



CITY OF CLEVELAND
Mayor Frank G. Jackson

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Mayor Frank G. Jackson Announces Staffing Changes to Cleveland Department of Public Health

*Changes are a result of an internal investigation and review of the
department*

CLEVELAND – Mayor Frank G. Jackson today announced several significant staffing changes and reassignments to the Cleveland Department of Public Health (CDPH). The announcement follows the City’s investigation into the department’s operating structure and culture, including the re-opening of an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint, the loss of the HIV/STI grant, a review of the vacancies, hiring and attrition within CDPH, and employee morale and culture.

[View the full report here.](#)

“I have made substantial changes within the Cleveland Department of Public Health to help ensure we are serving the citizens of Cleveland in the most effective manner, said Mayor Frank G. Jackson. “These changes are not taken lightly, but are necessary to ensure an operation that will effectively provide health services to Cleveland and its residents.”

Reorganization of the Cleveland Department of Public Health

Today’s changes represent a “top-down” departmental restructuring to allow for a new management structure. CDPH is now under the Office of Prevention, Intervention and Opportunities for Youth and Young Adults, led by Chief Tracy Martin-Thompson. Chief Martin-Thompson also oversees the Community Relations Board.

“We are strategically re-aligning the resources between the Mayor’s Office of Prevention, Intervention and Opportunity for Youth and Young Adults and the Cleveland Department of Public Health, to provide more meaningful opportunities and comprehensive support services to the public,” said Chief Martin-Thompson.

Additionally, Brian Kimball, currently the commissioner of the division of environment, is also now the interim director of CDPH. He will oversee the daily operations of the department.

Merle Gordon, the former director of the department is now the executive manager of population health. In her new role, Gordon will be responsible for overseeing, conducting and directing the

City of Cleveland's health assessments and subsequent community health improvement plans; with planning, implementing and evaluating initiatives, projects and programs to improve the health of the entire population of the City with a focus on subpopulations, particularly those most impacted by health inequities; and providing subject matter expertise and technical assistance to City agencies and community organizations regarding program planning impact on population health.

This position performs work of considerable difficulty, including the development of a population health working team through training and leading, creating, revising, and interpreting program and department policies and procedures.

The Executive Manager of Population Health reports to the Chief of Prevention, Intervention and Opportunities (PIOYYA), receiving guidance in the form of general goals to be accomplished and broad program policy. The position also provides recommendations to the Chief on strategic community health initiatives across the City. [View the full job description here.](#) [Read Gordon's full statement here.](#)

Also, as a result of the investigation, pre-disciplinary hearings will be held for the Commissioner of Public Health Persis Sosiak and the Lead Epidemiologist Katherine Romig. Two employees within the department, Dreyon Wynn and Nicole Evans, both of whom perform human resources functions in the department will be reassigned. There will also be a centralization and realignment of duties for CDPH-HR employees under the Department of Human Resources.

As a result of this report, Karen Aluma will no longer report to Katherine Romig. In the interim or until another supervisor is determined by management, Aluma will continue to report to Assistant Commissioner Patrick Cusick. The City will post a Request for Proposal (RFP) to employ a consultant to conduct a Diagnostic Review (management efficiency study with recommendations and action plan) of CDPH as an organization.

Additional Findings for the Cleveland Department of Public Health

Professional Development within CDPH: As a result of this report, there will be several areas of professional development, including:

- Citywide Employees - During Hispanic Heritage Month in 2020, the City will sponsor an event for its employees celebrating the contributions and influence of Hispanic Americans to the history, culture, and achievements of the United States. National Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated from September 15 to October 15 in celebration and recognition of the histories, cultures, and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.
- All CDPH Staff - Training on equal employment opportunity law, with an emphasis on anti-discrimination based on race, ancestry, age, and national origin. This training will also include a component on cultural competency, cultural sensitivity, and implicit bias.

Executive Team – Anti-Racist Organizational Toolbox. A development series to support employees and leaders in their ability to integrate an approach of racial equity and inclusion into their organizations. This toolkit includes dialogues, foundational training on bias, a racial equity and justice series, and an anti-racist policy and procedure analysis.

- Supervisory Personnel – Two (2) training sessions will be scheduled for supervisory personnel:
 - Supervisor/Management training to include training on effective communication with coworkers.
 - Roles and Responsibilities training on the progressive disciplinary process and grievance hearing procedures.

CDPH Hiring and Vacancies: The Departments of Human Resources and Civil Service will lead bi-weekly (twice (2x) a month) meetings with CDPH leadership to discuss the status of vacancies, requisitions, hires, promotions, transfers and Civil Service job descriptions within CDPH.

