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Hello Baby Provides Fresh Approach, Supporting Parents of Newborns

PITTSBURGH – The Department of Human Services (DHS), together with partners United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania (2-1-1) and Healthy Start Pittsburgh, announced today that they have begun rolling out a first-of-its-kind parenting initiative, Hello Baby, to all parents of new babies in the county. Allegheny County is fortunate to have many available resources to help parents of new babies thrive and now there is a way to get those resources to the families that need them most.

Hello Baby encompasses an array of supports, from a resource website and warmline to enhanced family centers to personal interactions, all intending to reduce the stressors that come with having a new baby. “It’s a complex initiative with a simple goal of improving outcomes for children in Allegheny County, and one that we could not have done alone. We’re especially thankful for the myriad of people—service providers, medical professionals, community members, and most importantly, parents—who have helped us develop Hello Baby and for the important partners who will help carry it out,” said DHS Director Marc Cherna.

Hello Baby is designed to strengthen families, improve children’s outcomes, promote safe and secure environments, and maximize child and family well-being. A website, helloworldpgh.org, provides information and links to Allegheny County resources that assist with infant health and safety, parent supports, childcare and development, and other essentials. It also includes a live chat with the opportunity to interact with a family specialist provided through United Way’s PA 211 Southwest.

“New parents have a lot of questions and are not always sure who to ask for information and support they may need. United Way of Southwestern PA is excited to be the information and referral partner for the Hello Baby program,” said Bobbi Watt Geer, President & CEO of United Way of Southwestern PA. In addition to the resources available to all parents, Healthy Start Pittsburgh will engage those with more specialized needs, as determined through an assessment of available data, and help to develop care plans, conduct case management and coordinate supports with other service providers.

“Hello Baby provides an opportunity for Healthy Start to step into a new but very familiar space—focusing explicitly on postpartum wellbeing. We’ve vetted this opportunity extensively and are excited to rethink how we serve families at this scale and feel that the program is aligned with our historical and continued commitment to health equity,” said Jada Shirriel, CEO of Healthy Start Pittsburgh.

In a light-touch response to newborn needs during the pandemic, a version of Hello Baby was piloted over the summer; 345 babies were referred by area birthing hospitals for help with things like strengthening social supports and addressing food insecurity, and Healthy Start Pittsburgh provided 188 care boxes of diapers, wipes and other essentials to families most in need.

A key component of Hello Baby is the enhancement of the 27 Family Centers located in neighborhoods around Allegheny County. The Family Center network, first established in 1997, has recently been updated to invite a more inclusive definition of “family.” Family Centers complement the resource aims of Hello Baby by providing a community hub for parents to connect and share experiences, learn about available programs, and find development and early education supports. Information and locations for the centers can be found at familycenters.alleghenycounty.us.

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