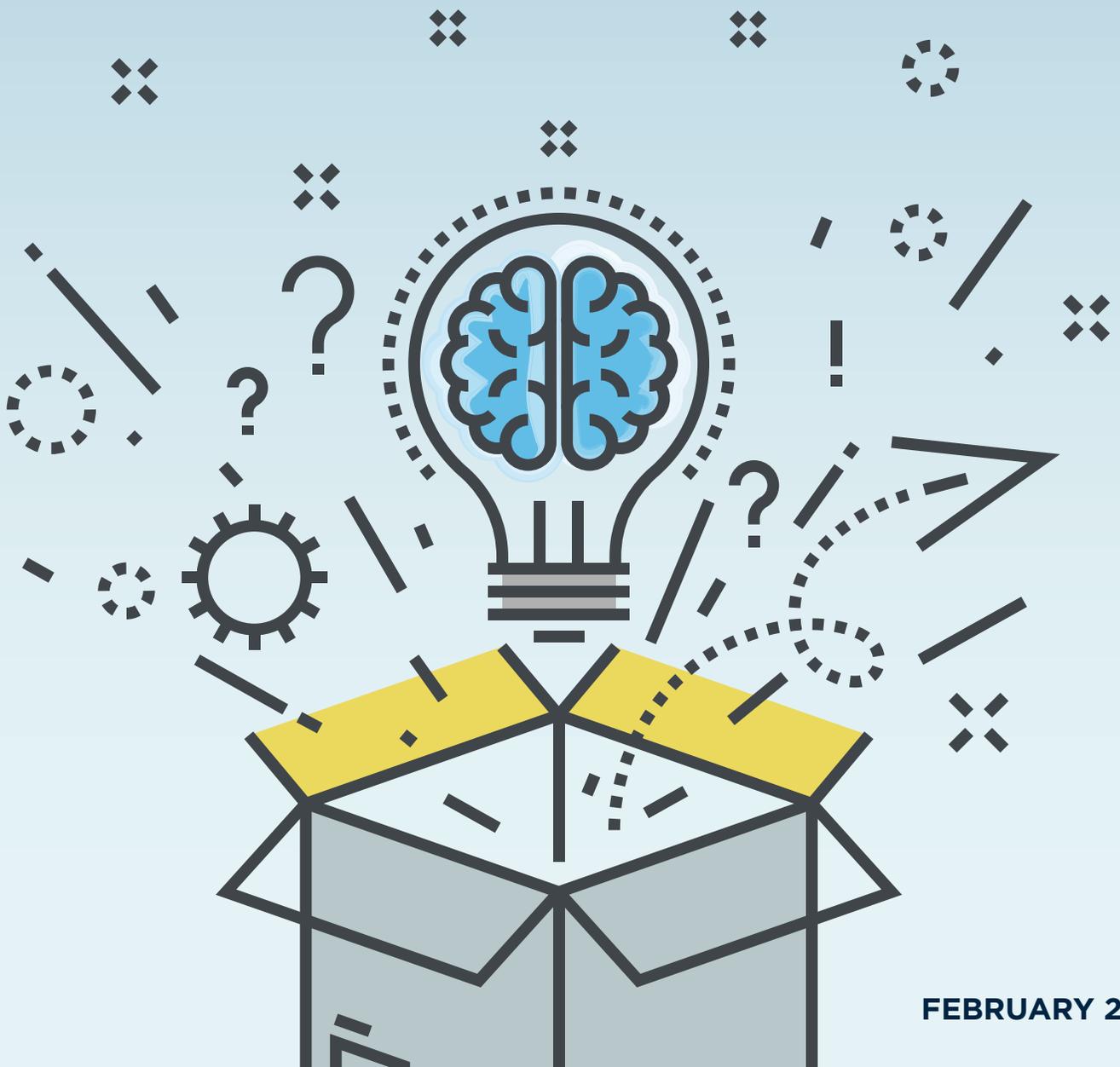


ALLEGHENY COUNTY DHS

Strategic Initiatives: 2019-2020 Final Report



FEBRUARY 2021

February 2021

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) helps over 200,000 people each year through well-established programs and innovations that advance its mission. In addition to these day-to-day programs, DHS developed a set of “strategic initiatives” to focus on in 2019 and 2020 – developed through a planning process that involved a full review of priorities across the agency.

