



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Joint Commission on the Modernization of Public Health**

*First meeting to be held this Friday*

**Oklahoma City, Okla.** - The Joint Commission of Public Health Modernization, established by Governor Fallin to provide guidance on the reform of the Oklahoma public health system, is set to meet for the first time at 1 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 5, at OKC-County Health Department's Northeast Regional Health and Wellness Campus, 2600 NE 63<sup>rd</sup> St.

"We are excited to bring together a diverse group of individuals from around the state to look at opportunities to modernize the way we deliver critical public health services," said Gary Cox, Oklahoma City-County Health Department executive director and chairman of the commission. "Although we are faced with many barriers in our current state system, we have realized progress in a multitude of public health programs and partnerships, and can build on that with outward focused initiatives and innovative approaches to improve health and wellness for our entire state."

Every day, public health professionals and their partners across the state work to prevent disease, promote effective programs and policies and protect against emerging community threats. Public health is an essential service, and Oklahoma's public health system provides a critical and unique role in protecting the health of families and communities throughout the state. Additionally, the system works to improve the health of all Oklahomans, and to serve as the fundamental linkage between the health care delivery system and the residents it serves.

Significant work has been undertaken in recent years at the national level to define a modern public health system, and explicitly articulate the delivery of essential health services. The Joint Commission of Public Health Modernization will establish a framework for defining foundational public health areas and capabilities, and estimate the costs associated with delivering these critical services. Public health modernization is achievable through valuable partnerships and innovative strategies. To bring Oklahoma up to date, the Commission will closely examine areas around budgeting, program and data assessment.

"Recommendations to bring Oklahoma up to date, integrate the way our systems work and build transparency will be critical in making us a healthier and more competitive state. Public health is not a soft issue, but one that provides a foundation for our success. It works closely with education, elected officials and the community at large to prioritize and solve complex problems that keep our citizens from living full, productive lives", said Interim Commissioner Preston Doerflinger.

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#### **Contact:**

Jackie Shawnee

405-419-4032

Jackie\_Shawnee@occhd.org