

2011 ANNUAL REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

*Ensuring the safety, permanency
and well being of vulnerable
children and youth*





Over the past five years, the Philadelphia Department of Human Services has embarked on a journey of transformation. Throughout this period we've reexamined our policies and practices and made significant changes aimed at improving the safety, permanency and well being of the children we serve. Change is never easy and while the road has not always been smooth, we've emerged as a stronger, more effective agency

Today, DHS is an agency that is accountable for its outcomes. One of the achievements I am most proud of in my tenure as Commissioner is the establishment of the Division of Performance Management and Accountability, which has created an infrastructure to evaluate the performance of the Department and its contracted providers. Based on the data collected and analyzed by this Division, we know that children served by the Department are being more closely monitored for safety issues, are achieving permanency at higher rates, have improved educational outcomes and are making more successful transitions to independence.

While we are proud of what we have accomplished, there is still a tremendous amount of work to do in order to sustain positive outcomes for children. Our primary focus moving forward, and one of the final recommendations of the Community Oversight Board, will be the clarity of roles and responsibilities between DHS and its provider agencies. Toward that end, we will be launching a new initiative called Improving Outcomes for Children (IOC), which will create a single case management structure. Within that structure, community-based providers will have primary responsibility for service delivery and decision making and DHS will be responsible for monitoring, oversight, and technical assistance. The agency will also serve as a convener, ensuring the input of relevant stakeholders at key decision making points in the life of a case.

Child welfare is a community responsibility and DHS alone cannot solve the problems of abuse, neglect and delinquency. During the past five years, we have built more robust partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders including the courts, the police, the District Attorney's Office, the School District, providers, advocates and the Commonwealth. Going forward, we will concentrate our efforts in the specific neighborhoods where the children we serve live. IOC is a community-based approach which will provide an opportunity for the Department to work more closely with the communities our children come from to create a service system that is informed by and speaks to the needs of those communities.

None of our accomplishments would be possible without the committed staff and management at DHS. Each and every day, these individuals work tirelessly to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of vulnerable children and youth. As Commissioner, it is a privilege and an honor to lead such a dedicated team and I look forward to our continued collaboration and success in the coming year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Anne Marie Ambrose'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Marie Ambrose
Commissioner, City of Philadelphia, Department of Human Services

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Friends,

It is my pleasure to present the FY'11 Annual Report for the Department of Human Services. This report documents the important steps toward our goal of promoting transparency, accountability and ultimately, better service to children, youth and families.

The Department of Human Services bears the awesome responsibility of ensuring the safety and well being of our city's children. It is a responsibility that each dedicated employee assumes with unwavering commitment. Every day, these skilled employees enter highly dangerous situations, without protection, without backup-- risking their own safety in order to protect vulnerable children. They are truly the city's unsung heroes.

The DHS of today is not the DHS of five years ago. Thanks to the capable and inspired leadership of Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose and the tireless efforts of staff, the department has made huge strides in its reform efforts.

In its most recent report, the Community Oversight Board, which is charged with monitoring the agencies progress, noted, "DHS reforms of the last three years have led to increased child safety and to improved fairness in the decision-making process for families." The report also stated that DHS has become a more open Agency at the administrative level, with more emphasis on communicating and coordinating with their service partners.

The following pages highlight some of the agency's many accomplishments over the past five years, including:

- *The implementation of a Safety Model of Practice, which incorporates child safety into all aspects of decision making.*
- *The establishment of the Division of Performance Management and Accountability (PMA), which closely monitors the quality of services rendered by provider agencies and enables the agency to better monitor outcomes for children.*
- *The establishment of teams to review child fatalities and near fatalities and make recommendations to prevent child abuse and neglect.*
- *The addition of a medical director and the expansion of its medical unit, through which the Department is better able to meet the needs of medically fragile children.*

While these achievements represent tremendous progress, DHS is not resting on its laurels. It is working hard to be more responsive to the communities where the children it serves live. We look forward to working with each of you to ensure that all Philadelphia children are safe and have the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Nutter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael A. Nutter
Mayor, City of Philadelphia

SAFETY

Child safety is at the core of DHS' mission.

Over the past five years, DHS has implemented numerous initiatives to better protect Philadelphia's vulnerable children.

