



# Improving Outcomes for Children

## ALL ROADS LEAD HOME



DHS hotline number:  
(215) 683-6100

Visit the IOC website:  
[www.phila.gov/dhs](http://www.phila.gov/dhs)  
Click on IOC link





Dear Friends,

The process of transformation is often fraught with challenge but also brimming with hope and possibility. As we transition to our new community-based service delivery model, Improving Outcomes for Children (IOC), the DHS staff is adjusting to new roles and responsibilities, policies and practices. The work is demanding but each day, we see glimmers of a brighter future for the children and families we serve.

This promise is reflected in our new campaign, *All Roads Lead Home*, a city-wide effort to ensure that children served by the child welfare system live with nurturing and supportive families. Research tells us that children fare far better when they live with families. Thus, while our primary goal is to help children and youth remain with their biological families, when that is not possible, we must do a better job of placing youth—particularly older youth—with relatives or foster families. *All Roads Lead Home* utilizes a multi-faceted approach to achieving that goal.

Like IOC, *All Roads Lead Home* draws on the strengths and resources within the families and neighborhoods we serve. I have often said, child welfare is a community responsibility. As you read through the pages that follow, I urge you to think about your role in ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable children. Whether it is opening your home to a child in care, becoming a mentor, or volunteering at a Community Umbrella Agency, you can make a difference.

While our transformation is still in progress, we are already receiving positive feedback from families, providers and community stakeholders who have embraced our new model and appreciate having their voices heard. None of this would be possible without the incredible dedication of the staff at both DHS and our new Community Umbrella Agencies. On behalf of the children, families and communities we serve, I offer my deepest gratitude.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anne Marie Ambrose".

Anne Marie Ambrose  
Commissioner, Philadelphia Department of Human Services







*All Roads  
Lead Home* is a  
multi-pronged  
effort to ensure  
every child has a  
loving home.





Dear Friends:

I am pleased to present the City of Philadelphia Department of Human Services' Annual Report. The theme of this report, *All Roads Lead Home*, could not be more meaningful to me. I grew up knowing how important a strong family unit and community is to future success. I was raised by my parents with the help, love and support of my extended family and neighbors. My West Philly neighborhood was more than just where I lived—it was my community, my home.

I helped my neighbors and they helped me stay on the right path. I played there. I got my first job there. I was encouraged to achieve there. My successes are a credit to my family, my support network and my community.

I believe every child deserves that kind of love and support. That's why DHS' effort to ensure that all young people served by the child welfare system live with caring families is such an important effort and why I urge every Philadelphian to consider how they can help nurture and support a child in placement.

I also know that child welfare is a community-wide responsibility that relies on all available resources including schools, the police, the courts, government agencies, local service organizations and residents. What makes DHS' new service delivery model, Improving Outcomes for Children so effective is that it rallies, coordinates and engages all of those resources within a given community to benefit our city's vulnerable children. It also ensures that services to children and families are provided by a network of people who understand the culture and strengths of the neighborhood where they live.

As Mayor, I could not be more proud of the way Philadelphia's child welfare system has improved over the last six years. Under the leadership of Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose, and the guidance experts and stakeholders from throughout the city and the county, DHS has transformed from an agency in crisis to a national model. This report provides just a glimpse into the many ways that the agency and its partners are bolstering family and community supports and helping children served by the system to flourish. To all of those who are part of that effort, I extend my heartfelt gratitude.

Michael A. Nutter  
Mayor



# All Roads

## Every Child Deserves A Loving Home

At DHS we know that children and youth do better when they live with supportive families.

Studies among a diverse set of child welfare systems from around the country demonstrate that youth living with families generally experience a shorter stay in placement and fewer placement moves. They are also more likely to remain with their siblings and stay in their own school. Yet for several years in Philadelphia, far too many young people in dependent care have been living in group homes or institutions. In fact, Philadelphia's reliance on congregate care settings has been far greater than the national average.

Children and youth who grow up in institutional settings are at a greater risk of physical, emotional, behavioral, and social issues. While some youth with severe mental and behavioral health challenges may benefit from short-term therapeutic treatment, the vast majority of children in foster care are best served living with families, which may include kinship, foster and adoptive families as well as reunification with biological families.

