The Scoop!

October 2026

Your Source for DCH Snackable News Bites











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- Meet the HFRD Surveyors
- SHBP's Men's Health Summit
- H.R. 1 and GREAT Health Updates
- Georgia Gateway Cyber Incident Response Team Meeting

and more!







BIG Scoop!

MEET THE TRAVELERS:

HFRD Surveyors in the Spotlight

On any given weekday, the Healthcare Facility Regulation Division's (HFRD) team of 133 surveyors are out in their communities, traveling to their survey locations, interviewing facility employees and patients, keeping detailed documentation of their findings, and doing their part to support the agency's work. This mighty team is responsible for inspecting the more than 30,000 healthcare facilities across the state, responding to complaints and following up on corrective action plans, and helping ensure the safety of some of Georgia's most important places.

We caught up with a few surveyors on the road, and learned a little more about their lives outside of their superhero work …



Mika Adams
Compliance Specialist 3
~ 4 Years Service



Latisha Bolden
Compliance Specialist 3
~ 3 Years Service



Keisha Payne-Holloway
Compliance Specialist 3
~ 9 Years Service



Mike Vongvilay
Nurse Manager 2
~ 4 Years Service

MEET THE TRAVELERS CONTINUED



Mika Adams

For those of us who don't get to see your work firsthand, what does a typical day as an HFRD surveyor look like?

"I prepare the day before for each survey. I review each provider's information, previous survey findings, complaints, and other relevant documents to ensure that I am fully informed before arriving onsite. This role requires strong organizational skills, keen attention to details, effective time management, and the ability to manage competing responsibilities while ensuring that providers meet established standards of care."



What's something about being a surveyor that might surprise your DCH colleagues?

"That our findings dictate a change in operations, standards and continuity of client care."

What do you enjoy most about your work – and what keeps you motivated?

"I enjoy going to different places every week and working with different people. The work is the same, but each environment is different. What keeps me motivated is the awesome HFRD leadership team, my amazing program director and my lovely coworkers."



When you're off the clock, what do you enjoy doing that has absolutely nothing to do with work?

"I enjoy listening to music, spending time in nature, watching documentaries, shopping, fellowship with friends, and solitude."

What's one thing you'd like your DCH colleagues to know about you or the work surveyors do?

"The work of a surveyor is selfless. It requires humility, integrity, good stewardship, and trust in your team. To be successful, you need a servant's heart, compassion and love for your fellow neighbor."



Latisha Bolden

For those of us who don't get to see your work firsthand, what does a typical day as an HFRD surveyor look like?

"A typical day begins with entering a building with a high expectation that Georgia residents are in a safe, health and homelike environment. If we see that regulations are not being followed, we work diligently together to ensure that we investigate and communicate with the staff to get an understanding of their practices. We work as a team to review records and interview families, residents, and staff to make a decision about what should be done. We are also sent out on revisits to give the facility the opportunity to correct deficiencies, and we may have standalone complaints to review as well. Overall, we work hard to shape the future of a healthy Georgia by improving access and ensuring quality to strengthen the communities we serve."



What's something about being a surveyor that might surprise your DCH colleagues?

"Lately, state surveyors are getting 'thank-yous' from administrators for coming in and recognizing deficiencies. Administrators desire the best for their residents and some mention that working with surveyors now feel more like teamwork."

What do you enjoy most about your work – and what keeps you motivated?

"I enjoy working with the team to conduct the best survey as possible, with dignity and respect for each other and the staff in the facility. What keeps me motivated is the smiles of residents and the gratitude we receive for ensuring that they have a safe, healthy homelike environment."

When you're off the clock, what do you enjoy doing that has absolutely nothing to do with work?

"I enjoy spending time with my grandchildren and family. I also love counseling and ministering to my church family and people in the community!"

What's one thing you'd like your DCH colleagues to know about you or the work surveyors do?

"Surveyors are dependable and hard workers who care about our vulnerable Georgia residents. We put in a lot of time and dedication no matter what... to make sure the work is conducted professionally and on time ."

MEET THE TRAVELERS CONTINUED



Keisha Payne-Holloway

For those of us who don't get to see your work firsthand, what does a typical day as an HFRD surveyor look like?

"No two days are exactly alike. A typical survey day involves independently conducting an on-site survey of a healthcare facility, investigating a complaint, reviewing medical records and facility documentation, interviewing staff and residents, and observing the overall quality and safety of care being provided. We are also responsible for documenting our findings, reviewing regulations, and communicating with facility leadership. I also manage the scheduling department, which consists of scheduling surveys for the Personal Care Home Program. I work directly with the Enforcement Manager conducting quality assurance of reports completed by the survey team and participate as part of the Special Enforcement Council."

