



December 2010 Executive Report
For Galveston County & Cities

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Pulse of the District...

A Spotlight on United Board of Health Public Health Services

Who we are:

The Galveston County Health District (GCHD) is a distinct, non-taxing governmental entity. GCHD is a *public health* district (not to be confused with a taxing *hospital* district), addressing the ten (10) essential public health functions outlined in state statute. As a district, the public health services under GCHD's umbrella are governed by a policy-making board, the Galveston County United Board of Health (UBOH): www.gchd.org/boards/UHBIndex.htm. Representative board members are appointed by Galveston County and cities. It is important to note that UBOH members do not oversee the 4Cs Clinics (the primary care services also under GCHD's umbrella) which have a separate governing board by federal funding requirements.

Where we came from:

GCHD was first created in 1971 through an agreement between the county, seven cities and one water district, under section 4436b of Vernon's Civil Statutes, to address public health needs. In 1981, GCHD was restructured under Chapter 121 of State of Texas Health and Safety Codes to provide a diverse array of public health services to citizens through an inter-local agreement between Galveston County and 13 member cities. GCHD underwent a Sunset Review, initiated by the County in 2000, which concluded that its public services were essential, yet made recommendations for improvement. The recommendations included adding two city representatives to the board as well as charging the District to work more closely with cities and better educate the public about its services. Since 9/11/2001, the District has expanded to meet needs of a growing population, and has assumed many additional responsibilities to include activities to address health security risks from intentional acts of terrorism to petrochemical and other natural disasters. In 2003, the organization initiated a strategic health planning process, with extensive public participation, which set priorities for the organization. Since that time, many health plan goals have been accomplished, and a new Strategic Health Plan was approved by both boards for 2010 – 2015, www.gchd.org/admin/strattoc.htm.

What we do:

GCHD plays a key role in informing and educating the public on important health matters as well as issuing official health alerts and health advisories for emerging health threats, disease outbreaks, and disasters. GCHD also provides:

- Emergency planning and response efforts
- Infectious disease detection and prevention programs
- Breast and cervical cancer screenings
- Public vaccinations to prevent disease
- Nutrition programs for pregnant women and children
- Vital statistics services for birth and death records
- Consumer health activities including food establishment inspections and permitting
- Air and water pollution control monitoring and investigations
- Animal services such as rabies control, sheltering, and adoptions
- Emergency and non-emergency ambulance services in jurisdictions under agreement

Where are we going?

GCHD is an agent of change – ever evolving to address new and emerging health threats and needs in Galveston County and cities residents. The new 2010-2015 Strategic Health Plan identifies key public health priorities, including: (1) Improving access to care for the indigent and uninsured, (2) Improving the health of our community and environment, and (3) Preparing for and responding to public health emergencies. Other organizational priorities include the need for adequate facilities, modernized technology systems to achieve efficiencies; and improvements in workforce development and public relations. Per a voter approved bond issue in 2008, several offices and public services are expecting to relocate to the new Mid-County annex in Texas City during the latter part of 2011. After years of planning, the new facility will provide for improvements in public services, including disaster responsibilities. Similarly, a new Galveston County Animal Resource Center will be ready for public service in 2011.

