



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

SOUTH CAROLINA
Telehealth
ALLIANCE

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



CONTENTS

- 01 Mission, Vision, Values, Strategies
- 02 Leadership
- 04 Digital Transformation

Strategy Domains:

- 06 Service Extension
- 08 Hospital Support
- 10 Convenient Care
- 12 Primary Care Support
- 14 Health Equity

Support Tactics:

- 16 Broadband & Technology Infrastructure
- 17 Training & Education
- 18 Research & Outcomes
- 19 Promotions & Awareness
- 20 Sustainability
- 21 Contact Us

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Mission:

Improving the health of all South Carolinians through telehealth.

Vision:

- › Telehealth will grow to support delivery of health care to all South Carolinians with an emphasis on underserved and rural communities.
- › It will facilitate, coordinate, and make more accessible quality care, education, and research that are patient-centered, reliable, and timely.
- › Our state will become recognized nationally for telehealth that is uniquely collaborative, valuable, and cost-effective.

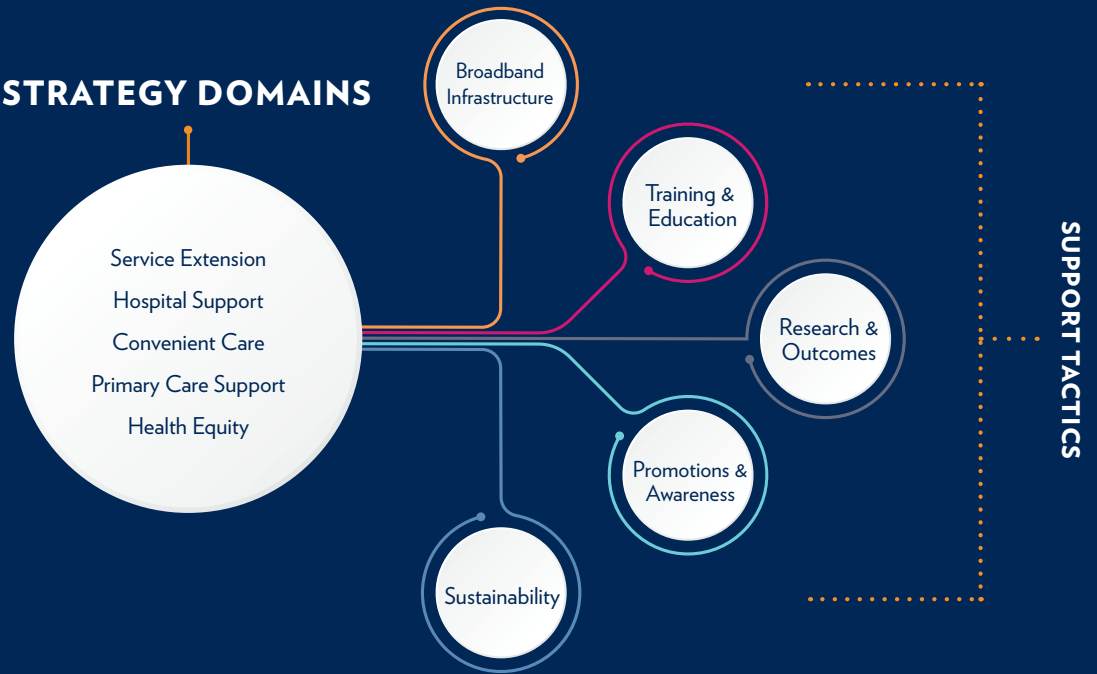
Values:

- › Patient Centered
- › Quality
- › Collaboration
- › Sustainability
- › Accountability

Value Proposition:

Telehealth in South Carolina will deliver high value through productive collaboration.

STRATEGY DOMAINS



Strategies:

- › **Service Extension:** All citizens of South Carolina will have equitable access to ambulatory care. Telehealth modalities will be used in the ambulatory setting to extend the reach of services that would otherwise be limited by travel and related barriers to care.
- › **Hospital Support:** Every community hospital in our state will have access to telehealth partnerships that enhance its services and its finances. These Hospital Services represent partnerships that extend care between hospitals using telehealth with a focus on connecting resources from larger urban hospitals to community hospitals throughout the state.
- › **Convenient Care:** All citizens in South Carolina will have affordable and immediately available patient-initiated virtual urgent and other health system-entry level care from an in-state provider. Convenient Care services are designed to engage individual patients through their own available devices in order to optimize utilization and maximize healthcare engagement.
- › **Primary Care Support:** All primary care clinics in the state, with emphasis on Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), will have access to integrated services through telehealth partnerships. These services are intended to support the mission of the primary care clinic as a medical home, emphasizing the importance of local health care infrastructure while mitigating gaps in access to supporting resources.
- › **Health Equity:** Targeted, novel initiatives will close the gap in access to health care services for high-priority health disparities. Health Equity services will make progress towards achieving health equity across the state in identified areas of health disparity.



[View SCTA Strategic Plan](#)

From the SCTA Leadership

As we reflect on another successful year of telehealth in South Carolina, we are reminded of its significance to healthcare. Building upon years of success, the South Carolina Telehealth Alliance (SCTA) is committed to sustained, equitable distribution of healthcare access. Through connectivity, digital literacy, and maturing care delivery models, South Carolina will continue to see enhancements of care statewide.

During the COVID-19 pandemic telehealth became essential, and nearly three years later, a hybrid model of care combining virtual and in-person options has become the new standard. This transformation to more patient-centered and patient-initiated health care demonstrates the response to fulfill the unique needs of each individual. Combining local and distant health care providers through hybrid care models is becoming increasingly common across care settings, and increasingly preferred by patients and providers alike. Throughout this report, you will see telehealth as the key to a transformed continuum-of-care.

