

DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County
Department of Human Services



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New VISTA helps to support initiatives around substance use disorders

The Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services has recently welcomed Denija DuCasse, an AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America), to the team. Her service term will run through September 2019.

Denija graduated from Shippensburg University with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in mental health counseling. She is currently enrolled at Duquesne University where she is working on her doctorate in counselor education and supervision. Denija began her career working directly with clients in both inpatient and outpatient facilities; however, she soon realized that she had a desire to move from hands-on care to a role that would allow her to create system-wide changes. It was that desire that encouraged her to apply for the VISTA position.

During her VISTA service term, Denija will work as the drug and alcohol community outreach coordinator. As a part of her position she will support the scheduling, organizing and planning of Certified Recovery Specialist (CRS) trainings. The CRS credential is offered to individuals in recovery who have been specifically trained to help others on their recovery journeys. Twenty-six specialists have been trained so far, and plans are in place to train an additional 30 specialists by March 2019.

Beyond CRS training, Denija will also participate in community events and conferences to share information about PA Get Help Now, a mobile website and hotline created by the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) to assist those seeking recovery resources.

"I was always told that it is important to be the change that you want to see in the world. My hope is that we can all work together to help facilitate the change that has been needed for many years," said Denija.