

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**



Open Government Report 2014

Transparency

The Department of Human Services (DHS) provides the public with complete information regarding the operation of the agency and the activities of its employees as contemplated by the District of Columbia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Therefore, pertinent agency information is posted to the DHS website. These documents include, but are not limited to:

- Applications to determine eligibility for benefits
- Agency performance documents
- Press releases regarding events and major occurrences related to human services generated by DHS, the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DMHHS), related sister agencies and the Executive Office of the Mayor
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families updates and information regarding all DHS Service Centers
- Documents related to serving homeless communities
- Feature stories about program success stories
- Newsletters
- Documents pertinent to the FOIA Xpress Reading Room

The DHS web site also contains information about the [Interagency Council on Homelessness \(ICH\)](#).

FOIA

DHS diligently works to issue a final response to each FOIA within the statutorily mandated 15-day period. In issuing its FOIA responses, the FOIA Officer within DHS reviews documents and determines what can be released to the public. The FOIA Officer is careful to alert requesters to the fact that much of the information contained within the agency is confidential due to the vulnerable citizens that DHS serves and privacy laws. The FOIA Officer provides agency responses electronically, via email, US mail, or the requester may schedule a time to review documents in person.

Public Engagement and Participation

In order to increase public access to information DHS will continue to post pertinent documents to the DHS and related websites, and ensure that partnering community-based organizations are provided with access to DHS documents, press releases, and policies in general.

In order to provide online access to proposed rules and regulations, DHS posts the information to the DHS website and solicits feedback through email or by mail. Additionally at least one public focus group session is held in order to gain feedback. Examples of published rules are listed below:

[Notice of Emergency Rule Making: TANF Payment Levels](#)
[SNAP Eligibility](#)
[Shifting from DC Healthcare Alliance to Medicaid Eligibility Rules](#)

DHS actively shares information with customers and constituents primarily through direct mail, community engagement meetings and events, participation in public hearings through Executive testimony, public service messaging on local Comcast programming, and by developing and disseminating community-based materials such as:

- Brochures
- Fact Sheets
- FAQ's
- Press Releases
- Posters
- Videos in all DHS Service Centers

For the months that lend to hypothermic conditions, DHS increases outreach efforts by:

- Distributing cards that feature the hypothermia hotline number and each shelter address and pick-up locations to the network of homeless service providers and other strategic community locations
- Purchasing advertising space in local, community-based newspapers and radio stations
- Partnering with WMATA to display ads on the sides of Metro buses providing instructions regarding helping homeless individuals and the hypothermia hotline number
- Alerting local media and updating the DHS web site during a hypothermia or hyperthermia alert.

The Department is currently in the planning stages of launching a social media presence to communicate with customers and stakeholders via Facebook and Twitter.

DHS is working closely with the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to identify a significant number of datasets that OCA and OCTO expect to publish online later this year. If no dataset from DHS is selected to be included in this 2014 release, we will continue to work with OCA and OCTO to identify datasets appropriate to publish in 2015. DHS will also submit the selected datasets to be published on Datadc.gov with a link to the DHS external and internal web portals.

Stakeholders

DHS identifies stakeholders through participation in the human services continuum. Those include leaders of non-profit and advocacy organizations, sister agency heads, and local government leadership. Participation is encouraged through focus groups, direct outreach, collaborative interagency meetings and initiatives such as the ICH, and increased communication among sister agencies through co-location of services at various DHS service centers.

DHS has improved public engagement efforts by working to establish a Customer Advocacy Board (CAB) with a dedicated staff member to provide a medium whereby customers are encouraged to self-advocate and offer direct input on DHS policy and procedures.

Collaboration

DHS partners with a number of sister agencies, non-profit organizations, and community-based organizations to fulfill its obligation to customers served. Many DHS Service Centers include co-located agencies such as the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) and others. Further DHS contracts with a number of non-profit organizations in the homeless services continuum. The agency has multiple Memorandums of Understanding and Memorandums of Agreement with other DC government agencies to provide needed services.

DHS has two administrations, Economic Security Administration (ESA) and Family Services Administration (FSA) and highlighted below are some of the partnerships.

Economic Security Administration

The Economic Security Administration (ESA) partners with the Department of Behavioral Health's mental health staff at TANF Assessment Centers to provide in-depth mental health assessments and referrals.

The Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) collaborates with ESA and receives TANF funding to serve CFSA families who are TANF eligible.

The District Department of the Environment (DDOE) partners with ESA to comply with the Heat and Eat requirements, and thus allowing Food Stamp customers to receive the maximum Standard Utility Allowance.

The Addiction, Prevention and Recovery Administration (APRA) works with ESA and receives TANF funding to provide substance abuse services to TANF customers.

Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) partners with DHS to use a license to conduct electronic-Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (eCASAS) testing for TANF customers. DHS also provides caseload data to OSSE for the purpose of determining high needs students who are enrolled in DC Public Schools.

The Department of the Employment Services (DOES) partners with ESA to provide job training services for ESA's Food Stamp Employment and Training customers.

ESA and the Office on Latino Affairs (OLA) collaborate in providing outreach and translations services for all ESA activities.

The Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OAPIA) provides outreach and translations services for all ESA activities.

DC Public Schools (DCPS) engages in data exchanges with ESA for the provision of services.

The Office of Attorney General (OAG) works with ESA in the collection of child support for TANF customers.

ESA partners with the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) which provides fair hearings for ESA customers who are contesting eligibility decisions.

The DC Health Benefit Exchange (HBX) provides funding to ESA for staff and resources regarding the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

The Office of Health Care Finance (OHCF) collaborated with DHS in the New Heights program which provides various services to expectant and parenting teens including case management linkages to government and non-government services partners with the District of Columbia Public Schools and the Student Support Center.

ESA recently entered into a partnership with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) to expand the District's 12 Cities Initiative, which provides blended funding and services for individuals with multiple barriers, including substance abuse, mental health and AIDS/HIV risk.

Family Services Administration

Local Family Services Administration (FSA) partners include the Child and Family Services Agency, the Departments of Health and Behavioral Health, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the Health Care Finance Administration, the D.C. Housing Authority, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the DC Child Support Services Division, and the Office of the Attorney General. Major federal partners include Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The DC Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Family Services Administration (FSA) collaborates frequently with the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), Lutheran Social Services (LSS), and Catholic Charities. CFSA and LSS are very instrumental in providing foster care services, and Catholic Charities provides employment training and case management to the refugees that reside in the District.

FSA's Adult Protective Services (APS) office intervenes to protect vulnerable adults through referrals to outside partners. APS professional staff members also make informative presentations to church groups and community organizations about abuse, neglect, and related topics impacting vulnerable adults.

Family violence issues are addressed by FSA partners that include the Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the District Alliance for Safe Housing, My Sister's Place, House of Ruth, and the Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project.

The FSA Homeless Services Program provides a variety of shelter and housing options as well as case management and other homeless prevention and supportive services to individuals and families. The Virginia Williams Family Resource Center serves the needs of families that are homeless by offering shelter options, case management, and other resources.

Other

Another way DHS ensures transparency is through the Office of Program Review, Monitoring and Investigation (OPRMI).

The DHS Office of Program Review, Monitoring and Investigation (OPRMI) investigates allegations of suspected public assistance benefit fraud, related to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamps Program (FSP); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Medicaid, and refers substantiated cases for prosecution or program disqualification.

OPRMI also investigates Unusual Incidents, such as employee misconduct, harassment and assault, which compromise the integrity of DHS programs or which threaten the health or safety of DHS customers, District government employees and the public.

Additionally, OPRMI receives and assesses suggestions for improvement and coordinates the resolution of complaints related to DHS programs and services.

OPRMI is also responsible for shelter monitoring and evaluating District of Columbia programs and services within the continuum that are covered by the Homeless Services Reform Act (HSRA) of 2005 as amended. These programs and services include the resolution of complaints, grievances and concerns. To report fraud allegation, contact OPRMI at (202) 671-4460.

(Internal) <http://dcdhs.dc.gov/service/monitoring-and-investigation>
(Public) <http://dhs.dc.gov/service/monitoring-and-investigation>

In addition, OPRMI collaborates with the following agencies:

Office of Attorney General
Office of General Counsel
Office of Inspector General
Office of DC Auditors
Metropolitan Police Department
Federal Bureau of Investigations
USDA
USDA Office of Inspector General
DC, VA & MD Department of Corrections
Child and Family Services Agency
OSSE/DC Public Schools
Internal Revenue Services
DC Tax and Revenue