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Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Protection from Abuse Database

Survey of Counties

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Highlights

Sixty-two Pennsylvania counties were surveyed in regard to the Protection from Abuse Database (PFAD). Forty-two counties actively participate in PFAD and were asked to respond to items pertaining to implementation, PFAD usage, satisfaction with PFAD, advantages and disadvantages, and future plans. Twenty counties currently inactive in the PFAD program were surveyed to better understand the reasons for their lack of participation PFAD. Five counties were excluded from the survey because they were currently undertaking training in PFAD. The survey was conducted by telephone during October, November and December of 2003.

Survey results indicated a high level of satisfaction with PFAD. Over 75 percent of active counties were "very satisfied" with initial training and technical assistance, follow-up technical assistance immediately after "start-up", ongoing technical assistance, and technical assistance for system changes and upgrades. About two-thirds of the counties were "very satisfied" with their overall experience of PFAD, and another 24 percent were "somewhat satisfied." The few counties that were "somewhat dissatisfied" tended to cite process issues that were internal to their county rather than problems with PFAD itself.

The primary advantages of PFAD are consistent and automated orders, the inclusion of data from most counties, and the creation of an automated PSP datasheet. The most frequently cited disadvantage of PFAD is the duplication of PFA data that must be entered into more than one system.

Counties that did not participate in PFAD most commonly cited two factors. First, PFAD requires the duplication of data entry. Second, the county does not have a need for PFAD. Half of the inactive counties did not see any advantages to PFAD, while the disadvantages included duplication and the consequent need for additional staff. Most of the inactive counties do not have any definite plans to implement PFAD in the future.

A small but vocal group of inactive counties expressed opposition to using a system for court data developed and managed by a non-governmental agency. These counties view PCADV to be special interest group seeking assistance form the courts to further its interests. Three of these counties would implement PFAD only if the state mandates participation.

Two-thirds of the inactive counties would require additional resources to implement PFAD. The most commonly cited resources were staff, technology (including computers, Internet access, interface to current system), and office space. Most of these counties indicated that they did not currently have the resources they thought were necessary to implement PFAD

Overview

In May 2003, the National Center for State Courts began evaluating the Protection from Abuse Database (PFAD). The project, funded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, explores three areas: (1) PFAD usage, (2) satisfaction levels and victim safety, and (3) data transmission and system integration. The evaluation is being conducted through secondary data analysis, county-level surveys, user surveys, case studies, and system analysis. This report summarizes results from the county-level surveys.

The survey of counties was conducted in October, November, and December 2003. Two questionnaires were drafted to address issues related to participation in PFAD. First, a survey of active counties explored implementation, technical assistance, and satisfaction with PFAD. Second, a survey of inactive counties identified perceptions of PFAD and reasons for not participating in PFAD. Survey instruments are provided in Attachments A and B. Attachment C lists responses to closed-ended items for each county.

A total of 62 Pennsylvania counties responded to the telephone survey. Five counties were not asked to participate because they were currently training on PFAD.[1] Exhibit 1 lists the counties participating in the survey, by their PFAD status.

Exhibit 1: List of Surveyed Counties, by PFAD Status

Active Counties (n=42)		Inactive Counties (n=20)
Adams	Lancaster	Bradford
Allegheny	Lawrence	Bucks
Armstrong	Lebanon	Cambria
Beaver	Luzerne	Clearfield
Bedford	Lycoming	Columbia*
Blair	McKean	Forest*
Butler	Monroe	Franklin*
Cameron*	Montgomery	Fulton*
Carbon	Northampton	Greene
Centre	Northumberland	Huntingdon
Chester	Perry*	Indiana
Clarion	Pike	Juniata*
Clinton	Potter	Lehigh
Crawford	Schuykill	Mercer
Cumberland	Sullivan*	Mifflin
Dauphin	Susquehanna	Montour*
Elk*	Tioga	Philadelphia
Erie	Venango	Somerset
Fayette	Wayne	Warren*
Jefferson	Westmoreland	Wyoming*
Lackawanna	York	

[1] Counties in training include Berks, Delaware, Snyder, Union, and Washington.

* Shared Judicial Districts include Snyder and Union; Columbia and Montour; Forest and Warren; Franklin and Fulton; Juniata and Perry; Sullivan and Wyoming; and Cameron and Elk.

Respondents

Surveys were conducted by telephone. The prothonotary's office was first contacted to identify the office in charge of administering PFAD. In most cases, the prothonotary or a deputy or clerk from the prothonotary's office responded to the survey (52 of 62 surveys). In ten cases, the prothonotary's office referred the caller to an individual in the courts, often in court administration.

Respondents were asked to provide the number of years in which they held their current position. Responses ranged from one-half year to 25 years, with an average length of service (in the same job title) of 8.5 years. While some respondents were relative newcomers to their position, most respondents had worked in their respective offices for several years in various other positions.

Survey respondents also were asked if they currently entered PFAs into a civil database. Forty-six respondents (74 percent) indicated that they currently have a civil case management system that includes PFAs. Three respondents (5 percent) were unable to answer this question. Sixteen of the twenty inactive counties indicated they had a case management system that included PFAs (two respondents were uncertain).

Active Counties

Counties participating in PFAD were surveyed on the following items: (1) Implementation; (2) Changes in PFAD usage; (3) Satisfaction levels; (4) Advantages and disadvantages; and (5) Future plans.

Implementation of PFAD

Respondents were asked to identify factors that influenced the decision to use PFAD. Nearly one of every five respondents could not recall specific reasons for initially implementing PFAD. Those respondents that could cite specific reasons most frequently noted that PFAD had the potential of being a statewide database and acquired PFAD because of the free technology and hardware provided by PCADV. Exhibit 2 provides further details.

The resources necessary to implement PFAD typically included access to the Internet, computers, printers, training, and staff. Seventy-one percent of respondents (30) noted that access to the Internet, which was provided free of charge by PCADV for one year, was necessary to use PFAD. Nearly as many respondents (29) also noted that PCADV provided a computer and printer as part of the implementation package.

