# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# assistant secretary for preparedness and response, Department of health and human services

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| **OVERVIEW** |
| Senate Committee | Health, Education, Labor and Pensions |
| Agency Mission | To enhance and protect the health and well-being of all Americans by providing effective health and human services and fostering advances in medicine, public health and social services.[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Overview | The assistant secretary for preparedness and response is the secretary’s lead for preparing for and responding to public health emergencies, including bioterrorism.[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[3]](#endnote-3) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Health and Human Services[[4]](#endnote-4) |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | The office includes approximately 700 employees and a $1.2 billion budget. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Serves as the secretary’s lead for public health emergencies and disasters.
* Organizes and coordinates the department’s response to emergencies.
* Leads the nation in preventing, responding to and recovering from disasters.
* Oversees the office’s range of activities from policy development and operational disaster response to advanced development of medical countermeasures, both for biodefense and for naturally occurring diseases.
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * Ability to stay collected in national emergencies
* Policy experience
* Basic understanding of issues in preparedness and in responding to disasters
* Understanding of public health *and* healthcare systems
* Leadership and oversight experience in responding to public health crises
* Background in medicine (a plus)
* Ability to understand, learn and handle basic scientific and economic challenges involved in countermeasure development
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| Competencies | * Excellent leadership skills
* Ability to work under pressure
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |
| Nicole Lurie (2009 to 2017) – Physician and Senior Natural Scientist and Professor of Health Policy at the RAND Corporation; Internationally renowned health services researcher and health policy expert, including in public health preparedness; Senior Editor for Health Services Research and President of the Society of General Internal Medicine[[5]](#endnote-5) |
| W. Craig Vanderwagen (2005 to 2009) (Original Officeholder) – Physician and Rear Admiral, U.S. Public Health Service; Director, Primary Care and Public Health for the Ministry of Health in Iraq; Physician, Indian Health Service[[6]](#endnote-6)[[7]](#endnote-7) |

1. Partnership for Public Service agency profile [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.hhs.gov/about/leadership/nicole-lurie/index.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.hhs.gov/about/agencies/orgchart/index.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.hhs.gov/about/leadership/nicole-lurie/index.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.c-span.org/person/?wvanderwagen> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.martin-blanck.com/bio_craig-vanderwagen.php> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)