

Human Services Systems Cross Training

Westmoreland County
Children's Bureau

Mission Statement

- It is the mission of the Westmoreland County Children's Bureau to protect children from abuse and neglect, preserve families whenever possible, and to ensure that every child under our care and supervision has a safe, stable, and permanent home in which to grow.

Agency Structure

- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS)
 - Office of Children Youth and Families (OCYF)
 - Licensing body for County Children and Youth Agencies
- Westmoreland County Children's Bureau
 - County operated
 - State Licensed
- Funding through federal, state, and county funds
 - Title IV-E, Block Grant

WCCB Services Provided

- Investigation/assessment of allegations of child abuse and neglect
- Provide ongoing case-management services to identified families
- Administer a foster/kinship care program for children currently in agency custody
- Provide Independent Living services to youth ages 16-20.

Investigation of Child Abuse and Neglect (Assessment)

■ Child Protective Services (CPS)

– Allegations of Child Abuse (as per CPSL)

■ Child: anyone under the age of 18

■ Perpetrator: parent (bio, adoptive, step), paramour or ex-paramour of parent, household member over the age of 14, caregiver over the age of 14, relative within 3 degrees

■ Abusive act: Physical, Sexual, Mental, Severe Neglect, “creating a likelihood”

Investigation of Child Abuse and Neglect (Assessment)

- General Protective Services (GPS)
 - Allegations of General Neglect; doesn't rise to the level of child abuse
 - Housing, substance abuse, truancy, parent/child conflict, incorrigibility, parenting, lack of supervision, etc.
 - Determination: valid/invalid, closed/accept for service
- Information Referral (I/R)
 - Referrals that are not investigated due to lack of allegations of specific abuse or neglect.

Ongoing Family Services (OFS / Treatment)

■ Family Service Plans

- Identify objectives and related tasks to eliminate or reduce risk/safety factors
- Developed with the family to ensure that the family has the resources and ability to provide for all the basic safety needs of the children
- Reviewed every 6 months

Ongoing Family Services (OFS / Treatment)

■ Case management services

- Contract with community service providers
 - substance abuse, parenting, therapy, home maintenance, truancy elimination, Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)
- Connect families to community resources
 - Mental Health, Behavioral Resources, Housing Authority, In-patient substance abuse programs, Food Banks

Child Safety: Assessment or Treatment

- Assess safety at each contact
 - Maltreatment, circumstances of maltreatment, child functioning, caregiver functioning, general parenting, discipline
- If child cannot safely remain in the home, agency may ask the court for custody

Foster/Kinship Care Program

- Approx 140 foster homes
 - 70 traditional foster homes
 - 70 kinship foster homes
 - Responsible for certification and re-certifications
- Kinship Care
 - Blood Relative, godparent, member of tribe/clan, individual with a significant relationship with the child or family

Independent Living Services

- Eligibility: Any youth whom was in agency custody anytime after they've turned 16
- Independent Living Needs Assessment
 - Life skills, Finances, Job Skills,
- Assist with job searches, career building, college application
- IL youth and custody

Referrals and Confidentiality

■ GPS referrals

- Very little agency is able to report without a release-of-information or an order of court

■ CPS referrals

- If the referral source is a mandated reporter: case determination and services provided

Myths

- #1: We just want to have kids adopted
 - Concurrent Planning
 - Reunification is the primary goal
 - ASFA: we must file for termination if a child has been in agency custody for 15/22 months
 - Safety, Permanency, Well-being

Myths

- #2: We're all for parent's rights, but ignore the children's rights.
 - Due Process
 - Always assessing safety
 - Must have both parent's involvement

Myths

- #3: We are too invasive on family rights / we don't do enough to help kids at risk.
 - Too much/too little
 - Federal/State Laws regulate agency operations:
 - CPSL
 - Juvenile Act
 - Adoption and Safe Families Act
 - Fostering Connections Act / Family Finding Act
 - Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act
 - 55 Pa. Code 3130's, 3490's, 3680's, 3700's
 - Evidence Based

Accessing Services

- 24 hour / 7 day availability
 - Office Hours: 8:30am – 6:00pm
 - (724) 830-3301
 - After hours (evenings, weekends, holidays)
 - 9-1-1, ask for on-call WCCB caseworker
- Childline referrals
 - 1-800-932-0313
 - www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis