

Georgia Board of Public Health

March 12, 2024

Agenda

- Call to Order
- Roll Call
- Approval/Adoption of Minutes
- New Business
 - Opening Remarks – Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H.
 - Respiratory Virus Season: COVID, Flu and RSV – Cherie L. Drenzek, D.V.M., M.S.
 - WIC For Your Family Campaign – Chris Rustin, DrPH, MS, REHS, Nancy Nydam, Chivonne Williams and Hannah Welsh
- Board Comments
- Adjournment

Commissioner's Remarks

Board of Public Health Meeting / Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H. / March 12, 2024

Epidemiology Updates

Board of Public Health Meeting / Cherie L. Drenzek, D.V.M., M.S. / March 12, 2024

Introduction

Infectious diseases are ever-changing and unpredictable!

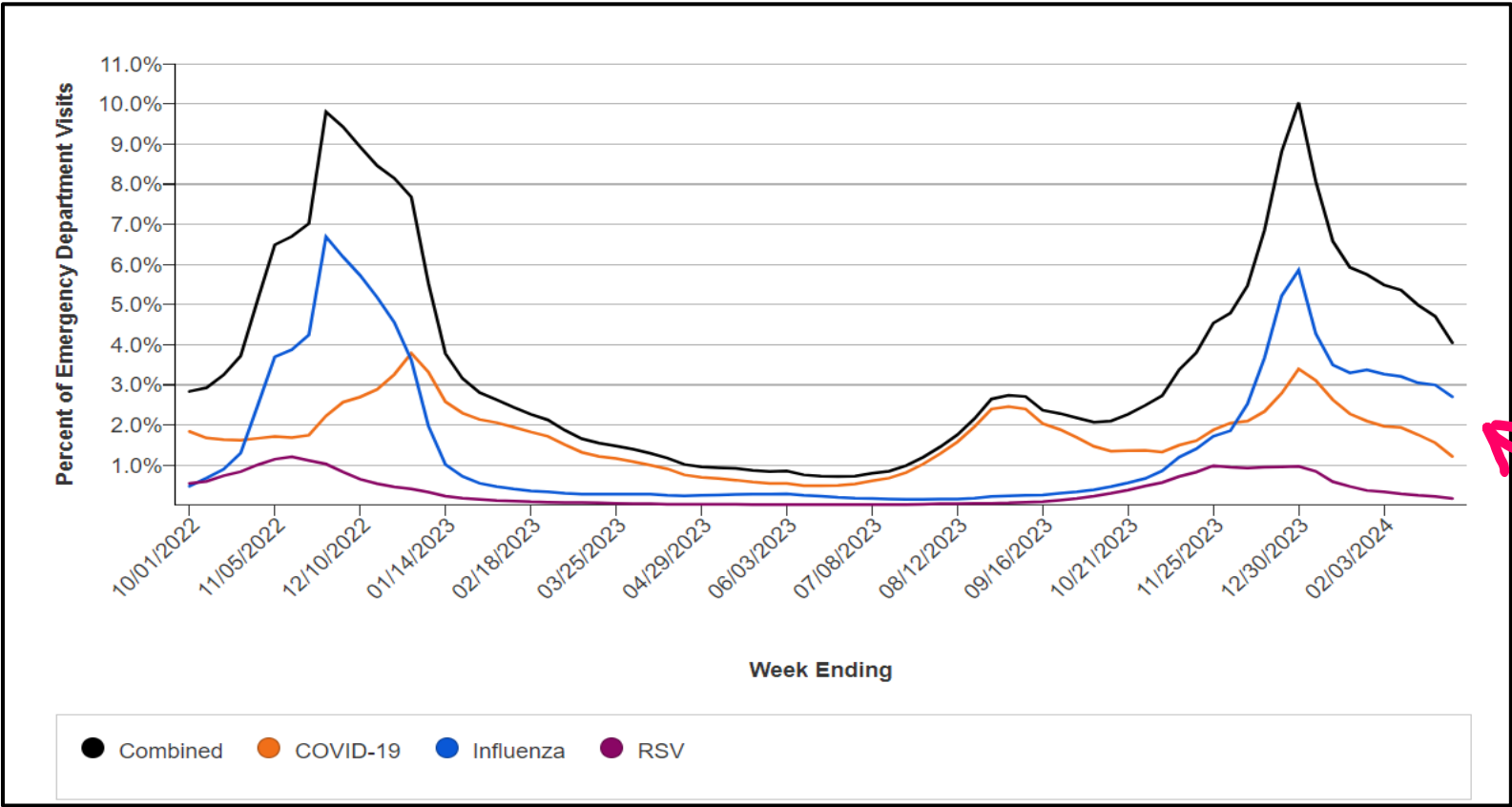
Surveillance and epidemiologic investigation are the cornerstones of prevention and control recommendations.

- Respiratory viruses (Influenza, RSV, and COVID)
- Measles

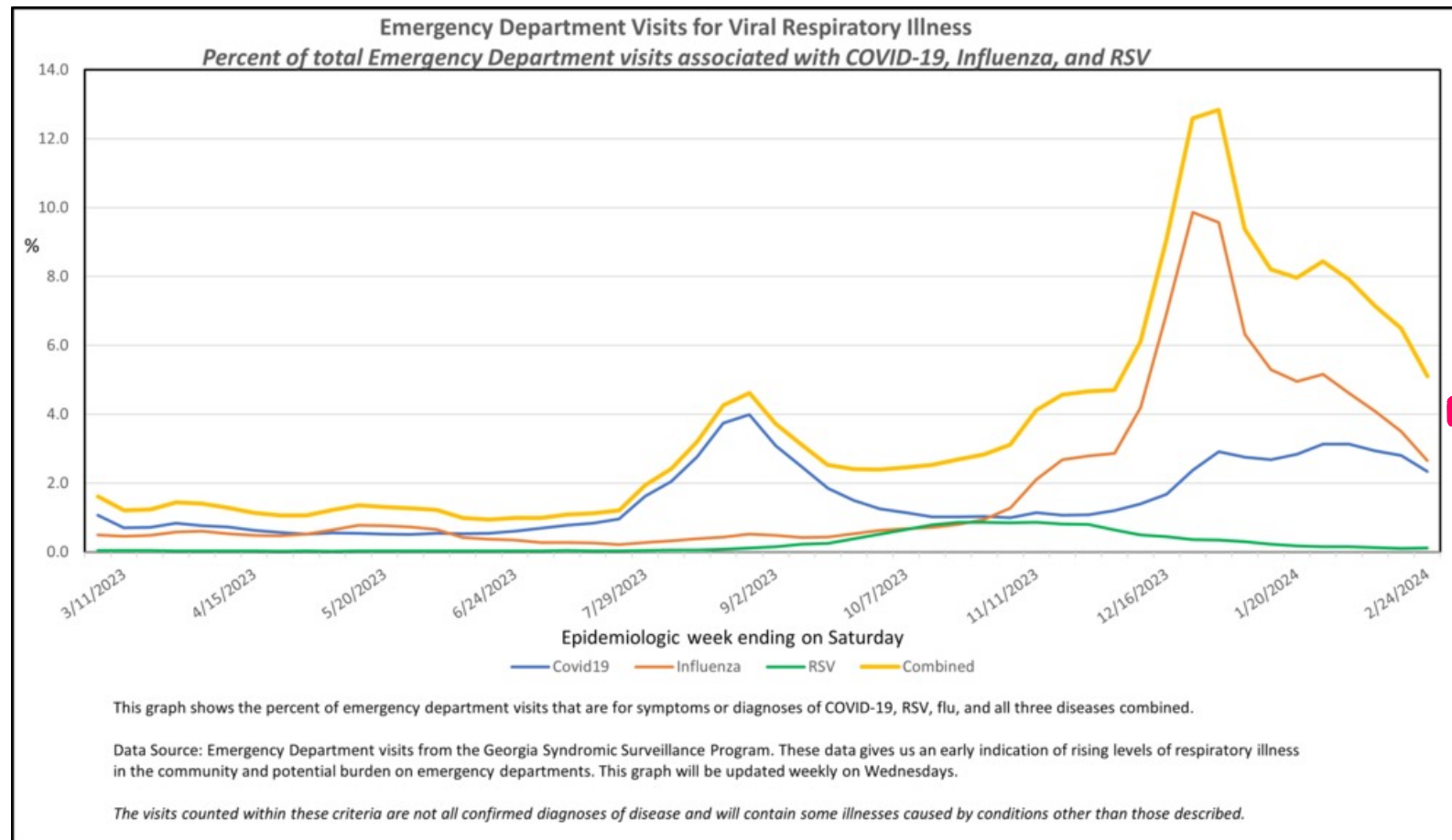
Respiratory Viruses: United States: On the Decline

Emergency Department Visits for Viral Respiratory Illness

Weekly percent of total emergency department visits associated with COVID-19, influenza, and RSV.



