

Gov. Pritzker Announces Agency Transitions

October 4 2023 2:30 PM



CHICAGO - Today Governor JB Pritzker announced several upcoming transitions in state agency leadership. Theresa Eagleson, Director of the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), will step down at the end of 2023. The Governor has appointed Lizzy Whitehorn, who currently serves as First Assistant Deputy Governor for Health and Human Services, to serve as Director of HFS beginning January 1, 2024, pending confirmation by the Illinois Senate. The Governor also announced the upcoming transitions, also at the end of the calendar year, of Paula Basta, Director of the

Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA), and Marc D. Smith, Director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Finally, the Governor announced the appointment of Camile Lindsay as Acting Director of Professional Regulation at the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR), pending confirmation. Lindsay is currently serving as First Assistant Deputy Governor for Public Safety, Infrastructure, Environment and Energy.

“Theresa, Paula, and Marc reflect the best of state government—people who have sacrificed to help millions of constituents through their dedication to service,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Despite the excellent quality of the candidates who will fill their shoes, their full impact on state government can never truly be articulated or replicated, and I thank them for their years of service. Lizzy and Camile’s years of service in my office have shown their passion for what they do, and I’m glad they will continue to have an opportunity to do this important work at an even higher level.”

Eagleson has served as Director of HFS since January of 2019. Prior to that appointment, Eagleson was the state’s longest serving Medicaid director, as well as the Executive Director of the University of Illinois’ System Office of Medicaid Innovation. Under Eagleson’s leadership, HFS has implemented numerous initiatives aimed at reducing disparities and creating a more equitable healthcare delivery system and child support services program and expanding behavioral and reproductive healthcare. She and the HFS team initiated and implemented a first-in-the-nation, equity-driven Healthcare Transformation Collaboratives program to incentivize health providers of all kinds and community-based organizations to partner in new ways to provide better care in historically underserved communities across the state. Together with DCFS, HFS successfully launched Youthcare, a managed care program specifically designed for youth in care. HFS also implemented new assessments for Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) and other provider assessments, making the Illinois Medicaid program less dependent on state general funds, and implemented nation-leading nursing home rate reform to improve care for 45,000 residents in Illinois nursing homes.

“Serving the people of Illinois, especially the millions of customers within the Medicaid program, from newborns to seniors, drives me every day,” **Eagleson said**. “It has been the honor of a lifetime to lead this wonderful team of professionals at HFS, and I am grateful to Gov. Pritzker for giving us the opportunity to create transformational change within the larger healthcare landscape in this state, especially for nursing home residents. I will always treasure these 30 years spent serving the state of Illinois.”

Basta, who is retiring at the end of 2023, was appointed Director of IDoA in March of 2019. Prior to joining IDoA, Basta served as the Director of Senior Services and Health Initiatives at the Chicago Housing Authority, where she oversaw social services for 54 senior buildings and 10,000 seniors throughout Chicago. During her tenure at IDoA,

Basta guided Illinois' network of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Care Coordination Units, and aging services providers through the COVID-19 public health emergency, ensuring continuity of services to older adults who are a population group at high risk of COVID-19 complications. Basta also helped to launch new programming to support older adults' health, independence and well-being during and beyond the public health emergency, such as the Illinois Care Connections program to combat social isolation, emergency gap filling services, and the expansion of nutrition programs in partnership with locally owned restaurants.

"It has been a privilege to serve Governor Pritzker's administration as Director of the Illinois Department on Aging," said Basta. "As the agency celebrates its 50th anniversary this fall, I am optimistic about the direction it's headed, and I am endlessly grateful to our staff and partner organizations for their ongoing efforts to meet the needs of older adults."

Smith was appointed Director of DCFS in April 2019. Prior to his appointment, Smith served as the executive vice president of foster care and intact services at Aunt Martha's Health & Wellness, Illinois' largest provider of services to families in crisis, since 2009. During his tenure, DCFS created a capital program investing in youth service providers and sought federal opportunities for funding, grew the agency budget to stable levels after years of disinvestment, and increased transparency and accountability to the public. Under Smith's direction, DCFS also prioritized technology upgrades to a 30-year-old infrastructure enabling new operational efficiencies, grew funding for youth scholarships, and increased staffing to the highest levels the agency has seen in 15 years.

"When I joined this administration in 2019, my mission was clear. Build a child welfare system in Illinois that keeps kids safe and supports families in crisis," **said Smith**. "As someone who has spent my entire career committed to improving the child welfare system – I am incredibly proud of the profound progress we have made. DCFS continues making a difference where it matters most – by keeping children safe, creating brighter futures for the youth in our care, and giving hope to families in crisis that need support. We are on our way to building a child welfare system in Illinois that will once again serve as a national model. The governor and his administration have been incredible partners. Together we confronted the longstanding challenges at DCFS head-on, with both optimism and pragmatism, so we can help families and children thrive. I am profoundly proud to have had the opportunity to lead and work alongside the amazing team of professionals at DCFS that have dedicated their lives to protecting and supporting our most vulnerable children."

Whitehorn has served as First Assistant Deputy Governor for Health and Human Services since 2019. Alongside Deputy Governor Sol Flores, Whitehorn led the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including testing and vaccine efforts and the

nation-leading rental assistance and childcare restoration grant programs. From the Governor's Office, she spearheaded the Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative, a collaborative approach among six state agencies to improve services, resources, and outcomes for youth with significant behavioral health needs. Over the last five years, Whitehorn has worked closely on the administration's healthcare initiatives, including legislation to authorize a state-based healthcare exchange, increased access to healthcare services, and expanded programs supporting reproductive healthcare, as well as efforts to strengthen the state's early childhood system. Whitehorn is a committed public servant, who previously served as Deputy Director in the Department of Central Management Services and Associate General Counsel in the Governor's Office.

“Over the last four and a half years, I've worked closely with the health and human service agencies and seen firsthand the results of interagency cooperation and coordination—a system that works better than those we serve,” **said Whitehorn.** “I'm honored to continue this work at HFS to increase access to affordable and equitable healthcare and support the millions of Illinoisans who rely on our Medicaid system every day.”

Camile Lindsay currently serves as First Assistant Deputy Governor for Public Safety, Infrastructure, Environment and Energy. Lindsay was responsible for overseeing several Illinois state agencies, including the Department of Transportation, State Police, Department of Corrections, Emergency Management Agency, and the Capital Development Board. Prior to joining the Governor's office, Lindsay served as Chief of Staff and Chief Legal Counsel for the Illinois Department of Corrections. Earlier in her career, she worked as Supervisory Regional Counsel for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Assistant Attorney General for the Illinois Attorney General's office, and Assistant State's Attorney for the Cook County State's Attorney's office.

“Professional licensing serves as the economic backbone in Illinois, with more than 1.2 million individuals counting on IDFPR for the means to verify they're qualified to work in their chosen field,” said **Director of Professional Regulation Camile Lindsay.** “I look forward to building upon the successes achieved at IDFPR to ensure the people of Illinois continue to receive the quality service they need from licensed professionals.”

Over the next several months, a national search will be conducted to find a new Director of IDoA and Director of DCFS.