

Marc Cherna Fellowship through the University of Pittsburgh

Job Description

About Marc Cherna

- For twenty-five years, Marc Cherna provided extraordinary leadership as Director of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, developing increasingly effective ways of delivering essential services to our most vulnerable neighbors. The most important products of his efforts are the countless lives saved or improved through the work of his DHS team as it dealt with such seemingly intractable challenges as homelessness, child abuse, substance use disorders, and mental illness. Marc's impact was even more substantial because his innovative approaches, which provided inspiring models locally and for other communities in the state and nation.

Cherna Fellowship

The **Cherna Fellows program** is an exclusive opportunity for University of Pittsburgh students pursuing graduate degrees in the School of Social Work to gain experience within an organization that designs, plans, organizes and implements human services for over 200,000 people and with a network of providers. This Fellows program is jointly administered by the University's School of Social Work and the Institute of Politics (IOP). The IOP was created in 1989 as a nonpartisan policy organization serving Southwestern Pennsylvania and delivers timely information about issues affecting our region to elected officials, community leaders, and the public. The Cherna Fellow will embark on experiential learning opportunities within Allegheny County and address all of the core competencies in social work while developing knowledge and practice in public policy analysis, development, and advocacy.

Students will be placed within the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) **for two full academic terms, with up to 720 hours** (meeting the minimum number of hours per year required by the School of Social Work), with financial support of a stipend of \$10,800. Students and placement locations within DHS are encouraged to co-design the projects with review by the IOP and the School of Social Work. Major project milestones will be crafted to ensure that Cherna Fellows can demonstrate each of the social work core competencies. (*Social Work Competencies EPAS 2015; 1-9 with a special emphasis on Competency 5: Engaging in Policy Practice*)

Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS)

At Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS), the mission is to improve the welfare of the County's most vulnerable residents. DHS offers a comprehensive array of services informed by the latest research and best practices across its program offices. Some current initiatives include:

- Ensuring access to all services by anyone who needs support
- Building a network of community-based Crisis services for people with mental health or substance use issues
- Investments that reduce the cost of public transit for low-income individuals
- Expanding drug and alcohol services
- Innovative housing solutions to deal with severe shortages in supply
- Broad-based workforce initiatives, including the Behavioral Health Fellows program

- Meeting the mental health needs of children in foster care through more responsive, effective services and support

In keeping with the spirit of Marc Cherna, who valued fresh perspectives, your ideas about how the Cherna Fellowship can impact our community are welcomed in your individual applications.

Student Application Process

Second-year MSW students are eligible to apply for this fellowship. Representatives of the Institute of Politics, Allegheny County, and the School of Social Work will select the Cherna Fellow, with preference given to students who have lived experiences with the human services system. (The Cherna Fellowship places a high degree of importance on lived experiences for the value they offer to the development of effective public policy and practice.)

Students must complete an online application, submit unofficial transcripts, resume, and write a one-page essay response. **The essay questions are the following:** What interests you in human services? Why is that meaningful to you and your future career? As part of the application process, students will be interviewed. Applications are due by **March 1st**, and students will be notified by the end of March if they have been selected for the fellowship. Here is the link to complete the application https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aV7tiCWKSgl80nk.

Fellowship Commitments

- Placement commitment is from September 2023 through April 2024
- Complete 720 hours at the placement site
- Weekly meetings with project mentor from partnering organization
- Complete DHS introductory training requirements for onboarding
- Co-create deliverables with DHS and develop a project that fits the student passions and mission of the Cherna fellowship

Benefits

- Earn a stipend totaling \$10,800 for the academic year
- Connect with and be mentored by DHS administrators
- Gain skills and experience in policy issues that affect the Pittsburgh region

It is the policy of Allegheny County that to work at an Allegheny County location (as an employee or intern), candidates for positions must provide proof of a Covid-19 vaccination. The prospective employee or intern will need to be fully vaccinated or have at least one shot of a two-shot series before beginning work. Allegheny County will allow for medical and religious exemptions from the requirements in accordance with state and federal law.

Each student will be matched with a MSW field instructor/project mentor (in some cases, it may be more than one person) to assist with guidance in the project and ensure the student meets overall fellowship learning objectives. For more information about the Cherna fellowship, please visit our website at <http://iop.pitt.edu/marc-cherne-fellowship>.