



# DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County  
Department of Human Services



February 2021

## **Safe Haven Hotel offers a safe place to stay, helps slow the spread of COVID-19**

Thanks to careful planning and countless community partnerships with groups that include Allegheny County Health Department, Allegheny Health Network, Allied Security, Community Human Services, and Community Kitchen, DHS's Safe Haven Hotel has now provided isolation and quarantine space for more than 700 high-risk individuals.

The idea for the Safe Haven Hotel began last year when COVID-19 cases started to appear in Pittsburgh. Concerned about the wellbeing of the County's most vulnerable individuals, staff in the Office of Community Services (OCS) began looking to the West Coast for ideas and saw that many communities were setting up isolation and quarantine facilities. After just three weeks of planning, Allegheny County's Safe Haven Hotel opened on April 6, 2020.

Referrals for the Safe Haven have come from regional healthcare systems, veteran-serving organizations, congregate care facilities and DHS service providers. The Hotel has also served first responders. Regardless of the referral source, individuals at the Safe Haven Hotel are highly vulnerable, have shown potential symptoms of COVID or had a known exposure to an individual who has tested positive, and have no other safe option where they can isolate or quarantine.

Once referred, clients are transported to the facility – which is located five miles outside of downtown Pittsburgh – by EMT; zTrip; or Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF) transportation staff. During their stay at the Safe Haven, individuals receive medical support and monitoring; emergency behavioral health services; housing assessments and planning; and pandemic support services, such as education and connection to resources. A hot meal is provided for dinner and cold meals and snacks are available during the day. Clients also have access to tablets donated by AHN's Center for Inclusion Health through a grant from the Highmark Foundation. These tablets can be used for telehealth appointments and other support services.

"We're extremely proud that the Safe Haven Hotel has played a critical role in our community's risk mitigation strategy," said Cynthia Shields, assistant deputy director in OCS. "The Safe Haven has allowed us to keep numbers low in the rest of the homelessness system, which is especially impressive when you look at other cities that have had very high rates of spread and infection. Most importantly, we've been able to

provide a protective space for folks who are extremely vulnerable to negative outcomes from COVID-19 and have no other way to keep themselves or their community safe, and we've made sure they remain connected to providers who can continue supporting them once they leave."