

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth

2003 Annual Report



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PCCY's year began with a board retreat in which the board guided the organizational priorities for the year emphasizing the need to continue the focus on education, child care and health care, to seek to position the organization strategically by working collaboratively during the gubernatorial election and maintaining and strengthening PCCY's position as an independent outside advocate for the children of Southeastern Pennsylvania with a particular emphasis on Philadelphia's children. The board underscored the problems of teens in trouble and urged us to expand that work if possible. The board committed the organization to strengthen its development efforts and capacity and to help support the 20 year anniversary endowment party.

In general, PCCY's city and state work last year was filled with examples of coalition building and policy leadership. We partnered with and led statewide groups. We helped create a strong agenda for children in the gubernatorial campaign through our work on Focus Five. We were instrumental in developing and keeping the issues of changing the way the state funds public education and improving the state's commitment to early childhood programming front and center throughout the campaign. We planned and undertook events and press outreach, met with the candidates and with our partners and together we established a stronger presence for children in the state campaign than ever before. When the campaign was over, we kept up the work, the collaboration and the leadership.

In Health Care:

We helped provide access to health insurance and care for hundreds of children. We finished our report on teen's access to drug and alcohol treatment, translated the brochures into Spanish, and distributed thousands throughout the region. Our drug and alcohol work immediately resulted in new services for adolescents in southwest Philadelphia.

We finished and distributed our first mental health report. We organized advocacy campaigns every week with about 100 residents and staff from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Some of the issues we worked on were increases in funding for adultBasic in Pennsylvania (successful), increase in our federal reimbursement for Medicaid participation (F-Map) (successful) and blocking block-granting of Medicaid(on-going). We re-formed our dental coalition; assisted in the development of a children's oral health report; worked in a variety of ways (including training their staff and providing them a report) with the health centers to increase the number of insured children who are their patients; testified at several City Council hearings on infant mortality and drug and alcohol services; trained school nurses on health insurance changes; began work on the new school nurse health care manual; organized suburban efforts to insure children; and provided information and assistance concerning health care access through our Child Health Watch.

The Campaign for Working Families, coordinated a healthy kids back-to-school effort and continued to build a safer lead-free environment for the city's children. That lead prevention effort this year has resulted in a continuing commitment to maintaining the increased investment of last year, to the city's receiving increased support from the federal government for lead, to several individual institutions supporting lead clean-up work, to increasing prevention work on the city and the coalition's part. Finally our lead coalition held meetings with Senator Williams and Representative Curry to discuss the bills they were introducing in the state legislature.

PCCY was the 2003 recipient of the GlaxoSmithKline award for community impact.

In Child Care:

This is the final year of PCCY's involvement in Child Care Matters. As a result, our effort this year was to focus on and solidify the gains that we have made over the past five years and to respond to critical issues as they emerged. Over the course of the year we held legislative briefings, organized several rallies highlighting the needs of child care workers for more support and child care settings for more quality. We struggled to have government maintain oversight and monitoring of all child care settings against strong challenges by those who wanted to broaden exemptions.

Generally, our work exceeded our expectations. We have had a series of important victories in our key issue areas. We have been able to get up to speed right away with the new state administration in moving forward on shaping policies in other issue areas. In general, with both a city and state administration sympathetic to the needs of children, we have forged important partnerships to strengthen and improve the system of early care for young children.

Major accomplishments:

We were successful in winning the Rendell administration's commitment to eliminate the waiting list for child care subsidy for this year. In May, funds were released to enroll 2,000 families.

We were successful in urging the major increase in child care spending for 2003-2004. The budget for child care increased by \$24 million this year - from \$449 million to \$474 million. The increase includes: \$10.8 million to enroll 3,400 new families in child care subsidy and \$2 million for a new compensation initiative that will provide retention grants to child care teachers who stay in the field and improve their skills and \$4 million increase in funding for "Keystone Stars" Pennsylvania's Quality Improvement Program.

PCCY was the lead voice in securing \$5 million in funding from the City administration for the child care health and safety fund. This funding will improve facilities for child care and after-school programs.

Regulatory Revisions for Child Care:

PCCY led the effort to modify proposed state regulations to adopt a Uniform Building Construction Code. The proposed regulations would have reduced supply of child care and created major confusion between DPW regulations and building codes. The new regulations eliminate all the problems and will make it easier to develop new programs that are both safe and economical.

Involvement in Gubernatorial Campaign:

In addition to PCCY's efforts on Focus Five, we worked to secure commitments from both candidates for governor on early education issues including pre-k, religious licensing exemption and quality issues. Our questionnaire was the first to get the Republican candidate on the record as to how much he would spend on his pre-k initiative. And we were able to get Ed Rendell on the record opposing religious licensing exemption. This has proven useful as to get the administration prepared to fight amendments on the House floor on this issue.

