



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

What we are here to do

DHS is here to **support people in their most vulnerable times** so they can thrive.

We provide parents with child care, out of school programs, and developmental support. We help people get behavioral health and wellness services, including recovery from substance use disorders. We provide housing and shelter for people in need, and help older adults and people with disabling conditions live as independently as possible. And we protect children, youth, and older adults from harm.

Community need

Food

15% of households here can't get enough food for their families.

Housing

Thousands of people are unstably housed. And national data show **20% of Black and Hispanic renters and 40% of older renters pay more than half of their incomes on housing.**

Wages

DHS clients' **earnings fell by 14%** in the first six months of the pandemic. Now we're in a K-shaped recovery, with income shooting up for those already doing well, and **going down sharply for those nearer the bottom.**

Violence

The number of gun shots fired in Pittsburgh is **persistently high.**

Trauma

Exposure to violence and other adverse experiences have increased child and youth trauma.

Abuse and Neglect

Children and older adults largely **went unseen over the last 19 months** (not in school, not seeing doctors), leaving us worried about safety for our most vulnerable.

Mental health

Our **suicide rate is higher than the national average.** Compared with the rest of the US, more adults here report their mental health is not good. And **40% of adolescents reported feeling sad or depressed** in the past month. This is before we've seen the full effects of a year of social isolation from the pandemic.

Substance use

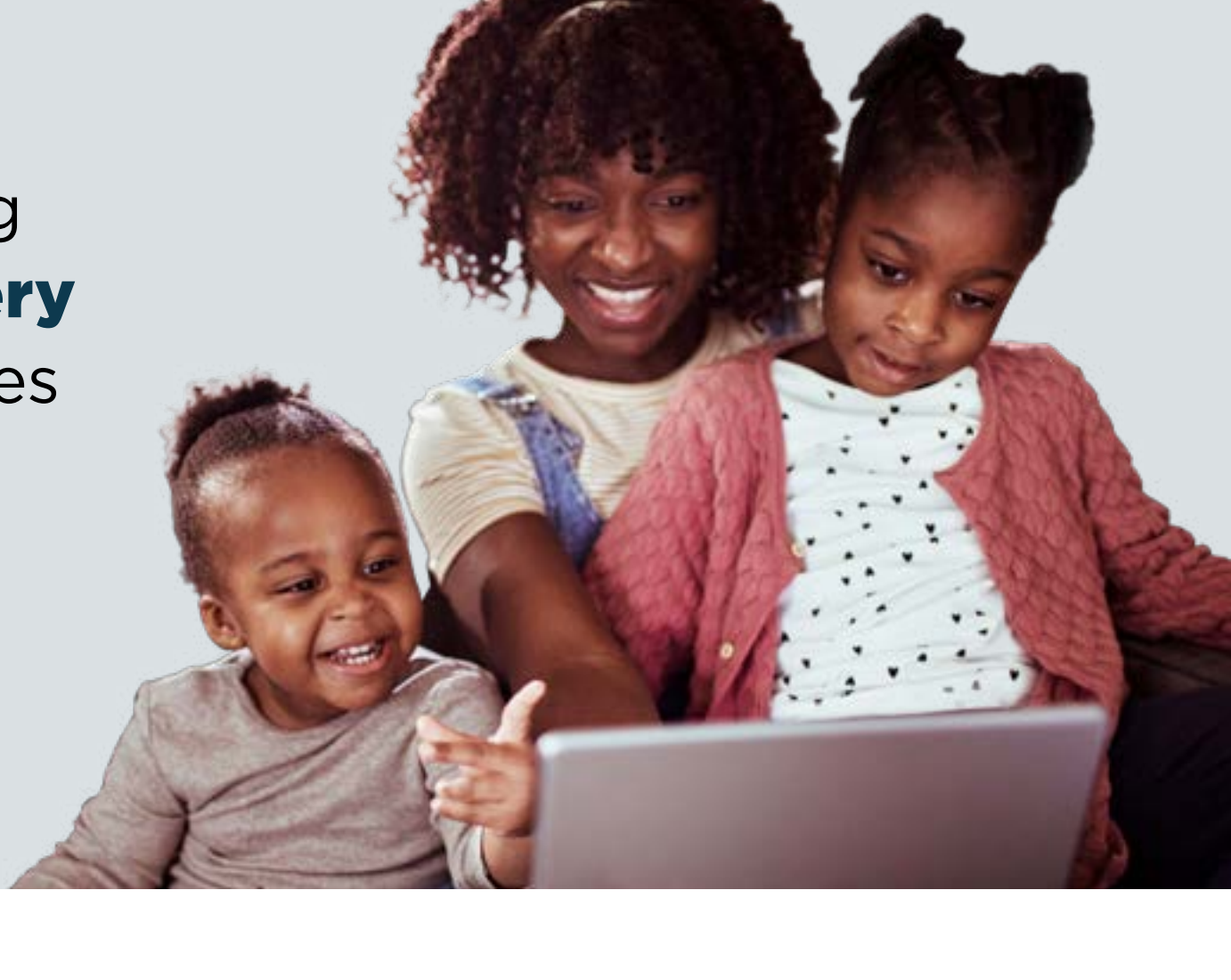
Adults reported **drinking twice as much alcohol** on more than twice as many days, during Covid (nationally); and **overdose deaths increased by 16%** (locally). All of this while access to treatment was down because of the pandemic.

