

## **Commitment To Outcomes**

The Department of Family and Support Services' (DFSS) commitment to outcomes (also known as the strategic framework) represents a transition to a more results-oriented and data-driven approach to delivering services – one that moves the department beyond measuring how many people receive services (quantity), to focus on how Chicagoans leave better off after receiving services (quality and impact).

The commitment to outcomes consists of a refreshed mission, priorities, and goals, along with a plan for how DFSS will measure, report on, and review them in the years to come; use them to make decisions; and drive greater collaboration within DFSS.

### **DFSS Refreshed Mission**

Working with community partners, we connect Chicago residents and families to resources that build stability, support their well-being, and empower them to thrive.

### **DFSS Priorities**

- *Deliver* and support high quality, innovative, and comprehensive services that empower clients to thrive
- *Collaborate* with community partners, sister agencies, and public officials on programs and policies that improve Chicagoan's lives and advance systemic change
- *Inform* the public of resources available to them through DFSS and its community partners
- *Steward* DFSS' resources responsibly and effectively

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Commitment To Outcomes?**

The commitment to outcomes consists of a refreshed mission, with priorities and goals that define the primary areas of focus that help DFSS advance its mission. It also provides approaches for how DFSS will use its mission, priorities, and goals to:

- measure, report on, and refresh outcome goals in the years to come
- make decisions and drive greater collaboration within the department

This is different than a Strategic Plan, which typically shares detailed strategies an organization will implement in the short-term (3-5 years). In contrast, DFSS is laying the foundation for how it will operate in the long-term and developing fundamental principles to guide decision-making.

## **Why is DFSS taking this approach?**

People generally come to DFSS when they are experiencing a difficult situation. The efforts of DFSS staff and its partners are critical, as they work to ensure that those who receive services leave stronger than when they arrived. DFSS is transitioning to an even more outcome-oriented model that focuses on *how many people leave better off after receiving DFSS' services, versus how many people come through the door.*

Using data to guide decision-making and drive outcomes is a shift happening in human and social services nationally, and more and more funders are advocating for this approach. DFSS is at the forefront of this shift, building on best practices and lessons learned from around the country. With a widening gap between the amount of services needed and the funding available to support them, DFSS must prepare for a future where it achieves more with less. The commitment to outcomes will enable DFSS to use its funds more effectively by better targeting which funding it pursues, programs it supports, and collaborations it takes on, while at the same time seeking to achieve the best outcomes for program participants.

## **How was the Commitment To Outcomes developed?**

The commitment to outcomes was developed through a comprehensive process that involved:

- In-depth interviews with DFSS staff and partner organizations
- Best practice research and interviews with human service agencies across the country
- Numerous workshops with DFSS senior staff and representatives from all divisions
- Workshops with a cross-section of DFSS' most important stakeholders, including delegate agencies, advisory councils, partner organizations, funders, union representation, the Mayor's Office, and the Office of Budget and Management

This process was facilitated by the [Civic Consulting Alliance](#), a local non-profit organization that provides pro bono consulting to help public officials solve the region's most pressing challenges.

## **How will the Commitment To Outcomes affect contracts and programs?**

The large majority of DFSS' work is achieved through partnerships with our delegate agencies, and outcome goals must be properly integrated into the department's requests for proposals (RFPs) and contracts if we are to make progress in achieving them.

DFSS is currently receiving technical assistance from the [Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab](#) on implementing an outcomes-driven approach to contracting. Specifically, we are focused on creating RFPs and contracts that:

- Elevate department and program priorities, outcome goals, and metrics in order to give applicants a clear understanding of the problems DFSS seeks to address
- Clearly identify the target population and its needs so that service providers can focus on serving those Chicagoans that are a priority for DFSS
- Provide more flexibility for service providers to contribute evidence-based, innovative ideas about how to serve the target population and implement the intended program
- Include selection criteria and application questions focused on results and best practices so that DFSS has the information necessary to choose service providers that are most likely to help achieve the program's goals

DFSS is also piloting active contract management techniques like reviewing real-time performance data with delegates to monitor progress, swiftly detect issues, and make course corrections.

This is a work in progress. DFSS doesn't have all the answers yet, but has intentionally decided to be transparent and engage staff and stakeholders early on so that shaping it can be a community effort.

If you have further questions about this please email [dfss@cityofchicago.org](mailto:dfss@cityofchicago.org).



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