



CENTER FOR RURAL AND
PRIMARY HEALTHCARE

2023 LEGISLATIVE REPORT





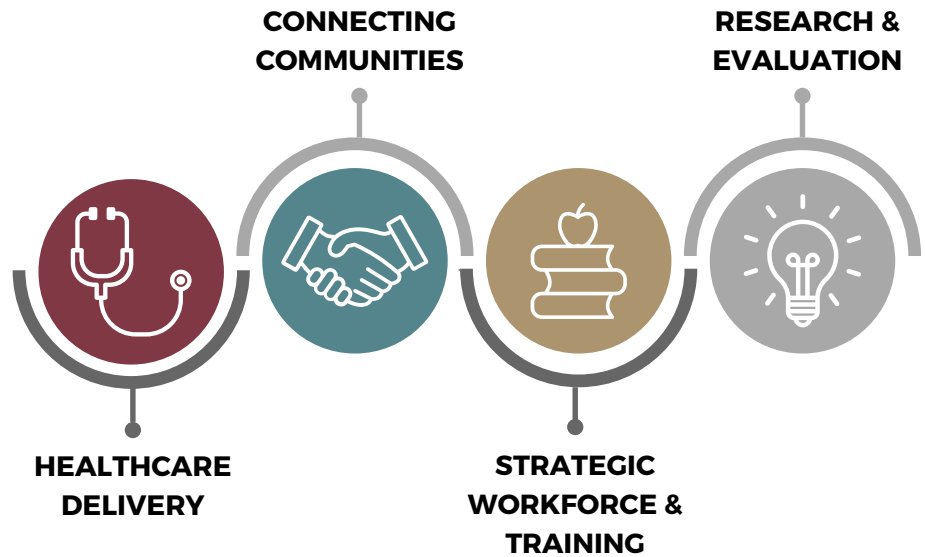
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About the CRPH

The SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare (CRPH) was founded in 2017 at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine - Columbia. Functioning as a university-based organization, the CRPH has access to the extensive expertise and resources of the USC system; however, it is steadfast in its commitment to serving the entire state of South Carolina. Over the last five years, the Center has experienced steady growth and significantly expanded our reach and impact.

Our Work



Our Mission

To accelerate the development of healthy rural communities by supporting improvements and new initiatives related to healthcare delivery, connecting communities, workforce training, and research and evaluation.



Our Goal

Our goal is to support our rural communities in SC through responsive healthcare delivery, connecting communities to health supportive care, training, and other educational initiatives, innovative programs, and robust research & evaluation. We seek to ensure all rural communities in the state have access to high-value healthcare.



Kathy Schwarling

CEO of Palmetto Care Connections

“Our Palmetto Care Connections team believes that the staff at CRPH truly understand rural and are willing to listen and learn as we try different solutions, hopefully figuring out the best approach along the way. The CRPH team does not try to tell the rural communities what they should do and how, but they listen, learn for, emulate, and then design the program to match the need.”

Our Impact

CRPH ACTIVE PROJECT SERVICE LOCATIONS

63

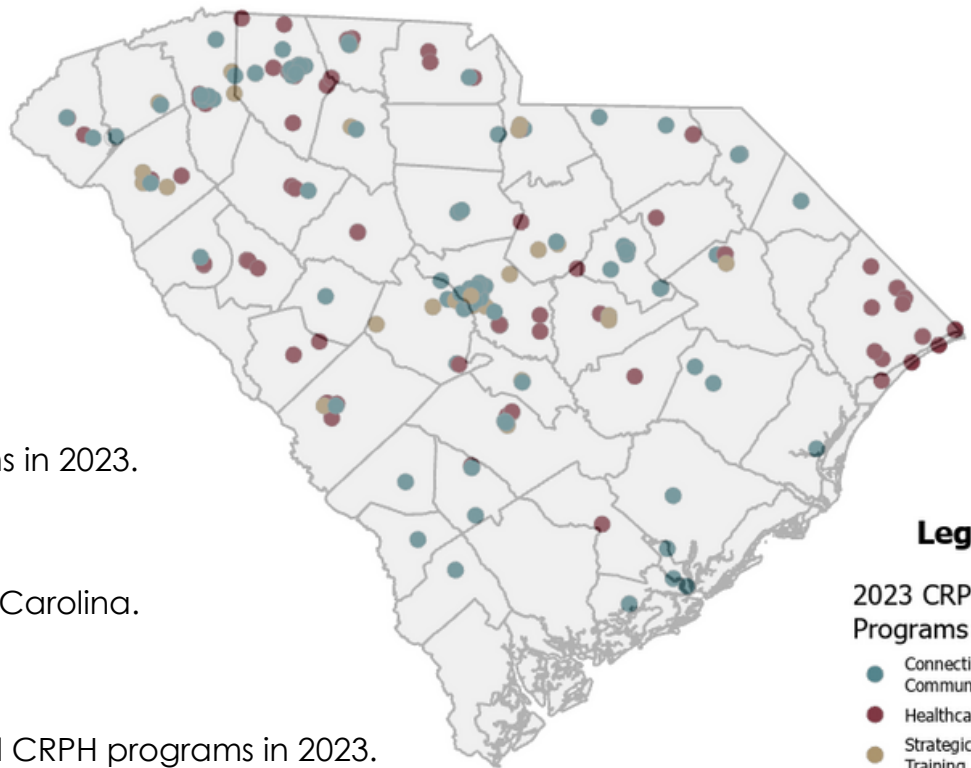
currently funded programs in 2023.

