



Maryland's Human Services Agency

# Maryland Department of Human Resources 2008 - 2011 Strategic Plan



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## ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS***

**T**his plan is the result of the hard work of so many people including DHR's statewide leadership team, staff and community stakeholders. Special thanks to everyone involved in forming and carrying out the plan.

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The Honorable Martin O'Malley  
***Governor***

The Honorable Anthony G. Brown  
***Lt. Governor***

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## ***MESSAGE FROM GOVERNOR MARTIN O'MALLEY AND LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR ANTHONY BROWN***

The O'Malley-Brown Administration -- in partnership with the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR) -- is focused more than ever on making our state government work by increasing accountability and transparency.



This strategic plan sets forth the ambitious goals, actions and measurable outcomes that will guide DHR's overall vision and direction in the next several years in order to make progress for Maryland's families.

In our One Maryland, where there is no spare citizen, we share an absolute and fundamental belief that every individual matters. Together, we are working to foster safe communities with an improved quality of life throughout every part of our state.

Our collective conscience tell us that we must care for people who cannot always care for themselves, and we must do everything possible to provide support and services to children, families and seniors who need assistance.

By combining compassion with efficiency and mixing new ideas with community partners and service providers, DHR is well on its way to setting a new national standard for delivering public services to those in need.

Working together, we can make a tremendous difference in the lives of our most vulnerable citizens as we strengthen our entire state.

Martin O'Malley, Governor

Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor

## ***MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY BRENDA DONALD***



I am pleased to present DHR's 2008-2011 strategic plan. This plan represents the sense of urgency we feel around our mission to assist, empower and protect Maryland's most vulnerable children and adults. We are strengthening partnerships on all levels in an effort to effectively enhance service delivery for our customers.

Over the past year, we have engaged our employees and numerous stakeholders across the state to request their best thinking on how DHR can truly make a difference in people's lives. Together, we are setting forth a three-year agenda that will strengthen our capacity to assist those in need.

This strategic plan offers a snapshot of how we intend to improve service delivery in child welfare through our **Place Matters** initiative. The plan also describes the re-engineering of our employment program to help people get jobs that offer living-wage salaries and benefits, as well as our goal to assess and provide for the needs of the vulnerable adults and senior population.

Because we know collaboration with other government agencies is essential, our plan directly relates to the work being done by Governor O'Malley's Children's Cabinet and the interagency strategic plan for Maryland's children.

We are more focused than ever on ways to improve our service delivery and to use our limited resources as wisely as possible. We are building a work culture that calls for greater accountability. I am so proud of the progress we have already made in our transparency and results-oriented accountability. It's a new day at DHR.

I extend sincere thanks to our staff and representatives of the organizations across the state who weighed in on this plan. With your continued support of our mission, I know there will be many more successes on the horizon for the children and families we serve.

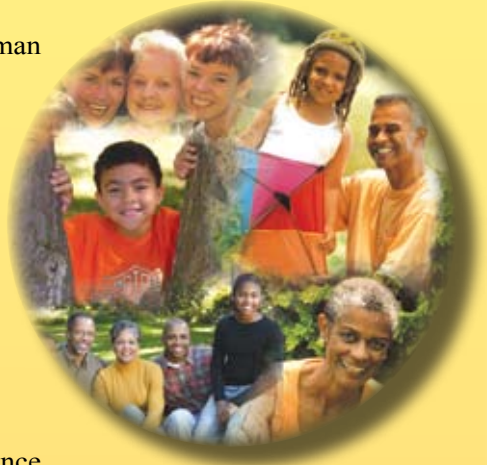
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Donald". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B".

Brenda Donald, Secretary

# *THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES*

## *WHAT WE DO*

The Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR) is the state's human services agency, serving 500,000 people annually. We protect the state's vulnerable children and adults and assist people in economic need. Working through local departments of social services in the 23 counties and Baltimore City, DHR provides foster care, adoption and protective services to children temporary cash assistance, food stamps and protective services to families and vulnerable adults. The agency also lends critical help to homeless persons, refugees, migrant workers, victims of crime and displaced, battered or assaulted women through grant support to an extensive network of community-based service providers and contractors.



## *WHO WE SERVE*

Nearly eight percent of Maryland residents live below the federal poverty level. We know that a much broader segment of our population is struggling to live on incomes beneath the self-sufficiency standard in their region of the state. As energy, gasoline and food prices escalate, so will the demand for our programs and services.

