

# GEORGIA Rural Health INNOVATION CENTER

AT MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

This is the official newsletter of the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center designed to keep stakeholders up-to-date on key information and events.

## The Center Launches New Maternal Health Observership



***The inaugural cohort of the Summer Experience in Maternal Health Observership included MUSM students (l-r) Alicia Williams, Will Lundy, Ethan Harrison and Nick Maron.***

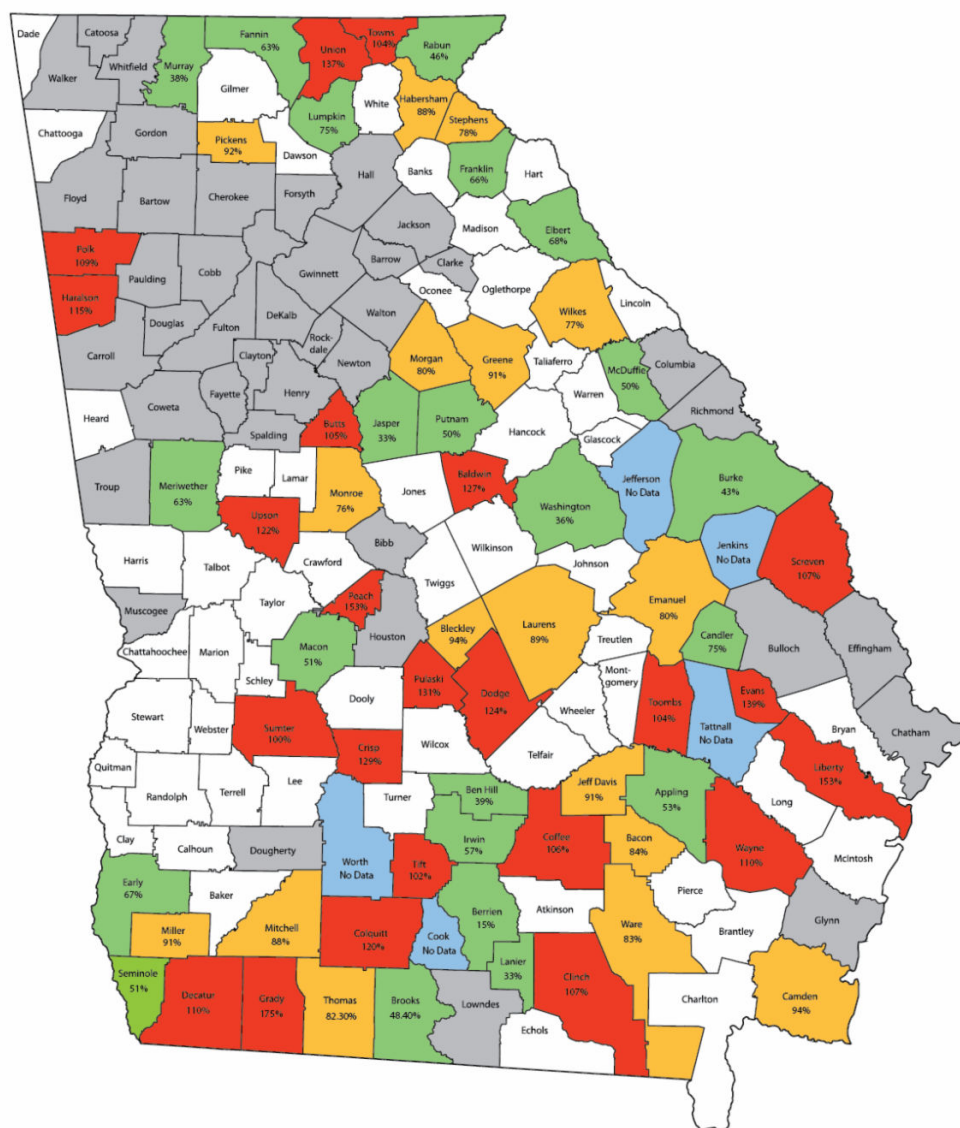
The Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center (GRHIC) in June began offering a new Summer Experience in Maternal Health Observership, open to M.D. students at all of Georgia's publicly-funded medical schools, including Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM).

Observership programs offer medical students an opportunity to observe the delivery of care firsthand. The GRHIC's summer maternal health program offers an expanded learning experience for rising second-year medical students interested in practicing obstetrics and gynecology in rural, medically underserved communities.