Exhibit 2: Factors Influencing the Decision to Implement PFAD

Survey Item: What factors influenced the decision to implement PFAD? (50 responses from 42 individuals)

	Number of responses	Percentage
Not sure	8	19
Potential to access statewide data	8	19
Free technology/hardware	7	17
Automated PSP datasheets	5	12
Desire to be a pilot county	5	12
Implementation was judicial decision	4	10
PFAD would lessen paperwork	4	10
Participation requested by community group	3	7
PFAD would bring consistency to PFA process	2	5
Staff were impressed at conference	2	5
PFAD would provide a back-up system	1	2
Automation would make PFAs more accessible	1	2

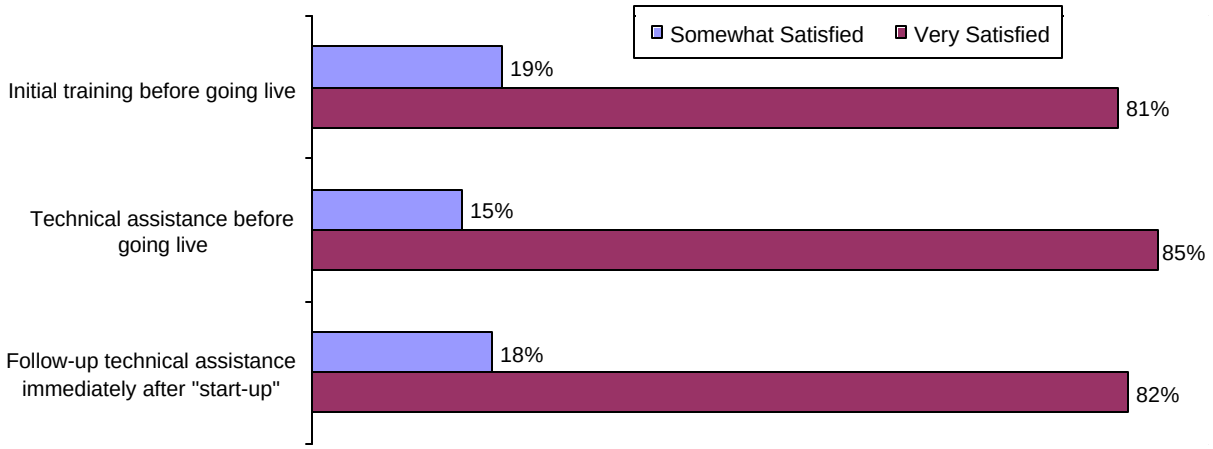
*Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 percent as respondents could name several factors.

The survey included three items related to satisfaction during the implementation stage:

- Satisfaction with initial training before going live
- Satisfaction with technical assistance before going live
- Satisfaction with follow-up technical assistance immediately after "start-up."

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction. A number of respondents could not provide an opinion because they were not present during the implementation stage. All respondents with some knowledge of the implementation stage were somewhat or very satisfied. As shown in Exhibit 3, over 80 percent of respondents who were knowledgeable about the implementation stage were "very satisfied" with all three aspects.

Exhibit 3: Satisfaction Levels with PFAD Implementation



PFAD Usage and PFA Activity

Respondents were asked to indicate how their level of PFAD activity has changed since the system was first implemented. The majority of respondents (60 percent) noted that the use of PFAD had increased, while two counties (5 percent) reported a decrease. Five individuals were unable to respond to the item. Exhibit 4 shows the results.

Exhibit 4: Changes in the Level of PFAD Activity

Survey Item: From the time that PFAD was implemented, would you say that your county's use of PFAD has increased, stayed about the same, or decreased?

	Number of responses	Percentage
Increased	25	60
Stayed about the same	10	24
Decreased	2	5
Not sure/No opinion	5	12

Cameron and Schuykill counties noted a decline in the use of PFAD.[2] Sixteen of the twenty-five respondents who noted an increase in PFAD attributed this to an increase in the PFA caseload. A few others noted that PFAD was now being used in all PFA cases and that PFAD provided greater accessibility to a number of agencies—all of which resulted in an increased usage of the database.

[2] Cameron County attributed the decrease to a decline in the caseload and courthouse renovation, while the Schuykill representative could not provide an explanation.

Respondents were asked to give their perception of the relationship between PFAD and the number of PFA filings. Most respondents (64 percent) indicated that PFAD had no effect on the numbers of temporary and final protection orders being filed in the county. Eight respondents (19 percent) felt that PFAD has led to an increase in PFAs, and two individuals (5 percent) responded that PFAD led to a decrease in PFAs. Exhibit 5 details the findings.

Exhibit 5: Perceived Relationships between PFAD and PFA Filings

Survey Item: Do you think PFAD has affected the numbers of temporary and final protection orders being filed in your county?

	Number of responses	Percentage
No effect	27	64
Increased	8	19
Decreased	2	5
Not sure/No opinion	5	12

Perry and Lebanon counties felt that PFAD led to a decrease in PFA filings—although Lebanon County attributed the decline to judicial discretion in granting PFAs.[3] Eight county representatives felt that PFAD had increased the number of PFAs being filed in their county, but half of those could not provide a specific explanation. The remaining four suggested that PFAD resulted in an increase in PFA filings because domestic violence victims had access to PFAD through advocate organizations, making it easier to enter data and follow-through on filings with the court.

Advantages and Disadvantages

County representatives participating in PFAD were asked to list the advantages and disadvantages of PFAD. The top three advantages of PFAD were summarized by the following statements:

1. Orders are consistent and automated (14 responses, 33 percent)
2. PFAD contains data from most Pennsylvania counties (12 responses, 29 percent)
3. PFAD automates the PSP datasheet (11 responses, 26 percent).

Other advantages (cited by two or more people) include the efficiency of PFAD (9 responses), accessibility of the data (8 responses), the provision that enables community advocates to enter data (3 responses), and less paperwork (3 responses). In addition, three individuals felt that PFAD did not provide any advantages to their counties.

Respondents were asked to cite the disadvantages of PFAD. The top three disadvantages included the following items:

[3] The Perry County representative felt that PFAD makes it easier and faster to enforce PFAs, which has led to fewer violations, and consequently, a drop in filings.

1. PFAD duplicates PFA data that is entered in another system (12 responses, 30 percent)
2. There are no disadvantages (7 responses, 18 percent)
3. PFAD takes more time (6 responses, 15 percent).

Additional disadvantages cited by two or more respondents include: the Pennsylvania State Police is not linked to the system (4 responses); the orders are fixed and are not flexible (3 responses); and the PFAD system goes down occasionally (3 responses).

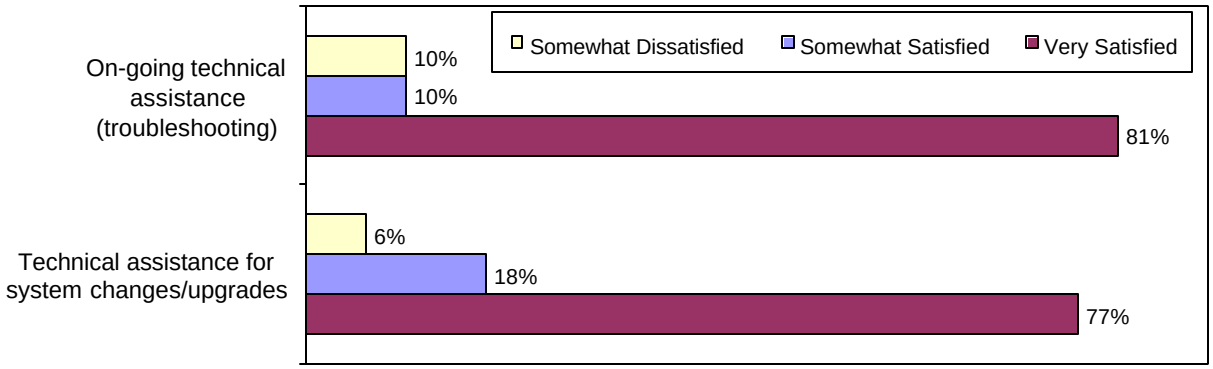
Satisfaction with Technical Assistance

The survey included two items to gauge satisfaction with ongoing PFAD usage:

- Satisfaction with on-going technical assistance (troubleshooting)
- Satisfaction with technical assistance for system changes and upgrades.

