



GEORGIA  
**Rural Health**  
INNOVATION CENTER  
AT MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

House Rural Development Council  
Glenda Grant, M.B.A.  
Executive Director  
September 1, 2021

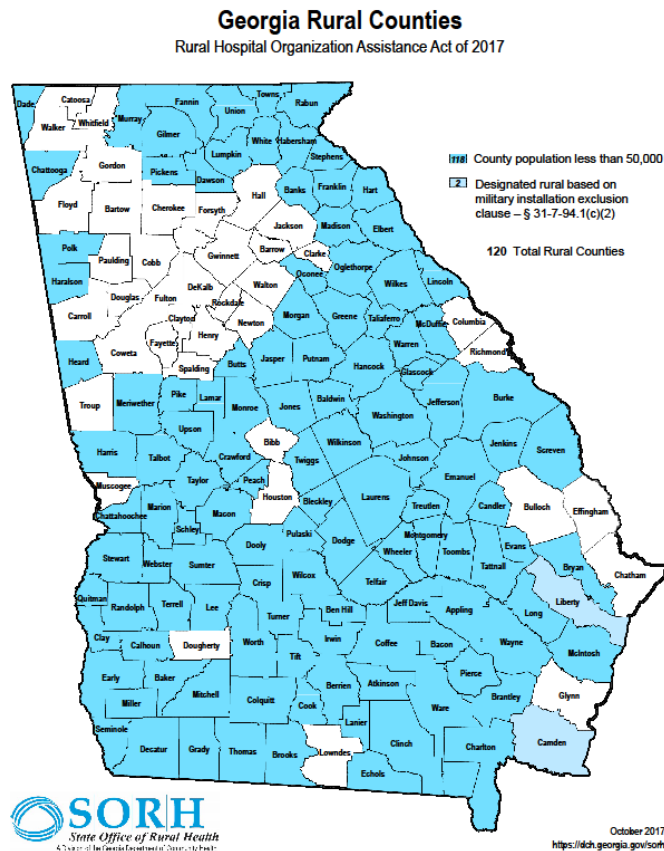
# The Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center

The Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center (GRHIC) was established in 2018 with HB 729 of the Georgia legislature and tasked to partner with rural Georgia to improve healthcare through reliable research, creative strategies, and sustainable solutions.

# RURAL GRAND CHALLENGES

- ❖ Maternal & Child Health
- ❖ Physician & Healthcare Workforce Shortage
- ❖ Health Literacy
- ❖ Strategic Healthcare Availability & Access
- ❖ Social Determinants of Health
- ❖ Mental Health
- ❖ Substance Abuse
- ❖ Healthcare Infrastructure
- ❖ Rural Occupational Health
- ❖ Aging Populations

