

**Integrated Population Health Data (iPHD) Project
Governing Board (GB) Meeting Minutes
September 27, 2024**

1:00 PM-2:30 PM EST

iPHD Governing Board meeting convened in compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act and all participants attended the meeting virtually.

Board Members Present:

Rachel Hammond (Chair and Designee for the Commissioner of Health Data Privacy Officer, NJ Department of Health), Rashmi Jain (Appointed- Big Data/Security Expert, Chair of Information Management and Business Analytics, Montclair State University), Francis Baker (Ex officio/Designee for the NJ Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General, NJ Office of the Attorney General), Greg Woods (Ex officio/Designee for the NJ Commissioner of Human Services, Chief Innovation Officer, Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services Department of Human Services), Elizabeth Litten (Appointed- Legal & Privacy Expert, Partner and Chief Privacy & HIPAA Compliance Officer, Fox Rothschild LLP), Kathleen Noonan (Appointed- Chief Executive Officer, Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers), and Michele Norin (Ex officio, Senior Vice President & Chief Information Officer- Rutgers University)

Attendees:

Margaret Koller (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Mark McNally (NJ Office of the Attorney General), Suzanne Borys (NJ Department of Human Services), Maria Baron (NJ Department of Health), Kara Unal (NJ Department of Health), Bretta Jacquemin (NJ Department of Health), Michael Toto (NJ Department of Health), Tim Seplaki (NJ Department of Health), Jose Nova (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Jolene Chou (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Joshua Lue (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Oliver Lontok (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Joe Brecht (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Katherine Kovacs (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Mary Marsan (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), and Manisha Agrawal (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy)

Call to Order/Opening Remarks

- R. Hammond called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm with a quorum present.
- R. Hammond acknowledged that the meeting was being held in compliance with the 1975 NJ Open Public Meetings Act and that there was a publication of the meeting time and location in the Newark Star Ledger and three websites (NJ. Com, NJ Press Association, and the iPHD website). Instructions for registration and login information were posted in the publications and the websites.

General Updates/Actions

Updates from the Chair

- R. Hammond informed the Board that DOH celebrated the one-year anniversary of Health Commissioner, Dr. Kaitlan Baston.
- R. Hammond announced that the Department of Health (DOH) will soon amend the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to provide an additional \$400,000 in funding for FY 2025. This increase will support future fee waivers and potentially add new project deliverables. K. Noonan asked whether the iPHD's request for additional funding was included in the latest appropriation and suggested that the Board formally ask the DOH for increased funding for iPHD. M. Koller agreed that the Center for State Health Policy (CSHP) would draft a letter for the Board's review. K. Noonan then motioned to send an official letter to the DOH to request more support for iPHD funding. M. Norin seconded the motion, and the proposal passed with unanimous approval, except for G. Woods, who abstained from voting.

Meeting Minutes

- R. Hammond requested Board members review the May 17, 2024, Governing Board meeting minutes (approved by the Minutes Subcommittee on July 3, 2024).
- K. Noonan made a motion to approve the May meeting minutes. R. Jain provided the second and, upon roll call, the minutes were approved unanimously.

Discussion

Cycle 3 Proposals

- R. Hammond provided a quick overview of the application review process and shared the criteria established by the Board for consideration of data release: (a) alignment of

the project with one or more research priorities, (b) application is grounded in good science, (c) that it is well written and presents a feasible analytical plan, and (d) strengths and weaknesses of the application.

- iPHD received 11 applications for this cycle: Five applications were recommended for data release by the subcommittee, two applications required further discussion, and four applications were not recommended for data release.
- R. Hammond requested all non-Board members attending to mute themselves until the public comments section of the meeting.
- R. Hammond asked Board members with a conflict of interest to recuse themselves from the discussion of that specific proposal. She instructed them to remain in the virtual meeting but to turn off their cameras and mute themselves during that portion of the discussion. She added that they would be called back into the meeting for the following agenda items. E. Litten and M. Norin recused themselves from all proposal discussions.
- R. Hammond announced that K. Noonan, the subcommittee chair, will present the subcommittee's recommendations. The Board members will then vote on the data release for each proposal individually. A roll call vote will be conducted for each proposal to ensure proper documentation.
- R. Hammond requested K. Noonan to review each application and share the subcommittee's recommendations. K. Noonan said that CSHP has put together an excellent and thorough review process and shared a few initial thoughts:
 - The GB Subcommittee, consisting of two Board members and three external reviewers, reviewed the applications and met to discuss their strengths and weaknesses, along with the RAC reviews. They then made recommendations to the Governing Board regarding data release and fee waivers.
 - In cases where there were disagreements among reviewers, the subcommittee worked to harmonize the reviews, acting as an "umpire" and collaborating with the external reviewers to facilitate the process. However, it was noted that the RAC reviews were more aligned in this cycle.
 - The summary sheet includes five projects highlighted in light green for which there was consensus from the subcommittee that data should be released. These were projects deemed: 1) to align with 1 or more of the research priorities, 2) be grounded in good science, 3) be well written, and 4) present a feasible analytic plan. She summarized the five projects recommended by the subcommittee and highlighted the importance of iPHD receiving applications from outside New Jersey.
 - K. Noonan said that the subcommittee thoroughly reviewed each proposal and agreed to recommend the five applications mentioned below.

