



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Office of Rural Health

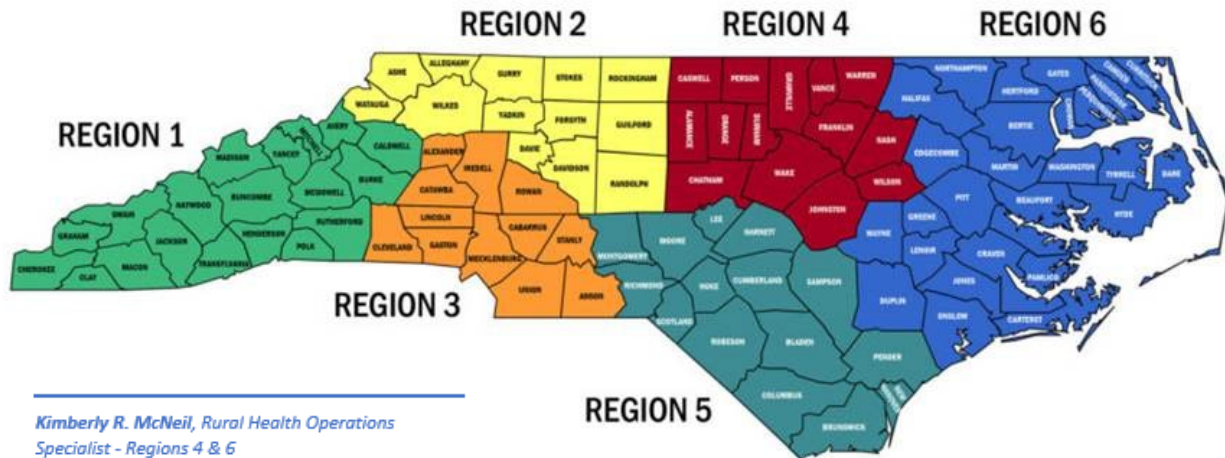
NC Office of Rural Health Quarterly Newsletter

Welcome to the Service Area Team's Quarterly Newsletter from the North Carolina Office of Rural Health (ORH).

The ORH uses Service Area Teams (SATs) to facilitate collaboration across programs and provide strategic support to grantees and partners across the state.

SATs are comprised of members from all programs within ORH including Community Health Grants, Medication Assistance, Rural Hospital, Rural Health Operations, Farmworker Health, Placement Services, Health Information Technology and Telehealth, Analytics & Innovations, and Business and Contracts.

We would love to hear from you! If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions for upcoming newsletters, contact Justin Kearley at justin.kearley@dhhs.nc.gov.



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Regional News and Highlights

WESTERN SAT NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS:



Hurricane Helene

Affected counties include: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, healthcare organizations across Western North Carolina have faced significant disruptions. Flooded roads, power outages, internet loss, and water service disruptions have made access to care difficult for rural communities, leading to delays in critical services. Many healthcare facilities have experienced infrastructure damage, straining already limited resources.

Despite these challenges, local healthcare providers are working tirelessly to maintain services and support their communities. Efforts include mobilizing mobile clinics to reach isolated areas, coordinating with state agencies for additional supplies, and more. As the response shifts from crisis to recovery, the resilience of the region's healthcare system highlights the importance of emergency preparedness and ongoing support for rural health infrastructure.



Check out the new updated webpage from Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) that helps to **match organizations that have supplies to donate and organizations that have need**. Organizations can register and can post what they have or what they need and be matched with businesses. https://volunteernc.app.needslist.co/issues/NC_Resiliency -

(best if opened in Chrome)

You can read about **resources from NCDHHS** here (this is a text-only document that is friendly for low bandwidth internet or cell service): <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/hurricane-helene-recovery-resources>

If you want to **learn more about the status of practices in Western NC**, check out this frequently updated resource from the NC Medical Board: <https://www.ncmedboard.org/landing-page/provider-status-page/N/A/P200>. Licensees in a county affected by Helene can continue to update status here as well.



The best way to help right now is to donate money. Contributions to the [NC Disaster Relief Fund](#) go to local groups who know what is needed on the ground in their communities. If you have already gathered items to donate, please work through one of [these organizations](#) Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster .

Nurses on Horseback Riding to the Rescue, by Moss Brennan, Watauga Democrat

SUGAR GROVE — A group of nurses worked to transport supplies and medical help to people in difficult-to-reach areas with an old-fashioned means of travel: horseback.



