



ALABAMA'S HEALTH

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BUREAU OF FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES PERINATAL DIVISION – WORKING TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF MOTHERS AND INFANTS

Infant and maternal mortality remain persistent problems in our state. The infant mortality rate is 7.6 per 100,000 births in Alabama, which is above the national average of 5.5 deaths per 100,000 births. As of 2017, the maternal mortality rate for Alabama is 17.4 deaths per 100,000 births, compared to the US rate of 11.5. The Perinatal Division has several ongoing initiatives to help combat these problems.

The program manager for the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Program is Amy McAfee, who supervises at least two perinatal nurses outbased in delivering hospitals in five perinatal regions across the state. They review all infant deaths and most fetal deaths that occur in Alabama. The case summaries are presented to a multi-disciplinary committee in each perinatal region to determine the cause of death and how to prevent future deaths. Recommendations are provided to regional community action teams to develop resources and programs to improve the health of infants and mothers. Initiatives implemented by the perinatal nurses or community action teams in Alabama include:

- Providing education related to fetal and infant health to the community, including safe sleep practices, benefits of breastfeeding, shaken baby syndrome, WIC services, and nutrition.
- Promoting the Count the Kicks app to measure fetal kicks at the same time each day to monitor fetal activity and recognize early signs of complications.
- Educating law enforcement and coroners on completion of the Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Investigation form to increase accuracy in reporting sleep-related deaths.
- Organizing candlelight vigils and memorial services for pregnancy and infant loss.

- Hosting events to increase awareness of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.
- Providing materials on bereavement support groups to parents and families that have experienced the loss of a pregnancy or infant.
- Scheduling regular meetings with labor and delivery nurses at hospitals to provide awareness of ADPH perinatal activities and discuss regional challenges to prenatal and infant health.

At the Central Office, the Perinatal Division provides cribs to families in Alabama who cannot afford to provide a safe place for their infant to sleep. This project is managed by Katrina Cuffey, with assistance from Shacari Choice. In 2023, the division is set to surpass its record for the most cribs given out by providing over 500 cribs as of September 1, 2023. Additionally, Antwan Parker and Jaquana Pierce in the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System provide education and outreach related to infant and maternal health at community baby showers, health fairs, and BabyPalooza, focusing on safe sleep, benefits of breastfeeding, counting baby kicks to monitor fetal activity, and good nutrition for moms and babies.

The Maternal Mortality Review Program (MMRP), led by Lindsay Harris, the program coordinator, reviews all deaths for women in prenatal care, during delivery, or postpartum up to a year after delivery. Similar to infant deaths, the MMRP utilizes the Maternal Mortality Review Committee, a multidisciplinary committee, to determine if deaths were preventable and how to prevent the deaths from occurring in the future. The Epidemiology Branch, led by Tim Feuser, analyzes the data collected by the MMRP to help complete the annual report. This report helps the state of Alabama understand the challenges of maternal health in Alabama and the findings and recommendations of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee.

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BENEFITS OF AMERICA'S ORIGINAL AND FAVORITE PLANTS CELEBRATED DURING FRUITS AND VEGGIES MONTH

In celebration of National Fruits and Veggies Month in September, the Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch promoted the theme: "Every Time You Eat, Have a Plant." This month-long celebration highlights the health benefits of America's original and favorite plants – fruits and vegetables.

To help celebrate, a bulletin board contest was held for the county health departments to create and place in lobbies or other high-traffic areas.

The winning health departments received a framed award certificate and prizes for each staff member. The winner was announced on September 29. Nineteen county health departments submitted photo entries in the contest. The winners are as follows:

Peachy Keen

Award for Use of the Theme

Choctaw County Health Department

Pear-Fection

Award for Design

Dale County Health Department

Cute-Cumber

Award for Creativity

Mobile County Health Department (Semmes Health Center)



Choctaw County Health Department



Dale County Health Department



Mobile County Health Department (Semmes Health Center)

Other entries:



Central Office Promotion

RSA Tower employees were also treated to a photo booth, and all participants became eligible for a drawing for fall prizes.

Molly Killman, division director, said, "Thank you for helping us encourage consuming more fruits and veggies! Remember, every time you eat, have a plant for better health!"



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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Approximately 50 percent of the women represented in the case reviews by the Maternal Mortality Review Committee did not receive an autopsy. The Maternal Autopsy Program, scheduled to begin in fiscal year 2024, will provide an opportunity for family members of a pregnant or postpartum woman to request an autopsy free of charge at the University of Alabama Birmingham Hospital or the University of South Alabama Women's and Children's Hospital at no cost. This will help family members receive answers about their loved one's death and provide the MMRP with a clearer understanding of the cause of death.

Due to the hard work of the dedicated staff in the Perinatal Health Division, mothers and families are receiving education and resources to improve their health, knowledge is gained in the medical community regarding the deaths of infants and mothers, and resources have been implemented to improve the health of women and infants across our state.

By Carolyn Miller and Amy McAfee



Members of the Central Office Perinatal Division staff are shown, first row, from left, Katrina Cuffey, Shalisa Gauntt, Carolyn Miller, Lindsay Harris, Leigh Ann Hollon, Shacari Choice; second row, Latasha Fair, Amy McAfee, Tim Feuser, Le Wu, Antwan Parker and Aijun Zhang.



**Region I Perinatal Coordinators
Tana-Kae Lewis and Tamara Jones**



**Region III Perinatal Coordinators
Tonya Troncalli, Toni Beasley and Cathy Nichols**



**Region II Perinatal
Coordinator Trendle Samuel**



**Region II Perinatal
Coordinator Janise Norman**



**Region IV Perinatal
Coordinator Csierra Payne**



**Region IV Perinatal
Coordinator Melissa Turner**

ALABAMA'S CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS PROVIDES MORE THAN JUST BIRTH AND DEATH CERTIFICATES

The department's Center for Health Statistics operates the Alabama vital records system and offers the important service of providing certified copies of birth, death, marriage, and divorce certificates for events that occurred in the state. In 2022, the center issued 810,569 certified copies of vital records, and the majority were issued through county health departments.

