



# The Allegheny County Experience

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## Effective Public/Private Partnerships in Child Welfare

Presented by

**Karen Blumen, Deputy Director  
Allegheny County  
Department of Human Services**

at the

**2009 National Citizens Review Panel  
Conference**

**May 20, 2009**

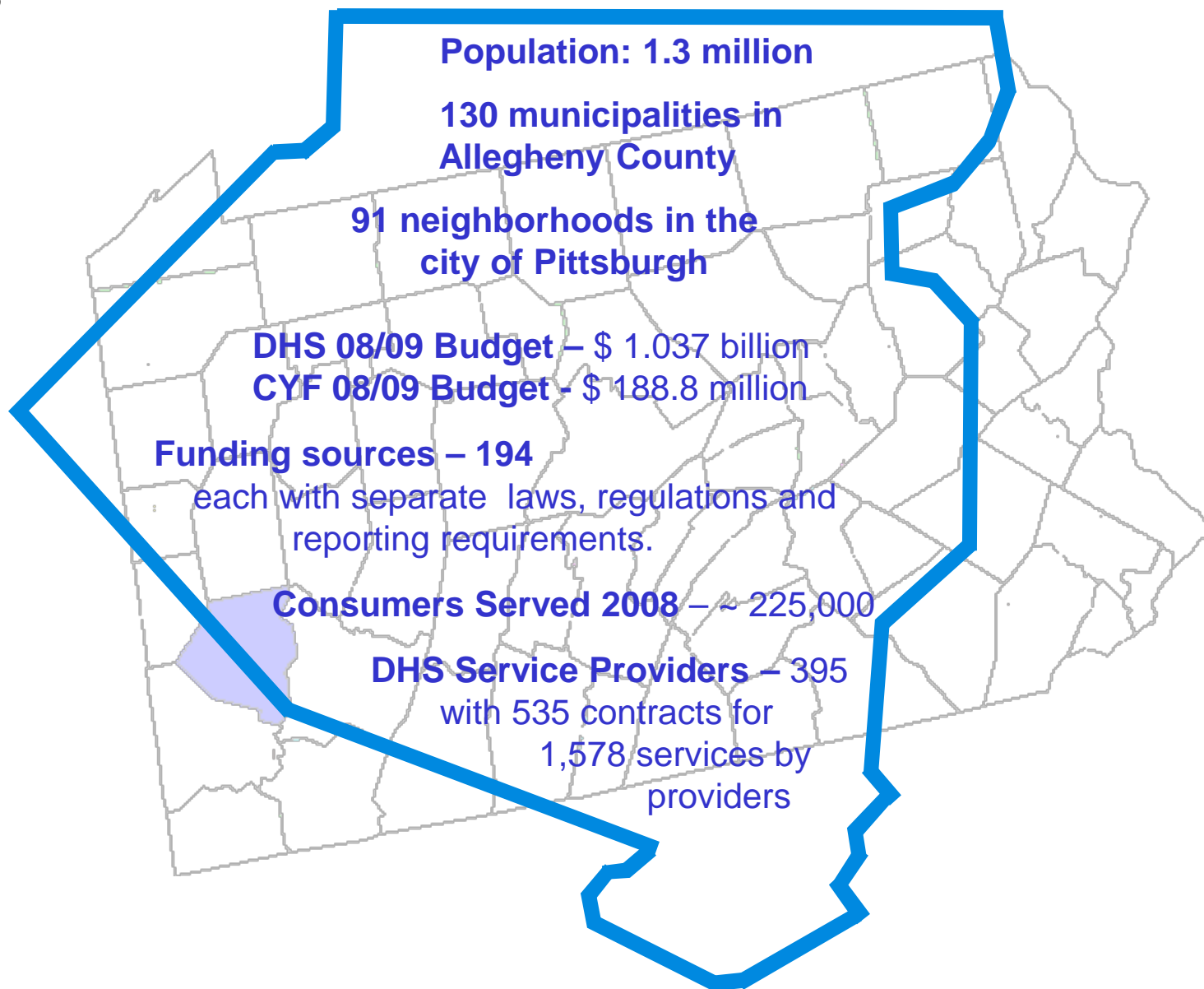
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## DHS Structure

### Program Offices

- Area Agency on Aging
- Office of Behavioral Health
- Office of Children, Youth and Families
- Office of Community Services
- Office of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities

### Support Offices

- Office of Administration
- Office of Community Relations
- Office of Information Management
- Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation

### Executive Office

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## DHS Guiding Principles

All Services will be:

- High Quality
- Readily Accessible
- Strength-Based
- Culturally Competent
- Individually Tailored and Empowering
- Holistic





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## Fundamental Tenets of DHS

**Child Protection is a community responsibility.**

**Poverty is *not* neglect**

**Emphasize services at the beginning of the service continuum .**

- Access to information and information sharing;
- Pure prevention; and
- Early intervention

**Strengthen families to create a safer environment for children :**

- Build network of family supports/assistance
- Recognize correlation between neglect/abuse and parental stressors
- Remove children only if absolutely necessary – removal is traumatic

**Offer extensive range of prevention, early intervention, crisis management and after care services for families and individuals.**

**Commit to openness, inclusiveness, and pro-active education with publics**



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## 1995 Allegheny County – A Child Welfare System in Crisis

- Highly publicized child deaths
- Provisional licenses
- Commissioner-led public hearings
- Investigative task force report issued
- Negative press coverage
- Community confidence at nadir

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## **Deficiencies Identified By Task Force Relative to Public Relations/ Community Engagement**

- **Child Welfare viewed as secretive, inaccessible and insular**
- **Adversarial relationship between management and workers**
- **Lack of cooperation between agency and other entities**
- **Ineffective communications/education efforts with publics**
- **Media relations = “no comment”**

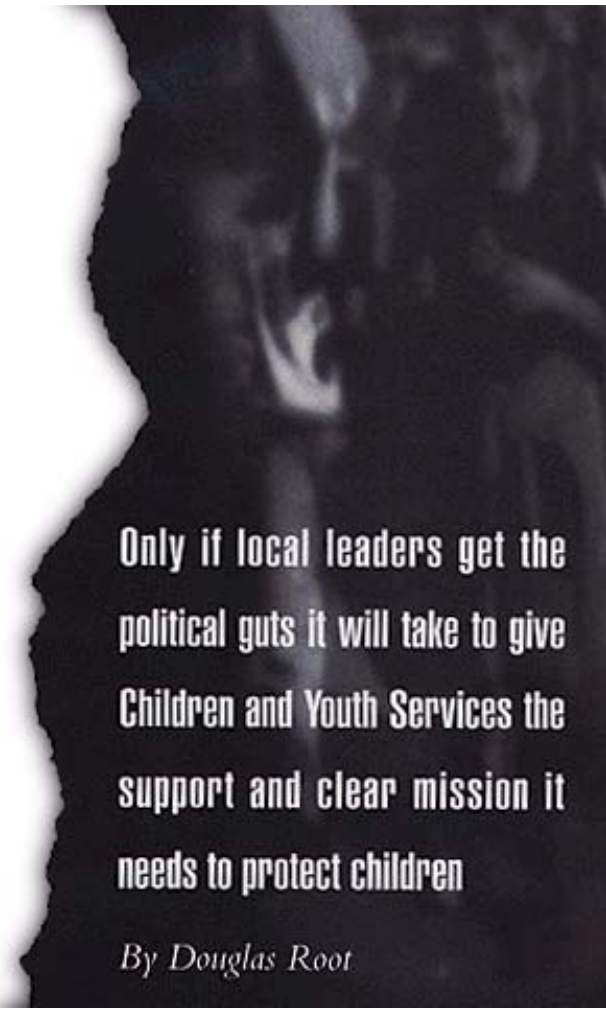


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## Can CYCS be Fixed?



Only if local leaders get the political guts it will take to give Children and Youth Services the support and clear mission it needs to protect children

*By Douglas Root*



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## The System is Transformed

**“Allegheny County once was a pathetic national disgrace. Today, it is a shining national model. Allegheny County is showing the nation that child welfare systems can be fixed, and it is showing the nation how to fix them.”**

**Richard Wexler, Executive Director, National Coalition for Child Protection Reform**

***(Source: CNN NewsNight with Aaron Brown, Aired: August 14, 2002)***

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## Intake Trends

	1996	2008
<b>Total Calls</b>	<b>7,234</b>	<b>8,424</b>
<b>ChildLined</b>	<b>1,737</b>	<b>1,327</b>
<b>Substantiated</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Families accepted for services</b>	<b>2,140</b>	<b>2,952</b>
<b>Children served</b>	<b>9,262</b>	<b>7,118*</b>
<b>Children placed</b>	<b>3,318</b>	<b>1,909*</b>

