



May 26, 2021

The Honorable Representative Maxine Dexter, Chair
The Honorable Representative Cedric Hayden, Vice-Chair
The Honorable Representative Winsvey Campos
The Honorable Representative Raquel Moore-Green
The Honorable Representative Andrea Salinas
House Committee on Health Care Subcommittee on COVID-19
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

SUBJECT: OHA Epidemiologists

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Subcommittee:

The House Committee on Health Care Subcommittee on COVID-19 submitted the following questions to OHA on March 24, 2021, and asked that OHA respond to the questions before the subcommittee meeting on March 26, 2021. OHA has compiled the following responses in accordance with the request.

OHA's Public Health Division is an accredited public health agency. The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) accreditation involves the assessment of a health department's ability to carry out the ten [Essential Public Health Services](#), to manage an effective health department, and to maintain strong and effective communications with the governing entity. OHA's Public Health Division was accredited by PHAB in March 2016.

1. Who are the epidemiologists that the state employs and what is their training/certification?

OHA currently employs one State Epidemiologist/State Health Officer, 46 Epidemiologists and nine Public Health Physicians. OHA also employs epidemiologists in other classifications, including management, in addition to the Epidemiologist series and the Public Health Physician series.

The purpose of these doctors and epidemiologists is to protect the public from communicable diseases. Currently, Oregon has the third lowest cumulative COVID-19 infection rate in the United States, the fifth lowest COVID-19 death rate and the fifth lowest COVID-19 death rate among seniors.

OHA's epidemiology classification is a three-level, professional class series. Each level requires a master's degree and one to four years of experience, or a bachelor's degree and two to five years of experience.¹ OHA also employs Public Health Physicians who

¹ Class Series Concept and Responsibilities: <https://www.oregon.gov/DAS/HR/class/ccrt/spec/6216.pdf>

serve as Senior Health Advisors on the COVID-19 response. Their work includes guiding epidemiologic and policy activities under the direction of the state epidemiologist. The epidemiologist series was reviewed and revised extensively by the Department of Administrative Services in 2017. The position review included revision to incorporate competencies and skills recommended by the CDC and the Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), which is a national organization that works to advance epidemiologic approaches in public health.²

CSTE recommends core competencies for epidemiologists, but it does not offer a certification program. The Certification Board of Infection Control & Epidemiology does offer voluntary certification, but it is limited to the focus area of infection prevention, which is a specialized field that focuses on healthcare settings. Several universities offer certificates in epidemiology, as distinct from advance degrees, which typically require additional education. All OHA Public Health Physicians have medical degrees, and 44 OHA Epidemiologists have advanced degrees. The table below does not include OHA employees with epidemiology training, experience, or responsibilities who are classified in a series other than the Epidemiologist series or the Public Health Physician series.

	Epidemiologist 1	Epidemiologist 2	Epidemiologist 3	Public Health Physician
Total number employed by OHA	17	22	7	9
Number employed by OHA and assigned to CRRU	14	6	2	3
Number with certification related to infectious disease/epidemiology*	0	4	2	3
Number with medical degree	1	1	1	9
Number with doctorate degree	0	3	1	1
Number with master's degree	16	20	6	3
Number with bachelor's degree	17	22	7	9

* *Certifications limited to the focus area of infection prevention, which is a specialized field that focuses on healthcare settings.*

² Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists: <https://www.cste.org/>

2. How is it that Dr. Sidelinger came to be the state epidemiologist? Is he certified? If not, how do you validate the title?

