

# Alabama's Health

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## National Leaders Discuss Charting a New Path for Public Health

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris, who is immediate past president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, was a distinguished panelist when leaders of four national public health organizations convened at Washington University in St. Louis to discuss challenges facing the field at a time of deep funding cuts, persistent health disparities, and shaky public trust. The purpose of the Assembly Series event, titled "Public Health in Challenging Times: Finding a Way Forward," was to explore ways to chart a path to a stronger public health system and a healthier population.

Other panelists speaking at the March 31 event were Georges C. Benjamin, MD, executive director of the American Public Health Association; Lori Tremmel Freeman, MBA, CEO, of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO); and Laura Magaña, PhD, MS, president and CEO of the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH).

Panelists agreed that in this uniquely difficult time, trust is critical to achieving public health goals. Dr. Harris noted that much of the population is unaware of what public health does or how federal funding reductions will play out in their own communities "where your children are kept safe from disease and you can eat at a restaurant safely or your environment is a clean and safe place for people to live."

Dr. Harris suggested that better communication is necessary because people only hear messages from the people they want to hear from, and they are not interested in hearing from people outside the group. This distrust is not only a problem for public health but for businesses and academia.

In encouraging students to enter public health careers, he said, "It's about getting up in the morning and feeling like you have a purpose. It's about taking care of people in your community who are often overlooked and don't have others taking care of them. It's a way to make your world better."



*Shown with Dr. Harris are Lori Tremmel Freeman of NACCHO, left, and Laura Magaña of ASPPH.  
(Photo: Zachary Linhares/WashU Public Health)*

# National Ovarian Cancer Alliance Collaborates with OPERATION WIPE OUT to Increase Awareness of Cervical Cancer Elimination

The Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance (OCRA) has released a nationwide announcement that it is collaborating with [OPERATION WIPE OUT](#) to help eliminate cervical cancer. The announcement states, "OPERATION WIPE OUT is an initiative that has demonstrated meaningful success reducing cervical cancer risk in Alabama through prevention-focused education and access to care. Drawing on this proven public-health framework, OCRA will adapt and expand the model nationwide—bringing practical, evidence-based cervical cancer prevention strategies to communities across the U.S."

OCRA is the world's largest non-government funder of cancer research. Its mission is to cure ovarian and gynecologic cancers like cervical cancer by advancing innovative science, promoting prevention measures, advocating for, educating, and supporting anyone affected by gynecological cancers.

The partnership will expand OPERATION WIPE OUT efforts by advancing policy initiatives that support prevention, screening, and follow-up care nationwide. OCRA will also lead a national public awareness campaign focused on the simple, effective steps that can prevent cervical cancer, including

evidence-based HPV vaccination and routine screening. "With OCRA's support, more women across the nation will hear that cervical cancer can be eliminated -- that this cancer is one that our grandchildren need not fear," said Nancy Wright, Cancer Division Director.

From its inception, OPERATION WIPE OUT has been driven by strong partnerships. By bringing government, academia, Rotary clubs, and partners together, we are proving that cervical cancer elimination is not just possible, it is achievable," said Isabel Scarinci, PhD, MPH, one of the leaders of the initiative. "Partnering with OCRA allows us to build on what has worked in Alabama and accelerate its impact nationally."

"This collaboration is about scaling what we know works," said Audra Moran, President and CEO of OCRA. "OPERATION WIPE OUT has shown that focused prevention efforts can reduce cervical cancer risk in real communities. By bringing this model forward nationally—through coordinated policy leadership and public awareness—we have an opportunity to prevent disease, save lives, and move closer to eliminating cervical cancer as a public health threat."

## Dr. Gary Pugh Speaks at WIPEOUT CERVICAL CANCER Summit

Dr. Gary Pugh, Medical Officer for Family Health Services, represented the department on a panel discussing the department's colposcopy program at the WIPEOUT CERVICAL CANCER Summit in Mobile on January 9. The Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program provides colposcopies at no charge to eligible women whose HPV/Pap tests are positive.



### Alabama Department of Public Health

#### Mission

To promote, protect, and improve Alabama's health.

#### Vision

Healthy People. Healthy Communities. Healthy Alabama.

#### Core Values

Excellence, Integrity, Innovation, and Community.

### Alabama's Health

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**Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.**  
State Health Officer

**Jamey Durham, M.B.A.**  
Director, Bureau of Prevention, Promotion, and Support

**Ryan Easterling**  
Director, Health Media and Communications Division

**Arrol Sheehan, M.A.**  
Editor

**Noelle Ahmann**  
Graphic Designer

# Community Room at Dallas County Health Department Named in Honor of Vera Booker

An overflow crowd gathered February 13 at the community room of the Dallas County Health Department in Selma for a ceremony to dedicate the space to trailblazing nurse Vera Jenkins Booker. Mrs. Booker, age 89, was among the first African American nurses employed by the county health department. Her career was dedicated to improving the health of all Dallas County residents.

Numerous family members, former colleagues, friends, clergy and fellow church members, sorority members, middle school students, and many others attended the special celebration. State Senator Robert Stewart, whose efforts were instrumental in honoring Mrs. Booker, unveiled a plaque in her honor.

