

Increasing Protection of Vulnerable Populations

Governor Tom Wolf believes Pennsylvanians should be safe from harm, mistreatment, and abuse. His administration is committed to the health and safety of all Pennsylvanians.

However, over the past few decades, Pennsylvania's systems have failed to adequately protect and care for some of our most vulnerable citizens. A series of incidents in our commonwealth that revealed inadequacies in the system's ability to protect and care for Pennsylvanians in vulnerable situations.

Our protective and oversight systems have been built to prioritize institutions over human beings. Gov. Wolf wants to dramatically shift these systems to first-and-foremost advocate, protect and empower our most vulnerable citizens.

Gov. Wolf will sign an executive order that begins an overhaul of our systems to best help Pennsylvanians most in need of our protection and care. Additionally, Gov. Wolf will pursue executive, legislative and regulatory reforms to strengthen systems and programs meant to protect citizens and resolve long-standing concerns and criticisms of Pennsylvania's protection of vulnerable residents.

Executive Order

Governor Wolf's "Protection of Vulnerable Populations" Executive Order establishes:

- An **Office of Advocacy and Reform**, maintained by the governor's office with an executive director, that includes a new Child Advocate position and integrates the Long-term Care Ombudsman.
- A **Council on Reform**, including 25 voting members appointed by Gov. Wolf, to support this effort by looking at protecting vulnerable populations from three perspectives: Prevention and Diversion, Protection and Intervention, and Justice and Support.
 - Each focus will identify reforms needed for Pennsylvania to better protect and support individuals relying upon protective services and assistance from the commonwealth.

Council of Reform members and the perspective they represent on the council include:

- Academic Representatives: Jennie Noll and Cindy Christian
- County and City Official Representatives: City Council Member Cherelle Parker; Court of Common Pleas Judge Kim Berkeley-Clark; CCAP Deputy Director Brinda Penyak; Local Law Enforcement Tony Minimum; Juvenile Probation Officer Susan Claytor.
- Advocate Representatives: Child Advocate Kari King; Senior Advocate Bill Johnston-Walsh; Disability Advocate Nancy Murray; Victim Advocate Susan Higginbotham; LGBTQ Advocate Todd Snovel; African American Advocate David Dix; Asian American and Pacific Islander Advocate Niken Astari Carpenter; Latino Advocate Maria Teresa Donate; Women's Advocate Randi Blackman Teplitz.

- Provider Representatives: Provider Association President Richard Edley; Provider Association Executive Director Diane Barber; Provider Association Executive Director Rebecca May-Cole.
- Medical Representatives: Pediatrician Phil Scribrano; Geriatrician Namita Ahuja; Psychologist Stacey Rivenberg.
- Community Representatives: Young Adult Haundray Muir; Veteran Living with a Disability Chris Fiedler; Senior Mary Bach.

In addition to governor-appointed members, Wolf Administration cabinet secretaries or their designees as **non-voting** members of the Council include:

- The Secretary of Human Services or designee – Teresa Miller
- The Secretary of Health or designee – Carolyn Byrnes
- The Secretary of Aging or designee – Robert Torres
- The Secretary of Drug and Alcohol Programs or designee – Jennifer Smith
- The Secretary of Education or designee – Pedro Rivera
- The Secretary of Corrections or designee – George Little
- The Chairman of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency or designee – Charles Ramsey
- The Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police or designee – Robert Evanchick
- The Adjutant General of Pennsylvania or a designee – Mark Schindler
- The Victim Advocate or designee – Jennifer Storm
- The Executive Director of the Juvenile Court Judges Commission or designee – Richard (Rick) Steele

Executive Actions

Governor Wolf is tasking state agencies with the following directives:

- Pursue bold reductions in institutionalization of children and adults and transition to home- and community-based services in conjunction with reducing placements in child residential treatment facilities, nursing homes, child congregate care settings;
- Create a new process for direct and timely referrals to the Office of Inspector General to reduce abuse and increase accountability for institutional bad actors;
- Establish Pennsylvania as a trauma-informed state to better respond to the needs of people who have had adverse childhood experiences;
- Issue guidance standardizing the time period to establish a plan of correction following the identification of a violation by a provider licensed by the commonwealth; verifying timely compliance with and implementation of a plan of correction; and taking licensing action against a provider that does not timely comply with a plan of correction.
- Use data and analysis to identify high-risk providers for additional oversight;
- Implement a statewide child welfare case management IT system;
- Launch an enterprise licensing and incident management IT system to be shared across multiple human services and health departments to increase data sharing;
- Use LEAN to identify opportunities for efficiency in child welfare administrative functions;
- Update Older Adult Protective Services mandatory reporter training;

- Commission a study on the financial impact to Pennsylvania due to financial exploitation of older adults;
- Establish sustainable housing and long-term services and supports for individuals exiting the corrections system with nursing facility level-of-care needs.

Next Steps

In addition to the executive order and action steps by the administration, Gov. Wolf will pursue extensive regulatory and legislative actions with input from the General Assembly. We expect a series of announcements on these actions over the coming months.