



# Speaker Biographies



**Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention**  
Center for State, Tribal, Local,  
and Territorial Support



**Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH**  
**Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
**Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry**



Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH, is the 19<sup>th</sup> director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the ninth administrator of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. She is an influential scholar whose pioneering research has helped advance the national and global response to HIV/AIDS. Dr. Walensky is also a well-respected expert on the value of testing and treatment of deadly viruses.

Dr. Walensky served as chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases at Massachusetts General Hospital from 2017 to 2020 and professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School from 2012 to 2020. She served on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic and conducted research on vaccine delivery and strategies to reach underserved communities.

Dr. Walensky is recognized internationally for her work to improve HIV screening and care in South Africa and nationally recognized for motivating health policy and informing clinical trial design and evaluation in a variety of settings.

She is a past chair of the Office of AIDS Research Advisory Council at the National Institutes of Health, chair-elect of the HIV Medical Association, and previously served as an advisor to both the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

Originally from Maryland, Dr. Walensky received her bachelor of arts from Washington University in St. Louis, her doctor of medicine from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and her master of public health from the Harvard School of Public Health.

**José T. Montero, MD, MHCDS**  
**Director, Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support**



José T. Montero, MD, MHCDS, is the director of CDC's Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support, where he oversees support to the US health departments and those serving tribal nations and insular areas. He provides leadership for key activities and technical assistance designed to improve the public health system's capacity and performance to achieve the nation's goals in population health. With his team, Dr. Montero leads efforts to create communities of practice where CDC's senior leaders work with the executive leaders of the public health jurisdictions, key partners, and stakeholders to identify new, improved, or innovative strategies to prepare the public health system to respond to changing environments.

Previously, Dr. Montero served as vice president of population health and health system integration at Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock Keene. In that capacity, he helped

the healthcare system advance its Healthy Monadnock population health strategy. Key components of this process were improved partnerships with all organizations engaged in addressing social determinants of health for the population served and development of a sustainability pathway for the region's population health strategy.

For seven years, Dr. Montero served as director of the Division of Public Health Services at the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). In that role, he led the delivery of high-quality, evidence-based services and prompt response to public health threats and emerging issues in the state. Dr. Montero was credited with maintaining New Hampshire's reputation as one of America's healthiest states. He oversaw the development and implementation of policies that advanced a healthier population, as well as the development of the state public health improvement plan and its implementation at the regional level. Under his leadership, DHHS developed a systematic approach for collecting, using, and disseminating actionable data and improved coordination between public health and health care. In New Hampshire, Dr. Montero also served as chief of New Hampshire's Bureau of Communicable Disease Control, deputy director for public health emergency preparedness and response, and state epidemiologist.

Dr. Montero has extensive experience in public health leadership and in the prevention and control of infectious diseases. His major academic and practice interests are related to social determinants of health, public health systems, and the integration of public health and population approaches into clinical practice.

Dr. Montero has held many national and regional committee leadership positions, including serving as president of the board of directors of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and chair of ASTHO's Infectious Diseases Policy Committee. He worked closely with CDC as a member of the board of scientific advisors for the Office of Infectious Diseases, as a member of the Social Determinants of Health Think Tank, a subgroup of the STLT Subcommittee to the Advisory Committee to the Director of CDC, and as a member of the CDC Advisory Committee to the Director of CDC to prevent tuberculosis in healthcare settings. He has also served on the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the National Academy for State Health Policy, the National Academies of Medicine, Sciences, and Engineering Roundtable on Population Health Improvement, the New Hampshire Citizens Health Initiative, Dartmouth Medical School's Leadership Preventive Medicine Residency Advisory Committee, and the Foundation for Healthy Communities.

Dr. Montero holds a medical degree from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. He specialized in family medicine and completed his residency at the Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia. He also holds an epidemiology degree from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá, Colombia, received his certification of field epidemiology from the Colombia Field Epidemiology Training Program and a master of healthcare delivery science from Dartmouth College.

