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Nurses record CEU credits using new 'swipe' system

Public health nurses will find it easier to keep records of their continuing education hours now that the State Board of Nursing has instituted a "swipe" system to facilitate keeping track of their CEU hours.

"This is big bonus for the nurses," Michele Jones, departmental training officer, said. "We're excited about this change that began in January, and we hope to get policies and procedures written for its use."

Ms. Jones explained that the department has been provided a Tricorder, which is a device which reads the bar codes on the reverse side of each individual's nursing license. The portable Tricorder can be battery-operated or plugged into an electrical outlet.

When there is a continuing education program, the nurse swipes the card individually to register attendance. This verification can then be uploaded to the Board of Nursing automatically into its database.

Ms. Jones said, "This system helps nurses when they renew their licenses because they won't have to key in each training for license renewal. We're in the process of writing protocols for how our folks utilize it."

Valerie Cochran, deputy director of the Nursing Division, said, "We want to remind nurses to carry their nursing licenses with them so that they can use the magnetic strip on their licenses to record their CEUs. Of course, nurses should keep all their certificates as records in case there's a glitch in the system."

Distance learning programs are not only offered to public health nurses, so there is more than one option. One important thing is to keep in mind the nurses need to



Valerie Cochran (left) and Michelle Jones of the Bureau of Professional and Support Services demonstrate the new Tricorder which is designed to simplify the recording of continuing education units for nurses.

clearly transcribe their name and license number at the local level. It is hoped that there will be a Tricorder in every county health department.

Nursing directors still need a backup system for checks and balances. In April, Thresa Dix, education director of the Nursing Division, will maintain the Tricorder.

Commendations

Health department employees who are listed here have received letters of commendation recently. To recognize other employees, please send letters through your supervisors or the state health officer to *Alabama's Health*.

Evelyn Jackson
Center for Health Statistics

from Johnnie Mae Gentry
Kansas City, Mo.

Jessica Hardy
Professional and Support Services

from Julie Will
Atlanta, Ga.

Theresa Mulkey
Center for Health Statistics

from Amy Renee Sizemore
Chesapeake, Va.

Kathie Peters
Center for Health Statistics

from Shaeneka Livingston
Mobile, Ala.

Video Communications and Distance Learning Staff
Health Promotion and Chronic Disease

from CDC Arthritis Program Staff
Atlanta, Ga.

Charlese Wright
Center for Health Statistics

from Earnest Allen
Atlanta, Ga.

Alabama Department of Public Health

Mission

To serve the people of Alabama by assuring conditions in which they can be healthy.

Value Statement

The purpose of the Alabama Department of Public Health is to provide caring, high quality and professional services for the improvement and protection of the public's health through disease prevention and the assurance of public health services to resident and transient populations of the state regardless of social circumstances or the ability to pay.

The Department of Public Health works closely with the community to preserve and protect the public's health and to provide caring quality services.

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Informational materials in alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Pilot breastfeeding peer counseling program begins in three counties

WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, supports and promotes breastfeeding as the preferred method of infant feeding. Research indicates that breastfeeding provides many health benefits for both babies and mothers. Alabama's WIC participants receive breastfeeding education throughout their pregnancy and additional support once they deliver their baby.

The WIC program has initiated a breastfeeding peer counselor program in three counties: Blount, Mobile and Montgomery. These pilot sites employ present or former WIC participants who breastfed their babies at least 6 months and can offer support to pregnant and postpartum mothers regarding breastfeeding issues.

State Lactation Coordinator Michell Grainger said, "The peer counselors are planting the seed by encouraging others about breastfeeding's benefits. The peer counselor can say 'I did it, you can too.' They are excited to educate and support other moms."

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants breastfeed at least for the first year of life. At the county health departments where peer counseling is available, nurses and nutritionists distribute printed materials which offer the following services to prospective breastfeeding mothers:

- Tips on going back to work and continuing breastfeeding
- Ways to stay close to babies through breastfeeding
- Ideas for getting support from family and friends
- Ways to get a good start with breastfeeding
- Secrets for making plenty of breast milk
- Help with breastfeeding concerns

For Montgomery County peer counselors Bridgit Broom and Charis Lewis, their parttime employment through the WIC Training Clinic is a calling. Both young mothers say they feel special because pregnant and postpartum women let them be a part of their lives when they talk on the telephone with them. They listen and counsel about infant feeding questions and other concerns. Peer counselors also help the women get additional help from other health care professionals if needed.

