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Slonaker named new director of Utah Health Policy Project

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The Utah Health Policy Project has named Matt Slonaker its new executive director, the organization's board announced Tuesday.

Slonaker's appointment is effective immediately and fills a void left by the June departure of UHPP co-founder and former executive director Judi Hilman. He has been working as UHPP's current director of Medicaid policy and collaboration since August 2012.

"We are excited to bring Matt's energy, policy expertise, and relationship skills to the director role," Jennifer Pathak, UHPP's board chair, said in a news release. "We know he will provide the leadership to address the critical issues created by launching the Affordable Care Act and other important health needs facing Utahns."

Slonaker, 33, is a native of Montana and a 2002 graduate of the University of Montana. Prior to working in Utah, he gained national and state-level policy experience as a staffer for the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, working on health care reform issues with its chair, Sen. Max Baucus, D-Montana. He later worked on state Medicaid reform at the New York City-based health care organization Care for the Homeless.

Slonaker currently represents UHPP and other Utah advocacy groups as a member of Utah Gov. Gary Herbert's Medicaid Expansion Community Working Group, which is considering state options for Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act.

In a prepared statement, Slonaker said that as UHPP's new director, he hopes to build strong community partnerships that will strengthen the agency's role as a leader in state health policy research and advocacy.

"We have monumental challenges ahead of us, but given Utah's collaborative spirit and commitment to finding workable solutions, we will succeed in creating a better health care system for Utah families," he said. "There's a lot to do and I can't wait to get started."

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