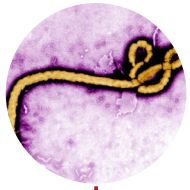
Preparing for High Consequence Infectious Diseases in GA

Infection Prevention Collaborative / Litty Varghese / October 15, 2026

Overview

- History of Preparedness
- Infectious Disease Network
- NETEC NSPS
- Program Components
- Current Gaps and Challenges
- Future Goals

History of Ebola Preparedness in Georgia

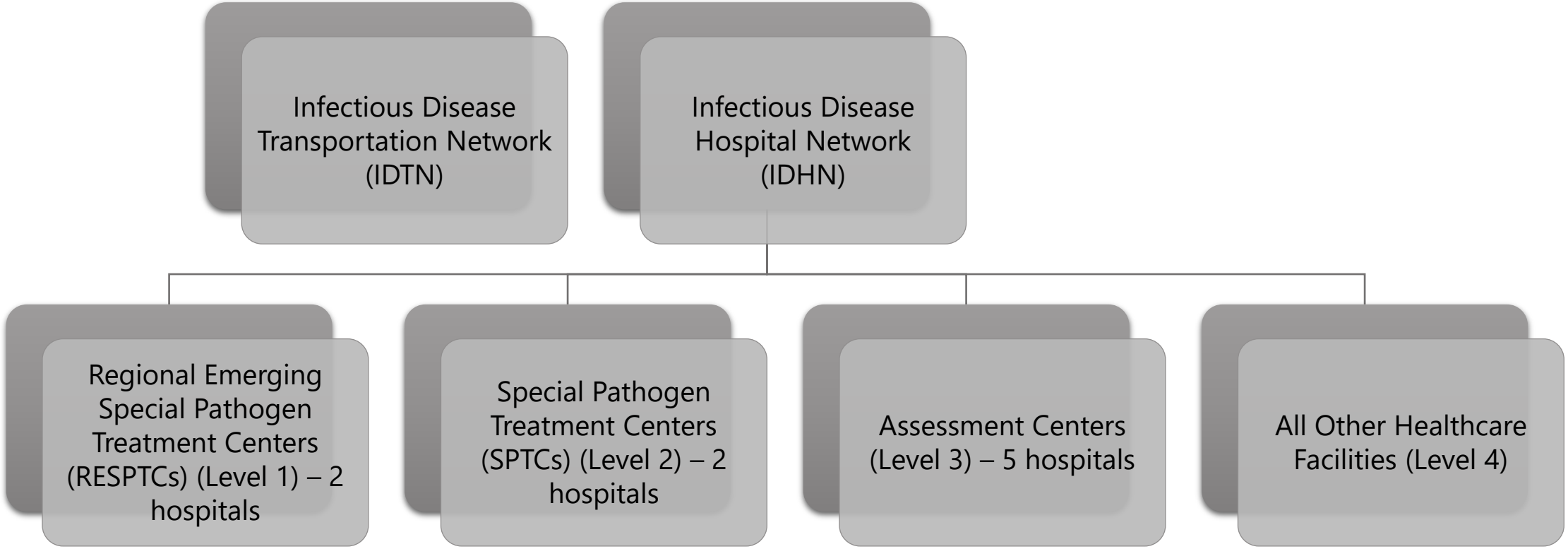


2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa

- Creation of GA Infectious Disease Network (IDN)
- Collaboration with Emory on receiving Ebola patients
- Creation of Ebola Active Monitoring System (EAMS)
- Creation of Disease Response Plans/Identity Isolate Inform Protocol
- Statewide Education to healthcare partners

Supported by funds through the Hospital Preparedness Program Ebola Preparedness and Response Activities cooperative agreement

Infectious Disease Network (IDN)

