



COVID-19 DHS Provider Meeting
November 19, 2020



General Information

DHS Provider Meetings are held once per week on Thursdays. There will be no call on 11/26 due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Upcoming food distributions:

1. McKeesport, 11/21, 10 am, 225 Penn Ave [Register here](#)
2. Duquesne, 11/23, 12 pm, 1 N Linden St [Register here](#)
3. Wilkinsburg, 12/5, 11 am, 225 Penn Ave [Register here](#)
4. Duquesne, 12/7, 3 pm, 1 N Linden St [Register here](#)

Mental Health America of SW PA Virtual Adult Support Groups

- There are many different groups being held via Zoom. See slide presentation for links to group flyers.

Update on CRF Billing

- CFR Expenses must be spent by 12/30/20
- Please submit November invoices by 12/5 if possible
- Due date for December invoices will likely be 1/5/21

Months ago, we launched Jazz HR as a recruitment platform for essential human service workers. We are seeking to determine whether we should reestablish this network. Providers were invited to participate in a [live poll](#).

- Where candidates can submit their credentials and indicate their interests and experience: https://bit.ly/SWPA_HHSjobs
- How providers can register to gain access to the platform for their organization: https://bit.ly/SWPA_HHSprovider

A Final Call for laptop and headset requests

- Supply of Laptops is limited! This is a FINAL CALL for device requests!
 - [Device Request Form](#)
- We still have plenty of headsets in stock! If you need a headset, please email us.
 - dhs-covid19supplies@alleghenycounty.us

Reviewing State and County COVID-19 Guidance in light of rising case levels

- The new state [Order](#) takes effect tomorrow (Friday, Nov 20th). The order covers travel precautions and mask wearing. People must wear masks anytime outside the home and in an enclosed space.
- Allegheny County issued a [new advisory](#) strongly encouraging residents to: not have guests in their homes unless they are essential workers (e.g., home healthcare providers, childcare workers or educators); cancel traditional Thanksgiving celebrations and celebrate virtually with non-

household members; avoid unnecessary travel; limit social event gatherings; and only leave home for work, school and essential needs.

- Our work serving vulnerable people in need of our services is essential and will continue, using all the necessary precautions such as proper masking, distancing, conducting work outside, if possible, with necessary handwashing and hand sanitizing. We will continue to update our guidance, as necessary. Contact your program lead with any questions.

Communication Protocol for COVID-19 Cases

In a single email to the following three individuals, the program administrator is to immediately notify the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (ACDHS) and the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) that an individual being served in the program is presumed or has tested positive for COVID-19:

- LuAnn.brink@alleghenycounty.us
- Brian Bell, DHS's Privacy Officer, DHSPrivacyOfficer@alleghenycounty.us
- Your DHS program office contact

COVID-19 Testing is available in McKeesport

- 455 Industry Road, McKeesport
- Appointment required, M-F 10 am to 4 pm. Closed on Thanksgiving and the day after (November 26th and 27th)
- 412-209-2262 or bit.ly/McKeesportCOVIDTestSite

Metrics

PA State Metrics – Compared week of 11/6-11/12 to week of 10/30-11/5

- All [PA State metrics](#) are increasing in Allegheny County. There was a greater than 100% increase in newly reported cases and incidence rate per 100,000 residents.
- The average weekly positivity rate has been increasing for the last month. On 11/7, there was a 16.9% positivity rate. This is the highest rate we have seen so far.
- The number of people tested per new case continues to decrease.
- The 14-day count of new cases is rising. We have seen a greater than 200% increase from early October to mid-November.
- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia is projecting a steep increase of weekly cases per 100,000 people throughout November
 - Case rate per 100,000 Allegheny County residents is the highest we have seen since the beginning of the pandemic.
- ICU bed usage is exceeding the 90% threshold for the first time. Above 90%, we start to worry about hospital capacity.
- Luckily, we have not seen increases in deaths.
- Deaths remain low, never exceeding 6/day.
- Rate of Transmission (R) is now estimated at above 1, at 1.4, which means there is significant spread; prediction is it will remain above 1 throughout November.

Patrick Dowd, Sally Ellwein and Megan Nestor joined the call to present the results of the Pulse Report for Children and Families, a collaborative effort between Allies for Children, United Way, POISE Foundation and Fourth Economy.

The report describes the impact of COVID-19 on children and family needs in the five-county region of Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette and Westmoreland.

October Trends included:

- Utilities: Increase in the number of households unable to meet utility bills, and with the end of the utility moratorium, the need will increase.
 - In the 5-county region, there's been a huge decrease in payment plan requests compared to last year; this may be evidence of a backlog of thousands of payment requests
- Housing: While the CDC eviction moratorium is in place until the end of December, there is a disproportionate number of households of color who are behind in rent payments.
 - Estimates are that there could be a backlog of 6,454 evictions.
 - There's been an overall increase of about 10% in housing-related requests.
- Decrease in utilization of healthcare: Nationally, screening, vaccination and mental health visits have decreased. However, there's been a 2,500% increase in telehealth services.
- Access to internet remains a barrier to telehealth services and online learning.
- Childcare: A decrease in available childcare is leading women, especially Black and Latinx women, to exit the workforce in high numbers.
 - Estimates are that the gap in childcare availability is 22,000 slots, due to COVID-19.
- Food Insecurity: There is an expected increase in food insecurity in Allegheny County.
- Nationally, Black and Latinx children have higher rates of COVID-19-related hospitalizations.
- Employment: in the 5-county region, Black workers are concentrated in vulnerable industries such as accommodations, food services and retail.
- Educational disruptions: In mid-October, non-White students were more likely than White students to be attending schools that are employing remote-only learning. Students in districts with higher rates of child poverty are more likely to be attending schools that are employing full remote models of learning.
- Read the full report with more detailed data [here](#). The next report will come out in December.
- Previous reports:
 - [Community Pulse Report: September](#) (full)
 - [Community Pulse Report: September](#) (abbreviated)

