



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

August 17, 2018

Dear ISAC members, friends and colleagues:

I am writing to tell you that I am retiring from state government at the end of August. While it is difficult to walk away from such meaningful work, it is time for me to make this change.

Kristin Ahrens will serve as Acting Deputy Secretary. Kristin is knowledgeable about all of ODP's programs and is well known to all of you. She has been instrumental in developing the ODP waivers and has been responsible for policy development, training, quality and communications for the past two years. Kristin and I will work closely to make the transition successful.

I want to thank Governor Wolf and Secretary Miller for their support of ODP and for making several achievements possible. In the past three years, we have expanded the program to everyone with Autism Spectrum Disorder and increased over all service capacity to serve 3,000 people (technically 2,960). We have expanded support coordination to more than 2,000 people assuring everyone on the waiting list access to a supports coordinator. We have removed the fear of falling off the cliff after graduation for school graduates and their families, assuring the availability of services to everyone graduating. The waivers have expanded the range of services available to promote employment and self-determination and we have provided one of the most significant rate increases in the program's history.

These achievements honor the recommendations in Everyday Lives and reflect the efforts of counties, supports coordinators, providers and professionals who have dedicated themselves to this work.

We are on the threshold of new and exciting developments. Studies of the brain and neurology are opening up new understandings about disability and the process of learning so we can be more effective at helping people. New approaches to managing community services will improve accountability and make the system more effective at achieving Everyday Lives outcomes. The Life Course approach will strengthen the resilience of families and their ability to support their family members, and learning to serve people with complex needs will complete the pledge to provide everyone the opportunity for an Everyday Life.

Each of us has a role in the system, but for self-advocates and families their role is their life. Their stake is their future. The ISAC provides a forum for honest and open communication and the opportunity for people working in the system to hear from the people who depend on the system. Thank you to everyone on the ISAC, your organizations and your members. Your guidance and collaboration make the service system stronger and your friendship has made the work a pleasure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nancy Thaler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nancy" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Thaler".

Nancy Thaler
Deputy Secretary