The Needs

This unique time: the opportunities

The needs are vast, but **there's increased hope we can make a difference.**

The federal government is making **investments in pandemic recovery** and supporting the human services infrastructure. We also are seeing **strong calls for reform**—to move from criminalizing poverty to offering social services and help.



Our plan: the goals

To best serve and protect people in the county, **we will work with our partners and community** to:

Create big, wide-open **access to human services** to make sure people get the right help when they need it.

Increase our investments in **economic security.**

Expand **prevention** so individuals and families can avoid entering systems when possible.

Support people, their families, and first responders when people are in **crisis.**

Improve the **flow and quality** of our systems so we can serve more people well.

Our plan: the strategies

Access

Place-based access: Build upon multi-service locations and good mobile/home delivery to connect people with services—prevention, intervention, and crisis

Digital access: Build a resource with rich, always-current information on the services anyone people need—and share this with anyone who wants to use it

Outreach and triage: Ensure people who need services the most know about them and are getting them

Marketing: Make it common knowledge where to turn for help in Allegheny County and provide information that's educational and useful

Economic Security

Rental assistance: Expand rental assistance and operate a smoothly-running system that allows people to access it in time to prevent eviction

Digital divide: Seek to implement a strategy that expands the number of people with regular access to the internet and devices which allow them to connect to treatment, education, and services

Child care and transportation: Seek opportunities to increase child care during non-traditional and short-term hours; and expand transportation for people in training and employment

Public benefits: Support agencies working to increase the number of people enrolled in the benefits

Resources: Actively seek additional funding to alleviate poverty

Prevention

Homelessness: Expand rental assistance, help increase affordable housing supply, and improve the flow of the system

Overdose: Expand street outreach, require medication assisted treatment as part of provider contracts, ensure careful transition from treatment, and expand harm reduction approaches

Trauma: Invest in community programs to reduce violence

Involuntary systems: Work with partners to redesign systems; and invest in jail population reduction, juvenile justice alternatives, and diversion from child welfare involvement

Crisis

One number to call: Prepare to have "988" become the number people call when someone is having a crisis

Mobile response: Replicate the co-responder model; and expand the number of social work teams that can respond when someone is in a behavioral health, housing, or other crisis

Community response: Support communities in instituting ways of helping their neighbors in crisis—and help make this part of the 911 system

Peer respite: Establish welcoming, peer-operated spaces where people can find support when their mental health symptoms are escalating, or they need to recover from a crisis

Flow and quality

For each of our major systems, we'll work to reduce waiting lists and improve outcomes through quality services and better flow.

Our values

DHS staff and its network of providers work with professionalism, respect, compassion, and equity.