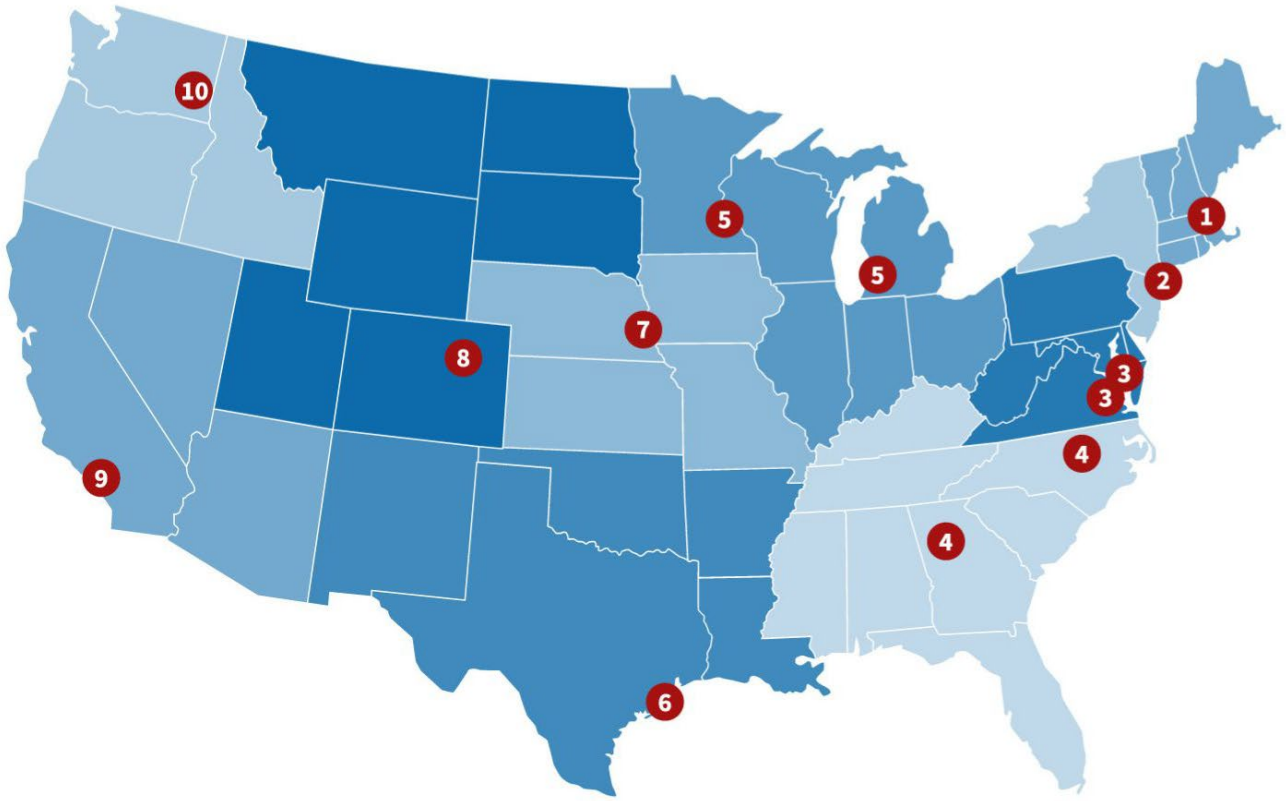


Emerging Special Pathogens Treatment Centers

Regions

1. **CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT**
   Massachusetts General Hospital
2. **NJ, NY, PR, VI**
   NYC Health + Hospitals / Bellevue
3. **DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV**
   Johns Hopkins Hospital
   MedStar Washington Hospital Center / Children's National
4. **AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN**
   Emory University / Children's Healthcare of Atlanta
   University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
5. **IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI**
   University of Minnesota Medical Center
   Corewell Health System
6. **AR, LA, NM, OK, TX**
   University of Texas Medical Branch
7. **IA, KS, MO, NE**
   University of Nebraska Medical Center/Nebraska Medicine
8. **CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY**
   Denver Health & Hospital Authority
9. **AZ, CA, HI, NV, AS, MP, FM, GU, MH, PW**
   Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
10. **AK, ID, OR, WA**
    Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center & Children's Hospital

NETEC | NSPS



NSPS Mission, Vision, and Goals

Mission

To develop a coordinated network of high-quality special pathogen care dedicated to protecting patients, communities, and the health care workforce in the United States.