Responses indicate high levels of satisfaction with technical assistance—more than 75 percent of individuals who responded to the items were "very satisfied." However, a number of individuals were unable to provide a response to system changes and upgrades (8 individuals). Also, unlike the response set related to PFAD implementation, there were a few individuals who were somewhat dissatisfied. The results are shown in exhibit 6.

Exhibit 6: Satisfaction Levels with Technical Assistance

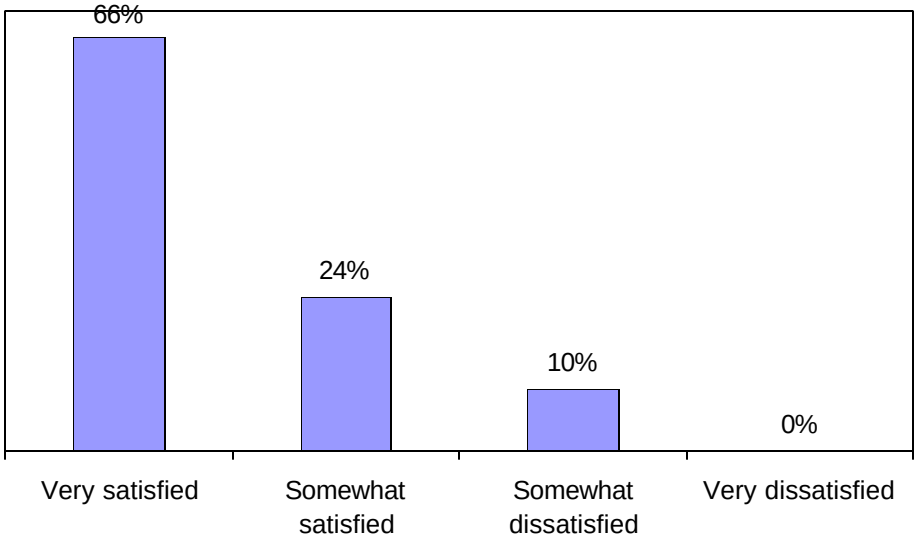


Overall Satisfaction

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their "overall experience with PFAD." Almost two-thirds of respondents (27 respondents, 66 percent) were "very satisfied" with their experiences with PFAD. Twenty-four percent of respondents (10) were "somewhat satisfied." Four respondents (10 percent) were somewhat dissatisfied, and one individual could not provide an opinion.[4] The responses are depicted in Exhibit 7.

[4] Adams County did not provide a response.

Exhibit 7: Satisfaction Level with Overall PFAD Experience



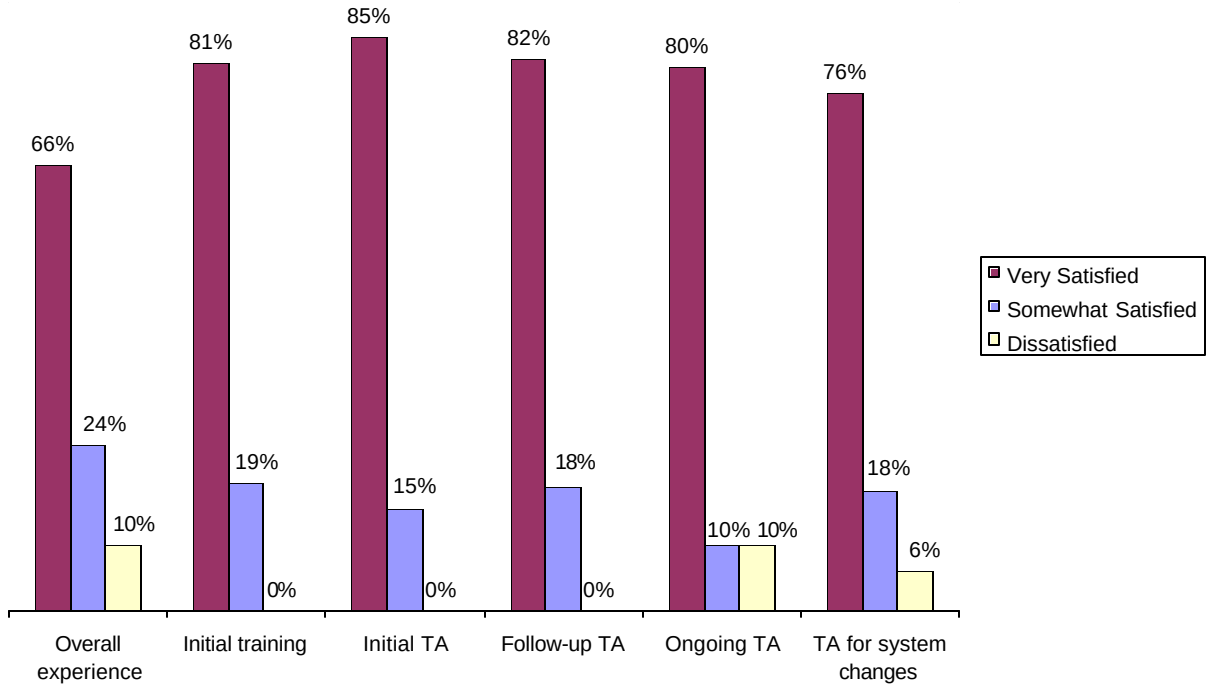
Respondents were asked to provide an explanation for their satisfaction level. Responses from those that were satisfied with the system and were mentioned by two or more individuals include the following:

1. Technical assistance is very good (11 responses, 30 percent)
2. PFAD is efficient (5 responses, 14 percent)
3. PFAD provides automated orders that are consistent (5 responses, 14 percent)
4. PFAD is user-friendly (5 responses, 14 percent)
5. PFAD enables advocates to enter data (5 responses, 14 percent)
6. PFAD automates the PSP datasheet (3 responses, 8 percent)
7. PFAD provides data from other Pennsylvania counties (3 responses, 8 percent)
8. PFAs are easily accessed through PFAD (3 responses, 8 percent)

Four respondents (10 percent) were somewhat dissatisfied with their overall experience with PFAD: Beaver, Elk, Jefferson, and Pike. In Beaver County, the experience with PFAD was negative due to the lack of a PFA coordinator and the absence of any routine processes in place prior to the current administration. In Elk County, the prothonotary transfers information from PFAs to the PSP datasheet manually. Because the office does not generate the PSP datasheet from PFAD, they find inconsistencies in the numbering of the relief from the PFAs to the PSP datasheet that they manually complete. The Jefferson County representative was somewhat dissatisfied with PFAD because of input errors made by the local advocacy group and the consequent efforts in responding to inquiries from the Pennsylvania State Police. The Pike County representative felt that PFAD was too complicated, requiring too many steps. Pike was a new PFAD user—the county had been using the system for about two months when this survey was completed. Thus, three counties were dissatisfied as a result of local processes, whereas only Pike County was dissatisfied with the database itself.

Satisfaction levels with PFAD implementation, technical assistance, and overall experience are shown in Exhibit 8. Satisfaction levels with individual items are higher than overall satisfaction levels. For instance, over three-fourths of respondents were "very satisfied" with particular aspects of implementation and technical assistance. Yet 66 percent of respondents were "very satisfied" with their overall experience with PFAD. The relatively lower level of overall satisfaction appears to be an outcome of frustration with local processes, however, rather than the PFAD system itself.

Exhibit 8: Summary of Satisfaction Levels



The Impact of PFAD on Working Relationships

Respondents were asked how PFAD affected their working relationships with other agencies, such as law enforcement and advocacy groups. Five respondents could not answer this particular item. Exhibit 9 ranks the responses for all items mentioned by two or more individuals.

Exhibit 9: The Effect of PFAD on Working Relationships

Survey Item: How has PFAD affected your working relationships with other agencies, such as law enforcement? Advocacy groups?

	Number of responses	Ranking
No Change	18	1
Relationship with the women's shelter improved	8	2
Relationship with local law enforcement improved	6	3
General improvement in relationships	4	4
Daily contact with agencies	2	5/6
Relationship with state police problematic	2	5/6

*Note: The sum is greater than the number of respondents as some individuals mentioned more than one item.

About half of all respondents noted that PFAD had not changed their working relationship with local agencies or community groups. Nearly all indicated that relationships worked well both before and after PFAD. Yet a number of respondents felt that PFAD led to a marked improvement in relations between their office and the local women's shelters, and with local law enforcement. Two respondents mentioned that PFAD had created some problems in the relationship with the Pennsylvania State Police.

Future Plans

Respondents were asked about their plans for the future use of PFAD. All but two counties had definite plans to continue their use of PFAD (Armstrong and Montgomery counties were unaware of future plans). Four counties specifically noted that they were adding or are planning to add indirect criminal contempt filings to their PFAD functions (Blair, Butler, Carbon, and Monroe).

Respondents were asked to provide recommendations for improving PFAD or its support services. A list of responses can be found in Attachment D.

Key Issues

Several key issues emerged in the course of the telephone survey: time, flexibility of forms, interagency and community relations, and training.

Time

PFAD requires additional staff time to enter, review, and submit data. Some respondents felt the additional time was well worth the effort, especially given the end result of an automatically generated PSP datasheet. For instance, the Clarion County respondent felt that PFAD takes a little time, "but the extra time is inconsequential." The Centre County respondent said that there is extra data entry into PFAD, but that the generation of the datasheet makes up for this extra work. Sullivan County, which shares a judge with Wyoming County, noted that PFAD may take additional time, but saves them from faxing PFAs back and forth with their neighboring county.

A handful of other respondents felt that the process was too time-consuming and failed to produce tangible results. For example, the Adams County respondent felt that PFAD took more time to use and did not provide any advantages.

A common source of frustration is the replication of data. Approximately three of every four counties have a civil case management system other than PFAD that includes PFAs. Most counties are entering identical data into two systems. The inefficiency of dual systems led some counties to rely more heavily on one system over another. For instance, Potter County relies more heavily on PFAD for their PFA information than their countywide civil management system. In particular, high-volume courts are challenged to use both PFAD and their internal county system. In Allegheny County, respondents indicated that staff do not have enough time to enter the information needed to get a temporary order and that PFAD was not being used in the manner intended. Time and staffing restraints may also be limiting the full extent to which PFAD is being used in each county. Currently, there is a great deal of inconsistency in the PFAD functions being utilized in each county.

Several respondents noted that the PFAD system is slow, either due to internal technology, Internet connections, or the PFAD system itself. Bedford County blamed its slow system on dated software (Windows95), while courtroom clerks in Lackawanna County have a difficult time keeping up with the docket due to an inefficient printer. The speed of the Internet connection was an issue for a number of counties. For instance, the Blair County respondent noted that initially there was a major problem with the slow speed of the Internet Connection. The respondent went on to note that there are fewer problems now. Finally, the PFAD process itself is time-consuming. In Northumberland County, the respondent indicated that twenty minutes is needed to enter a final order into the database and that the order has to be done all at once.

Flexibility of Forms

The PFAD relies on PFA forms that were created by the Supreme Court Rules Committee. The use of an accepted form makes orders consistent statewide. Yet there is a downside to standardization—the forms are not flexible enough to accommodate local conditions. A number of respondents mentioned the inflexibility of the forms as a disadvantage of PFAD (even though the forms are mandated by the Supreme Court). For example, Clinton and Northampton respondents would prefer to use their own terminology in the PFAs. The Susquehanna respondent felt the system should be more flexible to accommodate some of the orders that judges issue (e.g., parties file a stipulation on the record that is different from standard forms, parties/attorneys file their own paperwork which does not match PFAD forms). The Butler County respondent felt the forms were too rigid and restricted the judges from adding anything to be more creative. The Chester County respondent requested that a generic motion or petition for things that are not typical be considered (e.g., petitioner files for modification, but respondent cannnot be at first hearing).

Interagency and Community Relations

The PFAD process varies from one county to another. In most counties, the prothonotary's office is responsible for administering PFAD. In other counties, court administration has the primary responsibility for PFAD. Furthermore, access to PFAD for data entry purposes varies considerably. Domestic violence organizations and attorneys in some counties use PFAD to initiate the PFA process. In other counties, all PFA information is entered through the court or

prothonotary's office. Consequently, satisfaction with PFAD is often tempered by relationships between agencies and community groups.

