

Commissioners' Retreat on Cross-Systems Youth

Message from Commissioners

On December 19 and 20, 2007, we convened in a historic meeting to agree on actions each of our agencies could take to better serve children, youth and families by improving access to services and supports; ensuring quality coordinated services and supports from a qualified workforce; and by collaborating to eliminate service barriers between each of our systems. The meeting included a dialogue with youth and parents sharing their cross-system experiences. Our retreat was further informed by what we learned through the People's First Forums, and by conversations within the Governor's Children's Cabinet, and in other cross-systems meetings with consumers, parents, service providers, and family and youth advocates.

Our discussion was positive, constructive, and action-oriented. First, we acknowledged our shared sense of responsibility for New York State's children. To carry forward our spirit and practice of collaboration, we committed to meeting as a group every three months to develop and implement joint solutions to improve the lives of children, youth and families. These meetings will also give us the opportunity to review and discuss our progress. In this spirit of collaboration, we committed to:

- 1. Engage families and youth directly, listen to their concerns and proposals, and involve them in the design of individualized services and supports across agencies.**
- 2. Work together in a new way: more cooperatively, transparently, effectively and efficiently.**
- 3. Increase our focus on effective prevention and comprehensive early childhood services, while also focusing better on children with intensive needs requiring services and supports from multiple agencies.**
- 4. Explore new models for quality and continuity of care, including service coordination and dispute resolution.**
- 5. Support each other's individual agency goals relative to cross-systems children and youth.**

Finally, we affirm the important role and work of the New York State Council on Children and Families and will fully participate in its continued deliberations and activities.

Deborah Benson, Executive Director,
New York State Council on Children and Families

Karen Carpenter-Palumbo, Commissioner
Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services

Gladys Carrión, Commissioner,
Office of Children and Family Services

Richard Daines, MD, Commissioner,
Department of Health

David Hansell, Commissioner,
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
(joined January 2008)

Michael Hogan, Commissioner
Office of Mental Health

Diana Jones Ritter, Commissioner
Office of Mental Retardation and
Developmental Disabilities

Robert Maccarone, State Director,
Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives

Richard Mills, Commissioner,
Department of Education

Gary O'Brien, Chair,
Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy
for Persons with Disabilities