Institutional placements are also three to five times the cost of family-based placements.



Reducing dependence on congregate placement will result in savings that could be diverted to more effective community-based services and evidence-based interventions to improve permanence and other long-term outcomes for children.

For all these reasons, DHS, with the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has launched a multi-pronged campaign to reduce its reliance on congregate care for dependent children. This undertaking known as *All Roads Lead Home* encompasses changes to policy and practice as well as outreach and public awareness efforts.

The next few pages describe some of the many initiatives occurring throughout the agency and in close collabora-

tion with the Community Umbrella Agencies (CUAs) to reduce reliance on congregate care and ensure that our young people have the opportunity to live with loving and supportive families. While much of this work is in the initial stages, DHS is already seeing promising results.

***All Roads Lead Home* encompasses changes to policy and practice as well as outreach and public awareness efforts.**

# Lead Home

## Congregate Care Reduction

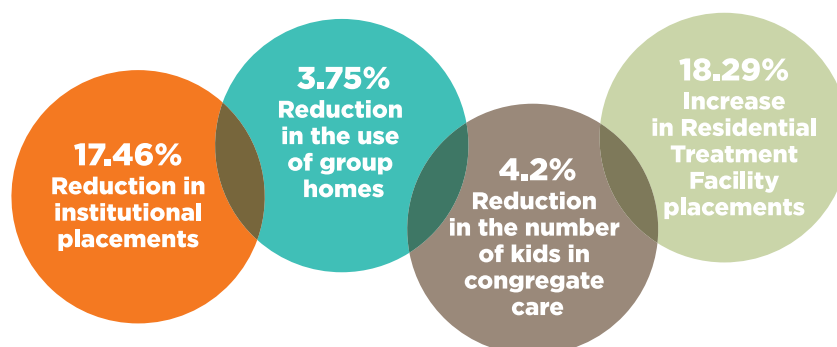
A key component of the *All Roads Lead Home* campaign is a policy requiring all referrals to congregate care settings be approved by the DHS Commissioner.

This policy is a “front-door” tool designed to reduce the unnecessary use of congregate care. The process helps to:

- Ensure that all referrals to congregate care settings are authorized and justified;
- Utilize group care as a last resort placement for treatment purposes; and
- Monitor, track and report the usage of congregate care placement decisions

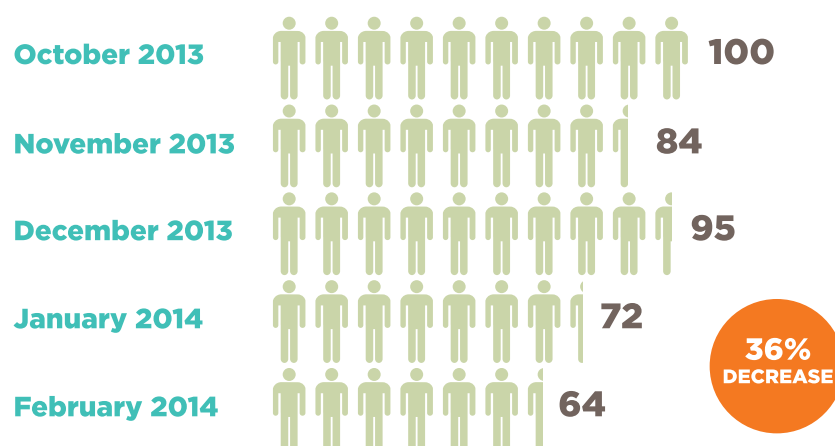
The Commissioner’s Approval Process is already achieving positive results. Congregate care, group home and institutional placements are down. And, while placements in Residential Treatment Facilities (RTF) have increased, we believe this increase indicates that youth with special needs are being matched with more appropriate clinical settings. Moreover, all placements in RTF are now pre-authorized and approved before a placement occurs.

### Reduction in Congregate Care Placements



The Commissioner’s Approval Process began in October, 2012. PMA completed an Annual Report capturing data from October 2012 to November 2013.

### Congregate Care Referrals



Perhaps most importantly, referrals to congregate care settings overall have dropped significantly, suggesting the Commissioner’s Approval Process has resulted in a greater awareness among workers about the importance of placing children and youth in family settings.