- R. Hammond outlined the process for reviewing the five proposals recommended by the subcommittee. She first asked the Board members if they had any comments or questions about the proposals. Hearing none, she then invited non-Board members to share their comments.
- During the public comment session, T. Seplaki inquired if application #302 involved the pediatric readiness survey. He clarified that, from an EMS data perspective, the EMS for Children program has a readiness survey, which is not part of the EMS data set. R. Hammond responded by explaining that the data dictionaries, available on the iPHD website, provide detailed information on the variables included in each dataset. She also mentioned that the pediatric readiness survey could potentially be added to the iPHD Project. M. Koller added that New Jersey is one of the pilot sites for this project, which is why the EMS data is being requested.
- K. Noonan highlighted an important point, noting that for non-New Jersey researchers, it's crucial to establish connections with data stewards. These connections are vital for ensuring that research benefits the state, which is a key goal of the iPHD project, and may also help guide researchers in shaping their future projects. M. Koller acknowledged the importance of engaging with data stewards and shared a deep appreciation for their invaluable contributions and support. J. Nova agreed and said that the data team received many questions and reached out to data stewards for additional information when needed. He thanked them for their collaboration and support.
- R. Hammond said she would accept a motion for a block vote to approve the release of data for the five applications listed below. K. Noonan made a motion to take a roll call vote, R. Jain offered a second and the motion was approved unanimously.

Proposal information		Motion	Second	Voting to Data Release		
Title	PI/Institution			Yes	No	Recused
Emergency Medical Services for Children Evaluation of Readiness and Outcomes	Matthew Hansen, MD, MCR Oregon Health and Science University	K. Noonan	R. Jain	R. Hammond F. Baker G. Woods K. Noonan R. Jain	0	E. Litten M. Norin
Effects of Legacy Pesticides on Maternal, Infant, and Child Health in New Jersey	Janet Currie, PhD Princeton University					
Impacts of Health Insurance on Infant Health and Utilization: An Instrumental Variables Approach	Benjamin Chartock, PhD Bentley University David Slusky, PhD University of Kansas					

Neighborhood Level Factors and Variation in Fatal and Non-fatal Overdose Rates by Race and Ethnicity	Sarah Cooper, MSW PhD Candidate Supervisor Lenna Nepomnyaschy, PhD Rutgers School of Social Work					
Prevalence of Maternal Substance Use During Pregnancy and Association with Offspring Birth Outcomes	Jessica E. Salvatore, PhD Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School					

- R. Hammond stated that the subcommittee recommended two applications for further discussion. K. Noonan explained that for these two "maybe" proposals, there were concerns regarding the methodology, the study's impact, and the generalizability of the results. The subcommittee debated whether the potential benefits justified the cost of releasing data for these proposals.
- R. Jain agreed, noting that one of the applications (#304) was a resubmission with minimal changes from the previous version, and the small sample size was a concern. K. Noonan then asked other Board members to share their thoughts.
 - R. Hammond said that based on the information shared, it is unclear how well this application fits into one of the established research priorities.
 - G. Woods asked about the cost burden on CSHP for processing these applications. M. Koller replied that it is one of the factors considered, explaining that CSHP needs to assess its capacity to create these data sets, which may influence decisions on borderline cases. The main reason this particular application was placed in the "maybe" category was that the applicant did not adequately address concerns raised in the previous review.
- R. Hammond reminded the Board that resource allocation has not been established as a formal review criterion. However, the Board can modify the criteria if they wish to include resource considerations for data review and release in the future. K. Noonan clarified that the intent is not to introduce a new criterion; the concerns with these applications were primarily related to methodology, impact, and alignment with research priorities.
- R. Hammond suggested to vote separately on the two "maybe" applications.
- During the public comment session, S. Borys mentioned that it is challenging to secure funding for projects studying suicide in New Jersey due to the low suicide rate. She added that NJDHS is introducing a new crisis services program, and they have data on potentially suicidal individuals in the state.

- R. Hammond stated that she would accept a motion to disapprove the release of data for the application listed below. K. Noonan motioned to proceed with a roll call vote, which was seconded by R. Jain. The motion was unanimously approved.

Proposal information		Motion to Disapprove	Second	Voting to Not Release Data		
Title	PI/Institution			Yes	No	Recused
The Epidemiology of Suicide and Kidney Disease in New Jersey	Elissa Kozlov, PhD Rutgers School of Public Health	R. Jain	G. Woods	R. Hammond F. Baker G. Woods K. Noonan R. Jain	0	E. Litten M. Norin

- K. Noonan provided an overview of the second application in the “maybe” category. She said that similar to the last one, there were questions about the research plan and understanding of the linkage. The PI has a strong record and highly relevant expertise, and the selected topic is very important. M. Koller mentioned that the subcommittee discussed the disconnect between historical expertise, health service delivery knowledge, and understanding of linkage related to this research. R. Jain said that it seemed like they were struggling to find some linkages to fit into the focus areas for IPHD research funding.
- R. Hammond asked whether technical assistance should be offered to the principal investigator to address data linkage issues and resubmit in the future. M. Koller explained that all applicants receive copies of the RAC reviews and are encouraged to resubmit based on the feedback provided. R. Hammond emphasized that the goal of IPHD is to provide access to administrative data for research purposes, and if there are significant issues with an application, it is preferable for applicants to consider the reviewers' feedback, revise the application, and then resubmit. K. Noonan agreed that this is a good approach.
- With no public comments, R. Hammond called for a motion to disapprove the data release for the application listed below. R. Jain made a motion for a roll call vote, which was seconded by K. Noonan, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Proposal information		Motion to Disapprove	Second	Voting to Not Release Data		
Title	PI/Institution			Yes	No	Recused
The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Pediatric Acute Appendicitis Outcomes in the State of New Jersey	Sathyaprasad Burjonrappa, MD, MS, FRCS Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School	R. Jain	K. Noonan	R. Hammond F. Baker G. Woods K. Noonan R. Jain	0	E. Litten M. Norin

- K. Noonan provided an overview of the applications in the “do not release” category. The proposed research areas were of great interest to the iPHD Governing Board, but the overall quality of the applications did not meet the requirements for approval. R. Jain agreed that the research design was poor. M. Koller mentioned that the methodological and scientific deficiencies in the proposals were captured in detail in the summary document shared with the Board.
- K. Noonan said that the review process is very rigorous, and the reviewers thoroughly review each proposal to provide researchers with specific feedback.
- There were no public comments. R. Hammond said she would accept a motion for a block vote to disapprove the release of data for four applications listed below. R. Jain made a motion to take a roll call vote, F. Baker offered a second and the motion was approved unanimously.

Proposal information		Motion	Second	Voting to Not Release Data		
Title	PI/Institution			Yes	No	Recused
The Impact of Social Determinants of Health on Unscheduled 72-hour Return Visits to the Emergency Department	Paul Peng, MD, PhD Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School	R. Jain	F. Baker	R. Hammond F. Baker G. Woods K. Noonan R. Jain	0	E. Litten M. Norin
Enumerating Spatial Mismatch to Address Health Inequity: Poverty, Healthcare Access and Healthcare Resources	Peijia Zha, PhD Rubab Qureshi, PhD Haiqun Lin, PhD Rutgers School of Nursing					
Investigating Disparities in Health Outcomes from Micromobility-Related Injuries	Hannah Younes, PhD Clinton J. Andrews, PhD Robert B. Noland, PhD Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy					
Trends and Risk Factors of Hypertensive Disorders Among Women in NJ	Aayush Visaria, MD, MPH Resident Physician Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Supervisor Ethan Halm, MD, MPH, MBA Vice Chancellor for Population Health, Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences					

- R. Hammond said that out of the five applications approved for data release, only two requested a fee waiver. The subcommittee also recommended both applications for the fee waiver. She reminded the Board about the funding decision criteria established for consistency and fairness in awards:
 - Did the applicant receive previous funding?