241

service locations in South Carolina.

21,688 +

patients served through all CRPH programs in 2023.



Legend

2023 CRPH Programs

- Connecting Communities
- Healthcare Delivery
- Strategic Workforce and Training
- Research & Evaluation



1,000,000+

miles of travel saved for South Carolina's kids and families in their pursuit of quality specialty pediatric care.



15,658

patients received clinical services closer to home through our iCARE and mobile healthcare programs.



1,383

individuals were connected to health care or resources to address their social needs in eight rural library systems across SC.



340

medical students and residents gained rural health experience, increasing the likelihood of them practicing in rural SC upon completion of their training.



2

HBCUs have initiated multi-year, multi-strategy healthy campus/health community initiatives to improve capacity and their ability to address health and wellbeing.



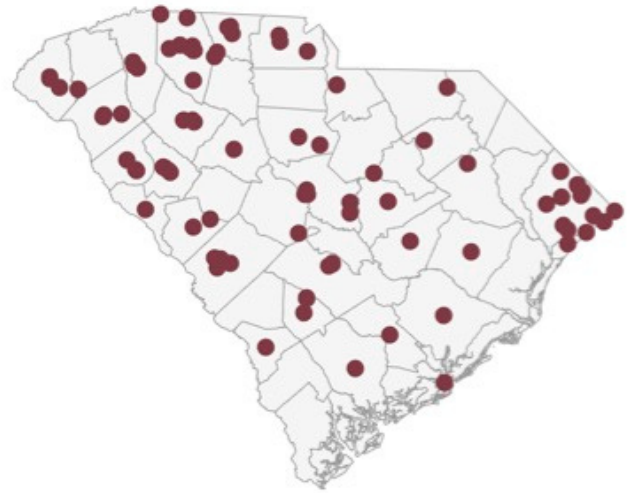
20+

healthcare and community organization partners working collaboratively to launch two collaborative health communities, which will work to create a system of care for their rural communities in 2024.