# WHAT WE DO!

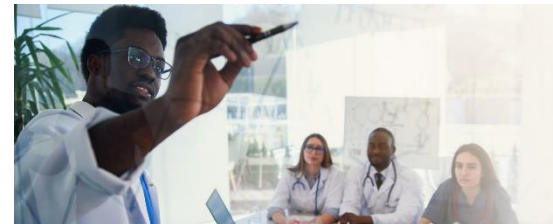


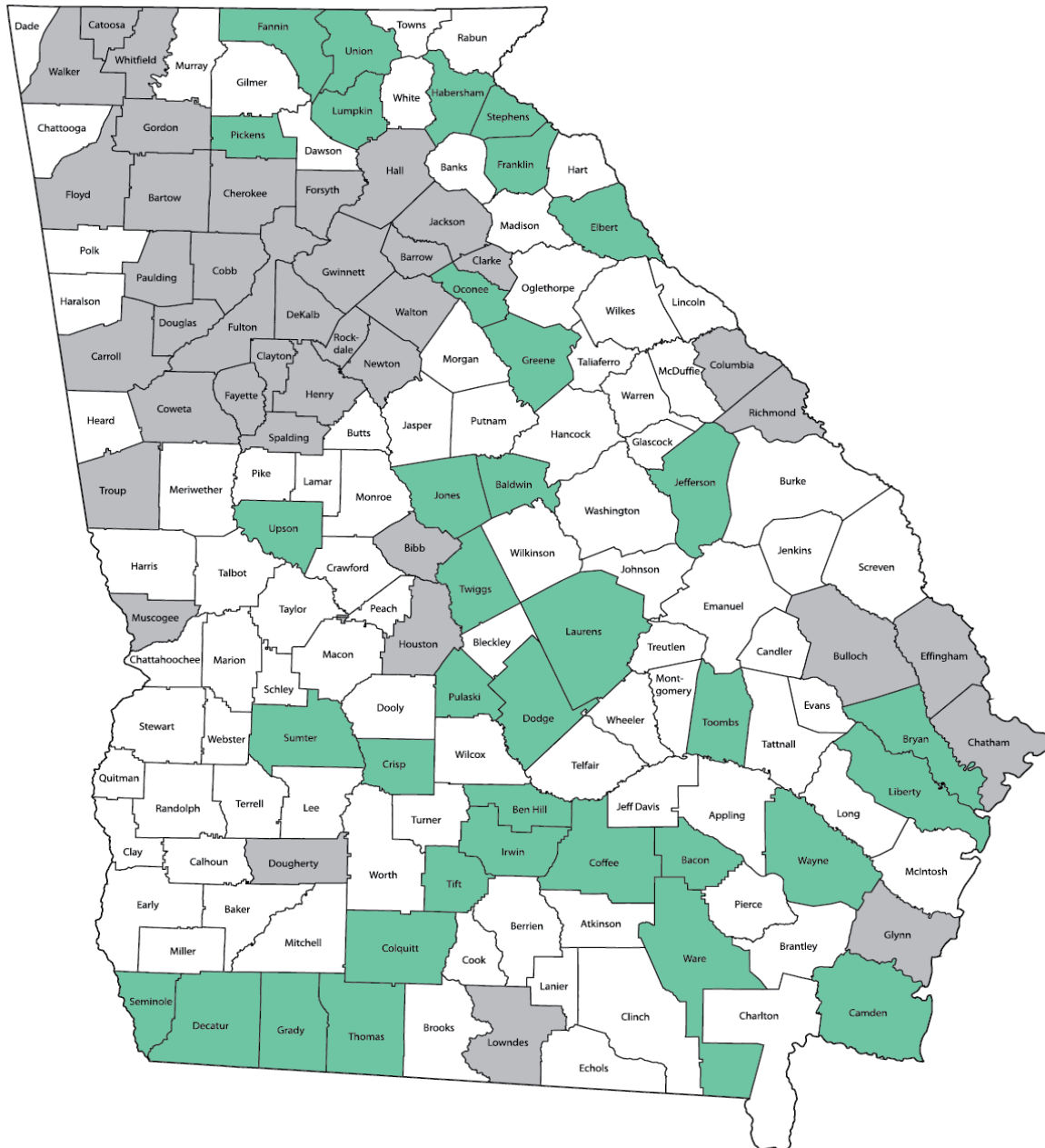
- We develop relationships with the 120 rural Georgia counties
- We research healthcare access, health disparities, and health outcomes
- We partner with local organizations, government, and agencies to implement projects to build healthcare infrastructure and capacity in the community.



# RURAL HOSPITAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING

- ❖ The Center was tasked to develop standards for education curriculum provided to leadership of rural hospital organizations and to other rural health care facilities upon request
  - ❖ Hospital executive leadership
  - ❖ Hospital board members
  - ❖ Hospital authority members
- ❖ The curriculum includes legal, fiduciary, grant management, planning, and compliance training
- ❖ As of September 1, 2021 – all rural hospitals are in 100% compliance!





## Rural Counties in Georgia with an OBGYN

- ❖ 36 rural counties HAVE an OBGYN are in **green**
- ❖ 84 rural counties DO NOT HAVE an OBGYN are in **white**
- ❖ 39 non-rural counties are in **dark gray**

# MATERNAL HEALTH PILOT PROJECT

- ❖ Ultimately the Maternal Health Initiative of the Center will seek to bring monthly prenatal services to rural counties that currently do not have any prenatal care services.
  - ❖ Of Georgia's 120 rural counties, 93 have no hospital with a L&D unit
  - ❖ 2/3 of rural Ga births occur outside of the mother's home county
- ❖ This pilot project collaborates with Dr. Joy Baker, MD, FACOG, PMH-C, C-EFM, from WellStar Medical Group Obstetrics and Gynecology and Dr. Keisha Callins, MD, MPH, OB/GYN, from Community Health Systems (Jones/Twiggs) to test office-based, high-end general imaging ultrasound equipment and hand-held ultrasound equipment to ensure clinical equality.
- ❖ Comprehensive data will be collected by the physicians and partners to evaluate effectiveness and outcomes. Once the results prove best practices then ultrasound capabilities will be expanded and taken on a larger scale to rural communities to combat maternal mortality through telehealth capabilities in communities without OB/GYN services

