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Report: County child abuse higher than state average

Partnerships for Children study details performance of child welfare system.

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The number of substantiated reports of child abuse in Luzerne County is much higher than the state average, though the number of repeat incidents is lower than the state average.

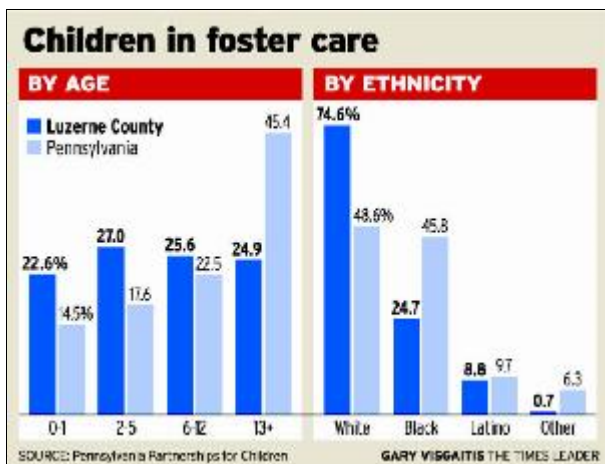
Child welfare in Luzerne County

A comprehensive report was released Tuesday highlighting the performance of Pennsylvania's child welfare system in all 67 counties. Findings include:

Child abuse reports	Child abuse confirmed
County: 586 01/01/08 THRU 11/30/08	County: 25.4% 01/01/08 THRU 11/30/08
Pennsylvania: 25,655 01/01/08 THRU 11/30/08	Pennsylvania: 16.4% 01/01/08 THRU 11/30/08
Repeated child abuse	In-home services
County: 1 in 12 01/01/08 THRU 11/30/08	County: 971 07/01/08 THRU 06/30/09
Pennsylvania: 1 in 11 01/01/08 THRU 11/30/08	Pennsylvania: 31,517 07/01/08 THRU 06/30/09
Children new to foster care	All children in foster care
County: 403 04/01/08 THRU 03/31/09	County: 1,179 04/01/08 THRU 03/31/09
Pennsylvania: 8,291 04/01/08 THRU 03/31/09	Pennsylvania: 31,537 04/01/08 THRU 03/31/09
Reunited with family	Re-entry into foster care
County: 41.3% Within 12 months from 04/01/07 THRU 03/31/08	County: 17.2% 04/01/07 THRU 03/31/08
Pennsylvania: 48.2% 04/01/07 THRU 03/31/08	Pennsylvania: 27.6% 04/01/07 THRU 03/31/08
Children leaving foster care	Monthly caseworker visits
County: 401 04/01/08 THRU 03/31/09	County: NA 10/01/08 THRU 09/30/09
Pennsylvania: 14,027 04/01/08 THRU 03/31/09	Pennsylvania: 8% 10/01/08 THRU 09/30/09

SOURCE: Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. GARY VISGATIS THE TIMES LEADER

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Those data are contained in a report released this week by Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. The inaugural report details the performance of Pennsylvania's child welfare system and provides a breakdown by county.

It's designed to provide data highlighting how counties are doing in meeting the needs of children and families in the child welfare system. The report establishes baselines this year of various indicators that will measure progress over time and shine a light on areas that need improvement.

The report also touches on foster care, something with which Luzerne County has had mixed results.

The report shows 41.3 percent of county children placed with a foster family were reunited with their relatives within one year. The state average is 48.2 percent.

The county performed better than the state average in having children re-enter foster care within a year of being reunited with their relatives. The state average is 27.8 percent and the county rate is 17.2.

Those entering foster care in Luzerne County leave the system, on average, in 6.7 months. The state average is 10.7 months. For other urban counties, the average is 12.3 months.

The report also examines, by county, repeated child abuse; in-home services for families in crisis; age and race of children in foster care; type of placement setting; reasons children leave foster care, such as adoption or guardianship; and foster care placement stability.

The report shows that every county type – rural, rural-mix, urban and urban-mix – has the need and opportunity to improve its planning, service delivery and outcomes for children in foster care.

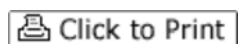
"These indicators were selected as measures for our report because they are the key decision and transition points in the life of a child experiencing the child welfare system," said Joan L. Benso, president and chief executive officer of PA Partnerships for Children. "The choices we make for children in foster care, such as placing them with a relative, a foster family home or in a congregate setting, affect permanency outcomes."

In addition to the county indicators and data, the report provides public policy recommendations to safely reduce the number of children in foster care and assure a legal and permanent family for every child.

The recommendations include, but are not limited to: enacting child welfare financing reform that increases funding for in-home and community-based services that improve child outcomes and family safety; creating a legal means to establish formal and enforceable post-adoption contact agreements between birth and adoptive families in cases deemed appropriate by the courts; and requiring a minimum of three-month permanency review hearings by the courts for all children in foster care.

Find this article at:

http://www.timesleader.com/news/Report__County_child_abuse_higher_than_state_average_12-10-2009.html



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