The role of the local domestic violence shelter was noted by several respondents. For instance, Armstrong and Bedford counties noted that their offices simply reviewed data entered by local domestic violence providers. Most offices with such arrangements were pleased that much of the data entry work was already completed by the time the plaintiff entered the court or prothonotary's office. In fact, Venango and Lycoming counties noted that their office only enters information when the local shelter cannot take a case due to a conflict of interest. Carbon County would like such an arrangement but does not have the interest of its local shelter.

Several counties attributed PFAD with an improvement in relations with the local shelters. The Clarion County prothonotary's office developed a working relationship with its local shelter, and Lawrence County mentioned that they had a "fantastic shelter" and met with staff about once a month. Yet a few people critized the PFAD process and the use of community service providers to enter data. The Jefferson County respondent noted that the court or domestic violence shelter inputs errors that then have to manually "whited out" by the prothonotary's office. The respondent went on to explain that this results in negative feedback from the Pennsylvania State Police. The respondent in Lebanon County also expressed the sentiment of being "caught in the middle," because the prothonotary's office is responsible for statistics and corrections that are generated from the court administrator's office.

Six respondents indicated that PFAD had improved relations with local law enforcement agencies. Erie County noted that the information flow between the courts and law enforcement had improved as a result of PFAD. The Lawrence County respondent mentioned that local police now take ICCs seriously, partly as a result of regular meetings that include the women's shelter. A couple of counties specifically mentioned that relations with the Pennsylvania State Police were somewhat problematic after PFAD. For example, the Montgomery County prothonotary's office fields a lot of questions from the state police that can be easily located on PFAD. Venango County also noted difficulties with the Pennsylvania State Police in regard to requests for missing information.

Training

A number of respondents noted the need for training. For example, in Beaver County, the respondent indicated that judges could use training on the requirements of PFAD (such as expiration dates) and would encourage statewide training for judges and magistrates. Blair County also mentioned training issues for court stenographers and "a couple of judges." The Dauphin County representative recommended training for attorneys and police officers on how to prepare PFAs for PFAD. In Montgomery County, the respondent recommended training for the state police.

Training for those who administer PFAD was also mentioned by a few respondents. The respondent in Chester County noted that their office only learned about all the various functions and different forms available in PFAD through a conversation with a CLEAN administrator. In Luzerne County, the respondent mentioned the need for a conference, especially for new officers. Additionally, some of the information retrieved through this survey shows a need for training on PFAs and domestic violence laws (e.g., Brady requirements, personal identifiers for PFAs).

Inactive Counties

Twenty counties do not participate in PFAD. One of those counties, Mifflin, had previously used PFAD. Respondents from each of these counties responded to a telephone survey addressing the following items (see Attachment B):

- Factors affecting the decision to not implement PFAD
- Perceived advantages and disadvantages of PFAD
- Future plans regarding PFAD and the resources needed to implement it

Factors Affecting the Decision to Not Implement PFAD

Respondents were asked to provide the reasons behind their decision to not implement PFAD. Exhibit 10 lists factors provided by two or more respondents.

Exhibit 10: Factors Affecting the Decision to Not Implement PFAD

Survey Item: What factors influenced the decision to not use PFAD?

	Number of responses
PFAD requires duplication of data entry	7
The county does not have a need for PFAD	6
Judges made the decision not to use PFAD	3
The county does not have enough information on PFAD	3
The office cannot staff PFAD	2
The decision was made by another office	2
PFAD is administered by a special interest group	2
The standard PFA orders are unacceptable	2

*Note: The sum is greater than the number of respondents (20) as some individuals mentioned more than one item.

Several of the inactive counties had multiple reasons for choosing not to participate in PFAD. PFAD's incapacity to link to existing court or county data systems was the most commonly cited factor weighing against implementing PFAD (7 counties). Most counties have a civil case management system. The lack of connectivity of PFAD to those systems would require double-entry of PFA data and more staff without providing enough benefits to these courts. This duplication of effort also was cited by some counties as a disadvantage of using PFAD. For example, Lehigh County's case management system is integrated with other county databases and using PFAD would not only create more work but also degrade the functionality of its system.

Duplication of effort also is related to the second most common reason for not implementing PFAD. Six counties saw no need for PFAD, and five of these counties also could not identify any advantages of using PFAD. Five of the counties having no need for PFAD have an

automated system that contains PFAs, but four of these counties also cited a range of other reasons for not participating in PFAD. For example, the prothonotary in Indiana County noted these factors influencing the county: PSP did not require the use of PFAD; the President Judge did not want to use PFAD; PFAD would require duplicative effort; and PFAD is operated by a special interest group. A similar set of factors influenced Columbia County: using PFAD would be double the work; it is neither mandated nor funded; it is not connected to the PSP registry; the prothonotary has neither the staff nor the space for it; and the county has a data system and therefore does not need PFAD to process and record PFAs.

Opposition to using a system developed and managed by a special interest group was cited by only two counties as a factor in deciding against implementing PFAD (Indiana and Bucks). However, other counties expressed concerns about a non-governmental agency controlling PFAD in response to other items in the survey (Columbia, Mercer, and Montour; see the discussion of future plans regarding PFAD below).

Some counties appeared to be uninformed about PFAD (e.g., the Fulton County prothonotary first heard about in October 2003) or misinformed (e.g., the Bucks County prothonotary reportedly thought PFAD contains PFAs for women only). A few other counties cited negative experiences other counties had with PFAD. For example, the Wyoming County prothonotary had heard that counties had stopped using PFAD because of its problems, while Indiana County stated that other counties have been unsatisfied with the equipment and had to pick up the costs (presumably of buying new equipment). Several other factors weighing against the implementation of PFAD also were noted among the responses of a few counties including, for example, concern about system security, dislike of the order forms, and judicial decisions against implementation.

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages

Respondents were asked to identify the advantages and disadvantages of PFAD. Exhibit 11 lists the perceived advantages and disadvantages of PFAD, as reported by two or more respondents.

Exhibit 11: Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of PFAD

Survey Items: From your perspective, what would be the advantages/disadvantages of using PFAD?

Advantages	Responses
None	10
Don't know/Uncertain	4
Automated PSP datasheet	3
Access to Statewide data	2

Disadvantages	Responses
Duplication/no interface	6
Staffing needs	5
No need	2
Not sure	2
Reporting to a non-profit	2
Insufficient office space	2
Less desirable PFA forms	2

*Note: The sum is greater than the number of respondents (20) as some individuals mentioned more than one item.

The inactive counties saw few advantages in using PFAD. Half the counties (10) stated that PFAD has no advantages, while another four counties did not know of any advantages. Three counties noted that production of the PSP datasheet would be an advantage, and two counties saw value in accessing statewide data through PFAD. Only one county identified multiple advantages of PFAD: Philadelphia cited the ability to print out the full order from PFAD instead of having to pull the file to make a copy; the potential for transferring data electronically to the PSP; and the value of a case scheduling component being added to PFAD.