Respiratory Viruses: Georgia



Severe Outcomes of Respiratory Viruses:

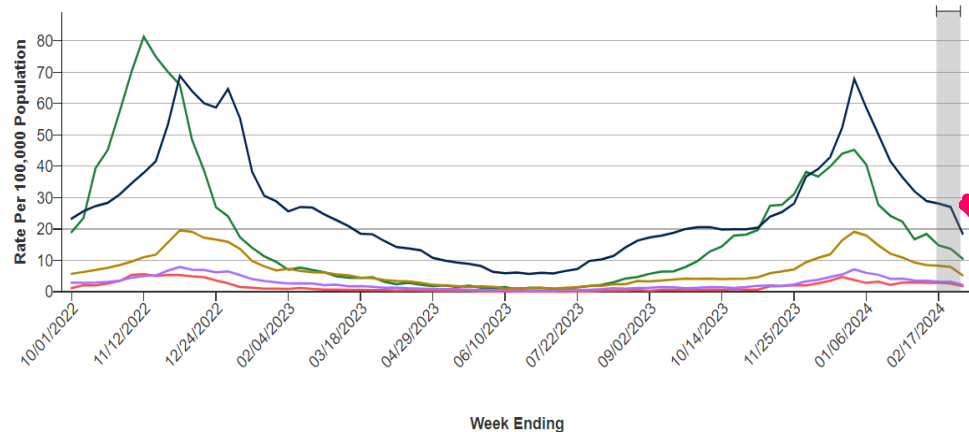
Most hospitalizations are among those 65 years+, and most deaths are still due to COVID

Hospitalization Rates for Viral Respiratory Illness, by Age

Weekly hospitalization rates for COVID-19, influenza, and RSV per 100,000 population. Preliminary data are shaded in gray.

Respiratory Illness

Combined

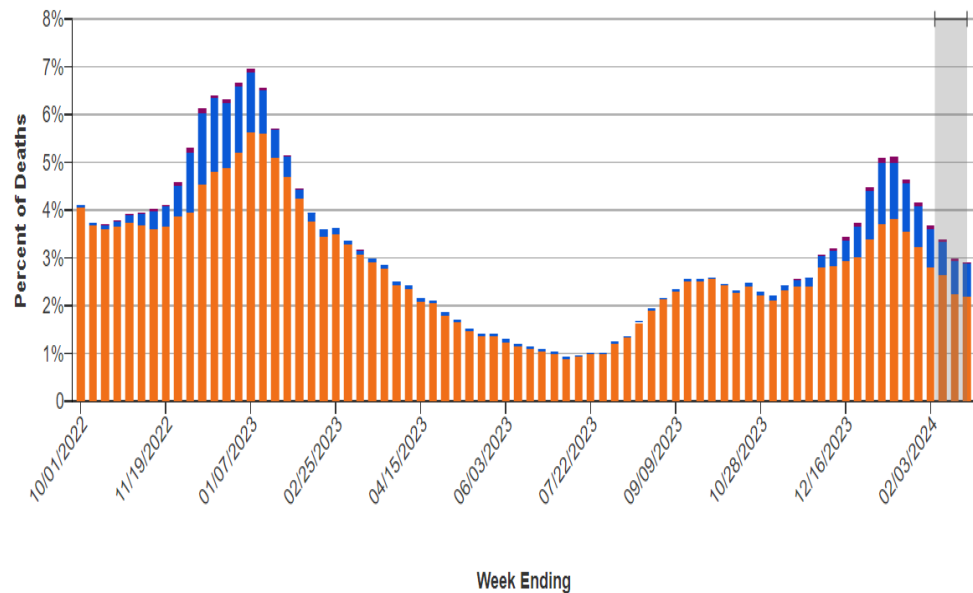


Age Group

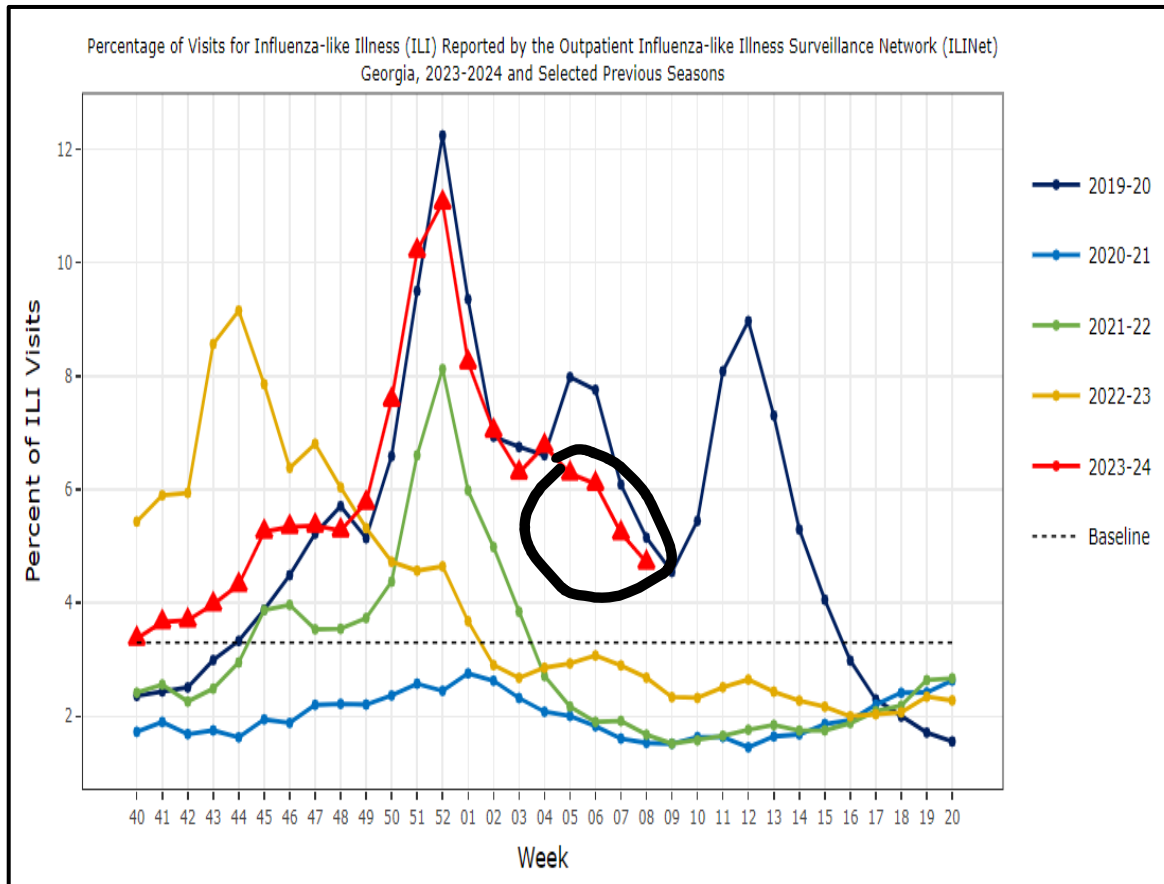
0-4 years 5-17 years 18-49 years 50-64 years 65+ years

Trends in Viral Respiratory Deaths in the United States

Weekly percent of total deaths associated with COVID-19, influenza, and RSV. Preliminary data are shaded in gray.

