

Questions for Rehabilitation Commissioner Nominee

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Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services (CGS § 17b-650a)

The commissioner manages the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), which is responsible for providing (1) services to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; (2) services for persons who are blind or have visual impairments; (3) rehabilitation services, including workers' compensation claimants; and (4) services for older persons and their families.

Questions for Nominee

1. DORS recently assumed responsibility for services provided by the former State Department on Aging, such as elderly nutrition, fall prevention, and federal Older Americans Act programs as well as housing the state's Long-Term Care Ombudsman program. But the Department of Social Services (DSS) still administers the state's elderly Medicaid-related programs, including the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders. Do you anticipate any challenges with having the state's elderly programs administered by two different agencies? How will you work with DSS to alleviate potential conflicts between the agencies or difficulties coordinating services for the elderly?
2. Please describe the mission of DORS as you see it. As commissioner, how will you ensure that the department meets this mission? What particular experience, expertise, and other assets do you bring to DORS?

3. Other than funding issues, what do you consider to be the greatest challenge to increasing access to elderly programs and services?
4. How has the partial federal government shutdown affected your service provision? What action has the agency taken to mitigate any impacts?
5. Public Act 17-30 created a new Advisory Board for Persons Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing chaired by the DORS commissioner, which replaced the Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired. The board must advocate and advise the governor and General Assembly on state policies affecting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and their relationship to the public, industry, health care, and educational opportunity. How has this change benefited the deaf or hard of hearing community? Can you provide an update on the board's recent activity?
6. The law requires the Advisory Board for Persons Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing to monitor services and refer people with complaints about interpreter qualifications to Connecticut's protection and advocacy system. How frequent are such complaints?
7. What are your priorities for the 2019 session? How are those different from last year?