

SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

Investment. Opportunity. Health.



ANNUAL IMPACT

2023

SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

Investment. Opportunity. Health.

About SCORH

The South Carolina Office of Rural Health (SCORH) is a non-profit organization with a mission to close the gap in health status and life expectancy between rural and urban communities in the Palmetto State. SCORH has been promoting investment, opportunity and health within rural communities since 1991.

Like its peer organizations in each state, SCORH is the sole organization in South Carolina that is federally designated to address the health needs in rural communities. SCORH works with local, state and national partners to:

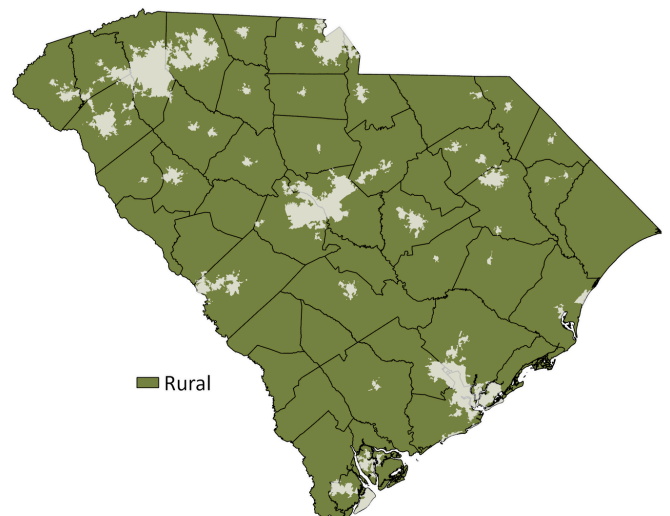
- 1 Increase access to quality health care,
- 2 Improve the social determinants that contribute to a community's overall health, and
- 3 Connect available resources across the state with local needs in rural communities.

To accomplish these goals, SCORH:

- Provides technical and financial assistance to healthcare providers,
- Advocates to local and state leaders to encourage rural-friendly policy, and
- Invests in educational activities and health programs at the local level.

With **32 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.

South Carolina Rural
Census Bureau Definition (2020)



Services & Initiatives

OUR COMMITMENT TO SOUTH CAROLINA'S RURAL COMMUNITIES:
Encourage investment. Promote opportunities. Improve health.

SCORH offers training, education and technical assistance to rural providers. We also empower rural communities to address the social determinants of health on the local level. SCORH provides the following services and initiatives to rural providers and communities:

Provider Services

- Center For Practice Transformation (C4PT)
- Rural Hospital + Health System Consultation
- Rural Emergency Services Consultation
- Revolving Loan Fund
- Rural Provider Recruitment and Retention
- Rural Oral Health Initiatives
- Rural Health Clinic Services

Community Initiatives

- Blueprint For Health
- Family Solutions
- Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas
- RuralForwardSC
- Behavioral Health Initiatives
- Network Development
- Healthy Food Access Initiatives



Letter from the CEO

SCORH is pleased to provide our annual report for the year 2023, outlining the progress and initiatives undertaken by our team to address rural health challenges. As we reflect on the past year, it is evident that our commitment to improving healthcare access and outcomes in rural communities has continued to drive meaningful impact. This impact would not be possible without our community partners, rural providers, grant funders and more! We especially thank all of you who are committed to prioritizing meaningful initiatives in rural communities.



In 2023, in partnership with SC DHEC, we continued our efforts to address health disparities and advance health equity in rural and underserved communities with funding through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. Some of the achievements accomplished are highlighted in this report.

