



# JEROME ADAMS

SURGEON GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

NationalJournal

## Life in Brief

**Hometown:** Mechanicsville, MD

**Education:**

- M.D., Indiana University School of Medicine, 2002
- M.P.P., University of California-Berkeley, 2000
- B.A., B.S., University of Maryland-Baltimore, 1997

**Family:**

- Married, Lacey; three 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, dates unknown
- Physician, Indianapolis Orthopedic Hospital, dates unknown

**Professional Associations:**

- Indiana Health Information Exchange
- Indiana Society of Anesthesiologists
- American Society of Anesthesiologists
- American Medical Association
- Indiana State Medical Association

## 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

### Policy Positions 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 in the way Americans think about the opioid crisis

**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

### 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

**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

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

## Criticisms and Controversies

No notable controversies

## COVID-19 Response

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**Key player in White House messaging about the COVID-19 outbreak; echoes President's arguments**

### Relevant Positions

- Coronavirus Task Force
- Influential relationship with Mike Pence

**Statements: *Vocal in national media on strategies to contain the virus; offers support of Trump and does not favor invoking the DPA***

- Appearances in national morning news programs to convey message that people's actions can help save lives and limit the spread of the virus, offering instructions on handwashing and social distancing
- Urged social media influencers, including Kylie Jenner, to amplify messages about social distancing
- Has defended the Trump Administration's response to the outbreak, arguing that as a democracy the U.S. must tread carefully before instituting drastic measures like China and South Korea
- Scolded national media for partisanship in their coverage of the administration's policies
- Stresses engaging with the private sector to increase testing; does not believe invoking the Defense Production Act is necessary, citing proactive production efforts by companies such as Honeywell and 3M