



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT  
OF COMMUNITY HEALTH

# Georgia State Office of Rural Health



Nita Ham, Senior Director  
SORH Program and Hospital Services

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# Mission:

The mission of the Department of Community Health is to provide access to affordable, quality health care to Georgians through effective planning, purchasing, and oversight.

# Celebrating National Rural Health Day!



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# State Office of Rural Health Overview

- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
  - Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP)
    - Established in 1987
  - State Office of Rural Health (SORH) Program
    - Established in 1991
  - SORH in each of the 50 states
    - Host site is designated by the Governor of each state
    - For Georgia: Department of Community Health
      - established in 2000; positioned in rural community of Cordele





# State Office of Rural Health Overview

- Four program sections
  - SORH Program
  - Hospital Services
  - Primary Care Office
  - Farmworker Health Program
- 10 total staff
  - One Executive Director
  - Two Senior Directors
  - Two Program Directors
  - Five support staff divided between program sections



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# SORH Purpose

- As determined by HRSA/FORHP
  - To help rural communities within their state build effective healthcare delivery systems
  - SORHs accomplish this by:
    - Collecting and disseminating health-related information,
    - Coordinating state rural health resources and activities,
    - Providing technical assistance,
    - Encouraging the recruiting and retention of health professionals, and,
    - Strengthening state, local, and federal partnerships.



# Georgia SORH: Federal/State Programs

- SORH Funding in Fiscal Year 2022 (FY2022)
  - \$42M
    - Federal and State funds
      - Each program section manages one or more federal grant
- Grants, projects, and programs in FY2022
  - 52 individual grants managed by SORH staff
    - Number may change from year to year
      - Federal
      - Legislatively directed
        - Line item in state budget
      - Selected via Request for Grant Application (RFGA) process

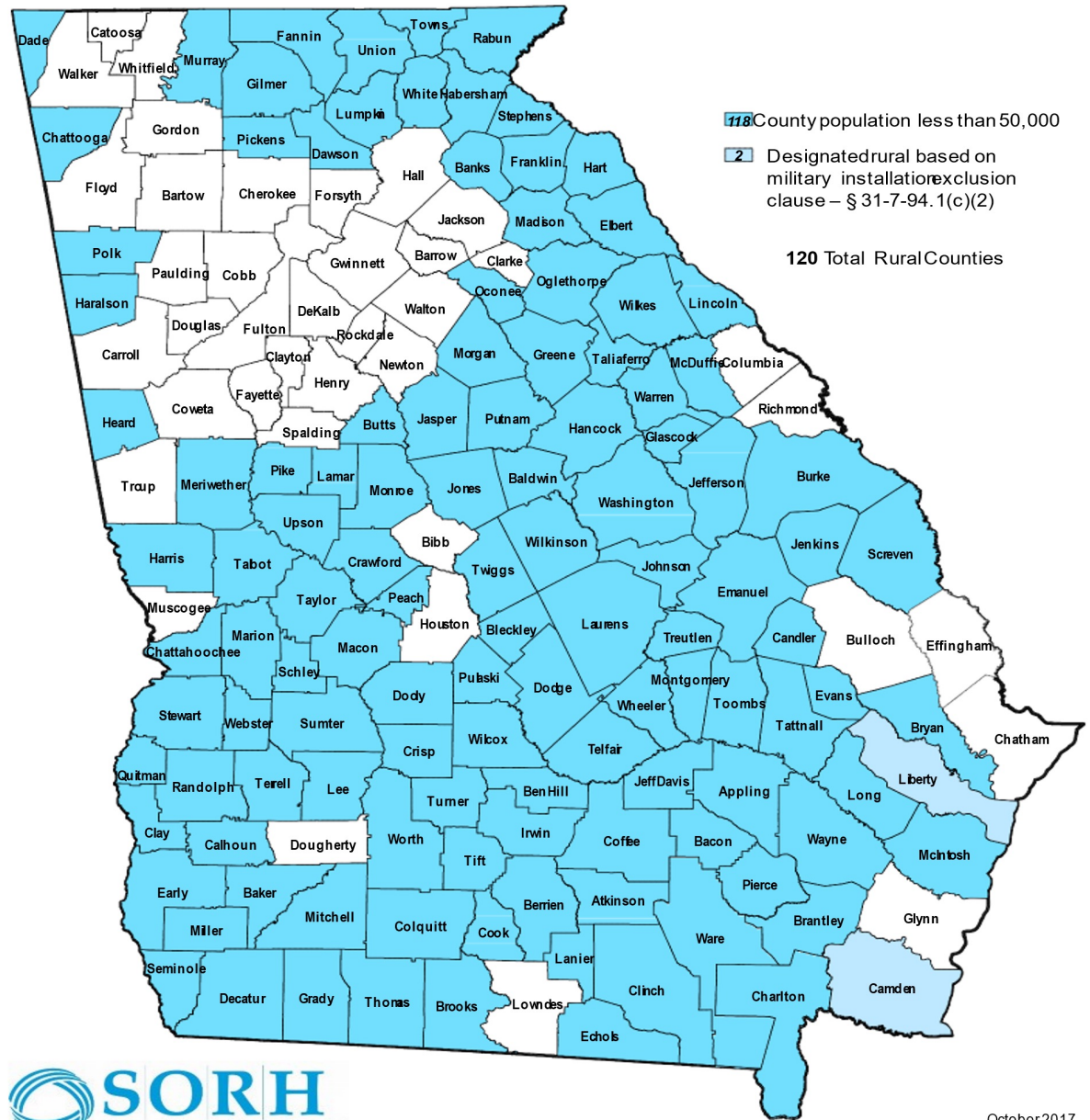


# Rural Georgia

***“Rural” is defined  
as having a  
county population  
of less than 50,000  
residents.***

## Georgia Rural Counties

Rural Hospital Organization Assistance Act of 2017



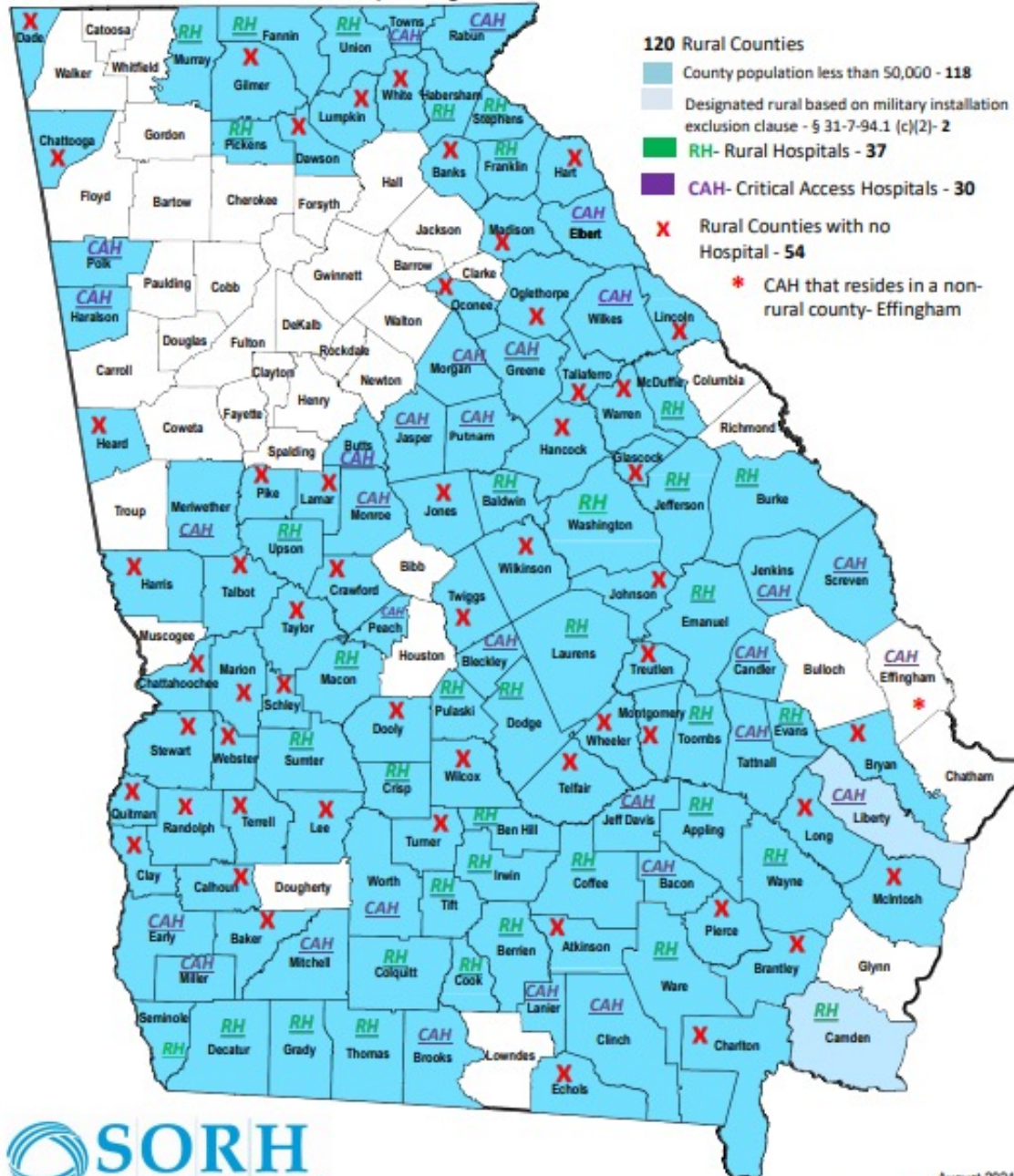
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October 2017  
<https://dch.georgia.gov/sorh>



