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Shapiro Administration Donates Stuffed Toys Collected from L&I's Annual Safety Inspections for the 2023 Holiday Season

Labor & Industry accumulates hundreds of toy samples every year during routine inspections for contents, choking hazards and general safety.

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania Departments of **Labor & Industry** (L&I) and **Human Services** (DHS) kicked off the 2023 holiday season Wednesday with an annual donation of stuffed toys collected throughout the year by L&I during routine safety inspections. The toys will be distributed to Pennsylvania families through DHS' Holiday Wish program.

"We inspect these stuffed toys throughout the year to ensure their safety for all children in Pennsylvania. It's become a tradition at L&I to donate the inspected toys to the Holiday Wish program because we get to brighten the holidays for a few children while reminding parents and retailers of the importance of toy safety," **L&I Secretary Nancy A. Walker**. "I encourage any Pennsylvanian who can give a little extra this year to consider donating to a holiday charity. The joy and happiness through a simple act of kindness can lead to lifelong memories for countless Pennsylvania children."

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 Commonwealth. Through this process, L&I accumulates hundreds of toy samples each year.

On Wednesday, L&I delivered over 650 stuffed 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 state agencies, allowing the program to reach thousands of individuals in need around Pennsylvania during the holiday season. The L&I and DHS stuffed toy tradition has helped nearly 4,200 stuffed toys that passed inspection find new homes over the past seven years.

"During this season of giving, we are proud to partner across state government to help make the holidays better and brighter for the families we serve. Holiday Wish allows us to work together to further our impact and bring some joy to our neighbors who may be struggling or having a hard time," said DHS Executive Deputy Secretary Andrew Barnes. "Our mission at DHS is to help Pennsylvanians access our most essential basic needs and achieve a better life with the dignity we all deserve. DHS' programs are here to help, and I encourage any Pennsylvanian having trouble financially to apply and see if we are able to help ease their situation."

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 (Medicaid), 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.

Applications for public assistance programs can be submitted online through the [COMPASS website](#). 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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