



Childwatch

Speaking out for the region's children.

A Publication of Public Citizens for Children and Youth • December 2011

It's Not About Luck It's About Keeping Our Pledge To Children



It's the season – from Thanksgiving through the New Year – many of us focus on the more gentle, more giving part of our nature.

We try to bring the more hopeful, charitable and thankful part of ourselves to the forefront, giving up – if

only temporarily – our cynicism, disappointments and self-focus to a more generous expression of “we.”

So in this time when the Congressional supercommittee and Congress as a whole cannot seem to come together and agree to focus on the things that matter, and when state government seems to be taking steps that will hurt the youngest and the poorest among us, local governments, local community groups and local communities are trying to figure out how to stretch their dollars, their compassion and their hopes.

In the midst of troubling news, we all need to reach down inside and focus on what matters. We can, each and all of us, insist that we as individuals, groups, city, state and nation do better – better by the kids we know and those we don't.

§ Better by the babies born every day – both the fragile and those lucky enough to be strong.

§ Better by the kids on waiting lists for quality child care and for those who are lucky enough to attend good programs.

§ Better by the kids who go to bed hungry, those whose families struggle to find a bed – and those who are lucky not to know hunger or homelessness or hopelessness.

§ Better by the kids who start school behind and those who are lucky enough to have been read to and nurtured for all their young lives.

§ Better by the kids who live in houses that have lead and other dangers in them and those who are lucky enough to be safe in their homes and their communities.

§ Better by the kids who attend schools that are not preparing them for the future and those who are lucky enough to attend schools that teach them well, support them, and value them.

It should not be a matter of luck. Life should not be a casino. Raising our children – all our children – should not be a gamble.

So as I think about the season – I hope that important folks start talking and taking seriously a pledge for children – not a pledge against taxes but a pledge against cuts that cause innocents to bleed – a pledge that assures that government will do no harm to the millions of children and families that need good leaders and something to seriously be hopeful about.

Let's ask all our leaders to take that pledge.

Wishing all of you a very happy holiday season.

In This Issue:

Medicaid Insurance Renewal

- Page 2

Child Care Update

- Page 3

Lead Paint

- Page 4

Forums: Children's Program

Cuts, Behavioral Health in Schools, School Governance

- Pages 5 - 7

Annual Appeal

- Pages 8 - 9

CourtWatch Project

- Page 11

New Publications

- Page 12 - 13

Medicaid And Our Kids

Poverty Rising But Numbers of Uninsured Children Falling?

An unprecedented number of children in PA lost their Medicaid coverage this fall. About 20,000 children across the state were terminated in August and September – 11,000 in Southeastern PA. There is no cause for these terminations; we understand that the majority of the children are still eligible for Medicaid.

PCCY's Child HealthWatch Helpline has been inundated with calls from frantic and upset parents who state they have followed the rules but their kids have been cut off. They want our assistance to reinstate their children's coverage.

Making sure kids covered by Medical Assistance (MA) maintain their status through the state's enrollment process has always been a difficult task with multiple steps. But the prolonged recession combined with administrative cuts in the Department of Public Welfare, have created a perfect storm that is crashing on families needing health coverage for their children.

MA enrollment must be renewed periodically and families are routinely informed by the County Assistance Office (CAO) which sends the appropriate notices and forms as their renewal date approaches. Families then complete the forms, returning the necessary documents to the CAO in a timely fashion.

Unfortunately a trio of challenges – more families relying on benefits due to the economy, budget cuts reducing staff handling caseloads, a slowdown as CAOs switch from paper to electronic filing – means that parents/guardians who successfully manage these steps still might not be able to keep their kids MA coverage!



Compounding the difficulty is a pair of state-mandated "Operations Memos" issued over the summer that are flooding already log-jammed CAOs with renewal forms and documentation.

In the long run, one directive calling for an alignment of renewal times for families receiving multiple benefits, MA, cash assistance, TANF, etc., might be a positive, but for now the result is an administrative traffic jam for caseworkers.

The second memo, "overdue MA renewals," announced that any family whose renewal date has passed will be given up to 10 days to send any needed documents to the CAO and/or have their issues resolved. If their status isn't updated in the DPW computer system by then, the family's MA benefit will be terminated – even if the documents are sitting in a pile sitting on a caseworker's desk.

As a result, many families who continue to be eligible for MA are losing benefits they should not have – even clients with receipts proving they delivered their documents on time.

What to do? MA advocates are exploring various avenues to address these issues including a legal suit against DPW for unlawfully denying clients access to MA services, and intervention on behalf of individual, unjustly-terminated families. The Child HealthWatch staff has been working overtime to help our clients in this time of crisis.

If you are a parent with a child enrolled in MA, now is the time to be especially aware of renewal schedules and on the lookout for any letters from the CAO. Also, keep copies of all documents you receive and send to the CAO. If you return your renewal by mail make sure you send the packet with a "return receipt requested," so you have proof that the CAO received your documents. If you deliver your packet in person, be sure to get a signed receipt; don't just drop off your papers at the front desk and walk away – even if it means you have to wait.

