



DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegany County
Department of Human Services



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Exciting changes for CYF visitation rooms

Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF) visitation rooms are receiving an upgrade, thanks to funding from the Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence in Child Welfare (QIC-DVCW).

As a QIC-DVCW [research and capacity building site](#), DHS is eligible to receive up to \$6,000 per year by completing research surveys. Last year, CYF received \$4,000 and earmarked those funds to improve visitation rooms at the four participating CYF regional offices. Each regional office hosts about 35 family visits a week.

"We could have just used the money to buy the items we thought would be best for the rooms, but we felt that it was important to work with families to determine their wants and needs," said Dara DeChellis, IPV program manager in CYF. "After hearing from our families and CYF client interaction specialists, we created an exhaustive list of ways we could improve the rooms. A team in each of the research implementation site offices is working to prioritize purchases and create action steps on how to best address our families' needs."

So far, visitation room upgrades have included the addition of diaper changing tables, organizational cubbies for toys, multi-ethnic dolls, and child-sized chairs and tables. Additionally, more than 200 items for the rooms were collected through a toy drive held in January.

Future plans include designing new signage that is clear and consistent, and creating options for interactive play for children of all ages.

"Families, parents, and children are important, and it is a value to our agency to offer trauma-informed spaces that encourage comfortable interactions between parents and their children," Dara added. "Our families deserve the best we have to offer."