- Was the application addressing a public health priority area?
- Is the application from a New Jersey State entity?
- Any weaknesses identified in the proposal?
- Diversity of the applicants either underrepresented organization or geography.
- Underrepresented research priorities for projects.
- R. Hammond asked the Board if they had any concerns or questions. There were no comments. R. Hammond said she would accept a motion for a block vote to approve fee waivers for two applications listed below. K. Noonan made a motion to take a roll call vote, R. Jain offered a second and the motion was approved unanimously.

Proposal information		Motion	Second	Voting to Data Release		
Title	PI/Institution			Yes	No	Recused
Neighborhood Level Factors and Variation in Fatal and Non-fatal Overdose Rates by Race and Ethnicity	Sarah Cooper, MSW PhD Candidate Supervisor Lenna Nepomnyaschy, PhD Rutgers School of Social Work	K. Noonan	R. Jain	R. Hammond F. Baker G. Woods K. Noonan R. Jain	0	E. Litten M. Norin
Prevalence of Maternal Substance Use During Pregnancy and Association with Offspring Birth Outcomes	Jessica E. Salvatore, PhD Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School					

- R. Hammond invited recused Board members back to the meeting and requested them to turn on their video and audio.
- M. Koller provided a quick overview of the timeline for data release for the five approved applications.

Perinatal Risk Assessment (PRA) Dataset

- M. Koller shared that CSHP briefed the New Jersey Health Commissioner in late spring, during which the Commissioner suggested incorporating PRA data into iPHD. M. Koller provided a brief overview of the dataset, noting that it aligns well with the maternal health priority and is of particular importance to the Commissioner. R. Hammond then asked the Board if they had any questions.
- E. Litten asked if the data is identifiable. G. Woods confirmed that the dataset does include identifiers and is designed to support care management for the members.
- R. Hammond explained that this process would be similar to how DOH datasets are handled. An identifiable dataset would be transferred to Rutgers, where it would be

linked and de-identified before being released to researchers approved by the Board. She emphasized that this would be a valuable addition to the iPHD Project.

- S. Borys noted that maternal health is a key priority for the First Lady of New Jersey, and her division is actively involved in examining maternal health, mental health, and substance use. She added that this dataset will provide valuable information about pregnant women.
- K. Noonan mentioned that PRA data is often used for analytics and to identify individuals who need to be connected to prenatal care but have not yet been reached. New Jersey's universal contact system reaches out to these individuals, and having this data available for research would be highly beneficial. E. Litten agreed, noting that this aligns well with iPHD's public health goals and priorities.
- E. Litten made a motion to include the PRA data into iPHD. R. Jain provided the second and, upon roll call, the inclusion of PRA data was approved unanimously.

Strategic Planning/ Process Improvement Activities

- M. Koller explained that CSHP is currently engaged in strategic planning and process improvement efforts. The goal is to establish a strong, consistent, and transparent process. As part of this, they will review past experiences to identify learning opportunities, document ways to improve efficiency, and ensure compliance. This will also help assess the Center's capacity to estimate the volume of applications they can handle in future cycles. She then outlined the process as follows:
 - Conducting a 5-month quick assessment to identify opportunities to optimize the application review process, and improving the user experience.
 - This assessment is led by a consultant, Katherine Kovacs, who worked on the initial phase of iPHD, and Mary Marsan, an MBA and MPH graduate student intern, who's been working with the iPHD since this spring. They will conduct an environmental scan and share their recommendations for process improvement aimed at increasing scalability, efficiency and project growth. This includes:
 - Conduct a survey of users and applicants to identify strengths and weaknesses.
 - Hold key informant interviews, including with Governing Board members.
 - Perform an environmental scan of other integrated data systems to pinpoint opportunities for improvement in iPHD.
 - Identify specific policy changes, gaps, or necessary adjustments in existing policies. Initial findings will be presented at the October Board meeting.

R. Hammond indicated that the executive session is not needed. R. Hammond asked if anyone would like to make a public comment. There were no comments, and the open session of the Governing Board meeting was adjourned at 2:25 pm.

- R. Jain made a motion to adjourn the open session of the meeting.
- E. Litten offered a second.
- Unanimous vote to adjourn the meeting.