

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**IRETA founder Michael Flaherty transitions to new role; Peter Luongo named new executive director**

**Pittsburgh, PA -- July 7, 2011 -- Michael T. Flaherty, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and founder and executive director of the Institute for Research, Education and Training in the Addictions (IRETA) for the past twelve years, has announced that he is stepping down from that role to focus more directly on the clinical development of recovery focused models of care in substance use, co-occurring disorders and mental health. He will continue to work with IRETA as a senior consultant.**

**Since 1999, Pittsburgh-based IRETA grew from its origins within Pittsburgh's St. Francis Health System and its Institute for Psychiatry and Addictions, to steadily develop into a recognized regional, state, national and international resource to improve policies, research, education, prevention, intervention and treatment of the illness of addiction and develop best practices to achieve and sustain recovery.**

**"IRETA has played a key role in advancing health care reform components relating to parity of mental and physical illnesses and the understanding of addiction as a chronic illness," Dr. Flaherty recounted. He cites IRETA's role in the shift from treating addiction as an acute condition to a chronic illness approach as one of the major accomplishments of the last decade. "IRETA's small, dedicated group of professionals works daily to reframe an understanding of addiction as a devastating illness that impacts victims and families rather than as a moral failing or crime," he said. "As a result, more effective recovery oriented systems of care have emerged to transform lives."**

**Dr. Flaherty will continue to work in the field collaborating with others to build more refined models of care and measures that can enhance an individual's opportunity to attain and sustain recovery. "Recovery is, after all, the true definition of success," he stated. "Given the growing need, financial challenge and even obligation to evolve a better recovery focused approach, I believe that this is an important direction for the next phase of my work."**

**IRETA board member Charlie Bishop commented, "Mike has a wonderful ability to build consensus, despite all odds. His compassionate spirit inspires people to broaden their points of view." He adds, "His collaborative work has brought true recovery into the national consciousness."**

**Dr. Flaherty has been involved at the state and national level with a number of initiatives. He has been a special advisor to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy on Leadership in Medical Education and**

**in Building Recovery Oriented Systems of Care. As a consultant for the Pennsylvania Department of Health/Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs and the Department of Public Welfare/Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, he chaired and facilitated the statewide Drug and Alcohol Coalition and built the first ever interdepartmental performance plan. He currently is a member of the National Advisory Committee (NIATx and Advancing Recovery Initiatives); the Stakeholder Workgroup, Washington Circle for Quality Improvement; board of directors of The Annapolis Coalition on the Behavioral Health Workforce; the Community Care Behavioral Health Organization; The Consensus Panel on Recovery for The Betty Ford Institute; and serves on the Advisory Board of Brandies/Harvard NIDA Center on Managed Care and Drug Abuse Treatment.**

**In introducing Dr. Flaherty's successor, IRETA board chair Rev. James Simms said, "IRETA will be in good hands" under the leadership of the new executive director Peter F. Luongo, Ph.D.,LCSW-C, who will assume his new post on August 1.**

**Dr. Luongo brings more than 30 years of experience working with consumer and advisory groups, elected officials, and other administrators in the planning, implementation and administration of substance abuse, mental health, juvenile justice, criminal justice and public health services on state and local levels. He has experience in federal and state public policy development, implementation and oversight, developing innovative public/private program partnerships that link social, medical and behavioral health services and solve complex policy and operational issues.**

**He is currently the managing director of his own health management and applied research practice in Germantown, Maryland. He previously was director of the State of Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration, with responsibility for planning and implementing the public substance abuse prevention, intervention and treatment system. Dr. Luongo also has served in various capacities in the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Addiction, Victim, and Mental Health Services in Montgomery County, Maryland.**

**Dr. Luongo holds bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology from the Catholic University of America and a Ph.D. in social work from the University of Maryland. He has been a faculty associate at the Johns Hopkins University and was recognized with their Excellence in Teaching Award . Dr. Luongo was named Maryland's 2008 Social Worker of the Year by the National Association of Social Workers.**

**"IRETA is so well-positioned regionally and nationally as a forward-thinking leader in identifying problems and developing practical solutions," said Dr. Luongo. "This solid reputation comes from effectively combining research, policy and best practice at the service level while also influencing broader public policy initiatives in a meaningful way. As a clinician at heart, I see the value of this approach in advancing true recovery - our primary goal. I am excited to be able to apply my experience in furthering this mission," he added.**

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**About IRETA . . .**

**The Institute for Research, Education and Training in Addictions (IRETA), based in Pittsburgh, is a 501 (c)(3) established in 1999 with the vision to integrate knowledge and science with service so that every person has the opportunity to achieve wellness and maintain recovery from addiction. IRETA accomplishes its mission to improve the recognition, prevention, treatment, research and policy related to addiction and recovery by working with national, state, and local partners and providing:**

- \* Accurate and timely dissemination of evidence-based information;**
- \* Bidirectional exchange of constructive knowledge related to addiction and recovery; and**
- \* Knowledge of addiction and recovery in a culturally competent manner**

**[www.ireta.org](http://www.ireta.org)**



IRETA administers the NeATTC, a federally funded program.