

CDC Virtual Town Hall: Meet the Panelists

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Tomás Aragon, MD, DrPH

California Department of Public Health, Director and State Public Health Officer



Dr. Tomás Aragon serves as the director of the California Department of Public Health and the State Public Health Officer, since January 4, 2021. Prior to coming to CDPH, he was the health officer for the City and County of San Francisco and director of the public health division.

Dr. Aragon has served in public health leadership roles for more than 20 years (communicable disease controller, deputy health officer, health officer, community health and chronic disease epidemiologist), including directing a public health emergency preparedness and response research and training center at the University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health.

As CDPH director, striving to embody and promote the universal values of dignity, equity, compassion and humility, he works through collaborative partnerships to mobilize communities and institutions to transform policies and systems towards a culture of equity, antiracism, healing and health for all people and our planet. As State Public Health Officer, he exercises leadership and legal authority to protect health and prevent disease.

Dr. Aragon graduated from University of California, Berkeley (B.A., Molecular Biology; Dr.P.H., Epidemiology), Harvard Medical School (M.D.), Harvard School of Public Health (M.P.H.), and Stanford University (certification in Strategic Decision and Risk Management in Healthcare). He completed his clinical and research training at University of California, San Francisco (San Francisco General Hospital Primary Care Internal Medicine; Clinical Infectious Diseases; and Traineeship in AIDS Prevention Studies).

Paul Biddinger, MD

Mass General Brigham, Chief Preparedness and Continuity Officer; Chief of the Division of Emergency Preparedness; Director of the Center for Disaster Medicine



Dr. Paul Biddinger is the Chief Preparedness and Continuity Officer at Mass General Brigham (MGB) and the Chief of the Division of Emergency Preparedness in the Department of Emergency Medicine at MGB. He holds the Ann L. Prestipino MPH Endowed Chair in Emergency Preparedness and is also the Director of the Center for Disaster Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). Dr. Biddinger additionally serves as the Director of the Emergency Preparedness Research, Evaluation and Practice (EPREP) Program at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health and holds appointments at Harvard Medical School and at the Chan School. Dr. Biddinger serves as a medical officer for the MA-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team in the National Disaster Medical System in the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Biddinger is an active researcher in the field of emergency preparedness and has lectured nationally and internationally on topics of preparedness and disaster medicine. He has authored numerous articles and book chapters on multiple topics related to disaster medicine and emergency medical operations and has responded to numerous prior disaster events, including Hurricane Katrina, Superstorm Sandy, the Boston Marathon bombings, the Nepal earthquakes, and many others. He completed his undergraduate study in international relations at Princeton University, attended medical school at Vanderbilt University, and completed residency training in emergency medicine at Harvard.

Laura Biesiadecki, MPH

National Association of County and City Health Officials - Senior Director, Preparedness, Recovery and Response



Laura Biesiadecki is the Senior Director for Preparedness at National Association of County and City Health Officials NACCHO, managing a team and budgets of \$8M dedicated to supporting local health departments preparedness, response and recovery efforts to all-hazards events. She also serves as the programmatic and logistical lead for the nation's largest public health preparedness conference attended by approximately 1,700 attendees per year. Ms. Biesiadecki joined NACCHO in 2011 as Director of Strategic Partnerships, Outreach and Education, managing the Advanced Practice Centers program and other projects. Previously Ms. Biesiadecki served as Senior Program Analyst at the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPH), where she managed ASPH activities in support of their preparedness programs, including coordinating the networks of CDC-funded Centers for Public Health Preparedness, Preparedness and Emergency Response Research and Learning Centers. She has coauthored several peer-reviewed publications addressing public health emergency preparedness. Ms. Biesiadecki earned an MPH at the University of North Carolina and a BS in Health/Health Care Administration and Management.

Nicole A. Errett, PhD, MSPH

University of Washington School of Public Health, Department of Environmental & Occupational Health Sciences – Assistant Professor



Dr. Nicole A. Errett is an Assistant Professor at the University of Washington School of Public Health, Department of Environmental & Occupational Health Sciences. Dr. Errett's research focuses on the development, implementation and health impacts of policies and programs that aim to build resilience in the context of public health emergencies, disasters and climate change. She works closely with public health practitioners, emergency managers, community-based organizations, and others to design and implement policy-relevant research that contributes to real-world solutions for pressing disaster, climate and health problems. Her research leverages qualitative and survey methods, and she frequently collaborates on interdisciplinary teams.

Dr. Errett serves as a co-lead for the CDC-supported Public Health Extreme Events Research (PHEER) network. She is a member of the National Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine's Forum on Medical and Public Health Preparedness for Disasters and Emergencies and is the founding chair and current co-chair of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' Disaster Research Response (DR2) Network Steering Committee.

Dr. Errett previously served as the Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and Response at the US Department of Health and Human Services, the Policy and Legislative Director at the Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Emergency Management and the Evaluation and Assessment Manager at the Northwest Healthcare Response Network. She holds a PhD in Health and Public Policy, an MSPH in Health Policy and a BA in Public Health Studies from the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD. She completed post-doctoral training in coastal community resilience at the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning in Vancouver, BC.

Christine Kosmos, RN, MS

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Director, Division of State and Local Readiness



Christine Kosmos, RN, MS is the Director of the Division of State and Local Readiness in the Office of Readiness and Response. Ms. Kosmos has served in this role since 2009 and has directed several important initiatives designed to improve state and local readiness to respond to emergencies. Ms. Kosmos has more than 20 years of experience in emergency preparedness, planning, and response in a variety of settings.

