

Transforming health for rural populations in rural places, for rural progress.

GREAT Health Program

— 2026

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The GREAT Health Program is supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of the Rural Health Transformation Program, a financial assistance award totaling \$218,862,169.63 with 100% funded by CMS/HHS. The contents are those of DCH and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, CMS/HHS, or the U.S. Government.



GEORGIA
RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

GREAT Health Program

Georgia Rural Enhancement and Transformation of Health



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ABOUT THE GREAT HEALTH PROGRAM

The **Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program**, authorized by Public Law 119-21 and administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), is a competitive federal initiative designed to support state-led strategies to improve healthcare access, outcomes, workforce capacity, innovation, and long-term sustainability in rural communities over a five-year implementation period.

The **GREAT Health Program**, led by the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH), is Georgia's approach to advancing the goals of the RHT Program. **With \$218.9 million in Year 1 funding**, the program aligns federal priorities with Georgia's long-term vision for strengthening rural healthcare systems and is organized around five core initiatives and 29 strategies that support rural providers' transition to value-based care, expand access, and improve health outcomes.

The GREAT Health Program serves **millions of Georgians across 126 rural and partially rural counties**, in partnership with healthcare, public health, and community organizations statewide.

\$218.8 M
Year 1 Funding

5 Initiatives
29 Strategies

VISION AND GOALS

The GREAT Health Program reflects Georgia's vision for a stronger, healthier rural future – one shaped by the voices of rural communities and designed to deliver impact statewide. By uniting community insight, provider expertise, and cross-sector partnerships, the **GREAT Health Program advances a value-based, patient-centered approach that strengthens rural healthcare systems** and supports long-term health, vitality, and opportunity across Georgia.



GREAT HEALTH PROGRAM GOALS

Improve Health Outcomes

Advance prevention and coordinated care

Increase Access to Care

Expand access to high-quality healthcare services

Strengthen Rural Healthcare Systems

Build resilient and sustainable rural health systems

Support Long-Term Financial Sustainability

Prepare providers for value-based care success



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GREAT HEALTH FUNDING & PARTICIPATION

GREAT Health Program funding and implementation activities are administered through competitive grant programs, statewide partnerships, technical assistance, and coordinated implementation strategies.



Program Governance

Led by DCH with guidance from the GREAT Health Advisory Council and statewide partners.



Funding & Support

Competitive grants, statewide partnerships, and technical assistance support implementation.



Participation Opportunities

Initiative-based funding opportunities and readiness support for rural partners.



Eligible Partners

Rural providers, FQHCs/RHCs, public health, community organizations, and academic partners.

FIVE TRANSFORMATIVE INITIATIVES

1



Transforming for a Sustainable Health System in Rural Georgia

Prepares rural hospitals and clinics to succeed in a multi-payer value-based care model aligned with CMS's AHEAD Model, improving outcomes and financial stability.

2



Strengthening the Continuum of Care in Rural Georgia

Expands behavioral health, public health, and emergency response systems to address root causes of disease and improve coordination across care settings.

3



Connecting to Care to Improve Healthcare Access in Rural Georgia

Increases access through telehealth, mobile services, and new care delivery models that bring care closer to rural communities.

4



Growing a Highly Skilled Healthcare Workforce in Rural Georgia

Builds and sustains a pipeline of healthcare professionals through training, incentives, and rural placement programs.

5



Leveraging Technology for Healthcare Innovation in Rural Georgia

Enhances care delivery through Electronic Medical Record systems, cybersecurity, AI, and digital tools that enable data-driven population health management.



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INITIATIVE 1

Transforming for a Sustainable Health System in Rural Georgia

\$75.6M

Budget Period 1

RHT Program Strategic Goal: Innovative Care

Initiative 1 prepares rural hospitals and providers for participation in the CMS Achieving Healthcare Efficiency through Accountable Design (AHEAD) model. The initiative focuses on improving healthcare delivery, strengthening financial sustainability, and supporting long-term transition to value-based care across rural Georgia.



