



May, 2012

Dear stakeholder:

It's hard to believe that already May is here. April was filled with important initiatives, such as our recognition of [Autism Awareness Month](#) and [Alcohol Awareness Month](#). In addition, the Department signed a [reciprocal agreement](#) with the Dominican Republic to enforce Child Support orders, the Governor signed an Executive Order creating the [Interagency Task Force to End Homelessness](#) and he announced New Jersey's designation as an [Employment First](#) state. This Administration has made a strong commitment to empower New Jersey's residents in a manner that enhances quality of life, independence and productivity.

I hope you're able to monitor our DHS [Facebook](#) page. On it we're able to share relevant news articles, photos and videos highlighting the programs and services we provide. In April, we posted videos about [Employment First](#), [Child Support](#) and our involvement in the [Bubbles4Autism](#) campaign, which we did at the State House with more than 100 state workers' children, who were participating in Bring Your Child to Work Day.

This month will be equally busy. We will be recognizing [Mental Health Awareness Month](#) by issuing an op-ed about the advances in treatment and recovery options in our state psychiatric hospitals and community based agencies. We also will do a site visit to one of our providers of inpatient and outpatient mental health services to talk with staff about their treatment model and how they successfully serves consumers.

May also is [Better Hearing and Speech Month](#). In New Jersey, it is estimated that more than 850,000 children and adults are hard of hearing. In fact, among the generations that grew up with walkmans, mp3 players and cell phones, doctors are seeing an increased number of patients in their twenties and thirties with hearing loss. I plan to tour one of the five Assistive Technology Demonstration Centers operated by DHS' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Over the past year, 700 telecommunication and home safety devices were distributed to eligible families.

And, this month, the Teen Media awards will be distributed to some lucky high school students who participated in our Division of Family Development's annual contest to draw or paint a vignette that underscores the importance of parental involvement in children's lives. The winning artwork is put on display for a week at the State House and featured in the following year's Child Support calendar. This year's calendar is [online](#) and shows the thoughtfulness and wisdom of these talented students.

Among our divisions, there are about 50 stakeholder meetings this month. I'm sure I'll see some of you along the way.

Regards,

Jennifer Velez