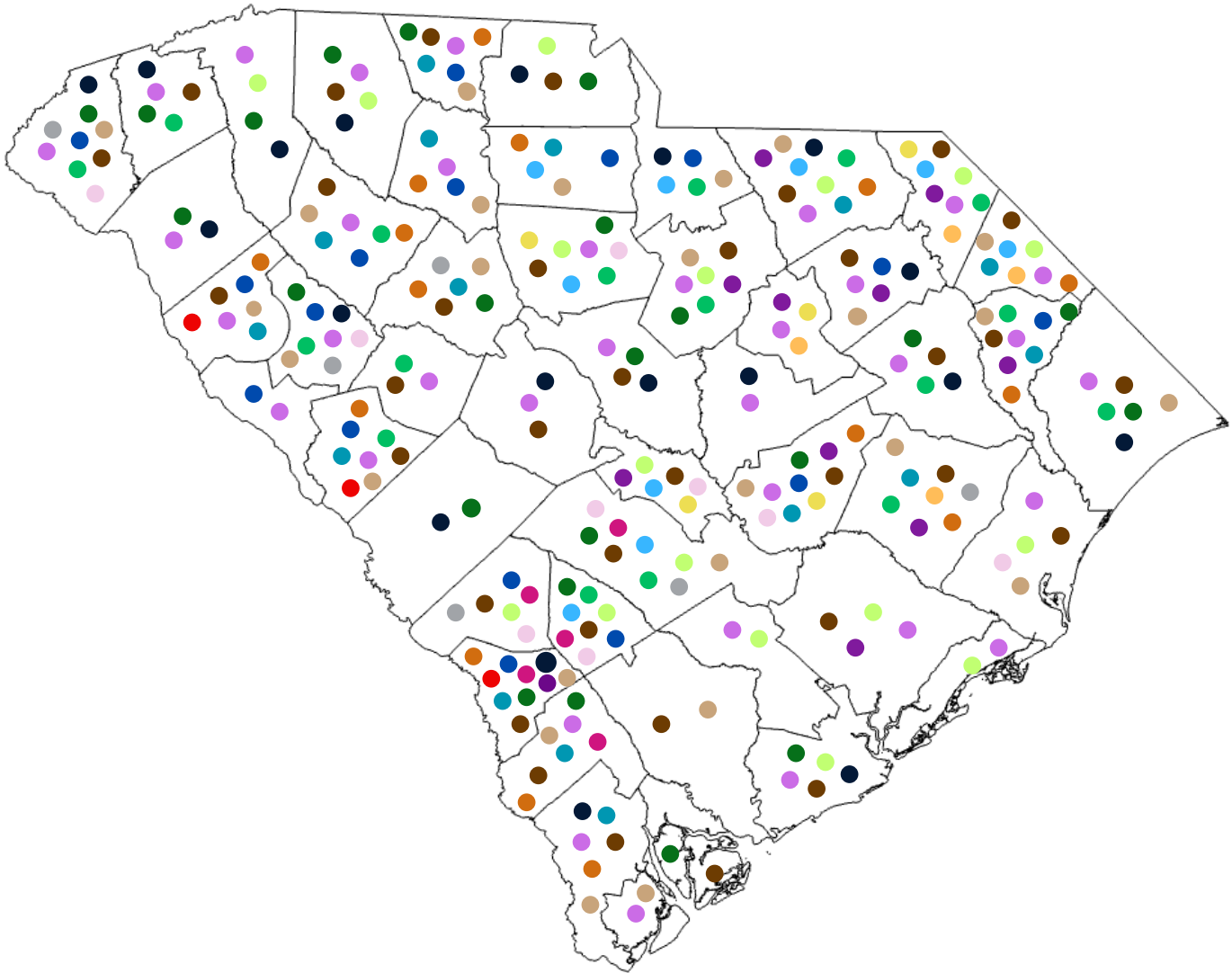
The behavioral health team expanded our work to reduce stigma around mental health and unveiled a simulation experience, "Empathy in Action: a walk in our shoes." In Orangeburg, our Family Solutions team opened the Family Resource Center, providing the residents of Orangeburg County with a family friendly and flexible hub for services from DSS, DHEC, DMH, Hope Health, SC Legal, and more.

SCORH's work spans across a variety of areas, however, as you'll notice in the subsequent pages, our emphasis remains on various strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing the delivery of healthcare services in rural settings as well as supporting the social determinants of health and the unique challenges in rural.

As we look ahead to the future, we remain committed to our mission to close the gap in health status between rural and urban communities. With the evolving healthcare landscape, we will continue to serve and look for collaborative partnerships to build healthier, more resilient rural communities.

Graham L. Adams, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

SCORH's Impact Across the Palmetto State



SCORH Programs & Initiatives:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ● Family Solutions | ● EMT Tuition Assistance Programs |
| ● AccessHealth | ● Rural Hospitals |
| ● Rural Health Network | ● Critical Access Hospitals |
| ● Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas | ● Rural Health Clinics |
| ● Blueprint for Health | ● Digital Economy Ecosystem Improvements |
| ● Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities (BRIC) | ● Small Rural Hospital Improvement Sites |
| ● Choose Well Sites | ● Center for Practice Transformation Assistance |
| ● Community Paramedicine Development Programs | ● SCORH Behavioral Health Initiatives |
| ● State Advocacy Support | ● Workforce Initiatives |

** Dots on map represent a presence of SCORH projects or involvement within that county. **

Family Solutions

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, Hampton, and Orangeburg counties.

In 2023, Family Solutions took the role of lead partnering organization in Orangeburg County for Thriving Families/Safer Children.



Program Participant Success Story

DB initially enrolled in the Family Solutions Healthy Start program 2019. She reported experiencing a number of challenges that affected her mental health. During her time in the program, DB says she built relationships and a support system that gave her knowledge and the tools to help with her children and in her personal life. She gained understanding about her mental health, and she was able to value herself. She now takes time for herself and the woman she has become.

In 2023, DB graduated from Strayer University with a Bachelors in Criminal Justice and is working on obtaining a Master's degree in Public Administration.

In 2023, Family Solutions...

410

Pregnant Women
Served

0

Infant Deaths

463

Program Participants

5

Counties Served

Family Resource Center Opening

The Family Resource Center (FRC) officially opened on February 1, 2024, providing the residents of Orangeburg County with a family friendly and flexible hub for services and resources. The FRC offers services from DSS, DHEC, DMH, Hope Health, SC Legal, and others. Workshops around financial literacy, credit restoration, housing, and others will also be offered.



