
COMMITTEE UPDATES



HEAD OVER HEELS FOR NBDPN!

As we transition from 2025 into 2026, I would like to take a moment to recognize the individuals and committees whose dedication continues to move our network forward.

The work of NBDPN truly comes to life through the four functional committees of the network. Each committee plays a vital role in advancing our shared mission and goals. The Health Promotions Committee leads efforts such as Birth Defects Awareness Month initiatives. The Surveillance Guidelines and Standards Committee is currently focused on the critical guideline revisions. The Surveillance Data Committee continues to support various multistate publications that expand and strengthen public health practice related to birth defects. The Program and Professional Development Committee focus on member surveys, mentorship opportunities, and professional growth. Together, these committees offer meaningful opportunities for collaboration, leadership, and impact across the network.

As we move into the new year, I would like to sincerely thank the former chairs and co-chairs who have transitioned out of their committee leadership roles. Their dedication and leadership have made a meaningful impact across the network. Adrian Michalski has been elected to the Board of Directors and will continue to be involved in the Surveillance Data Committee. Sam Viner Brown and Dianna Contreras, the former chair and co-chair of the Program and Professional Development Committee, will continue to lead the network in their new roles as Chair and Member of the Board of Directors. Thank you, Adrian, Sam, and Dianna for your continued leadership and commitment.

I would also like to warmly welcome our new chairs and co-chairs into their leadership roles. Derek Ross will be chairing the Program and Professional Development Committee, and Stephen Pope will be co-leading the Surveillance Data Committee with returning leadership from Dayana Betancourt. Karmen Dippmann continues to lead the Health Promotions Committee, while Jodi Snow and Washa Liu continue to lead the Surveillance Guidelines and Standards Committee. Thank you all for your continued leadership and dedication.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank all members who participate in one or more committees. Your expertise, ideas, and contributions are critical to NBDPN's success in advancing its mission and goals. I encourage all members to consider getting involved in a committee that aligns with your interests and expertise. If you're not sure which committee or workgroup might be right for you, I would be happy to speak with you. I look forward to continuing our work together throughout 2026.

- Allison Forkner

Announcements & Updates

HEALTH PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE (HPC)

The Health Promotions Committee (HPC) is responsible for promoting awareness and communications of health initiatives and key observances. There are several workgroups of the HPC, including Birth Defects Awareness Month (BDAM), Folic Acid Awareness Week (FAAW), social media, newsletters, and our newest addition: CMV Awareness Month. The groups coordinate the development and dissemination of toolkits for professionals in birth defects as well as the promotion of topic-specific events. For the upcoming year, the HPC is hoping to increase engagement among members who are working in awareness and education of birth defects. Additionally, the HPC is working toward the successful development of a new tool kit for CMV Awareness Month.



Karmen Dippmann
Chair

PROGRAM & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (PPDC)

The Program and Professional Development Committee is dedicated to helping members grow and succeed as individuals, professionals, and valued members of the NBDPN community. The PPDC also aims to facilitate connection and collaboration within both the NBDPN and the wider birth defects prevention community. Workgroups under the PPDC umbrella currently include Membership Engagement, Mentoring and Professional Development, and Networking.



Derek Ross
Chair

In 2025, the PPDC focused on developing an all-member NBDPN survey gauging key metrics such as member demographics and member experiences and expectations; members can expect this survey to be distributed sometime in 2026. Additionally in 2026, the PPDC is committed to producing webinars applicable to and beneficial for all NBDPN members.

Announcements & Updates

SURVEILLANCE DATA COMMITTEE (SDC)

The Surveillance Data Committee (SDC) leads the collection, analysis, and reporting of surveillance information. The committee helps coordinate multi-state projects and the biennial report. Priorities for this year include continuing to make progress on multi-state projects including a project to assess access to Down syndrome specialty care clinics and a study on mortality and causes of death among children with birth defects.



Dayana Betancourt
Chair



Stephen Pope
Co-Chair

SURVEILLANCE GUIDELINES & STANDARDS COMMITTEE (SGSC)



Jodi Snow
Chair

The SGSC develops, revises, and promotes NBDPN birth defects surveillance guidelines, standards, and technical tools to support best practices and ensure high-quality, consistent data across member programs. Its work is carried out through four workgroups: Guidelines Revisions, Standards, Technical Tools, and EHR/HL7 Interoperability.



Washa Liu
Co-Chair

In 2026, the SGSC will prioritize CDC-supported deliverables, including completing revisions to the first five guideline chapters with updated standards incorporated, followed by continued work on the remaining three chapters. The SGSC will also continue developing technical tools such as fact sheets, webinars, and look into creating an ICD-10 to CDC/BPA coding systems crosswalk in conjunction with the Surveillance Data Committee, and will continue to provide information on interoperability and electronic case reporting (eCR) efforts.

New Workgroup Alert!



CMV AWARENESS MONTH WORKGROUP

Every June, we are recognizing CMV Awareness Month and help raise awareness about congenital cytomegalovirus (CMV), a common virus that can have serious impacts when passed from a pregnant person to their baby. Karmen Dippmann is leading this year's workgroup! If you are interested in joining this workgroup and their efforts, please reach out to Karmen Dippmann or Ashley Mallett at nbdpninc@nbdpn.org.

The workgroup will meet every other Thursday starting February 12th 10-11am CST through June.

In the News

To ensure the best health for mothers and babies, it is important to focus on maternal health both before and during pregnancy. A recent CDC [study](#) found that pre-existing diabetes and prediabetes (a condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal and could progress to diabetes) are common among women of reproductive age (WRA). Among WRA with unmanaged diabetes, folate metabolism was affected, which may lower the protective effects of vitamin folic acid against preventable birth defects.

High Blood Sugar: A Growing Risk for Mothers and Babies

Diabetes is becoming more common among women of reproductive age (WRA), which can increase the risk for birth defects.

1 in 20 WRA have diabetes

1 in 3 WRA have prediabetes

Why This Matters for Birth Defects

- Previous studies show that high blood sugar among women with diabetes increases the risk of serious birth defects and other pregnancy complications.
- We found that high blood sugar levels may alter folate status in the body. Altered folate status may lower the preventive effects of vitamin folic acid.

Help Support Healthier Pregnancies from the Start.
Understanding the impact of high blood sugar can help strengthen efforts to reduce the risk of birth defects and support healthier outcomes for moms and their babies.



NBDPN

NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS
PREVENTION NETWORK

Please submit any member-related communications or other Network updates such as workgroups accomplishments, announcements, upcoming events, etc. to nbdpninc@nbdpn.org.

Engage with us on social media!

Connect with us today!

