

Welcome from CRPH

Dear Partners,

For the past seven years, the South Carolina Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare (CRPH) has worked with the Legislature to improve healthcare delivery, access, workforce, and outcomes in our rural communities. This impact report demonstrates how successful these efforts have been, thanks to our partners' collaboration, the support of our rural communities and our team's hard work.

This year, the Center has continued to expand its reach and deepen its impact across rural communities in South Carolina. We currently fund 72 programs to improve healthcare delivery, workforce development, and community health initiatives, and we have expanded our scope to include 241 sites statewide.

Our team's achievements in 2023-2024 extend beyond our programs to the national stage. Center Director Dr. Kevin Bennett served as president of the National Rural Health Association (NRHA), while Director of Connecting Communities Dr. Megan Weis contributed as immediate past president of the South Carolina Association of Public Health and as an NRHA Fellow. Program Manager Alanti Price served on the NRHA Health Equity Council, and Lead Evaluator Samantha Slinkard-Barnum provided national expertise for Family Learning Networks.

At CRPH, we remain committed to accelerating the development of healthy rural communities by fostering innovation in healthcare delivery, expanding workforce training, enhancing connections between communities, and conducting research that informs meaningful change. Several of our programs exemplify this, particularly the HBCU Health Discovery Program, Collaborative Health Communities and Libraries and Health Programs.

As you review this year's highlights, we hope you are as inspired as we are by our progress. The stories and data in this report reflect the collective efforts that have driven improvements in the lives of those we serve. Thank you for your continued partnership and support. We look forward to all we will accomplish together in the coming year.

The CRPH Team



Table of Contents

- 3** WELCOME FROM CRPH
- 5** OUR IMPACT
- 6** ABOUT CRPH
- 7** HEALTHCARE DELIVERY
- 10** COLLABORATIVE HEALTH COMMUNITIES
- 11** MOBILE HEALTH UNIT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM
- 12** CONNECTING COMMUNITIES
- 15** STRATEGIC WORKFORCE AND TRAINING
- 17** SC HBCU HEALTH DISCOVERY PROGRAM
- 18** RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

From Evidence to Impact

19,691+

patients served through all CRPH programs in annual year 2023-2024.



1.2 million +

miles of travel for families have been avoided since 2017.

241

service locations in South Carolina.



CRPH initial funding has led to

\$29,838,747

in federal funding.



15,245

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



72

currently funded programs.



334

medical students, nursing students, HBCU students and residents gained rural health experience.



3,168



rural residents served through facilitated healthcare access and meeting social needs.

About CRPH

Our Mission

At CRPH, our mission is 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

Support rural communities through:



Responsive
healthcare
delivery



Connecting
communities
to health
supportive
care



Educational
initiatives



Innovative
programs

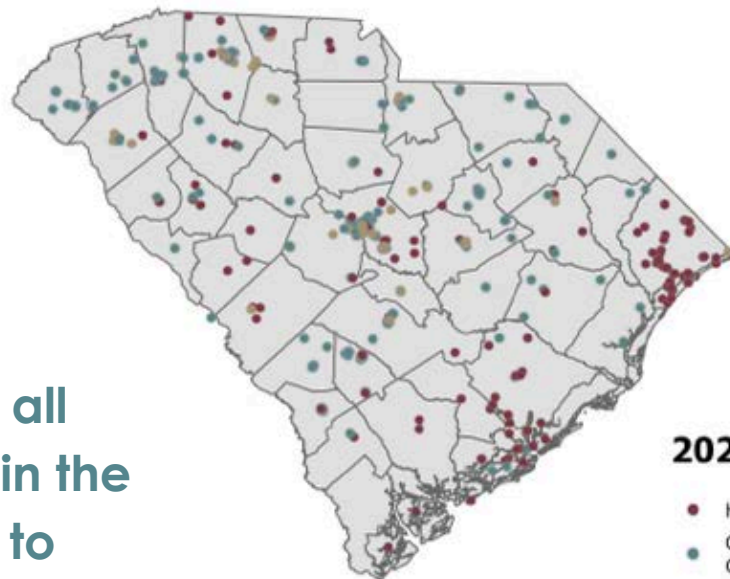


Robust
research and
evaluation

CRPH ACTIVE PROJECT SERVICE LOCATIONS

“

We seek to ensure all rural communities in the state have access to high-value healthcare.



