



Adapting as COVID-19 cases rise and a new strain emerges

Guidance for the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia
In effect January 17, 2021



Theology rather than Epidemiology

Epidemiologists and virologists are aiding us, but it is our faith that guides this plan.

Our faith is in Jesus Christ and our goal is to follow him faithfully.

Christians are to look not merely to their own interests, but to the interest of others.

We make that real in a sacrificial love that takes filling hospitals into account and demonstrates to our community how seriously we all need to take this pandemic.

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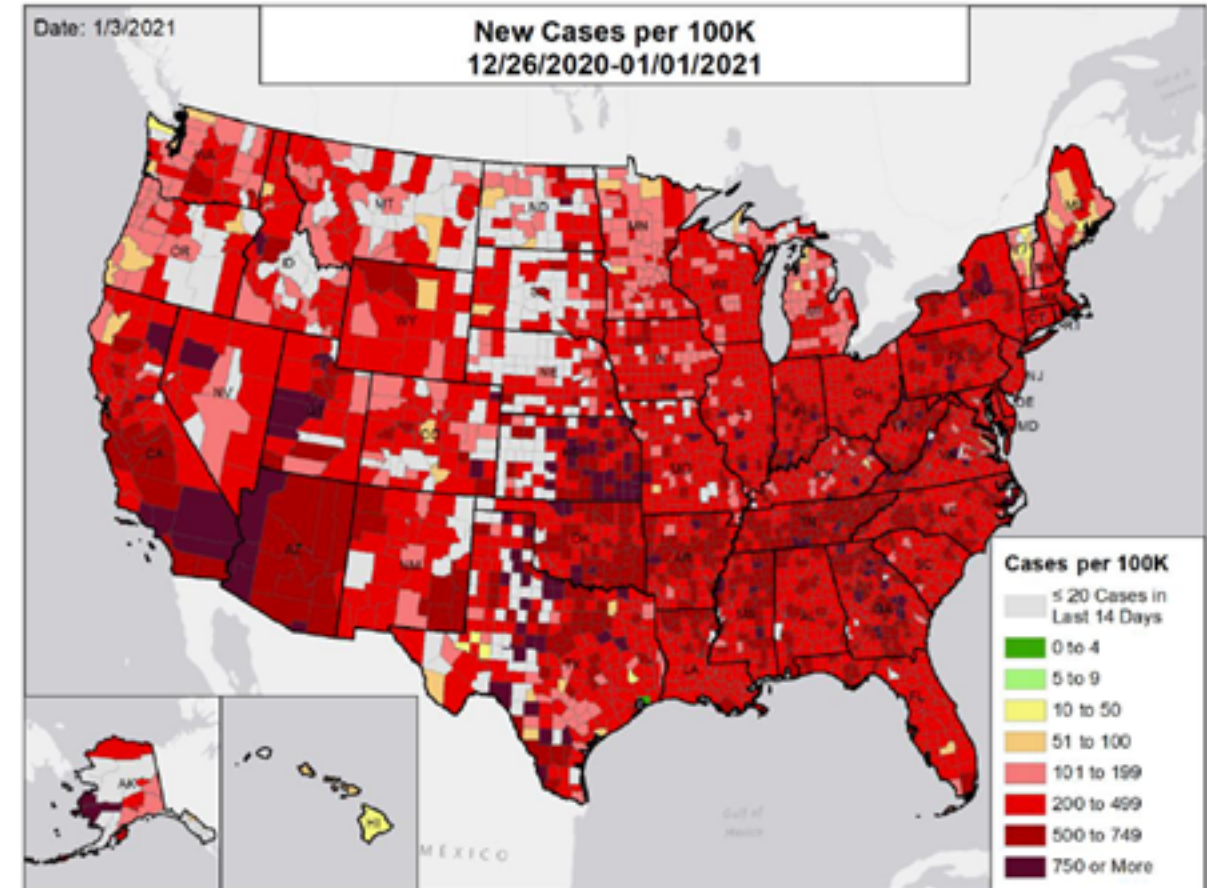
A new strain of COVID-19

