

The **Porch Light Project** is an initiative of **Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children** in collaboration with *Casey Family Programs*, a **national operating foundation dedicated to improving the lives of children in foster care**. The Porch Light Project strives to implement public policies to help assure a “forever family for every child” – a home where the porch light is always left on to guide and welcome a child home. You can learn more at www.porchlightproject.org.

The goal of the Porch Light Project is to safely reduce the number of children in Pennsylvania’s foster care system by assuring a legal and permanent family for every child.

CORE OBJECTIVES:

- Drive child welfare financing to focus on the goals of safely reducing the number of children in foster care and assuring that all children have permanent families. Effective financing strategy includes the flexibility to reinvest savings in child abuse prevention and other services that improve child and family outcomes.
- Ensure that all families with children who are at risk of abuse and neglect receive family strengthening services and supports (e.g., substance abuse treatment and housing assistance) so fewer children ever enter foster care and can remain safely in their homes.
- Assure that all children who must enter foster care are placed in the least restrictive and most family-like settings possible, preferably with kin and in their home communities to lessen the stress of removal from their home.
- Establish permanency goals for all children in foster care so they can achieve a legally permanent or forever family through reunification, adoption or guardianship.
- Promote permanency through timely and effective reunification and permanency services (e.g., counseling) for all children in foster care that make every effort to reunify children with their birth families and assure that children are prepared to be part of another permanent family should reunification efforts fail.
- Assure that all children in foster care receive the necessary education, employment and mental health services that facilitate positive adult outcomes.

KEY FACTS:

- There were more than 25,000 reports of suspected child abuse in Pennsylvania in 2008, including 50 deaths.
- About 19,000 children are in Pennsylvania’s foster care system at any given time. Nationwide, more than 500,000 children are in foster care.
- One in four children in the foster care system live in group homes and institutions, while only 22 percent are placed with relatives. About 48 percent of youth 13 and older in foster care live in group homes and institutions.
- In Pennsylvania, an African-American child is more than six times likely to be in foster care than a white youth; and a Latino youth is more than three times likely to be in foster care than a white youth.

continued on back



- The median length of placement for children in foster care is 15 months. More than 30 percent of all children who spend between 12 and 24 months in foster care experience three or more foster care placements.
- More than one-quarter of children re-enter care within 12 months of re-joining their families.
- On average it takes 32 months for a child in foster care to be adopted in Pennsylvania.
- More than 1,100 youth “age out” of foster care every year in Pennsylvania into uncertain circumstances.

The Porch Light Project Leadership Council

The Porch Light Project Leadership Council is comprised of a diverse group of state and national cross-systems experts, youth, parents and state legislators. These council members provide invaluable expertise in data analysis, best practice, mobilization, communications, and policymaker engagement necessary to define and advance a sound public policy agenda. Current council members include:

Anne Marie Ambrose, Esq.
Commissioner
Philadelphia Department of Human Services

Melissa Baker
Director, Strategic Consulting
Casey Family Programs

Joan L. Benso
President and CEO
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

Helen Cahalane, Ph.D., ACSW, LCSW
Principal Investigator
Child Welfare Education and Research Programs
University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work

Frank Capozzi
Youth Advisory Board Member

Mary Carrasco, M.D.
Director
International & Community Health System
Mercy Children's Medical Center

Frank Cervone, Esq.
Executive Director
Support Center for Child Advocates

Marc Cherna, MSW
Director
Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Linda Ciampi, M.C.Ed.
Senior Vice President, Children & Youth
Diakon Family and Community Ministries

Robert Cicco, M.D.
President
The Western Pennsylvania Hospital
Department of Pediatrics

Pamela Cousins, MSW
Director
Elk County Children and Youth Services

Paul Dilorenzo, ACSW, MLSP
Senior Director, Strategic Consulting
Casey Family Programs

Judith Dogin, M.D.
Senior Medical Director
Community Care Behavioral Health Organization

Richard Gold, Esq.
Deputy Secretary
Office of Children, Youth and Families
Department of Public Welfare

The Honorable Stewart Greenleaf
State Senator
Pennsylvania Senate

Darla Henry, Ph.D.
Co-founder
Family Design Resources

Scott Hollander, Esq.
Executive Director
KidsVoice

Barbara Huggins
Youth Ambassador
Stacy Johnson
Youth Advisory Board Member

Garry Krentz
Resource Parent
Pennsylvania State Resource Family Assoc.

Anne Marie Lancour, Esq.
Director of State Projects
ABA Center on Children & The Law

Todd Lloyd, MSW
Child Welfare Director
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

Ruby Marin
Youth Advisory Board Member

Sean McCormack, Esq.
Dauphin County District Attorney's Office
Dauphin County Courthouse

Sandy Moore
Director
Office of Children and Families in the Courts
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

The Honorable Phyllis Mundy
State Representative
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Laurie Green O'Connor
Director
Montgomery County Office of
Children & Youth

David Rubin, M.D.
Director of Research & Policy for Safe Place
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Robert Schwartz, Esq.
Executive Director
Juvenile Law Center

Gary Shuey
Social Work Supervisor
Children's Advocacy Clinic
PSU Dickinson School of Law

Walter Smith Jr., Ph.D.
Executive Director
Family Resources

Carol Wilson Spigner, DSW
Kenneth L. M. Pray Distinguished
Professor/Clinician Educator
School of Social Policy and Practice
University of Pennsylvania

Karen Traupman
Resource Parent

The Honorable Katie True
State Representative
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Sam Waite
Youth Advisory Board Member

The Honorable Leanna Washington
State Senator
Pennsylvania Senate

Jacqueline Wilson, MSW
Executive Director
Three Rivers Adoption Council