

Public health, explained.

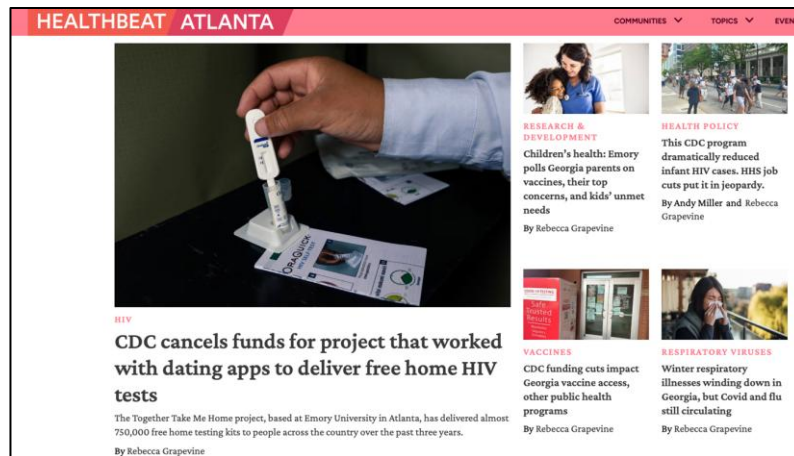
Rebecca Grapevine

May 15, 2025

Our mission

Public health, explained

“We’re building Healthbeat to help everyone understand how the public health system works so we can all work to make it better. This is essential to our democracy and our collective well-being.”

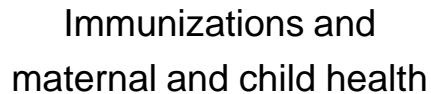


Public health versus health care

“Health care helps people after they fall in the river. It helps them get out.”

“Public health tries to prevent people from falling in the river in the first place.”





