

Department of Human Services State Documents

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Finding aid written in English

Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of the State Library

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607 South Drive
Harrisburg, PA, 17120

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Summary Information

Repository: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of the State Library

Creator: Pennsylvania. Department of Human Services

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Date: Majority of material found within 2019 - Present

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Scope and Contents

The Department of Human Services (DHS) administers a vast array of human-service programs, promotes local social services and planning activities, distributes federal and state funds to local agencies, and develops programs to respond to the human service needs of the Commonwealth's residents. Programs provide basic needs including cash, food, shelter, health care, heat, and job-funding assistance for individuals and families. The Department also provides treatment, care, and support services in state-operated facilities and in the community for people with mental illness and developmental disabilities as well as children and families.

The publications of the Department of Human Services contain strategic plans and educational guides. Selected topics from these publications include intellectual disability and child care. The bulk of the current material is dated from 2019 to present.

Biographical / Historical

The first Department of Welfare was established by the Act of May 25, 1921 (P.L. 1144). This legislation drew together in one agency activities previously performed by the Board of Public Charities, the Commission of Lunacy, the Prison Labor Commission, and others. The Administrative Code of 1929 further defined the powers of the new department. Acts of June 24, 1937 (P.L. 2003 and P.L. 2015) established a Department of Public Assistance and centralized relief and money distribution elements of state government. These acts also established the 67 county boards of assistance. The Act of July 29, 1953 (P.L. 1428) transferred supervision of penal and correctional institutions from the Department of Welfare to the Department of Justice. The former departments of Welfare and Public Assistance became the Department of Public Welfare on June 1, 1958, as authorized by the Act of July 13, 1957 (P.L. 852). Specialized institutions for juvenile offenders were established by the Act of November 21, 1959 (P.L. 1579). Also, restoration centers for older people were authorized by the Acts of June 19, 1964 (Special Session, P.L. 75 and 77). The legislative base for the Department's programs for people with mental illness and mental retardation was greatly expanded and codified by the Act of October 20, 1966 (Third Special Session, P.L. 96). All existing public welfare laws were consolidated and codified in the Public Welfare Code and Act of June 13, 1967 (P.L. 31), which has largely become the legal base of the Department's operation. On September 24, 2014, House Bill 993 officially changed the name of the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) to the Department of Human Services.

Legacy Agency Names and Related Agencies

Department of Welfare (incorporated agency), Department of Public Assistance (incorporated agency),
Department of Public Welfare (former name)

Other Finding Aids

For more information concerning the records of the Department of Human Services at the Pennsylvania State Archives, please visit:

<https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/pennsylvania-state-archives/permalink.html?key=class541>.

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Controlled Access Headings

- Pennsylvania Politics and government
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- Public welfare--U.S. states
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