



DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County
Department of Human Services



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DHS works to encourage positive school engagement at the start of a most unusual school year

The 2020-21 school year comes with a lot of uncertainty and confusion, but DHS staff are diligently working to support providers and families through these challenges.

Recognizing that staff and the network of provider agencies have a wide reach with children and families in Allegheny County, DHS leadership wanted to be very clear about setting expectations: one of the most important conversations happening should be around school year concerns, including the opening of the school year, addressing worries and fears, and identifying additional needs. Leaders in all child- and family-serving DHS offices worked together to create and distribute conversation starters, tips for human services professionals, key questions to ask and a short resource list.

Additionally, staff members have been assisting Allies for Children in maintaining a comprehensive directory of school reopening plans, which is available [as a Google doc](#).

To assist professionals during the school year, integrated school outreach staff who work on the DHS Focus on Attendance partnership will be available to answer questions through the newly established COVID School Help Resource Center. The center is a one-stop-shop that will offer guidance to strengthen the DHS professional network on topics ranging from obtaining basic needs to finding tutoring support to improving school engagement. Human services professionals can access the COVID School Help Resource Center by contacting focus_attendance@alleghenycounty.us or 412.918.9206.

"Young people who find themselves involved in human services systems often struggle in school. They are represented in special education services at higher rates and they are more likely to struggle with grades, attendance and school discipline when compared to their 'non-involved' peers. I was very proud to be part of creating this unified message which emphasizes that our workers play a key role in supporting children and families with school engagement," said Samantha Murphy, resource services manager in Integrated Program Services. "My hope is that our DHS involved young people get the support they need to start off the school year off strong!"