



# COUNTY OF ERIE

## OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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**Kathy Dahlkemper**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Erie County Office of Children and Youth Wins National Achievement Award**

Erie, PA – The National Association of Counties (NACo) announced the 2016 Achievement Award winners, which included the Erie County Office of Children and Youth (OCY). Erie County was recognized for the “Erie County Collaborative Independent Living Program” in the category of Children and Youth.

The Erie County Independent Living Program is designed to address issues facing youth who are aging out of foster care. The program is a contractual and collaborative arrangement between Family Services of NW PA, Bethesda Children’s Home, and the Erie County OCY.

Youth are matched with an independent living caseworker to overcome obstacles to successfully transition to adulthood. Caseworkers work with youth on issues such as education, employment, housing, life-skill development, and preventative services. Caseworkers also connect youth to community resources to promote self-sufficiency.

“The Erie County Independent Living Program has allowed hundreds of Erie County youth to prepare for life as an adult by teaching skills and providing supports that will give them a solid foundation for a great future,” said Lana Rees, Executive Director of OCY. “The collaborative nature has made this innovative program and the youth we serve successful,” noted Rees.

Erie County has utilized an innovative and collaborative method for its service delivery, which has allowed for enhanced services to be provided to the adolescent youth aging out of foster care to receive the important skills necessary to be productive and self-sufficient members of the community.

“I firmly believe that collaboration is the key to effectively delivering services to our constituents, and I am very proud of the work OCY is doing. They are setting an excellent standard for how inter-organizational collaboration can make Erie County a more vibrant region,” said Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper.

The Erie County Department of Health also earned two 2016 Achievement Awards. More information about NACo and the 2016 Achievement Awards can be found at [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).

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