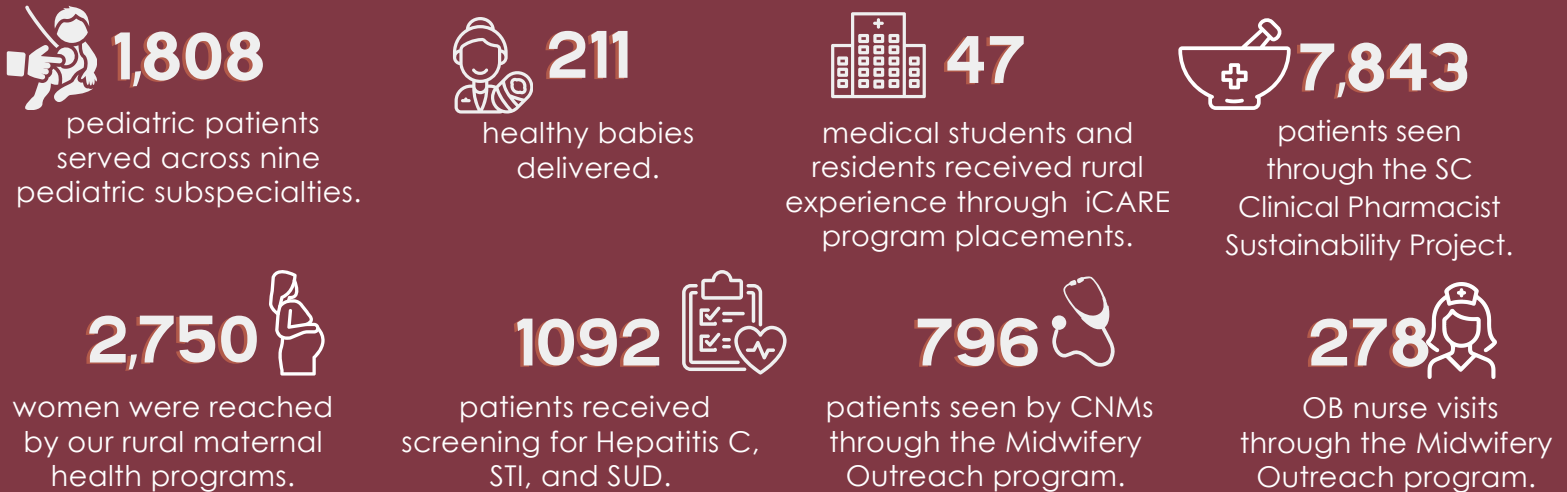
iCARE

As a core initiative of the CRPH, iCARE supports clinical organizations and practices that provide specialty care in rural communities through onsite or virtual care. iCARE also supports technical skills training, provider consultations, and healthcare team development. These providers travel to rural communities rather than patients traveling to the provider. iCARE providers operate at 24 different locations, spread across 34 of our 46 South Carolina counties, serving patients from rural and underserved communities throughout the state. iCARE providers work collaboratively with historic providers within rural communities to expand access to specialty services rather than duplicate services or harm existing patient-provider relationships.

iCARE PROJECT SERVICE LOCATIONS



iCARE 2023 IMPACT NUMBERS



PROGRAMS

- Bamberg Family Practice – Telehealth Program
- Greenwood Genetic Center – Expansion of eVisits to Ensure Access to Genetics Care for BabyNet Eligible Patients
- Medical University of South Carolina – COPD Management in Rural SC
- Palmetto Care Connections - IT Assessment and Service for Rural Providers
- Presbyterian College – PharmD Rural Health Initiative
- Prisma Health – Midlands – Antimicrobial Stewardship Collaborative of SC

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS



- **Carolina Pines Regional Medical -Midwifery Outreach in Rural Communities**
- **Edisto Indian Free Clinic – Expansion of Services in Dorchester and Colleton**
- **Emmanuel Family Clinic – Care for Better Neonatal and Obstetric Outcomes**
- **McLeod Health – Integration of Prenatal Care into Rural Residency Site in Cheraw**
- **Prisma Health – Project ECHO SC: Pregnancy Wellness Expansion**
- **Prisma Health-Midlands – Pediatric Outreach Subspecialty Clinics**
- **Prisma Health-Upstate – Upstate Pediatric Subspecialty Clinics**
- **Self-Regional Healthcare – Family Medicine-Centered Maternity Care in Edgefield**



Supporting Healthy Beginnings in Saluda

Emmanuel Family Clinic-Saluda champions the Rural Maternal Care for Better Neonatal and Obstetric Outcomes program, providing expecting mothers with comprehensive prenatal care and education. Inadequate high-quality prenatal and obstetrical care is a concern throughout SC, but especially in rural communities and even more acutely for Spanish-speaking patients. Emmanuel Family Clinic in Saluda is a historic and committed family medicine and obstetrical care provider for Spanish-speaking women. They are a critical care provider for their rural communities and women who travel from across SC to receive care from these trusted providers. Through support from the iCARE program, Emmanuel Family Clinic has expanded its clinical and wrap-around services to serve more women. The clinic saw over 89 pregnant patients last year, with more than half actively engaged in their prenatal care program.

"The Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare has been a tremendous help to our organization through its grant programs. With their support, we've had the supplies, funding, and programs to offer essential prenatal care and education to low-income pregnant women. We can expand access to excellent prenatal care and education for low-income pregnant women through the grant for our Rural Maternal Care for Better Neonatal and Obstetric Outcomes Initiative. Supported by other programs, we also provide free physicals, pap smears, and various contraceptive options. Thanks to CRPH, our organization has been able to help our rural community today and impact a future generation with care for newborns and their families."

