

2025-26 ANNUAL REPORT NEW CHAPTER, SAME STORY OF SERVICE

Southern Alabama AHEC



Prepared By:
Ismath Ferdous Jim



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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As we reflect on another impactful year at Southern Alabama AHEC (SAAHEC), I am filled with gratitude for the dedication and support of our partners, staff, and community members who have worked tirelessly to improve healthcare access and education across our region.

This past year has been one of growth and opportunity. We have expanded our outreach programs, provided invaluable training for healthcare professionals, and continued our mission to address the critical healthcare workforce needs in rural and underserved communities. Our team has worked diligently to bridge gaps in healthcare by offering innovative educational opportunities, strengthening partnerships, and advocating for policies that promote health equity.

Among our key accomplishments last year, we have:

- Increased the number of students participating in our health careers pipeline programs, inspiring the next generation of healthcare professionals
- Expanded our healthcare education and training offerings to address the ongoing need for trained health professionals in rural healthcare facilities
- Fostered healthier and more connected communities by offering health education, prevention, and health literacy across our ten-county service areas
- Strengthened our collaborations with healthcare providers, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and community organizations to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities

Looking ahead, we remain committed to our mission of bridging gaps in rural and underserved communities in Southern Alabama. In the coming year, we will continue to seek innovative ways to serve our communities, expand our impact, and ensure that individuals in Southern Alabama have the healthcare resources they need to thrive.

I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to each of you—our partners, supporters and stakeholders—who make our work possible. Your commitment and passion are the driving forces behind our success, and we look forward to continuing this journey together. Thank you for your unwavering support. Here's to another year of making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Hall

Vanessa Hall
Executive Director
Southern Alabama AHEC



Meet Our Team



VANESSA HALL

Vanessa has worked in public service for over 20 years, both in the private and public sector. She is an Air Force veteran having served 15 years as an avionics technician, radiologic technologist, instructor/trainer, and manager, enabling her to achieve the rank of Master Sergeant (E-7). Vanessa has a Bachelor's degree in Health Sciences/Radiologic Science, a Master's Degree in Human Services Counseling and graduate certificates in Organizational Communication and Health Promotion. She was appointed by Gov. Kay Ivey to serve on the Alabama Committee on Credentialing and Career Pathways Technical Advisory Committee and the Alabama State Department of Education CTE Textbook Committee. Vanessa served on the Alabama Rural Health Association board of directors from 2018-2024.



MD IKBAL PARVEG

Ikbal started his career as a Clinical Physiotherapist working in a hospital back in his home country Bangladesh in 2010. He practiced physical therapy and worked as a Physical Therapy Consultant in several non-profit clinics and organizations until he came to the US to pursue a MS degree in public health in 2014. While studying at Western KY University, he worked as a Graduate Research Assistant and completed a Public Health Internship with South Central KY AHEC. He joined Southern Alabama AHEC as the Program Manager in May 2017 and was promoted to Director of Programs in May 2021. Then, he was promoted to Associate Director with an increased managerial role in Center Operations in May 2023. He enjoys living in Alabama and serving rural and underserved communities to improve their health and well-being.



KELLY BRANDIN

Kelly M. Brandin, a native of Louisiana, has resided in Alabama since 1990 and currently calls Opp her home. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education (Louisiana College, 1985), a Master of Science degree in Elementary Education (Troy State University, 1994), a certification at the Master's level in Educational Leadership (Troy State University, 1996), and an Education Specialist degree in Teacher Leader (Troy University, 2015). In 2017, after 32 years of service to the field of education, she retired to serve as the Executive Administrator for her local chamber of commerce. In July of 2023, Kelly was hired for the newly-created position of General Manager of Programmatic Operations.



KATIE MORGAN

Katie Morgan became the Community and Education Outreach Liaison for Southern Alabama AHEC in 2023. As a Troy University graduate with a bachelor's degree in Human Services, she is passionate about serving her community and bridging gaps in rural and underserved areas. She is a Crenshaw county native who desires to see small towns and communities thrive in their socioeconomic status and overall well being. Katie is happily married to her husband, Jonas, and has a three year old son named Micah.



