



**COVID-19 DHS Provider Meeting**  
**February 11, 2021**



## General Information

DHS Provider Meetings are held once per week on Thursday at 4:30 pm.

Please share your current views on the availability of PPE and protective supplies, using [this poll](#).

DHS has [released two solicitations](#):

- RFQ for Forensic Psychological and/or Psychiatric Evaluators
  - Next deadline March 1
  - This is an ongoing solicitation with deadlines March 1 and September 1 each year
- CCBH/DHS RFP for Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility
  - Proposals due April 1
  - Proposals submitted through CCBH, not DHS, but you can find the RFP on our Solicitations page

### Bridging the Digital Divide

- As a reminder, free public WiFi is available at 10 sites. Find them at [wifi.alleghenycounty.us](http://wifi.alleghenycounty.us)
- As a reminder, the Digital Divide Device Program has re-opened! We are in the process of placing new orders for laptops and mobile hot spots. Previously submitted eligible requests will be filled as supply becomes available. We welcome the submission of new requests for clients in need. The link to submit new requests can be found here: [DHS Device Request Form](#). This is for anyone, not just CYF youth and families.

*Ask a Doctor: Q&A with Dr. Rhonda Johnson about COVID-19 Vaccines* is an attempt to ensure people have access to sound vaccine information. One final sessions is being offered for staff of DHS providers:

- Tuesday, February 16, 4-5 pm
- Please register here:  
[https://alleghenycounty.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_50zvpOXLOY6Hoxw](https://alleghenycounty.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_50zvpOXLOY6Hoxw)

Julie DeSeyn from the United Way joined to call to discuss vaccination calls to 2-1-1.

- 2-1-1 staff were able to sign up 750 seniors last week.
- United Way is working with the Department of Health to seek more targeted ways to reach people.
- United Way is also providing technical support to vaccination projects in Homewood and the Hill.

All [PA State metrics](#) are down from last week in Allegheny County.

- We are seeing a great decline in hospitalizations.

### Workforce Data Analysis and Services

- DHS recently did an analysis of pre- and post-COVID employment trends of DHS clients. This covered about 82,000 people.
  - From Q1 to Q2 2020 (onset of Covid), we saw a decrease in employment of 8% among women and 6% among men.
    - Usually, 35-40% of clients are in the formal workforce.

- Both Black and White clients experienced a 7% decrease in employment.
- Looking by age, younger clients had higher rates of employment overall before the pandemic and experienced the greatest decline. 18-24- and 25-34-year-olds had the largest decreases in employment (10%).
- Levels have not recovered from pre-pandemic rates.
- We saw the largest decreases in employment among people receiving Intellectual Disability services.
- Earnings fell across the board for those who remained employed.
- We have published an [overall report here](#).
- Andy Smith from Partner4Work joined the call. The CareerLink system is a universal point of access for people looking for training, skills and advancement. It offers a statewide website ([careerlinkpittsburgh.com](http://careerlinkpittsburgh.com)) to view job openings and has local centers in Allegheny County, one downtown and one in Forest Hills, which are currently closed. CareerLink is investing in online learning systems but knows that online access does not work for everyone. Andy recommends that case managers direct clients to call or email the centers, and a talent engagement specialist will reach out. Employers are looking for employees right now, but job seekers are facing barriers and not everyone is ready to return to their employment search right now.
  - For parents looking to re-enter the workforce, there is NO WAITLIST for the childcare subsidy right now! Parents can contact the Early Learning Resource Center Region 5 at 412.350.3577 or [elrc5@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:elrc5@alleghenycounty.us) to learn more about childcare subsidy requirements.
- Julie DeSeyn reported that 2-1-1 hears from 700-750 people per day, and many are looking for basic needs help like food, rent and utilities. Some of these folks may be ready or close to ready to be connected with Partner4Work for employment help. 2-1-1 is exploring this idea further.

#### Upcoming Food Distributions:

- Drive-up food distributions are happening on 2/20 (McKeesport), 2/27 (Wilkinsburg), 3/1 (Duquesne) and 3/9 (Allegheny Valley) – [details and registration here](#).
- Don't forget the [Food Bank's network of food pantries](#) for more consistent access to food.

### Legislative/Policy Updates

#### State and Local Updates

- Gov. Wolf's 2021-2022 proposed budget will undergo hearings in the General Assembly (GA) from Feb 16th through the middle of April as the GA works to finalize a budget by the end of June.
- On SNAP benefits, PADHS announced the implementation of the temporary federal [15% benefit increase](#) and [expanded eligibility for college students](#).
  - Beginning in February 2021, SNAP benefits will be temporarily increased by 15%. This increase is effective January 1 through June 30, 2021. For January benefits, there will be a one-time retroactive issuance of this additional benefit.
  - *College Student Eligibility*: students who are eligible for a state or federal work study program, regardless of participation, or students who have an estimated family

contribution of \$0 on their federal student aid determination are now eligible. This flexibility ends 30 days after the public health emergency ends.

