

The Courier Journal



Louisville health department leader who oversaw COVID-19 vaccine distribution has died



Sarah Ladd, Louisville Courier Journal

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Dr. SarahBeth Hartlage has overseen the COVID-19 vaccine rollout throughout Louisville.

Dr. SarahBeth Hartlage, who helped lead Louisville's fight against COVID-19 in her role as associate medical director of the [health department](#), has died.

Mayor Greg Fischer's office announced her death Friday morning but did not say how she died.

Dr. Sarah Moyer, the city's chief health strategist, called her death "sudden and unexpected."

"We are so grateful for the opportunity to have known and worked with her," Moyer said in a statement. "As a result of her leadership, knowledge and planning, thousands of our Louisville residents received life-saving COVID-19 vaccines."

Hartlage, an anesthesiologist, was in Florida this week for a health conference. During her flight to

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Hartlage, Alabama native who oversaw COVID-19 vaccine distribution in Louisville, dies

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an IV on her patient at 35,000 feet in the air.

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SarahBeth Hartlage, then-Interim Director of the Louisville Health Department, spoke with the media prior to the start of a COVID-19 vaccine drive-thru at Broadbent Arena on Jan. 4, 2021.

Hartlage, 36, joined the Louisville Health Department in September 2020. She quickly became the face of the LouVax site at the Kentucky Exposition Center, which was a hub for vaccine distribution in the city for months in 2021.

During her time overseeing those efforts, Hartlage led meetings, walked the Broadbent Arena floor every two hours, drew up doses of COVID-19 vaccine and made an office under the bleachers.

She was a regular face throughout the pandemic on weekly and biweekly calls with the media as she explained the nuance of new variants, vaccines and more.

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She was interested in research exploring gender equity in medicine, a passion that stemmed from the personal experience of being pregnant while she was a resident in training and learning that women in that position weren't guaranteed maternity leave, [she previously told The Courier Journal](#).



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community as a deeply compassionate, inspirational leader who made a switch to public health in the middle of a historic public health crisis."



Dr. SarahBeth Hartlage, then-interim medical director at Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness, is seen with her husband, Todd and daughter, Camille, in 2020.

She "took command of an amazing team of city workers and volunteers to vaccinate tens of thousands of people in a previously unthinkable short amount of time, while also working to ensure vaccines are being distributed equitably throughout the community and communicating facts about their safety in relatable ways to non-medical professionals," Fischer said.

Gov. Andy Beshear tweeted Friday afternoon that he and his wife, Britainy Beshear, "are sorry to hear of her unexpected passing."

"Dr. SarahBeth Hartlage helped save thousands of lives through her tireless and heroic efforts leading vaccinations in Louisville," [he wrote](#).

Dr. Jason Smith, the chief medical officer at U of L Health, praised Hartlage — who he knew both through U of L and her work in health department — saying she "always stepped up; she always cared."

"It's hard to quantify what she's meant to this community over the past two years," he said. "[As we remember those that have died](#) (of COVID-19), spend a moment to think how many could have died if not



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The mayor's office asked that people wishing to honor Hartlage donate to her charity, "[I Heart Camille](#)."

The charity is named for Hartlage and her husband's daughter, who was born early and with congenital heart disease and other issues, according to [its website](#). Read more about Camille's health journey here: http://www.iheartcamille.com/home-1?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery#story5

This story may be updated.

Reach health reporter Sarah Ladd at sladd@courier-journal.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@ladd_sarah](https://twitter.com/ladd_sarah).

This article originally appeared on Louisville Courier Journal: [Dr. SarahBeth Hartlage, who led Louisville COVID vaccine, effort dies](#)



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