

## **Kristi Putnam [PUHT-num], Secretary, Arkansas Department of Human Services**



Kristi Putnam became the Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Human Services in January 2023. She has more than 20 years of policy and hands-on experience in human services, early childhood services, education, workforce development, and health policy, including implementation of Kentucky's Medicaid transformation and several other innovative statewide policy and process initiatives.

Kristi has provided policy and strategy guidance to several legislative leaders, including House leadership in the Kentucky

House of Representatives, federal agencies, such as The Administration for Children & Families' Office of Family Assistance, and many state Health & Human Services agencies.

Kristi served in the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), beginning in March 2016 in the child welfare and family assistance office. After serving with CHFS for two years and leading Medicaid

Section 1115 waiver innovation efforts, she was appointed in May 2018 to serve as Deputy Secretary of CHFS, where she served until December 2019. In this role, Kristi helped lead impactful and collaborative cross-cabinet reforms in health policy, public benefits delivery, human-centered design and workforce strategies, operational technology improvements, child welfare, and education supports. She assisted in leading daily operations for CHFS, a cabinet with more than 8,000 employees and an operating budget of over \$14 billion.

After her time at CHFS, Kristi co-founded Connecting the Dots Policy Solutions, a policy consulting group focused on driving government innovations in the intersection of health, human services, education, workforce development, and economic growth.

Kristi also served as the Child Welfare Services Manager, Chief of Community-Based Care, and Statewide Foster Care Licensing Specialist in Florida's privatized community-based system of foster care and adoption. Her prior experience in Florida included policy and legislative development and implementation in the Department of Education, Department for Children and Families, the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, and Executive Office of the Governor.

Most recently, Kristi served as the Chief People Officer for AppHarvest, a publicly traded agtech startup in Kentucky.

Kristi was born and raised in the small town of DeLand, Florida, graduated from DeLand High School, and earned her Bachelor's degree in English and Social Work from Florida State University. She also earned a Master's degree in Psychology in Industrial & Organizational Change from Southern New Hampshire University.

Kristi and her husband Claude have three adult daughters and two grandchildren.