ISMATH FERDOUS JIM

Ismath Ferdous Jim is from Bangladesh and has a diverse professional background, including multiple Human Resource and Management positions. Ismath holds a Bachelor's and Master of Science in Art and Creative Studies, but her passion lies in promoting a prosperous and healthy lifestyle. In pursuit of this passion, she completed a Master of Health Promotion degree from the University of South Alabama in the USA in 2024. She was an AHEC scholar graduate for the class of 2024, and she worked as an intern with SAAHEC prior to her graduation. Following her graduation, she officially joined the Southern Alabama AHEC team.



LAQUANDA WILLIAMS

LaQuanda is a Frisco City native with a passion for the underserved and veterans. LaQuanda obtained her Bachelors of Science in Health Care Administration with a minor in Emergency Medical Services Management in 2021. Immediately afterwards, LaQuanda enrolled in the Masters of Public Health with a minor in Community Health Education program at Columbia Southern University receiving her MPH in 2023. In 2023, LaQuanda worked as a contrator on the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program, and now works full time on the SAAHEC initiative on this grant.



SAKINA SARWAR

Sakina Sarwar is a Certified Medical Assistant and healthcare professional with experience in patient care, healthcare administration, customer service, and community outreach. She previously worked with USA Health Family Medicine and currently serves as the Outreach and Prevention Coordinator at Southern Alabama AHEC. In her role, she supports community engagement, health education, and prevention initiatives, with a focus on improving access to healthcare resources for rural and underserved communities across Southern Alabama.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

To cultivate [healthy communities](#) by [bridging gaps](#) in rural and underserved areas [in Southern Alabama](#) through prevention, education, workforce development and community partnerships.

Vision

Healthy South Alabamians thriving in healthy communities.

Values

- Integrity FIRST
- Service
- Excellence In All We Do
- Other SAAHEC Guiding Principles:
 - Accountability
 - Responsibility
 - Reliability
 - Faithfulness
 - Organizational Loyalty

Locations & Impact



Office Locations: Mobile & Georgiana

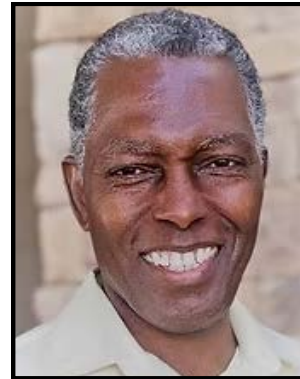


Events, Presentations, & Classes Offered

- **With 10 counties to cover, there is no lack of work to be done!**
- These counties include (from southwest to northeast):
 - Mobile
 - Washington
 - Baldwin
 - Clarke
 - Monroe
 - Escambia
 - Conecuh
 - Butler
 - Covington
 - Crenshaw
- Events & Presentations include, but are not limited to:
 - Bayou on the Move
 - Lillie B. Williamson High School
 - MOWA Choctaw Reservation Camp
 - Washington Technical School
 - Jackson High School
 - Clarke County High School
 - Atmore Community Hospital Diabetes Classes
 - D.W. McMillan Hospital Diabetes Classes
 - Monroeville County Hospital & Monroe County Career Fair
 - Georgiana High School
 - Hillcrest High School
 - Florala High School
 - Alabama Career Center

Our Board of Directors

- **Chairperson:** Mr. Danny Patterson
 - Director of the Gulf States Health Policy Center
- **Vice Chairperson:** Ms. Shernita Taylor
 - Workforce Development Manager | AUSTAL USA



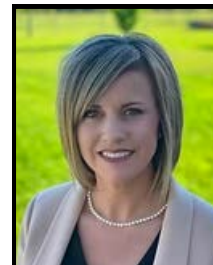
- **Other Executive Committee Members:**

