

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services**



**Performance Oversight Hearing for the**  
**Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services**  
**For FY 2012 and FY 2013 to date**

Testimony of  
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Committee on Health  
Yvette Alexander, Chairperson  
Council of the District of Columbia

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Room 412  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon Chairperson Alexander, members of the Committee, and members of the community. My name is BB Otero, and I am Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DMHHS). Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the performance of my office over the past year. I would like to extend a special thanks to your committee staff that has been available both to my office as well as to the various agencies in my purview for their support and willingness to quickly tackle sensitive and often challenging issues.

Similarly, I am privileged to work with 10 of the most outstanding professional directors of health and human service agencies who, day in and day out, guide and manage a multitude of services throughout the city. Our city is fortunate to have them.

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services was established in February 2011. Our mission is to support “the Mayor in coordinating a comprehensive system of benefits, goods and services across multiple agencies to ensure children, youth, and adults, with and without disabilities, can lead healthy, meaningful and productive lives.” We achieve this mission along with the ten agencies, and one intermediary organization, under our purview:

1. Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)
2. Department of Disability Services (DDS)
3. Department of Health (DOH)
4. Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF)
5. Department of Human Services (DHS)
6. Department of Mental Health (DMH)
7. Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
8. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS)
9. Office of Disability Rights (ODR)
10. DC Office on Aging (DCOA)
11. Children and Youth Investment Collaborative, the pass-through for the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (CYITC)

In order to achieve our mission, we have focused on cross-system issues and programs that, through a shift in policy and practice, provide a more collaborative and coordinated approach to serving the residents of the city. Additionally, we have established a culture of transparency and communication that seeks to make providers and community members partners in our work. The value and need for this high level of coordination is evidenced in the testimonies of agency directors who repeatedly express the need to work with sister agencies in order to deliver more effective and efficient services and by the urging of the providers and the community who experience the frustrations of interacting with a disjointed system. It is at these intersections that my office adds the most value.

Working closely with agency leadership, we systematically identify programmatic areas that cut across agencies that had previously operated in silos. By facilitating programmatic alignment, we achieve efficiencies, develop shared outcomes and make government more manageable for the recipients of such services.

- For example the One City Summer Initiative, in partnership with Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, Paul Quander, Interim Deputy Mayor for Education, Jennifer Leonard, and the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, has brought together 28 District government agencies and more than 80 community-based organizations. This office and its partners strove to ensure quality programming, increased services in traditionally underserved neighborhoods and the immediate response to neighborhood blight issues that create less safe environments for children and youth. I am pleased to report the partners served 23,235 children and youth between the ages of 5 and 25. As important were the youth outcomes. Sixty-six percent of the youth who completed the evaluation survey reported their summer program helped them feel positive about the future and 90% reported that their program helped them work better with others.
- Similarly through the creation of the Homeless Encampment Work Group, DMHHS took the lead in the coordination of multiple District government agencies to review and update the protocol for the abatement of Homeless encampments. There is now a protocol signed by the directors of 14 agencies and offices and a clear process in place to address encampments

across the city. The protocol was shared with homeless advocates for their feedback prior to being finalized. Presentations on the protocol have been given at Advisory Neighborhood Council (ANC) meetings, and a briefing was given to City Council staff.

- The most recent effort at program coordination is school-based health where we have come together with DOH, DCPS, DCPCSB and DMH to redefine the program ensuring a more robust approach to health services in the schools. This has led to a better understanding of the existing gaps and the need to allocate more resources to ensure system wide coverage.
- Additionally, this office tracks the various consent decrees in our cluster. At times, we unblock cross-system impediments and work across agencies to find viable solutions and strategies to ensure that significant progress toward meeting the exit criteria can be made.

There are numerous examples where agencies are using practices such as integrated case management and shared data to both maximize resources and reduce intrusion into the lives of residents needing our services.

- DHS has integrated TANF and homeless services leading to a single point of entry for families and an accelerated approach to stabilizing family crises while supporting them to take responsibility towards reaching their goals.
- I am currently chairing the Systems of Care working group that has brought together a cross section of youth-serving agencies and organizations to broaden our ability to provide appropriate mental health treatment to children and youth. Of note is that the participating agencies have agreed to use a common assessment form which will eliminate the need for clients to provide the same information in different formats to multiple agencies.
- Through the work of the truancy task force we have vastly improved the collection and sharing of data which has led to better understanding of the reasons why children and youth are not attending school and will lead to improving practice by instituting strategies that address these underlying issues.

In addition to the cross-system and programmatic alignment work, there are several efforts that contribute to greater efficiency for government and streamlined services for residents.

- The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) will soon release a consolidated RFP bringing together the housing resources of various city agencies – including DOH, DHS and DMH – in one solicitation.
- Under my leadership, cluster agency directors embraced positive youth development as the framework for working with young people. A number of agencies—including the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services and the Department of Parks and Recreation—have engaged the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation and Safe Shores to provide training to front-line staff and supervisors.
- My office facilitated the transition of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) from the Department of Health to the DC Office on Aging. This led to better coordination and leverage with other meal programs already operated by DCOA. Seniors comprise approximately 98% of CSFP beneficiaries in the District of Columbia. Effective October 1, 2012, the Capital Area Food Bank began implementation of the CSFP and has already added program enhancements that benefit the participants.

Finally, community-based organizations that provide direct services help expand our capacity to reach District residents and serve as a conduit for information sharing between the community and the government. My office has worked to strengthen the quality of such partnerships.

- The DC Office on Aging (DCOA) and the Senior Service Network meet monthly to coordinate services and jointly address concerns. This has meant a more active and expansive service provider role and has led to the co-location of agency staff in community settings.

- Play DC is a multi-year initiative and the largest playground renovation project in the District of Columbia's history. Through Play DC, renovations will happen at 32 DPR playgrounds. To ensure that the newly renovated play space will meet the needs of, and reflect the individuality and uniqueness of District neighborhoods, DPR and DGS hosted community meetings to discuss the overall Play DC project and residents had an opportunity to weigh in and supply input on details such as design and amenities that should be considered for each play space.
- Yet another example of making government more available and transparent is the work done on the annual Children's Budget Report. This report is a tool to allow residents to better understand the investments the city makes on behalf of children. This office took on the re-design of the Children's Budget Report to make the most of its potential. We opened the report development and dissemination process to the public. Our consultant held numerous input sessions and solicited input via a survey. More than 60 people attended the sessions; the recommendations were well-thought out and constructive. This input has been invaluable in understanding what the public wants and we plan to integrate some of the suggestions in the upcoming FY 2014 Children's Budget Report.
- Additionally, this office has coordinated multiple briefings with a cross-section of advocates, providers and concerned residents to gather their thoughts and recommendations on the budget formulation process.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to update the Committee on Health, the DC Council, and the community. While there remains considerable work to do to ensure that every resident of the District of Columbia is able to lead healthy, meaningful and productive lives, we are positioned to play an important role in facilitating cross-agency efforts to achieve our cluster goals. Perhaps more importantly, we are committed to achieving our mission and best serving the residents of the city.

This concludes my written testimony. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.