Ms. Lewis said, "You develop a special bond with each mother that lets you be a part of feeding her child. Sometimes we may only discuss breastfeeding techniques or milk supply. Other times she may just want to tell you how her day has been. You get to share their anticipation



Peer counselors Bridgit Broom (left) and Charis Lewis regularly contact pregnant and postpartum women in Montgomery County.

during pregnancy and give them support when they talk about their problems. Building that relationship makes it easier to help them when they are returning to work or school. I can relate to the mothers I talk to because I'm a breastfeeding mother on WIC too."

Each prenatal is assigned to one of the peer counselors. The counselor calls them at least once per month during pregnancy. This telephone contact is intended to establish rapport with the mother. The counselors have beepers and can answer any questions 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Incoming breastfeeding counseling calls have been answered as early as 7 a.m. and as late as 10:30 p.m.

The peer counselors contact the mother weekly immediately before delivery and also do follow-up after birth. Any problems are referred to the Peer Counselor Breastfeeding Coordinator. An International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) serves as the coordinator at each of the pilot sites. The IBCLC will refer mothers as needed to their physician, local hospital or lactation consultant.

Barriers to breastfeeding cut across ages and races. One barrier is that the infant has to be taught to breastfeed. Despite obstacles, success stories abound. A new mother, who also has a 9 year old, initially would not even consider nursing. This mother is breastfeeding her new baby and reports it is much easier and more beneficial.

Breastfeeding.....continued on page 4

Arthritis campaign targets West Alabama residents

The Alabama Department of Public Health's Arthritis Control Program is targeting the residents of the towns of Aliceville, Carrollton and Livingston in west Alabama to implement an arthritis awareness campaign during the month of March. The goal of the campaign, titled "Physical Activity. The Arthritis Pain Reliever," is to reach Alabamians with arthritis who have tried various ways to relieve the pain associated with the condition and encourage them to "get physical" by engaging in moderate physical activity for 30 minutes a day, three or more times a week.

Data for Alabama show that 34 percent, or approximately 1.14 million adult Alabamians have arthritis. The Alabama Arthritis Control Program wants persons with arthritis to know that arthritis pain and disability can be improved by moderate physical activity.

"It is important to be able to be independent and to work for a living, to play with your children and grandchildren, and to be able to engage in the activities of daily living. Not only can exercise lessen pain, but it can also help people with arthritis become more active and

energetic," says Linda Austin, director of the Alabama Arthritis Control Program.

The Alabama Arthritis Control Program has also been working with local partners in the area to establish the community-based Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program. This is a valuable physical activity resource that exists in the local communities.

The campaign was designed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to encourage people who have arthritis pain and disability to become more active and to participate in work and leisure activities, which are critical to quality of life.

"This campaign involves the placement of brochures, radio spots and newspaper advertisements that will help persons with arthritis to learn more about what they can do themselves to relieve pain, stiffness and disability associated with arthritis," added Austin.

For more information on the "Physical Activity. The Arthritis Pain Reliever" campaign or the Arthritis Foundation exercise program, please visit the Arthritis Prevention Web site at www.adph.org/arthritis.

Breastfeeding.....continued from page 3

Now 57.9 percent of new moms in Alabama initiate breastfeeding, and the percentage continues going up.

Ten years ago Ms. Broom had attempted to breastfeed her son, but she gave up after two months of nursing and supplementing with a bottle. Her mother had not breastfed, and her family really did not know how to help when she needed it. When she became pregnant with her second child she reached out and found La Leche League which gave her the information and support necessary to have a successful breastfeeding experience. Ms. Broom shared the information with her family and they were very supportive of her breastfeeding her son. She happily is breastfeeding her third child who is now 2. Bridgit and her young daughter regularly attend local meetings of La Leche League.

Ms. Lewis said her mother has been a big breastfeeding advocate who provided encouragement and support. The peer counseling opportunity came along at a perfect time because her sister recently had a baby. She is able to apply some of the information she has learned within the family.

Although some mothers opt not to breastfeed, many are more confident about making this decision after talking

to a peer counselor rather than to health professionals. "I know a lot about esophageal reflux and thrush now," she said, "and Michell (Grainger) has gotten a lot of calls from me."

Anna Johnson, R.D., I.B.C.L.C., coordinates peer counseling in Blount County where breastfeeding classes are planned. Angelia Cunningham, LPN, I.B.C.L.C., is the coordinator in Mobile County.

