



# GA-STRONG

STRENGTHENING THE REINVESTMENT OF A  
NECESSARY-WORKFORCE IN GEORGIA



**PROGRAM YEARS 1 (SFY 2023)  
& 2 (SFY 2024) IMPACTS**

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

GA-STRONG (Strengthening the Reinvestment of a Necessary-Workforce in Georgia) is a Medicaid Managed Care Hospital Directed Payment Program approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2022. GA-STRONG allows for the expansion of innovative programs leading to stabilization, development of the healthcare workforce, the improvement of statewide healthcare outcomes, and increased access to services. The participating hospitals, which include more than 20 eligible teaching hospitals with at least five full-time equivalent residents, are central to healthcare workforce redevelopment. The funds delivered through the program will allow these institutions to build on and expand innovative programs specific to their communities.

The core quality areas of focus include:

- Workforce retention and growth across the spectrum of care
- Incentivizing/prioritizing direct patient care
- Geographic Shortage Areas
- Accountability via robust hospital-specific reporting



# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In program year 1, GA-STRONG netted over \$675M for 20 participating hospitals, and in program year 2, GA-STRONG netted \$671M for 22 participating hospitals. Participating teaching hospitals across Georgia are required by the Department of Community Health (DCH) to allocate 10–20% of the funding provided through GA-STRONG toward stabilizing, developing, and growing the healthcare workforce. This supports the delivery of effective, efficient, and affordable care by core teaching hospitals and reinforces their teaching mission across the continuum of care.

This report summarizes performance in Program Year 1, State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023 (July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023) and Program Year 2, SFY 2024 (July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024), including evaluation measures and healthcare workforce reporting. The performance data reflects results from participating hospitals, as well as any updated data from prior periods.



# PROGRAM YEAR 1

SFY 2023 (JULY 1, 2022 - JUNE 30, 2023)

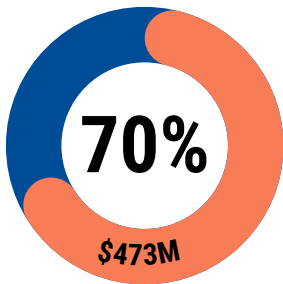
Participating hospitals FAR EXCEEDED the minimum requirement of a 10-20% investment of program dollars into the workforce.

SFY 2023 GA-STRONG Net Program Dollars

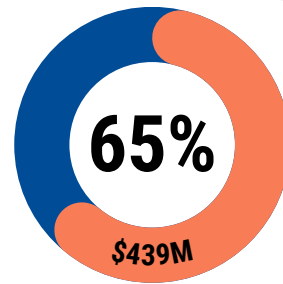
**\$675M**

for 20 hospitals

Program dollars are based on actual Medicaid CMO utilization and may vary annually.



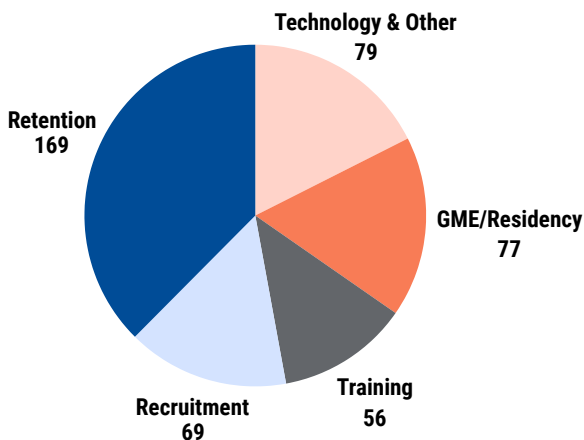
Of the net SFY 2023 GA-STRONG dollars (\$675M), 70% (\$473M) went to broad healthcare workforce activities.



Of the net SFY 2023 GA-STRONG dollars (\$675M), 65% (\$439M) went specifically to residency program expansions and improvements, workforce retention activities, and recruitment of new staff and learners.

