



ALLEGHENY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Accomplishments AND Strategic Initiatives

The background of the page is an aerial photograph of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, taken at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange and pink glow over the city. The Allegheny River flows through the center of the image, reflecting the sky and the city's skyline. In the foreground, a yellow steel truss bridge spans across the river. The city's skyscrapers, including the PPG Place, are silhouetted against the bright sky. The overall mood is serene and hopeful.

2026



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ABOUT

DHS

Allegheny County Department of Human Services helps people during difficult times and steps in when support is needed most.

Using a “no wrong door” approach, DHS works to make sure that whenever someone reaches out, they are connected to the services and support they need.

At DHS, we:

Serve 200,000+ people annually

We support people at every stage of life through child and older adult protection, family strengthening and youth programs, mental health and substance use services, the homelessness response system, and community supports for older adults and people with intellectual disabilities or autism.

Manage a budget of \$1 billion

DHS is our region’s largest funder of human services, and we’re committed to being a responsible steward of public resources. Through a mix of state and federal funding, along with grants from local and national philanthropies, we fund essential services and innovative system improvements.

Employ nearly 1,000 staff

Our staff include frontline professionals like caseworkers, hotline operators, and street outreach teams, as well as staff focused on contracts, finance, human resources, technology, and data analytics.

Fund more than 300 community-based agencies

Everything from substance use treatment to meals at Senior Centers is possible because of the community-based agencies we fund.



Program Offices

These offices provide services to Allegheny County residents using both in-house staff and contracted provider agencies.

Area Agency on Aging: Provides support, resources and access to services that help older adults, caregivers and families age safely and independently in the community.

Office of Children, Youth and Families: Protects children from abuse, neglect and exploitation while supporting families and ensuring children have safe, stable and permanent homes.

Office of Behavioral Health: Supports access to mental health and substance use services through partnerships with providers and community organizations across Allegheny County.

Office of Community Justice and Safety: Works with community partners and public safety agencies to prevent violence, respond to crises and reduce incarceration through timely interventions and supportive services.

Office of Community Services: Provides community-based programs and services that help stabilize housing, strengthen families and support healthy, connected communities.

Office of Developmental Supports: Supports individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism and youth with medically complex needs by connecting them to services that promote independence, inclusion and quality of life.

Support Offices

These offices provide services that help DHS offices, staff and providers work effectively.

Office of Administration: Provides operational, administrative and infrastructure support that helps DHS offices and staff deliver services effectively.

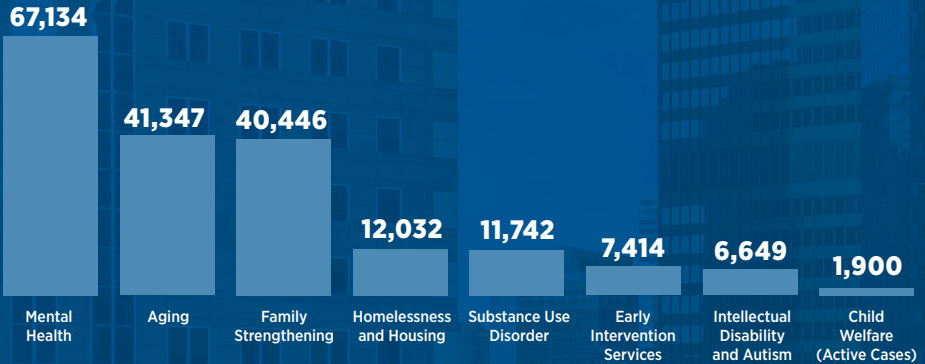
Office of Analytics and Technology: Supports quality improvement and decision-making through research, data analysis and technology solutions.

Office of Equity and Engagement: Advances equity and community engagement by helping ensure services are accessible, inclusive and responsive.

Office of Strategy and Planning: Helps advance the Department's priorities by coordinating agencywide planning and funding strategy, aligning initiatives, partnerships and resources.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In 2025, more than **200,000 people** received services funded by DHS.



Mental Health & Substance Use: Includes Medicaid behavioral health services, reentry and diversion programs, crisis prevention and response.