Most of the disadvantages of using PFAD cited by the inactive counties were the same as or related to the factors that influenced the counties to decide against implementing PFAD. Six counties cited multiple disadvantages of using PFAD, while one county said PFAD has no disadvantages (Fulton) and two counties were not sure what disadvantages PFAD might have (Cambria and Greene).

The most commonly cited disadvantages were the duplication of work due to the lack of interface with current systems (6 counties) and the need for more staff (5 counties). The following disadvantages were identified by two counties each: reporting to a non-profit; lack of space; less desirable PFA forms, and lack of need for PFAD. Other disadvantages cited by one county each related to work load (the need to type forms, handling calls from the PSP, inefficiency) and resources (need for a computer).

Resources

Inactive counties were asked to identify the resources that would be necessary to implement PFAD. Three respondents did not know what resources would be necessary (Mercer, Cambria, Greene counties). Clearfield and Mifflin counties indicated they would not need additional resources, and the Forest County respondent did not provide a response. Of the remaining 14 respondents, the most common resources were staff (9 counties), technology (including computers, Internet access, interface to current system) (8 counties), and office space (7 responses). Two counties also cited training as a resource need.

Respondents were asked a follow-up question as to whether the county could provide the additional resources. Of the 14 counties that identified a need for additional resources, 10 respondents indicated that they did not currently have the resources they thought were necessary to implement PFAD. Two counties stated they did have the resources (Fulton, Philadelphia) and two counties were uncertain (Indiana, Lehigh).

Future Plans

Respondents were asked if they presently had any plans to implement PFAD in the future. The results are shown in Exhibit 12.

Exhibit 12: Plans to Implement PFAD in the Future

Survey Item: Do you presently have any plans to implement PFAD in the future?

	Number of Counties	Counties
Yes	3	Clearfield, Franklin, Fulton
No	14	Bucks, Cambria, Columbia, Forest, Greene*, Huntingdon, Indiana*, Juniata, Mercer, Mifflin, Montour, Philadelphia, Somerset, Wyoming
Uncertain	3	Bradford, Lehigh, Warren

* As of April 30, 2004, Green County was active in PFAD and Indiana County was undergoing training.

Over two-thirds of respondents in the inactive counties (14) indicated they have no current plans to implement PFAD. Of the other six counties, three currently are moving toward implementing PFAD and three are uncertain about their future plans regarding PFAD. Although there is no clear pattern of resistance to PFAD based on jurisdiction size, several counties with smaller populations indicated stronger opposition to PFAD than did others (six of these counties have populations under 50,000 and three are under 90,000). Furthermore, three pairs of counties that share a judicial district (Columbia/Montour; Forest/Warren, and Franklin/Fulton) have similar intentions regarding implementing PFAD. This suggests that proximity and peers also may influence receptivity to PFAD.

The level and nature of resistance to PFAD vary among the 14 counties that have no current plans to implement it. Some counties strongly oppose participating in PFAD, while others might consider participating if particular issues can be addressed. For example, two counties (Cambria and Forest) appear to be so resistant they were reluctant to participate in the survey. Respondents in these counties saw no need for PFAD and provided no other reasons for not implementing it.

Five counties (Bucks, Columbia, Indiana, Mercer and Montour) equate participation in PFAD with reporting data to PCADV and view this as a significant issue. Three of these counties (Bucks, Indiana, and Montour) and one additional county (Mifflin) would implement PFAD only if the state mandates participation. In two counties (Mercer and Warren), the responses of the prothonotary indicated a lack of understanding of the need for law enforcement agencies and others involved in enforcing PFAs to be able to access the court's records remotely. In three counties (Huntingdon, Juniata, and Somerset), the primary impediment to implementing PFAD is a lack of basic resources (staff, space, computers, or internet access). Philadelphia County was receptive to the possibility of implementing PFAD. However, any decision to implement PFAD would be a group decision based on input from various agencies, the administrative governing board, and the president judge.

The three counties expressing uncertainty about their future plans to participate in PFAD also have concerns that vary in some degree and kind in their opposition to implementing PFAD. For example, Lehigh County currently has an integrated system that uses one numeric identifier to access information in other county databases that can be relevant to the PFA process (e.g.,

corrections and collections). Implementing PFAD would not only require duplication of effort, it also would be a step backward technologically. Lehigh is moving to a web-based system and would be willing to participate in PFAD if PFAD could download information from Lehigh's system. Warren County also sees data integration and duplication of effort as challenges to implementing PFAD and, like four other counties, would implement PFAD only if the state mandates participation. Bradford County's reluctance to participate appears to stem primarily from a lack of staff and space for using PFAD. The county's district court administrator also expressed interest in implementing PFAD after attending a PFAD training, but the administrator said she did not receive follow-up information that she requested.

The three counties that are actively moving toward implementing PFAD have one characteristic in common: they are collaborating with local domestic violence agencies that wish to participate in PFAD. Two of these counties (Franklin and Fulton) comprise one judicial district. Franklin County will need to acquire a computer and reassign staff to cover PFAD, while Fulton County needs only training on the system. Clearfield County did not specify any needed resources, but the judge who currently hears PFAs prefers forms he developed over the statewide forms used by PFAD. Another judge is taking over that docket and presumably he is more amenable to using the PFAD forms.

Summary of Findings

Sixty-two Pennsylvania county offices were surveyed in regard to PFAD. Forty-two counties participated in PFAD, while the remaining 20 counties were not active in the PFAD program. Six findings from the survey are highlighted below.

Finding 1: Over 75 percent of county respondents were "very satisfied" with the PFAD implementation process and the provision of technical assistance.

All counties that use PFAD were "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with initial training and technical assistance before going live, and with follow-up technical assistance after "start-up." Over 80 percent of respondent were "very satisfied" with all aspects of PFAD implementation. Counties were also "very satisfied" with technical assistance—at least 75 percent of counties were "very satisfied" with on-going technical assistance and technical assistance for system changes and upgrades.

Finding 2: Two-thirds of respondents were "very satisfied" with their overall PFAD experience.

Nearly all respondents (37 of 41) were "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their overall experience with PFAD—27 respondents (66 percent) were "very satisfied." Those respondents who were "somewhat dissatisfied" tended to cite process issues relevant to their particular county rather than the PFAD system itself. The quality of the technical assistance was the major factor contributing to high levels of satisfaction.

Finding 3: The greatest advantage of PFAD is consistent and automated orders. The primary disadvantage is the duplication of PFA data into more than one system.

The development of an automated system that creates standardized PFAs was cited as the greatest advantage of PFAD. Other advantages often cited were PFAD's resource as a potential statewide database and the automation of PSP datasheets. The major disadvantage of PFAD was the duplication of PFA data that is required to maintain both PFAD and the county's internal case management system. Respondents also noted that PFAD takes more time, which results from duplication of effort.