Before joining CDC, she spent 20 years with the City of Chicago Department of Public Health where she held several leadership positions, including serving as the Deputy Commissioner. In that role, she managed both public health and healthcare system preparedness and response. She also served as the director of the Chicago Trauma System, a network of designated trauma centers, and Deputy Commissioner for Clinical Operations, a network of 23 public health clinics in Chicago. Ms. Kosmos is a registered nurse. She began her career as a staff nurse and later served as the senior manager of one of the busiest trauma centers in Chicago.

Pia MacDonald, PhD, MPH, CPH

RTI International – Infectious Disease Epidemiologist; Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of North Carolina, Gillings School of Global Public Health



Dr. Pia MacDonald, PhD, MPH, CPH, has over 25 years of experience in domestic and international epidemiological research and public health. She has an extensive background in infectious disease epidemiology and surveillance, global health security, public health preparedness, and outbreak investigation and response. Dr. MacDonald serves as principal investigator and/or project director of large contracts and grants funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the areas of: infectious diseases, surveillance, public health preparedness and global health security.

In her current role, Dr. MacDonald leads projects focused on strengthening capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to disease outbreaks in order. Her research interests include the infectious disease epidemiology and surveillance, public health preparedness and response, as well as global health security implementation. She has worked on many outbreak responses, including Ebola, Zika, and COVID-19. In addition to more than 80 journal articles, Dr. MacDonald published the book *Methods in Field Epidemiology* (2012). She started her career as a CDC epidemic intelligence service officer and a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand. From 2002-2012 she was involved in the CDC-funded Centers for Public Health Preparedness, Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Centers, and the Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Centers.

Lisa J. Peterson, MPH, MPA, CPH

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) – Senior Director, Preparedness



Lisa J. Peterson currently serves as the Senior Director, Preparedness at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO). She has primary responsibility for the preparedness program; serving as the principal representative of the program to federal, state, local and non-governmental partners, develops and analyzes public health policy and identifies, tracks and analyzes emerging public health preparedness issues relevant to state and territorial health agencies. While at ASTHO, she has been a key member of ASTHO's response to diverse events such as the Gulf Coast Oil Spill, domestic Ebola, Zika virus, the southwest border migrants surge, and COVID-19.

During COVID-19, she served as the primary Chief of ASTHO's Technical Assistance and Support Operations Section which responded to more than 400 technical assistance requests from members and partners. Previously, she served as the Director, Health and Homeland Security where she coordinated efforts to increase state/territorial public health understanding and engagement between homeland security and emergency management disciplines. Currently, Ms. Peterson manages ASTHO's Preparedness Policy Committee and serves on a number of national workgroups.

Robin Soler, PhD

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Director, Office of Applied Research



Dr. Robin Soler is Director of the Office of Applied Research (OAR), Office of Science and Public Health Practice, Office of Readiness and Response. OAR has a \$9.2m budget and supports the development and implementation evidence-based preparedness and response strategies for state, tribal, local and territory public health departments. Dr. Soler supported CDC's 2014-2016 Ebola Response as the Evaluation Team Lead and served on the COVID-19 response with the Chief Health Equity Office. Dr. Soler has also led Applied Research and Evaluation Teams for CDC's Divisions of Diabetes Translation and Community Health (DCH). She joined CDC in 2004 as a Coordinating Scientist with the

Guide to Community Preventives Services. Dr. Soler has also served as a Technical Director for ORC Macro (now ICF, Int.) where she coordinated technical assistance and training for a national evaluation project of children's mental health services. From 1996 – 2000 she served as a faculty associate at the Rollins School of Public Health and Project Director for Project Excellence, a substance use prevention program for children.

Dr. Soler holds a doctorate degree in developmental psychology from the University of Michigan and a Bachelor of Science degree from Howard University.

Mitchell H. Stripling, MPA

NYC Pandemic Response Institute (PRI), Director



Mitch Stripling is the director of the Pandemic Response Institute, PRI. Mr. Stripling comes to ICAP with a long history of leadership roles in emergency management, disaster response and planning, coordination, and response to public health crises. Prior to joining PRI, Mr. Stripling served as the national director for Emergency Preparedness and Response at Planned Parenthood (PPFA). Before PPFA, Mr. Stripling served in leadership positions at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH), first as a director of the Emergency Planning Unit and later as assistant commissioner for Agency Preparedness and Response. Prior to his roles

in New York City, Mr. Stripling worked for the Florida Department of Health. He has helped plan and/or implement the responses to more than 20 federally declared disasters and public health emergencies.

Mr. Stripling holds an MPA in Emergency Management from Florida State University and a BA from Williams College.

Jay K. Varma, MD

Weill Cornell Medicine, Director of the Cornell Center for Pandemic Prevention and Response and Professor of Population Health Sciences



Dr. Jay K. Varma is an expert on the prevention and control of diseases, having led epidemic responses, developed global and national policies, and led large-scale programs that have saved hundreds of thousands of lives in China, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the United States. After graduating magna cum laude with highest honors from Harvard, Dr. Varma completed medical school, internal medicine residency, and chief residency at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine. From 2001-2021, he worked on infectious diseases prevention and control for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with postings in Atlanta, Thailand, China, Ethiopia, and New York City.

In September 2021, Dr. Varma joined Weill Cornell Medicine's Department of Population Health Sciences to conduct research, training, and programs on public health preparedness and response. Dr. Varma has authored 141 scientific manuscripts, eight essays, and one book.