

# House Rural Development Council

**BE D·B·H·D·D**

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities

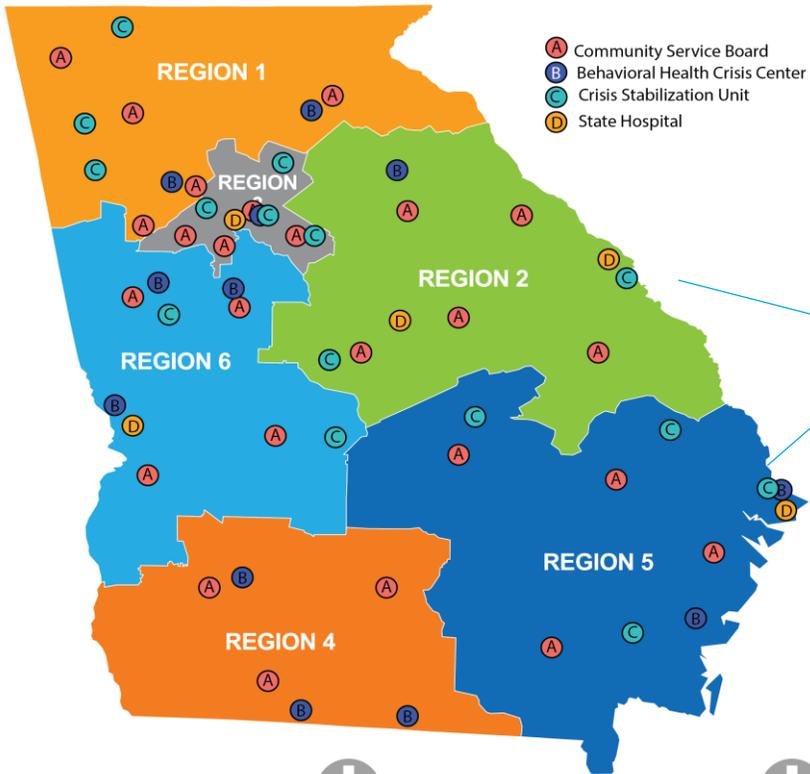
Commissioner Judy Fitzgerald  
December 8, 2021



# DBHDD Public Safety Net Goals

- Strengthen Georgia's ability to fulfill statutory obligations across five state hospitals
- Support uninsured Georgians at the highest level of need
- Address growing demand for mental health and substance use treatment

# Georgia's Public Safety Net



Adults: 14 BHCCs, 9 CSUs

Georgia Crisis and Access Line

Statewide Mobile Crisis Services

Crisis Stabilization Units

Children: 4 CSUs

Autism: 1 CSU

  
 Georgia Regional Hospital at Savannah  
 SAVANNAH

  
 Georgia Regional Hospital at Atlanta  
 ATLANTA

  
 East Central Regional Hospital  
 AUGUSTA

  
 West Central Georgia Regional Hospital  
 COLUMBUS

  
 Central State Hospital  
 MILLEDGEVILLE

# COVID-19 Impact

## National

**+31 percent**

Mental health-related  
Emergency Room visits for  
youth aged 12-17 (CDC  
2020)

**25 percent**

College students screened  
positive for suicidal thoughts  
(American College Health  
2021 National Survey)

