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July 1, 2021

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 to hospitals, primary care practices, FQHCs, stakeholders, vendors, health care advocates, and legislators.

Leading the Fight Against Rural Health Disparities

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Summertime Brings Pause for Reflection

When we think about summertime, we think of so many things including Memorial Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, America's Birthday July 4th, and of course for many, a vacation with beloved family. In the midst of all the disparities that rural health faces, we must take the opportunity to focus on these significant dates and reflect on just how thankful we are to be able to celebrate their importance and the joy they bring in the wake of that recognition.



The SORH team is dedicated this summer to spearheading many campaigns within the rural health arena, whether hospital settings, physician practices, or engagement with rural community partners, that focus on minimizing disparities that effect rural Georgians. We continue to focus on making sure rural Georgians understand the importance of getting vaccinated and educating rural communities on the positive benefits a safe and healthy community provides. Our campaigns also seek continuous improvement in the quality, access and sustainability of healthcare, recruitment and retention of providers, and the improved health of our residents.

The SORH team is truly dedicated to our rural communities and we encourage you to embrace the opportunities summertime brings and remember our rural roots are the backbone of our beautiful State of Georgia.

Stephen Register
SORH Executive Director



Global Partnership for Telehealth Shows Off New Mobile Learning Center



The Global Partnership for Telehealth cut the celebratory ribbon on their new mobile telehealth learning center at the HomeTown Health 21st Annual Spring Conference held at Jekyll Island April 13-16, 2021. Hospital staff members and business partners along with several SORH staff members attending the conference had an opportunity to take a tour of the new mobile unit and learn about the latest technology in Telehealth resources and equipment. Pictured above are executives from both HomeTown Health and GPT.

Focus on Rural Health

**Horizons Community Solutions
Strives for “Culture of Wellness”**

Horizons Community Solutions is a non-profit organization that works through collaboration and partnerships with a spectrum of entities toward creating a sustainable culture of wellness across southwest Georgia. Based in Albany, Horizons' vision inspires "A culture of wellness that achieves optimal health for everyone."



HORIZONS
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

Cynthia George serves as the CEO of Horizons. Having previously worked for 25 years for the Phoebe Putney Health System, George understands firsthand the vast health disparities that rural communities face.

"The amount of work our communities need can seem overwhelming at times, but Horizons works diligently to help empower people towards living healthier lives," said George. "For example, we cover 32 counties in southwest Georgia for our Cancer Coalition in which we work with hospitals and physicians to provide cancer screenings for those uninsured or underinsured in our coverage area."

Founded in 2002 as The Cancer Coalition of Southwest Georgia, the entity changed its name in 2016 to Horizons Community Solutions to reflect its expanded mission of working within rural communities to address the fundamental causes of health disparities in rural communities. The Cancer Coalition has continued as a division of Horizons.

[Read the full article here.](#)



Conrad State 30 J-1 Visa Waiver Program Addresses Qualified Physician Shortage



The Conrad State 30 J-1 Visa Waiver program may recommend up to 30 waivers per federal fiscal year (October 1 – September 30) to address the shortage of qualified physicians in the state's medically underserved areas (MUAs). Waiver support in Georgia is based on, but not limited to: 1) compliance with State and Federal laws and regulations; 2) need for service; 3) community support for the placement; 4) employer's

commitment to treating patients regardless of their ability to pay; 5) physician's intent to work long-term in a designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) or MUA; and 6) effect of the placement on other Georgia programs and policies. Waiver support is at the sole

discretion of SORH, as is the number of waiver requests supported by SORH for a particular employer, health care facility, or medical discipline.

The 30 waiver slots are limited annually as follows:

The State Office of Rural Health will begin accepting applications beginning August 1, 2021 – August 31, 2021. Beginning September 1, 2021, applications will be prioritized in the following order: Primary Care physicians working in a rural county located in a HPSA, MUA, MUP, Mental Healthcare Professional Shortage Area (MHPSA) followed by Primary Care physicians working in an urban county located in a HPSA, MUA, Medically Underserved Population (MUP) or MHPSA. Slots remaining will be filled by Specialist working in a HPSA, MUA or MUP followed by Flex slots. No more than three slots per facility (teaching hospitals are exempt from this limit).

