



*A Message From the Chair*

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Advisory committees were only a part of the Board's focus on developing partnerships with the community. Board members visited regional offices around the state, holding public hearings and seeking a new level of cooperation and communication critical to sound decision-making. They also sought to build relationships with other agencies, elected officials, and media representatives, who share the concerns of the people PRS serves.

An ambitious communication plan was approved by the Board late in the year. It is aimed not only at enhancing the department's efforts towards public education, public awareness and prevention, but also at increasing the accountability and responsiveness of the department, all top priorities of this Board.

Another major focus of the past year was the adoption of revised minimum standards for licensed child-care facilities in Texas, the culmination of four years of research, study, and input from both the public and private sectors. The new standards, which will be phased in over the next two years, include lower child-to-staff ratios, increased requirements for staff training, and prohibition of corporal punishment.

The Board also placed a great deal of emphasis on the needs of our aging population. Current projections indicate that, by the beginning of the next century, demand for Adult Protective Services may outstrip the current demand for Child Protective Services. In order to prepare for the future, the Board began the process of forging a working relationship with the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work to provide strategic forecasting and planning.

Finally, during 1994 the Board adopted a formal process for reviewing existing program policies. Already a significant number of policies have been changed or updated to ensure that they conform to the objectives and values identified in our mission statement. Ultimately, through this

process we are building a consistent and responsive policy framework to guide a unified agency.

Through all of these efforts and in all other policy decisions, the Board has not lost sight of its primary responsibility to protect vulnerable Texans from abuse and neglect. In this pursuit we identified a dual need: to measure not merely the immediate effects of our decisions, but their future impact; and to build an infrastructure with long-range viability and strength.

As I traveled across Texas this year in my role as Board chair, I had an opportunity to meet with staff and community leaders from all parts of the state. Everywhere, I was deeply impressed by the dedication and professionalism of this agency's employees. The Board adopts policy, but it is the hard work and commitment of these men and women who make the vision a reality.

Equally gratifying was the discovery of an astonishing number of citizens in urban and rural areas across Texas dedicated to our clients. We will increase our reliance on the experience, ideas and tenacity they bring to cooperative problem solving. At the same time we will continue to be grateful for the goodwill and benefit they bring to this public trust.

Many of the achievements in the last two years would not have been possible without the Board's generosity of time and spirit. It is not hyperbole to suggest that few people realize the countless hours each member contributes to this department. Board service is more than a responsibility to them, it is a dedication.

There is more to do to protect our children, our elderly, our disabled. In the year to come, the agency will face many challenges. If we continue to build on the foundation established in our first two years and seek to enhance the new spirit of cooperation and trust between the department and its many partners, I believe we can meet the challenge and fulfill the promise inherent in the creation of PRS.



Susan Stahl  
Chair, Texas Board of Protective  
and Regulatory Services

