



South Carolina's Healthcare Workforce

Ann Lefebvre, DSW, CPHQ | SC AHEC Executive Director
Senate Medical Affairs Subcommittee | September 10, 2025

South Carolina AHEC

What We Do

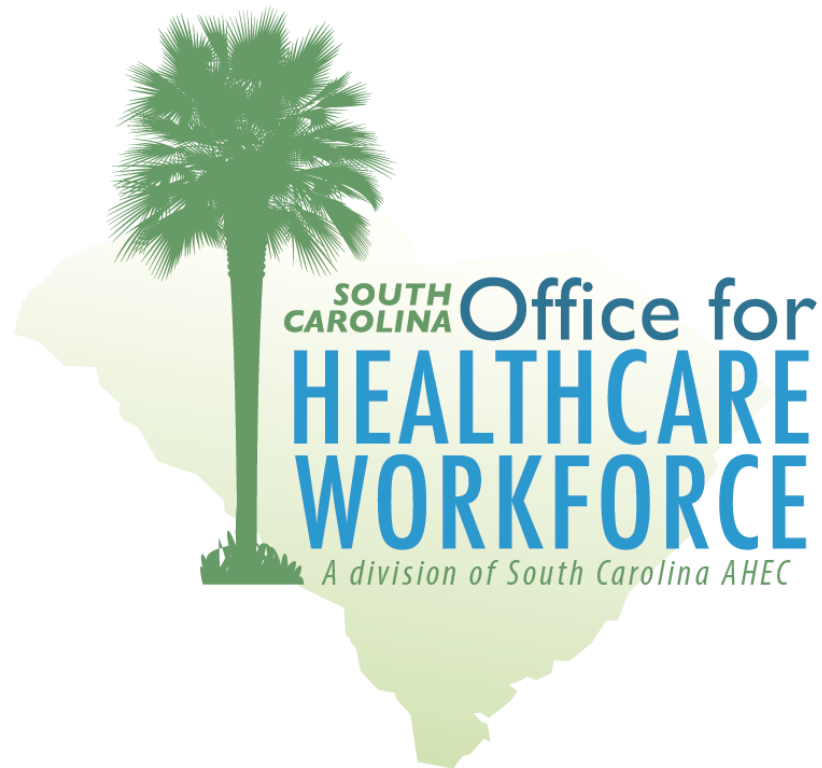
South Carolina AHEC strives to improve the training and distribution of health professionals to build and support the healthcare workforce South Carolina needs to connect all communities to better health.

Service Areas

- Health Careers Program
- Health Professions Student Program
- Graduate Medical Education
- Recruitment & Retention Program
- Continuing Professional Development

➔ **SC Office for Healthcare Workforce**

SC Office for Healthcare Workforce (SCOHW)



A division of AHEC dedicated to studying the issues that affect the balance of supply and demand for health professionals in the state. SCOHW develops accurate, reliable information and makes it widely available to support planning and policy decisions.

Our Licensed Health Professions Data



Note about data in today's presentation:

SCOHW has not yet received all data sets for the upcoming Data Book. In the interest of using comparable data points, the professions data used here are from our *2024 South Carolina Health Professions Data Book*.

Snapshot of Selected Health Professions

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses

- APRNs per 10,000 population: 12.9
- Total APRNs in SC (2022): 6,696
 - Nurse Practitioners: 5,260
 - Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists: 1,298
 - Certified Nurse Midwives: 82
 - Clinical Nurse Specialists: 56

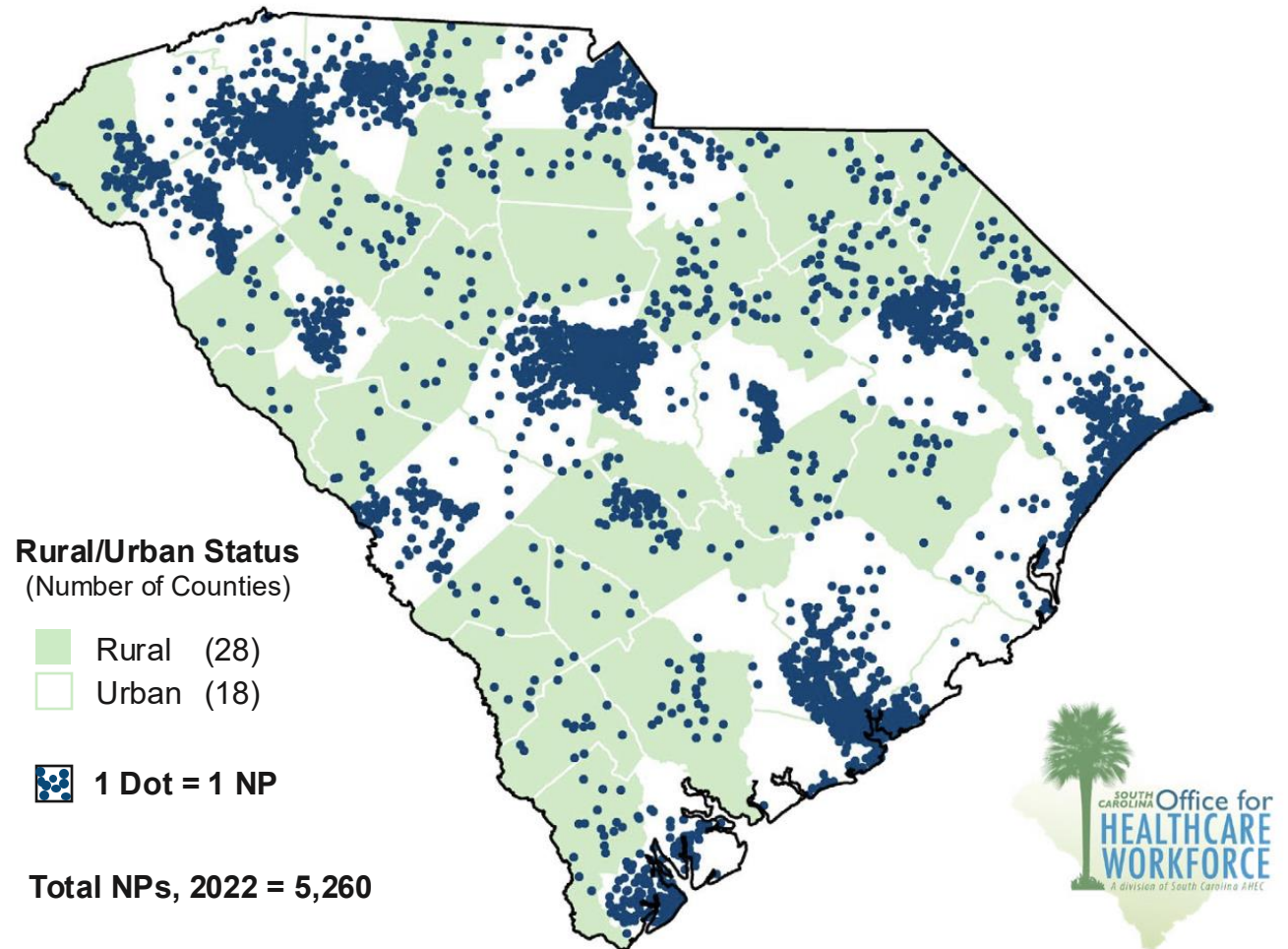
APRNs are licensed registered nurses with advanced training and education to practice in one of four roles

Nurse Practitioners

- NPs per 10,000 population: 10.1
- Total NPs (2022): 5,260
 - 78.6% of APRN workforce
- Education & Training:*)
 - Master's, post-nursing master's certificate or doctorate degree
 - National certification within 2 years after graduation
 - Post-graduate training can be completed to obtain advanced clinical knowledge and/or further specialization

*Summary of requirements for licensure outlined in SC practice act but not all-inclusive of every licensure pathway and/or requirement

Nurse Practitioners (NPs) by Primary Practice Location (2022)



Dots are randomly scattered within the zip code area.

Source: 2024 South Carolina Health Professions Data Book, <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/reports/139>.

Nurse Practitioner Practice Settings in SC, 2022

Primary Setting	Count	Percent
Physician / Medical Office	1,561	29.7%
Hospital – General Inpatient	514	9.8%
Hospital – Outpatient	313	6.0%
NP Provider Clinic	236	4.5%
Federal Clinic	235	4.5%
Urgent Care	221	4.2%
Hospital – Other Inpatient	218	4.1%
Home Health	210	4.0%
Nursing Home / Extended Care	164	3.1%
Ambulatory Care Setting	163	3.1%
Other	1,394	26.5%
Setting Missing	31	0.6%
Total NP Workforce	5,260	100.0%

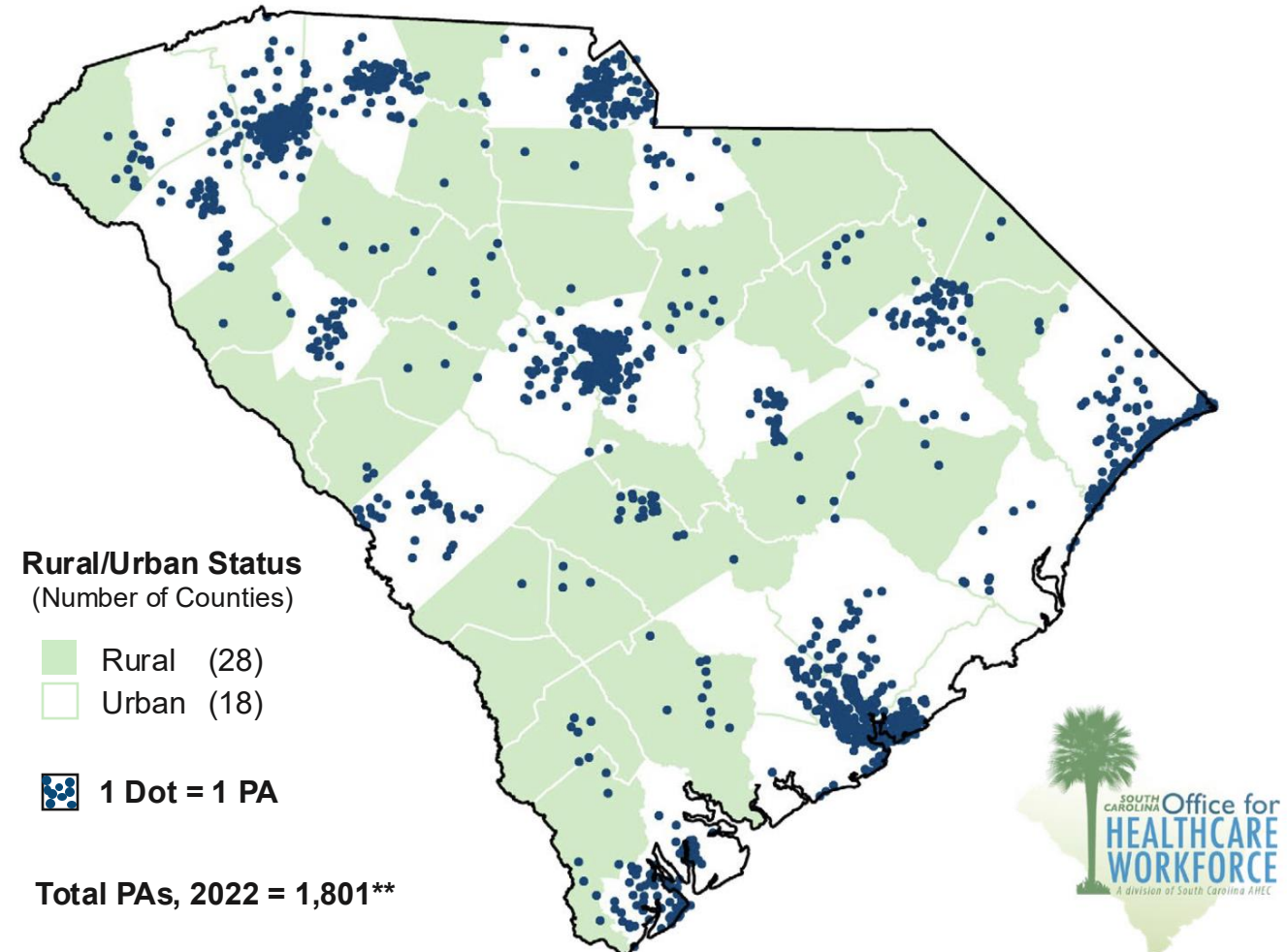
Data include NPs with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in South Carolina as of 5/1/2022. Source: Campbell C, Gaul K. The Nurse Practitioner Workforce in South Carolina, 2022. Charleston: South Carolina AHEC, Office for Healthcare Workforce. May 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/reports/145>.

Physician Assistants

- PAs per 10,000 population: 3.5
- Total PAs (2022): 1,801
- Education & Training:***
 - Complete an approved PA program
 - National certifying exam
 - Post-graduate training can be completed to obtain advanced clinical knowledge and/or further specialization

*Summary of requirements for licensure outlined in SC practice act but not all-inclusive of every licensure pathway and/or requirement

Physician Assistants (PAs) by Primary Practice Location (2022)



**This map omits 7 PAs missing a valid SC zip code. Dots are randomly scattered within the zip code area.
Source: 2024 South Carolina Health Professions Data Book, <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/reports/139>.