For six weeks, students shadow providers in rural Georgia and participate in a specialized curriculum, which includes participation in a weekly journal club to discuss current women's health literature and an assignment to author a white paper on a chosen major topic in women's health. The observership

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**Article Submitted by Dahlia Al-Haleem, MSES, PhD Research Assistant**



*\*7 day average of hospitalized patients (Total number of staffed inpatient beds in the hospital including all overflow, observation, and active surge/expansion beds used for inpatients, includes all ICU beds)*

*Blue – rural county with hospital, no data listed*

*Green – bed occupancy less than 75%*

*Yellow – 76%-100% bed occupancy*

*Red – over 100% bed occupancy*

*White - rural county without hospital*

*Gray - non rural county*

In the United States, an estimated 52.9% of the population is fully vaccinated against COVID-19; whereas, about 41.2% of the population is fully vaccinated in Georgia. As of mid-August 2021, 23 rural Georgia counties had over 100% of hospital beds filled. Most people who are hospitalized due to COVID-19 are unvaccinated. In fact, a research study conducted by the CDC found that people who are unvaccinated are about 29 times more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19, compared to those who are fully vaccinated. Even with the more contagious Delta variant, people who are unvaccinated are about 5 times more likely to be infected with COVID-19 than those who are fully vaccinated.

[Read More](#)



**The Center is Now Accepting Applications for the  
Sow a Seed Grant Program**



# Sow a Seed

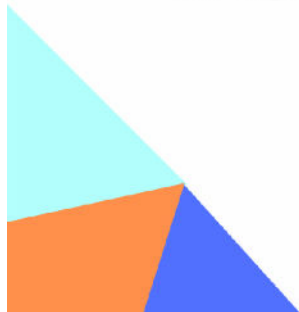
## Grant Program

You're invited to apply for the Center's 2021-2022 Sow a Seed Grant! The Center will provide funding directly to organizations that serve rural communities to improve Georgians availability and access to quality healthcare and human services.

Application deadline is Friday, October 1, 2021.

Please apply at  
[www.georgiaruralhealth.org/grant-program/](http://www.georgiaruralhealth.org/grant-program/)

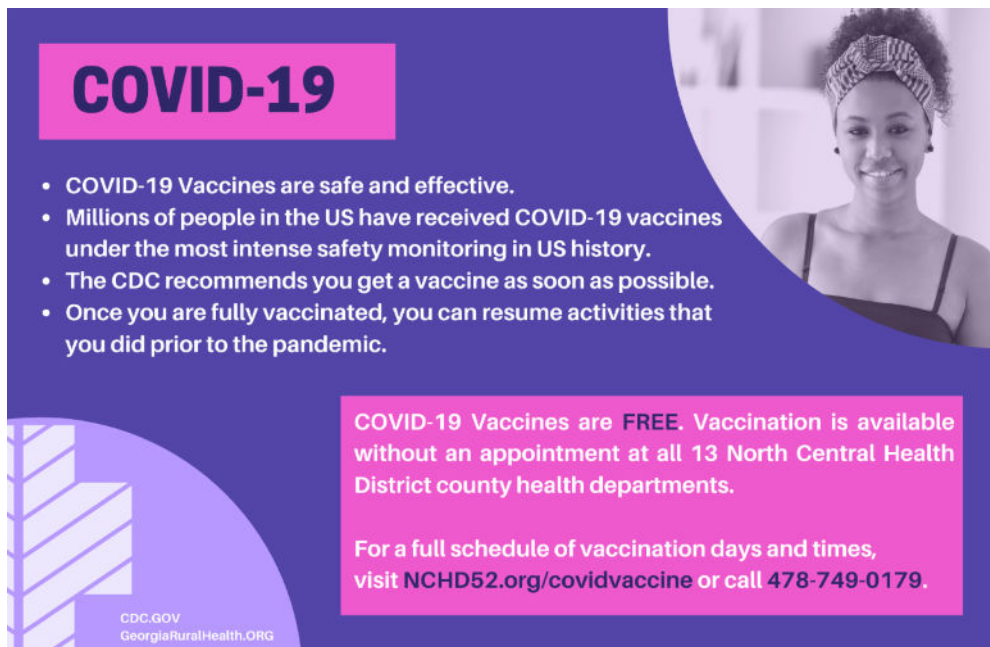
Please submit questions by email  
to Dr. Kedrick Williams at  
[williams\\_k2@georgiaruralhealth.org](mailto:williams_k2@georgiaruralhealth.org)



[Apply Today!](#)

## Hancock County Needs Assessment Audience Testing

*The Center awarded grant sub-contract with the Georgia Department of Public Health*



**COVID-19**

- COVID-19 Vaccines are safe and effective.
- Millions of people in the US have received COVID-19 vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in US history.
- The CDC recommends you get a vaccine as soon as possible.
- Once you are fully vaccinated, you can resume activities that you did prior to the pandemic.

