



# Public Engagement Newsletter

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[COVERING JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH]

*It's hard to believe but we're already several months into 2012 and so much has happened at the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS).*

*Secretary Michelle R.B. Saddler's words resonated loud and clear when she proclaimed "We're changing! And we're becoming better for the people we serve and for one another," during the launch of the department's Local Office Pride initiative at the Woodlawn and Northwest Family Community Resource Centers.*

*We've also been working with the Governor's office and the General Assembly on the FY 2013 budget, which will require many painful and tough decisions before it is complete. There is good news though as Governor Pat Quinn championed and signed a tax-relief law - as part of the Earned Income Tax Credit - to help working families across the state and help grow the economy, and DHS has increased eligibility for the Emergency Food Assistance Program, enabling many more families to access food pantries.*

*Moreover, as we enter the 2013 contracting process, we are preparing to launch the Centralized Repository Vault as part of the Management Improvement Initiative, which is streamlining contracting, reporting and auditing processes.*

*In other agency news, DHS recently participated in a service fair sponsored by Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez and Cook County Commissioner Jesus "Chuy" Garcia; and a Quincy doctor has been honored with the Department of Human Services "Outstanding Audiology Award."*



## SECRETARY SADDLER LAUNCHES LOCAL OFFICE PRIDE (LOP) INITIATIVE

"We're changing! And we want you to be a part of it!" said DHS Secretary Michelle R.B. Saddler as she launched the Local Office Pride (LOP) initiative at the Woodlawn and Northwest offices in January. Secretary Saddler and a host of DHS executives visited the Woodlawn Family Community Resource Center (FCRC) at 915 East 63rd Street and the Northwest FCRC at 4105 West Chicago Avenue on Wednesday, January 11. The two events were to celebrate the work being done and a commitment to more improvements in the future.

If you weren't aware, earlier this year DHS announced the creation of the new Division of Family and Community Services (DFCS) through the merger of the Division of Human Capital Development and the Division of Community Health and Prevention. The goal of the new division is to streamline and improve services. To help achieve this goal we've launched the Local Office Pride (LOP) initiative.



Secretary Michelle R.B. Saddler launches Local Office Pride initiative.

“Our employees are the face of the state for people who are in need,” Saddler said. “Their work is critically important and valued.”

Through the [Local Office Pride](#) initiative, we intend to create a culture of caring – together – in which FCRC staff feel supported and encouraged for their hard work; our waiting rooms will provide a more welcoming and respectful environment for our customers; and innovative strategies will better serve the high volume of customers who need assistance.

In addition, we're making policy changes in order to minimize caseworker workload and customer traffic and inconvenience. These improvements include:

- Express Desks to address the needs of customers who do not need to see their caseworkers, including those who just want to print a medical card, issue a LINK card, make an address change, add a baby, etc.
- New signage to clearly communicate to customers the various services provided and what line they should wait in to be seen.
- Waiting room supervisors who will be responsible for monitoring the functioning of the new plan, assisting on high-volume days and adjusting processes as necessary.
- Greeters will meet customers at the front door, inform them of the waiting room process, and either give them a number or direct them to the appropriate line in order to be served.

### **STATE INCREASES INCOME REQUIREMENTS FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE**

DHS Secretary Michele R.B. Saddler says the expansion of The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) will provide access to food pantries and soup kitchens for 337,000 more Illinois residents.

“In the current economic climate, an increasing number of families are experiencing food insecurity for the first time,” Saddler said. “This expanded eligibility aligns us with other states, such as New York, Texas and Wisconsin.”



DHS recently received approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to increase the eligibility for TEFAP from 130 percent to 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. TEFAP is a federally-funded program that provides supplemental food assistance to eligible Illinois residents through the provision of free, USDA food commodities via food pantries, homeless shelters and soup kitchens. The purpose of the program, which is administered by DHS, is to prevent hunger and help provide food security for low-income households and individuals.

DHS partners with eight food banks across the state for food distribution: Central Illinois Food Bank – Springfield; Eastern Illinois Food Bank – Urbana; Greater Chicago Food Depository – Chicago; Northern Illinois Food Bank – Geneva; Peoria Area Food Bank – Peoria; River Bend Food Bank – Moline; St. Louis Area Food Bank – East St. Louis Metro Area; and Tri-State Food Bank – Southern Illinois. These food banks, in turn, partner with over 750 food pantries, homeless shelters and soup kitchens statewide to provide free, USDA food commodities along with other privately donated and purchased food directly to eligible Illinois residents.

