



## Human Services Workforce Crisis

Counties are responsible for providing critical services to support the needs of our citizens and our communities that are impacted by drug abuse, mental illness, developmental disabilities and child abuse and neglect. Without an adequate workforce to provide these services, some of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens and communities may be left behind.

Pennsylvania counties deliver crucial human services on behalf of the state and federal governments – services that protect our most vulnerable citizens, among them children suffering from abuse, those fighting substance abuse addictions, individuals with mental illness and developmental disabilities, and seniors in need of long-term care.

While counties have continued to advocate for increased funding to support these services for years, the recent workforce crisis has only compounded an already dire situation, threatening counties' abilities to adequately meet service demands and fulfill community needs. Counties continue to face the daily challenge of serving the ever-growing needs of their residents, such as the significant increases in workloads to county child welfare agencies, the toll of the opioid epidemic on families and their children and the unknown impacts of the pandemic on communities.

While all industries are suffering workforce shortages, human services are unique, as they rely entirely on people to deliver those services. These roles cannot be performed by computers or other machines. Without our human services employees, we are unable to investigate child abuse, help someone find housing, or provide mental health supports and substance abuse treatment. As some of the most important services counties offer to their constituents, it is critical to ensure this workforce is adequate and sustainable now and into the future. From recruitment to retention, we owe it to our employees and those we serve to continue finding innovative ways and best practices to bolster and support this special workforce area for years to come.

### COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- Development of programs and partnerships to streamline human services recruitment efforts and create county employment pipelines.
- Permitting professionals to operate within their scope of practice and expertise, regardless of regulatory or degree requirements, to aid in service provision and delivery.
- Further reduction or elimination of regulatory barriers to ease burdens on county human services staff.