In fiscal year 2008, more than 363,000 residents (over 170,500 households) received food stamps. Nearly 22,000 families received temporary cash assistance. There are approximately 9,600 children in foster care, and the agency handles an average of 1,400 adult protective services cases and 2,100 in-home aid cases monthly. The agency collects and disburses over \$500 million in child support each year.



# ***OUR VISION, MISSION AND ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES***

## ***VISION***

We envision a Maryland where people independently support themselves and their families and where individuals are safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

## ***MISSION***

We will aggressively assist and empower people in economic need, provide prevention services, and protect vulnerable children and adults.

## ***PRINCIPLES***

- Work is indispensable for achieving independence.
- Partnerships and alliances with business and the community are critical to our customers' ability to achieve and maintain independence.
- Families should be the first resource for the emotional and financial support of their children and other family members.
- Assistance is provided to people while honoring individual and group differences.
- Empowerment is essential to the provision of human services.

## ***ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES***

- Valuing and acquiring knowledge and tools to support the professional growth and development of staff.
- Following ethical principles and acting with honesty and integrity.
- Ensuring participation of the people we serve, our staff, and the community.
- Investing in technology to support our mission.
- Measuring outcomes and being accountable for results.
- Investing in teamwork to accomplish our mission.
- Valuing each other and respecting different views, opinions, and experiences.
- Seizing opportunities for organizational excellence through innovation and creativity.
- Learning from our experiences and celebrating our accomplishments.
- Promoting employee well-being.

## ***OVERVIEW OF OUR FOUR MAIN GOALS***

**O**ver the next three years, DHR's work will be guided by four overarching goals. Each of the four goals has key performance measures designed to help us gauge our progress. Those measures offer insights into two key questions:



- 1) How well is DHR doing its job to help those in need?
- 2) Is anyone better off having had assistance from DHR?

DHR is reinvigorated with new initiatives and new partners joining us as change agents. Under the leadership of Governor O'Malley and Lieutenant Governor Brown, the agency is launching major initiatives to reform foster care statewide, increase opportunities for access and participation in expanded medical care and food assistance programs and to enhance employment opportunities for our customers.

We have an ambitious agenda but one that is necessary to foster a higher quality of life in every part of our state.

### ***OUR SPECIFIC GOALS ARE:***

- 1) DHR is recognized as a national leader among public human services agencies.
- 2) Maryland residents have access to essential services to support themselves and their families.
- 3) Maryland residents are safe from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- 4) Maryland children live in permanent homes, and vulnerable adults live in the least restrictive environments.

## GOAL #1

### ***DHR IS RECOGNIZED AS A NATIONAL LEADER AMONG PUBLIC HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES***

**D**HR will enhance its status as a high performing organization that is the state's foremost human services expert and an exemplary national leader.

#### ***WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL BY:***

- Strengthening our work force;
- Investing in our agency's infrastructure; and
- Building stronger relationships with external stakeholders.

#### ***STRENGTHENING OUR WORK FORCE***

In 2007, DHR applied for national accreditation statewide for the first time. Preliminary feedback from the National Council on Accreditation's (COA) review recognized the department for a growing culture of cross-training. For example, our caseworkers are learning new multidisciplinary approaches that weave together services addressing the multi-faceted needs of our customers.



We are indeed building a work culture that calls for more transparency. Employees are asked for authentic, timely and accurate information and asked for stories that we are sharing to educate the public about the challenges of our customers and the efforts of our agency to address those challenges.

A key component of our success is the ability to attract and retain well-qualified staff. We are also seeking new strategies to recruit and retain staff in child welfare and other key service areas.

#### ***KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES***

- Increasing the staff retention rate across DHR
- Shortening the timeframe to fill open and available positions

### ***INVESTING IN OUR AGENCY'S INFRASTRUCTURE***

Another key component to our success is improving our use of technology. We are investing in new technology and implementing standard operating procedures that will increase staff productivity.