# OB GYN OBSERVERSHIP

- ❖ 6 week summer opportunity opened to rising 2<sup>nd</sup> year medical students from Morehouse, MCG & Mercer
- ❖ Gain experience through direct observation in rural communities with guided research component
- ❖ Each of the four students who participated this year produced white papers for publication and gained experience with rural OB-GYN patients
- ❖ Each participant attended weekly journal-club meeting to present and discuss their topic of research and literature review
- ❖ Participants attended discussions on maternal mental health, social determinants of health, environmental factors and other relevant topics from national leaders in maternal health



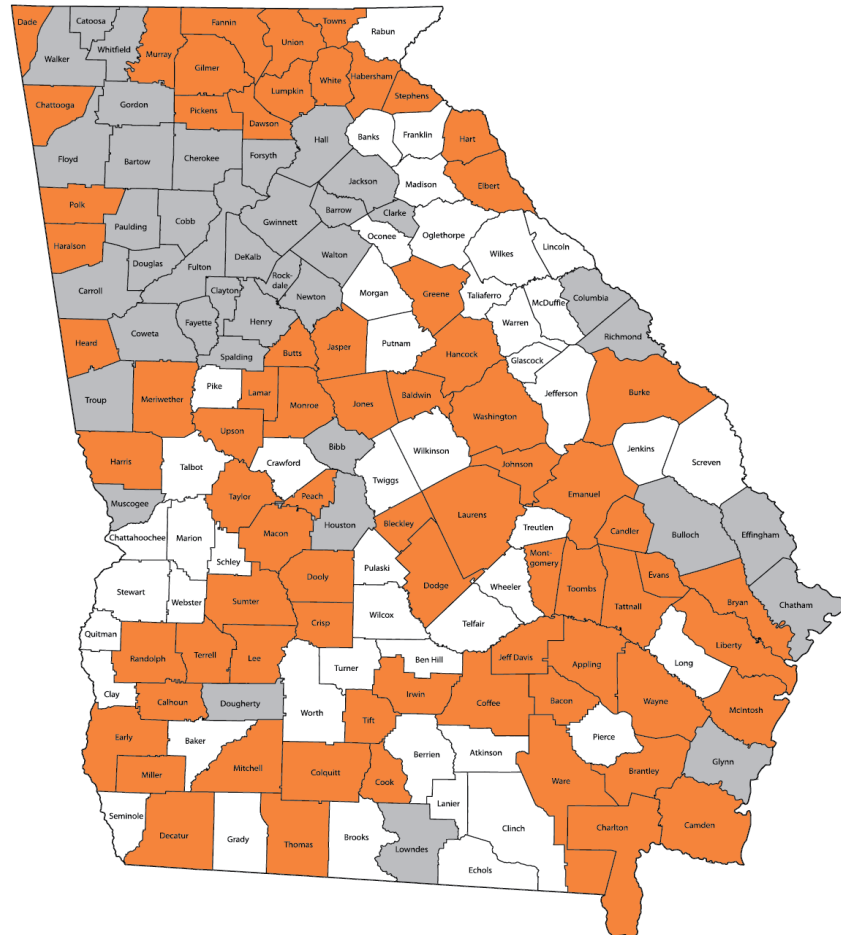
# OB GYN OBSERVERSHIP



Students picture L to R:  
Alicia Williams, Will Lundy, Ethan Harrison, Nick Maron



