



Life In Brief

Current Title: Surgeon General

Birthplace: Orange, NJ

Ethnicity: Black/African American

Marital Status: Married

Education:

- Bachelor of Science (BS) and Bachelor of Arts (BA), Biochemistry (BS) and Biopsychology (BA), University of Maryland Baltimore County, 1992 – 1997
- Master of Public Health (MPH), Interdisciplinary/Chronic Disease Prevention, University of California, Berkeley, 1999 – 2000
- Doctor of Medicine (MD), Indiana University School of Medicine, 1997 – 2002

Family:

3 children

Work History:

- U.S. Surgeon General, 2017-present
- State Health Commissioner, Indiana State Department of Health, 2014-17
- Assistant Professor of Clinical Anesthesia, Indiana University School of Medicine, 2009-17
- Anesthesiologist, Eskenazi Health, 2008-17
- General anesthesiologist, Ball Memorial Hospital
- Physician, Indianapolis Orthopedic Hospital

Quick Summary

Former state health commissioner launched into national policy circles by Mike Pence; leverages scientific research and community-input to

address health challenges, notably the HIV outbreak in rural Indiana and the opioid crisis

- Born in rural Maryland
- Cites family members' experiences with communicable diseases and substance abuse as informing his policies
- Academic background in chronic disease prevention; oversaw Indiana's response to Ebola, Zika, and child mortality rate spike, and maintains deep network of health professionals
- Convinced then-Governor Mike Pence to provide a temporary free syringe exchange in order to slow the spread of HIV during 2016 outbreak; relationship with Pence earned him a slot in the Trump Administration
- Vocal on strategies to combat the opioid epidemic, including expanding access to overdose reversal drug naloxone

Approach and Motivations

Personal experience drove him to medical field and has shaped policy priorities

- Growing up in a community with few doctors inspired him to pursue medicine
- Younger brother struggled with substance use disorders, which Adams has said led him to make the opioid crisis a defining agenda item
- Talks about family members' experiences with HIV, Hepatitis C, and chronic disease

Affirms evidence-based approach; incorporates variety of perspectives

- Has pledged to lead with science and believes health is apolitical
- Stresses that he is nonpartisan but has been criticized for recent alignment with Trump, including on COVID-19 policies



- Believes in building diverse partnerships between health, business, law enforcement, and utilizing community resources to develop a culture of health; cites input by county jail staff as instrumental in crafting Indiana HIV strategy

in the way Americans think about the opioid crisis

Policy Position and Areas of Focus

Focuses on HIV/AIDS, the opioid crisis, and mental health

HIV/AIDS: *Advocates for antiretroviral medications and needle exchange programs to curb the spread of HIV*

- Encouraged greater use of preventative HIV medication PrEP during 2016 HIV outbreak in South Indiana and acknowledged it as a valuable tool more broadly
- Instrumental in launching needle exchange program in Indiana to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS, citing scientific studies on the success of such programs
- As Surgeon General, launched initiative to reduce new infections of HIV by 75% in the next five years, including through needle exchanges

Opioid Epidemic: *Proponent of narcotic overdose treatments; launched educational campaign to erase stigma*

- As Indiana's health commissioner, advocated for legislation that would give family members of people struggling with opioid addiction access to naloxone, which can reverse opioid overdoses
- Issued first Surgeon General's Advisory in 13 years, urging more Americans to carry naloxone
- Authored report "Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Spotlight on Opioids" and a digital postcard calling for a cultural shift

Mental Illness: *Prioritizes issues at the intersection of mental illness and addiction*

- Emphasizes link between mental illness and addiction, citing story of brother's untreated mental illness that caused him to turn to substances to self-medicate
- Oversaw funding expansion for co-occurring mental health and substance use disorder treatment, bringing over \$550 million to 1200 health centers

Core Communities

Deep ties to health officials in Indiana and White House; consistent with science-based approach, engages closely with academics

