



# State of South Carolina

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Gov. Sanford Names Emma Forkner as DHHS Director HEALTH CARE CONSULTANT, AIR FORCE COLONEL, SC NATIVE TO TAKE HELM OF HEALTHCARE AGENCY**

**Columbia, S.C. – July 27, 2007** – Gov. Mark Sanford today nominated South Carolina native Emma Forkner as the Director of the Department Health and Human Services.

Forkner, 57, is a nurse with 35 years experience, and is currently a Senior Policy Analyst in the area of Health Quality Research at the Altarum Institute in San Antonio, Texas. Forkner joined Altarum in 1997 after retiring from the U.S. Air Force, where she achieved the rank of Colonel and served as Chief Nurse during a number of postings. A native of Dillon, South Carolina, Forkner grew up in the state and received her nursing degree from the Medical University of South Carolina.

Forkner will take the reins of an agency that has been focused on innovative changes to Medicaid aimed at improving the overall quality of care while helping control the rate of the program's growth. Last week, it was announced that South Carolina was chosen to be the first state in the nation to offer Medicaid recipients direct incentives for healthy behavior. Our Medicaid growth-rate has been cut in half over the last four years and is now one of the lowest in the nation. The agency implemented a prescription drug reform package that has saved the state almost \$13 million per year in drug costs. DHHS has also improved patient service with more accurate eligibility determinations and faster application processing times, which have been reduced by nearly 20 percent. The federal government recently recognized the Department for having the most innovative long-term care programs for seniors, including one that allows seniors to transition out of nursing homes back into their home.

“Whether it’s been her time in the military spent as a hands-on healthcare professional or her work in the private sector looking at big picture issues, I think Emma brings a unique skill set to this job,” Gov. Sanford said. “Under Robbie Kerr’s leadership of the agency, this administration has successfully focused on both improving quality of care while helping to control the rate of Medicaid growth, both of which will continue to be a priority for us. I want to thank Emma for agreeing to accept this role, and I welcome her to the team.”

Forkner will begin work at the agency pending Senate confirmation.

“I’m honored that the governor has chosen me to lead the Department of Health and Human Services,” Forkner said. “This agency has made some remarkable strides over the past four years, and it’s a record of progress I’m going to make every effort to continue, while at the same time facing new challenges that may come our way.”

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