Physician Assistant Practice Settings in SC, 2022

Primary Setting	Count	Percent
Private Office	640	35.5%
Hospital, Nonfederal General	582	32.3%
Freestanding Outpatient Clinic	275	15.3%
University / College of Medicine	71	3.9%
Emergency / Urgent Care Clinic	23	1.3%
Business Establishment	17	0.9%
Hospital, Nonfederal Rehabilitation	6	0.3%
Hospital, Nonfederal Psychiatric	3	0.2%
Admin / Regulatory Health Agency	3	0.2%
Freestanding Ambulatory Surgery Center	1	0.1%
Other	69	3.8%
Setting Missing	111	6.2%
Total PA Workforce	1,801	100.0%

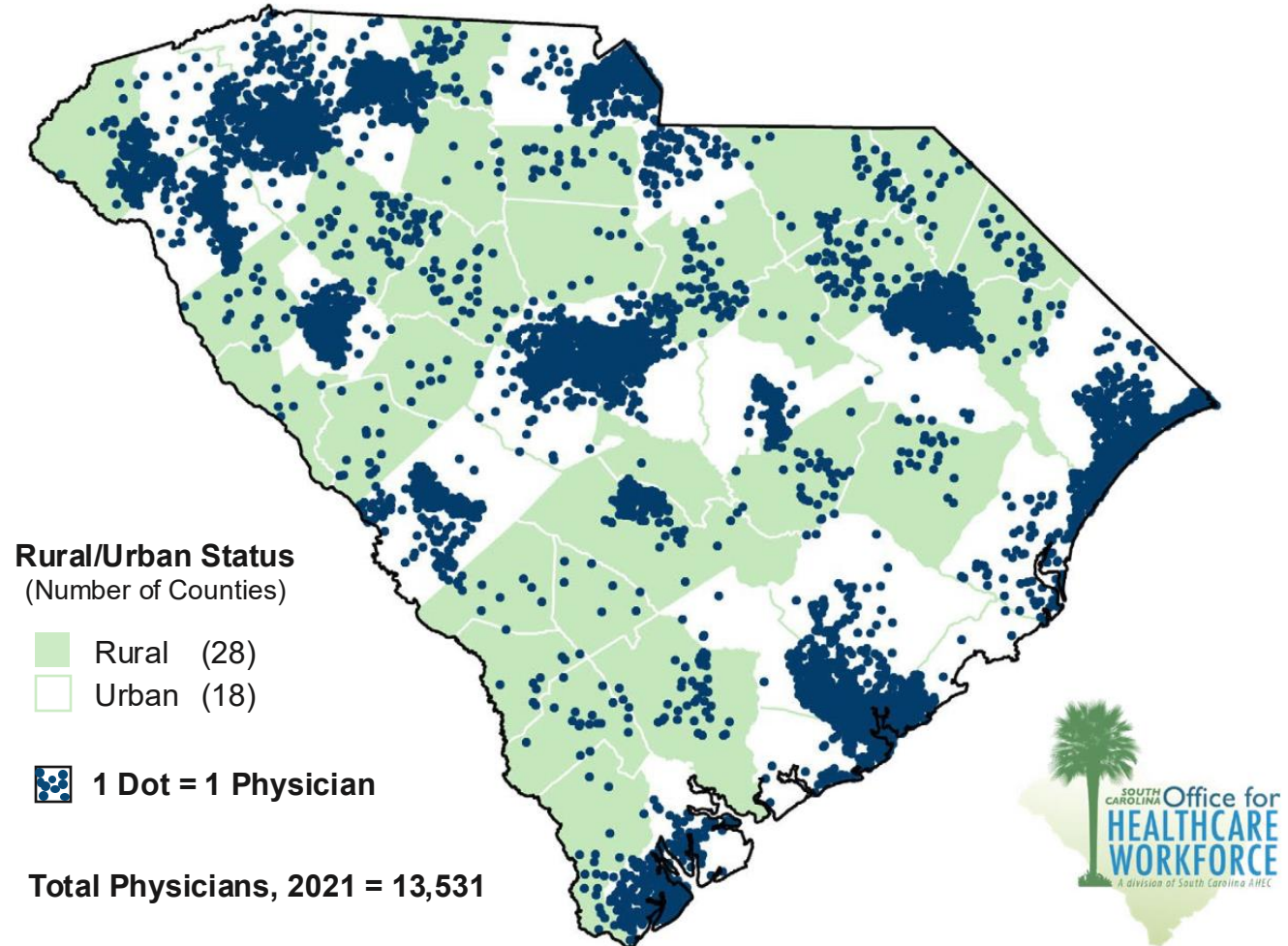
Data include PAs with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in a nonfederal setting in South Carolina as of 3/1/2022. Source: SC Office for Healthcare Workforce, SC AHEC, with data collected by the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) and obtained from the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA).

Physicians

- Physicians per 10,000 population: 26.1
- Total Physicians (2021): 13,531
- Education & Training:*)
 - Doctorate degree
 - Required post-graduate residency training (graduate medical education)
 - Licensure exam
 - Additional post-graduate training can be completed to obtain advanced clinical knowledge and/or further specialization

*Summary of requirements for licensure outlined in SC practice act but not all-inclusive of every licensure pathway and/or requirement

Physicians by Primary Practice Location (2021)



Dots are randomly scattered within the zip code area.
Source: 2024 South Carolina Health Professions Data Book, <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/reports/139>.

Physician Practice Settings in SC, 2021

Primary Setting	Count	Percent
Private Office	4,784	35.4%
Hospital, Nonfederal General	4,149	30.7%
University / College of Medicine	1,602	11.8%
Freestanding Outpatient Clinic	769	5.7%
Emergency / Urgent Care Clinic	390	2.9%
Group Assigned to Hospital	202	1.5%
Community Health Center (FQHC), Rural Clinic	201	1.5%
Outpatient Mental Health Clinic	111	0.8%
Non-Profit Organization	106	0.8%
Freestanding Ambulatory Surgery Center	103	0.8%
Other*	623	4.6%
Setting Missing	491	3.6%
Total Physician Workforce	13,531	100.0%

*Other setting includes “other” and any setting reported by fewer than 100 physicians. Data include physicians, including residents-in-training, with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in a nonfederal setting in South Carolina as of 9/1/2021. Source: SC Office for Healthcare Workforce, SC AHEC, with data collected by the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) and obtained from the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA).

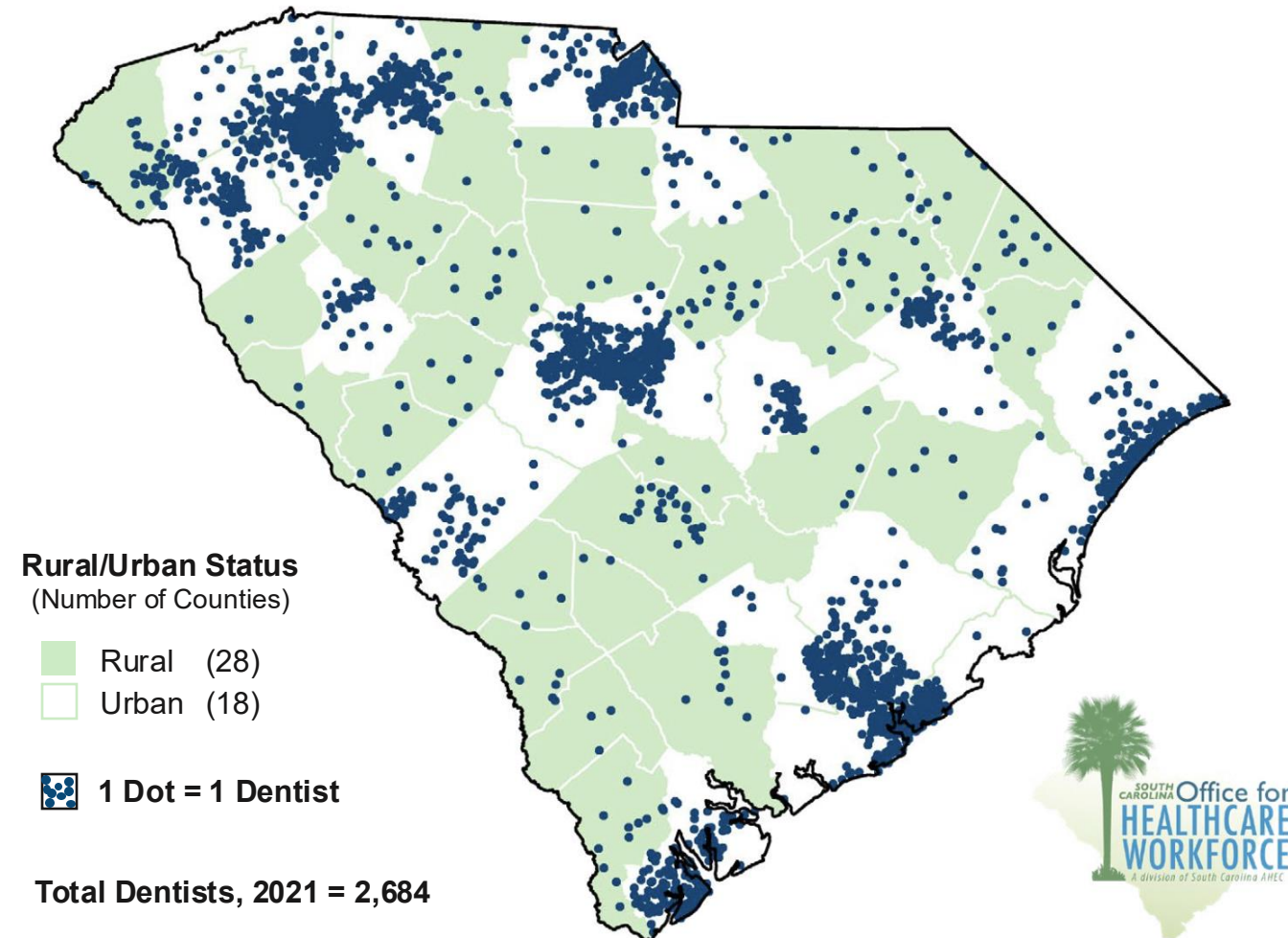
Dentists

- Dentists per 10,000 population: 5.2
- Total dentists (2021): 2,684
- Education & Training:*

 - Degree from approved dental college
 - National Board Examination + clinical examination
 - Post-graduate training can be completed to obtain advanced clinical knowledge and/or further specialization

*Summary of requirements for licensure outlined in SC practice act but not all-inclusive of every licensure pathway and/or requirement

Dentists by Primary Practice Location (2021)



Dots are randomly scattered within the zip code area.
Source: 2024 South Carolina Health Professions Data Book, <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/reports/139>.

Dentist Practice Settings in SC, 2021

Primary Setting	Count	Percent
Dental Office, Solo or Group	2,150	80.1%
Freestanding Clinic	67	2.5%
University / College of Dentistry	42	1.6%
Business Establishment	41	1.5%
Rural or Community Health Center (FQHC)	32	1.2%
Nursing Home / Other Institution	14	0.5%
Academic Setting	12	0.5%
Other*	60	2.2%
Setting Missing	266	9.9%
Total Dentist Workforce	2,684	100.0%

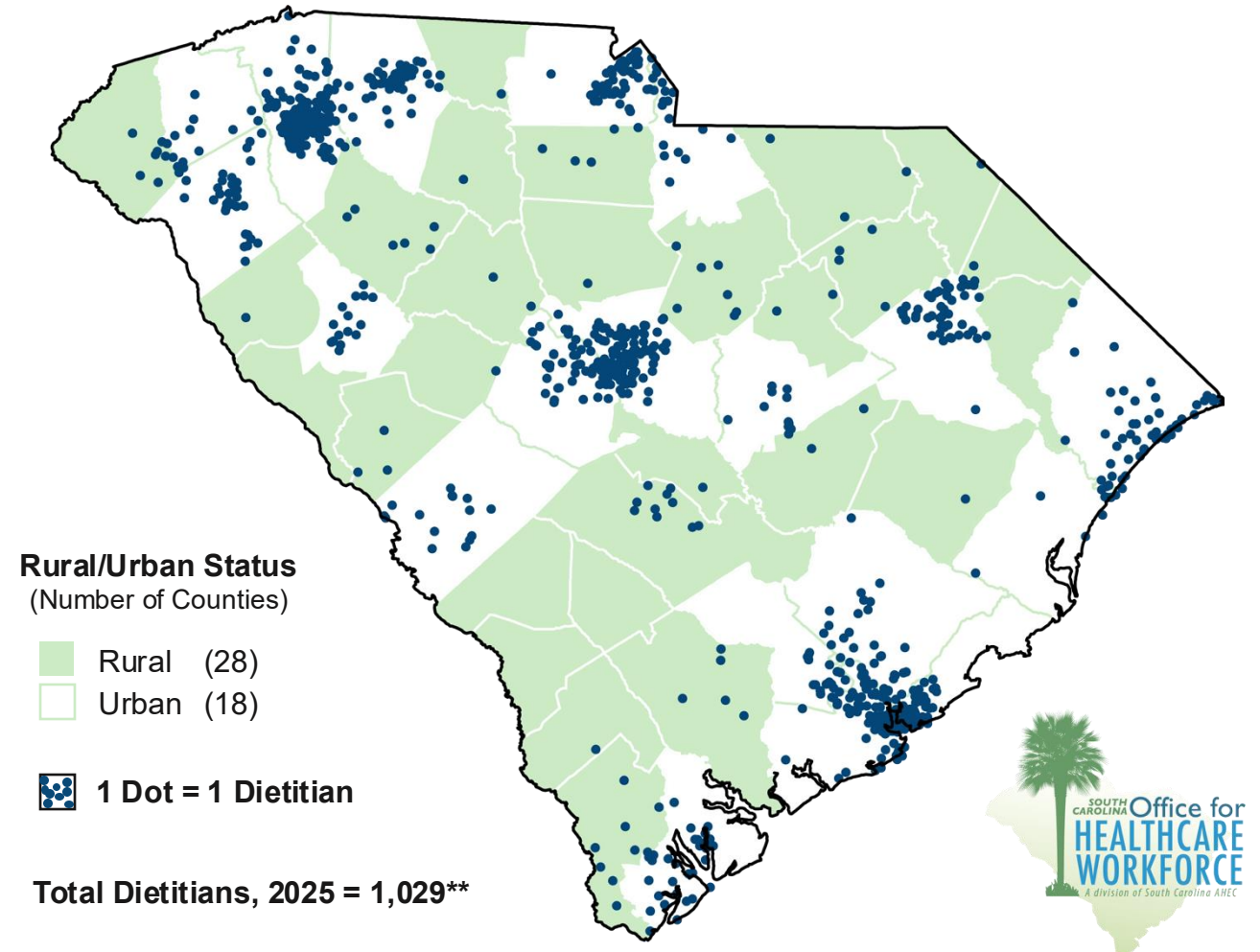
*Other setting includes “other” and any setting reported by ten or fewer dentists. Data include dentists with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in a nonfederal setting in South Carolina as of 5/1/2021. Source: SC Office for Healthcare Workforce, SC AHEC, with data collected by the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) and obtained from the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA).

