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October 1, 2022

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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Video Series Showcases SORH Impact on Rural Healthcare

Some of us may need a boost of energy to make the transition from summer to fall. As we embark on a new fiscal year, the State Office of Rural Health (SORH) is dedicated to learning from the old and planning for the new. We thrive to provide the best quality customer service and resources we can for our rural communities. "The secret of change is to focus all your energy not on fighting the old but on building the new." — from the character Socrates in *Way of the Peaceful Warrior: A Book that Changes Lives* by Dan Millman.

Our goal in fiscal year 2023 is to continue to create more opportunities to increase rural healthcare recognition and build more partnerships to reduce rural health disparities. For the past two years, the SORH has produced a video series, "SORH 101". We implemented this plan to expand our communication vision and to shine a spotlight on the diverse work of the Georgia SORH through the creation of short, informative videos that will enlighten both the general public as well as our many partners, and showcase the SORH's impact on rural healthcare.

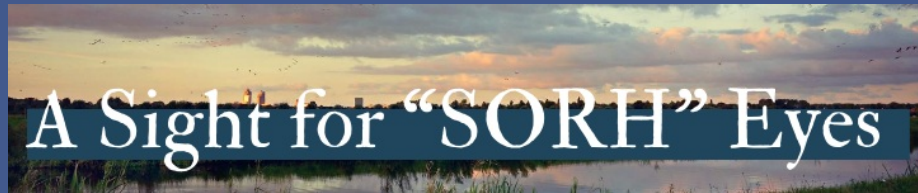


To help tell the story of the four program sections that comprise the Georgia SORH, quarterly videos spotlighting one of the sections will be posted on SORH's website and social media platforms that

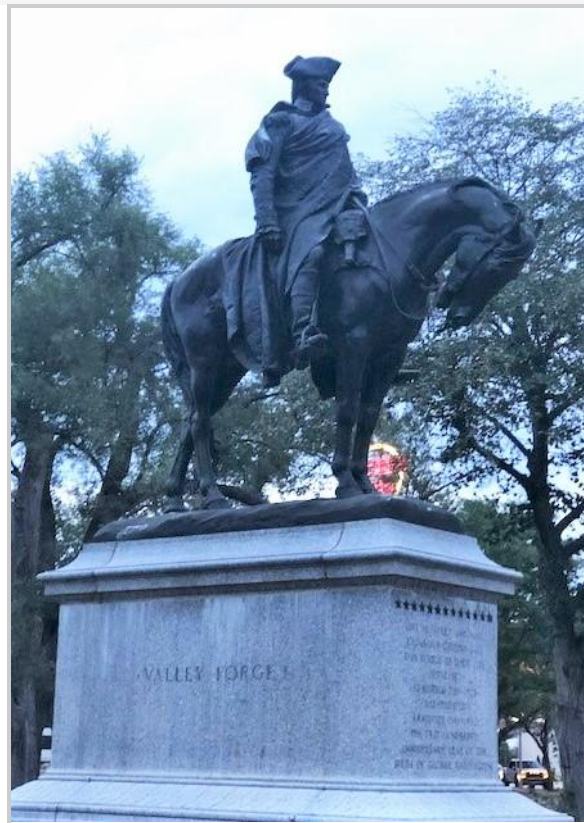
can be viewed and shared. The idea for these enlightening, informative, and fun videos was initiated as a vehicle to spotlight the vast amount of work and activity that comes out of an office with a small but dedicated staff.

Please visit our [website](#) and enjoy our [SORH 101 video](#) series. We look forward to connecting with you even more this new fiscal year 2023.

All the best,
Stephen Register
SORH Executive Director



SORH Attends National CAH Conference - *Kansas City Offers Beautiful Landmarks, Rich History*



This bronze equestrian statue to the left depicts General George Washington astride his horse at Valley Forge. It is considered one of the three greatest statues of Washington in America. Washington looks weary and his horse's head is down to illustrate the sad days of that hard winter. Located in Kansas City, Missouri's Washington Square park, it is a copy of the famous statue sculpted by Henry Shrady located in Brooklyn, NY.

The statue is a beautiful focal point near Union Station in Crown Plaza near the site of the 2022 National Rural Health Association (NRHA) Critical Access Hospital (CAH) Conference attended by State Office of Rural Health Hospital Services Director, Dawn Waldrip and Program Specialist, Amanda Sutton. Dawn and Amanda attended the conference on September 21st – 23rd to network with other SORH offices and CAHs nationwide and learn the latest program and regulatory updates and changes affecting not only Georgia's 30 CAHs, but all 1,360 CAHs nationwide.

Photo by Dawn Waldrip

FORHP Reviews REH Model at CAH Conference; **Reveals National Technical Assistance Center Vendor**

In the photo to the right, Sarah Young, Deputy Director of the Policy Research Division of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) reviews "What's Happening and What's Next" for Rural

Emergency Hospitals (REH) at the 2022 National Rural Health Association (NRHA) Critical Access Hospital (CAH) Conference in Kansas City, MO.