Finding 4: PFAD has improved interagency and community relations in a number of counties.

PFAD has not affected relationships between agencies and community groups in most counties. However, about 20 percent of the active counties felt that PFAD has led to improved relationships between the courts, prothonotary's offices, the local domestic violence providers, and/or local law enforcement. A few counties noted that PFAD had made their relationship with the Pennsylvania State Police more problematic.

Finding 5: The duplication of data and the lack of need are the most commonly cited reasons why counties have not implemented PFAD.

The inability of PFAD to work with a county's current case management system is an impediment to the implementation of PFAD in additional counties. A number of inactive counties also felt that they did not have a need for PFAD, either due to a process that was adequate or low numbers of PFA filings.

Finding 6: Most inactive counties do not have the resources they feel they would need to implement PFAD and do not have plans to use PFAD in the future.

The majority of inactive counties indicated they would need additional resources (staffing, technology, and office space) to implement PFAD. Most inactive counties (14 of 20) do not have current plans to implement PFAD in the future. A small number of counties were adamantly opposed to PFAD and will not participate in PFAD unless mandated.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were put forward by the National Center for State Courts evaluation team, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and members of the advisory board.

Recommendation 1: Data duplication should be eliminated. This can be accomplished by adopting XML standards and methods.

Recommendation 2: Create a standardized PFA process in Pennsylvania. Standardization will require an automated system from the State.

Recommendation 3: Educate courts and prothonotaries on the importance of PFAD, Supreme Court forms, state registry requirements, and domestic violence dynamics. Conduct regional or statewide training conferences.

Recommendation 4: Improve data interchange and access electronically between PFAD and the PSP data registry system. Ensure data goes into the national registry.

Recommendation 5: Assess the resource needs for counties that are currently not participating in PFAD due to limited resources.

Recommendation 6: Seek funding for those counties that indicate they cannot afford the required technology. Consider the state surplus as a means to provide technology to those counties in need.

Recommendation 7: Make PFAD an "official" registry with "ownership" from a state agency, with state funding. A study should be conducted to determine how this can best be accomplished.

Attachment A: Active County Survey

Survey of Pennsylvania Counties on the Use of the Protection from Abuse Database (PFAD)

The National Center for State Courts is working on an evaluation of the Protection from Abuse Database (PFAD), with funding from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. As part of this survey, we are asking prothonotary offices or those county-level offices responsible for PFAD on their use, or non-use of PFAD.

The survey will be conducted over the telephone. Following is a copy of the questions we will ask you in the arranged interview. The survey is short: it will take about 15 minutes of your time on the telephone.

If you have any questions at all, please contact the project director, Brenda Uekert, at 757-259-1861 or buekert@ncsc.dni.us.

Thank you in advance for participating in the survey.

Background Information

1. How long have you been the prothonotary (job title) in your county? ____ Years

2. Were you the prothonotary (job title) during the period in which PFAD was implemented?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

3. Which office administers PFAD? _____

4. Do you have a countywide civil case management system other than PFAD that includes PFAs?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

5. What factors influenced the decision to implement PFAD?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. What resources were necessary to implement PFAD? (such as Internet access or trained staff)
   _____
   _____
   _____

Attachment A: Active County Survey

7. From the time that PFAD was implemented, would you say that your county's use of PFAD has increased, stayed about the same, or decreased?
   ☐Increased
   ☐ Stayed about the Same
   ☐ Decreased
   ☐ Not Sure/No Opinion

8. What accounts for the increase/decrease in the county's usage of PFAD?
   _____
   _____

9. How satisfied are you regarding your overall experience with PFAD?
   ☐ Very Satisfied
   ☐ Somewhat Satisfied
   ☐ Somewhat Dissatisfied
   ☐ Very Dissatisfied

10. For what reasons are you mostly satisfied/dissatisfied with PFAD?
    _____
    _____
    _____

11. What are the advantages of using PFAD?
    _____
    _____
    _____

12. What are the disadvantages of using PFAD?
    _____
    _____
    _____

13. The next series of questions deal with satisfaction with the training and assistance provided by the PFAD support staff. For each item, I will ask you if you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied? If you are uncertain or unfamiliar with the issue, just let us know.

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	No Opinion/ NA
a. Initial training before going live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Technical assistance before going live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Follow-up technical assistance immediately after "start-up"	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. On-going technical assistance (trouble shooting)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Technical assistance for system changes/upgrades	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Attachment A: Active County Survey

14. Do you think PFAD has affected the numbers of temporary and final protection orders being filed in your county? Would you say that PFAD has had no effect, has encouraged an increase in filings, or resulted in a decrease in filings?
    ☐ No Effect ☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ Not sure

    12a. If an increase, or decrease, can you explain why this is so?_____
    _____
    _____
    _____

15. How has PFAD affected your working relationships with other agencies, such as law enforcement? And with other organizations, such as advocacy groups?
    _____
    _____
    _____

16. What are your plans for the future use of PFAD?
    _____
    _____
    _____

17. Do you have any recommendations for improving PFAD or its support services?
    _____
    _____
    _____

18. Any additional comments?
    _____
    _____
    _____

Would you like to receive a copy of the results from this survey when it becomes available?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Email Address: _____

Mail Address: _____
_____
_____

Attachment B: Inactive County Survey

Survey of Pennsylvania Counties on the Use of the Protection from Abuse Database (PFAD)

The National Center for State Courts is working on an evaluation of the Protection from Abuse Database (PFAD), with funding from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. As part of this survey, we are asking prothonotary offices or those county-level offices responsible for PFAD on their use, or non-use of PFAD.

The survey will be conducted over the telephone. Following is a copy of the questions we will ask you in the arranged interview. The survey is short: it will take about 15 minutes of your time on the telephone.

If you have any questions at all, please contact the project director, Brenda Uekert, at 757-259-1861 or buekert@ncsc.dni.us.

Thank you in advance for participating in the survey.

Background Information

1. How long have you been the prothonotary (job title) in your county? ____ Years

2. Were you the prothonotary (job title) during the period in which PFAD was implemented?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

3. Which office administers PFAD? _____

4. Do you have a countywide civil case management system other than PFAD that includes PFAs?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

1. What factors influenced the decision to not use PFAD?
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. From your perspective, what would be the advantages of using PFAD?
   _____
   _____
   _____

Attachment B: Inactive County Survey

3. From your perspective, what would be the disadvantages of using PFAD?

_____
_____
_____

4. What resources do you need to implement PFAD?

_____
_____
_____

5. Do you have these resources?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

6. Do you presently have any plans to implement PFAD in the future?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

7. If you were to implement PFAD in response to a statewide initiative, what issues would need to be addressed in your county?