Dietitians

- Dietitians per 10,000 population: 1.9
- Total dietitians (2025): 1,029
- Education & Training:*
- Successfully complete the requirements for current registration as a registered dietitian by the Commission on Dietetic Registration
- Or
- Pass required examination and received a baccalaureate degree or master's degree in relevant major from approved accredited institution

*Summary of requirements for licensure outlined in SC practice act but not all-inclusive of every licensure pathway and/or requirement

Dietitians by Primary Practice Location (2025)



**This map omits 8 dietitians missing a valid SC zip code. Dots are randomly scattered within the zip code area.
Source: SC RFA, derived from data collected by SC LLR.

Dietitian Practice Settings in SC, 2025

Primary Setting	Count	Percent
Hospital – General / Acute Care	290	28.2%
Physician / Medical Office	200	19.4%
Long Term Care / Nursing Home / Other Inst.	112	10.9%
Private Office	110	10.7%
Public Health Department	33	3.2%
Health Industry / Insurance – Support Services	29	2.8%
School / College Health or Social Services	22	2.1%
Academic Setting (Instruction / Research)	21	2.0%
Community Services	21	2.0%
Other*	140	13.6%
Setting Missing	51	5.0%
Total Dietitian Workforce	1,029	100.0%

*Other setting includes “other” and any setting reported by 10 dietitians or fewer. Data include dietitians with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in a nonfederal setting in South Carolina as of 5/31/2025.

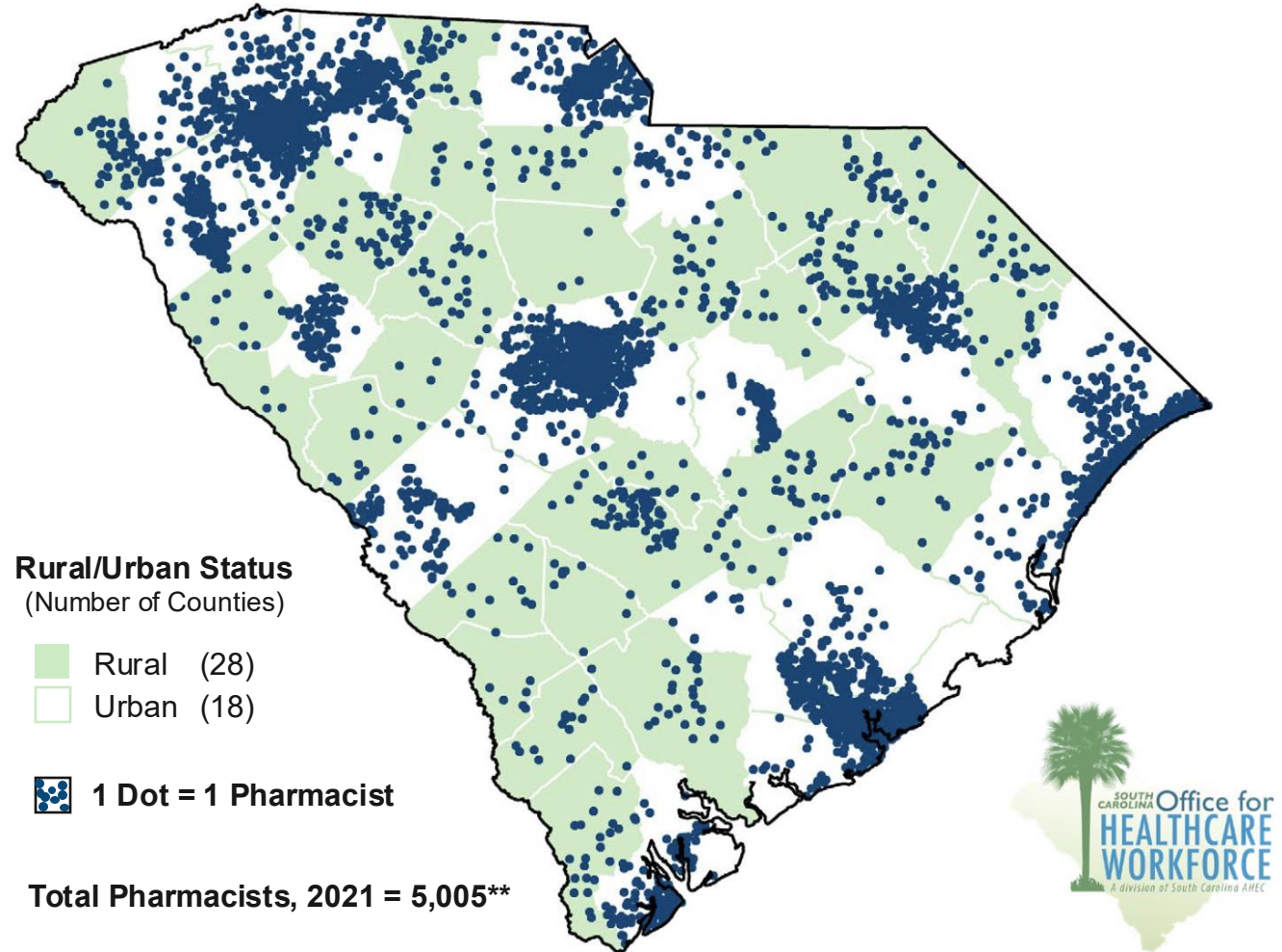
Source: SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA), with data collected by the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR).

Pharmacists

- Pharmacists per 10,000 population: 9.6
- Total pharmacists (2021): 5,005
- Education & Training:*)
 - Bachelor of Science in pharmacy or Doctor of Pharmacy degree
 - Licensure exams
 - Post-graduate training can be completed to obtain advanced clinical knowledge and/or further specialization

*Summary of requirements for licensure outlined in SC practice act but not all-inclusive of every licensure pathway and/or requirement

Pharmacists by Primary Practice Location (2021)



**This map omits 10 pharmacists missing a valid SC zip code. Dots are randomly scattered within the zip code area.
Source: 2024 South Carolina Health Professions Data Book, <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/reports/139>.

Pharmacist Practice Settings in SC, 2021

Primary Setting	Count	Percent
Large Chain Pharmacy	1,816	36.3%
Hospital – Nonfederal	1,390	27.8%
Independent Community Pharmacy	811	16.2%
Medical Bldg / Surgery Ctr / Clinic	267	5.3%
Long Term Pharmacy	191	3.8%
University or College of Pharmacy	72	1.4%
Mail Order Pharmacy	68	1.4%
Other Government Agency	61	1.2%
Home Care / Infusion Services	52	1.0%
Other*	272	5.4%
Setting Missing	5	0.1%
Total Pharmacist Workforce	5,005	100.0%

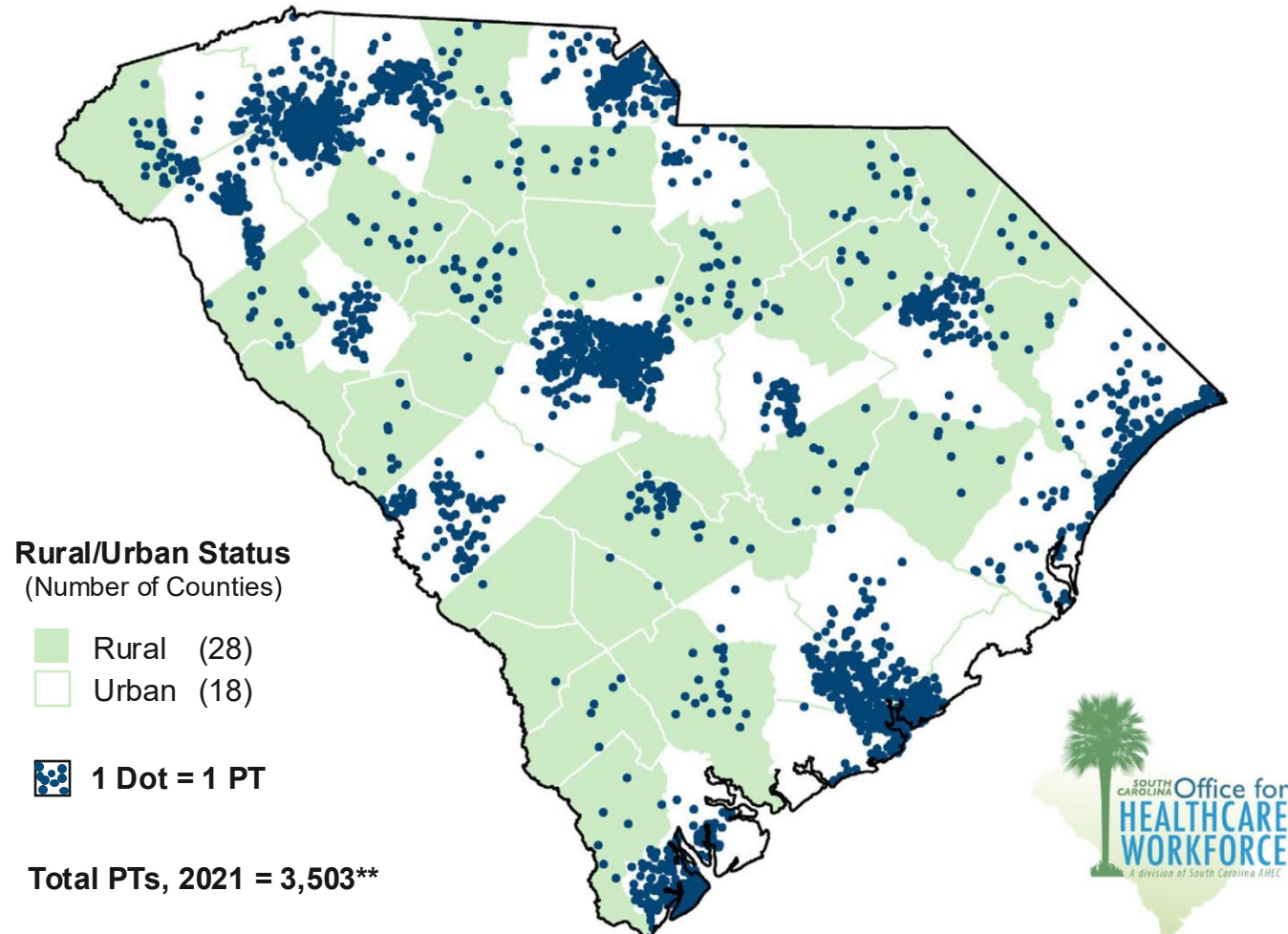
*Other setting includes “other” and any setting reported by fewer than 50 pharmacists. Data include pharmacists with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in a nonfederal setting in South Carolina as of 7/1/2021. Source: SC Office for Healthcare Workforce, SC AHEC, with data collected by the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) and obtained from the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA).

Physical Therapists

- PTs per 10,000 population: 6.7
- Total PTs (2021): 3,503
- Education & Training:***
 - Degree from approved physical therapy education program
 - Examination
 - Post-graduate training can be completed to obtain advanced clinical knowledge and/or further specialization

*Summary of requirements for licensure outlined in SC practice act but not all-inclusive of every licensure pathway and/or requirement

Physical Therapists (PTs) by Primary Practice Location (2021)



**This map omits 1 PT missing a valid SC zip code. Dots are randomly scattered within the zip code area.
Source: 2024 South Carolina Health Professions Data Book, <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/reports/139>.

Physical Therapist Practice Settings in SC, 2021

Primary Setting	Count	Percent
Hospital – Inpatient	1,006	28.7%
Physician / Medical Office	642	18.3%
Nursing Home / Other Institution	388	11.1%
Home Health Care	341	9.7%
Rehabilitation Clinic	311	8.9%
Private Office	239	6.8%
Academic Setting	103	2.9%
Group / Agency – Assigned Multi. Setting	64	1.8%
Retail-Based / Walk-In-Clinic	63	1.8%
Other*	336	9.6%
Setting Missing	10	0.3%
Total PT Workforce	3,503	100.0%

*Other setting includes “other” and any setting reported by fewer than 40 PTs. Data include PTs with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in a nonfederal setting in South Carolina as of 3/1/2021. Source: SC Office for Healthcare Workforce, SC AHEC, with data collected by the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) and obtained from the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA).

