

## New DPH leadership team announced

Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Josette Manning announced a new leadership team at the Division of Public Health (DPH), led by Division Director **Steven Blessing**.



**Steven Blessing**

“This team has extensive experience in managing key areas at DPH,” Secretary Manning said. “They will help our nationally accredited division protect and promote health for all Delawareans.”

Director Blessing oversees over 1,000 staff and manages a \$433 million budget in grant and state funding. He previously served as Interim DPH

Division Director since September 2023. He was named DPH Deputy Director in October 2022.

For 29 years, Director Blessing has served DPH in various leadership positions, including Emergency Medical Services Director, Paramedic Administrator, and Executive Assistant to the Director. During his 12 years as Chief of the Emergency Medical Services and Preparedness Section, he led the development and expansion of response capacity for health and natural disasters. During the COVID-19 response, Director Blessing managed the State Health Operations Center (SHOC) and was the Incident Commander in the final phases. He also managed the SHOC during Hurricanes Sandy and Irene, the Ebola crisis, and other emergencies.

Director Blessing was elected by his peers as President of the National Association of State EMS Officials from 2008 to 2010. He participated in a number of meaningful projects at the state and national levels.

Director Blessing is a former U.S. Army officer and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Delaware and a Master's degree in Business from Webster University.

“The Division of Public Health is a large and multi-faceted agency, staffed with incredibly talented and dedicated professionals,” Director Blessing said. “It is a great honor to have this opportunity to lead at such a critical time and meet the challenges of improving

the overall health status and well-being of people in Delaware.”

**Shonetesha (Tēsha) Quail, PhD, LPCMH, NCC** was named Deputy Director of DPH in October 2023, providing oversight for over 1,000 employees. Previously, Dr. Quail served as DPH Associate Deputy Director since December 2022 and oversaw the Birth to Three Programs and Community Health Promotion Branch. With 25 years of organizational experience working in the private and government sectors, she ensures health equity with a continuum of care approach and continues to serve as Chief Health Equity Officer.

Dr. Quail began her DPH career in 2013 and oversaw Southern Health Services for Kent and Sussex counties. She teaches classes as an Adjunct Professor at Wilmington University in the College of Health Professions and Natural Sciences.



**Shonetesha Quail**

Dr. Quail graduated from Wilmington University with a Bachelor of Science in Human Resources Management and a Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. She became a licensed psychotherapist in 2012. She holds a second Master's degree in Psychology and has a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Health Psychology with a concentration in Public Health, both from Walden University. Dr. Quail is currently enrolled in the Leadership Development to Advance Equity in Health Care program at Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

**Rebecca D. Walker, PhD, JD, MSN** is the Deputy Director for Clinical Sciences. Since coming to DPH in 2020, Dr. Walker served as the Director of Nursing for two years and oversaw multiple science-based teams. She has over 31 years of administrative, academic, and clinical nursing experience. Her clinical background is in emergency nursing, surgical trauma, critical care transport, and pre-hospital incident response.



**Rebecca Walker**



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Dr. Walker has served as the President of the Delaware Board of Nursing, the Chair of the Overdose Fatality Review Commission, an Associate Professor in Academia, Director of the International Master of Laws (LLM) program at Widener Law, a health care litigator in Philadelphia, and the Chief of Operations for the Division of Forensic Sciences. She also served the State of Delaware's 9<sup>th</sup> District as a state representative. Dr. Walker led major statewide initiatives and managed budgets at the Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security.

Dr. Walker received her foundational nursing education at Delaware Technical Community College (ADN), Wilmington University (BSN), and Wesley College (MSN). She is a 2004 graduate of Widener Law School where she received her Juris Doctor and became a member of both the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Bars. She completed her PhD in nursing research at the Medical University of South Carolina.

**Awele Maduka-Ezeh, MD, MPH, PhD, CCHP** was recently named Medical Director of DPH. Dr. Maduka-Ezeh is a public health physician with expertise (research and practice) in pandemic preparedness and response among vulnerable and marginalized populations, and in managing public health laboratories.



