

2026 CHEAC Annual Meeting Workshop Session Biographies

Routine Opt-Out Testing: FOCUSing on a Shared Vision to Reduce HIV, Syphilis, and Hepatitis C

Kimberly Hernandez, Division Director

Kimberly Hernandez is the Division Director of Health Services at Kern County Public Health, where she has served the community for more than 18 years. She leads multidisciplinary teams across a broad range of essential public health programs. An epidemiologist by training, Kimberly earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychobiology at UCLA and her Master of Public Health with a concentration in Biostatistics at Drexel University. She is part of the inaugural cohort to earn the Certified in Public Health (CPH) credential in 2008 and the Certified in Disease Investigation (CDI) credential in 2026. Throughout her career, she has served as a subject matter expert in legislative and policy development, curriculum development, and numerous public forums.

Kristopher Lyon, MD, EMT, PACEP, FAEMS, Health Officer and EMS Medical Director

Dr. Kristopher Lyon is a board-certified emergency and EMS medicine physician who has served as Kern County Health Officer since 2017 and Kern County EMS Medical Director since 2015, providing countywide public health and prehospital medical leadership, including through the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Dr. Lyon's combined role as Health Officer and practicing emergency physician allowed him to bring public health priorities directly into clinical care. He led implementation of the FOCUS routine opt-out testing program across several Kern County emergency departments, establishing routine opt-out screening for HIV, Hepatitis C, and syphilis to catch infections earlier and reduce stigma. He was also the site champion for the CA Bridge MAT and naloxone distribution program, expanding addiction treatment and overdose-prevention access for ED patients.

Dr. Lyon earned his Medical Degree from Jefferson Medical College and completed his residency in Emergency Medicine at Loma Linda University.

He is a Past President of the Kern County Medical Society and EMS Medical Directors Association of California (EMDAC), and currently serves on the Board of Directors and as Executive Committee Secretary for the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services.

Patrick Salazar, Program Manager

Patrick has 19 years of experience working with Kern County Public Health. He has 11 years of experience working in HIV and STI programming. Patrick started out conducting HIV testing and linkage to care activities. Patrick was able to advance in his role to become a Program Manager by administering the county's HIV and STI programming which includes numerous federal and state funding sources. Programs include but are not limited to HIV Prevention, Ryan White Part B, HIV Surveillance, and Congenital Syphilis. He was able to secure and sustain funding from the California Department of Public Health's Office of AIDS Division to implement the health department's first Rapid Antiretroviral Treatment (ART) and PrEP Program, respectively. Patrick was a key part of Kern County's FOCUS Program inception in 2019 and its continued success. He served as the 2024 President of the California STD/HIV Controllers' Association which represents 61 local health

jurisdictions. Patrick holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the California State University, Bakersfield.

Mandy Herrera, Program Manager

Mandy Hererra is a San Luis Obispo County native and a proud United States Army veteran, having served 11 years in the Army. Following her military service, Mandy earned her Bachelor of Arts in Human Services from California State University, Fresno.

After relocating to Kern County, Mandy recognized the significant need for expanded substance use services and access to care within the community. That passion led her to begin her healthcare career as an Emergency Department Substance Use Navigator, where she helped connect patients experiencing substance use disorders with treatment and recovery resources.

Mandy's role later expanded into serving as a Linkage to Care Coordinator, where she worked closely with patients who tested reactive for HIV, syphilis, and hepatitis C. She helped ensure they were connected to timely medical care, treatment, and supportive services while working alongside healthcare providers and community partners to improve health outcomes.

Today, Mandy serves as the Program Manager for Adventist Health Central Valley Network, where she oversees community health initiatives focused on improving access to care, addressing substance use disorders, advancing infectious disease prevention and treatment, and strengthening partnerships that improve the health of the communities we serve.

She is passionate about serving vulnerable populations, building collaborative healthcare systems, and creating pathways that connect individuals to the care and support they need to thrive.