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Kristen Rhodes Named Northampton's First Division of Community Care Director

NORTHAMPTON - Today, Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra announced the appointment of Kristen Rhodes as the director of the City of Northampton's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Community Care (DCC). Ms. Rhodes will lead the next phase of the DCC as the city works to implement alternative responses to some types of public safety calls in the City of Northampton.

"I am excited to welcome Ms. Rhodes to the Division of Community Care," shared Mayor Sciarra, "I look forward to working with her to execute all of the hard work and careful planning begun by Commissioner O'Leary and former Implementation Director Sean Donovan. Kristen's short-term goals include hiring staff, engaging with the community, and establishing a community response team by the end of spring."

For more than 15 years, Ms. Rhodes worked in the Education and Human Services fields, developing and managing programs for children and adults. She worked in therapeutic crisis management and alternative care models, developing and implementing training and policies around person-centered and trauma-informed practices. In addition, she has experience collaborating with public sector agencies to provide wraparound support for individuals in the community. Kristen received her Master's of Education from Springfield College and Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with a concentration on Social Services from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

"I am eager to put my expertise to work for the people of Northampton and to bring this much-needed, innovative service to the community," said Kristen Rhodes. "I have been inspired by the work of the Northampton Policing Review Commission (NPRC) and the thoughtful input received from stakeholders and community members who are collaborating with the DHHS and DCC. I look forward to building a Division that will provide connection, resilience, and support to our community members during difficult moments in their lives."

DHHS Commissioner Merridith O'Leary added, "We continue to move deliberately forward in our DCC planning as we fill this critical role with such a capable person. I am confident that Northampton will benefit from Kristen's years of experience working with community stakeholders that share a common goal of addressing racial and social inequities."

On April 4, 2023, Commissioner O'Leary will introduce Ms. Rhodes to the City Council's City Services Subcommittee, along with a general update on the Division of Community Care. See the city's website for specific information about the time and location.

For more information, please visit the Division of Community Care | Northampton official website at <https://northamptonma.gov/2471/40739/Division-of-Community-Care> or DHHS Commissioner Merridith O'Leary at moleary@northamptonma.gov or 413-587-1214.