



Allegheny County
Department of
Human Services

DHS Provider Briefing

May 13, 2021

*The briefing will be recorded and posted on [Allegheny County Analytics](#).



Agenda

- Current and Upcoming Opportunities
- Policy Updates
- Biden's Federal Funding Request
- Surge at the Border
- Q&A

Opportunities



Active Solicitations

RFP for the Operator of the Low-Barrier Shelter and Drop-In Center at Second Avenue Commons

- Don't miss the information session on Wednesday, May 19 from 3-4 p.m.!
- Proposals are due at 3 p.m. on Friday, June 25

[Link to DHS Solicitations](#)



Free Housing Legal Services for City of Pittsburgh Renters and Homeowners

Tenant and homeowner legal services are available now through the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh's Housing Opportunity Fund!

To access:

- For a Legal Assistance Program referral through RentHelpPGH, please call: 412-534-6600
- For non-English speakers, call Pittsburgh Hispanic Development Corporation: 412-530-5244

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program now accepting applications

- Temporary program to help households afford internet service during pandemic
- Up to \$50/month discount for internet service
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50)
- Households eligible if qualify for Medicaid, SNAP, free-and-reduced priced school lunches, LifeLink or Pell Grants, OR if household lost significant income during pandemic
- Three ways eligible households can enroll:
 - Directly with a local participating provider (find "[companies near me](#)")
 - Enroll online with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) at www.getemergencybroadband.org.
 - Download paper application at the www.getemergencybroadband.org site, fill out the application, and mail it – along with supporting documentation – to USAC
- Additional information: www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit, or call 833-511-0311 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. any day of the week

Device Requests

DHS has distributed:

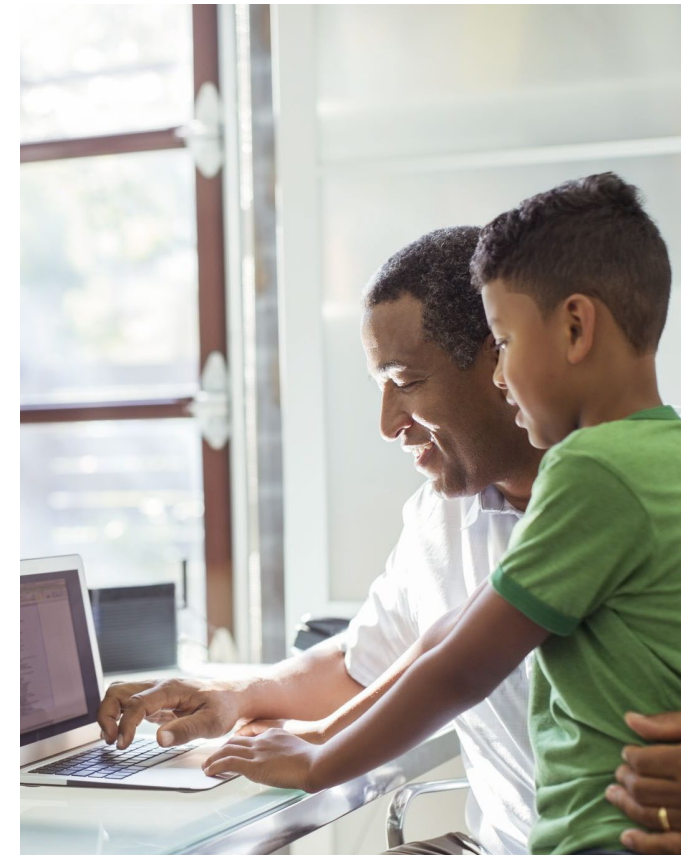
- over **3,313 laptops** to date
- over **1,095 hotspots** to date

DHS continues to receive requests for devices

- [Device Request Form](#)

We have headsets in stock! If you need a headset, please email us.

- dhs-covid19supplies@alleghenycounty.us



Local – Ballot Drop-Off at Elections Division

- Reminder that Election Day is on May 18th.
- Allegheny County Elections Division is offering ballot return until Election Day in the lobby of the County Office Building at 542 Forbes Avenue through Election Day (May 18th). Hours are listed below.