The center first began filing birth and death certificates statewide in 1908. Copies of certificates are valuable documents that might be used fraudulently to commit identity theft and other crimes, so access to most birth and death certificates is restricted. By Alabama law, birth certificates are confidential records with restricted access for 125 years from the date of birth. Death certificates are also confidential records with restricted access for 25 years from the date of death. Valid identification is required to obtain copies of restricted vital records.

Not only does the center register birth, death, marriage, and divorce records, but it is also responsible for registering fetal deaths (stillbirths), induced terminations of pregnancy, and Acknowledgments of Paternity. Nearly 200,000 vital records were registered with the center in 2022. Such registration allows data from Alabama births and deaths to be transmitted to the Social Security Administration for enumeration at birth and termination upon death, and to the National Center for Health Statistics for collection and publication, comparison among states, and determination of trends, such as maternal and infant mortality, drug overdose deaths, etc.

A uniquely beneficial service is that certified copies of vital records certificates may be obtained at any Alabama county health department on a while-you-wait basis, regardless of where in the state the event occurred. An automated vital records system called ViSION (Vital Statistics Image Oriented Network) makes this possible. The original ViSION system was implemented statewide in 1996. While county health departments issue most certificates, requests may also be made by mail, Internet, and telephone. ViSION training courses are held regularly to train employees statewide on the use of this system.

The center also provides other specialized vital records services. Keepsake birth certificates, although not legal certified documents, may be ordered from the center for display and decorative purposes. Apostille and Exemplified copies of vital records, routinely required for foreign use, can also be requested from the center. The Apostille and Exemplified copies consist of an Alabama vital record signed by the State Registrar and an additional certification signed by the Alabama Secretary of State.

In addition to registering vital records and issuing certified copies, the center corrects and amends birth and death

records and creates new certificates after legal actions. In 2022, the center's Special Services Division created approximately 5,240 new birth certificates following adoption or parentage determination and amended approximately 3,030 birth certificates and 1,240 death certificates.

Statistical data compiled from vital records obtained by the center are used to help leaders form policies to improve health by identifying trends and risk factors that affect life expectancy. Special studies are done on such topics as causes of death, births to teenagers, maternal behaviors during and after pregnancy, and other health-related topics. Information is released in narrative, graphic, and tabular form through publications, newsletters, special reports, presentations, and ad hoc tabulations. Publications are available on this website by going to the following: alabamapublichealth.gov/healthstats/index.html.

Social changes and new legislation can often impact the vital records arena and the services it provides. For instance, in the coming months the center will be establishing a Certificate of Nonviable Birth which can be issued to parents upon request. The Alabama Legislature adopted the Genesis Act in the 2023 Regular Session which allows issuance of a non-certified Certificate of Nonviable Birth following a fetal death under 20 weeks gestation, when certain criteria are met.



The Center for Health Statistics' ViSION training is conducted primarily via WebEx and in person at the Central Office. Participants shown in the training session September 19 are, from left, first row, Bureau Deputy Director Agnes McCray, Jasmine Davis, Jakiah Strong, Bureau Director Nicole Rushing; second row, Jennifer Lancaster, Makiela Murphy, Marshea Hall and Kaneidreia Arnold.

JAMIE GRAY RECEIVES 2023 NATIONAL EMS WORLD/ DYNAREX EMS CARING AWARD

Office of Emergency Medical Services Director Jamie Gray has earned a number of designations that follow his name, which include NRP and TP-C. These mean the Troy University graduate and State EMS Director since March 2021 is a Nationally Recognized Paramedic and an Internationally Board Certified Tactical Paramedic.

Added to his many accomplishments throughout his quarter-century career is a National EMS Award of Excellence, the 2023 EMS World/Dynarex EMS Caring Award. The award was presented by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians and EMS World on September 19 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

In nominating him for the award, supporter Doug Roberts concluded, "Mr. Gray epitomizes servant leadership and inspires others to give back and pay it forward."

Roberts' nomination stated the following: "Mr. Gray demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to his community. Gray is a member of the National Disaster Medical System as a deployable disaster medic and a volunteer member of a Law Enforcement Special Operations Unit Evacuation Team, and serves on the board of directors and acts as current chair of the South Region of the National Association of State EMS Officials. He is the former director of the Alabama Opioid Assistance Project and vice chair of the Alabama Mutual Aid System Advisory Council, as well as serving on the Emergency Medical Services for Children Advisory Council, Opioid Crisis Advisory Council, and the Data Driven Prevention Initiative Advisory Council.

"Gray began in emergency services in 1998 and in addition to medical certifications, holds certifications as a firefighter, fire service instructor, and EMS instructor as well as HAZMAT operations. He has served as a dispatcher, rode an ambulance, and taught EMS classes full time at a community college. He still teaches CPR classes for healthcare students of all disciplines and for local churches and organizations."



Jamie Gray, BS, AAS, NRP, TP-C

In April 2023, the Alabama Rural Health Association bestowed an additional honor of Gray as recipient of the "Provider of the Year Award" for 2023. The award was presented at the association's annual business meeting, where Gray made remarks regarding his work as an EMS professional in rural Alabama.