If you experience an unjustified termination, record everything. Keep track – in writing – of the time and content of all the letters and phone calls you receive and make. Then let PCCY know.

We will try to assist with your specific issues and work to resolve the problem overall by getting DPW to change its actions. **Contact 'Z' at the Child HealthWatch Helpline at 215-563-5848 x17.**

Federal Early Care And Education

The 2012 Budget and Beyond



With approximately half of Pennsylvania's public funding for child care and 85 percent of Head Start funding coming from Washington, child advocates have a large stake in the federal budget and deficit reduction processes this year.

Support for child care subsidy and Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania's quality rating and improvement system, comes from the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). Head Start services for pre-school students and Early Head Start for infants and toddlers comes directly from federal Head Start. In addition, Pennsylvania has recently applied for an Early Learning Challenge Fund grant through the federal government's Race to the Top program. This competitive grant could provide additional resources to Pennsylvania for improving early care and education.

In recent months Congress has passed two measures that could jeopardize these funds:

- The Budget Control Act cut four percent of discretionary spending and appointed a 12-member 'supercommittee' to create a proposal to reduce the deficit by \$1.2 – \$1.5 trillion over the next decade. However, the supercom-

mittee failed to agree on recommendations last month, triggering an automatic \$1.2 trillion cut to the federal domestic discretionary and defense budgets. The Congressional Budget Office estimates this will result in a cut of almost nine percent to domestic discretionary programs starting in 2013.

- Congress was also unable to agree on a 2012 budget by October 1, the start of the federal fiscal year. To keep government running, members passed two Continuing Resolutions, which fund federal agencies at 2011 levels in the short-term. It is likely that another Continuing Resolution will be required to keep government open through late December.

Where the Budget Stands Now: As part of the 2012 appropriations process, the House and Senate proposed to level-fund the Child Care and Development Fund Block Grant at 2011 levels. The House proposed to increase Head Start by \$600,000 and the Senate by \$400,000 in 2012. While PCCY welcomes the proposed increases in Head Start funding, they are not sufficient to offset the loss of federal economic stimulus funds. Nevertheless, we will have to work hard to sustain CCDBG and increase Head Start funding.

The House and Senate diverge more widely on funding for the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant. The more partisan House would eliminate Race to the Top, an Obama initiative. The Senate would continue to fund it at last year's level.

The chart below shows the differences:

	Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)	Head Start	Race To The Top - Early Learning Challenge Fund
House FY2011	\$2.2 billion	\$7.5 billion	\$500 million
House FY2012	\$2.2 billion	\$8.1 billion	- 0 -
Senate FY2011	\$2.2 billion	\$7.5 billion	\$500 million
Senate FY2012	\$2.2 billion	\$7.9 billion	\$500 million

In 2013, when triggers established by the Budget Control Act take effect, these amounts will be reduced.

Risks to Early Care and Education Funding: Early care and education (ECE) is extremely vulnerable to cuts during negotiations over the 2012 budget and in the deficit reduction process.

- ECE is funded from the discretionary (as opposed to mandatory) portion of the budget. Congress will determine the size of the cuts to each program; some will not be cut at all or sustain small cuts, while others will lose considerable funding.
- The full House and Senate must approve the budget proposals in the table above. Once this occurs, a House-Senate Conference Committee meets to resolve differences between both versions. ECE could be cut at this point as well.

What You Can Do: At this writing Congress is scheduled to vote on the 2012 budget by December 23rd.

There are many opportunities to influence negotiations and it is critical to speak out at every turn. Once it is passed, they will begin to tackle the 2013 budget and resume work on deficit reduction.

Please urge Pennsylvania Senators Toomey, Casey and your Representative to:

- Level-fund the Child Care and Development Block Grant and the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Fund, while increasing Head Start funding.
- Pursue a balanced approach to deficit reduction that includes sensible revenue increases, not an approach that relies on cuts alone.

You can find their contact information at **www.pccy.org**, where you can also sign up to receive e-alerts that will keep you informed of federal budget issues.

Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention

Help Protect Our Children From Being Poisoned

All funding for the CDC's Lead and Healthy Homes Program – which prevents children from being poisoned – is on the chopping block in the Senate Appropriations Committee's proposed FY12 budget. The CDC funding has made a significant impact supporting activities that help in reducing the number of Southeastern Pennsylvania children permanently injured by lead.

In Philadelphia alone, over the last decade the number of poisoned children has dropped from about 5,000 to 1,000. We cannot afford to backslide now! Tell Senators Casey 202-224-6324 and Toomey 202-224-4254 to fully fund lead poisoning prevention and make children a priority in budget and deficit reductions!

As this newsletter went to press, Philadelphia City Council was working on a bill that would require landlords to show that they were not renting an apartment or house that was hazardous to children. Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds-Brown introduced this bill to protect children from being permanently damaged by lead.

Although lead paint has not been allowed to be used in homes since 1978, there is little enforcement of current protective laws. Thus, thousands of children are still at risk in Philadelphia.

