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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **County, Pitt Child Welfare Partnership Receive Workforce Excellence Grant**

**PITTSBURGH** – The Department of Human Services (DHS) and University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work have been selected as one of eight partnerships nationally to take part in a new Workforce Excellence initiative through the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau. As a Workforce Excellence site, the NCWWI will engage the partners in a 5-year plan to cultivate inclusive organizational leadership and high-performing staff.

"Our region always excels when it works together, and this most recent example of collaboration between DHS and Pitt is no exception," said County Executive Rich Fitzgerald. "It is quite an honor to be selected as only one of eight partnerships nationwide, and we look forward to seeing the success of that partnership in our community."

In a letter accompanying the award, the NCWWI said it was recognizing the partnership between DHS and the University of Pittsburgh for its "commitment and dedication to the development of the child welfare workforce."

"We are honored to receive this opportunity, which is a reflection of the great collaboration that we have built with the School of Social Work," said Marc Cherna, DHS Director. "This initiative will help us to continue to build a diverse workforce to better meet the needs of children and families served through our child welfare system, while also preparing those caseworkers to be the child welfare leaders of tomorrow."

Working with representatives from the NCWWI, the initiative includes the integration of a Leadership Academy which will enable participating child welfare leaders to become skilled in leading change, fostering collaboration, implementing results-oriented decisions, and leading people. Additionally, the initiative will provide guidance and funding for the development of a Traineeship Program for Master's level students in the School of Social Work, who commit to working at Allegheny County's Office of Children, Youth & Families upon program completion.

"We're excited to offer this professional development opportunity to our students, and to further our commitment to strengthening the child welfare workforce," said Helen Cahalane, Principal Investigator

for the Child Welfare Education and Research Programs and Clinical Associate Professor at the Pitt School of Social Work. “Our long-standing partnership with Allegheny County DHS places us in a great position for accomplishing the goals of this national level workforce excellence initiative.

Read more about the Child Welfare Workforce Excellence Fellows Program on the [University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work website](#).

# # #

Marc Cherna, Director

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