   _____
   _____
   _____

8. Can you offer any recommendations or suggestions to the people who operate PFAD that would encourage your county to implement PFAD?

_____
_____
_____
_____

9. Any additional comments?

_____
_____
_____

Would you like to receive a copy of the results from this survey when it becomes available?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Email Address: _____

Mail Address: _____
_____
_____

Attachment C: Active Counties

County		Do you have a countywide civil case management system other than PFAD that includes PFAs?
1.	Adams	Yes
2.	Allegheny	Yes
3.	Armstrong	Yes
4.	Beaver	Yes
5.	Bedford	Yes
6.	Blair	No
7.	Butler	Yes
8.	Cameron	Yes
9.	Carbon	Yes
10.	Centre	Yes
11.	Chester	Yes
12.	Clarion	Yes
13.	Clinton	No
14.	Crawford	Yes
15.	Cumberland	No
16.	Dauphin	Uncertain
17.	Elk	Yes
18.	Erie	Yes
19.	Fayette	Yes
20.	Jefferson	No
21.	Lackawanna	Yes
22.	Lancaster	Yes
23.	Lawrence	No
24.	Lebanon	Yes
25.	Luzerne	No
26.	Lycoming	Yes
27.	McKean	Yes
28.	Monroe	No
29.	Montgomery	Yes
30.	Northampton	Yes
31.	Northumberland	No
32.	Perry	Yes
33.	Pike	Yes
34.	Potter	Yes
35.	Schuykill	Yes
36.	Sullivan	Yes
37.	Susquehanna	No
38.	Tioga	Yes
39.	Venango	Yes
40.	Wayne	Yes
41.	Westmoreland	No
42.	York	Yes

Attachment C: Active Counties

VS=Very Satisfied **SS=Somewhat Satisfied** **SD=Somewhat Dissatisfied** **VD=Very Dissatisfied** **NO=No Opinion/NA**

County		Overall experience with PFAD	Initial training before going live	Technical assistance before going live	Follow-up technical assistance immediately after "start-up"	On-going technical assistance (trouble shooting)	Technical assistance for system changes/upgrades
1.	Adams	NO	SS	SS	SS	SD	NO
2.	Allegheny	SS	VS	VS	VS	SD	NO
3.	Armstrong	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
4.	Beaver	SD	VS	NO	VS	VS	VS
5.	Bedford	VS	VS	VS	VS	SS	SS
6.	Blair	VS	VS	VS	SS	VS	VS
7.	Butler	SS	VS	VS	VS	VS	SS
8.	Cameron	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	NO
9.	Carbon	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	NO
10.	Centre	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
11.	Chester	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
12.	Clarion	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
13.	Clinton	SS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
14.	Crawford	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
15.	Cumberland	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
16.	Dauphin	SS	SS	NO	SS	SS	SS
17.	Elk	SD	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
18.	Erie	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
19.	Fayette	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
20.	Jefferson	SD	NO	NO	NO	SD	SD
21.	Lackawanna	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
22.	Lancaster	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
23.	Lawrence	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
24.	Lebanon	SS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
25.	Luzerne	VS	NO	NO	NO	VS	VS
26.	Lycoming	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
27.	McKean	VS	NO	NO	NO	VS	VS
28.	Monroe	VS	VS	VS	SS	VS	VS
29.	Montgomery	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS
30.	Northampton	VS	VS	SS	VS	VS	VS
31.	Northumberland	SS	NO	NO	VS	VS	NO
32.	Perry	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS
33.	Pike	SD	SS	NO	VS	VS	NO
34.	Potter	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
35.	Schuykill	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
36.	Sullivan	SS	VS	NO	VS	VS	SS
37.	Susquehanna	SS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
38.	Tioga	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
39.	Venango	VS	SS	VS	VS	VS	NO
40.	Wayne	VS	SS	SS	SS	SD	SS
41.	Westmoreland	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
42.	York	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS

Attachment C: Active Counties

No Effect=NE Increase=I SS=Stayed about the Same Decrease=D NO=No Opinion/Not Sure

	County	From the time that PFAD was implemented, would you say your county's use of PFAD as increased, stayed about the same, or decreased?	Would you say that PFAD has had no effect, has encouraged an increase in filings, or resulted in a decrease in filings?
1.	Adams	NO	I
2.	Allegheny	SS	NE
3.	Armstrong	I	NE
4.	Beaver	I	NS
5.	Bedford	I	I
6.	Blair	I	NE
7.	Butler	SS	NE
8.	Cameron	D	NE
9.	Carbon	I	NE
10.	Centre	I	NE
11.	Chester	I	NE
12.	Clarion	SS	NE
13.	Clinton	NO	NE
14.	Crawford	I	NS
15.	Cumberland	I	I
16.	Dauphin	I	NE
17.	Elk	I	I
18.	Erie	SS	NE
19.	Fayette	I	I
20.	Jefferson	NO	NE
21.	Lackawanna	I	NE
22.	Lancaster	I	NS
23.	Lawrence	I	NE
24.	Lebanon	I	D
25.	Luzerne	I	NE
26.	Lycoming	NO	I
27.	McKean	SS	NE
28.	Monroe	SS	NE
29.	Montgomery	I	NE
30.	Northampton	I	NE
31.	Northumberland	I	NE
32.	Perry	I	D
33.	Pike	SS	NE
34.	Potter	SS	NE
35.	Schuykill	D	NE
36.	Sullivan	SS	NE
37.	Susquehanna	SS	NE
38.	Tioga	I	NS
39.	Venango	I	I
40.	Wayne	I	NE
41.	Westmoreland	I	I
42.	York	NO	NS

Attachment C: Inactive Counties

County		Do you have a countywide civil case management system other than PFAD that includes PFAs?	Do you have resources needed to implement PFAD?	Do you presently have plans to implement PFAD in the future?
1.	Bradford	Uncertain	No	Uncertain
2.	Bucks	Yes	No	No
3.	Cambria	No	Not Applicable	No
4.	Clearfield	Yes	Not Applicable	Yes
5.	Columbia	Yes	No	No
6.	Forest	Uncertain	Not Applicable	No
7.	Franklin	Yes	No	Yes
8.	Fulton	Yes	Yes	Yes
9.	Greene	Yes	Not Applicable	No
10.	Huntington	Yes	No	No
11.	Indiana	Yes	Uncertain	No
12.	Juniata	No	No	No
13.	Lehigh	Yes	Uncertain	Uncertain
14.	Mercer	Yes	Not Applicable	No
15.	Mifflin	Yes	Not Applicable	No
16.	Montour	Yes	No	No
17.	Philadelphia	Yes	Yes	No
18.	Somerset	Yes	No	No
19.	Warren	Yes	No	Uncertain
20.	Wyoming	Yes	No	No