



Talladega College Alumna, Rica Lewis-Payton, Named VA Network Director

Rica Lewis-Payton, MHA, FACHE, has been named network director of the South Central VA Health Care Network, an integrated system of 10 VA medical centers providing a full range of specialty, tertiary, mental health, and long term care in an eight-state region. She starts her new position on March 11.

"With her strong leadership skills and personal drive, Rica has a proven track record of ensuring VA health care is more attentive to Veterans and their families; more performance-based and quality-driven; and better supported by medical education, research, and information systems," said Michael Winn, acting director of the South Central VA Health Care Network. I look forward to working with her again.

The South Central VA Health Care Network is one of the largest networks in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) responsible for VA medical centers and Veterans health care services throughout Mississippi, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and parts of Texas, Missouri, Alabama and Florida, more than 18,800 employees, and a budget of almost \$3 billion.

Currently, Lewis-Payton serves as medical center director of the Birmingham, Alabama VA Medical Center, responsible for the operations and management of the medical center and nine outpatient clinics. Managing a \$370 million budget and approximately 2,000 employees, she focused on quality patient care delivered efficiently through implementation of a comprehensive system of metrics, resulting in Birmingham VA Medical Center being recognized as a high performing VHA facility for the last three years. Under her leadership, Birmingham was named by VA as one of four Centers of Innovation in patient-centered care and cultural transformation.

Lewis-Payton is no stranger to the Jackson area. Prior to her current position, she served as South Central VA Health Care Network deputy director from 2004 to 2008. She also held leadership roles in public service, including Special Assistant to the Vice Chancellor of Health Affairs and Dean of the Medical School at the University of Mississippi Medical Center and Mississippi State Medicaid Commissioner in Governor Ronnie Musgroves administration.

Frequently recognized for her leadership abilities, she has been selected as Outstanding Alumnus of the School of Health Professions at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), one of the 50 Leading Business Women in the State of Mississippi, and a Distinguished Woman by the Greater Jackson Chapter of Girl Scouts. A native of Birmingham, Ala., Lewis-Payton holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Talladega College and a Master of Science in Hospital and Health Administration from UAB. She and her husband, Eddie Payton, have two adult children.