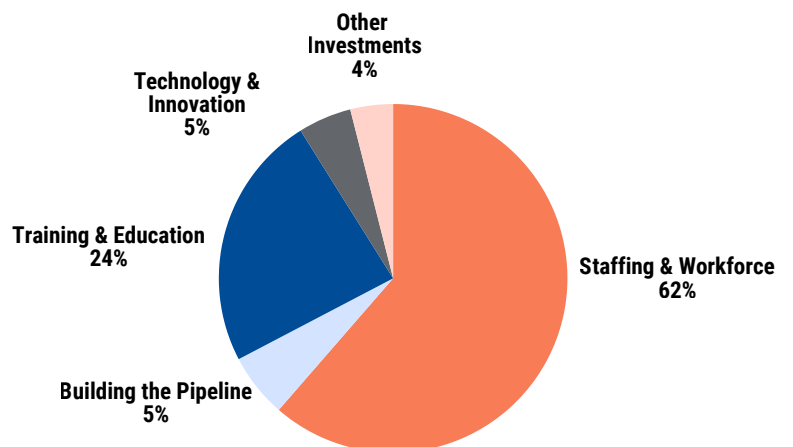
## Workforce Initiatives by Activity Type

Total 450



Workforce Initiatives by Activity Type summarizes the type and number of workforce initiatives implemented.

## Workforce Investments by Category



Workforce Investments by Category summarizes how the group split investment dollars between the workforce initiative categories.

# PROGRAM YEAR 2

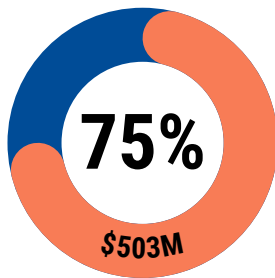
SFY 2024 (JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30, 2024)

Participating hospitals FAR EXCEEDED the minimum requirement of a 10-20% investment of program dollars into the workforce.

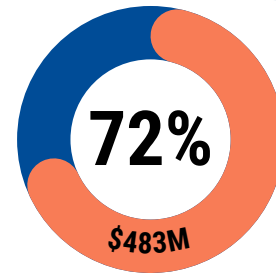
SFY 2024 GA-STRONG Net Program Dollars

**\$671M**  
for 22 hospitals

Program dollars are based on actual Medicaid CMO utilization and may vary annually.

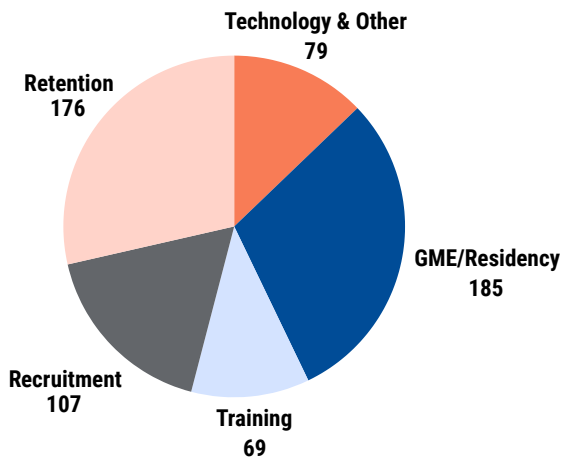


Of the net SFY 2024 GA-STRONG dollars (\$671M), 75% (\$503M) went to broad healthcare workforce activities.



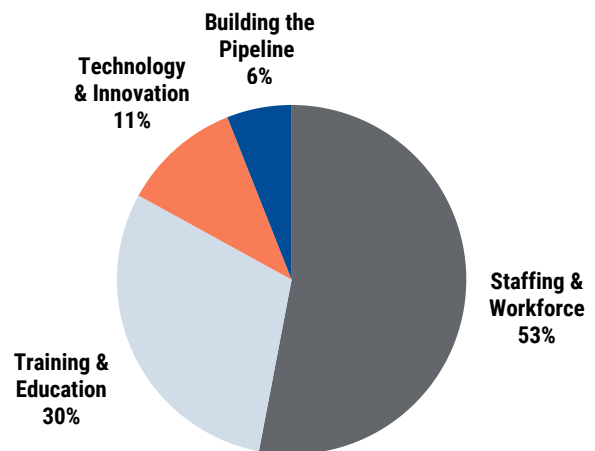
Of the net SFY 2024 GA-STRONG dollars (\$671M), 72% (\$483M) went specifically to residency program expansions and improvements, workforce retention activities, and recruitment of new staff and learners.