When we set out on these initiatives in 2019, we had no idea of the challenges that 2020 would bring – a global pandemic with impacts on all facets of life that required DHS to be flexible and respond to new and greater needs. Even in the face of these challenges, we continued to make progress on our strategic initiatives.

Within these pages are many examples of how we worked with our community partners to continually improve the well-being of children, youth and adults:

- How we improved **access** – reaching the most vulnerable people and making it easier for them to get the help they need through initiatives like the Pathway to Care and Recovery (engagement center), the Early Learning Resource Center, and Hello Baby
- How we improved the **quality** of our services – delivering them equitably and respectfully by creating strategies such as supporting caregivers of older adults, preventing arrest and incarceration for people with behavioral health needs, and increasing employment for adults with intellectual disabilities
- How we improved our **effectiveness** – using resources wisely through DHS-wide integration of program monitoring efforts, an independent assessment of our fiscal operations, and collaboration with the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute to better prepare, recruit, hire and advance staff

As I prepare for retirement after 25 years as Director of DHS, I am proud to showcase these achievements and feel confident you can continue to expect great things from the Allegheny County Department of Human Services.



Marc Cherna



DHS'S PURPOSE

Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) aims to improve the well-being of children, youth and adults through health and human services delivered in ways that are:

1. Accessible
2. Of high quality, delivered equitably
3. Effective

DHS staff, its network of contracted provider agencies, and its other community partners comprise the “human services system” that:

- Protects children
- Strengthens families
- Improves children’s prospects for school and optimal development
- Improves the mental health of children, youth, and adults
- Reduces substance use disorders and enhances recovery
- Prevents incarceration and reduces recidivism
- Improves the lives of people with intellectual disabilities
- Prevents and reduces homelessness
- Protects vulnerable older adults
- Supports seniors and their caregivers, so older adults can continue to live in their homes/communities

WHY “STRATEGIC INITIATIVES”?

DHS helps over 200,000 people each year through well-established programs and innovations that advance its mission. The strategic initiatives—selected through a planning process that involved a full review of priorities across DHS—are in addition to these day-to-day programs. By devoting attention and resources to high-value initiatives, we expect to make greater headway in achieving our mission. We are reporting on the results of this work as a way of remaining accountable to our clients, communities, and taxpayers.



GOAL 1

**Reach the most
vulnerable people
and make it easier
for them to get
the help they need
(Access)**

Initiative 1.1: Coordinated entry to drug and alcohol treatment, overdose prevention, and support

DHS is making it easier for people affected by substance use disorder (SUD) to access information, treatment, and support. During 2019–2020, DHS:

- Opened the first floor of an engagement center—called “Pathway to Care and Recovery”—in downtown Pittsburgh (November 2020). The center provides peer support, overdose prevention, and other resources to people ages 14 and older.
- Established two engagement coordination teams that provide outreach to people in hospitals and other locations and a warm handoff to treatment services.
- Laid the groundwork for the second phase of the center, a safe place to stay for people who have been assessed and are waiting for treatment to become available. This part of the center has 14 beds, including space for up to four youth.
- Launched a network of certified assessment centers (August 2020) so people can access the appropriate level of care, quickly, through in-person and telehealth services. The certified assessment center providers are White Deer Run, Pyramid, POWER, and Jade Wellness Center.
- Launched a centralized case management unit to focus on providing continuity of care, connections to peers, and other supportive services for people with SUD. In 2020, the case management unit made 960 referrals to treatment and support, resulting in 437 people served.