Supporting the Early Childhood Initiative:

Pennsylvania is one of the few states in which the child care and Head Start community have embraced (although not warmly) the establishment of a pre-k program. PCCY used its leadership in the field to both help shape the proposal to meet the needs of working families and to build support among the child care community to work actively on its behalf.

Child Care Subsidy Payments and Family Access:

PCCY has taken the lead in channeling providers' frustration with late payments and problems in the administering of the child care subsidy at the county assistance offices into an effort toward significant policy changes. We drafted a paper identifying problems and solutions and used our access to put this high up on the administrations agenda.

Quality Care for Vulnerable Children

PCCY has succeeded in getting DPW to set up an internal work group combining both child care offices to develop new programs and policies to encourage the use of regulated care and to ensure more information about child care options to families.

Events

In addition to our legislative briefings and rallies, we held a lunch forum with researchers from the Economic Policy Institute speaking about the implications of being “Behind At The Starting Gate” and to listen to the CEO of the School District respond.

Juvenile Justice

In juvenile justice, we held a Courtwatch where volunteers sat in and report on the outcomes of 1,000 cases. The Courtwatch report is currently in the next phase of the project which entails holding interviews with key stakeholders and developing recommendations for improvement. We participated in building a statewide coalition, hosted several meetings with policy makers and are planning a reception for Judge Reynolds, who is retiring from Juvenile Court.

Watching Out for Children in Changing Times

This was the final year of the Watching Out for Children in Changing Times project, where we focused on the impact of proposed and actual welfare reforms on children and families in the region. During the past year, we continued to monitor the impact of changes in the welfare system and moved our advocacy to a more significant collaborative focus. We partnered with the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Community Legal Services and Women’s Association for Women’s Alternatives to sponsor four educational forums during the past year.

The forums covered topics from “Extended TANF” and work supports, to the federal administration’s tax cuts and its proposed plans to alter a wide array of social support programs. At each forum, over one hundred participants were provided comprehensive resource materials on the topics addressed, as well as advocacy tools so they could help us influence the policy debate in a range of program areas.

Also on the forum front, acting upon a long-standing desire to address the special needs of teens, PCCY and our forum partners have reached out to local experts from the Juvenile Law Center and Philadelphia Legal Assistance to plan a teen forum that will include information about a variety of topics including: special teen rules for public benefits, consent and confidentiality issues concerning minors, custody and child support issues and access to mental health and drug and alcohol treatment.

In June 2002, PCCY stimulated the beginning of a local offshoot of the statewide coalition. The Philadelphia Welfare Coalition was started as a short-term coalition to address TANF reauthorization, and is now serving several important purposes. It has allowed us to “jump-start” some important actions of the Pennsylvania Welfare Coalition, particularly the development of a comprehensive briefing packet for the gubernatorial candidates. Consisting of a series of two-page issue briefs, these packets detailed many of Pennsylvania’s successes and shortcomings within our TANF programs. The Rendell Administration utilized the packet during the Transition Period, and DPW has given public acknowledgement of the value of these briefing papers. Through the Coalition, we plan to continue our role in statewide advocacy, as well as to begin a focus on Philadelphia-based implementation problems.

We participated in two Welfare Coalition meetings with Senator Rick Santorum. PCCY was also instrumental in securing and planning a Coalition meeting with Senator Specter. We have continued our efforts to inform our Senators about issues surrounding TANF and other support programs for low-income families.

In April, Watching Out staff participated in an advocates’ meeting with Senator Santorum’s State Director for Southeast Pennsylvania to discuss the tax cuts and the possibility of state fiscal relief.

In addition, the Philadelphia Coalition was once again able to secure a meeting with Senator Specter in Philadelphia in May, 2003. At each of our meetings with the Senators, we identified issues and concerns, made recommendations, and were often asked to provide follow up memorandums and further information as circumstances changed.

In related public benefits efforts, PCCY was a partner in the Campaign for Working Families, a new EITC campaign whose target was low-income families. During that Campaign, we developed comprehensive benefits outreach materials and spoke to many different groups about the supports that are available to low-income families.

We provided a tax preparation service and benefits counseling at Frankford Group Ministry on Wednesdays and Saturdays and at the Beacon Center at Frankford High School on Tuesdays. In addition, PCCY provided benefits support at a variety of other Campaign sites throughout the Campaign, including to CEIBA organizations such as Nueva Esperanza Academy, Centro Pedro Claver, Concilio, and the Norris Square Family Center at the McKinley School.

Through this effort we filed taxes for approximately 150 persons (about one-third of whom were EITC filers), resulting in \$167,054 in tax refunds and provided one-on-one benefits information to approximately 100 persons at tax sites and through phone calls. The EITC Campaign undertaken in Philadelphia this year was the first coalition/community effort; we learned much from the effort and are working through how best to blend benefits access work with the tax work. The Campaign distributed the benefits information we developed to over 3,000 tax filers.