The EMS office is responsible for protecting health, safety, and welfare of the public by assuring that emergency medical services provided by response agencies, training entities, and technicians meet or exceed established standards. A great deal of information and data about EMS services statewide can be viewed in the 2022 EMS Annual Report at alabamapublichealth.gov/ems/assets/2022.ems.annual.report.pdf

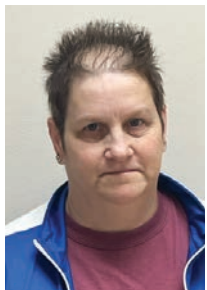
STAFF OF COFFEE AND HOUSTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS APPLAUD CUSTODIANS

Custodians in Coffee and Houston counties were recognized on National Custodian Day, October 3. Health department employees gave each custodian a gift card and a big thank you for the important work they do each day.

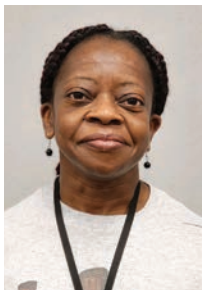
Southeastern District Administrator Corey Kirkland said, "I appreciate the staff in Coffee and Houston counties for recognizing and thanking our custodial workers."

National Custodian Day was created in 1985 as a way to recognize and appreciate the countless hours custodians put in every day to ensure that schools, offices, and other public places are clean and safe for everyone.

Pictured are Tammy Mullins of Coffee County and Jennifer Benton, Derrick Fayson and Larry Springfield of Houston County.



Tammy Mullins



Jennifer Benton



Derrick Fayson



Larry Springfield

DR. AMBER CLARK-BROWN APPRECIATES SERVING ALL OF ALABAMA

Eight months ago, Dr. Amber Clark-Brown began her career with the department, and she has no misgivings about accepting the best job she has ever had. She took on the multiple responsibilities of medical officer for the bureaus of Health Provider Standards and Home and Community Services as well as working with health equity and medical education for students and residents.

"I am thrilled to be able to serve all of Alabama, and I am grateful that this position has allowed me to work in the fields of health policy and public policy where I can affect more than one life at a time," Dr. Clark-Brown said. "I enjoy the 100 percent support we receive from our leadership; their actions speak louder than words."

Growing up in Monroe, Louisiana, she is the youngest of three daughters of parents who have been married 41 years. Early on she knew she wanted to be a physician. After graduation from Neville High School, she was awarded a full scholarship to Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, where she majored in Biology. It was at Tougaloo that she had her first experience with public health, which was pivotal in her career. She was one of 12 students selected as a Jackson Heart Study scholar. The Jackson Heart Study is a collaborative effort involving Tougaloo College, Jackson State University, and the Mississippi State Department of Health. This is the largest cohort studying why African Americans are predisposed to chronic disease. She studied biostatistics, epidemiology, worked in SAS, and conducted research projects each summer through the program.

After earning her B.S. degree, she attended the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University for her medical degree. While in Rhode Island, she was chosen as Miss Black Rhode Island USA 2013, where her platform was "Educate, Advocate, Elevate: a Three-Pronged Approach to Dispelling Health Disparities in Minority Communities." She has continued and expanded these goals in her career, including advocacy for people with disabilities.

A Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) specialist, she is board certified by the American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Formerly employed with the University of Alabama at Birmingham, she has represented the Medical Association of the State of Alabama in state and national capacities. Married, she said she is blessed that her husband is very supportive of her. He is employed in information technology for an international company, so relocating to Montgomery was possible since he is able to work remotely and has flexibility.

Although she knows she still has much to learn at ADPH, she has a greater appreciation of public servants and a renewed calling in improving public health. She is pleased that public health draws employees who are people who care and come from many different backgrounds.

Blending her skills from clinical medicine and academia has helped Dr. Clark-Brown realize that medicine has taught her skills that she can apply to her varied responsibilities within the department. And she enjoys the complexity. These include overall supervision of more than 70 employees in the two bureaus.

"Medicine teaches multitasking and prioritization," she said. "Like in medicine, I'm triaging what to address in what order, and this helps prevent me from getting overwhelmed with whatever tasks are at hand."

Some may believe some of her bureaus have an adversarial relationship with the entities they help regulate. She said this isn't the case. "We want to protect vulnerable residents of healthcare facilities and in their homes, and we enforce rules so people can have the best quality of life they can. Not everyone has people to speak up for them, so our surveyors are often, by default, acting in those roles as advocates. We have to enforce those boundaries. When people work with integrity and excellence, I know it's not a problem."

Recruiting and mentoring medical interns and others considering public health careers is fulfilling for Dr. Clark-Brown. This summer two students from the Heersink School of Medicine at UAB, Cody Grier and Henry Haken, worked under her direction to conduct scientific research studies of patients at the Montgomery County Health Department and Medical Outreach Ministries. At the conclusion of their projects, the enthusiastic students presented their research findings about the effects of health literacy on blood pressure education and the effects of diabetes prevention-focused programs to the State Health Officer and other staff. Another medical student plans to shadow Dr. Clark-Brown this fall. She also addressed students from three universities at the Public Health 101 outreach event.

Communication is important in public health, and she has represented the department in several capacities, including with the State Advisory Council on Palliative Care and Quality of Life.



Amber Clark-Brown, M.D.

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Dr. Clark-Brown, continued from page 7

"We have a responsibility to be honest and transparent, and Dr. Harris does an excellent job in serving the people with integrity," she said. "All we can do is give people consistent, accurate information and respect their ability to make their own decisions. Our jobs are to educate."

She agrees with the description of public health as "the silent guardians of health who quietly and tirelessly work behind the scenes." By preparing and being open to novel ideas and solutions, Dr. Clark-Brown is excited about the possibilities public health presents in the years to come.



Students Cody Grier, left, and Henry Haken of the Heersink School of Medicine at UAB are shown with Dr. Clark-Brown following presentations they made about summer research projects they conducted.

UAB MEDICAL STUDENT CODY GRIER TAKES FIRST PLACE HONORS

The University of Alabama at Birmingham Heersink School of Medicine plans and hosts clinical and research summer programs that help prepare students who aspire to a career in medicine or biomedical sciences. Second Year UAB medical student Cody Grier won first place in the public health category at the UAB research symposium on September 11.