Before joining the department, Mrs. Booker was the night shift nurse supervisor at Good Samaritan Hospital in 1965 and helped care for civil rights activist Jimmie Lee Jackson after he was beaten and shot in Marion following a mass meeting in support of voting rights. Jackson died at the hospital 8 days later. Mr. Jackson's death helped inspire the historic Selma to Montgomery marches of 1965. Mrs. Booker later testified before a grand jury about her experiences caring for Mr. Jackson, which led to the conviction of a former state trooper.

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris stated, "The dedication of the Vera Booker Community Room honors a legacy of service, courage, and commitment. Vera Booker broke barriers as one of the first African American nurses at the Dallas County Health Department and provided compassionate care during pivotal moments in our history. This room will stand as a place for gathering, learning, and collaboration for future generations, representing the enduring impact of one dedicated public health professional on an entire community."

Stewart said the room dedication is especially meaningful to him, and his success in honoring Mrs. Booker in this way is one of the proudest moments in his political career. Mrs. Booker had worked with Stewart's grandmother and had treated him on several occasions during his childhood.

"Throughout your life, you have seen our country at its greatest heights and lowest inflection points," Stewart said in a tribute to Mrs. Booker. "Thank you for keeping us healthy and for always encouraging us to do the right thing."

Mrs. Booker acknowledged the importance of the official recognition and her appreciation, and Stewart thanked Dr. Harris and others for their support.

In addition to Stewart, among those addressing the group were Chad Kent, Southwestern District Administrator; Sarina Stewart, Dallas County Health Department Administrator; and Carolyn Bern, Governmental Affairs and Community Relations Director.



***Shown with Mrs. Booker are, from left, Chad Kent, Administrator, Southwestern District; Boone Kinard, Director, Legislative and External Affairs; Latisha Kennebrew, Director, Community Affairs; Carolyn Bern, Director, Governmental Affairs and Community Relations; Sarina Stewart, Administrator, Dallas and Wilcox County Health Departments; and the Honorable Robert Stewart, State Senator.***



***Senator Robert Stewart unveils the plaque that will be mounted in the community room.***



***Friends and family from near and far gathered to celebrate Mrs. Booker.***

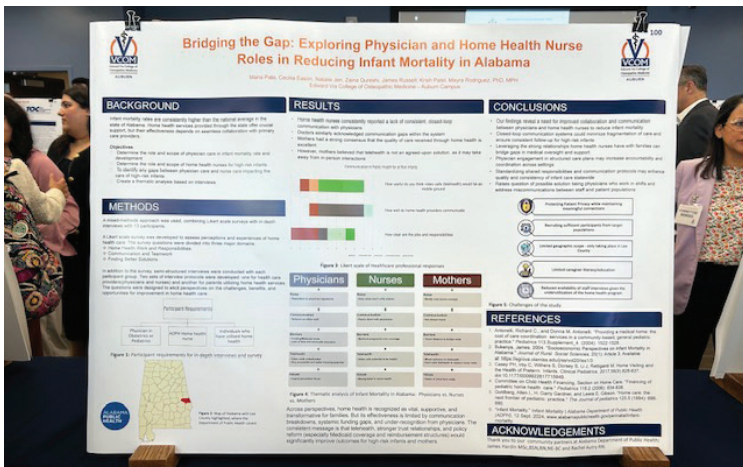
# Research Project Explores Impact of Public Health Interventions

Rachel Autry, home care services nurse supervisor at the Lee County Health Department, worked closely with medical students at Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) on a research project surrounding infant mortality. Ms. Autry provided insight on the work the department does through home care to impact infant mortality with home visits. Through home visits, home care provides education and support to families of at-risk infants, assesses home needs and risk factors, and in conjunction with pediatricians, provides direct patient care and monitoring.

Assistant District Administrator James Hardin said, "This work allowed these medical students exposure to public health interventions and the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to problems like infant mortality."



**Shown, from left, are VCOM student Natalie Jen, Rachel Autry and VCOM student James Russell.**



**A poster summarizes the findings of the student's project titled "Bridging the Gap: Exploring Physician and Home Health Nurse Roles in Reducing Infant Mortality in Alabama."**

# Rabies Overview Provided in Webcast

State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Dee W. Jones and Leigh Salter, director of Community Environmental Protection, presented a rabies overview for medical and public health professionals. In addition to a discussion of the history of rabies in Alabama, the live webcast provided information on reporting, testing, and options for medical treatment.



# Exercise Simulates Response to Measles Outbreak

Key stakeholders participated in a tabletop exercise on October 22 to prepare for a measles outbreak to refine emergency response plans for this highly infectious disease.



# UAB DrPH Students and ADPH Leaders Meet to Learn about Decision-Making During Crises and Emergencies

The inaugural cohort of Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) in Preparedness Leadership students from the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health met with members of the department's leadership team for an educational site visit on February 6 in Montgomery. The six doctoral students were interested in understanding how ADPH coordinates decision-making during public health crises and emergencies. They also learned about Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Hospital Preparedness Program grants and their importance to Alabama.

Below were the key parts of the discussion.

