

Department of Social Services

At a Glance

PATRICIA A. WILSON-COKER, J.D., M.S.W., *Commissioner*

Michael P. Starkowski, *Deputy Commissioner, Administration*

Rita M. Pacheco, *Deputy Commissioner, Programs*

Established - 1993

Statutory Authority - Title 17b

Central Office - 25 Sigourney Street, Hartford, CT 06106

Number of Employees - 2,400

Operating Expenses - \$202,667,807

Program Expenses - \$3,317,120,823

***Structure - Commissioner's Office, Regional Administration, Program Operations,
Administrative Operations***

Mission

The Department of Social Services provides a continuum of core services to: meet the basic needs of food, shelter, economic support, and health care; promote and support the choice to live with dignity in one's own home and community; and promote and support the achievement of economic viability in the workforce. The department gains strength from a diverse environment to promote equal access to all agency programs and services.

Significant Improvements/Achievements 2001-2002

HUSKY health care coverage (free or low-cost, depending on family income) enrollment increased to more than 209,700 children and teenagers, and expanded to about 80,000 parents and caregivers of children (income limits were increased to 150 percent of FPL on January 1, 2002). *HUSKY* is rated by the Children's Defense Fund as one of the best programs nationally.

Temporary Family Assistance recipients are limited to 21 months of benefits, with no more than three extensions allowed; there is also a federal limit of 60 months. The caseload in December 1995, a month before *Jobs First* began, was 57,855; by April 2002, the caseload had dropped to 22,918. Connecticut met the federal work participation rates for the year, and for the third year in a row received a high performance bonus payment. This bonus was \$13 million.

In June 2002, the Legislature approved the department's Pharmacy Prior Authorization Plan to require prior authorization for: brand name drugs when a generic equivalent is available, all prescriptions over \$500, and all early refills of prescribed drugs. This initiative is expected to save taxpayers about \$5.5 million a year, as prescription drugs lead Medicaid cost increases.

A report on the proposed plan to coordinate behavioral health services for the state's adults, children, and families, "The Connecticut Behavioral Health Partnership: Developing an Integrated System for the Financing and Delivery of Public Behavioral Health Services for Children and Adults in Connecticut," was submitted to the General Assembly in April 2002. Significant work has begun to implement this initiative and put its recommendations in place.

A new child support disbursement unit--with voice-activated response system and new website--gives child support customers access to their case data seven days a week. As of June 2002, over 8,500 custodial parents took advantage of the program. A new program for custodial parents without bank accounts was also created so that they can receive electronic payments.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

The Department of Social Services is strongly committed to the concepts, principles, and goals of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity. These objectives are commensurate with the state's policy of compliance with all federal and state constitutional provisions, laws, regulations, guidelines, and executive orders that prohibit discrimination. The Affirmative Action Plan, submitted on March 31, 2002, was approved and granted continued annual filing status by the Connecticut Commission on Human Right and Opportunities. DSS administers its programs, services, and contracts in a fair and impartial manner.

In the past year, this agency continued to monitor and improve its practices in employment and contracting, giving special consideration to affirmative action goal attainment, diversity training for all employees, and contract compliance. At the close of the November 30, 2001, affirmative action reporting period, 32.8 percent of DSS employees were minorities, 68.1 percent were women, and 1.0 percent were self-proclaimed as having a disability. During the plan year, DSS hired 179 new employees: 90 (50.3 percent) were minorities and 79 (44.1 percent) were women.

As part of this ongoing commitment, the department's affirmative action posture is reflected in the established, and Department of Economic and Community Development-approved, goals for small-, women-, and minority-owned business enterprises. The agency is actively working to solicit improved participation from these categories in its current and future selection of contractors.