

Take Charge Of Your Health Today. Be Informed. Be Involved.

We will get through this, Pittsburgh, but **WE MUST DO IT TOGETHER**

This month, the "Take Charge of Your Health Today" page discusses the resilience that the Pittsburgh community has shown during this year's unforeseen circumstances. 2020 has shown us that when our community is at its lowest point we unify and support one another through sharing resources, being a listening ear and being conscious of others' health.

According to the Allegheny County website, since the beginning of the pandemic, we have, unfortunately, lost more than 500 souls. More than 30,000 people have contracted COVID-19. Many parts of our lives are completely different. COVID-19 has forced us to change the way we celebrate life and the way we mourn people's passing. Our youths are navigating entirely different education systems, with most schools in the region operating completely online. Our workplaces are different, with some of us working from home, while others report to the office



ESTHER BUSH

with a fraction of the coworkers who once shared the same space. As humans, we are social people. As the pandemic continues to affect the way we

are able to socialize, in good times and in bad, our mental health continues to be negatively affected, as well.

However, with all that being said, I continue to be heartened by the strength and shared community concern for which Pittsburgh is known. When our neighbors are in despair, Pittsburgh residents step up and do what is right. This is the definition of resiliency, and I encourage this type of involvement and growth. We see resiliency in our homes, on social media and in our children. With 2020 coming to an end in a few weeks, it is vital to reflect on our successes.

Many of us have lost our jobs and insurance, as well as loved ones, but we have not lost our sense of community or the ways in which we support each other. We saw the community come together in November for our annual Thanksgiving Distribution, where 900 families in the various communities were helped and supported during

the Thanksgiving season. We see the resiliency and support of our neighbors through the Urban League's All One Pittsburgh initiative that is supporting people in our community who do not have access to vital essential items like cleaning supplies and toiletry items.

There continues to be a vast array of opportunities for you to help your fellow neighbor in this season of giving. If you can, donate money, time or in spirit. Review the other resources that are available on this page and get involved. Take charge of your health and well-being, and help your neighbor do the same. We will get through this, Pittsburgh, but WE MUST DO IT TOGETHER. Cheers to the new year. Thanks for reading this message; I am looking forward to 2021.

Take Charge, and take care; yours in the movement,

Esther L. Bush, President and CEO
Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh

Hello Baby and Pittsburgh Study want to help children thrive

As 2020 closes, and we are still mired down by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is time to reflect. It has been a difficult year for most of us and our families. People have been forced to find ways to bounce back from hardship, to be resilient. We have given support and asked for support from each other in order to protect ourselves and our families. Some people's difficulties have been made worse by the pandemic. Fortunately, Allegheny County is an area with many resources that can help people and families to be resilient in these times.

"We're very lucky in Allegheny County to have a lot of prevention, family-strengthening and community support services," says Amy Malen,



AMY MALEN



DANIEL S. SHAW, PhD

assistant deputy director of the Office of Community Services in Allegheny County's Department of Human Services (DHS). "But when we look at who's participating in services, we're not reaching everyone. People aren't always aware of what services are available to them, and it can be overwhelming to navigate services."

The Pittsburgh Study is a resource for families and a community-partnered study to find out what works to help children thrive. The study follows children in Allegheny County from birth through high school in order to find out the best ways to give children the support they need to graduate from high school on time, be healthy, and thrive. This is the largest community-partnered, intervention study to follow children over time. People who are pregnant, parents, babies, toddlers, preschoolers and children in elementary, middle and high school can participate in the study. Children can enroll at different ages.

So, how is the Pittsburgh Study a community resource? It not only informs researchers on how best to help children thrive, the study itself provides families with access to resources.

The study comprises different groups based on age—from pregnancy to adolescence. With the Early Childhood Collaborative group, families can access the Pittsburgh Study at various places that are familiar to them—birthing hospitals, WIC, family support centers and other health care providers' offices. Families consent to be a part of a research study, and they take a screening survey. That screening is evaluated immediately, and, based on their responses, families are offered programs that fit their strengths and challenges. The programs range from establishing an online relationship with someone who can help answer questions during an infant's first year of life to in-person programs that encourage cognitive stimulation and/or other parenting skills (promoting positive child behavior).

"The Pittsburgh Study is a formal research project, but it's a bit unusual," says Daniel S. Shaw, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences and lead of the Early Childhood Collaborative. "We're not trying to find out whether one intervention works better than another intervention. It's about whether offering these evidence-based programs in nontraditional systems will help us reach more people. If we make it easy for families, will they be more likely to use these programs?"

One of the Early Childhood Collaborative's partners is Hello Baby, a voluntary family-assistance program from Allegheny County's DHS. Developed because people are not aware of or using all of the county's services, Hello Baby is a way to help families find the support they need. It also helps DHS reach more families who can benefit from support, better match families and babies to the right services and ensure that the most vulnerable families and babies have access to the best services to fit their needs.

Parents of every newborn receive information about Hello Baby in the hospital and are then offered services based on their level of need. Outside of the hospital, families can visit helloworldpgh.org, a comprehensive website with wide-ranging resources.

"These supports run the whole gamut—health of the child and parent, child care, basic needs, family support, child development, housing, drug and alcohol counseling, mental health services, etc.," says Ms. Malen. "The program is designed to build meaningful relationships and meant to connect you to whatever your needs are as a parent."

The Pittsburgh Study and Hello Baby are similar in that each is an entry point for increasing parents' accessibility to the wealth of services available in Allegheny County. The Pittsburgh Study also involves taking a 30-minute survey, for which families are paid, every six months through their children's first 36 months of life, then annually thereafter. At each point of contact, families can opt in to offered services—or they can choose not to participate in any programs and just be a part of the study. The overall goal is the same.

"We have evidence-based programs that we know can support families and make their lives better," says Dr. Shaw. "Both Hello Baby and the Pittsburgh Study want to connect families to them. Our end goal isn't to publish research; it's to help children thrive."

The Pittsburgh Study

Early Childhood Collaborative

877-369-5105

tpsec@pitt.edu

The Pittsburgh Study - Early Childhood Collaborative is not your typical research study. We can offer support to you and your family now!



The Pittsburgh Study is a *community-partnered* research study based at the University of Pittsburgh. **Our goal is to find the best resources to help young children thrive and flourish.**

During the stressful time of COVID-19, we want to connect parents with programs that support families.

- ✓ **Phone call.** With your permission, we may call you to tell you more about the study and to find out if you qualify.
- ✓ **Provide Informed Consent.** If you are eligible, we will review the consent form with you.
- ✓ **Complete Surveys.** You will be asked to complete a short survey (about 30 minutes) about your background, your family, your well-being, and your child.
- ✓ **Programs for Families.** Based on your responses to the survey, we will offer you a choice of programs tailored to your family. Enrollment in a program is totally optional.
- ✓ **Follow up.** We will contact you every 6 months to complete a similar survey.
- ✓ **Compensation.** You will be paid for completing each survey. You also *may* receive additional compensation if you enroll in a program.



Do you? 1. Live in Allegheny County? and 2. Have a child x year old?
If you answered yes to both questions, you likely qualify. Call us today.