



July 2023

Dear Colleague:

Legal authority for the Georgia Department of Public Health (Department) to collect health information is provided in Chapter 12 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.). O.C.G.A. section 31-12-1 empowers the Department to " ... conduct studies, research, and training appropriate to the prevention of diseases " O.C.G.A. section 31-12 -2 allows the Department to declare certain diseases and injuries to be reported in a manner and within prescribed times. Under this authority, information about persons with cancer is required to be reported to the Department or its designated agent.

The Department is empowered to determine such reporting requirements. This letter is to serve as a written directive requiring selected information about patients diagnosed or treated for cancer in Georgia to be reported to the Department or to our appointed agent. Individuals and agencies required to report include, but are not limited to, all healthcare providers and facilities located in Georgia, such as:

1) Physicians; 2) Hospitals; 3) Laboratories; and 4) Free standing diagnostic or treatment facilities.

Under the provisions of this law, it is not necessary to obtain individual patient consent to allow the Department or its designated agent to collect information about patients with cancer from medical records or related documents for public health purposes. O.C.G.A. Code 31-12-2a addresses the confidentiality of information requested by the Department, and releases providers from civil liability when releasing information. O.C.G.A. Code 31- 2-2b states that " ... all such reports shall be deemed confidential and shall not be opened to inspection by the public." Only aggregate reports without identifiers can be released.

The Georgia Department of Public Health has designated the Georgia Center for Cancer Statistics (GCCS) at the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health as its agent for the purpose of collecting, editing, consolidating, and monitoring cancer data and its reporting in Georgia. Strict measures are in place at the Department and at the Rollins School of Public Health to protect the confidentiality of the data in your reports; patient names and other identifiers will not be released.

Information about reporting a diagnosis of cancer to GCCS and the Department, including our "Georgia Comprehensive Cancer Registry Policy and Procedure Manual," can be found on our website at: <https://dph.georgia.gov/reporting-cancer>.

Please contact Rana Bayakly at 470-763-8105 or via email rana.bayakly@dph.ga.gov if you have any questions or concerns. I greatly appreciate your invaluable help in tracking and fighting cancer in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cherie Drenzek', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Cherie Drenzek, D.V.M., M.S.
State Epidemiologist & Chief Science Officer

CC: Rana Bayakly, M.P.H.
Kevin Ward, Ph.D., M.P.H., C.T.R