## Workforce Initiatives by Activity Type Total 616 - Up 166 initiatives over SFY 2023



Since the fall of 2023, GA-STRONG participants have submitted annual narrative and investment data. This data includes a list of improvement initiatives categorized by type of initiative.

## Workforce Investments by Category



Workforce Investments by Category summarizes how the GA-STRONG hospitals reported their Program Year 2 (SFY 2024) investment dollars, which are broken out into four categories.

# STATEWIDE IMPACT

## **SFY 2023 Participants**

AdventHealth Redmond

Atrium Health Floyd Medical Center

Atrium Health Navicent The Medical Center

Colquitt Regional Medical Center\*

Emory Healthcare (*Emory Decatur Hospital, Emory Hospital Warner Robins, Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital, Emory University Hospital and Emory University Hospital Midtown*)

Memorial Health University Medical Center

Northeast Georgia Medical Center

Northside Hospital Gwinnett

Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital\*

Piedmont Healthcare (*Piedmont Atlanta, Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center, Piedmont Augusta, Piedmont Columbus Regional, Piedmont Macon*)

St. Mary's Health Care System

Wellstar Kennestone Regional Medical Center

## **SFY 2024 New Participants**

Hamilton Medical Center

Wellstar MCG Health

## **SFY 2025 New Participants**

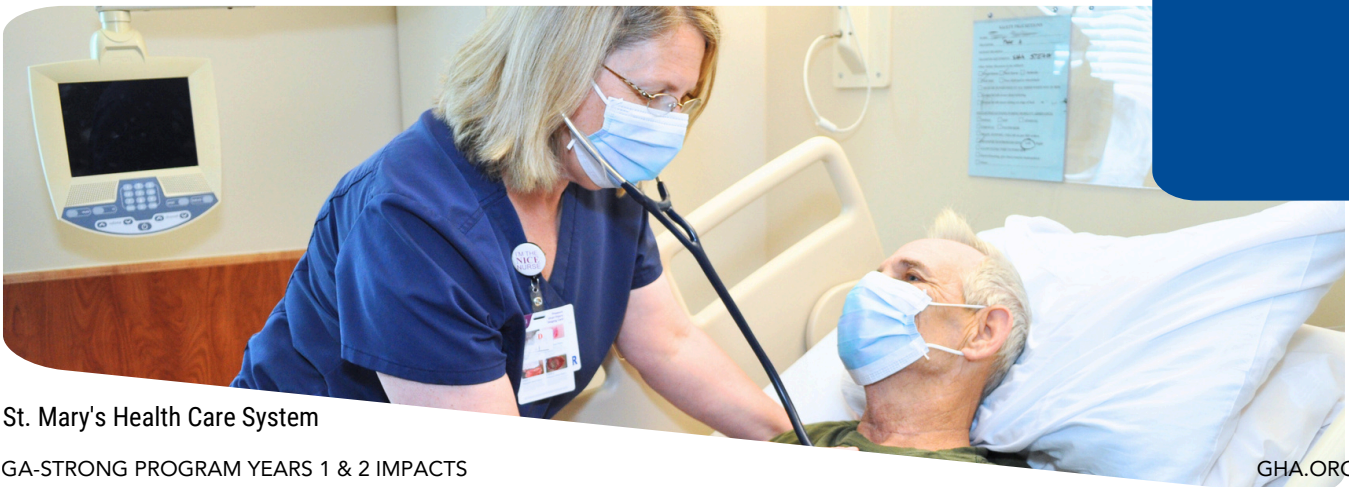
Archbold Memorial

St. Francis-Emory Healthcare

Fairview Park Hospital

Memorial Satilla Health

*\*In SFY 2025 these hospitals qualified for GA-AID and no longer participate in GA-STRONG.*