Vigilant Focus on Child Safety

In 2008, DHS implemented a Safety Model of Practice to better focus on threats to child safety and ensure that children only entered dependent placement when they were not safe in their home. **Between 2005 and 2010, the number of children in dependent placement decreased by 35 percent.**

Figure 1. Number of Children in Dependent Placement by End of Fiscal Year



Monthly Visits Improve Safety Monitoring

To further ensure the safety of children, in 2010 DHS implemented a protocol requiring workers to visit children in placement at least once a month. **The Department has maintained over 90% compliance since the protocol was established.**

Figure 2. Child Visits Per Month

MONTH	VISITED	REQUIRED	PERCENTAGE
July 2010	6972	7507	93%
August 2010	7075	7355	96%
September 2010	6769	7178	94%
October 2010	6367	6836	93%
November 2010	6178	6621	93%
December 2010	6057	6543	93%
January 2011	5940	6534	91%
February 2011	5882	6284	94%
March 2011	6235	6578	95%

Holding Providers Accountable

Over the past five years, DHS has taken numerous steps to improve provider accountability. The agency has developed new tools to evaluate its providers based on the quality of their service delivery. It has also set benchmarks to measure provider performance around safety issues and to assess best practices. Using this data, DHS ranks providers on their quality and compliance and these rankings inform the agency's contracting decisions.

Electronic Case Management

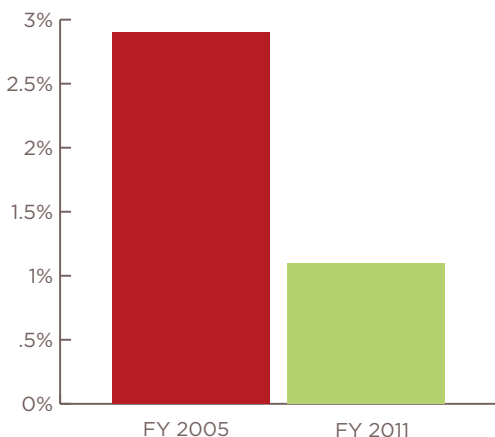
This year, DHS introduced the initial phase of an Electronic Case Management System (ECMS).

This paperless system is increasing agency efficiency and effectiveness as workers no longer have to fill out multiple forms with the same information. The system's "smart forms" guide workers through form completion and help prevent omissions and errors in documentation. ECMS also ensures that all staff working on a case can view current activity and obtain up-to-date information. When data about a child, such as caregivers or identified safety threats, is entered into the system, it is automatically carried over to the analysis portion of the assessment so that issues that might affect a child's safety cannot be inadvertently overlooked.

Keeping Children Close to Home

DHS has significantly reduced the number of dependent children in out-of-state placement. As a result, social workers can better monitor child safety and children can maintain contact with their biological families as appropriate.

Figure 3. Percent of Children in Out-of-State Dependent Placement



Quality Improvement

In 2009, DHS created a Division of Performance Management and Accountability to monitor agency performance and contribute to improved practice. The Division takes a multi-layered approach to quality improvement that includes:



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- *Case File Review*, in which approximately 150 cases are reviewed each month by the Quality Improvement Team to measure the agency's fidelity to the Safety Model of Practice, which guides all family assessment and case planning.
- *Quality Visitation Review (QVR)*, in which families are interviewed by an objective third-party to confirm that social work visits are occurring and that appropriate services are being provided to families.
- *Quality Service Review (QSR)*, which assesses the quality of services and outcomes for randomly selected cases from a specific service area.
- *ChildStat*, which helps improve accountability across all systems involved in a child's case (including child welfare, medical, mental health, educational, and legal) by providing a forum for professionals from a range of disciplines to discuss outcomes data and performance measures.

PERMANENCY

“Foster care is meant only to be a temporary situation on the road to permanency.”

— Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose

Helping Children Find Forever Homes

Since FY 2007, the percent of children in placement discharged to permanent homes has increased steadily from a low of thirty-four percent to a high of fifty percent.

