

CYF Community Outreach Specialist is building community ties

The Department of Human Service's commitment to amplifying community voices is getting a boost with the addition of Jace Ransom to the Office of Children, Youth and Families.

Jace's work as Community Outreach Specialist, a new role in CYF, draws upon his varied professional experiences to connect with community residents and leaders. Prior to joining CYF in March 2016, he taught elementary students in the Penn Hills School District and worked with the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation (PLF) for 13 years. At the nonprofit, he assisted in developing youth programs for faith-based communities.

Since joining DHS he has been familiarizing himself not only with the breadth of the department's programs but meeting with community groups and leaders, primarily in Penn Hills, Wilkinsburg and the Mon Valley.

Jace says his longtime work with parents, youth and community leaders puts him in an ideal position to be a tie that binds them all to DHS. And while it might seem counterintuitive, not having a background in direct human service delivery adds to the beneficial mix he brings to his work by giving a fresh look at situations, he said.

"Part of my work is to inform the DHS leadership about how the community perceives DHS and the work we do so that we can make the necessary adjustments and continue to create an integrated, accessible and culturally competent human service system," he said.

Walter H. Smith Jr., Ph.D., Deputy Director of CYF, said the addition of Jace demonstrates how committed DHS is to hearing the voices of the community. "Jace's work will elevate those voices. He will not only give an additional warm, consistent presence to the department and CYF in its interactions with residents and community leaders, he will help us to do the things we must do to ensure DHS boosts families and children to finding the solutions they need."

Walter noted that having a Community Outreach Specialist dovetails with the department's use of Conferencing and Teaming in casework. Conferencing and Teaming empowers individuals and families



Jace Ransom hopes his work will bring back information from the community to DHS to inform its practices.

not only by giving them an active voice and role in forging solutions but also brings together all of those who can help in that process.

“In a way, Jace’s position complements that practice model. Just as Conferencing and Teaming creates a community by bringing together families and individuals, so does a Community Outreach Specialist,” Walter said.

“We are wrapping our arms around the community,” Jace added.

More information about [Conferencing and Teaming](#) can be found on the DHS website.