

The Providence Journal: "Stenning to remain head of Rhode Island's state-run hospital"

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Stenning to remain head of Rhode Island's state-run hospital

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Stenning

PROVIDENCE — Governor-elect [Lincoln D. Chafee](#) is keeping Craig S. Stenning as the head of the department that runs the state's hospital and group-home network, a role he has had in the Carcieri administration since June 2008.

With the longest name in state government, the department — formerly known as the Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals — was recently renamed by lawmakers. It now has an even longer name: the Department of Behavioral Health Care, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), a \$446,750,327 state and federally funded budget and 1,223 employees.

"BHDDH is one of the state's most important departments, providing care and support for some of our most vulnerable citizens," Chafee said in a statement issued by his transition office on Tuesday morning.

"Craig has maintained the delivery of high-quality, effective services while instituting reforms that will enhance the department's efficiency. With our state facing fiscal uncertainty, we must seek out reduced costs and savings — but not at the expense of the services disadvantaged Rhode Islanders depend on. I feel confident that Craig can accomplish that difficult but necessary task."

Stenning began his professional career in 1969 as director of the Cranston Law Enforcement Planning Agency. In 1971, he started CODAC Treatment Centers and served as its CEO for 28 years as it became the state's largest outpatient program.

He went to work for the state in 2000 as the first “executive director” of Behavioral Health Care Services within MHRH, a job that carried with it an assignment to merge the divisions of Mental Health and Substance Abuse. In 2004, he was named acting director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities. He also spent five months working at the Department of Human Services on the Global Waiver, before being appointed acting MHRH director in June 2008.

The department now known by an acronym that when spoken aloud sounds like “Buddha,” oversees a public and private network of programs involving mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disabilities, as well as operating the Eleanor Slater Hospital.

Stenning served as chairman of the Cranston School Committee from 1978-82 and as a member of the Cranston City Council from 1982-92.

He earned a bachelor of arts in political science in 1969 and a master’s degree in public administration in 1971 from the University of Rhode Island, and he has done postgraduate work at the University of Miami, Yale University and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

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