

State of Alaska  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES**

**Sarah Palin, Governor**

**Karleen Jackson**  
Commissioner  
P.O. Box 110601  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0601

**NEWS RELEASE**



**Sherry Hill**  
Communications Officer  
/Legislative Liaison  
**907-465-1618**

**FAX: 907-465-3068**

[www.hss.state.ak.us](http://www.hss.state.ak.us)

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Contact:

Ann Potempa, (907) 269-7957, Cell (907) 240-9158  
Susan Morgan, (907) 269-4996, Cell (907) 632-6107

## **Department appoints new leaders to promote health**

*Alaska's first Chief Medical Officer to advise Health and Social Services commissioner*

(Juneau, Alaska) — Commissioner Karleen K. Jackson today announced the realignment of several leadership positions to help the state Department of Health and Social Services promote and protect the health of Alaskans.

“The most dramatic change in our structure is the creation of a new Chief Medical Officer position to oversee public health and provide advice to me,” Jackson told her staff.

The state’s new Chief Medical Officer is Dr. Jay Butler. Butler earned his medical degree from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 1985. Butler completed residencies in internal medicine and pediatrics and a clinical fellowship in infectious diseases. He worked as a medical epidemiologist for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta before coming to Alaska in 1998. Butler directed the CDC’s Arctic Investigations Program based in Anchorage between 1998 and 2005. He then joined Alaska’s Department of Health and Social Services as the chief of the Division of Public Health’s Section of Epidemiology. In early 2007, he became the director of the Division of Public Health. Butler will leave that position to become the state’s first Chief Medical Officer charged with advising Jackson, other department leaders and the governor’s Cabinet about medical concerns.

“The Chief Medical Officer position is designed to help Alaskans move toward the goal of becoming the healthiest people in the world,” said Butler, a father of five. “This will require addressing access to high quality and affordable health care, and being prepared to control new and emerging health threats. However, we also need to identify new ways to empower all of us to take responsibility for maintaining wellness in our own lives, in our families and in our communities.”

To allow Butler to focus on his new role, the department has appointed Beverly Wooley as the new Director of Public Health. Wooley has more than 20 years of public health experience in Alaska. Since 2003, she served as the director of Anchorage’s Department of Health and Human

Services. Prior to that, Wooley promoted nutrition, environmental sanitation and community health through various positions in the state. Wooley will join the department in August.

Commissioner Jackson announced one other change. To promote health communications, Sherry Hill, one of Jackson's current Special Assistants, will serve as the Director of Public Affairs to oversee the Public Information Team as well as legislative and regulatory work. Hill has more than 20 years of experience in public and government relations, and earned a Master of Science degree in public relations from the University of Stirling in Scotland. She has worked as the Special Assistant responsible for department communications and legislative work since September 2003. Hill's Public Information Team consists of more than a dozen staff members in Anchorage and Juneau who respond to media inquiries, and write and publish materials communicating department decisions and health promotion messages.

"Sherry has been functioning in this role for some time, and this change simply acknowledges the excellent work she does to support DHSS in communicating effectively with all our various stakeholders," Jackson told her staff.

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