



Commonwealth of Kentucky Justice & Public Safety Cabinet

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Reformer in Youth Services Will Lead Kentucky's Juvenile Justice Department

Carey Cockerell brings decades of experience, including overhaul of family protection in Texas

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 26, 2016) – Kentucky Justice Secretary John Tilley announced today that Carey D. Cockerell, the former head of family and child protection in Texas, has been named as the new commissioner for the state Department of Juvenile Justice.

Cockerell is taking the department's helm after more than 40 years of experience in youth programs. As commissioner for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, he implemented one of the largest reforms in Texas history, overhauling practices in child and adult services, expanding staff and establishing a first-ever health care project in child protection.

Prior to that, he worked for 20 years as director of juvenile services in Tarrant County – part of the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area – where he managed probation, court and detention services, along with treatment and post-adjudication programs.

"Juvenile justice is undergoing a top-to-bottom transformation in Kentucky, and Mr. Cockerell brings the knowledge and expertise to shepherd reforms with transparency and accountability," said Kentucky Justice Secretary John Tilley. "We were impressed by his commitment to public safety and his compassion for our youth."

Cockerell has a record of innovation, said Bart Lubow, a retired director for the Juvenile Justice Strategies Group under The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Lubow developed the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, which is reforming detention practices in 40 states, including Kentucky.

"Throughout his career, Carey Cockerell has shown unusual vision and dexterity in both children's services and juvenile justice," Lubow said. "Kentucky has made a smart decision to harness his leadership and dedication to keeping kids on the right track."

Cockerell was selected through a national search. His appointment is part of an ongoing revamp to ensure the highest level of performance and accountability throughout the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Secretary Tilley has made reforms to the department a priority since he took office in December. He announced in March that the department would undertake a sweeping review of policy and procedure, which has already resulted in additional training, policy revisions and reorganization of personnel. The department

also plans to contract with an independent, nationally-recognized organization to conduct an external review and recommend possible reforms.

Cockerell, who will take office Sept. 16, said he is eager to take up the task.

“I am honored to be appointed to this critical position, and I want to thank Gov. Matt Bevin and Secretary Tilley for the opportunity to serve Kentucky,” Cockerell said. “Maintaining a strong and innovative system of youth services is essential for our future, and I’m committed to fostering a system of integrity and accountability.”

Cockerell earned his master’s degree in social work at the Kent School of Social Work at the University of Louisville.

During his career, he has held high-ranking positions with the Texas Youth Commission, including serving as superintendent of a 240-bed youth institution. He served as director of Tarrant County Juvenile Services from 1984 to 2004.

As commissioner for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, he oversaw all areas of the organization, including child and adult protective services, residential and childcare licensing, prevention and early intervention programs.

Lubow said Cockerell’s leadership in Fort Worth showed that juveniles can and should be approached differently, using a robust system of community-based interventions that ensure both public safety and positive youth development.

“When you look at his record, Carey has really changed the course of juvenile justice in the areas where he has worked,” Lubow said.

Secretary Tilley also praised the dedication and hard work of Acting Commissioner LaDonna Koebel, who has guided the department for several months and will continue her service there.

“Acting Commissioner Koebel excelled on every level during her time as interim commissioner, and I applaud her proactive and decisive leadership,” Secretary Tilley said. “She has been instrumental in ongoing reforms, and we look forward to her continued and invaluable service to the Commonwealth.”

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