

# DHS in Motion

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## A Message from the Commissioner

### Greetings, DHS colleagues!

As we enter the beginning of a new fiscal year, it is an appropriate time to reflect with pride on the accomplishments of the past 12 months. Your dedication and commitment to the people we serve is inspiring. We have already taken significant steps to shape DHS into a model, client-focused and responsive social services agency for the 21st century.

As we continue our evolution, it is important to have a strategic blueprint that clearly details our goals, action plans, timelines and projected outcomes. As you know, there have been significant changes in child welfare legislation at the federal level, such as the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, and the overhauling of the Federal Department of Health and Human Services' regulations around child welfare reviews and funding.

These important shifts provide DHS with a unique opportunity to reexamine long-held assumptions, structures, priorities, and practices to more keenly focus the efforts of the Department into ensuring child safety, permanence, and well being.

Our "Blueprint for Excellence" has been created to organize the priorities of DHS (consistent with our vision and mandates), into a functional document, which allows us to align our organizational resources in a way that produces better outcomes for Philadelphia's children and families.

For the present, this blueprint is a roadmap for staff, partners, and the Philadelphia community. It focuses the direction of each aspect of our work. For the future, this blueprint is a means to measure our commitment to and achievement of ensuring child safety, permanence and well being.

To this end, we have selected broad directional guides around which we will align our work efforts to accomplish our goals. These are our Promotion Strategies, our "Bill of Rights" for children and families -- our expectations for ourselves and our system. They are the signposts mapping us toward excellence. Some (not all) of the initiatives that

we will be working on together are highlighted here. The Executive Summary of the Blueprint is currently available for staff and partners and the complete document will soon be available to all staff via our soon to be launched internal website.



Alba Martinez

### PROMOTION OF SAFETY *[right to be free from imminent harm or threat of danger]*

- Reduce the incidents of abuse and neglect.
- Reduce the incidents of youth violence.
- Expand quality assurance systems and resources.
- Develop specialized services to meet more particular needs of vulnerable families.

### PROMOTION OF PERMANENCE *[right to security and stability]*

- Front-load and intensify services to keep children at home whenever possible.
- Front-load and intensify services to reunite children in out of home care safely and as quickly as possible.
- Accelerate and increase the goal of adoption when reunification has been ruled out.
- Promote and implement a plan for Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship.

### PROMOTION OF TREATMENT AND WELLNESS *[right to physical, mental, emotional health]*

- Develop a Behavioral Health Department to more effectively meet the mental health needs of children and their families.
- Promote and align resources to achieve the integration of planning and service delivery between DHS and the Behavioral Health system.
- Develop a Physical Health and Education Department to more effectively meet children's health and educational needs.

### PROMOTION OF SERVICE QUALITY AND PROGRAM AND ACCOUNTABILITY *[right to receive and expect excellence]*

- Create a performance-focused and integrated Contracts Administration and Program Evaluation Division.

- Create a Quality Assurance Department to develop procedures and system capacity to deliver quality, timely, and permanent outcomes for children.
- Expand technology systems and functions to better manage agency data.
- Implement social work practice reform including caseload specialization, workload assessment, referral system improvement, and stronger coordination and collaboration with the Law Department to meet state and federal practice standards.
- Strengthen and expand staff recruitment, retention, and training and development opportunities.
- Develop and secure a new facility for youth requiring detention.
- Create a customer service, information and referral capacity and enhance communication systems to better meet the needs of staff, stakeholders, and customers.

### PROMOTION OF CHILD AND FAMILY WELL BEING *[right to grow and develop]*

- Redirect Family Centers to more specifically address prevention of abuse, neglect, and delinquency.
- Strengthen and expand support services for truancy and truancy prevention.
- Work to support families in their journeys to achieve economic self-sufficiency through education and training, and collaboration with workforce development partners.
- Develop broad partnerships to expand and create resource, counseling, support, and information systems for parents.

### PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY BASED PARTNERSHIPS *[right to connection to the village]*

- Create the Division of Community-Based Prevention Services to enhance DHS's capacity to prevent abuse, neglect and delinquency.
- Develop an infrastructure to enhance community participation in the protection of children.



## DHS Launches Medical Foster Parent Recruitment Campaign

The Franklin Institute has a long-standing reputation as a place that inspires the imagination. DHS used this child-friendly environment to inspire an audience of nearly 100 people to get involved in the department's newly launched Medical Foster Parent Recruitment Initiative. On February 28, 2001, City leaders, child welfare professionals, health care professionals and the faith-based community gathered together to learn about this new campaign to recruit foster parents for children with special medical needs.