## Georgia

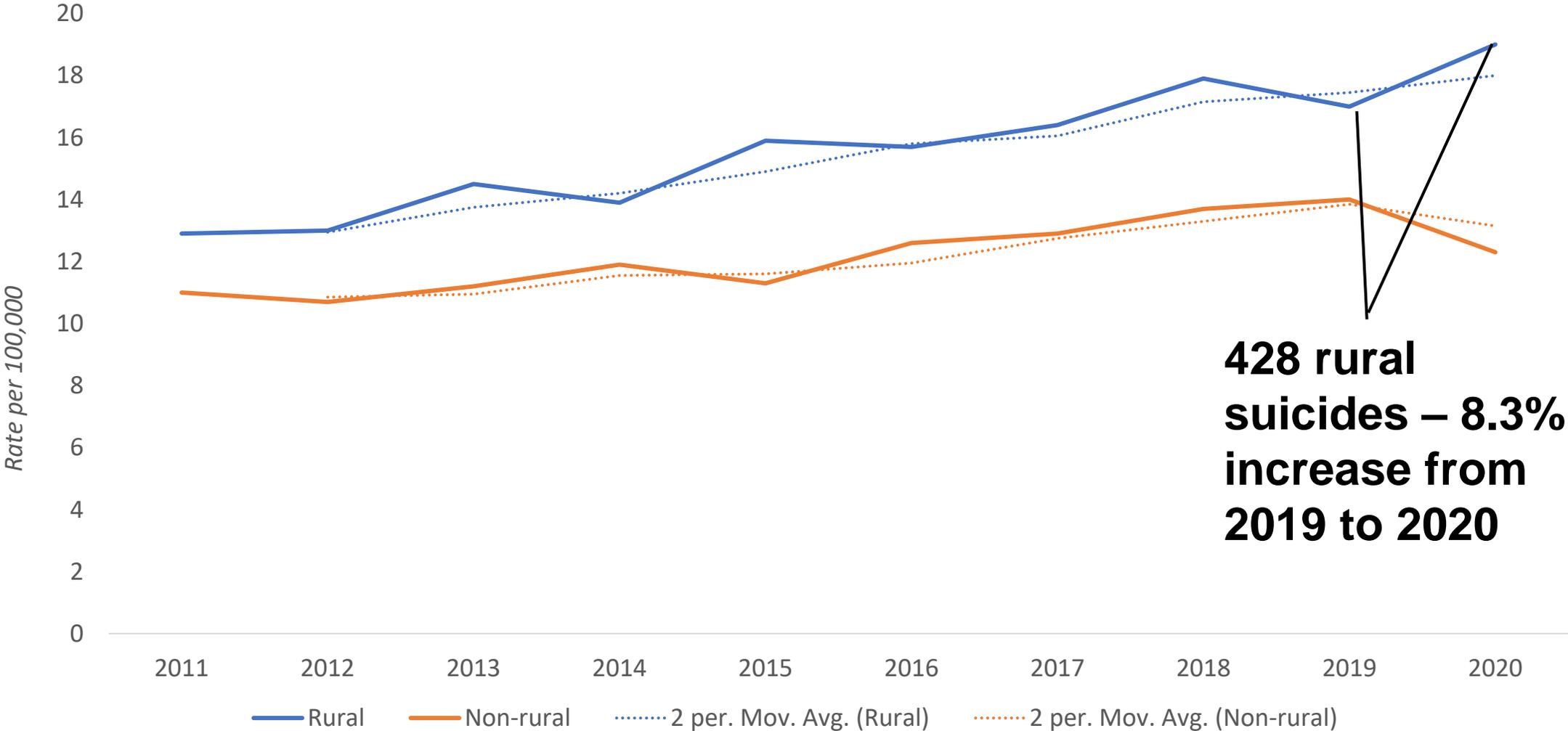
**+24 percent**

275,000 total calls, texts and  
chats to GCAL – highest since  
the inception

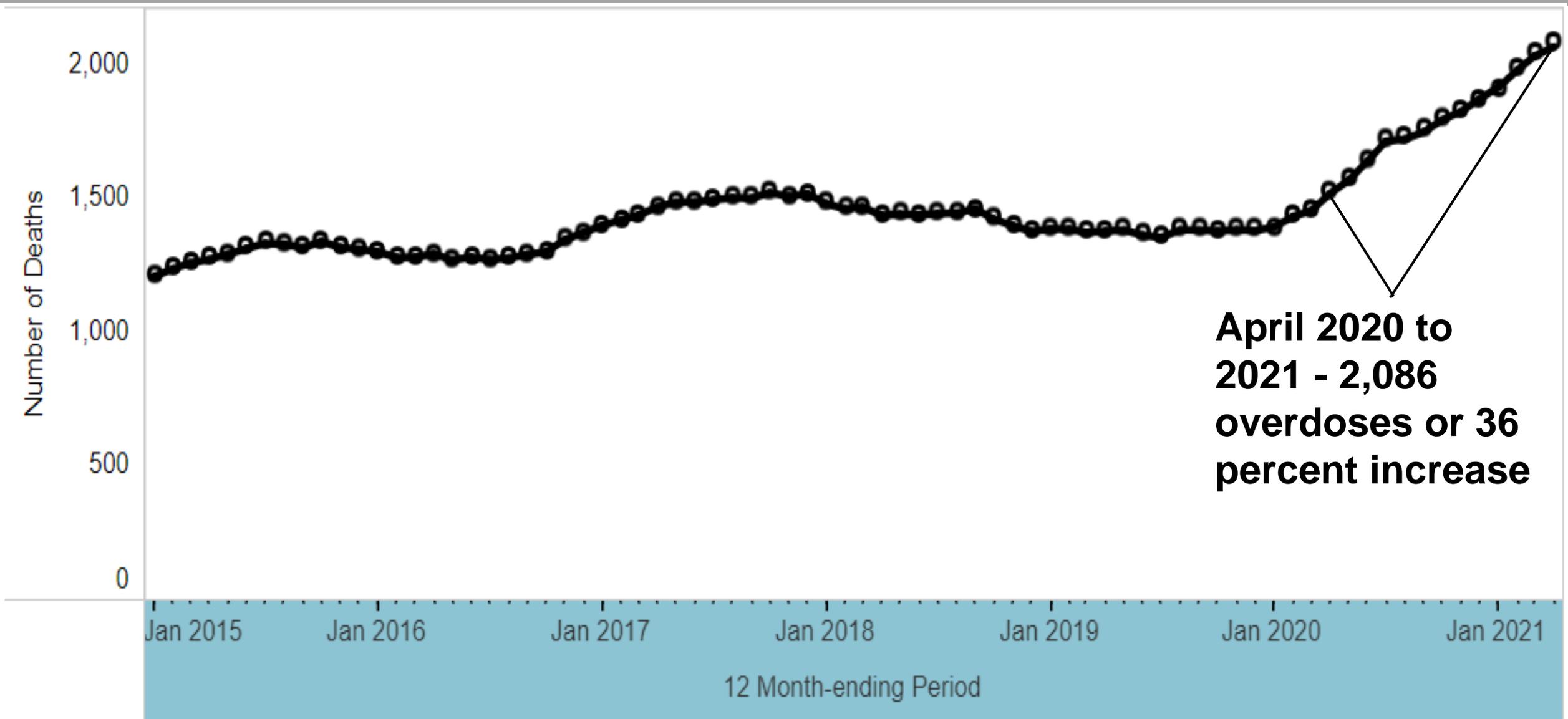
**+426 percent**

Georgians taking online  
mental health screenings  
(Mental Health America  
2020)

# Age-adjusted Suicide Death Rates in Georgia



# Georgia Overdoses



# Behavioral Health Workforce Impact

998

Net loss of hospital employees since January 2020 – **26 percent** reduction in hospital workforce

10 percent

Average number of community crisis beds “offline” per day in October 2021 – **68 percent** increase since June.

68 hours

Average wait time for jail referrals in June 2021—**more than 3x** June 2020

# Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Workforce Impact

60 percent

Turnover rate (SPADD 2021; 18% increase in two years)

28.5 percent

Vacancy rate (SPADD 2021)