It is clear that our state efforts are aimed toward inclusion, ensuring all citizens have access to care, regardless of their demographics or geographical location. Intentional efforts to mend the gaps in care have been put forth to serve our most vulnerable regions. Digital literacy and broadband initiatives, a new layer of necessary infrastructure, continue to accelerate a clear path to a highly connected future. The present is no longer asking if we can do telehealth, but rather how we should apply it, how it should be made equitable, and how we can perfect it. We have laudable goals through a maturing strategic plan, holding each domain and tactic accountable, so that we may demonstrate sustained improvements in healthcare.

While we are proud of each accomplishment, our work is not done, and our goals cannot be achieved working in silos. The SCTA remains committed to continued collaboration and innovation to improve the lives of all South Carolinians through telehealth.



James T. McElligott, M.D., MSCR
*Telehealth Executive Medical Director
Medical University of South Carolina
SCTA Advisory Council Co-Chair*



Kathy Schwarting, MHA
*Chief Executive Officer
Palmetto Care Connections
SCTA Advisory Council Co-Chair*

Dear Fellow South Carolinians,

It is my honor to introduce the 2022 South Carolina Telehealth Alliance (SCTA) annual report, which outlines the achievements of the unprecedented statewide collaboration of health systems, primary and specialty care providers, state agencies, and other shared-mission support organizations working to expand health care access through telehealth in our state. Since its inception in 2014, SCTA partners have worked tirelessly to advance telehealth clinical programs, education, awareness, and technology and broadband infrastructure. When the pandemic arrived in South Carolina in 2020, it was thanks to the investment from the state and the groundwork laid by SCTA partners that our healthcare systems were ready.

In 2022, we've seen telehealth become solidified as a key component of our healthcare infrastructure. While in-person care will always be essential, it is clear that both patients and providers prefer a virtual option when appropriate, as telehealth volumes remain elevated compared to pre-pandemic rates. The challenges of the pandemic ultimately uncovered a more efficient and patient-centered way to provide care, through a combination of in-person and virtual visits. The ways in which patients access healthcare have changed, which has required both federal and state policymakers to adapt and re-think the role of virtual care in our healthcare systems, including how it is practiced, covered, and paid for.

We must leverage the momentum of the past three years and continue to build upon the strong foundation laid in 2014. Since the initial state investment in telehealth we've seen skeptics turn to champions as our telehealth clinical programs have grown and matured significantly. At the Statehouse, the opportunity is ripe to review our laws and policies governing telehealth to reflect the changed healthcare landscape, with an eye towards sustainability. I hope you enjoy this 2022 SCTA Annual Report, outlining the impressive work and collaboration of SCTA partners, and the innovative and impactful role telehealth has played in our state.



Representative William "Bill" Herbkersman
*Chairman, Healthcare Subcommittee, House Ways
and Means Committee*

Digital Transformation



Telehealth has not always been a familiar phrase to our South Carolina residents. For some, the term was not introduced until 2020, when seeing a physician virtually may have been the only option to receive care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fast-forward to 2022, this is no longer the case — telehealth is digitally transforming healthcare.



Successfully integrating itself into healthcare, telehealth is now considered a core component of our care delivery models. Both patients and providers have come to expect a virtual option across a vast range of specialties, when appropriate. Telehealth is no longer considered the last-resort option, but for many, the first choice. As a testament to its advancements, telehealth programs now reach all 46 counties

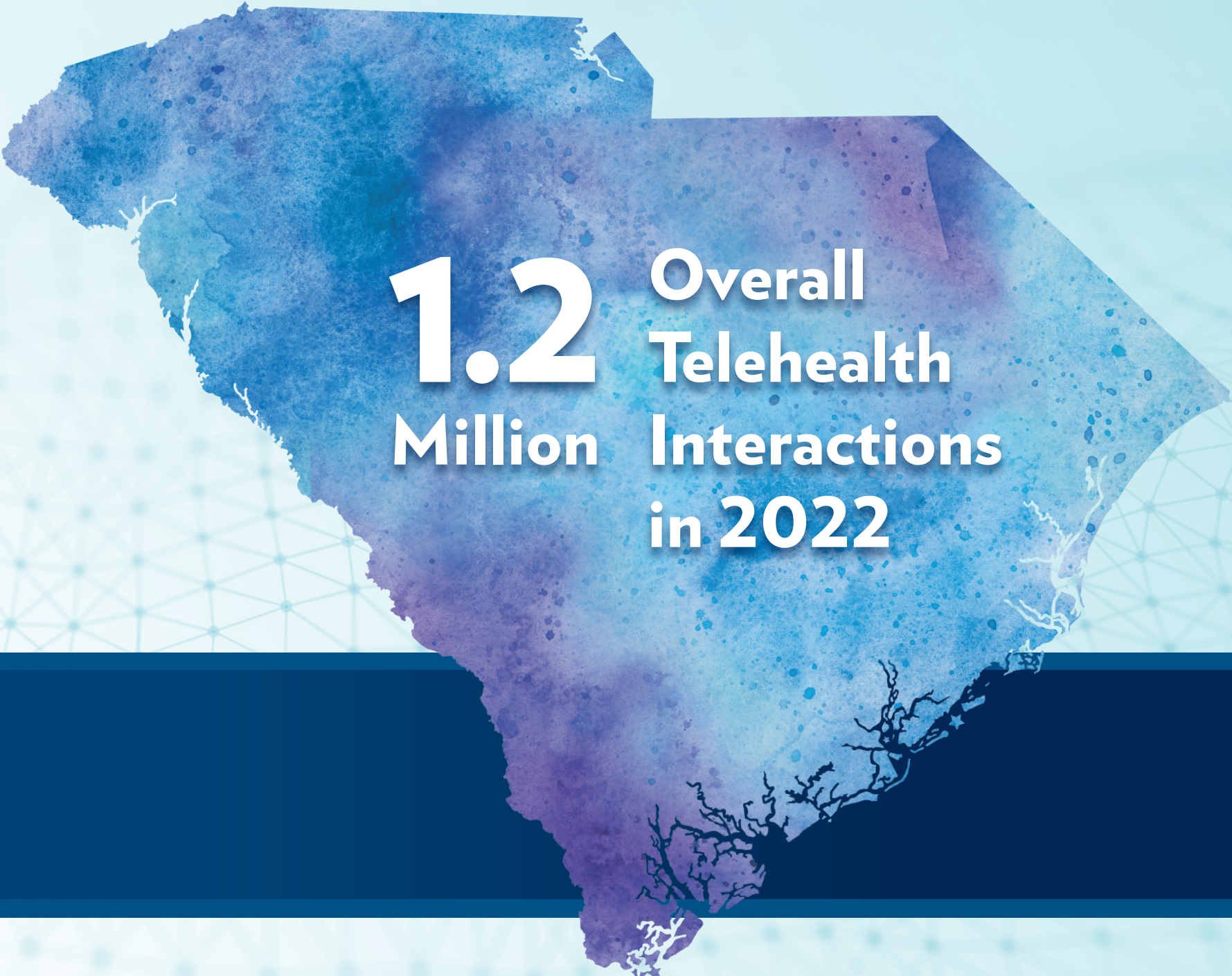
of South Carolina through the work of the South Carolina Telehealth Alliance (SCTA). SCTA partners across the state work diligently each day to support and develop these programs with the end goal of increasing healthcare access statewide.

