



# Rural Health Association of Tennessee TennCare Advocacy and Outreach

*Annual Report for Grant Contract Edison Number 78046*

*April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024*

*This program or service is supported by the Department of Health and Human Services Under Title I of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and is therefore prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or ability.*

## 2024 Annual Report TennCare Advocacy and Outreach Services

Grantee Name: Rural Health Association of Tennessee (Edison Vendor ID: 92463)

Grant Contract Edison Number: 78046

Grant Year Term: 04/01/2023-3/31/2024

Grant Term: 04/01/2023 – 03/31/2025

Grant Amount: \$1,000,000

### Program Overview

Rural Health Association of Tennessee (RHA) has been leading the way toward a healthy Tennessee through partnerships, advocacy, education, and resources since 1994. RHA's 800+ members include rural and urban providers, hospitals, clinics, school health professionals, mental and behavioral health providers, and others who work to address health disparities in rural and other minority populations. Our members reach all 95 counties across Tennessee.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the [U.S. Congress enacted the Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\)](#). Among other things, FFCRA required state Medicaid programs keep beneficiaries enrolled through the end of the Public Health Emergency (PHE) in exchange for enhanced federal funding. In 2022, [RHA received a grant through Tennessee Department of Health \(TDH\)](#) to build strategies and best practices to reduce COVID-19 risk across the state of Tennessee in underserved and rural communities. As part of this work, RHA established a [Health Insurance Enrollment Assistance Program](#) to support providers and their patients through the PHE and subsequent unwinding period. RHA hired Andrew Hawkins, BS who has nearly 12 years' experience assisting individuals enroll in TennCare and Affordable Care Act (ACA) Marketplace plans.

In preparation of the PHE ending, RHA signed a contract with the State of Tennessee, Department of Finance and Administration, Division of TennCare (TennCare) for "Advocacy and Outreach Services During the COVID-19 Unwinding Period." This contract allowed RHA to expand upon and later sustain the work that began as part of the TDH contract. Scope of services and deliverables include performing stateside outreach to assist TennCare members through the renewal process and advocacy services that includes operating a statewide hotline (866-675-7092) and monthly community events.

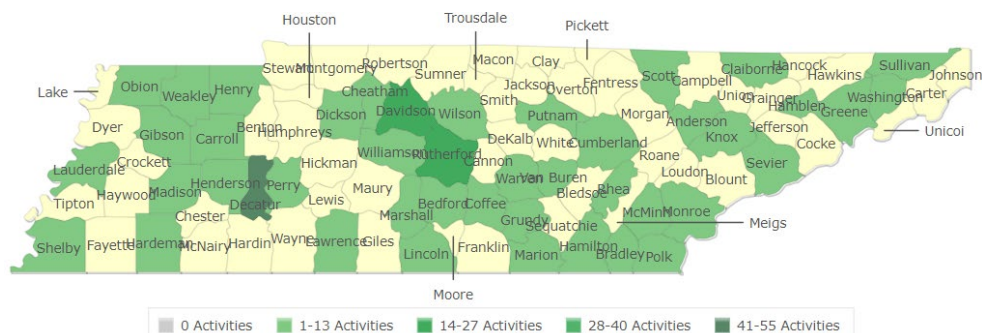
In the first year of the contract, RHA conducted 20 outreach events, made 24,175+ outbound calls to TennCare members, and provided direct renewal assistance to 1,641 people. The enclosed report outlines the activities and services provided April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024.

## Outreach Events

Rural Health Association of Tennessee’s (RHA) Community Health Workers (CHW) spend half their time conducting outreach events and making outbound calls to TennCare Members. Each month RHA’s Community Health Workers attend 1 community event aimed at reaching families and providers, in addition to weekly outreach at a healthcare facility, attending County Health Councils, and other events.

In Year 1, RHA attended 20 events in 16 counties. 4 events had a statewide or regional audience. RHA has a weekly presence at St. Louise Clinic in Murfreesboro and Hometown Health Clinic in McKenzie. When including additional outreach activities, RHA’s CHWs attended more than 125 events in at least 44 counties (see map below). Activities in the map do not include outreach by other RHA staff not funded by this grant or counties reached via events with statewide or regional audiences.

Event Name	County	Date
Anderson County & Clinton City Schools Family Resource Event	Anderson	May 11, 2023
Servolution Health Services, Community Health Fair	Claiborne	May 23, 2023
Rural Health Clinic Annual Event (Murfreesboro)	Regional	June 15, 2023
Resurrected Baptist Church, Community Resource Fair	Hamilton	June 24, 2023
Family & Children’s Services Back to School Bash	Davidson	July 29, 2023
Dickson County Community Baby Shower	Dickson	August 12, 2023
Enrollment Event -Linebaugh Library	Davidson	August 24, 2023
Obion County Back to School Bash	Obion	August 26, 2023
Westwood Elementary – Adult ELL Class	Coffee	September 15, 2023
Tennessee Public Health Association Conference (Murfreesboro)	Statewide	September 20-21st
Maury County Recovery Fest	Maury	September 23, 2023
Senior Fair and Event for Parents and Community	Gibson	September 25, 2023
Perry County Community Baby Shower	Perry	October 28, 2023
Lauderdale Community Fair	Lauderdale	October 28, 2023
Rural Health Association of TN Annual Conference (Knoxville)	Statewide	Nov. 15-17, 2023
Hometown Health Clinic Open House	Henry	December 9, 2023
Communal Healing Health Fair/Centenary United Methodist Church	Shelby	January 27, 2024
Milan Special School District Resource Event	Gibson	February 5, 2024
East Tennessee Regional Event (Johnson City)	Regional	March 19, 2024
Coffee County Community Resource Fair	Coffee	March 21, 2024
St. Louise Clinic – Ascension St. Thomas (on-site assistance)	Rutherford	Weekly
Hometown Health Clinic (on-site assistance)	Henry	Weekly