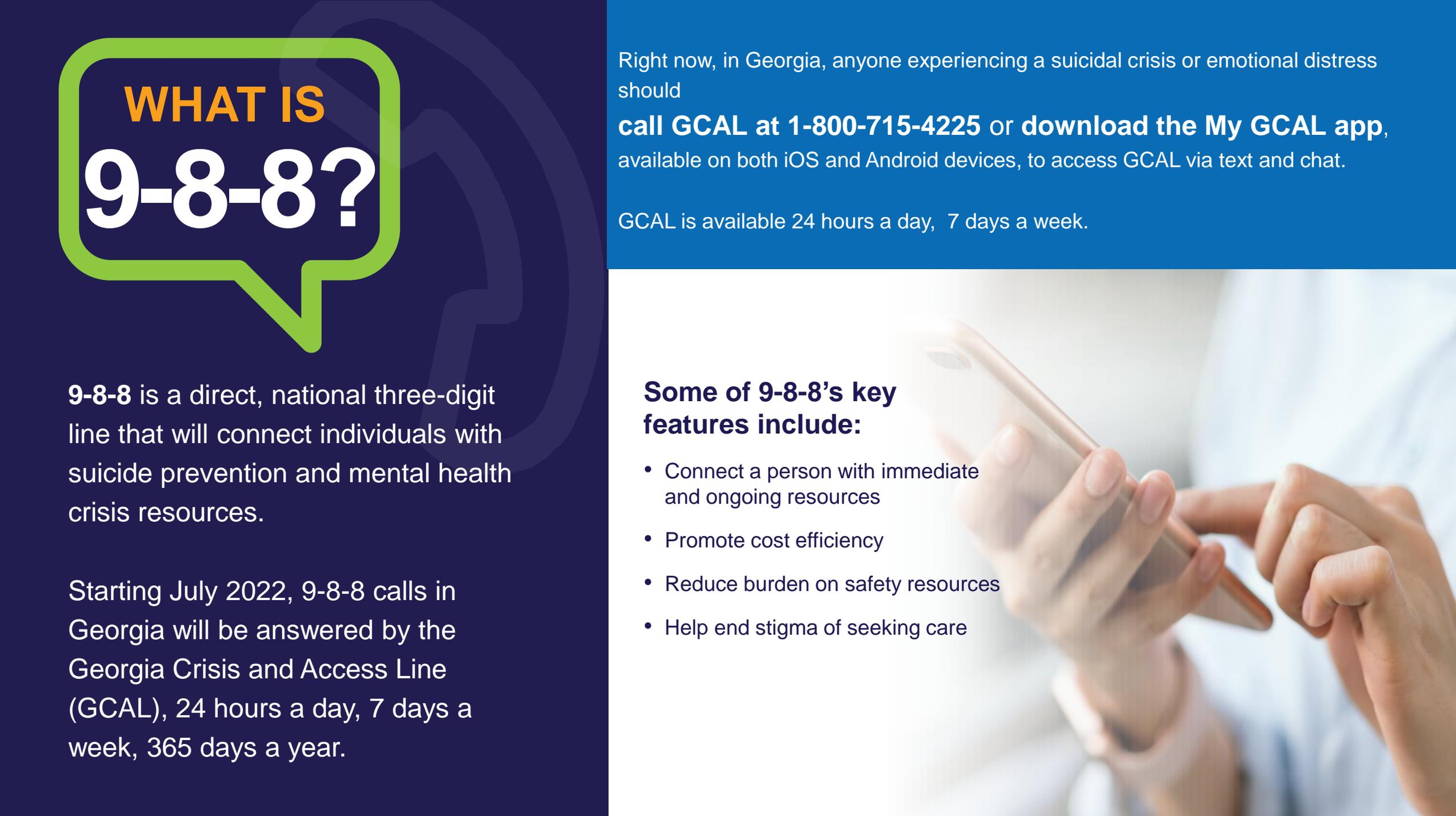
33 percent

Less than one year of experience (2019 National Survey)

- Critical shortage of direct care professionals
- Family members forced to choose between caregiving and employment
- Providers declining referrals due to capacity
- 1:1 or higher staff to individual ratios increasingly difficult to meet

# Addressing Workforce Challenges

- **Federal funding flexibility\* + State support**
  - *Workforce:*
    - Hazard pay in community crisis centers, workforce development, provider rate increases, provider rate study
  - *Crisis capacity:*
    - Enhancements to GCAL
- **Policy flexibility**
  - Telehealth allowances
  - Loosened licensure requirements for mobile crisis teams to increase rural access



## WHAT IS 9-8-8?

**9-8-8** is a direct, national three-digit line that will connect individuals with suicide prevention and mental health crisis resources.

Starting July 2022, 9-8-8 calls in Georgia will be answered by the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Right now, in Georgia, anyone experiencing a suicidal crisis or emotional distress should

**call GCAL at 1-800-715-4225 or download the My GCAL app,** available on both iOS and Android devices, to access GCAL via text and chat.

GCAL is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Some of 9-8-8's key features include:**

- Connect a person with immediate and ongoing resources
- Promote cost efficiency
- Reduce burden on safety resources
- Help end stigma of seeking care

# Why Do We Need 9-8-8?

Many do not know what to do in the event of a mental health crisis and their actions can place unnecessary burden on local law enforcement and emergency services, which rarely provide the most effective response for the individual experiencing the behavioral health crisis.