-Debra Cleveland, Office Manager of Emmanuel Family Clinic - Saluda

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

- **Clemson Rural Health - A Novel Approach for Rural Interdisciplinary Care Coordination of Uninsured South Carolinians with Opioid Use Disorder and/or Co-occurring Hepatitis-C Virus**
- **McLeod Health – McLeod Family Medicine/USC Behavioral Health Collaborative Care Expansion**
- **Prisma Health-Midlands – Telepsychiatry**

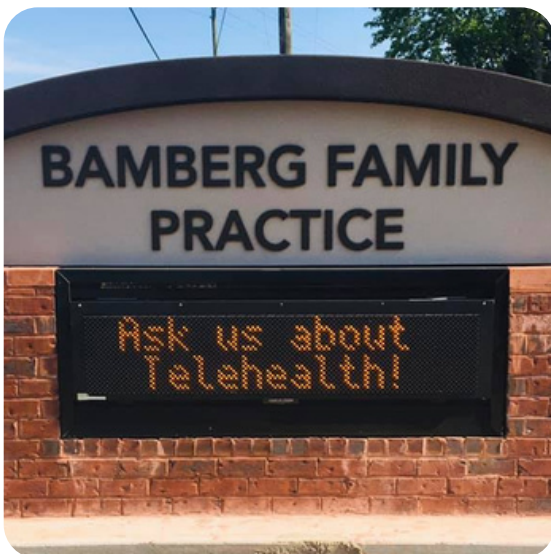


Broadening Telehealth Offerings in Bamberg County

Bamberg Family Practice offers evidence-based healthcare for all ages, prioritizing comprehensive services and patient well-being for their local community. Bamberg Family Practice has been a longstanding provider of care in Bamberg and surrounding rural communities, treating multiple generations of families for decades. Bamberg Family Practice has been progressively transforming their practices to meet the changing healthcare landscape and to better serve their patients. As part of this effort, they sought to expand their offering of telehealth services to overcome patient barriers like healthcare costs and transportation for their rural patients. The CRPH funding allowed the practice to bring on a full-time telehealth provider. The new telehealth provider has been able to provide locally-based telehealth services to their community's educational institutions, businesses, and patients. This ensures that care can remain local and connected simultaneously, allowing Bamberg Family Medicine to expand its business model, which means they can continue serving additional generations of rural families.

"By receiving funding from the CRPH for a full-time telehealth provider, we have been able to focus on growing our telehealth services. Our provider not only expanded services for existing patients but also fostered partnerships with local pharmacies, churches, and businesses, extending telehealth offerings to the community."

-Alicia Buck, Licensed Practical Nurse of Bamberg Family Medicine



Connecting Communities

The Connecting Communities program supports programs and initiatives that help connect people to health-related and healthcare services where they live. The program is a vital component of CRPH's commitment to promoting health equity, community engagement, and accessibility to care. Through this initiative, the CRPH seeks to catalyze positive change, helping to create a healthcare landscape that is not only more inclusive but also better equipped to address the unique challenges faced by rural and underserved populations.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES PROGRAMS

- **Healthy Learners – Removing Children's Health Barriers to Learning in Rural SC**
- **Institute for Child Success - Expanding Access to Doula's to Improve Birth Outcomes for Rural Families**
- **Medical University of South Carolina – Department of Surgery - Piloting the Expansion of a Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program**
- **McLeod Health - AccessHealth Program**
- **SC Alliance of YMCAs – Improving Health Outcomes and Behaviors through Expansion of Chronic Disease Prevention Programs**
- **SC Office of Rural Health - SCORH Community Conversations - Addressing Behavioral Health**
- **South Carolina Witness Project - Increasing Mental Health Awareness in Rural Communities**
- **Union County School District - Fit2gether-Union**

Supporting Educational Success in Barnwell and Bamberg Counties

In Barnwell and Bamberg counties, the Healthy Learners program, with support from the CRPH, addresses health barriers to learning for low-income children. The initial implementation helped students attend 42 healthcare appointments and held multiple screening events for 913 students, providing vision, dental, and hearing screenings. This effort aims to improve educational outcomes affected by health challenges like lack of access to healthcare due to financial, transportation, and provider availability issues.