Telehealth is here to stay as an essential constituent of the healthcare continuum. As the SCTA, our aim to continue supporting telehealth initiatives through awareness, advocacy, education, infrastructure, and innovation is boundless. Through passion and determination, SCTA partners will continue to work collaboratively toward expansion and sustainability of telehealth in South Carolina to ensure its longevity and success.

780,000+
Synchronous Telehealth
Interactions

640+
SCTA-Supported
Telehealth Sites

96,000+
Asynchronous Telehealth
Interactions

A watercolor-style map of South Carolina in shades of blue and purple, centered on the page. The map is overlaid with a faint geometric grid pattern. The text is positioned over the central part of the map.

1.2 Overall
Telehealth
Million Interactions
in 2022

Service Extension



*Learn more about
this strategy*

Example Services

- Ambulatory Telehealth Visits
- Regional Telehealth Clinics
- Outpatient Telepsychiatry
- eConsults

The Service Extension strategy aims to provide equitable access to ambulatory care to all South Carolina residents. Through telehealth capabilities, patients in SC have the opportunity to connect with their providers from afar, eliminating barriers to care such as travel. In 2022, SC providers continued to optimize the use of telehealth in their care settings to accommodate patient needs and broaden accessibility. It is apparent that both patients and providers see the value of telehealth in the ambulatory setting, as these visit types held the largest volume of telehealth in the state again this year.

McLeod Health

McLeod Health's Multi-Disciplinary Review (MDR) program brings medical experts across a variety of specialties, patients, and their family members together via telehealth for a group consultation. This allows a better understanding of all aspects of the patient's diagnosis and treatment plan, and a venue to ask the medical team questions. The program has received extremely positive feedback, and has shown success in improving collaboration, increasing quality of care, improving understanding of treatment and diagnosis, and increasing follow-up visit rates.



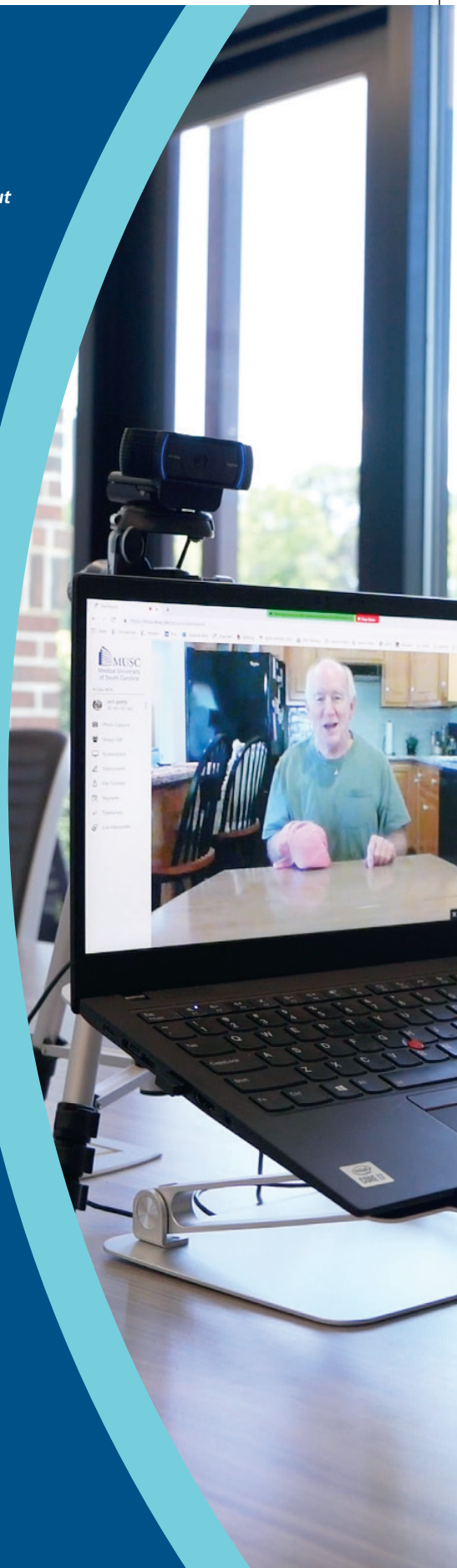
*Learn more about
McLeod Health's
MDR program*