We can do better! We can require that landlords show proof that they are not renting homes that are dangerous. We can save kids and dollars by following the examples of other cities and protecting kids from lead.

For more information about PCCY's lead work, contact Colleen McCauley, Health Director at colleenmccauley@pccy.org or 215-563-5848 x33.



E-Alerts and Social Media

Action today means protecting children tomorrow. PCCY sends regular e-alerts to keep our network up-to-date on important issues affecting children and families in our region. Please continue working with us to protect the lives and life chances of our region's children by taking action today.

Sign up for our E-alerts at **www.pccy.org** and follow us on:

Facebook at **www.facebook.com/pccypage** and Twitter at **www.twitter.com/pccyteam**

What's At Stake For Kids

Jared Bernstein: "Don't Cut Kids' Programs!"



*"I'm tired of playing defense, I'm sick of crumbs."
- Jared Bernstein*

October was a PCCY forum-filled month beginning with Jared Bernstein, Senior Fellow at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, who spoke on the 'Federal Budget and the Stakes for Children and Youth.' Bernstein, who was former economic advisor to Vice President Biden, was joined by Nan Feyler, Chief of Staff, Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Cynthia Figueroa, President and CEO, Congreso de Latinos Unidos and Yvonne Thompson-Friend, PA State Coordinator for Generations United's Pennsylvania Seniors4Kids.

Throwing down the gauntlet at the feet of a Congress where "facts are an unwelcome admission to the discussion," Bernstein, former economic adviser to Vice President Joe Biden, had a message to those who think the economy will self-correct, and that budget cuts are the answer to reducing the national debt: "There's no reason why underfunded programs for kids are not more important than overcapitalized banks."

The sentiment that government does not work is creating a "tricky, difficult political dynamic," Bernstein said, threatening the investment in the education and well-being of our children, what he called a "fair start for kids."

Keeping the interests of children in mind is a "dynamic challenge when government is dysfunctional," Bernstein said. Singling out education and nutrition programs, he stated that "left to its own devices," no private firm can or has the will to match what Washington can accomplish for the care and nurturing America's children."

He characterized the country's economic recovery during the first decade of the century as not "normal" since poverty rose instead of declined, and at seven percent, deep poverty was at record levels, with TANF responding "only modestly to rising unemployment."

What's needed now, he said, is more – not less – government spending. With private sector employment "growing too slowly" there is "absolutely nothing wrong with budget deficits – even large deficits," Bernstein stressed. "It's all a matter of when and what you are going to borrow."

"The root of health disparities – racial and economic – is poverty," said Feyler. Today's economic climate "is making things worse. If people felt like they deserved to be healthy, that would be a major accomplishment. It really is the infrastructure of our lives that is under attack. It's insidious."

A tremendous disconnect and understanding exists between local government and the social service and non-profit sectors that face great challenges assisting those in need as a result of budget cuts, Figueroa explained. "There's little exposure [in government] to what the non-profit agencies see," she said, bemoaning the loss of opportunity given today's economic climate. "I never thought I would see the things that I see there in the neighborhoods that we serve. It's as lean as lean can get. We need to figure out how to translate the disconnection."

Drawing on her two decades of government service, Thompson-Friend said her task is to translate the knowledge she's gained over 20 years into action that helps the community. "The problem is the need is so great," she said, noting that "the advocacy work we have done has an impact."

The panel agreed that things were difficult but Bernstein reminded all that we have to get to the place where politicians listen not just to their funders, not just to the lobbyists, but to the people.

For more information about PCCY's budget advocacy work and to download a copy of Jared's presentation, visit our website at www.pccy.org > **Issues** > **Budget Advocacy** > **Federal Budget Advocacy**.

Behavioral Health Goes To School

PCCY Welcomes Scott Bloom, NYC's Director of School Mental Health



Scott Bloom, New York City's Director of School Mental Health

On the same day as Bernstein spoke with us, we also sponsored a forum with WHYY on behavioral health in schools where Scott Bloom, New York City's Director of School Mental Health, shared his experience as the "bridge" between the city school systems and the city's mental health community.

An audience of direct service providers, district administrators, Community Behavioral Health and School District leadership, and parents gathered for the discussion at WHYY studios. Bloom dialogued with a panel of local, school-based behavioral health professionals and community members about how the city can build upon the services already in place in the schools.

Dr. Arthur Evans, Commissioner of the city's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disability Services, stated that while parents want a range of services available for their children, they don't want them labeled in order to get the help, or have to wait for treatment. "The social and emotional health of children is everyone's business," he declared.

Making a point to include the District's homeless students in his remarks, Wilfredo Ortiz, the School District's Deputy Chief of the Office of Academic Counseling and Promotion Standards, said, "We only have one goal in my department, that at the end of high school every single child can make an informed decision about their next step."

Bloom, who oversees NYC's school-based mental health programs, noted that children go to school for two reasons: to learn critical thinking skills and how to get along with each other. "School's where kids are socialized," he said, adding that like families, individual schools have their "own culture, values, language and way of communicating."

