

An Overview of the **State** **Office of Rural Health**

Overview

The State Office of Rural Health (SORH) manages programs to develop regional quality health care systems to optimize health status and improve health outcomes in rural and underserved areas of Georgia. During FY 2010, the SORH program budget was \$3,247,487 in state funds and \$3,841,529 in federal funds; for a total budget of \$7,089,016 as of June 30, 2010.

The SORH administers programs to develop financially viable non-traditional regional systems designed to meet the health and service demands of the communities served. The desired outcomes are:

- Improvements in rural health
- A strengthened health care safety net
- The introduction of health care as a strategic industry in Georgia

The SORH provides financial and technical support to select demonstration communities with the leadership and capacity to collaboratively design and implement models that:

- Increase access to integrated health services (physical health, prevention services, behavioral health, etc.)
- Transition to consumer driven health care
- Encourage regionalization of services so that providers are more financially stable
- Use medical technology to improve health outcomes and efficiency
- Ensure the long-term viability of the state's health care safety net
- Ensure continued job opportunities for employees in new roles that support the innovative health care delivery model, as well as creating a strong workforce of healthy citizens

Primary Care Office

The Primary Care Office (PCO) facilitates increased access to primary health care by tracking, placing and coordinating the recruitment of physicians and allied health professionals in underserved areas through the development of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), rural health clinics and

continued



Georgia Rural Health At-a-Glance

- Georgia has two million rural residents
- 126 Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas (MHPSA)*
- 143 Primary Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA)*
- 104 Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (DHPSA)*
- 66 hospitals are located in rural counties
- There are 27 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) with 135 access points in Georgia

*Note number of DHPSA, MHSPA, & HPSAs fluctuates as HRSA approves them continuously. While there are fewer designated shortage areas, this means that Georgia is doing a better job placing health care professionals in areas of need.

Programs

- Primary Care Office
- Hospital Services Program
- Georgia Farmworkers' Health Program
- Health care for the Homeless
- Statewide Area Health Education Centers Network
- Networks for Rural Health

An Overview of SORH

volunteer clinics. The PCO works closely with the Georgia Association of Primary Health Care (GAPHC) to foster the development of FQHCs. Initiatives of the PCO include:

- **Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)**

The Georgia PCO is currently working cooperatively with GAPHC to administer \$500,000 in grant funding for FQHC development in Georgia.

- **Professional Shortage Designations**

The PCO evaluates shortage designations to insure that Georgia's underserved communities may participate in federal and state programs targeting their special needs. The shortage designations include Medically Underserved Areas, Health Professional Shortage Areas, Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas and Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas.

- **J-1 Visa Program**

J-1 Visa Program is a state and federal partnership that sponsors international medical graduates who agree to practice primary care in underserved areas for a minimum of three years after completing their residency.

- **National Health Service Corps (NHSC)**

National Health Service Corps is a federal initiative to assist HPSA communities in developing, recruiting and retaining physicians and other allied health professionals through either loan repayment or scholarships. Currently, there are 107 health professionals in the loan repayment program and 13 NHSC scholars serving 94 sites.

Hospital Services Program

The Hospital Services Program provides technical assistance and resources principally to rural and Critical Access Hospitals. Federal funds of \$964,645 were received in support of the following grant initiatives:

- **Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program receives up to \$491,413 to:**

- ♦ Facilitate financial efficiency and quality improvement
- ♦ Develop and expand rural health networks
- ♦ Enhance coordination of Emergency Medical Service

- **Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program is a federal grant program providing \$473,232 in FY 2010**

to 53 rural hospitals with 49 or less beds to:

- ♦ Enhance quality improvement and reduction of medical errors
- ♦ Facilitate compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- ♦ Facilitate compliance with Prospective Payment System reimbursement methodology

Georgia Farmworker Health Program

The Georgia Farmworker Health Program works to improve the general health status of Georgia's migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families by providing cost effective, culturally appropriate primary and preventive health services. Federal funding supporting this effort is \$2,532,756 in FY 2010.

Health Care for the Homeless

Health Care for the Homeless provides primary and preventive health care services to the homeless in Atlanta and Savannah. State funds supporting these efforts are \$305,134.

Statewide Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Network

The SORH collaborates with the Georgia Health Sciences University Medical College of Georgia to administer this program. The mission of the Statewide Area Health Education Centers Network is to create and sustain community-driven, regional programs promoting health care access for medically underserved Georgians by improving the quality, diversity, education, supply, distribution and retention of health care professionals. State funds supporting these efforts were \$1,808,629 in FY 2010.

Networks for Rural Health

Networks for Rural Health is a grant program designed to help rural providers and community leaders build multi-county regional health care systems which are clinically relevant, financially viable, and improve access to care for the underserved citizens of Georgia.

Contact Information

Please contact the State Office of Rural Health for additional information by phone 229-401-3090, online at dch.georgia.gov, or by mail at: