

Our Strategic Roadmap 2025-2027

Denver Human Services | #HumanTogether

To those who inspire resilience in all of us.

On behalf of more than 1,100 dedicated Denver Human Services (DHS) team members, I'm proud to present this roadmap to everyone committed to the well-being of our community and those who inspire resilience in all of us. Over the past five years, the DHS team has demonstrated remarkable dedication, navigating generational challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the arrival of newcomers to our city. These experiences have been both deeply rewarding and extraordinarily demanding.

This roadmap lays out our vision and strategic priorities for the next three years, aiming to enhance the impact of our services for the people of Denver and make DHS an even better place to work. While it draws on best practices in our field, its foundation is the invaluable input from over 500 DHS customers, 400 DHS team members, senior leaders with a collective 200 years of experience, and our many partner organizations. It aligns with and reinforces the ambitious citywide goals developed by Mayor Mike Johnston, whose leadership continues to provide inspiration and essential support for DHS' efforts.

I'm profoundly grateful to everyone who contributed to this effort, and look forward to working alongside our team and partners to turn these shared aspirations into enduring realities.

Together, we've got this!

Anne-Marie Braga

DHS Executive Director

Larry's Story: A Customer's Success

Larry Beavers has celebrated many accomplishments in his life, but this may have been the hardest won.

"I am living proof that with the right support we can overcome many challenges," he said during a recent gathering at St. Francis Center in Denver. "I stand here tonight as a testament to that."

A Life-Changing Event

Larry's path to victory has been difficult. A college graduate and father of four adult children, he holds degrees in culinary arts, baking and hotel restaurants management and accounting.

His life and career were thriving—until the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Larry contracted the illness and spent three months in the hospital on a breathing machine. He lost his job. Financially devastated, he was unable to pay his rent and was forced to live out of his car. He didn't know where his next meal would come from—or how he could get healthy and back on his feet.

"The darkness of shame, despair and helplessness played with my head, so I started using drugs and alcohol to ease my pain and mask my feelings," he said.

A Network of Support

Fortunately, a pastor suggested he visit the St. Francis Center, which is home to one of Denver Human Services' Neighborhood Resource Sites. There, Larry met caring professionals, who enrolled him in DHS

assistance programs and connected him to supportive services from the Denver Rescue Mission, Bayaud Enterprises, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, Avail Property Management, St. Francis Center and more.

Larry came to look upon this network of helpers as his “new extended family.” They supported Larry with his medical needs. They also connected him to food, bus passes, counseling, phone use, rental assistance and other help. With all the organizations located within a few blocks of each other, Larry was able get to his appointments easily as he slowly rebuilt his life.

Today, Larry is healthy and living in a safe, stable home. He’s proud of what he has accomplished and grateful for those who helped along the way.

Larry Beavers

DHS & St. Francis Customer

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

We compassionately serve Denver residents by connecting them to basic needs, protective services, and community supports to improve their well-being.

Mekka Banks, DHS Team Member

Changing job fields and looking for work is never easy. It’s even harder when you’re older and shaken by trauma.

Despite her anxiety, a customer with these challenges joined the DHS Snap to Success employment and job training program. There, she met Mekka Banks, a DHS business development associate.

After an interview, Mekka discovered the customer was interested in the human services field. Mekka connected her with a community support: a human services training program offered through the Financial Health Institute. Mekka also helped her find money for car repairs and assisted with resume writing and mock interviews.

Today, the client is thriving in a full-time position at the nonprofit, Rocky Mountain Human Services.

Our Values

CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER VALUES

LISTEN

We listen with humility to our community, partners and each other, learning together to drive action.

DARE

We dare to be bold and creative, driven by the urgency the people of Denver deserve.

DELIVER

We take ownership of every problem, deliver breakthrough solutions and never do it alone.

DENVER HUMAN SERVICES VALUES

EMPATHY

We seek to understand how others feel and compassionately support those we serve, our teammates and our partners.

