

NEWS RELEASE

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Charles Smith
Executive Commissioner

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Key Additions to Health and Human Services Team

AUSTIN – Texas Health and Human Services Executive Commissioner Charles Smith announced three key hires today.

Kelly Garcia has been named director of government and stakeholder relations and Carrie Williams will serve as the system's chief press officer. Garcia replaces Molly Czepiel who has been named associate commissioner for policy and performance.

"I'm very excited we are going to have these talents on our team," Commissioner Smith said. "We're building a strong team to ensure that HHS is able to meet the needs of Texans now and in the future."

Czepiel will work with program staff across the system to develop and implement performance measures while fostering data-driven decision making to ensure the HHS system is accountable to the people it serves.

Garcia will lead the system's legislative affairs team and stakeholder outreach. In this role, she will serve as a liaison to elected officials and their staff, articulate the policy initiatives of the agency and coordinate HHS constituent services on behalf of legislative offices.

Williams will oversee HHS's media relations and social media programs, working with reporters and editors to ensure HHS's work is transparent, its messages reach the public, and information is provided quickly and accurately.

Molly Czepiel has worked for HHSC's external relations since 2009 and been director of that department since 2012. She began her career working for U.S. Rep. Sam Johnson in both the district office and Washington D.C. before returning home to Texas to work for U.S. Rep. Jeb Hensarling. She later served as a legislative liaison for the Office of the Attorney General and policy analyst for state Sen. Florence Shapiro. Czepiel is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin.

Kelly Garcia spent more than a decade reviewing state agency operations as a project manager and senior analyst at the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission and senior advisor to Gov. Rick Perry. In these positions, Garcia's focus was reforming regulatory policy, including health care; environmental policy, including oil and gas production; and criminal justice. Garcia joined HHSC in 2013 as an advisor to the executive commissioner during the Sunset review process. She currently assists the Department of Family and Protective Services in its response to foster care litigation. Garcia graduated from the University of Texas at Austin and has a master's in public administration from Texas A&M University.

Carrie Williams comes to HHSC after being the director of media relations at the Department of State Health Services and serving on the agency's media team for 10 years. An expert in crisis communications, she guided the agency through challenging public health situations, leading the agency's public information response to the country's first case of Ebola. Williams also oversaw the Texas public health press response to H1N1 in 2009, the unprecedented resurgence of West Nile virus in 2012 and, most recently, the emergence of Zika virus and its potential to impact Texas. She received a bachelor's degree in journalism and English from Creighton University in Omaha, NE.

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