Sarah and Kristi Martinsen, Director of the Hospital State Division of FORHP, provided an overview of the most recent updates regarding the REH model including the announcement that the nonprofit [Rural Health Redesign Center](#) has been tapped to provide technical assistance to hospitals through the process of becoming newly designated Rural Emergency Hospitals.



Established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, the REH model is a federal [policy response to the growing number of rural hospital closures](#). It allows certain hospitals of no more than 50 beds to convert to a facility with essential services – emergency department, observation care, and additional outpatient services. The REH Technical Assistance Center will help these transitioning hospitals through the conversion process. Read more about the REH Conditions of Participation [here](#).

Photo by Dawn Waldrip

Focus on Rural Health

New SORH Program Supports Continuing Education



The State Office of Rural Health will offer a new grant program designed to support continuing education (CE) for rural healthcare providers. Through this four-year grant program, state and nationally recognized CE courses will be coordinated and delivered on site at rural hospitals which agree to participate as a host site. Course costs, to include registration fees, textbooks, and other course-related expenses, will be covered through the grant for rural participants.

Participation in quality CE programs beyond initial licensure plays a crucial role throughout the career of health care professionals, allowing providers to maintain skillset proficiency, stay up to date in relevant areas of practice, and increase professional growth. Access to CE programs is often a barrier to participation for rural providers due to the limited number of course offerings, distance to training sites, course costs and travel expenses, as well as staffing challenges to back-fill while employees attend classes.

A Request for Grant Application (RFGA) will be released in October by the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH). Through this application process, DCH will select the grantee responsible for the overall coordination and delivery of the CE programs. After the selection is made, the grantee will work directly with SORH to select host sites and create an annual training calendar for this state-wide CE initiative.

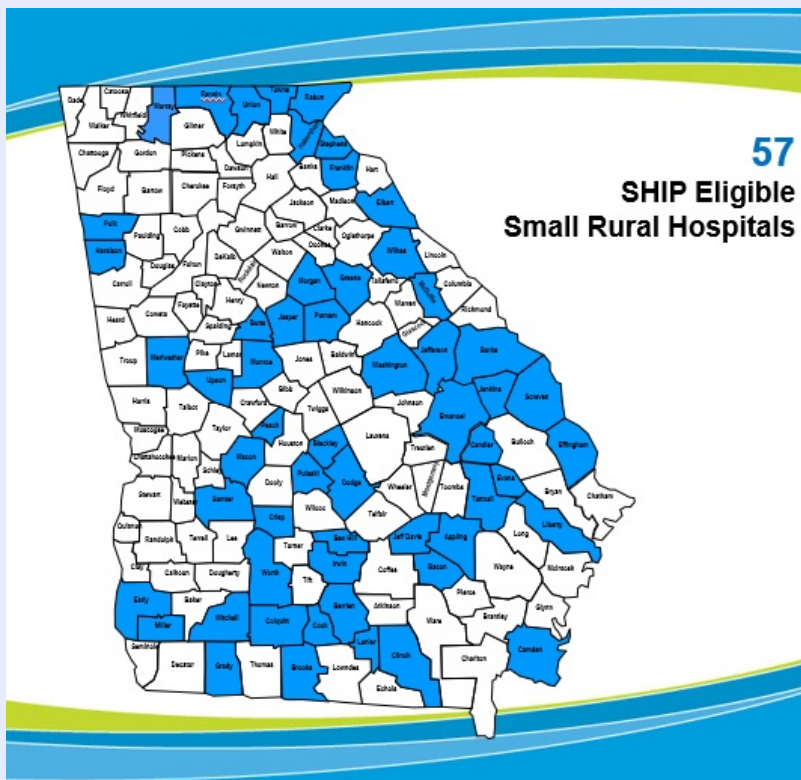
SORH anticipates the scheduling and delivery of CE programs in rural areas will begin in January 2023.

From Hospital Services

Hospital Services Presents FY 23-28 SHIP Program- **57 Eligible Hospitals Will Choose Options for New 5-Year Cycle**

June 1, 2023, kicks off a new 5-year cycle of the Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP) funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP).

As part of the FY 2023-2028 SHIP Competing Continuation application process, the Hospital Services team consisting of Dawn Waldrip, Director, and Amanda Sutton, Program Specialist, presented a Georgia FY 2023-2028 SHIP Overview webinar to over 45 hospital representatives on September 15th to review SHIP's purpose, eligibility requirements and spending priorities, provide an overview of the new program options, and provide instructions on completing the hospital application. Attendees also heard presentations from the Georgia Hospital Association (GHA) and HomeTown Health, LLC (HTH) as they rolled out their programs on behalf of the SORH for the new SHIP cycle.