Day/Date	Hours
Thursday, May 13	8:30 AM to 8 PM
Friday, May 14	8:30 AM to 8 PM
Saturday, May 15	8 AM to 5 PM
Sunday, May 16	11 AM to 7 PM
Monday, May 17	8:30 AM to 8 PM
Tuesday, May 18 (Election Day)	7 AM to 8 PM

Policy Updates

New Coronavirus Fiscal Relief Fund (CFRF) Guidance

- Treasury released [guidance](#) this week, allows greater flexibility in expending these funds than last year's Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF).
- Almost \$900 million coming to local governments.

Allegheny County	\$382.70 million
City of Pittsburgh	\$354.95 million
Total of all other County jurisdictions	\$130.01 million

- Relief is intended to:
 1. Support urgent pandemic response efforts to continue to decrease spread of the virus
 2. Replace lost public sector revenue to strengthen support for vital public services and help retain jobs
 3. Support immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses; and
 4. Address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the inequal impact of the pandemic on certain populations

CFRF – Equity-Focused Services

Treasury will presume the following additional example activities are eligible uses when provided within disproportionately impacted communities

Addressing Health Disparities

- Community health workers and public benefit navigators
- Remediation of lead paint and other lead hazards
- Community violence intervention programs

Investing in Housing & Neighborhoods

- Services to support individuals experiencing homelessness
- Affordable housing development
- Housing vouchers, residential counseling, navigation assistance

Addressing Educational Disparities

- New or expanded early learning services
- Educational services like tutoring and afterschool programs, as well as supports for social, emotional, and mental health needs

Promoting Healthy Childhood Environments

- New or expanded high quality child care
- Home visiting programs for families with young children
- Services for child welfare-involved families and foster youth

State – Occupancy Limits Raised

Maximum occupancy limits will be increased to 50% for indoor events/gatherings, and 75% for outdoor events/ gatherings, effective Monday, May 17 at 12:01 a.m.

- Currently, maximum occupancy is 25% for indoor events/gatherings and 50% for outdoor events/gatherings, regardless of venue size and only if attendees and workers are able to comply with 6-foot physical distancing requirement.
- This update will not prevent municipalities, school districts, restaurants and venues from continuing and implementing stricter mitigation efforts.

State – Budget Negotiations

- Looming State budget negotiations will be further complicated by the announcement that **PA will soon receive approx. \$7.2 billion in federal funds** based on different opinions on how to spend.
 - This funding is PA's portion of the Coronavirus State Fiscal Relief Funds from the American Rescue Plan (ARP).
 - Competing policies surrounding the use of the funds are beginning to form in the PA General Assembly:
 - Democrats favor using the allocation for a multi-billion-dollar recovery plan which has been introduced in the House.
 - Republicans are prioritizing fiscal restraint as the state faces expected structural budget deficits over the next five fiscal years, according to recent projections from the state's Independent Fiscal Office.

State – IFO COVID-19 Report

- The State's Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) released [a detailed report on the impact in PA of all COVID-19 stimulus](#)
 - Pennsylvania and Pennsylvanians have received a total of \$78 billion of direct federal aid during COVID-19 to date which has supported an annual average of 201,400 jobs, \$12.8 billion of labor income and \$36 billion of spending that would have otherwise not occurred.
 - Approximately 40% of the jobs and earnings gains will be due to spending by households with incomes less than \$25,000.
 - Households with income below \$25,000 will receive an average of \$4,000 per person.
 - Due to stimulus and unemployment payments, a significant number of unemployed workers are currently receiving more money than if they were working, prompting some businesses to raise wages to attract workers.
 - The IFO theorizes that the stimulus has resulted in permanently raising wages for lower-wage workers (the final total of which will not be available until the stimulus payments stop), and this suggests employers may be less sensitive to a minimum wage hike either in 2021 or 2022.
 - Once the stimulus is over, it is likely that there will be fewer jobs, and the economy is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic employment levels.

State – Unemployment System Update

- PA Department of Labor & Industry announced preparations for the **transition to a new, faster, and easier-to-use unemployment benefits system.**
 - New system will go live on June 8th.
 - The Unemployment Compensation (UC) system will be offline between May 30th to June 7th.
 - During the transition, [UC Service Center](#) will keep phones and email open to take new inquiries from claimants and place them in the queue for when the system comes back online.
 - Details on the transition can be found [here](#).