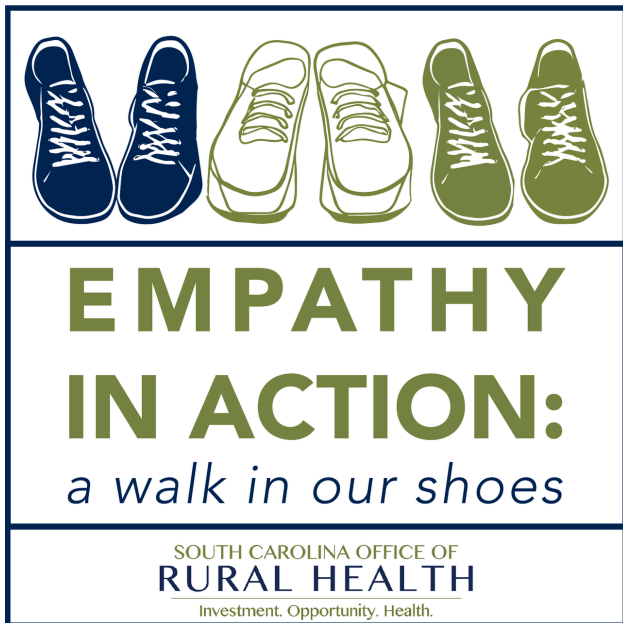
Workshops & Services Include:

- Life Insurance Awareness
- Family Solutions Pregnancy Enrollment
- SNAP Benefits
- WIC Mobile Unit
- Hep C, HIV Testing
- Mental Health Mobile Unit
- Breast Feeding Support
- Tax Fillings
- AND MORE!

The monthly calendar and services provided can be found at: <https://familysolutions.scorh.net/frc/>

Behavioral Health Initiatives

“Empathy in Action: a walk in our shoes”



SCORH developed a new offering called “Empathy in Action: a walk in our shoes,” which is a behavioral health simulation exercise developed and implemented in collaboration with key behavioral health stakeholders across the state. This simulation introduces a variety of scenarios that reflect actual patient experiences in SC related to access to care, stigma, and even death. The scenarios explore the barriers and policies that sometimes cause more harm than help. This activity challenges participants to examine their internal biases and address these issues which affect our friends, family, and neighbors.

At the 2023 conference, SCORH held the first simulation, pictured below. Future plans for the program are currently being developed.

Simulation Community Interest Form

If you are interested in bringing this simulation to your community or learning more about the simulation, please scan and complete the interest form.

SCAN



DREAMS Project

In 2021, SCORH was awarded an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Inspire grant for \$500k over three years to enhance stigma reduction and recovery friendly workplaces. The (D)eveloping (R)ecovery-Supportive (E)mployment in the (A)ppalachian (M)ountain Region of (S)outh Carolina (DREAMS) project will build capacity for and establish connections to recovery-supportive employment in Cherokee, Pickens, and Union Counties. This project will consist of three aligned, integrated activities that will impact individuals as well as regional employers in South Carolina's Upstate Appalachian region.

1

Engage employers to reduce substance use disorder (SUD) and SUD recovery stigma.

2

Connect individuals in recovery to job resources and employers.

3

Develop a stigma reduction curriculum and implementation guide for employers across the Appalachian region.

Community Conversations

Community Conversations are workshops developed and made available through the University of Rochester Medicine Recovery Center of Excellence for participants to explore Substance Use Disorder (SUD) stigma, how to support people and families living with SUD, and how to work together in their communities to reduce stigma.

SCORH was awarded a subcontract with Prisma Health to assist in the implementation of their HRSA Rural Community Opioid Response Program. SCORH supported the Community Conversation program to expand the mobile medication assisted treatment (MAT) services in four rural counties. This program addresses the stigma and misinformation surrounding addiction and recovery. Utilizing this national best practice, trainings were offered in Oconee, Laurens, Greenwood and Abbeville.

In Fall 2023, SCORH also launched a two-year grant initiative awarded by the SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare to host Community Conversation workshops centered on behavioral health and stigma reduction. Again, using a national best practice, SCORH delivered these training to identified AccessHealth programs, community partners and rural health networks in Spartanburg, Lancaster and Florence counties. AccessHealth networks play an integral role in the case management of uninsured and underinsured patients which often includes those experiencing behavioral health challenges.

Workforce Development

SCPHA Health Professional Education and Training Program

SCORH's workforce team continued their partnership with 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.

All FQHCs within the program received information, **14** received technical assistance and **8** are in various stages of completion.

3RNET Recruitment and Retention Academy State Sponsorship

This sponsorship allows SCORH to invite unlimited SC facilities (Federal Qualified Health Centers, Critical Access Hospitals, Rural Health Clinics and others) interested in learning more about recruitment and retention best practices specific to rural and underserved areas at no cost to the facility.

421

Healthcare Professionals Referred

111

Residents Reached

Health Equity Initiative

What is SC Health Equity Initiative?

Funded in 2022, South Carolina's Health Equity Initiative is a part of a national program with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), supported with funding through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. SCORH and the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC) are partners in this work to address COVID-19 health disparities among high-risk and underserved populations, including racial and ethnic minorities and rural residents.

SCORH and the SC DHEC committed funds to these health equity projects across the Palmetto State.

- Physical Plant Improvements of Rural Hospitals
- EMS - Community Paramedicine Program Assessments
- Rural Digital Equity Innovation Grants
- Rural Community Health Equity Initiatives
- Rural Vaccine Confidence Grants
- Rural Women's Health
- Local Food System Networks
- Behavioral Health Services Associations Mobile Training Series
- AHEC Rural Health Providers Learning Modules
- Palmetto Care Connections Digital Literacy Trainings
- SC Hospital Association COVID-19 Workplace Disparities Assessments
- SC Insitute of Medicine & Public Health Rural Policy Fellows Program



Strategy Snapshot 2023

1

Expand existing and/or develop new mitigation and prevention resources and services to reduce COVID-19 related disparities among populations at higher risk and that are underserved.

