

ANNUAL IMPACT



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INTRODUCTION



The South Carolina Office of Rural Health was established in 1991 to close the gap in health status and life expectancy between rural and urban communities in the Palmetto State. We have worked hard to promote investment, opportunity and health within rural communities since then.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated areas of ongoing inequity related to race, age, health status and ZIP code. Our staff, together with our partners across the state, have risen to the challenge of addressing those disparities.

In 2021, the South Carolina Office of Rural Health and the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control embarked upon a national effort to address health disparities and advance health equity in rural and underserved communities. This project is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with funding from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. As you'll see in the pages that follow, this focus on equity has touched every aspect of the work we do, from supporting rural clinics and hospitals, to addressing the social determinants of health and bolstering the work of community coalitions.

We have also accelerated our response to the opioid crisis here in South Carolina and across the nation. SCORH, together with our partners, has made a concerted effort to enhance opioid response efforts in rural communities, and build stronger networks of behavioral health services across the state.

With 27 percent of our state's residents living in rural areas, SCORH believes in preserving the unique character of rural communities without compromising their opportunities and access to critical services. We look forward to continuing this work in 2023 and beyond.

Graham Adams, Ph.D. Chief Executive Officer

SCORH'S IMPACT ACROSS THE PALMETTO STATE



FAMILY SOLUTIONS

25 YEARS OF HEALTHY START

Family Solutions celebrated 25 years of administering the Healthy Start program in October 2022. Healthy Start is a federally funded program, and the SC Office of Rural Health has been a grantee since 1997. In honor of that milestone, SCORH/Family Solutions awarded two higher education scholarships to former Healthy Start babies.

NEW SERVICE INTRODUCED

Over the summer, Family Solutions identified and trained five existing community health workers as community-based doulas through a partnership with Birth Matters. Family Solutions was one of 19 Healthy Start sites to be awarded HRSA funds to certify community doulas.

FAMILY SOLUTIONS' ANSWER TO TWO STATEWIDE HEALTHCARE CHALLENGES

1. Low breastfeeding rates at six months postpartum:

Two nurses in the Family Solutions Nurse-Family Partnership program became certified lactation consultants in 2022. Family Solutions now has three lactation consultants and one peer support consultant.

2. Low return rates for postpartum exams:

Family Solutions developed a postpartum protocol for program participants that all staff could follow for the first four weeks after delivery. In 2022, Family Solutions clients showed an increase in rates of postpartum exam attendance.

What is Family Solutions?

Family Solutions, a program of the South Carolina Office of Rural Health based in Orangeburg, is dedicated to improving the quality of life for parents and children in rural communities. Family Solutions is the home for Healthy Start and Nurse-Family Partnership, community-based initiatives with three main goals:

- To reduce infant mortality
- To improve health outcomes for women and their babies
- To support families through educational programs

Family Solutions serves expectant women, their babies and families, in Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, Hampton, and Orangeburg counties.



PROGRAM PARTICIPANT SUCCESS STORY

Tamia enrolled as a Nurse-Family Partnership client in January 2021. At that time, she was a junior in college facing the challenges of a pandemic, remote learning and a pregnancy. She always showed a great interest in learning all about her pregnancy and parenting, and talked about her goals with her Nurse-Family Partnership home visitor. Tamia completed her junior year, just one week prior to the arrival of her daughter, Karsyn.



Above: Tamia with Kaden (L) and Karsyn (R)

Senior year had challenges also, including a second unintended pregnancy. But she was determined to do her best to complete school and set a good example. Tamia graduated in May 2022, and needed to complete an internship in community health. The Family Solutions staff welcomed her and provided an intense learning experience. Tamia worked hard to complete the internship just in time for her son Kaden's arrival.

Tamia credits her Family Solutions experience and ongoing support for where she is now, working as a community health worker for Clemson Rural Health and planning on further education to become a nurse.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

In the final year of the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP), the SC Office of Rural Health worked toward sustainability of the projects developed throughout the three-year grant period:

BOBC2 – BRINGING OUR BEST CARE

a behavioral health consortium that provides pop-up mental health clinics and provider training sessions in the four communities of Bamberg, Orangeburg, Barnwell and Calhoun counties.

