

Missouri | Sarah Willson, MBA, BSN

Director

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

Sarah Willson was appointed director of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services by Gov. Mike Kehoe on Jan. 14, 2025. Willson brings a wealth of valuable experience to DHSS given her background as a practicing nurse and healthcare executive.

Willson's healthcare career has been defined by advocating for advancing quality care, developing efficiencies and improving outcomes for patients, as well as collaborating with lawmakers to develop healthcare legislation at the state and federal level. She has led statewide conversations on improving care for children, women, seniors and other vulnerable populations.



Willson was born in Missouri and raised in a rural community. Growing up, she and her family used services at her local public health agency, which introduced her to the importance and power of the public health system.

Prior to joining DHSS, Willson served as Vice President of Clinical and Regulatory Affairs for the Missouri Hospital Association for nearly a decade. She provided clinical and regulatory guidance to more than 140 Missouri hospitals in rural and urban communities, serving as a key expert on licensing, survey processes and compliance for acute care, critical access, long-term care, rehabilitation and psychiatric facilities.

Willson has also held leadership roles with Compassus Hospice and Palliative Care, where she oversaw operations in multiple states and became a Certified Hospice and Palliative Care Administrator. At Capital Region Medical Center, she directed patient care services across several departments.

Willson has a Master of Business Administration in health management from William Woods University and a Bachelor of Science in nursing from the University of Missouri-Columbia. She is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives and has been recognized with several awards throughout her career.