Working with patients at the Montgomery County Health Department and Medical Outreach Ministries, Grier conducted a study titled, "The Effect of Health Literacy on Blood Pressure Education." He explored how patients retain health information in everyday life and evaluated an ADPH blood pressure information flyer using a pre- and post-survey as well as the Patient Education Materials Assessment Tool (PEMAT).

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers congratulated Dr. Amber Clark-Brown, Medical Officer for the bureaus of Health Provider Standards, Home and Community Services and Office of Health Equity and Minority Health, and Senior Epidemiologist Dr. Ana Oliveira of the Office of Informatics and Data Analytics for their work. She wrote, "ADPH looks forward to more good work with students and their introduction to the practice of public health. I appreciate all the effort!"

FLU CREW 'SHOOES THE FLU' AT DRIVE-THROUGH CLINIC



The Northern Public Health District "Flu Crew" joined to "shoo the flu" away in Morgan County on October 19. The drive-through influenza clinic was a great success.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT TEAM SUPPORTS 'RUN WITH RONNIE'

Building an environment of teamwork and support is essential to the success of any healthcare environment. The Montgomery County Health Department team has worked hard to create an environment that is not only supportive to one another at work, but also outside of the work environment.

Kayla Wallace, Nurse Coordinator at Montgomery County Health Department, joined ADPH in December of 2022. Soon after onboarding, she shared many stories with her co-workers about her father, Ronnie Shaw. In April of 2022, Mr. Shaw was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) or Lou Gehrig's Disease. Kayla had talked some about Run With Ronnie which is an event that Mr. Shaw's friends and family organized to support the Shaw family and finding a cure for ALS.

April Montgomery, Nurse Manager at Montgomery County Health Department, knew she wanted to find a way for her team to show love and support outside the work environment to Kayla and the Shaw family. The team came together and planned a surprise for Kayla on the day of the event, September 23, 2023. The team had shirts made that read "Kayla's Crew from The Montgomery County Health Department" and wore them to Run With Ronnie. Kayla commented on the surprise by saying, "I never in a million years thought I would work at Montgomery County Health Department. My mother worked here as a nurse in the 1990s and encouraged me to get on the nurse register. It has been a huge blessing for me and my family. I love the support and teamwork that I have felt since working here. I'm so blessed to be a part of this team."

Ms. Montgomery said, "It has always been my goal to create a work environment that supports and shows love to each one of the people on my staff. I want the staff here to know that I will always support them professionally and personally if they allow me the privilege to do so. I am so incredibly grateful for the wonderful people I work with every day, and I hope we all continue our careers at ADPH for many many years to come."

May we all be reminded the importance of the small things and GREAT impact they can make to our fellow colleagues.

By April Montgomery



Ronnie Shaw is shown with daughters Kristen Budd, left, and Kayla Wallace.

Montgomery County Nursing Staff

Pictured, from left, are April Montgomery, Nurse Manager; Kayla Wallace, Nurse Coordinator; Shaquanda McMillion, Staff Nurse; Narquissa Carson, Licensed Practical Nurse; Nichole Paulk, Nurse Practitioner; and Sheena Johnson, Nurse Supervisor.



BUREAU OF HOME AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTS OUTREACH TO ALL AGES



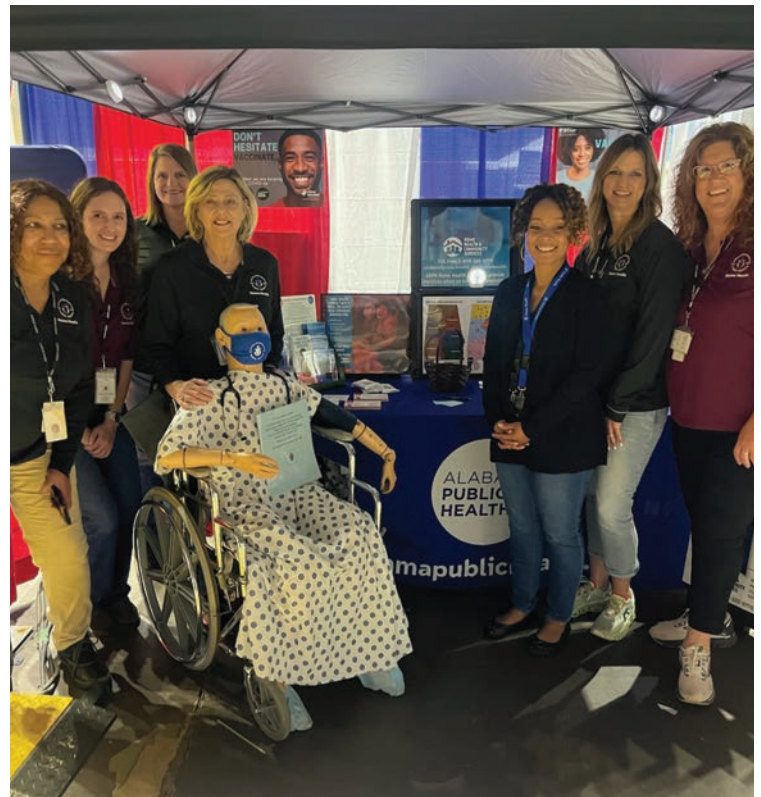
Summer health tips and an overview of the department's home health services were shared with a senior group in the Pintlala community of rural Montgomery County.



Dr. Choona Lang, bureau director, described the wide range of home health services, including maps of remote patient monitoring sites.



The Bureau of Home and Community Services was among the vendors at the Back 2 School Extravaganza July 30 sponsored by the Montgomery County Probate Court. Employees from the Central Office in Montgomery participated in the event. Donors provided backpacks, clothing and school supplies in addition to fun music, inflatables and food.



