

2017 INSPIRE HEALTHCARE



Karen DeSalvo, MD, MPH, MSc has dedicated her career to improving the health of all people, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations, through direct patient care, medical education, policy and administrative roles, research, and public service. Her commitment to improving the public's health includes ensuring access to quality, affordable health care, strengthening the public health infrastructure, and leveraging public-private partnerships to address the social determinants of health through environmental, policy, and systems-level change.

Dr. DeSalvo most recently served as Acting Assistant Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), a position President Barack Obama nominated her for in May of 2015. In that role, she oversaw 12 core public health offices and 10 regional health offices across the nation, and the development of public health policy recommendations, most notably Public Health 3.0 a blue print for the future of public health that calls for building local public-private partnerships, strengthening of local governmental public health infrastructure, and drawing more attention to the social determinants of health

During her tenure at HHS, Dr. DeSalvo concurrently served as both the Acting Assistant Secretary for Health and the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology for nearly two years. As the National Coordinator (January 2014-August 2016), she set high-level policy and the strategic direction for federal health information technology policy. She focused national attention on the need to move beyond adoption and focus on interoperability. She marshaled public and private stakeholders to create and execute on a national strategy to health IT that shifts focus from electronic health records to standardized data, freed through requiring published APIs (application programmable interfaces) and effectuating a culture and business case for information flow to support better health for individuals and communities.

Under Dr. DeSalvo's leadership as Delivery System Reform strategy co-lead, HHS set and met historic goals in payment reform, supported transformed models of care delivery including in primary care, and changed the approach to information distribution in the health system. Dr. DeSalvo specifically leveraged the Department's resources, states, and the private sector to build a more person-centered health system that encourages more coordinated care.

Before joining HHS, Dr. DeSalvo was Health Commissioner for the City of New Orleans, and Senior Health Policy Advisor to the New Orleans Mayor from 2011-2014. While there, she transformed the outmoded health department to one that has since achieved national accreditation and recognition, restored health care to devastated areas of the city, and led the establishment of a public hospital. Following Hurricane Katrina, Dr. DeSalvo was a community leader in building an innovative and award-winning model of neighborhood-based primary care and mental health services for low-income, uninsured and other vulnerable individuals in New Orleans.

Dr. DeSalvo was also a professor of medicine and vice dean for community affairs and health policy at Tulane University School of Medicine. She served as president of the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum, the state's lead for the health information exchange and patient centered medical home policy, and the National Association of Chiefs of General Internal Medicine. She has also served on the boards of the National Association of County and City Health Officials and the Society of General Internal Medicine. Dr. DeSalvo has received numerous honors, including recognition as one of Modern Healthcare's 50 most influential physician executives and leaders and 100 most influential people in health care in 2014, 2015, and 2016.

Dr. DeSalvo earned her Medical Doctorate and Master's in Public Health from Tulane University, and Master's in Clinical Epidemiology from Harvard School of Public Health. She has an honorary doctorate from her alumnus institution, Suffolk University.