

2026 Statewide Immunization Meeting Speaker Bios





Izzy Brandstetter Figueroa, PhD, MPH

Director of Vaccine Science Communication, Unbiased Science

Dr. Izzy Brandstetter Figueroa is an epidemiologist and science communicator with a focus on translating complex research into accurate and accessible public health information. As Director of Vaccine Science Communication at Unbiased Science, Dr. Brandstetter Figueroa develops evidence-based vaccine content, coordinates rapid responses to emerging misinformation, and leads the U.S. State of Vaccine Policy series, a biweekly publication produced in collaboration with the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) and the Vaccine Integrity Project, both at the University of Minnesota. Before joining Unbiased Science, she promoted vaccination at a Seattle-based non-profit organization (WithinReach), investigated disease outbreaks with Public Health – Seattle & King County, and spent several years as a researcher on the Seattle Flu Study tracking how respiratory pathogens enter and spread through a city. She holds a PhD in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from the University of Minnesota and an MPH in Epidemiology from the University of Washington.



Lucinda Caruso, MPH, RDN

Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program Manager, Bureau of Vaccine Programs
Division of Vaccine Excellence (DOVE), New York State Department of Health



Vajeera Dorabawila, Ph.D.

Director, Bureau of Surveillance and Data Systems
Division of Epidemiology, New York State Department of Health

Vajeera is the Director of the Bureau of Surveillance Data Systems, Division of Epidemiology, New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). In this capacity, Dr. Dorabawila oversees system maintenance and analytics from several NYSDOH critical systems including Electronic Clinical Laboratory System (ECLRS), New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS), Communicable Disease Electronic Surveillance System (CDESS), Electronic Syndromic Surveillance System (ESSS) and electronic Case Reporting (eCR). Journals she has recently published in include the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM), PLOS One, and Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports (MMWR). Dr. Dorabawila holds a PhD in demography from the University of Pennsylvania.



Deb Darfler, RN, BSN

Supervising Public Health Nurse, Washington County Public Health

Deb is the Supervising Public Health Nurse at Washington County Public Health. She has been a Registered Nurse for 40 years holding positions in Public Health, Home care, and the private sector. After 30 years of procrastination, she returned to school and obtained her BSN in 2023 from Chamberlain University. This is her third stint with Washington County Public Health and has been with them for the past 6 years.



Amanda Earl, RN, BSN, CLC

Public Health Nurse, St. Lawrence County Public Health Department

Amanda is the Immunization Coordinator and Maternal Child Program Coordinator at St. Lawrence County Public Health. She has been with St. Lawrence County Public Health for the past 2.5 years and has 10 years of hospital nursing experience in Neonatal Intensive Care and Labor and Delivery. Amanda completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Le Moyne College in 2014.



Lynn Fiorillo

Vaccine Coordinator, St. Peter's Health Partners



Jeremy J. Heisey, RN, BSN, MSN

IQIP Coordinator, Division of Vaccine Excellence (DOVE), New York State Department of Health

Jeremy is a Registered Professional Nurse. He graduated from SUNY Canton in 1999. He later received a BSN in 2004 from SUNY Plattsburgh and a master's degree in nursing education in 2021 from Excelsior University. His experience includes working at a LHD in New York State and over 15 years in the hospital setting in telemetry and Intensive Care. He started with the New York State Department of Health in 2018 with the Office of Primary Care and Health Systems Management in home care. In 2023, he became the IQIP Program Coordinator and the Child and Adolescent Coordinator for DOVE.



Sarah Hershey, RN, BSN

Adult Immunization Coordinator, Division of Vaccine Excellence (DOVE), New York State Department of Health

Sarah is the Adult Immunization Coordinator for the New York State Department of Health Division of Vaccine Excellence. She oversees and coordinates adult immunization initiatives for New York State, including influenza initiatives. Sarah joined the New York State Department of Health in March of 2018 with 18 years of prior experience as an RN in a variety of settings. Sarah received her Associate Degree in Nursing from SUNY Morrisville. She completed her bachelor's degree in nursing at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, NY, and has completed the Public Health Fundamentals Certificate of Graduate Studies at the University at Albany, School of Public Health.