Vision

To save lives and protect the health care workforce through an agile and comprehensive special pathogen system of care.

ASPIRATIONAL GOALS



Zero

Preventable Deaths

after special pathogen infection



2 hours

Network Mobilization

after suspected special pathogen infection

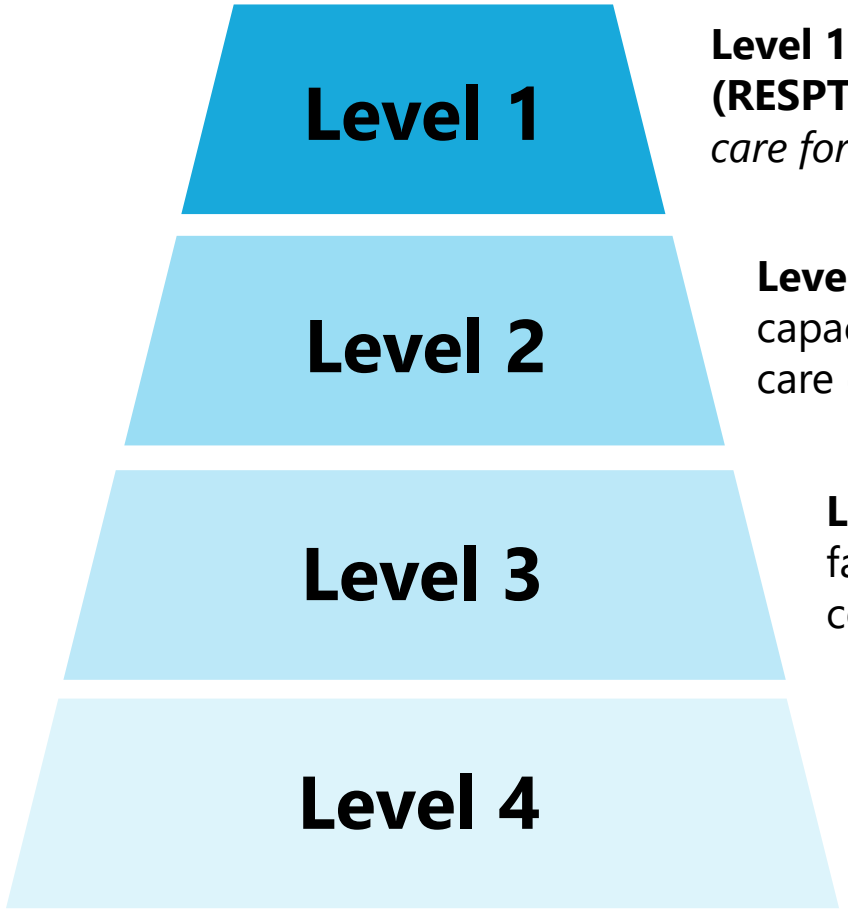


100%

Have Access

to high-quality special pathogen care for all of the U.S. population

The Tiered System of Care



Level 1 facilities, or Regional Emerging Special Pathogen Treatment Centers (RESPTCs), are regional resources hubs which provide highly specialized care. *Level 1s care for patients for their duration of illness.*

Level 2 facilities, or Special Pathogen Treatment Centers (SPTCs), have the capacity to deliver specialized care to clusters of patients and serve as primary patient care delivery centers. *Level 2s can care for patients for their duration of illness.*

Level 3 facilities, or Assessment Centers, are widely accessible care delivery facilities, able to conduct limited basic laboratory testing, stabilize patients, and coordinate rapid patient transfer. *Level 3s can care for patients for 12-36 hours.*