Employees staffed a popular booth at the Alabama National Fair in Montgomery October 4-13. Promoting home health services on Senior Day at the fair are shown, from left, Norma Hudson, Lacy Campbell, Karen Wakefield, Connie Tidwell, Kimberly Martin, Melissa Smith, and Marcy Stanley. The bureau team also made a special effort to greet and speak with fair-goers on Special Friends Day.

RETIREES

The following departmental employees have retired recently:

AUGUST

George Buckley, Jr.

Bureau of Clinical Laboratories

Barbara Etheridge

Southwestern Public Health District

Keith Higginbotham

Bureau of Information Technology

Angela Looney

Northern Public Health District

Thelma McDade

Bureau of Family Health Services

SEPTEMBER

Shirley Daniel

Bureau of Family Health Services

Starla Moore

Southeastern Public Health District

OCTOBER

Patricia Allcorn

Northern Public Health District

Kathleen Griffith

Bureau of Financial Services

Laura Williams

Bureau of Health Provider Standards

JEFFERSON COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER DR. MARK WILSON RETIRES

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris, left below, bids farewell to Dr. Mark Wilson who retired October 1 after 12 years of service as Jefferson County Health Officer. Dr. Harris praised Dr. Wilson for his integrity, his humility, and the great work he has done in his distinguished career of public health service which included two decades of serving in various capacities at Cooper Green Mercy Hospital.



ORIENTATION HELD FOR NEW SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT EMPLOYEES

The Southeastern Public Health District welcomed 12 new employees at its October class at the Coffee County Health Department. Shown with their base assignments are first row, from left, Sheckella Johnson, Administrative Support Assistant, Barbour County; Emily Wiggins, Communication and Public



Relations, Houston County; Dorenda Pressley, Administrative Support Assistant, Coffee County; Samantha Brooks, Staff Nurse, Crenshaw County; second row, Kelly Lopez-Devictoria, Administrative Support Assistant, Houston County; Hillary Hatcher, Tobacco Prevention Control Social Worker, Houston County; Shawntae Durant, Clinic Aide, Butler County; Abbey Smith, LPN, Covington County; Ashley Smith, EPSDT Social Worker, Pike County; Aimee Moore, Administrative Support Assistant, Coffee County; Alichia Mtichell, Home Health Aide, Covington County; and Flessia Bell, Home Health Aide, Butler County.

BOARD OF HEALTH APPOINTS JEFFERSON COUNTY'S FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN HEALTH OFFICER

Dr. David Hicks was officially appointed the 12th Health Officer of Jefferson County effective October 1, replacing Dr. Mark Wilson, who served as Health Officer for the last 12 years.

Historically, Dr. Hicks will be Jefferson County's first African American Health Officer. Dr. David Hicks is a board-certified family medicine physician and served as Deputy Health Officer at the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH), overseeing clinical operations. Additionally, he served as Incident Commander for JCDH's COVID-19 response efforts. Before this role, he was the Medical Director of Adult Health and Family Planning.

"Dr. David Hicks has been a valuable asset to the Jefferson County Department of Health for several years. He brings a wealth of experience to his new role as Health Officer, and I look forward to working with him to build on the Department's prior successes and to create new opportunities for growth and improvement for the Department and the citizens of Jefferson County," noted Dr. Iris Fancher, Chairwoman, Jefferson County Board of Health.

Before working at the health department, Dr. Hicks oversaw five clinic locations as Chief Medical Officer at Birmingham Health Care. He also has provided medical care in various settings, including urgent care clinics, correctional facilities, and an academic health system. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians, Chairman of Alabama's STD Medical Advisory Council, and a member of Alabama's Rural Medical Service Awards Advisory Board. Dr. Hicks is a Leadership Birmingham graduate and a member of the Freshwater Land Trust Red Rock Committee, Kiwanis Club of Birmingham, and UAB School of Public Health's Community

Engagement Council, respectively. In 2021, he received the NAACP Metro Birmingham Branch's Community Trailblazer Award.

Dr. Hicks stated, "I thank God for putting me in a position to continue the legacy Dr. Wilson and the other remarkable Jefferson County Health Officers set forth. Our staff remains committed to our vision of a healthier Jefferson County for all by strengthening partnerships, engaging with communities, and promoting health equity."



David Hicks, D.O.

Dr. Hicks earned a Master of Public Health degree in Behavioral and Community Health Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health and was a National Institutes of Health Fogarty MIRT Program research trainee at the National University of Science and Technology in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. He later earned his Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree from Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine. He completed his Family Medicine residency at Christiana Care Health System and served as Chief Resident. Dr. Hicks is married, and he and his wife have three children. Dr. Hicks stated, "In my free time, I enjoy fishing, doing genealogy research, reading, and cheering on my favorite sports teams."

By Wanda Heard



MEDICAL MINUTE BRINGS ATTENTION TO HEALTH ISSUES

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers recorded videos on influenza, COVID-19, and sexually transmitted diseases for Medical Minute segments produced in partnership with the University of Alabama at Birmingham. State Dental Director Dr. Tommy Johnson was also featured in a Medical Minute on oral health.

LEADERS SHARE INFORMATION ON HIV RESPONSE



CAPT John Oguntomilade, BDS, MPH, PhD, Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S., (EHE) Initiative Coordination Lead for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, is shown left to right, with State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris, Chief of Staff Michele Jones, EHE Program Coordinator Jonathan Joseph, Sharon Jordan, Director, Office of HIV Prevention and Care, Vontrese McGhee, Deputy Director/Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, Director, and Jora White, HIV Prevention Division Director. CAPT Oguntomilade met with state health officials, community members and health center leaders to discuss

the accomplishments of the EHE initiative and opportunities to optimize the impact of the EHE initiative. Alabama is one of seven states with a substantial number of HIV diagnoses in rural areas that are a part of the initiative. CAPT Oguntomilade commended department leaders "for their innovative approaches to mitigate the rural challenges, and their strategic partnership with Five Horizons Health Services and other community partners to expand access to and uptake of health resources in a holistic approach to mitigate health inequities in vulnerable communities."

