



DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County
Department of Human Services



June 2020

YELS team works to amplify the voices of those with lived experience

Big changes have been on hand for the Youth Voice Specialists team who were recently renamed as the Youth Engagement and Learning Specialists (YELS) team and moved from the Youth Support Partner (YSP) unit to the Collaborative for Applied Learning, Trauma and Technical Support (CATTS) team in Integrated Program Services (IPS).

Both the move and the renaming of the team are part of DHS's commitment to ensuring those with lived system experience continue to play a critical role in not only the delivery of services and peer support, but also in the education and training of DHS's workforce. Additionally, the creation of the YELS team is step forward in providing professional development and career advancement opportunities for YSP staff.

As part of the CATTS team, the YELS will continue to support DHS's work while lending the youth voice to ensure that it is incorporated into efforts and policies that support young people. Additionally, the YELS will bring the youth voice and creativity to many of the trainings currently being offered through the CATTS team, including trainings around assessment and trauma-informed engagement.

"The CATTS and YELS teams have a shared commitment on how we support and encourage workforce development through highly interactive and engaging trainings. I'm excited when I think about the opportunities for us to learn from one another, and how this collaboration will create different layers to our trainings as we bring our own personal and professional experiences together," said Robin Orlando-Price, applied learning and development administrator.

Kaiona McGowan, YELS manager, adds, "I am excited to join the CATTS team because the possibilities of collaboration and partnership are endless. I love to learn and gain new skills because it not only lends to my professional life but to my personal life and what I can bring to my community."

To learn more about the YELS, contact Robin at Robin.Orlando@AlleghenyCounty.us or Kaiona at Kaiona.McGowan@AlleghenyCounty.us.