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A Quick Look Backward



COVID-19 was first seen as best contained like the flu



We washed our hands and cleaned surfaces and were soon working from home

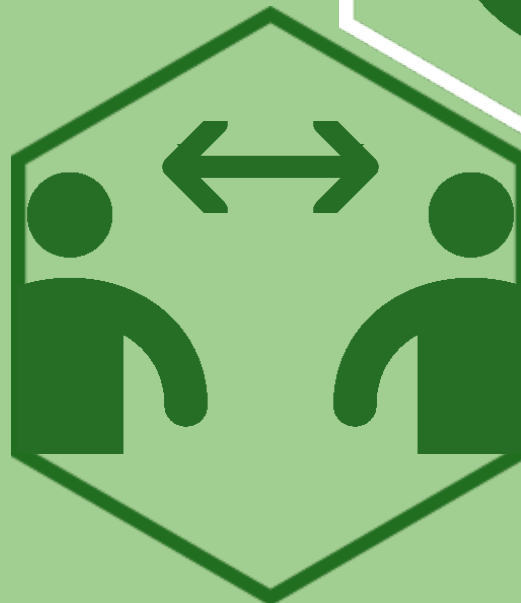
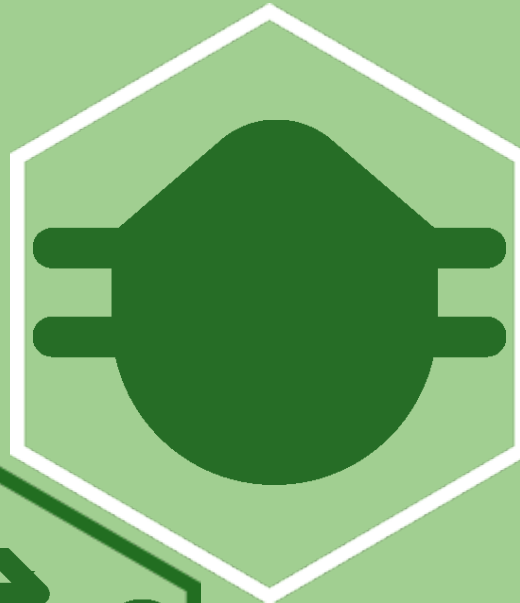


A Quick Look Backward

We learned more about the role aerosolized particles and wore masks and stayed apart.