- Ms. Jia Johnson, RN, BSN: Nurse Supervisor by UAB at Gulf Coast Nurse Family Partnership.
- Ms. Latrisa Simpkins: Dual Enrollment Coordinator at Reid State Technical College



- **At Large Board Members:**

- Ms. Erin Lunn: Assistant Professor, Program Director, Chair of the USA PA Department
- Dr. Tiffany Scarborough, DNP, RN: Dean of Nursing and Allied Health at Coastal Alabama Community College
- Ms. Michelle Shiver: Quality Assurance/ Improvement Director at Poarch Creek Health Department



Partners and Community Organizations

Statewide Nonprofit Partners:

West Central AHEC

The Bridge Center

East Central AHEC



We at Southern Alabama AHEC are blessed to collaborate very closely with other statewide nonprofits, especially those in adjacent counties (West Central AHEC and The Bridge Center).

We accomplish much more **together!**

Healthcare Partners:

- Atmore Community Hospital
- Bay Minette Medical Arts Clinic
- D.W. McMillan Hospital
- Grove Hill Memorial Hospital
- Evergreen Medical Center
- Monroeville Community Hospital
- Monroeville Medical Clinic
- Mostellar Medical Clinic
- North Baldwin Infirmary

Educational Institutions:

- Coastal Alabama Community College
- Victory Professional Development Center
- Lurleen B. Wallace Community College
- Monroe Healthcare Training Academy
- Shelton State Community College
- Reid State Technical College
- University of South Alabama
- Taite Healthcare Training
- Conecuh County Technical Center
- Florala High School
- Georgiana High School
- Hillcrest High School
- Jackson High School
- Clarke County High School

Community Organizations:

- Alabama Career Center
- Alabama Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Gulf States Health Policy Center
- Glorious LLC
- Mobile Area Education Foundation Workforce Center
- MOWA Choctaw Indian Reservation
- Poarch Creek Indian Reservation
- Rising Phoenix CDC
- Rivers Educational Services, Inc.
- Vets Recover
- Marine Corps League
- Eagle Landing
- Volunteers of America





SAAHEC Grants & Programs



The Southern Alabama AHEC (SAAHEC) is a multi-funded 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2014 that is dedicated to addressing health disparities, strengthening the healthcare workforce, and improving healthcare access and outcomes in rural and medically underserved areas of Southern Alabama.

The Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program (SSG Fox SPGP)

The SSG Fox SPGP program is funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs, henceforth referred to as the VA. SSG Fox SPGP enables the VA to provide resources toward community-based suicide prevention efforts to meet the needs of veterans and their families through outreach, suicide prevention services, and connections to Veterans Affairs and community resources.

Counties Impacted: Baldwin, Butler, Clarke, Conecuh, Crenshaw, Covington, Escambia, Etowah, Mobile, Monroe, Talladega, Tuscaloosa, and Washington.

SAAHEC provides the following services as part of the SSG Fox SPGP grant:

- **Outreach Services:** We identify veterans at risk of suicide and connect them with local services.
- **Baseline Mental Health Assessments:** As approved by the VA, this screening enables a proper determination of the participant's mental health needs. This includes evaluating socio-economic status, a Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale, and Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL-12). Once determined to be at risk, community organizations and VA resources are connected to the veteran.
- **Community Education:** SAAHEC provides suicide prevention education to veterans, communities, and families through Community Health Workers, Gatekeepers, Lethal Means Safety, Military Cultural Competency training, and more.
- **Assistance Obtaining VA Benefits:** We assist veterans in connecting with multiple resources, including vocational and rehabilitation counseling, educational assistance, housing assistance, and healthcare and mental health services.
- **Coordinating Other Public Benefits and Assistance with Emergent Needs:** Benefits and Assistance include connecting veterans to services such as healthcare, housing, financial support, legal services, transportation, childcare, etc.
- **Case Management Services:** These services include referrals, scheduling, resource allocation, and education about suicide prevention services.

