

Provider Briefing Meeting Notes

7/22/21

Agenda:

Current and Upcoming Opportunities
Policy Updates
Active Solicitations
Brief Overview of the Needs Based Plan and Budget
Just Harvest and Child Tax Credit Information
Back to School Update and Panel

Current and Upcoming Opportunities

1) Youth Essay Contest

- The Pittsburgh Chapter of NOBLE (National Organization of Black Law Enforcement) invites all Allegheny County youth aged 14-18 to submit an essay answering the question “What will it take to bring peace to the streets?”
- Cash Prizes: 1st Prize \$500.00 - 2nd Prize \$250.00 - 3rd Prize \$100.00
- To qualify essays must be submitted with the [registration form](#) and emailed to the NOBLE email address at noble@noblepittsburgh.org by Friday, August 20, 2021 at 5:00p.m.
- Essays will be judged by a Team of Community Volunteers & NOBLE members. Prizes will be awarded Friday, August 27, 2021.

2) Local innovations in vaccine equity grant

- The Wolf Administration and United Way of Pennsylvania launched the Local Innovations in Vaccine Equity in Pennsylvania project (LIVE PA) to administer \$4 million in mini-grants to local organizations.
- Provides a \$10 per shot reimbursement for partner agencies that offer shots to populations with barriers to vaccination
- Eligible Zip Codes: 15219, 15208, 15282, 15264, 15104 (Braddock) and 15134 (McKeesport)
- Apply for the grant at <https://www.uwp.org/programs/live-grant/>.

3) Pennie COVID Enrollment

- The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (American Rescue Plan or ARP) greatly increases the amount of financial assistance Pennsylvanians will be eligible for in 2021 and 2022 to lower the cost of health coverage through Pennie.
- Enrollment period runs until **August 15th**

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- Anyone can shop for coverage. Just select “2021 COVID-19 Enrollment Period” as the Qualifying Life Event.
- Visit <https://pennie.com/learn/covid19/> to use the Savings Calculator or enroll.

Policy Updates-Local

Presented by: Erin Dalton

Pittsburgh City Council on Tuesday voted 8-1 to allocate the entire \$335 million in American Rescue Plan funds over the next four years, devoting the majority to keeping hundreds of city jobs and making up for revenue decline during the pandemic. Allocations of note include:

- \$21 million for OwnPGH to promote affordable home ownership.
- \$2.5 million to fund a Guaranteed Basic Income Pilot.
- \$10 million to expand the City's Office of Community Health & Safety - Allegheny Health Network crisis co-responder model to all six police zones 24/7.
- \$20 million total through URA to create a fund to protect existing affordable housing, to create a fund to support land trusts, and to launch the reconstructed Land Bank.

County has not yet decided how we will use our dollars; likely to go to Council at the end of summer

Policy Updates-State

- PA general assembly is on summer recess until late September.

Active Solicitations

Presented by: Jacki Hoover

RFP for a Provider of Functional Family Therapy through Child Welfare: An Evidence-Based Intervention

[Link to DHS Solicitations](#)

- Redesigning in-home services

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- Take low-risk families and give them community-based services
- Identifying those who are at highest risk and with true need for most intensive intervention

Functional Family Therapy in Child Welfare

- Youth ages 0 through 17 and their families
- Looking at preventing out-of-home placement and decreasing the need for number of other social services.
- Looking for a provider who can engage families in the evidenced-based model and really develop a specialty around serving these high-need families.
- Families are diverse (racial, ethnic, religion, culture) and the expectation is we are looking for providers who will not only specialize but also recruit, hire and retain staff from the population they are serving.
- Extending deadline for RFP

Brief Overview of the Needs Based Plan and Budget

Presented by: Jacki Hoover

CYF, OCS and others plan with the state around budget each year. The NBPB budget is our 2nd largest source of funding (after managed care). We annually put in a request based on assessment for needs for youth and families. This year we are focusing on family centers, out of school time, eviction prevention and housing support, and kinship care and out-of-home placements.

- Services for youth with complex needs
- Prevent abuse and neglect and prevent adverse effects
- Looking to focus on families hardest hit by pandemic
- Improve outcomes for children in out-of-home placements
- Address racial inequities
- Can give input through Neighborland
- Public hearing on August 9th (<https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/News-Events/Meetings-Hearings/Community.aspx>)

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Connecting Families with Child Tax Credit

Presented by: Kristi Weiland Stagno from Just Harvest

- First payments went out 7/15.
- Fully refundable - families, even if eligible before getting a much higher amount and big difference for low-income families
- Can even receive if family has no income; they just need to file a tax form or non-filer form
- Any child under 18 is eligible
- IRS has a tool online to complete a non-filer form and portal to update information (can add or change bank account information and can also opt out if you are not claiming in 2021).

Unhoused families

- Can use shelter address or provider address on non-filer form (best to have a bank account for direct deposit if people are able to help set these up)

Foster and Kinship care

- To be eligible the child must have lived with the taxpayer for more than 6 months during 2021.
- Must have been placed by a government agency
- Grandparent or aunt/uncle could also qualify because they are related.
- Whoever claimed the child in 2020 will get the advanced child tax credit; if child is no longer living there and current guardian tries to file non-filer form it will be rejected.
- Person who claimed in 2020 would have to opt out of receiving before someone else could claim the credit- likely to lead to complications in kinship care and other families.

Immigrants

- Child has to have SS number but parents can have ITIN or SSN (would need ITIN before April 15, 2022).
- Need valid passport and need to file 2020 tax return to apply for the ITIN.
- Just Harvest can help with ITIN and 2020 tax return. It is a long process: take to IRS office, process application (8-12 weeks), then process return (8-12 weeks), so important to start now so they can be processed before April 2022.

Other Information

- You should receive advance credits automatically if you filed in 2019 or 2020.
- A few complications are coming up and you might need to call IRS and try to get through to solve.
- If you haven't filed 2020 yet, you can get virtual help; Just Harvest is setting up clinics to help people file.
- If you have no income, use non-filers portal.

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Just Harvest:

- Can answer complex questions
- CTC clinic: July 31 and August 12, soon will be able to get appointments through the website
- ITIN education webinars for providers and families - more on that coming in next few weeks.

P-EBT

- Every child that had reduced price meals and was enrolled in virtual school will be getting a third payment by mid-August and then also a summer P-EBT which will come in Fall.
- If not enrolled in free or reduced price meals, should enroll now through school district to be eligible for the summer P-EBT.
- Also for kids 0-5 who are currently receiving SNAP.

Back to School Update and Panel

Presented by: Amy Malen

Just under 200,000 school aged children in Allegheny County

Engaged with DHS:

- About 5,000 school aged children were active in child welfare in the last year.
- 13,000 in behavioral health
- 1,000 in housing and homelessness

1,300 children on average every month in out-of-school programs (learning hubs) funded by DHS in 2020.

National Level data:

- As of last spring, White students were more likely to be back in a school building than their Black, Latino and Asian peers
- Mental Health: the majority of elementary school principals said they could not meet student need with staff in place.
- Black children disproportionately lost parents due to COVID.

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- Parents with children receiving instruction at home were more likely to say there were mental or emotional health concerns.
- Learning loss (National Data): real takeaway is that in grades 1-8 the overall learning was lower; there was greater learning loss in earlier grades.
- Gaps are largest in majority Black and Latino schools.

Q&A

Panel participants:

- Dawn Golden, Director of Pupil Personnel, Woodland Hills School District
- Dr. Rod Necchai, Asst. Supt, Student Support Services, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Suzanne Hull, School-Based Liaison, Office of Behavioral Health, DHS
- Dr. Paula McCommons, SAP provider, Western Behavioral Health
- Jim Phillips, SAP provider, TCV Community Services
- Bob Jones, Executive Director, Brothers and Sisters Emerging
- Leah O'Reilly, Director of Programming, Human Services Center
- Dr. Wendy Etheridge Smith, Director of Early Learning and Community Supports, AIU
- Samantha Murphy, Resource Services Manager/Education Liaison, DHS

Returning to school

Q: What do we think school is going to look like next year?

Dawn: District is planning to have students in building for 5 days a week, full in-person instruction. Students will have the option to participate in an online academy. We will not have a hybrid model of instruction. Students and staff will wear masks in building and on busses. Parents can request their student be held back for learning loss and we have had a few parents make that request.

Mental Health Services in School

Q: What do mental health supports in a school building look like?

Suzanne: School based liaisons cover about half of PPS.

In school the first step for MHS is SAP (student assistance program) required for all middle-high school students; initially introduced via war on drugs and then began to also cover mental health.

The quickest way for a parent to connect student to services is to talk to school about making a referral to SAP.

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Q: Did you see increased need for mental health services this past year?

Paula: need was there but ability for folks to make referrals was more challenging. School social worker and nurse were great on the frontline; primary care offices often have co-located or integrated health at locations where families can easily accept services. Getting kids on site will go a long way to help with the adjustment. “Observable behaviors of concern” (attendance, sleep, attitude, coping)

Jim: SAP was at an all-time high for screening services pre-COVID and once virtual school started those referrals went down because the kids weren’t being seen. SAP providers have to be prepared for that and in turn need places to refer them to.

Suzanne: kids are entering at higher levels of care and the waitlist for the highest level of care is long. The length of wait is not typical, the result of not catching kids earlier and being able to do things on the front end. Hopefully being back in school will help us prevent entering at the higher levels of care.

Out-of-school time

Q: How are you thinking about heading into next school year?

Bob: most of us facilitate fun in safe spaces; it definitely changed in the pandemic when we were serving as a learning hub; this changed culture and the youth that came in because we had to focus on the learning. Thinking about intensifying academic support in afterschool space. Help with homework and tutoring and creating fun ways to teach.

Leah: Human Services Center has opened up in person summer program and have 65 enrolled (150 usually) but great to have smaller group. Almost all enrolled have not been in in-person programming since March 2020, and this will be an adjustment for everyone. Kids come in performing below standards in normal time and we’re now seeing even further behind. Seeing 1st and 2nd graders who are unable to identify or write numbers for addition. Math and reading remediation are the focus of the program. Students have lost confidence in academic abilities; some are refusing to try because of this. The kids haven’t been able to be accountable to sit and do work in a classroom setting. They need practice with impulse control and redirection, going back to basics of classroom rules, positive interactions.

Wendy: Early childhood education is not optional, we really need to get out to public and encourage participation whether it is formal early learning classroom or a home-based option. Struggling in terms of enrollment; Head Start has 600 of 1100 spots filled. Normally 600 was the number of returning children pre-Covid.

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Resources

Q: How can families be connected to services?

Samantha:

- Reminder about school enrollment- have to be enrolled in 1st grade by age of 6
- Enrolling in Early Childhood programs: County number and Pittsburgh number
- Important to identify families experiencing homelessness
- Definition: Anybody lacking a regular, fixed nighttime residence
- Every school is required to have a homeless and foster care liaison (should start with this person)
- Plug for school attendance! We know that positive attendance truly equals educational outcome.
- Embedding supports for kids to access during school day increases participation so much.
- Childcare finding tool can help people access programming.