### **STATE EXPANDS REDEPLOY ILLINOIS PROGRAM TO LASALLE COUNTY**

The Illinois Department of Human Services has expanded the state program designed to reduce the number of juveniles sentenced to prison. LaSalle County was recently awarded a \$101,000 Redeploy Illinois grant.

“Community-based services for juvenile offenders are generally less costly and more effective than correctional facilities,” said DHS Secretary Michelle R.B. Saddler. “Over the past seven years, Redeploy Illinois has successfully diverted nearly 1,000 youth from commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice. Adding LaSalle County to the program will allow us to reach more of the state’s troubled youth and divert them from the corrections system.”

Redeploy Illinois was implemented in 2005 in order to provide financial support to counties in their efforts to identify comprehensive community services for delinquent youth. The program has been successful in mobilizing communities to direct resources to youth offenders who otherwise would have been incarcerated by the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice. Counties receiving Redeploy Illinois funds commit to reducing their number of commitments by 25% in exchange for grant funds.

“The utilization of local treatment providers, local governance and evidence-based approaches is simply the most successful thing that Illinois has ever tried. Redeploy Illinois improves public safety, saves taxpayer dollars and provides more positive outcomes for children in conflict with the law,” added Retired Judge George Timberlake, Chairman of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission.

Redeploy Illinois currently serves 27 counties. The expansion is being funded by the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). LaSalle County is expected to begin serving youth in the spring.

## **GOVERNOR QUINN ENCOURAGES WORKING FAMILIES TO APPLY FOR TAX RELIEF**

Now that tax season is over, many working families are pleased they were able to get assistance they needed to file their taxes and receive the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The Center for Economic Progress (CEP), with funding from DHS, once again provided free tax preparation assistance for low income taxpayers. And this year a major donation from Walmart helped fund the program.

“Too many families do not receive the tax relief they deserve simply because they don’t have the information and means to access it,” Governor Pat Quinn said. “We want our working families to know about the Center for Economic Progress and Illinois’ Earned Income Tax Credit, which will support economic growth and help them keep more of what they earn.”

Earlier this year, Governor Quinn championed and signed a tax relief law to help working families across the state and grow the Illinois economy. The Earned Income Tax Credit law doubles the state’s EITC over two years, saving low-income workers an extra \$105 million per year and helping almost a million families who filed for the credit. The new law also benefits all Illinois taxpayers by raising the value of the personal exemption and indexing it to inflation.

To benefit from Illinois’ EITC, also known as the Earned Income Credit (EIC), taxpayers must include it on their tax returns. While more than 2.5 million state residents benefited from the Illinois EITC in 2010, many people who are eligible for the state’s EITC don’t file for it. The not-for-profit CEP estimates that between 10 and 20 percent of eligible taxpayers did not file for EITC last year.

The CEP Tax Counseling Project provides free tax preparation assistance at tax assistance centers across the state. More than 28,000 Illinois taxpayers filed returns through the program in the 2010 tax season, with more than \$50 million in state and federal tax refunds returned to clients.



Governor Pat Quinn champions to help working families.

## **ILLINOIS UNVEILS NEW TOOL TO STREAMLINE SERVICES AND SHARE INFORMATION**

The State of Illinois has created a new information portal for community service providers designed to streamline reporting to the state’s human service agencies. The new tool, called the Centralized Repository Vault (CRV), will help eliminate duplication and confusion, provide more efficient monitoring and auditing and allow service providers to focus more on their core community service missions.

“We recognize the critical role of our community service providers and want to help relieve them of a burdensome process that diverts time and resources away from providing critical services,” said Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Michelle R.B. Saddler. “This new reporting process will allow our providers to reinvest the dollars saved from reduced administrative costs into programs, leading to an increased level of service to the community.”

The Centralized Repository Vault accepts and securely stores data using an easy-to-use web form to make entries and upload documents for review by the state’s five human service agencies – Illinois Department of Human Services, Department on Aging, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Healthcare and Family Services, and Department of Public Health. Relevant data and documents from human service providers are collected at once and shared among these agencies, relieving providers of the administrative burden of repetitive requests for similar information. The collection of data in the CRV will be monitored to maintain proper oversight.