**Veterans
Serving**

349 Veteran Outreach Events

157 Veterans Screened

148 service attendance overall for 74 enrolled veterans

**74
Veterans
Enrolled**



Grants Finished Strong in 2025-2026



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Non-Clinical South Alabama Rural Training (SART) Program:

The non-clinical SART program, which ended in August 2026 and was funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), aimed to address the ongoing need in healthcare facilities for trained administrative support professionals in rural communities of Alabama by developing and corresponding with the Alabama Delta Region Collaborative (ADRC) network that supported the recruitment, formal training, social needs, certification, and placement of students. This program provided training and pathways to professional certifications to current administrative support professionals working in rural Alabama healthcare facilities and new workforce entrants.

- Counties Impacted: Butler, Clarke, Monroe, Escambia, Conecuh, Washington, Hale, Perry, Sumter, Greene, Choctaw, Marengo, Dallas, Barbour, Bullock, Russell, Lowndes, and Macon

Multiple programs were offered as part of this grant, including:

- Medical Billing and Coding Program
- Medical Billing Specialist with Electronic Health Records
- Medical Office Manager
- Certified Medical Administrative Assistant with Medical Terminology

Clinical South Alabama Rural Training (SART) Program:

One of SAAHEC's clinical SART programs, which was funded by the Delta Regional Authority (DRA), ended in July 2026. The project used a proven, coordinated, multi-sector approach to improve healthcare delivery in rural areas by training current and future health professionals for good-paying jobs in rural counties and addressing the ongoing need for trained health professionals in rural Alabama communities.

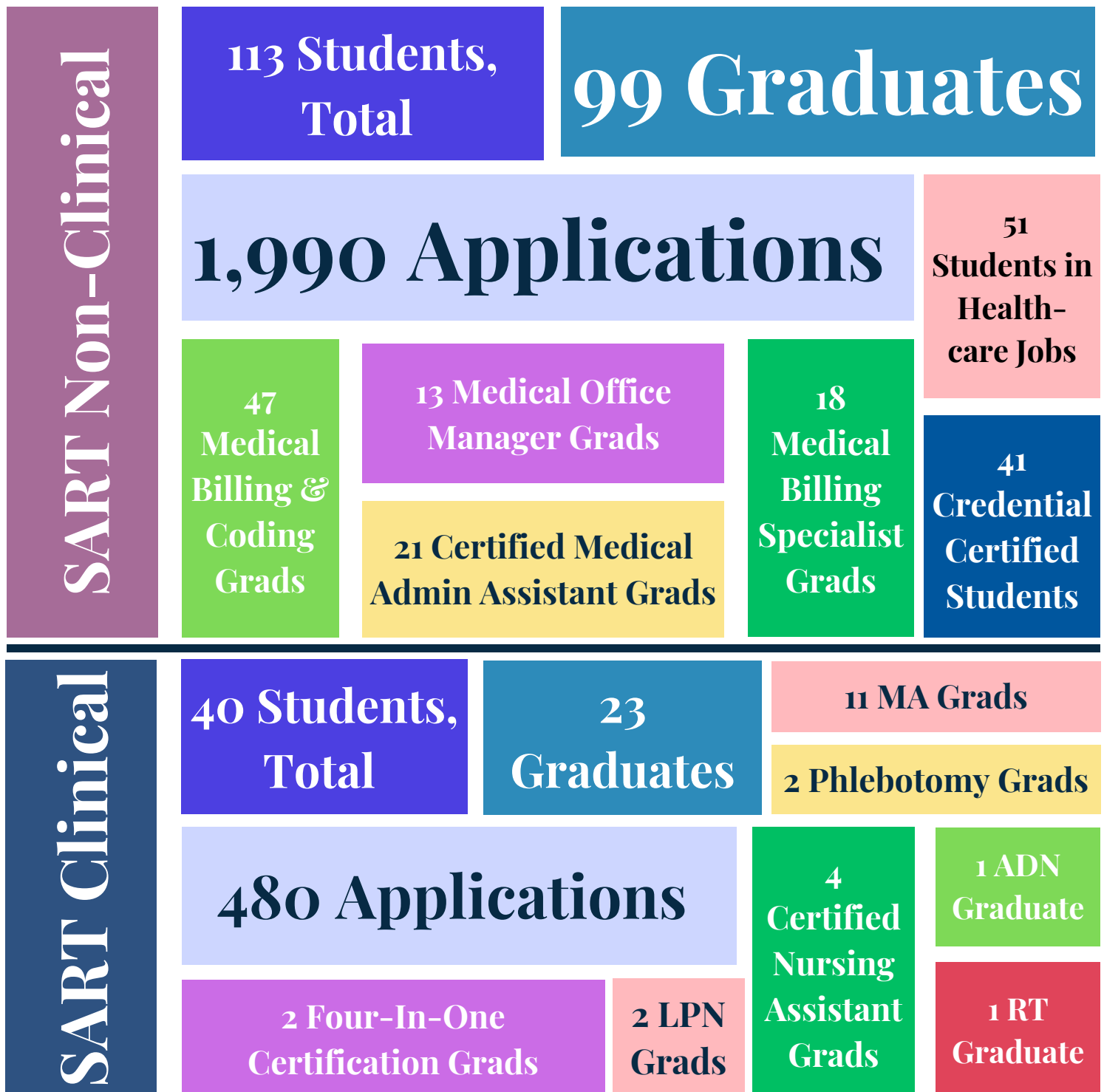
- Counties Impacted: Butler, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, and Monroe