During the 17-year rise to his current position Bloom has acted as a link between the schools and the mental health community, administering and integrating school programs, and coordinating procedures, policies and budgets. He connects providers and schools directly. Bloom was followed by a panel who discussed behavioral health in schools in Philadelphia.

According to Kimberly Doyle, Clinical Coordinator at Community Behavioral Health, 5,700 Philadelphia public school children attending 54 schools are in school-based models. "We want to see them in the school, in the classroom," she said.

Compared to veteran educators, today's teachers expect that behavioral management in the classroom is "part of the job," said Bryan Cohen, Vice President for Behavioral Health Services at Intercommunity Action. He listed adequate space for programs within schools ("the final frontier") and the ability of providers to speak different languages as the biggest challenges facing the District's school-based behavioral health programs.

Denea Whitest, Family Advocate in the Family and Youth Division, Mental Health Association, said school staff need to put themselves in a parent's place and help the children sooner rather than later. "By the time parents get to our office the child is already in crisis," she said. "If a parent doesn't know what services are available it is useless."

These services must become "imbedded" into the fabric of the schools, Cohen said. "We have to be part of school culture."

Most importantly, New York has created a bridge between the school district and behavioral health. The question remains: how can we create or strengthen our connections and collaborations here?



How Should School District Be Governed?

PCCY Hosts Public Forum And Dialogue



Retired Daily News columnist Elmer Smith, led the School Governance Discussion.

And within a few days of Bernstein and Bloom's visits, school governance was the issue that drew a capacity crowd who struggled to decide whether an elected school board, an appointed School Reform Commission, schools being part of local government, or any other combination would assure more community engagement, more and better guidance and leadership for our schools.

As Philadelphia's public school system functions with an interim superintendent for at least the remainder of the academic year, a full house engaged in a wide-ranging public forum about who should lead the 146,000-student district and how it should be governed.

Co-sponsored by PCCY, the Philadelphia Student Union and Education Voters Institute of Pennsylvania, the discussion was moderated by newly-retired *Daily News* columnist Elmer Smith. The panelists bore a mix of school supervisory experience: former School Reform Commission Chair Sandra Dungee-Glenn, former Trenton schools' superintendent James 'Torch' Lytle, and activists including Parents United for Public Education founder Helen Gym, Maurice Jones of the Philadelphia Student Union, Samuel Reed of the Teachers' Institute of Philadelphia and 2011 South Philadelphia High School graduate Keith Lomax.

Lytle began by observing that in today's world little difference exists between an elected and a politically-appointed school board models, such as the current five-member School Reform Commission. "Education has become increasingly political and subject to state and federal control. It's always good to have the mayor in your corner," he noted.

Lomax responded that he had no preference for either model so long as the needs of the students – equitable resources and restoration of positive climate – were being met. "As a group we just want our opinion to be heard," he said.

Stating that there are indeed differences between the two models, Gym said she was "somewhat partial to an elected school board despite its flaws." The School District's \$2 billion budget is the third largest in the state, she noted, and board members who hold multiple jobs can face conflicts of interest. Being a board member is a full-time job requiring a bigger commitment than "four hours a week," she declared, adding that members ought to "respect the position" and the public should "hold them accountable."

Dungee-Glenn, who served on both the Board of Education under Mayor John Street and the School Reform Commission, thought the focus on governance was misplaced. "Most school board members are poorly prepared for what they have to do," she maintained, adding that because state and federal governments are more involved in education than they were during the 1960s, expectations need to change as well. "We have to sort out what we expect from governance [and take a] long term view on education," she said. Despite leadership changes every few years, the District, she emphasized, should not continually "be embroiled in constant disruption and starting from scratch."

"My voice is never heard," Jones complained on behalf of students. "We always see adults fighting over positions and the parents left standing."

The shift from the Board of Education to a School Reform Commission did make the state more responsible for the District, Dungee-Glenn suggested, bringing with it additional resources – but also new, competing interests. "The SRC model brought more dollars [but there was] a new political investment in how those dollars would be spent."

The panel spoke clearly that they wanted more community engagement and more accountability from any board or SRC.

Annual Appeal

Your Support Matters

Thank you for honoring PCCY with your support over the years – it has meant a lot to us. Please be a part of our work again this year.

As you know, PCCY's agenda is simple because we work to improve the lives and life chances of the region's children. Yet, it is also complex because it means that all of us must watch out:

- So that babies can be healthy and strong in homes that will help them develop and grow;
- So that they receive good health care and nutrition as they grow and develop;
- So that children have access to good early education and care while their parents are at work;
- So that they have opportunities to learn in good public schools;
- So that they have safe places to play and grow in supportive communities.

Each of these simple phrases holds our agenda. Seeing that all the needs of our children are met forms the complexity of our advocacy on their behalf.

Federal, state and local budgets have all been severely cut this year. Our communities are facing challenges as never before as education, early learning and health programs are being cut or eliminated. PCCY is the only organization in this region whose role is to keep advocating at the large-scale policy level so that the city and state can help families meet the needs of children. With your help, we work on policies that improve children's access to health insurance, quality



Young people from Tune Up Philly String Ensemble performed two numbers at PCCY's 30th Anniversary Party. Photo by Derek Street

education, safe environments, good nutrition, family supports, early childhood education and child care.