Key Objectives

- Prepares rural hospitals and providers for AHEAD participation
- Strengthens long-term financial sustainability
- Expands value-based care and coordination
- Aligns providers, payers, and community partners

Key Stakeholders



- Rural hospitals
- Primary care providers
- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs)
- Community-based organizations
- State agencies and payer partners



Funding Priorities

- Hospital and provider readiness assessments
- Technical assistance and transformation planning
- AHEAD preparation and implementation support
- Risk mitigation for value-based care transition

Target Outcomes



- **Increase** in rural hospitals, primary care providers, and private payers participating in AHEAD
- **Increase** in patients participating in annual wellness visits
- Improved financial **sustainability** through more efficient funding model

IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

2026

2027 – 2028

2029 – 2030

2031+

- Hospital Assessments
- Apply to AHEAD Program

Transformation
Planning & Technical
Assistance

AHEAD Readiness &
Global Budget
Transition

AHEAD Global Budget
Finalized



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INITIATIVE 2

Strengthening the Continuum of Care in Rural Georgia

\$14.4M

Budget Period 1

RHT Program Strategic Goal: **Make Rural America Healthy Again**

Initiative 2 strengthens coordination across behavioral health, emergency preparedness, public health, transportation, nutrition, and community-based services to improve health outcomes across rural Georgia. The initiative focuses on addressing root causes of disease, improving access across rural settings, and supporting healthier communities across all life stages.



Key Objectives

- Improves coordination across care settings
- Expands access to behavioral health and preventive care
- Strengthens emergency response systems
- Supports healthier outcomes across the lifespan

Key Stakeholders

- Public health agencies
- Behavioral health providers
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and emergency response partners
- Schools and community organizations
- Hospitals and healthcare providers



Funding Priorities

- Behavioral health and crisis response
- School-based and community-health partnerships
- EMS, transportation, and emergency preparedness infrastructure
- Maternal and child health initiatives
- Public health screening and prevention services

Target Outcomes

- **Improved** coordination across healthcare and community services
- **Expanded** access to behavioral health, transportation, and emergency care
- **Improved** preventive care, screenings, and rural health outcomes.



IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

2026

Assessment & Planning

2027 – 2028

Program Launch & Infrastructure Expansion

2029 – 2030

Evaluation & Sustainability Planning

2031+

Sustainability, Evaluation, & Continued Support



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INITIATIVE 3

\$31.8M

Budget Period 1

Connecting Care to Improve Healthcare Access in Rural Georgia

RHT Program Strategic Goal: **Sustainable Access**



Initiative 3 expands access to primary, specialty, dental, behavioral, maternal, and preventive healthcare for rural residents. The initiative uses mobile clinics, point-of-care telehealth pods, telehealth infrastructure, rural stabilization funding, perinatal care improvements, and provider-to-provider consultation models to close geographic, economic, and systemic gaps in timely, high-quality care.



Key Objectives

- Expands access to healthcare in rural communities
- Increases telehealth and mobile care delivery
- Strengthens maternal, behavioral, and specialty care access
- Reduces geographic and transportation barriers to care

Key Stakeholders



- Rural hospitals and health systems
- Primary care, specialty, dental, and behavioral health providers
- Maternal and perinatal care providers



Funding Priorities

- Rural Stabilization grants aligned to GREAT Health Program goals
- Obstetric and perinatal care supports
- Provider-to-provider consultation and specialty care models

Target Outcomes



- **Expanded** access through telehealth and mobile care services
- **Improved** maternal, behavioral, and specialty care access
- **Increased** use of preventive and primary care services

IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

2026

Needs Assessment & Partner Alignment

2027 – 2028

Service Launch & Change Management

2029 – 2030

Expansion & Billing Transition

2031+

Fully Implemented Access Points & Billing Sustainability



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INITIATIVE 4

\$36.9M

Budget Period 1

Growing a Highly Skilled Healthcare Workforce in Rural Georgia

RHT Program Strategic Goal: **Workforce**

Initiative 4 strengthens Georgia’s healthcare workforce pipeline in rural and underserved areas. Each strategy addresses a distinct stage of education, training, and retention to grow the healthcare workforce through scholarships, efforts to encourage rural Georgians to work where they live, and programs to expand training.



