

Pennsylvania Specific Resources - “Institutionalization 2.0: Criminalization of people with Disabilities”

[PA START Allegheny](#) – PA START Allegheny is a specialized mental health support service for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and behavioral health needs. START stands for Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources, and Treatment. Their goal is to provide stability and prevent disruptive crises in participants’ lives. Page 2 of this guide is a 1-page explainer of the service.

[LeCSI](#) – LeCSI (Legal Connection, Support, and Intervention) is a program within the Office of Developmental Supports in the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. LeCSI serves individuals registered with, or in the process of registration with, ODS who are involved in the legal system by helping participants navigate the legal system, communicate with their attorneys and have a voice in their legal teams, access accommodations, and more. Pages 3 and 4 provide a comprehensive overview of LeCSI.

[Abolitionist Law Center](#) – The Abolitionist Law Center is nonprofit, public interest law firm and community organizing project that wields class action and impact litigation on behalf of people whose rights have been violated in jail and prison. Specific to Allegheny County, they’ve published a research report called [Invisible By Design: Developmental and Cognitive Disabilities in Allegheny County’s Criminal Legal System](#), which maps out the intersection points between people with intellectual disabilities and the criminal punishment system in Allegheny County.

[Pennsylvania Prison Society](#) – PA Prison Society works to protect the health, safety, and dignity of all incarcerated people. They are the sole organization in Pennsylvania with legal authority to visit any prison or jail. You can call their help line with questions about specific facilities and policies, or a concern about an incarcerated loved one: 215-564-4775.

[Public Source – Allegheny County Jail](#) – PublicSource has a series of articles examining concerns raised about the treatment of incarcerated people with mental health disabilities in the Allegheny County Jail and how chronic staffing shortages impact care.

[ASERT](#) – The Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT) is a statewide initiative funded by the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP). The goal of the ASERT Collaborative is to provide streamlined access to information for Pennsylvanians living with autism. Search “incarceration” in the search bar for resources specific to the criminal legal system.

[MyODP Training Resource Center](#) – MyODP.org provides a single place for people to access ODP’s virtual trainings, resources and communications, as well as to register to attend face-to-face events. Information is geared towards individuals and families as well as professionals working in human services. Search under RESOURCES for “Disability and the Justice System”.



The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (AC DHS), PA Office of Development Programs (ODP), and the PA Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) is launching an innovative crisis prevention and intervention program in Allegheny County: PA START Allegheny, opening on July 18, 2023. START (Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources, and Treatment) is a national model, currently operating in over 20 states, supported through the University of New Hampshire National Center for START Services™. Providing a 24-hour community-based crisis response and clinical consultation team, START works to strengthen efficiencies and service outcomes for individuals with **intellectual/developmental disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorder and co-occurring behavioral health needs**. It develops linkages with existing services to integrate and improve individual and system outcomes. It does not replace any services, but instead seeks improved outcomes through close collaboration with participants and their caregivers. The PA START Allegheny program is a strength-based, evidence-informed behavioral practice and person-centered approach to treatment. Learn more about AC DHS at www.alleghenycounty.us/human-services/index.aspx.

Resources for Human Development (RHD) is delivering the clinical services for the PA START Allegheny program. In line with AC DHS, PA ODP, and PA OMHSAS philosophies demonstrated in the LifeCourse Framework and the Community Support Principles, RHD is committed to the fundamental value of dignity and respect for all human beings, the empowerment of those we serve and our employees, a collaborative management model, and the importance of timely change and risk-taking. RHD is led by its values, focusing on developing a highly decentralized organization with the broadest possible service mission. Learn more about RHD at www.rhd.org.

PA START Allegheny's services include:

- 24/7 on-site or remote crisis response and consultation for enrolled individuals
- Prevention and intervention, clinical consultation, education, and training
- Coaching that supports caregivers and paid staff to improve their skills and confidence to support individuals with complex needs
- Ability to establish and maintain formalized community partnerships and system linkages
- Comprehensive assessment and evaluation of support needs, existing services, and available resources
- Systemic analysis, consultation, and support

For more information, please contact:

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LeCSI

Translates between the human services and legal systems to support you through legal system encounters.



Allegheny County
Department of Human
Services (AC DHS)
Office of Developmental
Supports (ODS)

**Want to reach LeCSI?
Call ODS at
412-253-1399
and ask for the LeCSI
lead or click on
Connect with ODS
at the QR code below.**



LeCSI (Legal Connection, Support, and Intervention) serves individuals registered with, or in the process of registration with, ODS who are involved in the legal system by helping participants:

- Navigate the legal system.
- Communicate with their attorneys and have a voice in their legal teams.
- Attend court proceedings.
- Understand and follow court orders.
- Connect with human services and community resources.
- Access accommodations.

LeCSI also helps courts:

- Recognize how disability may affect communication and understanding.
- Understand neurodivergence and individual differences in communication.
- Connect participants with appropriate human services and community resources.

LeCSI does not provide legal advice. Only the participant's attorney can provide legal advice.

ODS registers eligible Allegheny County residents with

- Intellectual Disability (ID);
- Autism;
- Developmental Disability (DD) prior to age 9; and
- Medically Complex Condition (MCC) prior to age 21.

Find details on [Diagnosis Eligibility Requirements for stakeholders](#) and at this QR code



ALLEGHENY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENTAL SUPPORTS
LEGAL CONNECTION, SUPPORT, AND INTERVENTION PROGRAM (LeCSI)

The Legal Connection, Support, and Intervention Program (LeCSI), run through the Office of Developmental Supports (ODS), is available to all qualifying individuals with Intellectual Disability and/or Autism (ID/A) who encounter the legal system. With authorization from our participants, LeCSI facilitates communication with and translates between the human services and legal systems. We further assist our legal system partners to support or represent individuals with ID/A by offering links not just to disability education, but also to available and appropriate resources and other human services systems as needed.

Our program specialists directly support our participants, linking to natural, community, and paid resources, and assisting in providing ADA accommodations in the courts. We also offer our participants emotional support and assistance in navigating court systems, understanding and following court orders, attending proceedings, and communicating with legal counsel. With the goal of processing trauma and avoiding future legal system encounters, LeCSI support continues after the conclusion of any case for as long as the individual participant chooses.

Having begun our program in the Allegheny County Criminal Court divisions in partnership with our Office of the Public Defender, Justice Related Services, and several private attorneys, we have since begun to assist in our neighboring County Courts and in Federal Court. As we now begin expanding beyond the criminal divisions, LeCSI remains dedicated to supporting the unique, disability-based needs of our participants in any legal system encounter, and to assisting our partners in recognizing and understanding expressions of neurodivergence and non-traditional means of communication.

Please contact us as soon as possible if you believe you may be working with someone who could benefit from LeCSI services:

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