

THE Porch Light Project

Forever Family For Every Child



Executive Summary

A Forever Family for Every Child

Every child has the right to grow up in a home where he or she feels safe and part of a loving and nurturing family. The Porch Light Project, an initiative of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, is a guiding light for policy change for thousands of children who have been “placed out of home,” or removed from their families following reports of child abuse, neglect or abandonment.

The Porch Light Project strives to implement public policies that 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. The Project’s mission is to strengthen families in order to reduce the risk of child abuse; assure that children have maximum stability when they must be removed from their homes; assure that a forever or permanent family becomes the reality for every child; and, to place equal emphasis on children who are abused regardless of their age – including youth who are approaching adulthood.

While child abuse is still a taboo subject, the reality is that at any given time 20,000 children find themselves living in the foster care system in Pennsylvania rather than with their birth families because they have been abused or neglected.

Children from birth to age five make up 30 percent of the foster care system; children six to 12 equal 24 percent of the

population, while the vast majority or 46 percent of children living in foster care are teenagers 13 and older. Challenges are present for children at every age in placement, but older youth who traditionally “age out” of the system at 18 face a unique set of difficulties when they don’t have a permanent family – or home – to call their own. The numbers of children in foster care are racially disproportionate. Approximately 47 percent of the children in foster care are African-American while only 15.8 percent of Pennsylvania’s children are African-American. Latino children comprise 9.3 percent of children in foster care versus 7.2 percent of the children in the state.

Statistics tell only part of the story. Behind every number is a family struggling. Behind every number is a child who craves stability, a safe place to call home. The Porch Light Project will begin to address these issues and seek permanent public policy changes to create better lives - and outcomes - for children and youth.

A Pennsylvania Partnerships
for Children Initiative

“The Porch Light Project will work to spearhead public policy reforms that ensure all children grow up in families where their needs for safety, permanency and well-being are met and to build the political will — including strong and visible leadership, appropriate financing, and sound public policies — to make this vision of a ‘forever family for every child’ a reality.”

—Joan L. Benso
President and CEO
Pennsylvania Partnerships
for Children