



DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County
Department of Human Services



June 2021

Five questions with Carolynne Burton

Carolynne is protective service investigator, aging care manager 3 in the Area Agency on Aging. She can be reached at Carolynne.burton@alleghenycounty.us.

1. What was your path to Allegheny County/DHS?

My husband and three kids relocated to Pennsylvania from Virginia Beach in March of 2015 because of a position my husband took in Pittsburgh. After the kids were all settled into their respective schools, I decided to take the civil service test so that I could resume my social services career. The positions I have held have been client interaction specialist, CYF caseworker, and care manager for Older Adult Protective Services (OAPS).

2. Tell us a bit about the work you do.

I conduct investigations based on allegations of abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, and abandonment of adults 60 and older. The goal is to determine the validity of the allegation and assist in mitigating any risk of further need for protective service. This could include referring to a case management agency or to in-home services to help support the older adult. At times there are more complex issues that cannot be safely closed out in the 20-day timeframe. We may need to apply for guardianship if the person is incapacitated (mentally or physically), or in cases of financial exploitation, we may need to assist the older adult in finding a representative payee to assist with their finances.

3. How does your work help to support DHS's mission and goals?

The work I do allows me to assist the most vulnerable population in Allegheny County. Utilizing the strength-based approach, I assist the older adult in self-determining their own care/needs while remaining in the community.

4. What most excites you about your work?

I love meeting older adults and having the ability to assist Allegheny County's most at-risk residents by helping these individuals connect to services by discussing all the resources available. It does help to have a supportive team that includes protective service RNs, a financial exploitation consultant, psychologists, and numerous other resources.

5. What is the most important thing DHS staff should know about your role?

AAA OAPS will always investigate all allegations regarding abuse and neglect of older adults. Every allegation is thoroughly investigated and taken seriously. The goal of the Protective Service unit is to assure the safety of older adults in our community. My co-workers and I take this responsibility very seriously. We have numerous investigators that go above and beyond in achieving this goal on a consistent basis. As the aging population continues to grow, it will be even more important to have dedicated staff to ensure the safety of older adults in Allegheny County.