



**COVID-19 DHS Provider Meeting**  
**March 18, 2021**



## General Information

DHS Provider Meetings continue to be held on Thursdays at 4:30 pm.

Please continue to send stories of the impact of your services (in a variety of media) to [Nakia.Granberg@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:Nakia.Granberg@alleghenycounty.us).

Dr. Debra Bogen joined the call to share updates from the Health Department.

The Health Department updated [its dashboard](#) to focus on weekly trends and overall trends across the entire pandemic.

- County case numbers have been stagnant and there is an indication that we are seeing an increase in cases. People are out and about a lot more now, attending more events.
- Hospitalizations and deaths continue to decline.
- We are doing contact tracing and reaching everyone within 72 hours.

### Vaccination

- Almost 4 million people have been vaccinated in PA and the number of people vaccinated per day continues to increase as supply increases.
- Allegheny County has vaccinated over 175,000 people; an average of 10,000 people per day.
- The Health Department only controls the doses directly sent to the county (about 10%, 61,000 doses).
  - 76% of doses have gone to people age 65 and older. 84% have gone to White people, 9.8% Black, 3.1% Asian.
  - ACHD has expanded county vaccination locations to Monroeville, Castle Shannon and the Hartley Rose building downtown, and closed PODs at Senior Centers and senior high rises. They are working on opening Central Baptist Church in the Hill District and a Ross location, and more locations are coming soon, including the Mon Valley.
- Pharmacies and healthcare providers are providing vaccinations to other 1A populations besides seniors. DHS Providers can also contact [DHSSStaffVaccination@AlleghenyCounty.US](mailto:DHSSStaffVaccination@AlleghenyCounty.US) about new staff members who need to be vaccinated.
- Challenges:
  - Large 1A group with greater demand than supply
  - Limited local control of distribution
  - Many registration systems. County is using 2-1-1 and a new system is coming soon.
  - Personnel – because ACHD is not a health care provider, they have to staff in partnership with collaborators like Red Cross, emergency services, DHS, housing authority and volunteers from Medical Reserve Corps (PA Serve).
  - Vaccine hesitancy
  - Equity of distribution

### Governor's order lifting restrictions

- Our mask mandate still stands, including for restaurants and bars.
- On April 4, restaurants and some indoor and outdoor events will be able to increase capacity.

DHS has [released three solicitations](#):

- RFP for Housing Mobility Services for Families in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8)
  - Proposals due April 23
- Child Welfare Prevention Concept Paper
  - Submit feedback until March 24, 2021
  - We will update the feedback document on the Active Solicitations page as we receive comments
- RFP for Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility
  - Proposals due April 1
  - Proposals are submitted through CCBH, not DHS, but providers can find the RFP on our Solicitations page

## **Legislative/Policy Updates**

### Federal Updates

Accessing federal stimulus payments created by the American Rescue Plan:

- Individuals with an adjusted gross income less than \$75,000 are eligible for \$1,400 payments and \$1,400 for each dependent
  - Payment reduced for individuals with incomes between \$75,001 and 80,000
- IRS began issuing payments on Monday, March 15th
- The IRS will use available information to determine eligibility and issue the third payment to eligible people who:
  - Filed a 2020 tax return
  - Filed a 2019 tax return (if the 2020 return has not been submitted or processed yet)
  - Did not file a 2020 or 2019 tax return, but registered for the first Economic Impact Payment using the special Non-Filers portal last year
  - Are federal benefit recipients (Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Veteran benefits) as of December 31, 2020, who do not usually file a tax return.
- For more information: [Get my Payment](#) to check status of payments; [FAQs](#)

### State and Local Updates

- The recently enacted American Rescue Plan will dramatically increase access to comprehensive health insurance coverage across PA by:
  - Increasing the subsidies available on [Pennie](#) (open enrollment through May 15th) and making more individuals eligible:
    - eliminates the 400 percent federal poverty limit ceiling on subsidy eligibility
    - increases subsidies available to those already eligible
    - extends subsidies to middle-income households previously ineligible
  - Providing the maximum available Affordable Care Act premium subsidies and reduced cost-sharing for anyone who receives, or is eligible to receive, unemployment compensation at any point throughout this year.
  - Subsidizing 100 percent of COBRA premiums for six months for individuals who lost their employer-sponsored coverage due to layoffs or reduced hours.

- Gov. Wolf nominated Suzanne Estrella to lead the State's [Office Victim Advocate](#) (OVA), filling the vacancy left by Jennifer Storm who resigned in January. The PA Senate will need to confirm the nomination.
  - OVA implements post-sentencing rights and services for victims of crimes.
- This week, Committees in both houses of the PA General Assembly advanced bills to allow an emergency referendum for an amendment to the PA Constitution that would open a two-year window on the statute of limitations to pursue claims of sex abuse.
  - Due to an oversight, the PA Department of State did not properly advertise the proposed amendment passed by the General Assembly and, without the above emergency legislation, the referendum would have been delayed by two more years.
  - If the bills pass by a 2/3 majority in both houses, the amendment will appear on the ballot statewide for the May Primary.

## Program Updates

### OCS

As a reminder, the Allegheny County Basic Needs COVID-19 Relief Fund has reopened!

- One-time \$700 grants are available for families with children under 18.
- This is for costs due to COVID-19 other than rent. Please encourage families to apply to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program for rental support.
- Due to limited funding, please only directly refer eligible households (do not widely advertise).
- Apply here: <http://pa211sw.org/allegheny-cares/>

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program has launched successfully!

- Program Stats
  - Almost 2,100 applications submitted following the 3/15 launch.
    - About half of the applications are incomplete—please make sure that folks are fully submitting documentation so their applications are processed.
    - We are tracking the application progress to watch for bottlenecks.
  - 400 tenants contacted
  - 13 landlords paid (about \$24,000)
  - About 2.5% of applications are being completed in Spanish.
  - 66% of applications have been submitted on a mobile device.
- Toolkit for Partners is available now: <https://covidrentrelief.alleghenycounty.us/toolkit-for-partners/>
- There are 8 drop-in locations where people can access a computer and staff assistance: Focus on Renewal, Gwen's Girls, Kingsley Association, Wilkinsburg Family Support, Greater Valley Community Services, SHIM Baldwin and Bethel Park locations, and The Wander Building
- We have a team at MDJ offices to work with folks who are currently going through evictions.
- Call the Allegheny Link to access other rental assistance programs. If you see any gaps of populations whose needs are not being met, please contact Chuck Keenan.

### CYF

Family Preservation & In-Home Redesign 2021 Overview

- As a reminder, in late February 2021, DHS released a concept paper to set forth our proposal for how to redesign the CYF prevention program currently known as “in-home services.”
  - The Concept Paper outlines the details of this initiative –please review this paper (<https://www.alleghenycounty.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=6442474008>) and provide feedback at [CYFPrevention@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:CYFPrevention@alleghenycounty.us); anonymous feedback can be submitted using [this form](#) by March 24, 2021.
  - We are reviewing the feedback here [CYF Prevention Concept Paper Community Comments](#)
  - So far, respondents have inquired about the decision support tool and advancing racial equity. Comments have also underscored the need for change in the entire system, not just select parts of the current system.
- A hypothetical family case:
  - A family is referred for truancy and assessed after 60 days. The family is facing many challenges including behavioral health needs, substance use disorder, parenting skills, and risk of court involvement and loss of housing. The caseworker refers to generic in-home services at multiple providers, rather than addressing the root cause. The services may be provided in a disjointed way, which is a challenge for the family.
  - Instead, we would like to conduct a universal assessment in a shorter timeframe to match the family with an intervention that addresses the root cause. This supports the casework staff in their decision making and reduces the risk of removal.

#### **How to Reach Us**

- Email us at [DHS-COVID19planning@alleghenycounty.us](mailto: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. For basic needs assistance or general COVID-19 inquiries call the 24/7 COVID-19 Hotline at 1-888-856-2774. Language services are available.
- See the slide presentation for other key contacts.

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