# 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. |
| 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 |
| Competencies | * Excellent leadership skills * Ability to work under pressure |
| **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)