Citywide Human Resources Leads- The City of Cleveland will partner with the Diversity Center to conduct professional development sessions on “Mitigating Bias in the Hiring Process”. This training is being offered as the citizens of the City of Cleveland are entitled to be represented by and have interactions with individuals that represent the community.

According to the Diversity Center, biases can surface in all stages of the hiring process, from posting the position, to reviewing resumes, and interviewing and selecting candidates. This working session includes an examination of existing procedures and the development of new practices that mitigate potential sources biases in the hiring process.

Further, as stated by the Diversity Center, the business case for diversity and inclusion will be discussed and participants will first gain an understanding of where these biases are often found in the process. Participants will then see examples of best practices that can be used to remove these biases from the hiring process.

Finally, participants will examine existing policies and/or procedures and identify ways to mitigate bias throughout the process. The goal of this session is to ensure, Human Resource professionals citywide have to tools to foster a positive operational and culturally diverse working environment.

The loss of the HIV/STI Grant: CDPH has partnered with the state since 1995 on HIV/AIDS intervention programs. In 2019, the program was expanded from three counties to include Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga, Ashtabula, Medina and Lorain counties and would

have – if approved, provided \$1.5M funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, education, testing and treatment programs as well as funding sexually transmitted infections (STIs) intervention programs. The ODPH issued a Corrective Action Plan to CDPH in February 2019. That action plan followed discussions between the State and CDPH in which the State outlined CDPH's deficiencies and the State's expectations for improvement.

The Ohio Department of Health subsequently declined to renew the grant funding for 2020 and declined Cleveland's attempt to reverse the decision, citing multiple reasons for their decision. The State, however, did agree to extend grant funding for thirty days to allow for a transition from CDPH to another provider effective February 1, 2020.

After a review and investigation of the loss of this grant, the City will develop a grant oversight and audit committee including personnel from CDPH, the Departments of Human Resources, Finance, and the Office of the Mayor. This Committee will review the status of each CDPH grant on a monthly basis to ensure grant objective, compliance, targets, activities and programs, reports, and outcomes are being met timely and in accordance to the grantor specifications.

Employee morale and culture within CDPH: The investigation and survey results revealed a large percentage of employees responded that their supervisor was available, provided guidance/coaching and their performance improved after interactions with their supervisor. Unfortunately, the survey results do not fairly represent the state of employee morale, rather only that their supervisor is present and engaged.

The results did not translate to the same large percentages of approval when asked about morale or their attitude toward coming to work or the Department in general. When employees were asked to describe how they feel when they think about work the responses were mixed, with the majority of individuals feeling either neutral or negative about their feelings towards work (CDPH).

In addition to the above referenced reorganization and professional development, the City will provide team dynamics and change management (i.e. the ADKAR model) professional developmental series to support the reorganization within the Department. Employees will continue to be surveyed in order to gauge effectiveness.

Karen Aluma EEO Investigation: The original Report of Findings and Recommendations regarding Karen Aluma's EEO complaint, authored by Austin Opalich, dated April 7, 2019 (the report date is an error; the report date should have been **April 7, 2020**) is being rescinded in its entirety. The retraction of this report includes any findings, and/or recommendations contained within the original report.

This report serves as the comprehensive replacement to Mr. Opalich's report. The investigatory team's investigation revealed the report was overbroad in its summary of incidents and quotations attributed to employees were misleading.

While the investigatory team did not find willful fraudulent conduct on behalf of Mr. Opalich, it is understandable that the over generalizations within the report caused confusion and were misleading. Notwithstanding the rescission of the original Report of Findings and Recommendations, the City of Cleveland found no credible evidence of unlawful discrimination against Karen Aluma because of her national origin and/or age.

The City of Cleveland also found no credible evidence of an unlawful hostile work environment based upon Ms. Aluma's national origin and/or age. However, the City did find leadership within CDPH made decisions which were profoundly and severely damaging and counterproductive to workforce trust, respect for others and employee confidence.

Editor's Note: *The City of Cleveland will host a virtual press conference on Thursday, Sept. 17 at 10 a.m. Additional details to follow.*

Any additional information on this topic will be posted to Trending Topics on GOVQA.

About the City of Cleveland

The City of Cleveland is committed to improving quality of life for its residents by strengthening neighborhoods, delivering superior services, embracing diversity and making Cleveland a desirable, safe city in which to live, work, play and do business. For more information on the City of Cleveland, visit online at www.city.cleveland.oh.us, Twitter at [@cityofcleveland](https://twitter.com/cityofcleveland), Facebook at facebook.com/cityofcleveland or on our blog at clecityhall.com.