



Governor Pritzker Appoints Health Policy Expert Dr. Sameer Vohra To Lead Illinois Department Of Public Health

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SPRINGFIELD — Governor JB Pritzker has appointed Dr. Sameer Vohra, a distinguished pediatrician and healthcare policy expert, to lead the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) beginning August 1. Dr. Vohra, the Founding Chair of the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine's (SIU-SOM) Department of Population Science and Policy, follows Dr. Ngozi Ezike, who stepped down in March after leading IDPH and the State of Illinois through the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.



“I’m proud to announce the Illinois Department of Public Health’s next visionary leader: Dr. Sameer Vohra,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Dr. Vohra is accomplished in every sense of the word. His experience and education transcend sectors and fields, bringing a well-rounded perspective to this agency. As a leader in state and national health policy, I have absolute confidence in Dr. Vohra’s ability to continue shaping a stronger IDPH for the 21st century.”

Dr. Vohra is a general pediatrician who holds degrees in law and public policy. He is a cross-disciplinary leader in state and national health policy formulation, and his recent focus has been on improving health outcomes in Central and Southern Illinois. An Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Public Health, Medical Humanities, and Law at SIU-SOM, he currently serves the State of Illinois as the Interim Chair of the Children's Mental Health Partnership.

He completed a residency in pediatrics at the University of Chicago and earned a Master of Arts in public policy from the University of Chicago. He holds a medical doctorate from SIU-SOM; a juris doctorate from SIU School of Law graduating first in his class; and a Bachelor of Arts in political science and science in human culture with honors from Northwestern University.

"I am humbled that the Governor has entrusted me to serve the people of our State as the 20th Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health," said Dr. Sameer Vohra. "Governor Pritzker, along with the dedicated staff of IDPH, have served our State admirably during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am honored to lead this agency into the future, continuing to keep us safe from emerging illnesses, supporting our public health workers, and promoting wellness in every community across Illinois."

Dr. Vohra also serves on IDPH's Illinois State Board of Health, the Illinois Medicaid Advisory Committee, the Governor's Rural Affairs Council, and recently completed a term on the Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund Steering Committee. He has previously served on national committees for the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Association of American Medical Colleges, and the American Medical Association, and on the Board of Trustees for the Illinois State Medical Society and Chicago Medical Society.

He has received numerous honors including a United States Fulbright Scholarship in 2009, an American Medical Association Foundation's Excellence in Medicine Leadership Award in 2014, and was named an Edgar Fellow in 2016 as one of 40 emerging political and policy leaders in Illinois. In 2020, he was named a Presidential Leadership Scholar, chosen by the George W. Bush Presidential Center, the Clinton Presidential Center, the George and Barbara Bush Foundation, and the LBJ Foundation.

Since Dr. Ezike's departure, IDPH has been led on an interim basis by Amaal Tokars, PhD., the department's Assistant Director.

"It has been my great honor to serve the people of Illinois and Governor Pritzker as leader of IDPH during this interim period at a time when we are facing public health challenges on a number of fronts," said Dr. Amaal Tokars, who will remain as IDPH Assistant Director, having served in that capacity since June 2020. "I applaud Governor Pritzker's appointment of Dr. Vohra, a distinguished leader in the healthcare policy

arena who is well-known among Illinois stakeholders for his expertise and dedication to improving health outcomes and addressing healthcare disparities that have been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

IDPH has 200 different programs that benefit each state resident and visitor. With the assistance of local public health agencies, these essential programs and services make up Illinois' public health system, a system that forms a frontline defense against disease through preventive measures and education.