



Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

NEWS

Office of the Governor

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Carcieri Names Craig Stenning as Director of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals

Governor Donald L. Carcieri today announced his intention to submit the name of Craig S. Stenning as Director of the Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals (MHRH). Stenning has been serving as Acting Director of MHRH since June of 2008. The nomination is subject to the advice and consent of the state Senate.

MHRH oversees a public and private network of programs involving mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disabilities, as well as operating the Eleanor Slater Hospital. Stenning began his State career in January, 2000 as the first Executive Director of Behavioral Healthcare Services.

“Craig has spent his career serving the public with integrity and distinction, and I am confident he will continue to serve with excellence as we move ahead with reform throughout MHRH,” said Governor Carcieri. “He has demonstrated a unique ability to communicate effectively and honestly with our community agencies and has initiated significant reform in both behavioral health and developmental disabilities.”

Prior to joining state government, Stenning began his professional career in 1969 as Director of the Cranston Law Enforcement Planning Agency. In 1971, he started CODAC Treatment Centers and served as its CEO for 28 years as it became the state’s largest outpatient program. His work in substance abuse treatment and prevention has earned him numerous state and national awards including the prestigious Nyswander/Dole Award for outstanding contributions in substance abuse treatment at the national level.

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His appointment as the first Executive Director of Behavioral Healthcare carried with it the assignment to merge the two divisions of Mental Health and Substance Abuse. In 2004, Stenning was also appointed to be Acting Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities along with his duties in Behavioral Healthcare. Stenning also spent five months working at the Department of Human Services on the Global Waiver before being appointed by Governor Carcieri as Acting MHRH Director.

“I am deeply grateful for the trust that Governor Carcieri has shown in me to lead this important Department,” said Stenning. “MHRH has a rich history of providing services to individuals with disabilities. I look forward to the challenge of continuing to reform our delivery system in order to provide effective services within the fiscal constraints of our State. It is imperative that we efficiently use our resources wisely and fairly to provide support to the vulnerable populations that MHRH serves.”

Stenning served as Chairman of the Cranston School Committee from 1978-82 and a member of the Cranston City Council from 1982-1992. He was inducted into the Cranston Hall of Fame in 2000.

Stenning earned his Master’s Degree in Public Administration at the University of Rhode Island (URI) in 1971. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from URI in 1969. He has done post graduate work at the University of Miami, Yale University and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

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