“We heard you guys got hit pretty hard obviously so we put together crews that can go out with some folks with backcountry experience to be able to access more remote areas and bring medical care out there if they need it,” said Mollie Brooks, who helped organize the effort.

On Wednesday, Oct. 2, the group had approximately 25 horses and people staging to help out. They also had a farrier [an animal hoof specialist] onsite in case any of the horses got hurt. Brooks said they worked with the sheriff’s office to help organize the efforts as everyone helping out there is not from the area. “The goal is just to offer you guys more resources,” she said.

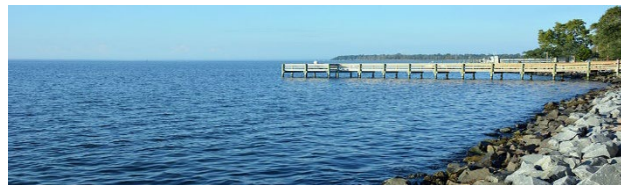
Angelica Brown is a nurse from Catawba County who was looking for ways to help with the recovery.

“We’re all nurses, so really medical is what we can offer y’all, so that’s what we’re here for,” Brown said. “I have ridden horseback and done a lot of nursing. I have never mixed the two together, so today will be a first.”

The teams were staging in the Sugar Grove area as they worked with Cove Creek Volunteer Fire Department for assignments.

Brennan, M. (2024, October 2). Nurses on horseback riding to the rescue. *Watauga Democrat*.

EASTERN SAT NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS



HRSA Administrator Johnson Visits Wilson County, Announces \$9 Million in Funding for NC Communities



Wilson County Substance Prevention Coalition was awarded a nearly \$3 million federal grant aimed to expand recovery and treatment services here and in Nash, Edgecombe, Warren and Wayne counties. Carole Johnson, administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration, made the announcement in Wilson on Monday, September 23. The Health Resources and Services Administration is an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The coalition will receive about \$750,000 each year for four years and will facilitate into other

rural counties. The goal is to replicate what has worked in Wilson surrounding recovery and treatment for substance use disorders.

Johnson also announced an additional \$6 million for two other North Carolina agencies — United Way of Rutherford County and Integrated Care of Greater Hickory.

Jeff Hill, Wilson County Substance Prevention Coalition director, said Wilson’s success is driven by the collaborative efforts among various agencies. He said the coalition is excited about the substantial funding that will allow them to serve more people.

SOUTH CENTRAL SAT NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS



Volunteer Blessings

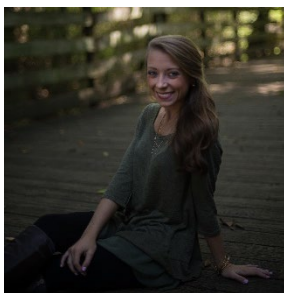


Susan Lowe, a volunteer at **Brunswick Senior Resources**, shares about her volunteer work with Marilou Smith. “What I enjoy most about volunteering with Marilou is seeing how much the clients appreciate her and the effort she puts into helping them afford and receive the medications they need. I really like talking to the clients as I fill out their applications and follow up on paperwork. It’s surprising but nice when some clients recognize my voice—it makes me feel valued. I love knowing I’m making a difference in their lives. Many people I speak with aren’t able to take their prescribed medications because they can’t afford them, sometimes not even the co-pay. I’ve learned how to help by offering them suggestions for lowering costs through coupons and the BFA program. Listening to the clients and referring them to other BSRINC resources when needed has been rewarding as well.

I also volunteer at the Dental and Medical Clinic at St. Mary’s Basilica in Wilmington, where they offer affordable services, and it’s been another great resource for some of our clients. Marilou is always flexible with the days and times I can come in. She’ll leave me tasks to work on or send me emails to follow up with clients.

I really value the trust she places in me, which lets me give back to others while enjoying my retirement. I plan to continue volunteering with BSRINC for a long time.” The Office of Rural Health would like to thank both Susan Lowe and Marilou Smith for their volunteer efforts. With volunteers like them working to support our safety net, we know we are in good hands!

New ORH Staff



Hillary Mouro (HITT Team)

Hillary is a native of Greenville, NC, and previously worked as a Clinical Research Specialist in Pediatric Hematology Oncology at ECU Health for over five years. Hillary holds a bachelor’s degree in Exercise Physiology from Florida State University (Go Noles!) and a Master’s Degree in Public Health from East Carolina University (Go Pirates!). Before her healthcare journey, she had the incredible opportunity to work at Walt Disney World as an entertainment cast member—a dream come true!