\* Point in time April 3, 2009

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## Placement Trends

	As of 1/1/96	As of 4/3/09
<b>Shelter</b>	<b>214</b>	Group <b>74</b>
		Foster Care <b>78</b>
<b>All foster care</b>	<b>2,557</b>	<b>1,466</b>
Un-related Foster Care	1,914	727
Kinship Foster Care	643 (25% of total)	739 (51% of total)
<b>Group home</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Residential (incl. Treatment Facility)</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Supervised Independent Living</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,318</b>	<b>1,909 (42 % reduction)</b>

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## Community Process

- Oversight Committee guided development
- Public process to develop vision, guiding principles and strategies
- Garnered support from universities, corporations, foundations and community at large
- Input and assistance were sought from a broad range of stakeholders
- Our Vision Statement and Guiding Principles, and the organization of DHS, all reflect community input.
- Town meetings – public forums (continue to this day)

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## Oversight Committee

- **Composed of leaders from the business, academic and public sectors**
- **Chaired by highly respected academician**
- **Provided guidance throughout redesign process**
- **Served as “sounding board”**
- **Provided support during the change process**

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## **Prioritized Communications, Education and Outreach**

- **Created Office of Community Relations**
- **Developed strategic approaches to optimize interactions with key stakeholders**
- **Build relationships**

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## Foundation Support

### Human Services Integration Fund

- Consists of 18 local foundations
- Provided approximately \$6 million since established in 1997
- Paved the way to fundamental changes in what and how services were provided through DHS
- Supported nearly 40 different projects/activities

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**HSIF has expanded to fund DHS best practice research, analysis, outreach...**

- **Analysis of behavioral health system**
- **Jail Collaborative evaluation study**
- **CYF workload study**
- **AAA casework management practices analysis**
- **Community relations publications**

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## ...and programs.

- Hearing Officer Project
- Children's Cabinet
- Allegheny County Jail Collaborative
- Mental Health Court
- One Vision One Life – Violence Prevention
- The Disability Connection
- Children of Incarcerated Parents
- Housing and Homeless Matching Funds
- HumanServices.net
- Transition-aged Youth
- Improving Outcomes for Children and Families in Allegheny County
- Scholars in Local Government Program
- Local Government Case Competition

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## Hearing Officer Project

- **Funded by 8 foundations – \$1.3 million over 3 years**
- **Created courtrooms in our 5 CYF offices**
- **Hired 3 hearing officers, county solicitors, child advocates, and parent advocates**
- **Scheduled progress hearings: 20-minute duration, minimum every 3 months**
- **Freed up Judges to spend more time on initial dependency and TPR hearings**
- **Achieved sustainability through savings incurred by reducing length of time in care and reducing placements.**

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## Other Foundation Support

### Casey Family Programs

- Youth employment (technical assistance)
- Service integration for children/youth with multiple needs

### McArthur Foundation

- Improving outcomes for dependent/delinquent youth

### Local foundations

- Education liaisons
- Youth Advisory Council
- Children's Cabinet

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## University Support

### Graduate Schools class projects

- Technical support and expertise

### College preparation for transitioning youth

- Remedial classes
- Summer-on-campus experiences

### Co-sponsorship of youth recognition events

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## Corporate Support

### Local Law Firm

- *Pro bono* terminations of parental rights and adoption finalizations – over 1,000 in the past 11 years

### Local Health Insurance Company

- Donated printing for 10,000 copies of A Parent's Handbook annually for 12 years
- Provided funding for client incentives and recognition

### Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce

- Technical support / research resources for human services redesign and ongoing

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## Non-Profits/Cultural Institution Support

### Allegheny County Library Association

- Partners with DHS on awareness campaigns and informational dissemination

### Museums, zoo, sports organizations

- Donate memberships and discounted admission tickets

### Tickets for Kids

- Provides tickets to concerts and sporting events

### Leadership Development Initiative of Pittsburgh

- Developed and supports mentoring program for transition-aged youth

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## Small Business Support

### **Manchester Craftsman's Guild and Bidwell Corporation**

- Local training center provides classes to transition-aged youth

### **Local Social Innovation Accelerator, small business and foundation**

- Barista program

### **Local credit agency**

- Performs credit checks/restorations for transition-aged youth

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## **Allied Child/Family-serving Professional Support**

*Ad hoc* meetings

Weigh in on creation of and outreach for prevention initiatives (Home Alone initiative)

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## Community Support Donations Acquisition

- Engages public emotionally in system
- Creates greater sense of understanding of
  - Lives of children, youth and families and funding limits
- Extends reach of agency
- DHS Initiatives
  - Project Prom
    - Formal attire for high school students
  - Holiday Project
    - Holiday gifts for children
  - Allegheny County Music Festival Fund
    - Items and services for children