- How ADPH stands up emergency operations and what the activation process looks like for the agency
- The leadership structures and decision-making frameworks that guide ADPH during public health emergencies
- How ADPH maintains or helps maintain grant capabilities, which capabilities are most challenging to maintain and/or activate, and which are the most resource driven
- How ADPH handles risk communication and addresses misinformation during crises
- Whether and how the current political and funding climate affects ADPH's ability to respond to specific types of disasters and emergencies



*DrPH students and faculty from the UAB School of Public Health met with State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris and departmental leaders to help prepare for decision-making in public health emergencies and crises.*

## AAP Child Advocate Award Presented to Carolyn Bern

Carolyn Bern, director of Governmental Affairs and Community Relations, was presented the Child Health Advocate Award of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). In 1991, the AAP established the award to recognize the significant accomplishments of public officials and private sector advocates who have served as a voice for children in state and local government. The award recognizes individuals for their contributions to child health and safety and serves as a stimulus for continued action in child advocacy.



*Shown at the presentation on January 15, from left, are Dr. Scott Harris, State Health Officer; Dr. Wes Stubblefield, Medical Officer, Northern and Northeastern Districts; Linda Lee, AAP-AL Executive Director; Carolyn Bern; Dr. Karen Landers, Chief Medical Officer; and Sabra Sutton, incoming AAP-AL Executive Director.*

# Medical Response Shelter Systems Training and Equipment Familiarization Held

On March 18, a coordinated Medical Response Shelter Systems Training and Equipment Familiarization was conducted under Emergency Support Function 8, Public Health and Medical Services, with the department serving as the lead agency. Supporting partners included the Montgomery City County Emergency Management Agency, Montgomery Fire Rescue, and the Center for Emergency Preparedness (CEP).

This training event represented a proactive investment in readiness, ensuring that personnel, systems, and equipment are prepared to respond effectively to public health emergencies such as pandemics, severe weather incidents, mass casualty events, and other large-scale incidents requiring rapid medical surge capability.

## Operational Context and Purpose

In today's evolving threat environment, public health and emergency response agencies must maintain the capability to rapidly establish scalable and adaptable medical support systems. This training was intentionally designed as a controlled, non-operational exercise focused exclusively on equipment deployment, setup, breakdown, and system familiarization.

There were no personnel movement, patient processing, or live field operations conducted. Instead, the emphasis was placed on reinforcing foundational skills and ensuring all participating agencies are proficient in both the deployment and demobilization of critical shelter systems. The ability not only to deploy but also to efficiently break down and recover equipment is essential to maintaining operational readiness, sustainability, and rapid redeployment capability in real world incidents.

## Drive Thru Medical Shelter System Deployment

A key component of the training involved the full deployment and subsequent takedown of the Drive Thru Medical Shelter System. This hands-on process allowed personnel to gain practical experience in both establishing and dismantling the system in a controlled environment. The Drive Thru Medical Shelter System is designed to support rapid triage and screening operations, mass dispensing or vaccination efforts, and medical evaluations while maintaining safe and controlled patient flow within vehicles.

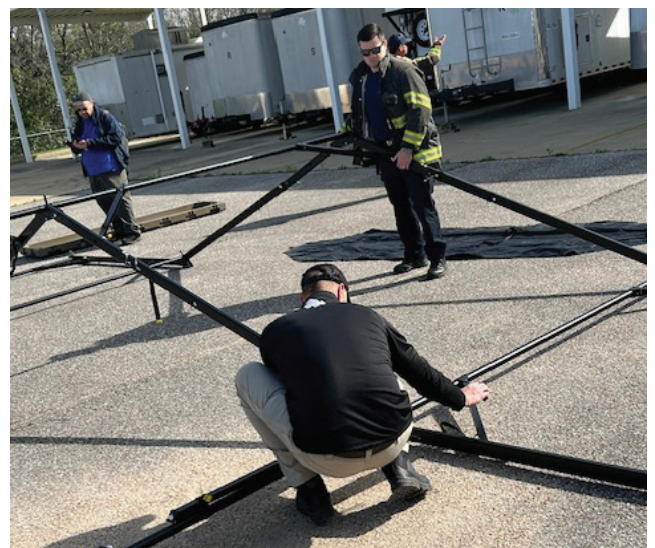
Participants executed a complete setup and breakdown cycle, ensuring familiarity with all structural components, anchoring systems, and configuration requirements. By training on both assembly and disassembly, personnel reinforced their ability to efficiently transition between operational phases during an actual incident.

## ASAP 18 Tent Deployment and Recovery

As part of the exercise, the ASAP 18 rapid deployment tent was both deployed and taken down, providing personnel with hands on experience in rapid shelter operations. The ASAP 18 is a durable, high performance shelter designed to be deployed in approximately 60 seconds with minimal personnel. During the training, teams practiced:

- Rapid deployment procedures
- Structural stabilization and anchoring
- Safe and efficient takedown and packing procedures
- Equipment handling and storage readiness

*Continued on page 8*



*Personnel gained hands-on experience in rapid shelter operations. Participants from four partner agencies were able to assemble and disassemble equipment in a controlled environment.*

## Medical Response Shelter Systems Training, continued from page 8

Although this was not a live operation, the tent setup training served as a critical demonstration of how quickly additional shelter capacity can be established and recovered. This capability is essential for maintaining flexibility during surge events or rapidly changing incident conditions. Participants realized that it does take a sufficient amount of personnel to setup.