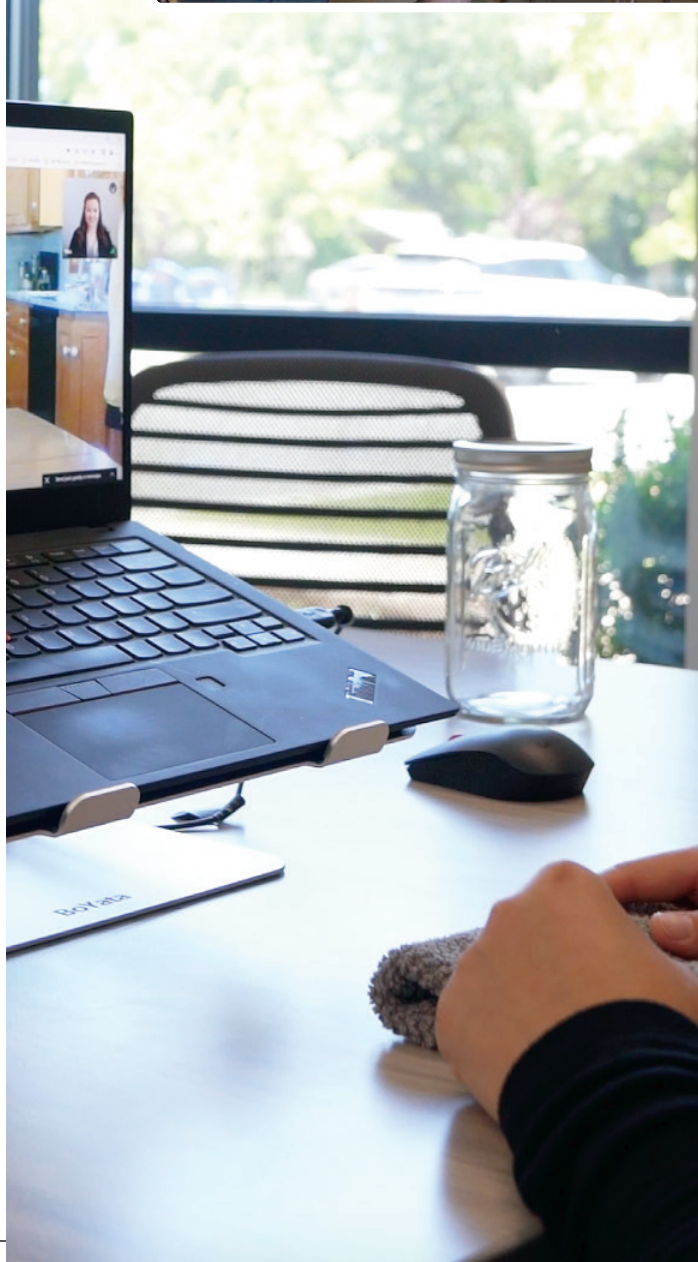
SCTA Free Telehealth Platform

The SCTA's free, premium instance of a HIPAA compliant telehealth platform, continued to serve as a helpful tool for SC providers. Over 1,300 SC providers have taken advantage of this offering, completing over 56,800 visits in 2022.

