

RC/PIO News & Notes 7-19-2024



FROM Eric Jens, GA DPH Risk Communicator
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News and Notes

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

BioWatch



A quarterly meeting of the Atlanta BioWatch Advisory Committee was held Monday in Lawrenceville. In addition to programmatic updates, BAC members talked about planning for major events scheduled during the next two years, and the role BioWatch will have in ensuring safety for large crowds attending the events. Amanda Feldpausch delivered a presentation on Avian Influenza, with follow-up information from Dr. Marcus Webster from the State Department of Agriculture. Dr. Laura Edison provided an update on the on-going response to the negative health impacts related to Diamond Shroomz products (more details to follow).

Diamond Shroomz

A state DPH news release was sent one week ago today, warning about the dangers related to products sold by Diamond Shroomz:

Georgians Urged Not to Eat Diamond Shroomz Products

Chocolates, gummies, and snack foods may contain psychoactive compounds

ATLANTA – The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are investigating reports of severe illnesses associated with Diamond Shroomz-brand chocolate bars, cones, and gummies.

Diamond Shroomz products may contain harmful and undisclosed ingredients, including psychoactive compounds that can cause serious illness when eaten. These "edibles" are often sold as gummy candies, chocolates, or other snack foods that frequently appeal to children and teenagers.

As of July 8, 2024, 58 illnesses have been reported in 27 states, including several reports in Georgia that are being investigated. Of the people who became ill after eating these products, more than half were hospitalized, and there is one potentially associated death under investigation. The investigation is ongoing to identify other cases.

Farewell

This is not exactly 'farewell' so much as it is 'see you in a different role.' Veronda Griffin is leaving her current position at state DPH August 5 to be the Dekalb County Board of Health's Public Health Preparedness Manager. Congratulations and looking forward to continued collaboration.



Fulton Functional Exercise

Thanks to Fulton County's Training and Exercise Coordinator Brianna Cleveland for calling attention to a Functional Exercise next month with a major focus on Communications:

Date: Wednesday, August 7, 2024

Time: 10:00 am to 12:30 pm (sign-in to the virtual simulator/collaboration site by 9:45 am)

Location: Virtual (participants will receive login credentials and links for the exercise (Zoom) platform and social media simulator not later than August 6)

This exercise is conducted in "real time" in a simulated social media environment. It allows participants to practice procedures to actively monitor news coverage and social media for situational awareness and prepare communications to correct rumors and misinformation during a regional mass casualty incident. *Participants are asked to register no later than **July 31**.*

<https://ess.ascentra.com/Registration/fultoncohealthsocialmediaex/>

Media/CERC Training

Registration is now open for the DPH Media / Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication training to be held at Georgia Highlands College in Rome, Thursday, September 19:

<https://ga.readyop.com/fs/5avp/f83d01eb>

Next Week Preview

More hot weather and more updates on current and up-coming events are expected next week.

About "News & Notes"

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