

Fact Sheet: DHS Accomplishments – 2003 to 2007

Working closely with Governor Linda Lingle, Lt. Governor James R. “Duke” Aiona, Jr. and the Legislature, Director Lillian B. Koller has reinvigorated the Hawai`i State Department of Human Services (DHS) since her tenure began in early 2003 by greatly strengthening programs that empower the State’s most needy and vulnerable populations.

This includes expanding healthcare coverage for impoverished families, launching innovative welfare-to-work initiatives, increasing early childhood education opportunities, and reducing substance abuse problems among adults and at-risk youth through new prevention and treatment efforts. Following are some highlights of DHS accomplishments under Director Koller’s leadership.

IMPROVING MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE FOR NEEDY RESIDENTS

- By negotiating a Medicaid QUEST waiver renewal in 2006 with the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Director Koller secured more than \$100 million in new Federal funds to cover the majority of healthcare costs for Hawai`i’s uninsured adults and children over the next six years.

Because of this additional funding, up to 20,000 needy adults will receive Medicaid health insurance through the new QUEST-ACE (Adult Coverage Expansion) program, effective March 1, 2007. These men and women are in one of the State’s lowest income brackets, making at or below the Federal Poverty Level of \$980 a month or \$11,760 a year.

These extra Federal dollars also enabled DHS to widen eligibility for the QUEST health insurance program by 50 percent, meaning an additional 9,000 children from low-income families will be able to receive coverage. This helps families who earn up to 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (\$4,950 a month for a family of four). In previous years, a family’s income could not exceed 200 percent of the poverty level to be eligible for no-cost insurance for their children.

- To help up to 95,000 Medicaid-eligible adults, including those in the Fee-For-Service and QUEST health insurance programs, receive an appropriate level of care for their teeth, Director Koller launched the Prevent Adult Dental Decay (PADD) program in December 2006. This initiative provides each client with \$500 in yearly dental benefits for exams, cleanings, X-rays, cavity fillings and other preventive and restorative services. In addition, DHS for the first time provides \$1,000 annually for adult Medicaid clients who require full or partial dentures.

Director Koller reinstated the preventive and restorative services after State budget cuts in 1996 eliminated most Medicaid dental benefits for adults, with the exception of emergency extractions of teeth.

- By more than tripling Hawai`i's contributions to the State Children's Health Insurance Program, Director Koller attracted about \$27.6 million in additional Federal monies over the past four years. Previous DHS directors left most of these Federal funds untouched.
- In October 2006, DHS secured \$24,438,000 in Federal aid to help public and private hospitals in Hawai`i bear the burden of treating uninsured and other needy patients.

A total of \$17,588,000 from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) went to all 16 private hospitals in the State to defray the cost of providing free medical services for the uninsured during the 2006 and 2007 fiscal years. An additional \$3.45 million went to the Hawai`i Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) to assist four public hospitals statewide. DHS will continue covering the Medicaid shortfall through June 2007 at those public hospitals, using Federal funding estimated at another \$3.4 million.

- In September 2005, DHS secured \$16.1 million in Federal aid to help public and private hospitals bear the burden of treating uninsured and other needy patients. This was the first time since 1994 that Hawai`i public and private hospitals received Federal funds for charity care.

DHS distributed a total of \$7.5 million to 15 private hospitals to defray the cost of providing free medical services for the uninsured. An additional \$2.15 million went to HHSC for 12 public hospitals to cover their July to September shortfall for low-income patients with Medicaid State health insurance. DHS continued to cover the Medicaid shortfall for these public hospitals for the rest of the year with new Federal funds of \$6.45 million.

- In April 2007, Director Koller accepted a Federal grant of more than \$8.7 million to help adults with diabetes better maintain their health so they can continue working 40 hours or more per month. CMS awarded the grant, which provides more than half the funding for the three-year Hawai`i Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment project.

Joining with DHS in this public-private collaboration are the University of Hawai`i at Manoa Center on Disability Studies, the State Department of Health and the Hawai`i Business Health Council.

- In late December 2005, DHS opened enrollment in the new State Pharmacy Assistance Program (SPAP), which helps low-income seniors and disabled individuals with their co-payments for prescription drugs. Under a new Federal law that took effect January 1, 2006, low-income seniors and disabled individuals who previously received prescription drugs through Medicaid began receiving these medications through Medicare.

In the past, individuals covered by Medicaid did not make co-payments for prescription drugs. That is why DHS proactively asked the Legislature in 2005 to establish the SPAP covering co-payments starting in January 2006 for the Medicare Part D program.