What's something about being a surveyor that might surprise your DCH colleagues?

"Surveying goes beyond walking through a facility and checking for compliance. It can also sometimes mean being the only surveyor conducting a survey within a large facility of at least 100 residents. We must think on their feet ... and be prepared to adjust and follow the facts wherever they lead."



What do you enjoy most about your work – and what keeps you motivated?

"Knowing that the work I do serves a greater purpose. At the end of the day, it's about protecting Georgia's most vulnerable population of people and helping ensure that residents receive safe, appropriate, and quality care. I'm motivated by knowing that my work can make a difference in someone's quality of life."



When you're off the clock, what do you enjoy doing that has absolutely nothing to do with work?

"I enjoy spending time with my grandchildren and family. I also love counseling and ministering to my church family and people in the community!"

What's one thing you'd like your DCH colleagues to know about you or the work surveyors do?

"Surveyors are dependable and hard workers who care about our vulnerable Georgia residents. We put in a lot of time and dedication no matter what... to make sure the work is conducted professionally and on time ."



Mike Vongvilay

For those of us who don't get to see your work firsthand, what does a typical day as an HFRD surveyor look like?

"A typical day for me as an HFRD surveyor involves traveling, communicating/coordinating with hospital executives on requests and deliverables, investigating, interviewing people, and documenting everything I do as I go. My days do not always start and finish at the same time, so I must be very flexible in my schedule."

What's something about being a surveyor that might surprise your DCH colleagues?

"Survey work goes beyond working with my assigned facilities. I often work with different agencies such as law enforcement, the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services, local coroner offices, shelters, and even animal control to gather the information needed for survey investigations."



What do you enjoy most about your work – and what keeps you motivated?

"Each investigation is different and there is no ONE way to approach each case. It keeps the work fresh and keeps me motivated to learn how to better survey and investigate."

When you're off the clock, what do you enjoy doing that has absolutely nothing to do with work?

"When I'm off the clock, I participate in Hills ATL, a free running group. I try to attend at least two sessions each week, and they provide such a great full body workout. It also a great space to meet new people and network."

What's one thing you'd like your DCH colleagues to know about you or the work surveyors do?

"Surveyors are dependable and hard workers who care about our vulnerable Georgia residents. We put in a lot of time and dedication no matter what... to make sure the work is conducted professionally and on time ."

MEET THE TRAVELERS FAST FACTS

Road-trip soundtrack: music, podcast or silence?

"Anything Mariah Carey or a crime-thriller podcast"
- Mike

"SiriusXM app in car – gospel and jazz music"
- Latisha

"Music. I love a variety of music, from R&B, country, to gospel."
- Keisha

"Music and silence"
- Mika

Go-to roadtrip snack?

"GoMacro protein bars, water, fruit, cashews and almonds"
- Mika

"Frito Twisters"
- Latisha

"Nuts, carrots, and water with a fresh lemon slice"
- Keisha

"Usually an order of French fries"
- Mike

Early bird or night owl?

"Night owl"
- Keisha

"Night owl."
- Mike

"Early bird"
- Mika

"3 a.m. early bird"
- Latisha

Mountains, lake or beach?

"Beach"
- Mika

"Beach"
- Latisha

"Beach. The water is so relaxing."
- Keisha

"Beach. I love the water!"
- Mike

What is something that is always in your car?

"Aquaphor"
- Mika

"Tums for all the fast food, extra computer and phone cords"
- Latisha

"Hand sanitizer 😊"
- Keisha

"My work printer and scanner. It lives there because I never know when I may need it. That logic has saved me many times."
- Mike

AGENCY SNIPPETS

SHBP Men's Mental Health Summit: Called to Lead, Built to Thrive

The State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) continued its support for state employees' overall health by holding its first Men's Health Summit in Newnan last month. Hosted by Kaiser Permanente at The Newnan Centre, the summit encouraged state employees to take meaningful steps in their physical, mental, emotional and financial well-being. Topics and activities included preventive wellness screenings, a physician panel on essential screenings, a candid conversation about prostate health and early detection, sessions on mental strength and burnout, and a financial health discussion focused on caring for your family without draining your future. The day ended with attendees developing personal 90-day Thrive Plans to help them carry healthy habits into their daily lives.

SHBP will continue its year-long wellness support with a Women's Health Summit on October 29 in Rome, Georgia. Keep an eye out for additional details in your inbox or register for the event here.

Scan above to register for the Women's Health Summit





Reminder: SHBP Open Enrollment benefit fairs begin October 5 and Open Enrollment is from October 19 to November 6!