Figure 4. Placements Discharged to Permanency



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Reconnecting Youth with Family



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Many youth in placement are reconnecting with members of their families thanks to DHS' innovative Family Finding Program. Implemented by Turning Points for Children, the program uses specially trained social workers with extensive counseling and database skills to reunite children with family members or other significant people in their past with whom they have lost contact. As a result, many children are able to establish meaningful connections and develop an essential sense of belonging.

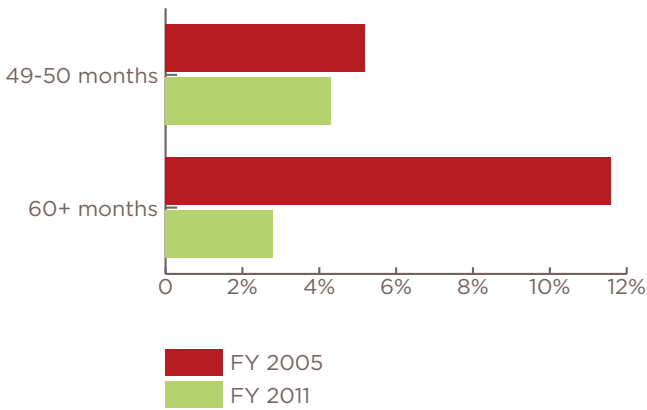
Recently, DHS' Family Finding Program helped "Cathy,"* an 18 year old girl with developmental disabilities who has been in care for more than seven years, reconnect with her family. Cathy's history of placements included a failed adoption, foster care, hospitalizations, and most recently an institutional setting. Cathy was unable to identify any family members except a sibling's first name. Despite this, Cathy's family finding social worker Candace Syres was able to find Cathy's family members, many of whom were excited to reconnect with her. Cathy now has weekly telephone contact with her mother and father. In addition, her case worker is making preparations for Cathy to attend her family reunion.

**Not her real name or photo.*

Children Spend Less Time in Placement

Since 2005, DHS has made great strides in decreasing the amount of time children spend in placement. **The percentage of children in care over 60 months has declined dramatically,** and the percentage in care over 48 months has also decreased.

Figure 5. Months Spent in Placement



Supporting Reunification

Whenever possible, DHS seeks to reunify children in placement with their biological families. The agency helps support this goal through its Achieving Reunification Center (ARC), a one-stop center that helps parents and caregivers overcome barriers to family reunification.

Services include: parenting education, housing and financial counseling, on-site behavioral health support and workforce development.

Figure 6. Permanency Discharges by Type, FY 2011 >

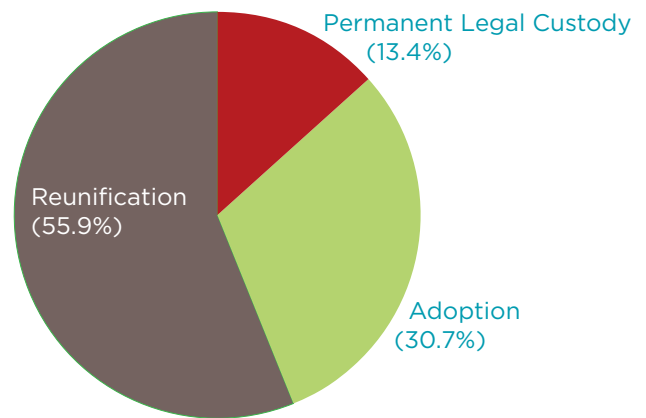
This year, the number of referrals to ARC increased by 12% and the number of enrolled parents/caretakers increased 5% from the previous year. ARC is now offering a 12-week class that helps couples explore family history and learn skills for building safe, secure relationships. ARC also partners with the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) to provide onsite employment services to support parents/caregivers with job training, job search and job placement. Training is available in the areas of hospitality, customer service/retail sales and culinary arts. In FY'11, 64 parents graduated and 29 obtained employment.

Creative Approaches to Find Adoptive Parents

Every child deserves a permanent home. When reunification is not an option, DHS utilizes a variety of creative approaches to find loving adoptive families for children in placement. One such approach, the Philadelphia Heart Gallery is a collaborative effort with local professional photographers who donate their talents and resources to raise adoption awareness through emotionally engaging photographic exhibits, which are on display throughout the city. (See example below.)



