



COVID-19 DHS Provider Meeting
January 14, 2021



General Information

DHS Provider Meetings continue to be held once per week on Thursday at 4:30 pm.

Human Services Planning: Request for Input

We need your help to identify priorities for helping people in Allegheny County. Priorities could include COVID-response, emerging needs and/or changes to improve the services we provide. Please [use this form to provide input](#).

COVID-19 Mobile Testing Schedule

As a reminder, each Monday, the Allegheny County Health Department provides an updated mobile testing schedule on its [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter](#). Testing is ongoing at sites around the County, and individuals can [register here](#); some sites allow for walk-ins.

- You can use the [county testing map](#) when you are working with a client and looking for testing locations with them.
- The McKeesport Testing Site remains open.
 - Make an appointment for a free test. You do not need insurance. Registration and testing information available at bit.ly/McKeesportCOVIDTestSite.
 - Those unable to drive can contact the COVID-19 hotline at 1-888-856-2774 for additional options and resources.

Upcoming opportunity to learn more about incarcerated women:

- Remote trainings are being held by A Child's Place PA on January 14, 21 and 28. Register by contacting Vicki Sirockman at 422-728-8287 or vsirockman@achildplacepa.org.

DHS has [released two solicitations](#):

- RFP for Family-Centered Service Coordination for Families Involved with Child Welfare and Mental Health Services
 - Proposals due Tuesday, February 9
 - Optional pre-proposal conference via Teams was held today, January 14 (details in RFP)
- RFP for Foster Care Agencies
 - Proposals were due Wednesday, February 10
 - Optional pre-proposal conference via Teams tomorrow, January 15 (details in RFP)

As a reminder, DHS released December 2020 Updates for Congregate and Long-term Care providers, providers conducting in-person operations, and the communication protocol for COVID-19 cases. We will continue to update these. Enhancements to DHS Guidance documents stem from PA's November 2020 [Mitigation and Enforcement order](#), the November 2020 updates to [PA DOH's Mask Order](#) and ACHD's updated [Isolation and Quarantine](#) guidance.

As a reminder, the Communication Protocol for COVID-19 cases is:

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

All [PA State metrics](#) are down in Allegheny County, although it should be noted that they are down only when compared to recent weeks, which saw record highs.

- The current positivity rate (as of 12/31) is 26%.
- Cases have fallen slightly throughout December but are still high (4,006 cases the week of 12/26).

Legislative/Policy Updates

Federal Updates

Supports available for individuals from recent federal stimulus

- Economic Impact Payments
 - One-time \$600 direct payments to individuals (full payment for AGI up to \$75k, reduced amount until \$87k). \$600 for dependents. Most eligible people will get payments automatically; other eligible individuals will need to file 2020 tax returns to receive their payment.
- Emergency Rental Assistance Program
 - \$25 billion nationwide to cover rent and utilities
 - Eviction moratorium extension through January 31st
 - Visit the [Allegheny County Rental Assistance website](#) for updates.
- SNAP benefit increase
 - 15% increase to the maximum allotment, from January through June
- Chafee Education and Training Vouchers
 - Increase of maximum stipend for older youth in foster care
- Flexibility to Leverage Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC)
 - Temporary ability for individuals to use earned income level from 2019 on 2020 tax returns to help workers who experienced lower wages in 2020 get a larger refund consistent with the amount during a normal year.
- Pell Grant
 - Increase of the maximum award by \$150
 - Reinstates eligibility for students who are incarcerated

First 100 Days of Biden Administration New Stimulus

- Incoming senate finance committee chair Bernie Sanders working on new multitrillion-dollar package that will likely include:
 - another round of stimulus checks
 - increases to size of the earned income tax credit and the child tax credit
 - increases to unemployment insurance benefits

- funding for schools and local governments
- significant investments in vaccine deployment, testing and contact tracing

PA General Assembly experiencing intense partisanship

- Allegheny County State Senator Jim Brewster was sworn in yesterday morning after Republican leadership's refusal to seat him until the federal lawsuit is resolved.
- Many Democrats are calling for the resignation of State Senator Doug Mastriano due to his paying to bus violent insurrectionists to Capitol attack on January 6th, as well as his presence at the attempted insurrection.

