



# RURAL HEALTHCARE RESOURCES

## ALABAMA MEDICAL EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

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### OVERVIEW

The mission of the AL Medical Education Consortium is to establish and maintain an osteopathic primary care physician pipeline for rural and underserved Alabama. The intention of the mission is to address both current and future shortages of primary care. The strategy for achieving this mission is a “Physician Pipeline” or pathway created to recruit Alabama students into medical education programs which are designed to prepare primary care providers for service in underserved areas.

## ALABAMA OFFICE OF PRIMARY CARE AND RURAL HEALTH

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### PURPOSE

The Office of Primary Care and Rural Health facilitates and participates in activities to improve access to health care services for all rural Alabamians with special concern for children, the elderly, minorities and other medically underserved vulnerable populations.

### PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The State Office of Rural Health (SORH) is administered through the Alabama Department of Public Health. This office administers the SORH program, the State Primary Care office, and State office of Minority Health and serves as state-level contacts for federal health initiatives in their respective areas of responsibility. The Office of Primary Care and Rural Health serve as contact for rural and minority health information and supports rural communities in health professions recruitment, identification of underserved communities, grant identification, telemedicine resources, and data collection/analysis.

It serves the following populations: communities, critical access hospitals, federally qualified health centers, physician practices, rural health clinics, small rural hospitals, county health departments, and mental health centers.

## **ALABAMA RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION (ARHA)**

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### **MISSION**

The Alabama Rural Health Association is a non-profit membership whose primary mission is to work for the preservation and enhancement of health for rural citizens of the state. This is being accomplished by bringing together a diverse constituency with a shared commitment of this mission to assume leadership in its accomplishment through communication, education, and advocacy.

### **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

The Association serves as a forum for the unified forces of health care providers, public officials, health care workers, educators, and consumers working to improve health in rural Alabama. The forum for the exchange and distribution of ideas and information related to the improvement of rural health serves as an advocate for rural health and encourages the development of appropriate health resources for rural Alabama.

## **ALABAMA SOUTHERN RURAL ACCESS PROGRAM (ASRAP)**

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### **PURPOSE**

ASRAP is a group of dedicated healthcare professionals working to improve the quality of life for Alabama's poorest and most medically underserved residents by improving access to primary care and improving the rural health infrastructure in Alabama's underserved communities through The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Southern Rural Access Program. The Alabama effort is led by a partnership of the Alabama Primary Health Care Association and the Alabama Family Practice Rural Health Board. The Southern Rural Access Program is a long-term investment to improve access to basic healthcare for some of the nation's most medically underserved residents in eight Southern states - Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, East Texas and West Virginia.

### **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

ASRAP has been awarded a grant of \$286,917 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through the Southern Rural Access Program. This 18-month grant began in early 1999 and marks the beginning of the initial three-year phase of a long-term effort by RWJF that has focused on improving access to health care in underserved rural areas including Alabama and seven other southeastern states.

The first phase will be used as a planning period to develop strategies and specific plans to address issues crucial to the development of an efficient and effective rural community healthcare infrastructure. Alabama's proposal calls for the establishment of separate committees to oversee the planning of each of the program's five components.

- Development of a health professional education program that will focus on the recruitment of rural students into health professions, and the creation of a rural health leaders “pipeline” of academically prepared professionals
- Development of a centralized health professional clearinghouse and a standardized recruitment and retention plan for Alabama’s underserved communities
- Creation of health care networks that will focus on cost efficiency and enhanced patient care services and referral systems
- Development of a revolving loan fund to provide working capital for the establishment of new primary care facilities and/or the renovation of existing facilities and other health care infrastructure improvement projects
- Exploration of community development approaches that will mobilize rural communities and their resources to improve health care and the overall quality of life of their residents.

## **INSTITUTE FOR RURAL HEALTH RESEARCH (RHI)**

*The University of Alabama*

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### **MISSION**

The mission of RHI is to facilitate the highest attainable standard of health for those who live, work, or play in rural America by investigating not only disease and infirmity, but also factors associated with physical, mental, and social well-being.

### **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

RHI has ongoing research projects focusing on current health issues that affect people who live in rural areas. They pursue their mission through the combined strength of scientific knowledge, professional skill, individual commitment, community support, and informed public policy. RHI seeks to foster collaboration among various disciplines, leading to high quality, mission-relevant research.

