

John J. Dreyzehner, MD, MPH, FACOEM

In 2011 Dr. John Dreyzehner joined Governor Bill Haslam's cabinet as 13th Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Health. With more than 25 years of service in clinical and public health leadership at the federal, state and local level, he has been privileged to lead a statewide team of highly talented and dedicated professionals who share a commitment to working together collaboratively to protect and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee.

Operationalizing a department-wide primary prevention and performance excellence framework now called "The TDH way", Dreyzehner and his team have been recognized with numerous awards, including the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials Vision award.

During his tenure with TDH, he has focused on team building and collaboration to create and strengthen relationships and build a stronger infrastructure for public health across Tennessee. Motivating his team to achieve performance excellence, the department has focused prevention of communicable disease and the upstream deterrence of the "Big 4" health challenges of our time: physical inactivity, excessive caloric intake, tobacco and nicotine use, and other substance use disorders. Compassionate, effective and efficient service to residents in all 95 counties of the state is not a goal, but the standard of performance he has set for the department.

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Dreyzehner began his medical service in 1989 as a United States Air Force flight surgeon, where he learned about the critical force multiplier effect of the public health mission, the Baldrige performance excellence framework and accumulated more than 300 hours in the F-15 Eagle and other aircraft as a member of USAF 94th Fighter Squadron and later served as Chief of Aeromedical Assessment for Air Combat Command. He was honorably discharged as a Major in 1997. Following several years in the private practice of occupational medicine he returned to public service in 2002 as the director of a rural multi-county health district in central Appalachia before coming to Tennessee as Commissioner. He also practiced in the field of addiction medicine for several years while working to bring attention to the public health aspects of the now well-recognized epidemic.

Dreyzehner graduated from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in psychology. He received his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and earned his Master of Public Health degree at the University of Utah, where he served as chief resident at the Rocky Mountain Center for Occupational and Environmental Health. Board certified in 1999, he is licensed in Tennessee and Virginia and is a Fellow of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. He holds appointments as adjunct faculty and professor (Hon.) with East Tennessee State University's College of Public Health, founding faculty of the Healthy Appalachia Institute and formerly visiting assistant professor of public health at the University of Virginia. He and his wife Jana, a child psychiatrist, have two adult sons.