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State psychiatric hospital hires a chief nursing officer

Oregon State Hospital has hired the former chief nursing officer of McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center in Springfield to be its chief nursing officer.

Kathleen Deacon fills a brand new position that will be critical to OSH's successful transition to the two new psychiatric hospitals being constructed in Salem and Junction City.

"In this role, Ms. Deacon will work closely with our existing nursing team whose members to date have done a great job of organizing and leading their division," said Superintendent Roy J. Orr. "But this division is growing and requires additional resources to meet existing and future needs."

As CNO, Deacon will have 24-hour oversight responsibility for all nursing care and will direct the overall operations of the hospital's nursing services. In addition, she will oversee laboratory and infection control programs.

"She is a dynamic and experienced leader who will play a critical part in the successful transition to the new hospital and continued implementation of a centralized model of care," said Orr. "In the role of CNO, she can help foster the integration of state and community services and work in close collaboration with staff and partners to ensure that Oregon has a comprehensive and coordinated mental health system."

Deacon, who has 38 years of experience in the nursing and health care fields, said she is looking forward to participating in the continued planning, building and moving to the new hospital.

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“This is an exciting and challenging time to be working in the state’s mental health care system,” said Deacon. “And an incredible opportunity to work with dedicated clinicians and support personnel to build a strong, competent and cohesive team that serves the needs of Oregonians with mental illness.”

Deacon, a resident of Marcola, holds a master’s degree in nursing and community health from Oregon Health & Science University. A master’s or postdoctoral degree is a regulatory requirement for the position of chief nursing officer.

She has served in a number of local and state organizations, including the Northwest Organization of Nurse Executives, Lane Community College Health Occupations Advisory Council, Springfield School District 19, American Heart Association, Lane Memorial Blood Bank and United Way/Success by Six Campaign.

The 2007 Legislature approved funding for two replacement psychiatric hospitals in Salem, opening in 2010, and Junction City, opening in 2013. For more information about the replacement project, go to www.oregon.gov/DHS/HRP/