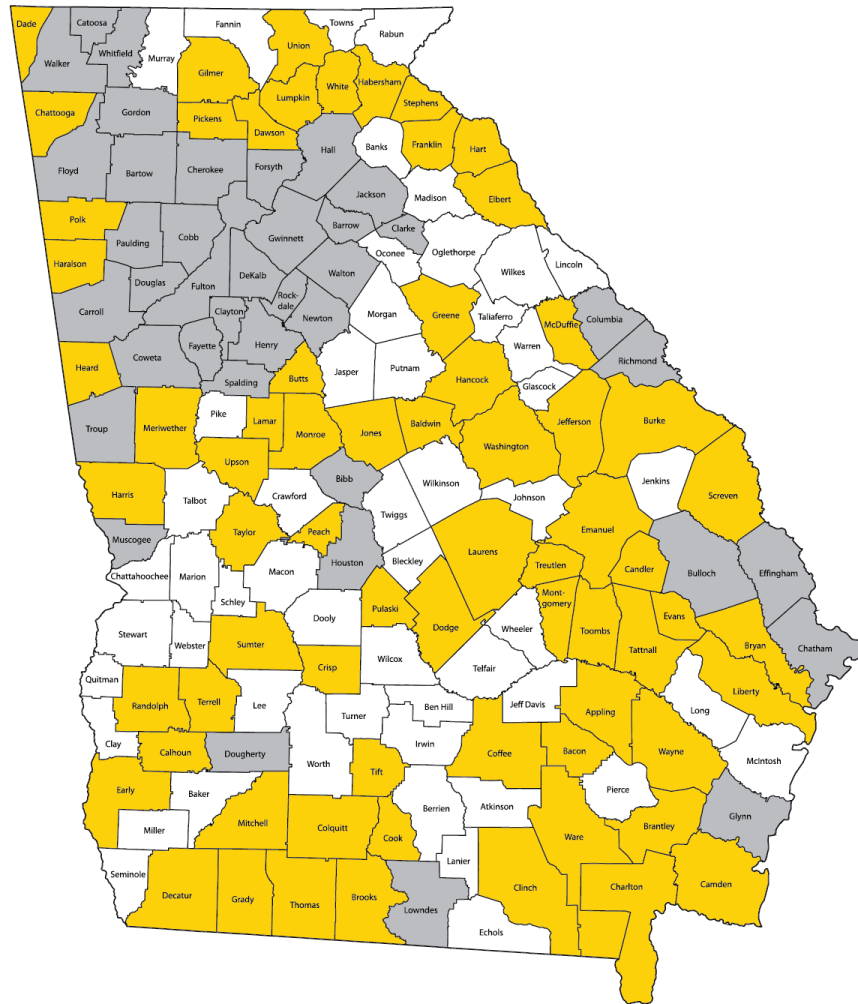
# BEN HILL MENTAL HEALTH PILOT



Rural Counties in Georgia with a Behavioral Health Provider (BHP) offering services at least one (1) day a week.

- ❖ 72 rural counties that HAVE a BHP are in **orange**
- ❖ 48 rural counties that DO NOT HAVE a BHP are in **white**
- ❖ 39 non-rural counties are in **dark gray**

# BEN HILL MENTAL HEALTH PILOT



Rural Counties in Georgia with a Community Service Board (CSB) office open in that County.

- ❖ 68 rural counties that HAVE a CSB are in **yellow**
- ❖ 52 rural counties that DO NOT HAVE a CSB are in **white**
- ❖ 39 non-rural counties are in **dark gray**

# BEN HILL MENTAL HEALTH PILOT

- ❖ Collaboration with the Ben Hill County Board of Education, along with Global Partnership for Telehealth (GPT) and the College of Professional Advancement, Mercer University, to develop and implement pediatric mental health visits in the school
- ❖ Components to this initiative include mental health screening, mental health individual, group and family counseling via telehealth, suicide and mental health awareness training, community wellness events and health fairs
- ❖ Currently there are no mental health services offered in Ben Hill County. This initiative will provide counseling support in the primary, elementary, middle and high schools- will be expanded in the Spring
- ❖ All services rendered are at no-charge to the student, insurance or school
- ❖ Overcomes barriers of the mental health workforce shortage, lack of transportation, lack of healthcare infrastructure and lack of insurance or financial resources