- DHS continues to tear down barriers that once prevented residents from gaining access to quality healthcare. This includes adding up to 33 outreach workers at community health centers statewide, starting in February 2004, who identify needy adults and children who are eligible for Medicaid and proactively enroll them so they receive essential medical services.
- Director Koller streamlined the Medicaid application process by creating the simplified, customer-friendly “pinkie” form, thus making it easier for pregnant women and children to obtain health insurance.
- To prevent the loss of health insurance for needy children, Director Koller implemented a “passive renewal” system in June 2004 so parents and guardians are no longer required to actively renew government-subsidized health coverage. Prior to this change, about 400 children lost their Medicaid insurance each month because their parents failed to respond to renewal notices.
- In 2004, DHS created a State-funded program providing medical assistance to pregnant women who are low-income, legal immigrants. This program was needed to cover the gap created in 1996 when Congress eliminated Medicaid for legal immigrants who have lived in the United States for less than five years.

The income/asset test to qualify for medical assistance for these women is the same as the criteria for pregnant women who are U.S. citizens or Compact of Free Association migrants in the Medicaid program. Providing prenatal care coverage for these needy women promotes the healthiest starts for their newborns. It also helps prevent the need for costly additional medical services resulting from the lack of timely and appropriate prenatal care.

- In July 2003, DHS created the “Going Home” program to enable elderly and disabled individuals to relocate from acute-care hospitals statewide to community-based alternative residential care in foster family homes. This innovative, cost-effective program provides more choices for these individuals while freeing up much-needed beds in facilities providing long-term care.

The program also bridges the funding gap by allowing Medicaid funds used to keep elderly and disabled patients in hospitals to instead follow the patient’s choice into residential care. At the end of 2006, 700 people were helped by this program, which also saves the State about \$70,000 per patient each year.

MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM WELFARE TO WORK

- SEE Hawai'i Work, launched by DHS in February 2005, places welfare recipients in company job training programs statewide, where they gain skills needed in the workplace. Many of these clients are eventually hired by the companies that trained them. So far, well over 500 employers have participated in SEE. Moreover, 88 percent of individuals who graduated from the training program are now employed in unsubsidized jobs and most of them are no longer on the welfare rolls.

Among the participating companies is NorthStar Alliance, a Honolulu-based mortgage banking and financial services firm. As of April 2007, NorthStar had trained 80 SEE participants, of which 29 were hired by NorthStar. The others found unsubsidized jobs with other employers or were still in training.

- To help clients enter the workforce rather than the welfare rolls, DHS in 2005 launched Up Front Universal Engagement (UFUE). This program, which connects clients with the job market at the time they apply for government assistance, is managed by a vendor that is responsible for marketing, job development and placement. During the current fiscal year, more than 18 percent of clients interviewed by UFUE were diverted away from government assistance and into jobs.
- Anticipating heightened work requirements under revised Federal regulations for people on welfare, DHS in 2006 began offering new financial incentives to encourage clients to seek and maintain employment. This "Reward Work" initiative allows recipients to retain 100 percent of their welfare checks while they work during the first two years of receiving welfare. The program also offers two years of progressive cash bonuses of up to \$8,250 for people who voluntarily exit welfare for employment, plus two months of rent payments to stabilize housing.

EXPANDING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

- DHS is investing an additional \$5 million annually to expand early childhood education. The money, which goes through the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program, has to date added an extra 600 preschool slots statewide.

On top of that, Director Koller issued capacity-building bonuses of \$75 per child to preschools that add slots for children and gave bonuses of \$50 per child to preschools that enroll their staff in professional development programs. In addition, she provided bonuses of \$50 per child for preschools that adopt recognized quality standards.

During 2006, DHS paid out well over \$1.4 million in incentive bonuses to preschools statewide to expand their programs, professionalize staff and adopt

quality preschool standards.

- To help Seagull Schools, specifically, DHS provided \$101,131 in incentive funding to improve the quality of its programs. As of Dec. 31, 2006, Seagull Schools spent this money on college tuition reimbursement for teachers, workshops and employee bonuses. Seagull Schools also used this money to provide emergency hardship grants for families to help with pressing needs such as housing, medical services and transportation.
- DHS oversees the Pre-Plus program, which provides preschool opportunities for disadvantaged children, ages 3 and 4, with a priority given to those whose family income is at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Pre-Plus is a collaborative effort between the state and private agencies, in which the state builds preschools on public elementary school campuses and private providers operate the schools.
- In August 2006, Lt. Governor Aiona and Director Koller joined Seagull Schools in celebrating the opening (June 1, 2006) of its Pre-Plus facility at Kapolei Elementary School. Facilities such as these help level the playing field by giving children from needy families the opportunity to attend preschool.
- Looking ahead, DHS plans to spend an additional \$20 million in Federal funding over the next few years for early childhood education and preschool childcare services, augmented with \$5 million in State funds for the POD program. This will help many more 3- and 4 year-old children attend preschools or childcare programs selected by their parents.
- Director Koller helped the Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE) obtain an extra \$10.5 million every year from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that can be used for school lunches or other needs. These Federal funds match State funds DOE currently spends on health services for school children, such as speech/language therapy, occupational/physical therapy, health-related transportation, mental health and other behavioral counseling, and diagnostic and assessment services.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- In September 2006, DHS partnered with Lt. Governor Aiona to begin providing the Discovery Health Connection Web service for free to 29 community service groups at 191 locations statewide. This one-year pilot project will assess the Web service's effectiveness in increasing awareness among young people about topics such as alcohol and drug abuse, violence prevention, anti-tobacco efforts, nutrition, the human body, mental health, growth and development, physical activity and personal safety.