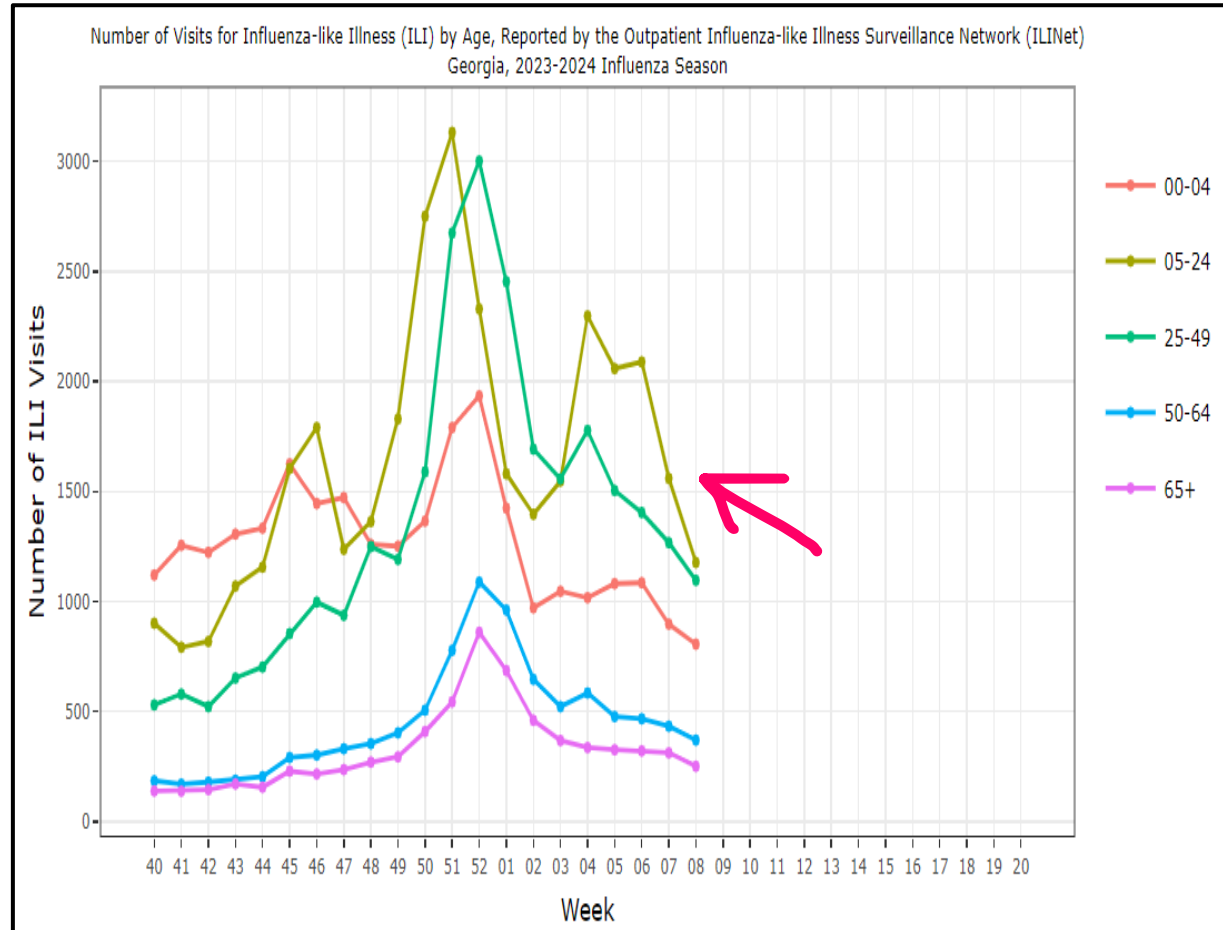


Georgia Flu Snapshot (High Activity but Declining)



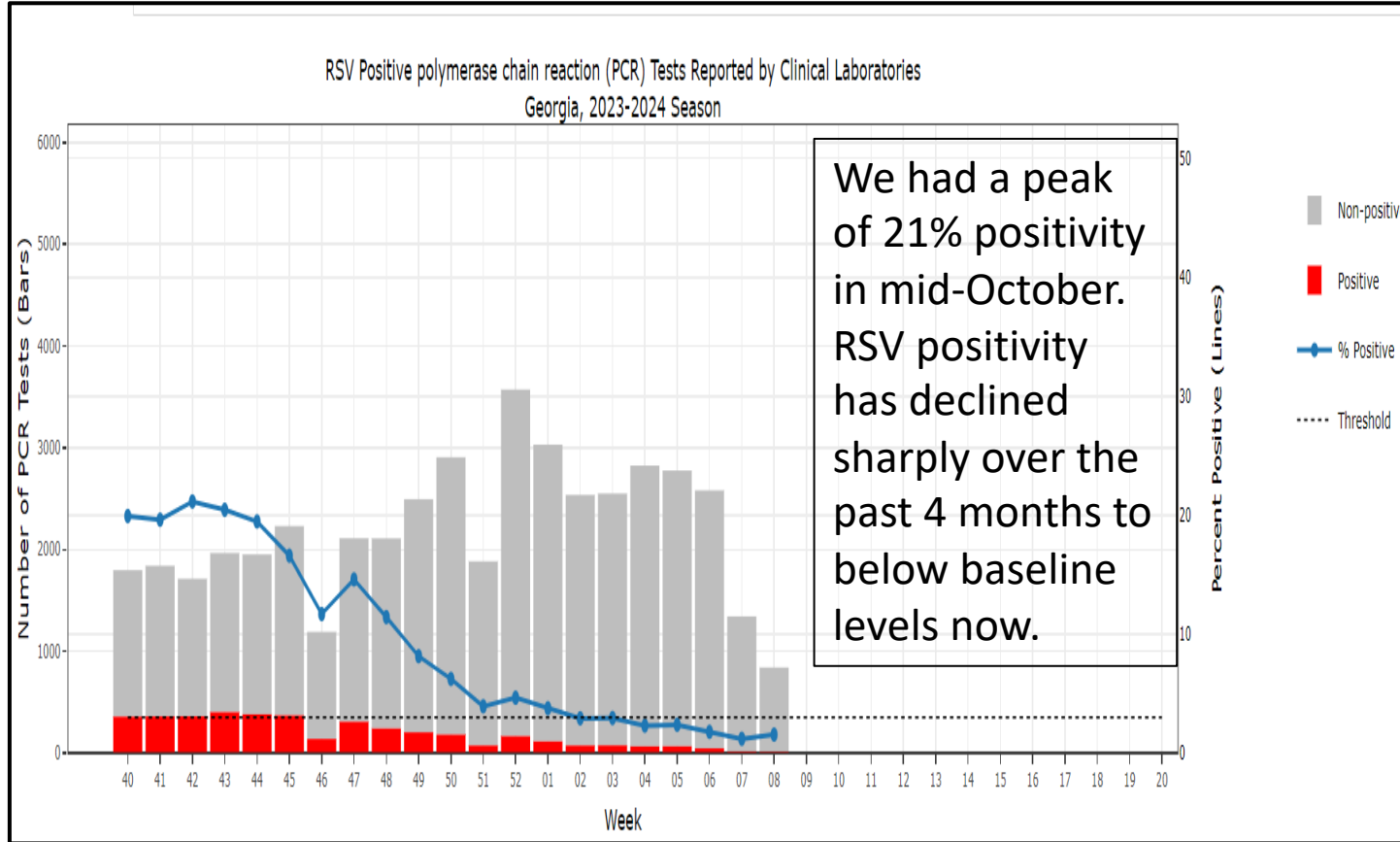
- Flu activity in Georgia is at a **high level (8 of 13)** but has declined over the last 4 weeks. This season is tracking like the 2019-20 one (dark blue line), which included a second flu wave in the spring.
- The proportion of outpatient visits for ILI was 4.7% last week, down from 5.2% the week before.
- Flu B now makes up nearly 60% of all circulating viruses.**

Georgia Flu Snapshot, 2023-2024



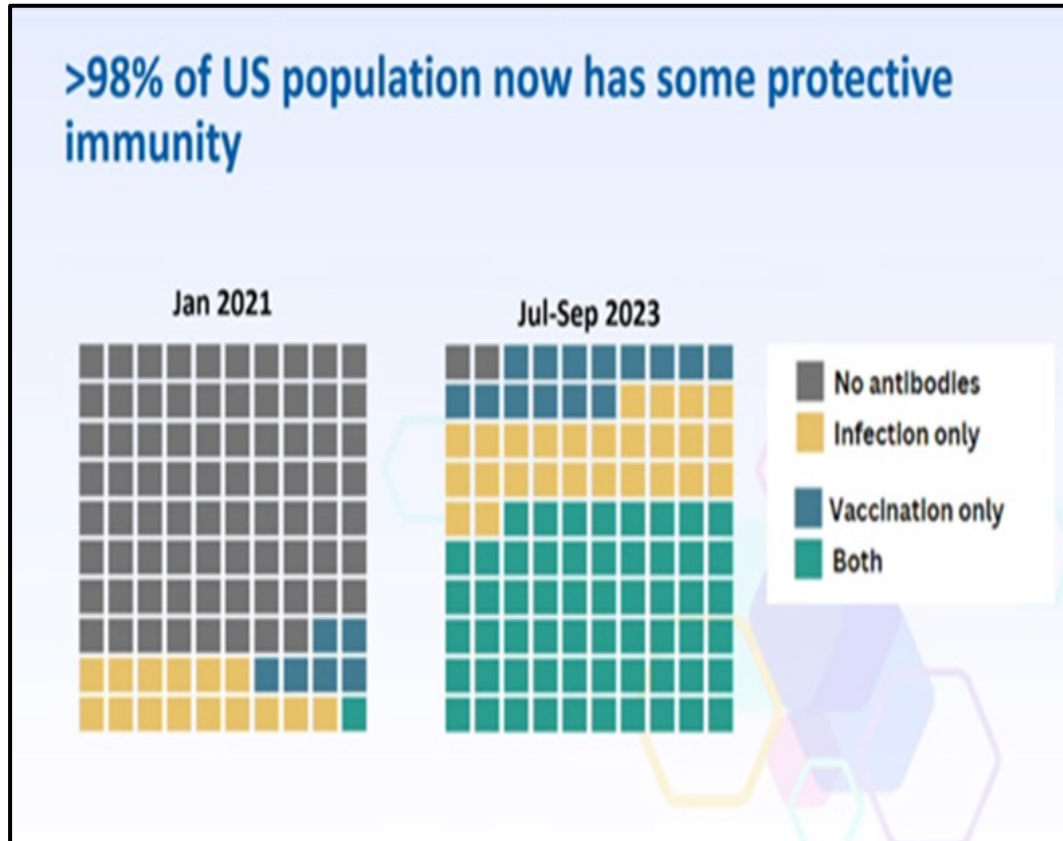
- **Last week, outpatient flu visits declined across all age groups, but the highest number of visits remained among those 5-24 years old (school- and college- age persons).**
- This age group has consistently been #1 in flu visits, underscoring the risk of flu transmission in school settings.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) in Georgia