4C's Clinic Updates

- **Phase TWO EMR Planning to Begin!** - On December 8th, a kick off meeting with Core Group members was held to get organized and start the ground work for the implementation of electronic health records (EHR) for the 4C's Clinic. Executive Sponsor, Dr. Mark Guidry, lead the Core Group including Abdul-Aziz Alhassan, MD, 4C's Medical Director; Jason Borillo, Physician Assistant; Luz Scott, Project Manager; Celina Bullock, Lab/X-Ray Supervisor; Pam Jahnke, RN, Strategic Plan Evaluator; and Michelle Robinson, Medical Records Supervisor. A webinar was held on December 15th which allowed the Core Group to visualize the software and major features of it. The next steps are to set up a kick off meeting with NEXTGEN staff on January 19th to establish a timeline for many necessary milestones leading to a tentative Go Live for EHR is midyear 2011.
- **Status of 4C's Billing and Collections in NEXTGEN** – Recent staffing changes include the resignation of the Billing & Collection Manager and a billing entry data clerk. Patrick Butler, 4C's Business Director is serving as interim manager. Mary McClure, Billing & Collections Consultant, has performed an audit of coding, billing and collections services and has identified several improvements needed. To date, no self pay bills have been sent since the October 19th Go Live date for NEXTGEN. However, staff are being cross trained today on how on to export the estimated 3000 self pay encounters into a NEXTGEN billing service which will mail out these statements to responsible individuals. Since October 19th, there are over 1465 third party encounters (Medicaid, Medicare & Private Insurances). To date, only 592 of these encounters have successfully billed to the third party. 4C's Executives are working aggressively with managers and staff to implement audit recommendations, establish productivity and

monitoring reports, and secure temporary staffing needed to fill vacancies and alleviate the 2 week coding backlog.

- **Eligible for Expanded Services Supplemental Funding** - The 4C's is eligible to apply for and receive up to \$397,172 to expand services. At least 2/3 and up to 100% of this funding is to be used for expanding medical services. The grant request is due January 6, 2011 and is expected to be awarded by the end of March 2011.
- **Budget Period Progress Report (BPR) Report Due December 17** - This is the new name for the annual 4C's Clinic grant. Annually staff prepares for Board approval the documents necessary to "re-apply" for federal funding to assist in the operation of the clinic. This year we will be applying for \$1,765,442 which is level funding. The grant process is supposed to be "easier" this year as only changes/updates to existing documents are to be included in the grant packet. Staff will have the grant documents to the Board for their final review at the December 16th Board meeting. Documents are due to the BCHC on December 17, 2010 with an April 1, 2011 start date.
- **Pathways for Access to 4C's Clinics** - The implementation of NextGen is a perfect opportunity to assure 4C's has clear pathways and appropriate process for the various types of insured, sponsored, and uninsured individuals who access services at 4C's. Executive officers have developed a draft guide for the various types of payers with information about requirements for check-in, verifications, financial screening, clinic fees or co-pays, charges, billing, and collections. The tool is being used to assure all pathways are considered to clarify expectations of staff and assure clients are processed appropriately and as efficiently as possible.

Office of Public Information

- Rollout of the **NextGen** system was the focus of a story in the *Galveston County Daily News* published October 18th. Information for the story was distributed in a GCHD press release earlier in the month. The news story can be found at <http://www.gchd.org/press/2010/new-electronic-system-rollouts.html>.
- A **Household Hazardous Waste Disposal** day held on November 13th was promoted in a *Galveston County Daily News* story on November 11th. GCHD participated in the successful event along with eight county cities. The event was designed to help residents rid their homes of hazardous materials that can't be disposed of in normal trash. The *Daily News* story is posted at <http://www.gchd.org/press/2010/hazardous-waste10-11-10.html>.
- Thanksgiving holiday hours of operation for the **Joe Vickery Animal Shelter** were announced in a press release issued November 22nd. The announcement is posted at www.gchd.org/press/2010/animal-shelter-closed-for-holiday112210.html.

Office of Community Health Services

- **AIDS Awareness** – GCHD HIV/STD Services participated in the following AIDS awareness programs: National Latino AIDS Awareness day on October 15, 2010 and The World AIDS Day on December 1, 2010. Both events raised awareness of HIV/AIDS and offered testing to individuals. A total of 135 individuals were tested at both events (47 and 88, respectively).
- **Flu immunizations** - In the month of November, staff administered 253 flu shots to Galveston County residents through outreach and immunization clinics.
- **Women, Infant and Children Services** - WIC staff members responded to the Similac formula recall by directing the clients to the manufacturer's website and toll free number that was set up solely for the recall. The clients were also informed of which stores in

their area had formula that was not on the recall list. Staff also offered alternatives to the Similac brand for the month of November and provided clients the names and numbers of other local agencies that could assist with any additional formula.

