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FY 05 Budget Request Seeks More Child Mental Health Services

DOVER _ The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families today presented its FY 2005 Governor's Recommended Budget to the Joint Finance Committee. Highlights include additional intensive outpatient services in child mental health and a small increase in staff in case management and juvenile probation. The proposed budget is \$147.4 million in total funds.

"Children in crisis today require ever more intensive mental health services," Cabinet Secretary Cari DeSantis said. "This budget will help us expand our capability to serve more children in need of that care."

Over the past three years, The Department has undertaken and met a number of challenges that include implementing Governor Minner's Foster Care reform initiatives, creating a Holistic Services team, re-engineering juvenile probation services, developing individual residential treatment homes, extending supports for children leaving Ferris School for Boys, and deploying mental health services more broadly.

"The most important customers for the Delaware Children's Department are children in our care," said Secretary DeSantis. "Our vision and rallying cry has been 'Think of the Child First.' These are just five little words that force us to recognize that, at the end of the long arm of bureaucracy, there is a child depending on us. This request continues progress in areas that are most essential for our children and consistent with best practice in service delivery."

Secretary DeSantis says children in crisis are better served and have more opportunity for success today because the Department has lived up to its commitment to build a service system that effectively meets the modern needs of children and families.

"Together with our advocates, providers, and partners in the private and non-profit community we have improved services to more children and families. We did it by thinking of the child first," she said. "It's a good start and support of our request will help us continue this success. The kids are counting on it."

On any given day, the Children's Department provides services to approximately 8,000 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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