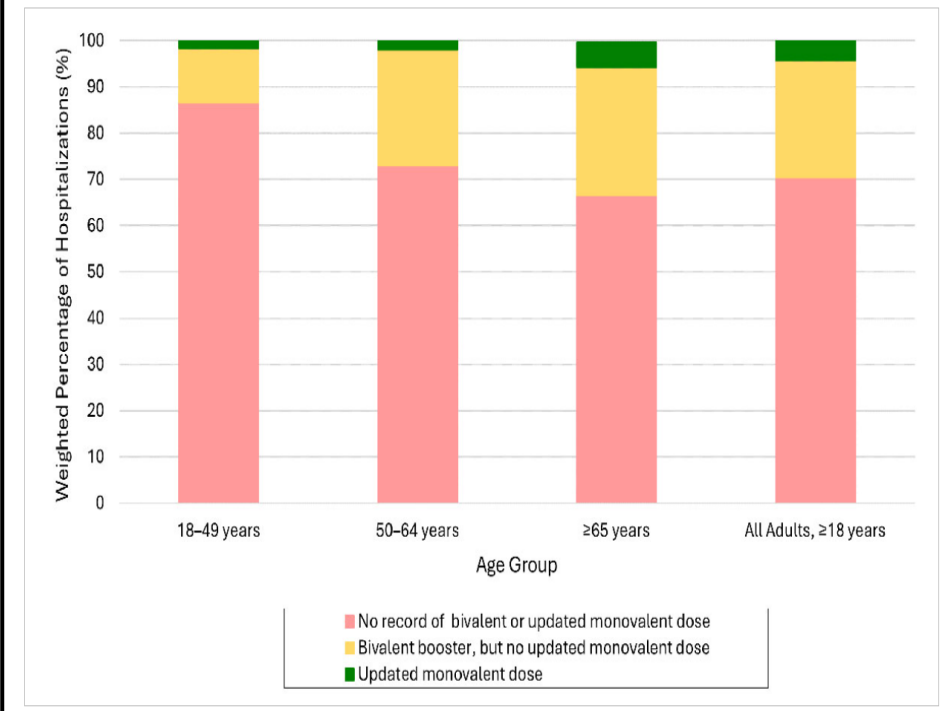
- RSV infection can be very serious or even deadly in young children; those under 12 months are most at risk for hospitalization.
- Since the peak of 21% positivity in mid-October, we saw consistent declines over the last 4 months.
- We have been below baseline levels since early January (this week 1.5% positive).
- Nationally, RSV activity is also declining, but about 5% of PCR tests are still positive.

COVID-19: Current Landscape

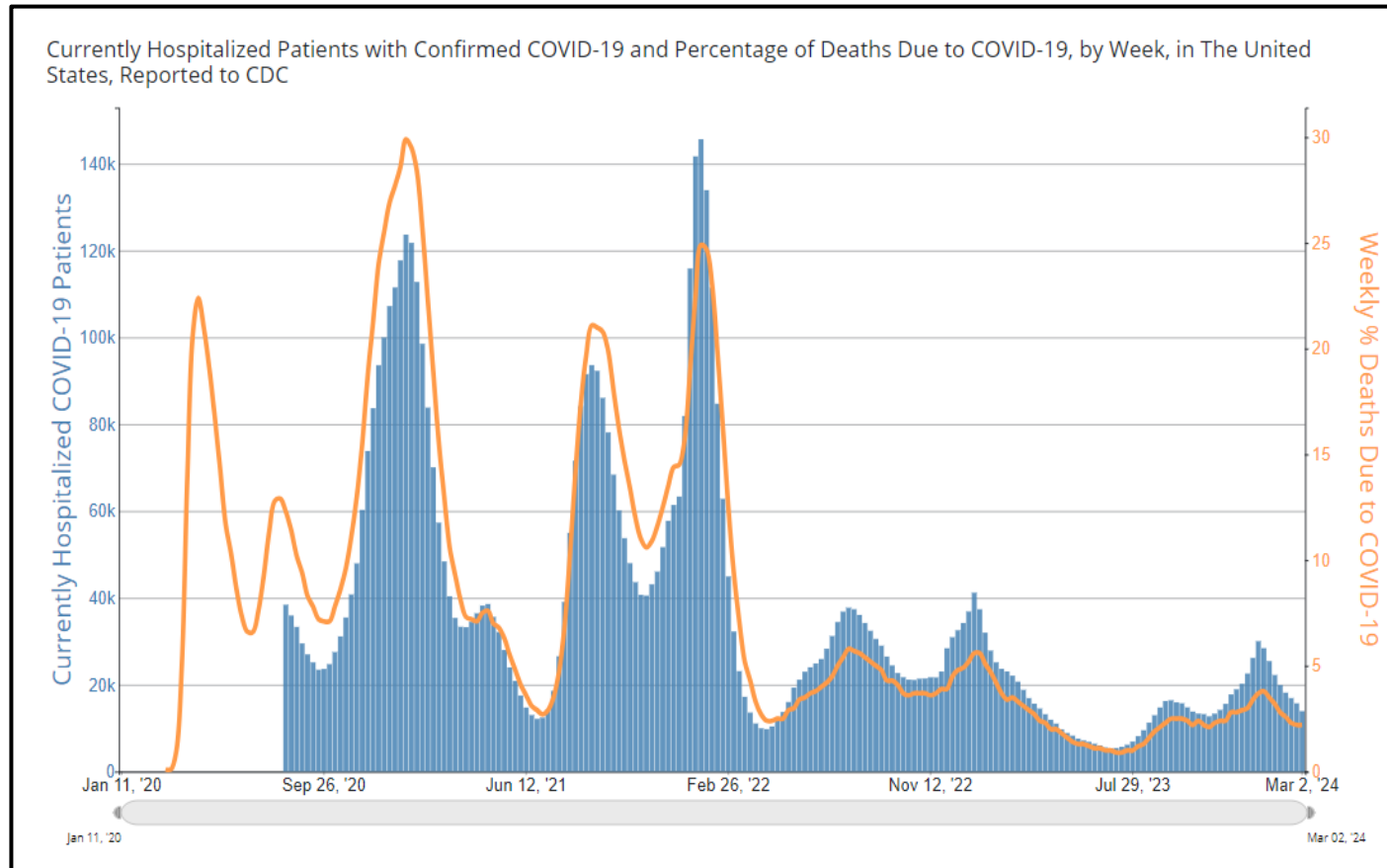


Vaccine protects against severe outcomes

Over 95% of adults hospitalized with COVID-19 during October–November 2023 had not received an updated (2023–2024) COVID-19 vaccine (Preliminary)