Source: TruServ (Activities by TN County)

## Special Outreach and Advocacy Services

RHA has a toll-free hotline that has steadily increased in the volume of calls over the past year. In Year 1 the hotline received a total of 780 calls from people seeking assistance enrolling in healthcare. This phone line is staffed by advocates trained in customer service, conflict resolution, and other soft skills. The hotline is staffed between 8am and 5pm, central time. Outside of these standard hours, callers will be greeted by a recording with English and Spanish options and the opportunity to leave a voicemail. Voicemails are returned within the same business day.

The hotline is menu driven and supports a process to connect individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and/or hearing and speech disabilities through our contract with a company called SpokenHere. Additionally, one of RHA’s Community Health Workers is a native Spanish speaker to assist Spanish speaking individuals and families when needed.

### April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024 Totals

Total Accounts Opened	69
Total Completed Renewal Packets	1,530
Total Completed Reenrollment Applications	42
Total Hotline Calls Received	780
Total Hotline Calls Answered	698
Number of Abandoned Calls	58
Average # of Staff Available to Answer Calls	3
Total Outgoing Calls (from TennCare list)	24,175
RESULTS: [Scheduled Appointment]	1,674
RESULTS: [Already Renewed]	2,743
RESULTS: [Left Voicemail]	7,631
RESULTS: [No Voicemail]	4,172
RESULTS: [Bad Number]	4,665
RESULTS: [No Number]	632
RESULTS: [Doesn't Want Assistance]	1,427
RESULTS: [Provided TennCare Direct #]	456
RESULTS: [Modified Appointment]	14

\*All calls are answered within 60 seconds of receipt of an incoming call, unless all staff are on another call, at which time the call rings to a monitored voicemail. All voicemails or missed calls are returned same day.

\*As of January 2024, RHA maintains a 2% or less Weekly Average Abandonment Rate for incoming calls. Prior to February 2024, RHA was including any calls that were not immediately answered and a return call placed in the totals reported. After communication with TennCare, we now understand that calls missed while staff are on another call and immediately returned same day are not considered abandoned and are now not included in our monthly totals.

RHA is also pleased to have reached many underserved communities in both rural and urban settings. Additionally, information about the unwinding period has been shared by all staff with County Health Councils and members that include school health, hospitals, FQHCs, clinics, and other community-based organizations. [RHA’s Enrollment Webpage](#) received nearly 10,000 visits and through RHA’s Rural Health Digest Newsletters reached more than 3,000 subscribers in the below newsletters:

- [April 2023](#)
- [May 2023](#)
- [August 2023](#)
- [October 2023](#)
- [December 2023](#)
- [January 2024](#)
- [February 2024](#)
- [March 2024](#)

## Successes and Challenges

TennCare’s success in auto renewing TennCare members through the “ex parte” process that matched data sources from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) with TennCare eligibility, has made the unwinding period an overall success.

TennCare, advocacy organizations, and providers were so prepared for the unwinding process that when RHA’s team made phone calls, they were often told by the TennCare member (or prior member) that they had been contacted multiple times and assisted by other agencies.

This directly impacted RHA’s anticipated enrollments and earned revenue, as RHA is paid per renewal packet completed as opposed to time and effort conducting advocacy and outreach. For example, in the chart on page 4 of the 24,000+ calls made, it is noted that 2,743 people had already renewed, 1,247 did not need/want assistance, and 456 were referred to TennCare Direct. This resulted in approximately \$111,150 in unrealized revenue for RHA. Also, RHA did not do an event in April 2023 as the contract had just begun, resulting in another \$20k under budget. These things together would have put RHA at 80% of the projected goal/budget.

Another reason for being under budget was a misunderstanding of the per person assisted vs. renewal packet completed (which can assist multiple family members). If RHA had billed \$25/person assisted instead of \$25/renewal, it is estimated that RHA would have earned an additional \$10,150.

RHA structured the contract to pay 50% for outreach (\$20,833.00 per monthly “event”) and is therefore able to invoice enough money monthly to fund 4 FTE instead of the planned 6 FTE as was in the application. Given what we know now, RHA would like to re-negotiate the per enrollment fee and/or discuss the possibility of a no-cost extension beyond the anticipated contract end date of March 2025.

RHA is thankful for this opportunity to collaborate with TennCare in the goal of improving access to care and health outcomes among Tennessee’s Medicaid population. This contract has allowed us to engage with members, communities, and new partners in a meaningful way. It is our hope to sustain this program beyond the term of the contract, especially since the TDH funding previously mentioned ended May 31, 2024. We look forward to continuing to strengthen and expand this program in Year 2.

## Acknowledgements

A special thanks to RHA employees Andrew Hawkins, Enrollment Director; Jyssie Molina, Becky White, and Ivy McDaniel (retired) Community Health Workers, and Alicia Calloway, Chief Operating Officer for leading the activities associated with this grant.

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