- Parents' incomes are still factored into determining if college students qualify for SNAP for those students under the age of 22 who live at home with their parents.
- Pennie, PA's health insurance exchange, will hold an additional open enrollment period from February 15th through March 15th.
  - Pennie encourages anyone who has been recently uninsured and is seeking coverage, along with possible financial assistance, to go to [pennie.com](http://pennie.com) or to call Pennie customer care at 844-844-8040.
  - Pennie is able to connect eligible applicants to Medicaid or CHIP.
  - As a reminder, anyone who experiences a qualifying life event is eligible to enroll in a plan through Pennie *throughout* the year.

### Vaccine Update and Tracking

According to the [state's dashboard](#), 75,819 people have received one shot and 33,126 have been fully vaccinated. About 9% of Allegheny County's population has received at least one shot.

- DHS continues to work with the Health Department in targeted ways, including supporting vaccinations at senior high rises and Office of Developmental Supports populations.

Guidance to Provider Community for Vaccine Rollout

- DHS has published [Vaccination Information and Guidance](#). Providers can email their questions about vaccine guidance and share their best practices about ways to encourage staff to get vaccinated to: [DHS-ProviderVaccination@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHS-ProviderVaccination@alleghenycounty.us)

### **Program Updates**

#### OCS

Health of the Homelessness System

- Providers are still operating, sheltering, taking in new clients.
- Not seeing new Section 8 vouchers or habitability inspections yet.
- Adult shelter are beds available at some year-round shelters (Bethlehem Haven, EECM & Light of Life). CALL AHEAD BEFORE SENDING ANYONE.
- Beds are filling up most nights at the Smithfield and McKeesport winter shelters. People can still come; the overflow will be sent to Safe Haven. Downtown Winter Shelters will be open one hour earlier (6:00 PM) and close one hour later (8:00 AM) through Sunday due to the approaching frigid weather.
- Shepherd's Heart winter shelter (women) usually has open beds.
- Youth shelter beds are available at DOCS.
- Family Shelter has one larger space available that can hold one family (up to 6) or two smaller families.
- Warming Centers are open during the hours winter shelters are closed. Warming Centers are in the Catholic Charities building on 9th and Liberty, the Red Door downtown and McKeesport Downtown Housing.

- Isolation and Quarantine facilities have spaces available as needed. Prioritization policy for highly vulnerable referrals is still in place.
  - We have had 624 clients to date, most of whom identify as male. The healthcare system and winter shelter are the biggest referral sources to Safe Haven.
  - We are getting mostly folks who are either positive/exposed or highly vulnerable. We are putting in place a prioritization system to prioritize individuals 60 and over with a medical condition, and then younger people with a medical condition.
- Point-in-Time Count
  - PIT Forms were due yesterday and partner letters are due tomorrow. Reach out to Rob Eamigh with any questions.
- Vaccines
  - Homelessness system provider staff are in group 1B for vaccines. We are working with FQHCs to put a plan in place to get staff and clients vaccinated and to conduct vaccine education. A second session is scheduled for February 17<sup>th</sup>.
- We are regularly reviewing spending across all HUD CoC grants and working with providers to reallocate funds if needed. If you have additional capacity, please complete the UFA reallocation form by March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- This year the National Alliance to End Homelessness conference is virtual. DHS has 15 spots to share; the first 15 homelessness service provider organizations to respond will be given priority. Any seats left after COB on Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup> will be released for providers to request that a second person attend. Email Rob Eamigh at [Robert.Eamigh@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:Robert.Eamigh@alleghenycounty.us) to sign up.
- Homeless Services and Supports Coordination for Youth (HSSCY) is a new program to help young adults obtain stable housing.
  - HSSCY Navigators are former Youth Support Partners who will help youth identify strengths and goals and provide direct support to help overcome housing barriers. Once a youth is housed, Navigators provide follow-up and direct support with housing stabilization and other life goals, such as education, employment and social connections. Navigators also help youth advocate for their needs.
  - The program launched last month and is currently taking referrals. Eligible youth include those who are least 18, and no older than 24, at time of referral and currently experiencing homelessness. To make a referral, please contact Jake Hirsch, program supervisor, at [jacob.hirsch@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:jacob.hirsch@alleghenycounty.us).
- Job Opportunity: We are looking for Youth Support Partners with lived experience: Interested candidates can send a cover email and resume to Amanda Hirsh at [dhs-yspadmin@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:dhs-yspadmin@alleghenycounty.us) or apply directly through the Great Lakes/DCM website at [www.greatlakesresearch.com](http://www.greatlakesresearch.com).
- KidsVoice is in need of community service placements for youth with summary charges. Unfilled volunteer positions are a great fit. If you are interested in hosting, please reach out to KidsVoice directly at [info@kidsvoice.org](mailto:info@kidsvoice.org).
- Give a shout-out to someone that you are working with in the CoC system: <https://www.kudoboard.com/boards/CpL49xOS>

## 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**