While we work on broad policy issues, we also help provide health insurance for 900 children annually, support eye days and smile days where more than 2,000 children receive needed treatment, and directly support arts projects in the city's public and charter schools. We look out for the whole child and work together with other organizations, making sure that as we advocate for one type of children's service, it is not at the expense of another.

PCCY is supported primarily by foundation grants and individual contributions like yours, not by government. Now more than ever we need to rely on your private dollars. We would like to ask you to consider doubling your annual gift. Please help us to keep advocating so that we can keep our promise to children and youth. We can't do it without you.

On behalf of all of us at PCCY, please know that we appreciate your support in our efforts to make a better, safer, more hopeful world for all our children.

Thanks you for all you do to help children.

Make A Gift To PCCY

We are proud of our accomplishments and eager to do more. We hope we can count on you to join us with a generous contribution as we continue to help improve the lives and life chances of the children, youth and families in our region that will contribute to making our community stronger, more competitive and more resilient in the years ahead.

- Use the envelope provided
- Website: www.pccy.org/donate
- Phone: Call Steven Fynes at **215-563-5848 x11**
- Mail: 1709 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, 6th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19103

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Eagles Youth Partnership
Eamon Associates
Early Childhood Environments
Elizabeth B. & Arthur E.
Roswell Foundation

First Hospital Foundation
Floc-For Love Of Children
Free Library of Philadelphia
Genuardi Family Foundation
GlaxoSmithKline
Green Tree Community Health
Foundation
Health Partners Foundation
Health Partners of Philadelphia
Heavenly Hall Church
Henrietta Tower Wurts Memorial
Hess Foundation, Inc.
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The Lenfest Foundation
Leo Model Foundation
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Lincoln Benefits Group
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Washington Savings Association
Wescott Financial
West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.
William Penn Foundation
Wills Eye Institute



New SRC & Vouchers

Three New Members Join The Commission

We welcome the new School Reform Commission – one that urges all of us to join them in working, listening and learning. The appointments of Wendell Pritchett, Lorene Carey, along with the confirmation of Pedro Ramos as chairman, ushered in a new, positive phase for the SRC.

Mayor Michael Nutter and Secretary of Education Ron Tomalis in October announced the appointment of two "executive advisers" to work directly with district leadership and the School Reform Commission until a permanent superintendent is chosen to replace Arlene C. Ackerman.

Along with the new commissioners has come a welcome change as a more open format was adopted during meetings that allows for questions from community stakeholders. The SRC meetings are also accessible live via the internet through the District's website.

PCCY's education team tweets the events in their entirety on twitter, so follow us on **PCCY_EdTeam**.

Meanwhile...In late October, the Pennsylvania Senate passed Senate Bill 1 (S.B.1), a measure that included a key piece of Governor Corbett's education agenda, school vouchers. The voucher portion of S.B.1 would provide \$6,000 – \$9,000 to eligible students in approximately 140 schools designated as "failing" under the bill.

In addition to a voucher plan, S.B.1 includes provisions to reform Pennsylvania's charter school law and an increased Educational Improvement Tax Credit program.

The proposed voucher program would drain millions of dollars from our public schools while research shows that vouchers do not improve academic achievement in cities with these programs in place.

PCCY believes a voucher plan will be detrimental to Pennsylvania's students and is tracking S.B.1's progress through the Pennsylvania House.

Investing in improving public education is a solution for all of Pennsylvania's students.

First Day Of School

A New Year At Henry Lea School

As I handed a bright yellow pencil to the adorable young student walking into the Henry C. Lea School, it was only then I realized I didn't have a second one to give to his eager younger sister. But even this small bump did not deter me as I, along with six Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) staffers positioned at Lea's entrance, wrapped up distributing pencils to the kids and providing their parents with a small, informative handout about children's health insurance.

Arriving at 7:30am and stationing ourselves on a prime corner at 47th and Locust, I didn't know what to expect in a situation where I was trying to attract parents' attention away from the children who were embarking on their first day in the public school system. As the minutes passed and the sidewalks filled, I knew I had to step up to the plate. My shaky voice obviously revealed nervousness as I approached a young father and son. However, this duo happily stopped to listen to my short spiel, and the delightful little

guy appeared excited and grateful for the new pencil.

After my initial conversation I thought how wonderful it was to see a father bringing his son to his first day of school. After speaking with more and more parents, I realized that in actuality, there was a large number of fathers dropping their children off at school. Never before had I ever seen so many men take such an active role in this type of task. Nearly every father I approached participated in discourse, wanting details and further explanations of the services and advocacy efforts PCCY engages in.

Seeing all these fathers may not have seen like much worth sharing but I call that morning a victory, inspiring hope that these young students will go on to higher education and have the ability to become anything they choose in this world.