Scan the code to the right to access the Open Enrollment portal.

Team SHBP at "Atlanta's Largest Office Party"!

Team SHBP represented 56 participants strong at the Kaiser Permanente Run, Walk & Roll event last month, complete with matching shirts to show their DCH pride. This annual event is often referred to as "Atlanta's largest office party" and gives employees a chance to connect outside of the office with a shared goal – movement, wellness, and community. Thousands of participants moved at their own pace through a 5K course that began on Hank Aaron Drive in the Summerhill neighborhood, culminating on Fraser Street with Atlanta's largest office party complete with vendors, activities, and a raffle giveaway hosted by SHBP!

"It was a fun opportunity to build camaraderie, encourage physical activity, and represent SHBP in the community," said Alexis Smith, wellness consultant with SHBP.







AGENCY SNIPPETS CONTINUED

Changes Coming to Georgia Pathways to Coverage

Beginning Jan. 1, 2027, changes to federal law under the Working Families Tax Cut/H.R. 1 will bring updates to Georgia Pathways to Coverage™. These changes will affect certain program requirements and how DCH administers Pathways, requiring updates to policies, processes and systems as the agency prepares for implementation.

Teams across DCH are working to prepare for the transition and ensure Georgia is ready to meet the new federal requirements. As implementation moves forward, employees can expect to hear more about what is changing and how this work will support the continued administration of Georgia Pathways.

There's more work ahead, and we'll keep Team DCH informed as preparations continue for January 2027. For more information about the upcoming changes, visit pathways.georgia.gov.

Scan the code to the left to access the website.

GREAT Health: From Funding to Action

GEORGIA RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

GREAT things continue to happen with rural health! DCH has officially completed the Year 1 funding cycle for the GREAT Health Program, with more than $218 million invested across all five initiatives and 116 subrecipients supporting rural healthcare transformation throughout Georgia. From strengthening rural hospitals and expanding access to care to growing the healthcare workforce and advancing technology, Year 1 has laid the groundwork for meaningful impact across rural communities.

In September, DCH also hosted its second quarterly public webinar to share the latest program progress, accomplishments and a look ahead. More than 400 people attended, reflecting the significant interest in GREAT Health and the work underway across the state. Team members can watch the webinar on DCH's YouTube channel.

With Year 1 awards complete, the focus now turns to putting those investments into action, tracking progress and preparing for Year 2. As projects continue to take shape, there will be much more ahead for GREAT Health, and we look forward to sharing the progress, partnerships and impact taking shape across rural Georgia! Learn more about GREAT Health at greathealth.georgia.gov.

Scan the codes to access the links.

recording

website

AGENCY SNIPPETS CONTINUED

Brittany Harris Graduates MCMP



Shout-out to Brittany Harris, a long-term care specialist with the Medical Assistance Plans (MAP) Division, who recently received her Certified Medicaid Professional Level II certification from the Medicaid Learning Center! This certification reflects a commitment to go above and beyond by completing an intensive multi-course curriculum with exams that require near-perfect scores to pass.

"She is a rising star and Medicaid leader in the making!" said Maxine Elliott, deputy director of service delivery and administration for MAP, and Brittany's DCH mentor.

Congratulations, Brittany, and thank you for your dedication to Georgia!

Elliott at HCBS: "Fraud, waste and abuse prevention is an integral part of every decision we make."





Maxine Elliott, deputy director of service, delivery and administration in MAP, recently presented at the Advancing States Annual Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Conference in Baltimore. Her presentation centered on fraud, waste and abuse efforts in HCBS, with Georgia leading the conversation that included representatives from Nebraska, Colorado and Montana as well. She also participated in a panel discussion with team members highlighting proactive measures currently being executed regarding fraud, waste and abuse prevention within the agency's Medicaid programs. The team spotlighted their implementation of Georgia Horizons as an example of commitment to combat and reduce fraud, waste and abuse in HCBS programs.

AGENCY SNIPPETS CONTINUED



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month!

Did you know?
When breast cancer is caught in its earliest, localized stages, the five-year relative survival rate is over 99 percent!

Learn about signs and symptoms, and how to perform a self-exam, at this link.

Scan the code to the left to access the link.

CHECK OUT THESE DCH STARS!



Scan the code above to watch the video.

GEORGIA GATEWAY CIRT:

STRENGTHENING CYBERSECURITY THROUGH COLLABORATION





The Georgia Gateway Cyber Incident Response Team (CIRT) recently collaborated with DCH and other state agencies to discuss the results of the U.S. Air Force Red Team's cybersecurity assessment conducted in April 2026. Cybersecurity Specialist Sai Yenumula and Chief Information Security Officer Will Monahan discussed details of the assessment, recounting how the Red Team attempted to compromise DCH's security systems through physical and digital means as part of the exercise. They concluded the presentation by offering recommendations for improving for next year's assessment.

