

Summer 2009

Region 8 Update



From Dr. Guerra...

It has been a year since the last Region 8 Update was published. During this time, Region 8 has been a very busy place. We have responded to three hurricanes and 1 tropical storm, tested over 2000 individuals for TB in a single school district, and investigated the first cases of H1N1 influenza in Texas. These responses have happened while the Region has continued to provide standard public health services in our 28 counties.

In our most recent, and ongoing, response, Region 8 was notified of two individuals suspected of having swine flu in Guadalupe County. During the initial days of the investigation, we learned that H1N1 was a new virus that is very different from what circulates in North American pigs. It has genes from flu viruses that circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and it has genes from avian and human flu strains. While this new virus is transmitted by and to people, at this time, it is causing a relatively mild illness, similar to seasonal flu.

Since the early days of the investigation, Region 8 has identified almost 80 confirmed cases, over 100 probable cases and 377 suspected cases. The Region has also ruled out almost 150 suspects. At the beginning of the investigations, each suspect received a visit from a public health nurse who swabbed the patient's throat, completed a 16 page questionnaire, and identified family members and friends who had signs

and symptoms of the disease. Through this labor-intensive process and with assistance from our partners at CDC and other Regions and programs, we learned about the disease and some of its risks.

On April 23, Region 8 opened its Regional Operations Center to coordinate the response. Staff from most regional and centrally-directed programs supported the investigation by providing operational and logistical support to the epidemiology staff. While the response is still under way, most of you have been able to return to your regular duties.

Investigating H1N1 influenza has been an excellent example of public health at work. Our team has skillfully shown its ability to execute all of the public health essential functions. And the most important take home message for residents of Region 8 and of Texas is that it is important to wash hands, observe correct cough etiquette and maintain social distance to prevent the spread of disease. These are basic public health education messages that have stood the test of time and have helped us manage this challenging investigation.

I am proud of the work Region 8 has done to respond to H1N1 influenza.

In this issue:

Dr. Guerra's Section	1
Regional meeting	2
Youth camps	2
New employees	2
Wellness Corner	3
Suboffice spotlight...	4



Join us as we learn to respond to natural and man-made disasters at the T Bar M.

Survivor: New Braunfels

Make sure that August 27 and 28 are on your calendars! On these days, all regional staff will be convening at T Bar M in New Braunfels for our annual Regional All-Staff Meeting. This year's theme is: Survivor 2009: New Braunfels. and will focus on public health preparedness. Sessions will include: medical special needs, preparedness demonstrations, and community involvement during a

disaster. Speakers include: Jack Colley, Chief of the Governor's Division for Emergency Management; Dr. Lakey and Dr. Morgan.

As at last year's meeting, please dress casually. For our purposes, casual means clean, neat and comfortable, not revealing or inappropriate. Please use your good judgment on this and if you're not sure ask Gale or your supervisor.

If you have not yet already made your reservation, be sure had do so. You can call T Bar M at (800)292-5469, of reserve online at <http://tbar.com/reservations.php>

The Group Number is: dshs rg8

The Password is: staff mtg

Survivor 2009: New Braunfels.
Prepare, Plan, Protect



Youth Camps—Keeping your Kids Safe this Summer **Kassie Rogers, MS RS**

Region 8 includes some of the most beautiful natural areas in Texas. Every year thousands of people flock to the hill country to enjoy the shady hillsides and crystal rivers. Region 8 is also home to a large proportion of the state's youth camps, due in large part to this natural beauty. Residential Youth Camps in Region 8 are located primarily in the Hill Country but there are large numbers of day camps in the more urban areas such as San Antonio and Victoria.

Even in areas with local health departments our General Sanitation program has the responsibility of regulating all the youth

camp. This summer they will inspect approximately 50 residential youth camps, where campers reside usually for a week or more. Inspections of these facilities include the food preparation and serving areas, first aid and nurses' station, pool and waterfront areas, archery and shooting ranges, riding stables, campers' lodging and any other activity areas. In past years, residential youth camps were sentinel sites for Lyme disease surveillance. Nurses collected ticks from the campers and mailed them to the DSHS lab in Austin.

Day camps are those in which campers come in the morning and leave every evening. Examples of

these camps are some Cub Scout camps, sports camps, etc. Region 8 inspectors will inspect approximately 30 of these day camps this summer, primarily in San Antonio and Victoria. Inspections at the day camps involve the food prep and serving areas and procedures, as well as the general facility safety, and activity safety.

If your children are heading to camp this summer, be grateful for the important work that our sanitarians do to protect their safety and health. The General Sanitarian program staff are: Armando Cortinas, R.S., Lane Alvarez, R.S. and Richard Gonzalez, R.S.



We'd like to extend a warm welcome to all new Region 8 staff!

Introducing...

Region 8 has had eight new staff join us during 2009. If you have not already done so, please welcome

- Diana Acosta—Receptionist

- Arlen Bolenbaucher—EMS Special Health Care Needs Program; and
- Pamela Gomez, Marisa Hernandez, Diana Medina, Jacqueline Mercado and Veronica Vasquez—Children with
- Charlotte Hunter—Immunizations

Eating Well for Less

By now, we're more than aware of the economic crisis, and are cutting back everywhere we can. It's tempting to reach for foods that appear to be cheap, quick, and comforting, but it's important to remember that the health consequences of many of these foods can be anything but comforting. Instead, try incorporating a few of these tips to save money and still eat well:

- Shop sales and stock up when

you can. Plan meals around what's on sale that week. Know the regular prices of items you usually purchase so you'll be able to identify a good sale.

