

WISCONSIN

Jeanne Ayers, RN, MPH

State Health Officer & Administrator

Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health



Jeanne Ayers, R.N., M.P.H., was appointed on March 25, 2019 as the State Health Officer and Administrator of the Division of Public Health, for the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. She oversees a wide variety of programs and services including communicable and chronic diseases; health promotion; environmental health, occupational health, family and community health; emergency preparedness and emergency health services, aging and disability services and health informatics.

Ayers has long been a leader in national efforts to assure health and racial equity, and improve population health. She has worked extensively with government, academia, health care, community groups, and broad-based community organizers to deepen the public understanding of the social determinants of health, and has developed and directed programs in public health, health care, occupational health and academia.

Before her appointment as Wisconsin's State Health Officer, Jeanne served as Assistant Commissioner and Chief Health Equity Strategist of the Minnesota Department of Health where she led Minnesota's efforts to advance health equity and improve population health. She headed the Health Improvement Bureau and was responsible for development of the Center for Health Equity and the role of American Indian Health Director, and the award-winning report "Advancing Health Equity in Minnesota: A report to the State Legislature". Prior positions include director of nursing, occupational health and preventive services at the University of Minnesota, Boynton Health Service, and founding executive director of the Centers for Public Health Education and Outreach at the School of Public Health, University of Minnesota.

Ayers' community activities include working with community groups and broad-based community organizers to deepen the public understanding of the social determinants of health and their relationship to policymaking across sectors. She served as the chief architect of ISAIAH's (a faith-based community organizing group), health equity work. She launched and directed the Healthy Heartland Initiative, a partnership of community organizing groups in five Midwestern states (Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri) working with public health to build organizing capacity to impact public policy. She was selected as the 2010 University of Minnesota Josie R. Johnson Human Rights and Social Justice Award winner for her work on health and racial equity.

Ayers earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Marquette University and a Master's in Public Health from the University of Minnesota.

Ayers is a partner in an operating family farm in Central Minnesota. Her Wisconsin roots start with her grandmother who hailed from Portage, Wisconsin.

