



STATE OF GEORGIA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**Sonny Perdue**
GOVERNORFor Immediate Release
Tuesday, August 26, 2008Contact: Office of Communications
(404) 651-7774**Governor Perdue releases reorganization plan for DHR***Creates stand alone agency for mental health, addictive disease programs*

ATLANTA – Today Governor Sonny Perdue released the findings of the Health and Human Services Task Force, which calls for a new Department of Behavioral Health encompassing the mental health and addictive disease programs currently housed in the Department of Human Resources.

“Since DHR’s creation 35 years ago under Governor Jimmy Carter, our state’s growth and healthcare needs have changed dramatically,” Governor Perdue said. “This restructuring of DHR recognizes those changing needs and puts in place a framework for a more efficient, effective delivery of these critical services.”

In addition to a new department focused solely on behavioral health, the proposed reorganization plan calls for merging the Department of Community Health with the public health and health regulation programs of DHR to make up a reconstituted Department of Health. Current DCH Commissioner Dr. Rhonda Medows would lead the new Department of Health.

The remaining social services under DHR would become the Department of Human Services. Programs included in this department would include Developmental Disabilities, Aging, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) and Child Support. Current DHR Commissioner B.J. Walker will lead the new Department of Human Services.

The proposal calls for legislation to be introduced when the General Assembly convenes next January with the transition to the new agencies occurring on July 1, 2009.

"It has been exciting serving with my fellow legislators and governor's staff as we look to transform the delivery of health and human services in Georgia," said Senator Renee Unterman. "This has been a lot of work and there still is a lot of work to do. This is a step in the right direction and I look forward to working closely with the agencies, legislature and advocacy communities on these important changes."

In addition to Sen. Unterman, three other legislators served on the task force: Sen. Jack Hill, Rep. Ben Harbin and Rep. Mark Butler.

"This is a positive step on the road to correcting our mental and public health systems," Rep. Butler said. "It is a huge step for this administration to pull these fragile lives out of this larger mix to get them the help and attention they need."

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