2024 CRPH Locations

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

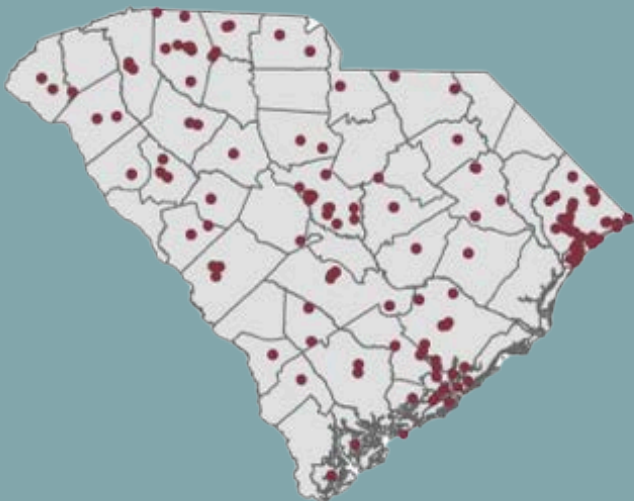
Expanding Access to Care



CRPH has worked diligently to expand access to care in rural communities. At the heart of this effort has been our iCARE program, which has supported clinical organizations and practices in providing access to care for rural populations onsite and virtually. By supporting healthcare providers in these communities, we have made significant strides in ensuring patients receive the care they need closer to home. Maternal and child health is a specific focus of this work. In many rural regions, the lack of nearby obstetric services has forced pregnant women to travel long distances to receive prenatal care.

Through our iCARE program, we are working to bridge these gaps by increasing access to prenatal care and improving the overall system of care and support for moms and babies. These efforts have laid a foundation for healthier lives and stronger rural communities. The initiatives highlighted on the next page are a selection of CRPH-sponsored programs working to improve outcomes for mothers and children.

Healthcare Delivery Service Locations



8,200+



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

438



patients seen for mental health appointments.

549



patients served through telehealth appointments.

1,338



pediatric patients served across nine pediatric subspecialties.



Improving Maternal and Fetal Outcomes Statewide

Project ECHO South Carolina: Pregnancy Wellness has bridged a gap for providers by creating a tele-mentoring network for obstetric health professionals. These sessions deliver user-driven, didactic content on perinatal care, presented by national obstetrics experts. Through the Center's support, the program was able to hire a program coordinator, which allowed for the addition of an ECHO consultant/project manager. As a result, the average number of participants per session has grown by an impressive 117%. Since 2020, the program has hosted a total of 3,660 participants, with an average of 50 participants per session.



Participation in Project ECHO sessions has grown by 117%



We are committed to addressing the leading causes of maternal morbidity and mortality in our state including, mental health, substance use, thrombotic embolism, cardiovascular disease, hemorrhage, health care disparities, the impacts of social determinants of health, rural maternity care deserts, and lack of access to best practice care.

-Rachel Grater - Project ECHO

Bringing Care to Underserved Populations

In the heart of Ridgeville is the Edisto Indian Free Clinic (EIFC). This not-for-profit medical clinic provides primary medical care, medications, and laboratory tests at no cost to residents without insurance or the financial resources to afford care. In particular, the EIFC provides care to pregnant women, providing medical care and follow-ups, which have improved outcomes for women with hypertension and diabetes. Additionally, through our partnership with EIFC, the clinic has begun a child health program, hired a psychiatric nurse practitioner, and planned to incorporate a vaccine clinic in the coming year. With our support to expand access, the clinic served 438 patients this year.



Of the 438 patients seen at EIFC, 30 were pediatric patients.



Recruiting and Retaining Providers to Improve Women's Health

Recruiting and retaining OB-GYN providers is essential to ensure that women, especially in rural communities, have access to comprehensive reproductive and maternal care. In late 2023, CRPH began an exciting partnership with Prisma Health – Upstate to support the Carolina Women's Care clinic in Laurens County. The program aims to recruit three advanced practice providers, including nurse practitioners and midwives, through incentives to help staff the clinic. These providers will offer maternal, perinatal, postpartum and routine gynecological care to women in this rural area. The objective is not only to recruit but also support retaining these clinicians beyond the initial service period to provide access continuity of care for women.



Building a well-trained, highly invested workforce for women's health in rural South Carolina is one critical step in mitigating the increased risk of maternal morbidity and mortality for women who live in rural communities.