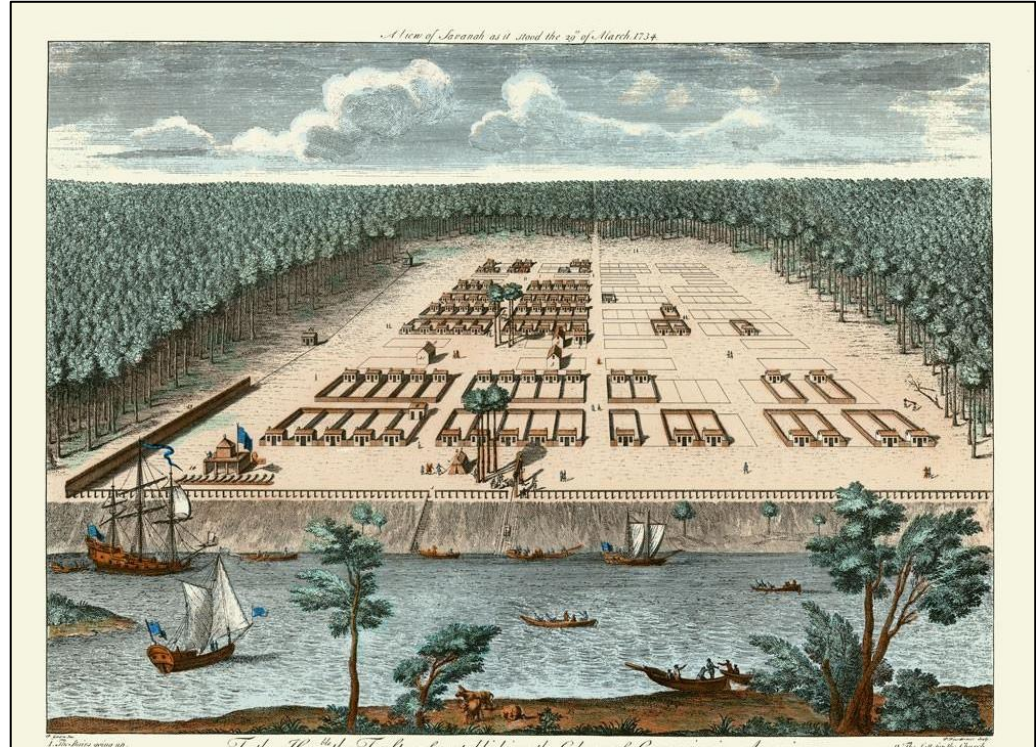
Restaurant and pool inspections



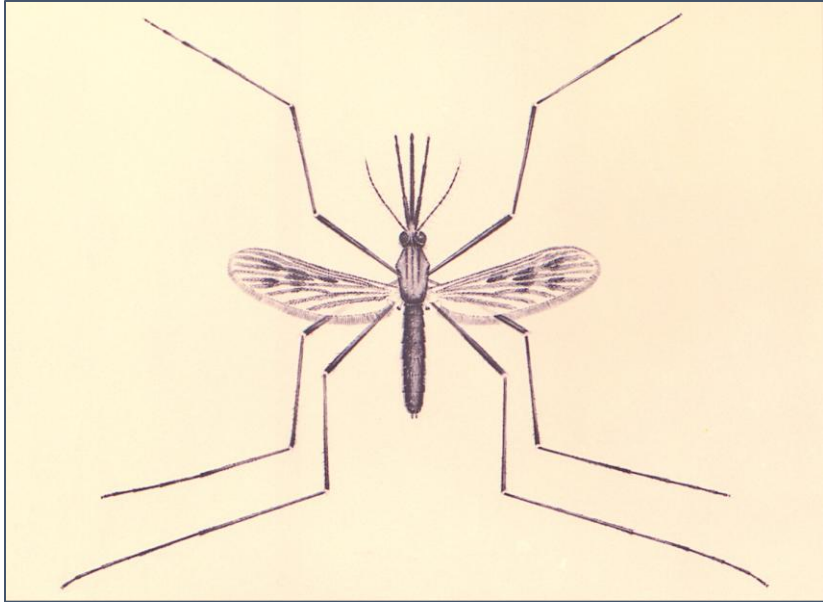
‘All in perfect health’

“I pitched upon this place not only for the pleasantness of the situation, but because ... I thought it healthy.”

“The people are all in perfect health.”



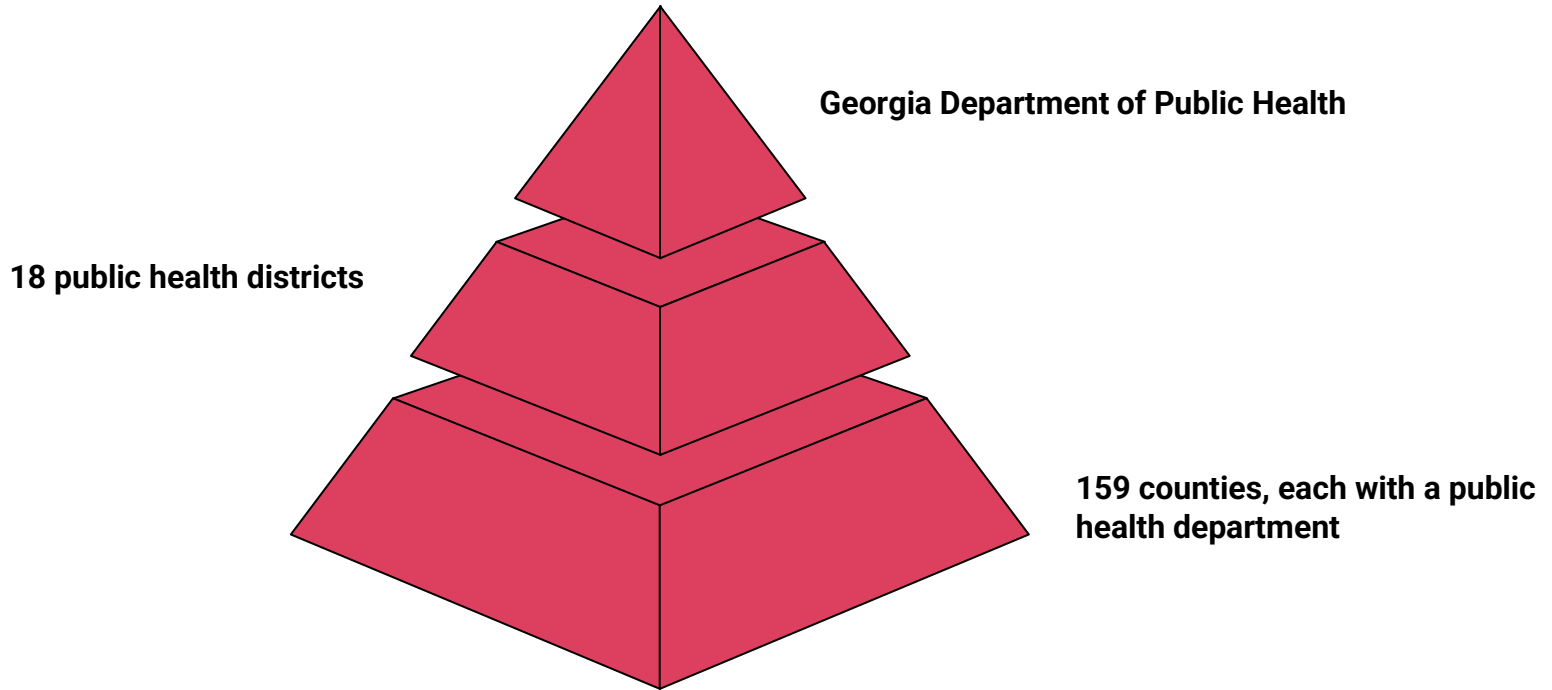
'A dangerous distemper raging'



