



## JOINT POLICY WORK GROUP

Virtual Meeting Summary  
Wednesday, 1 – 2:30 pm EDT

### Chairs:

Dr. Alexia Harrist (ASTHO), Director Pete Landon (GHSAC), and Director Andrew Phelps (NEMA)

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### Agenda

- **Public Health Crisis: Where we are now; and what will the future hold**
- **Engaging Jurisdictional Leaders to Recognize and Participate in Preparedness Work**
- **Unity of Effort**

*Public Health Crisis: Where we are now; and what will the future hold.*

Mr. Tim Manning and Ms. Eileen O'Connor provided a national and worldly perspective on the COVID public health crisis. At the time of the meeting, at least 70% of population nationwide has received the first jab and we donated 110M doses of the COVID-19 vaccine around the world. Today, operationally within the supply chain, we are not as resource constrained as we were at the beginning of the pandemic (minus the slight concern for oxygen in areas of high hospitalization rates). The idea for the White House task force is to create an industrial based strategy that is nimbler to omit the bidding role with the nod to providing greater visibility on resources and utilizing a more integrated system. For states drawing down their stockpiles, it is encouraged to not go to zero in supplies, and to think of the sustainable framework that can be nimble as cases may spike. In witnessing the increase in cases, now is not the time to rid of stockpiles. Stay within a full balance of the long term for this response: "We want the right stuff, in the right hands, for the right people, at the right time."

The drivers of vaccine hesitancy are something the policy work group knows all too well – from the quick speed of vaccine development to the skepticism that vaccines will be enough. Messaging seems to be the saving grace: social proof of others taking a vaccine and not making vaccinations a 'zero-sum game' are two proven best communication strategies to encourage more people to take a vaccine. How you message also helps, such as, framing vaccines as a tool as opposed to an ultimatum; emphasize the benefits; and refrain from using demanding, urgent language.

Resources provided:

- National survey-based messaging toolkits specific to:
  - [Vaccine confidence](#) in March 2021
  - [Reinforcing testing in the context of vaccines](#) in June 2021
- Comprehensive guidebooks for developing testing programs:
  - [Planning workbook](#)
  - [Tabletop exercises](#)
  - [Day-to-day implementation playbook](#) (recommended by CDC)
- Research—with RAND Corporation—about attitudes toward testing among:

- [Teachers](#)
- [Parents](#)
- Best-practice guidance—with Mathematica—on how to earn community buy-in and participation for testing programs:
  - [Lessons and Recommendations from Pilot Sites](#)

Lessons we are learning is that we must tackle the pandemic on a global scale to attempt to minimize the continuous variants and flare ups we currently see. The education on variants is challenging in the public messaging as well. Also, the mental and physical fatigue those working the incident are attempting to prevail must be top of mind as more policy driven discussions are considered. *[Eileen O'Connor's, Rockefeller Foundation, presentation provided.]*

*Engaging Jurisdictional Leaders to Recognize and Participate in Preparedness Work*

Director Christine Kosmos and Ms. Kate Noelte share observations to lead a discussion on how the public health preparedness model is built for catastrophic level incidents. In diving into this timely discussion, discoveries of what worked and what may need improvement was shared to show how we can work together more on joint planning, joint exercises, and find programs to replicate their successes. Specifically, training on how agency leaders can effectively communicate with other agency response leads to be comfortable in sharing plans and processes. Additionally, find how to meet needs of elected officials so they do not feel a need to recreate the wheel. Better and more frequent engagement with public officials is a must to avoid elected officials in creating new structures that caused delays and confusion.

A special note: We look to engage Director Kosmos and Ms. Noelte in another opportunity to expand on this discussion with a virtual meeting that will be solely focused on finding actionable solutions.

*Unity of Effort*

Mr. Jim Blumenstock charged the group with a call to find ways on how we may unify our efforts within the scope of this pandemic response. The perfect storm is looming for us to be going in the wrong direction: the collective workforce, reopening America especially with schools opening, adverse events, licensure approval for vaccines for under 12 years of age, seasonal flu preparedness on the rise, forty different funding and congressional action items, internal challenges for new hires, emergency management and public health declarations expiring and/or blocked...the list keeps growing. Thus, illustrating the scope of the pandemic response proves the need to have everyone (agencies and congressional leadership) involved. For those agencies that were not familiar with response, they were able to be included and are now valuable partners for future events/incidents/disasters. The impacts of the expiring emergency orders hamper the response and recovery aspects by slowing down the ability to ramp up in areas where the need fits.

A special note: The policy group will develop a resource that explains how each of the disciplines pull together in unity for a more robust, supportive, successful response and recovery initiative.

