

Agency for Health Care Administration

By Seann Frazier

The Agency for Health Care Administration (“AHCA”) was created by the Legislature in 1992 when its responsibilities were transferred from the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. The Department is headed by its Secretary, a gubernatorial appointee subject to confirmation by the Senate.

The Agency is the chief health policy and planning entity for the State. It is responsible for the administration of the Medicaid Program, health facility licensure, certification of managed care plans including pre-paid health plans, the certificate of need program, and the operation of the Florida Center for Health Information and Policy Analysis.

AHCA has a budget of nearly \$16 billion. The Medicaid Program alone has a \$13 billion annual budget.

Head of the Agency:

Holly Benson, Secretary
2727 Mahan Drive, Building 3
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Holly Benson assumed the role of Secretary at AHCA in 2008. Secretary Benson previously served as Secretary for the Department of Business and Professional Regulation and served in the Florida House of Representatives, representing Pensacola.

Agency Clerk:

Richard Shoop
(850) 922-5873

General Counsel:

Justin Senior
(850) 922-5873
Email: seniorj@ahca.myflorida.com

The Agency’s General Counsel is Justin Senior, a 1992 graduate from McGill University in Montreal Canada and a graduate with honors from the University of Florida Law School in 1995. Justin joined AHCA in June 2007 as its Chief Appellate Counsel. He was promoted to Acting General Counsel in October 2008 and was made General Counsel in January 2009. Before joining the Agency, Justin ran his own practice in Gainesville. Justin was born in Canada, but was an Australian citizen until 2004, when he became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Number of lawyers on staff: 38, including 28 in Tallahassee and 10 in other Florida offices.

Kinds of cases: The Agency’s administrative cases include rule challenges, complex certificate of need proceedings, administrative litigation involving facility regulation and licensure, Medicaid audits, and appeals from all of these types of cases. The Agency also represents itself in bid protests and in complex civil litigation brought in state and federal courts.

Practice Tips: The Agency operates three major divisions. In addition to the Office of the Secretary, which houses the Chief of Staff and General Counsel's Office, the Agency operates a Division of Medicaid, a Division of Health Quality Assurance, as well as the Florida Center for Health Information and Policy Analysis.

The Deputy Secretary for Medicaid is Dyke Snipes. His Division oversees more than 82,000 Medicaid providers serving more than two million recipients. The Medicaid Program processes more than 400,000 claims every day.

Public records requests should be sent to the Agency's Clerk:

Richard Shoop
Public Records Coordinator
2727 Mahan Drive
Ft. Knox Bldg. 3, Mail Stop #2
Tallahassee, FL 32308-5403
Tele. (850) 922-5873
PublicRecordsReq@ahca.myflorida.com

The Deputy Secretary for the Division of Health Quality Assurance, Elizabeth Dudek, has a wealth of experience and perhaps the greatest institutional knowledge of the Agency. Among other things, her Division is responsible for health facility surveys, the investigation of consumer complaints against health care facilities, managed care, plans and construction and the determination of need for certain new health care facilities and services ("CON"). Ms. Dudek also serves as the Agency's Emergency Operations Coordinator and as a registered lobbyist providing testimony before the legislature on behalf of the agency.