## **RURAL ALABAMA HEALTH ALLIANCE (RAHA)**

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### **MISSION**

RAHA is an organization comprised of four rural West Alabama communities: Bibb, Fayette, Greene, and Pickens Counties and Family Health Care of Alabama, a community health care center corporation with locations in nine counties. These communities came together in 1990 in response to their concern over the continuing health care crisis that exists in rural Alabama.

## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

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This non-profit entity offers a model for collaboration among autonomous communities and was organized for the following purposes

- Promote medical and other health related education in rural communities
- Enhance rural health care
- Stimulate rural community development
- Engage in fund raising related to such activities.

## **RURAL ALABAMA AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC)**

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Rural Alabama AHEC

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## **PURPOSE**

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AHEC recruits and retains healthcare professionals to rural areas. Members engage in collaborative programming and activities relative to medical resident and student rotations, health professions, student rotations, interdisciplinary team education, continuing education for providers, learning resource workshops and information dissemination activities to K-12 students. These centers maintain collaborative relationships and affiliation agreements with preceptors, community-based training sites, educational institutions, academic disciplines, organizations, rural community hospitals, rural health clinics, and other appropriate entities.

## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

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- AHEC has jointly developed learning resource centers in three community hospitals as educational sites for students of all disciplines. These sites have internet connection and presentation capabilities. Phase 2 of this project will provide training seminars in the use of such equipment.
- AHEC is compiling a *Health Occupations Career Manual* to provide resource material on health occupations available. The target audience will be junior high and high school students, counselors of these students, and parents.
- AHEC will build collaborative relationships to work toward mutual goals. Rural Alabama AHEC will work with communities and other organizations such as the Alabama Family Practice Rural Health Board, RWJF Southern Rural Access Program, and Tuskegee AHEC and develop affiliation agreements with academic departments as appropriate.
- AHEC is participating in the Clinical Digital Libraries Project, a joint project of The University of Alabama and The University of North Texas. This resource provides health and medical information on the Internet.
- AHEC will promote family practice team building by developing a standardized curriculum and offering training experiences for primary care health teams in rural communities and sites. It will continue to develop affiliation agreements with community-based teaching sites for student and resident rotations.

- To improve minority student outreach, the Rural Alabama AHEC will strengthen relationships with institutions and organizations which traditionally serve minority populations--such as the Tuskegee AHEC, Tuskegee University, Stillman College, and Morehouse University.

## **RURAL HEALTH PROJECTS, THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA**

### **COLLEGE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES**

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### **MISSION**

The mission of CCHS and goals for which it was created in 1972 are to supply well-trained doctors for rural Alabama and focus on ways to improve health services in rural communities. To further this mission, the Department of Community and Rural Medicine developed a group of rural health projects that bring together resources and research available through the state's academic institutions to assist communities in improving the health of rural Alabamians.

### **OVERVIEW**

The Rural Medical Pipeline is a concept which illustrates the importance of finding and nurturing capable rural students who are interested in becoming physicians and practicing in their hometowns or similar rural areas. These students are more likely than non-rural students to establish their medical practices in underserved areas after completing their training in urban medical centers.

The Rural Medical Scholars Program encourages high school students to consider careers in medicine and health professions and experience college first-hand Rural Medical Scholars Program-offers premed and medical students a year of special study prior to entry into medical school and specifically rural-oriented medical school experiences

## **TUSKEGEE AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (TAHEC)**

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### **MISSION**

TAHEC's mission is to enhance the quality and accessibility of medical, health and community education and promote the delivery of health care services in rural and medically underserved areas of Alabama.

## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

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TAHEC has been a major resource in recruiting health professionals for many years and offers several initiatives to encourage students to pursue careers in the health professions. A special focus is placed on addressing the importance of achieving cultural diversity in the health care workforce by attracting students from minority, disadvantaged and under-represented populations. TAHEC offers enrichment opportunities, which are targeted, to students from elementary through college years including those in health profession training programs.

Activities are provided through partnerships including the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System in Tuskegee and many other community agencies. Examples of activities for participants include informational seminars by health care providers, health career fairs, field trips to health care facilities, course offerings in math and science, computer skills development, and preceptor ship placements, among others.