July 1

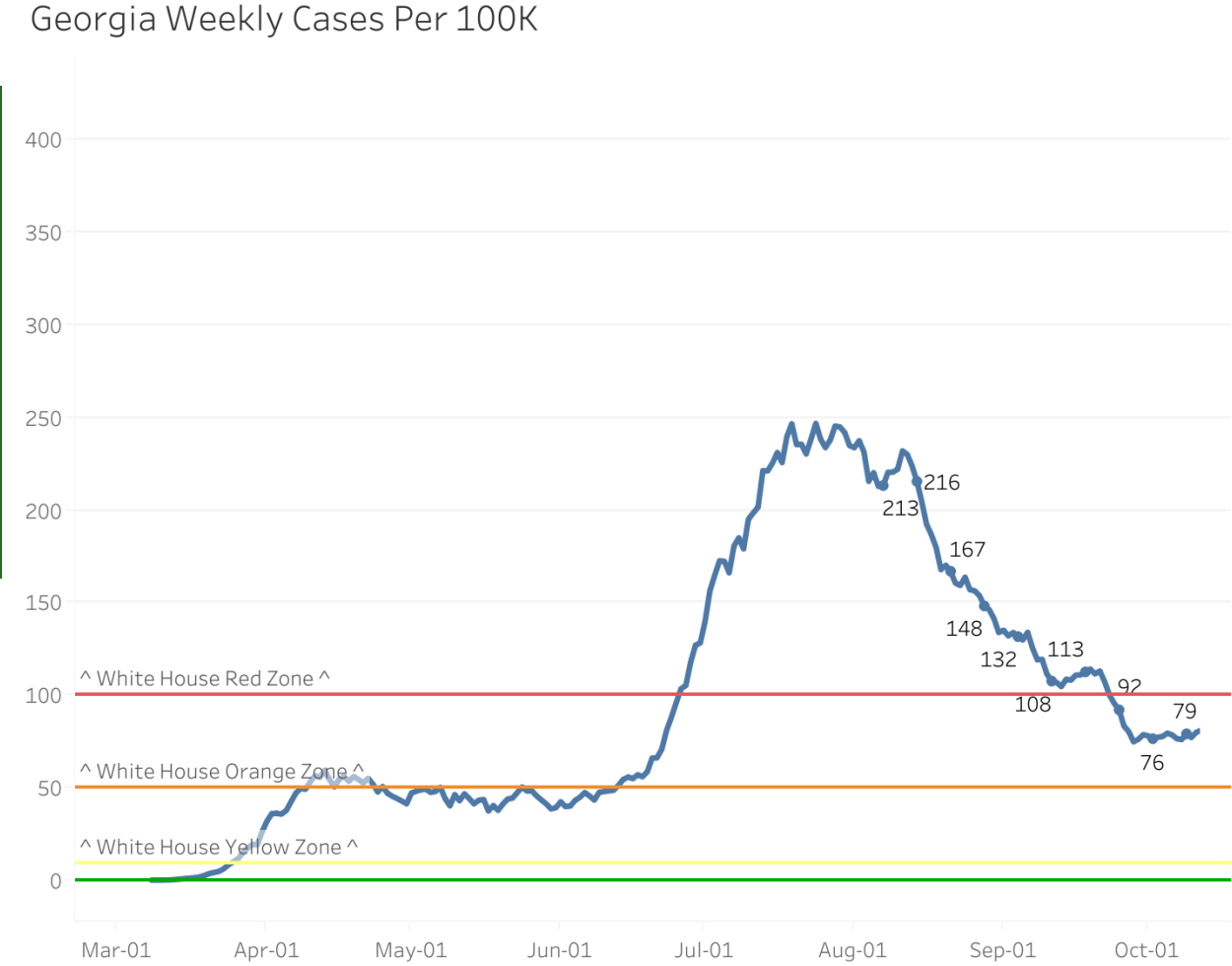
Phase 1 Guidance began and in person worship return in many congregations.



The requirements made for very different worship and not every church took part and many people stayed home.

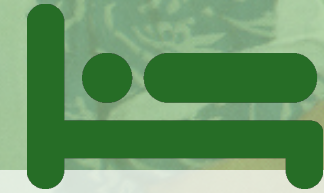
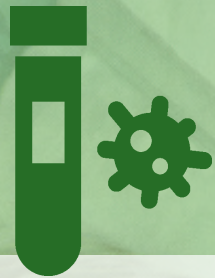
A Quick Look Backward

Case counts went down and the Diocese eased restrictions ahead of Christmas.

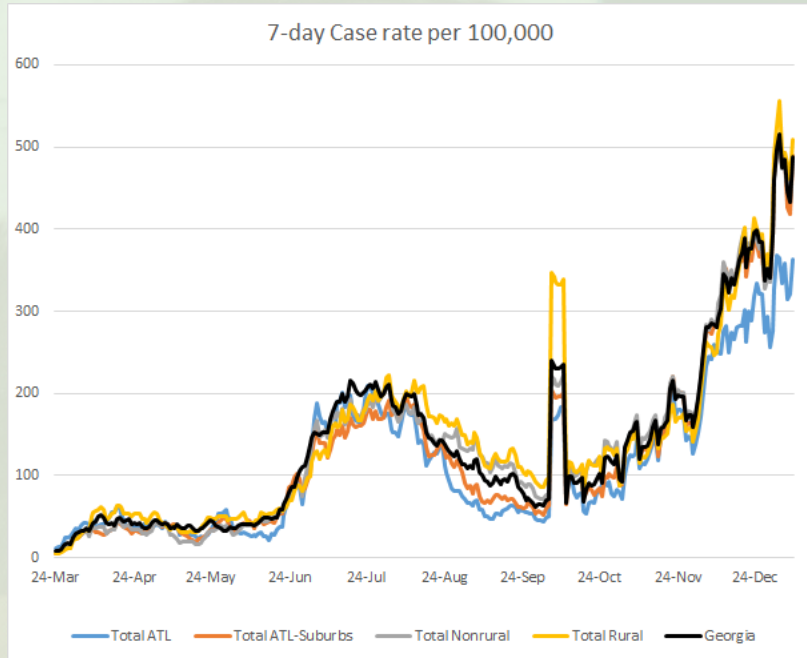


A Quick Look Backward

Gatherings at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year drove a spike.

