

Visit the [LPHA Info Hub](#) for news and links to resources.

Attachment:

- Fluoride talking points
- Fentanyl test strips letter
- Fentanyl test strips FAQ

UPDATES

Sarah Willson

Sarah Willson begins her tenure as acting director of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services next Friday, Feb. 14 after being appointed by Governor Mike Kehoe in January. She brings a wealth of valuable experience to DHSS given her background as a practicing nurse and healthcare executive. Willson was born in Missouri and raised in a rural community. Growing up, she and her family used services at her local public health agency, which introduced her to the importance and power of the public health system. Willson's healthcare career has been defined by advocating for advancing quality care, developing efficiencies and improving outcomes for patients, as well as collaborating with lawmakers to develop healthcare legislation at the state and federal level. She has led statewide conversations on improving care for children, women, seniors and other vulnerable populations.

Prior to joining DHSS, Willson served as Vice President of Clinical and Regulatory Affairs for the Missouri Hospital Association for nearly a decade.

Paula F. Nickelson

We wish Director Nickelson well as she departs DHSS for retirement following an impressive 25-year career in public health. She led DHSS through a transformative three years as director and we thank her for her contributions to and support of public health in Missouri. She has been a true champion of our efforts at the state and federal level. Thank you all LPHAs who submitted comments to her memory book or attended her reception in person on Tuesday.

Recently published: [2025 Missouri Public Health Data Landscape Survey, Transformation Maturity and Strategic Assessment Report](#)

Fluoride safety has been questioned recently, but it is safe and beneficial when used at the right concentration. Talking points are **attached** to help clarify the value and safety of fluoride.

Fentanyl test strips: See **attached** FAQ and letter detailing the new ordering process for fentanyl test strips. RedCap ordering page: <https://redcap.link/DeterraBags> Contact Karsyn Glueck, Harm Reduction Navigator at Karsyn.glueck@health.mo.gov or 573-519-0594 with questions.

PHEP Planners meeting, March 12 from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at the Governor's Office Building, Room 450, Jeff City. Lunch will be provided. Register via email to Emily.Hoke@health.mo.gov by February 21

Partner Readiness Evaluation Program (PREP): DHSS is looking for input on the PREP program. It is designed to help with preparedness efforts by ensuring agencies know what to do and where to find the necessary resources in various public health response scenarios.

Our intention is for this to be a simple evaluation with no additional requirements – just a quick check to confirm that key information and processes are readily accessible when needed. As the program evolves, we plan to use partner input to shape public health trainings and exercises. If you are interested in more information regarding this program, please reply, PREP OUR AGENCY to Tyler Bax at Tyler.Bax@Health.mo.gov and he will contact you with more information.

NEWS

2/7/2025: U.S. may see a second peak of seasonal flu this year, while COVID rates remain low. <https://tinyurl.com/mkw6xj7h>

2/7/2025: President Trump signs additional Executive Orders. (Note: Orders may not be posted on the Federal Register for several days.) <https://tinyurl.com/7famzm89>

2/7/2025: Texas measles outbreak increases in a community with low vaccination rates. <https://tinyurl.com/2s3a4afs>

2/4/2025: A new nursery opens in Vandalia that allows incarcerated women to be closer to their children. <https://tinyurl.com/4jrxamrm>

RESOURCES

AI and Public Health: Opportunities and Challenges. Hosted by ASTHO and partners. Panel presentation on the emerging uses of AI in public health and its significance for public health practitioners. [Webinar recording](#)

[Fact sheet](#) highlights **health disparities rooted in racism** and explores how public health data modernization is crucial to reducing them. Source: The Network for Public Health Law

Food safety fact sheet and shareable social media graphics targeting the general public, from the Public Health Communications Collaborative. <https://tinyurl.com/5bnfxrhe>

Communications training: Free, self-paced online courses, PHCC Academy on Strategic Communications for Public Health. [Enroll](#)

Build trust through communications. Join a cohort of public health professionals for three interactive sessions to gain practical skills and strategies to support your work in health communications and community engagement. *Strengthening Public Health Communications through Community Engagement* synchronous sessions build on [asynchronous content](#) to enhance your ability to engage effectively with communities and build strong, trusting relationships. [Apply by Feb 12th](#)

The CALM approach to communicating in times of uncertainty, from Public Health Communications Collaborative. [Fact sheet](#)

New [toolkit](#) with actionable strategies to build relationship with external partners through **intentional virtual collaboration**. Learn best practices for selecting platforms, designing agendas, and making content accessible. From ASTHO.