Biden's Federal Funding Request

“Build Back Better” Agenda

- Enacted: American Rescue Plan - \$1.9 trillion
- Proposed:
 - Human infrastructure (American Families Plan) - \$1.5 trillion
 - Jobs and infrastructure plan (American Jobs Plan) - \$2 trillion
- Annual appropriations funding request

Biden's Funding Request to Congress

- The President's Fiscal Year 2022 Discretionary Funding Request to Congress was submitted on April 9, 2021.
- Proposes \$769 billion in non-defense discretionary funding, a 16% increase from the current year, and \$753 billion for national defense programs, a 1.7% increase.
- Outlines Administration's priorities and topline funding levels for key programs in all federal agencies for FY 2022 (October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022).
- Includes high level priorities, but not specific details.

The funding request, if enacted as proposed, would:

Housing and Homelessness

- Extend Housing Vouchers to 200,000 more families, targeting individuals who are homeless or fleeing domestic violence.
- Accelerate efforts to end homelessness through increased Homeless Assistance Grants to support more than 100,000 households.
- Increase the supply of affordable housing through HOME Investment Partnerships Program funding to construct and rehabilitate affordable rental housing and to support other housing-related needs.
- Support access to homeownership and pandemic relief for underserved borrowers through the Federal Housing Administration's mortgage insurance programs.

Job Training

- Build a strong workforce through expansions to Registered Apprenticeship programs.
- Increase Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Grants to make employment services and training available to more dislocated workers, low-income adults, and disadvantaged youth hurt by the economic impact from the pandemic.

Child Welfare

- Address racial inequity in the child welfare system through new competitive grants to advance reforms that reduce the overrepresentation of children and families of color and address the disparate experiences and outcomes of these families.

Child Care and Head Start

- Expand access to affordable, quality early child care and learning and Head Start.
- Ensure that increased resources are used by states to increase wages for early educators and family child care providers.

Older Americans and People with Disabilities

- Increase resources for HHS' Administration for Community Living to help older adults and people with disabling conditions maximize their independence and well-being.
- Support caregivers and families through home and community-based services.
- Double funding for Lifespan Respite Care programs, coordinated systems of accessible, community-based respite care services for family caregivers of children and adults with special needs.
- Increase funding for meal programs for older adults.

Behavioral Health & Crisis Response

- Invest in mental healthcare with specific focus on individuals involved in the criminal justice system, resources to partner mental health providers with law enforcement, and funds to expand suicide prevention activities.
- Support research, prevention, treatment, and recovery support services to end the opioid epidemic.
- Increase the diversity of the healthcare workforce and expand access to culturally competent care through increased funding.
- Provide funding for the CDC's Social Determinants of Health program to support states in improving health equity and data collection for racial and ethnic populations.

Criminal Justice Reform

- Reform the Federal Criminal Justice System through key investments in First Step Act implementation, advancing the provision of high-quality substance use disorder treatment, reentry services, and recidivism reduction programming.
- Invest in programs that support community-oriented policing and practices and efforts to reform State and local criminal justice systems, including funding to support juvenile justice programs, drug courts and alternative court programs, public defenders, and Second Chance Act programs.

Education

- Increase funding for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants that support special education and related services for more than 7.5 million Pre-K through 12 students.
- Increases funding for early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities or delays and supports reforms to expand access to these services for underserved children.
- Enables an increase to the number of counselors, nurses, and mental health professionals in schools.
- Makes a historic investment in high-poverty schools (Title I grants) to deliver a high-quality education to all students and address longstanding funding disparities between under-resourced school districts and their wealthier counterparts.

Next steps

- Congressional Committees will draft bills for the annual appropriations process, taking the President's request into account, with the goal of passing before the current federal fiscal year ends on September 30th.
- Separate from annual appropriations, negotiations underway between the White House and Congressional Leaders on the proposed American Jobs and Infrastructure Plans.

Surge at the Border

Marc Cherna and Sister Linda Yankoski



Important Terms

- **IMMIGRANT:** A person who leaves their country to settle permanently in another country.
- **REFUGEE:** A noncitizen given permission to come to the United States because they were persecuted or have a well-founded fear of being persecuted (on account of race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group), in their home country. **Refugees are given this status before coming to the U.S.**, usually when they are temporarily located in a third country. A refugee is granted the right to live and work in the U.S. and, after a one-year period, may apply to become a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR).
- **ASYLUM:** A lawful status permitting individuals to remain in a country other than their own because they either have been persecuted or have a well-founded fear that they would be persecuted (on account of race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group) in their home country. Technically, an applicant for asylum in the United States must meet the same legal standard as a REFUGEE. **The difference is that an asylum applicant applies for this status while in the U.S.**, whereas a refugee is granted refugee status before arriving in the country. A person who has been granted asylum is an ASYLEE.
- **UNACCOMPANIED CHILD:** Defined by U.S. law as someone who enters the United States under the age of 18 years old, without lawful status, and without an accompanying parent or legal guardian. According to the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC), children seek refuge in the United States for many reasons: to escape war, gangs, or violence; to flee abuse; or to reunite with family. Some enter involuntarily as labor or sex trafficking victims.



A young girl carries a child inside a U.S. Customs and Border Protection holding area in El Paso, Texas

Lucas Jackson/Reuters

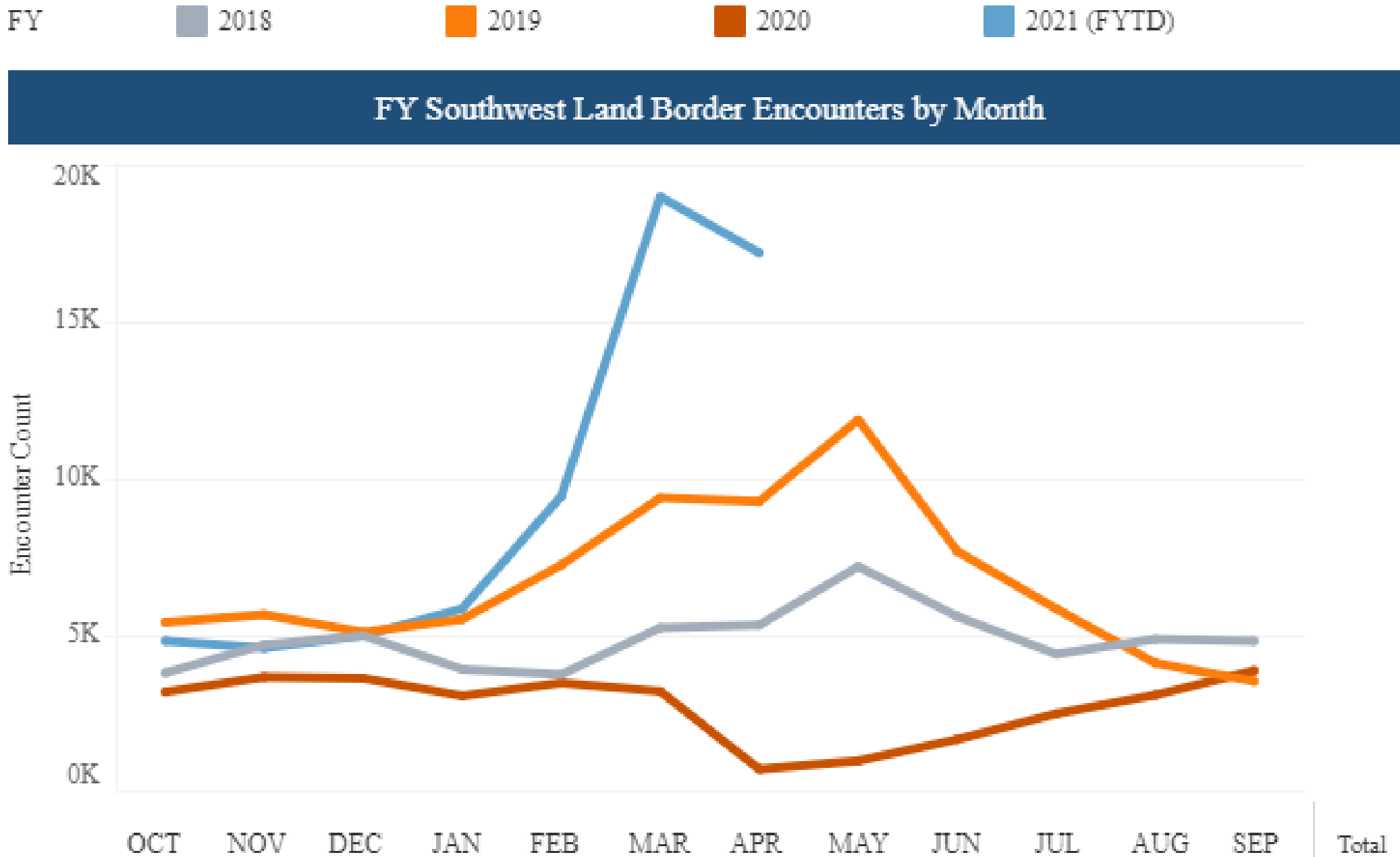


*Temporary processing facilities in Donna, Texas on March 17, 2021
Photo by U.S. Customs and Border Protection*