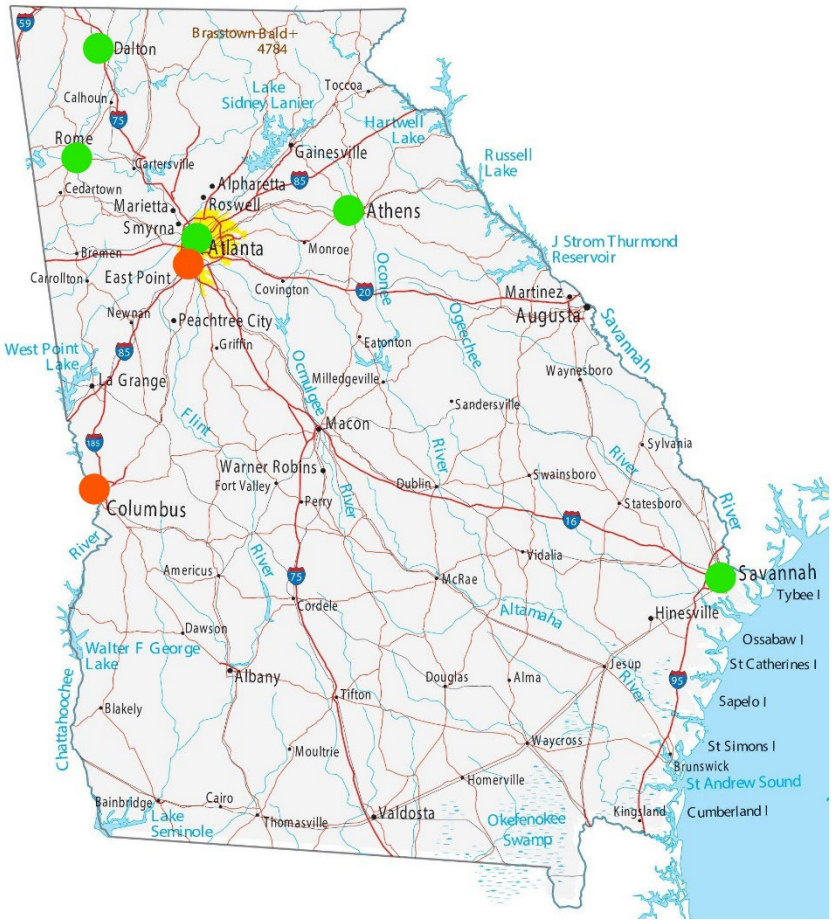
Level 4 facilities, or All Other Healthcare Facilities, can identify, isolate, inform, & initiate stabilizing medical care; protect staff; and arrange timely patient transport to minimize impact to normal facility operations.

STAND Award

- National Emerging Special Pathogens Training and Education Center (NETEC) National Special Pathogen System (NSPS) Level 2 Special Pathogen Treatment and Network Development (STAND) Award program, supported by the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR).
- $500,000 each to eligible U.S. hospitals seeking to strengthen their capabilities as NSPS Level 2 Special Pathogen Treatment Centers (SPTCs)
- 75 STAND award recipients nationwide
  - 2 Awardees in GA – Grady Hospital and Piedmont Columbus Regional

