

MDHS is committed to developing and implementing new and innovative policies and strategies, which will improve the quality of life and economic status of all Mississippians. To achieve this, MDHS is focusing on five major goals for 2001: the improvement of customer service; promotion of economic independence for TANF families; improvement in the overall effectiveness of Agency programs; improvement of internal and external communications; and improvement of MDHS image through community outreach and internal team building.

The Senate unanimously confirmed Janice Broome Brooks as Executive Director during this legislative session. Since her appointment by Governor Musgrove in December, Mrs. Brooks has provided a new sense of purpose and direction for MDHS, by virtue of both her leadership qualities and tireless work ethic.

Several important bills came out of the recently concluded session. Among them were statutes prohibiting and prescribing criminal penalties for impersonating a MDHS social worker; clarifying disclosure requirements of records on the death of children in MDHS custody, and requiring written reports on parents for termination of parental rights proceedings for children in custody.

In March we announced, a child care initiative which will allocate an additional \$19.5 million dollars for quality, affordable child care services to 12,700 additional families, and the provision of financial assistance to help pay the cost of utility bills to low-income families, the elderly and disabled, and families with small children. We strive to build strong families and make more Mississippians self-reliant.

MDHS Division of Youth Services will be recognized for its innovative Adolescent Offender Program (AOP) at the 2001 Southern Innovator's Fair in June.