Child Migrants: A Summary

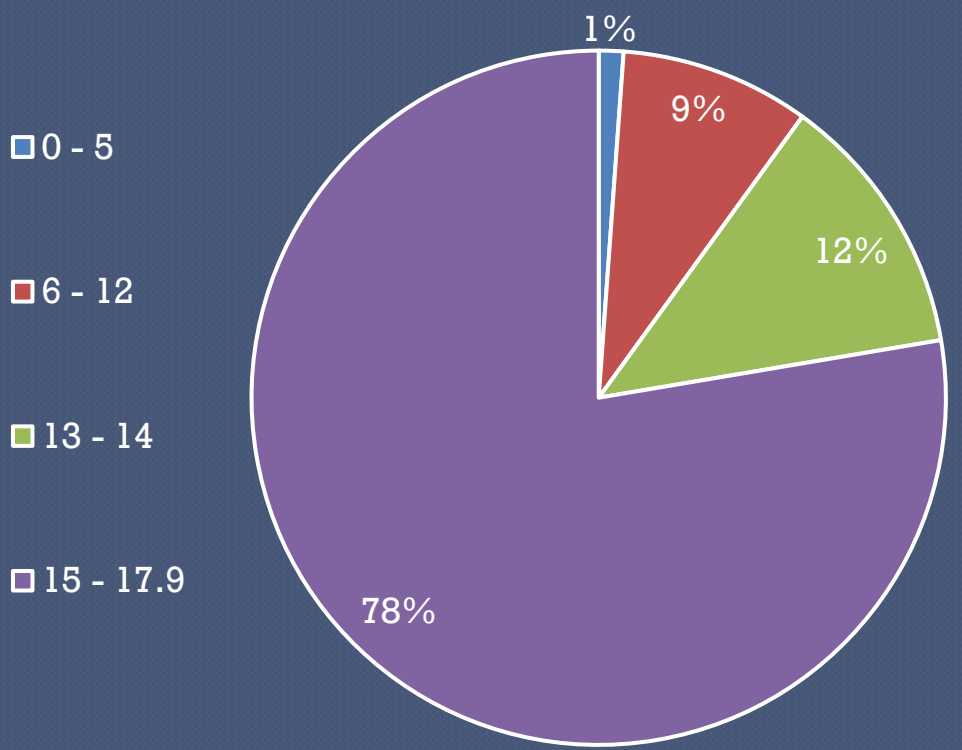
- The U.S. is seeing a rise in apprehensions of unaccompanied migrant children, most from Central America, along its southern border.
- A spike in apprehensions of migrant children crossing the U.S. southern border without a parent or guardian has overwhelmed the systems set up to care for them.
- Immigration authorities encountered nearly 18,900 unaccompanied minors at or near the U.S.-Mexico border in March 2021, far eclipsing the previous monthly record set in May 2019.

