



For immediate release:
March 4, 2004

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Delaware Meets Federally Mandated Child Safety Goals

WILMINGTON - Cabinet Secretary Cari DeSantis announced today that The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families' federally mandated improvement plan for child welfare services has met its goals for safety outcomes and has been released from continued monitoring of this outcome by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' ACF conducted an intensive review of Delaware's child protective, foster care, adoption, family preservation, family support and independent living services. Since that time, the Division of Family Services developed and implemented a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) to address certain factors and outcomes that evaluated strengths and needs.

"I am proud to say that Delaware has met the mandated safety outcomes for children in our care," said Secretary DeSantis. "Early in Governor Ruth Ann Minner's administration she signed an executive order directing the Children's Department to make child safety our first priority. This positive evaluation of our Performance Improvement Plan shows the commitment the Department has made in keeping with this priority."

As of December 31, 2003, ACF final reports for 40 states and the District of Columbia have been released. Delaware is tied for the second best score with four other states. Delaware is the only state to have successfully met the outcome of providing children with adequate services for their physical and mental health needs. Typically three sites from each state were selected for review. However, Delaware was only one of a handful of states subject to a statewide child welfare examination.

"Results of this evaluation are further proof that we are meeting the expectations of the federal government, our governor, but most importantly, our children," said Secretary DeSantis. "Under the guidance of Governor Minner and with the assistance of our many dedicated partners, we have worked hard to improve our foster care system, increased mental health services, opened transitional housing for youth leaving Ferris School, and created a new Holistic Services Team to work with children with intense and special needs. All of these positive changes relate to our improvement plan and these are changes we have made together."

On any given day, the Children's Department provides services to approximately 8,200 children who have been abused, neglected, are dependent, have mental health or substance problems, and/or have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts. For more information, please visit <http://www.state.de.us/kids/>.

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