Lead: Maisha Howze, Assistant Deputy Director, Office of Behavioral Health

Initiative 1.2: Homeless shelter and services under one roof

In 2019, DHS forged a public/private partnership to begin planning for a low-barrier shelter so individuals experiencing homelessness could be safely sheltered, access the resources and support that they need for permanent housing, and improve their health and well-being:

- Partners include winter shelter providers Pittsburgh Mercy, Action Housing, human services agencies, the City of Pittsburgh, PNC, Allegheny Health Network, and UPMC.
- The shelter will be built in 2021, opening in 2022. It will have 24/7 access for individuals in need and include year-round shelter beds, high acuity beds for individuals with higher levels of need, winter shelter overflow beds, and single room occupancy units.
- The shelter will also house a health clinic and a team of street outreach case managers, along with a drop-in center open during the day.

Lead: Abigail Horn, Deputy Director, Office of Community Services



Initiative 1.3: Housing navigator

DHS developed a centralized housing navigator service that works with landlords and case managers in the field to secure housing for higher-need individuals and families. During 2019–2020, DHS:

- Staffed the housing navigator team with two full-time navigators who are responsible for landlord recruitment and retention, housing search assistance for DHS clients upon referral from a case manager, and training for DHS staff and external partners on a variety of topics, including eviction and tenant rights.
- Recruited a network of nearly 350 landlords who operate in the private rental market in Allegheny County to work with DHS clients.

Despite many challenges in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the housing navigator team was able to:

- Reduce the time from enrollment to move-in for permanent housing programs – from 45 days in FY17–18 to 36 days in FY19–20.
- Match 145 additional clients with housing leads/offers in 2020.

Lead: Chuck Keenan, Administrator, Housing Services, Office of Community Services

Initiative 1.4: Treatment for parents with substance use disorder

Parents who need intensive treatment will be able to get therapy in home settings and without the need to part from their children through this two-part initiative, which focuses on families involved with Children, Youth and Families (CYF):

- A. Bring SUD treatment to a family’s home through a treatment and support team. (This initiative replicates a Connecticut model that reduced substance use, improved parent-child relationships, and reduced risk to children.) The target group for these services is families involved with CYF who have SUD. During 2019–2020, provider Holy Family Institute:
- Fully implemented two teams who provide in-home treatment.
 - Developed the means of sustaining the teams and continued to develop staff.
 - Served 65 families during the two years.
 - 90% of children remained with their parents at the 60-day mark in the program (2020).

Additionally, DHS collaborated with Community Care, Allegheny HealthChoices, Inc., and Holy Family Institute to establish and approve a supplemental service and rate for eligible families so providers could bill for this unique service through HealthChoices (effective October 2020)—an important step to sustaining the program.

Lead: Amy Sula, Manager of Integration Support, Office of Children, Youth and Families



- B. Open a family residential treatment program so that parents who need inpatient treatment can remain with their loved ones; and their children and other family members living with them can receive care and support. The target group for these services is families involved with CYF in which a family member has SUD. During 2019–2020:
- Provider Auberle began the process of securing approval for the building to house the family residential treatment program, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the facility was used as a pandemic isolation/quarantine location for families.
 - Auberle is now aiming for a 2021 opening for the residential treatment program.

Lead: Maisha Howze, Assistant Deputy Director, Office of Behavioral Health

Initiative 1.5: Early Learning Resource Center

DHS, in partnership with Trying Together and the Alliance for Infants and Toddlers, is responsible for planning and implementing the system of early care and education that serves lower-income families through the Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) for Allegheny County. The ELRC provides childcare subsidies, shares information about where to find quality childcare and other family services and is responsible for helping improve the quality of childcare in the county. DHS:

- Opened ELRC's downtown location and community-based locations in Wilkinsburg, East Liberty, Turtle Creek, Baldwin, McKees Rocks, and the North Side. Taken together, these centers serve thousands of families each month.
- Hired and trained over 90 staff.
- Established an Early Learning Leadership Council responsible for coordinating early learning services across multiple organizations in the county. The Council is composed of nearly 35 representatives from various sectors, including: early intervention and learning, childcare, schools, health, foundations, local government, workforce development, and family support.

