



# DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County  
Department of Human Services



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## **Office of Children, Youth and Families receives funding to create safer conditions for families**

DHS's Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF) is one of three national sites selected as a research and capacity building site by Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence in Child Welfare, (QIC-DVCW), a cooperative agreement between Futures Without Violence and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. This designation will assist CYF in working to help members of families involved in child welfare that are experiencing domestic violence. The other selected sites are in Illinois and Massachusetts.

As a research and capacity building site, Allegheny County CYF will test an Adult and Child Survivor-Centered Approach to better serve families experiencing domestic violence. While there is currently no known evidence-based approach for serving these families, the Adult and Child Survivor-Centered Approach is based on decades of research and practice lessons that show the safety of child survivors of domestic violence is inextricably linked to the safety of their survivor parent. With this approach, CYF will help families increase their protective factors to improve their safety, overall well-being, and permanency, and the parent using violence will be held accountable and supported through positive behavior changes to reduce or end the violence.

DHS has selected two regional offices as intervention sites (East and Central) and two offices as comparison sites (North and Mon Valley). Caseworkers at the intervention sites and community partners – which includes Women's Center & Shelter, Family Court, Holy Family, and Allegheny Family Network – participated in a two-day training on the Adult and Child Survivor-Centered Approach this spring and will begin applying those techniques when working with families experiencing domestic violence. CYF and partners will also work collaboratively to address disparities in the system.

Throughout the process, families at both intervention and comparison sites will be surveyed to learn more about their needs and how they are – or aren't – being met. The QIC-DVCW has partnered with the University of Kansas to conduct research on the project.

"In our work, we often prioritize the safety of the child, and research has shown that it's important for us to also ensure the safety of the parent, as well," said Dara DeChellis,

program manager of IPV in CYF. "By becoming a research and capacity building site, we will be able to better serve families in Allegheny County while also conducting the research to show that the adult and child survivor-centered approach is a successful, evidence-based method that can be used in child welfare agencies across the country."

To learn more about this work, contact Dara DeChellis at [dara.dechellis@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:dara.dechellis@alleghenycounty.us).