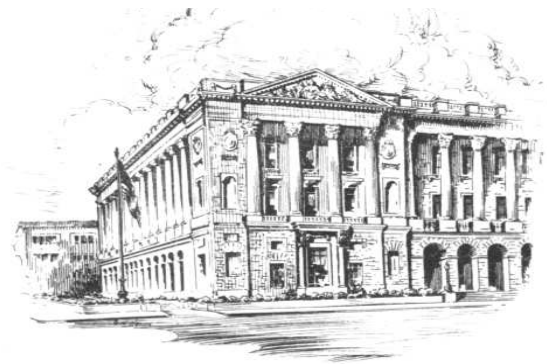
– *Victoria Larsen is a PCCY intern.*



Watching In Court

PCCY CourtWatch Project in Session

Joanne Hyle, friend and volunteer attorney and Bill Madeira, PCCY friend and veteran, have gathered volunteers to CourtWatch this fall in Philadelphia. With the cooperation of Judge Kevin Dougherty and the judges of Family Court, Philadelphia volunteers are sitting in and watching what happens when kids come before the court.



Who are these volunteers? They are law students and they are graduate students, they are retired and they are starting out in their careers – they are citizens of this city – looking, learning, and watching out for kids. Spurred on by the “kids for cash” scandal in Luzerne County – where hundreds of children in northeastern PA appeared before judges without attorneys and were sent away for minor actions to institutions that the judges had a personal interest in – PCCY’s CourtWatch program was reactivated.

The volunteers are looking at the Courtroom: listening to who is speaking and who is not, at whether the parents or kids speak up or not, whether they are in handcuffs or not, whether their parents were there, whether they could understand what was going on, says Bill Madeira.

CourtWatch was very active at PCCY through the nineties; it was last operating in Philadelphia in 2006. We believe it helped improve the court. The Luzerne case spurred attention to juvenile court in general and reminded us of the importance of having open public institutions. “When the public watches, we are all better protected,” says PCCY Executive Director Shelly Yanoff.

So far the volunteers are doing well and learning about juvenile justice as they watch up to 20 cases a day. CourtWatch runs through December in Philadelphia and plans to expand to Delaware County in the winter. **For more information about the CourtWatch, contact Steven Fynes at stevenfynes@pccy.org or 215-563-5848 x11**



Child Poverty in SEPA

Families Still Struggling During Recession

The percentage of children living in poverty has increased in four of five Southeastern Pennsylvania counties from before the recession (2006) through 2010, with deep poverty impacting nearly half of poor children.

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) figures, released by the U.S. Census Bureau, 172,679 children in our region – nearly one in five – lived in poverty last year. At 36.4 percent, Philadelphia has the highest child poverty rate in the five counties, with more than half of the city’s poor children living in deep poverty, or \$11,175 for a family of four (defined as less than half the federal poverty line, \$22,350 for a family of four).

Philadelphia’s rate of deep poverty for children increased from 15.6 percent (55,760 children) in 2009 to 19 percent (64,464 children) in 2010. Delaware County’s deep poverty rate for children, 5.9 percent, is the highest of the suburban counties, with 7,600 kids who are extremely poor.

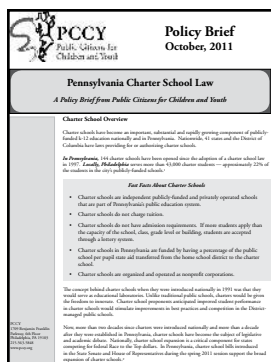
“The tremendous increase in deep poverty among Philadelphia’s children is heartbreaking,” says Kathy Fisher, PCCY’s Family Economic Security Associate. “We know many families were struggling long before the recession, but these shocking figures show how much more difficult day-to-day survival has become.”



“At a time when Congress is considering cuts to a whole range of critical programs, many of which have helped families make ends meet during these difficult financial times, the needs of our children should be kept first and foremost.”

Publications

New Policy Briefs, Guides And Reports Available From PCCY

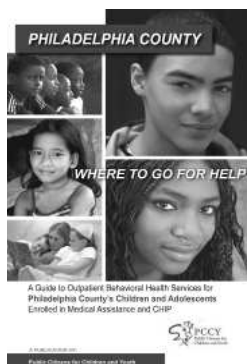


Charter School Legislation Policy Paper: One of the state's – and the country's – hottest political topics is charter school expansion and the movement toward increased school choice options. The General Assembly has introduced bills (S.B. 904 and H.B. 1348) that would replace current charter school legislation and provide for the unrestricted expansion of charter schools.

PCCY explores the record, experiences and impact of the state's charter schools in a new brief, 'Pennsylvania

Charter School Law.' The brief points out what the bills would and would not do, and includes a list of recommendations that should be written into any final legislation.

"We undertook this project because we believe there are practical ways to strengthen Pennsylvania's charter school law for our state's students, charter school operators and traditional school districts," says Taimarie Adams, PCCY's Co-Director of Education Policy. "Our motto is 'Advocacy with Impact' and we believe that the recommendations set forth in the policy paper will improve education in Pennsylvania." Get your copy of 'Pennsylvania Charter School Law' by calling PCCY at 215-563-5848 x12, or www.pccy.org > **Publications > Policy Briefs.**



Behavioral Health Resource Guide: Yet another edition of PCCY's resource guides is available for child-serving professionals in Philadelphia.

