

## HFI's Substance Use Treatment Program Expands to Include New Services

**Opioid Use Disorder Family Recovery Services** are unique in the extent to which they offer support. In addition to helping those who are suffering from an Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), HFI also offers support programs for their family members, even if the individual with the OUD diagnosis is not involved in any of HFI's programs. These services are intended to promote growth, wellness, and support. Certified Recovery Specialists will work to connect clients to other programs and resources that they may need, including mental health counseling, drug and alcohol counseling, professional skills training, parenting workshops, mentoring, and decision-making guidance.

**Intervention Services** include prevention and pre-treatment options for adolescents ages 9-18 who are first time marijuana users, pregnant/postpartum marijuana users, and/or pregnant/postpartum opioid users. These services are ideal for clients whose substance use has begun to interfere with their health and well-being but who do not yet require outpatient treatment. Services include drug and alcohol screening, referrals and case coordination, and life skills groups.



## A Reflection on This Year

### OUTCOMES AND POSITIVE COMMUNITY IMPACT



#### IN HOMES

77%

77% of families discharged from the Visit Coaching program had the opportunity for unsupervised visits with their children as they worked towards reunification.

92%

92% of clients in the Family-Focused Solutions Based Services program had increased their level of family support at the time of discharge.

75%

75% of clients in the Family-Focused Solutions Based Services program had reduced their mental health symptoms and improved their level of functioning at the time of discharge.

87%

87% of clients who completed the Home-Based Family Recovery program had maintained their sobriety and retained custody of their children 30 days after discharge.

**T**O READ MORE ABOUT Holy Family Institute's community impact, check out our Annual Report at [www.hfi-pgh.org/hfi-publications/2020-annual-report](http://www.hfi-pgh.org/hfi-publications/2020-annual-report) or scan the QR code at right.



# HOLY LIGHT

CHRISTMAS 2020

A NEWSLETTER OF HOLY FAMILY INSTITUTE

## Specialized Learning for the Whole Child

**C**LIENT AMBER'S nine-year-old son, Darrell, enrolled at Holy Family Specialized Learning after experiencing what his mother calls "extremely rough situations" at several other elementary schools. Darrell had been physically separated from other children dozens of times due to his behavioral and emotional challenges. On multiple occasions, Amber was told that her son would need medication to function in a classroom setting.

After receiving personalized attention from the staff at Holy Family Specialized Learning, however, Amber is amazed at the dramatic progress her son has made. "I love that school," she says. "My son has definitely moved forward in an extremely positive way. They welcome him warmly every day with open arms, and they provide a ton of emotional support to him. My baby is able to be focused on school every morning."

This positive experience has not only prepared Darrell to succeed in the classroom but has also improved his behavior at home, strengthened his relationships with his siblings, and given Amber peace of mind during the school day. "I was used to always having to leave my job," Amber says, referring to days when she would drive to school and pick Darrell up early. "I was so used to going to the IEP meetings every week to add new things for him to work on that I felt sure he would get a suspension when he went to Holy Family. Instead, they just called and let me know that everything was fine. And if I do feel curious, it's okay for me to call and ask how he is doing, no matter the time of day."

Darrell's experience at Holy Family Specialized Learning has been so transformative that Amber now hopes to enroll his younger brother at the school. "This has been one of the best decisions I have ever made for Darrell in my life," she says. "I'm so glad. I'm so happy we're able to move forward on this positive journey."



Students have the opportunity to learn about working in culinary arts.



Students participate in an on-campus gardening activity.



## In-Home Family Services: Creative Trauma Support for Families

*HFI's essential, front-line staff continued home visits to clients in the In-Home Family Services program, with a goal to give parents tools to provide healthy homes for their children.*

In-Home Family Services (IHFS) is a counseling program that empowers families throughout Allegheny and Armstrong Counties to handle a wide array of challenges related to abuse and neglect, substance use, mental health concerns, relationship conflict, and other issues related to trauma. The program is also partnered with Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families in a national child welfare and domestic violence support pilot program. Adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic, which introduced new financial, social, and environmental stressors for many families, has required both persistence and creativity. IHFS staff have risen to the occasion, continuing to offer critical stabilization and help parents provide healthy, nurturing homes for their children.

Unlike other HFI programs, which could effectively transition to telehealth and virtual services, IHFS clinicians rely on regular home visits to deliver hands-on assistance to parents and monitor the safety of children. Throughout the lockdown, IHFS employees donned their masks and continued home visits as essential workers. Some clinicians brought groceries to leave on clients' porches, while others helped connect families with masks and other important personal protective equipment (PPE).

This support has been transformative for IHFS clients, many of whom cannot rely on robust support systems during

these challenging times. For one 19-year-old client, the pandemic meant being unable to see her young son, for whom she had a post-adoptive agreement, or to have a funeral when her mother passed away. Despite these hardships, the teen has worked with IHFS to sign up for driving classes and enroll in school, all while holding down a job. "This young lady amazes me, because she has maintained, never complained and remains positive throughout her life," says her counselor Charise Ainsworth. "She is young but continues to thrive."

Also thriving is a teen client who has reinvented themselves, becoming, as they put it, "a nerd." Growing up in the midst of neglect, abuse, and drug use, this youth prioritized protecting their siblings over doing well in school. Now that all their siblings have found stability in two amazing adoptive homes, this client has been able to focus on and enjoy their education—and was even accepted into college, as their late stepfather had hoped. Having lost that caregiver to an overdose, the teen has been inspired to someday help people recover from substance use. With the help of their Independent Living caseworker, family, doctors, therapists, counselors, and teachers, they are building a strong foundation for any future pursuits. This young person now says, "[I feel] that I am loved and beautiful just the way I am... that I have so much to live for and that I am my own person."

Each success story reflects the dedication of IHFS staff, who are passionate about their work and endlessly attentive to the needs of their

clients. "We had about 25 workers going into homes during the pandemic," says Antonia Whitehead, Senior Vice President of Family Support Programs. "We always say how important our In-Home workers are, but this proves they were literally essential. They never stopped working."



An Independent Living Group of Armstrong County In-Home Family Services enjoys creative, collaborative activities.

## Nazareth Prep Remains Flexible as Covid-19 Cases Rise

AFTER MANY HOURS OF DISCUSSION and careful consideration, Nazareth Prep made the decision to start the school year with in-person learning. We did not take this decision lightly, consulting local health professionals, teachers, and parents as we examined our options. According to a survey sent to parents, 77% wanted their children to return to in-person learning and we, too, believed this to be the best choice.

Nazareth Prep began school on September 1st with desk shields on every desk, students and teachers practicing social distancing, and masks required. More recently

though, as Covid-19 cases in Allegheny County continued to increase, Nazareth Prep had made the decision to switch to hybrid learning for freshman and sophomores and then not long after that, decided to switch all students to virtual learning.

In-person classes are set to resume on Monday, December 7th, but the plan could continue to change. As promised from the beginning, Nazareth Prep will remain flexible as new information comes in. This has been a challenging year in many ways, but we are committed to keeping students, faculty, and staff safe, healthy, and free from Covid-19.



Nazareth Prep student, Emory, at his desk on the first day of school.

