

**Integrated Population Health Data (iPHD) Project  
Governing Board (GB) Meeting Minutes  
April 25, 2025**

**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), Joel Cantor (Ex officio/ Non-voting, Director of Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), 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, Assistant Commissioner and Division Director, Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services Department of Human Services), Kathleen Noonan (Appointed- Chief Executive Officer, Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers), and Janet Currie (Appointed- Human Subjects Research Expert, Professor of Economics and Policy Affairs, Princeton 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), Bretta Jacquemin (NJ Department of Health), (Kara Unal (NJ Department of Health), Tim Seplaki (NJ Department of Health), Michael Toto (NJ Department of Health), Geeta Real (NJ Department of Health), Darrin Goldman (NJ Department of Health), Domenica Cevallos (NJ Department of Health), Stella Tsai (NJ Department of Health), Yong Lee (NJ Department of Health), Teresa Snyder (NJ Department of Health), Jose Nova (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Kate Scotto (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Julien Rodriguez (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 1:32 pm with a quorum present.
- R. Hammond acknowledged that the meeting was held in compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act. Notices were published in the Newark Star Ledger and posted on relevant websites with registration and login instructions.
- R. Hammond announced that Commissioner Baston has been appointed as the interim CEO of the University Hospital in Newark. Jeff Brown, formerly the Deputy Commissioner for Health Systems, has been named the acting Commissioner of DOH.
- R. Hammond said the MOA modification for an additional \$400K in funding for FY 2025 is in its final stages.

### **General Updates/Actions**

#### *Meeting Minutes*

- R. Hammond requested the Board members review and approve the February 21, 2025, Governing Board meeting minutes. The minutes were approved by the Minutes Subcommittee on March 21, 2025.
- K. Noonan made a motion to approve the February meeting minutes. R. Jain seconded the motion, and, upon a roll call, the minutes were approved unanimously.

#### *Cycle 1 Pending Pilot Funding*

- M. Koller reminded the Board that one applicant, approved in December 2022 for pilot funding and a fee waiver, has yet to submit the required compliance documents—IRB approval, data use agreement, and data management plan. This issue was previously discussed at the February meeting, where the Board granted the applicant an additional 60 days to submit the documents. If the documents are not submitted within that time frame, the funding will be rescinded. However, the applicant may still access the data upon submitting the required documents and paying the applicable data fees. A formal notice was sent in early March.

- M. Koller noted that a reminder was sent in mid-April, but the documents remain outstanding. If they are not received by the deadline, she recommended sending a final letter notifying the applicant that the funding has been rescinded and that data access is still available for purchase.
- R. Hammond and M. McNally agreed with this approach.

### *Spring Virtual Update*

- M. Koller shared the webinar agenda and stated that iPHD has a strong network of interested parties, making it a great opportunity to reach out and update everyone on the progress. She added that an in-person event is planned for the fall, and the feedback from the webinar will be useful for refining operations and shaping the agenda for the fall event.
- M. Koller shared that the webinar is scheduled for April 30th from 2:00 to 3:00 PM, with 68 people currently registered. Notably, most registrants have not previously applied to the iPHD Program. This insight helped shape messaging that highlights the value of the iPHD, the opportunities it offers, and its key milestones and successes.
- M. Koller noted that CSHP is currently exploring potential venues to host the Research Consortium. She invited Board members to suggest centrally located and easily accessible sites. R. Jain mentioned that Montclair is centrally located and offered to check the availability of a conference room for September or October.

### *Strategic Plan Implementation Update*

- M. Koller stated that the iPHD is currently focused on strategic review and process improvement efforts to enhance scalability and streamline operations. This includes refining communication strategies, strengthening data management practices, and improving the overall user experience—all with a focus on long-term sustainability. She thanked K. Kovacs for leading this initiative.
- M. Koller said that the findings are grouped into six buckets including:
  - Strong demand for external data linkages: Researchers increasingly seek to link iPHD data with other datasets, which raises many re-identification issues.
  - Insufficient One-Year DUA Timeframe: Researchers often encounter institutional delays in DUA execution, making the one-year timeframe inadequate. As a response to this concern, a six-month timeframe for documents submission was implemented in the last cycle.