Aging: Includes enrichment activities, coordinated long-term care, and adult protective services.

Family Strengthening: Includes child care subsidy, 26 family centers, home visiting, out-of-school time programs, services for transition age youth, juvenile justice diversion programs and self-sufficiency programs.

Homelessness: Includes eviction prevention, supportive housing, emergency shelter, and homeless system coordination.

Early Intervention Services: Includes supports for babies and young children who have developmental delays or disabilities.

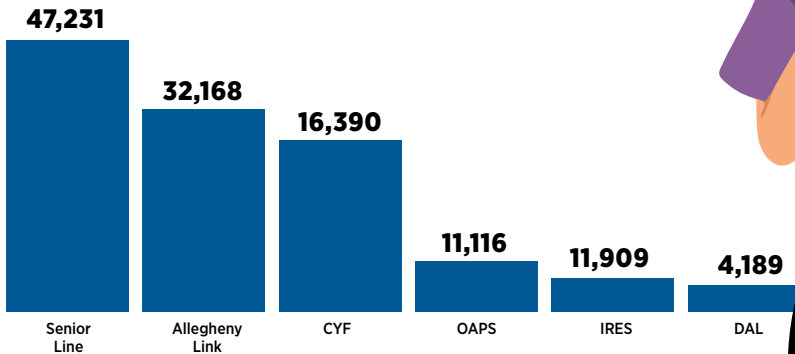
Intellectual Disabilities and Autism: Includes independent living, support coordination, and 24-hour staff support.

Child Welfare: Includes abuse and neglect investigations, out-of-home placements, and family reunification efforts.



DHS receives more than
100,000 calls each year.

CALLS IN 2025:

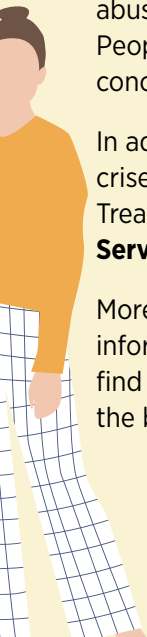


DHS operates several phone lines that connect people to resources and referrals. **The Senior Line** connects older adults to in-home services, transportation, and caregiver support, and the **Allegheny Link** helps people experiencing homelessness find resources.

We also take calls from community members reporting concerns about abuse or neglect through **ChildLine** or **Older Adult Protective Services**. People can also contact the **Director's Action Line** with questions, concerns, or complaints about any DHS service.

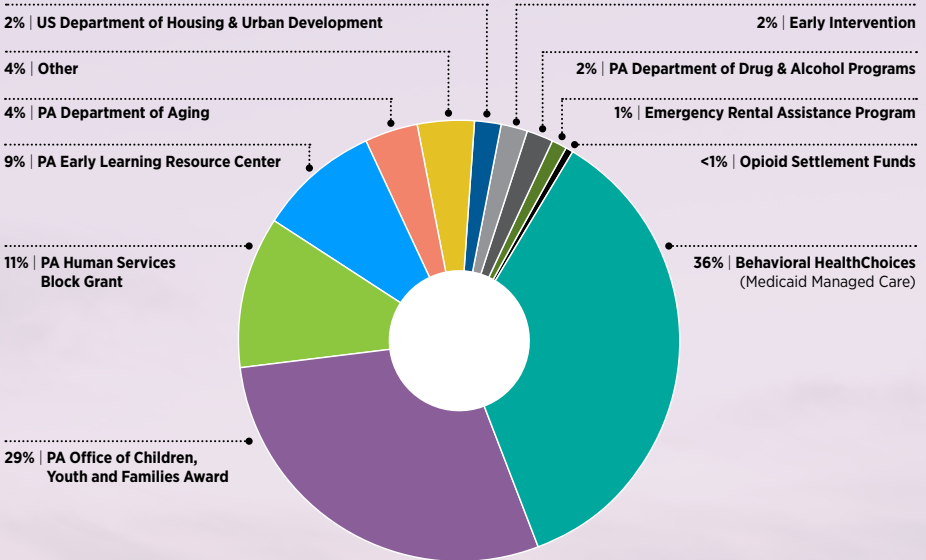
In addition, DHS responds to calls about mental health crises, involuntary commitments, and Assisted Outpatient Treatment through **Information, Referral, and Emergency Services (IRES)**.