Unaccompanied Children arrivals since 2018

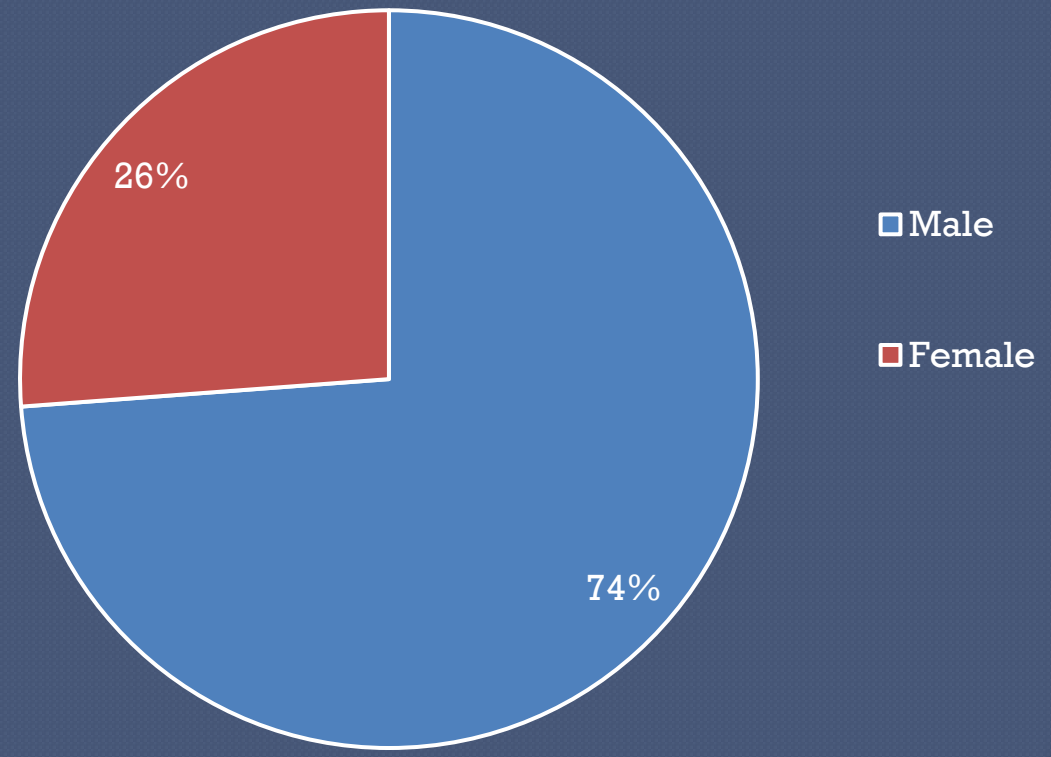


Majority of unaccompanied children are male teenagers

Unaccompanied children by age, 3/31/2021



Male vs Female, 3/31/2021



Reasons for the UC Surge 1/2

- Violence and poverty, worsened by the pandemic and hurricanes, have driven young people from Central America. Mostly Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.
- From Mexico, where the homicide rate is at near-record levels amid a long-standing war against drug cartels.
- Perceptions that President Biden is more welcoming have also driven migration, some say.
- Many children hope to reunite with relatives in the U.S. Others have deliberately left families behind, fleeing domestic abuse, criminal gangs, or local corruption.
- Some migrant parents send their children across the border alone to take advantage of asylum protections.

Reasons for the UC Surge 2/2

- Hard-line measures during the previous administration deterred asylum seekers.
- A deal was made previously with Mexico to inhibit children and families from entering the U.S. Many children remained in Mexico.
- The Biden administration took early action to approach as a humanitarian effort.
- Officials began reinstating the Central American Minors (CAM) program, which allows certain children from Northern Triangle countries to gain refugee status or temporary legal residence before making the dangerous journey to the U.S.-Mexico border. (CAM was discontinued in 2017.)

Current Situation

- The influx of children overwhelmed the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR/HHS), which had been operating under pandemic-related shelter occupancy restrictions.
- Many UC have been in overcrowded Customs and Border Protection facilities, some far longer than the three-day limit stipulated in the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act.
- The administration has responded by deploying the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help care for UC and open new emergency shelters, among other efforts.
- Officials have sought to speed up release of UC to sponsors.
- The number of children entering HHS custody has outpaced the number being released from its care.

About the HFI Program

- Licensed for 160 children and youth, but current capacity is 70 due to staffing
- Children stays average 30 days, with 12 day stays on the low end
- Youth age out at age 18
- Differs from domestic child welfare as UC have an adult they'll be reunited with and are not in care because of abuse or neglect

Ways to Support

- We're hiring!
- Spanish speaking volunteers can assist with arts and crafts, outdoor activities, and Mommy and Me program
- Volunteers needed for laundry, packing clothes for when children leave, and more
- Interested in volunteering? Contact Lynn Guerra, Director of Volunteer Services (412-766-9020 x1304, guerra.lynn@hfi-pgh.org)

Becoming a Shelter Provider

- State licensed shelter and child/youth residential care providers
- 30 beds or more
- For more information through ORR/HHS about grant and contract opportunities, complete Interested Provider Survey

Questions / Discussion

Sister Linda Yankoski
Yankoski.linda@hfi-pgh.org
412-766-9020 x1200

Coming up next

- Our next meeting is on May 27, 2021.

Key Contacts

- Provider questions for Allegheny County Health Department
 - DHS-COVID19Planning@alleghenycounty.us
 - Use the subject field to indicate if your qq is about CYF, Aging, BH, CYF, ID, Community Services, or DHS operations (e.g., contracting, payment)
 - <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/healthdepartment/index.aspx>
- Key DHS staff
 - Payment inquiries: Dan Evancho Dan.Evancho@alleghenycounty.us
 - Contract inquiries: Kathy Heinz Kathy.Heinz@alleghenycounty.us
Laura Brigido Laura.Brigido@alleghenycounty.us
- United Way 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 available.