676

Resources Delivered

2

Increase improvements or assessments for data collection and reporting for populations experiencing a disproportionate burden of COVID-19 infection, severe illness, and death to guide the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

45

Total Data Improvements & Assessments

3

Build, leverage, and expand infrastructure support for COVID-19 prevention and control among populations that are at higher risk and underserved.

34

Improvements to Infrastructure

4

Mobilize partners and collaborators to advance health equity and address social determinants of health as they relate to COVID-19 health disparities among populations at higher risk and that are underserved.

127

Total Patnerships

Partners

SC Institute of Medicine and Public Health
SC Area Health Education Consortium
Behavioral Health Services Association
Palmetto Care Connections

SC Association for Community Economic Development
SC Hospital Association and Alliance for a Healthier SC

Community Health Transformation

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. SCORH, in collaboration with the SC Hospital Association (SCHA), provides technical assistance (TA) regarding capacity, data reporting, leadership development, sustainability, and funding diversification to AccessHealth networks serving 23,337 enrollees in SC. 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 counties in South Carolina
- 5,339 new patients were enrolled to receive network services in the most recent 6-month reporting period

Provider engagement:

- 65% of physicians within network service areas are participating with network services
- 74% of specialty care referrals made by the network are completed by the provider

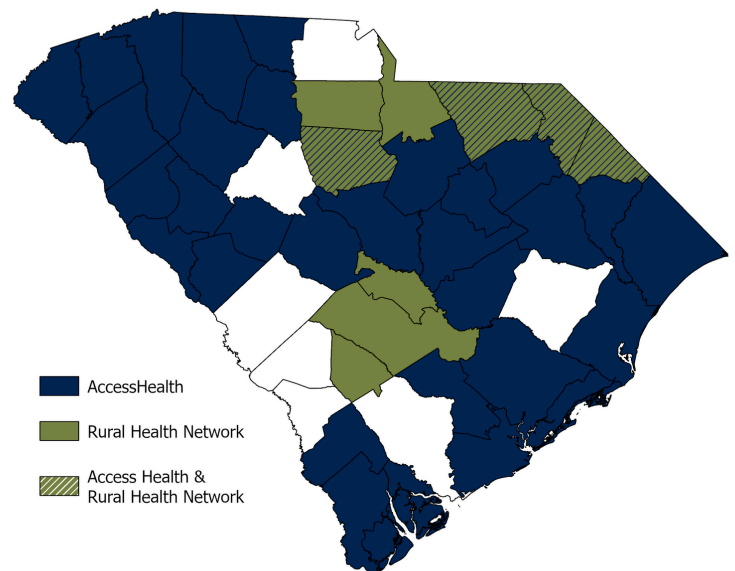
Value of service:

- SC networks report providing 82,062 primary care visits and 62,809 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:





- \$125,612,730 in total value of medical care provided
- \$47,406,941 in total hospital costs avoided

**All figures referenced above are for the combined reporting period of 7/1/2022 through 6/30/2023*





**Technical assistance delivered by
SCORH supports AccessHealth networks with:**

	Collaboration between networks and the Center for Applied Research and Evaluation at the Arnold School of Public Health (University of South Carolina) to conduct client surveys that incorporate patient voice into program design and delivery.
	Sustainability of networks through two newly established bodies of work including the Community Health Alignment Initiative (CHAI) in partnership with SC Department of Health and Human Services and the Center for Community Health Alignment and the Cardiovascular Health Learning Collaborative in partnership with the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), Division of Diabetes and Heart Disease Management.
	The alignment, mutual reinforcement and collective impact of the Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas (HPHC) and AccessHealth programs in managing chronic conditions and encouraging healthy eating and active living.
	Reach and scope of community health workers (CHWs) as a key role in providing risk-stratified case management, social determinant of health (SDOH) screenings and resources, and patient education.

The Duke Endowment, in partnership with the SCHA, 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. South Carolina HPHC coalitions have continued to work to increase their capacity for PSE (policy, system, and environmental) changes, data capacity, and coalition communication. The following statewide milestones were achieved in 2023:

- 1 Implemented **105** interventions that produced **141** policy changes, **448** environment changes, and **501** system changes
- 2 **1,659,402** people were impacted by this work
- 3 Estimated **26,377** people changed their individual knowledge and health related behaviors and **506** people achieved health status changes
- 4 Onboarded **4** new HPHC coalitions in Anderson, Chester, Horry, and Richland counties

Coalition Spotlight:

Barnwell County HEALing Partners launched the Well Community Collaborative & Pantry (The Well) in January 2023 and since that time has:

- Increased food access to than **2,600** families and **6,400** individuals
- Launched Barnwell Farmers Market and hired a market manager who has welcomed over **4,400** attendees
- Impacted **160** adults and over **100** children with their Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition, SNAP, Healthy Bucks, and Nutrition Kitchen programs
- Provided Wellness Masterclasses focusing on building physical and nutritional wellness, mental wellness, and financial wellness
- Partnered with Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church to provide the Faithful Families, Thriving Communities program where 100% of the participants made a positive change in at least one nutrition practice



Ongoing Community Support

Grant Writing Workshops:

In 2023, SCORH was awarded a 1-year grant from the SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare to build the capacity and fundamental grant writing skills of community leaders and nonprofits through the delivery of regional grant writing workshops focused on and hosted in rural communities. The Pee Dee workshop was hosted in December 2023 and workshops in the Lowcountry, Midlands and Upstate are planned for Spring 2024.



