



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Friday, September 30, 2011

CONTACT: Brie Callahan
Annie Thompson

(o. 312-814-3158; c. 312-636-5989)
(o. 217-782-7355; c. 217-720-1853)

Governor Makes Acting Appointments at Illinois Departments of Public Health, Children & Family Services

Thanks Outgoing IDPH Director Dr. Arnold for His Years of Service

CHICAGO – September 30, 2011. Governor Quinn today appointed Dr. Craig Conover as acting director of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Jean Ortega-Piron as acting director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Dr. Conover replaces Dr. Damon Arnold, who is leaving IDPH to create a Master's of Public Health degree program at Chicago State University.

"As he departs to pursue a new opportunity, I want to thank Dr. Arnold for his years of dedicated service to the people of Illinois," Governor Quinn said. "Dr. Conover's experience in a variety of medical fields will ensure that Illinois' public health system continues to protect and improve the health of the people of our great state."

Dr. Arnold's tenure at IDPH has seen the department winning a number of awards and grants, including a \$24 million federal grant to implement its "We Choose Health" initiative, announced yesterday. Under his leadership, the department has consistently received top scores from the Centers for Disease Control for public health preparedness, and has transformed its grant tracking and monitoring system to increase accountability. Dr. Arnold also worked to secure public-private partnerships for the state's State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) to improve the health of Illinois residents.

Dr. Craig Conover has held several positions at IDPH since 2002, currently serving as Illinois' chief epidemiologist and medical director of the office of health protection, where he is charged with responding to and preventing disease outbreaks. Before joining IDPH, he served as attending physician at the Emergency Department at the University of Vermont and Chairman of the Division of Infectious Diseases at Provident Hospital in Chicago. Dr. Conover holds a master's degree in public health from the John Hopkins School of Medicine and an M.D. from the University of Rochester.

The Governor also appointed Jean Ortega-Piron to serve as acting director at DCFS. Since 1996, Ortega-Piron has served as Deputy Director, Guardian and Advocacy, acting as guardian for all children committed to DCFS by Illinois' juvenile courts. In that role, she was instrumental in establishing the first-in-the-nation Memorandum of Understanding between a state child welfare agency and Mexico, and also established a system for monitoring psychotropic medications for state wards, described by the *Chicago Tribune* as the "gold standard" in the country. She has also served as the DCFS chief administrative law judge and administrator of the Appeals and Hearings Unit. Prior to that, she worked as chief legal counsel for the Illinois Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. Ms. Ortega-Piron is a graduate of Rosary College and the Chicago-Kent School of Law.

###