COVID-19 DHS Provider Meeting

February 4, 2021

General Information

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

Inside the Frontline is looking to showcase the impact of your work. Send submissions and suggestions to Nakia.Granberg@alleghenycounty.us.

COVID-19 Mobile Testing Schedule

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 helping a client find testing locations.
- As a reminder, the McKeesport Testing Site is open.
    - Make an appointment for a free test. You do not need insurance. Registration and testing information available at bit.ly/McKeesportCOVIDTestSite.
    - Individuals who are unable to drive can contact the COVID-19 hotline at 1-888-856-2774 for additional options and resources.

As a reminder, 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
- RFP for Foster Care Agencies
    - Proposals due Wednesday, February 10

As a reminder, RK Mellon Foundation has opened up several RFIs and RFPs:
- Request for Proposals
    - Economic Mobility, Supportive Living Environments for Children and Youth: Applicants should submit proposals via the online proposal application by February 25, 11:59 pm. Funding decisions will be announced by April 13, 2021.
- Requests for Ideas
    - Career Readiness for all Ages: Applicants should submit ideas via the online RFI portal by February 26.
    - Employment Opportunities in the Innovation Economy: Applicants should submit ideas via the online RFI portal by February 26.
    - Healthy People and Communities: Applicants should submit ideas via the online RFI portal by February 26.
- Organizations can apply for funding at any time using the Richard King Mellon Foundation's online application. You can also call or email at rkmf@rkmf.org.

The Racial Equity Training and Support Directory has been published. Includes entries for 12 providers that offer racial equity-related services such as trainings, organizational assessments and planning. The directory is available here: https://alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Trainings.aspx

Bridging the Digital Divide
- Free public Wi-Fi is available at 9 sites. Find them at www.wifi.alleghenycounty.us.
- 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 supplies become 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.

Ask a Doctor: Q&A with Dr. Rhonda Johnson about COVID-19 Vaccines. This is intended to ensure that people have access to sound vaccine information. Two sessions are being offered for staff of DHS providers:
- Wednesday, February 10, 4-5 pm
- Tuesday, February 16, 4-5 pm
- Please register for either session here: https://alleghenycounty.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_50zvpOXLOY6Hoxw

Please send vaccination questions or share best practices around staff vaccination to dhs-provideraccination@alleghenycounty.us.

Chuck Keenan joined the call to give an update on the Emergency Rental Assistance program.
- Previous program
  - Who participated in the previous CARES Rent Relief Program?
    - We had 7,572 people apply and were able to pay 3,623 households. $14.7M was distributed from PHFA, county CARES funds, and additional county Funds. Each household received $4,060 on average. Most payments were made in November and December.
    - Applicant Characteristics: Most (75% and 79%, respectively) had received unemployment compensation or public benefits previously. Only 5% had previously received homelessness services.
      - Many came from Pittsburgh, Penn Hills, Wilkinsburg and McKeesport. Success rates of applications varied by location.
    - Over 1500 landlords participated.
  - Lessons Learned
    - Need help from community partners and courts to assist with applications and documentation
    - Have enough staff for rush of applications upon program launch to reduce time lag
    - New program will allow us to provide direct assistance to tenant if landlord does not want to participate
    - New web portal will allow applicants to check on status and upload documents
- The new program should begin in March. We are awaiting guidance from the US Treasury Dept. on final eligibility rules:
  - Household income below 80% Area Median Income (AMI)
  - At risk of homelessness or housing instability
  - One of the following due to COVID 19:

- Qualifies for Unemployment Benefits
- Reduction in household income
- Incurred significant costs
- Experienced a financial hardship
- Proof of residency
- Lease or oral lease documentation

As a reminder, we are looking for your feedback on the crisis response stakeholder group recommendations. We want to hear from you: your thoughtful feedback, suggestions and concerns are a critical part of this process.

- We're asking you to take a survey where you'll have the opportunity to leave feedback on individual recommendations and select those you feel should be prioritized by the County and its partners. For additional information and to take the survey, please visit this website.
- A subset of these recommendations will be finalized and put into an action plan for the County and partners to implement.

