



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

Mark Bertolet  
412-350-3439  
[mark.bertolet@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:mark.bertolet@alleghenycounty.us)

## **Allegheny County Receives Grant to Expand Behavioral Health Services**

**PITTSBURGH** – Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald announced today that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has awarded the county \$933,000 to expand behavioral health services for children and adolescents 5 to 18 years old with serious emotional disturbance (SED) and their families.

“This award is an acknowledgement from SAMHSA of the robust behavioral health system of care already in place in Allegheny County, and we thank them for giving us the opportunity to expand the specialty populations that system serves,” said Fitzgerald.

Funding provided by the award will help establish a system of care within a new Community of Practice, a group of providers sharing a concern about children and families in the child welfare system, focusing on children diagnosed with an SED. SED encompasses any form of serious emotional, behavioral, or mental disorder.

“DHS has been fortunate to receive previous funding from SAMHSA to help build an effective system of care, but we are always evaluating it and trying to identify places that can be strengthened. With nearly one-third of children active in child welfare also receiving mental health services, this funding can go a long way in helping those individuals and families that are dually served,” said Marc Cherna, Director of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS).

The Community of Practice consists of 28 behavioral health service providers, and peer and advocacy groups, which have confirmed their willingness to serve child welfare involved children and families. Among other things, the funding will help expand existing supports, standardize a trauma-informed approach to service delivery, and address any gaps identified in crisis service.

The grant provided by SAMSHA is for one year, with the opportunity for continued funding for three additional years, depending on availability of federal funds.

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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

