



Michael P. Starkowski
Commissioner
Connecticut Department of Social Services

Professional Biography

Governor M. Jodi Rell administered the oath of office to Michael P. Starkowski as Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Social Services on March 27, 2007, following General Assembly's confirmation of the career public servant to administer the 2,100-staff, \$5 billion health and human services agency.

A leading authority on public financing of health care for children, elders and citizens with disabilities, Commissioner Starkowski rose through the ranks from accounting trainee to agency head over a 33-year career in state government service.

The Department of Social Services delivers a wide variety of services to children, families, adults, people with disabilities and the elderly, including health care, child care, child support enforcement, rehabilitation and independent living services, energy assistance, food and nutrition aid, and program grants. In the health coverage area, the department provides services to nearly 540,000 Connecticut residents of all ages.

Mr. Starkowski was a key advisor to Governor Rell in the 2008 creation of the Charter Oak Health Plan for uninsured adults aged 19 through 64. In this ground-breaking initiative, the Commissioner supported the Governor in the

design and details of the benefit package; negotiated contracts with the three participating managed care organizations; and is overseeing the full rollout of the program.

Also in 2008, Mr. Starkowski worked to complete successful negotiations and settlement with advocates who brought suit regarding access to dental care for children enrolled in HUSKY. The results of the settlement added dollars to the fee schedule for participating dentists and 'carved out' dental services to unify practitioner credentialing, customer service, claims processing, and reporting and administrative functions.

As a policymaker, Mr. Starkowski was also a leader in the creation and 1998 implementation of Connecticut's Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth (HUSKY) Plan, which continues to be an exemplary health coverage program, serving over 345,000 Connecticut residents. Designed to bring health insurance to all of Connecticut's children up to age 19 at either no cost or low cost to parents/guardians, the HUSKY Plan was cited by the Children's Defense Fund as one of the top three children's health programs in the nation. For his work in this area, Mr. Starkowski received the Excellence in Children's Policymaking Award from the Connecticut Children's Medical Center and the Mohegan Tribal Nation in 1998.

As a hands-on manager throughout his career, the Commissioner has been instrumental in developing such varied initiatives as Medicaid managed care, digital imaging for identification of clients, electronic benefits transfer, and an automated eligibility verification system. During his tenure as Deputy Social Services Commissioner from 1993 to 2007, he was also active in major state negotiations such as the *CHA vs. O'Neill* settlement regarding hospital rates, Federally-Qualified Health Center reimbursement issues, Medicaid managed care contracts, the managed care enrollment broker contract, non-emergency transportation contracts, the child care administration contract, and resolution of nursing home financing and operational issues.

In addition, Mr. Starkowski managed the development of pharmaceutical cost-containment initiatives such as prior authorization, generic substitution and a preferred drug list, while developing service initiatives to expand the ConnPACE program that provides access to, and substantial payment for, pharmaceuticals for the elderly and people with disabilities. In 2005, Governor Rell assigned him responsibility to coordinate the design,

integration and implementation of benefits provided by state pharmaceutical programs, in conjunction with the new Medicare Part D drug benefit.

Also in 2005, Governor Rell appointed Mr. Starkowski to co-chair the state's response in assisting victims of Hurricane Katrina, with Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Commissioner James M. Thomas.

In 2006, Mr. Starkowski received an award from the Connecticut Association of Optometrists for outstanding leadership in ensuring that low-income citizens of Connecticut receive quality eye care and vision services. He also received the Connecticut Pharmacists Association Special Recognition Award for his outstanding commitment to the profession of pharmacy. The first non-pharmacist to receive the award, Mr. Starkowski was recognized for his efforts in developing creative solutions and engaging advocates, pharmacists, health care providers and the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy in a partnership to successfully implement Medicare Part D for Connecticut's seniors and citizens with disabilities.

Michael Starkowski began his career in the original Department of Social Services, which he joined upon graduation from Central Connecticut State University with a bachelor's degree in accounting in 1974. When the agency split into the Departments of Income Maintenance and Human Resources (DHR) in 1979, he was selected to be the new Director of Administration at DHR. He was responsible for fiscal management of federal and state resources that funded programs operated primarily by non-profit and municipal human service organizations.

A key manager in implementing the merger of the Departments of Human Resources, Income Maintenance and Aging in 1993, Mr. Starkowski was appointed Acting Deputy Commissioner of Administration in the new Department of Social Services, overseeing a consolidated budget of over \$3 billion at the time. He was later appointed to full Deputy Commissioner of Administration, overseeing medical care administration, management information systems, quality assurance, human resources, contracts administration, and budget and fiscal analysis.

Throughout his 33-year career in government service, Commissioner Starkowski has worked to ensure careful management of public dollars

while maximizing effective and creative delivery of human services throughout Connecticut.

Personal

Born and raised in Hartford, the Commissioner resides in Rocky Hill with his wife, Karen. The couple raised two daughters and have a grandson and two granddaughters. Mr. Starkowski is an avid UConn basketball fan and memorabilia collector, as anyone who has visited his Hartford office can attest.

In support of individuals with serious and immediate medical needs, Mr. Starkowski is a longtime blood donor in the American Red Cross Apheresis Program. He is on call to donate blood in a two-hour process which results in greatly reduced chances of an immune system reaction by the patient to the transfusion, especially assisting bone marrow transplant, cancer and leukemia patients whose immune systems are already compromised. The Red Cross has cited Mr. Starkowski for his 150th apheresis donation.

Updated October 2008

Further information:

David.dearborn@ct.gov; 860-424-5024