# DATA HUB



Find name or key



Filter Options

Find near address or zip cod



Search within: 25 Miles ▾

## 987 Health Assets

Sort by: Name ▾

### 3:16 Family Medicine

**Address:** 222 Gordon Street, Bremen, GA 30110

**County:** Haralson

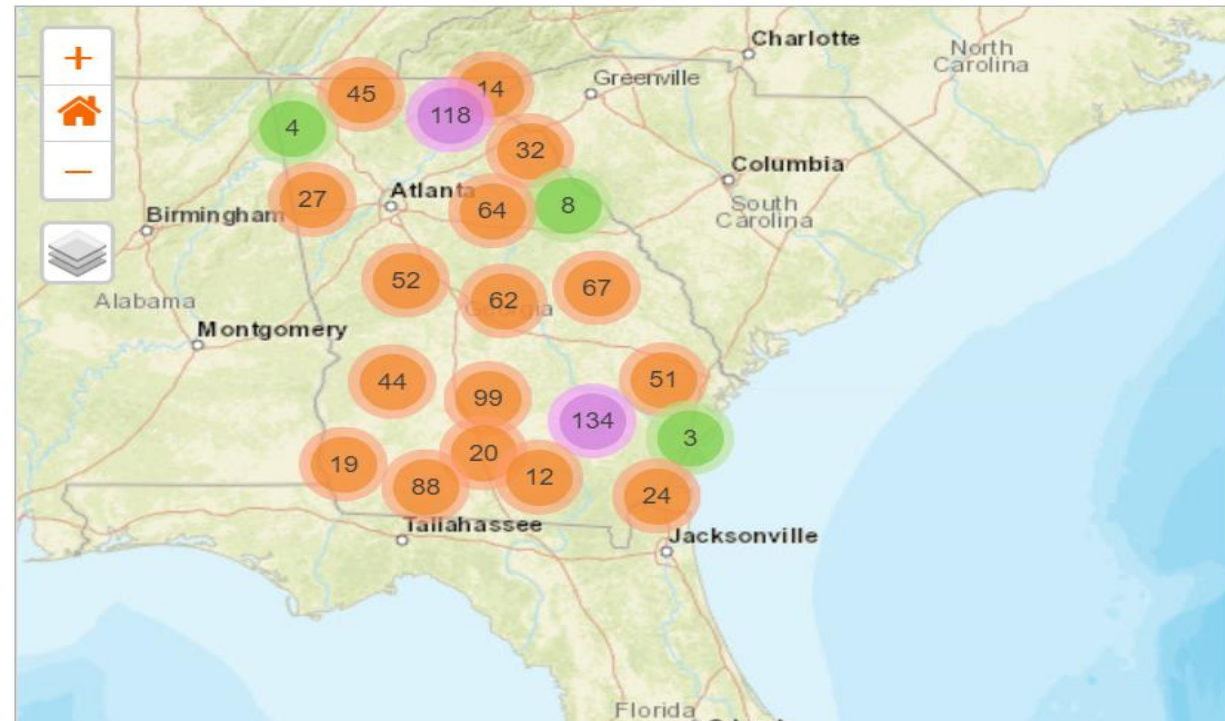
**Phone:** 770-537-1234

**Website:** [316healthcare.us](http://316healthcare.us)

#### Hours:

Monday	8:00AM-5:00PM
Tuesday	8:00AM-5:00PM
Wednesday	8:00AM-5:00PM
Thursday	8:00AM-5:00PM
Friday	8:00AM-5:00PM