FAST TRACK SEXUAL HEALTH TESTING TAKES AWAY STIGMA

One in two sexually active young people will get a sexually transmitted infection before the age of 25, and most will not know it. The Montgomery County Health Department offers quick, confidential and free same-day testing for patients showing no symptoms of sexually transmitted infections. Testing is available with or without an appointment on weekdays.

Fast track sexual health testing reduces long waiting times and the need to see a provider for patients who show no symptoms. This also helps remove stigma.

Carlavia Edwards, Disease Intervention Specialist Senior with the East Central Public Health District, said the clinic has seen an increase in patients seeking fast track sexual health testing services. From June 1 through September 30, a total of 515 patients accessed fast track sexual health testing at the Montgomery County Health Department. There is a 25 to 35 percent positivity rate among those screened.

Plans are to enhance fast track sexual health testing services.



East Central Public Health District staff explained fast track sexual health testing services offered in a Central Alabama Business Break segment. Carlavia Edwards, right, and Narquissa Carson described the free, confidential, same-day testing services at the Montgomery County Health Department.

ADPH RANKS 23RD BEST AMONG EMPLOYERS IN ALABAMA, ACCORDING TO FORBES LISTING

Forbes released its annual “Best Employers By State” list, ranking its 44 best places to work in Alabama for 2023, and the Alabama Department of Public Health was ranked among the leading healthcare employers in the state and 23rd overall in Alabama.

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris said, “With the continued challenges of COVID-19 over the past three years, your dedication to meeting our mission and exhibiting our core values of excellence, integrity, innovation and community have propelled us to this high ranking within the state. Our employees are our greatest asset, and I am proud of our teamwork.”

The magazine article described its methodology as follows: *Forbes* partnered with market research firm Statista to survey 70,000 full- or part-time workers at companies (with a minimum of 500 employees) in all 50 states, including criteria such as evaluations of their employer based on whether they would recommend their employer to friends and family, and including working conditions, diversity, compensation packages, potential for development, and company image.

According to *Forbes*, as with all its lists, companies do not pay to participate. All surveys were anonymous to encourage candor. The full list of *Forbes*’ best employers in Alabama is listed below.

- | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Southern Co. | 16. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama | 30. Siemens |
| 2. Books-A-Million | 17. Etowah County School District | 31. 3M |
| 3. University of Alabama at Birmingham | 18. U.S. Department of Defense | 32. Jefferson County School District |
| 4. Northrop Grumman | 19. PNC Financial Services | 33. General Electric |
| 5. Evonik Industries | 20. Auburn University | 34. Children’s of Alabama |
| 6. Wind Creek Hospitality | 21. Leidos | 35. WestRock |
| 7. Home Instead Senior Care | 22. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services | 36. Southeast Health |
| 8. Clayton Homes | 23. Alabama Department of Public Health | 37. United Parcel Service |
| 9. Edward Jones | 24. Infirmary Health | 38. Georgia-Pacific |
| 10. Honda Motor | 25. Marriott International | 39. Raytheon Technologies |
| 11. Polaris | 26. NASA | 40. East Alabama Health |
| 12. Publix Super Markets | 27. The Home Depot | 41. JCPenney |
| 13. Boeing | 28. U.S. Social Security Administration | 42. North American Lighting |
| 14. Hoover City School District | 29. Mercedes-Benz USA | 43. State of Alabama |
| 15. Airbus | | 44. Alfa Insurance |

PALLIATIVE CARE COUNCIL MEETS

Members of the State Advisory Council on Palliative Care and Quality of Life met August 11 in Montgomery. Shown, first row from left, are Sarah Pederson, Ph.D.; Kristi Acker, D.N.P., A.C.H.P.N. (Chair); Karen Marlowe, Pharm.D., B.C.P.S., C.P.E. (Co-Chair); second row, Richard Brockman, J.D.; Mary Ann Somers, M.A., Ed.; Stormy Dismuke, RN, MSN, P.P.-C.; Annie Hinson, L.B.S.W.; and Timothy Mayhall, M.Div., B.C.C. The mission of this council is to promote palliative care in Alabama by improving consumer awareness of the positive effect of compassionate palliative care on the quality of life and care for individuals and families living with life-limiting illness.



MORGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES WEAR PINK FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Clinic employees of the Morgan County Health Department dressed in pink in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month during October.



IN PINK FOR THE CURE

Tuscaloosa County Health Department employees demonstrated the Power of Pink to combat breast cancer.



'PINK OUT' FOR BREAST CANCER

The Calhoun County Health Department held a "Pink Out" for breast cancer awareness October 27.



PROGRAM INTEGRITY HONORS DIRECTOR BY WEARING PINK

Members of the Office of Program Integrity staff wore pink on October 24 in observance of Breast Cancer Awareness Month and to honor Director Debra Thrash for her more than 5 years as a breast cancer survivor.



PINK TOGETHER, STRONGER FOREVER!

Employees of the Monroe County Health Department recognized breast cancer survivors during October to show their appreciation, love and support during and after their fight. Shown, from left, are Ann Fox, Amy Ikner, Cindy Parsons, Angela Anderson and Wanda Biggs.



PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS SHOWCASED AT GET FIT SELMA!

The Dallas County Health Department participated in the 10th Annual Get Fit Selma! Health, Street Olympics and MGLC Carnival October 7 in Selma at the McRae-Gaines Learning Center. A table showcased programs such as Well Woman, WIC, Women's Health and others.