Scope of Practice & Regulation Policy Comparisons

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses: Nurse Practitioner Practice and Prescriptive Authority

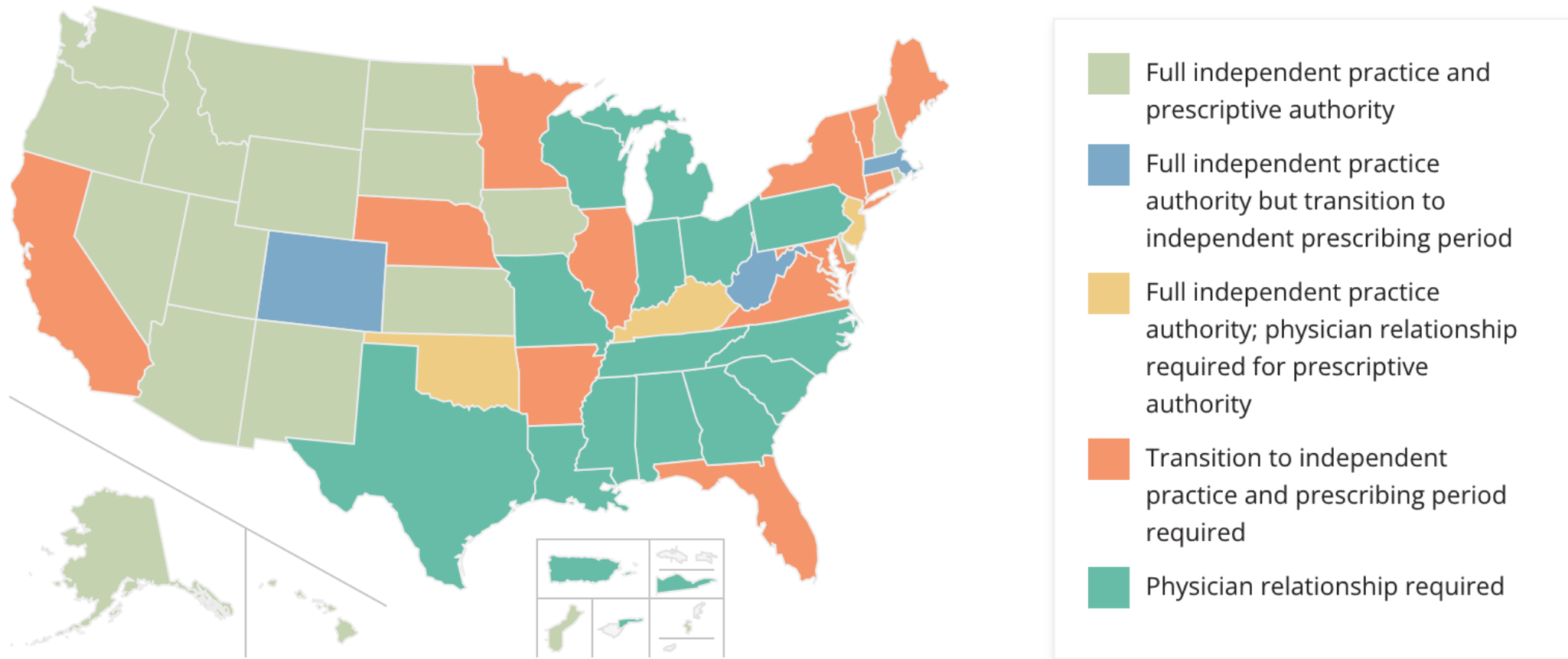


Image credit: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2025, <https://www.ncsl.org/scope-of-practice-policy/practitioners/advanced-practice-registered-nurses/nurse-practitioner-practice-and-prescriptive-authority>

Physician Assistants: Supervision Requirements (Practice and Prescriptive Authority)

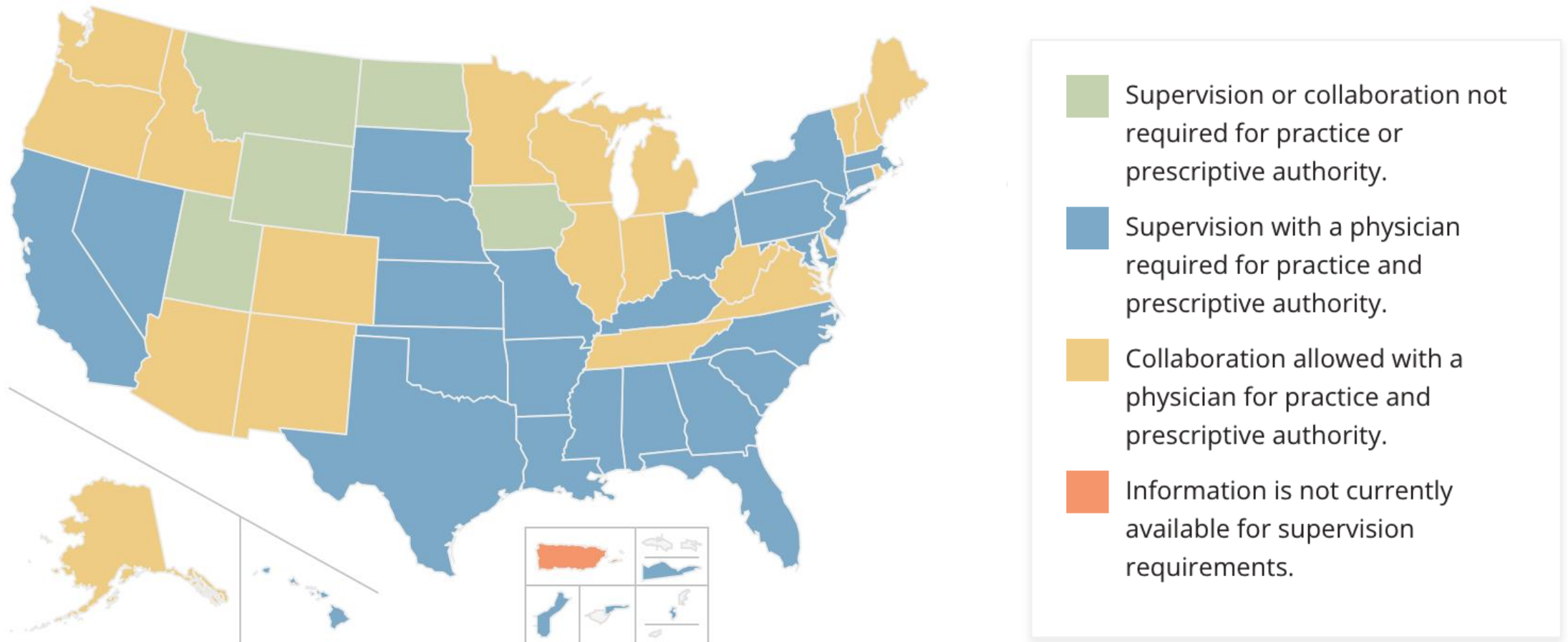


Image credit: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2025, <https://www.ncsl.org/scope-of-practice-policy/practitioners/physician-assistants/physician-assistant-practice-and-prescriptive-authority>

Pharmacist Prescriptive Authority: Independent Prescribing

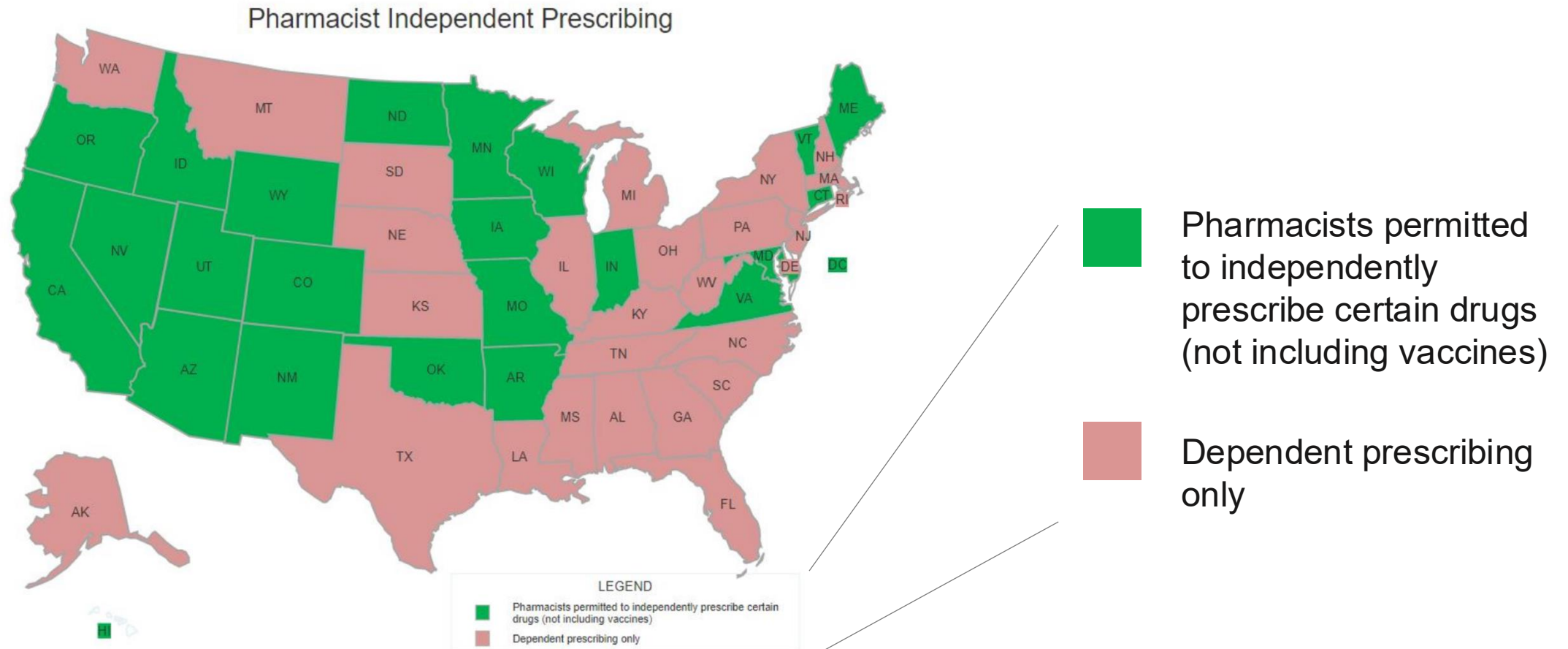


Image credit: American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, 2021, <https://www.ashp.org/-/media/assets/advocacy-issues/docs/GRD-2021-Prescribing-Authority-Maps.pdf>

Physical Therapists' Ability to Certify Applications for Disability Parking Placards and License Plates

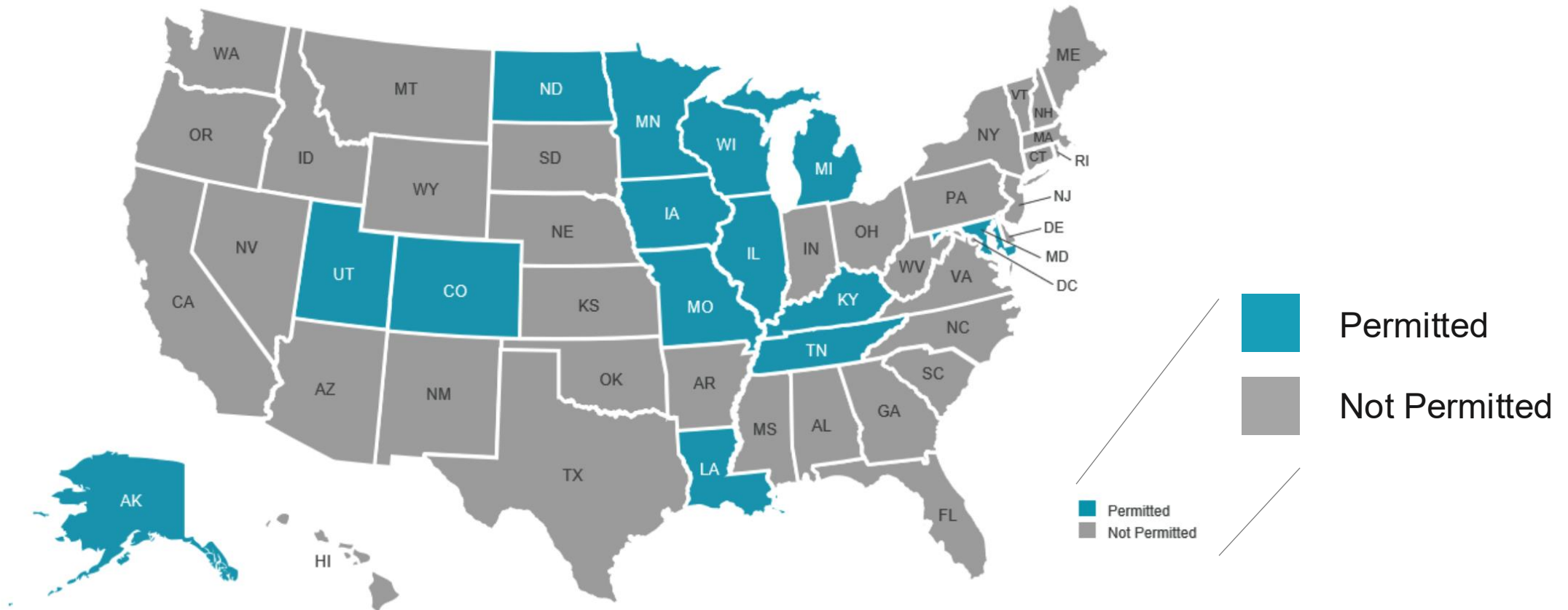


Image credit: American Physical Therapy Association, 2024, https://www.apta.org/contentassets/649fb6ae03e8435181f1f846cf1753e0/apta_disability_placard_certification-by_state240801.pdf

States with Enacted and Proposed Additional Physician Licensure Pathway Legislation

