



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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Additional Resources Available Through United Way 2-1-1 for School, COVID Questions *Partnership Providing Resource for Healthcare Providers, School Administrators, Parents*

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department announced today that additional services will be provided through the United Way’s 2-1-1 help line relating to school and COVID. Beginning immediately, the help line will now be able to assist in answering questions and providing consistent guidance and the most up-to-date information to healthcare providers, school administrators and parents.

This new resource is being provided through a partnership between the Health Department, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh Poison Center, and UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh’s Nurse Triage Line. Additional support for the enhanced triage line will come from physicians with UPMC Children’s Hospital, AHN Pediatrics, Sewickley Valley Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Kids Plus Pediatrics, Pediatrics South and Children’s Community Pediatrics.

This service adds nurses to 2-1-1’s resources to bolster the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania’s ability to connect people to services and information they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We know that parents, pediatricians and school administrators may have questions as children head back to school,” said Health Department Director Debra Bogen, MD, FAAP, FABM. “We want this to be a resource for anyone seeking the most up-to-date information and guidance about COVID-19.”

Calls to 2-1-1 for the nurses will be routed through a triage system. The 2-1-1 call center will take down a person’s information and provide it to an on-call nurse to return the call. People may also text questions to 2-1-1 by using 898-211 or submit questions using the instant message feature or online form available at <http://pa211sw.org>.

“For more than a decade, 2-1-1 has been a critical resource for our community. The pandemic helped to shine a light on its long time role of connecting people who need help with resources,” said Bobbi Watt Geer, President and CEO, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania. “We’ve seen double the call volume since March. Thanks to this partnership, we will be able to add access to nurses, making 2-1-1 even more valuable during this unprecedented health crisis.”

Nurses will be available to field questions between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. The average call back time during these hours will be about 20 minutes. Calls to 2-1-1 outside of those hours will be forwarded to the nurses, but people should not expect a return call until the next business day.

Nurses will be able to provide guidance to pediatricians who may be fielding calls from families, to answer questions about safety protocols and procedures from school administrators, and to respond to questions and concerns from parents.

“At UPMC Children’s, our top priority is to provide the highest quality of care and support to patients and families,” said Brian S. Martin, DMD, MS, Vice President of Medical Affairs at UPMC Children’s. “We will continue to provide our pediatric expertise to school nurses and administrators and ensure support for families in following up with their primary care providers/medical home.”

The UPMC Children’s Nurse Triage Line has been taking calls for nearly 25 years. The Health Department has contracted with the call line to handle COVID-19 questions and concerns related to schools from anyone, regardless of their physician or insurance provider.

The new resource is **not** for specific questions about a child's health or a case of COVID-19. Parents with questions about their child's health should contact their pediatric health care provider. School administrators with questions or information pertaining to a specific case of COVID-19 should continue to contact the Health Department.

This service is being offered in addition to the COVID-19 hotline for which the Health Department, United Way, and the Pittsburgh Poison Center partner to answer questions and concerns related to COVID-19.

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