



Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

NEWS

Office of the Governor

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Executive Office of Health and Human Services Given Statutory Authority Budget Article Formalizes Role of the EOHHS, Which Was Created By Executive Order In 2004

Governor Donald L. Carcieri today announced that the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) was established by statute as part of the recently passed Fiscal Year 2007 state budget.

Governor Carcieri established the EOHHS by Executive Order in March 2004 to facilitate coordination and collaboration among the five state departments administering health and social services in Rhode Island. A subsequent Executive Order, signed in December 2005, further clarified the role and responsibilities of the office.

The EOHHS's new statutory status will "increase its effectiveness and enhance its ability to develop a more cohesive health and human services policy agenda for the state," Governor Carcieri said. "The office is now in an ideal position moving forward to direct the development of goals and objectives necessary to improve the delivery of services and attain better outcomes for the people and communities served."

The five departments of the EOHHS include Elderly Affairs; Children, Youth and Families; Health; Human Services; and, Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals. Collectively, the departments provide direct services to nearly 300,000 Rhode Islanders annually and account for 42 percent of the state budget, or more than \$2.3 billion annually.

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In addition to increasing coordination and cooperation between the departments, the EOHHS is charged with improving the efficiency of health and human services policy, budgeting and financing; fostering and implementing best practices; and, maximizing and leveraging funds from private and public sources including grants, awards and federal funding.

Specifically, on the subject of Medicaid, the office will coordinate the administration and financing of all federal Medicaid health care benefits, serve as the governor's chief advisor and liaison to federal policy makers on Medicaid issues and coordinate departmental waiver requests, renewals and amendments to the Medicaid state plan for the purpose of ensuring their consistency with the state's policy and with budget priorities. Beginning December 1, 2006, the EOHHS will also be required to prepare and submit to the Governor and legislature a comprehensive, cross-departmental report of statewide Medicaid expenditures.

Additionally, the EOHHS is responsible for conducting a separate study of Medicaid programs and outlining options for reducing or stabilizing the level of uninsured Rhode Islanders while containing costs. This report, due to the Governor and legislature by March 1, 2007, will include analyzing the federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2006 and its impact on Medicaid programs administered by the five departments of the EOHHS.

"This level of global, all-inclusive reporting on statewide Medicaid spending has never been done before," said Jane A. Hayward, the Secretary of the EOHHS. "While the Department of Human Services does administer the lion's share of federal Medicaid funds, there are other state agencies also receiving funds. The ability to look at this funding source in its totality, across all the departments, will enable the state to better leverage funds and achieve better health outcomes for Rhode Islanders."

The office, which over the past 18 months has conducted and published two independent reviews of state-administered health and human services program areas – one relating to the Hillside Nursing Home following the death of a patient; the other of the state's assisted living system following the alleged murder of a resident and separate assault of an employee at the hands of a resident – will continue in this capacity as well, at the direction of either the Governor or the legislature. Both reports are available for review at .

Hayward, of Narragansett, who has led the office since its inception in March 2004, has been nominated by the Governor to hold the statutory post of Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Her appointment is subject to the advice and consent of the Rhode Island Senate.

The EOHHS has been staffed since 2004 with a handful of staff borrowed on a long-term basis from the agencies of the EOHHS. Those employees have been officially transferred to the EOHHS.