- Pay in cash, and bring less than your food budget will allow. That way, when/if you forget items later in the week/month, you'll have some cushion.
- Consider meat a condiment, and use small amounts to add

flavor instead of building your meal around meat.

- Limit the number of times you visit the grocery store to a minimum. This will help prevent impulse purchases.
- Shop with a hand basket or none, rather than a cart to limit purchases even more.
- Visit ethnic markets, farmers' markets, and drug stores or



Breaking Fitness Barriers

There are many excuses for not working out...Here's how to overcome some of them:

- No time? Break up your exercise into multiple 10-15 minute chunks during the day, get up 15 minutes earlier and go to sleep 15 minutes later, or multitask and return phone calls while you go for a walk.
- No interest? Remember that activity shouldn't be something you dread. Consider

nature walks, ballroom dancing, swimming, geocaching, yoga, tai chi, or playing with your kids at the park.

- Too self-conscious? Remember that most people are more focused on themselves than you, and that it's most important you're doing something for your health! Try a workout video or DVD, neighborhood walks, or purchasing some home equipment (such as

handweights and an exercise ball).

- No energy? Figure out if you are a morning or night person, and schedule your exercise accordingly. Make sure to have a small amount of food in your stomach (carbohydrates are quick energy, but don't over-do the portion size). Recruit a workout partner for motivation and accountability.

Support for New Moms & Dads

Region 8 is excited to announce the lactation support component of its worksite wellness program. CDC recommends 4 parts of a successful lactation support program: a private area for milk expression; flexible scheduling; education; and support, and Region 8 addresses each of these.

•The Regional Headquarters is pleased to announce its Moms' Room (Room 213) for milk expression. Field offices throughout the region that would like help in developing their own Moms' Rooms should contact Alexa George.

•DSHS policy already allows for flexible scheduling. New mothers

are encouraged to address scheduling issues with their supervisors. Morning, afternoon, and lunch breaks should provide adequate pumping time

•Education for breastfeeding moms is available from a number of sources. Expectant mothers who are members of Blue Cross Blue Shield can enroll in Special Beginnings (call 800-462-3275 to enroll or ask questions). A Breastfeeding Resource Directory from the San Antonio Breastfeeding Coalition is available in the Moms' Room, and from Alexa. Finally, periodic education sessions on the benefits of breastfeeding and navigating the challenges of breastfeeding and working are

available (contact Alexa).

•Finally, support resources are available in the Resource Directory. In addition, any women with experience breastfeeding who would be willing to provide peer support to new and breastfeeding moms are encouraged to contact Alexa.

We are currently in search of a more comfortable chair for pumping moms. If you have one you might be able to loan or donate, please let us know! Any additional ideas, comments or input are welcome.

Congratulations to all new and expecting parents!

Roasted Broccoli

- Heat oven to 450° and put rack in center of oven. Line a cookie sheet with foil.
- Cut head of broccoli or broccoli crown into flowerets. Leave as much or little of the stalk as you desire. (Estimate a fist-sized portion per person)
- Place broccoli on foil-lined sheet, spray with non-stick cooking spray, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Toss to coat.
- Roast in oven for 20-25 minutes, rotating the pan halfway after 10 minutes. Remove from oven when edges are browned and as crispy as you prefer.



HEALTH SERVICE REGION 8

7430 Louis Pasteur Dr.
San Antonio, TX
78229



Spotlight on...Fredericksburg (Becky Walch, RN)

The Fredericksburg office is located in the Good Samaritan Clinic, a clinic that serves low income and uninsured individuals, and across from the Community Health Center, which provides family planning services and child health care. Most of my referrals come from these two clinics.

My role in the community is wide and varied. With in my office, I:

- treat the most common STDs,
• provide STD testing,
• provide adult immunizations,
• Provide TB treatment and follow up care,
• and conduct disease surveillance.

Outside my office, I serve on many boards, provide health education programs to the community and present at several health fairs.

I present monthly on STD awareness and tobacco cessation at local drug rehab facilities, and hold a yearly STD awareness program for outgoing college freshmen. I have also provided training for drug rehab counselors on HIV and Hepatitis C.

I work with the City of Fredericksburg on their quarterly Emergency Preparedness Drills for such things as pandemic flu and waterborne disease outbreaks, as well as man-made and weather disasters.

I serve on the Gillespie County Health Board. One of the large

Projects that we have sought to achieve is increased indigent health care spending by the county.

I work with the County Extension Agent on the Walk Across Texas program, Healthy Living Seminars for senior citizens, and the Aim for a Healthy Community board, which seeks to reduce obesity in the community.

I also participate on the Western Hill County Child Fatality Review Team with surrounding county DSHS clinics. Our eventual goal for this team is to reduce preventable child deaths in our 4 county area.

Please contact Alexa George with any comments, suggestions or submissions.

Phone: 210-949-2043
Fax: 210-949-2084
E-mail: alexa.george@dshs.state.tx.us

