

What is the Pennsylvania Waiting List Campaign and what do we do?

Through Vision for EQuality, the Pennsylvania Waiting List Campaign was established in 1997 in response to the outcry of people in crisis across the Commonwealth to address the systemic problem of individuals with intellectual disabilities on waiting lists in PA.

Vision for Equality and the PAWL has an established Steering Committee who advise and direct our work. Steering Committee members consist of parents of child(ren) with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism as well as self-advocates. We include representatives from all parts of the state who are passionate about ending the wait for services.

Over the past 18 years, the Waiting List Campaign has been educating families, government officials, the public and the legislators about the impact of waiting lists on the health, safety and welfare of people with intellectual disabilities and autism.

Our Mission: To end waiting lists for community supports and services for people with intellectual disabilities, autism and their families.

We have influenced positive system change since our inception and have embraced the concept of self-advocates and families working together with other stakeholders to achieve our goals.

Through continuous education and advocacy we have brought the interests of people with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism, and their families to the forefront. We have contributed to several publications about the issues relating to the intellectual disabilities and autism system as well as the waiting list for home and community supports and services. We have served on numerous committees and workgroups representing the intellectual disability and autism communities. We have provided testimony for the House Human Service Committee Hearing alongside families and self-advocates as well as spoke at rallies about the lack of community supports and services.

- We have been instrumental in the development of the House Intellectual Disabilities Caucus
- We continue to encourage families by Empowering People them to Share their Story about what their life has been like and the challenges they face by being on the waiting list.
- We have been successful in securing a High School Graduate Initiative and The Elderly Caregiver Initiative for the past three years that has helped to target specific areas to help reduce the waiting list.
- We have been instrumental in House Intellectual Disabilities Caucus
- We helped development of the Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS)- to accurately count the number of individuals waiting for services in Pennsylvania

Our Plan to End the Wait

Our approach to education and advocacy is based on our key principles.

- We believe individuals with disabilities and their family members need to share their story and their life experiences with leaders in the administration and legislature. Our stories of life in the community and the barriers to accessing services are powerful, and we are most successful when key policy makers truly see and understand real people.
- Intellectual disability services are a core function of government and should not be fodder for political gamesmanship or partisan politics. PAWL is non-partisan and educates all elected officials on the impact of waiting lists on Pennsylvanians from all parts of the Commonwealth.
- People with disabilities deserve the supports and services they need in the community of their choosing. Home and Community Based Waiver services need to be available to prevent institutionalization and be provided to all citizens who qualify to assure their health and safety.
- Nursing homes, boarding homes, ICFs and State Centers are not acceptable community settings.

The Need for Solutions

Staff members of the PAWL Campaign are highly educated in the ID system and policy matters at the local, state and national level. Our expertise stems from our personal experiences as family members as well as a concerted effort to participate in educational opportunities and trainings from a variety of sources both within Pennsylvania and at the National level.