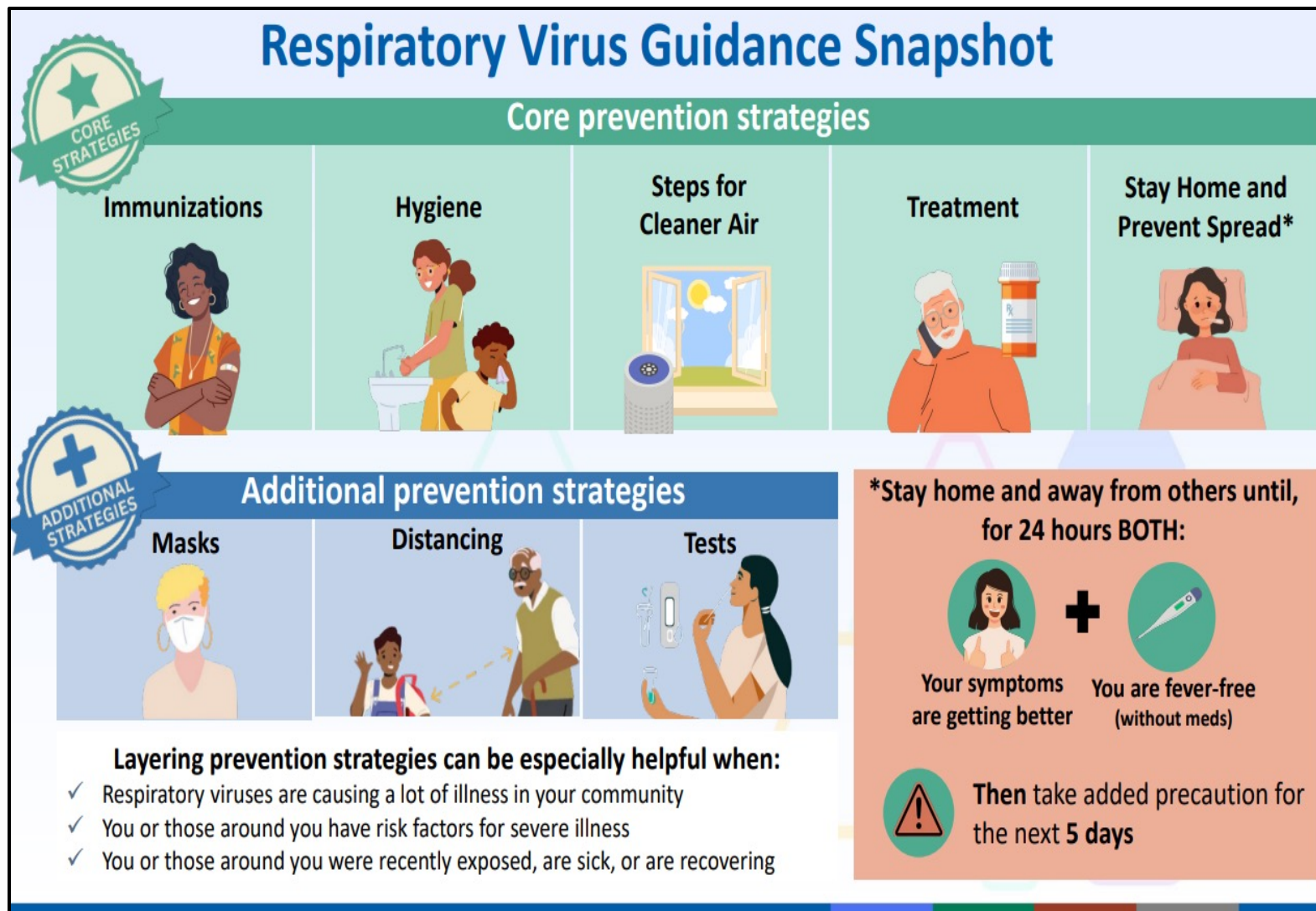
COVID-19 Landscape (Declining Activity)



- Weekly hospital admissions for COVID-19 have decreased by more than 75% and deaths by more than 90% compared to January 2022.
- The highly mutated subvariant JN.1 comprises most (93%) all cases nationally. **The monovalent XBB "booster" is effective against it.**

New CDC COVID Guidance

- Because the landscape of COVID in the US has changed so greatly over the past several years, on March 2, CDC updated their **COVID recommendations to align with other respiratory viruses like influenza and RSV.**
- Emphasizes **core strategies** for all 3 viruses like staying home when sick, vaccination, treatment, improved airflow, and respiratory hygiene.
- In the new guidance, persons with COVID **no longer need to isolate for 5 days** but rather until their fever resolves for 24 hrs and/or symptoms improve (like other respiratory viruses).



<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/respiratory-virus-guidance.html>

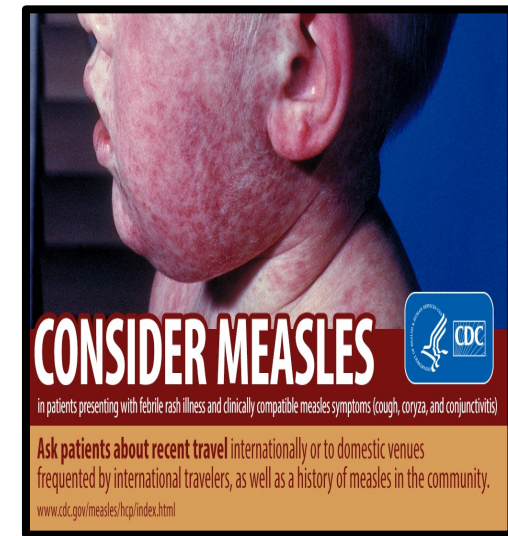
Bottom Line

- Influenza, RSV, and COVID activity levels are declining
- The 3 respiratory viruses can still have tremendous impact on populations and health care capacities but are PREVENTABLE!
- It is NOT TOO LATE FOR VACCINE!
 - COVID monovalent (XBB1.5) “booster”, as recommended
 - RSV biologics and vaccines, as indicated (infants, pregnant women)
 - Influenza vaccine for EVERYONE over 6 months of age
- Ongoing surveillance with a “pan-respiratory virus” view are critical for prevention and control recommendations.

Measles

Measles Landscape

- Measles is viral illness characterized by fever, rash, and the 3 Cs (cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis)
- Unique among infectious diseases in that it is considered one of the most **highly contagious** of all.
 - Spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes
 - Contagious 4 days before through 4 days after rash develops
 - Remains in the air or on surfaces for up to 2 hours
 - Attack rate **90%** among susceptible contacts
 - Incubation period 7-21 days
- However, is also **highly preventable** with MMR vaccine (2 doses are 97% effective)

