

NEWS NEWS



Department of Human Services

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Anne Marie Ambrose, Commissioner

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Oversight Board Commends DHS on Reforms

Philadelphia—The Department of Human Services has made considerable progress in its reform efforts, according to a recent report by the Community Oversight Board (COB), which is charged with monitoring the child welfare agency.

The COB was reestablished by Mayor Michael Nutter in January, 2008. The Board monitors progress on the implementation of the recommended reforms of the Child Welfare Review Panel (CWRP) and provides regular progress reports to the Mayor.

In accepting the report, the Mayor thanked the COB for its hard work and dedication. “The COB has been vigilant in its efforts to improve the Department’s ability to ensure the safety, permanency and well being of Philadelphia’s vulnerable children and youth,” he said. “Therefore, I am pleased to announce the reappointment of these members for another term. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, William Penn Foundation, Casey Family Programs, and the Pew Foundation for their generous support of this very important effort.”

The most recent COB report indicates that 21 of the CWRP’s recommendations—more than half—have been completed and/or are ongoing. In addition, 12 of the remaining 16 recommendations are listed as in progress, meaning that DHS is moving toward full implementation of the recommendations with a plan that is approved by the COB.

In particular, the COB stated that it “is particularly encouraged by the progress DHS has made in the area of improving overall child safety.” The report notes that “in the last six months, the Department has presented plans and begun implementation of an enhanced monthly child visitation strategy and has developed a plan for defining and using key outcome measures to improve practice and accountability.”

“I am particularly gratified that the COB highlighted our efforts to improve child safety,” said DHS Commissioner, Anne Marie Ambrose. “Ensuring the safety of children is DHS’ number one priority and the staff and leadership at DHS has worked relentlessly to improve policy, procedure and outcomes in this area,” she said.

The Board also evaluated the Department on the implementation of key outcome measures, as a quantitative approach to assessing DHS progress. It noted that that DHS has “worked diligently to provide data that allow the COB to assess agency performance through key outcome measures.”

According to Ambrose, much of the agency’s achievement in this area is the result of the creation of a Division of Performance Management and Accountability, which measures and monitors outcomes for children served by the Department. The division takes a data-driven and evidence-based leading to a best-practice model of service delivery.

Overall, the Board commended DHS leadership for its commitment to continued improvement and said the agency was implementing reforms in a manner that should lead to long-term sustainability.

Ambrose noted that in addition to the reforms cited by the COB, DHS has also implemented several new policies and practices to improve its ability to protect vulnerable children including:

- Improving its partnership with Family Court under the leadership of Administrative Judge Kevin M. Dougherty, which has led to better outcomes for children.
- Implementing New York City’s ChildStat process, which enables the agency’s Quality Improvement Unit to conduct in-depth reviews of randomly selected cases on a monthly basis;
- Establishing a team to review child fatalities and near fatalities;
- Developing a Safety Model of Practice, a comprehensive approach to incorporating child safety assessments into all aspects of decision making throughout the Department’s involvement with a family;
- Transitioning Services to Children in their Own Homes (SCOH) to a vast continuum of in home services, which allowed the department to offer a focused array of services while improving provider oversight by reducing the number of agencies supplying in-home services;
- Improving the efficiency of Community Based Prevention Services;
- Collaborating with the Philadelphia Police Department in their Public Service Area initiative;

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The Philadelphia Department of Human Services is the City agency charged with protecting children from abuse, neglect, and delinquency; ensuring their safety and permanency in nurturing home environments; and strengthening and preserving families by enhancing community-based prevention

services. In partnership with community organizations, DHS provides services to strengthen the overall well being of Philadelphia children, youth, and families using a customer focused approach that is responsive to evolving community needs.