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Children's Department Presents FY07 Budget

DOVER _ The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families today presented its FY 2007 budget request to continue Governor Minner's foster care initiatives, expand intensive out-patient services and strengthen the foundation of the Department's internal operations. The request proposed to the State Budget Director includes \$1,065,000 in new initiatives for a total budget of \$160.5 million. Cabinet Secretary Cari DeSantis also discussed the implementation of a four-year strategic plan to bolster children's services throughout the State.

"Our budget request reflects proposed enhancements to the department operations and service delivery," says Cabinet Secretary Cari DeSantis. "This will help to secure a fragile infrastructure and enable us to then build on a solid foundation."

In terms of internal operations, the Department needs to upgrade its automated data system, convert crucial casual/seasonal positions to full-time positions and continue providing its employees with System of Care service delivery training. The Department has also requested investments in two key areas: mental health services, especially to address the growing substance abuse problem among children; and ancillary services at the Stevenson House Detention Center in Milford.

Referring to the four-year plan, Secretary DeSantis said, "Our vision is to always Think of the Child First and this requires intricate, long-term planning. It is vital for us to make a very worthwhile investment in their future."

The four-year strategic plan would focus on investing in the juvenile justice system to reflect current thinking, best practices and early interventions, and addressing additional infrastructure needs to assure smooth operations. This plan would require a significant investment of new resources by the State over a four-year period.

"By combining the support provided by Governor Minner and the General Assembly with the ingenuity and hard work of our staff, we have had great success in caring for the youngest, most vulnerable citizens of the State," Secretary DeSantis said. "However, our job now is to secure a future system of care that delivers consistent positive results for our kids."

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