### Role of Montgomery Fire Rescue

Montgomery Fire Rescue played a critical and foundational role in this training under the leadership of District Fire Chief Chad Fowler, Chief of Special Operations at Montgomery Fire Department, along with the dedicated personnel of Fire Station 15. Their responsibilities were integral to the success of the exercise and included staging all shelter systems and equipment, ensuring proper maintenance, inspection, and operational readiness of all assets, and providing technical oversight during both deployment and takedown operations.

Montgomery Fire Rescue ensured that all equipment was serviceable, properly configured, and ready for immediate use in a real world response. Their emphasis on maintenance, upkeep, and readiness reinforced the importance of equipment reliability as a cornerstone of emergency preparedness. The Fire Station 15 crew provided hands-on expertise throughout the exercise, supporting safe setup, structural integrity, and proper breakdown procedures.

### Interagency Coordination Under ESF 8

This training reinforced the importance of a unified and coordinated approach under ESF 8, where each agency contributes to a comprehensive public health response framework. The department provided overall leadership and ensured alignment with public health emergency preparedness standards. Montgomery EMA supported coordination, planning, and logistical integration. Montgomery Fire Rescue ensured equipment readiness, staging, and operational safety. The CEP facilitated planning, coordination, and execution of the training. This collaboration demonstrated that

effective preparedness is achieved through coordination, shared responsibility, and consistent training across all partner agencies.

### Leadership and Key Personnel

This training was made possible through the leadership and dedication of the following individuals.

#### East Central District Administration

- Tim Hatch, District Administrator
- James Hardin, Assistant Administrator
- Kevin Hicks, Response Team Director and Montgomery Administrator

#### Center for Emergency Preparedness

- Gavin Graf, Director of CEP
- Alaina Robinson, PHEP Director
- Megan Hawkins, Property Manager and Office Manager

#### East Central District Emergency Preparedness Team

- Willie Mason
- Staceylyn McClain
- Charleswesley Pierce
- Michelle Fields

### Conclusion

The March 18, 2026, Medical Response Shelter Systems Training and Equipment Familiarization served as a comprehensive demonstration of deployment readiness, focusing on both the establishment and recovery of critical medical shelter systems.

By emphasizing full deployment and takedown procedures, this training ensured that personnel are prepared not only to respond rapidly but also to sustain and redeploy operations efficiently. The exercise strengthened technical proficiency, reinforced interagency coordination, and validated equipment readiness under ESF 8.

This effort reflects a continued commitment to preparedness, operational excellence, and the protection of public health. Preparedness is built through practice, and this training ensured that readiness remains strong across the East Central District.

*By Willie J. Mason, Jr.*

## Commendations

*If you would like to praise employees for their accomplishments, send letters of commendation to the State Health Officer or the employee's supervisor and a copy by e-mail to [Arrol.Sheehan@adph.state.al.us](mailto:Arrol.Sheehan@adph.state.al.us) for inclusion in this list. Four items are needed: the employee's name, work unit, name of the person making the commendation, and his or her city and state.*

#### **Casandra Clark**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Ms. I.V. Robinson  
Detroit, Mich.

#### **Jasmine Davis**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Chaitanya Dahagam  
Virginia (city not provided)

#### **Carey Dodd**

**Josh McCartha**  
**Luke Mayben**

Bureau of Information Services  
from Tim Hatch  
East Central District  
Montgomery, Ala.

#### **Lakita Hawes**

Family Health Services  
from Julie Yoo  
Hyundai Motor Manufacturing  
Alabama, LLC  
Montgomery, Ala.

#### **Ashley Rocker**

Clarke County Health Department  
from Renae Carpenter, LICSW-S, PIP  
Camille Place/Samuel's Place  
Monroeville, Ala.

#### **Sharonda Webster**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Celestine Phillips  
Ypsilanti, Mich.

#### **LaShunda Williams**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Jeanea Posey  
Address unlisted

# Volunteers Help Fight Hunger



Central Office employees volunteered to assist at the Heart of Alabama Food Bank in observance of September as Hunger Action Month. Volunteers trained and gained valuable experience in addressing the complexities of food insecurity and hunger with the goal of improving the health, quality of life, and longevity of Alabamians.

# 'Power of Pink' Supports Breast Cancer Awareness



Tuscaloosa County Health Department employees demonstrated the "Power of Pink" to promote early detection of breast cancer, support the fight, and raise community awareness of the importance of screenings and early diagnosis of breast cancer.

# Promoting Women's Heart Health by Wearing Red



Limestone County Health Department staff raised awareness of cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death among women, by wearing red on National Wear Red Day.

# Generous Group in Gadsden



Etowah County Health Department employees gathered for a photograph after making donations to LifeSouth Community Blood Center and the Etowah County Food Bank.

# Dr. Olusunmisola Oyesiku Takes on National Leadership Roles

East Central District Medical Officer Olusunmisola Oyesiku, M.D., M.Sc., DABFM, FAAFP, has been appointed to a two-year term on the Commission on Quality and Practice of the American Academy of Family Physicians. The academy's mission is to improve the health of patients, families, and communities by serving the needs of its members with professionalism and creativity.

Additionally, she was elected to a two-year term as a member-at-large on the 2026-2027 Board of Directors of the American Medical Women's Association. Her board service provides the opportunity to offer national leadership and develop governance skills within a longstanding, mission-driven organization. The association's mission is to promote women in medicine, advocate for equity, and enhance women's health.