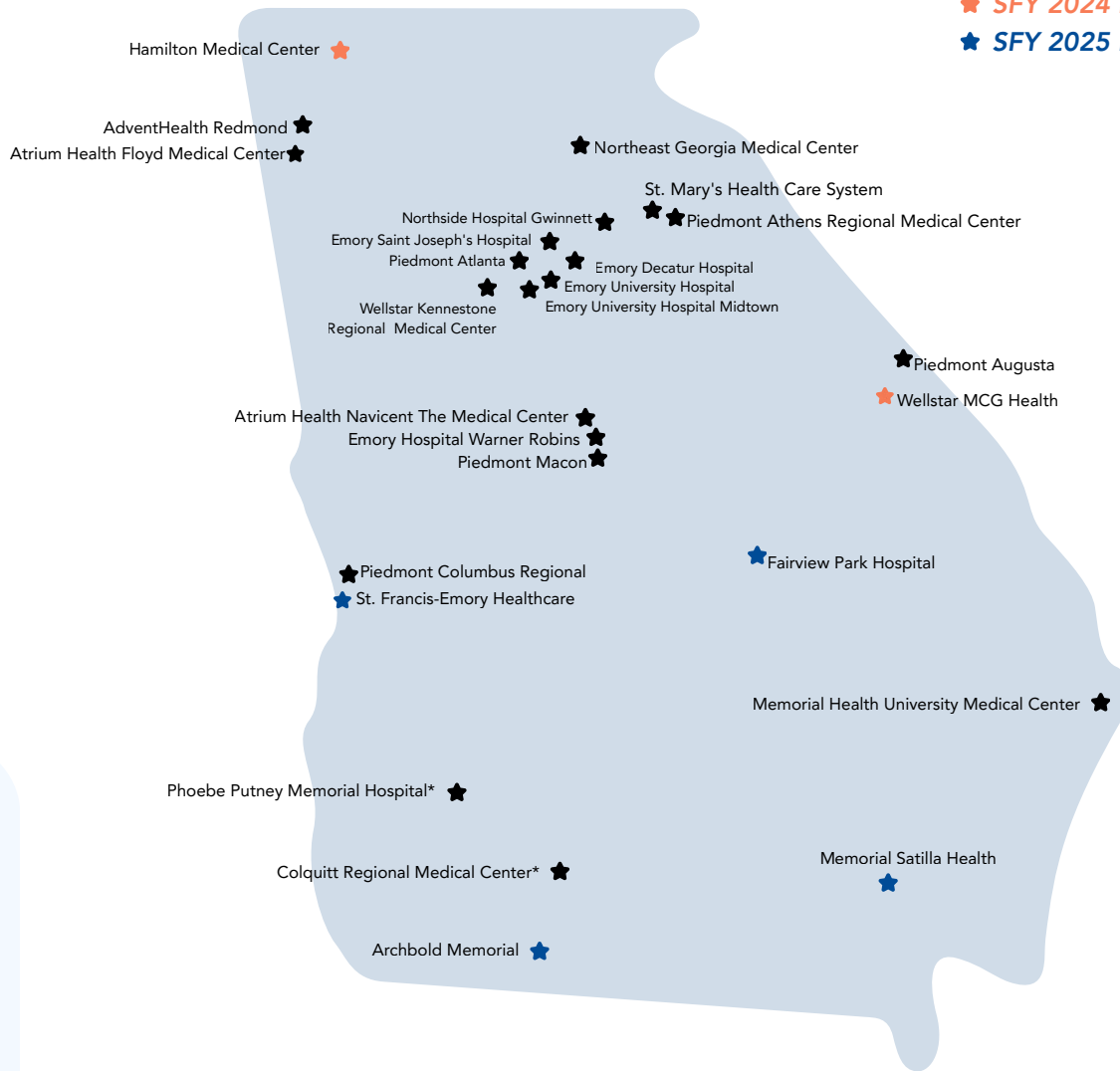


St. Mary's Health Care System

# STATEWIDE IMPACT

## GA-STRONG HOSPITAL LOCATIONS

- ★ SFY 2023 Participants
- ★ SFY 2024 New Participants
- ★ SFY 2025 New Participants



*\*In SFY 2025 these hospitals qualified for GA-AID and no longer participate in GA-STRONG.*