State and Local Updates

Four possible constitutional amendments that, if passed in May, will appear on a referendum

- HB 38 – Creates judicial electoral districts for all appellate courts (Superior, Commonwealth, Supreme), which will be drawn by the General Assembly
- HB 14 – Opens two-year window removing statute of limitations on bringing civil sex abuse suits
- HB 55 – Limits Governor's disaster declarations to 21 days and requires General Assembly approval in order to extend the declaration past 21 days. Clarifies that Governor cannot veto General Assembly on this.
- HB 55 – Enshrines specific protections against discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity into the state's Declaration of Rights (both changes were put in one bill in an attempt to garner bipartisan support).

Vaccine Update and Tracking

- AC has administered the second largest number of vaccines in the state, after Philadelphia; 128,200 vaccines, mostly through hospital systems. 44,000 vaccines were distributed alone last week.
- Vaccine provider locations: PA Dept of Health released [this map](#) where people who fall into category 1A can receive the vaccine
 - 1A includes healthcare workers, LTCR, ombudsmen, older adult protective staff and child protective staff
- Distribution sites include healthcare facilities, pharmacies and health department (ability to vaccinate 300-400 people/day)
- DHS has dedicated personnel to help in planning efforts, helping staff at County clinic in Monroeville, working to provide guidance to provider community and helping to develop communication/information for specific communities.

Guidance to Provider Community for Vaccine Rollout

- DHS encourages providers to make a plan for communicating vaccine plan for employees.
- Suggest they incorporate several considerations
 - Frontline workers receive early priority
 - Request an excuse for missed worktime to get vaccinated

- Benefits of vaccine rollout
- [Resources](#) for learning about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines
- Contact information for Allegheny County Health Department's resource for providing up-to-date information about vaccination in Allegheny County (<https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Health-Department/Resources/COVID-19/COVID-19-Vaccine-Information.aspx>)
- Messaging about the importance of wearing masks and social distancing even after employees get vaccinated
- Employers are allowed to have mandatory vaccination policies, with caveats:
 - EEOC stated that employers have authority to vaccinate among employees.
 - Employers have authority to request documentation of vaccination.
 - Employers must allow exemptions due to disability, contraindication and/or sincerely held religious beliefs.
 - Employers may not terminate employees who cannot get vaccinated and must find reasonable accommodations that mitigates health risk of unvaccinated employees.
- DHS views providers as playing a pivotal role in supporting high vaccination rates and encourages providers to develop communications plans.

Program Updates

OCS

Health of the Childcare System

- 567 licensed childcare providers and 437 relative providers are currently open.
- 64 licensed childcare providers are temporarily closed due to reopening challenges.
- 30 providers had to close temporarily in December due to potential/positive cases of COVID-19; 29 were Childcare Centers and one was a Family Childcare Home. This impacted 654 children.
- 22 childcare providers have permanently closed since the start of COVID-19 in Allegheny County; 9 Childcare Centers, 8 Family Childcare Homes and 5 Group Childcare Homes.
- There are currently 7,688 children receiving the Childcare Works (CCW) subsidy.
- There are no children on the subsidy waitlist, as of 1/5/21.
- Resources:
 - Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC): Physical offices not open to public, but all services available virtually @ (412) 350-3577 and elrc5@alleghenycounty.us
 - Community Learning Hubs: [Community Learning Hubs - Trying Together](#)

Food

Upcoming Food Distributions:

- Drive-up food distributions are happening on 1/23 (Wilkinsburg) and 1/25 & 2/1 (Duquesne) – [details and registration here](#).
- Don't forget the [Food Bank's network of food pantries](#) for more consistent access to food.
- Fresh Corners – stores that accept SNAP and provide fresh produce