The number of children whose families received a child care subsidy averaged 10,000 per month until February 2020. That number decreased slightly after March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, when the ELRC had to shift gears from open doors to working both virtually and in person, but by appointment only. The percentage of children whose families received a childcare subsidy and were enrolled in a high-quality childcare facility (STAR 3/4) increased just slightly between July 2019 and June 2020, from 27% to 28%.

Lead: Wendy Smith, Manager, Office of Community Services



Initiative 1.6: Hello Baby

Hello Baby , a voluntary program for families of newborns in Allegheny County, launched on September 1, 2020. Hello Baby aims to reach most families shortly after birth, providing them with information and helpful resources; providing additional support and services through our network of family centers; and offering priority care to families with the greatest need. DHS:

- Developed and launched the Hello Baby website, a compilation of local resources and tips for parents with newborns.
- Promoted Hello Baby to families of newborns at birthing hospitals, including providing a “parent bag” with Hello Baby information and a baby book, prior to mom and baby’s discharge from the hospital.
- Referred families who need additional support to DHS’s family centers.
- Selected provider Healthy Start to support Hello Baby’s highest-need families; and trained these staff in the COACH model of home visiting.
- Between September 1 and December 31, 2020, Hello Baby made a combined total of 402 referrals to Healthy Start and family centers for supports.
- Developed Hello Baby Cares in response to COVID-19 restrictions. This variation of the program provides a light touch and temporary response for families with newborns who need extra support. Healthy Start distributed 188 Cares Boxes (filled with necessities like diapers, formula, and disinfectant) as part of this effort.
- Executed a contract with Urban Institute/Chapin Hall to develop and implement a process and outcome evaluation for Hello Baby.

Lead: Amy Malen, Assistant Deputy Director, Office of Community Services

Initiative 1.7: Engage clients in improving services

DHS is improving the quality and responsiveness of its services to the public by using technology that expands communication between clients and government. During 2019–2020, DHS:

- Used the public engagement platform “Neighborland” to gather community feedback and inform planning efforts to address a variety of issues, including the impact of COVID-19, communication with immigrant and international communities about COVID-19, DHS’s role in the fight against racism and injustice, and criminal justice reform. More than 1,000 individuals responded with ideas and comments in 2020.
- Expanded its use of SMS technology to gather feedback from clients about their experiences with DHS services and created real-time dashboards to share this information with program staff.



- Worked with a technology firm to improve the user experience of the AccessMyInfo website, which allows current and former clients to view their DHS records and submit updates/corrections.
 - This work involved conducting interviews with clients and providers, applying digital prototypes and 40 new user stories (which are helpful in making sure the website's design and mechanics are user-friendly). It also required DHS to synthesize these findings into insight statements to improve website content.
 - The website re-launched in July 2020.

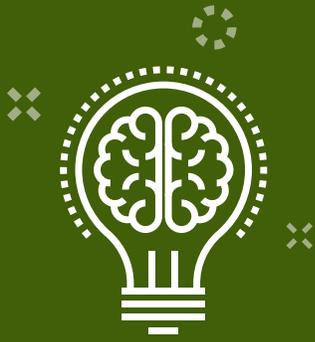
Lead: Erin Dalton, Deputy Director, Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning

Initiative 1.8: Family First

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act supports DHS in: keeping families together and, only when necessary, placing children in the least-restrictive, most family-like setting. Family First implementation, planned for October 2021 in Pennsylvania, will most directly impact DHS's prevention services and the way in which we are reimbursed for eligible services. To prepare for Family First implementation, DHS:

- Joined the PA Council Workgroup meetings and, with Philadelphia, recommended the state adopt a broad application of "Candidacy" for Family First services. DHS also recommended an efficient process for documenting families' eligibility, and a set of specific programs that the state should make eligible for federal funding through the Family First Prevention Services Program.
- Analyzed the changes DHS will require to comply with Family First, such as case practice and data systems, and began to implement those changes within DHS.