Children available for adoption are also spotlighted on local weekly newscasts and a website through Wednesday's Child, a public-private partnership between the Freddie Mac Foundation, NBC10, and the National Adoption Center. **The percentage of children adopted among those available for adoption rose from 15% in FY 2005 to 38% in FY 2011.**



WELL BEING

“We believe every child should have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.”

— Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose

Improving Educational Outcomes

In November of 2009, DHS took a major step toward improving the long-term outcomes of children and youth in placement by launching the Educational Support Center (ESC). The ESC improves the educational stability and academic progress of children and youth we serve by providing child-specific educational consultations to resolve individual barriers, including:

- *Helping youth remain in their school of origin when they enter placement or when changes in placement occur;*
- *Negotiating transfers of school records and facilitating information sharing;*
- *Addressing academic attendance and discipline issues;*
- *Addressing special education concerns.*

The ESC serves as a liaison between DHS and public and private schools, develops and implements interagency communication and practice protocols and advocates for changes to reduce barriers to education for youth in the child welfare system. It also provides training to help social workers navigate the special education system and advocate for their clients within the school.



ESC ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2011

In FY 2011, the Education Support Center:

- *Enhanced data sharing and cross system coordination with the School District through the completion of an information sharing agreement, a coordinated practice protocol and bi-monthly cross-system meetings;*
- *Held monthly meetings to engage and coach providers on school stability efforts;*
- *Held capacity-building forums to help staff and providers address the educational needs of children served by DHS; and*
- *Delivered trainings to school counselors, Family Court judges, staff, and advocates on improving educational support coordination for children involved with DHS.*

Keeping Children Healthy



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To better ensure the physical health and well being of children served, Dr. Cindy Christian joined DHS as Medical Director. An original member of the DHS Community Oversight Board, Dr. Christian holds the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) Chair in the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. She is also Director of Safe Place: The Center for Child Protection and Health at CHOP.

As DHS' Medical Director, Dr. Christian develops policy and systems related to primary health care as well as developmental and mental health care and evaluation. She also leads the internal review of medically needy children served by the Department to insure adequate medical care is provided and monitored; provides medical consultation to DHS nursing staff; recommends and reviews training curricula on physical health issues for DHS staff and provider agencies; and participates in team reviews of cases where medical issues are a central concern.



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Responding to Medically Fragile Children

Over half of the children in the child welfare system have at least one medical concern; many have two or more chronic health conditions. DHS' enhanced medical staff works to improve the health and safety of these children. Staffed with nine registered nurses, the medical staff helps DHS workers plan for the special health care needs of the children/families they serve. They make home visits and answer questions about a child's diagnosis and the side effects of medications. They also review health records, interpret acronyms or medical abbreviations and serve as a liaison between clients, social workers and medical professionals.

Preventing Child Welfare Involvement

DHS does much more than work with children and youth in placement. **The Department offers a wide range of programs aimed at diverting youth from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.** Some of these include:

- *Parenting Programs* to help parents cope with the challenges of child raising, reunite children in foster care with their biological families, and support parents and caregivers whose situations put them at high risk of involvement in the child protection system.
- *Out of School Time (OST) Programs* including after school and summer programs that provide safe, supervised places where children and youth can get academic help and participate in activities that aid the development of new interests and skills.
- *Support Community Outreach Programs (SCOP)*, which provide small grants to supplement community-based groups in their efforts to provide recreational, cultural, educational and social service programs and services for children and youth. Over 50,000 youth benefit from SCOP-funded activities.
- *Equal Partners in Change (EPIC) Stakeholder Groups*, which are comprised of individuals who live and/or work in a community and who are actively involved in the continued development of that community, including eradicating challenges to school attendance and performance.
- *Girls Track*, which provides mentoring, workshops and retreats to help adolescent girls build and maintain positive self esteem.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Philadelphia's juvenile justice system provides community protection, offender accountability and competency development.

Addressing Disproportionate Minority Contact with the Juvenile Justice System

The Youth Study Center (YSC) was awarded the first “County Juvenile Detention Center Best Practices for the 21st Century Award” by the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania for its innovative efforts to address overrepresentation of minorities in the juvenile justice system. The **Disproportionate Minority Forum Program**, developed by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency’s Philadelphia Working Group, is successfully reducing conflict between young people of color and law enforcement while keeping our communities safer. The program sponsors forums at the YSC and in Philadelphia public schools, which bring law enforcement officers and minority youth together to talk frankly and openly about problems on the street and their troubled relationships. By opening a dialogue between youth and law enforcement, the program aims to prevent volatile interactions on the street, decrease arrests of minority youth and diminish the chance of injuries to officers and youth.