Public health + power



State public health: a hybrid system



At the top:

HEALTHBEAT

Georgia Dept. of Public Health



At the top:

Georgia Dept. of Public Health

Georgia Department of Public Health budget

Federal funds make up roughly 50% of the departmental budget, with the state general funds making up the majority of the remainder.

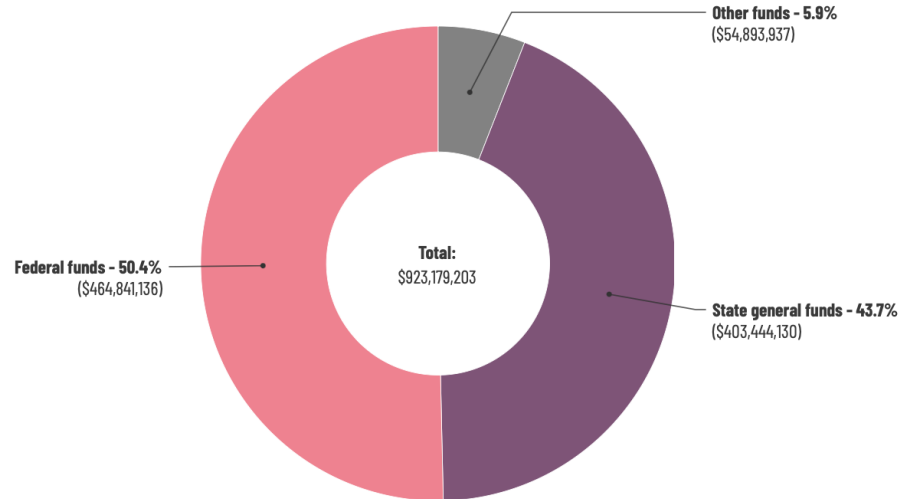
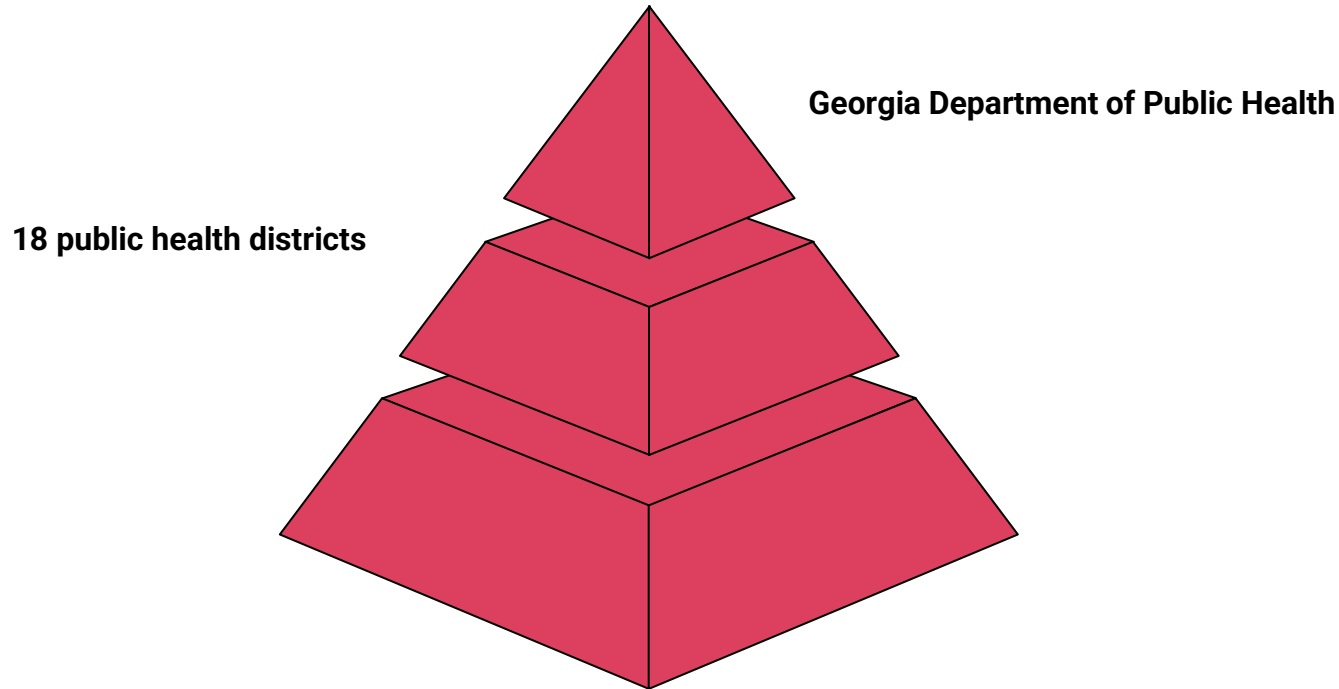


