



# **House Children and Youth Testimony: October 23, 2024**

**Improving the Lives of Children, Youth, and  
Young Adults with Complex Needs and their  
Families**

**A report from the Blueprint Workgroup  
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**Jonathan McVey**  
Complex Needs Planning  
Office of the Secretary  
Pennsylvania Department of Human Services



## Today I will address...

- History / Background of this Initiative
- Blueprint Workgroup Goals, Timeline, and Structure
- Overview of Blueprint Recommendations
- Next Steps for the Blueprint Recommendations
- Other News: Pediatric Capacity Building Institute
- Questions



## ➤ Blueprint: Youth with Complex Needs

### **Who we are supporting: common characteristics.**

- Children with complex trauma including abuse, neglect, developmental and institutional trauma
- Multiple and complex diagnoses across the developmental, physical, and mental health domains
- Potential diagnostic overshadowing due to an intellectual disability and/or autism diagnosis
- Complex communication needs
- Inconsistent presentation of behaviors and symptoms across settings;
- Lack of diagnostic clarity
- Disrupted education
- Limited, strained, or no natural supports
- Multiple system involvement, including justice systems
- An extensive history of out-of-home care



## > History / Background

- Complex Needs Planning Bulletin Issued October 2020, re-issued March 2021
- DHS provides technical assistance to counties in support of youth with complex needs. The technical assistance includes guidance regarding:
  - Licensed Settings;
  - Funding;
  - Successful strategies from other counties;
  - Facilitating complex needs planning meetings; and,
  - Guidance or assistance with referrals to clinical resources.



## > History / Background

- December 2022 to May 2023 - DHS and ASERT conducted a series of focus groups and surveys across child serving systems to better understand the needs of these youth and the systems of care supporting them.
- The ASERT final report is attached as Appendix B in the Blueprint Workgroup's Recommendations.
- Coming out of this report are five common themes and a Desired Future State – a vision for how youth and families are supported.



# > History / Background

## ASERT's Five Themes for Blueprint Workgroup

1. Communication
2. Services and Programs
3. Resource Navigation
4. Staffing / Workforce
5. Trauma-informed Supports

\* Family engagement was threaded throughout all of the other themes.





## Desired Future State

In Pennsylvania we believe all youth with complex needs and their families\* will have the opportunity to access timely supports and services that are individualized, trauma-informed, holistic, respectful of race and culture, family and youth-driven, and available in their own communities. This will be evidenced by:

- A focus on youth and family engagement while honoring their voice and choice;
- Establishing and maintaining a well supported and qualified workforce;
- Collaboration and shared understanding across systems to support planning and shared goals;
- Systems that prioritize; early identification, proactive intervention, and service options that support family stability, safety, and the youth's healthy development and meaningful relationships which support life-long connections;
- Teams engage in ongoing and integrated planning that supports the everyday needs of a family and youth (housing, education, transportation, scheduling, access to medical care, etc.); and,
- Service delivery that is coordinated, accessible, timely and includes support throughout the process.

\* - "Family" is defined by the individual.





## Blueprint Goals, Timeline, Structure

### Goal

- The Blueprint Workgroup was tasked with developing recommendations to improve the systems supporting youth with complex needs and their families.
- Nothing was off the table; participants were empowered to make recommendations which address all systems and levels of government.

### Timeline

- The Blueprint Workgroup kicked-off in July 2023
- The final report was published on February 12, 2024.



## Blueprint Goals, Timeline, Structure

### Blueprint Workgroup - Participants

#### System partners

- BHMCOs
- Primary Contractors
- Providers – community, residential, acute psychiatric hospitals
- Counties – MH, ID/A, CYF, EI, CASSP/SOC, JPO
- Education
- Families
- Hospitals

#### State Agencies: DHS, PDE, JCJC

For a complete list of participants and the organizations they represent, please see page 4 of the Blueprint or Appendix E.



## ▶ Blueprint Exec. Summary

### **Four Executive Summary Recommendations**

1. System should be restructured to emphasize prevention.
2. Decisionmakers implementing these recommendations must solicit input from those with lived experience.
3. A steering team is needed to carry these recommendations forward.
4. Acknowledgment of immediate crisis – state, local, and system leaders need to find solutions to implement immediately.

# Recommendations

## 1. Prioritizing Prevention and Strengthening System Response

- Ex: Amend Act 212 – Early Intervention – add new screening/tracking categories.

## 2. Information Sharing and Resource Navigation

- Ex: Establish a time-limited specialized workgroup to examine current laws, policies, practices, and tools to identify opportunities to improve information sharing.

## 3. Guidance and Supporting County Multi-System Planning Efforts

- Ex: Review tools and assessments which chronicle a child and family's life and select or develop a process and tool that can synthesize critical contextual information and be used and understood across all child-serving systems and professions.

# Recommendations

## 4. Administrative Efficiencies and Supporting Our Systems

- Ex: Create strong incentives to build a qualified workforce to enter and remain in human service fields.

## 5. Understanding System Capacity and Direct Service Solutions

- Ex: Create a multi-disciplinary team of professionals who are well equipped to treat and coordinate services and supports for youth with intensive multi-system needs in the community.

## 6. Strengthen Trauma Comprehension and Application

- Ex: Develop uniform standards to make PA a healing-centered state. Entities across all levels of service and across systems should commit to providing basic and advanced trauma training – and develop internal assessments and supervision to ensure consistency with trauma informed care.

## Next Steps: Phase II

May 2024 - Kicked-off steering committee of internal and external stakeholders

- Purpose: with DHS and subject matter experts, build out the details of each recommendation to make them actionable and present to decisionmakers/leadership.

### Participants

- Families, BHMCOs, Education
- Vision for Equality, PA DDC, PPC, PA Parent and Family Alliance, PA Family Network, RCPA, PCCYFS, CCAP, PCYA
- County Administrators and a Commissioner (Somerset)
- DHS, PDE, JCJC, AOPC, PID





## **Next Steps: Phase II**

**Blueprint Steering Team identified three recommendations to prioritize its efforts:**

- 1. Workforce (Recommendation 10)**
- 2. Comprehensive Needs/Gap Analysis (Recommendation 14)**
- 3. Accept and Provide (CCAP Recommendation)**



## Phase II

# Moving Forward

- Three Sub-committees – each meets monthly
- Steering Committee – quarterly
- Advisory Partner Updates – follows the Steering Committee to provide updates to the broader stakeholder community.



# Pediatric Capacity Building Institute

## Description

- An annual in-depth and interactive educational experience for participants across child serving systems.
- Goal: Increase clinical and administrative capacity across child serving systems.
- 18 sessions: two days per month for nine months
- Focus is on children, youth, and young adults (18-21) who have complex needs and their families.

## Other News

### PCBI Curriculum

1. Infant Mental Health, Attachment, and Child Development
2. Trauma / Vicarious Trauma / Trauma Informed Supervision
3. Change Management
4. Cross System Knowledge / Multisystem Planning
5. Education in Non-education Settings / Early Intervention
6. Psychiatric Diagnosis / Psychopharmacology
7. Communication/Sensory Regulation
8. Role of OT, PT, Speech
9. Expressive Therapies
10. Sexual Trauma in Youth
11. LGBTQIA+ Supports and Programming
12. Dignity of Risk
13. Understanding the Whole Child and Family: Biopsychosocial Approach
14. Relational Health and Permanency





# Questions?





**Thank you for your time!**