Growing the GA IDHN

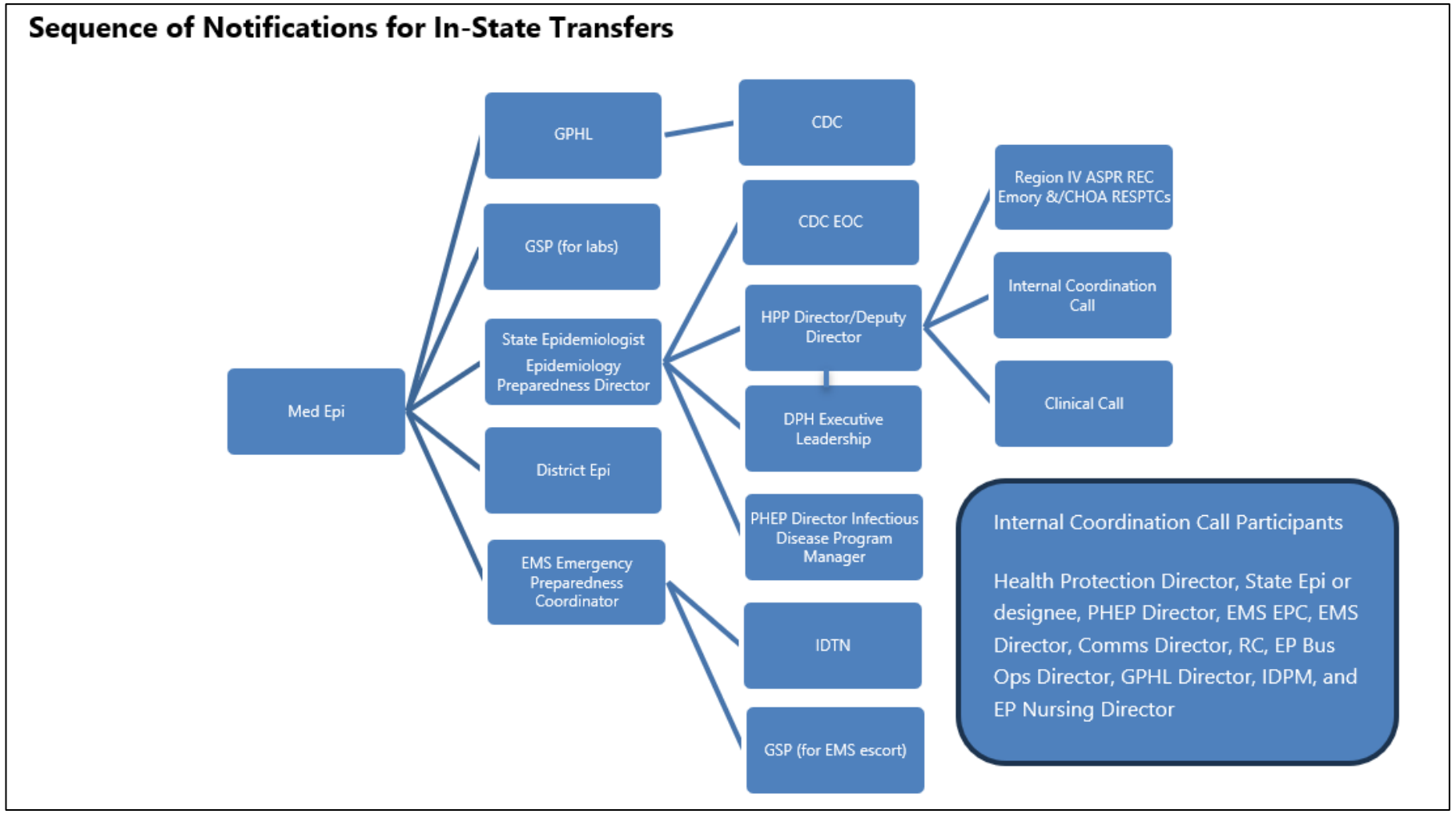
- Current IDHN facilities
  - Red – Treatment Facilities (Level 1 & 2)
  - Green – Assessment Facilities (Level 3)
- Huge gap in coverage in the south of the State
- Goal of having a treatment or assessment facility 2 hours from anywhere in GA.