Results-Based Accountability:

In partnership with the Alliance for a Healthier South Carolina and other certified partners, Results-Based Accountability (RBA) training modules were developed and made available on the South Carolina AHEC learning portal. Online training modules will be followed by regional RBA workshops through 2025, which will include a SCORH developed RBA curriculum and workbook. These training courses are part of a larger state-wide initiative to expand the utilization of RBA methodology to create measurable change and enhance alignment between hospitals and community partners throughout the state. This project is funded by The Duke Endowment.

**Moving from
Talk to Action**

with Results-Based
Accountability™



In 2023, 12 community coalitions from the previously established blueprint for health counties completed the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) action planning process and received funding for projects related to healthy eating, active living, and social isolation. The RBA action planning process taught communities how to move from talk to action and encouraged coalitions to use data to drive coalition decision making.

Barnwell County HEALing Partners, Wholespire Lancaster, Healthy Oconee, Bamberg County Health Coalition, Wholespire Laurens, Marion County Coordinating Council, Live Healthy Union, Wholespire Cherokee County, and Darlington County Coordinating Council were selected as priority areas for the CDC Health Equity Grant to receive \$50,000 for policy, systems, and environmental changes within their respective counties addressing healthy eating and active living.

Also in 2023, Williamsburg County Interagency Council, Rural Area Leadership Initiative (RALI) Dillon County, and Lee County Rural Leadership and Interagency Council wrapped up the Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities (BRIC) initiative which provided \$50,000 to each coalition for efforts addressing healthy eating, active living, and social isolation.

Accomplishments from the BRIC funding

- 1 14,705 fresh food boxes distributed including over 294,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables
- 2 Park and trail improvements made in Dillon, Lee, and Williamsburg Counties
- 3 Digital literacy training offered to senior populations in Dillon and Lee Counties
- 4 Improvements in opportunities for social connectedness among seniors, including Walk with Ease training, occurred in Lee and Williamsburg Counties
- 5 181 people participated in the BRIC community listening sessions across the four counties



The Blue Cross Blue Shield of SC Foundation funded phase 4 of the Blueprint for Health program, which is part of a joint initiative with Wholespire (formerly Eat Smart Move More SC).

Phase 4 includes coalition development, technical assistance, and community projects. SCORH has partnered with 10 more rural coalitions in phase 4 to address disparities reflected in their county data.

SCORH facilitated coalition assessment using the Stages of Coalition Development Tool (Woodland & Hutton, 2012), RBA training, and assisted with creating RBA action plans with strategies to address the identified disparities.

Newly recruited coalitions and counties include:

Abbeville	Clarendon
Greenwood	Chesterfield
Chester	Edgefield
McCormick	Newberry
Allendale	Marlboro

Through action planning, these coalitions have identified policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) strategies to focus on food access, physical activity, mental health, and transportation. Having identified their projects, coalitions can access up to \$25,000 to address their goals.

SCORH will continue to provide technical assistance to these coalitions through 2024 and will work to identify future project opportunities.



Provider Services

Rural Health Clinics



353

Contacts with Rural Health Clinics

SCORH provided technical assistance, billing and coding support, quality initiatives, and interpretation of federal regulations.



76

Site Visits

SCORH's Provider Service team completed RHC visits in **29** counties.



13

Scholarships

Provided to **13** individuals in **10** counties to take the Certified Rural Health Clinic Professional (CRHCP) Certification through the National Association of Rural Health Clinics.

SCORH hosted an RHC Virtual Workshop in June 2023 with **42** attendees on the following topics:

- Cost Report Overview
- RHC Compliance
- Team Building
- Good Faith Estimate



Choose Well

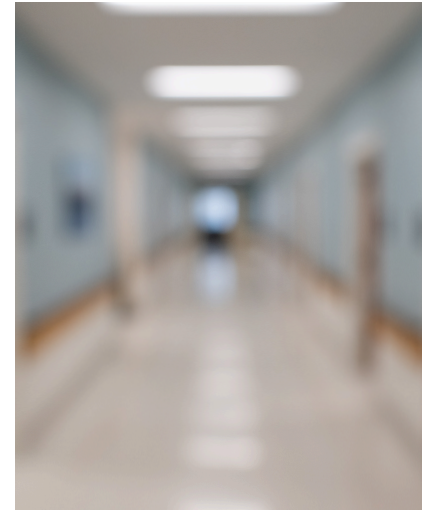
SCORH added four new rural practices to the Choose Well program in 2023. Choose Well is a contraceptive access initiative to reduce unintended pregnancy, funded by the nonprofit New Morning.

New Choose Well clinics are located in:

- Calhoun
- Greenville
- Cherokee
- Union

In 2023, SCORH conducted 30 on-site visits in 23 counties to facilitate process improvement and enhance the implementation and delivery of the program. These site visits included checking inventory, identifying staff/provider training needs, giving recommendations for process improvement, assessing staff/provider knowledge of the program, collecting information about site-specific birth control processes, coordination of rural health activities that SCORH supports, and encouraging coordination of services with community organizations nearby.

