

Monday, March 24, 2008

HARRISBURG, March 24, 2008 – Dauphin County’s Human Services Department has a new director.

Peter E. Vriens took the reins of the department today. He replaces Sandy Moore, who has taken a position with state Supreme Court Justice Max Baer.

The county Human Services Department includes the Area Agency on Aging, the Children and Youth, the Office of Mental Health/Mental Retardation, and the Drugs and Alcohol department, which has now returned to county control after operating under a private company for several years. The department has more than 110 employees.

Since 1998, Vriens has been the Administrator of Children and Youth for Adams County. He has also been a program administrator for the United Methodist Home for Children in Mechanicsburg. He holds a master’s of social work degree from Temple University and a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Dickinson College.

Vriens hopes to build upon the county’s success with the innovative practice of Family Group Conferencing, eliminate the waiting list for mental retardation services, expand services to the county’s growing aging population, and juggle growing state mandates with declining funding.

“Peter’s greatest strength lies in the fact that he takes a strength-based approach to problem-solving and service delivery,” said Commissioner George Hartwick III, who has primary oversight of the Human Services Department. “He focuses upon what is right, not what is wrong. He also believes in providing human services in an integrated and seamless way in order to provide consistent outcomes for consumers. He will build upon the foundation we have laid for Family Group Conferencing as a driving philosophy and practice governing how we deliver all human services.”

“I have been very impressed by Peter’s intelligence, maturity and management style,” Commissioner Jeff Haste said. “The county and the clients we serve are fortunate to have him leading the departments which serve our most vulnerable citizens.”

“Peter is also dedicated to reducing the number of teens in our juvenile probation system, helping to rebuild families in the county and provide support for troubled teens and families, “ said Commissioner Nick DiFrancesco. “His goals are timely and very relevant to the challenges of today.”