

# DAWN O'CONNELL

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**STRATEGIC AND EFFECTIVE LEADER WITH EXPERIENCE SOLVING COMPLEX PROBLEMS AND MANAGING PEOPLE, PROJECTS AND PROCESSES--INCLUDING HIGH PROFILE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY AND NATURAL DISASTER RESPONSES—ACROSS A \$3.6 BILLION FEDERAL AGENCY.**

## **EXPERIENCE:**

### **US DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

#### **Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response**

**June 2021-January 2025**

Presidentially appointed and Senate confirmed leader of the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response. Oversaw a \$3.6 billion budget and over 1000 employees spanning several key nationwide programs such as the Biomedical and Advanced Research and Development Authority, the Strategic National Stockpile, and the National Disaster Medical System. Served as principal advisor to the Secretary on preparing for and responding to public health emergencies and natural disasters. Worked closely with the White House, including the National Security Council, the Domestic Policy Council, and the Office for Management and Budget.

#### **Senior Counselor to the Secretary for COVID-19 Response**

**January 2021-June 2021**

Led the US Department of Health and Human Services' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Coordinated the work across the Department including that of CDC, NIH, FDA and ASPR. Ensured strategic and operational alignment with the White House COVID Response Team.

### **BIDEN-HARRIS TRANSITION**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

#### **Health Cluster Lead, Cabinet Nominations Team**

**September 2020-January 2021**

Led the work on the Department of Health and Human Services and Veterans Affairs Department Cabinet and Sub-Cabinet level nominations for the Biden-Harris Transition. Contributed to building the senior-level team leading the COVID-response. Served as COVID policy liaison for the Confirmations Team Health Pod.

### **CEPI: COALITION FOR EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS INNOVATIONS**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

#### **Director, CEPI US**

**June 2017-January 2021**

Head of CEPI's US Office. Responsible for all US government relationships and partnerships, including on the Hill and in the Administration. Executive Director for CEPI's Joint Coordination Group—a roundtable of outside partners including WHO, who have a vested interest in the success of CEPI's vaccines. Successfully coordinated \$1.3 billion in resource mobilization for CEPI's COVID-19 vaccine work.

**Senior Counselor to the Secretary****June 2016-January 2017**

Top advisor to the Secretary on global health, emerging threats and humanitarian crises. Led the Department's Zika response effort and managed the Department's work at the time to shelter unaccompanied children and expand the country's refugee program. Directly oversaw the work of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Office of Global Affairs, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response.

**Deputy Chief of Staff****January 2011-June 2016**

Managed policy and operational challenges across HHS' large and complex \$2 trillion organization and 80,000 employees. Coordinated the Department's international and domestic response to Ebola in 2014 and stood up and implemented the Global Health Security Agenda. Helped manage and lead the 170 political staff, providing advice and guidance.

**Chief of Staff****March 2007-January 2011**

Managed all office operations and staff in the Washington office and the 3 district offices. Briefed the Congressman on all legislative, administrative, and internal issues relevant to his representation. Retained Legislative Director duties.

**Legislative Director****January 2004-March 2007**

Tracked legislative issues relevant to the Congressman. In particular: trade, healthcare, taxes, and budget. Managed the legislative staff. Developed a new internal system for handling the thousands of constituent letters received by the Congressman each year.

**Legislative Counsel****Sept. 1997-January 2004**

Handled all aspects of healthcare, trade, taxes, budget, and environmental issues. Researched and drafted legislation. Participated in policy negotiations. Monitored House floor. Met and corresponded with constituents. Attended and drafted testimony for hearings.

**OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:****Menschel Senior Leadership Fellow****February 2025-May 2025**

Led discussions with faculty, staff, and students relevant to public health emergency preparedness and response. Participated in talks. Engaged in office hours. Shared leadership experience and provided mentorship.

**EDUCATION:**

TULANE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOLNEW ORLEANS, LA

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Juris Doctor, cum laude, May 1997

Honors: Tulane Inn of Court  
Tulane Environmental Law Journal, Notes and Comments Editor

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITYNASHVILLE, TN

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Bachelor of Arts with Honors in English, cum laude, May 1994

Honors: Dean’s List

**PROFESSIONAL LICENSES:**

Member of New York Bar

Member of District of Columbia Bar

**BOARD MEMBERSHIP:**

DC Soccer Club

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