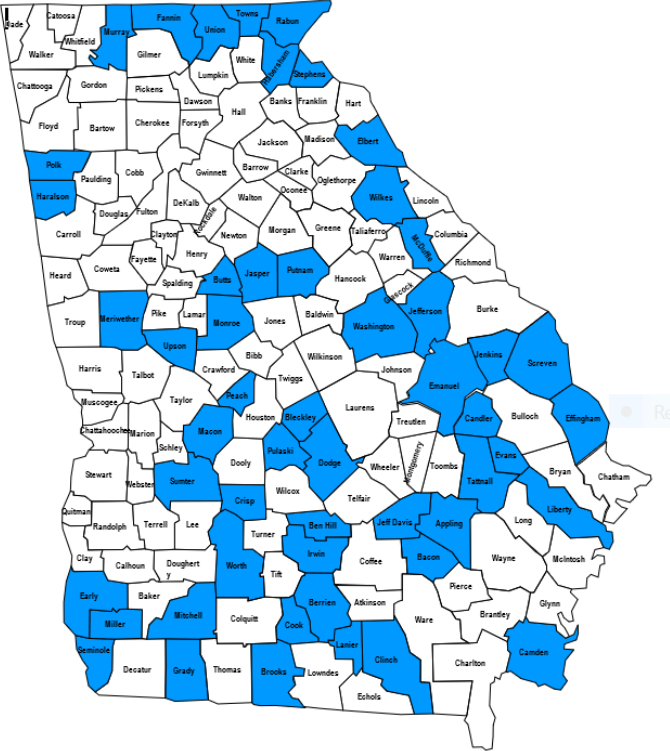
[Read the full article here.](#)



Georgia's SHIP Hospitals Will Receive Nearly \$12 Million for COVID Testing and Mitigation

The Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH), State Office of Rural Health (SORH) is scheduled to receive nearly \$12 million July 1st in federal funding for Georgia's small rural hospitals to increase COVID-19 testing efforts, expand access to testing in rural communities, and expand the range of mitigation activities to meet community need.

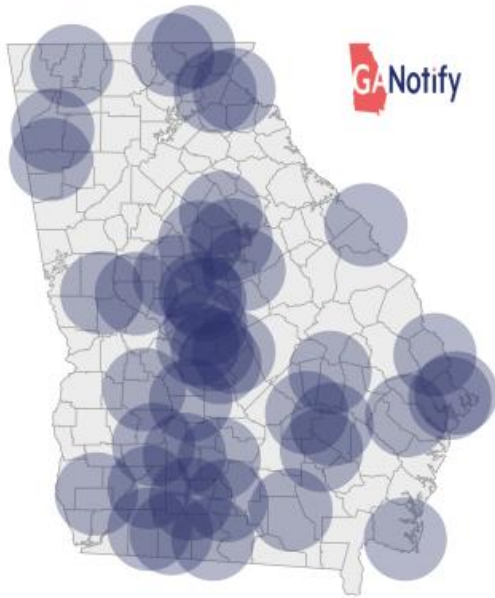
Through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy has allocated \$230,000 for each of Georgia's 52 hospitals participating in the Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP) that have agreed to accept funding for a total award of \$11,960,000. These hospitals (shaded blue in the diagram, right) are located in rural designated areas and have 49 beds or less. Four of the 56 eligible SHIP hospitals declined the funding.



DCH/SORH is working diligently to fast track these awards to the participating 52 hospitals. Under Federal regulations, the recipient hospitals will be required to submit quarterly spending reports through December 31, 2022. The reporting process has yet to be determined.

[Read the full article here.](#)

GA Notify Continues to Grow as Georgia's Only Encounter Notification System



With over 50 hospitals across the state, including 35 rural hospitals, GA Notify continues to grow as the only statewide Encounter Notification Service (ENS) in Georgia.

Established by the Georgia Hospital Association (GHA) to improve care transitions and outcomes for patients, Georgia Notify (GA Notify) offers clinicians actionable real-time encounter notifications. GA Notify is carefully tailored to optimize the physician experience for roster-based and patient-identified alerts by managing duplication, respecting provider preferences, and supporting deep workflow integration.

GA Notify was initially developed in 2018 through a legislatively directed grant from the State Office of Rural Health (SORH) to

improve rural health and population health analytics. When the new Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Conditions of Participation (CoP) electronic notification (e-notification) was published in the CMS Interoperability and Patient Access Rule, GHA expanded their member services to include the ability for hospitals to meet this new federal mandate by submitting Admit, Discharge and Transfer (ADT) data to GA Notify. GA Notify began sending patient-identified providers notifications for a patient's admission, discharge, and transfer event from emergency department, inpatient, and observation settings of care when the requirement went into effect on April 30, 2021. Because of the initial support from SORH, GHA was able to make the submission of ADT data free for hospitals to meet the new mandate.

To learn more about GA Notify, contact GHA at GANotify@gha.org.