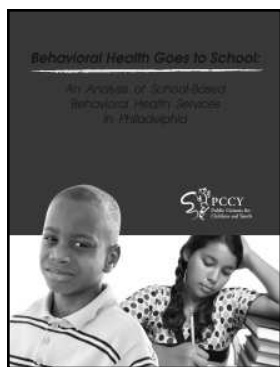
The latest guide, available in English and Spanish, is for children kindergarten through 12th grade. Besides an updated outpatient services section, the booklet features a listing of school-based behavioral health services.

"Parents called us asking what behavioral health services were available in the schools and where to get them," says PCCY Behavioral Health Coordinator Roxy Woloszyn,

noting that the guide was rewritten for easier reading comprehension. "We spent the last year and a half exploring these resources and are pleased to be able to provide even more information for them."

PCCY offers free health care guide training sessions for service providers, with our staff traveling to your child care program or school location.

Contact Roxy at 215-563-5848 x35, roxyw@pccy.org to request guides or training. The Behavioral Health Guides are also available online at www.pccy.org > **Publications > Health Care.**



Behavioral Health Goes To School: An Analysis of School-Based Behavioral Health Services in Philadelphia: PCCY's 43-page report examines the movement of placing mental health services within the public schools that began during the 1990s.

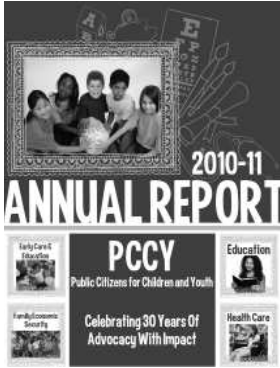
A network of the School District, city government, behavioral health providers and parents, Philadelphia's School-Based Behavioral Health Services has evolved into a system assisting 5,000 K-8 children (out of 105,000 total district population).

Feedback from teachers and school counselors was that the system works fairly well. "Children are getting services but the impact they are having on the kids and schools is largely unknown," says PCCY Health Policy Director Colleen McCauley, adding that greater collaboration and accountability between the partners needs to be improved.

Copies of 'Behavioral Health Goes To School: An Analysis of School-Based Behavioral Health Services in Philadelphia' can be obtained by calling the PCCY office, at 215-563-5848 x33, or www.pccy.org > **Publications > Health Care.**

Publications

New Policy Briefs, Guides And Reports Available From PCCY

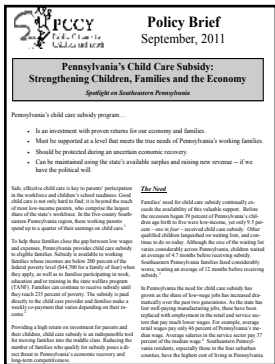


PCCY Annual Report: PCCY is supported primarily by foundation grants and individual contributions like yours, not by government.

Discover how PCCY, with generous sponsorship from our donors, helped improve the lives and life chances of the Southeastern Pennsylvania's children.

Copies of the annual report are available by calling 215-563-5848 or at info@pccy.org or www.pccy.org > **Publications > Annual Report.**

"As we look out for the whole child and work together with other organizations, making sure that as we advocates for one type of children's service, it is not at the expense of another," says Shelly Yanoff, PCCY Executive Director.



Child Care Subsidy Brief: As the number of low-wage jobs has grown in Pennsylvania, so has the need for child care subsidy that helps working parents and families with child care costs. Yet, as low-income, working families in the state continue to suffer the effects of the Great Recession, the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) in October, has increased the cost of

co-pays – from eight to eleven percent of family income – for families receiving child care subsidy.

The implications of allowing child care subsidy to continue to erode are examined in the PCCY policy brief, 'Pennsylvania's Child Care Subsidy: Strengthening Children, Families and the Economy.'

Serving approximately 136,000 children each month, Pennsylvania's child care subsidy program was developed in

the late 1990s to help low-income working parents remain in the workforce and move toward financial independence.

Over the last three years, more families have applied for subsidy and have needed it for longer periods of time. The program was cut 11.5 percent this year – the lowest level of state support since FY 2005-06. At the same time, Pennsylvanian's median income has dropped 5.7 percent and underemployment has nearly doubled.

"While we say we want parents to work and take care of their children, actions like this by the state make it more difficult for these parents and their children," says PCCY Advocacy Director Christie Balka. "Ironically, this is happening at a time when studies show more children are living in poverty than ever before."

Copies of 'Pennsylvania's Child Care Subsidy: Strengthening Children, Families and the Economy' are available by calling 215-563-5848 x15 or shawnt@pccy.org or online at www.pccy.org > **Publications > Child Care.**

Developing Philadelphia's Potential

Paving the Path to a Stronger Early Intervention System

Coming Soon.