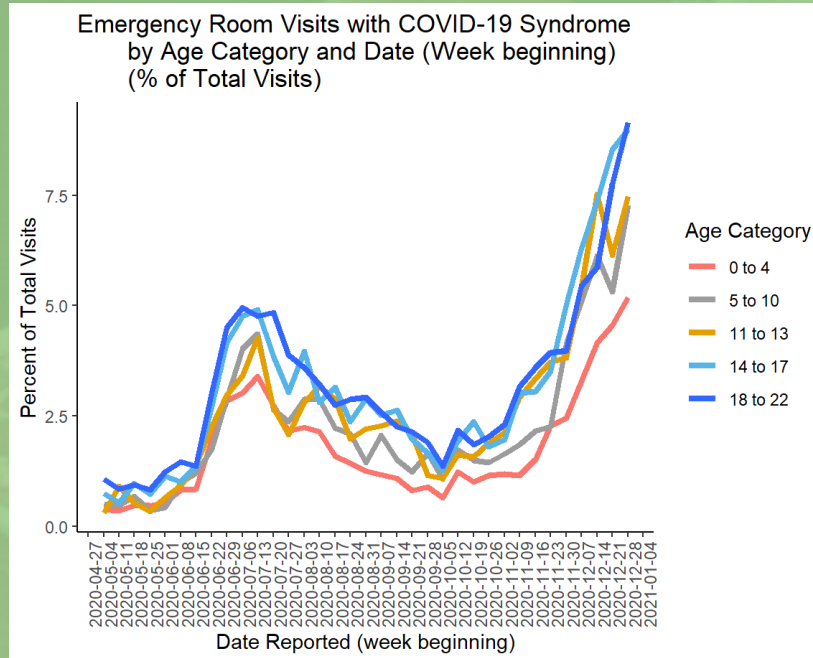


7-day Case rate per 100,000



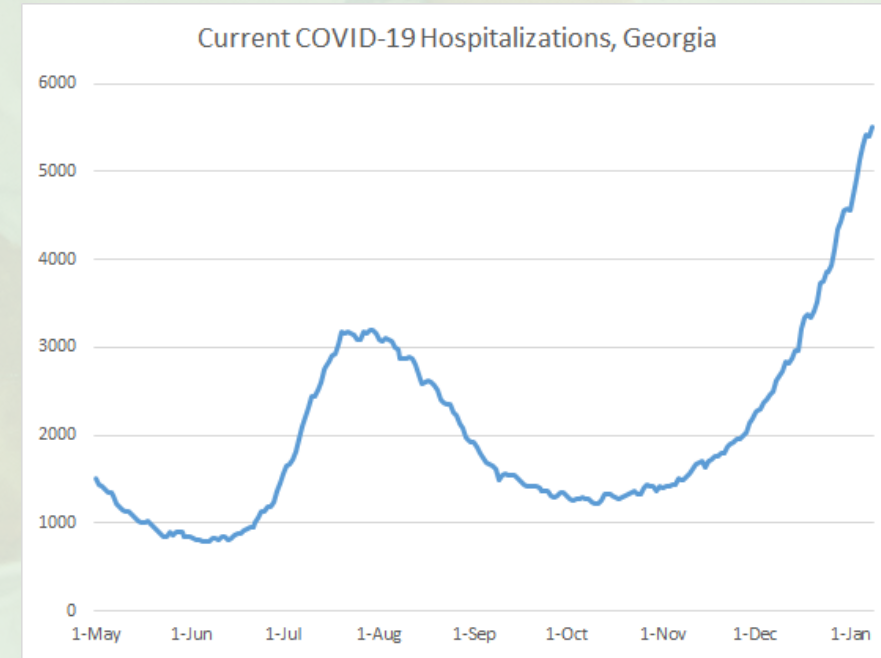
New Cases

Emergency Room Visits with COVID-19 Syndrome by Age Category and Date (Week beginning) (% of Total Visits)

