# Dr. Mandy Cohen Outlines CDC Priorities for 2024 in Discussion with New York Times Editorial Board



Dr. Mandy Cohen, the current director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (C.D.C.), outlined the organization's priorities in a recent discussion with the editorial board of The New York Times Opinion section. Cohen, who started her role last year and was previously North Carolina's top public health official during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasized a future-oriented, disease-agnostic approach for the C.D.C. This strategy includes strengthening core capabilities, such as data infrastructure and laboratory capacity, to handle various health threats from diseases like avian flu to public issues like drowning.

Key focuses for the C.D.C. in 2024 include improving mental health, addressing the overdose crisis and supporting young families. Cohen highlighted that over 100,000 people died from overdoses, and 50,000 from suicide last year.

Regarding avian flu, Cohen reassured that the public risk remains low, with only one mild human case reported. She stressed the importance of preparedness and building trust, especially among vulnerable populations like farm workers.

Cohen identified mistrust in science and institutions as significant challenges, noting that clear communication and operational excellence are essential to building public trust. The C.D.C. aims to apply these lessons from the pandemic to current and future health challenges.

On the operational side, the C.D.C. continues to collaborate with international counterparts, including an office in China, to share and monitor health data.

Addressing the opioid crisis, Cohen pointed to the importance of data and evaluating effective spending for interventions. In the context of the upcoming presidential election, Cohen remained focused on maintaining public trust and transparency, regardless of political changes.

Cohen stated that if Donald Trump were re-elected, she would likely step down due to the role being a presidential appointment requiring Senate confirmation. Cohen concluded by emphasizing the C.D.C.’s responsibility to counter misinformation and uphold public health integrity.