State Led Designation

- Developing an online application platform for facilities to apply to be designated as Level 2 or Level 3.
- Starting with previously designated Level 3 – Assessment Facilities
- Will be open to any hospital interested in joining the network and filling the access gap in the state

HCID CONOPs


Sequence of Notifications for In-State Transfers
Med Epi
GPHL
GSP (for labs)
State Epidemiologist
Epidemiology
Preparedness Director
District Epi
EMS Emergency
Preparedness
Coordinator
CDC
CDC EOC
HPP Director/Deputy
Director
DPH Executive
Leadership
PHEP Director Infectious
Disease Program
Manager
IDTN
GSP (for EMS escort)
Region IV ASPR REC
Emory &/CHOA RESPTCs
Internal Coordination
Call
Clinical Call
Internal Coordination Call Participants
Health Protection Director, State Epi or designee, PHEP Director, EMS EPC, EMS Director, Comms Director, RC, EP Bus Ops Director, GPHL Director, IDPM, and EP Nursing Director

Quarterly IDN Meetings













Partner Exercises

Baby Driver 2.0 – November 2024





Tranquil Passport – June 24-27, 2025







Increased Visibility

Created GA IDN webpage and resources on the DPH and the Georgia Healthcare Coalitions websites.

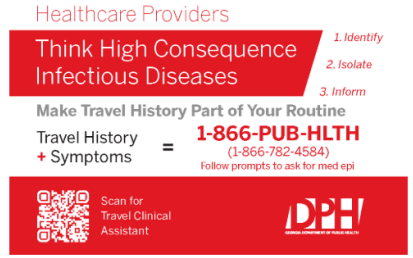


Healthcare Providers

The most important step in preventing and mitigating the spread of HCIDs is the Identify, Isolate, Inform process. Healthcare providers should be asking about travel history along with symptoms. If a patient has relevant symptoms and a travel history to areas of concern, the provider should immediately contact Georgia Department of Public Health at 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584) for further consultation.

Resources

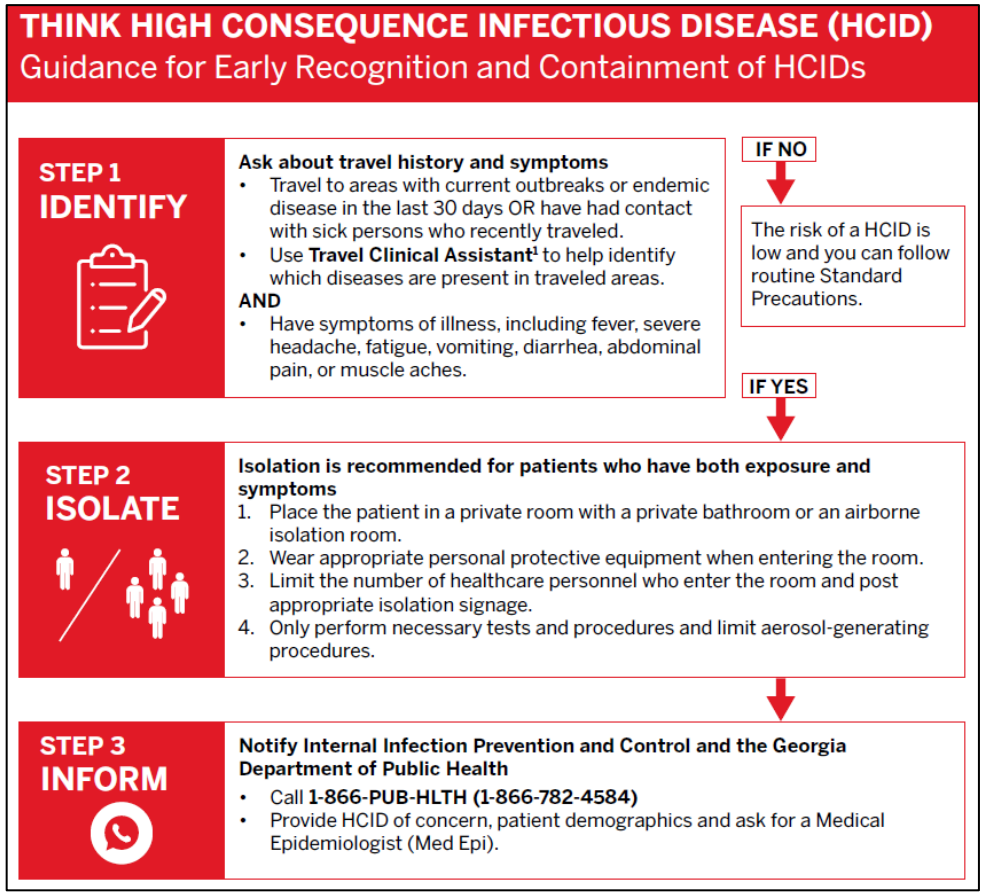
- Georgia's Health Alert Network (GAHAN)
- Travel Clinical Assistant (TCA)
- CDC Travel Health Notices
- National Emerging Special Pathogens Training and Education Center (NETEC)