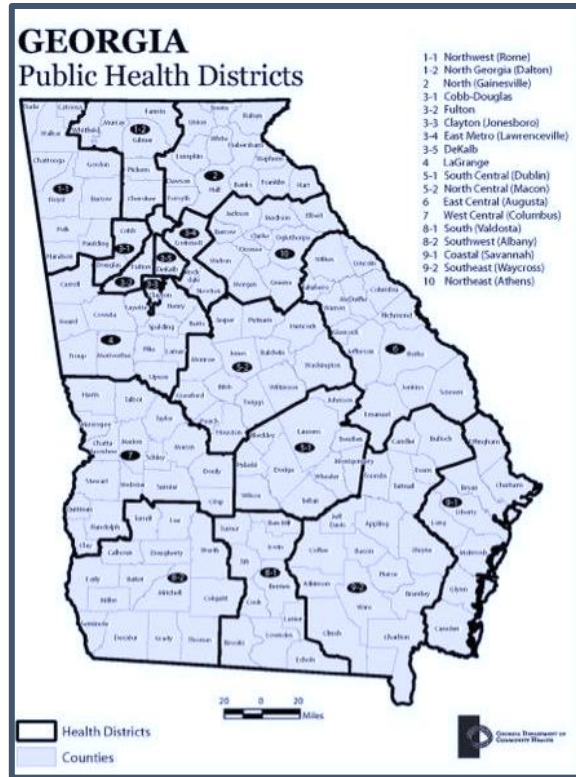
Chart: Thomas Wilburn • Source: [Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget](#)

State public health: a hybrid system



In the middle:

The 18 public health districts

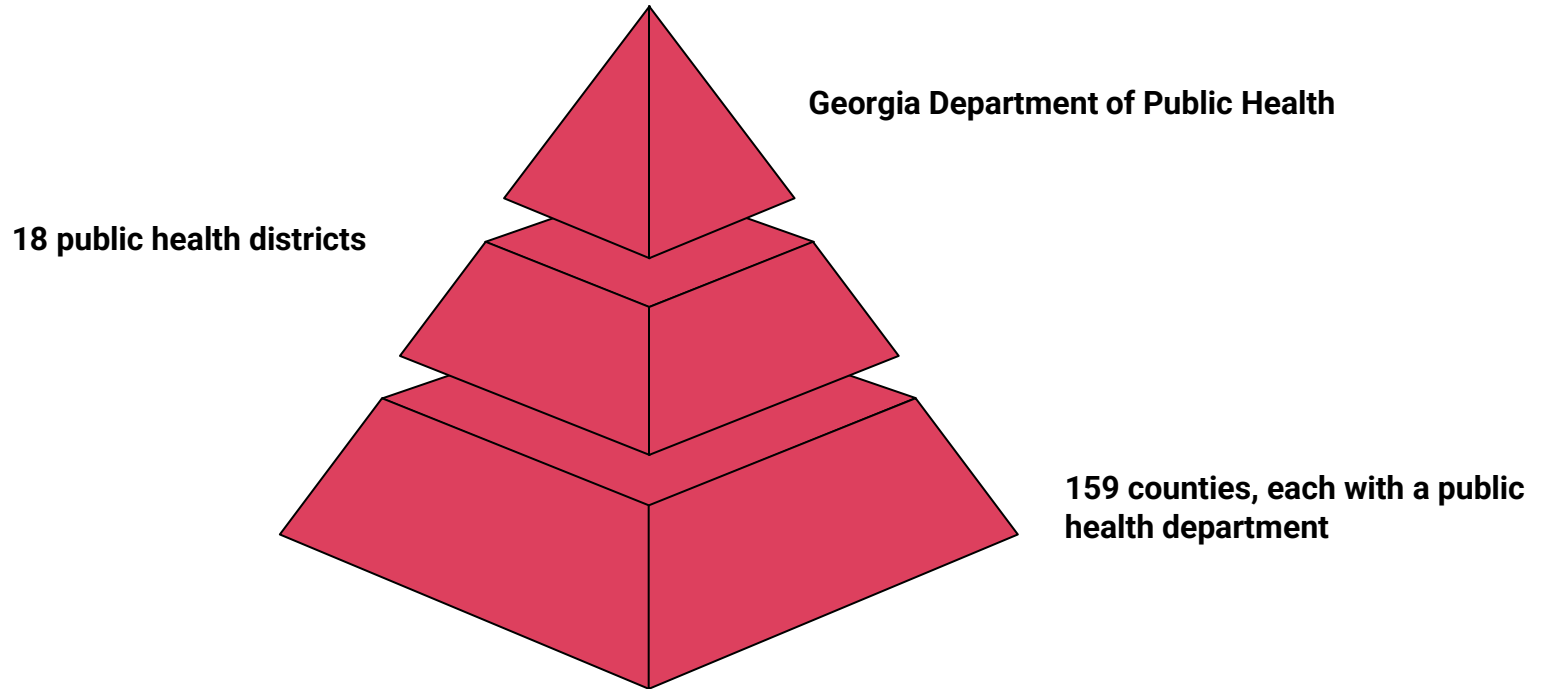


In the middle: 18 public health districts

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Georgia's public health system

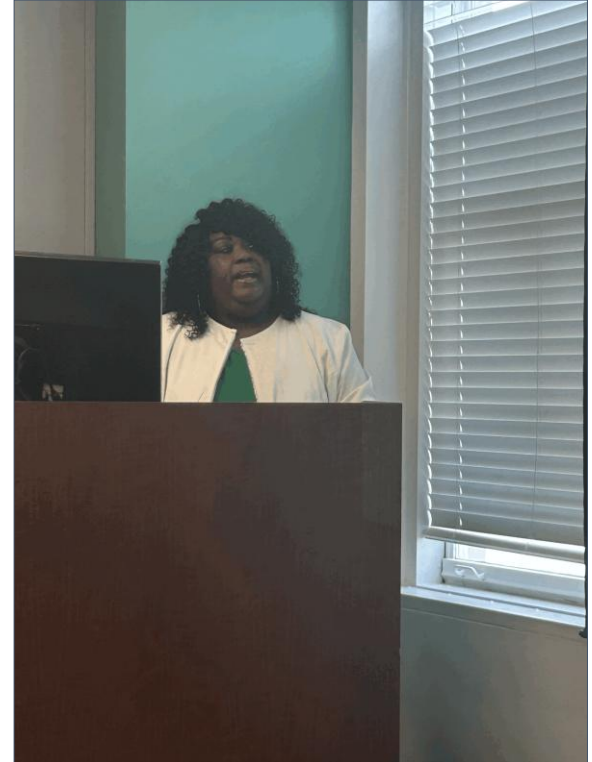


The backbone: 159 county health departments



What do county health departments do?

1. Breast and cervical cancer screening
2. Routine vaccinations as well as Covid, flu and mpox vaccines
3. HIV and sexually transmitted infection prevention, screening, and treatment
4. Minor ailments, chronic disease screening
5. Oral health services
6. Physicals and school screenings
7. Pregnancy testing
8. Refugee health
9. Tuberculosis screening and treatment
10. Diabetes prevention and management
11. Child car safety programming



