

## **Writing Samples Overview**

Here are two articles that I wrote for our internal employee newsletter, DHS Weekly News, for which I was also the editor.

### **Behavioral Health Fellowship Program Celebrates Its First Graduating Class**

### **Division of Veterans Services—The Newest Group Under the DHS Umbrella**

Additionally, I have included an annual overview of departmental projects that gets submitted for a larger County Manager's Report. I wrote the copy (gathering information from program and data experts throughout the agency) and worked with our design team to format the DHS section.

**From:** [Bertolet, Mark](#)  
**To:** [Bertolet, Mark](#)  
**Subject:** Behavioral Health Fellowship Program Celebrates Its First Graduating Class  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 18, 2025 2:56:50 PM  
**Attachments:** [AttachedImage](#)  
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# Behavioral Health Fellowship Program Celebrates Its First Graduating Class



Bertolet, Mark  
Public Relations Manager



On Thursday, May 8, twenty-three BH Fellows from the program's inaugural cohort were celebrated in a graduation ceremony and luncheon at the Pittsburgh Botanical Gardens. The ceremony marked the completion of a unique two-year program designed to help strengthen the region's behavioral health direct-care workforce, through support from the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

On hand to offer remarks were Karen Feinstein, President, Jewish Healthcare Foundation, DHS Director Erin Dalton, and County Executive Sara Innamorato, who praised the group for taking a chance two years ago on a new program that ultimately will make “a difference for you, both professionally and in your personal lives, as well for the members of our community that you serve every single day.” Along with praising the graduates, speakers also thanked the many provider groups, members of the education community, foundations, and others who help make this program possible.

BH Fellows are guaranteed full-time employment at a participating area behavioral health provider agency, and, while in the program are eligible for student loan repayment and additional training opportunities. The program currently has 124 Fellows across six cohorts serving in areas including family based mental health, crisis services, case management for substance use disorders, and more. Information on the program [can be found here](#).

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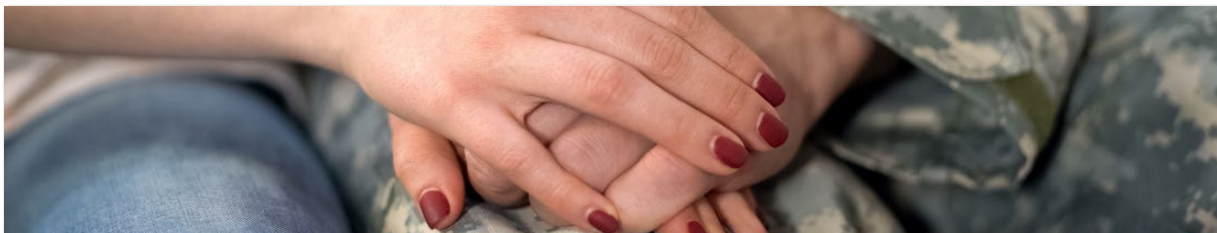


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**From:** [Bertolet, Mark](#)  
**To:** [Bertolet, Mark](#)  
**Subject:** Division of Veterans Services—The Newest Group Under the DHS Umbrella  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 18, 2025 2:51:39 PM  
**Attachments:** [AttachedImage](#)  
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## Division of Veterans Services—The Newest Group Under the DHS Umbrella



Bertolet, Mark  
Public Relations Manager

Allegheny County has long had a Department of Veterans Services, but the recent decision to relocate them to the DHS Office of Community Services makes complete sense when considering their role and their mission. “There are about 63,000 veterans in Allegheny County and it’s our goal to reach as many of them as we can to make sure they are getting the proper services they are entitled to,” says John Kaufman, Chief Veteran Affairs Officer. “Because DHS already touches so many other areas and communities, being here allows us to meet people where they are at.”

John leads the team, and while he’s located in the Human Services building, other members are spread around the County, allowing a Veterans Services representative to always be “nearby.” This includes Jaleesa Holifield, also at HSB, Kevin Carmichael and Hannah Trieu at Mon Valley CYF, and Julian Holland at CYF East Regional Office.

“Upon release from the military, you get your discharge papers and are pointed to the nearest VA healthcare facility. That’s about the extent of community reintegration,” says John. There are actually a lot of funded services that veterans can take advantage of, but it can be a little challenging to navigate the system, and that’s where the Division of

Veterans Services comes in. The two biggest programs they assist with are connecting people to VA disability services and assisting with survivor benefits. They also answer questions, facilitate applications, and can just be an ear for folks who are frustrated.

“Younger vets are used to going online and finding the information they need, but for a lot of our older vets, that’s not the case. And they’re not as used to reaching out for help either, so we might go and just sit at different locations for couple of days before some of the regulars really become comfortable with us,” John says. And their determination has really been paying off. In the first few months of 2025, they have already had interactions with 2200 veterans and assisted in drawing down \$1.7 million in VA compensation. And like all parts of the Human Services, there’s always room for growth. The team is hoping to add another position shortly to allow them to assist event more people.

If you have served in the military or are working with someone who served in the military, Allegheny County Veteran Services can be reached at 412.621.4357 or employees can drop in at any of their office locations.

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# HUMAN SERVICES

## MISSION

To create an accessible, culturally competent, integrated, and comprehensive human services system that ensures individually tailored, seamless, and holistic services to Allegheny County residents, in particular, the county's vulnerable populations.