More information about these hotlines, including contact information, is available on the DHS website. You can find the QR code in the "Learn More" section at the back of this booklet.



FUNDING

DHS's funding comes primarily from state and federal sources.



In 2025, DHS's largest sources of funding included:

Behavioral HealthChoices: Funding that supports PA's Medicaid Managed Care Program for behavioral health services, including mental health and substance use disorder services for residents of Allegheny County.

PA Office of Children, Youth and Families Award: An annual allocation that supports a range of child protection, prevention, and family strengthening services.

PA Human Services Block Grant: An annual award that combines mostly state, and some federal, funds for multiple service areas such as mental health, drug and alcohol services, housing and homelessness supports, and intellectual disability services.

PA Early Learning Resource Center: Funding from the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning that supports child care subsidies for low-income families and investments that improve the quality of early learning programs.

Notably, **Emergency Rental Assistance Program** funds were a temporary pandemic-era resource that has ended and is no longer available to support DHS's rental assistance services.

Funding Outlook

As we emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic several years ago, DHS benefited from an influx of temporary local and federal funding sources. Today, the landscape has changed. **Many of these temporary funding sources and federal grants have ended.** Additionally, state and federal funding, which are the primary sources that support DHS services, remain largely flat and, in some cases, are decreasing. At the same time, **community needs continue to grow and evolve.**

In this environment, DHS remains committed to being responsible stewards of public funds. This means **making thoughtful and evidence-based decisions about how resources are allocated**, ensuring investments achieve the best possible outcomes for children, families, and communities and align with community needs and priorities.

Federal and state policy decisions will continue to shape the funding environment in the years ahead, **requiring DHS and its partners to remain flexible, strategic, and focused on long-term sustainability.** At DHS, we feel ready to meet this challenge and are privileged to work alongside our tremendous partners, including the staff delivering services directly and those supporting them behind the scenes, agencies we fund, advocates and philanthropic organizations, board members, and elected representatives.



OUR GOALS AND INITIATIVES

DHS is focused on three core goals that guide how we invest resources and measure progress:

1. Access
2. Prevention & Diversion
3. Operational Excellence

On the following pages, you'll see highlights of our accomplishments under each goal over the past year, along with the strategic initiatives we have launched to keep moving these goals forward and deliver better outcomes for Allegheny County.

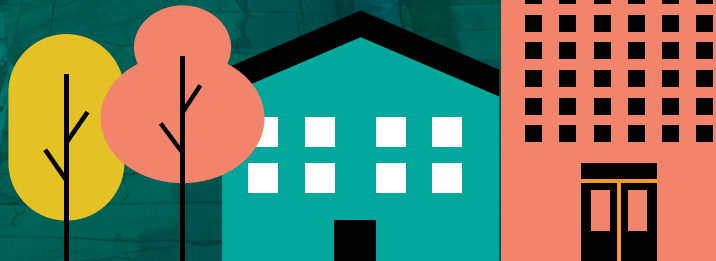
GOAL 1:

ACCESS

We will ensure Allegheny County residents can easily access the human services they need to achieve stability and well-being and provide rapid response to resolve crises when they occur.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

We are committed to ensuring that Allegheny County residents can easily find and receive the help they need, when they need it. That means helping people get services faster, making it easier to connect to the right program, and making sure those with the most urgent needs are served first. We are also expanding outreach and referral pathways so we can connect with people who are historically underserved or harder to reach.



