

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:

IN PENNSYLVANIA IN 2011—

- There were more than 24,500 reports of suspected child abuse.
- About 27,700 children were in Pennsylvania’s foster care system.
- About 22 percent of children in the foster care system lived in group homes and institutions, and an equal percentage were placed with relatives. About 50 percent of youth 13 and older in foster care lived in group homes and institutions.
- An African-American child was five times more likely to be in foster care than a white child; and a Latino child was twice as likely to be in foster care than a white child.

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- The median length of placement for children in foster care was about 14 months. One third of all children who spent between 12 and 24 months in foster care experienced three or more foster care placements.
- More than one-quarter of children re-entered care within 12 months of re-joining their families.
- On average, it takes 30 months for a child in foster care to be adopted in Pennsylvania.
- Nearly 900 youth “aged out” of foster care into uncertain circumstances.

(Most data from Adoption and Foster Care Annual Reporting System, 4/1/10 -3/31/11)

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

James E. Anderson
Executive Director
Juvenile Court Judges' Commission

Melissa Baker, Director, Strategic Consulting
Casey Family Programs

Joan L. Benso, President and CEO
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The Honorable Phyllis Mundy
State Representative
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Laurie Green O'Connor, Director
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The Honorable Leanna Washington
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Executive Director
Three Rivers Adoption Council