

FACT SHEET

State Office of Rural Health

Overview

The State Office of Rural Health (SORH) of the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) manages programs to develop regional quality health care systems to optimize health status and improve health outcomes in rural and underserved areas of Georgia. During State Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, the SORH program budget is \$6,409,397 in state funds and \$10,260,371 in federal funds, for a total budget of \$16,669,768.

The SORH administers programs to develop financially viable non-traditional regional systems designed to meet the health and service demands of the communities served. The desired outcomes are:

- Improvements in rural health access and delivery
- A strengthened health care safety net. The introduction of health care as a strategic industry in Georgia.

The SORH provides financial and technical support to select demonstration communities with the leadership and capacity to collaboratively design and implement models that:

- Increase access to integrated health services (physical health, prevention services, behavioral health, etc.).
- Transition to consumer-driven health care. Encourage regionalization of services so that providers are more financially stable.
- Use medical technology to improve health outcomes and efficiency.
- Ensure the long-term viability of the state's health care safety net.
- Ensure continued job opportunities for employees in new roles that support the innovative health care delivery model, as well as creating a strong workforce of healthy citizens.

State Primary Care Office

The Georgia Primary Care Office (PCO) promotes the expansion of access to comprehensive, quality primary health care for the underserved populations of Georgia through the development of new primary care access points and the recruitment and retention of safety net providers in underserved areas. Current PCO initiatives include:

- **Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)**
The PCO works closely with the Georgia Association for Primary Health Care (GAPHC) to foster the development and expansion of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC). The PCO is currently working with GAPHC to administer \$1,250,000 in grant funding for FQHC development and expansion in the state.



Health at a Glance

- 2.3 million rural residents in Georgia
- 39 Small Rural PPS Hospitals
- 30 Critical Access Hospitals
- 34 FQHCs with 201 sites in 111 counties
- 90 Rural Health Clinics
- 228 HPSAs covering 149 counties
- 190 DHPSAs covering 131 counties
- 108 MHPSAs covering 155 counties

Programs

- State Primary Care Office
- Hospital Services Program
- Rural Health Stabilization Program
- Georgia Farmworker Health Program
- Health Care for the Homeless
- Statewide AHEC Network
- SORH Grants

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- **National Health Service Corps (NHSC)**
National Health Service Corps is a federal initiative to assist Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) in recruiting and retaining physicians and other allied health professionals through loan repayment and scholarship programs. Currently, there are 162 providers receiving NHSC support and 403 NHSC-approved service sites in Georgia.
- **Georgia Conrad State 30 J-1 Visa Waiver Program (GA30)**
The J-1 Visa Waiver Program is a state and federal partnership that sponsors international medical graduates who agree to practice in underserved areas for a minimum of three years after completing their residency. At present, there are 71 participating physicians serving 19 counties.
- **National Rural Recruitment & Retention Network (3RNet)**
The PCO manages the 3RNet recruitment website for the state, connecting rural health care facilities with physicians and other health professionals interested in working in rural communities. (www.3RNet.org)
- **Health Professional Shortage Designations**
The PCO coordinates the Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) and Medically Underserved Area and Population (MUA/P) designation process within the state to ensure that Georgia's underserved communities may participate in federal and state programs targeting their special needs. Shortage designations include:
 - Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)
 - Dental Health Professional Shortage Area (DHPSA)
 - Mental Health Professional Shortage Area (MHPSA)
 - Medically Underserved Area/Population (MUA/P)

Hospital Services Program

The Hospital Services Program provides technical assistance and resources principally to rural and Critical Access Hospitals. Federal funds of \$1,085,270.00 were received in support of the following grant initiatives:

- **Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program (Flex)**
 - Quality Improvement – Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Program (MBQIP)
 - Financial and Operational Improvement
 - Population Health Management and Emergency Medical System (EMS) integration
- **Small Rural Health Improvement Program (SHIP)**
SHIP grant is designed to assist small, rural hospitals with costs related to one or potentially all three of these areas:
 - Value-Based Purchasing (VBP)
 - Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs)
 - Payment Bundling (PB) or Prospective Payment System (PPS) Investment Activities

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The Hospital Services Program provides technical assistance and resources principally to rural and Critical Access Hospitals. State funds of \$7,000,000.00 were received in support of the following grant initiatives:

- **Rural Hospital Stabilization Program**

The purpose of the Rural Hospital Stabilization Program is to address the closure of rural hospitals and the shortage of rural physicians that results in loss of health care access to approximately 1,800,000 Georgians.

- Phase Two – three hospitals \$3,000,000.00 over two years
- Phase three – twelve hospitals \$3,000,000.00 over one year

- **Patient Centered Medical Home**

The purpose of the *FY 2018 Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) Supplemental Funding Grant* is to support rural primary care physician practices to improve quality of care and patients' and providers' experience of care through the PCMH health care delivery model.

Through this \$300,000.00 legislatively directed supplemental funding opportunity, DCH/SORH will deliver a two-prong program focused on assisting rural primary care providers who may be at different degrees of readiness to implement the PCMH model in their clinical practice.

- **Georgia Rural Hospital External Peer Review Network**

The goal of this 1.5-year project is to develop a peer review program that supports CAH and other small rural hospitals in Georgia that includes on-going professional practice evaluation and focused professional practice evaluation. State funding supporting this initiative totals \$150,000.00

- **Rural Swing Bed Management Program**

This 1.5-year program is for the specific purpose of using funds to support a comprehensive education and training program focused on small rural Prospective Payment System and Critical Access Hospital Swing Bed level of care. State funding supporting this initiative totals \$200,000.00.

- **Behavioral Health Environmental Scan**

Purpose: An Environmental Scan of Behavioral Health and Behavioral Health Care in rural Georgia is designed to:

- Provide an overview of the status of selected health and health care issues in rural Georgia,
- Identify the key programs and organizational experiences
- Highlight gaps in information or resources, and
- Inform the subsequent development of programs, policies, education and training that can advance solutions to health problems.

State funding supporting this 1.5-year initiative totals \$150,000.00.

- **Georgia Rural Hospital Board Education**

The education is provided using both on-site and web-based presentations. State funding supporting this 1.5-year initiative totals \$200,000.00.

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Georgia Farmworker Health Program

The Georgia Farmworker Health Program works to improve the general health status of Georgia's migratory and seasonal agricultural workers and their families by providing cost-effective, culturally appropriate primary and preventive health services. Federal funding supporting this initiative totals \$4,858,931.

Health Care for the Homeless

Health Care for the Homeless provides primary and preventive health care services to the homeless in Atlanta at St. Joseph's Mercy Care. State funds supporting this initiative totaled \$169,000.

Statewide Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Network

SORH collaborates with Augusta University to administer this program. The mission of the Statewide AHEC Network is to create and sustain community-driven, regional programs promoting health care access for medically underserved Georgians by improving the quality, diversity, education, supply, distribution and retention of health care professionals. State funds supporting this program are \$2,899,595.

Georgia Charitable Care Network Grant

The State of Georgia provides \$500,000 annually to the Georgia Charitable Care Network to support Georgia's Free and Charitable Clinics throughout the state. These funds enhance service expansion through competitive sub-awards for the purchase of additional equipment and the addition of new service lines such as dental and behavioral health programs.

Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education

Through funds collected from the Georgia Breast Cancer License Tag Program, SORH provides \$350,000 annually to the Georgia CORE to provide expanded breast cancer screening, education, outreach and access programs, and treatment services for the medically indigent.

Air Ambulance Grants

Through state funding, the SORH office provides support to two air ambulance programs who serve the citizens of Georgia. Erlanger Life Force Air Ambulance receives \$600,000 annually, with 1207 patient transports within Georgia in 2017. Air Methods Corporation receives \$500,000 annually to support the Camilla base operation, and had 302 patient transports in 2017.

EMS Specific Grants

Through a combination of state and federal funding, SORH has \$642,000 dedicated to EMS specific grant projects for 2018. These projects are designed to integrate Emergency Medical Services into community based, patient centered programs through education, research, and collaboration initiatives. These grant projects include Strengthening Rural Communities through Child Abuse Education, Georgia EMS Workforce Study, Mobile Health Care Access and Integration Pilot Study, and the Rural Community Care Coordination Toolkit for EMS.

Southeastern Firefighter's Burn Foundation Grant

The State of Georgia allocates funding each year to provide a \$50,000 grant to the Southeastern Firefighter's Burn Foundation. This grant provides financial assistance for family members of patients admitted to the Joseph M. Still, Jr. Burn Center at Doctors Hospital, and can be used to cover expenses incurred during the patient's hospitalization.

For More Information

Please contact the State Office of Rural Health for additional information by phone at 229-401-3090, online at www.dch.georgia.gov/state-office-rural-health, or by mail at 502 South Seventh Street, Cordele, GA 31015.