#### Providers:





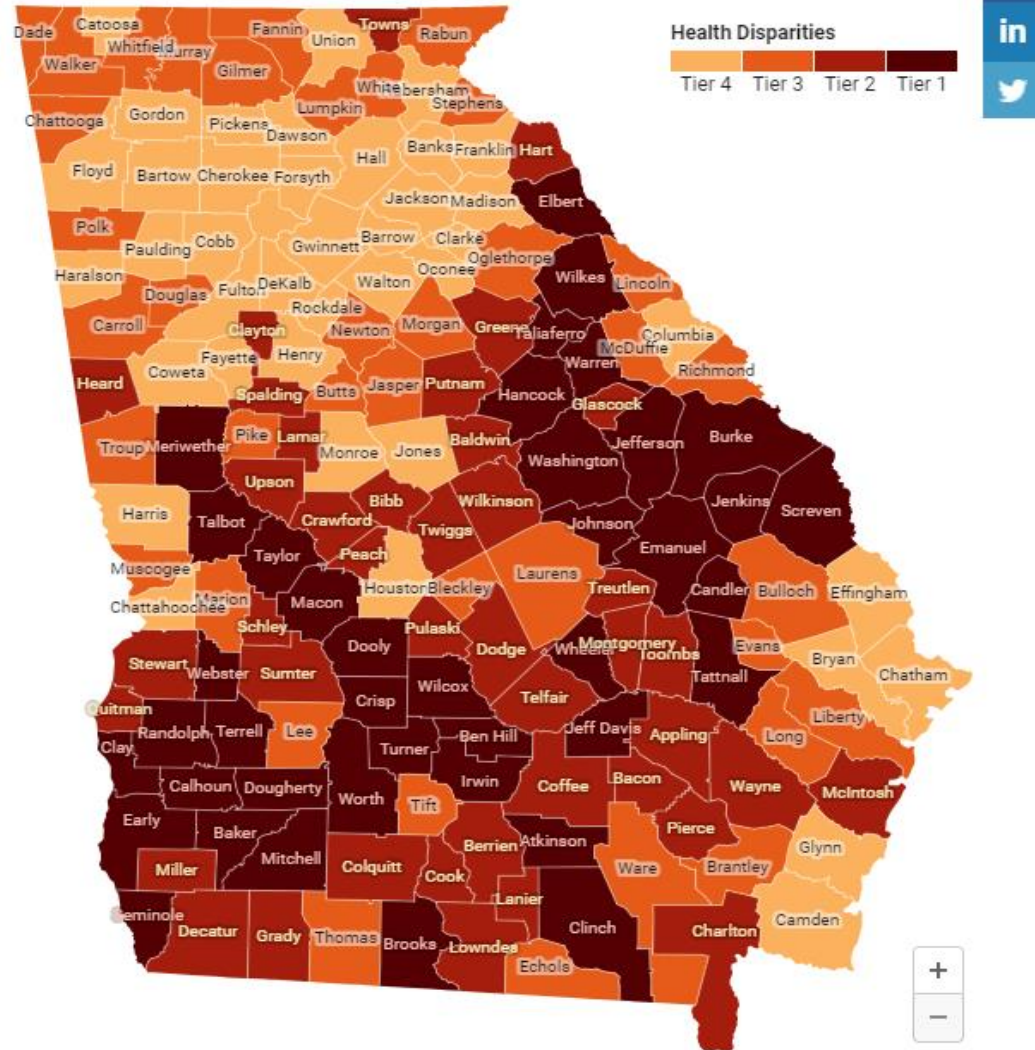
# Community Health Reporter

- ❖ Created to provide the Center with bi-weekly reports verifying new and existing healthcare practices and providers, their hours of service, address and if new patients are being accepted.
- ❖ The reporters will also report local news regarding health departments, hospitals, surgery centers, pharmacies and ancillary medical services in the community
- ❖ The 120 rural counties in Ga have been divided into 50 regions for coverage of all rural Ga
- ❖ Reporters enter data via a web app that will be verified by the Center and made available on the Center's website to aid the public in healthcare access
- ❖ Training begins in early September with reporting starting late September