- In October 2005, DHS and the Office of Youth Services (OYS) opened the Ke Kama Pono Safe House in Honoka`a on the Big Island. Operated by the Salvation Army, this group home diverts nonviolent female delinquents from being sent to the Hawai`i Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF) on O`ahu, and offers services such as counseling and anti-substance abuse education. Fourteen girls, primarily chronic runaways and truants, stayed at the safe house during its first year of operation. The County of Hawai`i recently approved an increase in capacity at Ke Kama Pono from six to eight girls, so it is anticipated that even more youth will stay at the safe house during 2007.

Ke Kama Pono is an important step toward increasing community-based alternatives to incarceration at HYCF. The safe house is an appropriate caring and rehabilitative environment that addresses the needs of troubled teens, who probably would not have fared nearly as well if they were sent to HYCF.

- In August 2004, DHS awarded Hale Kipa a two-year, \$2.68 million contract to provide home-based intervention services for at-risk youth. The Hawai`i Advocacy Program (HAP) diverts troubled youth away from incarceration or foster care by placing them under intensive mentoring guidance provided by neighborhood counselors.

Hale Kipa recruits people statewide to become paraprofessional counselors. These counselors spend about 15 hours a week with youth, mentoring family members and teenagers to help resolve issues relating to school, employment and relationships. Counselors also encourage youth to participate in constructive activities, such as mentoring other children and volunteering at senior care centers.

- In 2004, DHS and Lt. Governor Aiona awarded a total of \$1.08 million to four nonprofit agencies that provide family strengthening and teen pregnancy prevention programs for youth statewide. The four agencies are: the Boys and Girls Club of Honolulu, Hale Kipa Inc., the Hui Malama Learning Center and the Salvation Army-Family Intervention Services. This was the second set of new, Federally funded contracts awarded by DHS.
- With the encouragement of the U.S. government, Director Koller allocated about \$19.7 million annually for prevention programs over the past three years using Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Federal funding. These community-based programs strengthen families and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies and other unhealthy behaviors that often lead to poverty and child abuse and neglect.
- In December 2003, DHS awarded contracts totaling \$550,000 in Federal funds to three nonprofit agencies that provide critical youth services in the Kalihi community. The organizations are: Parents and Children Together (PACT), Kokua Kalihi Valley and the Susannah Wesley Community Center.

- To help homeless families living on the beach in the Waianae area of O`ahu, DHS teamed with Kamehameha Schools in 2007 to fund the Malama Mobile. This outreach effort, operated by the Partners In Development Foundation, provides a traveling preschool, family literacy program, food and clothing. The Malama Mobile also connects these families with medical, dental and legal services. The program serves all residents of three homeless beach communities in Waianae, as well as the new homeless shelter there.

PROTECTING AT-RISK CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- As part of its nationwide Child and Family Services Review, the Federal government in August 2006 formally recognized DHS for meeting a series of goals over the past two years to improve the safety, well-being and stability of children in the child welfare system. Goals attained by DHS so far include:
 - Reducing the risk of harm to children;
 - Initiating investigations more quickly into reports of child maltreatment;
 - Providing enhanced services to children, their parents and foster parents;
 - Increasing social worker visits with children; and
 - Involving children and their families to a greater extent in case planning.

These goals are contained in a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) developed for Hawai`i following a 2003 assessment by the State and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Each state has a PIP detailing changes that must be made to comply with Federal standards.

Completing Hawai`i's aggressive plan involved more than 350 benchmark action steps, 19 performance indicators and five systemic improvements. This progress saved DHS more than \$1.7 million in financial penalties the Federal government would otherwise have imposed.

- In September 2006, the DHS Child Welfare Services Branch increased the number of its partnerships with nonprofit agencies to provide additional recruitment, training, home studies and support services for foster families. Now working with DHS in this regard are the Partners In Development Foundation (PIDF), Hui Ho`omalulu and Catholic Charities Hawai`i.

As part of this effort, 34 foster families were recruited from November 2006 through January 2007 along O`ahu's Wai`anae Coast. This effort will help foster children continue to live in their own communities.

