



COUNTY OF LEHIGH

Office of Public Information
Government Center
17 South Seventh Street
Allentown, Pennsylvania 18101-2401
Phone: 610-782-3002
Fax: 610-871-2755

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 12, 2022

MEDIA CONTACT: Laura Grammes
610-782-3002

Lehigh County SHIFT Program Helps Local Children and Families Find Homes

Allentown, PA- Lehigh County's Office of Children & Youth has partnered with Pinebrook Family Answers and Valley Youth House to help local families find reliable housing. The SHIFT program, fully known as the Stable Housing Intervention in Facilitated Teams, was developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Humans Services and the Office of Advocacy Reform to prevent out of home placements for children and their families due to housing and homelessness issues. Assistance from local landlords is requested from Children & Youth services as housing opportunities for these families are explored within the community.

Through the Lehigh County SHIFT program, caseworkers seek to prevent children from being separated from their families due to out of home placements, to reduce the occurrence of inadequate housing as a cause for separation, to eliminate housing as a barrier to reunification, and to prevent families who are otherwise in good stand to be stuck in the public welfare system. The county received \$249,062 in funding from the SHIFT grant to the benefit the program and its recipients. As a result, families referred to the program will also receive other services associated with housing issues, such as but not limited to mental health needs, substance misuse, parenting education, and domestic violence resources.

Lehigh County's SHIFT program currently is led by CYS Program Specialist, Valerie Rode, who is actively seeking assistance from the community to help find these families a place to live.

"We have so many parents that are achieving their goals...and we are finding that families are really struggling to find available housing units that will house them and their children that they can afford. Although these families have achieved their goals and are stable to be on their own, or to reunify with their children, finding affordable housing is what is preventing them from exiting the public welfare system." Said Rode.

On Friday, January 7, 2022, Rode appeared on Lehigh County Executive Phil Armstrong's Weekly Webcast to raise further awareness on the SHIFT program and to reach out to local landlords for support.

"We still have issues with how we are going to take care of our county's children, the most vulnerable people in Lehigh County. It is thanks to Valerie and the dedicated workers in our Human Services department, we received a SHIFT grant to help relocate people back into housing so that they may be reunited with their loved ones." Said Lehigh County Executive, Phil Armstrong in his recent weekly webcast discussing the program.

Families referred to Children & Youth as well as families with ongoing cases are priority for the SHIFT program due to the nature of the grant and the stated goals in the particular program. OCYS caseworkers and provider staff from Pinebrook Family Answers and Valley Youth House diversionary/in-home/placement transition services will be making referrals for SHIFT.

If you are interested in learning more about SHIFT or are a landlord seeking to help, please contact Valerie Rode at 610-782-3071 or email valerierode@lehighcounty.org

###