



HUMAN SERVICES INTEGRATION FUND (HSIF)



In 1997, the Department of Human Services (DHS) was created under the direction of newly-elected county leadership and newly-appointed DHS Director Marc Cherna, by consolidating four separate departments into one unified department consisting of an Executive Office, five program offices and three support offices. An important component of this process - and a key factor in its success - was the engagement of a broad range of community partners in the design and implementation of the integration process; these partners included foundations, universities, government, faith-based and nonprofit organizations, consumers and other stakeholders. Responding to this process, and the challenges it faced, the R.K. Mellon Foundation convened local foundation leaders to consider how they could support and advance the Department's restructuring plans. The outcome was the creation of the Human Services Integration Fund (HSIF), a flexible funding pool, under the administrative direction of The Pittsburgh Foundation, for projects that foster integration and support innovations in technology, research and programming that would be difficult or impossible to accomplish with public sector dollars. From the original group of eight foundations, HSIF has more than doubled in size; its member foundations have contributed more than \$12 million¹ since the fund was established.

What began as a way to support Department creation and integration has grown into a fund that provides DHS with the flexibility to address innovative strategies and opportunities to improve department operations and the quality of services it provides. As a result of this flexibility, DHS has become a national leader in a number of technology-driven and programmatic initiatives. HSIF funding also provides an opportunity for its member foundations to initiate projects of mutual interest and to partner on a local and national level with other funding sources to expand opportunities for DHS to remain on the cutting-edge of the human services field. HSIF has been and continues to be an essential component in DHS's continuous efforts to improve the quality and reach of its services, and is just one way in which the local foundation community has supported DHS and demonstrated its commitment to the needs of Allegheny County residents.



CURRENT AND PREVIOUS HSIF MEMBERS INCLUDE:

- Alcoa Foundation
- Buhl Foundation
- BNY Mellon Foundation
- Eden Hall Foundation
- The Fine Foundation
- FISA Foundation
- The Forbes Funds
- The Grable Foundation
- The Heinz Endowments
- Highmark Foundation
- Hillman Foundation
- Jewish Healthcare Foundation
- Maurice Falk Medical Fund
- McAuley Ministries
- Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation
- The Pittsburgh Foundation
- Richard King Mellon Foundation
- Staunton Farm Foundation
- United Way of Allegheny County

The following is a selection of HSIF-supported initiatives and activities that reflect the range of opportunities made available through the fund.



IMPROVE TECHNOLOGY AND ITS UTILIZATION AS A DECISION-MAKING AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TOOL

Southwestern Pennsylvania Community Profiles

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Community Profile initiative is a Web-based software tool designed to present community data and indicators in a series of interactive tables, maps, graphs and charts that will be available to a wide range of users. The software tool allows users to visualize information from dozens of local, state and federal data sources (including the Allegheny County Department of Human Services). Data are presented at numerous geographic scales, from blocks, census tracts and neighborhoods to larger geographies, such as municipalities, school districts and counties.

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Community Profile initiative is being managed by the University of Pittsburgh's University Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR) and is based upon existing software code developed for the Providence Plan's Rhode Island Community Profiles. The Providence Plan created the Rhode Island Community Profiles software in an "open-source" development framework, making the code available for use by others. When completed, Southwestern Pennsylvania Community Profiles will be an invaluable resource for residents, government, elected officials, community organizations, charitable foundations, journalists, students and academic researchers.

DHS and Public School Data-Sharing Agreements/Partnerships

Since 2009, DHS has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to integrate student data to improve academic outcomes and well-being of at-risk children and youth with nine local school districts and the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.

These agreements have permitted analysis and sharing of data about students who are also involved with DHS services, and subsequently allowed for the implementation of initiatives designed to improve attendance and academic achievement.

Data Warehouse

When DHS was created, each of its consolidated offices had its own information system, a legacy of the four previously discrete departments. With support from HSIF, DHS was able to design the Data Warehouse, a central repository of social services data which has grown to include information from 19 internal and external data sources representing 29 different human service program areas. Originally developed by Deloitte Consulting, for \$2.8 million, the Data Warehouse is maintained with DHS operating funds. As part of DHS's ongoing efforts to ensure data quality, Data Warehouse Consultants recently conducted a thorough review of the Data Warehouse's design and data collection/management processes. Strategies were identified to further streamline and enhance these processes.

