



Hello Baby Overview

In Allegheny County, our goal is for every child to thrive and every family to feel supported and connected as they adjust to life with a new baby. It is in this spirit that the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) is launching Hello Baby in January 2020. Hello Baby is a voluntary program for parents of new babies designed to strengthen families, improve children's outcomes, and maximize child and family well-being, safety and security. The program is a tiered model with a variety of supports designed to meet families' varied needs and interests. It will build upon the robust set of services and supports that already exist for families and introduce a more deliberate and differentiated approach to outreach for new parents. Through Hello Baby, DHS will reach more families who can benefit from support, better match families and babies to the right services, and ensure that the most vulnerable families and babies have access to the best supports we can offer.

The tiered outreach and support strategies will be tailored to meet families' strengths and needs:

- **UNIVERSAL:** We will make sure every family knows what is available through an initial hospital visit and follow up mailings and marketing in doctors' offices and in the community. Universal resources will include a family-friendly website with helpful content and services for parents of infants and toddlers and a 24/7 "warm line" through 2-1-1 that will offer specialized parenting support to all families in Allegheny County. Both of these strategies are intended to help expecting and new parents navigate the myriad of resources our county has to offer, many of which are free and universally available.
- **DIFFERENTIATED:** We know that some families have higher levels of need, and we will employ a differentiated outreach strategy to reach and connect these families to additional supports. Community outreach workers will visit a subset of families, welcoming the new babies, delivering a diaper basket, and inviting the family to be a part of the nearest Family Support Center. These 28 community-run, family-led Centers, located throughout the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, have services and supports that include evidence-based home visiting, peer support, parenting education, social events (e.g., family dinners), and help in getting housing, child care and other vital services for children and family members. All families of young children are welcome to visit these centers, but we hope this differentiated outreach strategy increases participation by more vulnerable families.
- **PRIORITY:** A small group of families with the highest needs will be offered priority care and services by a two-person team consisting of an experienced peer-support specialist and a social worker. These teams will work to engage families, learn about their needs and, together with the

parents, develop a plan for leveraging their strengths, clearing barriers to appropriate services, and providing them with wraparound assistance for as long as they wish or until the child turns three. This assistance can take the form of concrete goods (e.g., diaper, formula, food), assistance with immediate needs such as transportation to the pediatrician and eviction prevention, and connections to community resources such as evidence-based parenting programs, mental health and/or substance use treatment, child care and emergency housing.

DHS is using available service data (birth records, child welfare records, homelessness, jail/juvenile probation records) and a predictive risk model to determine the appropriate outreach and supports to offer each family. DHS has conducted extensive reviews of this approach with community members, family members, direct service staff and the Allegheny County Children's Cabinet (DHS's children and families advisory board). We also consulted independent ethicists to weigh in on the plan to use data to tier Hello Baby services. They agreed that Hello Baby is an important – and ethical – service because 1) we are able to direct services to those who need them most and 2) those services are completely voluntary. Hello Baby will be implemented in waves; the initial pilot will take place in a representative geographic area of the County. The goal is to support as many families as possible as quickly as possible while ensuring that every family receives the appropriate supports and high-quality services needed to help them thrive. The path to full implementation includes making adjustments based on early experiences with the model and on a process and outcome evaluation for which DHS will solicit proposals.