-Dr. Kacey Eichelberger - Prisma Health

CRPH Maternal and Child Health Impact Numbers



180 healthy babies delivered.



547 appointments to improve access to genetics care for 0-3 year old children.



2,086 patients seen through the Midwifery Outreach program.

Collaborative Health Communities

The Collaborative Health Communities (CHC) program has made significant strides since its inception in 2023. CHC is a community-led model built with rural contexts as the primary driver of design. Adapted from the Accountable Health Communities model piloted by the CMS Innovation Center, these structured systems aim to address health-related social needs and coordinate clinical care by operationalizing clinical-community linkages.

The program is an investment in rural communities, giving them the space to ask themselves, “What if?” and “How can?” What if a community member could obtain services and resources that meet all their needs through just one connection? How can we remove barriers to services that prevent people from receiving the support they need? Our two initial CHC communities are moving towards implementation after extensive community planning and intervention design, each with a different focus area: birth outcomes and chronic illness. The Lakelands, one of our rural communities, has started enrolling patients and providing care through their network system.

CHC Focus Areas

**Lakelands:
Birth outcomes**

**Pee Dee:
Chronic Illness**



CHC is...



**Collaborative
priorities**



**Shared investment
and accountability**



**Structured
coordination and
alignment**



**Meaningful
capacity building**



**Built
locally**



**Continuous shared
learning**

“

The Collaborative Health Communities initiative has been a catalyst for impactful programs like Guided Beginnings, which is transforming maternal and infant health in our community. CHC is fostering innovative solutions that empower high-risk pregnant women and their families by addressing medical and social determinants of health. The ripple effect of this work is seen in healthier outcomes for individuals and stronger, more resilient communities.

-Cyndi New - Self Regional Healthcare

Mobile Health Units

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. This year, six programs have been funded by CRPH that range from primary care services to mental health and overall access to care.

7,010



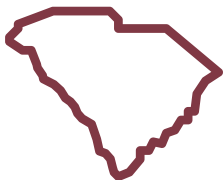
patients served through the Mobile Health Enhancement Program.

4,822

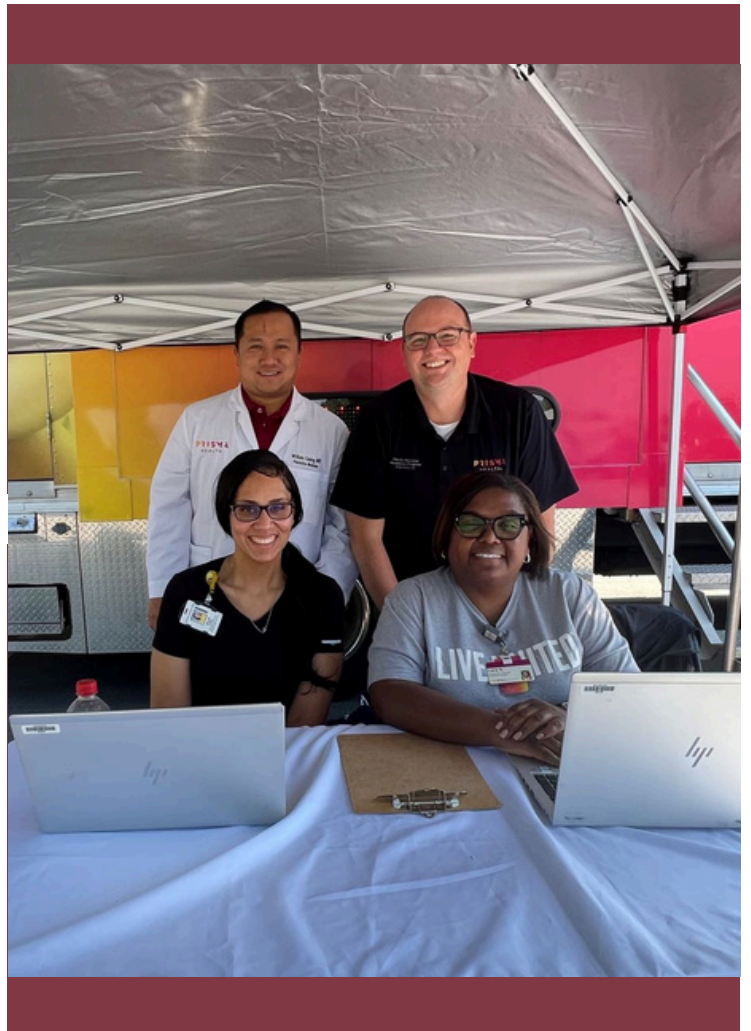


health screenings conducted through the Mobile Health Enhancement Program.

46



counties impacted by Mobile Health Unit Enhancement Program.



Meeting People Where They Are



In line with our mission to enhance connections within communities and with clinical partners, CRPH continues to partner with community hubs such as libraries, schools, community organizations and hospitals to meet rural citizens where they are. From engaging community members through screenings and referrals to providing transportation for children to reach their medical appointments, CRPH's funded Connecting Communities programs have reached individuals who face barriers to traditional healthcare settings, making it easier for them to access the support they need.

Encouraging Wellness and Leadership for SC's Youth



FIT2gether-Union provides services for Union children, including mental health support, youth leadership programs, Whole Child initiatives, and partnerships:

- Over 163 students received services in the 2023-2024 school year.
- Counseling services expanded from 37 to 100 students.
- Over 70 students meet monthly, with counseling services expanded to seven schools.
- Ten workshops and training sessions were held for teachers, students, parents, and administrators.



Community Paramedicine with Fairfield Medical Associates



Rural patients often need help with access to care due to transportation, long travel distances, and work conflicts, leading to inconsistent care and added strain on overburdened EMS systems. Our partnership with Fairfield Medical Associates and SC Emergency Services Association has taken the well-established community paramedicine model and augmented it to better serve rural residents in Fairfield County. This has been achieved by leveraging a rural health clinic and telehealth to connect residents in their homes to rural clinicians. Community Paramedicine programs, like this, increase access to primary care and reduce costly 911 calls for non-emergent transport. Two hundred sixty-six home visits were scheduled from 2023-2024, with 60 appointments preventing unnecessary emergency room visits.



266 home visits scheduled under the Community Paramedicine program.

Supporting Educational Success in Rural SC



Health Barriers to Learning can impact educational outcomes for low-income children, from attendance to graduation rates. In South Carolina's Lowcountry, challenges like high co-pays, limited transportation, and a shortage of providers make accessing care difficult. With support from CRPH, the Healthy Learners program has worked to address health barriers to learning for low-income children. The program served 98 students in Barnwell and Bamberg counties, providing 332 services. Healthy Learners team members traveled over 6,200 miles to assist in student appointment transportation and provided 938 health screenings.



6,200+ miles of travel to appointments saved for families.

Libraries and Health Program

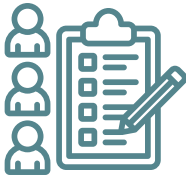
Since its inception in 2020, the Rural Libraries and Health program has reached South Carolinians through referrals to healthcare and social support services, health education, health screenings and the promotion of healthy food options. Our seven rural library health hub partners continue to pioneer innovative approaches and build community partnerships to connect rural residents to care and resources where they live, work, play and pray. Participating rural libraries include Abbeville, Calhoun, Kershaw, Lee, Marlboro, Oconee and Orangeburg counties.

7,179



South Carolinians reached through the Rural Libraries and Health program.

1,210



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

7



counties impacted through Rural Libraries and Health programs



“

I was diagnosed with diabetes, and my medicine was all out of order, and I wasn't feeling well. I came to the [hub] because they had a new program. I met with Jaquetta [CHW] and told her what was happening, and she scheduled my appointment with the doctors at CareSouth. Come to find out, I was taking the wrong dose of medicine at the wrong time. They were able to get me on track with the correct information. She also helped me get a medical alert necklace. Now my blood pressure is good, my diabetes is good, I cut out salt and eat plenty of vegetables.

-Johnny Scarborough - Lynchburg Health Hub Member (photographed above)

The Future of Rural Health Professionals



At CRPH, we continue to identify gaps in training and workforce development to ensure that our rural communities will have access to high-quality providers now and in the future. Through partnerships with organizations and academic institutions, we've collaborated on educational initiatives to ensure a skilled workforce capable of meeting the diverse healthcare needs of rural communities and delivering high-value care. These partnerships have resulted in training for medical students, residents, pharmacists, social workers and nurses. This year, one particular focus has been on empowering universities to tackle shortages of nurses and health workers in rural areas.

Supporting the next generation of healthcare workers



1,113 professionals received additional training, equipping them with skills to better serve rural communities and improve healthcare delivery statewide.

175 students were placed in rural healthcare systems, strengthening the pipeline of future providers dedicated to serving rural communities.