**Lori Isabella-Rhoades**

New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS)

Division of Epidemiology, New York State Department of Health

Lori is the lead trainer for the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS) Program and has been part of the NYSIIS team for 19 years. She conducts training sessions and supports outreach efforts to all NYSIIS users. Ms. Isabella-Rhoades also works directly with the development of system enhancements and conducts user acceptance testing of new enhancements for NYSIIS releases.

**Marina C. Kistner, RN**

Oneida County Health Department

Marina is a Registered Professional Nurse that has dedicated over 30 years of service to Public Health. Marina is a graduate from Mohawk Valley Community college and spent 10 years as a hospital nurse before joining the team at Oneida County. She has worked in all areas of public health nursing including STD/HIV clinics, Refugee Health Assessments, Immunizations, outbreak management, and for the last decade has been the Immunization Action Plan coordinator for her county. Marina's expertise and commitment have been instrumental to the success of Oneida's Immunization program.

**Mary Koslap-Petraco, DNP, PNP-BC, CPNP, FAANP, FAAN**

Clinical Assistant Professor, Stony Brook University School of Nursing, Grandparents for Vaccines

Mary is a clinical assistant professor at Stony Brook University School of Nursing in Stony Brook, NY, and a primary care provider in her own private practice after working for Suffolk County Department of Health Services for 30 years where she used her experience as a public health nurse to make system level changes. While on staff at SCDHS Dr. Koslap-Petraco developed and managed the immunization and lead programs and provided education to staff and the public on various communicable diseases and assisted in the management of communicable diseases. She has been appointed to the New York State Immunization Advisory Council by Senator Andrea Stewart Cousins, and is the first NP appointed. She was also recently appointed by the American Association of Nurse Practitioners to the Summit for Adult Vaccine Review (SAVR). Dr. Koslap-Petraco is a member of the ad hoc advisory board of the New York State Get Smart safe use of antibiotics campaign, a nurse consultant for the Immunize.org, and immediate past chair of Vaccinate Your Family-The Next Generation of Every Child by Two Advisory Board. She is a volunteer leader for Grandparents for Vaccines, a national nonprofit focused on changing the national conversation about vaccination through storytelling.



Olga Lawrence, MPH

Vaccine Preventable Disease Coordinator

Division of Vaccine Excellence (DOVE), New York State Department of Health

Olga is the Vaccine Preventable Disease Surveillance Coordinator in the Division of Vaccine Excellence and has been with the Division (former Bureau of Immunization) since 2020. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from Boston University and a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree from the University at Albany. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time in the Adirondacks and the Catskills.



Dana Olzenak McGuire, PT, DPT, PhD

Vaccines for Adults (VFA) Program Manager, Bureau of Vaccine Programs

Division of Vaccine Excellence (DOVE), New York State Department of Health

Dana is the Vaccines for Adults (VFA) Program Manager in the Bureau of Vaccine Programs, Division of Vaccine Excellence. In this role, she leads the development of VFA resources, education, and enrollment processes and virtual visits. She works closely with the Adult Immunization Coordinator building out the adult program in New York State to increase access and education for patients and providers alike. Additionally, Dana leads emergency preparedness activities and deliverables for the Division's Cooperative Agreement with the Centers for Disease Control. Dana joined New York State Department of Health in 2024 with experience working in county and community health, emergency response, and public health education and research. She received her PhD in Epidemiology from the University of Rochester in 2015.



Chelsea Reome-Nedlik, MPA,

Supervising Public Health Educator, Broome County Health Department

Chelsea is Broome County's IAP Coordinator. She has been with Broome County Health Department for nine years and currently manages its immunization and lead poisoning prevention programs. Chelsea has a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Binghamton University.



Heather J. Ryan, MLIS, MPH

Health Program Director, Broome County Health Department

Heather Ryan is a Health Program Director at Broome County Health Department where she works on the Immunization Action Plan, the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, and all things health communication. She also served as a school and daycare liaison during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before transitioning to public health, she spent 7 years working in childcare, summer camps, and museum education throughout New York and Virginia. Heather has a BA in history from SUNY New Paltz and a Masters of Information and Library Science from SUNY Buffalo. Her favorite thing is to go for a long walk with an audiobook and an iced coffee.