The CIRT comprises the Departments of Human Services, Early Care and Learning, and Public Health, in addition to the Georgia Technology Authority, and other technology partners, whose mission is to strengthen cybersecurity and incident response across the Georgia Gateway environment. The group meets at least twice annually to share information, discuss emerging risks, and identify opportunities to improve security and resiliency.

In addition to CIRT meetings, the DCH cybersecurity team participates in hands-on tabletop exercises hosted by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which allows participants to work through realistic cyber incident scenarios and strengthen coordination and response capabilities. For DCH, another U.S. Air Force Red Team cybersecurity assessment is on the horizon for spring 2027, where the team will test adjustments from last year's assessment.

MEST INSIDER

Georgia CareConnect Login for DCH Employees Is Live

As Georgia CareConnect continues to grow, we are excited to celebrate a major milestone. Beginning October 1, 2026, DCH employees who currently use GAMMIS (about 25% of DCH's staff) will be able to access Georgia CareConnect using their existing DCH credentials, marking the continued expansion of access to the platform.

What's New

For impacted employees, this represents a new, more connected way to access training, resources, updates, and support. With Georgia CareConnect, users can now:



1. Access Georgia CareAcademy, the new Learning Management System for Medicaid-specific training, job aids, recorded sessions, and role-based learning paths.



2. Stay informed through Resources, which provide direct access to news articles and milestone updates.



3. Receive personalized assistance through Additional Support, including ticket submission via the ServiceNow self-service portal.

What's Not Changing

While features inside Georgia CareConnect are expanding, the following items are staying the same:



1. GAMMIS itself is unchanged. Day-to-day working in GAMMIS - outside of accessing Medicaid training - will continue as usual.



2. You will continue using DCH Academy/Cornerstone for DCH HR and IT compliance requirements.

Scan the code above to access the website.

What's Next

Impacted DCH employees are invited to join virtual training sessions scheduled for early to mid-October. Each session includes a live demo and open Q&A with the Georgia CareConnect team.

If you are part of this group, you have already received communications on how to join these sessions as well as information about your access and next steps. If you are a GAMMIS user but did not receive direct email communications about this milestone, please contact your manager or submit a request on the contact form on Georgia CareConnect.

This milestone is one of many to come. As Georgia CareConnect continues with its phased rollout, additional tiles and features will be available.

Questions?

Submit questions anytime via the contact form on Georgia CareConnect, or browse News & Publications and FAQs for more information.

Final Scoop!

TEAM,



October has a way of reminding us just how quickly the year moves. It seems like we were just setting our priorities for 2026, and now we're already preparing for the work that will carry us into 2027. Before we get too far ahead, though, it's worth taking a moment to recognize some of the good work currently happening across DCH.

One accomplishment I'm especially proud of is the progress we've made with GREAT Health. All $218.8 million in Year 1 funding is now fully committed, completing our initial award cycle. That took a tremendous amount of work across DCH and with our partners, and I want to thank everyone who helped get us here. Now comes the most important part - putting those investments to work in rural communities across Georgia.

As we move into the final months of the year, there are several other important efforts underway. Open Enrollment for the State Health Benefit Plan's 2027 Plan Year runs Oct. 19 through Nov. 6. I encourage you to take some time early to review your options and make the choices that are right for you and your family. Keep an eye out for additional information in the coming days, including details about the transition to Express Scripts as our new pharmacy benefit manager beginning Jan. 1.

Looking a little further ahead, preparations for the 2027 Legislative Session are already underway. Teams across the agency are developing proposed legislation for consideration, and I appreciate the thoughtful work that goes into getting DCH ready. January will be here before we know it, and the preparation happening now puts us in a strong position for the session ahead.

This time of year also brings plenty of conferences and travel, with many of you representing DCH across the state and beyond. As you do, please continue to keep our Code of Ethics regarding Government Service in mind. If you have questions about a potential conflict of interest or the appearance of one, please reach out to our Ethics Officer, Perri Smith (perri.smith@dch.ga.gov).

As we represent DCH and serve others, I also hope we remember to take care of ourselves. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and it's a timely reminder to stay on top of appropriate screenings and preventive care - and to encourage the people we care about to do the same. Taking care of our health is always time well spent.

We have a lot on our plate as we head into the final months of the year, and I remain grateful for the people who keep this agency moving forward. Thank you for the care and professionalism you bring to your work each day, and for your continued commitment to DCH and the Georgians we serve.