**Awele Maduka-Ezeh**

She previously worked for DPH as State Medical Director and Chief of the Infectious Disease Prevention Section; and Director of the Delaware Public Health Laboratory. Prior to her appointment, Dr. Maduka-Ezeh was the Medical Director and Health Care Epidemiologist for the Delaware Department of Correction's Bureau of Health Care, Substance Abuse, & Mental Health since 2018.

Dr. Maduka-Ezeh earned her Medical Doctorate from the University of Ibadan in Nigeria in 2000. She received a Master of Public Health from Harvard University in 2005 and completed her Internal Medicine residency at the Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia from 2006 to 2009.

In 2011, she completed an infectious diseases fellowship at the Mayo Clinic, where she was also an instructor in medicine. Dr. Maduka-Ezeh earned a PhD in Disaster Science & Management from the University of Delaware in 2020.

Dr. Maduka-Ezeh is board-certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine in infectious diseases (2011-2033) and internal medicine (2009-2029).

**Christina (Tina) Farmer** was recently named Chief of Staff of DPH. Farmer represents the Director and Deputies at meetings and hires Director's Office staff. She coordinates with the DHSS Deputy Attorney General and oversees the Office of Communications, Contracts & Grants, and the Office of Performance Management.



**Tina Farmer**

She relays information between the DPH leadership team and other staff members while working with division and department leaders on project coordination and business administration. Farmer uses performance indicators and top-level strategies to oversee nearly 1,000 staff members. One of her primary duties is to identify employee issues and provide workable solutions.

Farmer is a native of Delaware and has spent most of her career dedicated to advancing health equity in women's health services, especially in underserved communities.

She has held positions for over 10 years at DPH, including roles in Fiscal, Clinic Services, Informatics, Family Planning, and the Birth to Three Early Intervention Program. Most recently, Farmer served as Director of Community Health Promotions, which includes the Family Health Systems Section, the Health Systems Protection Section, the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Section, the Office of Health Crisis Response, and the Office of Healthcare Provider Resources. She currently serves on the Health Literacy Council of Delaware, Partnership for Health Communities Steering Committee, and the Overdose System of Care Rural Subcommittee.

Farmer led the implementation of the Delaware Contraceptive Access Now (DECAN) initiative, a public-private partnership between the State of Delaware and Upstream USA to help reduce unplanned pregnancies. DECAN focuses on a set of policy changes and improves access to a full range of contraception, including long-acting reversible contraceptives.

Farmer earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the University of Delaware in 1997.



The Division of Public Health's (DPH) Office of Animal Welfare was honored for its 10 years of service by House Concurrent Resolution 81, sponsored by Rep. Kimberly Williams (D-19) and Sen. Jack Walsh (D-9). Pictured from left to right, front row: OAW Chief Mark Tobin, DPH Director Steven Blessing, Rep. Williams, Sen. Walsh, and Rep. Sherry Dorsey Walker. Second row: Melody Purdy, OAW program coordinator, OAW Deputy Director Joanna Miller, and Rep. Bryan Shupe. Third row: OAW Director Christina Motoyoshi, Officer Kelly Gorczyk, Lt. Jessica Kramer, Officer Jenelle Leib, and Lt. Tammy Moseley. Top row: Captain Philip Dixon, Captain Rebecca Stratton, Sgt. Andrew Price, and Captain Ervin Smith. Photo provided by Alexis Wrease/Delaware Senate.

## Tribute honors Office of Animal Welfare for 10 years of service to Delawareans

The 152<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly honored the [Office of Animal Welfare's](#) (OAW) 10 years of service with House Concurrent Resolution 81, sponsored by Rep. Kimberly Williams (D-19) and Sen. Jack Walsh (D-9). OAW was created within the Division of Public Health (DPH) to protect the health, safety, and welfare of companion animals and to centralize services.

"For 10 years now, the Office of Animal Welfare has worked to improve the quality of life for pets and people across our state and their efforts deserve recognition," Rep. Williams said. "Through their collaboration with local animal shelters, rescues, and the veterinary community, they have not only made Delaware a more humane and compassionate place, but have also played a pivotal role in making our state the first no-kill animal shelter state."