750,000+
total synchronous
ambulatory visits in 2022

63,000+
average synchronous
ambulatory visits per
month in 2022



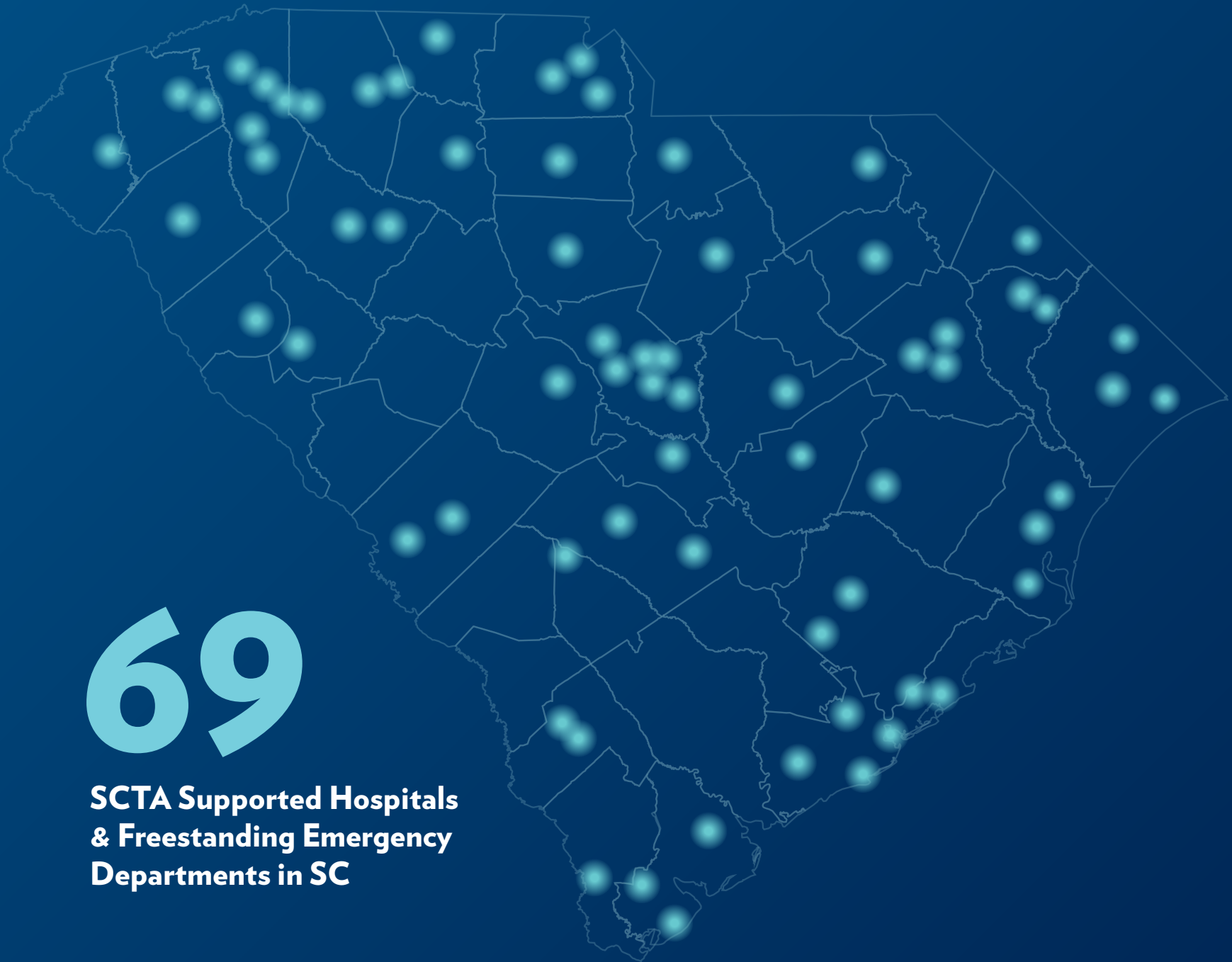


 **MUSC Health**
Medical University of South Carolina

The Stroke Recovery Research Center at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) offers telerehabilitation for its patients who are recovering from stroke health outcomes. This unique program connects occupational therapists to patients in their homes via telehealth, providing them with the ability to undergo therapy in their own environment. The program has shown immense success, allowing patients to receive therapy more conveniently while practicing their everyday tasks in their home.

*Hear from a patient
enrolled in this program*





69

**SCTA Supported Hospitals
& Freestanding Emergency
Departments in SC**

Hospital Support



Learn more about
this strategy

Example Services

- Tele-ICU
- Hospitalist Rounding
- Neonatal Nurseries Rounding
- Inpatient Specialty Tele-Consultations including:
 - › Stroke and Neurology
 - › Infectious Disease
 - › Psychiatry
 - › Palliative Care
 - › Cardiology
 - › Pulmonology

Hospital Support programs are crucial to the viability and prosperity of our South Carolina hospitals. Through partnerships with urban SC hospitals, our rural community hospitals can provide local patients with high-quality specialty care through telehealth. This statewide collaboration allows patients to remain close to home for care, reducing barriers and increasing access.

The SC tele-stroke and tele-neurology network now covers **96% of SC**, allowing **EVERY** citizen in SC to seek expert stroke care in less than 1 hour.



Committed to providing enhanced patient care at the community level, our partners at **Prisma Health** expanded its Virtual Intensive Care Unit (eICU) services in 2022 to several hospitals in the upstate region of SC. In collaboration with Prisma Health ICU teams, board-certified intensive care physicians and critical care nurses provide around the clock virtual monitoring of ICU patients to provide seamless integrated care. With great success, the eICU program anticipates further expansion to additional Prisma Health community hospitals in the near future.



The Medical University of South Carolina's (MUSC) robust set of hospital support programs provided over **10,500 inpatient consultations** across **46 supported hospitals** in SC throughout 2022.

MUSC's critical care team continued to partner with 9 community hospitals to provide an extra level of around the clock expert care to intensive care patients through its Tele-ICU program. In 2022, over **11,700 patients** were **virtually monitored** while in the ICU.



The SC Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) provides accessible mental health care 18 hours per day, 365 days per year through its Emergency Department Telepsychiatry program. With **26 partnering hospitals** across the state, this program provided over **8,650 telepsychiatry consultations** throughout 2022. The ongoing collaboration among SCDMH, SC hospitals, and SC providers enhances opportunities to further expand specialized mental health care to our communities.





65,000+

virtual urgent care visits
conducted in South Carolina
by SCTA partners in 2022

Convenient Care



*Learn more about
 this strategy*

Example Services

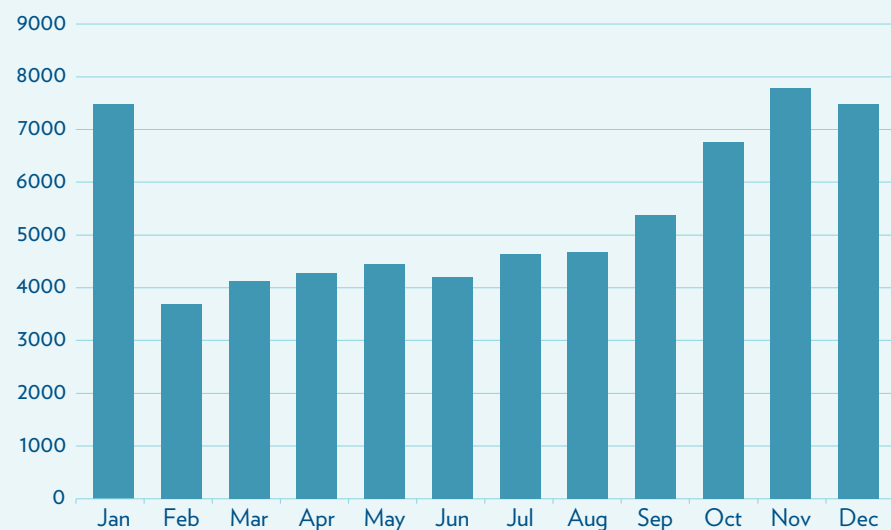
- Virtual Urgent Care

Convenient Care offers the opportunity for South Carolinians to seek low-acuity healthcare through telehealth 24/7 from various SCTA partners across the state. Usually completed asynchronously (not in real-time), these virtual visits allow patients to complete an online questionnaire specific to their health concern, connect with a provider, and receive a diagnosis and next steps such as a prescription the same day. This program opens the door to simple, accessible care for our SC residents, at their fingertips.



McLeod Health, MUSC Health, Prisma Health, Roper St. Francis, and Spartanburg Regional Health each offer virtual urgent care visits with a wide range of low-acuity visit types to any South Carolinian in need of care. Simply visit their respective websites for more information and to connect with a provider on the same day.