This is how we improved Access in the last year:

Exceeded 500 in 500 goal

In support of County Executive Sara Innamorato's goal to identify 500 affordable housing units in 500 days, DHS exceeded the target by identifying **568 units and housing more than 600 people**. DHS staff also provided case management support to more than half of the households, helping promote long-term housing stability. As of early November 2025, **98% of families with children and 95% of adults who leased a unit through 500 in 500 had not returned to the homelessness system.**

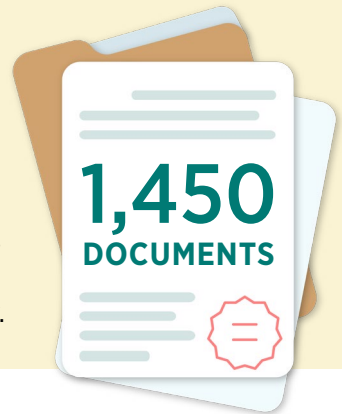
500 IN 500

 **600**
PEOPLE

 **568**
UNITS

Removed key barrier to services

Vital documents such as birth certificates and identification are often required to apply for jobs, access public benefits, and secure housing. In 2025, DHS launched document support services that **helped 880 individuals experiencing homelessness obtain 1,450 vital documents**, removing a major barrier to employment, housing, and overall stability.



Opened a new safe place to stay while waiting for housing

DHS opened a new triage center that provides **a safe, very short-term place to sleep for adults experiencing homelessness** while they wait for other housing options. The triage center works closely with street outreach teams to help people come indoors quickly, avoid rough sleeping, and transition as soon as possible into longer-term housing and/or treatment.



This is how we improved **Access** in the last year (cont.):

Mobilized network to respond to SNAP changes

New federal changes to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility rules and work requirements took effect in 2025. DHS quickly mobilized its provider network to ensure SNAP recipients understood the changes and knew what steps they needed to take to keep their benefits. **We trained more than 700 staff and providers, established 60 community sites for in-person assistance, and launched a social media campaign to spread awareness.** This coordinated effort helped prevent people from losing SNAP benefits — an essential support for families facing tight budgets.



Improved low income families' access to child care

In 2025, Family Centers connected **1,200 new low-income families to high-quality, affordable child care. This reflects a 20% increase** over the past three years, driven by new strategies to strengthen referral pathways and data tracking, helping more families successfully access child care.



Introduced new way to find aging resources

In addition to calling, emailing, or scheduling appointments with the Area Agency on Aging, residents can now chat with an automated assistant called ARIA to get instant, 24/7 answers about services for older adults in Allegheny County.



Easier enrollment in developmental supports

DHS launched a new online enrollment portal for Office of Developmental Supports services, allowing families to apply for intellectual disability and autism services at their own pace, 24/7.

Centralized access to intensive mental health services

DHS streamlined access to Community Treatment Teams (CTT) by launching an online portal where we can send digital referrals to service providers. This centralized referral management allows DHS to use dashboards to track openings across providers and locations and to triage referrals, helping connect individuals with severe, persistent mental illness to care more efficiently.



In the coming year, we will continue to expand Access through these Strategic Initiatives:

Help families get every public benefit they are eligible for

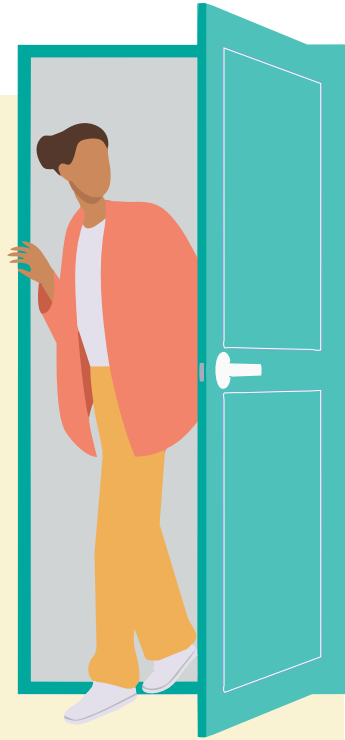
Many individuals and families are facing tight budgets and have to make difficult choices about how to stretch their resources, but programs like Medicaid and SNAP are available to help residents stay healthy and stable. While the state is responsible for administering these public benefits, not

DHS, DHS can still play a role by **working to make sure eligible people do not lose these benefits because of paperwork or rule changes.** We will also partner with workforce programs to help people meet new work requirements and support those most affected by recent policy changes.