#OPENADOOR

a pilot social media campaign to identify allies and reduce stigma surrounding mental health care. The campaign will launch in Georgetown County in 2023.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

SCORH invited substance use professionals from rural South Carolina communities to travel to Rochester, NY, with our staff for the 2022 Rochester Stigma Summit, hosted by the University of Rochester RCORP Recovery Center of Excellence. From this conference, participants planned South Carolina-specific community conversations facilitated by University of Rochester consultants and staff. Conversations hosted by Georgetown and Beaufort counties made strides to reduce stigma, biases, and negative perceptions around substance use disorder and recovery in their communities. Georgetown County conversation participants also became the only community conversation facilitators in SC through a train-the-trainer event.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SIMULATION

SCORH is developing an innovative behavioral health simulation with expertise from substance use disorder professionals, mental healthcare providers, first responders, social workers, and those with lived experience. This interactive experience will debut at SCORH's Annual Rural Health Conference in the fall of 2023.





Above: Beth Macy speaks at SCORH's National Rural Health Day celebration (L) , Gamecock Recovery administers a Narcan training (R)

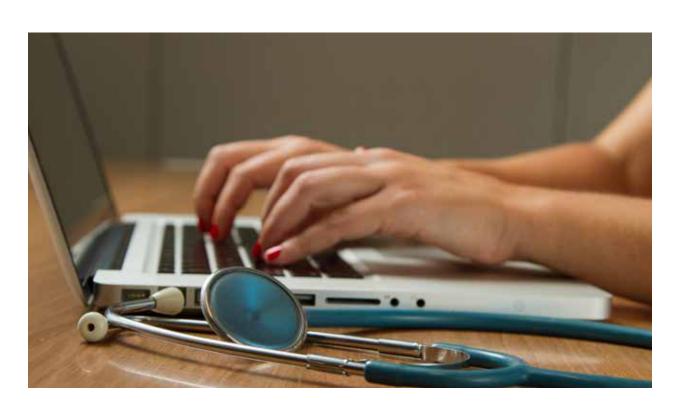
CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION IN OUR COMMUNITIES

- SCORH hosted Beth Macy, journalist and author of "Dopesick" and "Raising Lazarus," to speak at our National Rural Health Day celebration in November. Macy shared examples from her reporting on unique approaches to harm reduction, the value of grassroots community efforts, and examples of engaging non-traditional partners in this work. The event was co-hosted by the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina and the SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS). Gamecock Recovery trained participants to recognize the signs of overdose and administer Narcan. Participants left with two doses of Narcan to have on hand in their communities.
- Three communities Lancaster, Fairfield and Clarendon counties were selected to participate in a pilot program to develop best practices for addressing co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. With guidance from the SC Department of Mental Health and DAODAS, SCORH worked with Zenger Strategies to develop a curriculum for a more collaborative approach to patient care among staff at local community mental health centers and drug and alcohol authorities.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

In 2022, SCORH's workforce development team worked with:

- 25+ Rural Health Clinics (RHCs), hospital systems, and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) to develop job descriptions and post openings on the nationwide Rural Recruitment and Retention Network (3RNet).
- 101 physicians and dentists and 76 advanced practice providers, connecting them to rural organizations seeking candidates, resulting in several of those providers interviewing for or accepting jobs in rural communities.
- More than 200 future healthcare providers in family medicine residencies, physician assistant programs and other health career training programs. SCORH's workforce staff offered regular presentations to these programs, and worked to reestablish relationships with residencies that lapsed during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Healthcare providers seeking resume review and feedback, resources such as 3RNet and HRSA's workforce connector, connections with hiring organizations, and information on the different types of healthcare organizations across South Carolina.



BUILDING HEALTHCARE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES ACROSS RURAL SOUTH CAROLINA

The SC Office of Rural Health worked with the Clarendon County drug and alcohol authority as they sought National Health Service Corp (NHSC) site designation, as well as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designation in the area of mental health. This allows their licensed staff to apply for a variety of federal loan repayment programs, and in turn supports their overall recruitment and retention efforts.

Workforce staff also educated rural practices on expanded eligibility for the federal J-1 visa waiver program, which allows organizations to hire international medical graduates. Both NHSC site designation and federal programs enabling visas for international medical graduates are important tools to combat growing workforce shortages in healthcare. This year, SCORH's workforce team was contracted by the South Carolina Primary Health Care Association to help advance their Health Professions Education and Training Program by working with FQHCs to develop sustainable plans for developing or building on existing programs that empower health centers to "grow their own" healthcare workforce.



Jessica Seel, director of behavioral health initiatives and workforce development at the SC Office of Rural Health, has been elected to the 3RNet board of directors. She will serve two years as president-elect, followed by two years as president. Jessica helped create a behavioral health coalition within 3RNet to develop resources for those hiring or seeking employment in a mental healthcare-related position.

3RNet is a nationwide resource for health professionals seeking careers in rural and underserved communities. 3RNet works through 54 network coordinators across the country to create a 'hub' for available jobs.