Hospitals have four program options from which to choose for FY 2023. They may choose to receive funds of \$13,011 (depending on funding availability) directly to initiate projects of their choosing that align with the SHIP purchasing menu within three spending categories: Value-Based Purchasing; Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) or Shared Savings; or Payment Bundling or Prospective Payment System (PPS) activities.

Hospitals also have the option of utilizing their funds for consortia programming offered through the SORH by either GHA or HTH. GHA's program, "Simplified Quality Improvement and Peer Learning Network" includes training focused on simplifying CMS data to improve quality outcomes for year one. HTH is offering a choice of two tracks in their program; the "RISE UP" track featuring Revenue Integrity Solutions and Education, and the "Rural Swing Bed Management (RSBM)" track that provides best practices for compliance and efficiency for hospitals with swing bed programs. Option 4 is to opt out of the program. Each hospital will select programming that best suits its needs annually throughout the 5-year cycle.

[Read the full article here.](#)



From the Primary Care Office

SORH Awarded SLRP Funding for Physician Recruitment & Retention

The Primary Care Office, part of the State Office of Rural Health, (SORH) has been awarded funds by the Health Resources Service Administration (HRSA) for a State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) that will assist sites with valuable recruitment and retention resources.

The Primary Care Office is committed to improving primary care service delivery and workforce availability to meet the needs of Georgia's underserved populations.

The SLRP funding will be awarded to primary healthcare professionals to pay for all or part of the principal, interest, or related expenses of qualifying educational loans in return for their provision of primary health care services in a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). The participant must provide healthcare at an eligible facility such as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), Rural Health Clinic (RHC), Critical Access Hospital (affiliated with a qualified outpatient clinic), State Mental facility, Federal, State prisons, and private practices (solo or group) located in a HPSA. National Health Service Corp site approval does not apply to the State Loan Repayment Program.



[Read the full article here.](#)

For more information about the SLRP program, please visit, <https://dch.georgia.gov/divisionsoffices/state-office-rural-health/primary-care-office-pco-programs>.

You may also contact: Beth Walker: Primary Care Office Director: 229-276-2750 or Dorothy Bryant: HPSA Analyst: 229-401-3095

Reminder: The National Health Service Corp site recertification cycle is currently open now until October 11, 2022.

Please see the attached link for the NHSC Site Reference Guide: [here](#).



Farmworker Program

Decatur Clinic Will Offer Health Care to Hispanic Farmworker Community at Annual Fall Outreach Event

The Decatur County Farmworker Health Clinic will host its annual Fall Project October 21 – 23 in conjunction with Emory University Physician Assistant (PA) Program. This event will include a Friday evening clinic, morning and evening clinics on Saturday, and a Sunday morning clinic.

Shelia Ramer, FNP and Director of the [Decatur County Farmworker Health Clinic in Bainbridge](#), stated that “so much hard work goes into planning these events”.



Presently, the outreach team is reaching out to farmers, crew leaders, and Hispanic ministers to determine where the largest numbers of farmworkers will be located. Typically, the Sunday clinic is held at a Hispanic church located in a rural area close to farms and Hispanic farmworker communities. The fall project targets workers not seen during the Summer Project or those new to the area. Although the project is held over a weekend, this event has previously served between 250 – 300 farmworkers who may not have any other access to medical care.

Farmworkers come to these events with a variety of medical issues. Typically, the most common chronic conditions are diabetes and hypertension, while acute conditions include rashes, skin lesions, upper respiratory illness, musculoskeletal pain/injuries, and women's health conditions. Due to the current lack of access to mobile dental services, patients receive referrals for vouchered dental services.

[Read the full article here.](#)

To learn more about the Georgia Farmworker Health Program, go to our website [here](#).





...your favorite apples come from the Blue Ridge mountains!

The beautiful horizon above is home to Mercier Orchards, a 4th generation family-owned business and local tourist attraction in operation for 79 years in Blue Ridge, Georgia. Labor Day weekend was opening day as tourists flocked to the apple orchard to pick or purchase apples and shop for jams, jellies, cider, and wine made from local produce. September brings in seven different varieties of delicious apples to choose from. As the season changes from summer to fall, tourists especially enjoy seeing the changing of the leaves from bright green to brilliant autumnal shades of orange, red, and gold.

Blue Ridge is located in Fannin County and has a population of 23,682 citizens. It is one of the most rural counties in Georgia due to its location in the Appalachian Mountain Range, with about 90% of Fannin's residents living in unincorporated lands. Fannin is located at the top of the state and borders Tennessee and North Carolina.

Photo by Dawn Waldrip



[Georgia Department of Community Health \(DCH\)](#)

[Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center](#) (New)

[DCH Grant Opportunities](#)

[HRSA Funding Opportunities](#)

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

[Rural Health Research Gateway](#)

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

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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