**The Commissioner’s Approval Process is already achieving positive results. Congregate care, group home and institutional placements are down.**





# All Roads

## Seeking Nurturing Homes for Youth in Care

One of the primary ways the Department is working to provide loving homes for youth in placement is by stepping up its efforts to recruit foster and adoptive families.

This year, DHS teamed up with Channel 6 ABC-TV to host a foster care recruitment phone bank, which aired on the station's nightly newscast. DHS staff and foster care agencies were on hand to answer calls from potential foster parents. The event featured a visit from Philadelphia Eagle Jeremy Maclin who stopped by to support the cause and even took a few phone calls. The phone-bank was a huge success with over 160 viewers signing up to become foster parents.

To further raise awareness about the need for foster families, DHS held a city-wide town-hall style meeting to provide information to prospective foster parents. Several Community Umbrella Agencies (CUAs) have also hosted open houses to recruit families in their respective regions.

DHS is also involved in several efforts to promote adoption to ensure the permanency of children in its care for whom reunifi-



Photo by Bill Foster

cation is not an option. The agency partners with the National Adoption Center to promote adoption through the media through Wednesday's Child, a television segment hosted by NBC 10's Vai Sikaheima, and Monday's Child, a feature in the Philadelphia Inquirer. Additionally, Philadelphia's Heart Gallery photogra-

phers donate their time and talent to create beautiful portraits of children awaiting forever homes that showcase the need for adoptive families. Finally, the Department works closely with provider agencies to reconnect youth in care with family members who might provide permanent loving homes.



Photo by Charles Borrelli



# Lead Home

## Expediting Permanency for Older Youth in Care

In Philadelphia, 44 percent of youth in placement are over the age of 12.

Historically, these older youth have been far more likely than very young children to be placed in congregate care. To reverse this trend, DHS has implemented expedited permanency meetings.

The purpose of these youth-driven meetings is to help older youth in congregate care transition to family settings. Led by a facilitator from the newly established expedited permanency team, the meeting includes the youth, liaisons from Community Behavioral Health, the Education Support Center and other relevant providers. The youth is also encouraged to invite members of his or her circle of affection such as relatives, family friends or community members such as a coach, a pastor, or neighbor.

As part of the process, the group reviews the case history including the young person's relationship with his family and close contacts. They also identify existing barriers to reunification and develop a transition plan. Ideally, the plan results in the youth moving to a family setting. If that scenario is not possible, the group will work to ensure that the young person has opportunities for more reg-



ular contact with caring adults in his or her life. The key to achieving a successful outcome is actively listening to and engaging the young person. For example, some youth may not be able or willing to return to their biological family. However, through this process, DHS helps these young people identify other family members or friends who may provide loving homes or step up to provide more consistent and ongoing support.

**“The expedited permanency meetings help us glean information that is not in the case record. The meetings are youth driven and we ask them who they want involved in the process. Often we learn that a young person is in close contact with a coach, a neighbor, a family friend or someone from their church who can provide support.”**

LYRIS YOUNGE  
CONGREGATE CARE INTEGRITY OFFICER



# Reinforcing Effective Parenting Skills

One way DHS helps parents and caregivers develop the skills and confidence they need to raise safe, healthy, successful children is through the nationally recognized **Strengthening Families Program**.

The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is an evidence-based family skills training program found to reduce child maltreatment and help parents strengthen bonds with their children and learn more effective parenting skills. Based on research conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, the program centers around five protective factors that are considered essential for keeping families strong and safe.

These protective factors are reinforced at **Parent Cafés** where parents, caregivers and reunification resources gather in welcoming settings. Parent Cafés feature guided conversations, which enable participants to make discoveries leading to personal growth and better parenting. By facilitating the development of positive social connections and encouraging parents to share their feelings, the Cafés help mitigate the effects of trauma and promote deep individual self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning.

Each of the Community Umbrella Organizations (CUAs) regularly hosts Parent Cafés in their respective communities. In addition to providing skill development, these events offer leadership opportunities for parents and caregivers who can train to become peer facilitators. In recent Cafés, parents have discussed issues such as loving and accepting themselves, developmental stages of children, and starting over after tough times.