SCORH also provided a virtual Choose Well workshop to all 30 sites. The workshop included an overview and history of the Choose Well initiative as well as updates to the program's services and requirements.



In 2023, Choose Well:

1

Screened **19,026** women and men for pregnancy intention, which is a 309% increase from 2022.

Provided **15,058** women and men with contraceptive counseling, which is an 115% increase from 2022.

2

3

Provided **790** devices, 553 of those were long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs), which is a 60% increase in devices and LARCs from last year.

Rural EMS Systems

Community Paramedic Impact Document



SCORH received funding from The Duke Endowment (TDE) for the South Carolina (SC) Community Paramedic (CP) Impact Study in 2020. The SC CP Impact Study captured the impact of five community paramedic programs in South Carolina. The grant's goal was to build evidence that CP/Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) programs effectively decrease avoidable emergency department visits and inpatient admissions, reduce EMS calls, and improve clinical outcomes.

In this report, SCORH provided a summative evaluation that outlines the evidence that CP programs achieved the desired outcomes and justifies the business case for reimbursement of community paramedicine services. The CP Impact Study was finalized in 2023 and is available on the SCORH website.

The Mental Health Resilience Officer (MHRO) Project

SCORH worked with the EMS Association on the mental health resilience officer (MHRO) project in South Carolina. The MHRO course prepares EMS personnel to serve as their agency's MHRO. In this role, the MHRO will engage with peers to develop an understanding of mental health issues and resilience; identify peers who are experiencing mental health stressors and crises; navigate peers in need to the right services for help; and support the development of a culture of mental health resilience and emotional wellness within the agency. To date, EMSA identified, vetted, and selected 10 MHRO Instructor Candidates throughout the state, ensured that the candidates completed the MHRO Provider Course through the NAEMT, established the instructors as MHRO Instructors through NAEMT, and aligned with NAEMT Training Center at Aiken Technical College, and provided each instructor with the MHRO Instructor Toolkit and provided time for them to review the materials.

SC Rural EMT Tuition Assistance Program

SCORH administers the SC Rural EMT Tuition Assistance Program which provided tuition assistance to **44** individuals across **11** counties to begin or advance their EMT careers in rural areas. The tuition assistance is open to anyone that wishes to apply. Rural EMS directors can request funding for specific individuals that they want to grow within their rural EMS agencies. SCORH also supports rural EMS agency leadership to grow their skills and stay current with state policy changes and national best practices. SCORH sponsored **21** rural EMS agency leaders from across **seven** rural counties to attend professional education events in 2023.

Rural Hospitals

For the fourth year, SC has ranked among the **top ten states** for critical access hospital quality data reporting and improvement through the Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Program. Within the past three years, two SC critical access hospitals (Edgefield and Allendale) have ranked among the nation's **top 20** critical access hospitals in the nation 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, Dillon, Florence, Hampton, Marion, Union, and Williamsburg counties to leverage \$2.7 million in American Rescue Plan SHIP funds. Five hospitals utilized their COVID SHIP Testing and Mitigation funds for minor alteration and renovation projects.

Through the CDC Health Equity grant program, SCORH supported four hospitals with physical plant improvement projects. Five facility assessments were completed for Abbeville, Allendale, Hampton, Chesterfield, and Dillon hospitals, and four projects are currently being implemented.

SCORH facilitated the Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan for Allendale County in partnership with Allendale County Hospital. This opportunity brought together hospital leadership, local partners from diverse fields of focus and county residents to invest in a healthy rural community and devise a plan on how to make that vision a reality. Over 500 community members participated in this year-long process.

SCORH was designated as the technical assistance body for the Rural Emergency Hospital (REH) model and provided twenty-six site visits, connected hospitals to the Rural Health Redesign Center for REH analysis, and created and disseminated resources for the REH model. The REH resources include a hospital-specific fact sheet, training webinar, application process, and application; REH resources are available on the SCORH website.

SCORH 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.



Best Chance Network



The Center for Practice Transformation (C4PT) is an effort of SCORH, housed within the Provider Solutions team. C4PT partners with the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control Cancer Program to assist with several programs including the SC Best Chance Network (South Carolina's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program). The Center for Practice Transformation team provided program and practice-level support to primary care providers in rural and urban communities. They worked to

simulate a shared learning environment among the program, providers, and their patient populations. Primary care practices improved preventive care services for breast and cervical cancer screenings through quality improvement and monitoring, one-to-one technical assistance, group learning sessions, process mapping, and EHR optimization. The overall goal is to leverage the current climate with primary care providers and provide a heightened culture to thrive in a value-based environment.

In 2023, the Best Chance Network Staff:

- Hosted an in-person Billing Bootcamp and Listening Session with a total of **58** attendees from small rural practices, independent providers, and small and large hospital systems
- Provided virtual training sessions including evidence-based interventions and BCN program optimization to drive quality metric improvement with HEDIS
- Presented at numerous conferences, recorded trainings sessions, and served as a vendor to build awareness of breast and cervical cancer incidence and mortality in South Carolina

Comprehensive Cancer - Cancer Survivorship

SCORH and the South Carolina Comprehensive Cancer Control Program joined forces to make an impact on cancer survivorship care within rural South Carolina.

The Cancer Survivorship EHR Enhancement Pilot Project provides guidance on how to identify, develop and integrate cancer survivorship care plans within rural primary care practices.

