



# ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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## **“Stand Together” Program Earns National Recognition**

**PITTSBURGH** – Allegheny County and its Department of Human Services (DHS) has been honored by the National Association of Counties (NACo) with a 2017 “Best in Category” Achievement Award for Stand Together, an educational initiative created by DHS designed to reduce the stigma of mental illness. Awards were distributed at NACo’s Annual Conference in Franklin County, Ohio, July 21-24. The honor also grants Stand Together inclusion in NACo’s list of “100 Brilliant Ideas,” recognizing innovations from around the country.

“Any time one of our innovative programs is recognized at the national level, it’s truly an honor. Being singled out in a list such as this allows other counties to replicate a program that’s working here, so that the “Stand Together” model can help reduce the stigma of mental illness in more than just our own community,” said DHS Director Marc Cherna.

Stand Together, which began in 2013, trains, inspires, and equips middle and high school youth to act against stigma toward peers with mental or substance use disorders. During the 2016/17 school year, eight schools participated in the program, engaging more than 250 students. In May, a recognition ceremony at the Heinz History Center highlighted the students’ work, with displays of the individual school projects.

The program receives funding from Staunton Farm Foundation, Community Care Behavioral Health, and Allegheny Health Choices, Inc. DHS hopes to expand the number of participating schools in the 2017/18 school year. More information on Stand Together is at <http://standtogether.againststigma.org>.

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Marc Cherna, Director

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