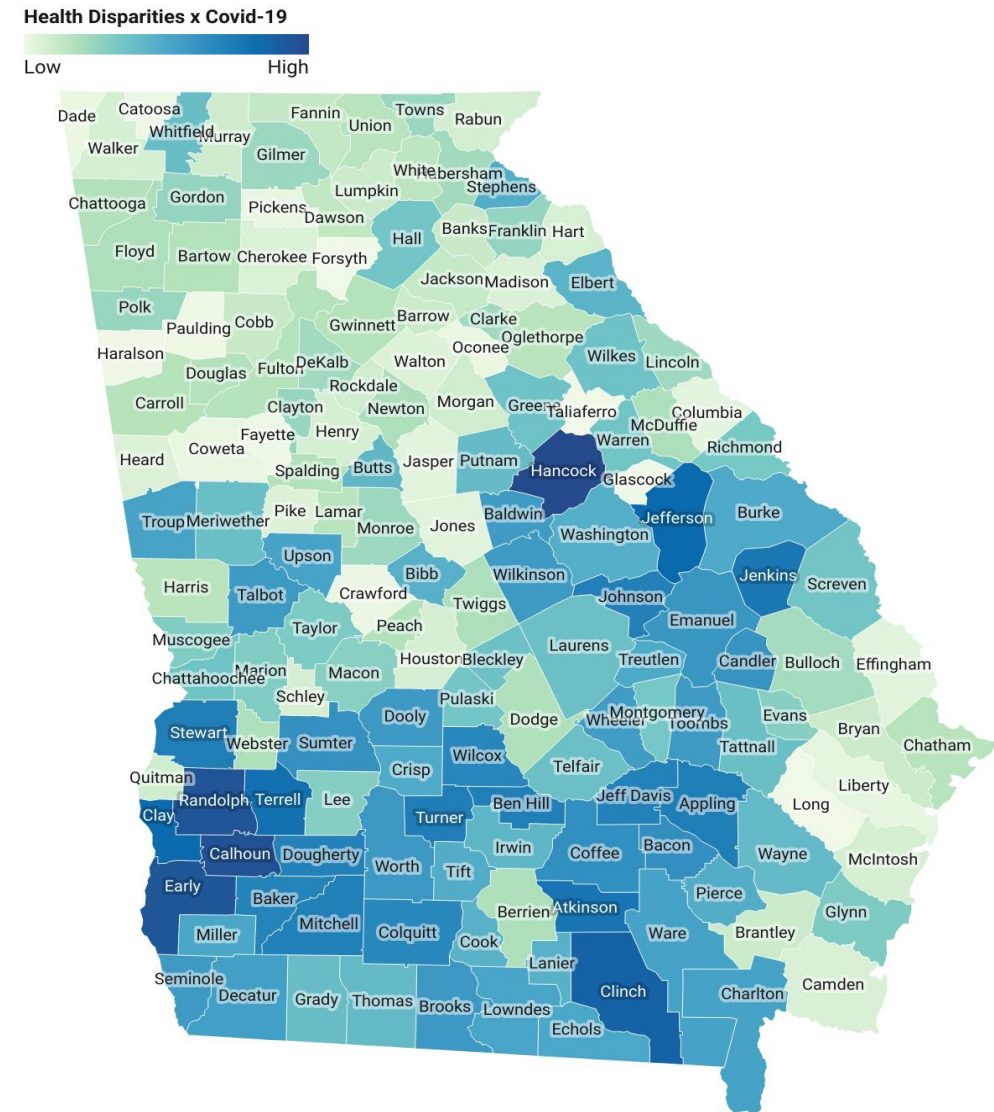




## GRHIC Health Disparities Index (tiers)



## COVID-19 x Health Disparities Index

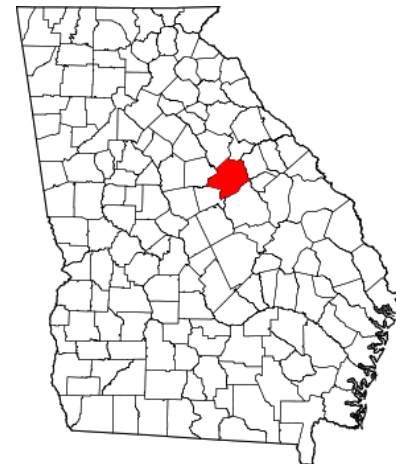


*This index was created using CDC and DPH secondary sources on acute services, preventative care utilization, modifiable health factors, structural poverty, socio-economic status, population measures, healthcare access, and nutrition access.*

Map: Anne Montgomery, Ph.D. and Chris Scoggins, MPH • Source: Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center • Created with Datawrapper

# Vaccine Hesitancy – Hancock County

- ❖ Center was awarded an 18-month grant by DPH to conduct a community needs assessment on COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in Hancock County
- ❖ Focus groups, key informant interviews and community surveys were used to gather data surrounding hesitancy through the lens of cultural intersectionality
- ❖ The preliminary results have been submitted and phase 2 concerning effective messaging around the vaccine has begun



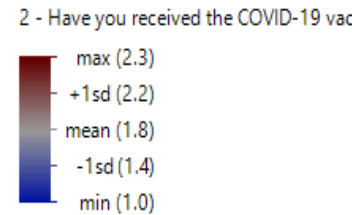
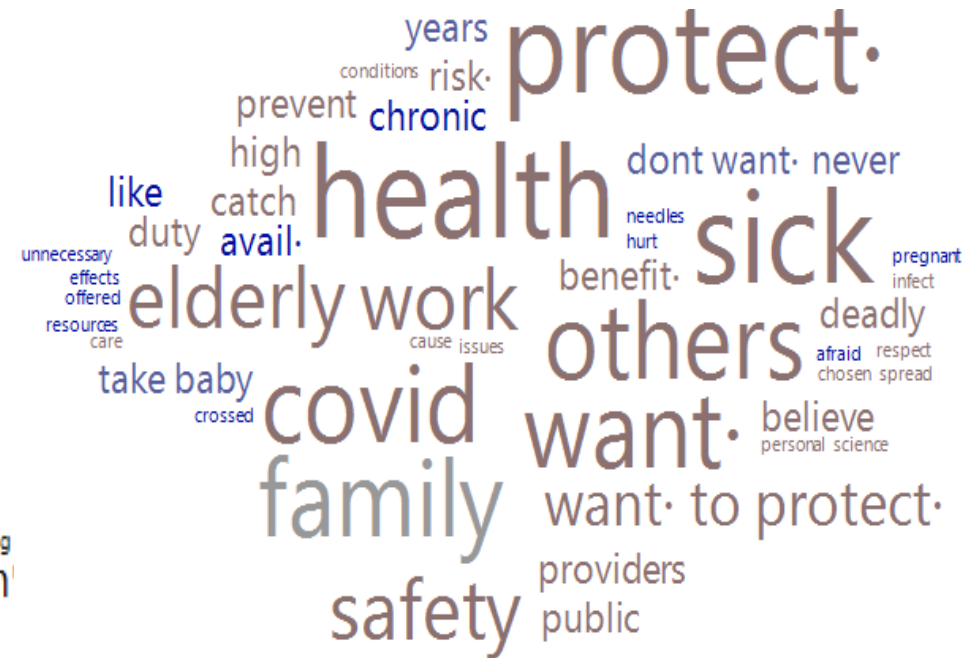


# Vaccine Hesitancy – Hancock County

❖ Trusted sources:

❖ Why vaccinate:

doctor.