Key Objectives

- Increases the quantity and quality of Georgia’s rural healthcare workforce
- Supports education, training, placement, and retention – every phase of the workforce journey
- Establishes a pipeline for access to committed, highly skilled providers

Key Stakeholders



- Academic medical institutions and teaching hospitals, other educational institutions
- Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce
- University System of Georgia



Funding Priorities

- New residency slots, fellowship opportunities, and other graduate medical education (GME) and nursing programs
- Training, mentoring, and telehealth programs for dementia
- Area Health Education Center (AHEC) training and housing opportunities

Target Outcomes



- Improve **retention** of students as rural providers
- **Increase** in rural students trained in rural areas
- **Decrease** in non-emergent visits to an emergency department
- **Decrease** in EMT turnover rates

IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

2026

Establish Working Guidelines with Partners

2027 – 2028

- Advisory Groups
- Expansion and Scaling

2029 – 2030

Implementation of Advised Recommendations

2031+

Future State Investments in Rural Provider Recruitment



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INITIATIVE 5

\$37.4M

Budget Period 1

Leveraging Technology for Healthcare Innovations in Rural Georgia

RHT Program Strategic Goal: **Technology Innovation**

Initiative 5 integrates technology-focused strategies to create a modern, efficient, secure, and patient-centered healthcare system across multiple dimensions of healthcare innovation. Capital investments, cybersecurity efforts, and consumer engagement technology enhancements will all work together to improve access to a modern healthcare system.



Key Objectives

- Improves consumer access to information
- Improve training and skills of the healthcare workforce
- Promotes data analysis to support population health efforts
- Fosters data sharing that results in collaborative, coordinated care

Key Stakeholders

- Rural hospitals and other providers
- Behavioral health facilities
- Private and venture investors
- Industry partners



Funding Priorities

- Cybersecurity, electronic medical records, other system enhancements
- Advancing Access to Robust Care and Health in Rural Georgia (ARCHER) tech catalyst fund
- Initial costs of surgical robots
- Telehealth integration in emergency response

Target Outcomes

- **Increase** in hospitals with population health reporting capacity
- **Increase** in consumers directed engaged in new health technology
- **Decrease** in reportable cybersecurity incidents



IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

2026

Evaluations, Planning, and Contracting

2027 – 2028

DCH Check-ins on Progress and Grants Based on Initial Findings

2029 – 2030

Scaling and Improvement

2031+

- Final Evaluations
- ARCHER Fund Distribution
- Program Integration



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WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA

August 2026 Annual Reporting & Year 2 Funding Review

Submit annual report to CMS to support continued program funding.

November 2026 Quarterly CMS Reporting

Submit quarterly report to CMS covering expenditures, progress, and metrics.

Ongoing DCH Program Management

Oversee day-to-day administration, provider engagement, and compliance.

Long-Term Rural Sustainability

Build lasting rural health infrastructure, workforce, and community capacity.

ONGOING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

To support effective and long-term sustainability of the GREAT Health Program, DCH is committed to ongoing stakeholder engagement that emphasizes coordination and community input. This approach includes structured engagement across program stages, regular collaboration with partners statewide, and establishment of the GREAT Health Advisory Council.



GREAT Health Advisory Council

- Includes representatives from DCH, Georgia Department of Public Health, and the State Office of Rural Health, rural providers, and community representatives.
- Offers feedback on GREAT Health Program strategy and milestones.
- Provides rural expertise for the duration of the program.
- Reviews program progress, data, and performance dashboards.

2026 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Funding opportunities include competitive grants, contracts, and technical assistance. Eligible applicants include providers, community organizations, and workforce and education partners. Many opportunities support collaborative, multi-organization approaches.

Visit
greathealth.georgia.gov for
funding opportunity
announcements.

2026 Funding Opportunity Release Schedule

Phase 1
March 24 – April 15

Phase 2
April 15 – May 15

Phase 3 (Competitive)
May 15 – June 15

Phase 4 (Competitive)
June 15 – July 15



How to stay engaged with us:

The GREAT Health Program is led by the Georgia Department of Community Health and administered in coordination with multiple state agencies, healthcare providers, academic institutions, and community partners.

Stay informed about the GREAT Health Program by visiting the program website, monitoring updates and funding opportunities, and engaging with program communications.



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