All PA State metrics are down from last week in Allegheny County, except for emergency department visits for Covid-like illnesses.

- Hospitalizations and case rates are at pre-Thanksgiving numbers.

Legislative/Policy Updates

State and Local Updates

- Governor Wolf gave his 2021-2022 Budget Address on Wednesday morning, calling for a budget totaling $37.8 billion, a more than 11% increase from the current year's enacted budget. Republican Leadership denounced the budget as a tax hike and a non-starter. The proposed budget includes:
  - Spending increase of $3.8b covered by raising the personal income tax rate by nearly one and a half percent and by a severance tax on gas drilling.
    - Tax forgiveness credits would negate increases for families making under $84k a year.
    - $1.36b of the increase would go toward increased education funding following the Fair Funding Formula.
  - Increasing the state's minimum wage to $12/hour as early as July 2021 with a path to $15/hour by 2027.
  - The "Back to Work PA" initiative, paid for by the shale tax, focused on job training, career coaching and childcare to promote workforce development.
  - Justice-related reforms, including cash bail reform, police department accreditation and expansion of medical release eligibility for individuals who are incarcerated.
- Pennie, PA's health insurance exchange, will hold an additional open enrollment period from Feb 15th through March 15th.
  - Pennie encourages those who have found themselves recently uninsured and seeking coverage (and, potentially, financial assistance) to go to pennie.com or to call Pennie customer care at 844-844-8040.

- o Pennie is able to connect eligible applicants to Medicaid or CHIP.
  - o As a reminder, anyone who experiences a qualifying life event is eligible to enroll in a plan through Pennie *throughout* the year.
- PA Department of Labor & Industry is working to fix technology issues causing delays in getting some Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) payments to claimants. PUA provides 50 weeks of benefits to individuals who are self-employed or lack sufficient work history to qualify for regular unemployment assistance.
- The Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program (PEUC), extended by the December stimulus bill, is now available. PEUC provides additional benefits to individuals whose regular benefits have expired or will expire soon.
  - o For information on unemployment assistance: PA Unemployment Compensation Guide
- The General Assembly is expected to pass a bill by the end of this week providing $44 million in additional rental and utility relief funding to Allegheny County.
- PA Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar will resign after revealing her department did not properly advertise for the constitutional amendment opening the statute of limitations on child sex abuse victims.
  - o The General Assembly reached a bipartisan agreement this afternoon to fix this issue by proposing an "emergency constitutional amendment," which will send the original amendment to voters in May as originally planned.
- City Councilmen Burgess and Lavelle call for an "educational emergency" declaration to address COVID-19 and systemic racism in Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS).
  - o PPS School Board plans to meet with Council members to address the claims.

Vaccine Update and Tracking

- According to the state's dashboard, 62,367 partial vaccines and 25,583 full vaccinations have been administered. About 7% of Allegheny County's population has received one shot.
- Vaccine provider locations: PA Dept of Health released this map where people who fall in 1A can receive the vaccine. Allegheny County is doing the following:
  - o Monroeville Clinic – 65+ and eligible health care workers
  - o Partnering with Pitt School of Pharmacy and Pitt Community Engagement Center for clinics in Homewood and the Hill District for adults 65+
  - o DHS is running a closed POD today and tomorrow for 1a populations – 500 doses
  - o Older adult high rise clinics to begin next week – about 1,000 doses per week
  - o 2-1-1 took calls to schedule appointments today but all slots were filled.

Guidance to Provider Community for Vaccine Rollout
- DHS has published Vaccination Information and Guidance. Providers can email their questions about vaccine guidance, as well as share their best practices with encouraging staff to get vaccinated to DHS-ProviderVaccination@alleghenycounty.us.

Upcoming Food Distributions:
- Drive-up food distributions are happening on 2/11 (Glassport), 2/20 (McKeesport), 2/27 (Wilkinsburg), 3/1 (Duquesne), 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.

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 COVD 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