 2014. It took 6 years (and various even earlier IT disasters that cost significant public resources) to develop a statewide automated child welfare system. Among the CWIS goals:

- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness
 - [To keep reading, become a subscriber.](#)

Children's Advocacy Centers lose official line in budget

The Wolf budget removes what was intended to be a stop gap funding measure for PA's children's advocacy centers (CACs). The current year state spending plan included \$2.250 million in General Fund revenues for CACs (\$250,000 of which was required in the budget document to be used for a mobile CAC).

Lawmakers and former Governor Corbett ensured this funding was spelled out in the current year budget knowing that the dedicated funding stream for CACS enacted in 2014 wasn't going to be available until July 1, 2015.

In enacting [Act 28 of 2014](#), lawmakers underscored that CACs represent "state-of-the-art treatment for victims of child sexual abuse" and it is through a CAC that "doctors, nurses, prosecutors, social workers and

[To keep reading, become a subscriber.](#)

Fixing education in PA requires focus on childhood trauma

Senator Andy Dinniman (D-Chester), who serves as the Democrat Chair of the Senate Education Committee, gave Wolf a thumbs up for a "fine address" and then rattled off a list of "real problems" facing Pennsylvania's schools.

Dinniman said there is "inadequate funding" and an "antiquated tax structure," but he also cautioned against any suggestion that money alone is the solution.

He drew attention to the "child in neighborhoods that have a great deal of social dislocation (e.g., violence, drugs) and how this child comes to the school setting "in trauma."

He praised efforts where communities are

[To keep reading, become a subscriber.](#)

\$3 million boost for State Food Purchase

Hunger advocates routinely have worked in recent budget cycles to increase the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) line item. Advocates wrote to Governor Wolf recently that SFPP “has become an indispensable source of critical resources for food banks, making it possible for them to acquire and distribute millions of pounds of nutritious food.”

SFPP provides counties with funding “for the purchase and distribution of food to needy individuals.” Counties receive the funding based on unemployment, eligibility for non-public assistance food stamps and medical assistance.

SFPP has remained level funded (\$17.438

[To keep reading, become a subscriber.](#)

Eliminating the child care waiting list

Currently there are approximately 3,600 Pennsylvania children waiting to receive subsidized child care. The budget recommends an additional \$17.8 million in federal funding “to provide subsidized child care services” to children in low-income families.

A recent [reauthorization of the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant \(CCDBG\)](#) will require increased inspections of child care programs. The Wolf budget reflects this seeking

[To keep reading, become a subscriber.](#)

Department of Public Welfare (state appropriations only)	2010-2011 <i>(Dollar Amounts in Thousands)</i>	2011-2012 <i>(Dollar Amounts in Thousands)</i>	2012-2013 <i>(Dollar Amounts in Thousands)</i>	2013-2014 Actual <i>(Dollar Amounts in Thousands)</i>	2014-2015 Available <i>(Dollar Amounts in Thousands)</i>	2015-2016 Wolf Request <i>(Dollar Amounts in Thousands)</i>
Cash Grants	270,195	212,998	60,690	52,690	45,457	45,457
Child Care Assistance	189,582	164,435	156,728	152,609	152,609	152,609
Child Care Services	171,720	154,265	141,369	155,673	155,691	155,691
Child Support Enforcement	14,497	13,382	13,608	13,796		
Child Welfare Services – County Needs Based						
Drug & Alcohol Assistance – Department of D&A						
Domestic Violence						
Early Intervention						
Family Centers						
Homeless Assistance						
Human Services Development Fund						
Legal Services						
Mandated Reporter Training <i>(note: revenue raised by the fee to obtain a copy of a certified PA birth certificate)</i>						
Nurse Family Partnership						
Rape Crisis						

