

Karen's Corner



The purpose of my monthly column is to share things with you. In an earnest effort to communicate, that means the ups and downs, the good and the challenging, the grandiose and the down-to-earth. This month my message is personal. It puts into words my appreciation of the formalized opportunity I have to work with all of you to achieve great things together.

On March 8, 2014, my position as Cabinet Secretary was confirmed by the West Virginia Senate. I consider that confirmation to be the height of my professional career, and I am truly humbled by it. To be trusted with the leadership of the Department of Health and Human Resources triggers within me my deepest gratitude. With the nearly six thousand of you who make the journey with me, I am honored to walk on this path.

I have spent nine months with you, and my confirmation offers the opportunity to take a deep breath and focus on our plans for the future of DHHR. As I bring my set of skills and experiences, you each bring yours. Our successes will be those we will achieve together. Together we can, and will, do great things.

I invite you to share my excitement as we sculpt the new, rejuvenated look of our organization.

My travels have kept me in tune to the thinkers within our organization, and trust me, we have many folks out there with great ideas about how to move forward with innovation and purpose. If you have a thought or suggestion, please share it! Our communications office is ready with an open mailbox to hear your ideas and send them to the right place for genuine consideration. Please e-mail your ideas to DHHRCommunications@wv.gov. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks for your partnership in an exciting new chapter for DHHR.

Karen L. Bowling, Cabinet Secretary

What is it that OEMS does?

The mission of the state Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS), based within the Bureau for Public Health is to reduce death and disability by promoting, supporting and enhancing the EMS system. But what does that really mean?

OEMS combines the efforts of public health, public safety and the healthcare systems. It is comprised of four basic components: Medical Direction, Trauma Designation and Categorization, EMS and Communications.

Medical direction is patient case-management, provided via a complex system supporting EMS personnel in the provision of pre-hospital care, both on scene and en route to the receiving hospital.

The Trauma division provides designation and certification to hospitals. There are various levels of trauma designation that ensures patients are transported to the appropriate hospital for the level of care that is needed based on the patients' injuries.

The Division of Trauma, Designation and Categorization is responsible for and carries out the operation and management of the state trauma/emergency care system. This includes trauma center designation, facility categorization, system design and operation, medical review and audit for Performance Improvement.

The EMS division is both a regulatory and advocacy entity that oversees training and certification of EMS personnel, ensures

compliance with legislative code and rule, sets practice standards, inspects approximately 2000 emergency medical vehicles and maintains licensure of EMS agencies. The WV EMS system is considered a leader in the provision of pre-hospital care. Other states often seek assistance and information sharing related to our training and certification processes to improve their own systems.



The Communications division maintains and supports a variety of specialized communication systems including: conventional radio, trunked radio, microwave and broadband. The operation of this system utilizes 130+ tower sites and 12 technicians strategically located throughout the state to ensure continuous operation.

All of this work is supported and maintained by a very hard-working and dedicated staff of approximately 50 people located in the Bureau for Public Health. OEMS represents a system and group of individuals that the State could not do without. We are fortunate to have such an innovative and knowledgeable team supporting our EMS personnel out in the field.

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership based organization that serves as the forum where organizations share knowledge and resources throughout the disaster cycle—preparation, response and recovery—to help disaster survivors and their communities.

National VOAD was founded in 1970 and has a presence in all 50 states, 5 territories and the District of Columbia. Guided by the core principles of the 4Cs cooperation, communication, coordination, and collaboration. -- National VOAD Members provide the leadership that build strong, resilient communities and delivers hope in times of need.

The West Virginia chapter of VOAD (WV VOAD) is chaired by Jenny Gannaway of Mingo County Community and Disaster Center. The Department of Health and Human Resources is represented by Joann Fleming of the Bureau for Behavioral Health & Health Facilities. Joann is an associate member and on the executive team.

WV VOAD played a significant role in responding to the January 2014 MCHM chemical spill in the Elk River. During the crisis, water and other donations distributed through the WV VOAD warehouse were in excess of half a million dollars (\$534,095.00). This includes 347,880 bottles of water, 1,933

hours of volunteer time, donations of diapers, formula, baby wipes, adult wipes, paper products, food, Clorox wipes, hand sanitizer and Coleman Coolers. WV VOAD member agencies and business partners gave over \$1.3 million in grants and donations. These numbers do not include water delivered to the National Guard or any numbers from the American Red Cross.

In response to the Governor's call for citizen donations of water, an additional 210 cases (321 gallons) were dropped off at the WV VOAD warehouse.

A full report of the WV VOAD recovery operations for the chemical spill is available online at <https://wvvoad.communityos.org/cms/node/166>. You can also follow WV VOAD on Facebook to stay up to date on disaster preparedness, planning and response.

West Virginia VOAD is a humanitarian association of independent organizations that may be active in all phases of disaster. Its mission is to identify unmet needs and facilitate efficient, streamlined service delivery to those imperiled or impacted by disaster while eliminating duplication of effort through cooperation in the four phases of disaster: preparation, response, recovery and mitigation.

Employee Spotlight: Donna White



On a spring morning in 1993, Donna prepared her three children, for a walk to the local Human Services Department to apply for welfare benefits. Donna and her husband were full time students at Eastern New Mexico University and struggling financially to meet all of the family's needs.

During this time in the mid-1990s, the political climate was to “end welfare as we know it.” States were given flexibility to experiment with new models of providing assistance to families in need. New Mexico implemented a voluntary program/work activity called Project Forward.

Donna recounts her interview with the welfare eligibility case worker and her experience with the Project Forward program in New Mexico. “We completed the review and she started asking me about my major and what I wanted to do when I graduated. I admit that I was young, immature and very frustrated, so I smarted her off and said, ‘Well, I could do your job.’ My response didn't faze her at all. She just started discussing what was needed to do her job. She told me that her job required a 4 year degree so I was on the right track as a student. I agreed to work with the project and worked 20 hours a week after that meeting as clerical support (volunteer). When I graduated, I was urged to apply for a (economic services) worker position and I got the job.”

Donna moved back to West Virginia following her divorce in 1996 and moved in to her parents' home with her three children. She was soon working for the Division of Rehabilitation Services before transferring to DHHR in 1996 as an Economic Services Worker. She also worked as a Family Support Specialist and a Social Services Supervisor. Donna became a Child Protective Services Supervisor in 2008 in Hancock County, where she currently supervises CPS intake workers.

Donna discussed her love for her work with DHHR. “I love helping people in need. I have been fortunate to have many wonderful supervisors along the way. Pam Adams, who supervised me most of my DHHR career, was a great role model for my style of supervision. She truly values people whether they are her staff or the people we serve. Nancy Exline continues to make positive changes to the Bureau of Children and Families in effort to move us to be the hands and feet of helping people.”

Today, Donna's children are now grown and on their own. She has inspired one of her sons to pursue a career with DHHR. She has since remarried, became a home owner, and recently purchased a new car. Donna explained, “I am a welfare success story. I was floundering in college. I needed Project Forward to focus me on what I needed to do. I love working with people. I could not imagine working at a job where I didn't work with people. My vision is to open a Women's Crisis Center when I retire. I want to offer support to families that don't have the support that I had.”