

New DSCYF Secretary Jennifer Ranji Sworn In

Wilmington – The State agency responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of children throughout Delaware has a new leader. Jennifer Ranji was sworn in as the 7th Cabinet Secretary for the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF) on Monday March 25th. Ranji was joined by members of her family, Delaware Governor Jack Markell, DSCYF staff, representatives from the Judiciary, General Assembly, Department of Justice, child advocacy organizations and special guests. Both Governor Markell and Senator Patricia Blevins provided remarks during the simple half hour ceremony. The Oath of Office was administered by Thomas P. McGonigle, former Chief of Staff for Governor Markell and Ranji's supervisor when she served as the Governor's Education Policy Advisor.

"I am honored and excited for the opportunity to lead the Department that works to address some of the most fundamental needs of our kids – the need to be safe, to be supported, to be healthy, and to make good choices for themselves and their communities," said Ranji. "I look forward to using my background in child advocacy and policy so we can continue to improve positive outcomes for the youth and families that we serve."

Ranji said her first priority will be to visit each of the Department's facilities statewide and meet not only with leadership, but also front line workers. She takes over a staff of 1,200 individuals spread across four Divisions: Family Services, Management Support Services, Prevention and Behavioral Health Services and Youth Rehabilitative Services. She will also be focused on improving continuity for adolescents in services, stable placements, and education in an effort to reduce the stress and challenges that may be

faced when transitioning back to the home, community or 'aging out' of foster care.

✘ “Jennifer’s experience as a fierce advocate for children in her private legal practice, and the depth and breadth of her experience with policy and education issues have prepared her well to lead our Children’s Department,” said Governor Jack Markell. “She is committed to working with the staff to find new, innovative ways to better serve our children and families, making a lasting difference for Delaware’s children and their families.”

Secretary Ranji served as Education Policy Advisor in the Office of Governor Markell from September 2009 to July 2012 and was the lead staff person on Race to the Top and Early Childhood Race to the Top initiatives. Prior to that, she served as Deputy Legal Counsel in the Office of Governor Thomas Carper, and as Director of Legal Affairs for Family Court of the State of Delaware. She has also practiced law privately and provided pro bono representation to domestic violence victims through Delaware Volunteer Legal Services and to child abuse victims through the Office of the Child Advocate.

Ranji received her B.A. from Rutgers University in 1991 and earned her Juris Doctorate in 1995 from Widener University School of Law. She is a former Chair of the Women and the Law Section of the Delaware State Bar Association, the Delaware Child Protection Accountability Commission and the Governor’s Synar Advisory Committee.

The Children’s Department provides services to children who have been abused, neglected, are dependent, have mental health or substance problems, have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts, as well as prevention services for youth. For more information, please visit www.kids.delaware.gov.