The CRV is available to authorized personnel of community service providers that are currently under contract with a state human services agency. Service providers must register to receive authorization to use the system. To complete the registration form, providers must have an Illinois.gov ID (which can be obtained through the site) and the DUNS number of the provider organization; a link will be provided shortly.

The CRV is a key component of the Management Improvement Initiative, a 2011 law aimed at increasing efficiency and easing the administrative burden on providers at a time of fiscal crisis in which they are working with limited resources and manpower.

### **DHS AND ICIRR ANNOUNCE UNITING AMERICA INITIATIVE**

In early February, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) hosted its 2nd annual “One Nation, One Dream” Immigration Integration Summit. More than 1,500 people attended the summit, joined by 50 of Illinois’s most powerful elected officials and dignitaries, including Governor Pat Quinn. Also in attendance were U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, U.S. Representatives Luis Gutierrez, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, Illinois Senate President John Cullerton, and Senate Republican Caucus Chair Senator Matt Murphy.



Governor Pat Quinn speaks during ICIRR Summit.

During the summit, ICIRR and the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), alongside others, launched “**UNITING AMERICA**” to encourage volunteerism and community dialogue between Illinois’s new Americans and their new neighbors. **UNITING AMERICA** is a partnership with DHS, the Serve Illinois Commission, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and the J.M. Kaplan Fund. ICIRR also announced its 2012 goals to assist 10,000 legal immigrants become citizens in Illinois through the New Americans Initiative Citizenship Campaign (NAI). NAI, a partnership between ICIRR and DHS, is an integrated citizenship campaign that uses grassroots and media outreach in 25 languages to provide free legal screenings, application processing, and referrals for English and citizenship test preparation services to immigrants throughout Illinois. In the last seven years, NAI has held 1,195 citizenship workshops and has directly assisted over 56,458 immigrants to become U.S. citizens in Illinois through the work of 31 NAI partner organizations throughout Illinois and the work of over 19,000 volunteers.

### **ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATES WITH WALGREENS**

During a meeting co-hosted by the Mayor for the City of Chicago and the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Federal, State, and Local government agencies; national corporations; non-profits; and faith-based groups met to forge a partnership to help people in the spirit of President Obama’s call for “independent responsibility and community service.”

In that mode of “neighbor helping neighbor,” vendors offered to support organizations and people in communities in many different ways. Walgreens is one organization that offered to provide free flu shot vouchers to eligible Illinois Department of Human Services customers, including those who did not have health-care insurance.

Walgreens pharmacists were available to administer flu shots at seven DHS Family Community Resource Centers around the Chicagoland area. Many people received flu shots within their local communities on selected days. Flu shots were offered to anyone 14-years-of-age or older per protocol within the State of Illinois at no out-of-pocket cost for Medicare Part B. Individuals who did not have insurance coverage for a flu shot and those who could not afford to pay were also provided the shot.

Looking ahead to next season, Walgreens and DHS plan to continue to explore ways in which they can work together to protect more people from influenza while positively impacting immunization rates.

## 19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DHS CAREER FAIR FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Twenty-five employers and more than 250 participants turned out for the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Career Fair for People with Disabilities held Friday, February 24, 2012 at the iWireless Center in Moline. The free event featured a job search workshop and resume reviews by area professionals.



The event also featured employers and agencies from the Quad-Cities area. People with disabilities were able to dialogue with the employers and find out pertinent job search information such as; types of jobs, skills and qualifications, how to apply, resume assistance, and where to apply. The employers were primarily from the Quad-Cities Corporate Partners, a group of employers dedicated to advocating for the employment of people with disabilities. The agencies are members of the Quad-Cities Disability Network. Participants came from agencies as well as the general public.

“Not all people with disabilities are represented by agencies,” stated Tom Lowery of the Illinois Department of Human Services - Division of Rehabilitation Services. “The public still makes up the overwhelming number of people with disabilities in the area.” By attending the Career Fair, individuals are not only able to meet with area employers, but are also able to meet agency staff who will inform participants of the services that they offer. High school students from six counties in Illinois and Iowa also participated in the Career Fair.

Sponsors of the event included the Quad-Cities Corporate Business Partners, Quad-Cities Disability Employment Network, the iWireless Center, the Argus-Dispatch Newspapers, and the Illinois Department of Human Services - Division of Rehabilitation Services. For more information on DHS/DRS services in the Quad Cities, contact [Tom Lowery](#) via email or by calling (309) 786-5831.

