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N.H. Institute for Health Policy and Practice Established at UNH

Edgar Helms, Jr., Appointed Director

By [*Sharon Keeler*](#)
UNH News Bureau

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Editors: A digital jpeg photo of Edgar Helms, Jr., is available by calling the News Bureau at 603-862-1566, or by downloading online at <http://www.unh.edu/news/Feb01/Helms.jpg>.

DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire, Dartmouth Medical School and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services have entered into a formal alliance to improve the health and well-being of citizens of the state.

The alliance establishes the New Hampshire Institute for Health Policy and Practice at UNH's School of Health and Human Services. The institute will work with state government agencies, health care providers, payers and consumers to identify health care needs and conduct applied research to explore and frame solutions.

"The institute presents an unprecedented opportunity to identify and explore health service policy issues of benefit to the state's legislature and its citizens," says David Pearson, interim dean of UNH's School of Health and Human Services. "There are so many people at the university who are working to create new knowledge and disseminate good information to help others become healthier and stronger. I'm proud that we were chosen to lead this initiative."

The Institute for Health Policy and Practice builds upon a history of partnership between the N.H. Department of Health and Human Services and UNH, says DHHS Commissioner Donald Shumway. It is similar to UNH's successful Institute on Disability, created from a partnership with the university and DHHS in the 1980s.

"This new institute combines health services research and policy analysis with hands-on technical assistance to policy makers, health care providers and communities," Shumway says. "For the Department of Health and Human Services, this is an investment in 'growing' our future workforce and an opportunity to improve the health of the citizens of New Hampshire."

Dartmouth Medical School also worked with the state and UNH to conceptualize the institute. "We now look forward to collaborating on research projects and policy studies that benefit the state and the New England region," says Anne Brisson, research assistant professor in Dartmouth's Department of Community and Family Medicine.

Edgar Helms, Jr., has been appointed director of the institute. Most recently chief administrative officer of Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Hampshire, he brings 30 years of experience to this position.

Helms began his career in 1971 as health planner in New Hampshire's Office of Health Policy & Planning. Throughout his career he has worked for the U.S. Senate, the Office of the Governor, and served as New Hampshire's commissioner of health and welfare. Helms later founded Helms & Company, Inc., a health services consulting firm.

A graduate of UNH, where he received his master's degree in American government, Helms says this position gives him an opportunity to "take all the work I've done since 1971 and apply it in a meaningful way.

"I'm absolutely fascinated with health policy and its practice," says Helms. "Great work has been done in the state in the area of public health, but there's more to be done. I'm excited to facilitate this new alliance that brings the resources of the state, UNH and Dartmouth together."

Helms will have offices in Durham and Concord. While the institute's initial agenda is being finalized, he says some of the broader issues involve long term care and working to convert the volume of health data that is collected in the state into "meaningful" community health status

"UNH has done an extraordinary job bringing in research money for the physical sciences, and the same challenges exist for those of us who care about the social sciences," says Helms. "There's a real level of commitment on the part of the university to be a deep, steady and trusted partner with the state, and this new institute is a great example of that."

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