Multiple Programs were offered as part of this grant, including:

- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)
- Certified Clinical Medical Assistant
- Three-in-One Certification with Phlebotomy, Medication Aide, and CNA
- Four-in-One Certification with Phlebotomy, EKG Tech, Patient Care Tech, Clinical Medical Assistant
- Medical Assistant Technology
- Associate Degree in Nursing
- Phlebotomy
- Respiratory Therapy



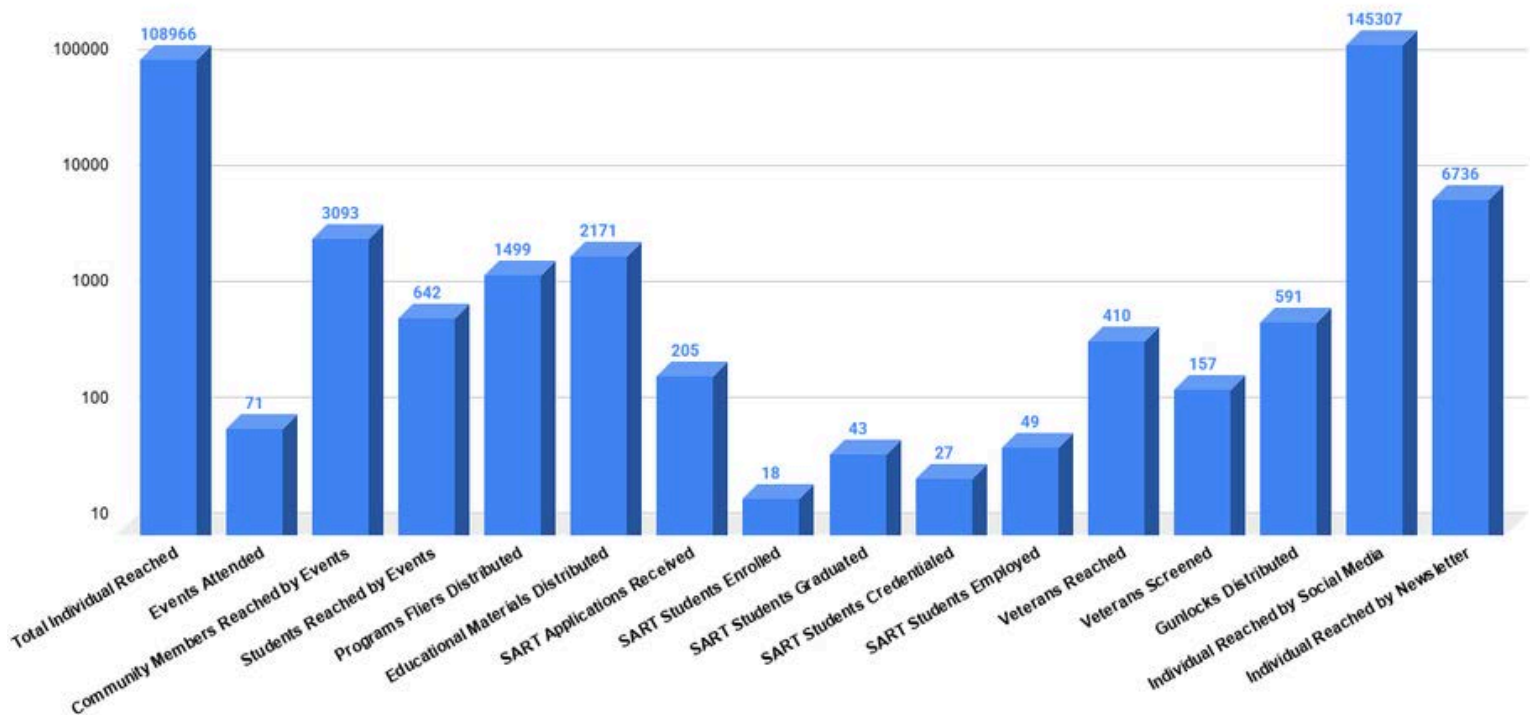
SART's Serving our Communities, by the Numbers



SAAHEC impact on the community

The following table illustrates the key impacts of our 2025–2026 fiscal year program initiatives

SAAHEC contribution at a glance



Fiscal Year 2025-2026

SAVE-A-VETERAN POLICE

SSG FOX participant testimonial

You are a true angel, and I believe this in my mind and soul. No words of kindness could ever express how truly grateful I am. Thank you for all the help with transportation for my doctor's visits, job placement, and everything else. Your support has truly been a Godsend.

I received my clothing voucher and Lyft transportation voucher this morning.

My Wave bus transit card has also been resolved, and breakfast was wonderful this morning with all the groceries you provided. Thank you all so very much for everything you have done for me. May God bless you and all that you do.

SOUTHERN ALABAMA AHEC

SAVE-A-VETERAN POLICE

SSG FOX participant testimonial

During one of the most difficult times in my life, SSG FOX team helped my daughter and me escape an abusive situation and homelessness. They provided temporary housing, connected us with an emergency shelter, and helped me access important benefits and resources. I am truly grateful for their support, encouragement, and dedication to Veterans. I will forever appreciate everything they have done for my family.

SOUTHERN ALABAMA AHEC

BUT
WAIT,

THERE'S
MORE!

