

# Commissioner



Former DHSS Commissioner Joel Gilbertson and his successor, Commissioner Karleen Jackson.

## Leadership transitions

By the time you read *Taking Action: Strategic Report 2003-05*, a new Commissioner of Health and Social Services will be in place. One of us, former Commissioner Joel Gilbertson, left state service on Sept. 30, 2005, for a job in the private health care sector. As of Oct. 1, 2005, former Deputy Commissioner Karleen Jackson assumed the duties of Commissioner.

The change in leadership has been seamless because we have been a team from the beginning in the most extensive reorganization of the state's largest department in Alaska history. For that reason, we are writing this message together.

## The need for reorganization

The former Commissioner set the tone for this reorganization in early 2003, when he announced changes to almost all the divisions, with one goal in mind: "to make better sense to the people we serve."

Gilbertson's announcement contained a promise: "Alaskans will get better customer service, and the Department of Health and Social Services will be in a stronger position to deliver quality services in very tough financial times for the state."

This publication — *Taking Action: Strategic Report 2003-05* — shows how that promise is being fulfilled.

## Keeping our eye on the mission

We have both devoted our careers to health and social services issues. And, like our entire department staff, we find deep satisfaction in seeing the people we help succeed in life. That goal continues from administration to administration, from commissioner to commissioner.

Our department mission — "to promote and protect the health and well-being of Alaskans" — is a reminder to all of us, from top down, that this is why we exist. We must look beyond the inevitable bureaucracy that comes with the territory and focus on the children, families and communities we are here to serve.

## A few highlights

We have opened up the Office of Children's Services to more public scrutiny by allowing more transparency. Our Division of Behavioral Health is making strides in bringing emotionally disturbed children back to Alaska for treatment from Outside facilities.

Our Division of Public Assistance is transforming its statewide offices to "one-stop" facilities, so families and individuals in need of temporary assistance won't get shuffled from person to person, from office to office. Our Family Centered Services in DPA now uses a wraparound team approach — other state agencies, employers, mentors, family members, clients — in helping clients attain and maintain employment and self-sufficiency.

We have launched a new program called SeniorCare, to provide a safety net for the state's low-income seniors. That program also provides qualified seniors with a prescription drug benefit to help them pay for the medicines they need.

We are communicating our needs more clearly to the state Legislature so there is no question about our needs or how we use the money we are given. And we are responding more quickly and efficiently to the news media to ensure that public information about our department is factual and accurate, providing Alaskans a clear message about how their money is being spent.

This publication covers most of the last three years' initiatives and accomplishments, so we encourage you to turn the page and read further. The last three years have been very eventful.

### ***We are all working together***

We reorganized the department around three guiding principles: self-sufficiency for Alaskans; a strong safety net for those who cannot provide for themselves; and local access to care. Working together, we established a momentum that allows the staff and division directors to continue their work.



Karleen Jackson  
Commissioner of Health and Social Services, 2005–



Joel Gilbertson  
Former Commissioner of Health and Social Services,  
2003–05