



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Texas Department of Human Services

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Change continued to be a prevailing theme for the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) during fiscal year 1992. Even as the agency struggled with rising caseloads and limited resources, preparations were under way for the formation of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and the transfer of some DHS programs and staff to other agencies as mandated by House Bill 7. In addition, DHS conformed with new state strategic planning and budgeting processes designed to allocate state resources more effectively.

However worthy the goals might be, changes of this nature are always unsettling. They tend to create considerable anxiety and additional work, at least in the short term. So in 1992, those of us who serve on the Texas Board of Human Services were very conscious of the need to provide stability for the agency.

We sought to steady the agency in several ways. First, we tried to keep our priorities clearly focused on the people DHS serves, and we supported staff in their efforts to do so. This was our stance across the entire spectrum of DHS programs, even those that we knew would soon be moving to other agencies. For example, in Child Protective Services, the board dedicated much time and attention to setting more equitable reimbursement rates for residential child-care facilities; moving toward implementation of a risk-based assessment process; and developing an automated system that can support the entire abuse and neglect intake, assessment, and treatment cycle. The board worked hard to provide the policy directions and support that enabled these initiatives and others to move forward without diverting staff from providing quality services to clients.

We relied greatly upon the leadership and experience of Burton F. Raiford to bring a sense of stability and continuity to DHS. In recognition of the skills and abilities he demonstrated during his service as interim commissioner, the board appointed him commissioner of human services, effective June 18, 1992.

Another way the board tried to chart a steady course in the midst of change was by remaining open to employee concerns and communications. For example, we invited employees in Management Information Systems to share their views on major issues and suggest changes in that division. Later, we met with groups of employees to discuss their concerns.

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The Board of Human Services considers dozens of policy proposals each year. During fiscal year 1992, we worked with staff to find ways to implement several important policies that have widespread implications for the agency.

We monitored progress toward implementing the position statement on services to people with disabilities that the board adopted in January 1991. Because the board believes that people of all ages with disabilities can live in their communities when they are provided appropriate services and supports, we have committed DHS to taking an assertive role in developing a strong system of community-based programs and services for people with disabili-

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ties. We measured our progress, in part, through the successes of the Office on Services to Persons with Disabilities, which marked its first full year of operation in June.

Another way we tracked progress was by requiring that all policy initiatives brought to the board include an assessment of consistency with our position statement on community-based services. In fiscal year 1992, we approved several program policies that expanded the availability of community-based care, including increases in maximum service hours for family care and primary home care; a "no-break-in-service" policy for some clients in these programs; and the designation of funds to help people make the transition from institutional care to life in the community. Although we felt some frustration in our limited ability to make things happen as quickly as we would like, the board will continue to look for ways to move more resources into community-based services.

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As the Texas population becomes more diverse, state government must reflect that diversity in both its workforce and business relationships. In fiscal year 1992, the board took action requiring the agency's purchased health services contractor to work toward greater diversity among its employees and subcontractors. Board members worked to ensure broad geographic and ethnic representation in the makeup of agency advisory committees. We also regularly monitored progress toward meeting our affirmative action employment goals within DHS.

In response to board directives, a diversity services unit was established to increase diversity among the contractors supplying goods and services to DHS. One goal of the new program is to help businesses owned by people with disabilities, women, or minorities compete successfully for DHS contracts.

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As public servants, board members and staff alike are obligated to conduct the agency's business according to the highest ethical standards. Since the DHS mission and philosophy are rooted in the belief that each person has value and deserves to be treated with dignity, it is especially important in this agency that we deal ethically with everyone.

Members of the board believe so strongly in the importance of ethics that we all participated in ethics training and asked that similar training be made available to DHS employees. We also responded to recommendations from the Ethics Advisory Committee that the board revise the agency's contracting rules to help ensure that DHS will avoid even the appearance of conflicts of interest in its procurement actions.

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As we look to fiscal year 1993 and beyond, we see more "interesting times" ahead. While we can feel satisfied that the agency is moving in the right

direction in several major policy areas, we will continue to press for changes that benefit our clients and help build a solid foundation for Texas' future. In 1993, plans must be finalized for the transfer of purchased health, indigent health, and preventive health services to the new Texas Department of Public Health. We are confident that these transfers will be made without interrupting client services or unduly disrupting DHS operations.

We are more concerned about our ability to meet the greatest immediate challenge before the board: securing adequate resources to carry out the mission entrusted to DHS. As a board, we take our policy-making responsibilities seriously. It is clear to us that additional resources will be required to do the kind of job the people of Texas expect from this agency. We are acutely aware of the urgent needs for health and human services all across Texas—in every program area that we oversee. Even in boom times, it would be no small task obtaining resources equal to the need. Given the state's difficult fiscal situation and the tremendous pressures being placed upon the state budget in areas such as public education, our task seems formidable indeed. But this board doesn't give up easily. In 1993, our top priority will be doing everything we possibly can to secure the resources that will enable DHS to offer needy Texans the programs and services that give them the opportunity to build better lives for themselves and a brighter future for all Texans.



Cassandra C. Carr

Texas Board of Human Services Chairman