



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, January 4, 2011

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Dr. David Sundwall Announces Resignation from UDOH

(Salt Lake City, UT) - Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Executive Director Dr. David N. Sundwall today announced his resignation from the agency, and as commissioner of health for the State of Utah. Sundwall, a family practice physician by training, was appointed executive director of the Department in January 2005.

Sundwall's six-year tenure with the UDOH was marked initially by increases in the state's public health budget. But in 2008, as the state's economy began to deteriorate, revenues declined and the department sustained significant budget cuts. At the same time, the Medicaid program began to experience unprecedented growth in expenses and enrollment. Despite those challenges, the UDOH has made great strides in improving the health and well-being of Utah citizens under his leadership.

"We're immunizing more children than before, our smoking rates continue to decline, we have better systems in place to detect and prevent disease outbreaks, and people are finally paying attention to the epidemics of obesity and prescription drug overdose deaths," Sundwall said. "It has been the highlight of my career to serve two amazing governors, and alongside hundreds of public health practitioners who commit themselves on a daily basis to improving the lives of their fellow citizens."

Some of the notable accomplishments achieved during Dr. Sundwall's tenure include:

- Working with Utah's 12 local health departments to develop a statewide, seamless public health system that will improve the efficiency, responsiveness, and economy of all public health programs and initiatives;
- Establishing the state as a national leader in Health Information Technology by overseeing the implementation of such projects as the All Payer Claims Database and the Clinical Health Information Exchange;

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- Leading an integrated and highly successful response to the H1N1 influenza pandemic. The department played a key role in the state's mass vaccination program and helped educate Utahns on how to protect themselves and their loved ones from the disease;
- Identifying the epidemic of prescription drug overdose deaths and obtaining funding and support to begin addressing it;
- Constructing the new Unified Public Health Laboratory building. The state-of-the-art lab replaced a decades-old facility on the University of Utah campus;
- Implementing ongoing open enrollment in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which ensures all children who qualify for CHIP will have access to it;
- Advocating for the creation of the Medicaid Preferred Drug List, which saves Utah taxpayers millions of dollars every year by ensuring Medicaid clients receive effective drugs at the best possible price;
- Reorganizing the UDOH to better align daily functions with the department's strategic objectives. The reorganization saved taxpayers nearly \$1 million.

“Over the past six years, and during his entire career for that matter, Dr. Sundwall has been the embodiment of a public servant,” said Gov. Gary Herbert. “His leadership on critical public health matters, such as the state's response to the H1N1 pandemic, has literally saved lives. On behalf of all Utahns, I thank him for his service to our state.”

“These years have been the most challenging, and the most rewarding of my long career in public policy and public health,” Sundwall wrote in a letter of resignation to Gov. Herbert.

Sundwall anticipates returning to academic medicine and hopes to resume a more active role at the University of Utah's School of Medicine in the Division of Public Health. He has also agreed to serve as a co-editor of a comprehensive public health textbook. In addition to those duties, Sundwall will maintain his position as vice chairman of the recently created federal Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC), which advises Congress on public insurance program policies.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.