

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



CENTER FOR RURAL AND
PRIMARY HEALTHCARE

From Evidence to Impact

**FROM
EVIDENCE
TO IMPACT**

OUR MISSION

Accelerate the development of healthy rural communities through the support of healthcare delivery, community engagement, training of the healthcare workforce, and research.

OUR GOAL

Support our rural areas of the state through sustainable healthcare delivery; actively connecting resources within these communities; workforce training and other educational initiatives; innovative delivery programs; and robust research & evaluation. We seek to ensure all rural communities in the state have access to high quality and value healthcare.

OUR WORK

**CONNECTING
COMMUNITIES**

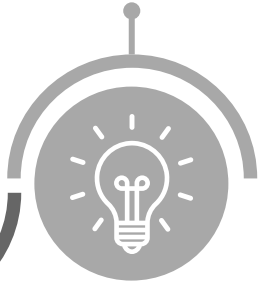
**RESEARCH &
EVALUATION**



**HEALTHCARE
DELIVERY**



**STRATEGIC
WORKFORCE &
TRAINING**



MEET

OUR TEAM



Kevin Bennett, PhD
Director



Michele Stanek, MHS
Associate Director



**Megan Weis, DrPH, MPH,
MCHES**
Director of Connecting
Communities



Patricia Witherspoon, MD
Medical Director



Alanti Price, MPH
Program Manager



Samantha Renaud, MA
Research Program Manager



Andrea Mitchell, MPH
Program Manager



Samantha Smith
Operations Manager



Songyuan Deng, PhD
Research Associate



Samantha Barnum, MPH
Rural Research Coordinator



Alexia Hopkins
Program Coordinator



Brittany Wesley
Business Manager



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WELCOME

Dear Partners,

As we look back on this year, I continue to be amazed at the innovation, persistence, and effectiveness of the work accomplished by our team at the SC Center for Rural and Primary Health (CRPH). Last year we challenged ourselves to tackle the growing issues of maternal and child health and behavioral health in our state. Now, this growing portfolio funds over 18 projects to address these topics throughout the state. Additionally, we engaged new and existing partners to expand our impact, including:

- Claflin University and USC-Lancaster to provide BS degree pathways for registered nurses
- McLeod Health to provide prenatal care across the Pee Dee region
- Clemson Rural Health and their mobile unit focused on opioid use disorder and medication assisted treatment

We have also embarked on a bold new project called our Collaborative Health Communities program. We have spent the last half of this year creating an evidence-based framework, extensive workplan, and criteria for community selection. This program, which will begin in two communities in 2023, will work to enhance health delivery and address social needs in a coordinated and robust way! We are also happy to announce a new member of our team, Alexia Hopkins (Program Coordinator). We all look forward to continuing to serve our rural communities across this state!



KEVIN BENNETT, PhD

DIRECTOR



CRPH IMPACT

65

active funded programs

Over
8700

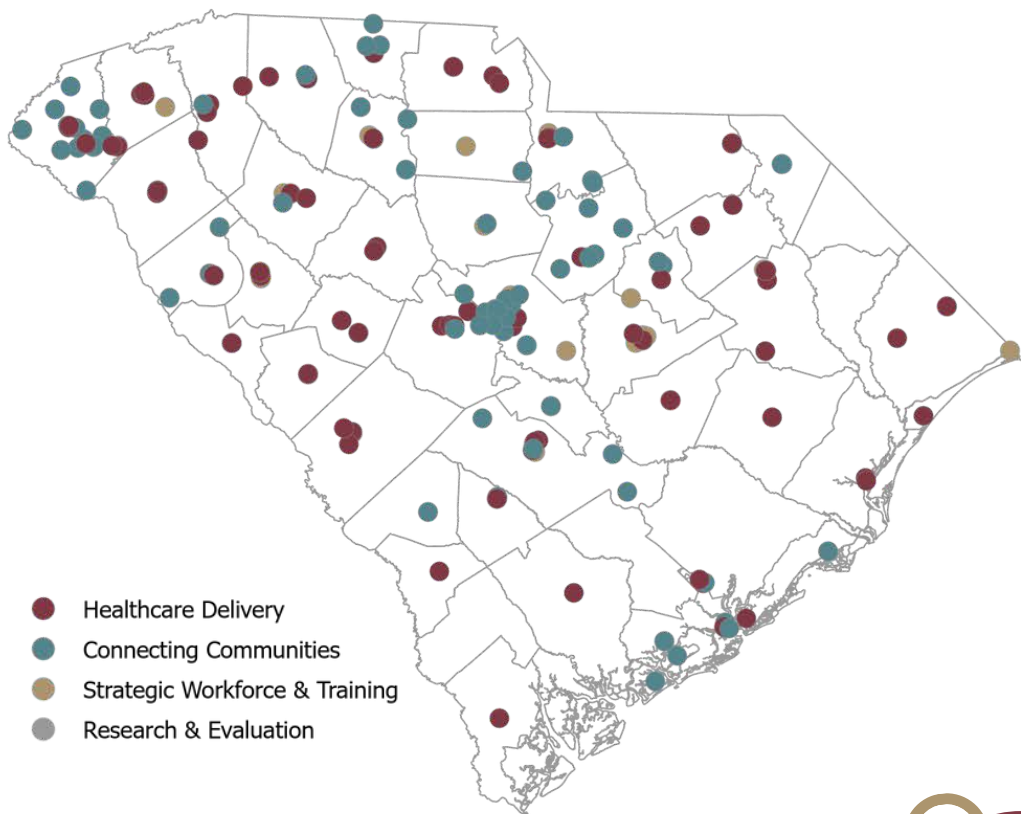
patients served in 2022

Service locations in

40

counties in South Carolina

CRPH ACTIVE PROJECT SERVICE LOCATIONS



ACCESS TO CARE: iCARE

ABOUT iCARE

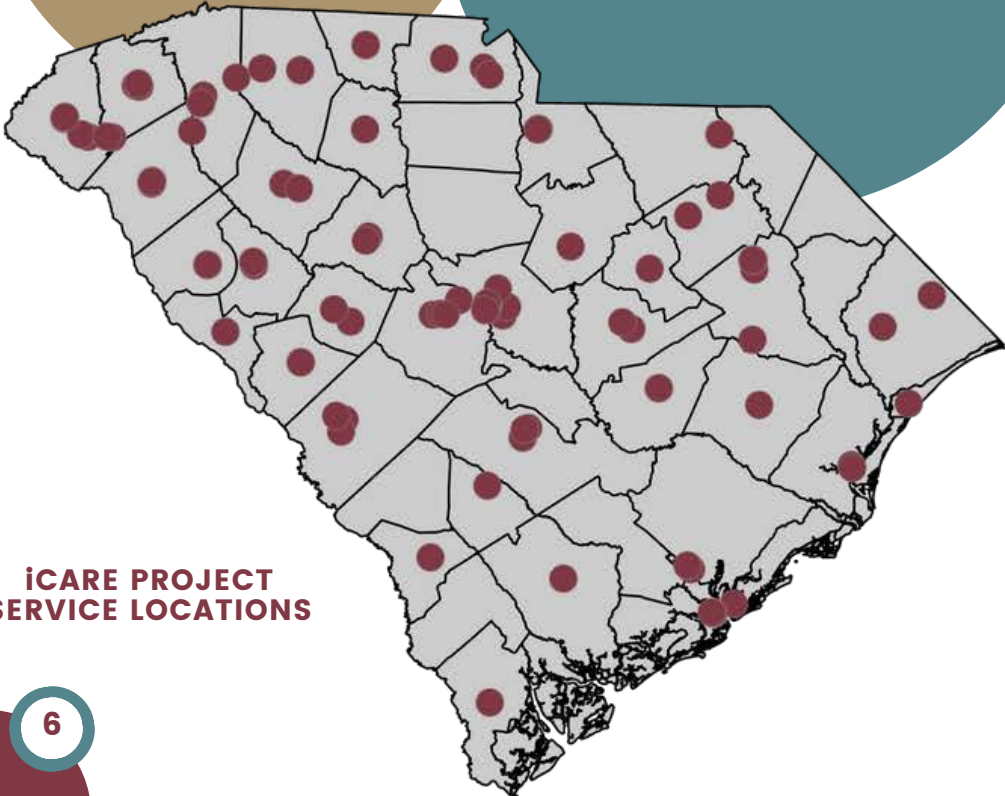
As a core program of CRPH, iCARE continues to expand critical healthcare services to rural communities. Funded iCARE programs support physicians, providers and other clinicians offering primary and specialty care through onsite or virtual services to rural communities. In addition, iCARE also supports technical skills training and patient engagement activities.

2,800+

Rural patients received care locally through iCARE projects

240K

South Carolinians avoided more than 240,000 miles of travel



iCARE PROJECT SERVICE LOCATIONS

Maternal-Child Health

Increasing pre-and post-natal care and education centered on healthy pregnancies is vital in ending preventable deaths and creating healthy women, children, and adolescents. One determining factor of healthy pregnancies is receiving prenatal care.

Recognizing that access to prenatal care for rural, low-income communities is essential to improving outcomes for mothers and babies and promoting new models for delivering prenatal care and obstetrical services, this year, we expanded iCARE to support the following:

- McLeod Family Medicine Residency - establishing a prenatal clinic in their Cheraw location after seeing a high-need due to the closing of the labor and delivery unit. The clinic will also staff a bilingual social worker to provide translation services during exams and help patients navigate referrals to specialists and community resources
- Self Regional Healthcare - establishing a prenatal clinic at Edgefield Medical Clinic to include physician-led prenatal care, ultrasound, non-stress testing, high-risk pregnancy consultation, and post-partum contraception to low-income residents and surrounding communities
- Emmanuel Family Clinic - expanding its maternal and child services to include prenatal care, delivery of the newborn, and post-partum care to uninsured and underinsured residents. This small rural health clinic in Saluda will also provide educational classes on nutrition and exercise for childbearing-age adult females and prevention of substance abuse approximately every 6-8 weeks.

By making care available and accessible, the impact will be healthier moms and babies, which leads to healthier communities.



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Connecting Communities supports programs and initiatives that connect people to health-related and healthcare services in the communities where they live. In September 2022, a new call for proposals was released to engage community partners to build more equitable and resilient community health systems that better serve rural and underserved groups.

- Communities Connecting to Care Cooperative Agreement
- McLeod Health AccessHealth
- Rural training tracks for Community Health Workers and Social Workers
- Partner with community-based organizations and non-profits, such as the South Carolina Alliance of YMCAs and Healthy Learners
- Libraries and Health - a growing model of linking communities and providers



The Libraries and Health Cooperative Agreement Program, established in 2020, continues to evolve, discover, and innovate to serve the health and social needs of rural and underserved residents of South Carolina through programs and research. In 2022 the initial five systems in Charleston County; Kershaw County; Lee County; Orangeburg County; and Union County were joined by four additional library systems- Abbeville County Public Library; Calhoun County Public Library; Marlboro Public County Library; and Oconee County Public Library through a partnership with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

The program supports alternative models of community care and healthcare engagement via a library system, including support for social workers, community health workers, and telehealth access at library locations. Successes through 2021 include:

- Over **15,000** residents reached through Lee, Union, Kershaw, Orangeburg, and Charleston counties with screening, referrals to services, health education, and healthy food initiatives in 2021

8

- **10** Health liaisons integrated in the participating libraries
- **11** Counties served through Libraries & Health projects

LIBRARIES & HEALTH MINIGRANT

Additionally, five mini grants were awarded to new and existing library partners to implement small-scale community health initiatives (Aiken-Barnwell-Bamberg-Edgefield Regional Library System; Abbeville County Public Library; Center for Disability Resources; Charleston County Public Library; and Oconee County). These projects will help reduce food insecurity, increase literacy and social skills, provide resources on consumer health, childhood trauma, and developmental disability, and increase access to mental health services through transportation services.

SOUTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES AND HEALTH: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

CRPH partnered with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to produce the *South Carolina Public Libraries & Health: Needs and Opportunities white paper*. The study documented a range of ways that South Carolina public libraries support health and identified ongoing needs public libraries have as they seek to meet health and health-related needs in their communities. Librarians report that while library capacity is limited the desire to be a partner in improving health in communities is strong.

The report also provides a series of recommendations for continuing education and other support needs, including a Theory of Change model to build more robust partnerships between the health and the public library sectors.

Collectively, these projects build on the role of libraries, as not just repositories for books, but as non-traditional community health hubs to connect people to healthcare and other supportive services, especially for rural and underserved areas of our state.

ADDRESSING HOUSING NEEDS IN ORANGEBURG COUNTY

"One story that stands out to me is about a library patron that came in to see the new library and receive a library card. She is a 54-year-old and she learned about my services from a flyer at the circulation desk. She requested to meet with me. She informed me that she lives in a home with a broken roof and broken water pipes, so no access to water. She informed me that the home was very old, and she was living in poor conditions without access to food. I was able to assist her with submitting an application to our local shelter here in Orangeburg and I sent it in for her. She did not have access to a cellphone for me to follow up with her and I didn't see her again for two days. She came into the library two days later and thanked me for helping her on the spot that day. She updated me that she was able to move into the shelter the very next morning and is currently working with their case manager to develop a transitional plan for better better living."

- Bodequia Simon, MSW

Resource Associate Orangeburg County Library



RURAL INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

The Rural Innovations Program supports organizations with innovative ideas to improve care and address unmet needs for rural South Carolinians.

12

active projects

23

counties with innovative service locations

35

projects since 2018

more than
\$3.1

million invested

“ We are excited about the CNA to BSN Pathway Partnership and the impact it will have to enhance the health professions workforce in rural South Carolina. It will provide opportunities students to complete classroom and clinical experiences preparing them for the CNA exam while pursuing a BSN degree.



10

- **Courtney Catledge, DNP**

Director, BSN Collaborative Program at USC-Lancaster

STRATEGIC WORKFORCE & TRAINING

Developing rural health leaders, in and out of clinical settings, is essential to successfully build healthy rural communities. CRPH's educational partnerships span across multiple disciplines to meet the multi-faceted needs of rural populations. These are a few of the supported strategic workforce and training programs:

CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY

Like every other state, an ongoing impact of COVID-19 is challenges related to the healthcare workforce shortages, especially a nursing shortage. CRPH has created a new partnership with Claflin University's nursing program that seeks to increase the number of nurses trained but also to ensure 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 BSN-prepared nurses who serve rural populations. In addition, educational resources are provided to enhance family nurse practitioner students' hands-on rural clinical health experiences.

USC COLLEGE OF PHARMACY

Pharmacists are increasingly viewed as a critical member of the healthcare team. The evidence demonstrates their role in improving chronic disease outcomes and ensuring patients receive preventive services. CRPH recognizes that pharmacists offer additional support to the clinical care team in providing quality care, especially in primary care settings. In partnership with Tandem Health and the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy, we support the postgraduate outpatient pharmacy residency program. This program develops pharmacist leaders in rural and underserved settings. This interdisciplinary education program merges pharmacy students and residents into a family medicine program, providing intentional training in a rural setting. Since its first resident in 2019, the program has grown exponentially to include pharmacists practicing in family medicine, cardiology and care transitions in rural SC.

MUSC GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

Medical education has always been a priority for our state; however, we are facing an overall physician shortage which can in part be attributed to healthcare providers leaving the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even more impactful is the misdistribution of primary care physicians in rural and low-income communities. Our partnership with the Medical University of South Carolina seeks to address this disparity by assessing the operational and financial opportunity to establish Graduate Medical Education teaching programs in a rural, regional health network. The goal is that this analysis will lead to further investment in creating teaching programs that will increase the number of primary care physicians in rural communities.

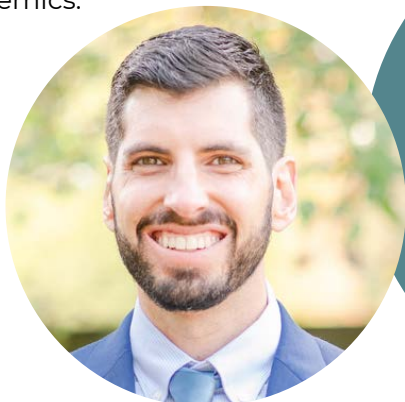
RESEARCH & EVALUATION

LEVERAGING DATA AND GROWING PARTNERSHIPS

CRPH collaborates with talented individuals and impactful organizations throughout the state to leverage existing knowledge and infrastructure that will lead to better health outcomes for rural South Carolinians. One such collaborator is Dr. Lior Rennert, an Assistant Professor of Biostatistics in the Department of Public Health Sciences at Clemson University.

In 2022, Dr. Rennert received funding from our Rural Innovations program, to develop a modeling framework identifying regions at highest risk of opioid-related hospitalizations, hepatitis C virus (HCV), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) as well as understand which factors influence utilization of mobile health clinics. With CRPH support, this modeling toolkit will be available to public-health decision-makers to inform allocations of mobile health clinics and other community-based interventions to regions of greatest need.

In addition to this work, Dr. Rennert has invited the Center to collaborate on a submission to the National Institute of Health on a project to reduce health disparities during COVID-19 and future pandemics.



“ Investments such as these have the potential to save countless lives during the current and future pandemics.

- Lior Rennert, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor at
Clemson University

PROGRAM EVALUATION

CRPH collaborates with several organizations to conduct high quality external evaluations. This year we had the opportunity to work with:

- Center for Community Health Alignment
- Diabetes Free SC
- South Carolina Medical Legal Partnership Collaborative
- Palmetto Care Connections

INFORMING RURAL COMMUNITY HEALTH AND EDUCATION

CRPH's research team has been working with the University of South Carolina's ALL4SC on a Learning and Action in Policy and Partnerships (LAPP) grant. This grant was funded with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), Data Across Sectors for Health (DASH) in partnership with the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) and aims to enhance

and foster relationships between state governments, community-based organizations, and community members.

This project, led by ALL4SC, was designed to use existing state health and education data to better understand the health, educational, and social-emotional needs and developmental context of Fairfield County youth and families. Our research team used this data to identify variables that impact outcomes of interest. The ALL4SC team then shared these findings with community partners and worked collaboratively to identify resources and develop policies that address the targeted needs.



RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS

1 Data from 60,000 Fairfield county students were analyzed

Students who took medication for their condition, such as asthma controllers or medication for diabetes, were more likely to have excessive school absences than students who did not take these medications

2 Conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, asthma, and ADHD, were associated with a higher probability of excessive school absences

4 Counseling students on physical activity or nutrition helped reduce the probability of excessive school absences

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

USC STUDENT GROUPS

CRPH support several rural focused student groups at the University of South Carolina.

- The Rural Interest Group (RIG) is an undergraduate, graduate, and professional student organization at USC. It offers a forum for students from all disciplines to learn more about rural communities. The RIG currently has 79 registered members.
- The Rural Health Interest Group (RHIG) at USC School of Medicine Columbia and Greenville aims to educate medical students on the unique opportunities in rural healthcare and to foster interest in serving rural and underserved population in South Carolina. Students in both groups meet monthly to hear from rural health professionals across the state and network.

CRPH SUMMER FELLOWSHIP

This year, we welcomed our inaugural cohort of summer fellows. Five undergraduate students from across the state were selected to participate in the fellowship program through a competitive selection process. With mentorship, fellows fostered their interest in rural South Carolina through opportunities to promote health equity, enhance the delivery of care, and research trends that impact access to care.

“ My experience as a Summer Fellow with SC CRPH not only helped me understand the importance of state participation in the delivery of rural health care but also opened the door for me to directly be a part of the state budgeting process as Research & Budget Analyst for the Ways & Means Committee. I am indescribably thankful for the opportunity to interact with so many professionals to learn how to promote optimal health for all in South Carolina!



-Aliesha Argrow
Claflin University

The fellowship was such a great opportunity! I was taught a significant amount of information concerning rural health and the disparities that these areas face, and SC CRPH also partnered me with my local hospital to help me further my career goal of becoming a physician assistant while simultaneously allowing me to serve my rural community.”



-Abby Bequist
University of South Carolina

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

CRPH will continue to collaborate closely with all these systems and communities, ensuring they lead the way in caring for their community, and providing whatever resources we can to contribute to these efforts. We are seeing innovative delivery models that demonstrate significant impact taking root. We also see these communities, their organizations, and their people taking the lead on these issues, and advocating for change.

In this coming year, we look forward to working with such communities in programs such as our Collaborative Health Communities program and the up-and-coming HBCU (historically black colleges and universities) Health Discovery program.

Collaborative Health Communities

- Building upon the collaborative nature of rural communities, we are conducting a pilot to advance and support the care coordination infrastructure in South Carolina. The project will emphasize that health is a shared responsibility and opportunity for an entire community. Funded communities will lead in creating sustainability to change population-level health outcomes.

HBCU Health Discovery program

- The HBCU Health Discovery program is designed to utilize the talent and perspectives of HBCUs to promote health and reduce health disparities. It is a collaboration that acknowledges the uniqueness of HBCUs to improve health outcomes in our state. Every HBCU in our state will have the opportunity to lead the creation of initiatives for their students and the surrounding community that define health equity from their context. The program will also help prepare the next generation of highly skilled and influential leaders to impact their campus, community, and healthcare workforce.

In all, our rural communities have the chance to improve their health, lead the way in innovation, and provide a model to be emulated across the state, region, and US. We are fortunate to be able to work alongside these groups as they do so.



COLLABORATIONS





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