

Home-based Family Recovery now offered in Allegheny County

DHS has partnered with Holy Family Institute to offer Home-based Family Recovery, an in-home therapy and substance use disorder treatment designed to help parents overcome substance use disorders while also improving parent-child relationships. Originally developed in 2006 for the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, Allegheny County DHS's use of the program marks the first time that it has been used by a state or jurisdiction outside of Connecticut.

"Substance use disorders are the leading cause of child welfare referrals, and the opioid crisis has created even more challenges. Although there are treatment options available around the county, they often come with barriers – such as limited transportation or lack of childcare – that can limit a parent's access to help," said Bruce A. Nichols, contract monitoring supervisor in the Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF). "Through Home-based Family Recovery, parents can establish a clear path to recovery while also strengthening relationships with their children and creating a safe and stable home for the family."

The Home-based Family Recovery program treats adults in Allegheny County over the age of 18 who are actively abusing substances and/or have a recent history of substance use. Unlike some programs that are only open to mothers, participants in the Home-Based Family Recovery program may be male, female or gender nonbinary. The participant must have a child who is under the age of 36 months and is either at risk for removal from parental custody due to parental substance use or in out-of-home care due to parental substance abuse with a plan for imminent reunification. The program can accommodate 12 families, and lasts from 6-12 months in duration.

Once enrolled, participants are exposed to a variety of in-home treatment methods, such as assessments to determine triggers, behavior, and consequences; contracts between parents and staff to achieve specific behavioral goals; and relapse and safety plans for children. Participants also receive weekly incentives for drug tests that show they are abstaining from substances.

To nurture relationships between the participant and their child(ren), the program works with participants to identify and explore their feelings about parenting. Additionally, there are weekly peer support meetings where the children can interact and parents can receive peer and staff reinforcement as well as support for their parenting skills and recovery success.

"We are encouraged by the progress we've seen in clients in the Home-based Family Recovery Program. We believe the program has the potential to reduce child abuse, neglect, and out of home placements while also building safe and stable homes that can foster the healthy growth and development of children," Bruce concluded.

For general information about Home-based Family Recovery, please contact Bruce at Bruce.Nichols@AlleghenyCounty.US. CYF staff should contact their office's resource specialist to learn more.