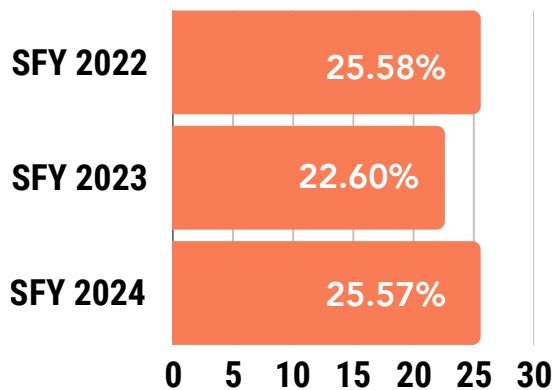
# REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

CMS requires that states evaluate each directed payment program’s impact on goals and objectives established in the State Quality Strategy. The three measures expected to be the most impacted by GA-STRONG include the rate of C-sections, readmissions, and emergency room diversions. During evaluation, CMS places more emphasis on improvement over the measure’s baseline than on achievement of the target.



## NTSV Cesarean Births:

The C-section rate for first-time mothers carrying one full-term baby in a head-down position.



## Healthy People 2030 Target

# 23.6%

**GA-STRONG hospitals surpassed this goal in SFY 2023.**

Performance declined in Program Year 2 (SFY 2024) 7.1% over Program Year 1 (SFY 2023), which was 22.60%, but the performance rate of 25.57% remained relatively unchanged from the baseline year (SFY 2022), which was 25.58%.

*Lower is better for all measures.*

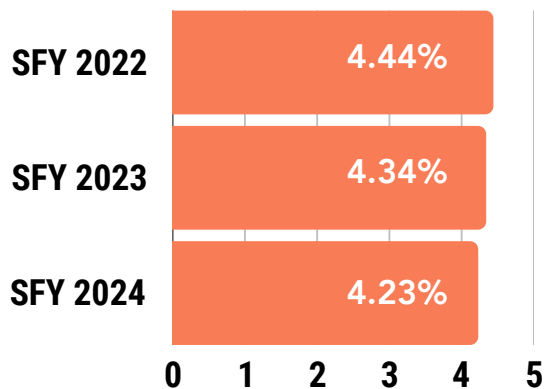


# REPORTING REQUIREMENTS



## 30-Day All-Cause Readmission Rate:

Percentage of patients age 18 and older who had to return to the same hospital unexpectedly within 30 days of being discharged.



# 14.67%

According to national data\*, 14.67% is the national average hospital readmission rate, which is far above (worse than) the performance of GA-STRONG hospitals.

# 7.1%

GA-STRONG hospitals had a 4.23% readmission rate average in SFY 2024, representing a 7.1% improvement in performance since the program began.

\*This national data comes from *Definitive Healthcare*, a data and analytics company. [www.definitivehc.com](http://www.definitivehc.com)

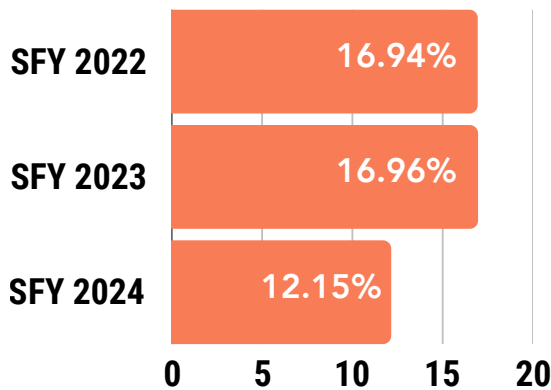


# REPORTING REQUIREMENTS



## Hospital Emergency Room (ER) Diversion Rate in Hours:

The percentage of time when the emergency room had to divert incoming ambulances to other hospitals.



## 190 Days

The decrease in the diversion rate at GA-STRONG hospitals equates to a 28.4% improvement over baseline, which equates to approximately 4,600 hours or 190 days of additional access to the ER.

In SFY 2023, the ER Diversion Rate remained stable, and in SFY 2024, the ER Diversion Rate decreased from 16.96% to 12.15%.