**“Parent Cafés are a great way to engage families. We are able to provide parents with information at the same time they are having fun. Most importantly, the model recognizes and honors the experience that every single parent has.”**


MARIA TERESA GAMEZ  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
NET COMMUNITY CARE

## 5 Protective Factors

- 1. Parent Resilience:**  
Be strong and flexible.
- 2. Social Connections:**  
Parents need friends.
- 3. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:**  
Being a great parent is part natural and part learned.
- 4. Concrete Support in Times of Need:** We all need help sometimes.
- 5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** Parents need to help their children communicate.







We love our children, but making our family strong takes a lot more than love.

“ Parenting doesn't come with a handbook. The Cafés provide an ongoing source of information and support. ”

Having a network of support helps me manage the stress of parenting.





# Cross System

## Supporting Child Wellbeing

Many children and families struggle with developmental and behavioral health issues that may affect case planning and decision making.

To help social workers evaluate behavioral health or developmental issues that might impact a caregiver's capacity to provide structure, supervision and nurturance to their children, DHS' Psychology Unit provides forensic psychological evaluations and consultation services. Conducted by licensed and school certified psychologists, these evaluations help answer questions about children's safety, permanency and well-being and include parenting capacity, bonding, supervised therapeutic visits, and evaluations of sexual abuse and sexual behavior problems, including sex offenses. The psychologists also provide consultation with specific directions on how to implement the findings of evaluations.

The psychologists also help DHS social workers navigate, access, coordinate and resolve conflicts with behavioral health services. They also serve as advocates for young people in care, helping to ensure these children do not linger in residential treatment programs



or other institutional settings. DHS psychologists are also called to provide testimony in court on sexual abuse and family violence.

**“DHS psychologists work to ensure that the appropriate behavioral health services are in place so that children and youth served by the child welfare system are able to remain in their own home. We also help DHS social workers better navigate the behavioral health system to facilitate access and resolve conflicts on behalf of the children and families they serve.”**

BERT L. HARRIS, MA  
LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST  
SUPPORT CENTER FOR  
CHILD & FAMILY WELLBEING



# Cooperation

## Supporting Educational Success

Perhaps no other factor is more important to the well being and positive long-term outcomes of youth in care than school success.

While school plays a critical role in the lives of all students, for young people who have been subjected to abuse or neglect, school may be the only place they find stability and supportive relationships. DHS' Education Support Center (ESC) helps improve the educational continuity and academic achievement of children and youth in care.

ESC staff, who serve as liaisons between DHS and the school, provide child-specific educational consultations to resolve individual barriers such as academic, attendance and discipline issues as well as special education concerns. They also improve school stability by helping ensure students remain in their school of origin when they enter placement or when changes in placement occur.

When remaining in the same school is simply not possible, the liaison helps to negotiate transfers of school records and facilitate information sharing to ensure a smooth transition.

In the past year, as part of an effort to deliver community-based services, the ESC began co-locating staff within neighborhood schools to provide frontline support to children in its care. By co-locating in neighborhood schools, ESC staff are able to form more effective partnerships with teachers, administrators and others who impact the child's educational experience. Additionally, by spending time in the neighborhoods they serve, they are better able to make appropriate referrals and linkages to community-based resources for the



Photo by Dawane Cromwell

**“My role is to identify early warning signs in school children served by DHS and work with teachers, principals and other personnel to ensure those students receive the supports to be successful.”**

ELISHA RAMBERAN, MSW  
EDUCATION LIAISON  
DHS EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTER

children and families they serve. Co-located ESC staff are tied to specific CUA areas and serve all of the schools in that area. Implementation of the co-location process is occurring in phases, beginning with the 1st and 2nd CUA areas. To help facilitate cross system-collaboration, a town-hall style meeting was held earlier this year for representatives from DHS, the School District of Philadelphia and the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services (DBHIDS), which also plays an integral role in student success. The meeting highlighted important information about policy, practices, available resources and referral mechanisms for each system.



# Giving Voice to Families

Giving children and their families a voice in decisions about their case is vital to DHS' effort to ensure children and youth in care live in nurturing environments.

Family Team Conferences, which are held at key decision points throughout the life of a case, are specifically designed to encourage input from families and their supportive networks.

