



Executive Report to the Galveston County 4C's Governing Board
January 29, 2009

Crisis in Uninsured Access to Specialty Healthcare

Since Hurricane Ike and the changes at UTMB, an estimated 75,000 Galveston County residents have no/limited access to specialty care. The 4C's clinic sees about 17,000 uninsured residents annually among whom about 220 are currently deemed eligible for the county indigent healthcare program. For patients on county indigent, new referrals sources are being negotiated on a case-by-case basis as the need is identified. For all other uninsured patients, 4C's clinic staffs have encountered many sad and challenging stories of uninsured patients who were previously receiving specialty care at UTMB and now have little or no options for serious health conditions. The decision by UTMB not to serve uninsured persons was the subject of a *Galveston County Daily News* story published December 21st. GCHD CEO Dr. Mark Guidry and 4C's patients contributed to the story which also included information on a resolution www.gchd.org/boards/2008/documents/Final%20RESOLUTION%20Access%20To%20Healthcare%201208.pdf passed by the Boards of Health concerning access to care. The whole story is posted at www.gchd.org/press/2008/UTMB-not-seeing-uninsured.htm. Staff is working with private providers who can provide some limited assistance; yet costs remain a barrier to many whose disease condition may worsen to the point of an emergency and ultimately preventable hospitalizations and mortality. Elected official and community leaders are discussing feasible solutions including a hospital district funded by sales tax, should the state legislature authorize such a model for Galveston County. See January 7th *Galveston County Daily News* story. CEO Dr. Mark Guidry was quoted in the story www.gchd.org/press/2009/county-talks-hospital-tax-district.htm.

Status of Influenza in Galveston County

Influenza season ranges from October thru May. As of January 12, 2009, a total of 6 flu cases (5 – Flu A; 1 – Flu B) and 1 ILI have been reported to GCHD. It's not too late to get a flu shot. See news release issued January 9th encouraging residents to get a flu shot after it was reported that flu has been circulating in the area www.gchd.org/press/2009/flu-shots-01-09-09.htm.

Post-Ike Lead Hazards While Rebuilding

A GCHD press release was issued on December 19th encouraging people repairing homes damaged by Hurricane Ike to take precautions to avoid lead poisoning. After a contractor who had been working in a hurricane damaged home was shown to have a very high level of lead poisoning the Galveston Lead Task Force requested that the information be distributed. The release can be accessed at www.gchd.org/press/2008/lead-safe-12-19.htm. The release as printed in the *Galveston County Daily News* January 9th www.gchd.org/press/2009/Official-lead-warning01-09-09.htm.

Good News on Hurricane Sediment

In response to a UTMB study on sediment deposited by Hurricane Ike a press release was issued on January 22nd encouraging people to use simple precautions when working with the material. The study basically found no levels of toxins that would require a clean-up but when working with any unknown material it is best to exercise caution. The press release as issued www.gchd.org/press/2009/hurricane-sediment-1-22-09.htm and as published in the *Galveston County Daily News*, www.gchd.org/press/2009/Study-Ike-did-not-

[leave-toxic-sludge.htm](#). KHOU Channel 11 also covered the story with GCHD Public Information Officer contributing.

Post-Ike Financial Deficits in EMS Services

There are financial deficits in budgets under contract with the City of Galveston's (\$141,607) for island EMS services and in the Mainland Transfer budget (\$127,653) under agreement with the County, Texas City, La Marque, & Dickinson. Potential short term solutions for the deficit with the City of Galveston budget include such things as: payment by the City of their contractual obligation for the FY 2008 operating deficit of \$225,000 (actual FY 2008 operating deficit \$259,156); potential revenue from FEMA reimbursement for operations during Hurricane Ike; a FEMA Community Disaster Loan; increased transfer calls out of UTMB; and working with staff to insure that run reports are completed properly so that billing can be done quickly and efficiently. Potential long term solutions for the City of Galveston include: establishing a hospital district that includes the operation of Emergency Medical Services; establishing an emergency services district; and studying the feasibility of a different model of 911 services. In regards to the deficit in the Mainland Transfer budget: short term - both the City of Texas City and the County of Galveston will reimburse the District the amount for which they are obligated under contract; long term - the City of Texas City would like to explore the possibility of privatizing non-emergency transfers.

