

**Integrated Population Health Data (iPHD) Project  
Governing Board (GB) Meeting Minutes  
April 24, 2026**

**1:30 PM-3:00 PM EST**

*The iPHD Governing Board meeting convened in compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act. 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), Francis Baker (Ex officio/Designee for the NJ Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General, NJ Office of the Attorney General), Rashmi Jain (Appointed- Big Data/Security Expert, Chair of Information Management and Business Analytics, Montclair State University), 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), Janet Currie (Appointed- Human Subjects Research Expert, Professor of Economics and Policy Affairs, Princeton University), and Dennis Zeveloff (Ex officio/Designee for the NJ State Treasurer, Senior Adviser to the Treasurer, New Jersey Department of the Treasury)

**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), Barbara Bolden (NJ Department of Health), Kara Unal (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), Aras Islam (NJ Department of Health), Jose Nova (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Kate Scotto (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Jolene Chou (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Joshua Lue (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Katherine Kovacs (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy), Julien Rodriguez (Rutgers Center for State Health Policy),

Joseph Brecht (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 1:31 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.

### **General Updates/Actions**

- R. Hammond informed the Board that Bob Bartolone has joined the Governor's Office of Disaster Recovery and will no longer serve on the Board. She welcomed Dennis Zeveloff, the new designee for the Treasurer. He serves as a senior advisor to the Treasurer and has an extensive background in the Murphy administration, having previously held positions such as Chief Policy Advisor to the Governor and Director of Budget and Outcomes.

### *Meeting Minutes*

- R. Hammond requested Board members to review and approve the March 27, 2026, Governing Board meeting minutes.
- J. Currie made a motion to approve the March meeting minutes. G. Woods seconded the motion, R. Hammond abstained, and, upon roll call, the minutes were approved unanimously.

### *Updated Fee Schedule*

- M. Koller informed the Board that K. Scotto is developing a new fee schedule with Rutgers Cost Accounting. This new schedule will be presented at the May meeting and will become effective on July 1, 2026.

### *Cycle 8 Applications*

- M. Koller provided an overview of the applications received for Cycle 8:
  - A total of 11 applications have been received, including 10 from New Jersey and 1 from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. There is a strong representation from Rutgers, along with several new applicants this cycle.
  - The CSHP is currently conducting a feasibility and completeness review prior to sharing the applications with the Research Review Committee

(RRC). The RRC meeting is scheduled for May 28, and the Board will review the applications in June.

- The distribution of research priorities is diverse, with EMS and UB identified as the most frequently requested datasets. Additionally, it is noteworthy that nine out of the 11 applications proposed linkages outside of the iPHD program.
- R. Jain about the possibility of reusing non-iPHD data linkages by other researchers in the future.
- R. Hammond responded that incorporating new data sets into iPHD requires approval from the Governing Board, a legal review, and the execution of Data Use Agreements (DUAs). She noted that if external linkages prove valuable, the board should discuss and consider formal inclusion into iPHD.
- J. Nova said that the most common request is for geographic level linkages using publicly available datasets. While the idea is compelling, its feasibility is contingent upon several factors, including the nature of the third-party source, its prior history of linkages, and the effectiveness of those linkages. If the evaluation of these criteria is favorable, we may consider its integration into iPHD.
- M. Koller said that there are two applications from the Department of Children and Families (DCF), who are also data contributors. The data team is in the process of making it research ready so that it will be available for the next cycle.

### *Bylaws*

- M. Koller said that CSHP is currently updating the bylaws and related policy documents to align with the recent changes that have been operationalized and implemented following their approval. It is important that these foundational documents remain consistent with iPHD's operations.
- K. Kovacs said that the bylaws were approved before the launch of iPHD. Since then, iPHD has experienced significant growth, which has led to changes in the review process, the development of new policies, and the normalization of virtual meetings. She provided an overview of the modifications to the bylaws.
  - The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) has been renamed and restructured as the Research Review Committee (RRC), reflecting streamlined operational changes made in 2025.
  - A new section establishes a formal expedited review pathway for projects previously approved through a formal peer review, reducing duplicative efforts. The Board retains full approval authority, and this was adopted on February 27, 2026.

- A newly established Article V formally defines the Board's overarching governance authority, which encompasses responsibilities related to data release, committee oversight, and compliance. It also authorizes delegation of routine post-approval actions (e.g., extending approved data years) to committees or Rutgers CSHP staff in accordance with Board-approved policy.
  - New language has been incorporated to provide clarity regarding presiding authority in the absence of the statutory Chairperson and when no Vice Chairperson has been elected. In such cases, the Chair may designate another ex officio member to preside; if no designation is made, the ex officio members present at the meeting will select a presiding member among themselves.
  - Several other amendments were also made, including updates to statutory citations, such as the recent adjustment to the OPMA in accordance with P.L. 2024, c. 16, and the removal of the in-person attendance requirement, aligning with established practices for virtual meetings (§2.10)
- R. Hammond said that all additions had already been approved by the Board. She asked the Board to share any comments or concerns. It was noted that there were no comments. J. Currie then moved to approve the bylaws, and R. Jain seconded the motion. Upon roll call, the bylaws were unanimously approved. The updated version will be posted on the iPHD website.

*Review of Applications: Expediated Pathway Submission for Peer Reviewed Applications*

- R. Hammond provided a brief overview of the process. She outlined the criteria for releasing data, which include- alignment with one or more of the research priorities, it's grounded in good science, well written, presents a feasible analytics plan, and an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the application.
- M. Agrawal provided an overview of the NIH approved application submitted to iPHD:
  - Project Title: Adverse Health Outcomes from Extreme Heat, Air Pollution, and Medications in Low-Income Pregnant Women and their Offspring; PI: Soko Setoguchi, PhD
  - It is a multi-state study that involves New Jersey, California, and Massachusetts.
  - It aligns closely with the research priorities of maternal and infant health research priorities, as well as with the purpose of the iPHD.

- The findings from the study will provide robust evidence regarding the combined effects of extreme heat, air pollution, and medications on low-income pregnant women.
- J. Currie commented that merging these datasets with Medicaid claims data would represent a significant undertaking.
- J. Nova provided an overview of the requested data linkage and highlighted the data flow using a flow chart. He mentioned that this is a unique scenario because it involves sending Personally Identifiable Information (PII) out of iPHD. This application proposes:
  - Linking NJ birth and hospital discharge data to temperature, humidity, precipitation (PRISM) and air pollution data (MAP), using the CMS Chronic Conditions Warehouse (CCW) Virtual Research Data Center (VRDC).
  - Linkage of NJ birth registry data for mothers and babies to CMS Medicaid claims data within the CCW VRDC.
  - To facilitate the linkage, the iPHD team will provide the VRDC team with a finder file containing PII, which includes the last names, dates of birth, and sex of both mothers and babies. Additionally, iPHD will provide a linked birth and hospital discharge data file to the research team for uploading to the VRDC.
  - All linkages will be performed inside this secure enclave by CCW VRDC. A separate Data Use Agreement (DUA) with CMS will be established for this linkage.
  - Once the VRDC team has conducted the record linkage using the iPHD-provided finder file for the Medicaid-eligible populations, all identifiable data will be retained exclusively by CMS CCW. The research team will only have access to the crosswalk file and will not have access to any PII.
- R. Hammond asked for details regarding the storage and usage of CMS data. She specifically wanted to know how the data is stored, what the data destruction policy entails, and whether the data could be used for purposes beyond this project's scope, including any civil, criminal, or administrative enforcement actions.
- J. Nova stated that the information will only be used for this project and will be destroyed afterward. However, CSHP will follow up with the PI to review the language in the DUA.
- J. Currie raised the same concern regarding data storage within the VRDC, indicating that it is not subject to destruction. She also inquired whether other states are sharing their data with CMS.

- M. McNally inquired if iPHD will have a DUA with CMS. J. Nova responded that the PI has a DUA with CMS and the iPHD data linkage is included in that DUA.
- R. Hammond stated that additional information is required regarding data security, privacy, destruction, and use provisions before voting on this application.
- M. Koller explained that the initial plan was to use New Jersey Medicaid data. However, since this is a multistate study, obtaining data from CMS will allow for comparability across different states. She mentioned that more details will be provided before the next meeting.
- R. Hammond asked if any other Governing Board members have any questions, comments, or concerns that they would like to raise. She inquired whether everyone was comfortable deferring the decision until more information is available.
- J. Currie asked if the birth and hospital data were linked to the NJ Medicaid claims within iPHD, then data sharing with CMS may not be necessary. G. Woods responded that this is a multi-state study and using the same data source across all states would allow for greater consistency. He added that there may be formatting discrepancies at the state level, which could pose challenges for a multistate strategy.
- M. Koller informed the Board that the PI is a highly experienced researcher with extensive knowledge of CMS data. More information regarding CMS's data usage and destruction policy will be provided before the next meeting. Furthermore, if this leads to collaboration with VRDC, it could create an additional pathway for data processing.

**R. Hammond indicated that the executive session is not needed. R. Hammond asked if anyone would like to make a public comment. She added that each commentor has a maximum of three minutes to share their comments.**

**There were no public comments, and the open session of the Governing Board meeting was adjourned at 2: 16 pm.**

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