*Dr. Oyesiku is shown at "The Heart. The Mind. The Body: A Women's Health Conference" where she spoke.*

# East Central District Employees Volunteer with Meals on Wheels

The mission of Meals on Wheels is not only to provide food, it is a warm smile, a wellness check, and a reminder that someone cares. More than 5 million meals have been delivered. Shown are employees who put on their caps and aprons to help homebound individuals in the community through the Montgomery Area Council on Aging Meals on Wheels on October 23. The team assisted in assembling 420 meals for the elderly and disabled in Montgomery County.



# RETIREES

The following departmental employees have retired recently:

## September

**Sherry Box**  
Northeastern District

**Donna Braswell**  
Southwestern District

**Melinda Carter**  
Northern District

**James Hodges**  
Clinical Laboratories

**Sarah Morrow**  
Southeastern District

## October

**Dawn Bysiek**  
Southeastern District

## November

**Charles Bush**  
Southwestern District

**Laurie Gregory**  
Family Health Services

**Demetra Meade**  
Northern District

**Jenny Pope**  
Southwestern District

## December

**Cason Coan**  
Radiation Control

**Lisa Jones**  
Human Resources

**Wesley White**  
Information Technology

## January

**Janet Baughn**  
Northern District

**Nancy Bishop**  
Prevention, Promotion, and Support

**Deborah Bivins**  
West Central District- STD

**Darlene Bradford**  
Northeastern District

**Belinda Catchings**  
Northeastern District

**Stacy Hill**  
Southwestern District

**Julia Honeycutt**  
Northeastern District

**Sophilus Jones**  
Northeastern District

**Gloria McMeans**  
Children's Health Insurance

**Jennifer Pate**  
West Central District

**Sandra Powell**  
Family Health Services

**Olivia Pryor**  
Southeastern District

**Angela Swain**  
Children's Health Insurance

**Cynthia Thompson**  
Northern District

**Jennifer Thompson**  
West Central District

**Mary Washington**  
Southeastern District

**Terry Winters**  
Southeastern District

## February

**Amy Cleckler**  
West Central District

**Arleen Judy**  
Financial Services

**Thomas Lee**  
STD

**Ellen Snipes**  
Center for Emergency Preparedness

**Tami Whitfield**  
Southeastern District



*Southwestern District Administrator presents a certificate to Marcia Allan who retired from the Escambia County Health Department effective January 1 after 29 years of service.*



*State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris presents a retirement certificate to Ricky Elliott, Director of Field Operations, who retired with more than 34 years of departmental service.*



*State Pharmacy Director Nancy Bishop is shown with Jamey Durham, director of the Bureau of Prevention, Promotion, and Support, upon her retirement December 19.*



**Co-workers honored Ron Dawsey, director of the Bureau of Environmental Services, who retired January 1 following 47 years of service.**



**Nick Moss retired from the Health Media and Communications Division effective March 1 after a career of more than 30 years. He is shown with Ryan Easterling, right, division director.**



**Assistant District Administrator Mark Johnson of the Northeastern District is shown with Nurse Manager Carrie Johnson who retired with 21 years of service.**



**On World TB Day 2025, State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris presents a retirement certificate to Julie Nightengale of the Division of TB Control.**



**Tammy Langlois retired from the Division of TB Control after 36 years of service. She is shown with State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris.**



**Mary Bullard, RPM Nurse Care Coordinator for the Northeastern Public Health District, was honored by her coworkers on her retirement effective February 1. She is shown at the center with Mark Johnson, Assistant District Administrator; and Pam Talbot, District Home Care Nursing Director.**

# In Memoriam

## William C. Bailey, M.D.

Dr. William C. (Bill) Bailey of Birmingham, a lifelong champion of lung health and a former chairman of the TB Medical Advisory Council, died on January 18, 2026. In a tribute to Dr. Bailey, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers noted that he served as a mentor to her and many others, including State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris and State Committee of Public Health member Dr. David Thrasher.



*Dr. Bailey is shown presenting the James H. Baker Exemplar Award to Dr. Karen Landers in 2018. Dr. Bailey was often pictured in this publication in connection with his work with TB control and tobacco cessation.*

Dr. Bailey attended Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans where he also completed his internship, residency, and fellowship in Pulmonary Medicine. He joined the then-developing University of Alabama, Birmingham School of Medicine in July 1973 and worked there until his retirement in 2015. In that year, he was awarded Tulane University's Lifetime Achievement Award for academic achievement and advancements in pulmonary and critical care medicine.

Dr. Bailey served in the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, developing and implementing outpatient treatment of tuberculosis. He retired as a Captain in 1968. He was accomplished in the fields of tuberculosis; asthma; COPD, its causes and treatment. He was especially involved in and proud of his developments in national and international programs for smoking cessation. He was a prominent leader and longtime member of the Board of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, the American Thoracic Society, as well as many other professional organizations. Dr. Bailey authored more than 300 publications in these fields, as well as 11 book chapters and books.

His obituary read that he regularly comforted his patients with prayer and God-given wisdom. His wife and their family traveled extensively to Eastern European countries. In the early 1990s, Dr. Bailey was a part of a team of five medical experts to consult with Russian leaders in several cities and hospitals there. He also consulted and taught in each of the major cities in New Zealand. In the latter, Dr. Bailey taught and lectured over 30 times in 31 days. During summers in Maine, he attended the Jackson Laboratories for Research. He was a leader in the International Union Against Tuberculosis for many years with worldwide leadership positions.