NEW TO 2026



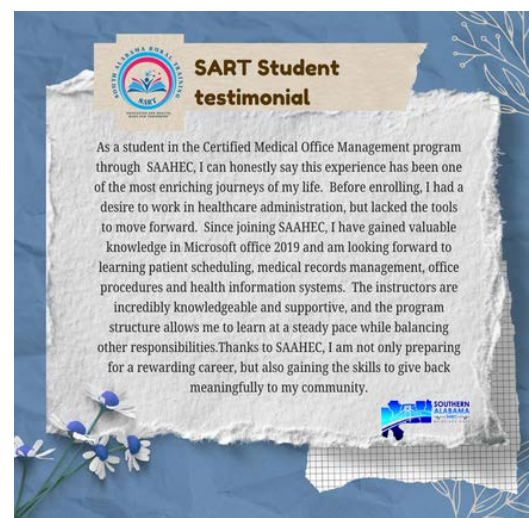
New to 2026: Grants & Programs

Daniel Foundation of Alabama Grant

In June 2026, Southern AL AHEC was awarded a two-year grant from the Daniel Foundation of Alabama to support the continuation and expansion of our South Alabama Rural Training (SART) Program. This funding will strengthen our efforts to provide workforce training opportunities, enhance healthcare career pathways, and expand access to training resources for individuals in rural communities across South Alabama. The South Alabama Rural Training (SART) Program is a community-based healthcare workforce development initiative led by Southern Alabama AHEC and overseen by our Associate Director, Ikbal Parveg. The program is designed to address critical healthcare workforce shortages across rural and underserved counties in the Alabama Delta Region by providing training, financial support, and career pathways for individuals pursuing healthcare careers. Through partnerships with healthcare providers, educational institutions, and community organizations, SART supports student recruitment, training, certification, and job placement in high-demand healthcare fields. The program has successfully trained over 100 participants, with approximately 70% completing training programs and 38% securing employment in healthcare in Alabama and/or Delta Region Counties specifically.

The primary purpose of this newly awarded additional project is to expand SART to increase access to training, strengthen the regional healthcare workforce, and improve long-term health outcomes in the communities served. This grant, which runs from 2026 through 2028, will enable SAAHEC to financially assist those in rural communities to pursue healthcare programs—such as certified medical assistant, certified nursing assistant, licensed practical nursing, and emergency medical technician—at academic institutions located in the SAAHEC region.

Counties Impacted: Alabama Delta Region counties.



SAAHEC Projects in Partnership with WCAAHEC

Rural Health Network Development (RHND)

In partnership with the West Central Alabama AHEC (WCAAHEC), the RHND program is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and works to implement the Rural Health Network Development (RHND) Goldenrod Outreach (GO) Initiative, a coordinated community-based approach involving multi-sectoral interventions to increase services for prevention, treatment, and long-term management among those at risk for diabetes and heart disease in rural Southwest Alabama.

Counties Impacted: Clarke, Escambia, Monroe, Choctaw, Marengo, and Sumter

Accomplishments:

- 1,371 diabetes and heart disease educational materials were distributed to raise awareness and promote prevention.
- **24 SAAHEC-sponsored diabetes classes were offered in Monroe County, reaching 28 individuals** directly due to SAAHEC's involvement and sponsorship through this grant.
- **Indirect lessons were offered at the Clarke and Monroe County senior centers, providing education to approximately 152 seniors.**



The Delta Region Maternal Care Coordination Program

In collaboration with the newly formed maternal care subcommittee of the Southwest Alabama Healthcare Collaborative (SAHC), we are implementing the project named AlaRISE (Alabama Resources Information Support and Empowerment) Maternal Care Coordination, funded by HRSA. For this project, we use a proven, coordinated approach involving a multi-sector intervention to improve and increase access to care for pregnant women and new mothers during and after pregnancy in several Alabama Delta Region Counties.

Counties Impacted: Butler, Clarke, Hale, Marengo, and Monroe

Goals of the program include:

- Utilize care coordination strategies to enhance and expand access to perinatal services through a strong, diverse network of entities that offer care during and after pregnancy
- Utilize evidence-based, promising practices and/or value-based care model(s) in the planning and delivery of perinatal services.
- Identify barriers to providing maternal health care in the region and strategies for addressing such barriers.
- Develop and implement sustainable care coordination strategies into policies, procedures, services, staffing, and communication systems (including billing for appropriate services)

Photo Fun!



SART
Graduation
Program









RHND



SAAHEC
Team



Serving
Community



Meeting



MAKING OUR STORY OF SERVICE, YOURS.



Join the SAAHEC Team through donations of time, service, or finances.

Sponsor a student, sponsor an event, or sponsor an employee training/conference!

*Thank You for
Your Support!*

Contact Us



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