ASTHO's [Legal Mapping Center](#) has been updated. It highlights the legal landscape for public health priorities through interactive maps, codebooks, policy reports and more.

Public Health and the New Administration ([podcast](#)). National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) president and CEO, [Dr. Vincent Lafronza](#), joins the In Solidarity podcast to discuss what he thinks is in store for public health and how we can navigate the next four years.

OPPORTUNITIES

RWJF offers funding for a new cohort of community-led pilot studies to produce new, actionable evidence about how to help medical, social, and public health systems work together to address forms of systemic racism. This CFP focuses specifically on systems alignment (SA) interventions that have the potential to dismantle or disrupt the health effects of systemic racism and to positively affect the health and wellbeing of communities that experience systemic racism. [Applications](#) due June 4, 2025.

WEBINARS/TRAINING/CONFERENCES

Feb 12, 2:30 – 3:30 pm, **Approaches to Engaging the Amish Community**, FOCUS Jurisdictional Chat, CDC. Hear from a panel of jurisdictions currently working with the Amish community on increasing vaccine uptake. Ask your questions and share your experiences engaging the Amish community and partners on vaccine uptake. [Register](#)

NEW! Feb 13, 9:30 – 11:00 am, **Mobile Food, Part 2**. Hosted by BEHS webinar learning series.

[Recordings and FAQ](#) from previous sessions. Join link:

<https://stateofmo.webex.com/stateofmo/j.php?MTID=mcea40414218eb493d6f1cf2208bb2bf9>

Webinar number: 2631 015 4942

Webinar password: BEHS (2347 when dialing from a phone or video system)

Join by phone: 1-650-479-3207 Call-in toll number (US/Canada)

Access code: 263 101 54942

NEW! Feb 18, 2:00 pm, **Building Power through Narrative**, hosted by CHRR. Learn how groups can build power and advance health and equity through narrative change. We'll share training opportunities and resources on utilizing strategies in public health. [Register](#)

NEW! Feb 20, 12:00 – 1:15 pm, **Food Insecurity and Food Safety: Important Policy and Legislative Actions**. Hosted by Network for Public Health Law. States are increasingly adopting “food freedom” laws that exempt retailers like those at farmer’s markets and seaside docks from food safety regulations. At the same time, food waste and food insecurity are growing. Both the safety, and the health and wellness

of those living in the U.S., are threatened by these trends. Attend this webinar to learn about the food freedom trend along with law and policy levers that can reduce food waste and address food insecurity. [Register](#)

Mar 3 – 5, **Community Health Worker Association of Missouri Conference.** [Register](#)

April 1 – 2, **Rural Health Workforce Development Conference**, Missouri Rural Health Association. [Register](#)

April 2, 10:00 am, **Regional LPHA meeting** in Boone County; Save the date, details to come

April 3, 10:00 am, **Regional LPHA meeting** in Adair County; Save the date, details to come

April 16, 10:00 am, **Regional LPHA meeting** in Platte County; Save the date, details to come

April 30, 10:00 am, **Regional LPHA meeting** in Butler County; Save the date, details to come

May 1, 10:00 am, **Regional LPHA meeting** in St. Charles County; Save the date, details to come

May 6, 10:00 am, **Regional LPHA meeting** in Springfield-Greene County; Save the date, details to come

May 5 - 9, 2025, **Basic Inspections and Investigations Course for New Manufactured and Retail Regulators.** \$350 fee and class size limited to 18 people. [Register](#)