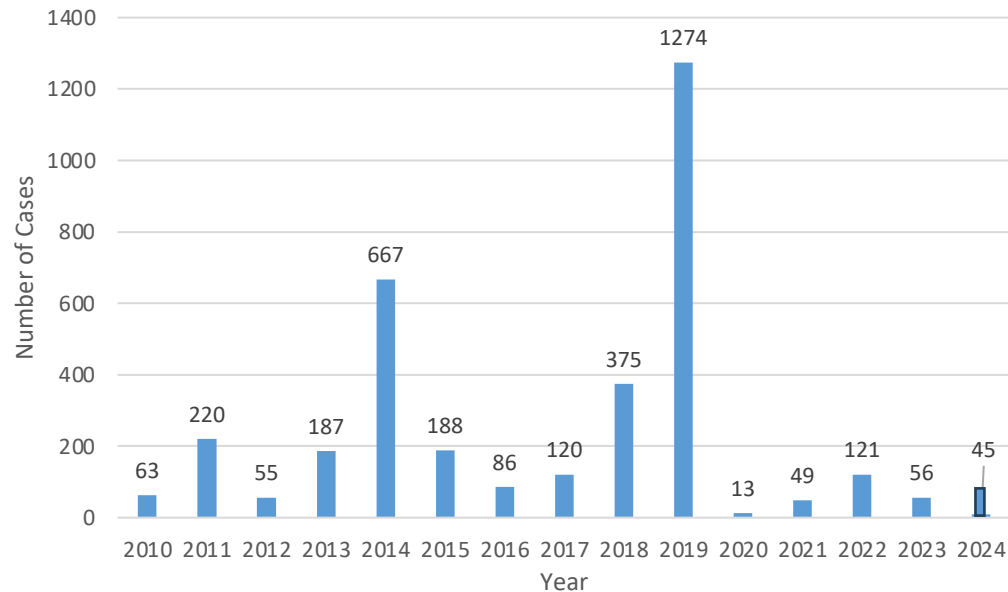


Measles Landscape

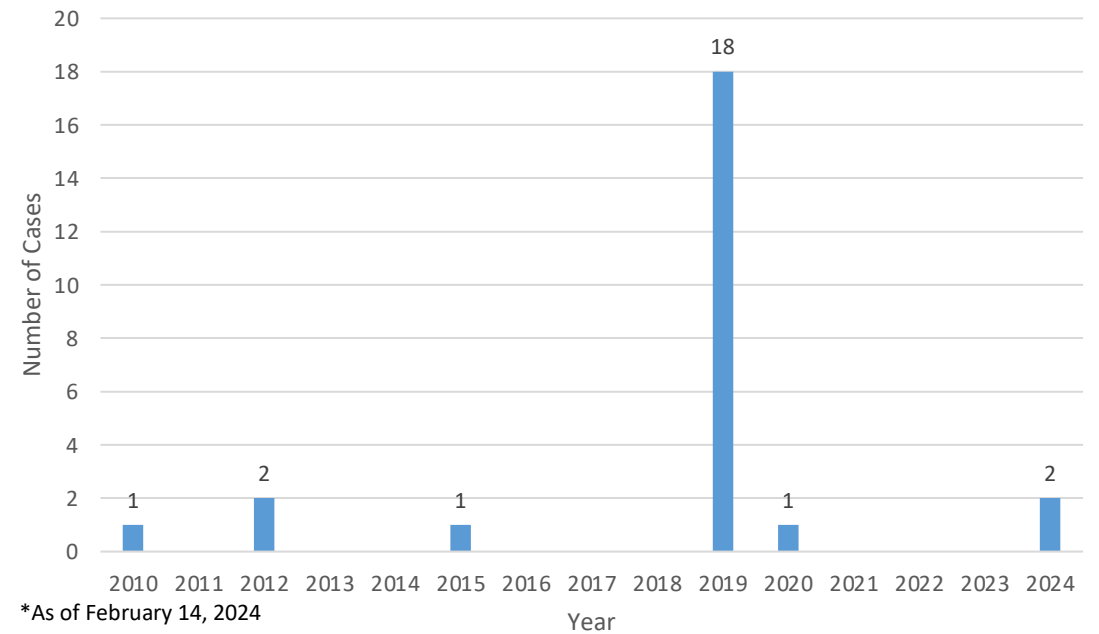
- Considered “eliminated” from the United States in 2000
- The epidemiology of measles is changing drastically, increasing both globally and in the U.S.
- **COVID-19 has increased the risk of measles outbreaks.** Over 61 million doses of MMR vaccine were postponed or missed from 2020 to 2022 due to COVID-19. This increases the risk of larger outbreaks around the world and in the United States.
- Epi pattern: Most cases and outbreaks in the US now are related to international travel/travelers, followed by further spread in the U.S. among pockets of unvaccinated people.

Measles Epidemiology

Number of Measles Cases Reported by Year to CDC,
Nationally, 2010-2024*



Measles Cases Reported to DPH, Georgia, 2010-2024*



Measles Case, Georgia, January 2024

- On January 18, 2024, the Georgia Public Health Laboratory (GPHL) confirmed measles infection in an unvaccinated resident of metro Atlanta who had traveled abroad.
- First measles case in GA since 2020.
- Measles cases are public health emergencies warranting immediate investigation.
- Goals of the investigation include, broadly, to **stop spread**, to determine the source of the infection, to find additional cases (and stop their spread) and educating healthcare providers and the public.



Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner | Brian Kemp, Governor

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Health Alert: Measles (Rubeola)

Georgia Department of Public Health Requests Reports of Suspect Measles Cases

Action Steps:

Local health departments: *Please forward to hospitals and clinics in your jurisdiction.*

Hospitals and clinics: *Please distribute to infectious disease doctors, infection preventionists, emergency department physicians, intensive care physicians, neurologists, radiologists, primary care providers, and pediatricians.*

Summary

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) has confirmed a case of measles in a resident of the metro Atlanta area. DPH is working with identified locations that this individual visited while infectious (Jan. 7-15, 2024), to identify any persons that may have been exposed. The index patient acquired the virus while traveling abroad and historically, January through May is the peak time for importation of measles infections to the United States. Therefore, DPH urges healthcare providers to maintain heightened awareness for patients with symptoms compatible with measles.


Clinical Presentation

Measles is a highly contagious illness and is spread primarily person-to-person via aerosolized droplets. The incubation period is typically 10 to 12 days but can range from 4 to 21 days. Measles typically begins with a prodrome of stepwise increasing fever (often as high as 104-105° F) accompanied by cough, coryza, and/or conjunctivitis. Koplik spots (tiny red spots with bluish-white centers on the buccal mucosa), which are diagnostic for measles, may appear 2-3 days before the rash and fade 1-2 days later. As fever peaks on day 4-5, a maculopapular rash typically appears on the face along the hairline and behind the ears, and then progresses downward to the chest, back, and extremities. Within 4-5 days, the rash fades in the same order that it appeared.

Georgia Measles Investigation

Steps to **stop spread**:

- We identified all exposed contacts, particularly those who may be susceptible to measles (such as infants, immunocompromised, or unvaccinated persons) and:
 - 1) offered prophylaxis (MMR or IG) as appropriate
 - 2) educated them about symptoms, incubation, and infectious periods;
 - 3) actively monitored for development of symptoms throughout the 21-day incubation period
 - 4) recommended exclusion from venues where spread may occur, such as schools or daycare
- A second case of measles was confirmed on January 25, 2024 (a sibling of the of the index case who was also unvaccinated and traveled abroad with them).
- **No additional cases were reported.**



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Measles: Take Home Messages

- Most measles cases and outbreaks in the US are related to international travel/travelers, followed by further spread here among **pockets of unvaccinated people**.
- Because of the changing epidemiology of measles, we will continue to be at risk for measles importations and outbreaks.
- Healthcare providers should consider measles in the differential for febrile rash illnesses and **should notify/report to DPH immediately** at 1-866-PUB-HLTH.
- To stop further spread, measles case investigations are extremely resource-intensive, time-sensitive, “all hands-on deck” public health responses affecting many stakeholders.

Questions

For more information, please contact:

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State Epidemiologist & Chief Science Officer

(404) 657-2609

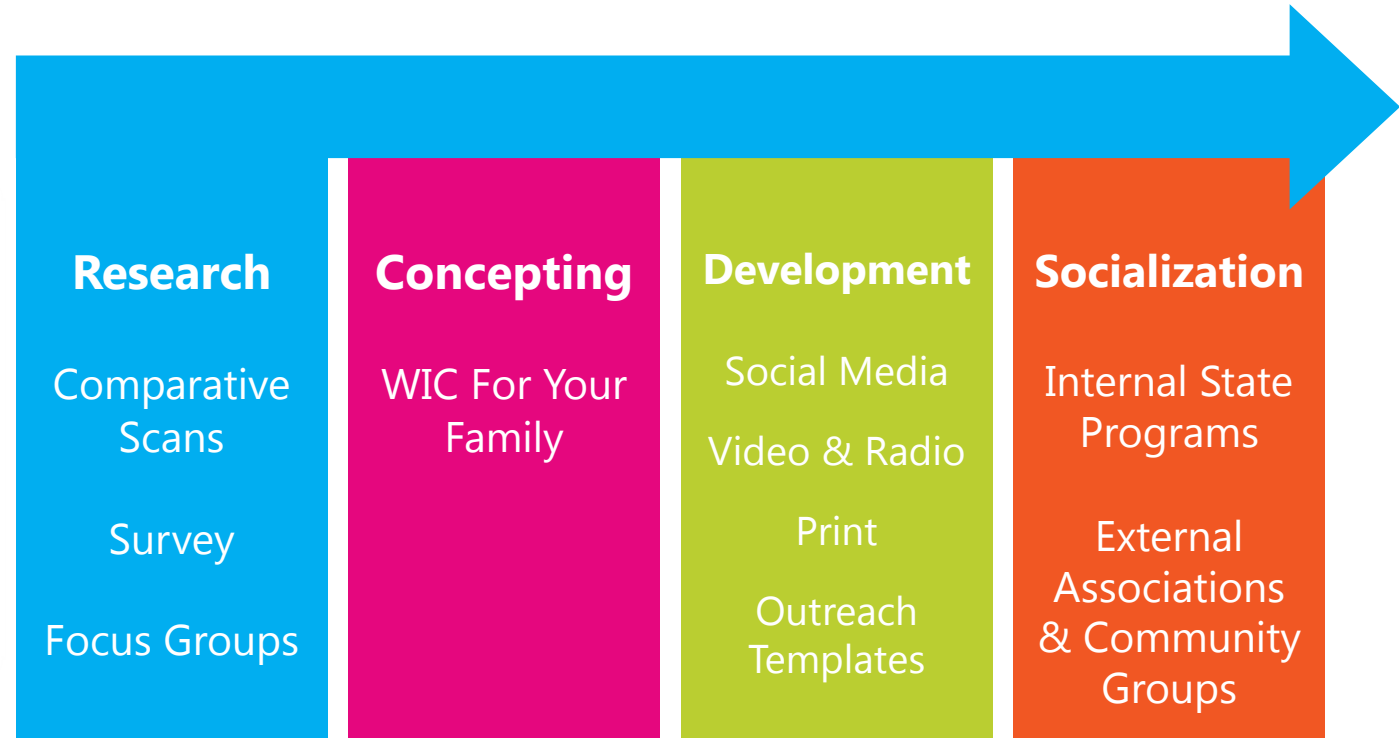
cherie.drenzek@dph.ga.gov

WIC For Your Family Campaign

Board of Public Health Meeting / Chris Rustin, DrPH, MS, REHS, Nancy Nydam, Chivonne Williams, Hannah Welsh / March 12, 2024

Overview: "WIC For Your Family"

To support Georgia WIC in launching updated statewide communications materials following the COVID-19 pandemic, we conducted primary research to concept, develop, and socialize refreshed WIC assets.