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## Charitable Donations from Faith-based Groups

- Holiday gifts
- Duffle bags with personal hygiene items
- Handmade quilts, bears, pillows
- Monetary support
- Clothing gift certificates

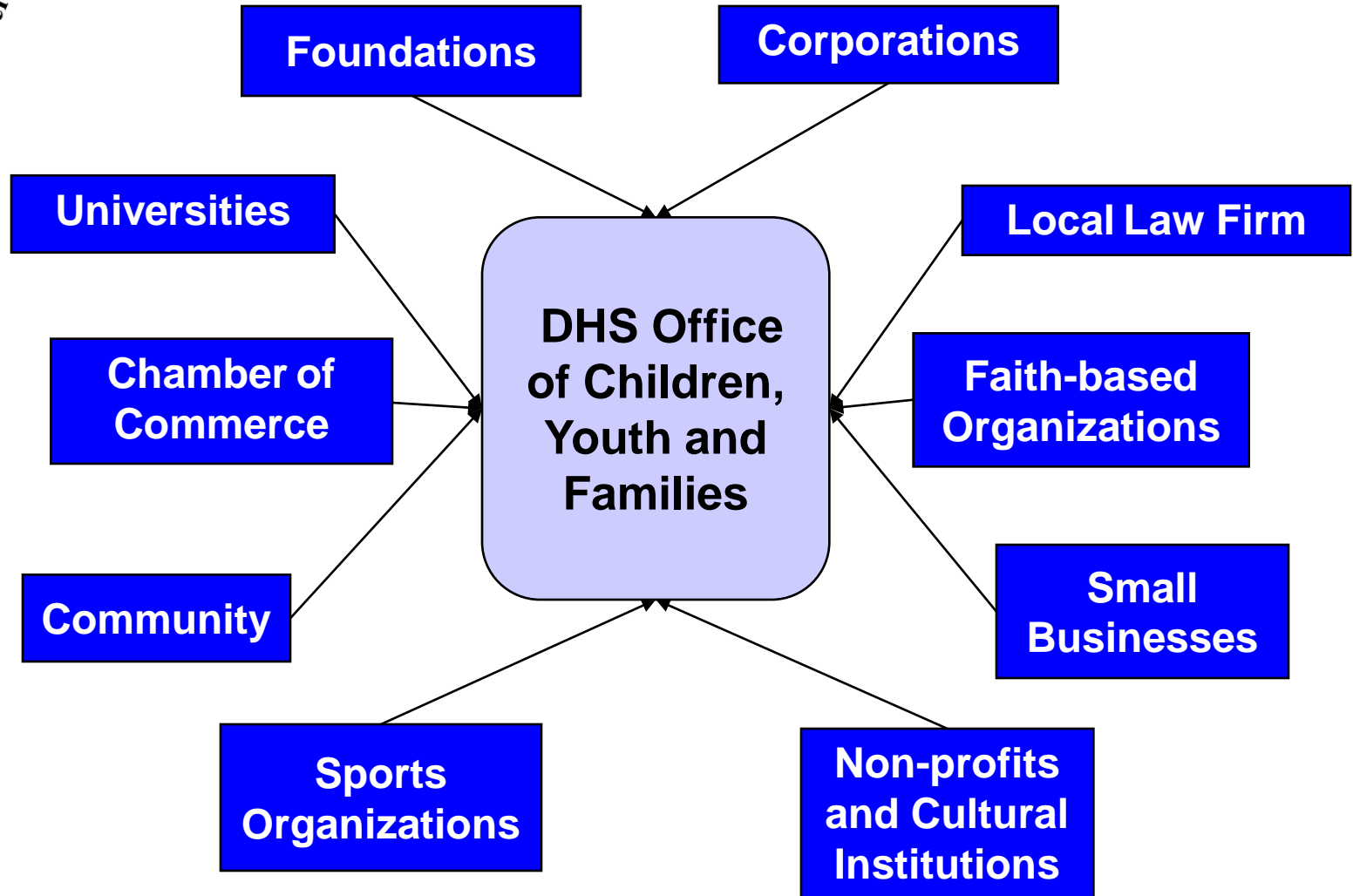
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## Web Sites & Publications of Interest

- **Allegheny County Department of Human Services**  
[www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs)
- **Human Services Integration Fund**  
<http://www.alleghenycounty.us/uploadedFiles/DHS/about/HSIF.pdf>
- **Home Alone**  
[www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/homealone.asp](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/homealone.asp)

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## Contact Information

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