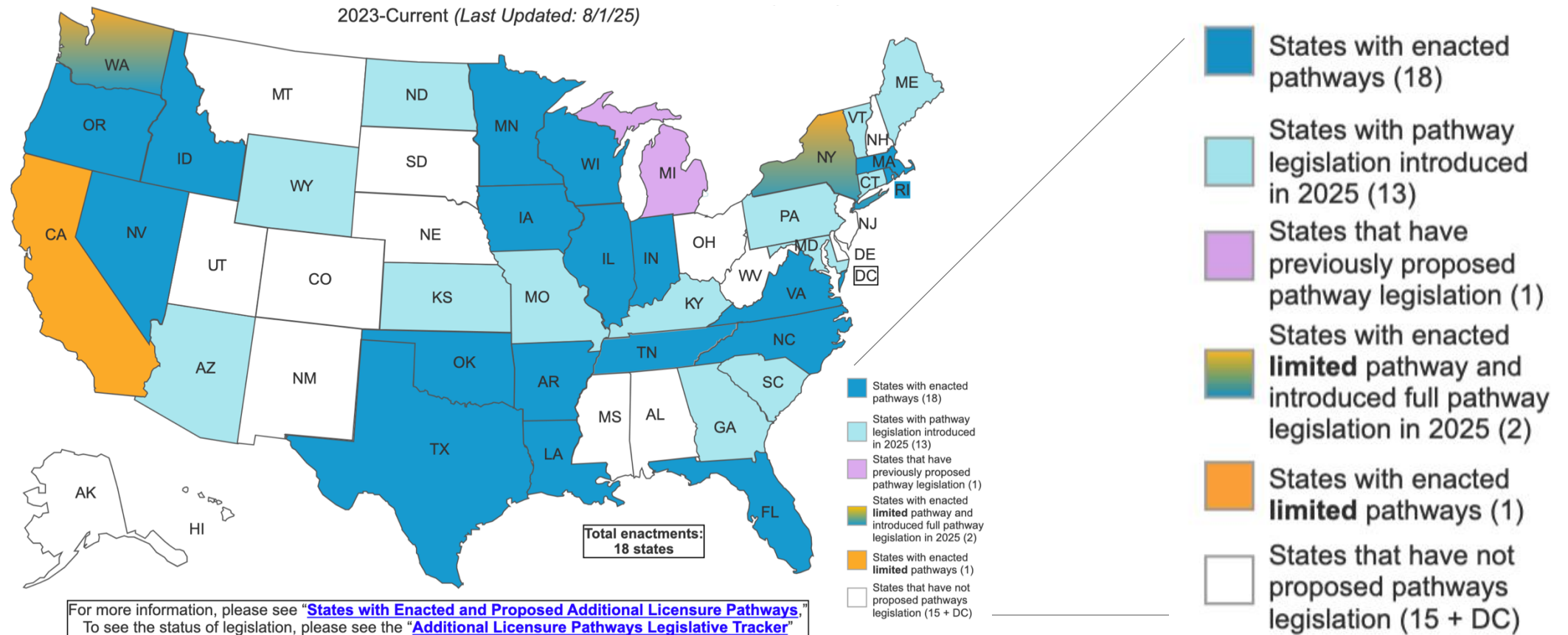
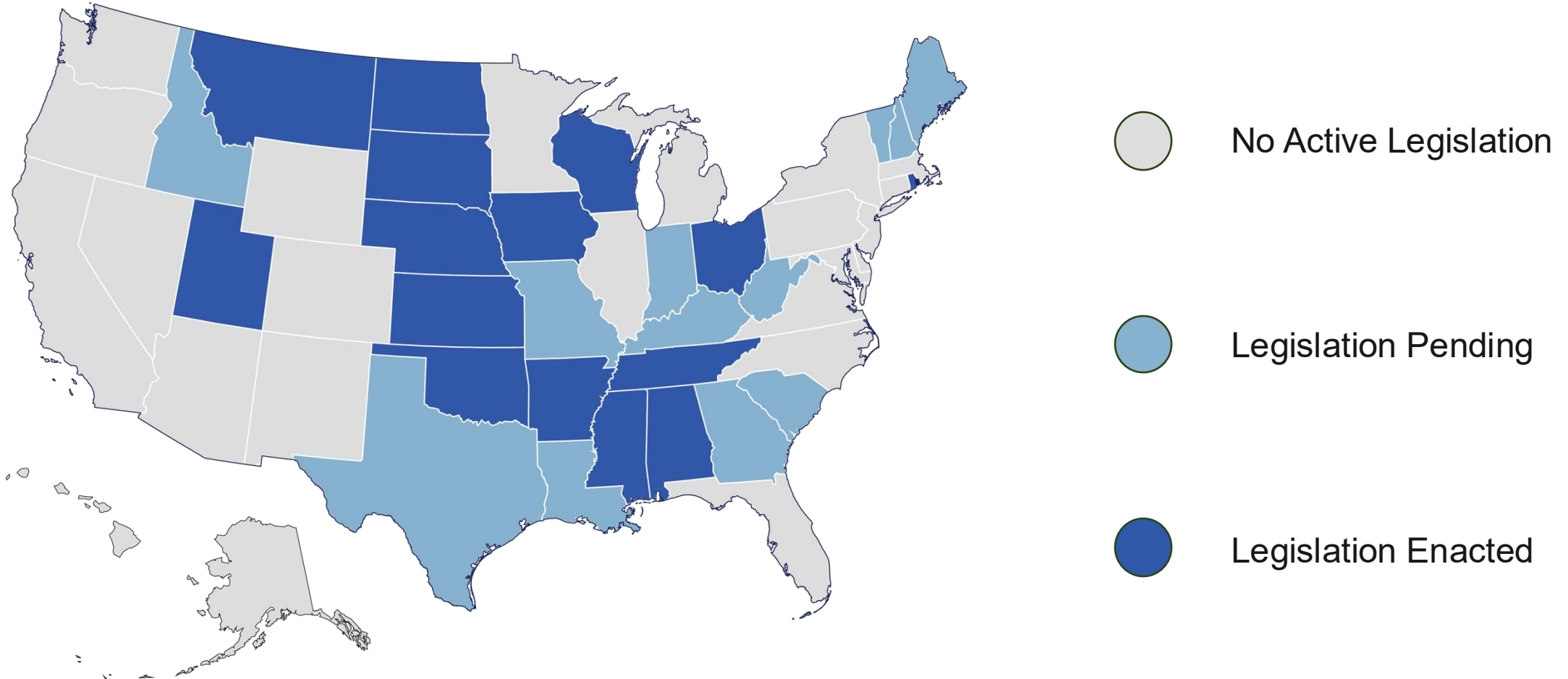


Image credit: Federation of State Medical Boards, 2025, <https://www.fsmb.org/siteassets/advocacy/policies/states-with-enacted-and-proposed-additional-img-licensure-pathways-map.pdf>

Dietitian Licensure Compact



Source: Council of State Governments, 2025, https://dietitianscompact.org/?page_id=10. Note: The following states would not be able to participate because they do not license or certify dietitians: California, Colorado, Virginia, Michigan, and Arizona. Colors in this map were updated to be more readable on screen and in print.

Teledentistry Regulation

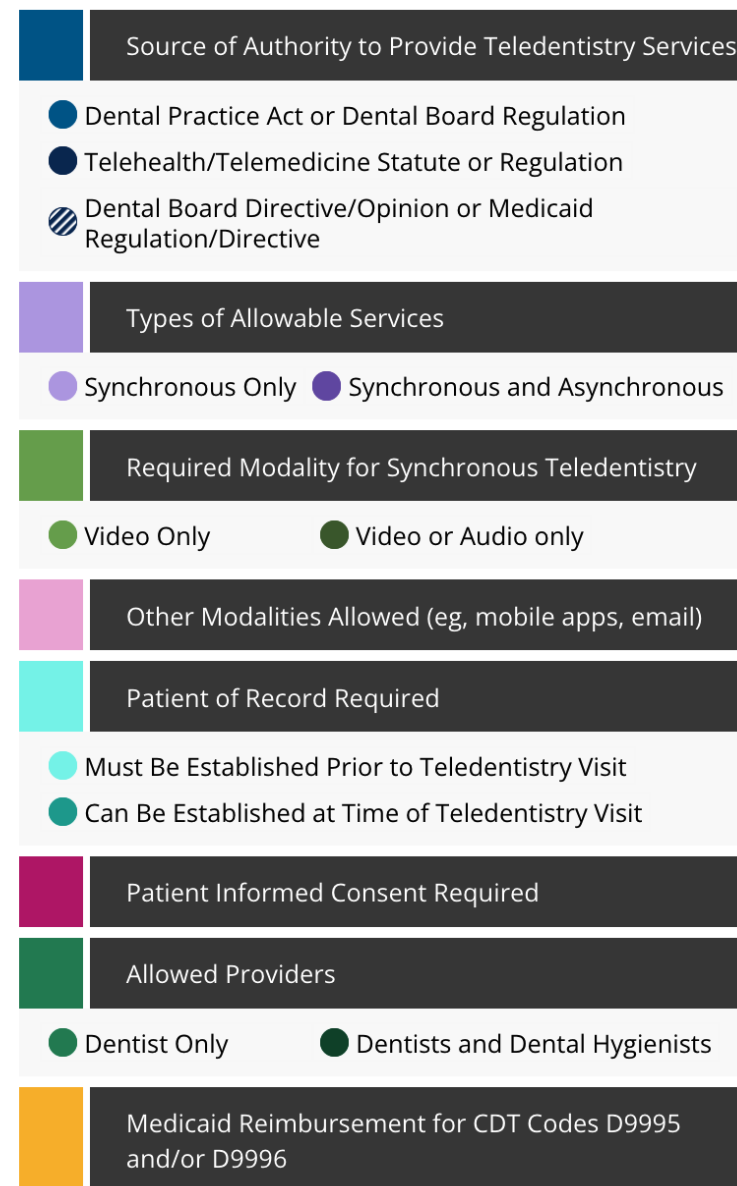
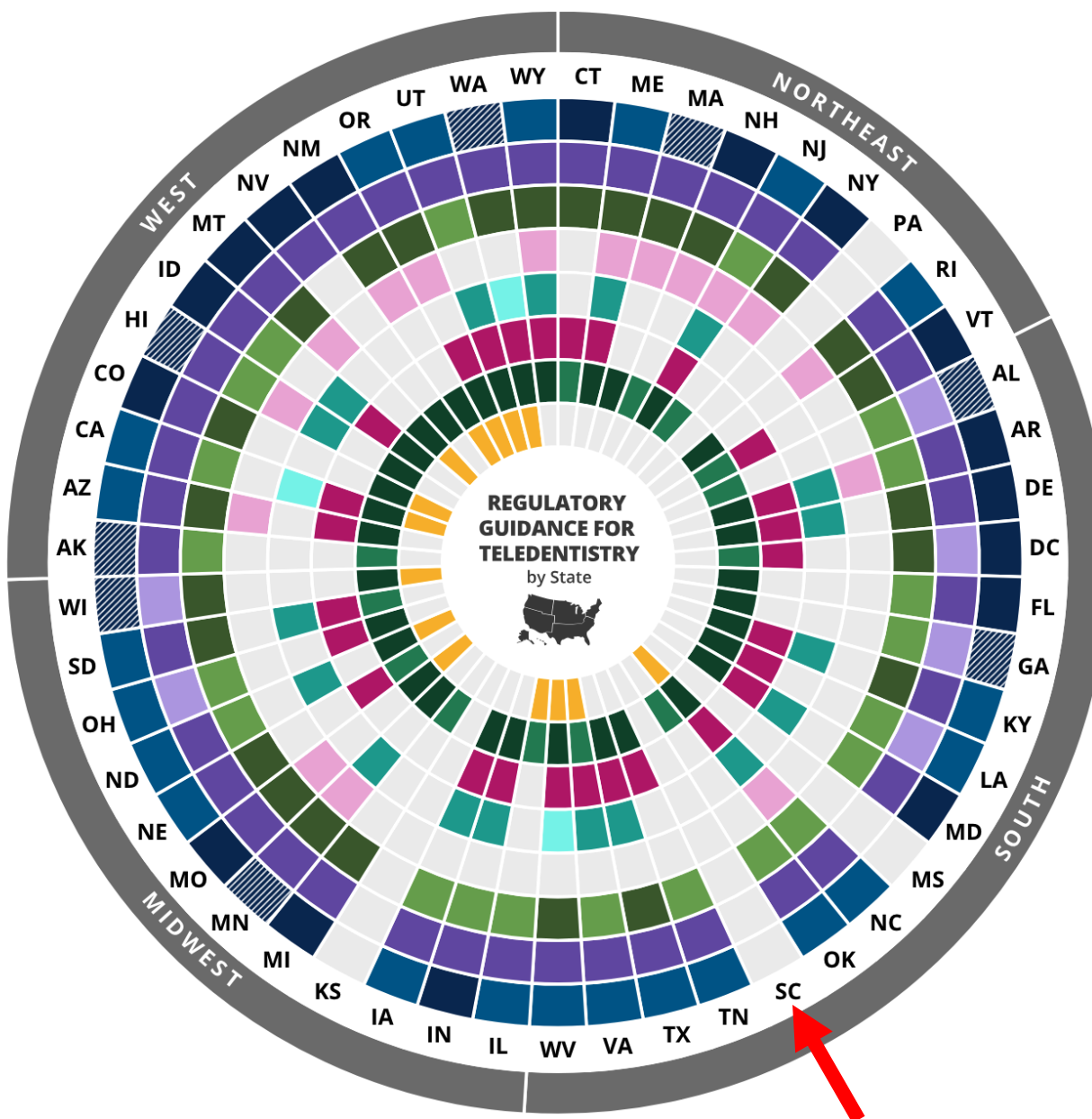
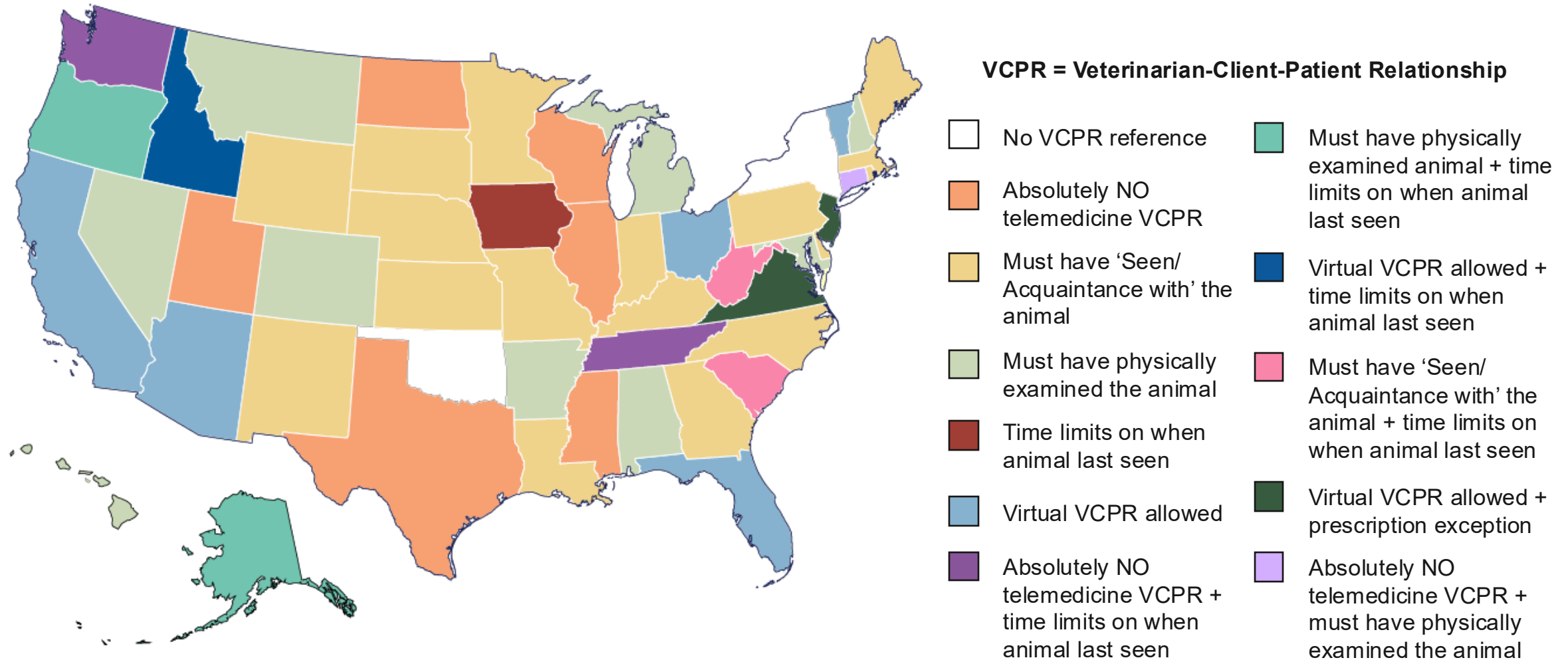