Lead: Kira Fatherree, Strategic Policy Manager, Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning



GOAL 2

**Ensure quality
services, delivered
equitably and
respectfully
(Quality)**

Initiative 2.1: Improve equity and inclusion in our systems, services and operations

DHS is committed to anti-racism in our practices, systems and impact. To realize that commitment, DHS:

- Contracted with Joyce James Consulting to provide racial equity trainings to CYF staff in person (2019) and virtually (2020).
- Adopted and began to implement a racial equity framework and theory of change as part of a partnership with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, which includes:
 - DHS’s vision for equity.
 - Launching strategic planning for equity and inclusion with DHS offices, including forming core planning teams and designing office-level implementation plans.
 - Several initiatives to “normalize” shared definitions for racial equity and inequity, implicit and explicit bias, and individual, institutional and structural racism. These initiatives include a two-part video series about key equity concepts and a virtual library of racial equity resources.
 - Office-level dialogue groups throughout DHS and a toolkit for facilitators.
 - Adapting DHS’s one-day, in-person racial equity training to a three-part online version.
- Created a publicly-available directory of qualified providers that offer racial equity-focused services, including training and organizational capacity building.
- Administered an online survey to assess racial equity knowledge, skills, and experiences among all DHS staff to inform future action steps toward advancing racial equity across the agency; 814 employees participated (52% of employees).

Lead: Jessica Ruffin, Deputy Director, Office of Community Relations

Initiative 2.2: Transition service coordination for seniors

DHS’s Area Agency on Aging (AAA) made a major shift during 2019–2020, ending its role in delivering service coordination and re-focusing on the primary obligation of the AAA to provide protective services, home delivered meals, and advocacy for older adults in long term care settings within the county. During 2019–2020, DHS:

- Ended aging service coordination in April 2020 – a strategic choice, given the increasing challenges of providing quality services within the constraints of the Community Health Choices/managed care organization (MCO) structure.
- Supported the transition from AAA service coordination to more than 10 service coordination agencies in Allegheny County.

Lead: Kurt Emmerling, Deputy Director, Area Agency on Aging



Initiative 2.3: Caregiver support

AAA implemented a strategy to provide better support to the caregivers of older adults so they have reduced stress and a higher quality of life and can continue to support seniors' well-being. During 2019–2020, DHS:

- Partnered with the University of Pittsburgh to establish the Community Aging in Place-Advancing Better Living for Elders (CAPABLE) Program, a service for caregivers and care receivers delivered by an interprofessional team (an occupational therapist, a registered nurse, and a handy worker) that aims to improve health and participation in meaningful daily activities of older adults who have disabilities and functional limitations.
- Launched a caregiver support strategy that includes:
 - Outreach to community organizations and families at a variety of events.
 - An evidence-based six-class session called Powerful Tools for Caregivers. The classes offer tools to help reduce stress, improve self-confidence, manage time, set goals, solve problems, improve communication, make tough decisions, and locate helpful resources.
 - Delivering 55 caregiver backpacks through more than 50 county libraries. The backpacks contain a diverse selection of information, including local supports on finances, handling emotions, making decisions, finding respite, and where to get training.
 - Establishing caregiver libraries within eight local senior centers that offer a variety of books and resources.
 - Establishing the Caregiver Resource Center at AAA offices. This Center provides a library of resources to caregivers, including books and videos available on loan.

As a result of this work, the Caregiver Support Program grew from 308 consumers in the program in January 2019 to 398 consumers in December 2020.

Lead: Brendan Hanley, Division Chief, Area Agency on Aging

Initiative 2.4: Transition age youth services

DHS worked to improve services for 16–25 year olds with serious mental illness or serious emotional disturbance to reduce the severity of their conditions and ease their transition to adult services. This strategy was part of the department's larger strategy for transition age youth (TAY). Achievements in 2019–2020 include:

- Created an incentive payment plan for school-based outpatient providers, in collaboration with Community Care and Allegheny HealthChoices, Inc., to improve services for TAY, to identify TAY as a special population, and to elicit culture change within provider organizations.