COVID-19 Vaccines are **FREE**. Vaccination is available without an appointment at all 13 North Central Health District county health departments.

For a full schedule of vaccination days and times, visit [NCHD52.org/covidvaccine](https://NCHD52.org/covidvaccine) or call 478-749-0179.

CDC.GOV  
GeorgiaRuralHealth.ORG

Currently, the COVID-19 and Flu Vaccine Hesitancy Needs Assessment in Hancock County, Georgia is in the “audience testing” phase of COVID-19 and flu vaccine messaging. Audience testing is typically implemented when there is a need to gain more insight on a particularly activity in hopes of becoming more knowledgeable about the activity and receiving feedback from the intended, targeted “audience” which in this case are residents of Hancock County.

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## Rural Healthcare Ethics ECHO Starting September



**Rural Healthcare**

**Ethics Webinar**

MERCER UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Project ECHO

GEORGIA Rural Health INNOVATION CENTER  
AT MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Dr. Brian Childs and Dr. Lauren Bunch, professors at [Mercer University School of Medicine](https://www.mercer.edu/school-of-medicine) (MUSM), hosted an informational webinar Aug. 11 on Rural Healthcare Ethics. This session, open to all clinicians and healthcare administrators in Georgia, covered a brief description of healthcare ethics in the rural space and the value it can add to patient care.

MUSM, in partnership with the [Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center](https://www.georgiaruralhealth.org/) (The Center), hosted the event and is now accepting applicants for a new Rural Healthcare Ethics ECHO program.

[Read More](#)

## Community Health Reporter Program

The Community Health Reporter Program is underway with great interest from community members and more applications being submitted each week. Our team has been reviewing applications, conducting interviews, and making selections for representatives of numerous counties/territories. The individuals selected to serve this role for their respective territories represent community foundations, local non-profits, school systems, civic and family organizations, and county taskforce programs.

While we have filled many positions, we still have territories who need a Community Health Reporter representative. Please check the map (right) for an updated roster of territories in need (Full color and white locations have openings, all territories in gray are unavailable). If you see that your county/territory is among this group, please contact us **TODAY** to apply and be considered for this rewarding role in community innovation.



### [Community Health Reporter](#)

## The Center Offers Mental Health First Aid Virtual Courses



**MENTAL HEALTH  
FIRST AID**

The Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center is partnering with Phoebe Sumter Medical Center, Sumter County High School, and the Sumter County Sheriff's Department to provide a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training course for several of its employees and community members this Fall. MHFA training, developed by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, provides a valuable learning experience teaching participants how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders.

[Read More](#)

## Health Fairs & Events

**Visit us at these upcoming events for giveaways and wellness activities**

Georgia National Fair | October 7, 2021

Washington County | coming soon

Hancock County | coming soon

Clay County | coming soon

**Are you interested in hosting a health fair in your community?**

Please email [Morgan Williams, MPH](#)

# NEWS & NOTABLES

## The Center Welcomes New Rural Health Representatives



***James Burton, Jr., MPA***

[Read Bio](#)



***Davis Perkins***

[Read Bio](#)



***Mason Thornton***

[Read Bio](#)

## The Center Welcomes New Cohort of Rural Health Sciences Ph.D. Candidates as Center Research Assistants

The Center is proud to host its second cohort of Rural Health Sciences Ph.D. candidates. Returning students include Dahlia Al-Haleem, MSES and Joy Joseph, MPH. They are joined by Ben West, MBA.

Our Research Assistants provide direct support to our Data Team and Senior Field Representatives bringing their expertise from diverse health science and business backgrounds.

[Learn More about the Rural Health Sciences Ph.D. Program](#)

## Chris Scoggins, MPH represents Center at Annual Two Georgias Training



***Pictured above - Chris Scoggins, MPH, Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center and Dwyane Patterson, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation***

On August 4, 2021, Chris Scoggins, Director of Special Projects, represented the Center as a panelist at the Two Georgias Initiative's "Bridging to the Future" conference. The Two Georgias Initiative is a five year grant program funding 11 health partnerships across rural Georgia. The program was created and is managed by the Healthcare Georgia Foundation. The initiative is entering its final year and this year's conference addressed sustainability and long term success.

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Visit our website to learn more.



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