Community

- Virtual Community Baby shower is scheduled for January 21 at 11am. The event is designed for expecting parents or individuals caring for a newborn. They will play virtual baby shower games and all attendees will receive a baby care package and information from resource providers. [register here](#)
- [School reopening dashboard](#) – includes information from school districts about up-to-date distance learning and reopening plans

Health of the Homelessness System

- Providers are still operating, sheltering and taking in new clients.
- It's harder to find landlords and units available to our folks.
- We are still not seeing Section 8 vouchers.
- Adult shelter beds are available at some year-round shelters (EECM, Light of Life & Bethlehem Haven). CALL AHEAD BEFORE SENDING ANYONE.
- Beds filling up most nights at Smithfield and McKeesport winter shelters. People can still come; the overflow sent to Safe Haven.
- Shepherd's Heart winter shelter (females) has open beds.
- Youth shelter beds available at DOCS.
- Family Shelter units available; mostly units for smaller families.
- Three Warming Centers are open during the hours when winter shelters are closed. Centers are located at Catholic Charities, Red Door and McKeesport Downtown Housing.
- Isolation and Quarantine facilities
 - (Safe Haven & Family) are receiving referrals and taking in record numbers of people, including an increased percentage of those who are positive/exposed.
 - Family I&Q space available.
 - New Safe Haven prioritization policy:
 - Tier 1
 - Age 65 and up and with the following conditions: cancer, chronic kidney disease, COPD and other chronic lung disease, immunocompromised state from organ transplant, liver disease, heart conditions and sickle cell disease
 - Tier 2
 - Age 60 and up and with the following: cancer, chronic kidney disease, COPD and other chronic lung disease, diabetes Type II, Immunocompromised, liver disease, heart disease and sickle cell disease

Housing

- Upcoming Program Updates
 - ALLEGHENY COUNTY RENT RELIEF PROGRAM 2.0 - New rental assistance program expected soon. A top priority for DHS, expecting guidance from US Treasury. May be delayed.
 - Annual HUD NOFA CoC competition this year will be non-competitive. Expect flat funding for existing programs carried over; anything expiring in 2021 will renew non-competitively. Expecting guidance from HUD soon. May be delayed.
 - New HUD CoC Projects: There is CoC funding for new projects in the appropriations bill and HUD has said that they will do some kind of competition for new projects at some point.
 - New YHDP project: Additional youth RRH units coming soon!

- Upcoming Training Schedule
 - January 27th, at 1 pm – Landlord/Tenant Topics: Standard lease breakdown, Tenant Responsibilities and Landlord Responsibilities
 - [Click here to join the meeting](#) or call in (audio only) +1 267-368-7515 Conference ID: 919 769 821#
 - February 24th, at 1 pm – Housing Crisis: Hoarding / Infestations, Housing Cost Burdened, Eviction Prevention, Condemnations, Change of Ownership/Common Real Estate Scams
 - [Click here to join the meeting](#) or call in (audio only) [+1 267-368-7515](#) Conference ID: 129 530 437#
 - Virtual trainings being scheduled now: Mental Health First Aid, Trauma Informed Care, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression
- Upcoming Meetings
 - Housing & Homelessness Provider Calls
 - Every other Tuesday @ 9:30 am
 - Next Call: January 5th
 - Featuring: Just Mediation
 - [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)
 - [+1 267-368-7515](#)
 - Conference ID: 883 836 652#
 - Ask a Navigator Office Hours
 - Every Tuesday, 10:30 am-11 am
 - [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)
 - [+1 267-368-7515](#)
 - Conference ID: 947 434 365#

OBH

- PA certification board announced that the certified peer specialist and certified recovery specialist examinations will be offered in an on-demand online format. [More information here.](#)

CYF

- We are not requiring a child to leave foster care because of age, but waiting for guidance from the state; individuals can ask to return if needed.
- SITY is recruiting for their youth advisory board; looking for youth who have system experience; every Tuesday from 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm via Zoom or at HSB
- If you can be an emergency respite caregiver through A Second Chance, Inc. contact ASCICovidCombat@asecondchance-kinship.com or call Davida Allen at 412-377-2511.

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**