- Secured a capacity-building grant to implement the changes necessary to meet the needs of this special population.
- Created TAY tip sheets and a social media campaign for youth that helps them navigate mental health services. The campaign focuses on such topics as isolation, depression, anxiety, trauma, and resources for food and shelter.

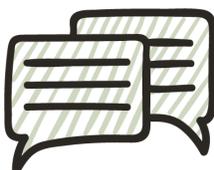
Lead: Jewel Denne, Assistant Deputy Director, Office of Behavioral Health

Initiative 2.5: Reduce the overuse and misuse of the criminal justice system for people with behavioral health and/or other human services needs

DHS is partnering with government, nonprofit organizations, and the community to improve safety and justice for people in Allegheny County—to reduce racial disproportionality, safely reduce the size of the jail population, and improve the health and well-being of individuals who have mental health, substance use, homelessness and other human services challenges. In 2019–2020, DHS:

- Created a Crisis Response Stakeholder Group (CRSG) with Allegheny County Emergency Services. This group, made up of representatives from 911, law enforcement, city and county government agencies, behavioral health providers and other community advocates, is charged with developing an action plan for improving the functionality of and coordination among our existing crisis services. It also will test new initiatives to prevent crises and respond to individuals experiencing a crisis. Since September 2020, the group:
 - Finalized the CRSG’s vision, goals and objectives. These aim to place at the center Black communities disproportionately harmed by our crisis systems.
 - Created a crisis system map to illustrate how people currently flow through our crisis system and to highlight gaps and areas for improvement.
 - Generated recommendations for improving the crisis system at each of four phases: prevention, early intervention, response and post crisis recovery.
 - Conducted 15 stakeholder interviews and hosted four focus groups with law enforcement, front line staff, and individuals with lived experience of our crisis services, to collect additional input.
 - Secured Bureau of Justice Assistance funding to support crisis response/diversion efforts.

Lead: Jennifer Batterton, Manager of Special Initiatives, Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning



Initiative 2.6: Improve the effectiveness of in-home services

To reduce children’s risk of home removal, DHS has invested substantially in “non-placement” services. To increase the impact of these programs, DHS:

- Reviewed current program outcomes, evincing the need to identify in-home services that better address families’ needs and reduce children’s risk of removal.
- Analyzed key information to determine which family needs and risk factors linked to removal need to be addressed by the current in-home program.
- Identified the most important services for families, across a continuum of risk and need, that feature clinical interventions, community supports, and concrete assistance.
- Finalized casework practice changes needed to improve the match between families’ assessed needs and recommended services, including elevating the role of assessments in creating family plans.

Lead: Christina Graves, Manager of Special Initiatives, Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning

Initiative 2.7: Adopt promising practices for improving the lives of people who need developmental supports

DHS’s Office of Developmental Supports (ODS, formerly the Office of Intellectual Disabilities) expanded the use of promising practices for adults and youth with intellectual disabilities and/or Autism (ID/A) to enhance the quality of services delivered and improve client outcomes. During 2019–2020, DHS took these actions to expand promising practices:

- Created a program description for a new Long-Term Structured Residence (LTSR) model to accommodate the unique needs of people with ID/A who are involved in the forensic system.
- Coordinated Autism Spectrum Disorder Training for an existing forensic LTSR provider to better meet the needs of people with Autism.
- Established connections with current ID/A providers to develop capacity for long-term housing options for youth with multi-system involvement.
- Enhanced collaboration with the Mobile Transition Age Youth Treatment Team and Mobile Intervention for Young Adults Team to improve outcomes for youth with ID/A and a mental health issue.
- Developed the infrastructure to support staff and providers in adopting promising practices. New tools include:
 - A universal referral form and process for the Allegheny County Re-entry Program to identify people who are eligible for ODS services.
 - A multi-system database to better assess trends.
 - A customer service survey to elicit feedback from professional partners and families.