After evaluation of these pilot programs, WIC will expand the program into other clinics. Each peer counselor has completed a 15 hour training program prior to initiating the program in the clinic. The Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Coordinators provide training to the peer counselors and are available for additional professional guidance. Studies have shown that breastfeeding peer counselors help increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates.

For more information contact Michell Grainger, M.S.N., R.N.C., I.B.C.L.C., State Lactation Coordinator, WIC Program, Bureau of Family Health Services, at (334) 206-5673, mgrainger@adph.state.al.us.



Photo courtesy of Bart Crabtree

Ron Grantland and his wife Joan are shown at his retirement celebration. Grantland began his public health career in 1971 as an environmental assistant for Morgan County. In 2000 he became the administrator for the seven counties of Public Health Area 2. In 2004 the School of Public Health at UAB named him Alumnus of the Year.

Register now for the State Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

“Just as we all play a role in helping our children thrive, we all play a role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Alabama.”

A state conference April 6 titled “Making the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect a State Priority” will explore questions such as: What is our role? What really makes a difference in child well-being? What are the best practices in child abuse and neglect prevention? What programs should be funded? Vice Admiral Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, U.S. Surgeon General, will be the keynote speaker at the Bryant Conference Center in Tuscaloosa. The conference will be held from 9:30-3:30 p.m. with registration from 9 to 9:30 a.m.

Corinne Graffunder, M.P.H., of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is among the featured speakers.

The registration fee is \$50 per person and the registration deadline is March 31.

The Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (the Children’s Trust Fund of Alabama) is the conference sponsor.

For information about the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board or to register for the conference visit <http://www.ctf.state.al.us/>, Children’s Trust Fund of Alabama, P.O. Box 4251, Montgomery, Ala. 36103, (334) 242-5710.

What is your life expectancy?

The department’s Center for Health Statistics calculates Alabamians’ life expectancy, and an Alabamian born in 2004 can expect to live to reach 74.8 years of age. The average age at death is higher for females, both black and white, than for males.

Al Stone, statistician with the Statistical Analysis Division, reports, “The average woman lives about six years longer than the average man, and whites live about four years longer than blacks. Black females outlive white males by 2.5 years and white females outlive black males by more than a decade.”

Preliminary U.S. data for 2003 indicates that the average life expectancy for the U.S. is better than for Alabama, 77.6 years.

These are the Alabama averages:

| | |
|---------|------|
| Total | 74.8 |
| Male: | 71.8 |
| Female: | 77.7 |
| White: | 75.6 |
| Male: | 72.8 |
| Female: | 78.3 |
| Black: | 71.7 |
| Male: | 67.8 |
| Female: | 75.3 |

ALPHA: Celebrating 50 Years of New Beginnings A Future of Continued Commitment and Service

The Alabama Public Health Association will mark a milestone when it hosts its 50th Annual Meeting and Education Conference May 4-5 in Birmingham. Joining in the celebration will be public health professionals from other states in this joint meeting with the Southern Health Association.

Kicking off the conference as a pre-conference seminar will be a Public Health Professional Services Leadership Day on May 3. The Bureau of Professional and Support Services sponsors this event. A reception hosted by the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health will follow from 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Leadership Day is May 3 Conference is May 4-5

The agenda opens with registration and continental breakfast from 7 to 8 a.m. Thursday, May 4. State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson will give his annual address. Following welcomes and other opening remarks, keynote speaker Dr. Claude Earl Fox will address the group on the subject, "Public Health, Are We Big P or little p?" Dr. Fox, former state health officer, is now director of the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute.

A 50th year luncheon celebration will include a tribute to the late Marion Wilford and a presentation titled, "Remembering the First 50 Years." A variety of educational sessions also will be offered to participants twice.

Topics will include the following:

- Alabama's response planning for an agroterrorism event
- Emerging issues in family planning
- Domestic violence
- Communication, inspiration, adaptation
- Spirituality and health
- Bacterial source tracking in recreational waters
- Clandestine methamphetamine laboratories: First responder awareness
- Avian flu, Rift Valley fever and other emerging disease
- Healthy lifestyles and healthy choices
- The disconnect between general health and oral health

After a reception, Bill Wise of Bevilacqua Research Corporation will make a special evening presentation

(from 6:10 to 8 p.m.) titled "Roots of Terrorism" which will cover the history, current status and what the future holds with respect to terrorism.

Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association, will speak at the Aycock Breakfast Friday morning. The day's agenda will include an address from the Southern Health Association. Dr. Michael Fleenor, Jefferson County's health officer, will speak on public health in the 21st century. A second keynote address will be made by Dr. Joshua Klapow, followed by concurrent educational sessions on subjects including the following:

- Obesity epidemic: Public health genetics
- The importance of collaboration during a disaster response
- Reducing workplace violence, Improving workplace safety
- Achieving superior customer service
- Prison HIV/AIDS Alabama policy

Rob Gray of the UAB School of Public Health will teach an onsite class titled "Presentations 101 - How to Give an Effective Presentation with MS Powerpoint." Enrollment will be limited.

REGISTER NOW online at www.alphassoc.org/ and click on Conference. Registration can be done online or completed and faxed to the Bureau of Professional and Support Services

The Conference Hotel is the Radisson, 808 S. 20th St. at 8th Ave., Birmingham. Please make room reservations (\$77 per night) by contacting the Radisson Hotel at (205) 933-9000 or toll free at 800-333-3333 and state you are with the Alabama Public Health Association.



Preparing for Retirement

ERS Retirement Preparation Seminars

If you are within four years of retirement eligibility, you are invited to attend a free full-day seminar to help you plan your retirement with confidence. The schedule and registration forms for the seminars have been sent to all state and local agencies. You may also view the schedule and download a registration form from our Web site at www.rsa.state.al.us. Click the Retirement Planning, Seminars and Counseling Services button. These seminars are for all employees who are covered under the Employees' Retirement System (ERS).

Seminar Topics

Various topics and speakers are highlighted in the seminar program.

- Social Security
- Insurance issues
- An up close look at adjustments after retirement
- A thorough explanation of the retirement options, the retirement process and deadlines, etc.
- A thorough explanation of the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP)
- RSA-1 Deferred Compensation Plan information
- Various retiree organizations will be represented

Remember: The key to a successful retirement is preparation.

Registration Process

Complete the Registration Form. Be sure to select two seminar sites.

1. Mail your completed form immediately to the address given on the form.
2. If your spouse is to accompany you, please indicate so on the form.
3. You will receive a confirmation letter including exact time and location. If your seminar choices are filled or you do not meet the requirements for participation, you will receive a denial letter.
4. If you have not received a letter within 2 weeks of the seminar, please contact us at 1-800-214-2158 ext. 1509 or ext. 1617 to confirm.

Note: Registration is on a first come basis. No faxes or phone registrations will be accepted. If you have questions about the Ret Prep Seminars, please feel free to call 1-800-214-2158 and speak to Judy (ext. 1617) or Maxine (ext. 1509).

Frequently Asked Questions

Where are these seminars being held?

Ret Prep Seminars are held all across the state on various dates. Exact locations will be given in a confirmation letter. Remember: You must be at least within four years of retirement eligibility to attend.

Must I be pre-registered to attend?

Yes - All members and spouses must be registered.

May I bring my spouse?

Absolutely - but please register your spouse.

Do I have to take leave to attend?

Yes - but the benefits from attending will be well worth the time.

People today are spending up to one-third of their lifetime in retirement - PLANNING is a must.

Prepared by the Communications staff of the Retirement Systems of Alabama.

To have your questions answered in "Speaking of Retirement," please address them to:

Mike Pegues, Communications
Retirement Systems of Alabama
135 South Union St
P O Box 302150
Montgomery, Ala. 36130-2150

Calendar of Events



March 6

Plan First Update, 11-11:30 a.m. For more information contact Annie Vosel, (334) 206-2959.



March 7

Diabetes Update: Proactive Steps for Healthy Foot Care, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Debra Griffin, (334) 206-2066.



March 8

Home Health Coding for Alabama, Part 1 of 2, 12:30- 4 p.m. For more information contact Janice McIntosh, (334) 347-2664, extension 400.



March 9

Home Health Coding for Alabama, Part 2 of 2, 12:30-4 p.m. For more information contact Janice McIntosh, (334) 347-2664, extension 400.



March 14

South Central Public Health Training Center, 12 noon-1:30 p.m. For more information contact Video Communications, (334) 206-5618.



March 15

Providing Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Health Care Services, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Annie Vosel, (334) 206-2959.



March 16

Radiological Terrorism: Clinical and Public Health Aspects, 12 noon-1:30 p.m. For more information contact Video Communications, (334) 206-5618.



March 22

Home Health Aides and Attendants, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Brenda Elliott, (334) 347-2664

April 3-9

National Public Health Week. This year's theme is "Designing Healthy Communities, Raising Healthy Kids."



April 6

ADPH Statewide Staff Meeting, 3-4 p.m. For more information contact Video Communications, (334) 206-5618.

April 7

World Health Day