

Robert Knodell [nOh-del], Director, Missouri Department of Social Services



A native of southeast Missouri, Robert Knodell has led the Missouri Department of Social Services since October 2021. After 19 months as Acting Director, he was appointed by Missouri Governor Mike Parson to be the full-status Director on June 2, 2023.

Areas of focus for Director Knodell have included improving workforce compensation and aggressive recruitment and retention strategies to reduce vacancies and staff turnover. He has worked closely with Governor Parson and the General Assembly on historic pay increases for team members, shift differential increases for evening and overnight congregate care staff, and flexible workplace innovations. He has successfully worked to accelerate new technology projects to replace and upgrade antiquated systems to more efficiently manage workloads and to better serve the over 2 million Missourians who utilize DSS programs. Director Knodell has focused on empowering front-line customer-serving DSS team members across our state, and on improving stakeholder relationships with partners and advocates.

Director Knodell's career has included lengthy service to the state on the staffs of the Missouri General Assembly and the Governor in budgetary, policy, and leadership roles. His areas of focus in the Governor's Office included healthcare/Medicaid, education, and rural development.

His service includes a recent stint as Acting Director of Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, where he worked to secure passage of Missouri's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), launched the state's Public Health Transformation Initiative, and helped secure tens of millions of dollars in funding to fight COVID-19 which included state-run monoclonal antibody infusion centers, medical staffing surge support, and vaccination programs.

A graduate of Southeast Missouri State University, Robert lives in Holts Summit, Missouri with his wife Mandy and daughter Sally.