#### ***KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES***

- Increasing the amount of time the network is available to employees
- Increasing the percentage of network projects delivered on time
- Increasing the number of contracts sent to procurement within the standard guidelines
- Increasing the percentage of timely procurement contracts

### ***BUILDING STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR PARTNERS***

There are no simple solutions to human services delivery. Government cannot do this alone. We must forge stronger relationships with other agencies and organizations in the state to produce better outcomes for our customers. To help us assess our role in providing adult services in the state, we will convene a statewide summit on adult services. To meet our goals for our foster care reform initiative, we are partnering with other organizations and volunteer groups. We will partner with the business community to enhance employment opportunities for our customers

#### ***KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES***

- Increasing the percentage of new partnerships and innovative collaborations
- Increasing the percentage of families assisted through new collaborations/partnerships



**GOAL #2**

## ***MARYLAND RESIDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES***

**W**e are seeing the effects of the economic downturn that is sweeping the country. DHR is experiencing significant increases in the number of applications for temporary cash assistance and food stamps and more requests for medical care and employment assistance. Large increases in food, medical and transportation costs and unmanageable housing and utility bills are posing enormous threats to our state's low-income families.

### ***WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL BY:***

- Enhancing our child support programs;
- Promoting economic self-sufficiency for those we serve; and
- Increasing access to food assistance.



### ***ENHANCING OUR CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAMS***

We are helping to strengthen families and reduce welfare dependency by ensuring that parents live up to the responsibility of supporting their children. Child support provides a reliable source of income to children, and reduces a family's dependence on public assistance. The department will strengthen employment and father-focused services to assist parents to support their children both financially and emotionally.

### ***KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES***

- Increasing the number participants in the non-custodial parent employment program who make child-support payments
- Increasing the number of children with established paternity
- Increasing the number of custodial parents receiving regular child support payments through wage withholding
- Increasing the amount of child support collected
- Increasing the percentage of collections on arrears
- Increasing the percentage of children and parents who use the access and visitation program

### ***PROMOTING ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR THOSE WE SERVE***

When individuals and families come to DHR for assistance, the opportunity we have to change their lives depends upon our success in helping them attain a higher level of self-sufficiency.

Over the next three years, we will re-engineer the welfare-to-work program and enhance employment support for our customers. We will focus on creating more training opportunities and job development for emerging and growth industries. Our welfare-to-work programs will be tailored to national best practices that grow and support more actual work experiences, partnerships with corporate sector entities and community colleges. One example is a new initiative in partnership with the state's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) to build bridges among the business community, other sister agencies and our customers around job development and training.

### ***KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES***

- Increasing the number of customers placed in jobs paying \$10 per hour or more with wage growth over one year
- Increasing job retention for customers
- Increasing the number of customers who exit from cash assistance and do not return after one year
- Increasing the number of customers who have access to health insurance through employers
- Increasing the number of customers who use the earned income tax credit



### ***INCREASING ACCESS TO FOOD ASSISTANCE***

DHR is taking steps to build on our record of increasing access to the food stamp program. The erosion of the purchasing power for low-income families often leads to poorer nutrition for the household. These compromises can affect children's ability to learn in school and the parents' productivity at work.

### ***KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES***

- Increasing the number of food stamp applications approved within seven days
- Increasing the number of applications for food stamps among underserved populations (seniors, underemployed individuals, etc.)
- Increasing the payment accuracy rate



## GOAL #3

# **MARYLAND RESIDENTS ARE SAFE FROM ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND EXPLOITATION**

Nothing matters more to a child than a place to call home. The department's **Place Matters** initiative ensures that foster children achieve permanency faster while reducing the need for out of home care and minimizing the length of time a child stays in care. We know that children and vulnerable adults are Maryland's citizens most likely to be exploited, abused or neglected.



Traditionally, a greater focus has been on providing safety and supports to children who are neglected or abused. However, there is an increasing need to enhance similar supports to adults and members of the growing aging population across the state. Adult protection will be a major discussion item at a proposed DHR statewide summit on adult services in fiscal year 2009.

### ***STRENGTHENING ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES***

In 2009, DHR will make it a priority to clarify its role in the statewide service delivery system for adults.

### ***WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL BY:***

- Strengthening adult protective services; and
- Instituting national best practices in adult protective services.

### ***KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES***

- Increasing the percentage of indicated or confirmed adult abuse cases in which there is no recurrence of abuse within six months

Instituting National Best Practices in Child Protective Services  
DHR is ensuring that our investigations of harm use national best



practices that are designed to service the child in the least disruptive way – while building on the strengths that exist within the family unit. We have put into place best practices that help to provide a consistent array of services involving upfront engagement of family members and other involved parties.