The 9-8-8 law requires Georgia to enhance the current system's ability to respond to those experiencing a behavioral health crisis by providing:



## Someone to talk to

- Available 24/7 for calls, text and chat
- Peer-run hotline offering callers emotional support, staffed by volunteers who are in recovery themselves, also called a peer warm line



## Someone to respond

- Mobile crisis available statewide
- Coordinate with 9-1-1/ EMS as appropriate
- Outpatient community provider response



## Somewhere to go

- Crisis stabilization units
- Crisis service center
- Peer wellness respite
- Detox and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment
- Inpatient beds
- Outpatient crisis

# 9-8-8 Planning Coalition

**A coalition was assembled with members who play a role in delivering crisis and behavioral health services in Georgia. Our charge to the coalition members is to:**

**Share with DBHDD your unique perspectives related to the crisis response system**

**Help project the needs of your constituents as DBHDD works to fully recognize the opportunities of 9-8-8**

## **Coalition Representation**

- 9-1-1
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Georgia (AFSP)
- Behavioral Health Link (BHL)
- Benchmark
- Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta
- Community Service Boards (CSBs)
- CSU and BHCC providers
- DBHDD Suicide Prevention
- Department of Public Health EMS
- Georgia Collaborative ASO
- Georgia Council on Substance Abuse (GCSA)
- Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL)
- Georgia Emergency Communication Authority (GECA)
- Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network (GMHCN)
- Georgia Parent Support Network (GPSN)
- Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget
- Grady
- Mental Health America of Georgia
- National Alliance on Mental Illness Georgia (NAMI)
- Police Departments
- Sheriffs
- Veteran’s Administration

# Georgia's Current Crisis System

Resources and services currently exist to provide mental health crisis and suicide prevention resources to Georgians across the following crisis continuum:

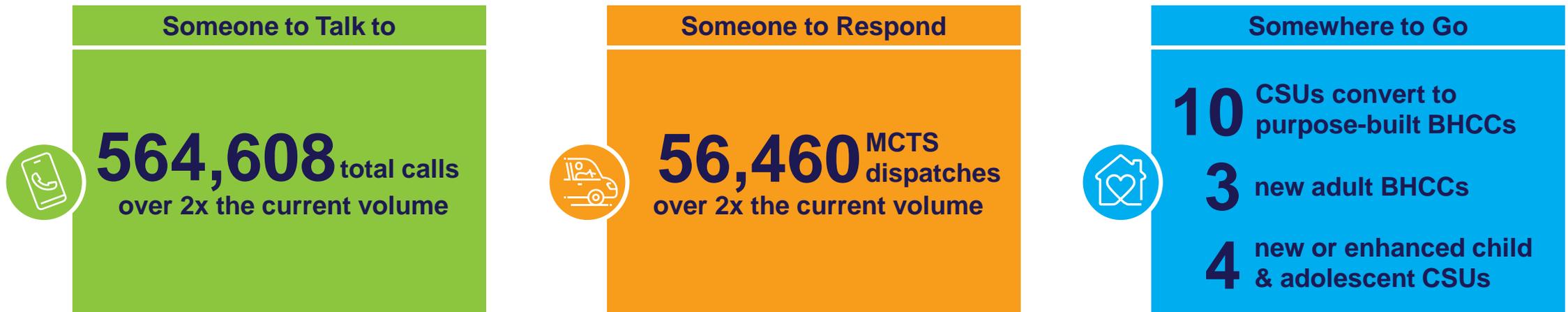


**Note:** Numbers reflect FY21 volume

# Future State Crisis System

## 9-8-8 Year 1 Projections

The continued increase in demand for crisis services in conjunction with the implementation of 9-8-8 requires enhancements to the current crisis response infrastructure and expansion of capacity.\*



Call volume projections provided by Vibrant (National Suicide Prevention Line) + current Georgia Crisis and Access Line volume + 7% anticipated increase for next two years = 564,608 projected calls

# Next Steps



## **Projecting Demand and Capacity Needs**

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- Continued analysis of future capacity needs to strategize funding for multi-year ramp up
- Waiting on federal guidance on 9-8-8 implementation for states (report was due April 2021)
  - Federally driven marketing strategy will be a major factor in state planning
- Short- and long-term strategies to mitigate workforce challenges



## **Exploring Funding Opportunities**

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- Federal funding
- Explore mechanisms to draw down Medicaid dollars
- State funding
- Capital Bonds

# Remember: Every challenge is an opportunity

