



Executive Director's Report

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Concerned about the growing number of reports of abuse and neglect among those who are most vulnerable, the 72nd Legislature created the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (PRS). The new agency was charged with protecting children and people who are elderly or have disabilities and licensing child-care facilities and child-placing agencies. In June 1992, Gov. Ann Richards announced her appointments to the PRS board. Shortly thereafter, the board selected an interim executive director, and on Sept. 1, 1992, PRS officially came into being.

In accordance with House Bill 7, which combined health and human services agencies under one umbrella to ensure more effective services to the people of Texas and more efficient use of available resources, the following programs transferred to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services on Sept. 1, 1992:

- ◆ all functions of Child Protective Services;
- ◆ the functions, programs, and activities of the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TxMHMR) related to the investigations of abuse and neglect within their facilities;
- ◆ all functions of Adult Protective Services; and
- ◆ all activities related to licensing child-care facilities and child-placing agencies.

A year later, on Sept. 1, 1993, under House Bill 1510 of the 73rd Legislature, The Services for Runaways and At-risk Youth program was transferred from the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) to PRS. Abuse and neglect investigations in facilities regulated by the Texas Department of Health (TDH), which under House Bill 7 were scheduled to move to PRS Sept. 1, 1993, were transferred to DHS instead. Certain functions, programs, and activities (including licensing and certification) related to institutions other than long-term care facilities were retained by the Texas Department of Health rather than being transferred to PRS as called for by House Bill 7.

From its appointment in June 1992, our board became extremely busy and involved, defining the agency's mission and strategic directions for the upcoming years, preparing our request for funding from the Legislature, and conducting a nationwide search for a permanent executive director. The board is now working in conjunction with staff to review all policies, procedures, practices, and rules. Board members and staff will base decisions about what works well and where changes need to be made after receiving information from staff statewide, the public, expert panels, the Health and Human Services Commission, and advisory groups.

I began my duties as permanent executive director on March 1, 1993, midway through the agency's first year and one day after the siege on the Branch Davidian compound outside of Waco. Throughout this challenging situation, I was very gratified to see our staff respond in such a responsible, compassionate, and timely manner and receive recognition for their efforts from the Legislature. With nearly 86 percent of our agency's staff involved directly in

servicing our clients statewide, their success is my greatest concern. In response to a survey of staff who work directly with clients, I have suggested several initiatives that I believe will help them accomplish their difficult jobs more effectively—new ways of doing things and new ways of looking at how we serve our clients. One of these initiatives is to provide field staff with computers. Automation will improve services to our clients by making our field staff more efficient and information more accessible.

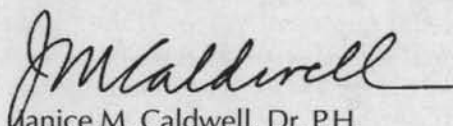
Gradually, as we have established our identity under the health and human services umbrella, our internal organizational structure has begun to come together. Perhaps of greatest interest to the reader is the addition of an ombudsman office, which is responsible for handling complaints from the public and responding in a timely manner. Our regional state service boundaries have been redefined so that they are now uniform for all health and human service agencies to promote better planning and coordination of state services. (See map on page 95.)

PRS will increasingly reach out to the various communities to share the responsibility for protecting our most vulnerable citizens. We need community organizations, advocacy groups, businesses, churches, lawmakers, and others to work with us as partners in promoting the prevention of abuse, neglect, and exploitation and providing services to those in need of them.

We intend to take a firm stand against those who abuse our system by falsely reporting abuse and neglect as a way to embarrass or get revenge on another person. This happens most frequently in child custody cases where one spouse files a report on the other without valid reason. Such an act is a misdemeanor and will not be tolerated.

Perhaps one of our greatest challenges, and an ongoing one, is to work to change the public's perception of us as "the bad guy." Sometimes we are labeled as such because we intervene to protect people who cannot protect themselves. The real "bad guy" is the person who is abusing the child or person who is elderly or has a disability. One of the ways we plan to bring this about is to train our staff in total quality, a way of working and thinking that will result in improved management methods, higher productivity, and better service to our clients.

From the survey sent out to field staff, one theme predominated: they want to have time to be more effective in working with clients so that they can make a real difference in the lives of the people they serve. Making a difference in the lives of those who are most vulnerable to abuse and neglect is what our agency is all about.


Janice M. Caldwell, Dr. P.H.
Executive Director