



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**CONTACTS:** Elaine Plunkett  
412-350-6897  
[elaine.plunkett@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:elaine.plunkett@alleghenycounty.us)

Margi Shrum  
412-350-5482  
[Margi.shrum@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:Margi.shrum@alleghenycounty.us)

### **DHS Launches “Use Your Words” Campaign to Promote Importance of Talking to Babies**

**PITTSBURGH** – The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) today launched an education campaign to spread the message that talking to babies and young children is one of the best things people can do to nurture development.

The campaign, called “Use Your Words: Your Baby is Listening and Learning,” will be promoted via social media and materials distributed to key audiences, including DHS Family Support Centers and pediatricians’ offices.

“In Allegheny County, we want every child to have a bright future, and research shows that the most important aspect of children’s language experience is the amount of words they hear at a young age,” said Leslie Reicher, Administrator, Bureau of Outreach and Prevention in the DHS Office of Community Service.

Among other sources, the campaign draws upon a longitudinal study published in 1995 by Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley at the University of Kansas. It also dovetails with a policy statement this summer by the American Academy of Pediatrics to encourage reading out loud to children beginning in infancy.

“The more babies hear words, face-to-face, no matter the topic, the better their communication will be when they use their own words,” said Dr. Chaves-Gnecco Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician with Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC.

Dr. Chaves-Gnecco and Michelle Figlar of the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of the Young Child (PAEYC) are both in support of this campaign’s important message.

“PAEYC welcomes the ‘Use Your Words’ campaign. It helps promote our goals of educating parents, caregivers, stakeholders and professionals in best practices in child development,” said Ms. Figlar.

Education materials for “Use Your Words” are available at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/use-your-words.aspx](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/use-your-words.aspx). The materials include a training guide for professionals, tip sheets for parents and caregivers, brochures, resources for further reading, and more.

For updates on Twitter and Facebook, follow @ACDHS and visit [www.facebook.com/acdhs](http://www.facebook.com/acdhs). Spread the word and join the conversation in social media using #UseYourWords.

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MARC CHERNA, DIRECTOR  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES – OFFICE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS**  
101 HUMAN SERVICES BUILDING • ONE SMITHFIELD STREET • PITTSBURGH, PA 15222

