



News for Immediate Release

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Governor Corbett Achieves Real Reforms That Will Sustain the Safety Net

Harrisburg – Secretary of Public Welfare Gary D. Alexander today announced the funding appropriations for DPW’s fiscal year 2012-13 state budget and the continued efforts to preserve the safety net of services that continue to serve millions of Pennsylvanians.

“Governor Corbett has once again signed a fiscally prudent budget that will help preserve core services for the neediest Pennsylvanians and deliver value to the taxpayers,” said Alexander. “Our commitment remains, we must focus on streamlined, efficient and effective programs that will benefit those truly in need.”

The enacted budget provides \$10.6 billion in state funds for the human service programs that will continue to serve millions of Pennsylvanians who rely on core programs and to further help abled-bodied individuals into self-sufficiency and break the dependency from public assistance.

The 2012-13 fiscal year budget implements real reforms that fully support the department’s mission of providing services for the neediest among us, breaking the cycle of dependency on government programs and helping Pennsylvanians who have fallen on hard times find their way back to their feet.

“The Department of Public Welfare provides services to millions of Pennsylvanians and this budget focuses on spending every tax dollar smarter,” said Alexander. “These are unique economic times that require us to re-evaluate how we do business; we must maximize every dollar and preserve programs for the most vulnerable.”

The Corbett administration is proud to add an additional \$31 million to programs that help individuals with intellectual disabilities. An additional \$17.8 million will be dedicated to addressing the waiting list associated with these programs including young adults who are “aging out” of the system and adults with aging parents who are at risk of no longer being able to care for them.

Due to an increase in revenues, the administration was able to restore \$83.7 million in funding for community-based programs such as behavioral health services, mental health services, child welfare and homeless assistance.

This budget also transforms how state government works with county governments in providing services. The Human Services Block Grant pilot program, which will be available for up to 20 Pennsylvania counties to start, will provide flexibility. This

flexibility gives counties more control over their human services dollars, allowing spending decisions to be made closer to home.

“Counties know the needs of their people better than we do here in Harrisburg,” said Alexander. “Giving the counties the flexibility to meet the needs of their people is a positive step in the right direction.”

The department will also consolidate planning and reporting requirements for all counties, allowing them to spend more funds on providing services, and less on dealing with cumbersome red tape. We will continue to work with counties to develop better program performance measures that drive outcomes like self-sufficiency, improved health and education.

The department has maintained the medical portion of the state-funded General Assistance program, by continuing to provide health care for individuals who do not qualify for the federal Medicaid or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) programs.

The 2012-13 budget focuses on providing support for children and adults. Enhancements made to Pennsylvania’s foster care system ensure that young adults, ages 18 – 21, continue to receive support until they can safely reach self-sufficiency. This budget also provides safeguards that protect those who are physically and cognitively impaired between the ages of 18 and 59. This is a core function of government that Pennsylvania currently offers for children and the elderly, these reforms extend this to those who are middle-aged.

In a continued effort to root out waste, fraud and abuse, new audit enhancements will ensure that welfare claims are reviewed thoroughly before being paid. This will reduce instances where incorrect payments have to be chased down by the department, often resulting in lost taxpayer dollars. Audit enhancements will also focus on reducing fraudulent billing, leading to a reduction in medical errors.

In addition, the department will implement high cost case reviews, performing intensive review and case management of high-cost consumers enrolled in Medical Assistance programs. This ensures better health outcomes for enrollees and ensures services are delivered in the right place, right time and right setting.

Further, the department is enhancing its recoupment of benefits for those who have been found ineligible.

“Bringing integrity back into our programs will help the department realize true costs savings and cost containment measures that ultimately ensure tax dollars are being spent on the programs and people they were meant to be spent on,” said Alexander.

During the 2012-2013 fiscal year, the department will also focus on a work-first initiative to move able-bodied recipients into work. Greater accountability and performance-based measures will be used with providers to encourage greater outcomes for the recipients.

“Work experience is best learned from actual work itself, and these reforms will help recipients achieve successful, independent lives free from public assistance,” said Alexander. “This budget brings common sense reforms that will allow for effective and efficient delivery of services for the truly needy. We must remember that the best anti-poverty program is a job.”

For more information about the Department of Public Welfare, visit the department’s website at www.dpw.state.pa.us or call 1-800-692-7462.

Pennsylvanians who suspect welfare fraud should call 1-800- 932-0582.

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