Image credit: Oral Health Workforce Research Center, 2022, <https://oralhealthworkforce.org/infographics/variation-in-teledentistry-regulation-by-state/>

Virtual Veterinary Care Regulation



Derived from: Veterinary Virtual Care Association, 2025, <https://vvca.org/resources/telemedicine-map/>

Key Trends

Bright Spots & Opportunities

South Carolina Ranks Low for Access to Health Care

America's Health Rankings (2024) ranks South Carolina in the bottom half of states for access to care:

**Access to Primary
Care Providers**

37th

**Access to Mental
Health Providers**

40th

**Access to Dental Care
Providers**

42nd

America's Health Rankings, Summary of South Carolina, 2024 Rankings, <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/states/SC>

Shortage vs. Maldistribution

Shortage

A universal lack of the number of health professionals needed to address the provision of care

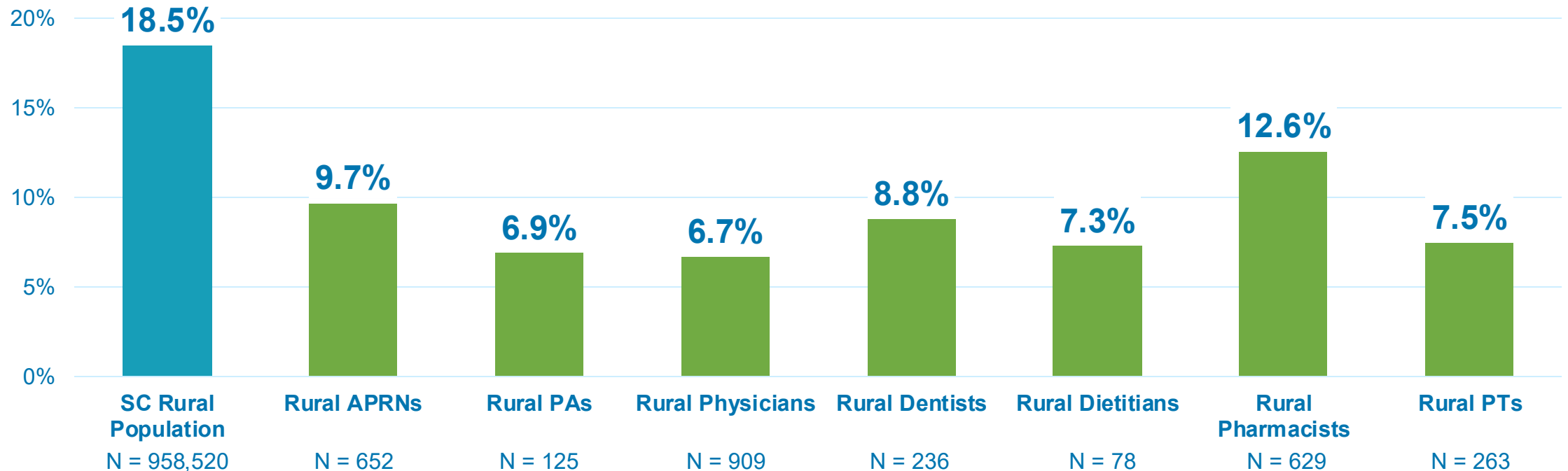
Maldistribution

A lack of a specific health professional or specialty in a specific area or setting

Why it matters: addressing maldistributions enables us to look at local factors that contribute to recruiting and retaining health professionals and devise data-driven, targeted solutions

Maldistribution of Health Professionals in Rural South Carolina Counties

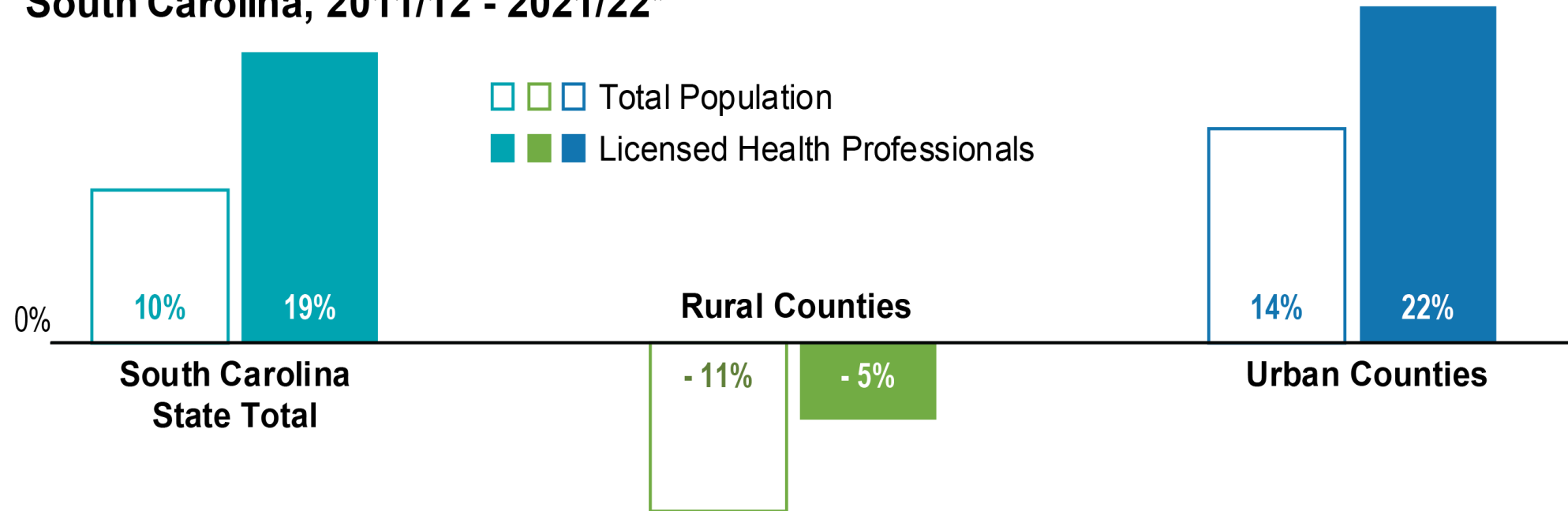
Percentage of South Carolina Population Living in Rural Counties Compared to Percentage of Selected Health Professionals Practicing in Rural Counties



Notes: This information includes selected health professionals with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in a nonfederal setting in South Carolina as 2021 (physicians, dentists, pharmacists, PT), 2022 (APRNs, PAs) or 2025 (dietitians). Physician counts include residents-in-training. Rural counties are defined as counties in which 50% or more of the population lives outside of an urban area.

Rural Communities are Losing Health Professionals

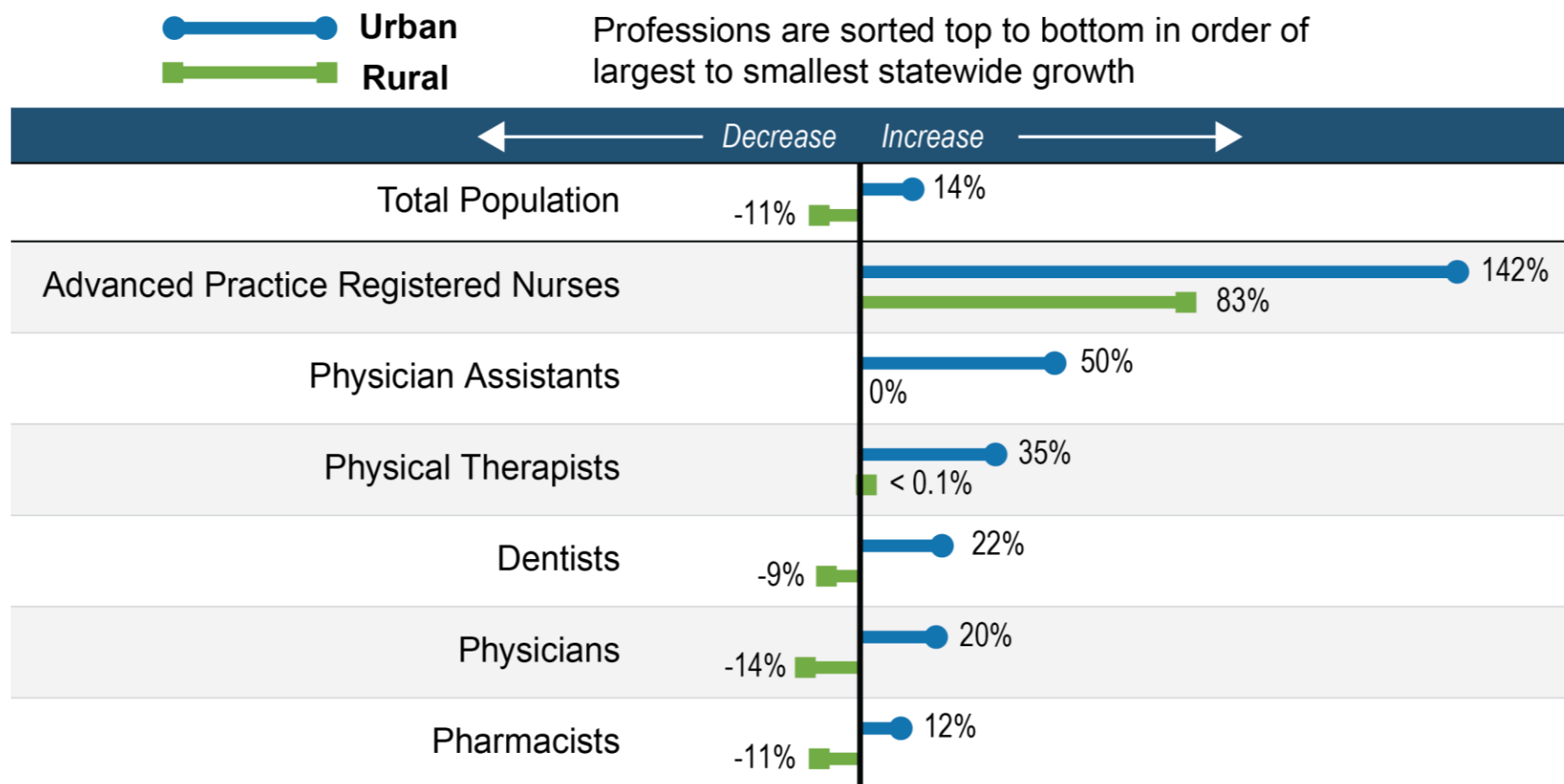
Percent Change in Total Population and Selected Licensed Health Professionals, South Carolina, 2011/12 - 2021/22*



Notes: This information includes health professionals with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in a nonfederal setting in South Carolina as of two months after the end of each profession's license renewal period. Professions include all professions tracked by SCOHW except for social workers and psychologists, for which data were not available until 2017 and 2020, respectively. Physician counts include residents-in-training. *The figures in this chart are based on the difference in counts from 2012 to 2022 for nurses and PAs, and from 2011 to 2021 for other professions. Rural counties are defined as counties in which 50% or more of the population lives outside of an urban area. Sources: SC Office for Healthcare Workforce, derived from data collected by the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation and obtained from the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office; US Census Bureau, Geography Division, updated September 2023, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>. Created 8/29/2025.

