

# Perspectives

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## Commissioner Of Health Departure is Announced

Governor Christie has announced the departure of Health Commissioner Mary O'Dowd.

Mary E. O'Dowd first joined the Department of Health in January 2008 as Chief of Staff, subsequently serving as Deputy Commissioner for a year prior to becoming Commissioner in April 2011. During her tenure, she has been responsible for a staff of more than 1,200 and a budget of \$1.9 billion.

O'Dowd's leadership of the Department coincided with extraordinary transformation in the healthcare delivery system in New Jersey. Under her leadership, the Department invested in the healthcare safety net and health information technology, implemented new financial strategies designed to promote quality of care, transitioned senior services programs into the Department of Human Services and championed public health initiatives to enhance population health.

Furthermore, O'Dowd's efforts to improve pregnancy outcomes and health early in life has resulted in a statewide effort to better coordinate health and social services programs, an expansion of the Newborn Screening program, and increased breastfeeding rates as part of a broader obesity prevention program. She also made it a priority to improve the quality of care at the end of life by promoting the need for individuals to discuss their care preferences with their loved ones and health care providers.

O'Dowd led the Department's response and recovery efforts during a number of unprecedented emergent events including: Hurricane Irene, Superstorm Sandy and the West African Ebola epidemic. Governor Christie will nominate O'Dowd to the Board of Directors for Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey.

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## Commissioner Of Health

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Catherine Bennett, the Department's Director of Policy and Strategic Planning, will become acting commissioner. Bennett joined the Department as Director of Policy and Strategic Planning in August 2010.

She has directed strategic public health and healthcare delivery initiatives including healthcare quality assessment, health statistics and informatics, population health and health equity, regional health planning, and health information technology. Prior to joining the Department, Bennett worked as an executive in the private sector, providing consulting, strategy, and management services to federal and state health and human services agencies. Bennett holds a Master of Government Administration from the University of Pennsylvania, a Juris Doctorate from The Dickinson School of Law, and a Bachelor of Arts from Villanova University.

In addition, two other Cabinet members are soon leaving their posts; State Treasurer Andrew Sidamon-Eristoff and Banking and Insurance Commissioner Ken Kobylowski.

- Office of the Governor, Press Release, June 22, 2015



## ALFA 2025 Roadmap

HCANJ is the state partner of ALFA, a trade association that represents assisted living on the national level. To better inform its advocacy efforts, ALFA is conducting a listening tour over the next several months on four topic areas:

1. Workforce development - increasing standards of employee excellence and ensuring high quality
2. Quality care - promoting a better quality of life through technology and services
3. Operational excellence - determining best practices for employee onboarding, technology implementation and professional development
4. Consumer choice—addressing the challenges of long-term services and supports by playing a role in how people finance needs in their later years.

The feedback, answer and discussion held at these events will help ALFA create a Senior Living 2025 roadmap and guide the future of assisted living.

New Jersey's session is being held in mid-July. For more information, please contact Kathy Fiery at the association.