



DHS News

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Department of Human Services



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Child Welfare Leadership Fellows work to improve outcomes for CYF-served teens

On Tuesday, July 20, five teams of Child Welfare Leadership Fellows gathered at the Office of Children, Youth and Families' (CYF) Mon Valley Regional Office to present the final phase of their project work focused on the challenge of providing stability for Allegheny County's CYF-served teenagers. The 2021 class marked the fifth group of Fellows.

The Fellows spent the last 10 months exploring opportunities to improve supports and services for teens, a group that was selected because they will soon be transitioning to adulthood and are especially in need of stability. The Fellows divided the topic into five areas – crossover youth (youth served by CYF and Juvenile Probation), exits, well-being, transition services and placement stability – and used data provided by the Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning (ATP) to devise potential solutions. Some suggestions offered included new interventions for parent-child mediation, efforts to increase natural supports for teens and re-imagined roles for transition planners.

"This year's Fellows had a unique challenge as the first, and hopefully only, class to complete Fellows virtually. So much of this program is built on teamwork and engagement and building those pieces when we were remote was challenging, but the Fellows worked very hard and really came together as teams to propose solutions that can help teens," said Katie Arvay, child welfare practice analyst and program manager for Fellows. "Fellows uncovered a number of areas where we can make improvements, and will now begin to work with leaders within CYF to implement solutions that will help teens engage with services, build networks of support, and find stability at home and in the community."

Previous classes of Fellows have been the catalyst for changes in the child welfare system, including the establishment of behavioral health specialist and kinship navigator positions, a Private Petition Diversion Initiative that refers a very specific population of youth (12-17 years old without a safety concern) to services they need to address a crisis without CYF involvement, and reimagining resource coordinators as in-home navigators. Since inception, more than 120 DHS staff members from across DHS program areas have participated as Child Welfare Leadership Fellows.