

EDITORIAL

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ACS Commissioner John Mattingly did a fine job protecting city kids in a thankless, tough position



ACS Commissioner John B. Mattingly leaves successor Ronald Richter an agency far more efficient than it was when he arrived.

Photo by Smith for the News

A good public servant is moving on.

Administration for Children's Services Commissioner John Mattingly spent seven years leading an agency charged with protecting the most vulnerable citizens from people who are supposed to nurture them. And handling the fallout when his agency failed.

That's a long time, and during his tenure the city saw several heart-wrenching deaths of small children under ACS supervision. With each tragedy came deserved scrutiny of Mattingly's agency. Each time, he used lessons learned to improve it.

He instituted a data-crunching system to pinpoint problems and call supervisors to account. He hired retired detectives to teach investigative techniques to caseworkers. He increased the professionalism of those caseworkers, cut their caseloads to eight this

year, down from 21 in 2006, and increased their supervision, reducing turnover.

Mattingly can take his leave in September having much to be proud of. He leaves successor Ronald Richter an agency far more efficient than it was when he arrived. But more needs to be done.

Some 40 children already known to child welfare authorities die every year from various causes. Even one is too many. There are still too many cracks in the Byzantine child welfare system. Caseworkers are still too reactive.

Richter, a Queens Family Court judge who was a deputy commissioner under Mattingly, knows the issues inside and out. ACS is in good hands.

Good luck to Richter, and to Mattingly.