"With the support of CRPH, Healthy Learners has been able to expand our Low Country office (currently serving the children in Allendale and Hampton Counties) to include the counties of Bamberg and Barnwell. Families in these underserved communities often struggle to provide access to essential healthcare services."

-Amy Splittgerber, Executive Director of Healthy Learners

Rural Libraries and Health

The Rural Libraries and Health program, established in 2020 with five library systems, pioneers an innovative approach to connecting rural residents to care and resources in rural libraries. Through a partnership with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control to expand the program, the Center now engages eight library systems statewide to improve healthcare access, augment health outcomes, and collaboratively learn how to implement and improve library-based health models. Participating rural libraries include Abbeville, Calhoun, Charleston, Kershaw, Lee, Marlboro, Oconee, and Orangeburg counties. The program reaches South Carolinians through referrals to healthcare and social support services, health education, health screenings, and the promotion of healthy food options.

RURAL LIBRARIES AND HEALTH IMPACT



3,513

South Carolinians reached in Abbeville, Calhoun, Charleston, Kershaw, Lee, Marlboro, Oconee, and Orangeburg Counties.



1,383

people engaged through screenings, referrals to service, health education, and healthy food initiatives in 2023.



9

Health Liaisons integrated in the participating libraries.



13

counties impacted through the Libraries and Health program.

Addressing food insecurity in Charleston County:

To improve health outcomes and address the prevalence of conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, which disproportionately affect underserved and rural populations due to poor nutrition, Charleston County Public Library manages three community fridges located at St. Paul's Hollywood Library, Otranto Road Library, and John L. Dart Library in Charleston. These fridges offer free fruits and vegetables to residents in low-income and rural regions, made possible through generous contributions from the community and local partners. Each fridge offers ingredient sheets in English and Spanish that provide nutritional details and recipes for common fruits and vegetables. Additionally, they provide CDC-sourced COVID-19 safety information and flyers about free test kits. These libraries distributed over 7,600 pounds of produce and 173 COVID-19 rapid test kits from October 2022 to March 2023 at the St. Paul Hollywood Library and Otranto Road Library.



Strategic Workforce and Training

Fostering the growth of rural healthcare leaders, providers, and care team members within and beyond clinical environments stands as a crucial pillar in our efforts to construct thriving rural communities. CRPH's collaborative educational initiatives extend across diverse fields to address the multifaceted requirements of rural populations, ensuring a sufficient workforce with the training necessary to provide high-value care.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



- **Clafin University – Rural Nursing Program**
- **Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, Carolinas - Addressing Health Inequity in South Carolina By Increasing Access to Primary Care**
- **Medical University of South Carolina - MUSC College of Dental Medicine**
- **USC Lancaster – CNA to BSN Pathway**
- **USC College of Pharmacy - PAIRED with PEEP/PAIRED to ExCEL in Rural Communities**
- **USC College of Social Work – Rural Occupations Workforce Expansion**
- **USC School of Medicine - Ultrasound Institute**



RURAL RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

- **Prisma Health - Preventive Medicine Residency**
- **Prisma Health - Tuomey Sumter Family Medicine Residency**
- **USC College of Pharmacy - Tandem Rural Pharmacy Resident Program**

Nursing Scholarships for Rural Service

Under the banner of Project RURAL (Rallying the Underrepresented to Realign Healthy Approaches to Living), Clafin has awarded scholarships to increase the enrollment of underrepresented minority students pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree, particularly those who play a vital role in serving rural communities. With our support, the nursing department hired a clinical coordinator who has initiated rural experiential training placements in Orangeburg, Allendale, and Colleton counties. The program also provides resources to reduce non-tuition costs for family nurse practitioner students to enhance their clinical skills as they prepare for their rotations and immersion experiences. This reduces any disparities or gaps that may hinder a nurse practitioner (NP) student from successfully completing their NP training program, thereby increasing the number of underrepresented minority NPs in South Carolina.

Prisma Health Preventive Medicine Residency

Preventive medicine is a specialty bridging clinical practice and public health. Preventive medicine physicians have biostatistics, epidemiology, healthcare organization management, and research expertise. Our funding has supported the training of six preventive medicine physicians, with four currently serving underserved communities. As demonstrated by the COVID pandemic, improving the linkage between the healthcare delivery system and public health systems is critical to managing disease outbreaks but also working to improve overall population health in rural SC. Preventive medicine physicians are an important bridge between these systems and are uniquely qualified to develop and lead solutions for rural health.