Virtual Urgent Care Visits By Month 2022





240,500+
Remote Patient
Monitoring Interactions



Primary Care Support



Learn more about
this strategy

Example Services

- Project ECHO/Telementoring
- Diabetes Remote Patient Monitoring
- Diabetic Retinopathy Screening
- Primary Care Integrated Services
 - › Nutrition Counseling
 - › Psychiatry

Primary Care Support services aim to connect distant and local providers in South Carolina with intentions to maximize primary care statewide. Through its wide range of programs, SC communities are provided with the support and adequate primary care resources to amplify patient care. This encourages SC patients to seek primary care in their communities, thus mitigating gaps in access to care.

South Carolina's Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) program allows providers to continuously monitor patients' clinical conditions from afar while at home or in a clinical setting using appropriate telehealth equipment. If the provider detects abnormal activity in the patient's levels, actions are quickly taken to alert the patient and resolve the issue. Many SCTA partners across our state offer a variety of robust remote patient monitoring programs, ranging from heart health care, diabetic care, COVID-19 care, and even pediatric burn care. These are just a few of the many RPM programs in the state, offering patients peace of mind while managing their clinical conditions.



South Carolina's Project ECHO/**Telementoring programs** aim to empower rural healthcare providers to provide specialty-informed care for patients with specific needs through regular case and didactic sessions. In 2022, these programs held **70 sessions**, with nearly **2,000 participants** with a focus on peer recovery support specialists, SC pregnancy wellness, and opioid use disorders.



*Hear from SC Project
ECHO program champions*



**SC Project ECHO/
Telementoring
Programs now
cover all 46
counties in SC!**

Health Equity

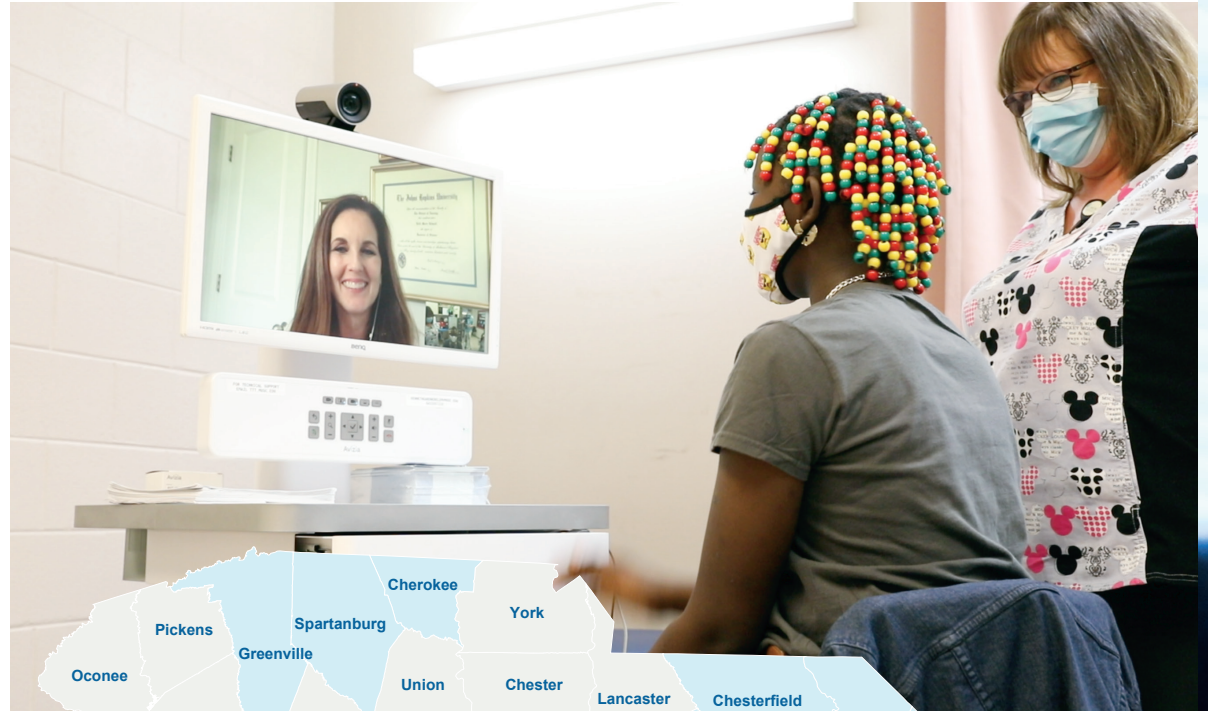


Learn more about
this strategy

Example Services

- School-Based Telehealth
- Women's Reproductive Behavioral Health
- Medication Assisted Treatment Telehealth (Tele-MAT)
- Maternal Fetal Medicine
- Health Care for the Homeless
- Pediatric Intensive Care Telehealth
- Trauma Resilience and Recovery Program

