



# DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families

One Smithfield Street, Suite 400

Pittsburgh, PA 15222-2221

412-350-5701, 412-350-4004 (fax)

**Child Abuse Reporting Line** (to report child abuse/neglect or receive information):  
412-473-2000

**ChildLine** (State child abuse reporting line): 1-800-932-0313

**Director's Action Line** (for consumer concerns or complaints): 1-800-862-6783

**Established in 1997—second largest child welfare agency in Pennsylvania**

## Administration

Patricia L. Valentine, DHS Executive Deputy Director for Integrated Program Services

Walter Howard Smith, Jr., Ph.D., DHS Deputy Director

Children and Youth Services Advisory Board

Pa. oversight: Pa. Department of Human Services Office of Children, Youth, and Families

## Mission

Protect children from abuse and neglect; to preserve families, whenever possible; and to assure permanency, that is, to provide permanent, safe homes for children either by assuring safety within the child's own family, or by finding an adoptive home or another permanent setting for those children who cannot be reunified with their family.

## Legal Mandates

Complies with the following state laws/regulations requiring that child abuse and neglect be investigated and safe permanent homes be secured for dependent children:

- Juvenile Act (Act 333) and amendments
- Child Protective Services Law (Act 124) and amendments
- Pa. Adoption Act (Domestic Relations Title 23)
- Regulations governing county children and youth agencies
- Child protective services regulations

Also complies with all applicable federal legislation including the:

- Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997
- Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980
- Missing, Exploited and Runaway Children Protection Act
- Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Act
- Title – IV B, D, E
- Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001
- Chafee Foster Care Independence Act
- Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978
- Multi-ethnic Placement Act of 1994

## Office of Children, Youth and Families Overview

### Calls Logged 2015

\* **13,152** calls of suspected child abuse/neglect were received by CYF.

- 48% (6,303) were screened out at intake.
- 52% (6,849) were assigned to a caseworker for a full investigation.
  - \* 22% of these (1,483) were accepted for child welfare services.

### People Served

- In CY 2015, 7,563 children and 7,743 parents received services.
- On January 1, 2017, 3,836 children in 1,803 families were receiving services. 1,344 of these children were in out-of-home placement. 1,183 were in foster care. About two-thirds of those in out-of-home placement were placed with kin.

### CYF filled positions (a/o 01/16)

- 511 (county)

### Contract Providers (FY 2015-16)

124

### Budget (FY 2015-16)

\$250.4 million (20.1% county; 62.6% state, 18.9% federal and 0.3% other funds)

Includes \$198.8 M for CYF, \$37.9 M for JPO and \$13.7 M for Shuman Juvenile Detention Center

81% of the total budget is distributed to contracted agencies of 6



2015

# Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Marc Cherna, Director

## Office of Children, Youth and Families

Walter Howard Smith, Jr., Ph. D., DHS Deputy Director,  
CYF

One Smithfield Street, Fourth Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15222-2221

412-350-5701; 412-350-4004 (fax)

To report suspected child abuse: 412-473-2000

### Background

Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families is the County's public office mandated by law to protect children from abuse and neglect. The office was created in 1963 to comply with federal and state laws requiring that child abuse be investigated. It is the second largest child welfare agency in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

In 1997, CYF and four other County departments became part of an integrated Department of Human Services. The primary objective of the Department of Human Services is to ensure a coordinated human services system that improves, increases, and promotes services to the County's general public and, in particular, to its most vulnerable populations.

### Mission

The Office of Children, Youth and Families is responsible for the welfare of the children of Allegheny County. Our mission is to:

- protect children from abuse and neglect;
- preserve families, whenever possible; and
- assure permanency, that is, to provide permanent, safe homes for children either by assuring safety within the child's own family, or by finding an adoptive home or another permanent setting for those children who cannot be reunified with their family.

### Goals

The Office of Children, Youth and Families is guided by three goals established by the Commonwealth for all child welfare agencies across Pennsylvania:

- To prevent child abuse, neglect, and exploitation;
- To ensure all abused, neglected or otherwise dependent children are protected from further abuse and neglect in their own or some other permanent home; and
- To provide for the well-being of children in substitute care.

Regardless of how a family may become involved with the Office of Children, Youth and Families, we recognize and celebrate the diversity of the County's population. We also acknowledge the historical inequities and systemic discrimination faced by many of our County's citizens and strive to

practice our work in a socially just and ameliorative fashion.