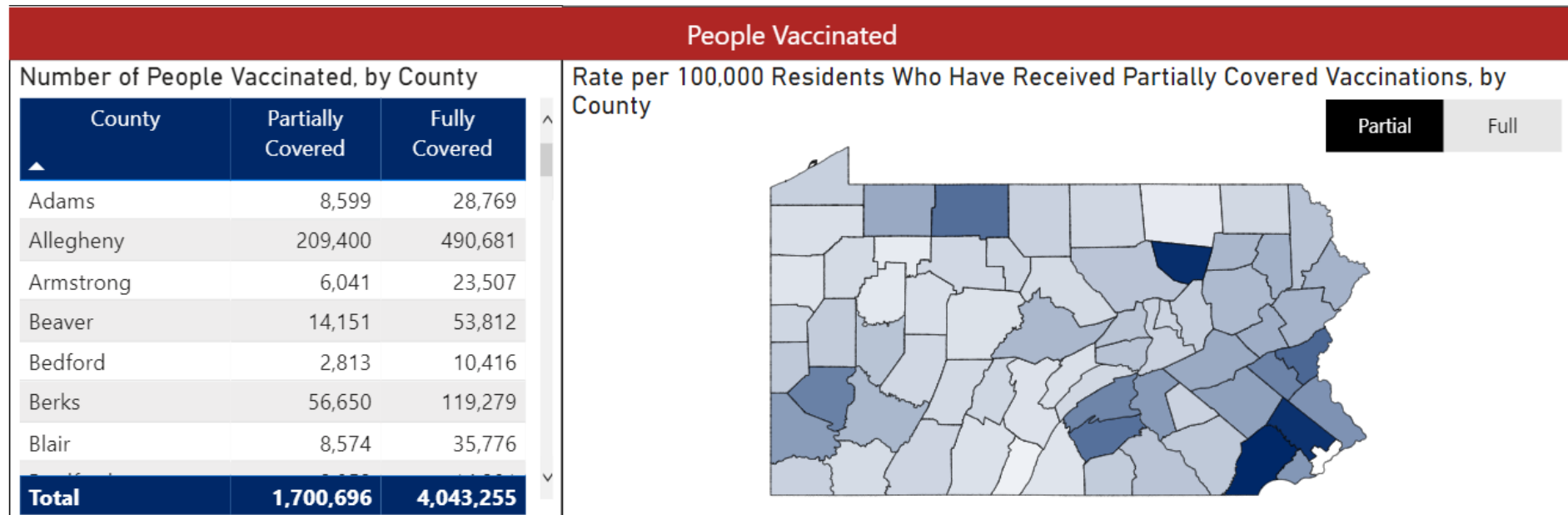
Appendix

Allegheny County Vaccination

Through 5/12/2021:

- 209,400 are partially vaccinated and 490,681 are fully vaccinated
 - 58% of residents have received at least one dose
 - 40% are fully vaccinated

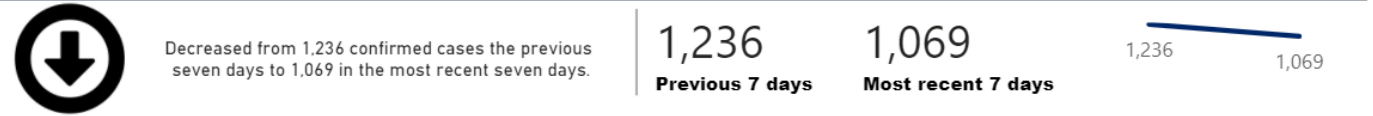
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Vaccine/Pages/Dashboard.aspx>



PA State Metrics

- Compares week of May 1st -May 7th to previous week (April 24th-April 30th)

Newly reported confirmed cases



Incidence rate per 100,000 residents



PCR testing positivity rate



Average daily COVID-19 specific hospitalizations



Average daily COVID-19 patients on ventilators



Percent of hospital emergency department visits due to COVID-like-illness (CLI)



	% change from last week to this week
Newly reported cases	-14%
Incidence rate per 100,000	-13%
Positivity rate	0%
Ave. daily hospitalizations	-22%
Ave. daily patients on ventilators	-20%
% ED visits due to CLI	0%

PA state's early warning system dashboard

(<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx>).