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January 1, 2025

SORH Short Rows is the quarterly newsletter from the Georgia State Office of Rural Health (SORH) for all matters rural. It provides an update on the progress made to improve rural health in Georgia's hospitals, primary care practices, FQHCs, stakeholders, vendors, health care advocates, and legislators.

Leading the Fight Against Rural Health Disparities

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What's New for SORH in 2025?

The State Office of Rural Health (SORH) extends our wishes for a happy, healthy, and prosperous new year.

Our commitment to serve Georgia's rural communities never waivers, and SORH staff remains dedicated to our mission from January 1 to December 31 every year.

We anticipate 2025 will bring new opportunities and look forward to providing continued support for our rural hospitals, clinics, grantees, communities, partners, and internal and external customers. It is both our privilege and our pleasure to continue serving the residents of rural Georgia.

Wishing you the best in 2025!

Nita Ham, Executive Director
State Office of Rural Health

A Sight for “SORH” Eyes

Clinch Memorial Hospital in Homerville Hosts Ribbon Cutting Celebration Event Marks Opening of Patient and Community Healing Garden



Clinch Memorial Hospital CEO Angela Handley cuts the ceremonial ribbon on phase one of the hospital's patient healing garden on December 5 in Homerville, Georgia. The ribbon-cutting kicked off the opening of the sanctuary as a healing environment to patients and community members. The garden was funded in part by the Rural Hospital Stabilization Grant and other donations. Many members of the community were on hand for the celebration, including hospital board members, SORH Executive Director Nita Ham, and SORH Program Operations Specialist Cole Edwards.

Focus on Rural Health

Application Deadline for Rural Hospital Stabilization Or Graduate Medical Education Grants is January 8



A new grant opportunity is currently available for Georgia's rural hospitals to apply, but hurry – the deadline for submitting applications is 11:59 p.m. on January 8, 2025!

The Dual Track FY25 Rural Hospital Support Grant offers qualifying hospitals a choice to apply for either Rural Hospital Stabilization or Graduate Medical Education Program funds through a single application process. This Request for Grant Application (RFGA) is

located on the Grant Announcements page of the Georgia Department of Community Health website at <https://dch.georgia.gov/grant-announcements>.

Applicants interested in applying must choose between the two tracks and are not allowed to apply for both tracks. Once deciding on a track, applicants must then follow the specific application instructions outlined within the selected track and address all the required areas of the application. Funding details for each track can be found within the RFGA.

Please note that if you have any questions regarding this posting, contact Joanne Mitchell (her information is located on the RFGA) at the Department of Community Health as SORH staff cannot answer questions regarding the RFGA.

SORH Updates Website

SORH is excited to announce completed updates to its section pages on the DCH website.

In addition to pages that describe SORH's four program sections, the website also offers pages dedicated to the Rural Hospital Stabilization Grant Program, News & Resources (which houses past editions of the SORH "Short Rows" newsletter and "SORH 101" video series), and a "Meet the SORH Team" page that comprises a fun mini-bio of each SORH staff member.



Additionally, the "SORH Maps of Georgia" webpage has been updated with several new versions of maps that showcase different facets of Georgia's healthcare system.

SORH staff is proud of the website revamp that offers a more visually-appealing design and invites you to check out the new look at <https://dch.georgia.gov/divisionsoffices/state-office-rural-health>.

From Hospital Services

Hospital Disclosure Requirements in SB505 due July 1, 2025



Georgia Senate Bill 505 (SB505) went into effect on April 4, 2024, requiring certain Georgia hospitals to revise publication of their organizational and financial documents on their websites to align with the standardized templates provided by the Department of Community Health (DCH). For-profit hospitals are excluded.

The State Office of Rural Health (SORH) within DCH has been working with partners and stakeholders on the "Hospital Information Transparency" project for several months to develop standardized

templates that hospitals must utilize to publish the list of organizational and financial documents outlined in SB505. Building on the original House Bill 321, SB505 mandates posting of certain "Organizational & Financial Information" in a prominent location on the main page of the hospital's website that links to the list of specific documents outlined in the statute by July 1, 2025.

Hospitals must also provide DCH updated URL links via email at DCH.Transparency@dch.ga.gov by August 1 annually. The hospital URL links will be located on DCH's hospital transparency website.

