

The Community Health Reporter Program: A Crowdsourced Approach to Delivering Healthcare Access Data

INTRODUCTION

Being able to connect patients with the right care, at the right time, in the right context, is a critical function of the modern healthcare system and a key driver of quality and cost. Being in a rural community often adds additional layers that may complicate the picture. In these communities, the accuracy and timeliness of distributed information on healthcare facilities, services, and accessibility vary greatly (Cyr et al., 2019). Available data utilizes licensure information, facility registration, and claims data, each with unique limitations, expectations, and reporting delays (Cyr et al., 2019). The distribution of accurate information about available resources is critical to healthcare site planning, efficient referral networks, and patient decision-making.

FRAMEWORK

As a means to combat this issue as recognized in Grand Challenge #4 of Rural Health, "Strategic Healthcare Availability and Access", the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center (GRHIC) Staff developed the Community Health Reporter Program (*Grand Challenges Facing Rural Georgia, 2021*). This Program employs local residents to serve as Community Health Reporters and provide data on the availability of healthcare providers and services in their respective communities.

The theoretical framework for which this program is built upon is the crowdsourced approach (Wazny, 2018). This approach "is a nascent phenomenon that has grown exponentially since it was coined in 2006" (Wazny, 2018). "It involves a large group of people solving a problem or completing a task for an individual or, more commonly, for an organization" (Wazny, 2018). "While the field of crowdsourcing has developed more quickly in information technology, it has great promise in health applications" (Wazny, 2018).

METHODS

The Program utilizes a crowdsourced approach to:

- 1) **Recruit** applicants from Community Partners through an application & interview process
- 2) **Train** reporters at a Virtual Orientation Session to gain proficiency in first encounter communication skills with conversation starters, use of data collection tools, & bi-weekly reporting procedures
- 3) **Retain** and **update** GRHIC's initial database of healthcare sites and providers across rural Georgia
- 4) **Engage** rural communities with a comprehensive, online resource and the knowledge by which to use it for their greatest benefit



Virtual CHR Program Orientation ~ December 9, 2021

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SAMPLE CONVERSATION STARTERS WITH HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS/OFFICE MANAGERS

Starter A (Phone Call or In-Person):
Hi, my name is _____ and I am the Community Health Reporter for _____ counties. I serve with the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center to gather up-to-date information from health care sites in our communities. All information that I help obtain from you will be used to share with our communities and let people know about the great health care services right here in our backyard. Can you help me and share some information with me?

Starter B (Phone Call or In-Person):
Thank you for your time. I am _____ and I am your Community Health Reporter for this area. I represent the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center and I help get information to better serve our rural communities. I am contacting you to get some information (like key contact person) and contact information as well as the services that are provided at your location. I am not interested in any patient information but just want general information that the Center can share publicly on your behalf. Would you give me a few minutes to gather this information?

Starter C (Email):
Greetings!
I am _____ and I serve as the Community Health Reporter for your region of _____ counties. My service is through the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, located at the Mercer University School of Medicine in Macon, Georgia. It is my purpose to help their team gather information from you on the health care providers and services rendered at your location. I am aware that we are amidst this pandemic, but I do want you to know I would like to come by quarterly to meet you and learn all about your site. What I am interested in learning about are the hours of operation, health care providers present, types of services rendered, and types of insurances you accept. I am responsible for getting this information back to the Center so that they can compile it for sites all over Georgia and share it publicly to all rural communities. This is a really great resource for the entire state and I'm grateful to play a huge role in making this possible. Can we schedule a day and time for my visit or is it preferred that I just stop by within a certain time frame when fewer patients are present? I am excited about coming to meet you and everyone there at _____ (insert health care site name). Thank you for your time and attention to my request to offer this service to you and our rural communities of _____ counties.
Sincerely,

(Your Name)
Community Health Reporter for _____ (Your Counties)
Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center

**Note: these are all examples and not required to be used, but are suggested as a resource for you

TESTIMONIALS

Community Health Reporter for Peach & Crawford counties, Briana Hart shared:

"One reason that I've found this program so beneficial to my community is during COVID, I had a lot of family members that were affected personally, and in Peach County and Crawford County, I have family ties in both. And just to listen to them sit back and talk about 'I had to go all the way to Macon or Warner Robins to see somebody.' I'm like I know there are options closer by so knowing that I can be that person to provide them with resources close by where they don't have to travel so far and they can get medical care or assistance quicker is one of the reasons that this [program] touched so close to home for me."



Community Health Reporter for Liberty & McIntosh counties, David Floyd shared:

"One of the things that I've learned that has been sort of interesting working in Liberty and McIntosh counties is that a lot of doctors' offices are joint properties . . . if you have a doctor like a heart specialist that comes every Thursday or something, one of the values that I've added is that as a general rule, they are not a part of that practice. They have their own separate practice in another city, so be sure to list them as a separate [provider] at that particular address only on Thursdays so their actual hours of operation have value . . . to show that they are only available on Thursday in that community."



NEXT STEPS

Retain and **update:** As more data is collected and reported by the Community Health Reporters over the next three months, a more concise review can occur to ensure that duplicate data is not reported. In order to achieve quality control and the most up-to-date information on healthcare sites and providers, a collaborative team of data analysts and program staff will conduct data reviews and verification calls with site contacts.

Engage: Upon establishment of a firm standardized database complete with all components and categories of data as collected by the Community Health Reporters, official press release will be distributed to GRHIC Board, organization partners and community members to inform that the Community Health Reporter Rural Healthcare Contacts Database is ready for public use.

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