### **Jenna Meyer, MPH, BSN (CDR, USPHS)**

**Acting Director, Office of Tribal Affairs and Strategic Alliances, Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support**



Commander Jenna Meyer, MPH, BSN, is the acting director of the Office of Tribal Affairs and Strategic Alliances within CDC's Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support. Commander Meyer is a Commissioned Corps Officer in the United States Public Health Service. She received her master of public health in maternal child health from the University of Minnesota and her bachelor of science degree in Nursing from the University of Missouri – St. Louis. She is an international board-certified lactation consultant, certified in public health, and certified in maternal newborn nursing.

Her previous assignment was as a public health advisor to Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR). During her four years with SOAR, LCDR Meyer helped bring attention to rural health, assisted in strengthening the local response to opioid use disorder and its consequences, and facilitated opportunities to build the capacity of the public health system in Appalachia Kentucky. Prior to this assignment, CDR Meyer spent eight years working for the Indian Health Service in both urban and rural areas. During that time, she worked as an obstetrical nurse, lead coordinator for the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, and as director of Quality Management. Throughout her career, CDR Meyer has worked closely with federal, state, tribal, and community partners to advance public health and welling being through collaboration, innovation, communication, and focus on prevention.

### **Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH**

**Deputy Director for Public Health Service and Implementation Science**



Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH, is the Deputy Director for Public Health Service and Implementation Science (DDPHSIS) at CDC, where he leads, promotes, and facilitates programs and policies that identify and respond to public health threats, improve health domestically and internationally, and puts science into action. Prior to his role as deputy director, Dr. Smith served as director and state health officer for the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and as secretary of health. As such, he was a member of the governor's cabinet and provided senior scientific and executive leadership

for the agency. Dr. Smith also recently served as president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

In his role as director and state health officer for ADH, Dr. Smith also oversaw the delivery of over 100 services through the main office in Little Rock and over 90 local health units in each of the state's 75 counties. These services included immunizations, WIC, outbreak response, vital records, chronic disease prevention, preparedness and emergency response, injury and

violence prevention, and suicide prevention. Additionally, Dr. Smith previously served the ADH as Branch Chief for Infectious Diseases, State Epidemiologist, and Deputy Director for Public Health Programs.

Dr. Smith received a bachelor's degree from Rice University in Houston, Texas, and a master of arts from Dallas Theological Seminary, also in Texas. He completed his doctor of medicine from Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and his master of public health from the University of Texas School of Public Health, Houston. Dr. Smith is board-certified in internal medicine and infectious diseases and holds voluntary faculty positions in the Division of Infectious Diseases at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Medicine and in the Epidemiology Department at the College of Public Health. His clinical interests include HIV, global health, and emerging infectious diseases.

Dr. Smith is also an ordained minister in the Anglican Church. He and his wife served as medical missionaries at Kijabe Hospital in Kenya. During that time, he served in several different roles, including chief of internal medicine, medical intern program director, and infectious diseases consultant. He also served as country medical director for the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Kenya and Senior Medical Technical Advisor for the AIDS Relief program in East Africa. Dr. Smith and his wife have four children adopted from Kenya.

### **Alison Kelly, MPIA**

#### **Director Office of Appropriations, Office of Financial Resources**



Alison Kelly is the director of the Office of Appropriations. Prior to coming to OFR, she served as the associate director for policy in CDC's Center for Global Health (CGH). In this capacity, she was instrumental in the stand up of CDC's \$600 million global health security program. Kelly's previous leadership positions within CGH included serving as director of the Overseas Operations Office and acting principal deputy of the Division of Global HIV/AIDS. She also served overseas as business service officer and deputy director for the HIV/AIDS program in CDC's office in Beijing, China. Prior to her assignment in China, she served as CDC's strategy and innovation officer for the Coordinating Office for Global Health (COGH). Kelly has been with CDC for over 20 years, and has held management and policy-related positions in the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, and the National Center for Environmental Health. She has also worked in CDC's Washington Office. In 1992, Kelly received her master's degree in international affairs and pacific studies from the University of California, San Diego. She specialized in economic policy and an emphasis in program design and evaluation. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology and Asian studies from Dartmouth College.

