



State of North Carolina
Department of Health and Human Services

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**Gov. Perdue Announces New Leadership and Consolidation
In the Department of Health and Human Services**

RALEIGH — Gov. Bev Perdue today announced key leadership changes and consolidation at the Department of Health and Human Services as part of her continued focus to provide the best service for the people of the state.

Dr. Laura Gerald, former executive director of the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, has been appointed State Health Director effective February 1st and will become leader of the newly combined Division of Prevention, Access and Public Health Services. The process is underway for the merger of the Division of Public Health and the Office of Rural Health and Community Care.

Dr. Jeff Engel, State Health Director since 2009, will take on a broader policy-making role and will bring his expertise to the Office of the Secretary as a special advisor on health policy.

The leadership moves coincide with the Governor's executive order encouraging agencies to consolidate and realign state government, to better serve all citizens and achieve efficiency. Outgoing DHHS Secretary Lanier Cansler, in consultation with incoming Acting Secretary Al Delia, will begin the formation of the new division.

"As we move to enact the Governor's executive order, the focus shifts to a more integrated approach to improving the health of all North Carolinians," Cansler said. "Dr. Gerald brings a clinical perspective to this role from her training and practice as a pediatrician, and more than a decade of experience in promoting prevention and access to quality care. Dr. Engel will provide an overarching view of the entire spectrum of health and preventive care. I believe DHHS will have the right combination of experience and vision in positioning Drs. Gerald and Engel to guide us through this process."

During the past decade, Dr. Gerald, a North Carolina native and pediatrician, has been a consultant and senior advisor for Community Care of North Carolina (CCNC) on disease management, quality improvement, cost-containment efforts and coordination of CCNC across state agencies. Most recently she has served as an advisor to the Secretary on community care and chaired the Governor's Eugenics Compensation Task Force.

"Dr. Gerald is a distinguished medical professional who has brought unparalleled success to the enormously important, and historic, challenges that I have put before her," Gov. Perdue said. "Now I have asked her to serve the people of North Carolina again as we bring these important offices together in our continuing efforts to consolidate and reorganize state government to better aid our communities."

Following her medical training at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and Johns Hopkins Hospital, Dr. Gerald was recruited as part of the National Health Service Corps to return to her hometown of Lumberton to

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practice general pediatrics. Her interest in addressing health issues on a broader scale led her to pursue and earn a master's degree in public health from the Harvard School of Public Health. Dr. Gerald also completed the Commonwealth Fund Harvard University Fellowship in Minority Health Policy.

Since his appointment in 2009, Dr. Engel has overseen the state's response to the H1N1 pandemic, the successful passage and implementation of the South's first statewide ban on smoking in bars and restaurants and a decline of infant mortality rates to the lowest in North Carolina's history. Dr. Engel also saw an 18-percent decline in new HIV infections from 2009-2011. As an infectious-disease physician, Engel has been caring for HIV-infected people since the epidemic began in 1981, continuing as a volunteer physician at a Ryan White-funded HIV clinic in Raleigh.

"Dr. Engel has been an effective and thoughtful leader for public health in North Carolina," Cansler said. "His emphasis on quality improvement and data-driven decision making has been important to the successes we have achieved. I am grateful for his service and continued dedication to the people of our state."

Dr. Engel also managed the receipt and implementation of \$23 million in new recurring federal funds to support expansion of home visiting programs, implement a quality improvement initiative in Public Health, improve health data systems and provide community transformation grants to help North Carolinians make the healthy choice the easy choice.

"I'm looking forward to having Dr. Gerald and Dr. Engel on the leadership team as we strengthen an agency that is critical to so many North Carolinians and work to improve their health," Delia said.

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