INCLUSIVITY

We foster belonging and respect, celebrate the diversity of our team and community and advance equity for all through our actions.

INTEGRITY

We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards and do the right thing, even when it's not easy.

BALANCE

We're conscious about taking care of ourselves and having fun along the way, so we can best serve others.

Katina Hill, DHS Team Member

A listening ear and compassionate support can change a life. That's what one customer said after working with Katina Hill with the DHS Family and Adult Assistance Division. When the customer shared their struggles, Katina listened with empathy and then connected her to relevant community services. "She's just amazing," the client said. "She seemed very compassionate and warm."

George Cassidy, DHS Team Member

Every veteran deserves a champion. In Denver County, 40,000 veterans lean on the advocacy of George Cassidy from the DHS Veteran Services team. One veteran recently thanked George for delivering on a disability claim. Because of George, he wrote, he would be receiving \$20,000 in compensation and another \$3,700 to pay for cancer treatment. It's the type of life-changing support veterans deserve.

Who We Serve & How We Help

Overview

Denver Human Services served more than 235,000 people in 2024 through assistance programs. This is about 1 in 3 Denverites.

Our team members work with children, seniors, families and individuals facing social and economic pressures. We connect people to food, health care, child care, child and at-risk adult protection, child support, employment support and other essential services. Our team members also refer customers to partner agencies for services we do not offer, such as direct medical care, behavioral health and housing. Together with our community, we strive to build well-being and resiliency for every child, family, adult and older adult. Funding for DHS services comes primarily from state and federal sources.

Find a complete list of these programs and services on the Denver Human Services website:

denvergov.org/DHSRoadmap

Reference

Assistance programs data is from the Colorado Benefit Management System (CBMS), 2024. The services include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Health First Colorado / Medicaid, Adult Financial Assistance, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Denver population data is from the U.S. Census Bureau

QuickFacts, July 1, 2023 (the most recent estimate at the time of publication).

Who We Serve & How We Help

Assistance Services

DHS provides health coverage and food assistance to hundreds of thousands of residents.

More than 200,000 Denver residents receive health coverage (through Health First Colorado / Medicaid), while more than 100,000 Denver residents receive food assistance (through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP), provided by Denver Human Services (DHS). Many people receive both health coverage and food assistance.

Working to Close Systemic Gaps

People of color have higher than average rates of poverty in Denver. This overrepresentation underscores the persistent systemic challenges faced by communities of color in our city. Due to this gap, people of color also represent a larger part of DHS public assistance recipients (78%). The vital economic and health care supports provided by DHS play a key role in promoting both self-sufficiency and equity for all in Denver. We are proud that 66% of the DHS team are people of color, reflecting the racial and ethnic diversity of the community we serve.

Reference

Poverty information is from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2019-2023. Assistance data, including health coverage, food assistance and people of color, is from the Colorado Benefit Management System (CBMS), 2024. DHS team data is from Workday, the City and County of Denver's human resource business system, 2024.

Who We Serve & How We Help

Protection Services

Child Welfare and Adult Protective Services provide mandated protection services to address suspected maltreatment or exploitation of children, youth or at-risk adults. The hotline received over 16,000 reports of suspected maltreatment per year. Of those, about 5,000 are assessed. The vast majority receive short-term interventions to maintain them safely in their home, and to connect them with more services available in their community following DHS involvement.

DHS also provides prevention services to help build individual and family strengths. These services increase access to resources and supports that prevent crises and improve outcomes.

Reference: Protection Services data is from the State of Colorado's Results Oriented Management (ROM) and Colorado Adult Protective Services (CAPS) systems, 2024.

Camille Price, DHS Team Member

Neglected and exploited by her son and isolated from other family, an older adult woman needed a champion. She found it in Adult Protective Services caseworker, Camille Price. Camille placed her with a new emergency guardian, and urged medical providers to admit her client to the hospital. There, the woman received care for her wounds, and nutritious food, before moving to a nursing home. When Camille closed the case, the woman was receiving 24-hour care, enjoying regular family visits and greeting guests with a smile. Best of all, she was living with the dignity and respect she deserved.