Post-Ike WIC Location Changes Planned

Dickinson WIC Clinic Relocating – The Health District has received approval from DSHS to relocate Dickinson WIC. The new facility has been chosen (3411 Gulf Freeway, Dickinson TX 77539) and bids from three contractors for renovations ranging from 162,550 to 194,000 have been submitted to the USDA. Once a bid has been accepted, the estimated time of completion is approximately one month. **UTMB Galveston WIC Site (UHC) Closure** - Due to the continued drop in WIC participation in Galveston after Hurricane Ike and UTMB's shift in focus to sponsored healthcare, the UHC will not reopen. All UHC participants will be relocated to the Galveston Island Community Center at 4700 Broadway. DSHS will do a mass transfer of UHC clients on February 3, 2009. Island WIC will close on January 29th, 2009 so staff can pack UHC and get ready for the movers which are scheduled for January 30th. A press release, street banners and letters will be used to inform the community and patients of the UHC transfer to the Island Community center.

Lake Madeline Water Testing

Investigators with the Air and Water Pollution Division collected multiple samples following the release of approximately 500,000 gallons of untreated sewage as reported by the *City of Galveston*. Reports indicate that pump failure was the underlying cause that led to the discharge. The Health District notified the city of our intention to collect samples to assess the risk to public health even though the City does not contract with the District for these water testing services. Lake Madeline has long been impacted by pollutants that have deteriorated its water quality. The results of these tests were not completed at the time of this report.

New Board Memberships

Bob Baylor, DVM, Veterinarian representative; Charles T. Scruggs, DDS, Dentist representative, and Wayne Rast, Kemah City Councilman, Municipality representative begin as new United Board of Health Members. A majority of city members (*Bayou Vista, Dickinson, Clear Lake Shores, Friendswood, Hitchcock, Jamaica Beach, Kemah, La Marque, Santa Fe, and Texas City*) have ratified the member selections. Lucy Vasquez, a 4C's patient, begins as a Consumer representative of the 4C's Governing Board. All Board members have completed orientation with Harlan "Mark" Guidry, MD, MPH, Chief Executive Officer. For more information on boards of health, see <http://www.gchd.org/boards/boardindex.htm>

Other Public Information Reports: For more information, please contact Kurt Koopmann, Public Information Officer, at (409) 938-2211 or email (kkoopman@gchd.org).

- GCHD Public information was contacted for a December 5th *Houston Chronicle* story after it was reported that Legionella was found in water samples taken at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. The reporter was informed that the illness is a reportable condition but no cases had been reported associated with the findings. The story is posted at www.gchd.org/press/2008/120508UTMBlegionella.htm.
- A Galveston coffee shop wanted to sell coffee after Hurricane Ike but did not meet all of the state sanitary requirements. The *Galveston County Daily News* used an editorial disagreeing with several local issues impacting businesses www.gchd.org/press/2008/120708GovernmentEditorial.htm.
- Information was provided to the *Galveston County Daily News* on plans being made to handle the emergency medical needs of people attending the Lone Star Rally. The December 11th story discussed concerns since UTMB is not fully functional as a Level 1 trauma center. Find the story at www.gchd.org/press/2008/121108RallyEMS.htm. The issue was raised again when a lady attending the event was critically injured soon after the festival ended and an air ambulance was not immediately available. The *Galveston County Daily News* requested and was provided details on the arrangements that were made with PHI inc., to provide air ambulance coverage for the story printed December 24th www.gchd.org/press/2008/police-see-motorcyclist.htm.
- Public Information was contacted after an incident in *Santa Fe* where a resident's Pit Bull dog was roaming at large and killed neighbors two Chihuahuas. The *Galveston County Daily News* was provided details on the citations the offending dogs owner received as reported in the story published January 11th <http://www.gchd.org/press/2009/Couple-wants-city-to-ban-pit-bulls.htm>.

