

ACHI Director Named State's First Chief Health Officer

LITTLE ROCK, AR – [Joe Thompson, MD, MPH](#), Director of the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, was selected by Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee to serve as the state's first chief health officer.

The Arkansas General Assembly created the position earlier this year in legislation that merges the Department of Health with the Department of Human Services. As chief health officer, Thompson will take a direct role in helping to set the state's health agenda. "This affords me the unique responsibility of advising Governor Huckabee on health issues both nationally and locally. Together, we have the opportunity to positively influence the health of Arkansans for years to come." Thompson said.

Specifically, the legislation states that the chief health officer will serve as the public's representative on the state Board of Health, help the board create health-awareness programs, and provide "reliable information" to state lawmakers.

The governor described Thompson as "a true visionary and leader in health policy and a person whose work has earned him a national reputation for being an innovator and creator as it relates to the policy of improving the health of people."

Dr. Thompson will assume his new duties on August 13, 2005, and will continue as ACHI's executive director while serving as chief health officer. He expects to divide his time equally between the two positions.

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