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Press Release

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DHSS Commissioner announces leadership changes

(Juneau, Alaska) The Health and Social Services (DHSS) Commissioner Karleen Jackson today announced department leadership changes in a realignment of some department functions. Bill Streur, formerly the director of Health Care Services, has been appointed Deputy Commissioner for Medicaid and Health Care Policy; Cheryl Howdyshell has been appointed Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Accountability. Bill Hogan will continue as Deputy Commissioner, a position he has held since October 2005, with primary responsibility for Family, Community and Integrated Services.

"I am pleased that both Bill Streur and Bill Hogan will continue to serve this department in these newly-defined leadership roles," said Jackson. "They will help ensure that the realignment of functions will better serve Alaskans in the delivery of our mission to promote and protect the health and well being of Alaskans."

Streur has served as Health Care Services director since April 2007. In his new role as Deputy Commissioner he will be responsible for overall administration, planning and program direction of Medicaid health care policy and operations within DHSS, which includes Medicaid policy and financing, Health Care Services, tribal health agreements, rate review; and design, development, and implementation of the new Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS).

"Bill has done an exemplary job managing Health Care Services, demonstrating the depth of his knowledge and experience in Medicaid -- and now he will oversee all operations related to Medicaid, including Medicaid reform efforts, rate review and Medicaid financing," Jackson said.

Streur came to the department from First Health Services Corporation where he served as the Senior Director of Alaska Operations since 2003. First Health Services Corporation manages the state's current Medicaid claims system.

Streur has over 25 years working in health care and working with Medicaid, including managing a behavioral health system, and establishing and operating a Medicaid HMO in Michigan. Streur earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in pre-medicine and liberal arts from

Northern Michigan University, with graduate study toward concurrent Master's degrees in Business and Sociology from Ball State University and Troy State University.

Howdyshell will begin work with the department by Oct. 2007. With over 25 years of management experience that includes an emphasis in social services, Howdyshell comes to the department from Providence Health System in Alaska, where she has served as the Director of Volunteer Services since 2003.

“Cheryl’s experience and knowledge of social services and her business background make her ideal for this position,” said Jackson. “I am extremely pleased that she’s joining our leadership team as her expertise will support further improvements to our department finance and accountability functions.”

Howdyshell has extensive social services experience in Alaska, including serving as Interim Executive Director and Deputy Director of Catholic Social Services and as Shelter Manager with Salvation Army. Her corporate experience includes serving as a Manager for Customer Services with General Communications, Inc. (GCI) and Operations and Area Manager for Lamont’s. Howdyshell has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Resource Development from Alaska Pacific University. She is also a lifelong and third generation Alaskan.

As Deputy Commissioner, Howdyshell will oversee department performance management, quality assurance, audits, hearings and appeals, facilities, and department finance and management areas including grants and contracts.

Hogan began work with the department as Behavioral Health Division Director April 2003. Hogan’s experience and education includes a lengthy stint as Chief Executive Officer of Life Quest, a community mental health center located in Wasilla, Alaska. He is a social worker with experience as a clinician, supervisor and administrator.

Hogan has a bachelor’s degree in sociology from State University of New York, and a Master of Science degree in social work from West Virginia University. He has also served as chair of the Alaska Mental Health Board, board member of the Alaska Community Mental Health Services Association, and Executive Director of the New York state chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

Sherry Hill has been appointed as Assistant Commissioner for Public Affairs (previously announced as Director of Public Affairs); and Wilda Laughlin has been appointed Special Assistant in Juneau. Laughlin will support department Public Affairs efforts, including legislative coordination and media relations. Laughlin most recently served as the Senate Minority Press Officer with the Alaska Legislature. She has worked for 12 years as either a legislative aide or as an Information Officer for the Senate. She received her Bachelors degree in Journalism in 1987 from the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Members of the DHSS leadership team leaving state service include Anthony Lombardo, Janet Clarke and Elmer Lindstrom. Lombardo began work with DHSS in 2003 as Public Assistance Director and served as Deputy Commissioner from 2004 until last week, when

he left to pursue his interests in enology and viticulture. “We thank Tony for his time and service with the department – he began to put our Performance Management and Quality Assurance programs in place, to provide better accountability to our partners in delivery of services,” said Jackson

Janet Clarke, who has served as Assistant Commissioner for Finance and Management Services since 2004 will assist with the leadership transition over the next few months before retiring in January 2008. Clarke has worked for the State of Alaska for 27 years, with 17 of those years dedicated to service in the Department of Health and Social Services. “Janet has been instrumental in providing leadership for finance and management functions of state government through six different commissioners and seven different governors,” Jackson said. “Her work has been focused on improving professional customer service to Alaskans and she has implemented many positive changes over the past 17 years with the department.”

Elmer Lindstrom will be retiring in December 2007 after working for the state for 30 years, the last 15 of which have been with the department. “Elmer is one of those unique individuals who can perform almost any function necessary to ensure the smooth operation of the department,” Jackson said. “He is an excellent example of a strong team player and exemplary public servant who has the ability to find positive solutions to the most intractable challenges.”

“We thank Tony, Janet and Elmer for their significant time and service with the department,” said Jackson, “their dedication to the mission of the department and more than 50 years of combined service to Alaskans is to be commended.”

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