According to OAW director Christina Motoyoshi, who has been with the office since 2014 and director since 2018, OAW launched a statewide [Lost and Found Pet Registry](#); implemented [training and certification regulations](#) for animal welfare officers; established [Delaware Animal Services \(DAS\)](#), an enforcement unit to safeguard pets and the public; and expanded the [State Spay & Neuter Program](#) to reduce animal homelessness.

## DPH and partners invite employers to March 14 diabetes and obesity program

The Division of Public Health (DPH) and its partners invite employers to attend a free in-person program about diabetes and obesity. "Culture of Health Boot Camp – Roadmap for Employers to Address Diabetes and Obesity in the Workforce" will be held on March 14, 2024 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Modern Maturity Center, 1121 Forrest Avenue, Dover, DE 19904.

Presenters will share how addressing diabetes and obesity can improve employee health, productivity and retention, and reduce health care costs. Participants will gain access to resources to support well-being programming and benefit offering and create an action plan to build a culture of health.

The webinar is sponsored by DPH; the Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health; and the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), Delaware State Council. The program is approved for 2.5 SHRM Professional Development Credits (PDCs).

Two of the biggest health concerns facing Delaware's workforce, diabetes and obesity, are major cost drivers for employers. Among Delaware adults, 12% have diabetes and 13% have prediabetes, at an annual cost of \$1.1 billion. Among U.S. adults, 37 million have diabetes and 96 million have prediabetes, at an annual combined cost of \$403 billion.

The reported obesity rate for adults for U.S. and Delaware adults is 34%. The nationwide direct medical cost of obesity is \$173 billion.



To register, visit <http://tinyurl.com/Culture-of-Health-Boot-Camp>.

## Suspected influenza claims six lives

Six suspected flu-related deaths for the 2023-2024 influenza season have occurred since December, according to the Division of Public Health (DPH).

All decedents were over the age of 55 with one reportedly up to date on their flu vaccination. Cases were statewide.

Getting the annual flu vaccine is important for all people ages 5 months and older to prevent serious illness, hospitalization, and death. DPH reminds the public that it is not too late to get vaccinated against the flu. Visit [flu.delaware.gov](http://flu.delaware.gov) and click on the Find A Flu Shot Near You button for flu vaccination locations.



## DHMIC’s Health Equity Champion award nominations due March 17

The 18th Delaware Healthy Mother and Infant Consortium (DHMIC) Summit will be held on April 17, 2024 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Chase Center at the Riverfront, located at 815 Justison Street, Wilmington, DE 19801.

The summit convenes leaders in the area of family health to discuss new approaches that enhance the health of women, children, and families of all ages.

The event is free. For more information and to register, visit <https://dethrives.com/dhmic>.

Two Kitty Esterly, MD Health Equity Champion awards will be presented to an individual and an organization that advances equity by working tirelessly for the well-being of mothers and children in Delaware and for the health of the community. Dr. Esterly, Delaware’s first neonatologist, was an active voice, champion, and advocate on behalf of women, infants, and children. Nominate until March 17 at <https://dethrives.com/dhmic/health-equity-awards>.

## Tobacco Prevention Conference scheduled for May 8 in Newark

The Division of Public Health’s Tobacco Prevention & Control Program and the American Lung Association will host a Tobacco Prevention Conference on May 8, 2024 at the University of Delaware’s Clayton Hall Conference Center, located at 100 David Hollowell Drive in Newark, Del.

The conference will share tobacco prevention and cessation topics on health equity, behavioral health, and community partnerships. It will benefit those who support current tobacco prevention programs, health care and behavioral health providers, community organizations, education administrators, student health staff, and those in public health.

Once established, registration information will be posted on [healthydelaware.org](http://healthydelaware.org).

## March 10, 2024 is National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is March 10, 2024. The observance raises awareness about the impact of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) on women and girls.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends HIV testing for everyone between the ages of 13 and 64. Everyone should be tested for HIV at least once and more often if they are at [high risk](#) of getting it. Both sexual partners should find out their HIV status even if they are having sex only with each other.