Hillary currently lives in Cary with her husband, Andrew and her two dogs, Elsie and Meeka. They are excited to grow their family and will welcome a baby girl this Spring! In Hillary’s free time she enjoys running, exploring all that the Triangle has to offer, traveling, and cheering on the Carolina Hurricanes. She is passionate about using technology to enhance healthcare delivery and improve patient outcomes. Hillary is eager to bring her diverse experiences to the team and looks forward to collaborating with all of you and learning from your expertise.



Leslie Wolcott (Operations Team)

Leslie joined the team at the beginning of October to support the South-Central Service Area and has about a decade of experience in NC's federally qualified health center and rural health environments. Prior to this work, she taught writing and rhetoric at the university level. She holds an MA in English from The University of Nevada and an undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia.

Leslie agrees with Hillary that cheering for the Canes is great fun!

Upcoming Events

Register Now to Attend Our Upcoming Regional Meetings

The North Carolina Office of Rural Health, NC Rural Health Association, NC Rural Center, NCCHCA, NC AHEC, and NCAFCC are hitting the road, and we want to see YOU!

We are pleased to invite you to our upcoming Regional Partnership Meetings and National Rural Health Day celebration. The purpose of the meetings is to provide high-quality and tailored networking, technical assistance, and continuing education opportunities to ORH grantees, partners, and communities. The events will be held in person across the state and will address Best Practices & Innovative Approaches in Healthcare, Medicaid Expansion, Regional Topics of Interest, and more.

We are excited to bring relevant and engaging content to our grantees and community partners and look forward to gathering with you. Please RSVP via the links below as space is limited.

Regional Meeting Dates, Times, and Locations

Region 6: Thursday October 31 @ Pamlico Community College

Address: 5049 NC-306, Grantsboro, NC 28529

Time: 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

[Register Here](#)

Region 5: Thursday November 21 National Rural Health Day

Scotland Health Care System

Address: 5501, 500 Launchwood Dr, Laurinburg, NC 28352

Time: 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

[Register Here](#)

Region 4: Monday December 2 @ NC Rural Center

Address: 4021 Carya Dr #160, Raleigh, NC 27610

Time: 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

[Register Here](#)

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The Office of Rural Health and its partners invite you to:

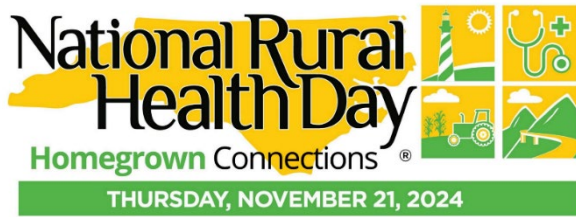
Regional Partnership Meetings

NC RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION | NC AHEC | North Carolina Association of Free & Charitable Clinics

NC RURAL CENTER | CELEBRATING 50 YEARS | NCCHCA

Coming to a location near you...

National Rural Health Day at Scotland Health Care System



As part of National Rural Health Day, this event is an opportunity to celebrate the “Power of Community Connections” by honoring the selfless, community-minded spirit that prevails in rural North Carolina. The event, which is being hosted in-person and livestreamed from Scotland Health Care System in Laurinburg, will showcase the efforts of

rural healthcare leaders, providers, organizations and rural stakeholders to address the unique healthcare challenges that rural North Carolinians face today and into the future.

North Carolina has long been a leader in rural healthcare, with a proud history of innovation and commitment to the well-being of its rural communities. As the home of the nation’s first Office of Rural Health, North Carolina continues to set the standard for supporting and advancing healthcare in rural areas.

Come celebrate a local hero - William Massengill Jr., as North Carolina’s Community Star. Thomas Ricketts, PhD, will provide a dynamic keynote address. Dr. Ricketts is a Senior Policy Fellow in the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research and historic advocate for rural health.

The event is sponsored by Scotland Health Care System, The North Carolina Rural Health Association, The NC Office of Rural Health, and The Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation.

