

RC/PIO News & Notes 3-8-2024

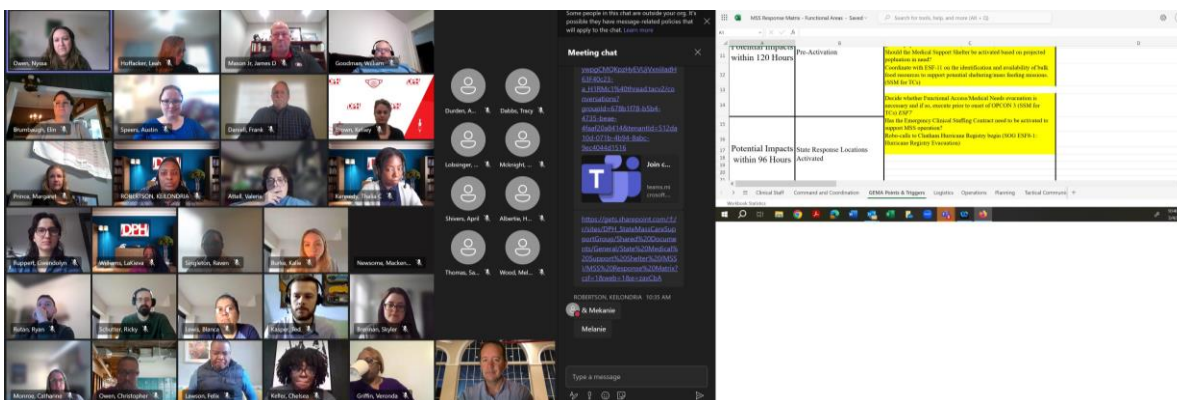


FROM Eric Jens, GA DPH Risk Communicator
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News and Notes

A wide variety of topics are in store for this week's highlights.

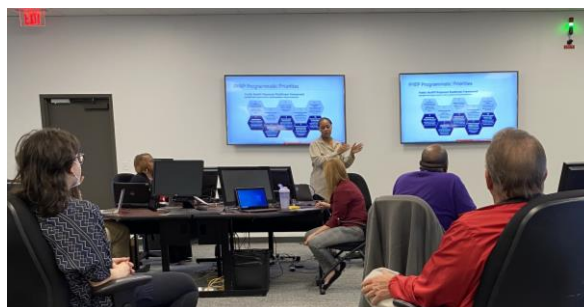
Medical Support Shelters



An overview and enhancement of the Medical Support Shelter plan was conducted Monday morning for state EPR staff. Nyssa Owen, Keilondria Robertson and others shared the existing structure for the plan that would have evacuees from the coast arriving at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth. Future sessions and an exercise in May are expected to result in further plan improvements.

State DHEART

The state DHEART team held a quarterly meeting Thursday, providing an overview of the group and future planning for all members. Chairs Veronda Griffin and Chris Owen talked about expanding agency involvement and the process of activating and deactivating the Emergency Operation Center. Saneika Thomas gave an overview of exercises and trainings. Leah Hoffacker talked about Emergency Preparedness program goals and expectations. She said along with five-year strategic planning there are multiple major events to prepare for in the next two years.



CDC Website Update

Changes You'll See



Consolidated webpages



Tailored links based on automation



Cleaner navigation based on a sophisticated taxonomy



More consistent structures and pages



Plainer language for all content, including professional content

The CDC beta website is now available with a limited number of topics as the site management team collects user feedback. During an overview webinar one week ago, CDC hosts said the goal is to simplify content and language while enhancing user experience. The URL's will change once the new site goes live so there is no need to make any changes or redirects for accessing current content at this time. Targeted demos will be set up during the next month to capture input from Public Health and clinicians. You can peruse the beta site at: <https://beta.cdc.gov/>

Healthy Brain Initiative

Thanks to Connie Smith-Lindsey for bringing attention to Georgia's role in the national Healthy Brain Initiative. Be sure to check out the video summarizing the objectives, with word from Elizabeth Head, Deputy Director, Aging Health Manager:

*This important initiative is intended to help public health departments and health communicators to educate about **dementia, detection, diagnosis, treatment, and care** at the community level. DPH is one of 43 health departments funded for the Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) by CDC. The Alzheimer's Association and the National Association of County and City Health Officials have launched the third cohort of the [HBI Road Map Strategists](#). This nationwide effort focuses on building public health capacity to address dementia at the local level. The Road Map Strategist program funds local health departments and tribal health organizations to better address brain health, dementia, and caregiving in their communities. **The awardees are:***

- Clay County Health Department (Illinois)
- Davis County Health Department (Utah)
- Kitsap Public Health District (Washington)
- Lamar County Health Department (Georgia) – District 4
- Nelson-Griggs District Health Unit (North Dakota)
- Northeast Tri County Health District (Washington)
- Oneida County Health Department (Wisconsin)
- Panhandle Public Health District (Nebraska)
- Pharr Department of Health (Texas)
- Waukesha County Public Health (Wisconsin)

As highlighted in the **video**, no matter your community or your zip code, everyone deserves a life with the healthiest brain possible. [Video](#)

Statewide DPH Risk Communicators meeting

Plans are being finalized for the annual statewide DPH risk communicators meeting March 19 in Albany. A final agenda and reminder will be sent next week. While most districts have indicated they will have one or more representatives at the meeting, there were a few who indicated that they could not make the trip, so a virtual option is in the works. Once that happens, a Teams link will be sent directly to all PIO's and risk communicators who will be asked not to forward it without expressed written consent. The idea behind that is to keep these meetings as open honest forums in which folks can express all thoughts and concerns that they choose. For that same reason, the session will not be recorded.

Media / CERC training

Registration is closed for the March 20, DPH Media / Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication class at the Dougherty County Health Department. If anyone would like to attend, please reach out directly and you will likely be added at that time. Thanks to everyone who has been helping to organize the event. It will be an exciting and educational day for all.



Tomato Vaccine

Last month we had international visitors from Uzbekistan visit the state DPH EOC. More recently we received this interesting information from the National Public Health Information Coalition in the weekly highlights report:

Edible Plant-Based Vaccine TOMAVAC Shows Promising Defense Against COVID-19

Scientists from Uzbekistan have unveiled a novel antiviral vaccine derived from a tomato plant and genetic vectors to fight against COVID-19. The innovative vaccine, named TOMAVAC, is distinct in that it can be consumed directly from the tomato plant.



Scientists created a transgenic tomato, TOMAVAC, which produces a key protein of the virus. Feeding mice with TOMAVAC resulted in a significant increase in virus-fighting antibodies in their blood and intestines. These antibodies showed 15-25% neutralizing activity against the virus. Initial trials in humans also demonstrated a steady increase in antibodies without severe side effects, suggesting TOMAVAC's safety and potential effectiveness. Read the study [here](#).

Networking at Emory

Georgia Department of Agriculture Food Safety Intern Natalie Hobbs shared an open invitation to an event being held later this month:

Emory University's Student Outbreak Response Team (SORT) at Rollins is hosting a networking night on March 28th with the Humanitarian Emergency Research Team (HERT). The link to RSVP is [here](#). Please feel free to forward this link to others within DPH or other agencies that may be interested. Feel free to email me with questions: Natalie.Hobbs@agr.georgia.gov



Next Week Preview

This afternoon the state PHEP staff will be meeting to go over the recently received Notice Of Funding Opportunity. Another focus this afternoon will be weather monitoring with much of the state at risk for potential flooding. Daylight Saving Time begins this weekend, along with the reminder to change home smoke detector batteries. Next week there will be multiple meetings including several held to prepare for some of the many events on the calendar during the next two months. The March state Board of Health meeting will held Tuesday. On Thursday there will be a Crisis Care Response Plan tabletop exercise at the state DPH EOC.

About "News & Notes"

"News & Notes" is a weekly communication aimed at risk communicators 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