Human Services.net

HumanServices.net was a dynamic, consumer-facing, readily accessible, easy-to-navigate, web-based system that contained descriptive and contact information about human service providers in Allegheny County. Launched in 2006, with funding from HSIF, HumanServices.net provided information on all human service agencies and the populations they serve in a single location. The project was a windfall for individuals with specific needs as well as DHS staff and provider agencies with clients with multiple needs (e.g. mental health, transportation and child care).

The implementation of PA211 in February 2012 replaced the need for HumanService.net.



OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION

Physical Relocation Project

Support from HSIF and the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce helped DHS design a physical relocation strategy to co-locate the four former departments in order to improve communication and service coordination for consumers with multiple needs. In addition to integrating services, the move created more effective space utilization, reduced rental space by approximately 17,000 square feet, and cut annual rental costs by \$256,000.

JD Edwards Project

JD Edwards was engaged on a consulting basis to coordinate the consolidation of the financial management systems of the four former departments. This project created a single county-wide direct-entry system, leading to significant efficiencies and improvements over the three individual entry and reporting systems previously in place.



COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Advisory Board Technical Assistance and Training

A key initiative for DHS early in its formation was to improve the effectiveness of its multiple advisory boards. HSIF support allowed DHS to hire a consultant to structure each retreat to address issues, clarify board and staff roles and responsibilities and identify processes to review action plans and effective communications plans. The retreats led to increased buy-in and support from board members and the community.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

DHS serves approximately 20 percent of Allegheny County's population every year. In order to gauge consumer perception of and satisfaction with DHS's services, a thorough customer satisfaction survey was conducted. DHS received constructive and substantially positive feedback, which was shared during a summit convened with more than 200 provider agencies.



WORK FORCE ENHANCEMENT

Random Moment Sampling

To facilitate departmental integration, DHS needed to develop a cost allocation system for staff that worked across different program areas. Funding from HSIF allowed DHS to contract with a consulting firm to develop a random sampling technique to produce accurate labor distribution results without the burden of a costly manual system. The automated system saves the department \$120,000 annually in costly accountant fees and an estimated 320 hours of professional staff time; additionally, the system increases revenue realized from maximizing claims submitted to state and federal government.

Personnel Audit

Early in the consolidation process, analyses were conducted that indicated pay disparities among similar staff in different offices as well as performance measures and incentives. HSIF supported the hiring of consultants who created a unified human resource strategy. The efforts improved efficiency and cost effectiveness tremendously; a more competitive salary structure based on benchmarking was created along with an updated and improved personnel performance appraisal process.

Child Welfare Workload Standards Project

A study was conducted on the demands and parameters of providing high quality child welfare services; the results determined the optimum caseloads for caseworkers and were used to adjust caseloads and to provide quantifiable information to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare and public officials.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Caseload Analysis

HSIF funded a consultant who conducted an in-depth review of AAA caseload volumes, internal and external professional processes for AAA programs, and information capabilities. AAA has implemented many of the organizational and structural recommendations that emerged from the study, resulting in improved interactions with consumers and reduction in the length of time between initial contact and service provision.



QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Behavioral Health Cost Analysis Study

Funding from HSIF helped to initiate a review to assist in the consolidation of mental health and drug and alcohol services into a unified Office of Behavioral Health. The review was completed by the Technical Assistance Collaborative with oversight and follow-up from a local steering committee that included providers, OBH, Allegheny County Health Choices, Inc. and Community Care Behavioral Health.



INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Scholars and Fellows in Local Government

In 2007, the DHS Scholars in Local Government program was implemented. The Scholars program is a highly competitive career development opportunity intended to attract recent graduates of master's degree programs in public policy, public administration, social work, business and law school to pursue a career in local government. Candidates compete for one-year appointments during which they complete high profile projects and participate in professional development activities.

In 2013, the DHS Fellows in Local Government program was implemented and the first Fellow was hired. The program is designed to create a pathway for motivated and talented individuals with past or current lived experience within a human service system to contribute to and shape the work of DHS. It is designed for recent college graduates in a variety of human service-related fields.

Scholars and Fellows who successfully complete their one-year assignment are given special consideration for full-time employment with DHS. As of January 2013, three previous Scholars are DHS employees.

Local Government Case Competition

Since 2007, HSIF has supported the Local Government Case Competition, designed to engage graduate students from local universities in identifying creative solutions to difficult social problems.