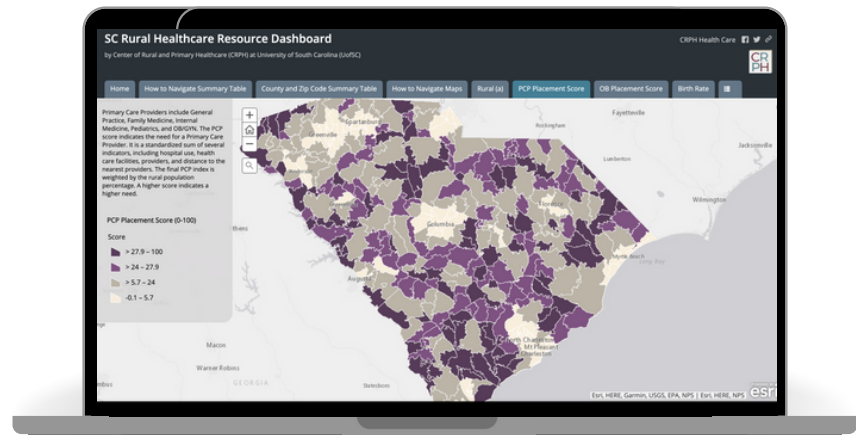


Research and Evaluation

In pursuit of our mission to enhance rural health access and improve outcomes, CRPH fosters collaborations with an array of programs and organizations. Within these partnerships, the CRPH team plays a crucial role by providing its program evaluation and reporting expertise, thereby contributing to the overarching goal of advancing rural healthcare.

In the current year, we had the opportunity to collaborate with:

- **Carolina Health Advocacy Medicolegal Partnership (CHAMPS) Clinic**
- **Center for Community Health Alignment**
- **Clemson University**
- **FoodShare**
- **Free Clinic Association**
- **Furman University**
- **Palmetto Care Connections**
- **Prisma Health**
- **South Carolina Telehealth Alliance**



SC Rural Healthcare Resources Dashboard

Our SC Rural Healthcare Resource Dashboard provides communities with data to make decisions, implement programs, and target high-need areas. This tool was created to enable communities, researchers, and policymakers' easy access to actionable data. Data is available at the State, County, and Zip code levels to support various needs. While using the SC Rural Healthcare Resource Dashboard, users can:

- Learn about community access to health including facilities and providers.
- Discover how the many definitions of rural are represented in our state.
- Compare the health conditions and behaviors of multiple communities, and more.

Collaboration with Palmetto Care Connections

The CRPH is committed to advancing healthcare accessibility through telehealth initiatives. Partnering with Palmetto Care Connections (PCC), a nonprofit focused on introducing technology and telehealth solutions to underserved areas in South Carolina, the CRPH serves as a consultative resource. Together, the CRPH and PCC teams engage in collaborative brainstorming sessions to identify and propose innovative solutions. Additionally, the CRPH Research and Evaluation team plays a multifaceted role, serving as an external evaluator for other grant-funded programs, assessing outcomes and impact, conducting data analysis to comprehend service needs and workforce requirements, and more.

Mobile Health Unit Enhancement Program

Mobile Health Units are an emerging strategy for serving communities faced with barriers to accessible healthcare. These units can generate substantial cost savings for patients while improving access to healthcare services. Our Mobile Health Unit Enhancement program supports mobile healthcare units serving rural and underserved South Carolina residents. The program works with organizations with an established mobile health unit to increase the services provided and expand their scope of services or reach new areas of the state.

MOBILE HEALTH 2023 IMPACT NUMBERS



2,004

patients served through the Mobile Health Unit Enhancement Program.



818+

referrals made to other services to provide comprehensive care for patients



400+

women received breast cancer screening.