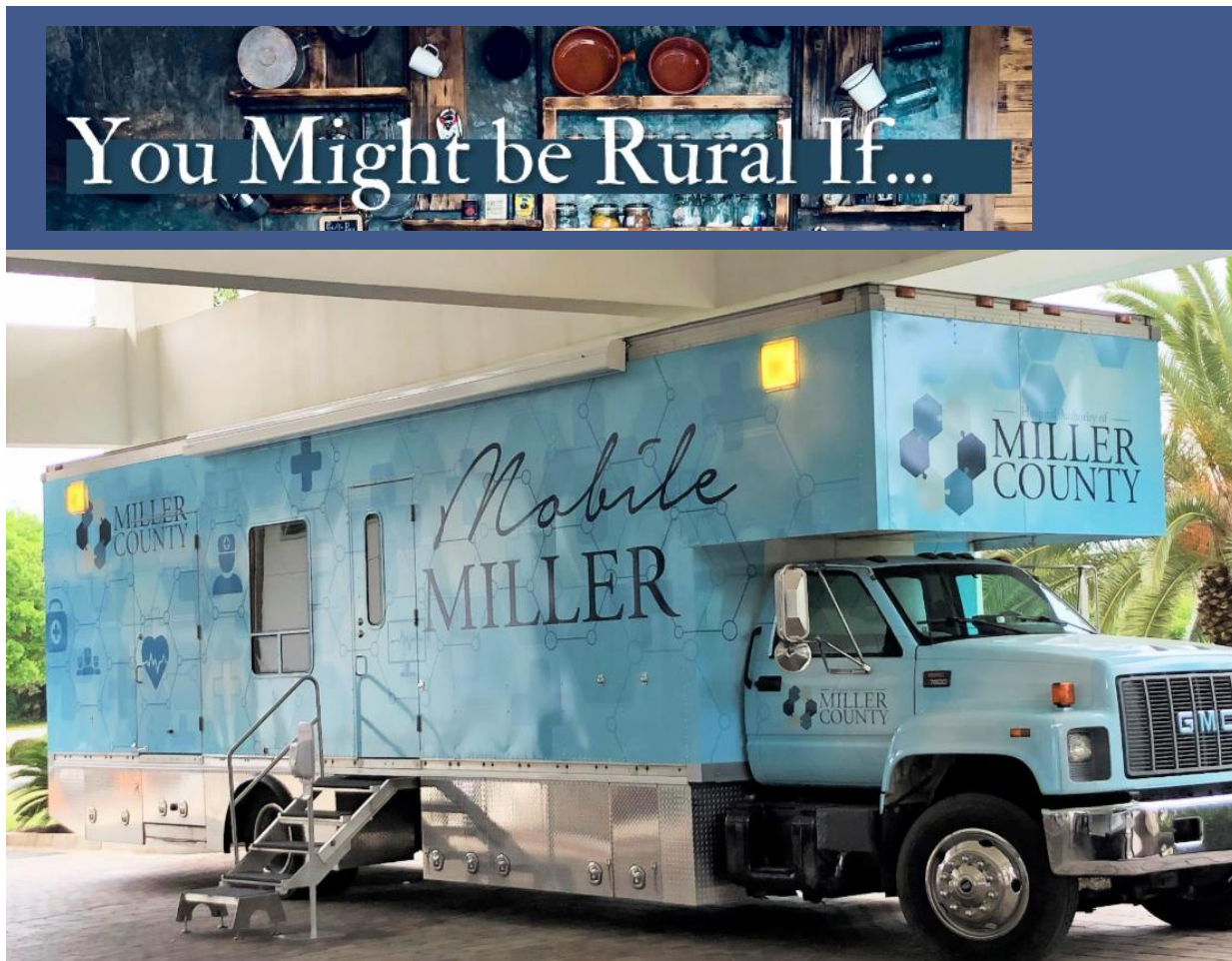
Georgia Farmworker Health Program Receives \$5.8 Million from American Rescue Plan Act

The Georgia Farmworker Health Program (GFHP) has received \$5.8 million from the American Rescue Plan Act for Health Centers which will provide one-time funding to support health centers funded under the Health Center Program to plan, prepare for, promote, distribute, administer, and track COVID-19 vaccines, and to carry out other vaccine-related activities.



The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) awarded approximately \$6.1 billion appropriated by the American Rescue Plan Act to health centers that are current Health Center Program operational (H80) grant award recipients, under section 330 of the Public Health Service Act, to respond to and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and enhance health care services and infrastructure.

[Read the full article here.](#)



...you have access to healthcare on wheels.

Miller County Hospital's CEO Robin Rau, showcased the hospital's new mobile healthcare unit "Mobile Miller" at the HomeTown Health 21st Annual Conference held in Jekyll Island in April. Rural hospital executives, hospital staff, business partners, and SORH staff attending the conference had an opportunity to tour the mobile unit that includes a small waiting area, triage area, and a private exam room. Mobile Miller is on the road providing better access to healthcare to the citizens of Miller County.



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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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Georgia Department of Community Health



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