Lead: Susan Acquaro, Assistant Administrator, Office of Developmental Supports



Initiative 2.8: Increase employment for people with intellectual disabilities

To improve the availability of quality employment opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities during 2019–2020, DHS:

- Expanded its network of providers that offer job-related supports, including job finding, job development, and supported employment. DHS now has 17 providers that offer these services to adults with ID.
- Developed a new service—Community Participant Services—to integrate individuals into meaningful day activities, employment and volunteering – expanding the potential for individuals to be an active part of their community.
- Increased the number of clients receiving job finding and supported employment services. The number of clients grew by 13% (from 467 to 530 people) from 2018 to 2020.

Lead: Marian Tresky, Assistant Administrator, Office of Developmental Supports

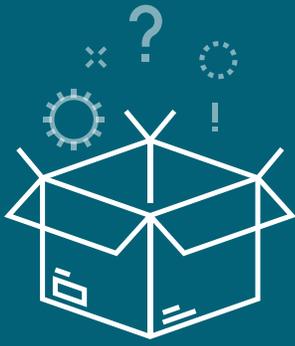
Initiative 2.9: Use unstructured data to improve decisions

To improve service delivery, DHS is turning unstructured data (such as case notes) into information that caseworkers, providers, managers and quality assurance teams can use to ensure they are providing the services clients actually need and want. During 2019–2020, DHS:

- Established a partnership with Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) to support this technology strategy. CMU researchers used natural language processing methods to analyze large volumes of unstructured data and available structured data to inform decision support tools for use by caseworkers, supervisors and DHS quality assurance staff.
- Began developing a basic search tool for caseworkers to make better use of unstructured data as soon as possible. The first phase of the tool uses keywords.

Lead: Katy Collins, Chief Analytics Officer, Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning





GOAL 3

**Use resources wisely
(Effectiveness)**

Initiative 3.1: Value-based purchasing

DHS is improving the impact of its behavioral health services (mental health/drug and alcohol) by changing a share of its contracts to be “value-based”—that is, paying providers based on clinical outcomes and client experience, rather than fee-for-service. This is a multi-year initiative by DHS, Allegheny HealthChoices, Inc., and Community Care. Together they have:

- Selected the performance outcomes on which these contracts are based.
- Modified provider contracts to be value-based in several areas: service coordination, community and school-based services, intensive behavioral health services, inpatient mental health services, SUD treatment, residential treatment facility transformation, and medication assisted treatment.

Over 40% of the overall HealthChoices (Medicaid-funded) spending in Allegheny County occurred under a value-based model (2019).

In partnership with Community Care, DHS also has begun developing a Human Services Block Grant-funded value-based purchasing initiative, focusing on the county’s six Centers of Excellence that serve people with opioid-related SUD.

Lead: Denise Macerelli, Deputy Director, Office of Behavioral Health

Initiative 3.2: Contracts review

DHS-contracted providers deliver a large share of the human services in Allegheny County. DHS took a comprehensive look at its contracting system in preparation for several improvements in 2021. In 2019–2020, DHS:

- Completed a thorough review and mapping of the contracts process.
- Identified bottlenecks, “pain points,” and potential problems at every step of the process.
- Brainstormed different ways to re-engineer the process to improve efficiency and increase flexibility without sacrificing quality.

Lead: Scott Hemphill, Chief Operating Officer, Office of Administration



Initiative 3.3: Integrated monitoring

DHS monitors its programs for quality and compliance, with a decentralized approach to monitoring. To improve the impact of these monitoring efforts and to more systemically work with providers to enhance quality services, DHS established the Integrated Monitoring Initiative. As part of this initiative, in 2019–2020, DHS:

- Implemented the Integrated Monitoring Quarterly Report, which provides a cross-system view on monitoring and how DHS is supporting providers.
- Automated a Provider Post-Monitoring Survey—to capture feedback from providers about the reasonableness, effectiveness, and quality of DHS monitoring and the monitoring process so DHS can make improvements.
- Gathered information to ensure DHS was continuing to achieve the level of monitoring necessary to effectively administer human services during the COVID-19 pandemic, and identified successes and best practices that could be applied to monitoring efforts across the department and beyond the pandemic.
- Initiated an evaluation of fidelity to DHS Monitoring Standards of Practice, which will inform how DHS can strengthen monitoring through further support, development and changes in practices.
- Developed processes to use monitoring results and trends to inform service procurement decisions.

