



COVID-19 DHS Provider Meeting

July 9, 2020



General Information

We continue to hold DHS Provider Meetings once per week on Thursdays.

Please submit stories and photos about how COVID-19 has changed the ways in which your organization or staff conduct business and how it might impact your ongoing operations to Evelyn.Whitehill@AlleghenyCounty.US.

Dr. Debra Bogen, Director, Allegheny County Department of Health, joined the call to discuss the new two-week order.

- Current state
 - The County started to see increases around June 20th
 - The daily case rate is now higher than our spring peak.
 - We have more capacity now (e.g., testing, PPE)
 - We had assumed it would be a quiet summer and we did not anticipate the increase in cases.
 - The vast majority of people testing positive had traveled or gone to bars and restaurants.
- The new order tries to mitigate the spread in the following ways:
 - Because outdoor air is safer, only outside restaurant dining is permitted.
 - Limiting the amount of alcohol people consume prevents loud, boisterous talking and behavior.
 - Limiting gathering size limits spread.
- Other recommendations to mitigate the spread:
 - The green guidance has not changed: please work from home if possible.
 - Limit your trips outside the home.
- Testing
 - If you are symptomatic or a close contact of a known positive case (within 6 feet for 15 minutes), or if you have traveled, get tested.
 - The new cases are not an artifact of higher testing. They are due to more high-risk behaviors such as traveling.
- Testing after traveling
 - Stay home for 14 days after high risk travel and/or if you have a high exposure job to go back to.
 - Low risk travel means going by car in small groups and avoiding crowded locations.
 - Ideally, get 2 tests at least 48 hours apart starting a few days after you return home.
 - Waiting four days and getting one test might be a more realistic option when testing availability is limited.
- Masking Outdoors
 - Follow the state's [masking order](#)
 - Out of consideration for others and as per the rules, carry a mask with you when outdoors and put it on when you see another person. If you can't see anyone, it is safe to not wear a mask outside.
- Indoor services are permitted with fewer than 25 people (e.g., adult training), but:

- Do it remotely if possible.
- Keep 6 feet apart, mask and wash hands. Use caution!
- Follow DHS guidance.
- When there is a positive case in a healthcare facility:
 - The facility does the investigation of the individual's activities at work and the health department does the investigation for activities outside of the work environment.
- Childcare Masking
 - Look at the [newest guidance related to childcare](#). Face shields are a good alternative for children, as they are easier to communicate with and keep on.
- Offices
 - With regard to cubicles, use your judgment. Generally, cubicle walls do protect others.
 - Wear masks while moving around the office.
- The constantly changing guidance is a challenge. If you have guidance that is specific to your organization or population, follow that.

Brian Bell, DHS Privacy Officer, joined the call to give an Illness Reporting Update.

- We are putting some new guidance together and will share it out soon.
- We've been collecting reports of COVID-19 illnesses since March 31st; a majority are provided through critical incident reporting.
- In July the daily reports have increased to about 7.
- We have received 147 positive reports to date.
 - 106 were clients, 41 were staff
 - 28 resulted in hospitalizations and 10 in deaths. These rates are slightly higher than the general County population.
 - A majority of reports came from the intellectual disability system, explained by the fact that many are in a congregate setting.
- DHS Staff
 - DHS is seeing more reports from staff, including 5 recent positive cases.
 - A majority of reports (70%) were from a child welfare office, followed by aging; these are individuals who provide direct services.
- If a member of your staff has tested positive for COVID-19, including presumptive positive, or has been exposed to a confirmed case, notify DHS by emailing DHS-PrivacyOfficer@alleghenycounty.us (preferred method). Alternatively, you may report via phone to Brian Bell, Allegheny County Privacy Officer, at 412-350-2887.
 - We want to know about anything that may impact clients or your ability to provide services. If an action such as quarantine is required, let us know. If there is a definitive exposure, let us know.
 - Contact Brian directly if there is no existing reporting avenue for your program office or if there is a possible outbreak in a congregate facility.

There are candidates seeking work in human services who are credentialed and have experience. If you are an agency that would like to gain access to this recruitment platform and these potential candidates, request access via at https://bit.ly/SWPA_HHSprovider.

COVID-19 Metrics

Allegheny County is not meeting the following benchmarks:

- Decline in new cases: we saw over 1,000 cases the week of June 28th
- New cases below threshold: our rate is 119 per 100,000 residents, above the benchmark of 50.
- Decline in total hospitalizations: we saw a 78% increase over the past week.
- Diagnostic testing capacity: Our tests-to-cases ratio is continuing to decline. We should be seeing an increase in testing capacity in response to rising cases.
- Rate of transmission below 1: hovering between 2 and 3.
- New cases below threshold: we are now above the PA threshold.

Allegheny County is approaching the following benchmarks:

- Percent of Positive tests: now 9.5% and increasing

Allegheny County is meeting the following benchmarks:

- Decline in Deaths: This is flat to declining. It may be too soon to tell; our decline in deaths was 2-4 weeks in previous phases.
- ICU bed capacity: remaining flat

DHS's plan for COVID-19 response

- Our clients have a higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 due to a high rate of chronic conditions, living in congregate care facilities and age.
- People in our County are facing increased hardships such as unemployment, housing instability, mental health symptoms, childhood food insecurity, and risk of abuse and neglect.
- Members of marginalized communities, such as Black people, are affected more, as shown in doubled hospitalization and death rates, and higher rates of comorbidities and unemployment.
- In addition to its standard services, DHS aims to:

A. Mitigate spread of virus to people most at risk of getting seriously ill

1. Hygiene/safety - \$5M: Sanitation and cleaning, physical distancing, hygiene stations, client masks
2. Reduce density in shelters - \$600K: We would like to open a second winter shelter this year
3. Testing – advocate for testing at congregate facilities
4. Quarantine and isolation facilities - \$7M – maintain current facilities
5. Deliver food and essentials to older adults living at home - \$100K