### *KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES*

- Increasing the percentage of children without recurrence of maltreatment within six months of a first occurrence
- Increasing the number of children maintained safely in their homes with supportive services offered up front

## GOAL #4

# *MARYLAND CHILDREN LIVE IN PERMANENT HOMES, AND VULNERABLE ADULTS LIVE IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS*

Again, nothing matters more to a child than having a place to call home. Additionally, Maryland’s senior population is increasingly in need of supports that will allow them to maintain their independence, preferably in their homes or in community settings.

### *WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL BY:*

- Implementing the **Place Matters** initiative
- Improving access to adult care services



### ***IMPLEMENTING THE PLACE MATTERS INITIATIVE***

DHR made **Place Matters** a priority for 2008. The agency joined with the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Casey Strategic Consulting Group to reform foster care in the state. We are spearheading a three-year effort to bolster 1,000 new foster family homes by 2010 so that our children live in closer proximity to their family members and their communities. Specific recruitment goals for each region of the state are guiding the outreach.

#### ***KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES***

- Reducing the number of children in out-of-home care
- Reducing the number of children in group homes
- Increasing the number of children placed in their home jurisdiction
- Increasing the number of children who reunite with their family
- Increasing the number of adoptions



### ***IMPROVING ACCESS TO ADULT CARE SERVICES***

As DHR clarifies its role in the statewide service delivery system for adults, we will explore rising demands for in-home care and respite care options, especially those services that give needed resources for disabled persons to function independently or with minimal assistance. The demand for these services will only escalate as baby boomer generation members are joining the ranks of senior citizens.

#### ***KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES***

- Increasing the percentage of individuals served by adult services who remain in the community during the year
- Decreasing the average caseload size



## ***DHR'S TOP PRIORITIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009***

**D**HR will revisit priority areas annually to ensure that the evolving needs of our customers are reflected. The priorities will help us carry out our goals.

### ***PLACE MATTERS***

Nothing matters more to a child than a place to call home. This priority will help us to focus on achieving greater permanency for children, reducing the need for out of home care, and minimizing the length of time a child stays in care.

### ***BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING OUR WORKFORCE***

Our customers need a dedicated, well-trained workforce committed to working on their behalf. This priority will help us to focus on staff recruitment, retention and training to maximize and access all available resources, etc

### ***INVESTING IN DHR'S INFRASTRUCTURE***

A dedicated, well-trained workforce must have the necessary tools to accomplish their tasks. This priority will help us focus on providing staff with the necessary tools to carry out their job responsibilities.

### ***IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES***

Work opportunities that provide living-wage salaries and benefits are imperative. This priority will help us to identify and adapt best practices for the redesign of our welfare-to-work program.

### ***ASSESSING ADULT SERVICES***

The senior population is increasing in Maryland. This priority will help us to define and clarify DHR's role in the statewide service delivery system for adults.

## APPENDICES

# AGENCY STRUCTURE

**D**HR delivers programs and services through local Departments of Social Service (DSS) in the state's 23 counties and Baltimore City. Programs and services are administered at the state level through three core central administrations:

### *Child Support Enforcement Administration (CSEA)*

CSEA administers and monitors child support services, provides technical assistance and makes policy. CSEA also locates non-custodial parents, establishes paternity, enforces support orders, collects and disburses payments and processes interstate cases.

### *Family Investment Administration (FIA)*

FIA oversees how economic support is provided to those in need and assists customers in finding jobs, determines eligibility for cash assistance, food assistance and medical assistance programs.

### *The Social Services Administration (SSA)*

SSA oversees adult services and child welfare programs to prevent or remedy neglect, abuse, or exploitation of children. SSA preserves, rehabilitates or reunites families and prevents children from having to enter out-of-home care when services can enable them to remain safely in their own homes.

