



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2008

CONTACT:
Dena Brummer
404-463-5391

DCH Report Highlights Georgia Counties with the Best and Greatest Health Needs for Minorities

Report kicks off first phase of the Georgia Health Equity Initiative

ATLANTA – An inaugural county-by-county report on Georgia’s health disparities released today by the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) and the Minority Health Advisory Council (MHAC) reveals that the state’s minority populations have poorer health and limited access to care than other Georgians.

“The Georgia Health Disparities Report is a critical first step to identifying and increasing awareness of health issues impacting segments of our population and communities across Georgia,” said Dr. Rhonda Medows, DCH Commissioner. “This report describes for each county key health issues and the major factors influencing health status: income, education, health care access and quality of care.”

The report, *Health Disparities Report 2008: A County-Level Look at Health Outcomes for Minorities in Georgia*, is an account of the health status of Georgia’s minority populations by county. It aims to identify inequalities in health care access and outcomes, and encourage action toward health equity for all Georgians.

“Disparities are not inevitable,” said Dr. George Rust, Co-Chairperson of MHAC and Director of Morehouse School of Medicine’s National Center for Primary Care. “We can achieve equality and improve health outcomes for everyone, if we all pull together and work to make it happen in each community across Georgia. This report is an easily accessible resource that empowers Georgians to begin to understand disparities in their communities and to formulate solutions.”

The report is the first phase of the Georgia Health Equity Initiative, which is a comprehensive long-term effort aimed at reducing racial/ethnic inequalities in health care across the state. DCH’s Office of Health Improvement (OHI) will kick off the second phase of the initiative by hosting “Community Conversations,” a series of town-hall meetings on the report’s findings across the state in May and June.

“We believe this report coupled with the community meetings will prompt real discussions about why these disparities exist, and more importantly, what can be done to eliminate these gaps,” said James Peoples, Director of OHI.

The third phase of the initiative focuses on the Georgia Health Equity Grant Program. The statewide program will provide matching grants to community based groups and organizations that address illnesses and conditions that have the biggest incidence and extreme disease burden on Georgia’s minority populations. Grant awards will range from \$75,000 to \$100,000.

Key findings from the report include:

- A list of 14 counties in Georgia that have the best minority health outcomes;
 - Murray County
 - Pickens County
 - Cherokee County
 - Lumpkin County
 - White County
 - Forsyth County
 - Gwinnett County
 - Oconee County
 - Paulding County
 - Fayette County
 - Henry County
 - Wheeler County
 - Miller County
 - Charleton County

- A list of 16 counties in Georgia have the greatest health challenges for minorities;
 - Fulton County
 - Hall County
 - Jackson County
 - Clarke County
 - Wilkes County
 - Lincoln County
 - McDuffie County
 - Glascock County
 - Macon County
 - Stewart County
 - Quitman County
 - Sumter County
 - Crisp County
 - Irwin County
 - Berrien County
 - Atkinson County

“In 2007, Georgia ranked 40th on the United Health Foundation's 'America's Health Ranking report,” said Medows. “We can not hope to significantly improve the health status of our state as a whole if more than a third of our population continues to suffer disparities in health. It is our hope that this report will inspire actions and efforts to improve the health status of all Georgians.”

The report and state-specific information is available on DCH's Web site at http://dch.georgia.gov/vgn/images/portal/cit_1210/21/33/111684019Georgia_Health_Equity_Initiative_Health_Disparities_Report_2008.pdf.