## **Prevention**

The Department of Human Services strives to prevent child abuse and neglect by helping to support and strengthen families. We work toward this goal by:

- Funding community based programming  
We dedicate a portion of our child welfare dollars to funding community based programs that help families and children thrive. These include after-school programs, youth development programs, parenting support classes among others.
- Operating a system of family support services  
We fund a network of community based Family Support Centers which offer home visiting, support group and related services, afterschool and youth development programs, and other community based services that aim to strengthen families and prevent maltreatment.
- Closely collaborating with child-serving systems  
We partner with behavioral health care providers, pediatricians, hospitals and other child serving professionals to help struggling families before abuse occurs.

## **Intervention with maltreated children and their families**

A report to the Office of Children, Youth and Families concerning an allegation of child maltreatment launches a formal intervention with the family. Our call screeners, working when indicated with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, determine whether the allegation being made meets the legal threshold to initiate a formal investigation. From that point forward, our child welfare intervention with the family may include any or all of the following: investigation of child abuse/neglect, family service, and/or out-of-home placement.

### **• Investigations of child maltreatment**

When someone reports a concern about child maltreatment in Pennsylvania, the response of the child welfare system can take one of two primary paths.

Allegations that a child has been severely physically, emotionally, or sexually abused, or severely neglected are reported to the Pennsylvania ChildLine office in Harrisburg. ChildLine determines whether or not the report needs to be investigated. If they determine that an investigation needs to be conducted regarding a child living in Allegheny County, ChildLine will refer the matter to Allegheny County for investigation. At that point, Allegheny County will open a Child Protective Services investigation and assign a worker to the matter.

Other allegations concerning child neglect, truancy and related issues are reported directly to the Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families. CYF determines whether the report warrants an investigation and if it does, the matter will be assigned to one of our regional offices for a General Protective Services assessment.

Child welfare investigations take place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Once an investigation is launched, the assigned caseworker will interview each child, members of the family and the family's network of support, doctors, teachers and others to gather information that will help to determine whether maltreatment has occurred. In addition, she or he will make a determination as to whether the children are safe in the household, and whether any child is at risk. Finally, she or he will determine whether to offer formal child welfare services to the family.

- **Child welfare services for children, youth and families**

If a family requests or a case worker recommends child welfare services for a given family, a child welfare case may be opened for that family. Once a family services case is opened, families will receive case management with a primary focus on assistance in building a team of supports around them to resolve the maltreatment concerns. DHS manages a network of providers including treatment providers, community based organizations and others, who can be called on to assist families and family members in resolving specific issues as needed. We strive to ensure that our own interventions and those provided through our network partners are delivered using methods that are proven effective through research and evaluation, and that recognize and celebrate the diversity of the County's population.

The Office of Children, Youth and Families is dedicated to providing interventions with families in a way that builds on the family's strengths and increases, over time, the family's capacity to manage their own problems. We accomplish this through the use of Conferencing and Teaming. Conferencing and Teaming is the DHS standard of practice that engages individuals, families, supports and professionals in assessing strengths and needs and developing a plan for keeping children, teens and adults safe and healthy while continually integrating individual and family actions with professional services.

If a family is receiving services from the Office of Children, Youth and Families, Conferencing and Teaming will include:

- **Comprehensive Assessment**

DHS employs the Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST), Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) and Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) to assess of individual and family function. In addition we employ Pennsylvania Safety Assessment and Management Process to continually assess the safety and risk of harm to each child in the family. Finally, we continually deploy family finding techniques to ensure that the family's natural supports are engaged in assisting them.

- **Teaming to create and manage Family Plans**

We work with the parent(s) to identify individuals known to the parents who are invested in strengthening the home environment to create a safe home and mitigate the risks of harm to the child. This diverse team (including the parents, caseworker, friends/relatives, and other professional helpers) meets to develop a Family Plan to strengthen the family so that it can provide a safe and loving home for the children. The Family Plan outlines the family's goals to ensure the safety and well-being of each child and lays out what each member of the family's Team will do to take action toward achieving those goals. Family Plans often include formal services and supports that would be most helpful to the family – but just as often, they build on the family's own network of family and community supports to shore up assistance to the family in a sustainable way.

- **Out-of-home placement**

If we feel at any point during our intervention with a family that a child cannot remain safely in the care of their family, we will seek to assist the family with emergency services, or will seek the Court's permission to place the child into protective custody. In these situations we work hard to identify a family member or family friend that the child can stay with. When those efforts fail, Allegheny County contracts with a network of providers who care for children in family or group settings.

Removing a child or youth from the care of their parents/guardians is a serious and trauma-inducing event. We do not take this step lightly. Our goals for children are to "stay home" whenever possible, to "go home" by reunifying with parents after a removal, or to "find home" with a

new, permanent family if reunification is not possible. Accordingly, when a child is removed, we immediately launch a process of permanency planning – working to determine what the child’s permanent home will be. Our first efforts are to help the child’s family to make the changes it needs to in order to be able to care for their children safely at home once again. If those efforts fail, we work with the child and other members of the family’s Team to identify potential other permanent guardians for the child, or work to identify a nurturing family who will adopt the child.