- Common post-approval data requests: It is common for researchers to request additional data years after receiving approval, necessitating formal policies and guardrails.
- Need for centralized and automated tracking systems: Decentralized tracking does not align with iPHD growth and efficiency strategies.
- Knowledge gaps on PHI: Some applicants need guidance on PHI/HIPAA-compliant data and the constraints surrounding data linkages.
- Communication challenges: One-on-one communication is inefficient and unsustainable. Adopting platform-based messaging (webinars, website, FAQs) so that we have a standard set of communications to enhance efficiency, consistency, and equity.
- M. Koller presented a comprehensive overview of the activities undertaken in the last five months to identify and address potential bottlenecks within the process:
  - Gathered direct feedback from researchers to shape policies and refine applications.
  - Revised workflows to optimize efficiency in key areas, reducing bottlenecks.
  - Updated FAQs for clarity and enhanced the website with an infographic on the application process. Added variables list to improve communication regarding data availability.
  - Modified application forms to include external data linking and funding information.
  - Implemented Airtable to facilitate automation and project management.
  - Developed new policies to address the growing number of post-approval data requests, establishing formal guidelines to balance researchers' needs with staff resources.
- K. Kovacs outlined the reasons for choosing Airtable as the project management tool for iPHD, and highlighted its project management capabilities and relational database features. She added that Airtable includes automated alerts for tracking compliance documents. Additionally, it offers dashboard functionality for quick reviews and easy information sharing.
- J. Brecht gave an overview of the website enhancements, noting that the new pages will launch closer to the RFA release date. Additionally, sample application documents will be available on the website to assist applicants in their planning. He added that these enhancements aim to keep information current and make it easier for applicants to navigate.

- K. Noonan and R. Jain expressed their appreciation for adding Airtable as a project management tool and the website enhancements.
- M. Koller mentioned that the dashboard feature in Airtable will be useful for the annual report and for organizing the information for legislators in case there are potential follow-up ad hoc inquiries and requests.

## **Discussion**

### *FAQ on External Data Linkages*

- M. Koller said that CSHP created an FAQ to address questions related to external data linkages. Additionally, the data request form was updated to include additional questions aimed at assessing feasibility, ensuring HIPAA compliance, and addressing potential reidentification issues beforehand.

### *Additional Data Year Policy*

- M. Koller explained that it typically takes four to five months from application submission to approval. During that time, new data years may become available. If this occurs, the iPHD team will notify applicants about the additional year before processing any compliance documents.
- M. Koller noted that R. Hammond and M. McNally suggested drafting a motion for the Governing Board to delegate limited authority to CSHP to enhance operational efficiency. This delegation would allow CSHP to inform applicants when a new data year becomes available. If applicants wish to include the additional year, they must update their data request form. CSHP would then proceed with compliance documentation reflecting the updated data request.
- M. Koller asked R. Hammond to review the proposal and request a motion if she agreed. R. Hammond confirmed that this would be a limited delegation of authority and invited Board members to share any questions or concerns. The Board expressed consensus that the approach was reasonable.
- R. Hammond added that CSHP should inform the Board of any such changes to approved applications as an FYI under this delegated authority.
- R. Hammond formally requested that the Board authorize CSHP to approve limited modifications to previously approved data requests—specifically, the inclusion of newly available data years—provided the request is received before the DUA and IRB processes are initiated.
- R. Jain made the motion to grant CSHP this limited authority. J. Currie seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

- R. Hammond thanked CSHP for its strategic planning efforts, which have led to meaningful quality improvements.

**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 2:26 pm.**

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