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FY 07 Budget Request Addresses Infrastructure Needs and Juvenile Justice Reform

DOVER—The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families today presented its FY 2007 Governor’s Recommended Budget to the Joint Finance Committee. Emphasis was placed on a four-year strategic plan that focuses on basic infrastructure needs and a reform of the juvenile justice system. The proposed budget is \$158.4 million in total funds including enhancements for intensive outpatient treatment in New Castle County, day treatment in Sussex County, substance abuse assessments for youth statewide and conversion of the successful Families and Children Together (F.A.C.T.) project from a federal grant to State funding.

“We are strategically planning for a challenging future, which is surely on the horizon,” Cabinet Secretary Cari DeSantis said. “As the State’s fiscal forecasts improve and financial resources become available for additional investments in Delaware’s children in crisis, we stand ready to quickly implement those service enhancements that will help us help our children.”

The growing population of children in this state is of particular concern to Secretary DeSantis, who noted that on any given month, the Department is serving approximately 350 to 450 more children than the previous year.

“As the Department serves more and more children, and as those children present with more complex and challenging issues, there is real concern about service gaps in our continuum of care for the children and families we assist, especially for teenagers,” she adds. “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.”

Recently, the work of the Children’s Department was recognized when its Community Services Re-engineering team in the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services received the first-ever Governor’s Team Excellence Award. This core team engaged more than two dozen other staff to examine ways to improve the probation system. Their efforts led to an increase in youth involved in school, employment or vocational training, increased compliance with conditions of probation and improved satisfaction among employees.

“Receiving the Governor’s Team Excellence award is a wonderful testament to the dedicated staff we have in our Department,” Secretary DeSantis said. “We work in teams across our department, across State government and with our partners and providers in the community, to help children succeed. This team work is what is making a difference for our kids every day.”

On any given day, the Delaware Children’s Department provides services to approximately 8,300 children who have been abused, neglected or abandoned, have mental health or substance problems, or have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts. For more information, please visit <http://www.state.de.us/kids/>.

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