Human Together
It is an exciting time for Denver Human Services! Under the leadership of Executive Director Don Mares, the Denver Human Services strategic vision framework — Human Together — sets forth a plan to support a healthy and connected community where no one gets left behind. Over the next three years, this plan will serve as a guiding document to set priorities for the department. But above all, this document will hold us accountable to the community and to the clients that we serve.

Denver Human Services is the connective tissue that holds together an equitable and healthy city — and we all play a role in supporting a healthy and connected community. The Denver Human Services Value Sphere outlined in this plan creates an opportunity for every department within the City and County of Denver to support the individuals and families of Denver. I encourage everyone to identify ways in which they can support a healthy and connected community where everyone is safe, supported, and well.

It is with great pleasure that we provide our community with a clear vision and a sense of purpose for where the department is heading. Part of being human is knowing that we all need a little help sometimes and that help should be available where and when you need it. No matter where a person is in their life, we want to start where you are and build community connections that build resilience for the future. From housing to food or child support and medical assistance, no matter your need, our team is here to lend support.

Human Together will inform and guide our work at Denver Human Services over the next three years and will help with communicating our mission and vision to employees, clients, and the community. The strategic vision framework will be used as a guiding document when considering strategic partnerships, program planning, strategies, and evaluation and will serve as a tool in our continued development of best practices and employee and client engagement at Denver Human Services. It is a great privilege to provide the community, our clients, and our workforce with a clear vision of where Denver Human Services is headed and how you can play a role in helping us get there.

Together, we’ve got this.

Don Mares
Executive Director
DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

A quarter million people in Denver turn to Denver Human Services for support at all stages of life. Our employees help children, seniors, families, and individuals navigate social and economic pressures by connecting them to services and experts who support their overall well-being.

About Us

Denver Human Services is here to start where you are. We help connect people to supports, such as food, housing, shelter resources, parenting classes, child care, employment support, and other essential services. No matter the need, our team helps Denverites be supported. Together with our community, we work to build well-being and resiliency for every child, adult, and senior in need.

Our budget to provide these vital services is about $200 million annually. The department is primarily funded by state and federal sources, as well as local property tax revenues. Employees who determine eligibility and provide case management services connect Denver families in need to hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance each year. At any given point in time, Denver Human Services has custody of hundreds of children who are unsafe at home and is covering the costs of their housing and care. The financial impact of Denver Human Services also includes facilitating tens of millions in child support payments each year and sheltering on average 1,400+ people experiencing homelessness per night.

At any given time, Denver Human Services is supporting:

- Hundreds
  of children in need
  of housing and care
- Tens of
  Millions
  in child support
  payments
- 1,400+
  people experiencing
  homelessness sheltered
  on average per night
People live healthier, safer lives because of our trained and caring professionals, who give support in the moments it matters most. Denver Human Services employs more than 1,100 trained, dedicated employees who connect people to programs and services that build and maintain well-being.

Our professional staff protects children, older adults, and people with intellectual and developmental disability when they’re in harm’s way. They use Lean process tools to ensure efficient use of public funds, monitor and measure performance, and provide timely, accurate, essential services to our clients. Denver Human Services employees provide training and support to parents, cultivate partnerships with hundreds of community-based providers, and care for our facilities. Starting where the clients are is at the heart of Denver Human Services’ programs. Social workers are placed throughout the city in many places where clients would need them, including courthouses, schools, community centers, and the shelter system.

We all need to ask for a little help sometimes. From infancy to older adulthood, Denver Human Services is here to lend support when it matters most.

One in three people in Denver get support from Denver Human Services. Our clients are your neighbors, friends, and co-workers. They are also children who cannot speak for themselves, parents looking for guidance, or adults who are physically or cognitively disabled. Clients come from neighborhoods across the city, and are a diverse representation of our community.
Denver Human Services had a three-point, collaborative approach to the creation of Human Together, our strategic vision framework. We talked with hundreds of staff members, clients, community partners, and diverse community voices to inform the development of Human Together.

To assist with the implementation of our vision, Denver Human Services put together a group of staff to form a committee of strategic ambassadors. There are 50+ individuals who represent every level and division of the department. The purpose of this group is to be brand ambassadors of our vision and value sphere. This group will continue to advise around Human Together and ensure that every employee of Denver Human Services understands our vision and how they contribute to supporting a healthy and connected community by showing up to work every day at Denver Human Services.

Additionally, we spoke to many community partners who represented a diverse cross-section of Denver’s many distinct community voices, including foundations, boards and commissions, nonprofits, universities, service providers, and advocates.

We acknowledge that our goals are ambitious and will require collaboration and partnership with our community, clients, and partners. Over the next few years, we will continue community outreach and engagement to focus and align our work and partner to build a healthy and connected community.
MISSION, VISION, & VALUES

Mission
Partnering with our community to protect those in harm’s way and help all people in need.

Vision
Denver Human Services envisions a healthy community where people are connected, supported, safe, and well.