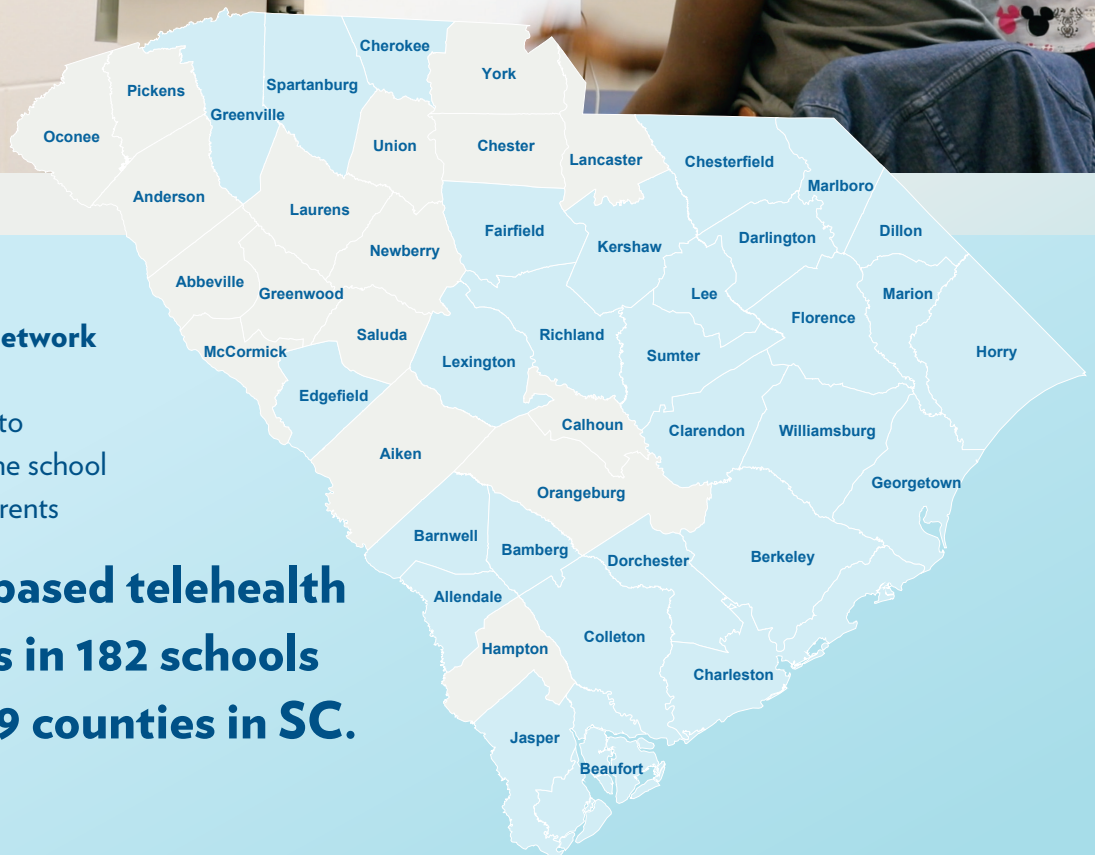
Health Equity is a particularly meaningful strategy, focused on closing health care gaps in our state. These services target the most vulnerable populations in the state, requiring the collaboration of several parties to make an impactful change.



SC Statewide School-Based Telehealth Network

School-based telehealth programs continued to expand in 2022, bringing care to students in the school setting. These programs help students and parents avoid missed school and work to travel elsewhere to an appointment.

**School-based telehealth
operates in 182 schools
across 29 counties in SC.**





Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System's Nurse Family Partnership Program (NFP), showcased on The TODAY Show in September, is an evidence-based community health program, which aims to transform the lives of Medicaid-eligible mothers who are pregnant with their first child. Each mother is partnered with a registered nurse early in her pregnancy and receives ongoing care through her child's second birthday through a combination of virtual and in-person visits. Nearly **2,200 telehealth visits** were conducted through the NFP program in 2022.



*Hear from an
enrolled patient*

Broadband & Technology Infrastructure



As a long-standing SCTA partner, **Palmetto Care Connections (PCC)** is committed to expanding access to care in South Carolina's rural and underserved communities through broadband initiatives. The Palmetto State Providers Network, a consortium of health care providers in the state led by Palmetto Care Connections, was awarded **\$7.2 million** in 2022 from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Connected Care Pilot Program. The funding will enable five Federally Qualified Health Centers and one hospital system to provide broadband internet access

services, remote patient monitoring, and video consults to **5,000 primarily low-income South Carolinians** suffering from chronic conditions and infectious diseases. In addition, the funding will provide health care provider broadband data connections, a connected care telehealth platform, and data analytics to facilitate synchronous telehealth services for an estimated **18,000 patients in the following 13 SC counties**, Aiken, Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Fairfield, Georgetown, Horry, Lee, Lexington, Marlboro, Newberry, Richland, and Sumter.

In 2022, PCC received funding commitments for nearly **\$24 million** in broadband subsidies for South Carolina health care providers.



Learn more about SC broadband initiatives

Training & Education



Telehealth training and education has been a crucial element of the digital transformation of care. With telehealth as a key player in the health care continuum, constant training and education is needed to keep SC residents and providers up to speed with current innovations.

Palmetto Care Connections (PCC), the SC Area of Health Education Consortium (SC AHEC), and the Medical University of South Carolina work together to lead these efforts in our state, providing digital literacy outreach, online learning modules, telehealth equipment demonstrations, telehealth dedicated courses, and much more.

Digital Inclusion Training

PCC's Digital Inclusion Program strives to empower SC residents to utilize telehealth by providing digital literacy trainings, affordable internet solutions, internet enabled devices, online content, and technical support. In partnership with the SC Department on Aging and various local agencies, PCC provided digital literacy trainings, digital devices, and education to **896 South Carolinians** in 2022.

Telehealth Educational Resources

SC AHEC remained focused on ensuring up-to-date telehealth education resources are available for all health professionals and students in SC through its online telehealth courses. Courses offered include, foundations of telehealth, telehealth implementation, telehealth presenter certification, telemental health, etc. Over **500 individuals** successfully completed one of these telehealth modules in 2022!

Telehealth Training & Education in Rural SC Communities

Palmetto Care Connections (PCC), hosted several telehealth education and training events throughout the year in Allendale, Bamberg, Orangeburg, and other rural counties in the state. Residents who attended these events received telehealth equipment demonstrations, digital literacy education, and other local healthcare and community resources.

10th Annual Telehealth Summit of South Carolina

240+ participants and **27** sponsors registered for SC's Telehealth Summit, hosted by PCC in Charleston, SC.