Who We Serve & How We Help

Operations Support

Our DHS team is made up of many kinds of experts to help us deliver effective services. Some of our teammates' roles are less visible to the public than others, but they are no less critical to accomplishing our mission. They support the many Assistance and Protection programs our community members experience every day.

They take pride knowing they are serving customers both within our department and in the community.

Operations Support Services Include:

- Financial Services, Audit and Budget
- Contracting Services and Grants
- Facilities, Safety and Security
- Legal Services and Policy
- Quality, Business Improvement and Training
- Communications
- Program Integrity
- Culture and Wellbeing
- Data and Research
- Records and Privacy
- Logistics
- Human Resources

Susan Heller, DHS Team Member

Customer service starts with comfort. In 2023, this was an issue at the DHS Welcome Center, which was crowded and short of seats.

The DHS Facilities, Safety and Security team got to work restoring space in the nearby Castro building that had more room for seating and privacy.

Susan Heller, the DHS space planner, focused on ways to make the experience more relaxing. The team improved lighting and furniture, and repainted in calmer tones. "Customers are asking for help, and that's hard," she said. "That's what I hope design does: it helps soothe them a little bit."

The space now welcomes over 6,000 customers each month. "It runs so much smoother in this building," said one visitor on DHS' 2024 customer survey.

Reference: Customer visit data is from the DHS Customer Lobby Tool (2024)

Reducing Challenges to Opportunity in Denver

We use data to better understand our community and direct support where it's needed most. Some neighborhoods in Denver have more characteristics that may impact health and well-being. DHS services can help reduce the impact. These data also guide us in placing DHS Neighborhood Resource Sites in key areas to maximize our support.

To view this map and review the data, visit denvergov.org/DHSRoadmap

Where We Are Going: Our Goals & Strategies

The following overarching goals and strategies provide direction for Denver Human Services (DHS) for the next few years. They are based on input and feedback received from DHS customers, teammates, and community and service partners. We will develop detailed annual plans to put these strategies into action, and will routinely measure our progress. Each goal aligns with and supports one or more citywide goals established by our mayor, Mike Johnston.

Goal #1: Amplify the reach and influence of our programs and partnerships.

Related Citywide Goals: Affordable, Family Friendly, Safe

Strategies:

1. Expand access to our services by helping people know what they are eligible to receive, making it easier for them to apply and delivering services faster.
2. Measure customer outcomes to ensure we're improving well-being, including safety, stability and hope.
3. Help make Denver the premier city in America to raise a family by collaborating with partners to strengthen prevention and supporting people to thrive after moving beyond DHS services.

Goal #2: Uplift our team by fostering a healthy and supportive workplace.

Related Citywide Goal: Team Denver

Strategies:

1. Boost employee engagement, with a continued emphasis on flexibility and work-life balance.
2. Build a leadership initiative serving all DHS supervisors and managers, as well as team members aiming to enhance their leadership skills.
3. Revitalize our facilities to create a better environment for our team, while continuing to prioritize employee and customer safety.

Goal #3: Employ innovative approaches to maximize results for our customers.

Related Citywide Goals: This goal supports Affordable, All In Mile High, Family Friendly, Safe

Strategies:

1. Strengthen collaboration and integration across our programs to provide customers with more holistic and efficient experiences.
2. Ensure customers' voices and experiences are at the heart of program development, operations and continuous improvement.
3. Prioritize the use of data to inform decisions, track performance and achieve transformative results.

Jelena Estrada, DHS Team Member

A single working mother was in a bind. Her truck had broken down, and she couldn't afford to fix it. Without transportation, she would lose her job and her ability to support her child. Jelena Estrada, who supports DHS' Economic Resilience Workforce Programs, delivered a solution for the family. She secured funds to pay for the repairs through the nonprofit, Hands of the Carpenter. "I'm so happy and grateful! Please keep helping other women in my shoes as well," the client said.

