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## PRESS RELEASE

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### The PEAL Center Announces New Executive Director

[Pittsburgh, September 24, 2021] Today, the PEAL (Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership) Center Board of Directors announced the appointment of Mary Hartley as its new executive director.

This announcement comes after an extensive eight-month statewide search following the departure of PEAL's former Executive Director Jeannine Brinkley.

Hartley, a longtime advocate for children and adults with disabilities and former PEAL Board Member, has served as interim Executive Director for the organization since February. Hartley becomes the third executive director of the statewide parent and youth training and information organization since it was founded in 2005 by a group of parents of children with disabilities led by Liz Healey.

"The PEAL team has been incredibly dedicated and accomplished great work during this this leadership transition and overall unusual year and a half," said PEAL's Board President Paul Fogle, one of the Founding Members of the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network. "We are confident Mary will continue to support PEAL in its mission to educate and empower families to ensure that children, youth and young adults with disabilities and special health care needs lead rich, active lives as full members of their schools and communities."

Hartley will oversee PEAL's 18-member team and promote PEAL's efforts in offering individual assistance, trainings, family-friendly resources, and leadership development. She will also manage PEAL's many grants and projects and continue fostering PEAL's important partnerships across the state.

Hartley is a parent advocate who got her start volunteering with the Local Task Force on the Right to Education. She is a disability systems-change professional who has directed and managed multiple public policy and legislative changes in several Pennsylvania organizations. During the last 16 years, she has primarily worked with the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania and Achieva on statewide efforts. Hartley was appointed by Governor Wolf to serve on the Employment First Oversight Commission where she was the inaugural Chair. She has served on the Board of Disability Rights Pennsylvania and is past Chair of UPMC's Disability Resource Council.

#### About the Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership (PEAL) Center

Since 2005, the PEAL Center had been committed to empowering families, children and young adults with disabilities, and the professionals who serve them. Today, PEAL is a Pennsylvania statewide organization that continues to promote inclusion and access to education and healthcare. The Peal Center offers free of charge support to those served through individual assistance, trainings, and leadership development.

The PEAL Center operates various programs and projects that align with its mission to educate and empower families to ensure that children, youth and young adults with disabilities and special health care needs lead rich, active lives as full members of their schools and communities. PEAL is Pennsylvania's Parent Center (PTI) and Family-to-Family Health Information Center (F2F) and collaborates with other partners for Families to the MAX and Transition Discoveries. To learn more visit: [pealcenter.org](http://pealcenter.org)

The PEAL Center serves all of Pennsylvania with offices in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and remote staff.

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