Construction Underway on New Youth Study Center

A new 150-bed Youth Study Center (see artist’s rendering below) is slated to open in 2012. The 160,000 square foot facility will provide more space for juvenile housing, program administration, education, visitation, dining, indoor and outdoor recreation, and medical care as well as court and hearing rooms. The building, which is easily accessible by public transportation, also has designated space for community meetings. Designed as the first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design - Silver Rating) certified building to be constructed by the City, the new facility will provide substantial savings in fuel consumption. The building’s exterior, designed to look like a school, includes aesthetically pleasing outdoor recreation areas, walkways and quiet areas.



Reducing Out-of-State Delinquent Placements

DHS is better monitoring and ensuring the safety and quality of services provided to youth in delinquent placement by reducing its reliance on out-of-state facilities. Keeping youth closer to home helps maintain family bonds and, according to several studies, reduces recidivism. **Since 2005, DHS has reduced the number of out-of-state delinquent placements by 88%.** Today, such placements account for only 1.2% of all delinquent placements.

Figure 7. Youth in Delinquent Placement*

POINT IN TIME	OUT-OF-STATE PLACEMENTS**	PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH PLACED OUT-OF-STATE
June 30, 2005	141	9.6%
June 30, 2011	17	1.2%

* Does not include youth in pretrial settings, youth development centers and state placements. **Subset of number of youth in all settings.

OLDER YOUTH

“The Achieving Independence Center helped me achieve more than I ever thought possible.”

— Victor Curtis, an AIC member who completed his freshman year in college with a 3.8 GPA

Increasing Stability and Positive Choices

The Achieving Independence Center (AIC) helps youth aging out of foster care achieve their goals of self-sufficiency. The Center offers comprehensive instruction on daily life skills, money management, self care, and personal/social development. It also prepares youth for independence through job training and placement assistance and by helping youth obtain permanent housing.

In January 2011, the AIC established the Chaffee Room and Board program to assist youth discharged from care who need support to identify and maintain stable housing. Youth receive \$1,000 to purchase furnishings, up to 12 months of rental assistance and a monthly transpass. A portion of funds are also used for temporary and/or short-term housing to help decrease incidents of homelessness as well as to provide housing to youth who attend post-secondary institutions outside of Philadelphia and return to the city during breaks.

Developing Connections

To help ensure that older youth in long-term foster care have the connections, sense of belonging and support that they need to thrive, DHS has established a new Permanency for Youth Project targeting high-needs youth. In just one year, the program has achieved impressive results.

Compared to the previous year, in FY 2011:

- The number of youth aging out of care with a permanent home has more than doubled (119% increase).
- The number of youth aging out of care with a live connection has more than doubled (112% increase).
- The number of youth aging out of care with a source of income support increased 51%.

Reaching for Bright Futures

The AIC offers myriad services to help older youth in placement succeed academically, graduate high school and advance to post-secondary education. Their comprehensive approach includes the involvement of student coaches, the educational planning team, the DHS caseworker and School District personnel including guidance counselors, teachers and administrators. Individual education plans are developed to help youth address their specific issues or concerns.



AIC also helps students access post secondary education. College preparation begins early in the youth's junior year and includes help with college selection, application, and applying for financial aid and scholarships. The Center also ensures that high school and college-bound youth have the supplies they need through its annual Backpack Challenge.

AIC BY THE NUMBERS: FY 2011

19,916	Visits by older youth to the AIC
1,396	Youth receiving case management services
1,062	Youth participating in life skills workshops
470	New members enrolled
62	% of eligible seniors to graduate high school
138	Youth who obtained employment
725	Active members per month (on average)
280	Youth receiving housing assistance

DHS ON THE MOVE



National Adoption Day



Older Youth Prom



AIC Backpack Challenge



Pinwheels for Prevention Rally



Years of Service Employee Recognition Program



DHS Honors Award Ceremony



National Reunification Day





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