Resource shared: <https://www.astho.org/COVID-19/Emergency-Supplemental-Funding-Overview-Chart/>

**Speaker Bios** (in alphabetical order of last name).

**James S. Blumenstock**

*Senior Vice President, Pandemic Response and Recovery, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)*

Jim holds the position of Senior Vice President for Pandemic Response and Recovery and is responsible for the coordination and oversight of all ASTHO COVID-19 pandemic related activities, including recovery and community resilience phases, ensuring an aggressive and sustained strategic and integrated whole-of-ASTHO response to this historic public health incident. Prior to this appointment in August 2020, he was the Chief Program Officer for Health Security for almost 15 years. His portfolio included the program areas of infectious diseases, immunization services, environmental health, and emergency preparedness and response. Jim also serves as a member of the Association's Executive Leadership Team responsible for enterprise-wide strategic planning, administrative services, member support, and public health advocacy.

Prior to his arrival at ASTHO on November 1, 2005, Jim was the Deputy Commissioner of Health for the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services where he retired after almost 32 years of career public health service in various capacities. As the Deputy Commissioner, he had executive oversight responsibilities for a department branch of over 650 staff, an operating budget of approximately \$125 million, which was comprised of the Division of Public Health and Environmental Laboratories; Division of Epidemiology, Occupational and Environmental Health; Division of Local Health Practice and Regional Systems Development; Division of Health Emergency Preparedness and Response, and the Office of Animal Welfare. During his tenure, Jim also served as the Department's lead Incident Commander and represented the Department on a number of boards, councils and commissions including the NJ Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force.

Jim is the proud recipient of the ASTHO 2004 Noble J. Swearingen Award for excellence in public health administration and the Dennis J. Sullivan award, the highest honor bestowed by the NJ Public Health Association for dedicated and outstanding service and contribution to the cause of public health. He is also a scholar of the UNC Public Health Leadership Institute, completed the Harvard National Preparedness Leadership Initiative and the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security's Executive Leaders Program, currently holds a faculty appointment to the Georgetown University School of Medicine's Department of Family Medicine, and held an elected office serving his community for 12 years. Jim received his Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science from Rutgers University in 1973 and a Master of Arts degree in Health Sciences Administration from Jersey City State College in 1977. He is a native of New Jersey which is still his primary residence with his wife of 46 years, Lee. They have three children and five grandchildren.

**Christine Kosmos, R.N., B.S.N., M.S.**

*Director, Division of State and Local Readiness in the Center for Preparedness and Response, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Christine 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.

**Tim Manning**

*COVID-19 Supply Coordinator, White House COVID Response Team*

For more than two decades, Tim Manning has worked on both the frontlines and in the senior most levels of homeland security, crisis and emergency management, and resilience at the local, state, federal, and international levels. Mr. Manning is a former Deputy Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, governor's homeland security advisor, firefighter-EMT (serving both urban and rural departments and the wildland interface), rescues mountaineer, and geologist. He is currently the COVID-19 Supply Coordinator with the White House COVID Response Team. Mr. Manning served through the entirety of the Barak Obama administration as the Deputy Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for Protection and National Preparedness, having been confirmed by the U.S. Senate in the spring of 2009.

**Kate Noelte**

*Deputy Director, Division of State and Local Readiness in the Center for Preparedness and Response, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Kate Noelte previously served as a senior advisor within DSLR. She worked on several projects, including strategic program planning, guidance development for the Public Health Emergency Program and the Crisis Response cooperative agreements, partner engagement strategies, and expansion of the Operational Readiness Review (ORR) process.

Ms. Noelte joined CDC in DSLR as a health scientist on the Measurement and Evaluation Team in the Evaluation and Analysis Branch, where she helped develop and implement DSLR's first ORR tool and evaluation process.

Ms. Noelte has also worked in CDC's Office of the Director (OD), where she worked with CDC's Chief of Staff on public health emergency response-related initiatives and in CPR's OD. Before joining CDC, Ms. Noelte worked in the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Health Affairs and at state and local health departments.

**Eileen O'Conner**

*Senior Vice President for Communications, Policy & Advocacy, The Rockefeller Foundation and Legal and Communications Subject Matter Expert, Naval Post Graduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security*

Eileen O'Conner frequently serves as a lecturer and subject matter expert on legal and communications topics at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security. Ms. O'Conner is the Senior Vice President for Communications, Policy and Advocacy at The Rockefeller Foundation, overseeing all government affairs, communications, and advocacy to advance the Foundation's programmatic priorities worldwide. She

serves as a senior member of the leadership team at the Foundation and as a strategic adviser to its President on effectuating all programmatic priorities. For the prior three years she served as the Vice President of Communications for Yale University, overseeing all aspects of internal and external communications for the University and advising the University Cabinet on key issues and leading reputational crisis management planning and response. Before joining Yale, Ms. O'Conner served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia and Senior Adviser to the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Ms. O'Conner founded legal crisis management practices in several Big Law firms, representing clients around the world facing criminal and civil litigation and investigations. For 24 years, Ms. O'Conner was an award-winning journalist for ABC News and CNN, 16 years overseas as a war zone correspondent mostly based in Moscow.