These conferences bring together people from the formal and informal parts of a family's life. Participants may include the child or youth, parents, the DHS social worker (until the case is handed over to the CUA), the CUA case manager, relatives, or foster parents. Other support people identified by the family such as a teacher, coach, therapist, or minister are also invited. Generally, the more people at the table, the better, because it reminds parents that they are not alone and provides an



**"Family Team Conferences provide a way for families to talk about their situation and to work with professionals to identify the best options possible for their children. They also ensure that all available resources and assets are identified to support the families and children we serve."**

TYRONE HARVEY  
CUA TEAMING DIRECTOR

opportunity for DHS and the CUA staff to engage with members of the family's network who will be critical to its success.

The goal of the Family Team Conference, which is facilitated by specially trained staff, is to develop a workable plan that everyone at the table can buy into. The facilitators lead participants in a discussion about safety issues, concerns and risks, as well as family members' strengths and support networks.

**As of May 2014, over 2,400 family team conferences have been held.**

These strengths and concerns inform the family's single case plan, which guides the family's progress. The single case plan is reviewed at every Family Team Conference and revised to reflect achievements and changes in the family's and children's lives.

DHS has found that Family Team Conferences lead to greater accountability because when families help write their own case plan, they are more likely to meet the requirements. Most importantly, because the process draws on the family's strengths and existing resources within their community, it enables them to move forward and become independent of the child welfare system.



Photo by Bill Foster



# Alternatives to Secure Detention

Youth who come in contact with the Juvenile Justice System also benefit from reduced reliance on institutional care.

Studies have shown that housing delinquent youth in secure detention can have a profoundly negative impact on their mental and physical well-being, their education, and their employment. Moreover, some researchers have found that instead of reducing crime, incarcerating high numbers of youth may aggravate recidivism rates. In an effort to improve outcomes of youth who come in contact with the Juvenile Justice System, DHS has launched several new initiatives aimed at diverting these young people from secure detention.

In November 2013, the Department opened two **Evening Reporting Centers**, which are community-based alternatives to secure detention for delinquent youth whose offenses do not pose a safety risk to the public. The centers, operated by Philadelphia Youth Advocacy Program and Northeast Treatment Centers, offer substantive, evidenced-based programming including aggression replacement therapy and cognitive behavioral training. Youth come to the centers immediately after their school day and participate in programming and an evening



Photo by Dawane Cromwell

Youth participate in a range of programming at DHS' new Evening Reporting Centers, which are community-based alternatives to secure detention.

meal until they are escorted home at approximately 9:00 pm. Thus, the centers ensure these youth are off the streets and in a secure environment during the hours when they are most susceptible to involvement in delinquent activity. More importantly, they are helping these young people develop the skills they need to turn their lives around and avoid further contact with the justice system.

**A partnership between the courts and Juvenile Justice Services (JJS)** is also helping to reduce reliance on secure detention. JJS staff are now assigned to the courts to help identify appropriate community-based alternatives to secure detention for low-level offenders. DHS funds numerous center-based alternative programs throughout

the city, which include intensive case management. Youth who successfully complete all requirements of these programs over an average of six months can have their cases expunged.

Finally, to better serve JJS-involved youth who are also experiencing child welfare related issues such as abuse and neglect, the Department is taking steps to ensure they benefit from the full array of resources available from both systems. A new Shared Case Management Unit has been established to conduct joint meetings with the family, social worker, probation officer, Community Behavioral Health and other representatives. The meetings initiate early sharing of information to support planning for the complex needs of these vulnerable youth.



# A Tribute to Social Workers



To recognize the devoted men and women who work tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and families, DHS teamed up with the Mural Arts Project (MAP) to create a magnificent new mural. Above and Beyond: A Tribute to Social Workers, was created by Philadelphia-based muralist Eric Okdeh, and depicts the impact social workers have in our communities, with a particular focus on the child welfare system.