Developing Philadelphia's Potential - Paving the Path to a Stronger Early Intervention System:

The early childhood years present a singular opportunity to influence lifelong development and prevent or minimize developmental problems in children, but only a fraction of Philadelphia's eligible children are receiving services through the city's early intervention programs.

PCCY has been talking to stakeholders to discover why Philadelphia's early intervention system is not serving all the children who could benefit. Our report will recommend policy changes that could increase accessibility to more families and highlight steps that stakeholders can engage in to make sure all children get the services they deserve.

Copies of 'Developing Philadelphia's Potential' will soon be available by calling 215-563-5848 x15 or shawnt@pccy.org or online at www.pccy.org > **Publications > Child Care.**

Picasso Project

2012 Grant Cycle Underway

PCCY's Picasso Project celebrates ten years of awarding arts grants to public schools and the response to the current call for applications has been "overwhelming positive," according to Project Coordinator Gretchen Elise Walker.

Eligibility guidelines for the grants, up to \$5,000, have been changed to include schools with two or fewer arts teachers.

Nearly 100 district teachers and counselors – plus interested artists – attended three informational workshops offering applicants tips prior to submission. At least 10 grants will be awarded during the second half of the school year.

"We've had 130 inquiries about the grant overall — so we know the need is tremendous since these schools are

starved for resources," Walker says. "It's really inspiring to see that despite constraints, teachers, artists, and parents are fired up about doing some really creative projects with their kids."

The winning schools will be announced in December followed by an awards ceremony in early 2012.



Young Friends of PCCY

Joining Together To Create Advocacy With Impact

A November wine and cheese reception drew a crowd of 70 young adults wanting to learn more about PCCY's mission and work.

Hosted by the "Young Friends of PCCY," the event featured a presentation about our advocacy efforts, and remarks from State Representative Tony J. Payton, Jr. (D-179th) and PCCY's board president Carolyn Adams.

"This was a good opportunity to engage young people from diverse professional backgrounds," says PCCY Co-Director for Education Policy, Shanee Garner, promising more activities to come. "It's the first step of many we're taking to attract more interest in our work advocating for children."

Special thanks to the Sheraton Hotel Center City, Four Seasons Hotel Philadelphia, Torn Leaf Design, Di Bruno Bros. and DJ Cincere for their generous donations.

(Top): State Representative Tony Payton, Jr., lent his support to PCCY's Young Friends.

(Bottom, Left to Right): Gina Mosley, Lauren Friedman, Aubrey Jones and Garrick Baskerville.





Comings and Goings and More



Keyonnee Thalia, is a Master of Social Work student at Temple University with a concentration in Communities and Policy and a specialization in children and families. She will be graduating in May 2012. At PCCY she assists with CourtWatch, Health-Watch and ArtsRising.



Picasso Project coordinator Gretchen Elise Walker travelled to Harvard University's Graduate School of Education ('06) Arts in Education program conference.

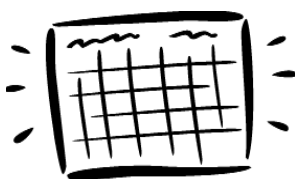
During a session on student arts advocacy, Gretchen shared details of PCCY's 'Don't Close the Curtain on the Arts' campaign, which urged the Philadelphia School Reform Commission and City Council to keep arts programs in the schools.

For more information about the 'Don't Close the Curtain on the Arts' campaign, visit our website at www.pccy.org/curtainclose.

University of Pennsylvania Master of Social Work student, Lu Bai, is a Picasso Project intern. She is from Tianjin, China and will graduate in May 2012.



PCCY extends a special thanks to Terri D. Haggard, our "PULSE" volunteer from GlaxoSmithKline. During her six-month stint with PCCY, she directed the development of our 30th anniversary annual report as well as our social media outreach.



Give Kids Sight Day

Save The Date



Parents mark your calendars for PCCY's annual day of free eye checks and free glasses.

**'Give Kids Sight Day'
Saturday, April 14, 2012!**

Be sure to check PCCY's website at www.pccy.org/sightday and our facebook page at www.facebook.com/pccypage for more information and details as the date approaches.

Marquell Amaro (left) was fitted for free glasses after his checkup at the Wills Eye Institute at last year's 'Give Kids Sight Day.'



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PCCY Roundtable



Join PCCY's *Education Roundtable*, a monthly discussion with local reporters of topical issues affecting the School District of Philadelphia and its students. Hosted by Shelly Yanoff, the half-hour program airs on PSTV, Comcast Channel 52, the District's own cable channel, and PhillyCAM on Comcast 66/966 and Verizon 29/30.

Check local listings for time.

Mission Statement

PCCY - Public Citizens for Children and Youth is the region's leading child advocacy organization, dedicated to improving the lives and life chances of children in our region through thoughtful and informed advocacy. Founded in 1980, PCCY is an independent, non-profit organization.

About The Newsletter

Writers and Editors: Christie Balka, Kathy Fisher, Steven Fynes, Colleen McCauley, Louise Pangborn, Deborah Zubow and Shelly D. Yanoff, Executive Director, Sid Holmes, Communications Director. Design & Layout, Steven E. Fynes.

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