To communicate our vision and the future direction of our work, our department created the Denver Human Services Value Sphere. Our value sphere evolved out of a concept called the Human Services Value Curve, which was developed by Harvard’s Technology and Entrepreneurship Center’s Leadership for a Networked World. The Human Services Value Curve is a human services framework intended to increase efficiency and effectiveness in achieving outcomes. The Denver Human Services Value Sphere utilizes the underlying concepts of the value curve while using clear, understandable language that is Denver-centric.

Values
The Denver City STARS values serve as a commitment to the way we will treat our clients, community partners, and each other.

Service to Customers: The goal is to continually exceed customer expectations by identifying and meeting needs, working collaboratively to solve problems, and developing trusting constructive relationships with residents, employees, officials, vendors, and contractors.

Teamwork: We work cooperatively with others to achieve team goals. We actively foster commitment and team spirit and work with others to meet business objectives.

Accountability & Ethics: We follow through on commitments made and take responsibility for results and subsequent outcomes. We contribute to maintaining the integrity of the organization and display high standards of ethical conduct.

Respect for Self and Others: We treat others with consideration and high regard. We demonstrate respect for the differences that exist among customers and fellow employees and recognize that those differences are an important source of innovation, progress, and interpersonal awareness.

Safety: We create and maintain a safe work environment by taking actions that prevent injury or harm to self, others, equipment, and/or property. Additionally, we create and foster an environment of open and respectful dialogue in which individuals may offer diverse perspectives.
Our vision statement and Human Services Value Sphere provide the framework for the future of our work. The goals provide direction and set expectations for what we can do to help achieve the vision, and they establish a decision-making framework for the department.

**GOAL #1:** **EQUITY & ACCESS**
Ensure every individual in Denver has access to the support that they need to live a healthy and high-quality life.

**GOAL #2:** **SAFETY & WELLNESS**
Support and advance sustainable health, wellness, and safety outcomes for the community.

**GOAL #3:** **CONNECTIVITY**
Increase connectivity as a department to improve community partnerships, reduce internal silos, and work collaboratively with city and state partners.

**GOAL #4:** **ECONOMIC RESILIENCE**
Strengthen economic well-being across the lifespan to increase access to opportunity.

**GOAL #5:** **WORKFORCE**
Support a healthy and connected workforce that is equipped to strengthen the communities of Denver.

---

**Human Together utilizes the following framework:**

**Goal:**
Our broad, primary outcome

**Preliminary Strategies:**
The approach taken to achieve the goal

**Strategy 1.1**
Establish proactive outreach strategies to increase awareness and enrollment in services and increase protective factors.

**Strategy 1.2**
Incorporate client ideas into our work to create a feedback loop for continuous improvement and inclusive program decisions.

**Strategy 1.3**
Increase access to attainable housing.

**Strategy 1.4**
Launch brand campaign to reduce stigma in the community, increase awareness of services, and enhance communication about human services.

**Strategy 2.1**
Identify outcome driven performance measurements to measure our impact and to identify gaps in supports.

**Strategy 2.2**
Research creative pilots utilized in other counties that demonstrate positive outcomes.

**Strategy 2.3**
Blueprint to end hunger, aligning state and local efforts to increase access to food for all Denverites.

**Strategy 3.1**
Strengthen community partnerships and coordination.

**Strategy 3.2**
Develop a resource guide that meets the needs of employees, community partners, and clients.

**Strategy 3.3**
Realign the lobby experience to create a welcoming and inclusive space that supports a positive and efficient client experience.

**Strategy 3.4**
Explore client-facing technological solutions for enrollment and navigation.

**Strategy 4.1**
Research and advocate for livable wages to support and increase economic mobility.

**Strategy 4.2**
Identify why individuals and families are coming to us in the first place and create applicable prevention strategies.

**Strategy 5.1**
Focus on staff wellness, safety, and development.

**Strategy 5.2**
Standardized customer service training for the entire department.
WHAT’S NEXT?

Human Together is the beginning of a robust community-focused effort to help Denver residents build healthy, safe, resilient lives. Effective communication and consistent measurement are critical for the successful implementation of the strategic vision framework, as well as the overall success of Denver Human Services. We will now begin to develop action plans to achieve our goals.

We acknowledge that our overall mission and vision are ambitious and that the societal conflicts we face are complex. Consistent with our values, Denver Human Services may modify our strategic vision framework over the next few years as we learn from our staff, clients, partners, and community and move toward building a healthy and connected community.

Acknowledgments

Human Together was a collaborative process that included Denver Human Services staff, strategic ambassadors, community partners, the Mayor’s boards and commissions, and clients. We would like to acknowledge the input, support, guidance, feedback, and commitment of those who have been a part of this process.

Our staff and partners will continue to have a voice in the process.

CONNECT WITH US & FOLLOW OUR PROGRESS

Social Media

Denver Human Services has several social media channels. Connect with us online to get to know us, follow our progress, and receive updates on our exciting initiatives.

Peak Storymap

Mayor Michael B. Hancock created the Peak Performance program in 2011 to increase taxpayers’ return on their investment in city government. Peak partners with city departments and agencies to empower employees to improve their work processes through training, coaching, and support.

As a part of the Peak Performance program, the city of Denver has created storymaps based on the Mayor’s priorities. View a detailed storymap of the innovations in place to support and sustain the safety net of Denver. This storymap will be updated as we create action plans around our new department goals.