Indiana Health Policy Wonks: *Relationships with health policymakers, many of whom worked on the needle exchange program*

- Worked closely with Indiana Health Department officials Pam Pontones and Jennifer Walthall
- Developed relationship with leaders in health advocacy, including Beth Meyerson, Co-Director of the Rural Center for AIDS/STD Prevention
- Wide network from involvement with State's Health Executive Board, State Trauma Care Committee, and Healthy Hoosier Foundation

Mike Pence: *Long history with Pence and Trump appointees pulled from Pence's circle*

- Originally appointed to health commissioner by then-Governor Mike Pence
- As State Health Commissioner, worked closely with health care consultant Seema Verma, who helped Pence design Indiana's Medicaid



expansion; Verma is current Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

- Connected to former Pence aides who have also worked in the Department of Health and Human Services, including his former health care policy director Brian Neale, who served as Deputy Administrator and Director at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Academics: Valuable mentorships; supportive of historically black universities

- Meyerhoff Scholar at University of Maryland-Baltimore County; mentored by former President Dr. Hrabowski and maintains ties to Meyerhoff colleagues
- Has held various research positions, including work under Nobel prize laureate Tom Cech, who is at the University of Colorado-Boulder
- Engages with historically black universities, including Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) and Howard University; considers Dr. David Satcher, MSM Founding Director and former Surgeon General, a mentor and friend

Political History

- State Health Commissioner, IN Department of Health, 2014-2017

Relevant Financial Information

Has donated to political action committees related to his professional background

Political Donations

- Donated \$1,800 to American Society of Anesthesiologists Political Action Committee between 2011 and 2014
- Donated \$250 to the Indiana State Medical Association Political Action Committee

Publications, Media and Speaking

Publishes and speaks on public health crises such as the opioid epidemic in national news and before medical groups

Publications: Has written academic papers, book chapters, and editorials on anesthesiology and the opioid crisis

- Favorite Subjects: Addiction, case-based approaches to anesthesiology
- Preferred Outlets: Journals including the American Journal of Public Health, and newspapers including the New York Times
- Regularly co-authors op-eds with Robert Redfield, Director of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Media: Appears in national cable news channels to discuss strategies to tackle the opioid epidemic and other health challenges

- Favorite Subjects: Opioid crisis, naloxone, public health announcements
- Preferred Outlets: National cable news outlets including CNN, FOX News, NBC News, and Good Morning America
- Social Media Habits: Active on personal and professional Twitter accounts

Speaking: Speaks to medical students and groups on addiction and the future of public health

- Favorite Subjects: Substance abuse, stigma, national health challenges
- Preferred Audience: Medical schools including Rush University Medical Center, Harvard University, and Morehouse School of Medicine; and national health organizations including the American Society of Anesthesiologists and the American Public Health Organization



Jerome Adams

Surgeon General

Vignette
by National Journal

Congressional Testimony: *Statements before House and Senate on the opioid epidemic and communicable diseases*

- In his capacity as Surgeon General, has testified before House and Senate committees on the opioid epidemic and HIV/AIDS

- Attended Indiana University School of Medicine as an Eli Lilly and Company Scholar, a minority scholarship program
- Studied abroad in Holland and Zimbabwe

Awards

- Public Health Service Outstanding Service Medal
- Public Health Service Outstanding Unit Citation
- Public Health Service Unit Commendation
- Public Health Service Crisis Response Service Award
- Humanitarian Service Medal
- Public Health Service Regular Corps Ribbon
- Commissioned Corps Training Ribbon

Criticisms and Controversies

No notable controversies

Family and Personal Background

Rural upbringing; highly educated scholarship student

Raised in a small town in Maryland

- Grew up on the family farm in Mechanicsville, Maryland
- Father was from southern Maryland and worked the tobacco fields and raised pigs
- Their town had few resources, including few physicians

Minority scholarship recipient

- Attended the University of Maryland-Baltimore County as a Meyerhoff Scholar, a program with the goal of increasing diversity among future STEM leaders