*Like Mother, Like Daughter. Sharing a laugh are Sharlene Wall, daughter Crystal, Director of Social Services Estelle Richman, and DHS Commissioner Alba Martinez.*

Currently, there are 40 medically needy children in the system that qualify for outplacement into a loving foster setting. "That is a very attainable goal, which is why DHS is making a concerted effort right now to recruit foster parents who will open their hearts and homes to children in need," said DHS Commissioner Alba Martinez. Martinez continued, "study after study has proven that the physical, psychological, and emotional condition of children with special medical needs improves dramatically once they are moved out of an institutional setting and into a nurturing foster home."

DHS announced the formation of a Speakers Bureau to address groups of prospective foster parents, and a special announcement was made by Philadelphia Daily News Promotions Manager, Jeff Horn. The paper agreed to feature, over 40 consecutive weeks, a photo and brief description of each individual medically needy child. Accompanying each story will be the newly established phone number to handle specific requests for medical foster care information.

The emotional highpoint of the evening occurred during the screening of the newly produced recruitment video, titled Legacy of Love: Becoming a Medical Foster Parent. The video features interviews with pediatricians, child psychologists, DHS Social workers, and medical foster parents who all attest to the remarkable strides made by children with special medical needs, once they are placed in a foster home.

# (215) 683-4DHS

*It's here! DHS now has a new, easy-to-remember, main number. After a period of pilot testing, (215) 683-4DHS is now in full operation. It sounds simple. However, establishing it was a complex process. Thanks to the amazing effort of a work-group, which included staff from communications, hotline, information and referral, logistics, triage, client reception, resource development, personnel, and staff development, we were able to accomplish the task! Thanks also to our newly - appointed Customer Service Agents, who answer the telephone and connect the callers to the appropriate department or staff.*

*We will continue to assess the effectiveness of our new main number, and will always look for ways to improve communication and customer service, both internally and with our external constituents. We welcome your input and feedback!*

## The Second Annual Children's Crusader Awards

A crusader is "one who undertakes an enterprise with zeal and enthusiasm." It is an apt description of the men and women who dedicate themselves to preventing and ending child abuse in Philadelphia.

In honor of April's designation as "Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month," the Philadelphia Department of Human Services recently hosted the second annual Children's Crusader Awards. The Mayor's Reception Room served as the setting for this awards ceremony honoring the arduous work and commitment of DHS social workers and community-based agencies in their efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect in Philadelphia.

This year's Children's Crusader Award winners included DHS Social Worker II, Donna Howley; DHS Social Worker II, Elyse Conwell; and the community based organizations Germantown Settlement and the Philadelphia Society for Services to Children.

"DHS exists to serve and protect the city's children and youth, but we can't do it alone," said DHS Commissioner Alba Martinez. "Workers like Donna Howley and Elyse Conwell, and organizations like the Philadelphia Society for Services to Children and Germantown Settlement are doing incredible work on behalf of children and their families, yet they receive very few accolades. This award is our way of acknowledging their significant contributions to ending child abuse in Philadelphia."

Donna Howley has been a DHS social

worker for 26 years, and is currently involved with the Child Abuse Hotline. "There are so many people here who do so many wonderful things...what I do is no different. I'm shocked, but also very grateful for the honor."

Elyse Conwell, considered a "Hero" to many of her co-workers, has been a dedicated advocate for her clients for the last 3 years. "This award is particularly gratifying to me because I love what I do. Knowing that my work is helping to stabilize and empower families is the greatest reward, and to have my peers honor me is very special."



*The Rewards of Hard Work: DHS colleagues share a moment of pride. Pictured from left to right are Deputy Commissioner Wanda Mial, Children's Crusader Award winner Elyse Conwell, DHS Commissioner Alba Martinez, Children's Crusader Award winner Donna Howley, and DHS Communications Director Liza Rodriguez.*

"Winning the DHS Children's Crusader Award is a great honor for our agency," said Helen Dennis, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Society for Services to Children. "Our mission is to prevent child

abuse and, if we are doing our job right, it will help DHS in their mission to strengthen and keep families together."

"I am honored that the tireless hard work and efforts of our staff is being recognized by DHS," said Emanuel V. Freeman, President and CEO of the Germantown Settlement.

The Children's Crusader Awards are given annually to DHS social workers and community based organizations that exemplify the common mission of strengthening families and preventing abuse and neglect in Philadelphia. Nominations are submitted by DHS staff, and an awards committee determines the annual winners.