## Jan Cordell

Jan Cordell, who formerly managed cost accounting for the department and had been working as a Retired State Employee, passed away January 14.

In an emailed announcement, Shaundra B. Morris, MAcc, CPM, Chief Accountant and Director of the Bureau of Financial Services, said, "It is with deep sadness that I share the news of her sudden, unexpected passing. This loss is felt by all of us, and our thoughts and heartfelt condolences are with her family, friends, and loved ones during this difficult time. Jan was a valued member of our team, and her contributions, and presence will be greatly missed."

# Creativity Abounds in Limestone County

Employees of the Limestone County Health Department embraced the spirit of the season by decorating their office doors.

Judges proclaimed the winners as follows:



**First place Ronda Russell**



**Second Place Lori Adams**



**Third Place Whitney Burchell**

# Alice Irby Presented 2026 AMCHP Emerging MCH Professional Award

Alice Irby, Senior Epidemiologist with the Bureau of Family Health Services, has been awarded the 2026 Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Emerging Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Professional Award representing Region IV (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee). Each year, AMCHP recognizes individuals across the MCH field who have made a meaningful difference in their communities. Leaders, innovators, youth, professionals and legislators are nominated and selected for their commitment to advancing MCH and their efforts to strengthen the people and systems around them. This year's conference, and awards ceremony, were held in Washington, D.C. The association's theme, "The Power of Connection," is a reminder of how essential relationships, partnerships, and shared purposes are to improving outcomes for mothers, children and families.

The Emerging MCH Professional Award was established in 2014 to recognize current/future leaders for their significant

contributions to their state MCH programs in promoting and protecting the health of women, children and families in their state and/or region. This award aims to recognize an individual's capacity to perform above and beyond expectations, use creativity and innovation to address pressing MCH challenges, and demonstrate emerging and future leadership potential.



Miss Irby began her Alabama Department of Public Health career in the Center for Health Statistics. Presently, her major focus areas are the MCH Block Grant and State Systems Development Initiative. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling and photography.

## Share Your Smile with Alabama Winners Promote Oral Health

The winners of the ninth annual "Share Your Smile with Alabama" contest are Kaydense Anthony-Johnson, left, of Macon County, who attends George Washington Carver Elementary School in Tuskegee, and Caleb Patterson of Montgomery County, who attends MacMillan International Magnet School. The formal announcement and presentation were made on January 8 in preparation for their promotion of National Children's Dental Health Month in February.



## Dr. Clark-Brown Addresses the Foundation for PALTC Medicine

Dr. Amber N. Clark-Brown, medical director for the Bureau of Health Provider Standards, delivered the Anne-Marie Filkin Lecture at the March PALTC26 Annual Conference. PALTC26 is the yearly gathering of the Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medical Association (PALTmed), held March 26-28, in Anaheim, Calif. This educational and networking event for professionals in the PALTC setting featured AI showcases, clinical updates, and policy discussions.

Dr. Clark-Brown highlighted her role as the only embedded medical director within the state survey agency in Alabama, emphasizing the importance of medical directors in

long-term care facilities. She discussed the State Operations Manual, which outlines medical director responsibilities, and the Office of Inspector General's audit of nursing homes, focusing on medical director engagement and the accuracy of Payroll-Based Journal data. She shared a case study illustrating the critical role of medical directors in patient care and underscores the need for effective communication and collaboration.

Alabama is seen as a trailblazer as other states show interest in collaborating with her to adopt the bureau's best practices for improving long-term care through medical director leadership.

# Operation Winter Shield Serves Alabamians

The Office of Community Affairs (OCA) continued its efforts to serve communities in Alabama by distributing items typically needed during the winter season. By partnering with community organizations and hosting Operation Winter Shield with donated items, OCA was able to serve over 1,200 people with over 200 resources, ranging from food drives to space heaters and fire safety education.



# Holiday Cheer Efforts Benefit State Combined Campaign

The Office of Community Affairs hosted Santa's Sip Shop to benefit the State Combined Campaign.



## Calendar

**April 30**  
**12 noon-1 p.m. Central Time**

**Aerodigestive Problems, When It's Hard to Swallow and to Breathe**

This program will discuss aerodigestive problems, including noisy breathing that worsens with feeds, choking with feeds, coughing with feeds, reflux, and chronic cough or wheezing from swallowing problems.

For more information, contact Health Media and Communications, (334) 206-5635.

**June 9**  
**12:15-1:30 p.m. Central Time**

**Measles: An Urgent Call to Action for Child Health Providers**

Vaccine hesitancy and measles are both on the rise. Many pediatricians have never seen measles cases in their practices, and this program will provide information to help them be prepared to address this disease as well as take steps to prevent it in their patient populations.

For more information, contact Health Media and Communications, (334) 206-5635.

# District Social Work Directors Host Fall Training Events Statewide

Training events were held for public health social workers throughout the state in the fall.