Make it easier to access housing

We will create one clear and simple entry point for all DHS housing programs so individuals can access support through a single “front door” that connects them to the right resources and prioritizes those with the most complex needs. We will also **expand housing options for people with needs that fall outside the scope of traditional programs,** including those with co-occurring mental health and substance use needs, individuals who require 24/7 support, and people with criminal histories. For people living unsheltered, we will **strengthen rapid response** efforts to help them come indoors quickly and begin the transition to stable housing.



Connect children and families who are screened out from child welfare to community-based services that could help

DHS's Office of Children, Youth and Families receives more than 16,000 referrals each year and reviews each one to determine whether an investigation is warranted. While some families are assessed as low risk and screened out of further involvement, they may still benefit from support, such as mental health or substance use services. Moving forward, families who are screened out of child welfare will be offered a direct and timely referral to community-based services so they can connect to support right away rather than being sent elsewhere to navigate services on their own.



Make it easier for people and families with intellectual disabilities and autism to get support

Families and caregivers of people with intellectual disabilities and autism have shared that navigating services and systems can be overwhelming. As a result, **we are streamlining our processes to make it easier for families to find support more quickly and with less stress.** We will also partner with Duquesne University to launch a law clinic focused on serving individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism, strengthening the legal system's understanding of intellectual disabilities, **improving access to appropriate legal support, and working to reduce negative legal outcomes.**

Less time navigating systems. More time getting the right support.






GOAL 2:

PREVENTION & DIVERSION

We will prevent the need for intensive supports and divert away from involuntary systems by resolving crises and proactively supporting individuals and families with services that promote well-being and stability.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

We aim to prevent crises whenever possible and divert individuals and families away from more intensive or involuntary systems, including the child welfare and justice systems. We are investing in prevention-focused, community-based supports so people can access services in the least restrictive settings. By identifying and engaging individuals and families at greatest risk, we can stabilize situations sooner and reduce escalation. When crises do occur, we focus on expanding human services responses so that help comes in the form of support and stabilization rather than involvement in more coercive systems.



In the last year, this is how we improved Prevention & Diversion:

Introduced a new community-based treatment option for people with serious mental illness

After significant planning, analysis, and stakeholder engagement in 2025, DHS launched Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) on January 1, 2026, to use civil court processes to help people with serious mental illness who have difficulty engaging in treatment on their own. Each year, more than 5,000 people are evaluated for involuntary commitments, and many do not receive consistent follow-up care or stay on their treatment plans.

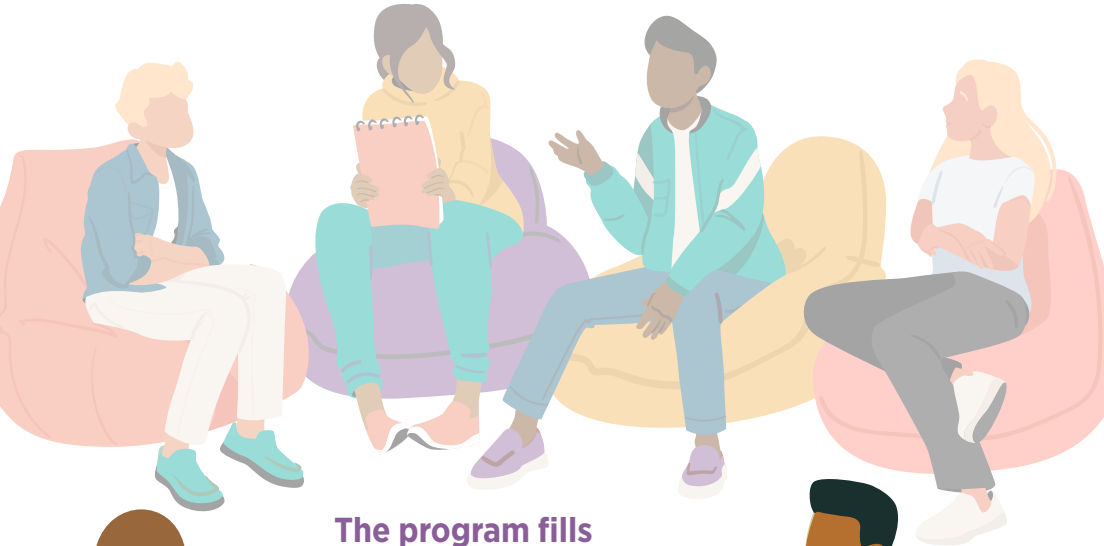
AOT is meant to break the cycle of repeated hospitalizations and involvement in the justice system by offering structured, community-based support instead of more restrictive settings.



