



NEWS NEWS

Department of Human Services

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DHS 2012 Annual Report details Major Progress in protecting City's Children

Philadelphia, March 12, 2013 –Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS) has made remarkable progress in protecting the city's most at-risk youth, according to the agency's newly-released 2012 Annual Report.

The report, called *Improving Outcomes for Children*, highlights trends such as far fewer children being placed away from their families and fewer children being placed in group living programs as evidence of the progress made in recent years.

Improving Outcomes for Children is also the name of a groundbreaking program launched in 2012 that is bringing sweeping change to the way DHS delivers its services. Instead of a case worker from DHS overseeing a family in the city's care, an organization based in the community will now have that responsibility. DHS, in turn, will hold those community organizations accountable.

"After years of research and planning, we've taken a common sense approach to addressing problems and developing creative alternatives to taking children away from their families," said DHS Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose. "This new approach involves families and the community in developing appropriate solutions that also take the child's culture into account."

Mayor Michael Nutter, who appointed Commissioner Ambrose five years ago with the mission of turning around a poorly performing agency, says in the report Ambrose has done just that. “When I asked Anne Marie Ambrose to accept the position, I explained that my goal was to systematically change the way this agency functions and operates. I asked her to conduct a complete review of our policies and practices and think about ways to deliver services that ensure our children are safe and that our families can stay together. This is complicated work, but Commissioner Ambrose and her entire staff have continually delivered,” said the mayor.

Aside from keeping more children with their families, another accomplishment noted in the report is the declining number of youth being held at the Juvenile Justice Services Center (formerly the Youth Study Center). In 2008, 134 youth were held on an average day; in 2012 that number had fallen to 111, a decrease of more than 17%. And youth who are held are now in a more uplifting environment thanks to the opening in December of the new JJSC at 48th and Haverford in West Philadelphia.

Other accomplishments from 2008-2012 noted in the report include:

- A 28% decrease in the placement of children with someone other than relatives
- A 68% decrease in the number of children placed out of state with someone other than relatives

The report also notes that in 2012 construction began on a new building that will locate together several key agencies that support and protect victims of child sexual abuse. The new facility will house members of the police department’s Special Victims Unit, DHS Sexual Abuse Investigations Unit, the Philadelphia Children’s Alliance and staff from the District Attorney’s Office. The new center is designed to be a one stop shop for child victims of sexual abuse. This approach will serve to lessen the trauma victims face and improve the likelihood of successfully capturing the perpetrators.

Commissioner Ambrose, who received the Casey Family Program’s Excellence in Leadership Award in 2012, said DHS is poised to accelerate the pace of better outcomes for the city’s most vulnerable children. “We’ve worked hard to learn from our colleagues throughout the country and infused best practices and nationally-recognized interventions into the work we do. We have put ourselves in the best possible position to keep kids safe and give them the opportunity they deserve.”

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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.