



COVID-19 DHS Provider Meeting

May 13, 2021



General Information

DHS Provider Meetings will now be held at 4:30 PM every other week over the summer, on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month.

Active Solicitations

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

- 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](#)

As a reminder, free housing legal services are available for City of Pittsburgh renters and homeowners

- For a Legal Assistance Program referral, please call 412-534-6600
- For non-English speakers, call 412-530-5244

As a reminder, the Emergency Broadband Benefit program is accepting applications

- A temporary program to help households afford internet service during the pandemic
- Up to \$50/month discount for internet service
- Households are eligible if qualify for Medicaid, SNAP, free-and-reduced priced school lunches, LifeLink or Pell Grants, OR if household lost significant income during the pandemic.
- There are three ways eligible households can enroll:
- Directly with a local participating provider (the FCC [maintains a list of participating providers](#), sorted by state)
- Enroll online with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) at their website www.getemergencybroadband.org.
- Download a paper application at the www.getemergencybroadband.org site, fill out the application, and mail it – along with supporting documentation – to USAC
- Additional information is available at www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit, or by calling 833-511-0311 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. any day of the week.

As a reminder, free public Wi-Fi is live at 13 sites around the county. Find hotspots at wifi.alleghenycounty.us. Devices are also available:

- DHS has distributed over 3,313 laptops to date
- DHS has distributed over 1,095 hotspots to date
- DHS [Device Request Form](#)
- If you need a headset, email: dhs-covid19supplies@alleghenycounty.us.

Ballot Drop-Off at Elections Division

- Reminder that Election Day is on May 18th.
- Allegheny County Elections Division is offering ballot return 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

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
- 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
 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community health workers and public benefit navigators • Remediation of lead paint and other lead hazards • Community violence intervention programs
Investing in Housing & Neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services to support individuals experiencing homelessness • Affordable housing development • Housing vouchers, residential counseling, navigation assistance
Addressing Educational Disparities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New or expanded high quality child care • Home visiting programs for families with young children • Services for child welfare-involved families and foster youth

Legislative/Policy Updates

State and Local Updates

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 AM.

- 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 over \$7.2 billion in federal funds** and based on different opinions on how it should be spent.
 - This funding is PA's portion of the Coronavirus State Fiscal Relief Funds from the American Rescue Plan (ARP).
 - Treasury's [guidance](#) allows greater flexibility in expending these funds than last year's Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF).
 - Competing policies surrounding the use of the funds are beginning to take shape 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](#).
 - To date, Pennsylvania and Pennsylvanians have received a total of \$78 billion of direct federal aid during COVID-19, 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 (October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022).
- Outlines the Administration’s priorities and topline funding levels for key programs in all federal agencies
- 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
- Housing and Homelessness
 - Extends *Housing Vouchers to 200,000 more families*, with a focus on those who are homeless or fleeing domestic violence.
 - Accelerates efforts to *end homelessness through increased Homeless Assistance Grants to support more than 100,000 households*—including survivors of domestic violence and youth who are experiencing homelessness
 - *Increases the supply of affordable housing* through increased HOME Investment Partnerships Program funding to construct and rehabilitate affordable rental housing and to support other housing-related needs.
 - *Supports access to homeownership and pandemic relief for underserved borrowers* through the Federal Housing Administration’s mortgage insurance programs

- Job Training
 - Seeks to *build a strong workforce* through expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programs
 - Increases Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Grants to make *employment services and training available to more dislocated workers, low-income adult and disadvantaged youth* hurt by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Child Welfare
 - Seeks to *address racial inequity in the child welfare system* through new competitive grants to advance reforms that would reduce the overrepresentation of children and families of color and address the disparate experiences and outcomes of these families
- Child Care and Head Start
 - *Expands access to affordable, quality early child care and learning and Head Start*
 - Seeks to ensure that increases resources are used by states to *increase wages for early educators and family childcare providers*
- Older Americans and People with Disabilities
 - Increases resources for the HHS Administration for Community Living to *help older adults and people with disabling conditions maximize their independence and well-being*
 - *Supports caregivers and families* through home and community-based services
 - Doubles funding for Lifespan Respite Care programs, coordinated systems of accessible, community-based *respite care services for family caregivers* of children and adults of all ages with special needs
 - Increases funding for *meal programs for older adults*
- Behavioral Health & Crisis Response
 - Investments in *mental healthcare* with specific support to those who are involved in the criminal justice system, resources to partner mental health providers with law enforcement, and funds to expand suicide prevention activities
 - Seeks an historic investment to support research, prevention, treatment and recovery support services designed to *end the opioid epidemic*, with targeted investments to support populations with unique needs, including older adults
 - Provides funding to *increase the diversity of the healthcare workforce and expand access to culturally competent care*
 - Provides 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
 - Seeks to *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
 - Invests 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
 - Increases 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, nurse, and mental health professionals in schools*
- Supports *Full-Service Community Schools*, which provide comprehensive wrap-around services to students and their families, from afterschool to adult education opportunities, and health and nutrition services
- 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 with the goal of passing before the current federal fiscal year ends on September 30th.
 - Separate from annual appropriations, negotiations are underway between the White House and Congressional leaders on the proposed American Jobs and Infrastructure Plans.

Surge at the Border Marc Cherna and Sr. Linda Yankowski

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.
- Marc was contacted by feds to help increase the capacity and reduce the length of stay for children at the border.
- After the Haitian Earthquake 11 years ago, Marc and Sr. Linda (HFI) helped re-locate 50 children.

Child Migrants: A Summary

- The U.S. is seeing a rise in apprehensions of unaccompanied migrant children, mostly 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.

Reasons for the UC Surge

- 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.
- 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 the situation 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 Holy Family Institute Program

- Licensed for 160 children and youth, but current capacity is 70 due to staffing.
- Children stays an average of 30 days, with 12-day stays on the low end.
- Youth age out at age 18, even if the situation is not settled.

- Differs from domestic child welfare as UC have an adult they'll be reunited with and they 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)
- Become 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.
- Contact: Sister Linda Yankoski, Yankoski.linda@hfi-pgh.org 412-766-9020 x1200

Coming up Next:

- Our next meeting is on May 27, 2021.
- Featured Topic: Equity
- Featured Presenter: Angela Reynolds, YWCA

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.

Q&A

Q: How are kids doing when they get here?

A: I opened a temporary shelter in Erie to welcome 150 kids in one night. All were girls under 12 years old. They hadn't bathed in weeks. Many have lice. Their feet are blistered, clothes are tattered. They are scared, crying. They don't know what is going on. They may have phone number and name hidden in their shoe, which they've been told not to show to anyone. It is critical that we find that info to help them. Most of the younger kids are resilient. Soon, they are running around, laughing, playing games, making friends. We try to get them to call someone they know. That helps them calm down and understand their journey. Our counselors explain what will happen next.

Q: Are kids mostly alone or sibling groups?

A: Mostly alone.

Q: What does the flow look like?

A: ICE takes kids first. Their facilities are inadequate and not designed for children. The law says they must be out of ICE within 72 hrs., but because of the large numbers, they are often there longer. To get them out of ICE, the feds stood up temporary influx centers quickly (stadia, convention centers...) but there is no staffing for that. They are grabbing staff from everywhere – FEMA, other agencies, most are not bi-lingual or trained.

There are now 220 agencies (like) HFI to take in the kids, as many of the temp sites need to revert to their regular purpose. The federal government is very slow in contracting.

They should be able to speed things up, as the youth fall into four categories; the first two (80%) ought to be able to move through quickly:

1. 40% know their parents are here – why not get them moving faster?
2. 40% have some non-parent blood relatives here.
3. 10% have a neighbor or friend, or someone they know, here.
4. 10% have no identified people – usually 17 year-olds – who should be moved into independent living services.

All kids get health care and educational assessment and vaccines.

The Federal government is looking for services for kids who age out – there are Fed grants available – they are at risk for trafficking and they need services