In the last year, this is how we improved
Prevention & Diversion (cont.):

Filled a critical gap in youth mental health care

After several years of planning, DHS and Community Care launched **Changes, a new short-term Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility at Southwood Hospital for youth ages 12-17** with serious mental health needs. The program fills a critical gap for youth who need more support than outpatient care in order to stabilize but do not require a longer-term residential stay of six months or more. All staff are trained in a cognitive behavioral therapy model, with ongoing training and consultation to ensure fidelity and strong outcomes.

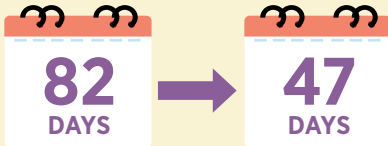


The program fills
a critical gap
for youth who need
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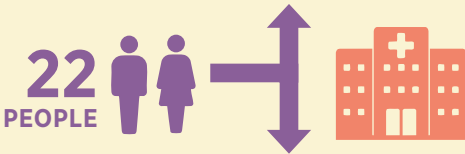


Helped people get mental health care without waiting in jail

Sometimes people are found “not competent” to stand trial, meaning they are unable to move forward with their court case due to serious mental illness. Instead of waiting in jail for a state psychiatric hospital placement, individuals are now able to receive care in less restrictive, more dignified settings. **Since implementation in April 2025, the program has already:**



Reduced the median jail wait time for state hospital beds from 82 to 47 days.



Diverted 22 individuals from Torrance State Hospital.

\$2.7m
IN SAVINGS



Generated **\$2.7 million in cost savings** for the state through avoided hospital stays.

Connected people to services at jail intake

In collaboration with the Allegheny County Jail, DHS launched evidence-based screenings at jail intake, and Diversion Coordinators have **screened more than 4,000 individuals to date**. These screenings help identify physical health, mental health, substance use, and intellectual disability needs early in the process, **creating opportunities for timely intervention**. In 2026, we will expand the use of individualized diversion plans for people who would be better served by community-based services instead of jail. If the court approves the plan, the person will receive support in the community rather than remaining incarcerated.



In the coming year, we will continue to advance **Prevention & Diversion** through these Strategic Initiatives:

Make sure people in crisis are met with the right responder at the right time

When someone is in crisis, they should be met quickly by someone trained to respond to what they're experiencing, no matter where they are in the county. **Connecting people to the right responder can help avoid unnecessary arrests, incarceration, and added trauma.** In recent years, DHS has expanded mobile crisis and similar teams, which now work alongside 911 and other first responders in more than 40 municipalities. DHS's crisis response efforts also include our partnership with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, a free and confidential service for people in crisis, including mental health struggles, emotional distress, and alcohol or drug use concerns. In 2026, we will take a closer look at how all of our crisis response efforts are working, including who they are reaching, what is most effective, and where we can better align and strengthen services to improve outcomes for people in crisis.



Improve our continuum of supports to strengthen and preserve families

In child welfare, family preservation refers to community-based supports designed to help families address safety concerns, strengthen parenting skills, and stabilize after crises so children can remain safely with their caregivers rather than entering foster care. **DHS will improve and expand its family preservation services** by introducing a new evidence-based case management model, increasing service capacity, clarifying provider performance expectations, and developing sustainable natural supports by formally partnering with kin. We are also strengthening our policies and procedures to **better support families when parents are detained or deported**, with a focus on ensuring child safety, preserving family connections, and minimizing unnecessary system involvement.

Strengthen protective services for vulnerable groups

DHS is strengthening protective services functions so we can **respond more effectively to safety concerns and better serve vulnerable residents.** For older adults, DHS will hire 55 Civil Service staff and launch a new Older Adult Protective Services system in compliance with state requirements. For children, youth, and families, DHS is piloting a field screening unit to conduct more targeted, early assessments of referrals, especially in cases that are not clearly low-risk or high-risk. This approach can **help families avoid more intensive investigations when they are not needed** and improve staff capacity by diverting cases away from high-intensity investigations where appropriate.