4C's Clinic Updates: For more information, please contact Patrick Butler, 4C's Business Director, at (409) 949-3406 or email pbutler@gchd.org or Pam Jahnke, RN, Strategic Plan Evaluator at (409) 938-2256 or email pjahnke@gchd.org.

- **Medical & Dental Provider Update** – 4C's Medical Provider, Susan Berkley, PA started on January 5, 2009. Staff continues to search for qualified medical and dental providers to fill open positions. Current Provider vacancies have been widely advertised and distributed. Information on all Health District positions can be viewed at: <http://www.gchd.org/hr/job.htm>
- **Lab Supervisor** – 4C's has a new Lab Supervisor, Celina Bullock, RT, who started on January 5, 2009. Ms. Bullock serves as the Radiation Safety Officer and all limits on the types of x-rays being performed have been removed.
- **4C's Dental Review** – Executive staff has reviewed and approved a new Dental Appointment Scheduling Guide that will work towards reaching the Dental Provider productivity goals set by the 4C's Governing Board. The new Appointment Guide is scheduled to begin February 2, 2009.
- **4C's Nursing Director** - The 4C's Clinic has a new Nursing Director. Medina Gingery, RN, as of December 29th. Ms. Gingery brings her experience as an oncology and labor and delivery nurse at UTMB, as well as past work in the Risk Management Department at the hospital. Clinic Nursing currently has two open positions, a clinic RN and a clinic LVN. Many applications have been received for both positions and the interviewing process has begun.

Office of Community Health Services: For more information, please contact Cassandra Arceneaux, MD, MPH, Director of Community Health Programs at (409) 938-2456 or email carceneaux@gchd.org.

- **Senior Survey** - The Senior Health Advisory Council, with help from GHCD staff (CEO, Dr Guidry, CHS Director, Dr Arceneaux, Chief Epidemiologist, Dr Beckham, and CDC Apprentice, Rica Mauricio), has developed a survey to assess the healthcare beliefs and concerns of Galveston

County Seniors. The questionnaire will be administered by nursing students from Galveston College and UTMB School of Nursing. The data will be analyzed and presented to the Senior Health Advisory Council and representatives from Galveston ROPES, a non-profit devoted to the needs of Galveston County seniors and will hopefully be used to address the needs of the elderly in our community.

- **Senior Center Presentations** - Dr Arceneaux gave presentations at area senior centers this month on Health District activities since Hurricane Ike devastated our county in September; these presentations were given at the *Nessler Center in Texas City, Carbide Park in La Marque, Bacliff Community Center* and the *Dickinson Community Center*. In addition, Jack Ellison, Public Health Planner, presented information on emergency preparedness and staying safe during the holidays to over 30 participants.
- **Obesity Presentation** - Dr Arceneaux attended a meeting with the Texas City Independent School District Nurses Association on January 13, 2009 to discuss the childhood obesity prevention program, The Healthy Weigh. The nurses were very receptive and excited about the potential to help their students. They intend to distribute our flyers to the parents of children with acanthosis nigricans, a skin condition most often associated with diabetes.

Office of Environmental Health Services: *For more information, please contact Ronnie Schultz, Director of Environmental Health Services, at (409) 938-2314 or email rschultz@gchd.org*