COMMUNITY HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

The SC Office of Rural Health aims to address the social determinants of health at the local level through coalition and network building. In 2022, SCORH collaborated with state partners to continue the work of the following programs:

ACCESSHEALTH

The SC Office of Rural Health, in collaboration with the SC Hospital Association, provides technical assistance regarding capacity, data reporting, leadership development, sustainability, and funding diversification to AccessHealth networks. By improving local population indicators (e.g. avoidable emergency department visits, avoidable inpatient stays, and uncontrolled diabetes), networks contribute to improved health in North and South Carolina.

OUTCOMES*

Need and capacity:

- AccessHealth SC serves 36 of 46 counties in South Carolina (28 focus counties plus 8 additional counties served).
- 5,703 new patients were enrolled

Provider engagement:

- 60% of in-network physicians are participating
- 81% of specialty care referrals made by the network are completed by the provider

Value of service:

- SC networks report providing 42,330 primary care visits and 32,696 specialty care visits
- AccessHealth measures return on investment by capturing the value of medical care provided to patients as well as avoided cost to hospitals. Networks report:
 - \$60,958,623 in total value of medical care provided
 - \$23,660,383 in total hospital costs avoided

Network efficiency:

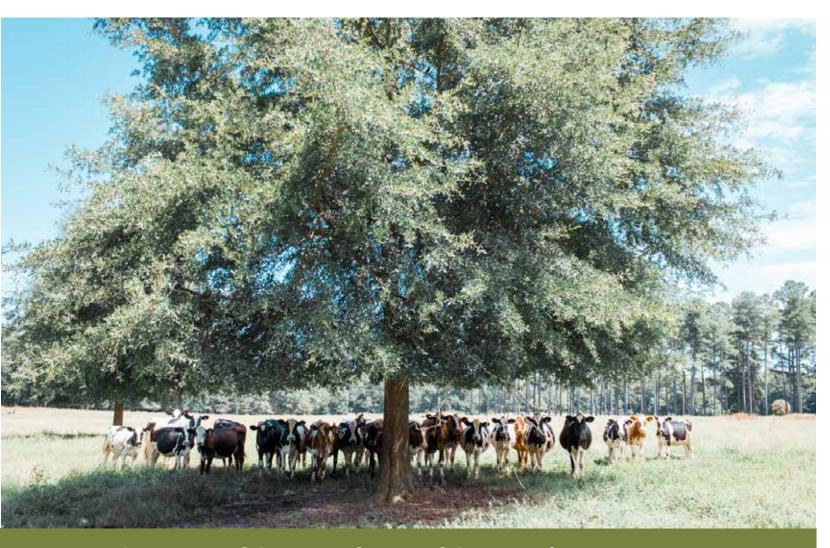
- Nine networks are collaborating with the Center for Applied Research and Evaluation at the
 Arnold School of Public Health (University of South Carolina) to build custom patient surveys.
 These surveys allow networks to collect patient feedback on services and staff, impact on
 patient health and possible gaps of care. This resource will be pivotal in ensuring patient voice is
 incorporated into program design and delivery.
- Networks are participating in a bi-state health equity project to identify and reduce disparities within their diabetes poor-control populations. By disaggregating data by race and ethnicity, networks can zero in on disparities between populations, determine the contributing factors and provide appropriate resources and education patients need to manage their diabetes.
- Networks continue to expand their work to meet the evolving needs of the patients they serve.
 Expanded work and scope include obstetrical services, homelessness outreach, and collaboration with the Best Chance Network, a program that offers screening services for lung, breast and cervical cancer.

What is AccessHealth?

AccessHealth is a statewide effort across North and South Carolina, supported by The Duke Endowment, that encourages and supports the creation of community-based networks of care. The initiative aims to reduce health disparities, improve clinical outcomes, decrease avoidable hospital use, and expand access to care among the low-income, underinsured and uninsured. Twelve community-based networks of care across South Carolina provide access to primary and specialty care providers, care coordination, and case management services through provide networks offering medical homes and timely, high-quality healthcare services to underserved Carolinians.

Networks provide risk-stratified case management services, social determinant of health screenings and connection to resources to some of the most vulnerable citizens of South Carolina. This approach strengthens patients' confidence and ability to manage their health and prevent avoidable use of the acute healthcare setting.

^{*}reporting period 1/1/2022 through 6/30/2022



What is Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas?

The Duke Endowment, in partnership with the SC Hospital Association, launched the Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas (HPHC) program in South Carolina in 2017, as a community-driven health improvement initiative using collective impact as a framework for reducing the prevalence of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

The HPHC approach is rooted in:

- Assisting communities to work together to address long-term systemic issues that have led to poor health outcomes
- Helping coalitions implement evidence-based interventions (EBI) at the individual level
- Leading coalitions to pursue policy, systems and environmental (PSE) changes for greater impact

HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY CAROLINAS

The SC Office of Rural Health, in collaboration with the SC Hospital Association, provides technical assistance regarding coalition development, partnerships, community engagement, sustainability and capacity to community coalitions supported by the Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas program.