Legislative/Policy Updates

State and Local Updates

- The General Assembly will most likely finalize the state's 2020-2021 budget by the end of today, with a roughly \$2b gap due to COVID.
- While not final yet, it appears that the state's budget deal will include the following means to close the funding gap, to what will be close to a flat fund budget:
 - \$1.3b CARES Act funding
 - \$340m from state's Rainy-Day Fund
 - Some targeted cuts (unclear where those will be)
 - Funds pulled from a couple of PA special funds
- PA rolled out the COVID-19 Interim Vaccination Plan Version 2 today during a 12:15 pm press briefing. The plan discusses the possible roll out of the vaccines and who will first receive the vaccines. Healthcare workers/first responders/critical workers/people with high-risk conditions would receive the vaccine first (most likely)

- [View the Vaccination Plan](#)
- [Link to PA Health Department general vaccine page](#)

Program Updates

OCS

Community Learning Hubs Update

These were launched in September and still going strong, 1300 students are enrolled at 60 hubs. Many hubs are at capacity, but many still have space and you can learn more at

<https://tryingtogether.org/community-learning-hubs/>

- Almost 60% of students served are PPS students, and the other 40% are spread across many school districts.
- Every hub is in communication with students' schools.
- We plan to keep hubs open because they are providing needed childcare and internet capacity. We are doubling down on safety measures.
- We are exploring potential funding sources to sustain the hubs after CARES funding expires on December 30th

Childcare Access Update

- Childcare providers have been open at reduced capacity throughout the pandemic except when the state mandated them to close (March – May), and many also received waivers to remain open during that time. Demand has been increasing while available seats have been decreasing.
- There ARE still childcare seats available across STAR levels, neighborhoods and age in Allegheny County (but this does not guarantee the right fit for a family's needs). There is, though, a waiting list of 360 for the childcare subsidy.
- The pandemic hit this sector hard financially – through mandated closures, reduced capacity and resistance to return to congregate settings. Funding to keep providers afloat included:
 - State continued to pay childcare subsidy based on February enrollment through August
 - Nearly \$20M of state CARES funding was distributed March - August
 - \$3.1M in county CARES funding will be distributed by end of December

Housing and Homelessness system update

- Winter Shelters opened on 11/15, every night from 7pm-7am.
 - McKeesport Downtown Housing Emergency Shelter – All Welcome (open every night until March 15)
 - 523 Sinclair St, McKeesport, PA 15132
 - 724.244.6565
 - Women's Winter Shelter (inclusive of transgender and nonbinary individuals)
 - Shepherd's Heart Fellowship and Veteran's Home
 - 13 Pride Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219, Uptown
 - 412-618-7719
 - Men's Winter Shelter (inclusive of transgender and nonbinary individuals)
 - Smithfield United Church of Christ
 - 620 Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219, Downtown
 - 412-618-7467
- Rent Relief Program Update

- We have paid out over 1162 payments in rent relief, over \$3,946,342. We have over 5961 applications pending. By the end of the week, ACTION housing will follow up with all pending individuals about missing documentation.
- Other Rental Assistance Programs: Call the Allegheny Link @ 866-730-2368
- Utility Assistance
 - The utility moratorium ended on November 9th.
 - PWSA and Duquesne Light will not impose shutoffs for the remainder of the year, and Peoples Gas will impose shutoffs for households above 300% of the federal poverty line only.
 - Assistance programs include:
 - Dollar Energy Fund
 - Customer Assistance Program - Due to pandemic restrictions, more flexible about income reporting/verification – will take verbal report in certain circumstances
 - Low Income Usage Reduction Program (LIURP) - Free program to make heating system more efficient
 - Peoples Emergency Furnace and Gas Repair/Replacement Program

CYF

- Beginning today, CYF staff are taking extra safety precautions. Staff will begin prioritizing face-to-face visits based on investigation, level of risk, or unknown or unassessed information. In-home visits will continue when necessary. Clinical managers and supervisors will meet with caseworkers to determine which families need in-home visit vs. a virtual visit. Masking and physical distancing will be observed.
- We ask you to continue to communicate childcare and learning hub access information, we want to ensure that families have safe and appropriate childcare.
- We are asking all providers to update COOP plans and send them to provider relations, continue to report all positive cases or exposures daily, and address all crisis situations as normal procedure requires. We are also asking in-home and foster providers to prioritize visits based on need, safety and risk.
- This Saturday is be National Adoption Day! 73 Children are celebrating permanency through adoption this Saturday and 20 more are scheduled for December. This is an exciting accomplishment.
- If you know of a corporation or individual who may want to sponsor a child through the holiday project this year, direct them to <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/News-Events/Events/Holiday-Project.aspx>

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. 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**