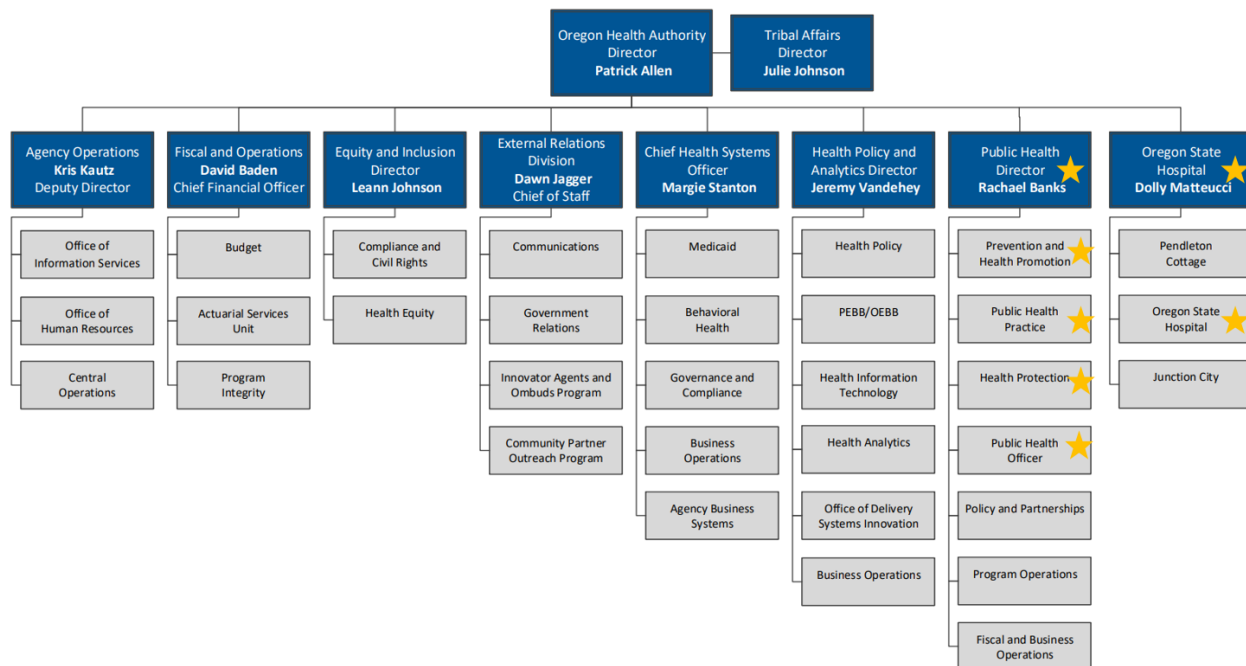
Dr. Sidelinger is Oregon's Public Health Officer and State Epidemiologist. Dr. Sidelinger was appointed by the OHA Director in 2019. Prior to joining OHA, Dr. Sidelinger served as the Child Health Medical Officer and Interim Deputy Public Health Officer for the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency. In this role, he oversaw the county's six Public Health Services branches, including Epidemiology and Immunization Services and Public Health Preparedness and Response.

Dr. Sidelinger received his Doctor of Medicine from Georgetown University School of Medicine in 1997 and completed the United States Medical Licensing Exam the same year. He completed his internship and residency in pediatrics and a fellowship in community pediatrics focusing on public health, and he is licensed by the State of Oregon (#MD153060). Dr. Sidelinger's epidemiological experience and training include:

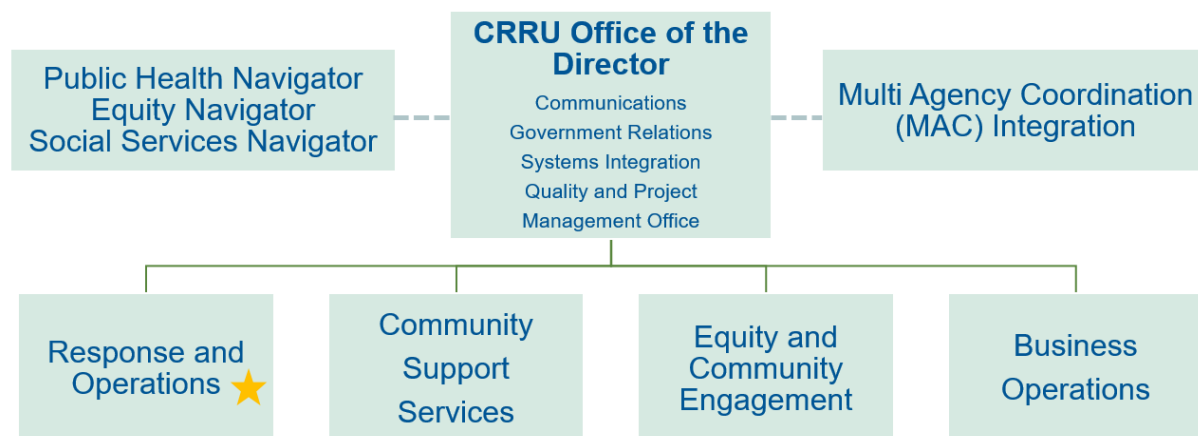
- Completion of coursework in graduate level public health with a concentration in epidemiology and biostatistics
- Completion of a three-year community-based research fellowship
- Faculty position in community pediatrics overseeing training in public health and culturally effective care
- Over ten years with the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency serving as a deputy public health officer, interim maternal child and family health services chief, and child health medical officer'
- Authored and co-authored several studies related to epidemiology and public health

3. Is there an organizational chart of who reports to whom? What is the flow of information from the epidemiologists to the Governor's office? Where does Dr. Sidelinger fit into this flow?

OHA's epidemiologists primarily work in the Public Health Division and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Unit (CRRU). The Public Health Division and CRRU leadership regularly participate in COVID response meetings to prepare briefings for the Governor.



The epidemiologists assigned to CRRU work in the Response section.



4. The committee is hoping for direct answers for a plan on masking and the role of businesses in vaccine verification.

Please refer to the Governor's Office.

Please let us know if we can address any other questions you may have. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Patrick M. Allen
 Director