B. Ensure access to life-saving health and human services, and deliver them safely

1. Front door – access to care, working closely with United Way
2. Warmlines - \$800K to handle more calls
3. Triage
4. Outreach to Black, Latinx and immigrant populations - \$3M: with messages about the pandemic

C. Help people facing increased hardship because of COVID-sparked economic recession

1. Benefits enrollment - \$2M: Connecting eligible people to existing benefits and new COVID-related assistance. Our providers are doing outreach and providing application assistance
2. Digital divide/remote access - \$1.8M: access to technology, virtual programming in programs such as out-of-school time programs
3. Homeless prevention - \$5.8M: rent relief program. We are able to augment the program in conjunction with ACED and help prevent people from losing housing.
4. Health of the network - \$1.8M: coordinate distribution of PPE, hazard pay for CYF frontline workers

5. Crisis response: reduce unnecessary encounters with law enforcement and the Jail for people experiencing MH, SUD or homelessness
6. Personnel - \$700K: contact tracers, staff for safe haven
7. Food - \$4M: to United Way's food relief fund, providing prepared meals throughout the County
8. Childcare - \$4.4M: through Trying Together, to keep childcare and relative providers open while operating with higher costs due to being under capacity.

The vast majority of funding is going out to our provider community. CRF funds must be spent by the end of 2020.

We are continuing to improve our website, located at www.bit.ly/COVID19DHSPROVIDERS.

- [The Operational Changes Tracker](#) is now live.
- You can reach us by email at DHS-COVID19planning@alleghenycounty.us. We will answer all questions and elevate issues to inform the network.

Legislative/Policy Updates

State and Local Updates

- On Tuesday, Allegheny County Council approved and passed the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) appropriations established by the federal CARES Act. This approved COVID-19-related funding can now be distributed to County departments and municipalities.
- Pittsburgh City Council held a public hearing on possible changes to the Citizen's Police Review Board's powers, including requiring full cooperation from any officer being investigated.
 - Any changes can only be approved through a City-wide referendum since the CPRB is a part of the City's Home Rule Charter.

Food

There are three [upcoming food distributions](#):

1. Allegheny Valley: July 14th at 5 pm at Pittsburgh Mills Galleria
2. McKeesport: July 18th at 10 am at Founders Hall Middle School
3. Duquesne: July 20th at the Food Bank
 - a. Duquesne is requiring reservations, the benefit being you can receive multiple boxes in one car.

There are many bus stop food distributions happening in McKeesport, McKees Rocks, Northside, Allentown, Brookline, Hilltop, South Oakland and Penn Hills. See slide presentation for details.

The Food Access call is on Tuesdays at 3:30 pm. Call-in information can be found in the slide presentation.

Program Updates

Aging

- Heat risks
 - Seniors have been staying home more than any other populations.
 - We are checking in on them and delivering cooling supplies.

- Should you know a senior who is potentially at risk due to the heat, please do not hesitate to contact the Senior Line at 412 350-5460.
 - This number will also connect the caller to 24/7 emergency senior services.
- Farmers Market Vouchers
 - We are mailing out all of the vouchers within the next two weeks. More than a half million dollars in vouchers are being mailed.
 - We received more than 12,000 applications.
 - There is no waiting list.

OCS

- Homeless network
 - Today Governor Wolf signed a new [executive order](#) that protects homeowners and renters from eviction or foreclosure until **Aug. 31**, if they have not received assistance from the new CARES Act Rental Assistance Program or are not already receiving relief through one of several federal foreclosure moratorium programs or judicial orders.
 - As a reminder, [Applications](#) are now available [for PHFA's CARES Rent Relief Program](#), to provide a maximum of 6 months of rent assistance for eligible renters. In partnership with ACED, we are handling the [renter program locally](#). Please contact Cassandra.Collinge@allegHENYcounty.us for more information.
 - Please help us get the word out!
 - ACTION Housing has a dedicated hotline to answer applicant questions: 412-248-0021 or ahicarerrp@actionhousing.org
 - Mortgage assistance is available through the PHFA site.
 - Quarantine and Isolation spaces are open for individuals and families and have available spaces. We plan to keep these open through at least December.
 - To make a referral for a family, Contact Remy Harris (Remy.Harris@allegHENYcounty.us)
 - Homeless referrals: Jessica.McKown@allegHENYcounty.us
 - Office of Behavioral Health referrals: Diane.Johnson@allegHENYcounty.us
 - Allegheny County Jail referrals: Jennifer.Batterton@allegHENYcounty.us
 - Immigrants and Internationals referrals: bgreen@jfcspgh.org
 - As a reminder, we have ordered more cell phones for clients who need to communicate with providers or access telehealth. Please contact Gabe Krivosh (Gabriel.Krivosh@allegHENYcounty.us) for additional information.
 - We are looking for a [medical/clinical director](#) for the safe haven site. Help get the word out!
 - As a reminder, please provide Public Comment by July 11 on the federal strategic plan to end homelessness at <https://www.usich.gov/public-input/>.
 - We've moved the Provider Network Meeting to every other Tuesday at 9:30 am; call-in information can be found in the slide presentation. The next meeting on July 21st will focus on workforce development.

How to Reach Us

- Email us at DHS-COVID19planning@alleghenycounty.us with questions. Use the subject line to indicate the type of question you are submitting (e.g., program area, DHS operations).
- The COVID Hotline is 2-1-1 and the Health Department's line is 687-2243.
- See the slide presentation for other key contacts.

SEE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS RAISED AT TODAY'S CALL