Healthcare Providers Think High Consequence Infectious Diseases. Make Travel History Part of Your Routine. 1. Identify 2. Isolate 3. Inform. Travel History + Symptoms = 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584) Follow prompts to ask for med epi.

Provider Resources

HCID Screening Tool



Think HCID Magnet



Med Epi Consult

MED EPI

The Med Epi will perform a risk assessment once all required information is provided.

- If appropriate, the Med Epi will initiate **transportation to a Treatment or Assessment** facility.
- Transportation will be coordinated through the **Infectious Disease Transportation Network (IDTN)** and will depend on the type of suspected pathogen, patient condition, weather, location of the patient, and bed availability.
- Depending on the situation, a transportation unit may arrive at the facility anywhere from **4 to 24 hours after initiation** of transport by the Med Epi.
- Facilities should be prepared to **keep the patient isolated** while providing necessary care until transportation arrives.
- Facilities are responsible for **managing and disposing waste appropriately** if the patient is confirmed to have an HCID.

The Med Epi will need the following information:

- Patient demographics
- Travel history (specific travel dates & locations)
- Exposures (to sick contacts, funerals, animals, and/or visited healthcare facilities)
- Symptoms and progression of illness
- Any testing conducted
- Underlying health conditions
- Current medications?
- Vaccine history and prophylaxis taken (Malaria)
- Hospitalization plan (admitting, isolation or discharge)
- Additional information (preferred language, co-travelers, etc.)

HCID Magnets and Posters

- Distributed 50 magnets and 50 posters per Coalition
- Prioritizing hospitals, urgent cares, stand-alone Eds, Clinics, etc.
- Digital versions are on the GA IDN webpage under Resources

Category A Waste Kits







Drill Request Form

- https://ga.readyop.com/fs/5c1c/870c989d
- Facilities interested in conducting a drill should reach out to Litty Varghese or Jessica Pavlick
  - The request form link will be sent to you
  - The link will eventually be posted to the GA IDN webpage

Building Relationships to Address Gaps

Decedent Management Planning

- Learning from real-world incidents – Lassa Fever in Iowa.
- Working with local SMEs to build partnerships, identify funeral service partners, and create a protocol for HCID decedent management.
- Discussing with counterparts in Region IV states to share best practices and standardize plans

HCID Decontamination of Non-Healthcare Private/Public Spaces

- Collaborating across programs in DPH to formulate a plan of action
- Finding contractors to manage decontamination as needed

Gaps and Challenges

- Ongoing education on the appropriate use of Identify, Isolate and Inform
- Sustained source of funding for both hospitals and EMS
- Maintaining engagement across disciplines and levels of healthcare facilities
- Access to Level 2 or Level 3 facilities across the state

Goals

- Conduct statewide education for stakeholders and partners on state, regional and federal plans and processes.
- Complete re-designation of current IDN facilities
- Recruit new facilities to join the IDN as Level 2 or Level 3 centers
- Complete tabletop and full-scale exercises to test new plans and partnerships.

Questions

For additional information, please contact:

Litty Varghese
Infectious Disease Program Manager
Litty.Varghese@dph.ga.gov