Cynthia Rand, MD, MPH

Professor of Pediatrics, University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry
Dr. Rand is a general academic pediatrician and health services researcher at the University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry, where she directs the T32-funded Primary Care Fellowship and serves as Division Chief of General Pediatrics. Her research experience combines expertise in adolescent and maternal immunization and adolescent preventive services delivery, quality improvement, and health informatics. She has been funded by the NIH, CDC, SAHM, and AHRQ to improve adolescent and maternal immunization rates. Her community contributions include participating in both national and NY State American Cancer Society roundtables to improve HPV vaccination rates on a larger scale. She cares for patients and teaches residents and students in the Golisano Children's Hospital Pediatric Practice



Jamie Schaunbaum

Co-Founder – CEO, The J.A.M.I.E. Group

Jamie is a meningococcal disease survivor, nationally recognized public health advocate, and Co-Founder & CEO of The J.A.M.I.E. Group, where she leads Legislative Affairs & Strategic Partnerships. The J.A.M.I.E. Group is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing vaccine-preventable diseases through education, advocacy, and policy. After losing all ten fingers and both legs below the knee to meningococcal disease at age 20, Jamie has spent nearly two decades transforming her experience into action. She has worked with legislators, healthcare organizations, and public health partners across the country to advance immunization policy and increase awareness of meningococcal disease. Her advocacy has helped shape vaccine legislation in multiple states, and she frequently shares her story with healthcare professionals, policymakers, and communities to inspire action and strengthen vaccine confidence. Jamie is also a member of the USA Paraclimbing National Team, where she continues to redefine what is possible through both sport and advocacy.



Mari Sepowski, RN, BSN

IQIP Coordinator

Division of Vaccine Excellence (DOVE), New York State Department of Health

Mari Sepowski is a Registered Nurse with a BSN from Boston College in 1987. Her experience includes working in the public and private sector and also at Local Health Department as a Public Health Program Nurse. In 2007, Mari started working for the NYSDOH, Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Program. In May 2024, Mari became the IQIP Program Coordinator and Child and Adolescent Program Coordinator.



Aniké K. Shaw

Health Program Administrator

Division of Vaccine Excellence (DOVE), New York State Department of Health

**Deb Sobieszek, RN, BSN**

PHBPP Coordinator

Division of Vaccine Excellence (DOVE), New York State Department of Health

Deb has been a registered nurse since 1998 graduating from Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing, and later completing her BSN at Siena College in 2018. She enjoyed her work from 1998-2012 gaining invaluable nursing experience at Memorial Hospital in Albany and the VA Medical Center in Syracuse NY. In 2012, she transitioned her career to New York State service at the Dept. of Corrections and Community Supervision. In 2014, she was given the opportunity to join a newly created office, the Office of Community Transitions, within the Department of Health and worked as a Community Transition Coordinator until 2020. She was on the state's emergency COVID response team in New Rochelle, NY at the start of the pandemic, and has been with the Office of Public Health since, most recently in the role of the Perinatal Hepatitis B Prevention Program Coordinator as of July 2022.

**Adrienne Verrilli**

Assistant Commissioner of Communications

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Adrienne Verrilli is the Assistant Commissioner of Communications and Senior Communications Director for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. A communications and public policy expert with more than two decades of experience, she oversees citywide public communications strategies, managing a bureau of over 50 staff, campaign budgets, and multimedia messaging to advance critical public health priorities across New York City. Prior to joining the NYC Health Department, Adrienne served as the Vice President of Communication & Culture for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), where she drove nationwide media relations to advance the organization's health, education, and advocacy agendas. Her extensive leadership career within healthcare advocacy also includes serving as the VP of Communications & Marketing at Planned Parenthood of Greater New York, where she successfully led the communications strategy for New York State's historic five-way affiliate merger. Before her time in New York, she directed communications and marketing for Planned Parenthood Northern California, managing strategies that served 140,000 patients annually across 20 counties. Adrienne pivoted her career to pursue a passion for a more just world, beginning her work in sexual and reproductive health and rights after a successful 10-year career in finance.

**Jennifer Wohlfahrt, BSN, RN**

Public Health Nurse, Bureau of School Immunizations

Division of Vaccine Excellence, New York State Department of Health

Jennifer Wohlfahrt joined the Department of Health in 2022 as a Public Health Nurse after extensive clinical experience in pediatric critical care. Jennifer currently works within the Bureau of School Immunizations leading the oversight of school immunization audits and medical exemption review process. Jennifer is passionate about collaborative problem-solving and empowering school and health professionals with clear, reliable guidance. In her free time, she loves gardening, traveling, and spending quality time with her husband and four children.