## Georgia Rural Counties with Rural Hospitals, Critical Access Hospitals, and Rural Counties without a Hospital Rural Hospital Organization Assistance Act of 2017



# Rural Hospitals

- 120 of 159 counties defined as “rural”
- 67 small rural and Critical Access Hospitals (CAH)
  - 54 counties with no hospital
  - Nine counties with only one physician
  - Additional nine counties with no physician
- Importance of:
  - Strong EMS system
  - Trauma patient management education

# Rural Hospital Stabilization Grant Program

- Rural Hospital Stabilization Grant Program
  - 2014 RHS Committee Findings
  - 2015 Legislatively directed program with annual funding
- Currently in Phase 7; \$39M funding to date
  - 34 of 67 rural hospitals have participated
- Focus: Keep rural hospitals open
  - Improve quality of care
  - Increase market share/expand services/service areas
    - Keep local patients in local hospitals



# SORH Purpose: Partnerships

- Georgia Hospital Association
- Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center
- Georgia Southern University
- Georgia Department of Public Health
  - State Office of Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
  - Strong working relationship during past 10 years
    - SORH has funded numerous grants to support EMS initiatives
      - Improve/enhance patient care
      - Continuing education



# SORH & Georgia Trauma Commission

- Strong partnership
  - Monthly rural-focused meetings
  - In discussion with GQIP & Mercer Innovation Center regarding rural surgery quality improvement initiatives
  - Provided input as requested during the development of the MARCH PAWS program
  - Attends Level III/Level IV Rural Trauma Center Committee Meetings
  - Support for the American College of Surgeons Trauma Systems Consultative Visit & Rural Focused Review



# SORH & Georgia Trauma Commission

## Georgia Trauma Foundation

- Previous SORH grantee
  - EMS Workforce Study
- Current SORH grantee
  - Continuing Education Data Base Grant
  - \$312K for year one to develop data base
    - \$37K annual funding for four years to maintain data base
  - Designed to use with Continuing Education Coordination Grant

## Supporting Emergency Department Designations

- Continuing Education (CE) Coordination Grant
- Created to support CE needs for rural hospitals seeking emergency department designations
- RFGA will be released this month
- \$275,185 per year for 4 years
  - \$1.1M total





# SORH Is Available



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