## **Assuring the well-being of children and youth in substitute care**

### **• Out-of-home placements**

Out-of-home care is a temporary means of planning for the safety of children. Out-of-home placement settings are managed by non-profit providers under contract to Allegheny County and include:

- Kinship foster care - licensure of a child’s relative or family friend to be the foster parent for the child
- Family foster care - placement of the child with a recruited, trained and licensed foster home associated with a provider agency
- Treatment foster care - placement of the child with a foster family who is trained specifically to care for children with exceptional behavioral health or other clinical needs
- Group care – placement of a child into a community based group home
- Residential care – placement of a child into a residential campus

The quality of care provided in these settings is monitored by Allegheny County through a combination of data review, case record review, investigations of complaints, surveys and site visits. Anyone who is concerned about the quality of care provided to a child in out-of-home placement should call the Allegheny County DHS Director’s Action Line at 1-800-862-6783.

### **• Partnership with child-serving systems**

Taking good care of abused and neglected children requires partnership with foster parents, biological parents/guardians, schools, health and behavioral health care providers, community programs and others. The Teaming process affords the opportunity to collaborate with our partners to ensure good communication as well as streamlined and effective care for children and youth. Each CYF office has access to a psychiatrist, as well as specialists in intimate partner violence, substance abuse and housing issues who may be called upon to assist in planning for good care.

### **• Education**

Across the country, children and youth in substitute care experience disruptions to their education, repeated grades and truancy at higher rates than their peers. In Allegheny County we strive to partner with school districts to support the educational attainment of system-involved youth. We have data exchanges with 14 school districts throughout the county and hold regular education related forums, trainings and other professional development sessions to strengthen our system’s ability to assure good educational outcomes for children and youth.

### **• Transition-age youth**

Older youth who have stayed in the custody of CYF for 30 days past their 16th birthday become eligible for Independent Living Skills Training, based on the assessment of need, to assist with the transition out of CYF care and into independent adulthood. Transition plans are created for each young person, and each young person is able to take advantage of Independent Living programming including case management, linkages to vocational and educational programming, financial literacy, youth development programs and more.

## **Community Involvement**

The youth of Allegheny County are also supported by DHS sponsored programs that pick up where traditional governmental funding leaves off. For example, the *DHS Holiday Project* has provided holiday gifts to children receiving services through CYF since 1980. Each year, contributions from public and private donors provide thousands of children, ages birth through 18 years, with gifts. *The Allegheny County Music Festival Fund*, begun in 2000 as cooperative effort between the DHS OCR, Children's Court and Allegheny County Special Events, solicits funds from county residents who attend a county-sponsored outdoor concert, turning the proceeds into requested art, music or sports lessons, memberships to museums, and a wide array of products and services otherwise unattainable, for identified children served in some way by DHS or Juvenile Probation. Since 2003, *Project Prom* offers the public a way to help high school seniors attend their prom in style. Project Prom collects and makes available new and gently used formal attire to any student receiving services through DHS. Eligible students are invited to attend *Project Prom for Gentlemen*, an evening of mentoring, and are assisted with gift cards for tuxedo rentals. Thousands of gowns have been donated to date. The number of young adults taking advantage of this program increases yearly.

## **Administration**

The Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families is supervised by the Commonwealth's Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families. The administrative operation of CYF is the responsibility of the DHS deputy director, Office of Children, Youth and Families. CYF is under the authority of the director of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, the DHS executive deputy director for integrated program services, the Allegheny County manager and county executive.

## **Office locations**

CYF administrative offices are located in the Human Services Building, One Smithfield Street, Suite 400, Pittsburgh, PA 15222. Regional offices are located in and around the City of Pittsburgh.

**Child Protection/Intake — 412-473-2000**, 400 N Lexington Street, Point Breeze

**Central Regional/Intake — 412-350-3600**, 1401 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh

**East Regional — 412-473-1100**, 400 N. Lexington Street, Point Breeze

**Mon Valley Regional/Intake — 412-664-8900**, 332 Fifth Avenue, McKeesport

**North Regional/Intake — 412-323-6100**, 1972 Clayton Avenue, Pittsburgh (North Side)

**South Regional/Intake — 412-488-8500**, 2100 Wharton Street, Pittsburgh (South Side)

**Adoption — 412-473-2300**, 400 N. Lexington Street, Point Breeze