## ABOUT

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for providing and administering publicly-funded human services to county residents. DHS provides a wide range of services, including those for older adults; mental health services (includes 24-hour crisis counseling); drug and alcohol services; child protective services; at-risk child development and education; emergency shelters and housing for the homeless; non-emergency medical transportation; and referrals for supports coordination for individuals with a diagnosis of intellectual disability.

DHS' total budget for fiscal year **2019** was **\$1.1 billion**, comprised of funds from 125 funding streams. DHS administered a network of **451** contracted service providers and served more than 200,000 Allegheny County residents.



## WHO IS THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES?

There are **889** people who work in the Allegheny Department of Human Services. These individuals fulfill many roles:

Administrative Staff; HR Staff; Facilities Staff; Contracting & Compliance Staff; Program Specialists; Program Monitors; Project Managers & Coordinators; Direct Service Workers; Caseworkers; Case Aids; Data Analysts; Fiscal Analysts; IT Management & Support; Communications Specialists; Director's Action Line Staff; Information & Referral Representatives; Call Center Representatives

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

### “Hello Baby” Grant Funding

DHS received \$2.75 million from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children, Youth and Families’ Children’s Bureau to implement “Hello Baby,” a new primary prevention strategy geared toward strengthening families and improving children’s outcomes. With additional funding provided by the state’s Needs Based Plan and Budget, the program is a first-of-its-kind initiative that will use predictive analytics and data supplied through the Allegheny County Data Warehouse to help identify families most in need of supports. The initiative brings together a partnership that includes Healthy Start, Family Support Centers, the United Way, and birthing hospitals around Allegheny County.

### Partners in Workforce Excellence

DHS and the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work were selected as one of eight partnerships across the nation to take part in a new Workforce Excellence initiative through the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Children’s Bureau. As a Workforce Excellence site, the NCWWI will engage the partners in a 5-year plan to cultivate inclusive organizational leadership and high-performing staff.

### Early Learning Resource Center

In July, as designated by the PA Department of Human Services, DHS became the entity responsible for administering state funding that will provide for an Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC). The ELRC serves as a single-entry point for families to connect with services for children including family support, early intervention, child care access, and subsidized child care vouchers. It also offers assistance to child care entities to improve their quality of care.

### Reducing Stigma in Schools

“Stand Together,” a school-based program that works to dispel the stigma associated with mental illness, expanded to 17 schools in Allegheny County. The model, developed by the Allegheny County DHS, has been adopted by Venango County and by schools in Delaware as well.

### HUD & Youth Homelessness

Allegheny County received a \$3.49 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to aid in its efforts to reduce youth homelessness. The County is one of 23 jurisdictions receiving funding through HUD’s Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

### Stable Housing for SUD Clients

Allegheny County received \$1 million from the PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) and the PA Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) Fund to support stable housing for people in recovery from Substance Use Disorder.

### Improving Economic Mobility

The department was selected by the Kresge Foundation to take part in its Next Generation (NextGen) Initiative, a two-year national collaborative project that includes a \$500,000 cash award. DHS will join nine other private nonprofit and public human service organizations in working to improve the social and economic mobility of families with low incomes.



# 2019 HUMAN SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

## POPULATIONS SERVED

**56,871**

mental health services

**50,000**

aging services

**37,727**

community services

**14,460**

substance use disorder services

**8,534**

homeless & housing supports

**8,478**

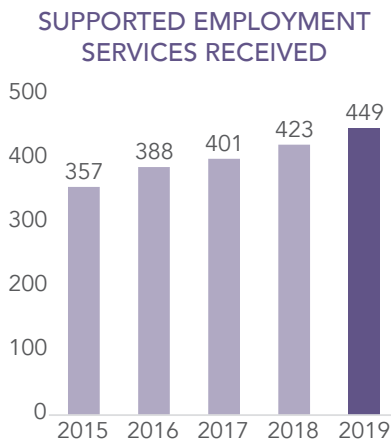
active child welfare cases

**6,168**

intellectual disability services

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

The department's Office of Intellectual Disability (OID) assists county residents with a diagnosis of an intellectual disability and/or autism. One of the key services OID offers is its Supported Employment program, which provides individuals with severe disabilities with the intensive supports they need to become employed. The number of individuals able to receive assistance through the Supported Employment program increased by 26% between 2015 and 2019.



## HOUSEHOLDS IN PERMANENT HOUSING PROGRAMS

Permanent Housing programs include programs for individuals with a disability and programs for people who would otherwise be on the street. In the past four years, the department has pushed to find more permanent housing solutions for its clients, resulting in an overall increase from 2016. However, the rate has plateaued due to the finite number of available spaces in the area.

2016 .....	1,531
2017 .....	1,779
2018 .....	1,898
2019 .....	1,872

## PHONE RESOURCES

### 24-HOUR HOTLINES

**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES LINE:** allows people to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

**17,739 CALLS**

**INFORMATION, REFERRAL, EMERGENCY SERVICES:** takes calls for information about mental health services and involuntary mental health commitments.

**12,509 CALLS**

**ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES:** receives reports of suspected abuse or neglect of adults (ages 18-59) and senior citizens (ages 60+).

**6,462 CALLS**

### OTHER RESOURCE LINES

**SENIORLINE:** connects seniors or caregivers to speak to highly-skilled staff about services available.

**51,971 CALLS, EMAILS, & VISITS**

**ALLEGHENY LINK:** streamlines access to disability, senior, housing, or home-visiting services.

**37,804 CALLS**

**DIRECTOR'S ACTION LINE:** allows residents to provide concerns, complaints, comments or questions about DHS or contracted service providers.

**3,373 CALLS, EMAILS, & VISITS**