



MEDIA RELEASE

State of Tennessee
Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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HENRY APPOINTS FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DEPARTMENT OF INTELLECTUAL and DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

NASHVILLE – Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) Commissioner Jim Henry announced today his appointment of Debra Payne as the first Deputy Commissioner for DIDD, effective immediately.

Payne will assist Henry in the oversight of program operations that include two developmental centers, a statewide community-based service delivery system supported by 2,500 employees, 475 community providers and three regional offices.

“Our state is fortunate to have Debbie fill this crucial role in state government,” Henry said. “She has more than 30 years of policy and leadership experience in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities and she served as acting Commissioner prior to my arrival. She is very familiar with the department’s services in Tennessee.”

Payne most recently served as Assistant Commissioner of Community and Facility Services in the Division of Intellectual Disabilities Services prior to the Tennessee Legislature establishing the agency as a stand-alone department effective January 15, 2011. She remained in that role upon the division becoming a department.

During her career, Mrs. Payne has served in many capacities ranging from direct support professional, behavior therapist, Director of Habilitative Services at Clover Bottom Developmental Center, and Administrative Director for Volunteers of America (VOA), a community provider agency contracted with DIDD. She is credited for assembling a nationally recognized Protection from Harm system while serving as the statewide Director of Protection from Harm for the Tennessee Division of Intellectual Disabilities Services.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to continue to serve Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” Payne said. “I look forward to continuing the progress the administration has made in organizing the department.”

Debra Payne holds a bachelor’s degree in Psychology/Criminal Justice from Middle Tennessee State University.

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