Participating practices can receive up to \$10,000 and technical assistance to help with implementation and sustainability. Through this partnership, a total of **209** patients at rural practices had a current and complete cancer survivorship care plan.



“Testimony from BCN and Cancer Survivorship: My Journey to Healing with Shifa Free Clinic and The Best Chance Network”

"I never thought I'd be someone who had cancer. But when I found a lump and got scared, the Best Chance Network was there for me. They helped me get a mammogram without any cost, and that's how I found out I had breast cancer. It was really scary to hear that news, but the people at Best Chance Network were amazing. They didn't just help me find out about my cancer; they also helped me figure out what to do next. They showed me where to get treatment and stood by me the whole time.

After my treatment, I joined the cancer survivorship program. This wasn't just about checking my health; it was about helping me get back to normal. They made sure I kept seeing doctors and stayed healthy. It felt good to know I wasn't alone even after my cancer was gone.

I want to say a big thank you to everyone at the Best Chance Network and Shifa Free Clinic with the survivorship program as my provider for my health in primary and gynecology care. You didn't just help me fight cancer; you were my friends through the toughest time in my life. Because of you, I'm not just a cancer survivor; I'm living my life again. To all the women out there: please take care of yourself. Programs and practices like this can save your life, just as they saved mine."



Chronic Disease: 1815 & 1817 CDC Contracts

In 2023, the C4PT provided practice facilitation and support to practices aiming to improve their care for patients with diabetes, hypertension, pre-diabetes, and high blood cholesterol. In partnership with SC DHEC, the C4PT team provided direct practice facilitation, provided learning opportunities, created new programs and services, expanded care teams, and assisted with obtaining and reporting data.

Practice facilitation included:

- Assistance with EHR optimization
- Process redesign
- Team-based care development
- Linkages with community-based self-management support
- Quality reporting
- Implementation of disease-specific dashboards
- Use of clinical decision support tools
- Training new staff members
- Adaptation of practice facilitation methods to continue to support practices throughout the pandemic emergency

The C4PT staff also championed and supported practices in continuing to focus on and drive improvement in chronic illness care during a period when considerable attention was on COVID-19 prevention and treatment as well as practices experiencing acute staffing constraints.

Chronic Disease

C4PT secured a subcontract with Constellation Health, the state's Quality Improvement Organization, to assist with their CDC initiative related to improving chronic disease management in SC. C4PT will assist in deploying clinical pharmacy support to rural practices in SC.

Oral Health

The C4PT is an active participant in The National Rural Oral Health Initiative Task Force and works with the CareQuest OPEN: Oral Health Progress and Equity Network, built to take on America's oral health challenges so that everyone has an equitable chance to thrive.

The C4PT assists the South Carolina Division of Oral Health in building consensus among stakeholders working to improve oral health in South Carolina and participates on the SC DHHS Medical Dental Integration Leadership Team.



Patient-Centered Medical Home

In 2023, C4PT continued their work in practice transformation. That support was provided around Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) recognition through the National Committee of Quality Assurance. C4PT also helped provide support for over **100** practices in maintaining their recognition as well as helping practices work towards implementing the medical home model. Additionally, **\$200,000** was awarded to **10** practices in May 2023 that demonstrated high performance in quality measurement, care management, and team-based care among other areas. This is through the Advanced PCMH funding opportunity. The C4PT team continues their partnership with the SC Department of Health and Human Services to provide all support as well as discuss the future of how their support can lead to value-based care.

In collaboration with SC DHEC and South Carolina Medical Association, the C4PT team worked to develop a new program that supports practices as they transition to value-based reimbursement. This program will include an assessment of practice readiness and current participation in value-based reimbursement contracts. It will focus on practices developing core capabilities for value-based reimbursement.

SC Birth Outcomes Initiative



The C4PT assisted the SC Department of Health and Human Services Birth Outcomes Initiative team in planning and executing their relaunch of the SC Birth Outcomes Initiative in November 2023. They assisted in the logistics and program planning for this important statewide initiative.

National Rural Health Clinic Assistance

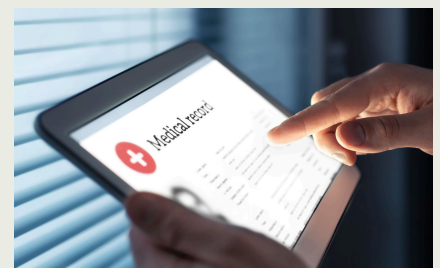


SCORH completed a 3-year contract with the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) to assist with nationwide outreach to all **5,300+** Rural Health Clinics across the country. The project goals were to help Rural Health Clinics (RHC) complete the required reporting for the federal funds of **\$100,000** that each eligible RHC received. With the help of SCORH, the National Association of Rural Health Clinics (NARHC) and the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH), 98% of

all RHCs completed the reporting. This partnership was unique as the National Organization of State Offices and the National Association of Rural Health clinics were contracted with HRSA to complete this project.

Rural and Primary Healthcare: Rural Enhancement Grants

In partnership with the SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare, SCORH awarded **23** rural organizations with up to **\$5,000** to advance their practices through modern technology updates, including computers, information technology (IT) updates, educational materials, training, and/or portable medical devices. This funding also supported COVID-19 response items such as vaccine fridge/freezer, educational conferences such as National Association of Rural Health Clinics conference and funding for Patient Center Medical Home status. In addition, the funding supported home blood pressure monitors, glucometers and supplies to patients in need.



