



News Release

Timothy Jeffries, Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 19, 2015

MEDIA CONTACT
Tasya Peterson
602-542-4296
TasyaPeterson@azdes.gov

DES Director Timothy Jeffries serves as panelist for Heritage Foundation 2015 Antipoverty Forum

What States are doing to reform welfare now

PHOENIX – Director Timothy Jeffries today served as a panelist for the 2015 Antipoverty Forum in Washington, D.C. The event was sponsored by The Heritage Foundation. Joining Director Jeffries on the panel were Tarren Bragdon, President and Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for Government Accountability (FGA) and The Honorable Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner, Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

“I have great respect for The Heritage Foundation, so I was humbled by the invitation to serve as a panelist for this prestigious organization,” said Director Timothy Jeffries. “This was a great opportunity to discuss welfare reform and what Arizona is doing to focus on jobs and growing the economy. It was an honor and a privilege to serve alongside two well-respected individuals.”

Listed below are excerpts from Director Jeffries’ discussion:

“Quoting blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, ‘We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty.’”

“Clients served in the more than 115 DES lobbies statewide come to the Department in critical need of services for themselves and their children. Often times, while waiting to be served, their names are yelled across the lobbies. Earlier this year, I directed DES colleagues to cease and desist the practice of yelling and address people in a kind, professional, gentle manner.

“Names are sacred in nature and we should be caring for these beautiful people with kindness, dignity and respect. A name is powerful. In all our service centers, we can never yell the name of a client. Because more often than not, those clients have had their name yelled for all the wrong reasons. Remember: Little things have **huge** power.”

“The biggest development regarding welfare reform in Arizona has been a reduction to the TANF benefit limit from 24 months to 12 months, which will go into effect in July 2016. The Department is actively working with the participants in the TANF program who will be immediately impacted by this reduction. There are approximately 1,600 families who will be

impacted. We will be providing targeted services to assist these families in becoming job ready and finding employment.

“This is a short timeframe for families and because many families will have more than one disruption, we don’t want families using all 12 months in one episode, if possible. So in addition to the more focused and robust employment activities, we will also be ensuring that we minimize the time spent waiting for an eligibility determination. Getting eligibility determination done faster and smoother will allow them to get into the work programs sooner and begin the transition into self-sufficiency.”

Mr. Bragdon is a nationally recognized expert on health reform issues. Commissioner Mayhew provides leadership, guidance and policy direction to the largest agency in state government, with an annual budget of over \$3.4 billion and more than 3,400 employees.

Each year, the Antipoverty Forum gathers researchers, national and state policy leaders, expert practitioners, communicators, and philanthropists seeking to help more Americans overcome poverty. This year’s program highlights state initiatives, what’s working in private initiatives to promote work, and the outlook for reforming federal welfare programs as the 20th anniversary of the 1996 welfare reform milestone approaches.

###