- **Decade Environmental Software** - Staff continues to meet with our software vendor in order to implement our new environmental data management system. The current focus is on validating the data that was converted from our legacy data base, formatting our local server to receive all of the converted data and reviewing the restaurant inspection information that will be posted on the District's website. Staff anticipates that the system will go live in late February or early March following some on-site training.
- **Dog Seizure** – Animal Services executed a seizure warrant at a residence in the *City of Santa Fe* and removed 22 dogs. The court awarded custody of 16 dogs to the shelter, four were returned to the owner and two were placed with the owner's son. Earlier, Animal Services received a complaint about this same residence and the number of animals. At that time, the gentleman was in possession of 44 animals. We assisted the gentleman in reducing the number of animals down to 10 and agreed that he could keep those animals. Since that time in December, the gentleman once again has collected additional dogs to a total of 22. The 16 seized dogs in our possession are currently being evaluated for adoptability.
- **Cat Trapping** - Animal Services is currently assisting in the trapping of 60 cats within the *City of La Marque* that were being fed and cared for by an elderly person. This person contacted Animal Services to request assistance since she is no longer able to take care of the cats. To date, we have trapped approximately 30 of these feral cats.
- **Consumer Health Permits Overdue** – 32 food service permits, six animal establishment permits, and one pool permit were overdue as of 1/7/09. Letters were sent out to the owners; as of 1/23/09, all of but one of the animal establishments have paid and are in compliance with the policy approved by the Board for food service, animal, and pool establishments.

Office of Emergency Medical Services: *For more information, please contact Mike Carr, JD, EMS Director, (409) 765-2524 or mcarr@ghcd.org*

- **Bolivar Peninsula Emergency Recovery Program** – At the request of the County Judge and County Commissioner Doyle, GAAA is coordinating staffing an ambulance on *Bolivar Peninsula*. The operations started on November 19, 2008 and are expected to continue through February 2009.

This is being done by off duty EMS staff, and a dedicated peninsula medic. There is no negative impact on regular GAAA operations.

- **Hurricane Plan Review** – GAAA staff continue to work on applying lessons learned from Hurricane Ike to the Hurricane Operations Plan. Interested GAAA staff and administrators are continuing to meet to complete the process before the beginning of Hurricane Season 2009.
- **Responses Down in 2008** – Overall responses are down for GAAA 911 operations in 2008. There were a total of 12289 responses in 2008 as compared to 14010 for calendar year 2007. A reduction of twelve percent. The aftermath of Hurricane Ike resulted in a reduction of 35 percent for emergency calls in the last quarter of the year. In addition, Non Emergency Transfers in the *City of Galveston* dropped to almost none for the last quarter, due to the closed hospital and nursing home facilities.

Disease & Disaster Preparedness for additional information, contact Dana Beckham, DVM, Chief Epidemiologist, at (409) 938-2322 or email dbeckham@gchd.org.

Epidemiology Updates:

- **2008 Elevated Blood Lead Cases** – As of December 31, 2008, the Health District has received a total of 25 confirmed elevated blood lead cases. All cases were referred to Community Health Nursing and 4 were referred for an Environmental Lead Investigation. Demographics on the confirmed cases are as follows: Gender: Male (15), Female (10); Race/Ethnicity: Hispanic (16), Black (6), White (3); Age ranges were from 1 – 41 years old; Zip Code: 77550 (15), 77551 (3), 77590 (2), 77591 (1), 77568 (3); 77573 (1); Levels ranged from 10 – 122 mcg/dL, 4 cases were ≥ 20 mcg/dL.
- **Varicella on a Cargo Ship** – Early on the morning of December 17, 2008 the US Coast Guard informed GCHD that a cargo ship anchored in the waters of Galveston had a crewmember with fever and pox like lesions on the skin. The cargo ship had history of travel from South America. The local health authority, director of GAAA and CDC quarantine medical officer were notified of the case. The CDC quarantine medical officer coordinated the transport of the case to a medical facility in Harris County for evaluation. The case was evaluated and diagnosed with varicella.
- **Salmonella Typhimurium Multi State Outbreak** - CDC, in collaboration with public health officials in many states and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), is investigating a multistate outbreak of human infections caused by Salmonella serotype Typhimurium. As of January 19, 2009, 474 persons infected with the outbreak strain of Salmonella Typhimurium have been reported from 43 states and Canada. The state of Texas has 6 confirmed illness associated with this outbreak. One of the 6 cases resides in Galveston County. Preliminary analysis of ill persons suggests consumption of peanut butter is the likely source of this outbreak. To date, no association has been found with major national brand name jars of peanut butter sold in grocery stores.
- **Hepatitis A (Texas City and Dickinson)** - For the month of December, (2) Galveston county residents were reported to GCHD for acute Hepatitis A infections. The first case was a homebound Texas City resident. Epidemiology investigation revealed no history of travel and 1 household contact had been identified needing post exposure prophylaxis. The household contact was not available for education or to receive the prophylaxis. The 2nd case was in a Dickinson resident with history of travel to Mexico within 2 weeks of onset of symptoms. Case was treated at local hospital and all four household contacts were given prophylaxis. A total of 8 Hepatitis A cases have been reported to GCHD for the year of 2008.
- **“CDC Interim Recommendations for the Use of Influenza Antiviral Medications in the Setting of Oseltamivir Resistance among Circulating Influenza A (H1N1) Viruses”** - On December 19, 2009, GCHD sent out a health advisory was sent to participating Emergency Departments, ICPs, physicians, nurses, labs and other providers with recommended treatment against influenza and