State Social Work Director William Kennedy noted that social workers serve in the following programs: the Alabama Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program, the Alabama Personal Responsibility Education Program, ALL Kids Children's Health Insurance, Child Car Seat Training, Community Affairs, Diabetes Self-Education, Elevated Lead, Emergency Preparedness, Family Planning Care Coordination, HIV Care Coordination, Home Health, Licensure and Certification, Maternity Mortality Review, Newborn Hearing Screening, Newborn Screening Care Coordination, STD, Suicide Prevention, Telehealth, Tobacco Prevention, TB, Well Woman and WISEWOMAN.

District social work directors who hosted the trainings were Jenny Kilpatrick, Southwestern; Kim Richard, Northeastern; Patience Enyinda, Northern; Heather Smith, West Central; Takisha Whitehurst, Southeastern; Allyson Hobbs, East Central.



**Southwestern District, Clarke County Health Department, October 23**



**Northeastern District, Etowah County Health Department, November 7**



**Northern District, Morgan County Health Department, December 4**



**West Central District, Tuscaloosa County Health Department, December 5**



**East Central District, Elmore County Health Department, December 11**



## AIPHA Membership Promoted

Alabama Public Health Association leaders informed and engaged prospective members at the 2026 Annual Women's Health Conference in Prattville. Pictured, from left, are Bylaws Chair Kennita Marshall, President-Elect Gavin Graf, Parliamentarian Sandra Blakely, and President Kelly Fuller.

# Department Celebrates World TB Day 2026



*With the goal of eliminating TB as a Public Health threat, employees in the RSA Tower on World TB Day enhanced their knowledge by listening to presentations, asking questions, playing games, winning fun prizes, and enjoying "tidbits and tea" at a midday event on March 24.*



*Dr. Burnestine Taylor, Medical Officer for Disease Control and Prevention, noted that everyone is susceptible to TB infection, but TB is preventable and curable when patients receive adequate treatment and support.*



*Central Office employees in Montgomery joined to celebrate the strides made in TB prevention and control.*

## Mobile County Health Department Marks World TB Day with Awareness Activities, Education, Community Outreach



*As part of the observance, the RSA Tower buildings in Mobile and Montgomery were illuminated in red, and departmental staff were encouraged to wear red to highlight the ongoing threat of TB and the importance of early detection and treatment.*



*The Mobile County Health Department joined partners across Alabama in recognizing World Tuberculosis Day on March 24 by promoting awareness, education, and prevention surrounding TB. Cherrite Peterson, Public Health Administrator for Disease Surveillance and Control at the Mobile County Health Department, and Dr. Eduardo Calderon, infectious disease specialist and TB Control Consultant, are shown.*

# Eliminate TB

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacterium usually attacks the lungs; however, it may attack other parts of the body such as the kidneys, spine, joints, reproductive organs, or brain. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal. **TB is both preventable and curable.**

## 1. Think Am I at risk for TB?

Talk to your healthcare provider about getting tested if you:



were born in or traveled to a country where TB is prevalent, such as in Asia, Africa, or Latin America



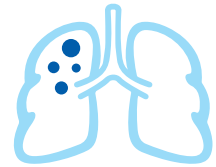
are currently living in crowded living spaces such as a prison, jail, homeless shelter, nursing home, etc.



are an employee or resident of nursing homes, hospitals, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, etc.



are immunocompromised (HIV, end stage renal disease, Silicosis, Hodgkin's disease, etc.) increasing the risk of developing TB disease



had recent exposure to an active case of TB

## 2. Transmission

TB is spread through the air from person to person when they cough, sneeze, speak or sing.



## 3. Symptoms

Productive cough (3 or more weeks), coughing up blood or sputum (mucous from a deep cough), chest pain, weakness or fatigue, loss of appetite, fever, chills, and night sweats.



## 4. Evaluate

If you are experiencing any of the symptoms mentioned above, contact your local health department at [alabamapublichealth.gov/TB/area-managers.html](http://alabamapublichealth.gov/TB/area-managers.html).

To learn more about TB and how you can protect yourself and others, visit [alabamapublichealth.gov/tb](http://alabamapublichealth.gov/tb).



ALABAMA  
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HEALTH

# Dr. William A. Curry Named Alabama's 2025 Community Star



On November 20, National Rural Health Day, the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health recognized Dr. William A. Curry as Alabama's 2025 Community Star. The recognition honors individuals who demonstrate exceptional dedication to improving health in communities with limited access to care. Throughout his career, which included practicing internal medicine in rural Pickens County, he advanced primary care, fostered rural health leadership, and helped train future physicians. At a reception held in his honor at the Jefferson County Department of Health, several speakers who have worked with, been mentored by, or are friends shared heartfelt remarks about the many contributions of Dr. Curry.

## Alabama's Hospitals Continue to Improve Quality by Reducing Healthcare-Associated Infections

For the 14th year in a row, Alabama's Healthcare-associated Infections (HAI) program has been committed to protecting patients from adverse healthcare events, while promoting safety, quality and value in Alabama's healthcare delivery.

"We publish an annual report that provides information on the number of infections per category and whether the hospital performs better than the national average, similar to it, or worse than," said State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris. "In addition to the report, our staff members work with hospitals to improve the accuracy of the reporting, education that not only helps with public reporting, but more importantly helps hospitals collect data that is valuable in their efforts to improve care."