Funding and Research Opportunities

ORH Funding Opportunities

Working title of the funding program: Community Health Grants

Date of this notice: October 21, 2024

Application Deadline: 5:00PM on December 20, 2024

Purpose: Description of the function of the program and reason why it was created: These grant funds, supported through the North Carolina General Assembly, are for assuring access to primary and preventive care to meet the health needs of vulnerable, underserved and medically indigent patients, with emphasis on providing primary and preventive medical services to uninsured or medically indigent patients. An important component of this work is to strengthen the safety net through increased levels of collaboration and integration of services to meet and sustain the needs of those served more effectively. When an eligible primary care medical home safety net organization provides integrated care, grant funding may also support dental, pharmacy, maternal, and behavioral health services.

Maximum Award Amount: Applicants may request up to \$150,000 per year of the grant.

Funding Availability: Funding requests are contingent upon availability of program funding. The highest scoring applicants will receive a three-year award based on applicant scores. ORH anticipates that approximately 33 applicants will receive three-year funding. Successful applicants will be required to attend a grant award workshop.

Proposed Project Period or Contract Term: State Fiscal Year 2026: July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Deadline for Submission: December 20, 2024

Grant applications must be received electronically using the on-line application link provided by the Office of Rural Health. All applications are due by 5:00 PM on December 20, 2024. Only electronic applications will be accepted. Incomplete applications, or applications not completed in accordance with the following instructions, will not be reviewed.

Please visit the Community Health Grant webpage for detailed application instructions:

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/about/grant-opportunities/rural-health-grant-opportunities/sfy-2026-community-health-grant-rfa>

Free Farm Response Mental Health Training for those serving in Helene-Affected Areas

Individuals providing counseling services to agricultural communities affected by Hurricane Helene (FL, GA, NC, SC, TN, VA), are eligible to take FarmResponse for FREE (a \$150 value). AgriSafe's FarmResponse® program is a 3.5-hour continuing education course that includes the full range of competencies necessary to provide appropriate mental healthcare for agricultural producers and their families. For more information visit: agrisafe.org/courses/farm-response/

Celebration of Rural Health Nursing Conference

NC AHEC is hosting the virtual 7th Annual Statewide Celebration of Rural Health Nursing Conference. Originally scheduled for November 15, 2024, it has now been rescheduled to January 2025 as a result of Hurricane Helene. This year's theme is "Bridging the Gaps to Improve Access to Care." Find out more using this link:

Opportunity to Participate in Research on HPV Vaccinations in Rural NC

UNC Professor of Family Medicine Dr. Nadja Vielot is conducting NIH-funded research on adolescent HPV vaccination in rural NC. She is looking to recruit four (4) family practice or pediatric clinics that predominantly serve patients living in rural areas. Selected clinics would participate in a four-year project and could earn up to \$10,000 in compensation.

Promoting Early Action against HPV (PEACH)

Did you know that...

...rural North Carolinians are at increased risk for cervical and other HPV cancers?

...HPV vaccination is FDA approved for children as young as age 9?

...recommending HPV vaccination at age 9 versus age 11 leads to higher vaccination rates?

PEACH (IRB# 23-3074) is a four-year study to evaluate the benefits of age-9 HPV vaccination.

We are seeking four rural NC clinics to participate in the following activities:

- Year 1: Identify a vaccine “Champion” to help the research team develop an intervention plan.
- Year 2: Assist in recruiting patient caregivers for interviews about HPV vaccine acceptability
- Years 3-4: All clinics provide baseline and endline HPV vaccination rates. Two randomly selected clinics will attend a training session on the intervention, implement the intervention, and provide baseline and endline feedback on the intervention.

Clinics and Champions will receive up to \$10,000 for participating in all phases of the project.

For more information, click [here](#).

To participate, contact Principal Investigator Nadja Vielot, PhD at nadjavielot@unc.edu.

PEACH is funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (1K01HS029527-01A1)

Opportunity for Installation and Repair of Health Care Equipment in Rural NC

UNC’s Student Organization for Engineering World Health (<https://ewh.org/>) has offered their services to help install and repair health care equipment in rural North Carolina. The organization has done work in countries like Uganda and Guatemala in the past. If interested or have further questions, please contact Chimnay Singh at Chinmay.Singh@unc.edu.

