



## Community Engagement

Engagement with community groups and families was a significant component of Hello Baby development. Beginning in 2017, discussions were held with groups of families, peer support professionals, child welfare workers and service providers about their comfort with the ways in which data would be used to proactively identify and reach out to families. Stakeholder groups were invited to discuss development of the project, as well as its implementation timelines, and Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) shared project updates with existing community networks including the Children's Cabinet. All input was incorporated into the development process. Feedback sessions were held with the following groups:

1. Families who had received community prevention services, with a specific focus on fathers
2. Local service provider agency direct line staff, supervisors and leadership
3. Clinical experts (pediatricians, developmental psychologists, academic social workers)
4. Family Court judges and advocacy agencies (KidsVoice, parent advocates)
5. Peer Support agencies (Allegheny Family Network and Youth Support Partners)
6. The DHS Children's Cabinet
7. National child welfare and child development experts
8. Local funders
9. Civil liberties, civil rights and social justice advocacy organizations (e.g., African American Strategic Partnership, ACLU, Urban League)

Over the course of these sessions, several consistent themes emerged. These themes were then incorporated in the design and implementation of Hello Baby:

- Strengths and needs for support can be very different, and they can fluctuate, so services must be able to respond as they change.
- Reframe the system's perspective: "Make it an alliance, not a hierarchy in which the provider is assumed to be more knowledgeable or in control than the family."
- Reduce the service burden on families (too many separate things delivered by too many people not talking with each other).

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- Do not overpromise, be honest about what the services and systems can provide or do and what they can't.
- Hire and train staff with the skills, cultural competence, and comfort level to engage honestly and openly, building trust and meeting families where they are at.

The DHS Children's Cabinet and focus group interviews with family members, advocates, and providers also shaped how the program approaches families, the bounds of the information that the program will share with providers, and the qualities of the people Hello Baby has hired. Ongoing opportunities for feedback through an advisory council will be established after the program launches in September 2020.