

# Delaware's Department of Health and Social Services Releases Draft Strategic Plan for Public Comment

## Process Involved 14 Months of Internal, External Analysis and Outreach

NEW CASTLE (July 16, 2020) – After 14 months of analysis, employees and stakeholder online surveys, internal and external focus group interviews, and a focus on strengths and weaknesses of current operations by a strategic planning steering committee, the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) today [released a draft strategic plan](#) to achieve a goal of focusing on person-centered planning and social determinants of health to better integrate and connect the health of the Delaware residents it serves with other behavioral, environmental, social and policy influences.

The strategic planning builds on the work of Governor John Carney's administration to focus on efficiency and accountability through the Governor's Governmental Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) Board. With Delaware more than four months into its COVID-19 response, the plan will become an important tool as DHSS adapts to serving the vast majority of its clients remotely.

"The recommendations in the draft strategic plan are especially important today as we are employing new and more efficient ways to provide integrated and person-centered services to Delawareans during the COVID-19 pandemic," said DHSS Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, who is leaving her position on July 31 to accept a new position with Nemours in

Washington. “As the largest agency in state government, this plan provides an enhanced roadmap for streamlining the services we provide, while also saving taxpayer dollars in this challenging fiscal environment.”

“Our vision is to have high-quality operations across the Department and we have specific strategic recommendations in this plan for achieving this vision,” said Deputy Secretary Molly Magarik, who was appointed by Governor Carney as the next Cabinet Secretary for DHSS and confirmed by the Delaware Senate. “I want to thank all of the stakeholders and our employees who contributed to this plan. Now, I look forward to feedback from the public and taking the first steps forward in implementing the plan as a critical part of our COVID-19 response.”

“As Chair of the DHSS Reorganization Committee, I applaud the Department for maintaining its commitment to strategic improvement even while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said state Senate Majority Leader Nicole Poore. “Many of the findings in the agency’s strategic plan align with several of the key issues identified by the DHSS Reorganization Committee. I look forward to collaborating with the Department as we continue the work of applying this strategic planning effort to produce better outcomes for the thousands of Delawareans who depend on this agency and its dedicated workforce each and every day.”

The four key areas for the Department to address through our strategic planning process included:

- DHSS staffing and workforce management
- Data integration and sharing across DHSS divisions
- Gaps in services provided by DHSS
- Person-centered service delivery

Since June 2019, the strategic goals were developed from a review of existing literature; an inventory of current

Departmental programs; a stakeholder needs assessment which included surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews; and input from experts in health care, business and policy. The DHSS Reorganization Committee, chaired by Senator Poore and co-chaired by Michael Houghton, also has echoed similar feedback over the past eight months and will continue to inform the efforts.

The DHSS report, [available on DHSS's website](#), includes details on the following three themes and six goals:

### **FOUNDATIONAL THEMES**

1. Customer Service: The Department's priority is to deliver quality services to Delawareans. We are committed to providing excellent service to our "customers" through all of our programs.
2. Measurable Outcomes: Data will drive the Department's decision-making and we will use data to identify opportunities to improve service delivery and program design.
3. Coordination of Funding: The Department will look for opportunities to coordinate funding streams across divisions to strengthen opportunities for services.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

- GOAL 1: Develop a person-centered approach to the service delivery system to meet the multi-faceted needs of individuals and families.
- GOAL 2: Improve the public health and safety infrastructure to protect the well-being of all Delawareans.
- GOAL 3: Build, align and strengthen the DHSS workforce to meet current and future service needs.
- GOAL 4: Enhance and integrate data to support data-driven decision-making and increase access to shared information within the Department, its divisions, and

across the state.

- GOAL 5: Promote inclusive and routine communication among DHSS leadership, staff, stakeholders, and clients.
- GOAL 6: Strengthen the department-wide planning structure to support continuous improvement and increased efficiency, including routinely capturing feedback from staff, customers, and stakeholders.

The plan outlines objectives and strategies for each identified goal along with key performance indicators that will be used to track and evaluate the Department's progress toward meeting these goals.

The plan is [posted on the DHSS website](#) for public comment for the next 60 days. Comments can be emailed to: [DHSS\\_TownHall@delaware.gov](mailto:DHSS_TownHall@delaware.gov)