HIV can be prevented by not having sex, never sharing needles, and using condoms the right way every time you have sex. According to the CDC, the HIV prevention medicine [PrEP \(pre-exposure prophylaxis\)](#) is highly effective at preventing HIV from sex or injection drug use when taken as prescribed. In emergency situations, [post-exposure prophylaxis \(PEP\)](#) prevents HIV if it is started within 72 hours of a recent possible exposure.

Individuals with HIV can take antiretroviral pills or shots to lower their viral load so a test cannot detect it. If they keep an undetectable viral load, they can



live long, healthy lives and prevent transmission to others through sex or sharing needles, syringes, or other injection equipment, and from mother to child during pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding.

For social media graphics regarding National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/library/awareness/nwghaad.html>. *Let’s Stop HIV Together* campaign resources for women are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

HIV screening and prevention tools and guidelines for clinicians are available at <https://www.cdc.gov/him/clinicians/index.html>.

A related observance, [National Youth HIV Awareness Day](#), is April 10.

## By March 4, State seeks public comment on proposed regulations

The Division of Public Health seeks public comment on the following regulations by March 4:

- A proposed new 4306 Stroke System Regulation
- Re-proposed revisions to Regulation 4459 Lead Based Paint Hazards
- Re-proposed revisions to the 4459A Regulations Governing the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Act.

The lead poisoning prevention regulations are being re-proposed due to substantive changes resulting from the public comment received between December 1, 2023 and January 8, 2024.

Copies of the proposed regulations are available for review in the February 1, 2024 issue of the Delaware Register of Regulations at <http://regulations.delaware.gov> or by calling DPH at 302-744-4700.

Until the close of business on March 4, 2024, public comments will be accepted in written form via email to [DHSS\\_DPH\\_regulations@delaware.gov](mailto:DHSS_DPH_regulations@delaware.gov), or by U.S. mail to:

Vicki Schultes, Hearing Officer  
Division of Public Health  
417 Federal Street  
Dover, DE 19901.

The Delaware Department of State, Division of Professional Regulation is seeking public comment on behalf of the Board of Dentistry and Dental Hygiene on its proposed revised regulations that clarify that limited licensees are subject to general supervision while training and eliminate redundancies in the Supervision regulations. Read the proposed regulations in the February 1, 2024 issue of the Delaware Register of Regulations at <http://regulations.delaware.gov>. Select the HTML option, then “proposed regulations”.

The Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed rule change on March 21, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. virtually and at the second floor Conference Room A in the Cannon Building, located at 861 Silver Lake Boulevard, Dover, DE 19904. Written comments should be sent to Jennifer Witte, Administrator of the Delaware Board of Dentistry and Dental Hygiene at the same address. Written comments will be accepted until April 5, 2024.



The Division of Public Health, Health Systems Protection Section published the following reports in 2023:

1. [State of Delaware Public Drinking Water Annual Compliance Report and Summary for 2022](#)
2. [Capacity Development Program Report to the Governor, 2023](#)

The Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology published the [Delaware Healthcare-Associated Infections 2022 Annual Report](#).

## DPH shares more than 360 fact sheets

Three Division of Public Health (DPH) offices posted new and updated fact sheets to its Fact Sheets A-Z page. The site features more than 360 fact sheets to help the public, health care providers, and others understand public health subjects.

The Office of Preparedness updated its 86 fact sheets available in these formats: public information, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), medical, and EMS. Topics include Sheltering in Place, Isolation and Quarantine, natural threats such as brucellosis and tularemia, and man-made threats such as ammonia and chlorine.

The Health Systems Protection Section’s 127 fact sheets address bedbugs, cockroaches, flooded septic systems, heating oil spills, mold remediation, private drinking water tests, and more. Chromium, acetaldehyde, and vinyl chloride are examples of the section’s chemical FAQs.

The Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology’s 109 FAQs include measles, rubella, and sexually transmitted infections, plus a new set on tickborne diseases. School nurses can share FAQs on conjunctivitis, hand washing, head lice, pinworm, ringworm, scabies, and strep throat with parents, guardians, and personnel.

Reach DPH’s Fact Sheets A-Z page at <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dph/factsheetsaz.html>.