An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood, showing rows of houses and trees. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The houses are multi-story, and there are several cars parked on the streets. The text is overlaid on the top left portion of the image.

GOAL 3:

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

We will strengthen service quality, client experience, equity, and fiscal stewardship through data-driven decision-making, operational excellence and continuous improvement.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

We are working on building stronger systems that deliver meaningful results for the people we serve. This includes investing in programs with demonstrated impact and improving how we do things based on feedback from clients and service providers. By continuously refining how we operate, we are pursuing excellence in delivering human services to Allegheny County.

In the last year, this is how we improved **Operational Excellence**:

SERVICE QUALITY

Ensured individuals are receiving the right level of care

DHS **collaborated with two doctors** to review cases for every individual receiving Specialized Residential Care, a housing program that provides additional mental health treatment and rehabilitation after a hospital stay. This **quality assurance work** ensures everyone is in the most appropriate housing and care setting, so they **receive the right level of support** to successfully return to the community.



Supported lasting exits from homelessness

Of the more than 1,000 individuals who exited shelter to permanent housing, **96% did not return to the homeless system** — supporting long-term stability for those households and freeing up shelter beds for others in need. DHS staff provided hands-on support throughout the transition, including helping people move into new apartments, demonstrating that **these investments lead to lasting outcomes**.

96%

DID NOT RETURN TO HOMELESS SYSTEM

EQUITY

Increased subsidy payments for caregivers

DHS increased the average daily subsidy for kin adoptive parents and permanent legal custodians **from \$20 to \$34**, correcting a long-standing disparity in which non-kin adoptions historically received higher rates. This change provides an average of **\$5,000 in additional annual support per child** and benefits approximately **2,600 families** who have stepped up to care for these children who were previously in the child welfare system's care.

\$20 → \$34

AVERAGE DAILY SUBSIDY FOR KIN

↑ \$5,000

INCREASE IN ANNUAL SUPPORT PER CHILD



2,600

FAMILIES CARING FOR KIN

In the last year, this is how we improved **Operational Excellence** (cont.):

Graduated the inaugural Racial Equity Fellows

The two-year program is designed to build capacity for advancing equity and social justice within local government. **Ten Racial Equity Fellows were embedded across DHS offices**, where they worked on projects to identify and address disparities, and the program has already generated national interest from other jurisdictions seeking to launch similar initiatives.

Supported staff growth and development

In alignment with County Executive Sara Innamorato's H.I.R.E.S executive order to expand training and leadership opportunities for Allegheny County employees, approximately **1,200 DHS staff participated in live and on-demand trainings** in topics such as motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care, and crisis management. In addition, about 80 leaders from across DHS engaged in a new leadership development program, including one-on-one coaching.

CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Implemented new tool to respond to client feedback

DHS implemented a new client satisfaction survey for families involved in the child welfare system to better understand their experiences. In 2025, more than **2,000 responses were collected at key points in a family's child welfare journey, with 93% of respondents reporting that caseworkers treated them with dignity and respect** at the opening of an investigation. The survey helps identify areas for improvement while also highlighting strengths and opportunities to celebrate staff.



Engaged youth and community in redesigning Highland

The County is redesigning the former Shuman Juvenile Detention Center (now known as Highland) to better meet the needs of youth, families, and staff, with a strong focus on trauma-informed design. **DHS convened a series of feedback sessions with community members, system partners, and youth to gather input on how spaces at Highland should be used,** the design of key areas such as bedrooms, and the overall look and feel of the facility, including color choices. By meaningfully engaging with youth and other stakeholders, we can help ensure this important investment is done right.

FISCAL STEWARDSHIP

Strengthened and expanded provider network

DHS strengthened its provider network by both welcoming new community-based organizations and improving partnerships with existing providers. In 2025, **DHS launched Doing Business with DHS 101,** a new workshop to support community-based organizations that have not previously contracted with the department. The workshops walk organizations through DHS's procurement and contracting processes, **making it easier for new organizations to partner with us** in future funding opportunities and helping grow our provider network. Meanwhile, the Office of Children, Youth and Families **worked with more than 150 existing providers to update contracts to meet state requirements.** This work clarified expectations, reduced duplicative services, helped prevent errors, and made it easier for providers and DHS to understand roles, responsibilities, and service goals.



