



**STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
P.O. Box 45010, Olympia, Washington 98504-5010**

January 29, 2021

Dear Stakeholder,

Recently Evelyn Perez, Assistant Secretary for our Developmental Disabilities Administration, announced she is retiring after 35-years of state service effective April 30, 2021. Many of you know Evelyn as a civil rights champion for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Evelyn's career began with the Department of Social and Health Services as an attendant counselor at Lakeland Village in Medical Lake, and rising through the ranks to serve as the DDA Region 1 Administrator. In 2013, Evelyn led the division to become its own administration and served as the first assistant secretary for the newly created administration. Her distinguished career also includes founding membership for the [Latino Leadership Network](#) – supporting and empowering Latino state employees. As Evelyn took leadership of the administration, she not only built a formidable team, she established relationships with our clients, their guardians and our legislative stakeholders, who all gained a renewed respect for her advocacy and a presence that was felt across the entire state. Her work in informing person-centered supports and services was felt across the entire department of social & health services and I am forever grateful for her and her dedication to quality and effectiveness.

Evelyn has been instrumental in leading DDA's COVID-19 response, mobilizing many resources to ensure the health and safety of clients and staff in the community and our four state-operated campuses. Most recently, Evelyn worked with stakeholders, clients, families and others to reorganize the administration to better align with the needs of nearly 50,000 clients and 4,500 DDA staff. Under Evelyn's leadership, DDA corrected significant deficiencies for the pre-admission screening and resident review at nursing homes and became a leader in the nation, ranking first in the country for employment and day programs. She was also instrumental in implementing a new waiver while extending services to thousands of clients who were on a wait list, and reducing the institutional footprint to meet community needs. Needless to say, she will be terribly missed.

The void created by Evelyn's departure is vast and we are grateful for the transition period we have now through the end of April. We will use the time to conduct a national recruitment for the position. Given the innovative spirit of Washington State, especially under Gov. Inslee's supportive leadership, we believe we can attract a wide pool of highly qualified candidates. We are determined to conduct a thorough recruitment to ensure our selection is intentional and that ultimately we hire the right person to lead the great work of DDA. I am dedicated to taking as much time as needed and to hearing from stakeholders like you.

Should an interim period occur without a new Assistant Secretary in place, I will appoint an acting Assistant Secretary. I will continue to keep you apprised of our progress.

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Thank you for your interest and support of the Department of Social & Health Services and the Developmental Disabilities Administration in our work to transform lives. Evelyn's guiding light has been the DDA mission, vision, and values and will continue to drive the work we do for many years to come. Please join me in congratulating Assistant Secretary Perez for a job well done, a career in service, and for her well-deserved retirement.

Fondly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cheryl Strange", with a stylized, cursive script.

Cheryl Strange
Secretary

DSHS: *Transforming Lives*