APPOINTMENT OF DR. RACHEL BERGER AS MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR 
OFFICE OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

June 14, 2024. Today, Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh and Laval Miller-Wilson, Deputy Secretary of DHS’s Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF), announced Dr. Rachel Berger MD, MPH will join OCYF as Medical Director in July 2024. Dr. Berger will work in the Deputy Secretary’s Office providing expert medical consultation and be involved in decision-making and strategic planning to strengthen the identification, evaluation and reporting of suspected maltreatment in the Commonwealth.

“Dr. Berger is a nationally recognized expert on child abuse and neglect and brings an incredible wealth of experience and leadership as a child abuse pediatrician and researcher, as well as experience mentoring others and advocating for change on behalf of children and families in Pennsylvania and nationwide. She will be a valued addition to our team of dedicated professionals who work 24/7 to serve the Commonwealth to protect children,” said Secretary Arkoosh. “Her medical expertise and long-standing commitment to child abuse prevention will be critical to our work ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of children. Her perspective and experience will strengthen our work at the state level and help our partners in county children and youth agencies.”

Dr. Berger has dedicated her clinical and research career to serving children and families impacted by child abuse and neglect. Most recently, Dr. Berger was a child abuse pediatrician at UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh where she served as chief of the division of Child Advocacy from 2013 until 2022. She also served as the Medical Director for the UPMC Child Abuse Initiative, a program to improve the ability of general emergency departments to respond to child maltreatment, initiated the collaboration with Child Protective Services designed to provide real-time medical expertise for referrals of young children at highest risk of morbidity and mortality from child maltreatment, and led the Allegheny County Infant Child Death Review Committee from 2017-2022. At the national level, Dr. Berger also served as the research lead for the Federal Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities during the Obama Administration and was a senior policy fellow for Casey Family Programs, a national child welfare foundation.
Collaboration with child abuse pediatricians and other medical professionals with specialized knowledge in child abuse prevention and treatment is critical to identifying child abuse or neglect and referring at-risk children and families to appropriate supports and resources. The newly created medical director position will provide medical expertise to help shape child abuse prevention policy and guidance for the Commonwealth as well as partner county children and youth agencies in all 67 counties. This role aligns with both OCYF’s mission of protecting Pennsylvania’s children and recent recommendations outlined by Pennsylvania’s Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics in the Keystone State Child Abuse Medical Forum Strategic Plan.

DHS’s Office of Children, Youth, and Families's vision is for all children and youth to grow up in a safe, nurturing, and permanent family and community. Their mission is to support the provision of quality services and best practices designed to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of Pennsylvania’s children, youth, and families.

Learn more about the Office of Children, Youth and Families work to protect Pennsylvania’s children.