



# DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County  
Department of Human Services



**August 2021**

## **Kudos: Jessica McKown, Stephanie Meyer, Cynthia Shields and Brian Wolford**

DHS staff members Jessica McKown, Stephanie Meyer, Cynthia Shields and Brian Wolford were part of a group of six County employees who received the Exemplary Employee Award for their work on the [Safe Haven Hotel](#). The award was presented on August 6 during a meeting with Erin Dalton, DHS director; Dr. Debra Bogen, Allegheny County Health Department director; and Andrew Szefi, Allegheny County solicitor.

The award nomination states, "From the beginning, [establishing the Safe Haven hotel] was an enormous and demanding task. Despite broad outreach to and inventive negotiation with hotel owners, few were interested. It was similarly difficult to find a provider willing to take on operations. And even once more promising leads turned up, the team had to negotiate the contracts, settle insurance, work with the provider to get staffing into place, set up training for staff, identify security, arrange complex transportation, and ensure on-site medical care and telehealth would be available. All while feeling the pressures of time and duty of responsibility to our most vulnerable residents.

The nominators concluded, "While the team is humble about their work, their efforts have undoubtably saved residents' lives."

On [Twitter](#), Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald added, "The group spent entire evenings and weekends to open Safe Haven and [iron] out issues after it began operating. This team, including many of their colleagues, set a precedent for how employees across multiple departments can work collaboratively to tackle challenges that matter."