Some Health Professions are Making Gains in Rural Communities While Others Are Not

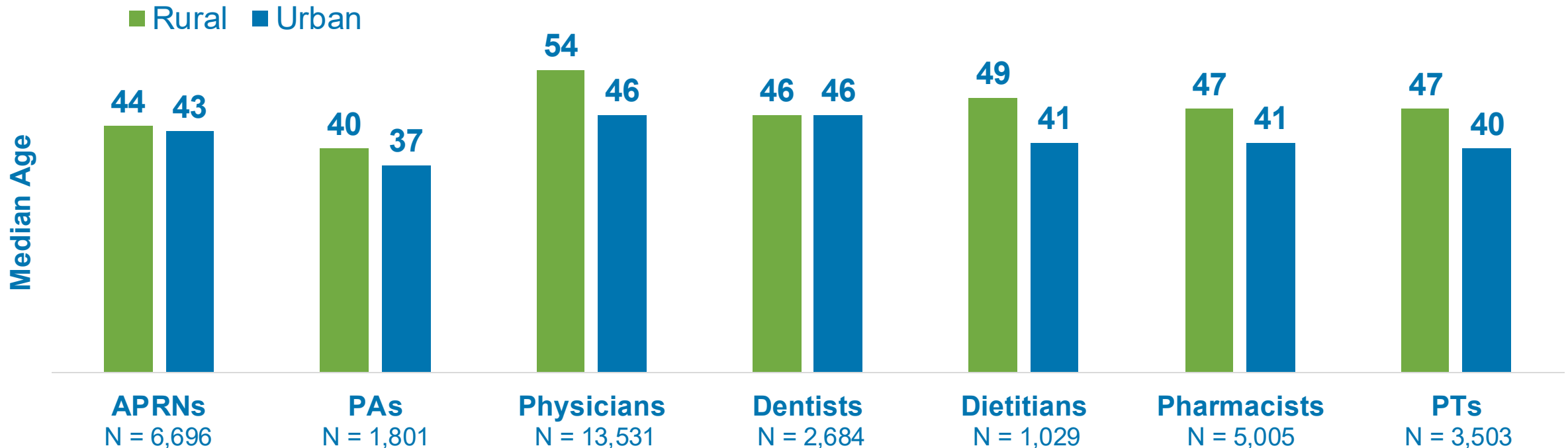
Percent Change in the Number of Selected Health Professionals, Rural and Urban Counties, South Carolina, 2011/12 - 2021/22*



Notes: This information includes health professionals with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in a nonfederal setting in South Carolina as of two months after the end of each profession's license renewal period. Physician counts include residents-in-training. *The figures in this chart are based on the difference in counts from 2012 to 2022 for nurses and PAs, and from 2011 to 2021 for other professions. Rural counties are defined as counties in which 50% or more of the population lives outside of an urban area. Sources: SC Office for Healthcare Workforce, derived from data collected by the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation and obtained from the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office; US Census Bureau, Geography Division, updated September 2023, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>. Created 8/29/2025.

Health Professionals are Generally Older in Rural South Carolina

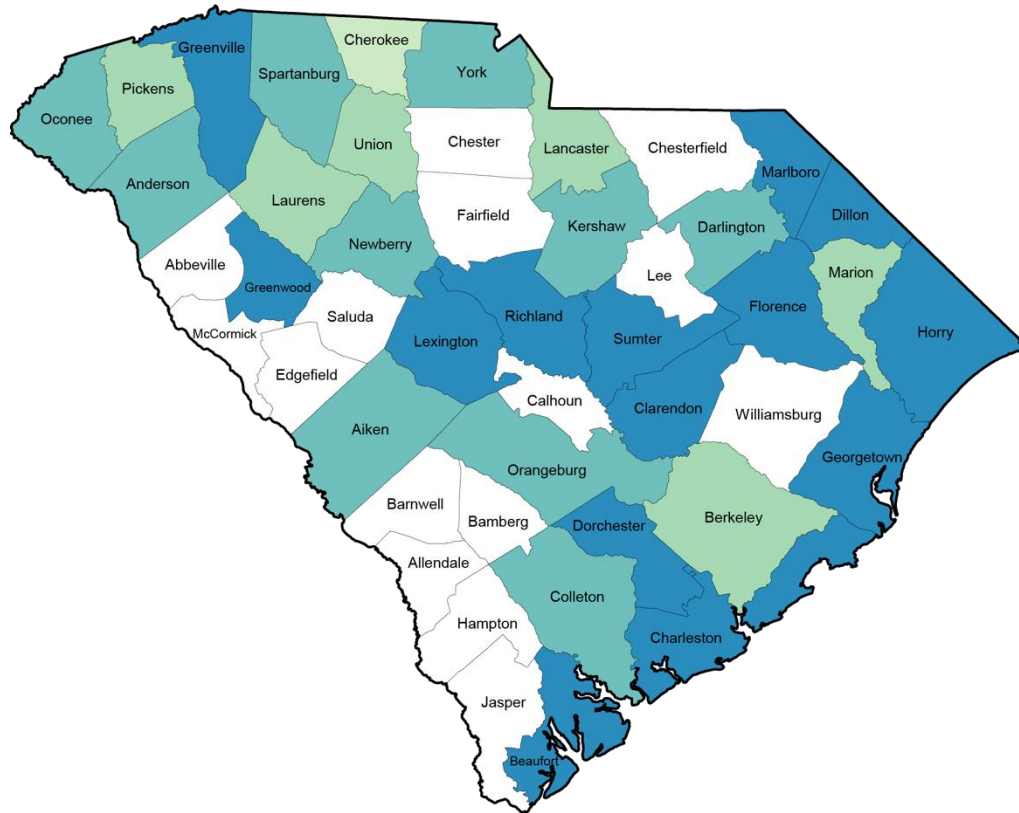
**Median Age of Selected Licensed Health Professionals,
South Carolina 2021/2022***



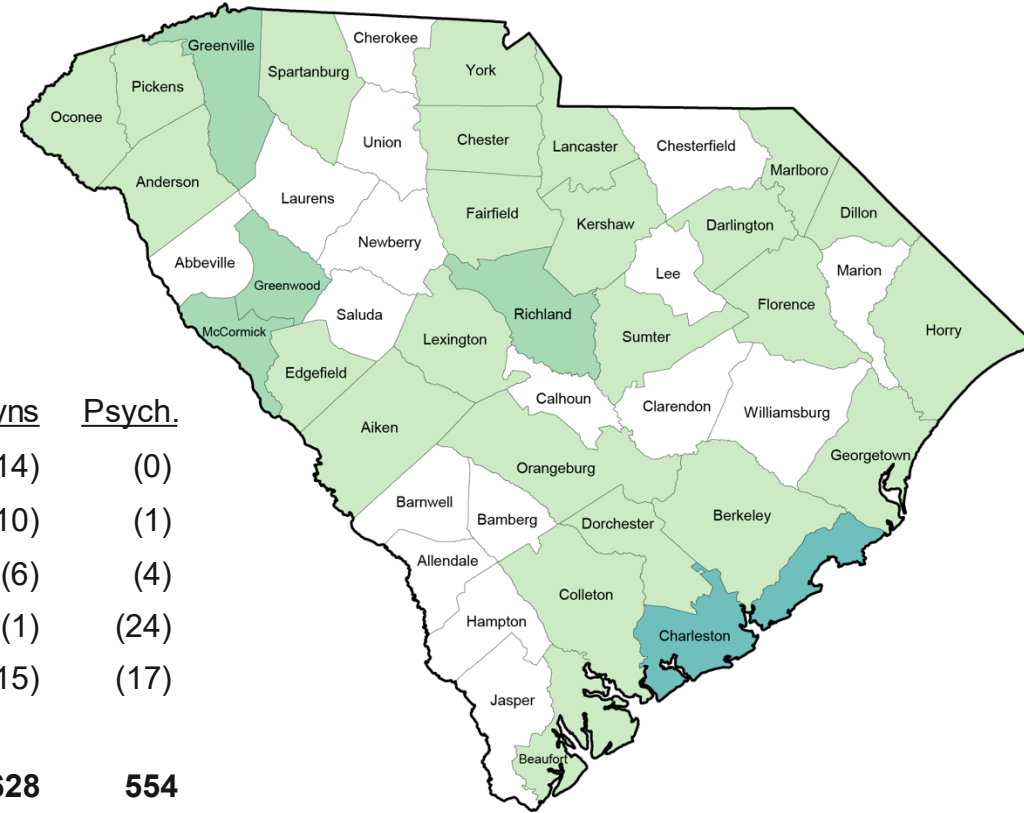
Notes: The median represents the midpoint of a data set, where half of the data points fall below and half fall above the median. *This information includes selected health professionals with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in a nonfederal setting in South Carolina as of **2021** (physicians, dentists, pharmacists, PT), **2022** (APRNs, PAs) or **2025** (dietitians). Physician counts include residents-in-training. Rural counties are defined as counties in which 50% or more of the population lives outside of an urban area.

What Maldistribution Means for Communities

**OB-Gyns per 10,000 Women Age 15-44
South Carolina, 2021**



**General Psychiatrists per 10,000 Population
South Carolina, 2021**



Legend

5.0 or More
3.0 to 4.9
1.0 to 2.9
0.1 to 0.9
No Active OB-Gyns/ Psychiatrists

OB-Gyns	Psych.
(14)	(0)
(10)	(1)
(6)	(4)
(1)	(24)
(15)	(17)

Total active in SC: 628 554

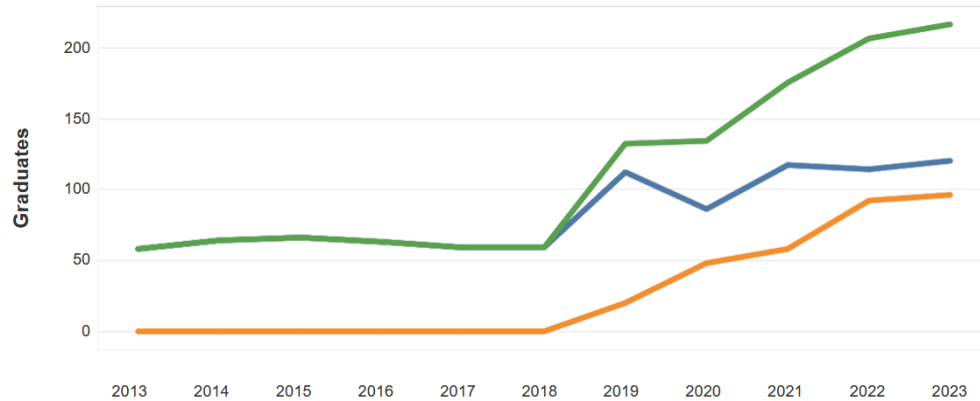
Source: South Carolina Office for Healthcare Workforce, South Carolina AHEC. 2024 South Carolina Health Professions Data Book, <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/reports/139>.

State-Funded Rural Provider Incentive Programs Are an Effective Investment

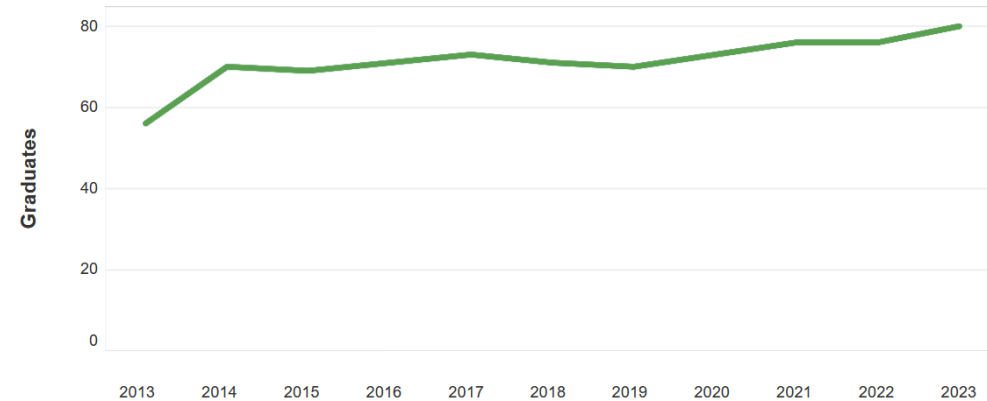
- **Rural Provider Incentive Program** – Physicians, APRNs, PAs
 - 678 providers funded since program inception in 1989
 - 91% average retention rate for participating providers over last 3 FYs
- **Rural Dentist Loan Repayment Program** – Dentists
 - 114 dentists funded since program inception in 2005
 - 96% retention rate – program completers still practicing in SC shortage areas
- **Rural Behavioral Health Professional Incentive Program** – Psychologists, Social Workers, Licensed Counselors and Therapists, SCBHDD Mental Health Professionals
 - New in FY25 – 56 professionals selected for funding (contracting in progress)

Increases in Educational Capacity to Address Supply Issues

Number of Graduates from South Carolina Educational Institutions by Institution Type, Physician Assistant, 2013 to 2023