Competitions have addressed a variety of issues, including how to position Allegheny County as a leader in the environmental sustainability movement; assisting the Homewood Children's Village in designing its five-year strategic plan; addressing academic performance for students attending the Pittsburgh Public Schools who also receive services from DHS; designing ways to address stigma and improve the experiences of individuals living with serious mental illness; addressing the issue of suburban poverty and those affected by it; and designing a recruitment and retention strategy for the 21st Century workforce.

The Case Competition has been an ideal way to engage graduate students in community issues, make them aware of DHS's reach in the region and encourage them to consider future employment opportunities with DHS.

Allegheny County Jail Collaborative

The Allegheny County Jail Collaborative was created in 2000 as a collaborative among DHS, the Allegheny County Jail, the Allegheny County Health Department and the Courts; with its focus on two primary goals (increase public safety and reduce recidivism), the Collaborative has implemented a number of initiatives that support successful re-entry, coordinated discharge and family support for inmates and their families. An HSIF Jail Collaborative sub-fund was established in 2009 to provide the matching funds necessary to secure significant federal funding as well as to provide support for other program components designed to enhance the Collaborative's work.

External evaluations of the Collaborative's work are underway.

Mental Health Court (MHC)

MHC offers offenders with behavioral health diagnoses a special docket within criminal court that diverts them to treatment rather than incarceration. MHC offers offenders with behavioral health diagnoses a special docket within criminal court that diverts them to treatment rather than incarceration. The effort, funded through the auspices of HSIF, has helped to keep recidivism rates of MHC participants low through close supervision and a mandatory treatment plan intended to promote recovery and seamless support services. Staunton Farms funded an evaluation by Rand which demonstrated the cost effectiveness of the court. MHC has helped to keep recidivism rates of MHC participants low through close supervision and a mandatory treatment plan intended to promote recovery and seamless support services. The Staunton Farms Foundation funded an evaluation by Rand which demonstrated the cost effectiveness of the court.

Hearing Officer Project

HSIF support was critical to expediting permanency in Allegheny County. With more than 17,000 dependency hearings per year, one full time judge, and a child welfare system in the midst of major reforms, the local foundations responded to a 1998 grant proposal created by Marc Cherna and the Honorable Max Baer, to increase judicial resources for dependency cases and forward their permanency agenda.

HSIF provided \$1.185 million in funding which was used to hire hearing officers and other support staff to preside over dependency hearings so that judges were able to more closely review and monitor critical court proceedings (e.g., termination of parental rights). The outcomes of the project included a decrease in the number of children in placement, reduction in average length of stay of children in out-of-home placement, and a decrease in judges' average caseload. Lower caseloads resulted in the availability of funds to support the ongoing operation of the project.

The Disability Connection

Statistics indicate that Americans with disabilities are behind their peers in key predictors of self-sufficiency, including rates of employment, homeownership and graduation. In 2000, The Disability Connection was created to heighten awareness and improve outcomes for Allegheny County residents with disabilities. Since then, The Disability Connection has enhanced the capacity of DHS to promote and meet the direct service needs of individuals with disabilities; provided information and referral, case management, and service coordination services to individuals with disabilities as well as their advocates and local professionals; supported DHS and its provider network in increasing workplace accessibility and inclusiveness; forged strategic partnerships to increase disability awareness and the number and quality of services available; and provided training to DHS staff, community partners and the general public on disability-related topics.

Housing and Homeless Matching Funds

In 2005, HUD cut funding for services dedicated to homeless and housing programs significantly and increased local matching requirements in order to receive federal money. By contributing to the Continuum of Care Supportive Services fund and providing the necessary local match, HSIF made it possible for DHS to leverage critically important federal dollars necessary for the continuation of programs to support homeless individuals. With this support, Allegheny County was able to remain competitive at the national level and ensure HUD funding at maximum levels.



RESEARCH AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

HSIF supports DHS's research agenda, which includes both external evaluations of DHS-funded programs and internal research and evaluation activities. Examples of external research include an evaluation of the Family Support Center Network and an analysis of the outcomes of the Systems of Care Initiative.

Through its internal research agenda, DHS has analyzed a wide variety of programs, issues and policies, expanding throughout various DHS offices and supporting efforts which further integration throughout the Department. Almost 100 reports have been produced through this agenda, in the following areas: basic needs; behavioral health and disabilities; child development and education; child, youth and families; crime and justice; and innovation, policy and reform.