41 scholarships were awarded to support the next generation of rural healthcare leaders.



Supporting Future Rural Nurses

Claflin University's rural nursing program seeks to increase the number of trained nurses and ensures that South Carolina has a diverse nursing workforce. Through Project RURAL (Rallying the Underrepresented to Realign Healthy Approaches to Living), scholarships are awarded to increase the number of underrepresented, minority Bachelor of Science in Nursing-prepared nurses who serve rural populations. Project RURAL has secured affiliation agreements with over 30 sites for student placement in rural areas such as Orangeburg, Allendale, Augusta and Colleton counties. The program has provided support to over 20 students via scholarships. In addition, the program has placed 20 students in Orangeburg and over 50 students in other rural areas of the state.



20 Claflin students supported via scholarship funds.

Strengthening the Pipeline of Health Professions in Rural SC

Many healthcare facilities, especially in rural areas, need trained health professionals. Our partnership with the University of South Carolina Lancaster has worked to address the rural healthcare shortage across the state. The program focuses on enhancing the rural South Carolina health workforce by recruiting, retaining, and training professionals while improving healthcare access through Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training. It also provides an alternative path for associate in science students who opt out of or don't qualify for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Collaborative Program, equipping them with marketable CNA skills. Although the program is still in the implementation phase, students have successfully completed coursework to pursue certification. Additionally, direct partnerships with Mid-Carolina AHEC and MUSC Chester Health have been established to support students in preparing for the certification exam and securing placements. The program has trained 25 students as nursing assistants. Nine of the 14 students in the first pilot class successfully passed the certification exam. To date, 14 program graduates are employed in local healthcare facilities.

HBCU Health Discovery Program

The SC HBCU Health Discovery Program has experienced significant growth this year, with four historically Black colleges and universities joining the cohort. The program empowers HBCUs to champion health equity within their context, benefitting 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 aims to improve health in rural Orangeburg by introducing primary care services for students and residents of the surrounding community. The initiative will use Smart HOME technology and artificial intelligence to engage students and community members by promoting healthy behaviors, particularly around chronic disease management. Additionally, the program offers 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 both the campus and community.

Voorhees University: Located in rural Denmark, SC, Voorhees University received a planning grant that will enable it to assess the health needs of its campus and 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 provides comprehensive health resources to its students. In addition, we are supporting curriculum development for students to contribute to rural community health development through service-learning opportunities.

In 2024, we onboarded two more institutions, Clinton College and SC State University. We look forward to sharing more about what these HBCUs will accomplish in the coming year and are excited to continue engaging with more of our state's HBCUs in the future.



From 2023-2024 the HBCU Health Discovery Program has expanded to four institutions:



Clafin University



Voorhees University



Clinton College



SC State University

Research and Evaluation



In pursuit of our mission to enhance rural health access and improve outcomes, CRPH Research and Evaluation team work to provide data to inform CRPH initiatives, assess impacts, inform partners and programs and evaluate the impact of these efforts. This year, our team collaborated on research projects addressing a variety of issues, from maternal and child health to the behavioral health of children in foster care, including projects funded by the NIH and the CDC. CRPH also formed exciting new evaluation partnerships, such as:

13 Collaborative

CRPH has long supported the 13 Collaborative, a family medicine residency learning network that connects clinical, academic and community organizations across the southeast. Through a grant from the American Board of Family Medicine Foundation, our Center has been chosen to formally evaluate the collaborative's current work. The effectiveness of the 13 learning collaborative will be assessed through a mixed methods quantitative and qualitative evaluation. The data collected will inform the quality improvement of learning collaborative activities, expand the collaboration and ensure that activities are valuable to participants.

American Board of Family Medicine Foundation's Residency Learning Network Seed Grant Program

CRPH was awarded a competitive grant to evaluate the American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) Foundation's Residency Learning Network Seed Grant program this year. This program will fund approximately 30 nationwide networks supporting the adoption of program requirements, innovation in family medicine residency education, competency-based medical education and transformation of clinical practice that advances the specialty. As evaluators, CRPH will measure the impact and learnings among the grantees and describe their work against the backdrop of existing family medicine residency networks, communities of practice and learning collaboratives.



**CENTER FOR RURAL AND
PRIMARY HEALTHCARE**

Connect With Us:



www.scruralhealth.org



SCRuralHealthcare@uscmed.sc.edu



SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare