



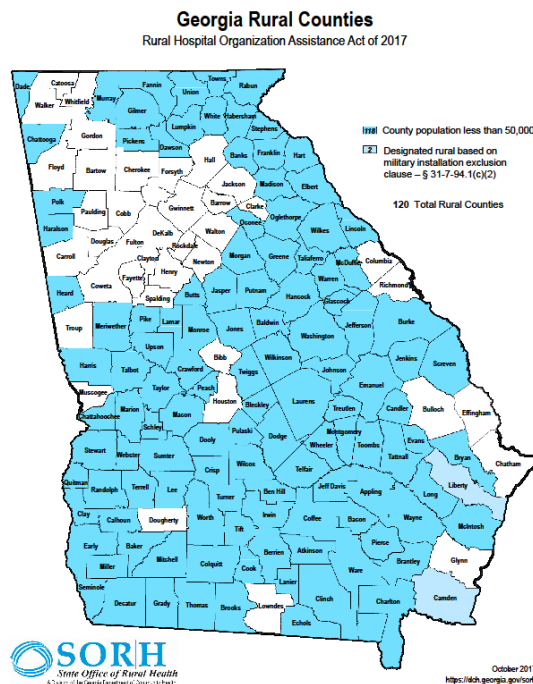
GEORGIA  
**Rural Health**  
INNOVATION CENTER  
AT MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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Executive Director  
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# The Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center

The Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center (GRHIC) was established in 2018 with HB 769 of the Georgia legislature and tasked to partner with rural Georgia to improve healthcare through reliable research, creative strategies, and sustainable solutions.

# WHAT WE DO!

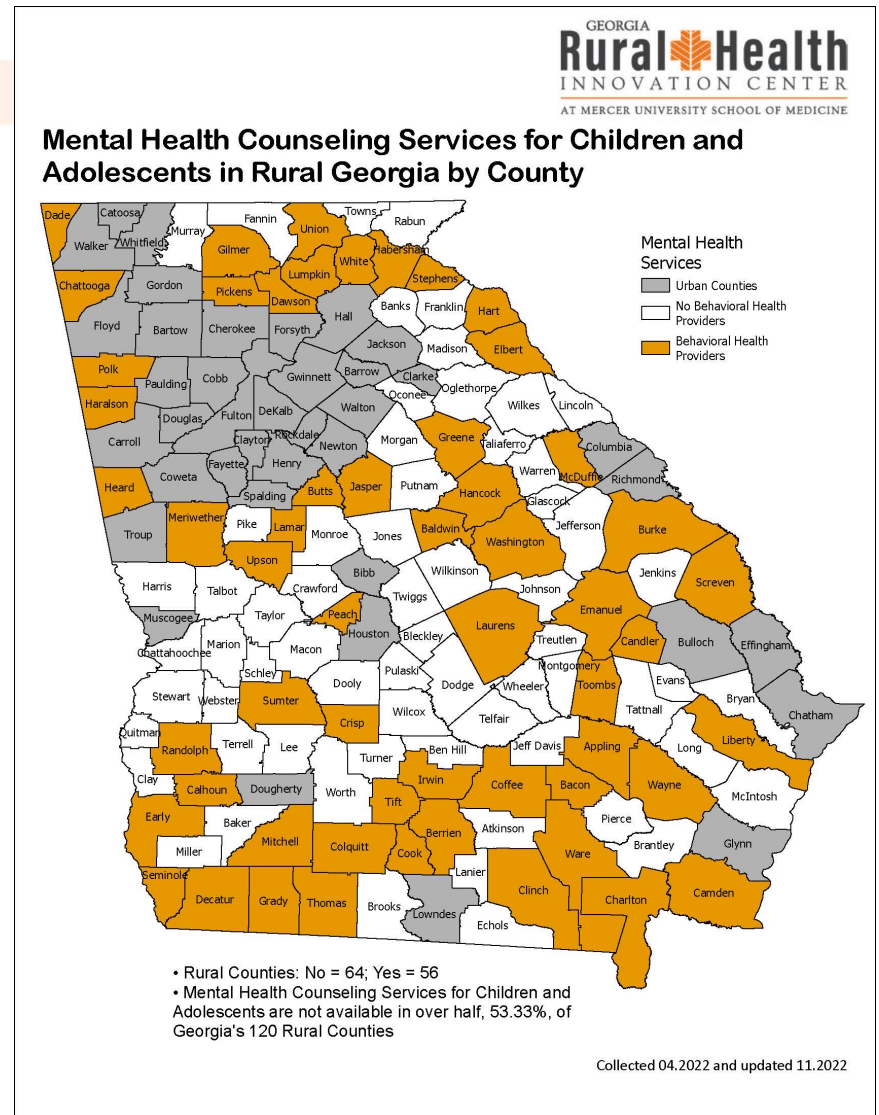


- We develop relationships with the 120 rural Georgia counties
- We research healthcare access, health disparities, and health outcomes
- We partner with local organizations, government, and agencies to implement projects to build healthcare infrastructure and capacity in the community.

# PEDIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Rural Counties: No = 64 Yes = 56

Mental Health Counseling Services for Children and Adolescents are not available in over half, 53.33% of Georgia's 120 rural counties.



# PEDIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

- ❖ Collaboration with the Ben Hill County Board of Education, along with Global Partnership for Telehealth (GPT) and the College of Professional Advancement, Mercer University, to develop and implement pediatric mental health visits in the school
- ❖ Components to this initiative include mental health screening, mental health individual, group and family counseling via telehealth, suicide and mental health awareness training, community wellness events and health fairs- provides supervised hours for counseling students with a provisional license following graduation
- ❖ Currently there are no mental health services offered in Ben Hill County. This initiative will provide counseling support in the primary, elementary, middle and high schools- will be expanded in the Spring
- ❖ All services rendered are at no-charge to the student, insurance or school
- ❖ Overcomes barriers of the mental health workforce shortage, lack of transportation, lack of healthcare infrastructure and lack of insurance or financial resources

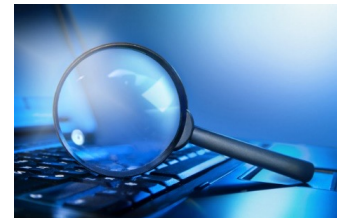


# PEDIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

- ❖ Due to the success of the Pilot project, the program has been expanded to all Ben Hill County Schools
- ❖ In the past 6 months Washington County began a pilot and will expand to all schools in the county in January 2023.
- ❖ Jefferson County is online to begin their pilot in January 2023 with plans to expand to all schools
- ❖ Harris County is setting up their space with an anticipated start date of August 2023
- ❖ In discussion are: Twiggs County, Hancock County, Upson County

# Community Health Reporter

- ❖ Created to provide the Center with bi-weekly reports verifying new and existing healthcare practices and providers, their hours of service, address and if new patients are being accepted.
- ❖ The reporters will also report local news regarding health departments, hospitals, surgery centers, pharmacies and ancillary medical services in the community
- ❖ The 120 rural counties in Ga have been divided into 72 regions for coverage of all rural Ga
- ❖ Reporters enter data via a web app that will be verified by the Center and made available on the Center's website to aid the public in healthcare access
- ❖ To date we have employed 63 health reporters and are currently recruiting for the rest



# FARMERS MENTAL WELLBEING PROJECT

- ❖ Minimal research being done on agricultural workers' mental well-being, aside from suicide-focused work.
- ❖ Partnered with the GA Foundation of Agriculture to assess the mental wellbeing of agricultural workers, including stressors.
- ❖ The goals of the program are:
  - ❖ Provide overview of the mental health, including stressors, for farm owners, farm workers, farm managers, and their spouses in GA.
  - ❖ Develop recommendations



# Farmer's Mental Well-Being Project: Statewide Survey Report



## **STUDY METHODS**

- Mental well-being = more holistic term
- Statewide after pilot: 153 counties
- Online; EN & ES
- Jan – April 2022
- Dissemination:
  - commodity groups
  - newspaper ads
- N = 1651
  - Farm Owners – 38%
  - Farm Managers – 19%
  - Farm Workers – 30%
  - Spouses – 12%
  - Other – 2%
- Georgia Ag Census

## **HEALTHCARE ACCESS**

- 60% no access to basic medical care
- 50% no health insurance
- Farm managers and farm workers had significantly less access to healthcare than farm owners.
- Silent Generation & Baby Boomers less likely to seek mental health care than Generations X, Y, & Z.

## **FARM STRESSORS**

- Top stressors for all farmers:
  - Balancing home and work life,
  - Weather and its effect on the farm,
  - COVID19's effect on income
- Farm owners – lowest stress scores
  - succession planning
  - changes to ag laws or policies
- Farm managers –
  - saving for retirement
  - working environment
  - problems with partner or children
- Farm workers – highest stress scores
  - obtaining operating certificates
  - experiencing microaggressions
  - lack of opportunities

## **SUICIDAL IDEATION AND NEGATIVE AFFECT**

- At least once a month:
  - 47% - loneliness
  - 49% - sadness/depression
  - 39% - hopelessness
  - 29% - thoughts of dying by suicide
- 42% have thought about dying by suicide in the past 12 months.

## **GENERATIONAL STATUS**

- First-generation farmers vs generational:
  - higher stress scores
  - fewer coping mechanisms
  - less healthcare access
  - suicidal ideation:
    - 61% in the past year (vs 10%)
    - 9% daily (vs. 1%)

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Key informant interviews
- In-person survey collection of underrepresented groups (traveling farmers)
- Develop farmer-specific mental health interventions, with Ga Foundation for Ag.
- The pilot and statewide reports are available to download:  
[georgiaruralhealth.org/farmworkersurvey](http://georgiaruralhealth.org/farmworkersurvey)

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## Other Projects

- ❖ Mental Health First Aid
- ❖ QPR
- ❖ Community Resiliency Model
- ❖ Maternal Health Observership
- ❖ Maternal Health Summit
- ❖ Faith in Rural Health
- ❖ Health Fairs
  - ❖ Dooly County
  - ❖ Hancock County
  - ❖ Harris County
  - ❖ Johnson County
  - ❖ Sumter County
- ❖ Rural Med Camp
- ❖ In-Person Med Camp
- ❖ Rural Hospital Leadership Training
- ❖ Coordinate Trauma Commission Training
- ❖ Barber Shop/Beauty Shop
- ❖ Rural Vaccine Hesitancy Study & Initiatives
  - ❖ Clay County
  - ❖ Randolph County
  - ❖ Putnam County
  - ❖ Twiggs County
  - ❖ Washington County

## In the works. . .

- ❖ Partnering with innovators on several pilots to expand rural Pediatric networks and strengthen local rural Pediatricians.
- ❖ Partnering with Christopher Wolf Crusade to bring LifeCoach Specialist to 3 pilot hospitals in rural Georgia for opioid misuse project.
- ❖ Partnering with rural OBGYN to build effective and sustainable models for in-home prenatal visits and study the feasibility of physician run and hospital supported birthing centers in rural areas to decrease maternal and child mortality.

Stay in touch:

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