This year, South Carolina coalitions have been working to increase their capacity for PSE (policy, system, and environmental) changes, data capacity, and coalition communication. Through June 30, 2022, the following impacts were recorded:

In the community, these coalitions have impacted approximately **132,528** people through:

- 18 policy changes
- 83 environmental changes
- 83 system changes

There was also positive individual change in knowledge, attitudes, and/or beliefs in an estimated **16,808** people.

Adding to this, all 10 coalitions have drafted policy agendas and implemented the use of Salesforce for data reporting.

SPECIFIC COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- **Tri-County Health Network** received a grant from In It Together SC (\$50,000) and was invited to participate in partnership with the Center for Community Health Alignment's Robert Wood Johnson grant focused on equity and alignment with community health workers.
- Wholespire Spartanburg completed their community health improvement plan in partnership with DHEC following delays due to COVID, and has scheduled coalition-wide results-based accountability training to align implementation with the framework.
- **LiveWell Kershaw** has implemented strategies from their policy agenda, including participation in a nationwide initiative called "Move with the Mayor," and passed their Open Community Use policy in partnership with Wholespire Kershaw and DHEC.
- LiveWell Greenville and Wholespire Spartanburg received support from the USDA
 GusNIP Produce prescription award to expand efforts aligning clinical and community partners in
 identifying, enrolling, and prescribing patients a produce prescription to their local FoodShare.

1.

RURAL FORWARD SC

DIGITAL ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM

A Digital Economy Ecosystem (DEE) brings together technical education, job training, leadership development and community planning to develop quality digital jobs, local entrepreneurship, and remote work opportunities to rural communities.

Over the past three years, the SC Office of Rural Health has secured US Department of Agriculture funding for DEE projects in five communities. In 2022:

- Barnwell and Williamsburg built their digital economy ecosystems, with the creation of two new staff positions and additional external investment
- Orangeburg, in its second year of the project, continued to build its roadmap for a Digital Economy Ecosystem
- Newberry and Greenwood launched as new DEE communities

With five active communities across the state, DEE communities are establishing a network to share news, educational offerings, new partnerships, and job posts.

DIGITAL EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

The Digital Equity Collaborative is multisector group representing urban, rural, local, and statewide partners who have an interest in ensuring equitable broadband access across South Carolina. Through conversations, several projects have arisen with the goal of maximizing broadband connectivity and digital literacy for all communities in South Carolina.

SCORH's health equity initiative provided an additional \$50,000 in funding for economic development materials, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education and materials, entrepreneurial support, and office technology.

What is Rural Forward SC?

Rural Forward SC threads together the work of the SC Office of Rural Health by celebrating the unique culture of our rural communities and advocating on their behalf. Through Rural Forward SC, we are leading a collaborative effort to promote what is working well and investing in proven strategies to address ongoing challenges across rural South Carolina. Guided by our mission to achieve equity in the health and well-being of our rural communities, we strive to elevate "rural" beyond the status quo and promote a new mindset about what rural means.



RURAL HEALTH CLINICS

SCORH'S PROVIDER SERVICES TEAM

- made **442 contacts** with Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) in 2022 to provide technical assistance, billing and coding support, and interpretation of federal regulations.
- completed **51 site visits at 17 RHCs in 13 counties** to assist RHCs with federal regulations. Mock surveys are performed at the request of the clinics to assess compliance with federal and state guidelines. This biennial requirement can be completed internally at the clinic, or they can hire SCORH to assist.

The SC Office of Rural Health assisted six healthcare providers as they sought federal designation as a Rural Health Clinic (RHC). These new RHCs serve the following counties:

- Greenville
- Lee
- Oconee
- Orangeburg

The SC Office of Rural Health added seven new Rural Health Clinics to the Choose Well program in 2022. Choose Well is a contraceptive access initiative, privately funded by the nonprofit New Morning. New Choose Well clinics are located in:

- Saluda
- Greenwood
- Oconee
- Horry
- Florence
- Marlboro
- Chesterfield

In 2022, SCORH's 30 Choose Well sites screened 4,654 women for pregnancy intention, and provided 7,006 women with contraceptive counseling. As a result, 487 Choose Well devices were adopted for use and 343 of those were long-acting

Shannon Chambers, senior director of provider solutions at the SC Office of Rural Health, has been elected vice president of the National Association of Rural Health Clinics board of directors. She has served on the board since 2020.



RURAL EMS SYSTEMS

TRAINING NEW COMMUNITY PARAMEDICS

18 new community paramedics have been trained in Calhoun, Lee, Fairfield, and Marlboro counties during the three-year EMS Supplement Community Paramedic project with SCORH. In 2022:

- **73** residents of rural communities in counties without a hospital have been enrolled in the program and have received care in their own home
- These programs have prevented more than **400 calls** to 911 by expanding access to care in these communities.

GROWING THE WORKFORCE

36 EMTs across 15 counties received tuition assistance to begin or advance their EMS certification, through a partnership between SCORH and the University of South Carolina School of Medicine. This comes at a time when rural EMS is experiencing a difficult workforce shortage; these new personnel will help sustain access to emergency, life-saving care for those in need.

RECORDING THE IMPACT

The SC Office of Rural Health received funding from The Duke Endowment for the South Carolina Community Paramedic (CP) Impact Study in 2020. The 60-page study was completed this year and captures the impact of five community paramedic programs in South Carolina:

- Abbeville County Emergency Medical Services
- Prisma Health EMS
- Greenville County EMS
- Clarendon County Fire Rescue
- Richland County EMS

The SC CP Study provides a summative evaluation that outlines the evidence that CP/Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) programs decrease avoidable emergency department visits and inpatient admissions, reduce EMS calls, improve clinical outcomes, and justify the business case for reimbursement of community paramedicine services.

This report will inform and align statewide partnerships to leverage advocacy resources and advance the goal of reimbursement for these services.

What is Community Paramedicine?

Community paramedicine is a relatively new and evolving healthcare model. It allows paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) to operate in expanded roles by assisting with public health, primary healthcare and preventive services to underserved populations in the community. The goals are to improve access to care and to avoid duplicating existing services.

Some rural patients lack access to primary care and use 911 and emergency medical services (EMS) to receive healthcare in non-emergency situations.

This can create a burden for EMS personnel and health systems in rural areas. Community paramedics can work in a public health and primary care role to address the needs of rural residents in a more efficient and proactive way.

Source: Rural Health Information Hub

RURAL HOSPITALS

For three years, South Carolina has ranked among the **top three states** for critical access hospital quality data reporting and improvement through the Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Program. In 2021 and 2022, Edgefield County Healthcare was ranked among the nation's **top 20** critical access hospitals for quality by the National Rural Health Association (NRHA).

The SC Office of Rural Health assisted small, rural hospitals in Abbeville, Allendale, Cherokee, Chesterfield, Clarendon, Florence, Hampton, Marion, Union, and Williamsburg counties to leverage \$2.7 million in American Rescue Plan SHIP funds. SCORH is supporting three hospitals to utilize their COVID SHIP Testing and Mitigation funds for minor alteration and renovation projects.

The SC Office of Rural Health will continue to meet the changing needs of small, rural hospitals to ensure they remain viable in the current marketplace and can effectively care for their communities.



CENTER FOR PRACTICE TRANSFORMATION

In 2022, the Center for Practice Transformation...

HELPED numerous rural health practices create team-based care and provide alternative ways to improve outcomes by:

- connecting them to programs such as the YMCA and the National Diabetes Prevention Program
- educating patients on self-measurement and self-management education for blood pressure and diabetes
- integrating pharmacist services **Example:** Carolina Medical Associates is collaborating with the Y-USA hypertension program to provide additional self-management support for patients with hypertension. This program provides rural residents with access to nutritionists and physical activity specialists as well as chronic disease self-management tools and approaches.

OFFERED

- several in-person workshops and several webbased learning sessions
- 15 webinars on behalf of several South Carolina healthcare agencies

These learning sessions focused on chronic disease improvement, community-clinical linkages, practice optimization, and community-based self-management support. Sessions were crafted to develop new subject matter experts into SC-based speakers who can support statewide learning to address the needs of rural practices, patients, and organizations.

What is a Patient-Centered Medical Home?

PCMH recognition not only improves the care patients receive but also provides enhanced reimbursement from the SC Medicaid program. This enhanced reimbursement allows them to support new services, add new clinical team members and continue their focus on transformation.

FACILITATED practice transformation strategies at 75+ practices through improved clinical care, practice operation, and patient experience, as well as increased capacity for value-based reimbursement.

COLLABORATED with practices to implement new models of care to improve access and outcomes for rural patients, including:

- clinical pharmacist integration
- behavioral health integration
- implementation of chronic care management services
- optimization of telehealth/virtual health services

ASSISTED more than 45 practices with patient-centered medical home (PCMH) development to obtain or retain National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) PCMH recognition. This designation provides rural practices with enhanced reimbursement from SC Medicaid and supports high performance in primary care practices that serve rural patients.



DIRECTED the Advanced PCMH program on behalf of SC Medicaid to promote continued medical home development and improved performance in primary care practices. Advanced PCMH provides \$20,000 to 10 rural practices to support their continued transformation and capacity building.

PROVIDED technical assistance to rural ambulatory care practices on how to optimize the use of their electronic health record to collect and understand performance data. SCORH staff offered focused attention and assistance to rural practices in using data to identify health disparities.

EDUCATED rural health practices on the importance of population-based health and how to address health disparities, in partnership with state agencies such as the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the SC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

SCORH's Center for Practice Transformation serves as a state and national leader in addressing health equity issues.

ORAL HEALTH:

- The Center for Practice Transformation is an active participant on The National Rural Oral Health Initiative Task Force, a group of rural oral health professionals that studies and guides the National Rural Health Association's (NHRA) oral health policy recommendations and identifies technical assistance needs.
- The Center for Practice Transformation works with the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network, built to take on America's oral health challenges so that everyone has an equitable chance to
- The Center for Practice Transformation assists the South Carolina Division of Oral Health to build consensus among stakeholders working to improve oral health in South Carolina.

DIABETES:

The Center for Practice Transformation serves on the Diabetes Action Council of South Carolina, which provides funding to community coalitions to increase awareness of prediabetes and the availability of the National Diabetes Prevention Program.

WOMEN'S HEALTH:

The Center for Practice Transformation's partnership with the SC Best Chance Network was recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a champion of cancer screening for uninsured and underinsured women during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Best Chance Network received this recognition for maintaining screening volume during the pandemic.

SCORH'S PRACTICE TRANSFORMATION CONSULTANTS PRESENTED AT SEVERAL NATIONAL **MEETINGS, INCLUDING:**

- NCQA's Quality Summit (highlighting the practice transformation and improvement by Bamberg Family Practice, a rural South Carolina practice)
- The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) regional meeting (describing the collaboration with DHEC's Cancer Division)
- The National Rural Health Association national meeting (describing the collaboration with DHEC's Cancer Division)

SCORH's Practice Transformation Consultants, LaShandal Pettaway-Brown (top) and Lindsay Williams (bottom)



HEALTH EQUITY INITIATIVE

In 2022, the SC Office of Rural Health and the SC Department Health and Environmental Control committed funds to these health equity projects across the Palmetto State.

RURAL HOSPITALS

5 HOSPITALS – UP TO \$90,000 EACH

Five rural hospitals conducted facility assessments with funding from the Hospital Physical Plant Improvement Project through the CDC Health Equity Initiative.

- Allendale County Hospital
- McLeod Health Dillon
- Hampton Regional **Medical Center**

Capital projects that eliminate, deter, and neutralize the spread of infectious diseases began implementation in January 2023.

EMS - COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE PROGRAM **ASSESSMENTS**

4 AGENCIES - UP TO \$50,000 EACH

Four community paramedicine programs serving rural counties without a hospital completed an assessment of their current agency needs and developed action plans to better address COVID-19 related disparities, and assist patients managing chronic conditions. In 2023, EMS agencies in Calhoun, Fairfield, Lee, and Marlboro counties will receive support to implement their action plans.

RURAL DIGITAL EQUITY INNOVATION GRANTS

7 PROJECTS - \$49,082

Grants were awarded to projects in Barnwell, Bamberg, Newberry, Darlington, and Williamsburg counties that utilize digital resources to address COVID-19 related health disparities, boost rural economic development and contribute to the overall health of a rural community:

- Barnwell County Career Center NFT Museum, LLC
- Bamberg Family Practice

• Kingstree Lions Club

- South Carolina's Rural Innovation Network
- Southern Palmetto Regional Chamber

About South

Carolina's Health

Equity Initiative

South Carolina's Health Equity

Initiative is a part of a national

Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC), supported with funding

Supplemental Appropriations

Environmental Control (DHEC)

program by the Centers for

through the Coronavirus

Act. SCORH and the SC

Department of Health and

are partners in this work to

disparities among high-risk

including racial and ethnic

and underserved populations,

minorities and rural residents.

address COVID-19 health

Response and Relief

• Town of Lane

RURAL COMMUNITY HEALTH EQUITY INITIATIVES

10 PROJECTS - \$586,474

Rural community health equity grants support projects that advance health equity and address social determinants of health as they relate to COVID-19 health disparities. Local health equity initiatives ranged from increasing access to the COVD-19 vaccine and COVID-19 testing initiatives, addressing social isolation and quarantine, transportation, chronic disease self-management, and food insecurity:

- Clarendon County Council on Aging
- Upper Midlands Rural Health Network
- Marion County Coordinating Council
- Self-Regional Healthcare
- Wholespire Laurens County
- Pick 42 Foundation
- SC Association of Community Action Partnership
- Impact York County
- C. Williams Rush Museum of African-American Arts & Culture
- New Alpha Community Development Corporation.

RURAL WOMEN'S HEALTH

FAMILY SOLUTIONS

Family Solutions offered preconception services and post-delivery centering groups during the COVID-19 pandemic.

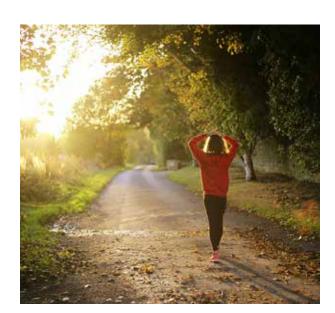
- 28 individuals served through post-delivery groups to assist the transition from pregnancy to parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 37 individuals received educational offerings to partners that may be interested in having children.

RURAL VACCINE CONFIDENCE GRANTS

9 HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS – \$90,000

Nine rural healthcare providers received grants to survey rural residents' opinions and beliefs about vaccines and dispel COVID-19 misinformation. These providers implemented vaccination outreach projects, promoted vaccine safety and efficacy, made vaccines more accessible, developed educational materials and training, and installed storage units to house vaccines.

- Blythewood Medical Associates (Richland/ Fairfield counties)
- Carolina Pediatrics and Adolescent Care (Richland County)
- Coastal Plains Primary Care (Hampton County)
- Bamberg Family Practice (Bamberg County)
- Fairfield Medical Associates (Fairfield County)
- Lovelace Family Medicine (Newberry County)
- Regional Medical Center of Orangeburg and Calhoun (Calhoun and Orangeburg Counties)
- Smith Medical Clinic (Georgetown County)
- St. James Health and Wellness (Charleston County)



LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM NETWORKS

20 COMMUNITY GARDENS - \$60,000

The SC Association for Community Economic Development (SCACED) awarded 20 community garden grants in 17 counties across the state. The grantees' community gardens will target seniors, low-income individuals, students, and African Americans in rural and underserved communities.

- Bell Von Dur Harv (Richland County)
- Blackville Community Development Corporation (Barnwell County)
- Carolina Human Reinvestment (Georgetown County)
- Chesterfield-Marlboro Economic Opportunity Council (Chesterfield and Marlboro counties)
- DOW Farm (Sumter County)
- Ebenezer AME Church (Fairfield County)
- City of Florence (Florence County)
- Greater Lake City Community Resource Center (Florence County)
- Lynwood Family Farm (Lee County)
- Mount Zion Baptist Church (Barnwell County)
- Palmetto Works Community Development Corporation (Horry County)

- Pressley Farms (Williamsburg County)
- Rambling Rosa Farm (Pickens County)
- Seasoned Seafood/Benefit Corporation (Richland County)
- Sumter County Master Gardener Association (Sumter County)
- Synergy Garden at Presbyterian Fellowship (Laurens County)
- Veggie Cupboard Community Garden & Greenhouse (Barnwell County)
- Victory Gardens International (York County)
- Waccamaw Economic Opportunity Council (Williamsburg County)
- Whistle Britches Farm & Garden (Aiken County)
- Winthrop University (York County)







of the organizations are led by women



of grantees are in food deserts defined by SCDHEC

12 HIGH TUNNELS - \$120,000

SCACED also granted \$120,000 to socially disadvantaged farmers (including female, Black and veteran farmers) in rural and underserved areas of South Carolina to build high tunnels.

- Care Connections: Veggie Cupboard Community Garden (Barnwell County)
- Deer Groove Farm (Lee County)
- Dream Enterprise and Company (Richland/ Fairfield counties)
- Dragonfly Creek, L.L.P. (Colleton County)
- Gullah Farmers Cooperative (Beaufort County)
- Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church (Barnwell County)
- STAJEN Farms (Sumter County)
- Wild Hope Farm (Chester County)
- Willrock Farm (Laurens County)
- Windy Hill Farm (Anderson County)
- Victory Gardens International (York County)

In 2022, the SC Office of Rural Health and the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control contracted with partners across the state to offer these health equity projects across the Palmetto State:

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES ASSOCIATION offered an eight module training series focused on marketing and communication to address the stigma surrounding behavioral health services and treatment in minority communities.

- Seven agencies used the training to build and grow their marketing and communication strategies.
- Six agencies made significant changes to their digital, print, and social media presence to provide more equitable access to behavioral health care and treatment.

SCORH led the development of three interagency training modules with the local **drug and alcohol commissions** in Clarendon, Fairfield, and Lancaster counties. The goal is to create a wider safety net of behavioral health services to ensure rural residents can receive adequate and comprehensive services.

SC AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTERS (AHEC) developed 15+ learning modules for rural healthcare providers to promote health equity in rural communities. 400+ health professionals and students earned continuing education credits in curriculum covering rural health disparities, social determinants of health, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

PALMETTO CARE CONNECTIONS (PCC) has provided digital literacy training to 660 residents of Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Dillon, Hampton, Orangeburg, Lee, Marion, Marlboro, and Williamsburg counties, and continues to recruit additional participants. To date, all participants have received a digital device upon program completion, and 21% have qualified for discounted internet service.

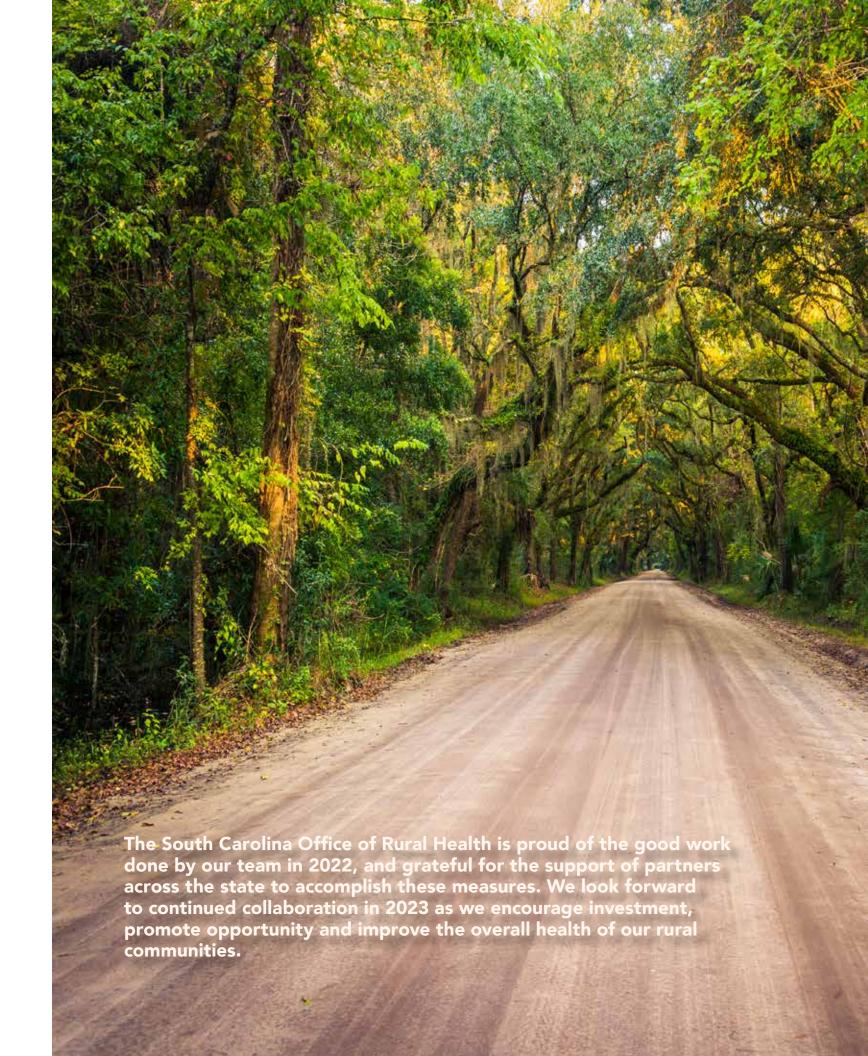
Participants also report reduced social isolation, higher utilization of telehealth services, and easier access to job applications.

THE SC HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION addressed COVID-19 related workplace disparities at these five rural healthcare sites through Working Well, an employer wellness program:

- Cherokee Medical Center
- CareSouth Carolina
- Northeastern Technical College
- Self-Regional Health Care System
- Union Medical Center

These sites completed a baseline assessment and an on-site environmental audit. The worksites will receive additional support to implement equitable approaches to improve their policy, systems, or environments.

THE SC INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH (IMPH) hosted the inaugural session for the Rural Health Policy Fellows Program in Williamsburg County. They engaged eleven local leaders which included county, municipal, and state representation in a dialogue to be more equitable in addressing local needs and decision making. Additional sessions are expected to take place in Barnwell, Darlington, Dillon, Georgetown, and Lee counties.



ANNUAL IMPACT 2022

