

# RC/PIO News & Notes 5-12-2023



FROM Eric Jens, GA DPH Risk Communicator  
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## News and Notes

The COVID-19 pandemic ended yesterday. At least the federally declared Public Health Emergency ended yesterday, but as we all know, COVID-19 still exists. As do many other Public Health threats. We'll cover a couple of those this week, plus recap the State Health Board's monthly meeting held this past Tuesday.

## State Board of Health meeting

The May meeting of the State Board of Health was the last one to be held at 2 Peachtree. Commissioner Toomey commented on many significant changes that have happened over the years, and a couple that are on the horizon. This includes the move to new offices at the Twin Towers, the ending of the Public Health Emergency declaration, and the announcement from CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky that she is stepping away from that position next month. Dr. Chris Rustin told board members that the end of the COVID-19 declared emergency will bring some changes, but vaccinations, testing and treatment will continue. Data reporting requirements will be less stringent. He said COVID cases have dropped 92% since the height of the Omicron variant, and similar declines have also occurred in hospitalizations and deaths.

A screenshot of a presentation slide titled "TikTok Prohibition (SB93)". The slide contains two bullet points: "Restricts the use of certain social media platforms on state equipment; and" and "Provides for the establishment and maintenance of a list of prohibited social media platforms upon state equipment by the director of the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA).". Below these is a section titled "Impacted Programs: Communications, IT". To the right of the text is a small video inset showing a meeting room with people seated around a table. The video is labeled "Fanny Vazquez". At the bottom of the slide, there is a red bar with the text "GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH".

Megan Andrews told the board about the plethora of legislation approved in this past session that will have a direct or indirect impact on Public Health functions. William Bell presented the board with appropriation levels for the coming fiscal year. Material and childhood health is a focus both legislatively and financially for the coming fiscal year. There will not be a state health board meeting in June. The next meeting will be held July 11.

# Mental Health Month

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Thanks to Venessa Sims for sharing some of the efforts Georgia Department of Agriculture is doing to promote mental health improvements throughout the farming community:

*We are also featuring a Mental Health Hero every week in May, and this can be found on our website, stay tuned each week where we will be showcasing a new ag mental health hero. This week we are featuring Lily Baucom from Georgia Foundation from Agriculture/Georgia Farm Bureau: <https://www.agr.georgia.gov/mental-health-resources>*

*I am also sharing the Georgia Foundation for Agriculture's **Small Gestures, Big Impact Challenge** that Lily shared earlier this week to Friends of the Foundation:*

*For the five weeks in May, we are challenging members to reach out to friends, neighbors, and fellow farmers in the following ways:*

- *Week 1: Send a text*
- *Week 2: Give a card*
- *Week 3: Take a ride*
- *Week 4: Deliver a treat*
- *Week 5: Make a call*

*Join us for this five-week challenge and see how small gestures can make a big impact on someone's mental health. Let's take a few extra minutes to make those small gestures this month—and every month—together.*



# Severe Weather Preparation

Thanks to Lisa Janak-Newman for sending this update on new efforts that should lead to better protection during severe weather incidents:

*FEMA Region 4 is partnering with NOAA and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium for a new virtual workshop series, [Using Social Science to Build Resilience](#). Our goal is to link emergency management professionals with social scientists who study disasters to help better prepare our most vulnerable residents. Attendees also will have the opportunity to share best practices and lessons learned, as well as their ideas for future topics.*

*The series kicks off **May 23 at 1 p.m. Eastern/noon Central** with **Retrofitting the Narrative for Tornado Survivability Among Mobile Home Residents**. Click here to learn more and to register: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_49TOScqtQEzb-85FVTryQ#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_49TOScqtQEzb-85FVTryQ#/registration)*

## MCM Summit

Thanks to Keith Goodman who sent this picture of the Medical Counter Measures Region IV Summit he attended along with MCM Specialist Kim Gilleran in Wilmington, North Carolina last week.



## Next Week Preview

Fulton County is hosting an Emergency Preparedness Summit today at the Fulton County Airport. We'll highlight that event next week. Other meeting topics for next week include BioWatch, Mass Fatality planning, Opioid and Substance misuse, Atlanta Urban Area Security Initiative and COVID. On a final note, I have joined the growing number of folks who have spent their last day in office at 2 Peachtree.



### About "News & Notes"

"News & Notes" is a weekly communication aimed at risk and public information officers within Georgia's 18 public health districts. The goal of the communication is to increase preparedness through the exchange of information about significant events, training and other planned activities. Some information herein may be considered FYUO or For Your Use Only. Please be judicious when forwarding. For questions, comments or to submit information for inclusion, contact Eric Jens at [Eric.Jens@dph.ga.gov](mailto:Eric.Jens@dph.ga.gov)