



News Release

Timothy Jeffries, Director

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DES Announces Innovative New Initiatives for 2016

PHOENIX – The Department of Economic Security is hitting the ground running in the New Year with multiple internal and external projects to provide critical services to our clients more efficiently. Upcoming projects include: on-going LEAN Transformation initiatives to ensure efficiencies; job training and employment support for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents; Employment Services restructure to focus on employers, job seekers and colleagues; and seamlessly engaging with Arizona social services sister agencies to maximize the impact for the poor.

“We must move faster as an agency and community to serve those in need,” said Director Tim Jeffries. “**Our NEW DES** must never accept mediocrity in our noble service. We need to always work hard, make a difference to foster gratitude, humility and kindness.”

Through collaboration with the Governor’s Office of Transformation and other State agencies, the Department is focused on utilizing Lean principles to streamline internal processes and reduce wasteful spending. DES is working on several initiatives, which will help promote faster and more secure client services. For example, by utilizing the LEAN principles, the Department is reviewing and updating procedures at all DES Call Centers. The goal of this project is to reduce the average wait time and call time, while still providing accurate information, and high quality customer service.

DES is actively implementing an action plan to address and support 32,000 Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) in Maricopa, Pima and Yavapai Counties who must work to find work. On January 1, new requirements that affect a specific group of individuals receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), (formerly food stamps), benefits went into effect. The change requires any Able-bodied Adult without Dependents (ABAWDs) who receives SNAP services to be limited to three months of SNAP benefits during a 36-month period, unless they meet the federal ABAWD work requirements, or a federally allowable exemption. Able-bodied Adults without Dependents, are adults between the ages of 18 and 49 who are able to work and do not have dependent children to support.

“Working and becoming self-sufficient allows someone to improve their financial position, while also providing them with a sense of accomplishment and dignity,” said Jeffries. “The Department of Economic Security is committed to assisting those individuals who would like to work toward a better future.”

DES is working with local community partners to provide augmented employment and training services. Additionally, DES is partnering with local labor leaders to develop opportunities for employment for all Arizonans, including the ABAWD population.

In order to prepare the Department to meet the Governor's vision of quality economic opportunities, the Department is beginning a major re-organization of the Division of Employment and Rehabilitation Services (DERS).

As the DES Division with a primary focus on helping individuals gain and sustain employment, a key element of economic self-sufficiency, the Division of Employment and Rehabilitative Services (DERS) has a critical role in helping Arizonans and employers realize the Governor's vision. The Division will integrate the myriad of workforce programs into a single comprehensive system. This will better serve and support all job seekers, including veterans, youth, individuals with disabilities and individuals with barriers to employment. The three new main areas of focus include: **Employers, Job Seekers, and Colleagues.**

DES is also in the preliminary stages of collaboration with several state agencies to create programs that will provide better access to services for all clients. Agencies include: the Arizona Department of Corrections, the Department of Child Safety, the Arizona Department of Veterans Services, the Department of Health, the Department of Housing, and the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System. More details will be forthcoming as collaboration continues.

"One of our goals this year is to engage other Arizona state agencies in order to maximize the services and impact we can have as we serve the poor and vulnerable citizens of Arizona," said Director Jeffries.

The Department also plans on continuing some successful initiatives from 2015. Last year, the Department extended office hours at several locations to assist clients during the extreme summer heat. Due to the positive feedback received, the Department plans to make the extended hours permanent in several more locations.

"Many of our clients have difficulty making it into offices because of their work schedules," said Director Jeffries. "The additional hours will allow them to have their needs met without having to take time away from their jobs."

"Our focus areas remain with **People, Priorities, Planning and Performance!**" said Director Jeffries. "Among the many strengths, our colleagues' ability to focus upon our beautiful, broken and treasured clients, will ensure **Our NEW DES** is moving in the right direction."

The Department plans to release more information throughout the year as new initiatives develop.

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