Lead: Hilary Scherer, Integrated Programs Manager, Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning

Initiative 3.4: Streamlined, documented business processes

DHS, which delivers hundreds of programs funded by over 100 sources, assessed its current administrative and fiscal processes and began making changes to achieve additional efficiencies, better-support decision-making, provide greater visibility into information, and lay the groundwork for financial technology. During 2019–2020, DHS:

- Hired accounting/technology firms to conduct an independent assessment of DHS’s fiscal operations in five key areas: organizational structure, budgeting, cost transfers, invoicing, and travel and expense reimbursement.
 - The assessors conducted over 35 stakeholder interviews, an organizational structure assessment, maturity model assessments, and capability/best practice workshops.
 - The assessors worked with DHS and other County leadership to determine which recommendations were of highest priority and to develop an implementation roadmap.
- Completed a full internal assessment of all Office of Administration units and began implementing transformation plans for the human resources, contracts, and fiscal units.

Lead: LaToya Warren, Deputy Director, Office of Administration



Initiative 3.5: Critical information for decision-making

To improve case practice and protect vulnerable people, DHS is improving how it supplies crucial information to staff and providers in a timely manner. During 2019–2020, DHS:

- Developed a living data catalog, called the “Alerts Catalog,” to document information sources and potential alerts across the DHS enterprise, as well as a list of interested parties for each alert type.
- Identified a cost-effective technology to support a system of alerts via email or text.
- Developed an administrative dashboard to manage alerts.
- Selected the 412 Youth Zone as a pilot use-case, with a pilot testing group.
- Created a working group with CYF to develop policies regarding who should receive alerts and actions they should take once they are alerted.

Lead: Ian Maverro, Chief Technology Officer, Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning

Initiative 3.6: Expanded communications avenues

DHS worked to optimize communications to staff, providers and allied professionals and to reach more clients and potential clients. This included using multiple techniques and focusing on a broader, more diverse client base, to apprise them of information, news and available programs and services. During 2019–2020, DHS:

- Integrated DHS communications with equity and inclusion, to expand the potential for DHS to reach and engage more organizations, communities and clients in the county.
- Launched a campaign to promote human services workers as essential frontline staff.
- Worked with the Health Department and other County offices to create and disseminate important pandemic-related information.
- Created a new provider website to improve information and resource sharing among DHS’s provider network.
- Launched “Message from Marc” series to keep DHS staff informed of internal goings-on.

Lead: Jessica Ruffin, Deputy Director, and Mark Bertolet, Public Relations Manager, Office of Community Relations



Initiative 3.7: Child welfare workforce

The National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) selected DHS in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work as one of seven sites in the country that would focus on the goal of improving the way child welfare organizations prepare, recruit, hire and advance the child welfare workforce. During 2019–2020, DHS:

- Conducted a Comprehensive Organizational Health Assessment, with 71% of CYF staff participating. The assessment indicated opportunities to strengthen the workforce in the domains of workload, supervision, and racial equity. Two action teams, co-facilitated by the University of Pittsburgh, are developing and implementing strategies to make changes to achieve supervision through a racial equity lens.
- Completed NCWWI’s “Pathway to Change” training—to implement and sustain change on identified workforce priorities.
- Implemented a new traineeship program for Masters-level social work students at the University of Pittsburgh, the “Child Welfare Workforce Excellence Fellows.” The program is in its second year and has trained nine participants.
- Instituted a Leadership Academy for CYF staff. In 2020, the Academy began training its first cohort of 12 CYF regional office directors and clinical managers in improved adaptive leadership skills.

Between 2019 and 2020, the CYF workforce saw a 10% reduction in the number of exits from CYF case work positions.

Lead: Kelly Dillard, Talent Acquisition Manager, Office of Administration