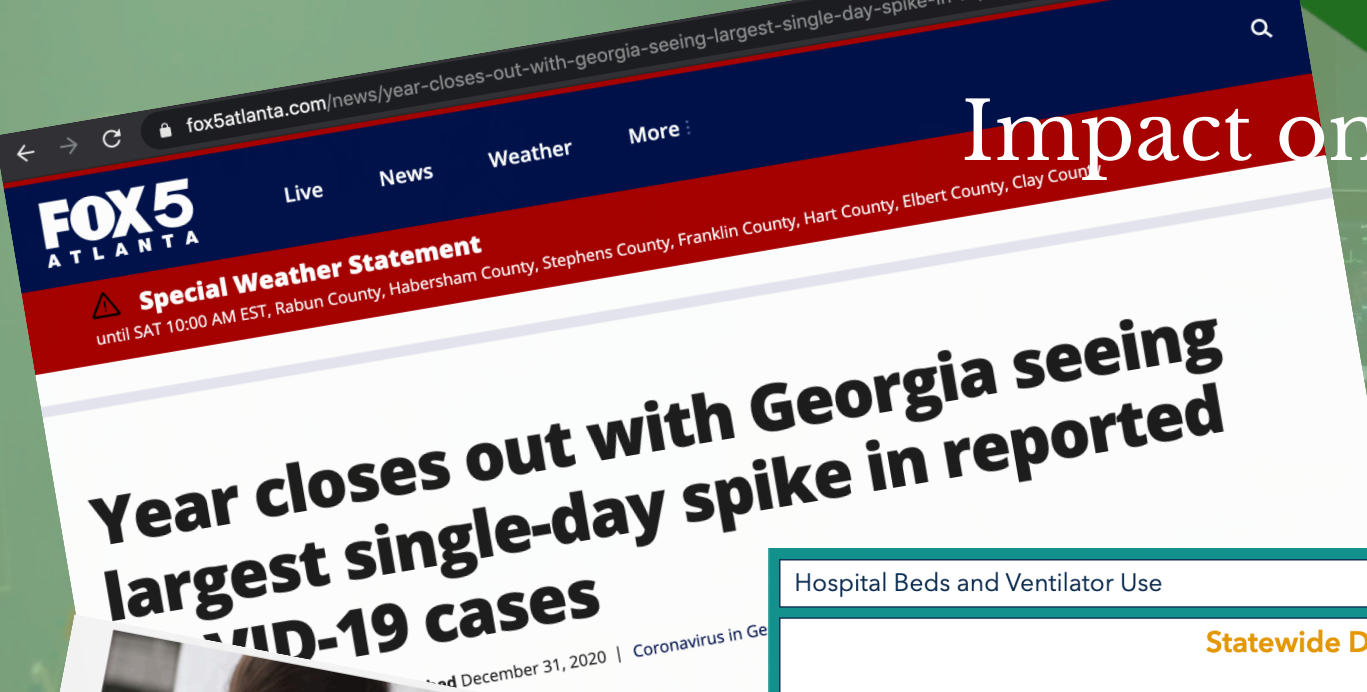


Emergency Room Visits

Current COVID-19 Hospitalizations, Georgia



Hospitalizations

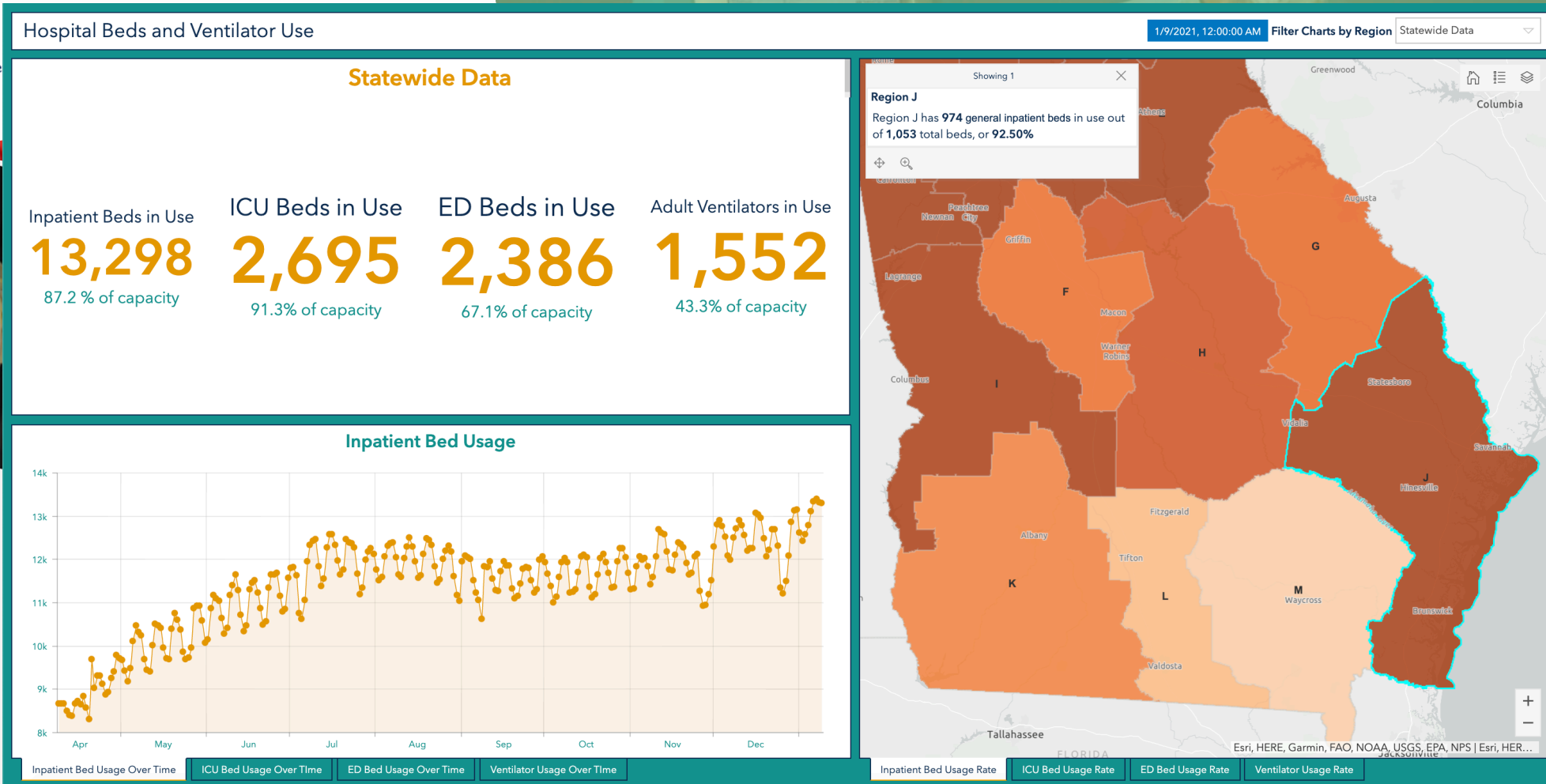


Impact on hospitals

Hospitals in the area of the Diocese of Georgia have sometimes hit 100% capacity since Christmas and most are close to full.



Hospitals say staffing crunch is biggest pandemic challenge
THE PULSE | December 2, 2020 | Andy Miller
Hospitals 697 | Nurses 41 | Public Health 1061
The problems abound: Medical supply vendors are upping their prices, and there are occasional shortages of COVID-19 test equipment.
Georgia hospital CEOs told Gov. Brian Kemp on Wednesday that their biggest challenge amid the pandemic is finding enough staff to treat people stricken by COVID and also take care of other patients.

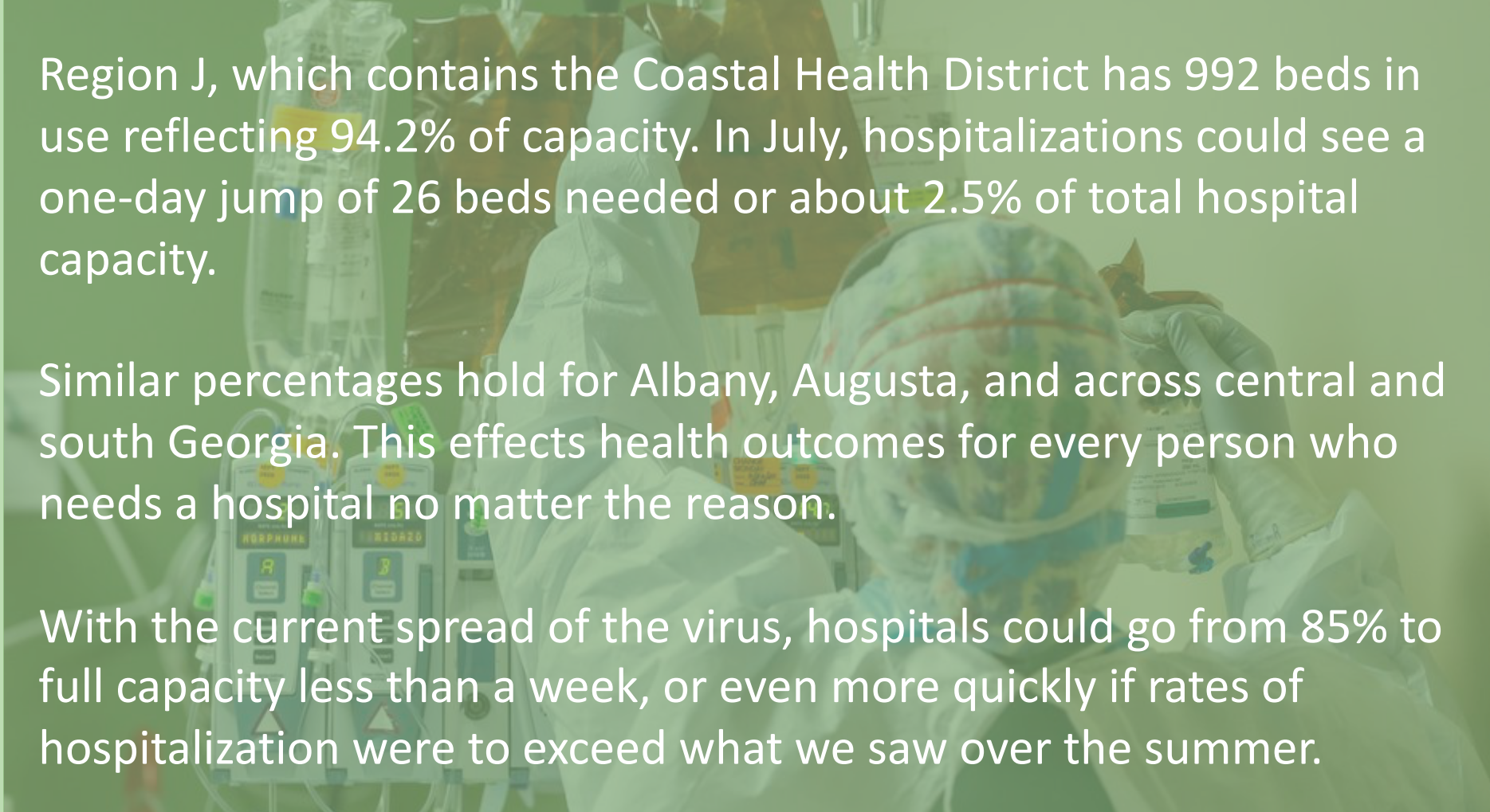


Impact on hospitals

Region J, which contains the Coastal Health District has 992 beds in use reflecting 94.2% of capacity. In July, hospitalizations could see a one-day jump of 26 beds needed or about 2.5% of total hospital capacity.

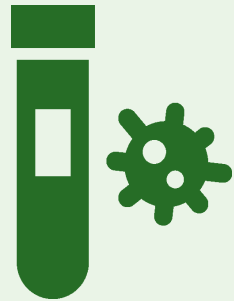
Similar percentages hold for Albany, Augusta, and across central and south Georgia. This effects health outcomes for every person who needs a hospital no matter the reason.

With the current spread of the virus, hospitals could go from 85% to full capacity less than a week, or even more quickly if rates of hospitalization were to exceed what we saw over the summer.



A New Strain of COVID-19

A new, more easily transmitted strain of the virus is now in Georgia and we have no known experience worshipping with it.



This is no cause for panic.

Yet, being more cautious now will give time to learn more about the new strain.

A screenshot of a web browser displaying an AJC news article. The browser's address bar shows the URL: ajc.com/news/coronavirus/the-variant-virus-what-we-know/IZOQGX3JDJDXED2BUB5HMPKIE/. The article title is "The variant virus: What we know". Below the title, there is a photograph of a person in a blue lab coat holding a syringe. The article is dated "CORONAVIRUS | Jan 5, 2021" and includes a credit: "Credit: HYOSUB SHIN / AJC". The main text of the article begins with "Georgia is the fifth state where someone has been found to be infected with the variant virus of COVID-19. Here are answers to common questions about it." The browser interface includes social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Email, and a "Log In" button in the top right corner.

ajc.com/news/coronavirus/the-variant-virus-what-we-know/IZOQGX3JDJDXED2BUB5HMPKIE/

AJC

The variant virus:
What we know

CORONAVIRUS | Jan 5, 2021

Credit: HYOSUB SHIN / AJC

Georgia is the fifth state where someone has been found to be infected with the variant virus of COVID-19. Here are answers to common questions about it.

COVID spread in worship



This is not getting attention from news outlets as proving someone got the virus in worship and not at a restaurant is not easy, but we have seen many cases of transmission of the virus occurring in churches that have tried to offer worship as usual.

We have done well in the Diocese of Georgia and we can make it through this pandemic demonstrating our love for our neighbor in not overloading our hospitals and keeping vulnerable persons safe.

Levels in guidance are based on your area

Cases of COVID in your county and hospital use in your area are the criteria.

Yellow Level

Fewer than 25 cases per 100,000 and hospitals are at less than 85% capacity

Orange Level

From 25 to 34.9 cases per 100,000 and hospitals are at less than 85% capacity

Red Level

From 35 to 59.9 cases per 100,000 and hospitals are at less than 90% capacity

Dark Red Level

60 cases or more per 100,000 in your county OR hospitals are at greater than 90% capacity.
No in person gatherings. Worship offered online only (livestream, pre-recorded, Zoom, etc.)

Levels in guidance are based on your area

See full written guidance for complete details.

Yellow

- 25-50 persons for indoor in-person worship depending on size of space.
- 75 persons for outdoor in-person worship.
- Communion in one kind. Parishioners coming by to pick up consecrated host permitted.
- Some singing permitted.
- Some food and beverage outdoors.

Orange

- 25-50 persons for indoor in-person worship depending on size of space.
- 75 persons for outdoor in-person worship.
- Communion in one kind. Parishioners coming by to pick up consecrated host permitted.
- No singing permitted.
- No food or beverages.

Levels in guidance are based on your area

See full written guidance for complete details.

Red

- No indoor in-person worship.
- 50 persons for outdoor in-person worship.
- Communion in one kind. Parishioners coming by to pick up consecrated host permitted.

Dark Red

- No in-person worship.
- Livestreamed or pre-recorded worship with a crew of up to 10 persons.
- Communion in one kind. Parishioners coming by to pick up consecrated host permitted.
- Singing if soloist or a singers from the same household are the only ones present when recording.

Maintaining Prayer & Holy Eucharist

No matter the level of guidance in effect, churches can be open for an individual or household to register for a time to pray in the church and receiving consecrated host is always permitted.

Praying in Church

Individuals and households may be in the church to pray.

Communion

Consecrated hosts may be picked up by some contactless means.

Our Exit Plan

Vaccinations are underway and an end to these levels can be in sight if we work together.



As case counts fall in your area, we will once again see a drop sustained for 14 days as we did in late summer.

Congregations may move to the lower level of guidance (such as from orange to yellow) after 14 days of being under the threshold for that level.



Worshipping together in person matters so much. This plan already has the end in mind and is created so you don't have to wait for the whole Diocese to see lowered case counts.



*“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.
Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”*

-Jesus (in John 13:34)