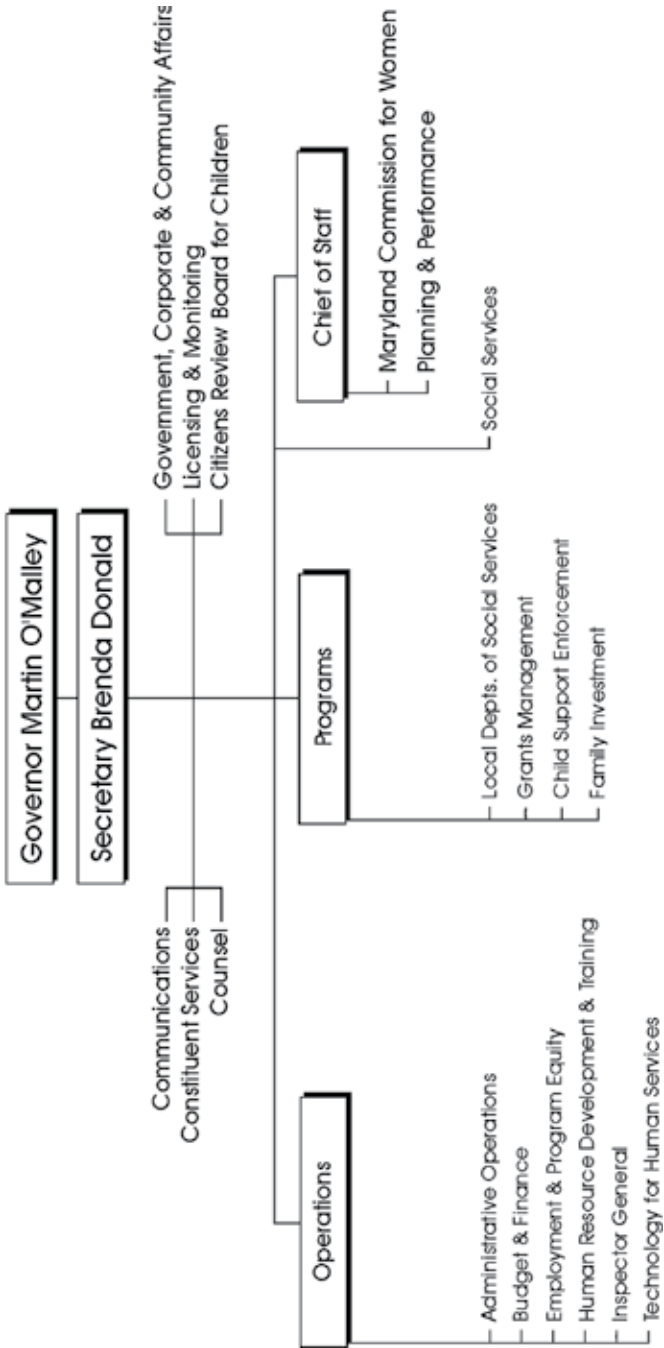
### *Local Departments of Social Services*

Each local department of social services (DSS) directly delivers DHR's broad range of services to our customers. The local departments are the heart of DHR. Each DSS jurisdiction has a director appointed by the secretary of DHR and approved by that jurisdiction's governing body.





DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES



# APPENDICES

## FORMING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

### *A COLLABORATIVE AND INCLUSIVE PROCESS*

The broad ownership of this plan among DHR employees and stakeholders across the state is the result of a yearlong inclusive and collaborative process that included a wide-range of voices at the table.

The statewide leadership team -- comprised of the directors of our 24 local departments of social services and a relatively equal number of key individuals from the central office -- convened workgroup meetings to identify key issues from the transition team report. The transition report was an assessment prepared for newly elected Governor Martin O'Malley and identified five key issues for DHR.

Leaders at DHR subsequently convened a forum of local and statewide partners who helped define priority areas that would guide our annual strategies and actions. This group brought expertise in areas affecting DHR customers.

By December 2007 the statewide leadership team recommended strategic changes for 2008-2011, and aligned the annual priorities with them. Using a results-based management model, DHR reviewed the agency's vision, mission, organizational values and the three-year overarching goals and performance measures.

The statewide leadership team shared their recommendations with DHR employees through an electronic feedback survey. More than 1,000 employees provided their input.

### *SETTING THE STAGE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY*

To set up accountability measures for quarterly departmental reviews, DHR invited targeted staff into a two-day workshop in April 2008 to apply Results Based Accountability (RBA) methodology to performance measures for programs and operations.

In May 2008, DHR concluded the strategic planning process by having a wider group of senior leaders and managers from the central office, local DSS directors, and select program and operations representatives validate the performance measures and the annual priorities.

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