

**Presentation to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee
on Health and Human Services
February 14, 2012**

**Status Report: Consolidation of the Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation,
Services for the Blind and Deaf & Hard of Hearing within the
Department of Health and Human Services**

Presenter: Maria Spaulding, Deputy Secretary for Long-Term Care and Family Services

Executive Order #85. "The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Services for the Blind and Division for Deaf & Hard of Hearing are hereby consolidated into the Division of Blind, Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Rehabilitation Services. All references to the "Division of Vocational Rehabilitation," the "Division of Services for the Blind," or "the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing" are hereby deleted and replaced with the "Division of Blind, Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Rehabilitation Services." This Executive Order shall not affect any contract, agreement or other obligation of or obligation owed to the former Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the former Division of Services for the Blind, or the former Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Where the former Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the former Division of Services for the Blind or the former Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is referred to by law or by contract or other document, the referenced is hereby deemed to apply to the Division of Blind, Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Rehabilitation Services.

Overall Comments

- The Blind Services responsibilities include Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living and the Medical Eye Care Program.
- The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services include client services, and services to agencies and organizations to identify barriers to employment. The Division serves as a resource and linkage to programs and services all across North Carolina.
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services include vocational rehabilitation, independent living and assistive technology, technical assistance, training, demonstrations, equipment loan and information and referral.
- All services prevent or mitigate the need for out of home placement by allowing individuals with identified needs to remain in their residence of choice and/or least restrictive setting.

Current Consolidated Activities

- Administrative functions including human resources, budget management, management of properties and leases, IT support, business operations have already been consolidated.
- Continued communication with stakeholders, partners and consumers.
- Vocational Rehabilitation has assumed the contract processing for Blind Services.

Next Steps

- Consolidate database management system implementation effective early 2013.
- Analysis of programmatic functions (such as independent living, employment services and assistive technology) to determine specific areas of consolidation/merger.
- Review of programs in conjunction with DHHS Excels initiative and departmental goal to build a coordinated system of care leading to better person-centered outcomes.

Status Report: Consolidation of Office of Housing and Homelessness and Office of Long Term Services and Supports into the Division of Aging and Adult Services

Presenter: Maria Spaulding, Deputy Secretary for Long-Term Care and Family Services

Executive Order No. 85: *“The Office of Long-Term Care Services and Supports and the Office of Housing and Homelessness are hereby consolidated into the Division of Aging and Adult Services. All references to the ‘Office of Long-Term Care Services and Supports’ or the ‘Office of Housing and Homelessness’ are hereby deleted and replaced with the ‘Division of Aging and Adult Services.’ This Executive Order shall not affect any contract, agreement or other obligation of or obligation owed to the former Office of Long-Term Care Services and Supports or the former Office of Housing and Homelessness. Where the former Office of Long-Term Care Services and Supports or the former Office of Housing and Homelessness is referred to by law or by a contract or other document, the reference is hereby deemed to apply to the Division of Aging and Adult Services.”*

Overall Comments

- The Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) quickly, efficiently and effectively transitioned the two former Offices of Housing and Homelessness and Long Term Services and Supports into its organization.
- DAAS integrated the former Office of Housing and Homelessness a unit within its existing Adult Services Section to strengthen coordination with its Special Assistance

unit and promote closer working relationships with local departments of social services. Subsequent to Executive Order No. 85, DHHS also moved responsibility for the Emergency Shelter Grant (formerly in the Office of Economic Opportunity) to DAAS and its Housing and Homelessness unit.

- DAAS also integrated the former Office of Long Term Services and Supports into its existing Planning, Budget and System Supports Section, where affected staff members have continued to focus on such areas as supporting the emerging Community Resource Connections for Aging and Disabilities, promoting person-centered hospital discharge planning and other transitional care, and assisting with direct care workforce initiatives. Recently, DAAS joined with the NC Hospital Association, the Carolinas Center for Medical Excellence, and Community Care of NC in hosting a Partnership for Patients Summit in Greensboro attended by about 300 health and human service professionals, including physicians and hospital workers.
- DAAS quickly communicated these organizational changes to the many stakeholders, including our federal partners—citing the *DHHS Excels* emphasis that “we need to stop serving ‘pieces of people’ and focus on the whole person,” through the sharing of information, ideas and resources.
- Feedback from stakeholders has been positive.
- With the consolidation of these two offices into DAAS, the coordination in such areas as policy and resource development, program planning and oversight, communications, information systems, administrative functions, and fiscal management and monitoring has been strengthened. For example, DAAS has identified new opportunities for collaboration between the Housing and Homelessness unit and work with county DSSs, Senior Centers, and Area Agencies on Aging.
- As stipulated in Executive Order No. 85, all existing contracts and agreements have been honored and there has been no disruption in payments, services or service arrangements. Still, DAAS has examined and continues to examine ways to strengthen the affected areas of business.
- DAAS has been able to provide required reports (e.g., federal) and other documentation in a timely manner.
- There has been no loss or addition of staff positions but there have been some personnel changes and realigned responsibilities.

- The consolidation of these two former offices and their interests and areas of responsibility into DAAS is consistent with the history and work of DAAS, wherein DAAS has respected and built upon the affected offices' primary purposes and working relationships. In September 2003, the then Division of Aging merged with Adult Services (formerly in the Division of Social Services) to form the Division of Aging and Adult Services. This resulted in DAAS administering services and supports for adults 18 and older—largely through its work with county departments of social services—which complemented well its ongoing work with Area Agencies on Aging and the more than 400 local public and private providers of aging services. DAAS has had a long commitment to working with North Carolinians of all ages. For example, DAAS is leading efforts for the department, through its Family Caregiver Support Program and other means to develop lifespan respite opportunities, address the issues of grandparents raising grandchildren, and help individuals and families remain as independent as possible in the community.