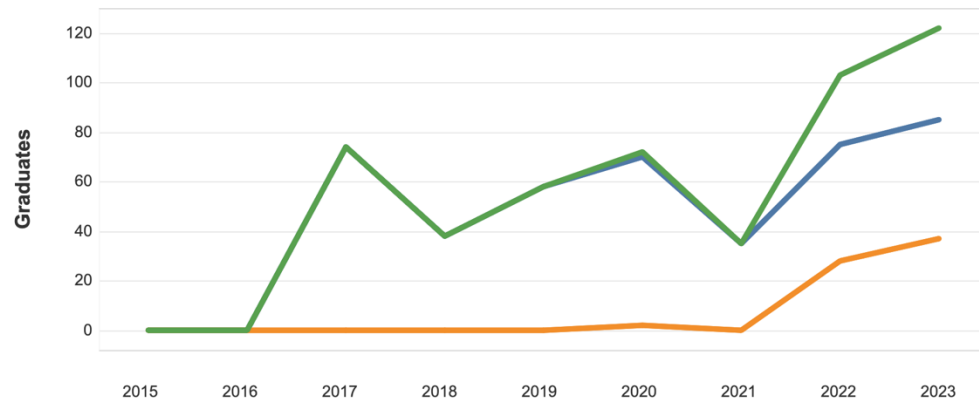


Number of Graduates from South Carolina Educational Institutions by Institution Type, Dentistry, 2013 to 2023

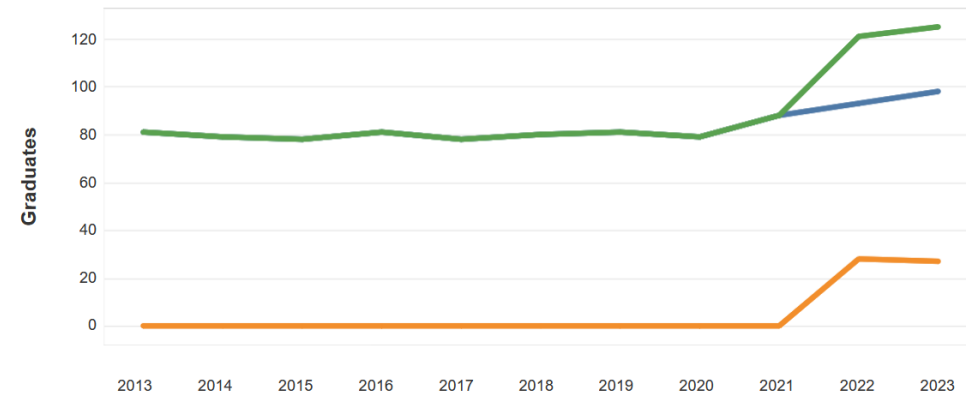


- Total Graduates
- Public Institution Graduates
- Private Institution Graduates

Number of Graduates from South Carolina Educational Institutions by Institution Type, Nursing Practice, 2015 to 2023



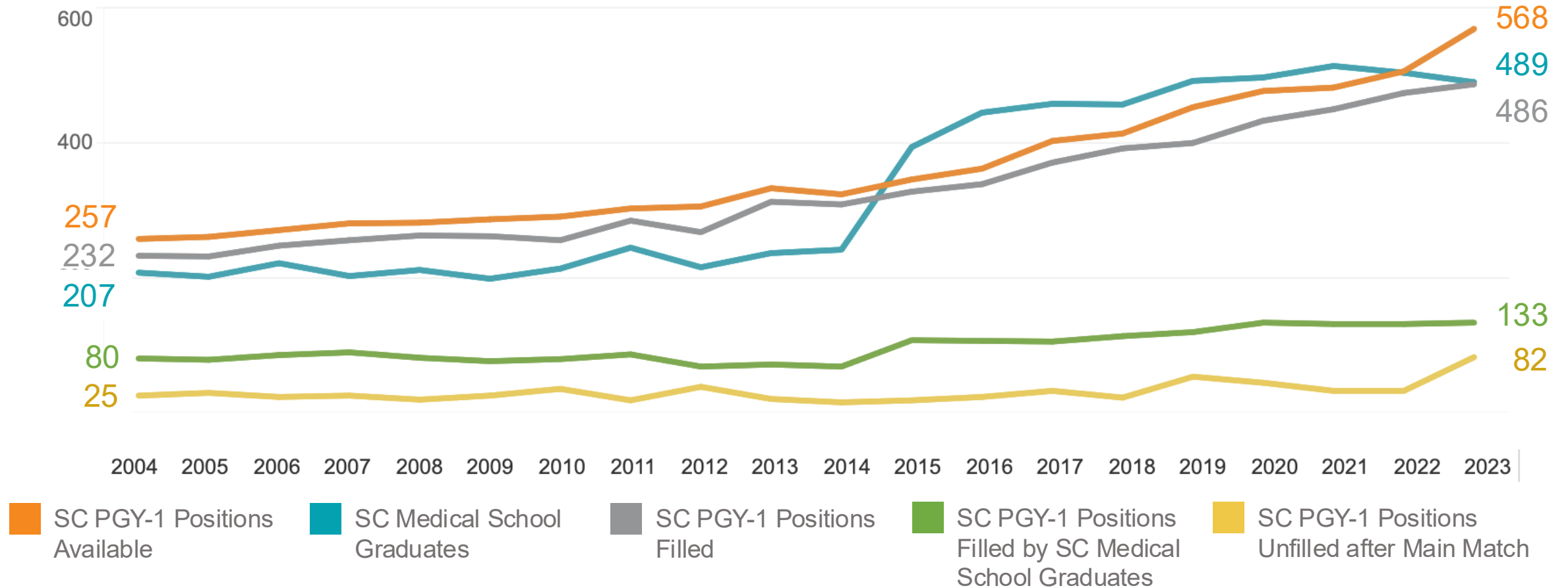
Number of Graduates from South Carolina Educational Institutions by Institution Type, Physical Therapy/Therapist, 2013 to 2023



View full visualizations in detail at <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/viz/SC-Healthcare-Workforce-Edu-Dashboard.html>

Medical School Graduates & Residency Slots Have More Than Doubled Since 2004

South Carolina Medical School Graduates, PGY-1 Residency Positions and In-State GME Matches, 2004-2023

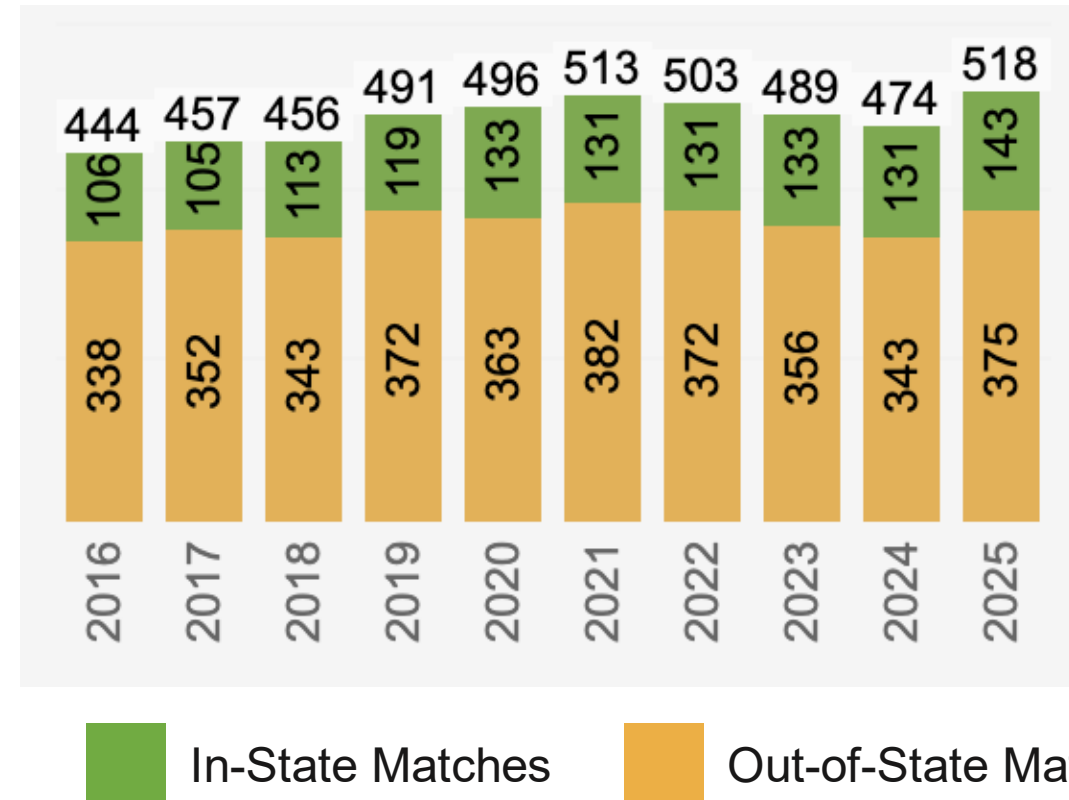


South Carolina Residency Match Results (2016-2025) and First-Year Residency Positions (2010-2025), SCOHW 2025, <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/viz/SC-Residency-Match-and-PGY-1-Positions.html>

Retention of SC Medical Graduates Lags

- 72% of SC medical graduates (375) matched out-of-state for residency training in 2025
 - 76 SC medical graduates (15%) matched to in-state primary care programs

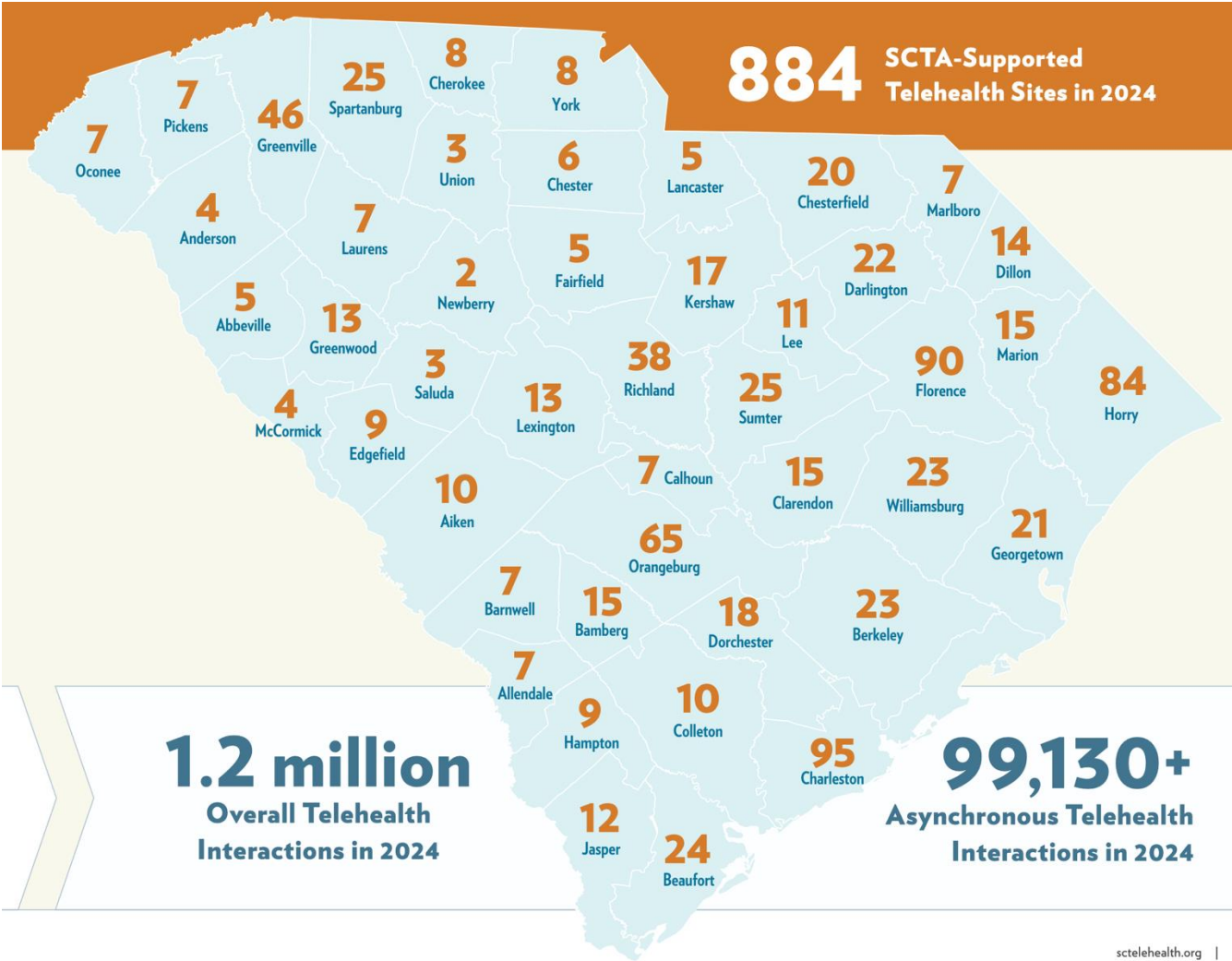
South Carolina Medical Student Match Results:
In-State vs. Out-of-State Matches, 2016-2025



South Carolina Residency Match Results (2016-2025) and First-Year Residency Positions (2010-2025), SCOHW 2025, <https://www.scahec.net/scohw/viz/SC-Residency-Match-and-PGY-1-Positions.html>

South Carolina is a Leader in Implementing Telehealth to Address Access Issues

South Carolina Telehealth Alliance (SCTA) 2024 Annual Report



sctelehealth.org |

<https://sctelehealth.org/-/sm/sctelehealth/about/f/scta2024annualreportcompressed.pdf>

In Summary:

- We are a growth state in total population, and we are seeing a growth in health professionals in some areas.
- We have a maldistribution of clinical providers between rural and urban areas.
- Strategies and policies that address workforce maldistributions in our communities will help improve access to care in our state overall.

Questions?

South Carolina Area Health Education Consortium (AHEC) connects students and professionals with the tools, training and resources necessary to develop an effective healthcare workforce, with a focus on primary care for rural and underserved areas.

www.scahec.net