Alabama's hospitals performed better than the national performance level in three of the four important infection-related categories, according to the department's latest report for calendar year 2024. The annual report reveals state- and hospital-specific infection rates on catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs), central line-associated blood stream infections (CLABSIs), and two surgical site infection measures (abdominal hysterectomies and colon surgeries). Statewide, Alabama's hospitals performed better than the national performance level in the CAUTI, CLABSI, and colon surgery categories, while performing similarly in the abdominal hysterectomy category.

"Providing quality care and patient safety remain at the heart of everything Alabama's hospitals do," said Danne Howard, President of the Alabama Hospital Association. "These results reflect the dedication of frontline caregivers and hospital leaders, as well as the ongoing work of the Association's quality and infection prevention efforts that provide education, hands-on training through infection prevention bootcamps, sharing of best practices, and direct support to hospitals across the state. By working together and continually investing in improvement, our hospitals are advancing safer quality care for the patients and communities they serve."

Dr. Harris stresses the importance of infection prevention, as delays in recovery and the worsening of the condition caused by infections can lead to a higher economic burden. Several studies report that a simple and straightforward process, taking only a few seconds to clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub helps to prevent HAIs and save lives, reduce morbidity, and minimize healthcare costs.

The annual report is one of several tools patients can use to learn more about a hospital's quality of care. Other measures are reported on Hospital Compare, a website operated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. "While these online resources can be helpful, they are just part of the picture," added Dr. Harris. "Individuals should always talk with their healthcare provider about the care needed and the best place to receive that care."

# Alabamians Can Access Free Digital Mental Wellness Self-Care Platform Called Crediblemind

Behavioral and mental health issues affect every aspect of life; one in five adults in the United States experiences mental illness each year. Alabama has seen the number of mental health providers and access to care improve, though more work is needed to meet the demand for services. State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris said, "The strains experienced with COVID-19 highlighted a mental health gap between the people seeking assistance and the shortage of providers available."

In partnership with the department, [Alabama Department of Mental Health](#), [Jefferson County Department of Health](#), and [Mobile County Health Department](#), the mental well-being platform called CredibleMind, launched in May 2025, is available to Alabama residents at no charge. CredibleMind provides a means to empower and assist individuals to overcome mental health challenges through a confidential, personalized, accessible, immediate, and anonymous self-care and mental well-being platform. By accessing CredibleMind, the barriers of long waits for professional help and the social stigma that may come from seeking mental health services are avoided. This one-stop information platform supports wellness with evidence-based resources designed to support the mental health needs of everyone, everywhere.

Jefferson County Health Officer, Dr. David Hicks, was among those seeking a solution to the critical problem of rising stress, anxiety, and depression in Alabamians. Dr. Hicks expressed enthusiasm for the new platform, stating, "CredibleMind represents a significant step forward in our efforts to support the mental health and well-being of our community by using a public health approach focused on prevention and early

intervention. Through CredibleMind's free, easy-to-access resources, barriers to better mental health are reduced and access to the tools needed to thrive improved. We are committed to promoting mental wellness and reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues."

Mobile County Health Officer Dr. Kevin Michaels said, "CredibleMind helps you catch mental health concerns early and learn more about them by bringing together personalized resources. Everything is neatly organized by specific topic or condition, so whether you're dealing with stress, anxiety, sleep issues, or just want to boost your overall well-being, you can quickly find what fits your needs."

CredibleMind brings together a wealth of information in expert-rated and vetted videos, podcasts, apps, books, and articles in one place. To learn more, visit [CredibleMind](#).

## Veterans Mental Health pilot projects

To expand and improve mental health access for veterans across Alabama, the Veterans Mental Health Steering Committee has awarded grant funding to new pilot projects supported by Opioid Settlement funds. These projects increase awareness of evidence-based, veteran-focused services and ensure veterans and their families can more easily access crisis care, outpatient therapy, telehealth options, residential treatment, and trauma-focused services tailored to their unique needs.

For more information, the website for the projects is <https://mh.alabama.gov/veterans-mental-health-pilot-projects/>



# Alabama Residents: Your Input Is Needed for the 2026 Community Health Opinion Survey

The department is seeking input from adult Alabamians to improve health in your local community. ADPH's mission is to promote, protect, and improve Alabama's health and provide the people of Alabama with the highest quality service possible. To reach this goal, the department needs participation from residents aged 18 and older in a 10-minute online survey.


The 2026 Community Health Opinion Survey is part of the State Health Assessment that the department utilizes to identify health issues and challenges at the community level. Based on this information, the department can better serve Alabama residents by addressing their highest-priority needs.

The State Health Assessment process began in 2015 as the first approach to prioritizing health issues based on feedback from the general population. The 2020 survey ranked mental health and substance abuse, access to care, pregnancy outcomes, nutrition and physical activity, and social determinants of health as the top five health issues.

Participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential. To access the survey, click the following link or QR code: <https://survey.sogolytics.com/r/LjwdU>

Primary data collection is taking place during April and May. This includes surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Survey responses must be received by June. The final report is expected to be completed in November.

For more information, contact Sondra Reese at [Sondra.Reese@adph.state.al.us](mailto:Sondra.Reese@adph.state.al.us).



**ATTENTION**

## Your Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) Wants to Hear from You

Please complete a short online survey (QR code below) on the greatest health issues and health challenges in your local community! Knowing what Alabama communities consider the most important issues will help ADPH serve all communities better in the future. The survey is for anyone older than 18 years of age and organizations. It should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