In partnership with the Georgia Rural Health Association (GHA), Dawn Waldrip, senior manager of the SORH Program and Hospital Services, presented the SB505 website templates and instructions to hospitals in a webinar on December 12. GHA will host question-and-answer sessions January 23, 2025, and April 24, 2025 at times to be determined.

Questions or requests for technical assistance may be submitted to DCH.Transparency@dch.ga.gov.



SORH Primary Care Office and Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center Partner to Host Series of Physician Recruitment Fairs



Dorothy Bryant, HPSA analyst, and Beth Walker, senior manager of the Primary Care Office (PCO), provided SORH resources to physicians and residents at recruitment fair held at the Mercer University School of Medicine in Savannah.



Dorothy Bryant, HPSA analyst, and Olakesta Outlaw-Houser, PCO program associate, attended the physician recruitment fair hosted in partnership by SORH and the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center at Mercer University School of Medicine in Macon.

The Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center (GRHIC) and the State Office of Rural Health (SORH) Primary Care Office (PCO) recently partnered to host a series of recruitment fairs for physicians seeking positions in Georgia's rural counties.

PCO staff attended the recruitment fairs held at the Mercer University School of Medicine in Savannah on October 11, and at GRHIC in Macon on November 15. Vendors included rural hospitals, federally qualified health centers, and other practices seeking physicians to join their team.

Physicians and residents had the opportunity to learn about available programs including the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program and National Rural Recruitment & Retention Network (3RNET). PCO also provided Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) maps for primary care, dental care, and mental health care, illustrating the need across the state for primary care physicians, mental health providers, and dentists.

GRHIC will be hosting additional recruitment fairs for physicians in the spring and fall of 2025. Dates and locations will be provided once finalized.

For questions regarding HPSAs, National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program, 3RNET, or the Conrad 30 J-1 Visa Waiver Program, contact the Primary Care Office at 229-276-2750 or 229-401-3095.



Farmworker Program

Courtney Hamilton Griffin Recognized as Georgia's NOSORH Community Star on National Rural Health Day



The Georgia Farmworker Health Program (GFHP) is pleased to join the National Office of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) in honoring Courtney Hamilton Griffin as Georgia's community star. Courtney was recognized on November 21, National Rural Health Day, and during the November GFHP board meeting.

Courtney has been a GFHP board member since 2018 and currently serves as vice-chair. She is the director of operational support at Southern Valley Fruit and Vegetables based in South Georgia.

Courtney recognizes the importance of accessible health care to the migrant and seasonal workers. Through her role on the GFHP board, she has remained diligent in ensuring that the GFHP mission and vision are carried out. Courtney's dedication has

enabled the GFHP board to not only sustain awareness of current operations, but to also be proactive in anticipating and planning for future healthcare needs.

The migrant and seasonal farmworkers at Southern Valley have participated in the GFHP Summer Project since 1997. Courtney said, "One of my most rewarding experiences has been the summer project, where over 1,100 farmworkers, including 300 from our farm, received care in 2024. It is always special to me to see medical students, local businesses, and community members come together to provide essential services to the farmworkers. I look forward to seeing it continue to grow and help many more farmworkers."

To read more about Courtney and the community stars from other states, click here:

<https://powerofrural.org/2024-community-stars/>.



You Might be Rural If...



... you own a pet goat!

Although goats are often associated with an agricultural lifestyle, they are being kept more and more frequently as pets, like this "kid" that was visiting her veterinarian sporting a pink collar and leash.

According to Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine, the owner of a pet goat benefits from companionship, the potential for milk production, land management by grazing, and more. Goats are fun, social, and playful animals and make great companions by interacting and bonding to their owners, not "baaa"d.

Their social nature means that goats tend to fare better in a herd as they are happiest when grouped with other goat companions. Before considering adopting a goat, potential owners should consider that goats need plenty of room for grazing and exercise. Therefore, they are better suited for owners living in rural areas.

For more goat knowledge, read "[Chew On This: Goats as Pets](#)".

Photo by [Jamie Branch](#)



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[Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center](#)

[DCH Grant Opportunities](#)

[HRSA Funding Opportunities](#)

[Rural Health Information Hub \(RHI Hub\)](#)

[Rural Health Research Gateway](#)

[Health Professional Shortage Area \(HPSA\) Find](#)

[3RNet - Rural Recruitment and Retention Network](#)

DCH Mission Statement

The Department of Community Health will provide Georgians with access to affordable, quality health care through effective planning, purchasing and oversight.

We are dedicated to
A Healthy Georgia.

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