guidance for assessing and treating patients during the 2008-09 influenza season which can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/index.htm>.

- **Animal Euthanasia Training** - On January 12, 2009, GCHD conducted an 8 hour training course on animal euthanasia with 14 participants attending. This course is required for all persons who will euthanize animals at a DSHS approved shelter or impoundment facility.

Preparedness Update:

- **PPE Fit Testing** - On January 7 and 14, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Fit testing was performed on 38 Health District employees. PPE fit testing is performed in settings where there is an increased risk of exposure to infectious droplet nuclei or other harmful dusts, fumes, gases, or vapors.

General Compliance Updates For more information, please contact Kristina Garcia, Compliance Auditor, at (409) 938-2213 or email kgarcia@gchd.org.

- **The Cervical Cancer Screening Services and Diagnostic Service Agreement with Bassem Maximos, MD, MPH** was signed by COO on January 13, 2009. The term of this contract is one year and shall automatically renew year to year unless terminated. The District agrees to pay allowable CPT codes and Reimbursement rates set by Breast and Cervical Cancer Services (BCCS) program.
- **The Cervical Cancer Screening Services and Diagnostic Service Agreement with Mainland Medical Center** was signed by COO on January 13, 2009. MMC agrees to provide facilities for cervical cancer diagnostic services, including colposcopies and diagnostic procedures necessary to identify cervical cancer. The term of this contract is one year and shall automatically renew year to year unless terminated. The District agrees to pay allowable CPT codes and Reimbursement rates set by BCCS program.
- **The Breast Cancer Screening Services and Diagnostic Service Agreement with Mainland Medical Center** was signed by COO on January 13, 2009. MMC agrees to provide facilities for breast cancer screening and diagnostic services. The term of this contract is one year and shall automatically renew year to year unless terminated. The District agrees to pay allowable CPT codes and Reimbursement rates set by BCCS program.
- **Oce Financial services, Inc. State and Local Agreement** was signed by COO on January 20, 2009. The District agreed to make sixty monthly payments of \$2,592.00 for copiers, equipment maintenance, and copier supplies.
- **Fleet Vehicle Maintenance/ Repair Bid was awarded to Palmer Avenue Exxon** in Texas City. COO approved bid award on January 21, 2009. The term of this contract is one year with an additional thirty-six months extension expiring March 2, 2009. Rates remain the same as previous year.
- **Contract renewal with Leta F. Melancon** was signed by COO on January 22, 2009. The independent contractor will monitor health services delivered by Correctional Medical Services to the Galveston County Jail inmates. Compensation will remain the same as previous contract at an annual amount of \$10,000 to be paid in twelve equal payments of \$833.33. The term of this agreement is February 1, 2009 to January 31, 2010.
- **Commercial Lease renewal with Unity Investments for the Dickinson Community Health Services office** was signed by COO on January 23, 2009. The lease term is month to month. The terms and conditions of this agreement remain the same as the original agreement except a rent adjustment. The new rate is \$3,845.56 per month for 3028 square feet. The rent increased from the previous agreement is \$839.56 per month.