



Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

DFPS News Release

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hank Whitman Steps Down as DFPS Commissioner

Henry L. “Hank” Whitman Jr., who led the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) through a period of unprecedented change while distinctly improving investigations and services for abused and neglected children, today announced he is stepping down from state service on June 30.

“Commissioner Whitman’s long-standing commitment to putting the needs of children and families first helped create a safer future for Texas,” said Governor Greg Abbott. “Hank made fundamental changes to DFPS that resulted in better outcomes for children, and he played an instrumental role in the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services’ transition into its own agency. Because of his leadership, DFPS is left better than he found it, and I extend my sincerest gratitude for his decades of dedicated service to the state of Texas.”

When he started the job in 2016, Commissioner Whitman walked into DFPS headquarters with the stark memories of countless child abuse and homicide investigations he led in a 33-year law enforcement career that culminated as Chief of the Texas Rangers.

“That was my fuel, and it gave me the energy to try and do this job the right way,” Whitman said. “Once I was here and found out the caliber of employees who were working on the front lines, all the way up to the executives in Austin, I knew we could get the agency turned around and headed in the right direction.”

Among the agency’s highlights while he was commissioner:

- With Governor Abbott and the Legislature’s support, stabilizing the front-line workforce with an emphasis on adequate compensation, supervisory training, and a revamped Special Investigator program;

- Transforming the state's foster care model from Austin-based to Community-based Care, with single master foster care contractors responsible for each geographic area;
- Directing DFPS as it became a stand-alone state agency, becoming the first agency leader nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate;
- With aid from Governor Abbott, becoming a solid participant in Texas' ever-growing battles against human/sex trafficking.

Commissioner Whitman said he is proudest of the time he was able to spend with individual caseworkers in his now legendary ride-alongs, including those from Adult Protective Services (APS). No one in the agency ever knew where he would turn up; he would just appear at a DFPS office in El Paso, or Port Arthur, or Laredo, introduce himself to a caseworker, and go along for the day.

"I've testified to it at the Legislature, and said it many times," Whitman said. "These caseworker jobs at DFPS are the toughest jobs I know. There are lives being saved – and I mean literally – every single day. I am the proudest I have ever been in my career. I will never forget the people here, what they've done, and what they will continue to do each day when I'm gone."