The event focused on:

1. Fostering community commitment to healthy nutrition, an active lifestyle and smarter personal choices.
2. Increasing awareness of local, state and national services and resources for both physical and mental health and wellness.
3. Motivating participants to make positive change in their negative behaviors.



Pictured are Deborah Ellis, left, and Sonja Washington.

ETOWAH COUNTY DRIVE-THROUGH CLINIC A SUCCESS



Etowah County Health Department employees and the public were shaded under a new canopy at a drive-through immunization clinic on October 3. Staff members set up and administered 297 influenza vaccines at Glencoe Baptist Church.

ENTHUSIASTIC STUDENTS ATTEND PUBLIC HEALTH 101 CAREER DAY

More than 100 collegiate public health students attended Public Health 101 Career Day 2023 September 26 at the Training Center in Prattville.

Students from Samford University, Tuskegee University, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham were invited to learn about career opportunities, internships, and benefits provided with department employment.

In the invitation to university leaders, State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris stated, "Students will hear from each Bureau Director who will share the opportunities we have available to jump start the professional career path."

In addition to the presentations by Mobile County Health Officer, Dr. Kevin Philip Michaels, 22 bureau and office directors, and other health department officials, the day-long agenda included time for students to speak directly with public health leaders about the many positions statewide for which they would qualify. A tour of the adjacent Bureau of Clinical Laboratories facility was also conducted.



Mobile County Health Officer Dr. Kevin Philip Michaels addresses students about career opportunities.



Shown from left are Alden Harris, East Central District Recruiter; Connickle Moore, Employee Relations Office Manager; Brent Hatcher, Director, Office of Human Resources; Clairetta Benjamin, Southwestern District Recruiter; Emily Wiggins, Southeastern District Recruiter; Shanika Andrews, Equal Employment Officer/Recruiter, Employee Relations; and Danita Rose, Employee Relations Officer/EEO Coordinator.

THE STATE HEALTH ASSESSMENT WORKGROUP BEGINS WORKING ACROSS THE STATE

The State Health Assessment (SHA) Workgroup was established in 2018 to begin identifying the top health improvement areas throughout the state. Members are responsible for collecting, analyzing, and sharing the results of the SHA to enable better data-driven decision-making. The workgroup typically meets 18-24 months before the next release of the SHA.

In 2023, the SHA Workgroup was reignited after the pandemic. Members were split into two teams: the Data Survey Team and the Community Engagement Team. The Data Survey Team oversaw the analytic side of the community survey, including designing clear questions, capturing appropriate responses, and identifying persisting health issues. The Community Engagement Team also oversaw the “Community Conversations,” which will be the listening sessions held across the state.

Both teams indicated areas in Alabama that needed more representation in the data reporting and increased health equity among populations.

“This group has been great at identifying and exploring areas of health inequity across the state,” comments Dr. Carlene Robinson, who coordinated the SHA and oversaw the activities in the SHA Workgroup. “We are getting back to the core of public health – hearing about the public’s health concerns and using our combined expertise to address them.”

The SHA Workgroup established the Community Conversations to specifically hear from historically marginalized groups, such as individuals from shrinking townships, individuals with disabilities, minority mothers with complications surrounding perinatal care, and individuals who work as first responders.

More information about their efforts and ongoing work can be found on the ADPH website under “Community Improvement Projects”.

**SHA Community
Engagement Team**

Annalyse Bergman, ADPH
Epidemiologist (Team Lead)

Nada Al-Assi, ADPH Public Health Educator

Carolyn Bern, ADPH Director
of Governmental Affairs and
Community Relations

Denise Bertaut, ADPH Child
Passenger Safety State
Coordinator

Lita Chatham, ADPH Assistant
Director, Nutrition and Physical
Activity Division

Lois Gwinn, Mobile County
Health Department Health
Senior Program Administrator

Jennifer Harris, Alarise Health
Policy Advocate

Alice Irby, ADPH
Epidemiologist Senior

James King, Alzheimer's Association Director of Government Affairs

Latisha Kennebrew, ADPH
Director of Health Equity and
Minority Health

Tana-Kae Lewis, ADPH Region I
Perinatal Coordinator

Sarah MacCarthy, UAB Magic
City LGBTQ Health Studies
Endowed Chair

Patricia Martin, ADPH Project Coordinator

Courtney Myers, ADPH IT
Systems Technician Senior

Csierra Payne, ADPH Region IV
Perinatal Coordinator

Chris Sellers, Alabama
Department of Mental Health,
Director of Analytics

Susan Wiggins, ADPH Nurse
Manager

SHA Data Survey Team

Kortnei Scott, ADPH
Epidemiologist (Team Lead)

Joan Bassler, University of
Alabama at Birmingham
Statistician

Cathy Beatty, ADPH Nurse Practitioner

Traci Dunklin, Alabama
Department of Senior Services
Family Caregiver Program,
State Director

Saranee Dutta, ADPH GIS Specialist

Connie Hendon, ADPH
Infection Prevention and
Control Staff Nurse

Dana Jones, ADPH Disease
Intervention Program Manager

Julie Nightengale, ADPH
Epidemiologist

Justine Goetzman, ADPH
Epidemiologist

Makiko Hori, ADPH Public Health Research Analyst III

State Health Assessment



NORTHERN AND WEST CENTRAL DISTRICTS HOLD MEDICAL NEEDS SHELTER TRAINING

Medical needs shelter training and exercises were conducted with the West Central District staff on August 15-16 at the Alabama Fire College in Tuscaloosa and the Northern District staff on September 6-7 at Calhoun Community College in Tanner.

On the agenda were the nursing, clerical, social worker, environmental, and AIMS patient tracking roles in medical needs or mass care shelters. Exercises included observation,

patient tracking and demobilization, followed by an exercise hot wash.