In the coming year, we will continue to advance **Operational Excellence** through these Strategic Initiatives:

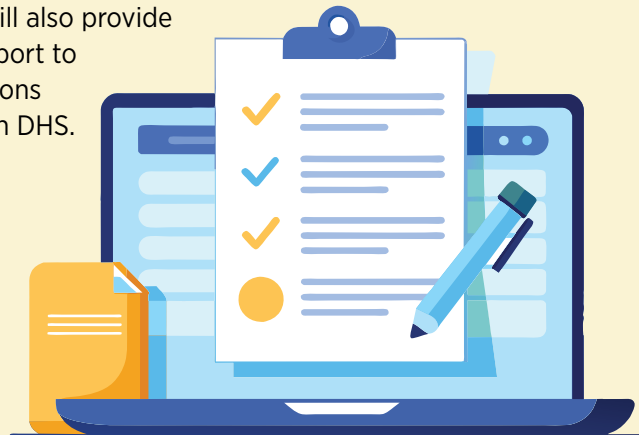
Redesigning substance use treatment around sustained engagement and continuity of care

Many people seeking treatment for substance use have long-term, recurring needs, but today's system is built around short-term, disconnected services that can be difficult to navigate. As a result, people can lose connection to care and cycle through crisis services, increasing the risk of overdose and other health issues. **We will create a more connected and continuous path to recovery by strengthening residential treatment, expanding recovery housing, increasing outreach to reconnect people to care, and better linking services across the system.** As reliance on crisis services decreases, we will reinvest those resources to further strengthen the continuum of care.



Modernize the DHS contracting process to improve speed and transparency

DHS has been engaged in a multi-year contracting modernization project focused on reducing administrative burden for providers. In 2026, we will **implement a new software platform and process improvements** to address provider concerns about the length of time it takes to execute a contract and receive payment. DHS will also provide technical assistance and support to community-based organizations that want to do business with DHS.



Reduce burden on frontline staff so they can spend more time with people and families

In addition to prioritizing caseloads for critical teams like protective services, DHS is exploring technology solutions that reduce burden on our workforce. **We are equipping frontline staff with voice-to-text and summarizing tools so they can reduce time spent on paperwork and better reflect what was discussed with clients.** This allows staff to focus more time on listening, problem-solving, and building relationships, improving the overall client experience. Supervisors can use this information for quality-improvement efforts and stronger service delivery. We are also providing this information to clients themselves, helping improve caseworker-client alignment and clarity on action items. **By using large language models responsibly, we can work more efficiently, respond more quickly, and deliver better outcomes for the community.**



LEARN MORE



DHS Website

Learn how to do business with DHS, find job postings, learn how to get involved, and access info about DHS programs and services.



DHS Email Updates

Sign up to receive monthly emails with important DHS updates. Stay informed about news, research reports, and the latest Requests for Proposals.



Solicitations Website

Learn about and apply for open human services solicitations (Requests for Proposals) and read FAQs about working with DHS.



Director's Action Line

Get help with questions, concerns, comments, or complaints about DHS services or providers. Receive a personal response by calling 1-800-862-6783, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.



Allegheny Analytics

Explore dashboards, datasets, and reports to better understand issues affecting Allegheny County residents. Browse by topic to find data and insights in one place.



QuickCount

Access data about residents' involvement with public systems and examine overlaps in services. Filter by time frame, location and demographics.



AccessMyInfo

If you have received a service provided by DHS or external providers, AccessMyInfo is your gateway to accessing all your health and human service records. Find records and documents related to public benefits, child welfare, homelessness and housing, behavioral health and more.



Engage Allegheny

Share your input to help shape Allegheny County's programs, services, and initiatives. Learn about opportunities to participate and see how community feedback informs decisions.





Allegheny County Department of Human Services
www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs
1 Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222