### **Elizabeth Dalsey, MA**

**Health Communication Specialist, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health**



Elizabeth Dalsey is a health communication specialist at the CDC National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the Western States Division. She began work at NIOSH in 2006 after receiving her master's degree in communication from Michigan State University. She currently conducts communication activities and outreach for the to promote NIOSH knowledge, interventions, and technologies. Elizabeth also manages NIOSH's American Indian and Alaska Native Initiative.

### **Georgia Moore, MS**

**Associate Director for Policy, Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support**



Ms. Moore has worked in communications, policy, program management, and strategic planning at CDC since 1996. Since December 2009, she has served as the associate director for policy in the Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). She leads and advises on strategy and budget formulation, performance measurement, risk and issues management, and policy efforts. She also guided development and the continuing implementation of CDC's Grant Funding Profiles activity. She holds bachelor's degrees in biology and journalism and a master's degree in microbiology.

### **Peggy Honein, PhD, MPH**

**Director, Division of Birth Defects and Infant Disorders, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities**



Margaret (Peggy) Honein, PhD, MPH, is an epidemiologist and director of the Division of Birth Defects and Infant Disorders at CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. In this role, Dr. Honein oversees efforts to promote healthy birth and optimal development for all children. She previously served as the Chief of CDC's Birth Defects Branch.

### **Nancy Messonnier, MD (CAPT, USPHS, RET)** **Director, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases**



Nancy Messonnier, MD, is the director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) and is currently leading CDC's efforts on COVID-19 vaccines. In late 2019, Dr. Messonnier directed NCIRD to activate a center-based response to an unknown respiratory disease in China that later transitioned to a full agency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the COVID-19 response, Dr. Messonnier is leading the effort to support the COVID-19 vaccine program in the areas of distribution, administration, implementation, safety, and access for hard-to-reach populations, with the goal of ensuring that a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is available to every American who wants one.

Since becoming director of NCIRD in 2016, Dr. Messonnier has been a champion for the prevention of disease, disability, and death through immunization and control of respiratory and other vaccine-preventable diseases. Dr. Messonnier spearheaded CDC's Vaccinate with Confidence initiative, which works with national organizations to strengthen public trust in vaccines and prevent vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks by advancing three key priorities: *Protect Communities, Empower Families, and Stop Myths*. The initiative includes activities aimed at reaching communities with low flu vaccination rates or high likelihood of COVID-19 complications, such as African American and Hispanic communities.

Dr. Messonnier began her public health career in 1995 as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer in what is now the Deputy Director for Infectious Diseases and has held a number of leadership posts across CDC. She served as acting director for the Center for Preparedness and Response for four months in 2019, deputy director of NCIRD from October 2014 to March 2016, and led the Meningitis and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Branch in NCIRD's Division of Bacterial Diseases from 2007 to 2012.

Dr. Messonnier has extensive experience in prevention and control of bacterial meningitis and, among other accomplishments, played a pivotal role in the successful public-private partnership to develop and implement a low-cost vaccine to prevent epidemic meningococcal meningitis in Africa. More than 150 million people in the African Meningitis Belt have been vaccinated with MenAfriVac since 2010, with remarkable impact. Dr. Messonnier has also been a leader in CDC's preparedness and response to anthrax, including during the 2001 intentional anthrax release and in evaluating simplified schedules for use of licensed anthrax vaccine.

Dr. Messonnier has written more than 140 articles and chapters and has received numerous awards. She received her bachelor of arts from the University of Pennsylvania and doctor of medicine from the University of Chicago School of Medicine and completed internal medicine residency training at the University of Pennsylvania.