Alabama Department of Public Health is the lead agency for the Emergency Support Function 8 in the State of Alabama Emergency Operations plan. Training focused on the activation and set up, operation and demobilization of a medical needs shelter.



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 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.

Kimberly Britt
Candace Fennell
Pam Wales

Jackson County
Health Department
Northern Public Health District
from Rick and Angelia Vinson
Address unlisted

Casandra Clark

Center for Health Statistics
Special Services Division
from Henry Thurman, New York
Heidi S. Kelley, Texas

Nicole Cleveland

Center for Health Statistics
Special Services Division
from Berthenia
Tillman, Georgia

Jamie Hammond
Kenny Thomas

Northeastern District
WIC Program
from Mary Gomillion
and District WIC Staff
Northeastern Public
Health District

Allison Haskell
Semtria Marshall

Montgomery County
Health Department
from Aleah Harris-Hosea
Address unlisted

Teresa Kilburn

Center for Health Statistics
Record Services Division
from Jacqueline
Poole, Michigan

Jennifer Lancaster

Center for Health Statistics
Record Services Division
from Ms. Clark, Texas
Tammy Jimenez, Illinois

BALDWIN COUNTY EMPLOYEE HEALTH FAIR



Social workers Venetia Dyas, left, and Daphne Jordan from the Southwestern District provided health information at the Baldwin County Employee Health Fair in Robertsedale October 17.

TRAININGS FOCUS ON HEALTH LITERACY

The cost of limited health literacy is high. Health literacy has an impact on patient understanding, patient compliance, and patient outcomes. Dr. Joy Deupree of the UAB School of Nursing is offering health literacy training sessions to help attendees learn how to develop their community skills to promote health literacy and effectively identify the needs and interests of unique audiences.



REGINA PATTERSON, IT DIRECTOR, RETIRES

Coworkers wished Regina L. Patterson, director of the Bureau of Information Technology, a happy retirement when they honored her with a retirement reception September 28. She retired effective October 1 after more than 34 years of service.



CALENDAR

**NOVEMBER 7, 10-11 A.M.
(CENTRAL TIME)**

Fostering Health Equity in Alabama

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

**JANUARY 8, 1-2 P.M.
(CENTRAL TIME)**

**Congenital Heart Defects - An Overview
of the Most Common Birth Defect**

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

NEWBORN SCREENING CONFERENCE UPDATES PROVIDERS

Newborn babies can still have a disorder even though they may look healthy. Early diagnosis through screening may reduce morbidity, premature death, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities. September is Newborn Screening Awareness Month and Sickle Cell Awareness Month. The Bureau of Clinical Laboratories held the Alabama Newborn Screening Conference September 22 in Prattville to update healthcare providers and others of the latest tests and recommendations. This year the Alabama Newborn Screening Program is celebrating 58 years of life-saving newborn screening.



ADPH JOINS OTHER AGENCIES AND GROUPS TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY RESOURCES

"It was a great day" public health educators Nada Al-Assi, left, and Bentasia Parker reported following a WSFA Day of Action event in Tuskegee September 7. They joined representatives from dozens of local and state groups and agencies to help offer assistance to those battling poverty in the River Region. A second event was held in Montgomery on September 21.



ASL TRAINING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS HELD



Susan McCrary, left, and Wanda Scales record an American Sign Language (ASL) training session on August 10. The First Responders Guide to Emergency Situations Using American Sign Language (ASL) training was created to assist people with sensory loss. The series covers the alphabet, numbers, essential words and phrases, and basic ASL phrases for emergency personnel and first responders.

CONGENITAL SYPHILIS INCREASES, SUMMIT FOCUSES ON REDUCTION STRATEGIES



STD Division staff and payers/Medicaid met with representatives of other states October 17 in Raleigh, N.C., to discuss strategies to confront rising rates of congenital syphilis in states. Photographed, from left, are Dana Kierce, B.S.N., R.N., Alabama Medicaid Agency; Travis Houser, D.B.A., M.B.A., Alabama Medicaid Agency; Burnestine Taylor, M.D., Medical Officer, Disease Control and Prevention; Agnes Oberkor, M.P.H., Dr.P.H., CPNP-PC, Congenital Syphilis Coordinator, Clinical Consultant, Lead Trainer, STD Division; and Leandro Mena, M.D., M.P.H., Director of STD Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

SEVENTEEN PARTICIPANTS COMPLETE BASIC ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING COURSE IN OCTOBER



Pictured from left, with base county are: first row, Stacey Hood, Shelby; Emilee Jenkins, Etowah; Mallory Mathis, Mobile; Tamiah Rice, Mobile; second row, Casey Poer, Madison; Johnathan Hargreaves, Monroe; Victor Nguyen, Elmore; Cheryl Chisholm, Mobile; third row, Jeffery Johnson, Madison; Ryan Lang, Cherokee; John Arnold, Shelby; Christy Phillips, St. Clair; fourth row, Jaqouri Dawson, Mobile; Rhodnisha Croskey, Marion; Eric (Tanner) Guttensohn, Montgomery; Andrew Palmore, St. Clair; and Evelyn Moore, Baldwin.

The Bureau of Environmental Services completed the fall session of the Basic Environmental Training Course (BETC) on October 20. BETC is a two-week course for newly employed environmentalists around the state. This course is offered biannually and must be successfully completed by the new environmentalists prior to their receiving permanent status with the state.

Instructors provide information on basic services the staff will be engaged in at the county health departments including onsite sewage and wastewater disposal, food establishment inspections, body art (tattoo), animal bite investigation, solid waste disposal, and more. The course also introduces the class to the ADPH legal staff and legal procedures, outbreak investigations, and sample collection, as knowledge needed in their future work.