



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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L&I, DHS Partner to Distribute Hundreds of Stuffed Toys to Pennsylvania Families this Holiday Season

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania departments of Labor & Industry (L&I) and Human Services (DHS) kicked off the holiday season Monday with an annual donation of stuffed toys collected throughout the year by L&I during routine inspections and later distributed to Pennsylvania families through DHS' Holiday Wish program.

"We collect these toys throughout the year because it's our job to make sure they're safe for all children in Pennsylvania. Donating our annual collection is a special opportunity to spark a little joy for a few of those children each holiday season," L&I Secretary Jennifer Berrier said. "I encourage all Pennsylvanians to consider their neighbors, co-workers, friends and family members who might be struggling this holiday season. If you have a little extra to give this year, get in touch with an organization that collects holiday donations. You won't regret it."

Under state law, L&I's [Bureau of Occupational and Industrial Safety](#) must inspect all new stuffed toy samples for contents, choking hazards, and general safety. Toys that pass inspection get a registration number, which is on every stuffed toy sold in the state. Because of this process, the department accumulates hundreds of toy samples each year.

In the past six years, L&I has donated nearly 3,800 toys that passed inspection to holiday gift drives. On Monday, L&I delivered nearly 600 toys to DHS for its Holiday Wish program, which was started in 1989 by a small group of DHS employees. Over the years, Holiday Wish has grown to include hundreds of employees in numerous departments, allowing the program to reach thousands of individuals in need around Pennsylvania during the holiday season.

When a family or individual visits a local DHS [County Assistance Office](#) (CAO) to apply for benefits, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Medical Assistance, CAO caseworkers identify families and older adults in need to take part in the Holiday Wish program. Holiday Wish participants then select a few gifts they need or would like to receive, and state employees sponsor a family or individual to ensure they receive special gifts during the holiday season. Commonwealth agencies and the Pennsylvania National Guard gather in December to distribute these gifts to hundreds of families across Pennsylvania.

"We want to do our part during this season of giving to help make the holidays better and brighter for the families we serve. Holiday Wish allows us to give a little extra help to our neighbors who may be struggling or having a hard time," said DHS Acting Secretary Meg Snead. "Our mission at DHS is to ensure every Pennsylvanian has the resources they need to meet their basic needs and live their lives with the dignity we all deserve. DHS administers programs to help, and I encourage any Pennsylvanian having trouble financially to apply and see if they qualify for assistance."

Applications for public assistance programs can be submitted online at www.dhs.pa.gov/compass. On-site CAO services are available if clients cannot access online services or need assistance that cannot be accessed through the COMPASS website, the myCOMPASS PA mobile app, or by calling the Customer Service Centers at 215-560-7226 for Philadelphia clients or 1-877-395-8930 for clients in all other counties.

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