## DHS DIRECTOR MODERATES IAACOMA ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

The Illinois Department of Human Services’ Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs Director and the Illinois Association of Agencies and Community Organizations for Migrant Advocacy (IAACOMA) Vice-President Ms. Nelida Smyser-De Leon, moderated a roundtable discussion of nearly 20 panelists designed to bring together agricultural employers, farm workers, advocates, service providers, government agencies, community members, and other stakeholders to discuss farming in Illinois. Among the 60 participants in attendance, other topics of concern and discussion included: safety in the workplace, housing needs and availability, health and wellness, agricultural workers rights, recruitment, access to community resources, and job related incidents faced by workers and employers.

Founded in 1977, IAACOMA is dedicated to advocating for migrant and seasonal farm workers and other under-served and under-represented rural and downstate Latinos and/or immigrant communities.

## OTHER HAPPENINGS AT THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES:

### DHS PARTICIPATES IN CITIZEN WORKSHOP IN SUMMIT ILLINOIS



Pictured from left: OHLA Director Ms. Nelida Smyser-De Leon, Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez, Commissioner Jesus “Chuy” Garcia, HFS Deputy Director Peter Vina, and DRS Assistant Director Francisco Alvarado.

The Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs (OHLA) recently attended a Citizenship Workshop at St. Blase Church in Summit, Illinois hosted by Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez and Cook County Commissioner Jesus “Chuy” Garcia.

Congressman Gutierrez and Cook County Commissioner Garcia both acknowledged the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) for their leadership with the New Americans Initiative and their partnership with the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights to help individuals and families become citizens. Many families were pleased to see our commitment in servicing the community at-large on Human Services delivery issues in English and Spanish.

According to the recent census report, in the past 10 years, the number of registered Latino voters has increased by 45 percent; this represents the largest increase of any ethnic group. Latino population gains translate into economic and political gains for the rest of the state. However, many of our Latino families are not informed about the citizenship process and or have had bad experiences dealing with immigration attorneys.

Congressman Gutierrez and Cook County Commissioner Garcia are both leading this fight by having state agencies such as DHS, our providers, ICIRR, and partners present and active within these communities to educate, translate and lead many families towards the path to citizenship.

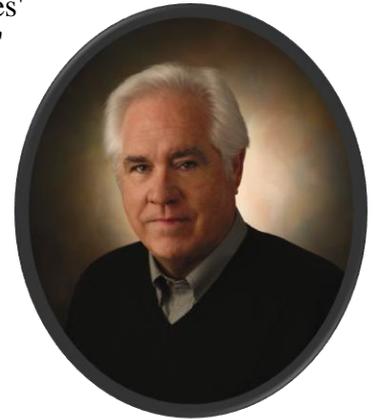
## **DHS PRESENTS OUTSTANDING AUDIOLOGY AWARD TO DR. ROBERT MOSS**

A Quincy doctor has been honored with the Department of Human Services' Division of Rehabilitation Services (DHS/DRS) "Outstanding Audiology Award." The award was presented by Robert Griffith of DRS' Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit (SDHH) to Dr. Robert Moss, Audiologist and owner of Moss Hearing Center in Quincy. The award recognizes outstanding service to customers of DRS, and was presented at the 19th annual Illinois Academy of Audiology Convention held in Chicago earlier this year.

Dr. Moss is the 9th recipient of the Award and has been a DRS vendor since 1996. He has a well established reputation in the Quincy community and with DRS. Recipients are chosen for the excellent service they provide to DRS customers who are deaf or hard of hearing, and also based on the feedback DRS receives from their customers. Dr. Moss always goes the extra mile for his customers and receives very positive reviews from DRS customers.

Examples of his integrity include working with a DRS customer who was born deaf with almost no usable hearing. Dr. Moss was able to provide hearing aids for the customer that allowed him to hear more sound than ever before, and resulted in the customer becoming employed.

Dr. Moss was able to assist another DRS customer who had significant hearing loss that worked as a security guard and whose job depended on what hearing he had. Again, Dr. Moss provided hearing aids that allowed more amplification to the customer. Those hearing aids have made a world of difference for the customer, and he is now going to school to become a Registered Nurse.



Dr. Robert Moss

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