*Lower is better for all measures.*





# HOSPITAL IMPACT

Hamilton Medical Center

## **AdventHealth Redmond**

AdventHealth Redmond is actively developing a new medical student pathway aimed at pre-matching students into its internal medicine residency program, with a focus on retaining graduates to practice in the local community. The hospital appointed a Pulmonary Critical Care Medicine Associate Program director to lead the development of a critical care curriculum. This move enhances the Graduate Medical Education (GME) leadership by incorporating core subspecialist representation. As part of this effort, AdventHealth Redmond is refining its ICU curriculum and rotation structure to provide comprehensive critical care training for residents.

## **Atrium Health Floyd Medical Center**

Through partnerships with Georgia Highlands College and Georgia Northwestern Technical College, Atrium Health Floyd Medical Center aims to increase RN graduates by 50% and expand programs in respiratory care, radiology technology, and licensed practical nurse (LPN) training. The hospital increased clinical staff wages, reduced vacancies by over 50%, and expanded emergency department triage staffing. Atrium Health Floyd is growing its family medicine residency program and implementing the "Rise to Success" initiative to sponsor healthcare education for high school graduates. While expanding emergency medical services (EMS) and building a freestanding emergency department in underserved Chattooga County, they've invested in advanced medical technologies, including neurosurgery navigation equipment and an orthopedic surgical robot.

## Atrium Health Navicent The Medical Center

Atrium Health Navicent The Medical Center's "Rise to Success" and "Bridge to Success" programs enable high school graduates and existing employees to earn healthcare-related degrees, adding 30 new team members to patient care support areas in 2023. A new emergency medical technician extern program offers 14 training opportunities, while expanded LiveWell clinics in technical colleges reduce onboarding time. The center conducted market studies leading to competitive pay adjustments for various roles, implemented merit increases, and expanded tuition reimbursement through the Bright Horizons EdAssist program. Additionally, investment in telehealth, including virtual school visits, has expanded access to care.

## Colquitt Regional Medical Center

Some of Colquitt Regional Medical Center's initiatives include establishing a nurse preceptor program to expand training for new nurse graduates, forming a partnership with an area technical college to expedite the training and hiring of LPNs and certified nursing assistants (CNAs), and working on a 40,000-square-foot education/simulation center.

## Emory Healthcare

*(Emory Decatur Hospital, Emory Hospital Warner Robins, Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital, Emory University Hospital and Emory University Hospital Midtown)*

Emory Decatur Hospital hired a new full-time residency coordinator to build partnerships with area technical colleges. This collaboration has resulted in 50 new nurse graduates, helping stabilize the workforce. At Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital, a new skills-based compensation program will increase recruits and reduce turnover. At Emory University Hospital, the GA-STRONG program helped fund residency programs for pathologists, pharmacists, registered nurses, and physicians. Emory University Hospital Midtown utilized GA-STRONG dollars to support its role as a primary medical laboratory science program clinical site, where staff from multiple facilities participate in didactic lectures and clinical rotations. Emory Hospital Warner Robins, formerly Houston Healthcare, established a collaborative partnership with the local community college, allowing its educators to serve as adjunct nursing instructors. The hospital also implemented a comprehensive nurse residency program.



Atrium Health Floyd Medical Center



Emory Hospital Warner Robins

## **Hamilton Medical Center**

Hamilton Medical Center is using GA-STRONG funds to support a variety of programs. Some projects include: Certified Health Care Environmental Service Technician (CHEST) certification, advanced training for frontline environmental services staff that focuses on maintaining a clean, safe, and healthy environment; Culture Fair, an inclusive workforce diversity event that creates an atmosphere of learning, unity, and cultural appreciation; nurse residency, training to help new nurses transition from academic learning to clinical practice through hands-on experience, mentorship, and professional development opportunities; nursing educators, a robust mentor program that provides ongoing training and support to nursing staff by educators embedded throughout the organization; wellness benefit, programs that support employees with resources that enhance overall well-being, including the purchase of software for tracking employee wellness and longevity milestones; nurse extern program, an opportunity for nursing students in the last two years of school to work and learn alongside a Hamilton registered nurse.

## **Memorial Health University Medical Center**

Memorial Health is expanding its primary care services by hiring additional primary care physicians to support the growth of its rural track residency program. This initiative aims to enhance healthcare access in underserved areas. The medical center is also hiring more family medicine and internal medicine faculty to accommodate the growing needs of its residency programs, ensuring that residents receive comprehensive training and mentorship. Memorial Health has implemented market adjustments across multiple disciplines, helping to attract and retain top talent in various medical fields.



Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital

## Northeast Georgia Medical Center

GA-STRONG funding has helped Northeast Georgia Medical Center launch an online well-being platform for staff and expand its GME programs, adding new residencies in emergency medicine and psychiatry, and a fellowship in cardiovascular medicine. They partnered with local colleges to support nursing programs, including funding an accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. The medical center also invested in a state-of-the-art simulation center and mobile unit for community outreach. They restructured their talent acquisition team, adding 11 recruiter positions and three sourcing roles to partner with area schools to improve their healthcare workforce pipeline.

## Northside Hospital Gwinnett

Northside Hospital Gwinnett has implemented a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) school and patient care technician (PCT) internship program. This initiative offers an 18-day course to train employees as CNAs and PCTs, with students receiving pay while completing the program. Following the course, participants transition to an eight-week PCT internship to gain practical experience in the hospital setting. Thanks to this program, 47 new hires have been brought on board, reflecting Northside Gwinnett's focus on workforce development and enhanced patient care made possible through GA-STRONG funding.

## Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital

Phoebe Putney sustained high-reliability quality initiatives that improve outcomes for Medicaid enrollees. In collaboration with Southwest Georgia Area Health Education Center, Phoebe's family medicine residency program supported the "Pathway to Med School Program" to address the shortage of primary care physicians in Southwest Georgia. College students in Southwest Georgia receive a full day of hands-on training in the simulation center. The hospital launched innovative partnerships with the Savannah College of Art and Design, Medical College of Georgia, and Albany Technical College.

## **Piedmont Healthcare**

*(Piedmont Atlanta, Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center, Piedmont Augusta, Piedmont Columbus Regional, Piedmont Macon)*

Piedmont Healthcare is leveraging funding from the GA-STRONG program to expand its nursing scholarship program and implement virtual nursing across its network. Using remote electronic monitoring and visual communication technology, this initiative is being rolled out over the next two to three fiscal years to enhance patient care and efficiency in all Piedmont hospitals. Additionally, the Piedmont 2.0 Recruitment program aims to boost the hiring of clinical professionals while promoting Piedmont as a top destination for healthcare careers and professional growth.

## **St. Mary's Health Care System**

St. Mary's Health Care System launched a clinical ladder program to aid retention by recognizing nurses who continue to develop their skills and remain committed to quality outcomes and patient safety. The hospital addressed workload concerns by hiring additional support staff, particularly in high-turnover areas like the intermediate care unit (IMCU) and 5th surgical unit, where turnover rates previously exceeded 40%. St. Mary's implemented a virtual nursing program, allowing for expanded patient ratios and mentorship opportunities, and established surgical services training cohorts to combat staffing shortages in the operating room. The hospital further supported recruitment and retention through sign-on and referral bonuses, an internal staffing agency called FirstChoice, and staffing incentive programs for critical shifts.

## **Wellstar Kennestone Regional Medical Center**

Wellstar Kennestone Regional Medical Center has utilized funding from the GA-STRONG program to support its GME specialty rotation housing initiative. This program provides temporary, free-of-cost housing for emergency medicine residents during their pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) rotations in Augusta, ensuring they receive critical clinical exposure without the burden of housing expenses.

## **Wellstar MCG Health**

Wellstar MCG Health has been working to establish programs designed to improve workforce retention, community partnerships through clinical programs and pipeline development, while also working to improve access to new educational opportunities. The GA-STRONG funds have allowed Wellstar MCG Health to make key investments in training and education, technology and innovation, building the pipeline, and their existing staff and workforce. Wellstar MCG Health continues to partner with Augusta University to increase our GME offerings to enhance educational opportunities for future healthcare leaders. MCG Health also invested heavily in increasing the salaries of radiologists to counter the national shortage this key specialty is experiencing nationwide. Wellstar also continues to invest in outreach efforts with the continued investment in digital health and telemedicine programs to expand its footprint to the underserved rural areas of Georgia.

\*The contents of this report cover program years one and two and are subject to updates in future years.



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