Learning Opportunities

Primary Care Team E-Learning Series

NC AHEC

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Take your role and your practice to the next level! This free self-paced series includes eight online courses for medical assistants and primary care teams, which include:

PCT 1 – Improving Office Systems

PCT 2 – Introduction to Team-Based Care

PCT 3 – Chronic Condition Overview, Part 1: Hypertension and COPD

PCT 4 – Chronic Condition Overview, Part 2: Diabetes and Heart Failure

PCT 5 – Introduction to Motivational Interviewing (MI)

PCT 6 – Health Literacy & Patient Education: An Overview PCT 7 – Effective Tobacco Interventions

PCT 8 – Recovering Recovery in Mental Health, Substance Abuse & Chronic Illness

We hope you take advantage of this learning opportunity, offered in partnership with Piedmont AHEC. Click on the blue button below to register. We look forward to connecting with you!

[Register here](#)

Collaborative Care Model Capacity Building Funding Webinar

SPECIAL WEBINAR

Collaborative Care Management Capacity Building Fund

Wednesday, October 30 | noon - 1 p.m.

The NC General Assembly has earmarked \$5 million for capacity building for Medicaid-enrolled primary care practices across the state to adopt Collaborative Care Management (CoCM). NCDHHS is contracting with Community Care of North Carolina (CCNC) to manage the Collaborative Care Management Capacity Building Fund award program in partnership with NC AHEC for Practice Support coaching. We're excited to announce the launch of these funds for eligible primary care practices serving Medicaid members.

If you are a primary care entity serving Medicaid patients and are interested in learning about CoCM and related capacity building fund opportunities, we invite you to join us on October 30 for an overview and opportunity to ask questions.

Speakers include Beth Glueck, PhD, LCMHCS, NCC, Integrated Care Program Manager for Community Care of North Carolina, and Eric Christian, MAEd, LCMHC, NCC, Director of Behavioral Health Integration

for Community Care of North Carolina. This webinar is hosted by NC Medicaid, the NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (DMHDDSUS), Community Care of NC (CCNC), and NC AHEC.

REGISTRATION/CONNECTION INSTRUCTIONS:

If you plan to join the webinar using your *laptop, tablet computer, or phone using a WiFi connection to the internet*, please use the following link to register and receive access information:

Zoom registration

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_rjLhtNlpRyyT9XYxpPLbLg

If you will be joining the webinar using your *cell phone*, please use the following information for access to the Zoom Webinar:

Phone with dialing access:

Dial (312) 626-6799

Webinar ID: 813 4708 7611

Participant ID: 310919

Flu Information

It's flu season! Read updates from NCDHHS here <https://flu.ncdhhs.gov/>

About ORH

We would love to hear from you! If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions for specific programs within our office, please feel free to contact the Operations Specialist facilitating your region's SAT below!

ORH Programs

[Provider Recruitment and Placement Program](#) provides recruitment efforts for medical, dental and psychiatric health professionals to North Carolina's rural and underserved areas and offers incentives to eligible providers.

[Provider Recruitment and Placement Program Profile](#)

[Rural Health Operations Program](#) create access to health care for vulnerable populations by supporting state designated rural health centers.

[Rural Health Operations Program Profile](#)

[Community Health Program](#) supports the primary care Safety Net system to increase access for vulnerable populations.

[Community Health Program Profile](#)

[NC Farmworker Health Program](#) provides medical, dental and enabling services to members of the North Carolina agricultural labor force and their families.

[NC Farmworker Health Program Profile](#)

[NC Rural Hospital Assistance Program](#) funds projects for the benefit of all critical access hospitals and eligible small rural hospitals in NC.

[NC Rural Hospital Program Profile](#)

[Medication Assistance Program](#) provides free and low-cost medications donated by pharmaceutical manufacturers to patients who cannot afford them.

[Medication Assistance Program Profile](#)

[Statewide Telepsychiatry Program](#) supports the psychiatric evaluation of patients through videoconferencing technology in emergency departments.

[Statewide Telepsychiatry Program Profile](#)

[Analytics and Innovations Program](#) assists ORH programs and grantees with using data and leveraging technologies in ways that help improve monitoring, evaluation efforts, and innovative strategies.

[Health Professional Shortage Area Program Profile](#)

[Community Health Worker Program Profile](#)

[Rural Health Information Technology and Telehealth Program](#) works directly with the North Carolina Safety Net to assess needs and provide technical assistance throughout the state to improve the use of Electronic Health Record (EHR) Systems and the use of NC HealthConnex, the state designated health information exchange

[Rural Health Information Program Profile](#)

SAT Facilitator Contact Information

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