Rural Forward SC

Rural Digital Innovation

SCORH is committed to ensuring rural communities are included in digital resource conversations to address inadequate broadband, exclusion of digital opportunities which enhance economic development, and fragmentation of rural communities.

CDC Grant Funding for 2023-24 has directly impacted:

Digital Economy Ecosystem (DEE)

- Year 2 activities/strategy execution for Greenwood and Newberry DEE sites
- Creation of a new DEE site: Oconee
- Continuation of the DEE Network which impacts Barnwell, Greenwood, Newberry, Oconee, Orangeburg, Williamsburg DEE counties and neighboring Allendale County.

Digital Equity/Opportunity Meetings

- SCORH has managed the Digital Equity Collaborative quarterly meetings which visited Columbia, Moncks Corner, Oconee counties during 2023.

Transportation Solutions

SCORH actively supports the South Carolina Rural Transit Authority and the South Carolina Department of Transportation to highlight rural transportation needs and how the lack thereof impacts the health of rural residents. One success of 2023 was the inaugural South Carolina Rural Transit Day held in Florence, on July 24, 2024.

What is Rural Forward SC?

Rural Forward SC threads together the work of SCORH 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.



SCORH Rural Health Conference

26th Annual Rural Health Conference

SCORH hosted **354** attendees at our 26th Annual Rural Health Conference in Hilton Head, SC. Sessions included topics on maternal health, behavioral health, transportation, food access and more!

We also celebrated National Rural Health Day on November 16, 2023 with an awards luncheon, recognizing rural leaders and providers, and held a Power of Rural tailgate event.

Seven rural healthcare providers and community members were recognized for their significant impact in rural communities and have shown excellence in their work to make their communities healthier, either through direct healthcare delivery, or efforts to make their communities stronger and more resilient.

Each of the following honorees received an award with a Palmetto Tree (the official State Tree of SC) on fused glass in an iron frame created by Pat Stone of GlassyLady, a member of the SC artisans in Walterboro (awardees pictured centered below, left to right). To watch the videos and learn more about these awardees, visit - <https://www.youtube.com/scruralhealth>

Each year, SCORH hosts an Annual Rural Art Competition. South Carolina artists are invited to submit artwork in any medium that captures the beauty and unique character of our rural communities.



2023 Winner

"Looking for Dinner"
by Lisa A. Alberghini



2023 Annual Award Winners

Rural Practitioner of the Year Award: Dr. Frank Stewart, a pediatrician at Oconee Pediatrics in Seneca, SC

Pioneer Award: Dr. Charles McElmurray, a family medicine physician for over 40 years and founding physician for the John A. Martin Primary Healthcare Center in Winnsboro, SC

Award of Excellence: Donna Avant, R. Ph., owner and pharmacist at Ehrhardt Pharmacy

Rural Health Provider of the Year Award: Community Medical Clinic of Kershaw County, a family practice free clinic serving as a medical home to the uninsured and underserved of Kershaw County. (pic: Susan Witkowski, CEO)

Rural Health Leadership Award: Lathran Woodard, CEO of the South Carolina Primary Health Care Association (pic: Kenya Mingo, Director of Corporate Compliance and Communications)

Power of Rural Award: Steven Brown, Founder-President, Dreams Imagination & Gift Development Program

Outstanding Community Health Project or Initiative Award: Gratitude Gathering, a collective group dedicated to spreading hope through education and resources to combat substance use disorder. (pic: Justo Chalaire and Teresa Roy)

2024 Annual Rural Health Conference



SCORH on the National Level



Shannon Chambers, Senior Director of Provider Solutions, serves as the Vice President for the National Association of Rural Health Clinics (NARHC).



Jessica Seel, Director of Behavioral Health Initiatives & Workforce Development serves as the president-elect for 3RNET (National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network)



SCORH staff attended the 2024 NRHA Policy Institute in Washington, DC. They also visited with South Carolina Members of Congress and staff to discuss the importance of rural health.

Pictured: Graham Adams, Elizabeth Burt, Sarah Craig, and Britton Herbert from SCORH, joined by Lari Gooding, CEO of Allendale Hospital, Emma Boswell from USC's Rural Health & Minority Research Center and Megan Weis, SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare.



Paola A. Gutiérrez, Director of External Engagement
American Public Health Association meeting,
November 2023



Lindsay Williams, Practice Transformation Consultant
National Association of Rural Health Clinics,
October 2023



Jessica Seel, Director of Behavioral Health Initiatives & Workforce Development
NOSORH Annual Meeting,
September 2023



Amanda Hiers, Program Manager, Community Health Transformation
NOSORH Region B meeting, May 2023



Jennifer Johnson, Rural Health Clinic Specialist
NOSORH Region B meeting, May 2023

Let's Get Social!

The Rural Focus - Newsletter

THE RURAL FOCUS

Join the mailing list to receive our weekly newsletter, *The Rural Focus*, and stay in the know with up-to-date information on all things rural!



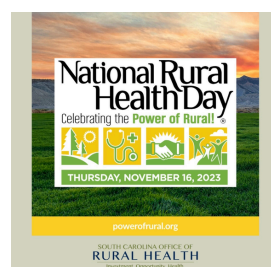
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