- **TB Program** - There is a current vacancy for a Tuberculosis Program Manager, a registered nurse who will be responsible for the direct care of patients infected with TB or at risk of infection. Responsibilities include assuring compliance with local and state program guidelines, and managing staff activities to screen, investigate contacts, provide preventative treatments and assist the TB clinician in patient management.

Office of Environmental Health Services

- **Galveston County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day** – The November 13th Collection Day held at Gulf Greyhound Park was a huge success. Approximately 2200 vehicles loaded with household hazardous waste, tires and electronics were allowed to properly dispose of these unwanted materials. Unofficially, over 120,000 pounds of hazardous waste including paint was collected along with 1300 tires and approximately 45,000 pounds of electronics and 10,000 pounds of documents which were shredded. Participants were very appreciative that the event was held even though the wait to unload averaged about 1.5 to 2 hours.
- **Lightning Strike on Animal Shelter** – On November 2nd, Animal Services staff arrived at work with no computers, telephones or a video surveillance system. Apparently, a lightning strike associated with a storm moving through the area the night before hit near the shelter or on the shelter destroying many of the computers and shutting down the phone system. Repair crews along with GCHD Information Technology staff worked feverishly to restore services. Along with the cost of repair services, approximately \$4,000 dollars in computers and computer related equipment was lost and will need to be replaced.
- **Animal Services Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting** – The quarterly meeting of the Animal Services Advisory Committee was held on November 16th. The committee was briefed on the presentation made to the Board concerning the current status of animal services and our concerns over staffing of the new Animal Resource Center. In addition, the committee was updated on the construction status of the Resource Center and the current timeline for completion. The committee also discussed the need to review current animal registration requirements with the goal of eventually standardizing the registration process across the county.

Office of Emergency Medical Services

- **Lone Star Rally** – GAAA provided extra foot units and ambulances during the annual biker LSR which brought an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 persons to the island during the 4 day event. Call volume increased as expected with the influx of people on the island.
- **Seawolf Half Marathon sponsored by Endorfun sports** – November 20th EMS extra GAAA crews were on hand for the half marathon held in Galveston. No major incidents were reported.
- **Special events** – GAAA provided extra units or staff to the following events held on the island and paid for by the individuals sponsoring the event under board approved rates: Health and Physical Education Teachers convention held at Moody Gardens December 2nd – 4th, Boxing match at the Galveston Convention center sponsored by Savaerse Productions on November 20th, Salt Grass planting held on the west end of the island sponsored by the Galveston Bay Foundation on November 13th.

- **Texas EMS Conference** – GAAA had a booth at the State conference in Austin held November 21st thru the 24th. Several potential applicants stopped by to visit with our staff and learn about the career opportunities at GAAA and the GCHD. Four staff members were sponsored by GAAA to attend the lectures on the latest practices in EMS and obtain CE hours at the same time.
- **Guns and Hoses** – Sheri Byrd and Joseph Richardson, GAAA paramedics, participated in this boxing event along with Galveston Firemen and Police officers to raise money for the Boys and Girls club. The event was held at Moody Gardens on December 4th.

Disease and Disaster Preparedness:

Epidemiology

- **Flu Surveillance** - Galveston County has received a total of 18 flu A cases since October 17. This brings the total of 79 flu A cases for the year 2010. The flu activity level for Texas for the week ending October 6, 2010 is "sporadic." Sporadic is defined as small numbers of laboratory-confirmed influenza cases or a single laboratory-confirmed influenza outbreak has been reported, but there is no increase in cases of influenza-like illness.
- **Elevated Lead Levels** – In the month of November, Epidemiology Services received 2 confirmed Elevated Blood Lead Level (EBLL) reports in Galveston county residents (**Galveston – 1; Kemah – 1**). This brings the total of confirmed EBLL cases in Galveston County to 12 cases. All cases have been referred to Community Health Nursing for a home assessments. Four cases were referred to Environmental Services for an environmental lead investigation due to levels exceeding 20 µg/dL. The following is a demographic breakdown of the EBLL cases: 7 males and 5 female ranging from 10 months – 5 years; **(9) Galveston (77550), (1) League City, (1) Hitchcock and (1) Kemah.**
- **West Nile infection (Santa Fe)** - On October 22nd, Epidemiology Services received a report of a fourteen year old **Santa Fe** resident with symptoms consistent with Neuroinvasive West Nile infection. The diagnosis was supported by positive West Nile IgM AB testing of the CSF. The patient was admitted for treatment on 10/3 after becoming ill 10/2. The patient was discharged on 10/5 and made a full recovery. Epidemiology investigation revealed the case was reported to spend five to eight hours outdoors a day and to never wear mosquito repellent. There was no history of travel outside Galveston County within fifteen days of onset. This marks the 2 WN virus infections for 2010 in Galveston County residents.
- **Vibrio infection (Port Bolivar, League City and Galveston County)** – On October 21st and 27th, Epidemiology Services received 2 reports of a Port Bolivar and League City residents diagnosed with *Vibrio vulnificus* infection, respectively and a 3rd report of a Galveston County (homeless) resident diagnosed with *Vibrio damsela* on October 14th. Epidemiology investigation of the *Vibrio vulnificus* revealed that both cases had underlying conditions that compromised their immune system and both had a history of beach/marsh water related activities. According to CDC, *V. vulnificus* can cause disease in those who eat contaminated seafood or have an open wound that is exposed to seawater; and *V. damsel* is associated with wound infections and less common than other vibrio species. The 3 cases bring the total of vibrio infections in 2010 for Galveston County to 4.
- **Lyme Disease (League City)** – November 1, Epidemiology Services received one (1) confirmed Lyme disease report of a 42 year old League City resident. Epidemiology investigation revealed the case moved to Galveston County in 2008. The case was previously clinically diagnosed and treated for lyme disease in a different state, however

repeatedly tested negative for lyme. After following up with a local provider, the case has now tested positive and met the epidemiology case criteria for Lyme disease. This case brings the total of lyme disease cases for Galveston County residents to 3 for the year 2010.

- **Gastro-Intestinal Illness in School Aged Children – (Texas City , League City and Santa Fe)** - Galveston County Health District investigated gastro-intestinal (GI) illnesses in several different schools/daycare Texas City, League City and Santa Fe. Epidemiological investigation revealed five school aged children have been confirmed with shigellosis; other student's GI illnesses consist of vomiting, diarrhea, and/or nausea lasting approximately 24 to 48 hours. Environmental investigation conducted at schools/daycares did not reveal any violations or procedures that would lead to foodborne illness.
- **Health Advisories** – Epidemiology Services sent out 3 Health Advisories to medical community and schools in the month of November on Gastro-intestinal Illness in Schools (11/4), Virology Report (11/8) and Bats in Schools (11/15). The advisories are sent to providers, schools or other participating entities to inform, educate or advise on current incidents or topics that may impact their facility.

Public Health Preparedness

- **Meetings with Emergency Preparedness Partners - PHEP** staff attended the following Preparedness meetings during November/December 2010. PHEP Staff attended the Regional SNS Coordinators, Public Health Planners, and Hospital/Treatment Center Coordinators (Catastrophic Medical Operations Center CMOC Coordinators) meeting in Houston on November 2, 2010. Staff attended the Incident Commander's meeting hosted by BP on November 4, 2010. Staff participated in a PHEP Statewide Conference call on November 9, 2010. Staff participated in the bi-monthly Urban Area Security Initiative Health and Medical Committee meeting on November 10, 2010. Staff met with David Brinkley of the Galveston County Emergency Communications District about Communications plans for Health Care Emergencies on November 15, 2010. Staff also met with a UTMB Family and Preventative Health Medicine resident to discuss preparedness plan and community response to Health Emergencies on November 15, 2010. Staff attended a Mid-Term planning conference for the Galveston/Houston regional Bio-Watch exercise on November 17, 2010. This exercise is scheduled for February of 2011. Staff participated in the Regional Pandemic Influenza Response planning meeting on December 1, 2010. Staff also attended the PHEP and SNS Regional Coordination Meeting on December 7, 2010.
- **HEART-MRC Recruitment Drive** – Staff have made four recruitment presentations and attended one community outreach event in the month of November for recruiting members to the Health Emergency, Action and Response Team (HEART). This program is an affiliate of the Citizen Corp's Medical Reserve Corps. The program is intended to develop a base of volunteers in the community to respond in Public Health Emergencies to assist GCHD staff in response. The presentation consists of a Power Point slideshow and 10-15 minute talk on the need for HEART in our community. An orientation session for new members was held on November 30, 2010 with 32 volunteers present. PHEP staff members are available to make this presentation to any group who desires to see it.
- **Bio-Watch Exercise** – PHEP staff members are participating in planning for a Regional Exercise of the Bio-Watch system. This late winter exercise will test a full scale response to detection of a Biological agent being dispersed in the region. Detection, notification, decision-making and response are all components of the exercise which will occur over three days. The date for the exercise is February 15-17, 2011.

Signed RFP's, Grants, Contracts & Agreements:

- **Contract for Water Pollution Control and Abatement Services between the Galveston County Water Control and Improvement District No. 8 and the Galveston County Health District** was signed by COO on September 29, 2010. Agreement will immediately begin following full execution of the agreement and will expire on September 30, 2011. Water Control and Improvement District No. 8 shall pay Galveston County Health District \$5,410.48 based on an annual fee of 0.5033 cents per capita based on the City of Santa Fe's January 2008 population of 10,750.
- **Agreement between Galveston County Community Action Council Head Start Program and the Galveston County Health District** was signed by COO on October 22, 2010. Agreement will be for one year from September 1, 2010 to September 1, 2011.
- **Lawn/ Landscape Maintenance Contract Addendum between Landscape Professionals of Texas and Galveston County Health District** was signed by COO on October 23, 2010. Original contract expired October 9, 2010 and GCHD will continue the contract for one additional year, expiring October 9, 2012.
- **Memorandum of Understanding between the Galveston County Health District, Galveston Housing Authority and City of Galveston** was signed by CEO on October 27, 2010. Agreement will be for one year from November 11, 2010 to November 1, 2011 and will automatically renew unless terminated. The Agreement was entered into for the purposes of forming a collaboration which will facilitate information to decrease and eliminate the risk of childhood lead poisoning from property sources.
- **Agreement between Texas City Independent School District – Cooperative Project Head Start and Galveston County Health District** was signed by COO on October 27, 2010. Agreement will be for one year from September 1, 2010 to September 1, 2011. Texas City Independent School District wishes to have employees of the Head Start Program receive services by GCHD.
- **Agreement for the Provision of Ambulance Services between the Galveston Area Ambulance Authority and the University of Texas Medical Branch** was signed by COO on November 3, 2010. Agreement will be for one year from January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011. GAAA will provide ambulance transportation to patients out of UTMB to and from local clinics and hospitals.
- **Agreement for Collection Services of Delinquent Emergency Medical Services Accounts** was signed by COO on November 9, 2010. Agreement will be for one year from November 10, 2010 to November 20, 2012.

Environmental Health Programs – Notices November 2010		
	Month	Average
Animal Control (dogs running at large, no registration, cruelty, etc)	87	88
Air Pollution (violation of state air regulations, permits, excessive emissions, etc)	5	5
Food Services (violations of food service policy requiring voluntary closure, court actions, etc.)	0	0.2
Food Services (letters sent for operating with an expired food service permit)	18	21
Public Health Nuisances (trash and high weeds, violations of health and safety code)	20	28
On-Site Septic Systems (violation of on-site policy)	5	7
Water Pollution (improper disposal, sewage leaks, grease trap violations, etc)	2	7

STOP THE FLU!

Galveston County Health District
409-938-7221 • Wash your hands • Stay home if sick
www.gchd.org • Cover your cough • Flu Shot

*A Monthly Report of
The Galveston County Health District.
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