



# RC/PIO News & Notes |

May 1, 2026

A Weekly Update from **Eric Jens, Risk Communicator** – Georgia Department of Public Health  
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## News & Notes

Mental Health, HIV Prevention, Public Health perseverance and more are in store for highlights this week.

## HIV Prevention Campaign

Thanks to Connie Smith-Lindsey for sending us the images and information about a recently started HIV Prevention Campaign:

*The key messages focus on PrEP to Protect. Test to Know. Know Your Status. in English and Spanish.*

*The HIV Prevention Campaign launched on April 13, 2026, for most media buys. The placement on digital kiosks in neighborhoods and communities launched on April 27, 2026 and will conclude on June 14, 2026. HIV Prevention is a statewide campaign, so it is possible to see ads in several public health districts on digital billboards, digital display banners, DPH social media, and dating apps.*



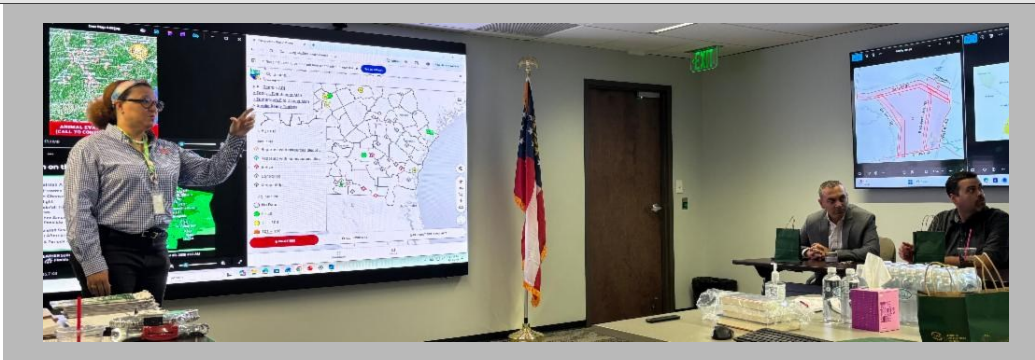
## EOC visit

Thursday afternoon Lisa Newman brought her team from the Department of Administrative Services for a tour of the state DPH EOC. The visit timed out well as numerous groups and individuals stopped by throughout the 90 minute session. This allowed for more detailed discussion on Emergency Preparedness, EOC design and function, Epidemiology, Planning, Risk Communication, and more.



## Mental Health Discussion

Proponents of Mental Health advancements met Thursday afternoon at the state Department of Agriculture EOC. USDA representatives met with representatives of numerous state and partner agencies to discuss on-going efforts, and to find ways of providing the most resources to the people in greatest need of those services. Venessa Sims also provided an update on the Ag response to South Georgia wildfires.



## Public Health Perseverance

Last week's session on Public Health Perseverance hosted by County Health Rankings & Roadmaps highlighted some of greatest challenges during the past 200 years. Physician Dr. Aletha Maybank, former chief equity officer of the American Medical Association said some of the recent threats to Public Health advancement may be different, but not necessarily worse than major challenges of the past. Professor Sarah Gollust, from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health said health disparities are often exacerbated when they are ignored by the media and left out of common conversation.

### 1830s-1850s — Cholera & miasma theory

Sanitation reforms blocked as economic threat to trade, property  
Framed as: "poverty is moral failure, not a public health matter"

### 1850s-1900s — Compulsory smallpox vaccination

Anti-vaccination leagues grew across UK and US after mandates  
Framed as: "bodily liberty vs. state tyranny"

### 1918 — Influenza pandemic & wartime suppression

Governments suppressed death counts to maintain wartime morale  
Framed as: "patriotic duty over public alarm"

### 1950s-1990s — Tobacco & manufactured doubt

Industry-funded research sowed confusion about smoking harms  
Framed as: "scientific uncertainty" and "personal choice"

### 1980s — HIV/AIDS and political abandonment

Federal inaction under Reagan left a decade of preventable deaths  
Framed as: "disease of deviance" — moral othering blocked response  
Counter-framing: ACT UP recast this as a civil rights emergency

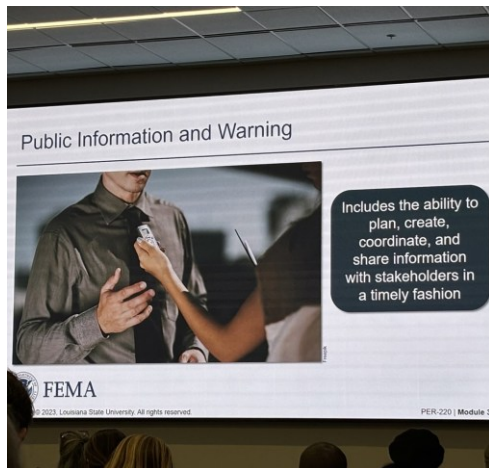
### 1990s-2010s — Opioid crisis & regulatory capture

Pharma companies lobbied aggressively; FDA/DEA oversight weakened  
Framed initially as: "pain relief access" and "undertreated suffering"  
Later: addiction reframed as individual moral failure, not corporate harm

### 2020-2025 — COVID-19 & the politicization of science

Masking, distancing, vaccines became partisan identity markers  
Framed as: "freedom vs. control" — public health cast as authoritarian  
2025: regulatory rollback dismantled infrastructure built over decades

## Bio Incident Training



Thanks to Byron Lobsinger for sending the pictures and information from a training he recently attended:

*I'd recommend the Emergency Response to Domestic Biological Incidents training course that I attended at the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center this past week.*

*Multidiscipline attendees from throughout the Metro area shared their experiences and discussed FEMA related plans during a biological incident tabletop exercise conducted between training modules. The participation between agencies and organizations enhanced the training and exercise experience, as well as provided an opportunity to meet several of the over 60 in attendance. One of the key takeaways is that many challenges exist with a natural, accidental, or intentional biological incident.*



## Next Week Preview

Next week there will be a full-scale exercise for the Atlanta BioWatch Advisory Committee from Wednesday through Friday. The Region C Healthcare Coalition meets Tuesday. And Thursday is Children's Mental Health Day with activities planned at Twin Towers.

**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](mailto:Eric.Jens@dph.ga.gov).

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