This DHS program supports those who have moved beyond Colorado’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Odie Leal-Mcintyre, DHS Team Member

DHS team members engage to create a healthy community where people are connected, supported, safe and well. It happens both on and off the job.

Odie Leal-Mcintyre, a teammate in the Performance Improvement and Accountability Division, is one example of how this looks.

During the 2024 #BeAGiver School Supply Drive, she volunteered to fill backpacks with school supplies. The drive is organized by the DHS GIVE Donations Program, inspiring community members, local businesses and nonprofit organizations to donate. In 2024, the drive provided new supplies and backpacks to 1,440 children in DHS programs, setting them up for success during the new school year.

Odie was glad to help. “I see that a little more love does make a greater impact on a family,” she said.

[#HumanTogether](#)

[#HumanTogether](#). At Denver Human Services, we use this phrase because it celebrates the strength and interconnectedness of our staff and community.

When we say we are [#HumanTogether](#), we affirm that every voice matters. Every perspective has value. And every experience helps inform how we improve our service to the Denver community. In developing Our Strategic Roadmap, we benefited from the insights and generosity of our team, customers and partners. The perspectives they shared informed the strategies outlined in this roadmap—and will inspire us to carry out our mission with even greater empathy, efficiency and effectiveness each day. Together, we’ve got this!

[Watch The Video](#)

We invite you to watch a video featuring our teammates sharing why they serve at Denver Human Services: denvergov.org/DHSRoadmap

Matthew, DHS Team Member

“My hope is that years down the line, I can look back and just see a network of families that have been bettered or been able to use our services to become the best families they could be.”

Danicka, DHS Team Member

“We’re all human, and I think being human together means understanding where others are coming from and truly listening to what they need. I want people to leave here feeling seen and valued for who they are and the strength they bring to their own lives.”

Annie, DHS Team Member

“My family was a client. My kids and I were on benefits, and I really wanted to work for the City of Denver. I saw an opening in Human Services, and I thought, what better place to work so I can give back to the community after the organization helped me.”

Jose, DHS Team Member

“When I hear clients say these services saved their lives, it reminds me why we’re here and what’s possible. The commitment to our customers is in every interaction. It’s about showing them that they matter and their stories matter.”

Michaela, DHS Team Member

“It’s humbling to be part of someone’s life at such a vulnerable time and to ask them to trust you with their story. We’re committed to the greater community. It’s about all of us, sharing in the tough and challenging spaces and being there as a team.”

Francisco, DHS Team Member

“That drive to give back to my community, to the people where I come from, inspires me every day. I can walk with you, connect you, and support you—but I can’t do it for you. That’s how we empower people.”

Dina, DHS Team Member

“It’s about showing respect and care for every person who walks through our doors, no matter where they’ve been or what they’re facing. I want every customer to leave here feeling fuller—whether that’s a little fuller in their belly or just with a bit more hope.”

Accessibility

For the Spanish or Vietnamese version of the DHS Strategic Roadmap, please visit denvergov.org/DHSRoadmap.

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Accessibility (Vietnamese)

Để nhận được phiên bản Tiếng Tây Ban Nha hoặc Tiếng Việt của Lộ trình Chiến lược DHS, vui lòng truy cập denvergov.org/DHSRoadmap.

Dịch vụ Nhân sinh Denver tuân thủ luật Liên bang về dân quyền hiện hành và không phân biệt đối xử dựa trên chủng tộc, màu da, quốc gia xuất xứ, tuổi tác, tình trạng khuyết tật, hoặc giới tính bao gồm cả ngôn ngữ. Quý vị có quyền yêu cầu các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ bằng lời hoặc bằng văn bản bằng ngôn ngữ chính của mình nếu cần.

Vui lòng liên hệ dhsadasupport@denvergov.org và những dịch vụ này sẽ được cung cấp miễn phí.

Accessibility (Spanish)

Para consultar la versión en español o vietnamita del plan estratégico del DHS, visite denvergov.org/DHSRoadmap.

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