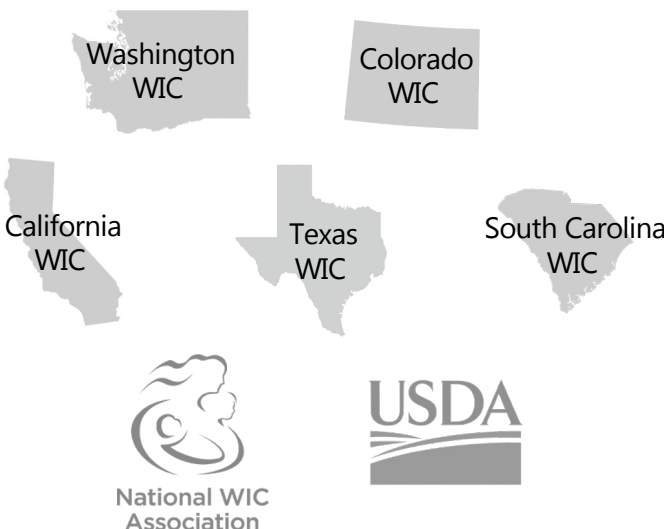
Research Summary

We conducted and analyzed comparative scans, a pulse survey of Georgia residents, and focus group sessions with WIC staff to inform messaging considerations.

Comparative Scans

15+ Programs

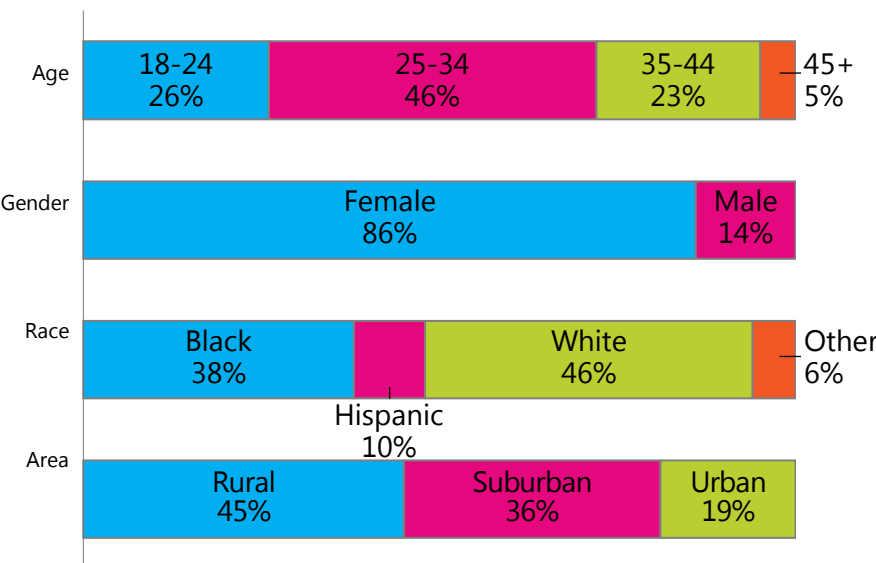
SAMPLE OF PROGRAMS REVIEWED



Pulse Survey

600+ Respondents

DEMOGRAPHICS



Focus Groups

6 Focus Groups **27** Participants

HEALTH DISTRICTS

Columbus – District 7
Cobb-Douglas – District 3-1
Coastal – District 9-1
GNR – District 3-4
Dalton – District 1-2
Augusta – District 6

Understanding Residents' Perspectives

Top 2023 Research Findings

1

Overall, Georgians are familiar with the name "Georgia WIC", but are **less familiar with everything the program offers and how to know if they're eligible.**

2

Reducing the stigma around receiving aid is important, and we can do this through empowering language and education.

3

Many Georgia residents don't know that **they can receive WIC benefits on top of other kinds of assistance,** like SNAP.

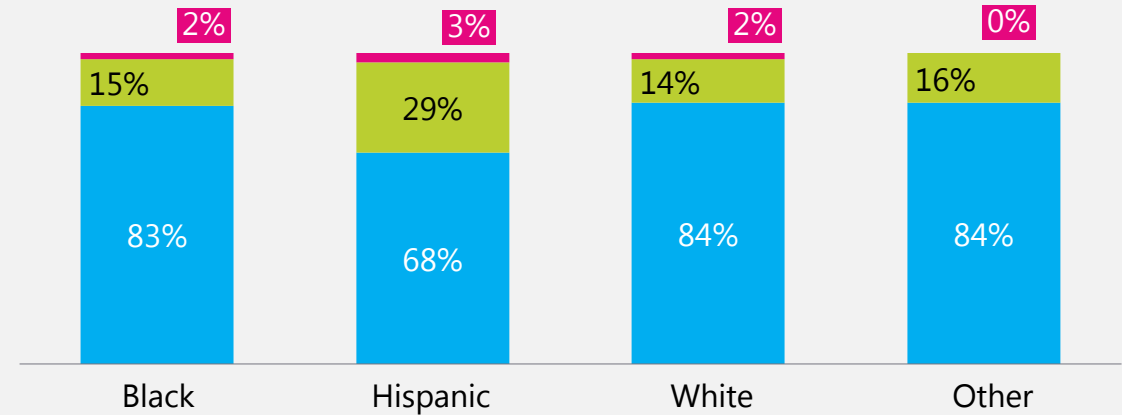
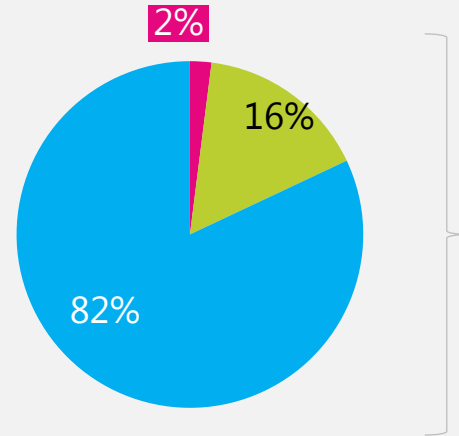
4

Engaging videos, print-outs, and social media can help reach eligible participants and teach them about WIC.

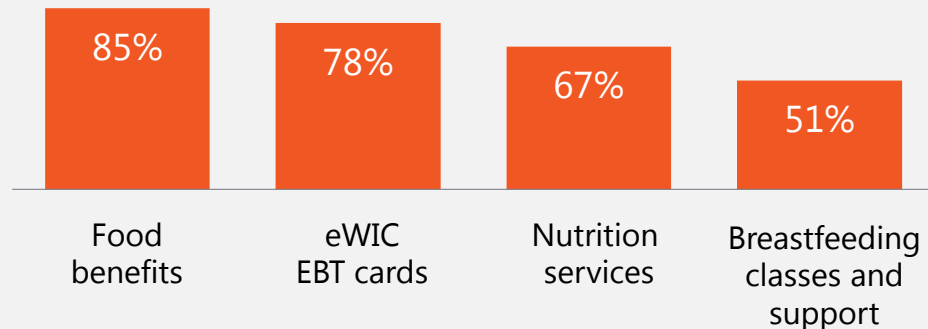
Understanding Residents' Perspectives: Double Click

How familiar are you with the Women, Infants, Children (WIC) program?

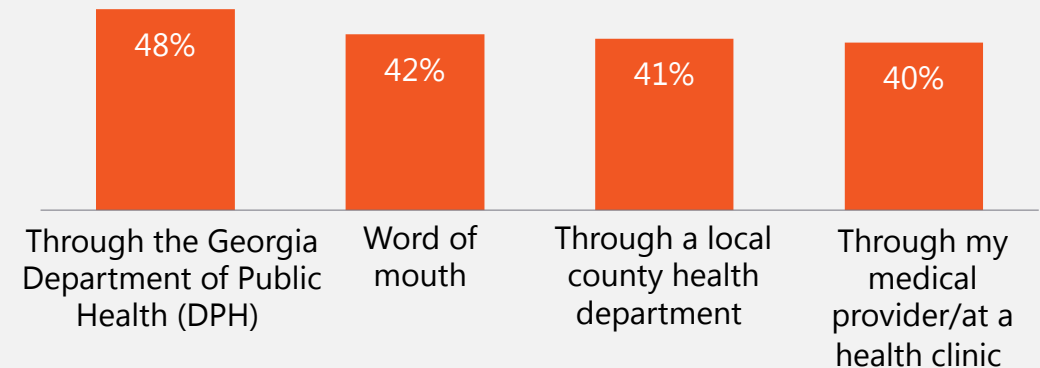
- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Not at all familiar



Which of the following WIC offerings are you aware of?



Where have you heard of the WIC Program?