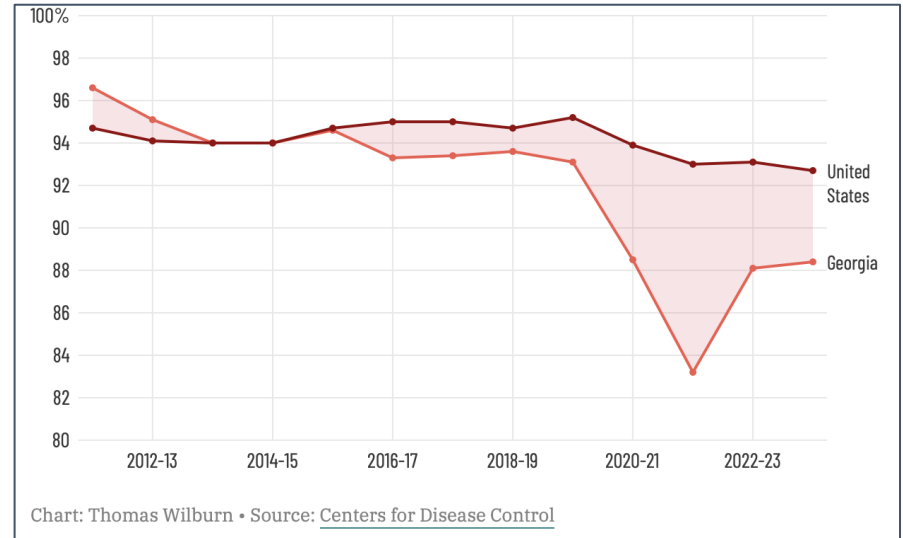
What do county health departments do?

- 12. Tattoo parlor inspections
- 13. Restaurant inspections
- 14. Hotel and motel inspections
- 15. Public pool inspections
- 16. Rodent control
- 17. Mosquito control
- 18. Rabies control
- 19. Issue certifications for septic system construction, etc.
- 20. Lead poisoning
- 21. Birth and death certificates
- 22. Low THC oil cards



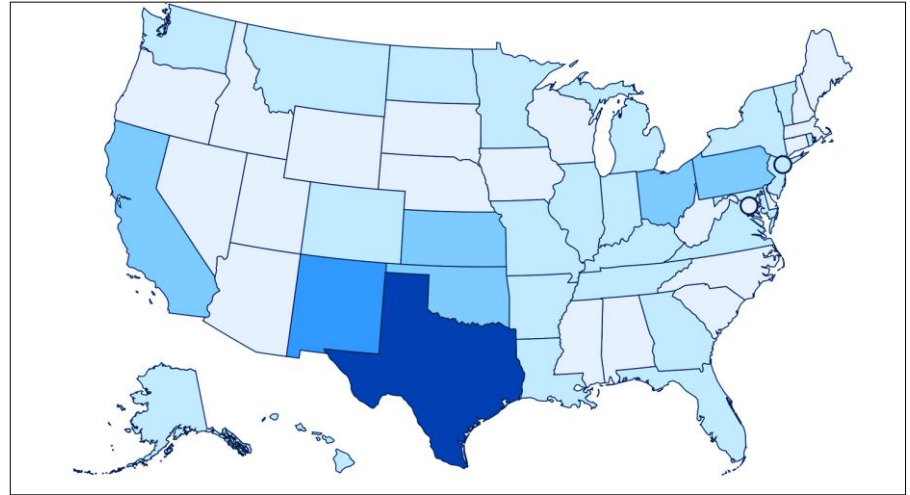
Measles: The big picture

- Eliminated in 2000 in the U.S.
- Herd immunity rate: 95%
- Georgia kindergarten rate: 88.4%



Measles: Anatomy of a response

1,001 cases so far this year
versus
285 cases last year



Measles: Anatomy of a response

Friday, Jan. 24

“We have a suspect measles case....

Monday, Jan. 27

“This is an all hands on deck response ...”

Contained to just three cases in one family



Gwinnett Board of Health members and Gwinnett, Newton, and Rockdale Public Health Department employees speak after the board's meeting in Lawrenceville, Georgia, on February 10 amid a measles outbreak. | (Allen Siegler / Healthbeat)

Other topics we're following



FROM HEALTHBEAT ATLANTA

New Emory survey: Americans agree on public



FROM HEALTHBEAT NATIONAL

Measles misinformation is on the rise — and Americans are hearing it, survey finds

Beliefs about the safety of the measles vaccine and the threat of the disease are sharply polarized. About two-thirds of Republican-leaning parents are unaware of an uptick in **measles** cases this year, while about two-thirds of Democratic ones knew about it, according to a new survey.

By Arthur Allen, KFF Health News | April 23

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