MOBILE HEALTH UNIT PROGRAMS

- Abbeville Area Medical Center - Mobile Chronic Care Services
- C Williams Rush LLC – Accessible Rural Health Care
- Clemson Rural Health – Establishing an Integrated Model for Rural Mental Health Services
- Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) - VCOM Mobile Health Unit
- Little River Medical Center – Mobile Community Health Services Project
- Prisma Health, Midlands – Midlands Mobile Health Clinic
- ReGenesis Health Care – Closing Healthcare Gaps in Rural, Multicultural Community via Integrative Mobile Care
- The Regional Medical Center (now MUSC Health - Orangeburg) - Expanding Women's Healthcare in Rural South Carolina
- Rural Health Services, Inc. – RHS Medical Mobile Outreach
- SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, Midlands - WIC Services on Wheels Enhancement
- SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, Upstate - MOSAIC: Mobile STD Assessment and Information Center - Rural Intervention
- Self-Regional Healthcare - Improving Rural Health Care Access

"Our goal was to establish mobile health care in Saluda, Edgefield and Greenwood utilizing a nurse practitioner, staff person and CHW as support. We successfully operated clinics in these counties, providing care to 300+ patients, including screenings, medical referrals, social resource connections, and medication assistance. We set up at different accessible and advertised locations in these communities in advance, allowing patients to plan their visit, while also providing follow-up care that ensured continuity for the patients."

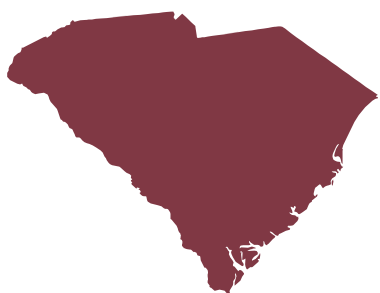
-Cyndi New, Director of Community Health & Health Equity of Self-Regional Healthcare

Collaborative Health Communities

Improving population health means acknowledging drivers of health that directly affect the development of disease and life expectancy. Building upon the collaborative nature of rural communities, our pilot initiative, the Collaborative Health Communities (CHC) project, originally named the Rural Health Revitalization project, will support the advancement of care coordination and systems of care development in rural South Carolina. Communities will receive funding to establish clinical community networks that collaboratively address health conditions and health-related social needs.

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITIES

In selecting the pilot communities, we prioritized communities based on data that experienced high rates of maternal, infant, and child health morbidity and mortality, hypertension, diabetes, mental/behavioral health problems (including substance use), and asthma. The following multi-county communities were selected as potential target areas for the pilot:



Lakelands

- Abbeville
- Edgefield
- Greenwood
- McCormick
- Newberry
- Saluda

Pee Dee

- Chesterfield
- Clarendon
- Darlington
- Dillon
- Florence
- Georgetown
- Horry
- Lee
- Marion
- Marlboro
- Sumter
- Williamsburg

LOOKING AHEAD

In the fall of 2023, the Collaborative Health Communities development began in each pilot community. The CHC model will use a multi-sector structure in which healthcare partners and community-based organizations work together to connect patients to supports and services that address identified health-related social needs in a manner that is coordinated, integrated, and emphasizes whole-person care. In 2024, the communities will begin delivering high-quality pilot services to improve maternal-child health and chronic illness among the residents they serve.

SC HBCU Discovery Program

The SC HBCU Health Discovery program harnesses the unique talents and perspectives present within historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The program aims to empower HBCUs to champion health equity within their context, benefiting students and their communities while cultivating future healthcare leaders to establish a lasting pipeline of diverse professionals through mentorship and networking opportunities. In 2023, we onboarded our first two institutions:



Clafin University

The DEEP Wellness Program seeks to improve health in rural Orangeburg by introducing primary care services for students and residents of the surrounding community. Using Smart HOME technology and artificial intelligence, the initiative will engage students and community members by promoting healthy behaviors, particularly around chronic disease management. Additionally, the program will offer valuable learning experiences to students. Students will be able to conduct research focused on rural health disparities and receive training to serve as community health workers, benefiting the campus and community.



Voorhees University

Located in rural Denmark, SC, Voorhees University has received a planning grant that will enable them to assess the health needs of their campus and their community. The results will be used to create programs and interventions to reduce the burden of chronic illness and establish a healthy campus initiative that will provide comprehensive health resources to their students. In addition, we are supporting curriculum development for students to support rural community health development through service-learning opportunities.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we move forward, we are excited to continue engaging in our state's HBCUs. We are working to partner with other SC HBCUs in the next HBCU Health Discovery cohort as we remain steadfast in our dedication and investment in these pillars of our rural communities.





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