



NEWS RELEASE

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Alabama's health care services are not interrupted by Hurricane Katrina

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Health care providers in the state are working to ensure that individuals from Alabama and evacuees from Mississippi and Louisiana receive appropriate medical care following Hurricane Katrina.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "A partnership between the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Alabama Nursing Home Association, the Alabama Hospital Association and other organizations is working to address the needs of Alabama patients and to offer assistance to our affected neighbors."

Alabama hospitals have bed capacity and staff are available to receive new patients. More than 50 shelters have opened in locations throughout the state and other shelters are on standby status.

Pharmacies in the state have been working diligently to supply needed maintenance medications. Gov. Bob Riley signed a proclamation expediting the process of obtaining refills for storm victims. People can go to any pharmacy and receive assistance with their medications.

"We want to help our neighbors in need and have adopted flexible criteria to accommodate displaced people who need public health services." Dr. Williamson added.

Public health teams are staffing shelters, sometimes around the clock. Public health environmentalists are assessing kitchens at shelters and are helping to advise and prevent any unhygienic conditions. Steps are being taken to prevent mosquito-borne diseases by aerial spraying in high-risk areas. Disease intervention specialists are working to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, social workers and administrative staff are assisting evacuees, and emergency medical technicians have been deployed to assist victims with medical needs.

At the request of State Superintendent of Education Dr. Joseph Morton, the usual requirement of a valid Certificate of Immunization is waived for nine months, and day care center and head start attendees will have 60 days to provide documentation or other history of previous vaccinations.

9/6/05