- Recognizing the need to keep government transparent and accountable, Director Koller created new confidentiality rules allowing the Child Welfare Services Branch to release private records under certain circumstances. The administrative

rules, approved in December 2004, allow DHS to disclose – without court order or consent from any parties – confidential information to agencies such as the police, prosecutors and the media to help locate missing children or assist DHS in investigating a child’s case.

This critical information – such as child abuse reports, psychological evaluations and medical documents – may be key to locating a child who is abducted, runs away or is lost.

The new rules also allow DHS to release information to physicians who are caring for a child they suspect may be the victim of child abuse or neglect. In addition, DHS can now disclose information to community agencies to help search for non-custodial parents or relatives as support for the children and their families. This sharing of previously confidential information is helping keep children safer and preserve family connections.

The 1997 disappearance of “Peter Boy” Kema, Jr., is an example of how new confidentiality rules may finally help achieve justice for this child. While the media petitioned the courts for the release of information in this case for many years, the information was never released to the public. DHS, with the guidance and support of the Lingle-Aiona Administration, used the new rules to provide full disclosure of Child Welfare Service records to Hilo police and prosecutors, and provided more than 2,000 pages of documents to the media and public.

- In 2005, DHS established a Web site dedicated to finding children who are missing from the foster care system. The site includes photos and pertinent information about the children, and instructions about what community members should do if they know the whereabouts of a missing child.
- In 2005, DHS partnered with Heart Gallery Hawai`i, a nonprofit organization, to help place foster children with permanent, adoptive families. Professional photographers volunteer their time to take the images, showing children in natural settings that capture their spirit and emotions.

At any given time, there are typically about 200 children in the DHS foster care system whose parents’ rights have been terminated by the Family Court and are waiting for adoptive families to come forward. The Heart Gallery focuses on older foster youth with special emotional, physical or developmental needs.

- The Lingle-Aiona Administration, through DHS, introduced a bill requiring public and private schools and other agencies or institutions to immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect directly to DHS or the police. The Legislature approved the bill, which Governor Lingle signed into law in June 2006.
- In November 2006, the Federal government awarded DHS a \$498,000 incentive bonus for significantly increasing the number of children adopted from foster care

during 2005. DHS will use the award to promote adoptions of older foster youth before they “age out” of the child welfare system.

Hawai`i was one of 21 states to receive an incentive award in 2006 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Federal agency recognized DHS for increasing the number of foster child adoptions from 354 in 2004 to 431 in 2005.

EMPOWERING DISABLED PERSONS

- In January 2006, Director Koller named Joe Cordova as administrator for the DHS Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division, which helps empower disabled individuals through work training and education so they can enter the workforce and move toward self-sufficiency. A blind rehabilitant himself, Cordova encourages positive attitudes among disabled persons so they can confidently compete on equal terms with their non-disabled peers.

Before joining DHS, Cordova served as Regional Commissioner for the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services for Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Minnesota, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa and Wisconsin. He was also Deputy Director of New Mexico’s Commission for the Blind, the Liaison for the Disability Affairs to the City of Albuquerque, and a mental health counselor at the University of New Mexico.

- In January 2005, DHS partnered with the University of Hawai`i Center on Disability Studies to win a two-year, \$1 million Federal grant for the Hire Abilities – Hawai`i project. This effort removes barriers to finding employment for persons with disabilities and provides support to services to disabled people who are currently in the workforce.

AWARDS RECEIVED BY DIRECTOR KOLLER

- The Women in Need (WIN) nonprofit organization honored Director Koller with the 2005 “Woman of the Year Award” for empowering women and families across the State. In presenting the award, WIN highlighted Director Koller’s initiatives to improve child welfare services and to provide healthcare coverage to tens of thousands of uninsured adults and children.
- The Big Island Press Club presented Director Koller with the 2006 “Torch of Light Award” in recognition of her courage in making State government more transparent and accountable by allowing the release of confidential documents to help locate missing children and access needed services for foster children. These new rules also enabled DHS to provide more than 2,000 pages of documents regarding the 1997 disappearance of “Peter Boy” Kema, Jr. on the Big Island.

- The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services – through its Administration on Children, Youth and Families – honored Director Koller with the 2007 Commissioner’s Award for exceptional contributions to the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect in Hawai`i. This prestigious award was presented in April 2007 during the 16th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, held in Portland, Oregon.
- The National Department of Health & Human Services Administration on Children, Youth and Families -- honored Director Koller with the 2007 National Adoption Excellence Award for outstanding accomplishments in achieving permanency for America’s children waiting in foster care for permanent homes. Director Koller and the Department of Human Services (DHS) were recognized in the category for child welfare system improvement for progress in promoting adoption in recent years, especially for hard to place foster children with special needs, and who are older. The award recognized “the Department success has largely come from a coordinated and multi-faceted approach with the Family Court and community and faith-based organizations”.