

## New assistant secretary on the job



Martin Mueller began work in October as assistant secretary for Health Systems Quality Assurance at the Washington State Department of Health.

Secretary of Health John Wiesman appointed Mueller to the position.

Health Systems Quality Assurance works to protect and improve the health of people in Washington by supporting the health care delivery system. The division, along with its affiliated boards and commissions, oversees 83 professions.

Before becoming assistant secretary, Mueller directed the department's Office of Public Health Systems Development. This office plays a primary coordinating role with Washington's 35 local health agencies, oversees the state's Public Health Improvement Partnership, and engages in other high-priority public health systems development activities. Karen Jensen, assistant secretary for the HSQA division since 2008, now fills the position Mueller formerly held.

Before coming to the Department of Health in April 2012, Mueller was assistant superintendent for student support for the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), overseeing Washington's teacher credentialing system, along with all K-12 student health, safety, support, and prevention programs administered by that agency. Prior to his appointment as assistant superintendent in October 2006, he was OSPI's director of learning and teaching support for five years, and also directly supervised various school health and safety programs.

Before arriving at OSPI in 1996, Mueller coordinated school safety and prevention programs at Educational Service District 123 in Pasco, Wash., and also provided direct student support services to several schools in Southeast Washington. Prior to that, he was the chief administrator of a small hospital in Southern Idaho that specialized in substance abuse and psychiatric care.

Mueller holds a master's degree in public administration.

## Dr. Maxine Hayes is first recipient of diversity honor bearing her name



The first recipient of the Maxine Hayes Diversity Leadership Legacy Award is none other than the honor's namesake, Dr. Maxine Hayes.

Secretary of Health John Wiesman presented the award to Dr. Hayes Oct. 25 during a diversity summit on the Washington State Department of Health's Tumwater campus. Dr. Hayes, a pediatrician, retired at the end of 2013 after serving as state health officer since 2000.

"A commitment to diversity is central to our agency's mission," Wiesman said. "We have an obligation to see that the greatest variety of perspectives is brought to bear on the issues before us. We therefore celebrate diversity and inclusion, recognizing that our success as an agency depends on these values."

The Hayes Award will go each year to a senior manager at the Department of Health or State Board of Health.

## Marijuana recommendations go to state legislators

Final recommendations for medical marijuana use in Washington went to the Legislature in December.

On Oct. 21, the three agencies involved released draft proposed recommendations to the public for comment. The draft proposed recommendations include possession amounts, special considerations for patients who are minors, and regulatory requirements for producing, processing and retail licensing.

The 2013 budget bill (3ESSB 5034, section 141) directs the Liquor Control Board to work with the Department of Health and the Department of Revenue to develop recommendations for the Legislature regarding the interaction of medical marijuana regulations and the provisions of Initiative 502, which established a recreational marijuana system. The full document is available online. The Liquor Control Board held a public hearing on Nov. 13 before adopting and sending final recommendations to the Legislature in December.

## Overdose deaths from prescription pain meds drop 27 percent

Fewer people in Washington died from prescription pain medication overdoses from 2008 to 2012, after an eightfold increase between 1998 and 2008.

The overdose death rate dropped by 27 percent and the number of deaths dropped from 512 in 2008 to 388 in 2012. This success was tempered by an increase in heroin deaths, which rose from 146 in 2008 to 231 in 2012.

Opioid prescriptions increased dramatically since the late 1990s, leading some to misuse and abuse them. Some of those who became addicted to prescription opioids have transitioned to heroin, because it's cheaper and more readily available, especially in non-urban areas.

In the past three years, the Department of Health created new prevention tools to help health care providers and consumers.

Our long-term goal is to support safe use of pain medications while preventing addiction. These include pain management rules for health care providers and the Prescription Monitoring Program, which helps providers see what patients are being prescribed.

Health care providers continue to play a critical role in preventing prescription drug misuse by: helping patients manage pain medications safely, referring patients to addiction treatment when necessary, and actively using the Prescription Monitoring Program.

To further address opioid overdoses, the department will work this year to expand access to naloxone. Naloxone is a powerful opioid overdose antidote that health care providers can prescribe for those at risk of an overdose.

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## Here's an eye-opener: Drowsy driving kills, injures thousands each year

A National Sleep Foundation survey reports half of Americans report they've driven while drowsy and 20 percent admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel during the previous year.

Each year, the study says, fatigued drivers cause about 100,000 crashes resulting in at least 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries and \$12.5 billion in monetary losses. Drivers 25 and under cause 55 percent of the crashes. Experts say being awake for 18 hours has consequences on drivers similar to a blood alcohol concentration of .008, the legal limit in every state.

Signs that a driver is growing drowsy include difficulty focusing, daydreaming, trouble missing the past few miles, missing signs, yawning repeatedly or rubbing one's eyes, trouble keeping one's head up, irritability and drifting. It's a good idea to pull over or to ask someone else to drive.

## Department of Health offices see leadership changes

One senior manager's retirement means new challenges for two others in the Washington State Department of Health's Health Systems Quality Assurance division. The change also brings a bit of reorganization to the division.

Janet Kastl retired in January as director of the Office of Community Health Systems. The office oversees emergency medical services and trauma programs; research, analysis and data; and rural health. Kastl has worked in public health for more than three decades. In 2012 she received the Governor's Award for Leadership in Management.

Replacing Kastl is Steve Saxe, most recently director of the Office of Health Professions and Facilities. That group oversees and regulates many of Washington's healthcare providers, along with facilities such as hospitals.

Making the move with Saxe are two groups that will remain under his management, certificate of need and construction review. The former determines whether requests to build or expand healthcare facilities are justified. The latter makes sure new and remodeled facilities meet exacting building standards.

Lisa Hodgson, who had been Saxe's deputy, took over for him as director of Health Professions and Facilities. "I'm convinced Lisa's combination of knowledge, experience and leadership skills are exactly what we need to move the important work of HPF forward, and to meet our current and emerging challenges," Assistant Secretary Martin Mueller said in making the announcement.

In another personnel move in the division, Shannon Beigert, Office of Customer Service director since 2008, resigned to accept a position with the Office of the Insurance Commissioner.

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