Watch a
Summit recap

12,300+

telehealth learning
experiences occurred during
2022 in South Carolina

400+

participants in PCC's Webinar
Wednesday program, offering
free telehealth, technology,
and broadband education
webinars

Research & Outcomes

MUSC Health Telehealth Center of Excellence

The **MUSC Center for Telehealth** is one of two federally recognized National Telehealth Centers of Excellence (COE) as designated by the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) in 2017. In 2021,

the COE was renewed to receive a total of **\$16.25 million over 5 years** to fill important gaps in the national telehealth landscape through a combination of ongoing

regional and national collaborations, as well as proactive dissemination of telehealth resources. In 2022, the COE supported **over 50 faculty and staff** who were focused on the following areas: 1) Impact on Federal and Healthcare Spending, 2) Telehealth to Support HIV Prevention and Treatment, 3) Telehealth to Address Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorders, 4) Telehealth to Support Rural Hospitals, and 5) Evaluation of Direct-to-Consumer Telehealth.



*View the new
COE website*



SC Center For Rural and Primary Health Care

As a valued SCTA partner, the **SC Center for Rural and Primary Health Care (CRPH)** at the USC School of Medicine, continued to support telehealth research and innovation among rural and primary care practices in SC. In 2022, CRPH worked to assess the barriers and facilitators of successful telehealth adoption among smaller SC rural and primary healthcare practices amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Their work also explored the impact of COVID-19 on telehealth utilization patterns overall. CRPH was proud to present their findings at the National Rural Health Association's Annual Rural Health Conference and are now **preparing for journal publication.**



SC Telehealth Research Pilot Grants

The SCTA partnered with the SC Clinical and Translational Research Institute (SCTR) this year to award two \$25,000 Telehealth Research Pilot Grants with the aim to accelerate the adoption, utilization, and investigation of telehealth interventions in South Carolina:

- Novel Application of Skills for Psychological Recovery Following Sexual Assault – **Alyssa Rheingold, PhD**
- Cognitive and Psychosocial Assessment to Optimize Stroke Telerehabilitation – **Michelle Woodbury, PhD, OTR/L**

In 2022, over 78 peer-reviewed articles on telehealth were published by South Carolina researchers.

Promotions and Awareness



Watch the
2022 TAW
recap

SC Telehealth Awareness Week (TAW) 2022 SCTA champions gathered at the SC State House in Columbia, SC to capture SC Governor Henry McMaster signing a proclamation declaring September 18–24th as **SC's 6th Annual Telehealth Awareness Week, 2022!**



Watch House-calls: Healthcare in the Digital Age! SCETV's 1-hour documentary that takes a deep dive into the evolution of telehealth in South Carolina.





SCETV created **30 unique videos and news stories**, including a 1-hour documentary about telehealth in South Carolina. Distribution points included broadcasts on South Carolina ETV, South Carolina Public Radio, and digital channels including YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Distribution on SCETV's YouTube channel reached an audience of **35,000 subscribed** and broadcasts reached **499,031 households** weekly.

View the **Top 10 Telehealth Stories of 2022**



2022 Social Media Engagement

 **Facebook**
+42.8% in reach

 **Twitter**
9,434 impressions

“The pandemic has been a horrible experience for many people, but I think we’ve learned a lot in the medical field about not just how to care for really sick patients but also how to pivot and do things like telemedicine. I don’t think that’s going away. I think we’ll always have a hybrid where there may be telemedicine options, depending on what the needs are, as well as in-person visits, and I think that combination is the right approach.”

Dr. Ryan Tedford, MD – MUSC’s Section Chief of Heart Failure and Medical Director of Cardiac Transplantation, on utilizing telemedicine with his patients

Watch the full story



Sustainability



Since 2020, temporary telehealth flexibilities from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and South Carolina Medicaid have remained in effect under the Public Health Emergency (PHE) 90-day renewals. Over the years, SC providers and patients have found these flexibilities to be extremely beneficial to the digital transformation of healthcare. With this instrumental change in the healthcare landscape, SCTA sustainability stakeholders heightened their efforts toward sustainable telehealth coverage and reimbursement policies. Looking to 2023, SCTA champions will continue this work to ensure telehealth policies are kept up to date with the changing role of virtual care in our health care systems.

SCTA 2022 Advocacy Efforts:

[View SC Bill
H. 5161](#)



In March, SCTA stakeholders collaborated with Representative Bill Herbkersman to introduce the **South Carolina Telehealth and Telemedicine Modernization Act (SC Bill H. 5161)**, with the goal of updating the previously passed South Carolina Telemedicine Act by introducing a new definition of ‘telehealth’ and removing confusing and antiquated tele-prescribing language. Although the bill did not advance from committee, its introduction opened the door for ongoing engagement and discussion with SC payers.

The SCTA also created the **SC Payer Telehealth Coverage Scorecard**, a tool that outlines how SC’s largest payers align or misalign with SCTA payer priorities. The scorecard has proven to be a helpful guide in conversations with SC payers and telehealth stakeholders, and is available to review on the SCTA website. Moving forward, the scorecard tool will be updated to reflect the changing telehealth coverage landscape.

[Access SCTA
Telehealth
Coverage
Resources](#)



[View the SC
DHHS Telehealth
Flexibilities Bulletin:](#)



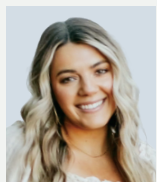
In April, SC Medicaid: **SC Department of Health and Human Services (SC DHHS)**, released a bulletin regarding the telehealth flexibilities issued during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The agency categorized the flexibilities into those which will remain permanent, those that will be extended for one-year post-PHE for further evaluation, and flexibilities that will expire at the end of the PHE. Included in those flexibilities being made permanent was the patient home as referring site, for certain evaluation and management services rendered by a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant – a huge win in aligning SC Medicaid’s telehealth policies with SCTA Sustainability workgroup priorities. SCTA sustainability champions will continue to work with Medicaid to provide supporting data and information regarding those services to be evaluated for one-year post-PHE, as well as other SCTA telehealth coverage priorities.

Contact Us

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