To gain a richer understanding of the profession, Okdeh and his colleagues took pictures of social workers in the field and talked extensively with them about their work. The sentiments of these social workers are incorporated into the mural both figuratively and literally. The mural also includes 10 scannable QR codes. These codes, which can be read using a smart phone, allow viewers to hear audio files of social work-

ers sharing their experiences. The mural is located at 1325 Cambria (near Broad and Glenwood Avenues) on the wall of City of Philadelphia Fire Station, Engine 50, Ladder 12. It represents one of many projects for young people served by the Department on which DHS and MAP partner. These programs provide learning opportunities in the areas of art education, restorative justice and behavioral health.



# Federally Funded Projects

## Improving Pathways to Quality Care for Young Children



At least one third of all DHS-involved children are five years old or younger and many have experienced the trauma of abuse, neglect, domestic violence or community violence. While it is

clear that exposure to traumatic events can have severe lifelong consequences, research also indicates that relationships with caring adults can alleviate the effects of early trauma. In partic-

ular, quality early childhood education programs can support children who have experienced abuse and neglect by providing a safe and enriched learning environment as well as access to early intervention, health care and mental health services. These programs also provide critical supports for families.

Through a new federally funded initiative, DHS is working to ensure that all young children in its care have access to high quality early childhood education programs. Teamwork for Enhancing Early Childhood (TEECH) brings together key child welfare and provider organizations, stakeholders, advocates and parents to develop culturally competent strategies to increase enrollment and engagement of young children in high quality, trauma-informed early care and education.

## Supporting Stable Housing



Photo by Bill Foster

Studies have found high rates of homelessness among former foster youth. To better address this issue, DHS applied for and received a two-year discretionary grant from ACYF-Children's Bureau to fund Pipeline Up to Stable Housing (PUSH), a strategic intervention to prevent homelessness for youth aging out of the foster care system. PUSH is examining city-wide data to identify the risk and protective factors for foster youth, assessing the array of services available to young people at risk of homelessness, measuring readiness for Evi-

dence-Based Practices at agencies across the city, and reaching out to young people to determine their needs. The initiative will also implement and evaluate a Natural Mentoring Pilot Program, which aims to help older youth maintain connections with caring adults in their lives. DHS is joined in this work with the Office of Supportive Housing, Community Behavioral Health as well other non-profit agencies. PUSH is expected to impact approximately 1800 youth who represent 47% of DHS' foster care population.



# Preparing Youth for Independence

For older youth in placement, the transition to independence can be full of challenges and uncertainty.

DHS' Achieving Independence Center (AIC) provides a full range of services and support to help youth ages 14 and older develop self sufficiency skills and prepare for their futures.

**"The AIC helped me obtain a book scholarship and get my enrollment deposit for college waived. "**

LEIDY TORRES, AIC STUDENT

This year, the AIC moved into a beautiful new space in the iconic Leon H. Sullivan Human Services Center at 1415 N. Broad Street. The spacious new facility provides significantly more room for the Center's many programs, which include instruction on daily life skills, money management, healthy relationships and self care as well as educational assistance, job readiness, job training, and more. Now members can take advantage of a large art room for experiential art programs, a fitness room, a housing office, a career office, a fully equipped



The AIC's new location offers dedicated space for youth to work with coaches on a variety of life skills including job readiness.

Photo by Dawane Cromwell

kitchen for culinary classes, a library and a serene room for one-on-one counseling.

The new facility's proximity to Temple University is another plus. One of the AIC's primary objectives is to help students achieve their educational goals. To that end, the Center offers academic assistance, helps youth develop individual education plans, offers college prep workshops, and supports youth in selecting post-secondary schools and completing college and financial aid applications. Temple has long been a valuable partner in these efforts, and now as a new neighbor, the AIC is working with the university to explore the potential for additional collaborations that will help these young people succeed.



AIC member Leidy Torres is headed to Temple University after being accepted at several colleges. The highly motivated teen credits the AIC with helping her to develop skills in money management, independent living, building a resume and interviewing for employment.



# Community Umbrella Agency Geographic Zones

City of Philadelphia | Department of Human Services







City of Philadelphia  
Department of Human Services  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215-683-4DHS (4347)  
[www.phila.gov/dhs](http://www.phila.gov/dhs)

Michael A. Nutter, Mayor  
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Dr. Donald Schwarz, Deputy Mayor  
Health and Opportunity  
Anne Marie Ambrose, Commissioner  
Department of Human Services