

A Message from the Commissioner

Welcome to the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living's Annual Report for 2019. This last year has been one of change and opportunity- sometimes those two things present as one and the same! Our mission and vision for the state of Vermont and for all Vermonters remain the same. We strive to make Vermont the best state in which to grow old or live with a disability – with dignity, respect and independence.

In our day-to-day work, this means that our efforts are aimed at building communities which are inclusive, respect what makes each of us unique, celebrate the contributions of each community member, and recognize that we are stronger together than we are apart. Important to DAIL is our work to eliminate the lines that create a paradigm of “us” and “them”. We do that through our work to Reframe Aging, to build a Vermont Community of Practice on Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Developmental Disabilities, to build career pathways for individuals with barriers to work. Our primary mission is to support Vermonters to build the kind of community in which we all want to live, work and age. There is really no “us” and “them” ...just Us.

On a practical level, this year has seen a tremendous amount of work on the scaffolding of our policies and practices. We are revamping regulations in multiple programs, focusing on reforming payment in several program areas and developing training and supports for staff as their roles change. We are committed to being transparent and accountable to Vermonters, and equally committed to ensuring that we build systems that are strong and sustainable into the future.

We believe that we have a duty and an obligation to change with the times. We do this in response to Vermonters whose needs and expectations are constantly evolving. We do this in response to changes in federal regulations. We do this in response to the changing face of Vermont's demographics.

With the many opportunities that we pursue, we recognize that change is hard and creates its own challenges. What remains constant is our vision and our values for all Vermonters and our continued gratitude to our many community partners, the Administration, and the legislature. Our partnerships are critical to ensuring that we can recognize the vision we have for Vermont. We are also grateful for the opportunity to

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be a part of people's lives and to learn from them what we need to know in order to continue to evolve as part of the fabric of their lives.

Finally, I remain personally grateful to the staff of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living. They are extraordinary- committed, passionate, dedicated. Even as some of our most tenured staff retire from a life of public service, new individuals step forward to pick up the work with enthusiasm and skill. I am pleased to report that our team is strong. I am fortunate to work with staff, partners and individuals across the state who build community each and every day. I look forward to what this next decade has to offer us.



Monica Caserta Hutt
DAIL Commissioner