

DHS in Motion

A Monthly
Message from the Commissioner

Hello DHS colleagues!

I am happy to introduce "DHS in Motion", a monthly message that hopes to accomplish the following goals:

- Establish dialogues with staff around a number of topics related to agency priorities
- Keep staff updated on the work of my office
- Highlight our agency's accomplishments
- Discuss changes taking place at DHS

Because our agency is so large and things are happening and changing at all times, "DHS in Motion" will also allow me to share my thinking, vision, and focus with you. I encourage you to give me feedback on the ideas, plans, and highlights that I share with you here. I look forward to hearing from you!

DEVELOPING A "VISION" FOR DHS

During my first eight months as Commissioner, I have had the opportunity to learn about the depth and complexity of our agency's work. I have met with and exchanged emails with many of our staff members about a number of things, including agency values, priorities, needs, and accomplishments. These experiences have reinforced how honored I feel to be working for DHS and how proud I am of the commitment and dedication of our staff members.

Because our city's most vulnerable families are facing increasing social and economic barriers, it is crucial to integrate prevention and support strategies among government agencies and community organizations that work with families at risk. I believe that the Department of Human Services must be the leader in developing goals and strategies that address this integration. In this spirit, I share with you my thoughts on developing goals that will

help us become Philadelphia's leader in connecting family and children to the resources that will ensure their healthy development and well-being.

Vision VALUES

- Programmatic efforts will place a greater emphasis on prevention and community resources will be leveraged to accomplish the desired prevention outcomes
 - The work environment at DHS will promote recognition of the day-to-day work of DHS staff and pride in the services that the agency provides
 - The status quo of practices and services will always be questioned and assessed in order to continuously find ways to operate more effectively and efficiently as one system
- Community input and partnership will be prioritized.
- Information about DHS services, programs, and processes will be readily accessible to the public through a variety of communication and public education vehicles.
- Inter-agency and multi-disciplinary collaborative networks of internal staff and external partners will be used to solidify the "safety net" of children and families in the city.

Vision GOALS

1. Improve outcomes for children and families served by the Department of Human Services through multiple strategies in areas that include:
 - a) reduction of child abuse, neglect, and delinquency
 - b) increase in adoptions and permanent placements
 - c) re-direction or investment of prevention resources in communities of highest need
2. Utilize research data and outcomes measurement as tools to:

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THOUGHTS ON LEADERSHIP

Several high profile events have created an opportunity for us to start approaching our work from a different angle, honestly looking at what it is that we do well and what are some of the gaps that we need to bridge. I am very excited about how DHS has recently responded to the engagement of external partners in strategically assessing our current work and future plans.

I believe that it is our responsibility at DHS to define and map out an agency vision and determine what are the steps to accomplish it. It is also our responsibility to solicit the input and support of external partners and to share with the public, advocates, and others what our vision and plans are and what we are currently doing to improve the lives of children and families in the city.

A New Approach to Leadership and Management

I have started making some changes in our approach to leadership and management that reflect my philosophy around shared visioning, planning, and accountability. For example, I have facilitated the creation of a team approach at CYD where we work together on issues that were previously addressed by a few individuals. Another example is my preference for a 'hands-on' approach, where I participate in meetings and engage in dialogues with

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Alba Martinez



Hello (continued)

- a) evaluate effectiveness of programs and services and design service strategies and
 - b) share accomplishments and challenges with our partners and the public.
3. Develop a Communications Strategy that will engage DHS clients and providers, the media, and public at large in learning about the service goals and priorities of the Department, how the Department operates, and its programs and services in communities.

4. Transform Department into resource center for children, youth, and families in Philadelphia through multiple strategies, such as the establishment of a "customer-care" unit and the publication of print and virtual "family support resource guides".
 5. Create effective inter-agency and multi-disciplinary networks to address the multiple needs of children, youth, and families involved with DHS and reduce bureaucratic barriers to the integration of services.
- Given the extraordinary work that our agency is already engaged in, I feel confident that these goals are achievable with your support and that of our many community partners. ■

THOUGHTS (continued)

staff and managers from many different levels in the organization regardless of their formal roles or titles. Finally, I have changed the tone and dynamics of some of our delicate engagements with labor, external partners and regulatory systems. The tone has changed from tense and adversarial at times to healthy, cordial, and supportive, which allows for the honest discussion of tough issues and for finding common ground.

DHS: Becoming a Model Child Welfare Agency

DHS is a committed and dedicated agency striving to become a great organization. Shaping a great organization will take courage, trust, sacrifice, and a sense of wonder and creativity. My ultimate vision is a stronger DHS. I think we are all on the same page with this. I truly look forward to working with you as we pave the road to get there. ■

Needs-Based Budget Meetings Provide DHS With A Direct Link To The Communities

In keeping with the Department of Human Services' new vision and commitment to get even closer to the people we serve, DHS hosted a series of four Needs-Based Budget Community Meetings earlier this summer.

The meetings were scheduled in four different regions of the city, in order for DHS to hear firsthand about the needs of Philadelphia's diverse communities; gain positive feedback on the programs, policies and services of DHS; and receive constructive criticism in those areas where the communities we serve believe we are lacking. It is vital that we seek out the concerns and opinions of our clients when developing the overall budget. In seeking out the people we serve by going directly into the neighborhoods, we remove the barriers of cynicism and strengthen the bonds between our agency and the people of our communities. We also are afforded rare and candid insight into the true needs of the people we serve, which enables us to develop a comprehensive plan and budget to ensure the success of our mission.

Commissioner Alba Martinez was on-hand at each of the four meetings and led the important and often passionate dialogue with community residents. She was joined by DHS Deputy Commissioners, including Cheryl Ransom, Joyce Burrell and Maxine Tucker. These community meetings are a critical public facet in the 18-month creation of DHS' Needs-Based Budget, which also includes dozens of other planning meetings with city and state officials.

The meetings were extraordinarily well-received and the community residents were appreciative of the opportunity to interact directly with Commissioner Martinez. The sessions raised questions and concerns we knew we would need to address, but also illuminated new issues and ideas that will lead to the establishment of innovative new programs and improved delivery of services.

"The people were not at all afraid to share their issues, concerns and problems," said Commissioner Martinez. "But the exchanges were uniformly positive and done in a spirit of partnership, which was so encouraging to me. It was also gratifying to hear people simply say 'thanks' for the help of DHS. There were many wonderful and uplifting stories about how DHS workers made a difference in the life of a child or family. These meetings and the many other strategies we are employing to reach out to the communities will go a long way toward positively changing the public's perception of DHS and put a caring human face on an agency that most people really don't know. I am so proud of the work we do and the response we received from the hundreds of attendees at these meetings confirmed my belief that the men and women of DHS are among the most dedicated people in Philadelphia's city government. Having this outstanding team of people is a great starting point, but we all know that there is much more work to be done for the children and families of Philadelphia." ■

Thank You and Farewell

I want to express my profound gratitude to two long-time members of the DHS team who are retiring soon, Deputy Commissioner Maxine Tucker and Margaret Holtzman, Supervisor of Riverview Home. Maxine has given DHS - and Philadelphia's children and families - 30 years of tireless, dedicated service. For 22 years, Margaret has provided unwavering commitment and care to the elderly at Riverview. These two women have been champions for our clients and an inspiration to their DHS colleagues. From all of us at DHS, thank you for your years of service. You will be missed. Enjoy your retirement...it is well-deserved. ■

