
Bureau of Family Health Director Introduction

It is our pleasure to introduce ourselves, Derik Flerlage and Dr. Jessie Piper, as the new co-directors for the Bureau of Family Health at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). We are incredibly excited to be here and to continue the wonderful work that has been happening for many years.

Derik is a registered respiratory therapist (RRT) by trade who has spent time as a frontline healthcare worker, a long-term care director, a local public health official and a senior administrator in the hospice industry. Derik graduated with his associate and bachelor's degrees from Washburn University and a master's from Wichita State in health administration. Derik also served as Deputy Chief and Chief of COVID-19 Operations for the Shawnee County Health Department where collaboration across the state was critical. Derik's clinical, public health and administrative experience gives him a unique blend of knowledge that he looks forward to implementing at the state level. Derik believes in open communication and collaboration while bringing energy and optimism to any meeting or partnership. He is looking forward to getting to know his programs at various levels to ensure a bureau that works for all.

Dr. Piper comes to us from Kansas State University where she worked as an Assistant Professor in the Center on Aging. She taught classes that focused on physical health and wellness, aging policy and advocacy and intergenerational relationships. Throughout her career she has a multitude of experiences that make her the perfect fit for our bureau. She spent time working at the Riley County Health Department where she learned about the various pieces of KDHE, in child welfare, and as the Executive Director of a small preschool. While in graduate school she studied Applied Family Science which focuses on individual and family preventative program development, administration and evaluation. Jessie also worked with Extension professionals whose goals are to promote and support individual and family health across the life span – a passion she shares and what drew her to this position. She believes in transparent and authentic leadership and looks forward to supporting Kansas families in this role.

As a team, we look forward to strengthening the Bureau of Family Health and its connections throughout the state of Kansas by fostering collaboration, communication, transparency and authenticity. If there are ever any concerns, questions, or suggestions please feel free to reach out.

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