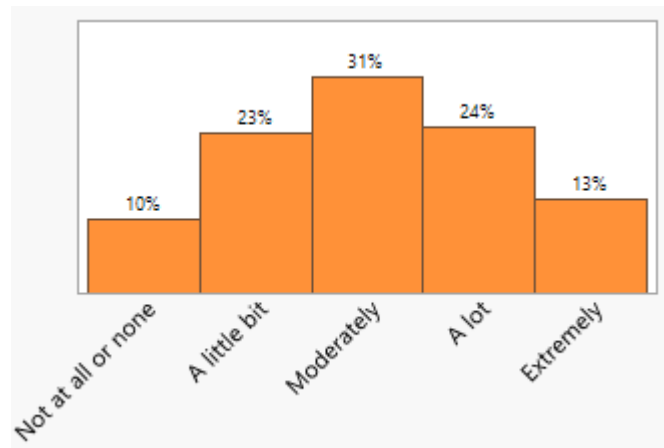
# FARMERS MENTAL WELLBEING PROJECT

- ❖ Minimal research being done on agricultural workers' mental well-being, aside from suicide-focused work.
- ❖ Partnered with the GA Foundation of Agriculture to assess the mental wellbeing of agricultural workers, including stressors.
- ❖ The goals of the program are:
  - ❖ Provide overview of the mental health, including stressors, for farm owners, farm workers, farm managers, and their spouses in GA.
  - ❖ Develop recommendations
- ❖ A pilot survey was launched a few months ago, and most of the data is analyzed.
- ❖ Statewide is expected in winter-time once funded.

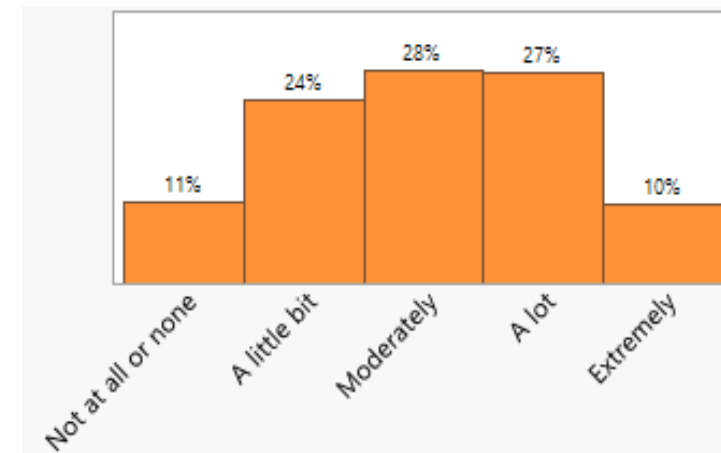
# FARMERS MENTAL WELLBEING PROJECT

Some key points:

- ❖ About 15.3% of agricultural workers were diagnosed with depression
- ❖ Thoughts of wanting to die by suicide: 32% at least a few times a year; 8% weekly
- ❖ 79% of farm owners worried about who will take over the farm after they retire
- ❖ 86% worried about unexpected financial burdens
- ❖ Most agricultural workers spent about 1 to 3 hours worrying per day, with 6% more than half their day.
- ❖ Two Covid-specific questions were included:
  - ❖ Fear of catching Covid:



Fear of Covid influencing income of farm:



# SOW A SEED GRANT PROJECT

- ❖ The Center will provide funding directly to organizations in rural communities to implement and evaluate programming that enhances Georgian's access to quality care and overall health and wellness. The goals of the program are:
  - ❖ Provide funding for innovative projects addressing the health needs of rural communities in Georgia
  - ❖ Provide support to new and less experienced grantees to build their skillset and ability to identify, secure, and manage grants
  - ❖ Develop a library of projects, best practices, and strategies that can be applied and adapted to new communities
  
- ❖ Application deadline is October 1, 2021. Application process will be available quarterly.

# GRHIC Team



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Brenda Lumley



Anne  
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