Messaging Concept: “WIC For Your Family”

What we learned: A need for increased awareness, as well as empowering, inclusive, and cohesive messaging

What we did: Focused “WIC For Your Family” **on empowerment, the different types of families eligible for WIC, and how the program’s full range of benefits supports different stages of life**

High-level Messaging

Holistic Health and Wellness

WIC is an education-based program that empowers different types of families to take the first step to improve their holistic health, learn about their specific nutritional needs, and access a wide range of benefits including referrals and 1-1 support

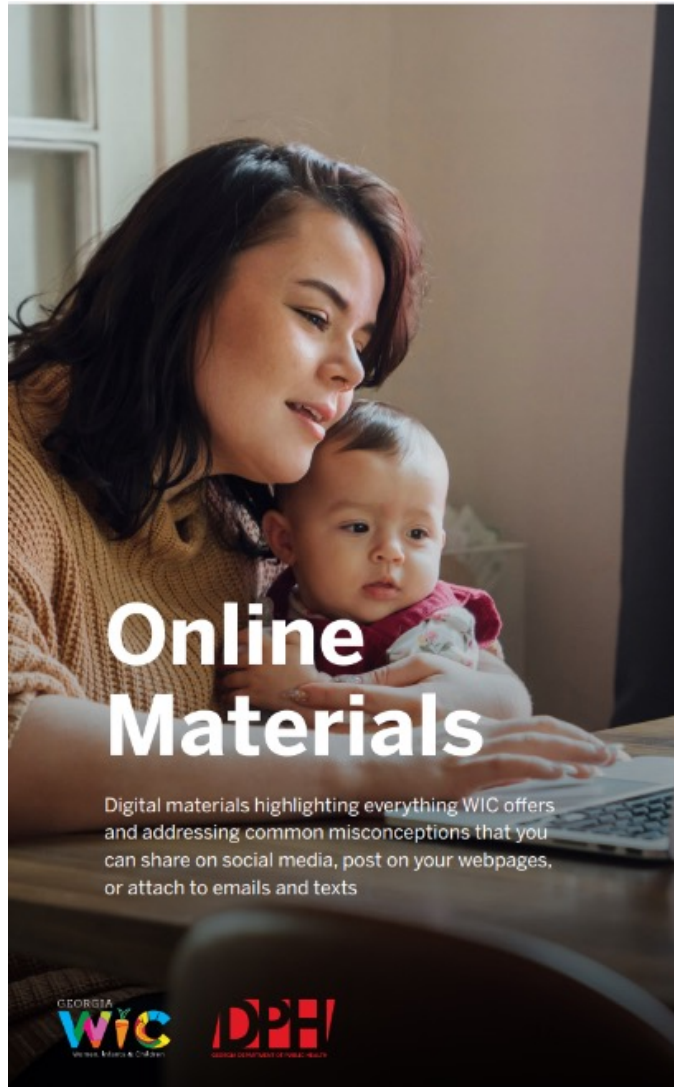
Art Direction

Imagery highlighting independence, relationships between WIC staff and patients, growth, health and wellness beyond food, different family types, and different stages of life

Tone

An empowering, confident, and healthy tone that evokes positivity and strength

"WIC For Your Family" Assets



"Did you Know" Social Posts
English & Spanish



General Social Posts
English & Spanish



"WIC For Your Family" Video
English



"WIC For Your Family" Video
Spanish

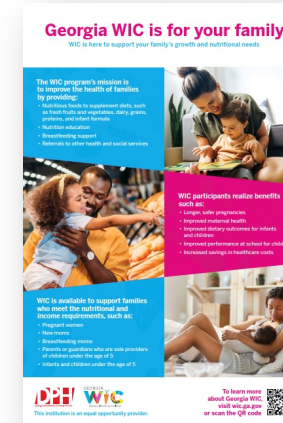
Video Spotlight: "WIC For Your *Family*"



"WIC For Your Family" Assets



General Posters
English & Spanish



Informational Poster - Long
English & Spanish



Informational Poster - Short
English & Spanish

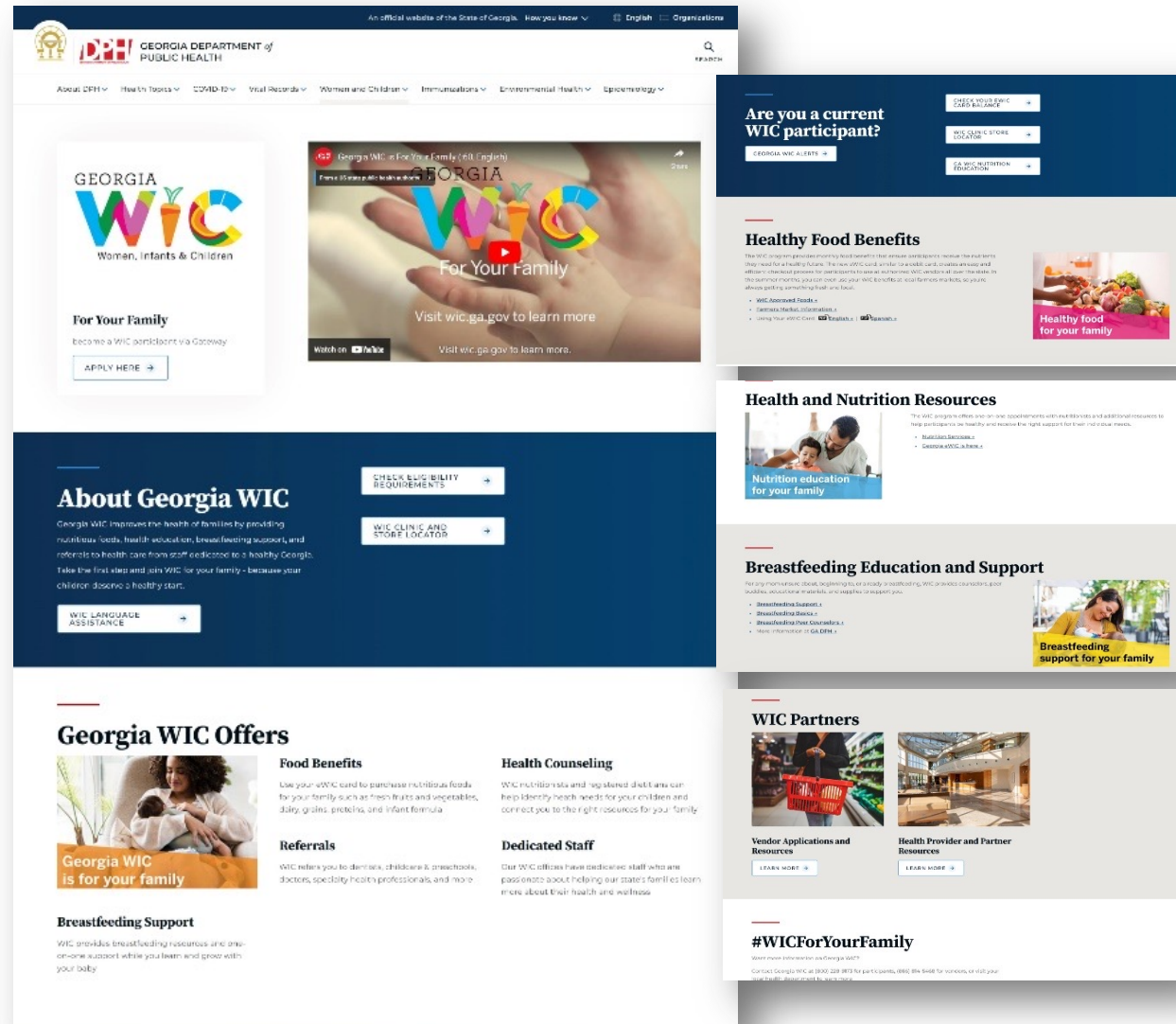


WIC in Four Steps Poster
English & Spanish



Informational Pamphlet
English & Spanish

"WIC For Your Family" Updated Webpage



Marquee video

Important links such as where to apply, how to check eWIC card balance, and store locator

Overview of food benefits

Health and nutrition resources (e.g., information on nutrition services)

Breastfeeding education and resources (e.g., support, basics, counselors)

Partner materials for vendors, providers, and other partners (e.g, social media graphics, materials to print)

Internal & External Socialization with Key Partners



To engage cross-promotion internally and externally, we created the **“WIC For Your Family” Partner Toolkit** and are sharing with:

Internal State Programs

- Vaccines for Children
- Children 1st
- GA Family Planning
- Safe Infant Sleep
- DECAL

External Associations & Community Groups

- Healthcare
- Education programs
- Youth services
- Nutrition programs
- Community groups (e.g., Library)

Questions

For more information, please contact:

Nancy Nydam

Communications Director

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Next Meeting

The next Board of Public Health Meeting
will be held May 14, 2024