In Education

In public education this year, we continued our pivotal role in informing, providing leadership, reporting trends and speaking out. We issued two reports, increased our education staff and profile by having a retired teacher visit schools and report back what he saw; provided information to local and national press regularly, and raised funds to provide grants in art and music to schools.

PCCY's education work was as varied as education is. We organized, we visited, we reported, we testified.

At the State level, we

- Supported increased state investment and increased state share in supporting programs that work;
- Organized and made legislative visits with key members of the Philadelphia delegation;
- Organized the Harrisburg Trip (450 people, Mayor and Governor spoke at rally, legislative visits with Philadelphia and suburban legislators);
- Developed a Phone Bank (to date 63 volunteers participated, key legislative districts completed in the five county area) to encourage support for increased state investment;
- Held meetings / briefings / trainings conducted at numerous home and school and community meetings;
- Sent hundreds of post cards and phone calls placed to key legislators;
- Spoke on radio programs (Labor to Neighbor, Sandra Glenn, Tamlin Henry);

At the School District, we:

- Testified and organized others to address the high number of suspensions of young children occurring. (The District has since taken steps to provide other options and more supports for younger children with behavioral problems);
- Testified and organized others to address the need for more music and art supports in schools (The CEO has since publicly stated his commitment to art and music);
- Testified and organized others about the importance of community involvement in decisions related to school management issues (The CEO has expressed a commitment to work with community groups to establish a formal process for involving community in future decisions);
- Testified and organized others to speak out about the need for a more even distribution of money across low performing schools (resulted in raising awareness of the issue)

At the city government level we:

- Consistently advocated for more support for schools.

Other Education Initiatives

- The year began with our telephone hotline to help answer parent and students' questions about the new school environment. With a collaboration of groups, we prepared fact sheets on issues and referred hundreds of calls to community groups urging the callers to get involved. "The Philly Public Education Connection," brought together nine education groups resulting in helping hundreds of parents and students navigate the system;
- The Picasso Project took off, funding eight programs, working with individuals and organizations to build advocacy around the arts in schools;)
- Sponsored Philadelphians United to Support Public Schools (continued to build and strengthen broad coalition of parents, school employees, students, unions and community around education issues;)
- Coordinated a Student Voter Registration Drive (September 2002-June 2003, registered close to 1,000 seniors across 26 high schools. Senior assemblies included live broadcasts from Power 99 FM, student training on new voting machines, motivational speakers.)

Reports

We published two education reports this year: "Looking Back, Moving Forward," a Baseline on schools report and our most recent report on our visits to the schools, "Beyond the Statistics, Beyond the Test, Beyond the Headlines."

We sponsored a meeting with the Director of State Policy, Donna Cooper concerning the Governor's Proposed Education Budget. Our education coordinator, Aldustus Jordan, received an award for his work from the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

Youth Development and Parent Support

We collaborated with a project to help develop parent nights to ease and assist families in the critical work of raising children. We collaborated in helping set up another teen lounge and we continued problem solving around issues in youth development and supporting the expansion of these programs. We began the planning effort to develop a Major Three Year Forum series as part of a new strategic positioning effort

Development

The Development committee has been strengthened this year with the special efforts of several board members. We took some major steps forward this year in building our capacity to develop a strategic, varied and supported campaign.

Events

We have had three very successful events including the 20th Anniversary Endowment Party, a successful Millennium Club Event and Please Touch Party.

Reports Published This Year

- “A Helping Hand: A Guide to Drug and Alcohol Treatment for Philadelphia Teens” – these brochures were printed in English and Spanish and distributed to community health centers and organizations across the city.
- “The City – Neighborhood Schools Initiative: Music, Art and Public Education, A Powerful Relationship.”
- “A Report on Philadelphia’s Drug and Alcohol Treatment System for Adolescents.”

- “The Mental Health System for Low-Income Children: The Philadelphia Story.”
- “Looking Back... Moving Forward... and Asking the Right Questions – Public Education in Philadelphia.”
- “Beyond the Statistics, Beyond the Tests, Beyond the Headlines: A Closer Look at Philadelphia Public Schools.”

Staffing

Tom Elkington has joined us to assist with financial advice and management and Dennis Barnebey is working with us on education several days a week. Laurel Barnes moved to full time health associate as we went into the Campaign for Working Families and Colleen gave birth to a baby boy and went out on maternity leave. Gretchen Aguiar left and Barbara Torregrossa came back from maternity leave. The year ends with PCCY looking for a deputy director and the Board electing new leadership. Pat West, who was recently honored by the School of Public Health for her extraordinary contribution will be leaving the presidency of the organization after her years of her extraordinary service to PCCY. Sissy Rogers, with a new doctorate, returns to the presidency.

**As always, the year was full,
but so too should be our children’s lives. There is much to do.**