

# Virginia Rural Health Plan 2022-2026 and Data Commons

Presenting on behalf of the  
Virginia State Office of Rural Health

Clarissa Noble, MPH  
Sarah O'Connor, MPH



*This publication was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$125,236.09, with 100 percent funded by HRSA/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA/HHS, or the U.S. Government.*



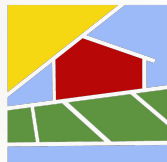
# Presentation Overview

- Approach to the 2022-2026 Virginia Rural Health Plan (VRHP)
- Defining Rurality
- VRHP Topics
  - Highlight: Built & Natural Environments
- VRHP in Action
- Rural Health Data Commons
- Lessons Learned & Moving Forward



Kiptopeke State Park

📷: Rachel Stevens



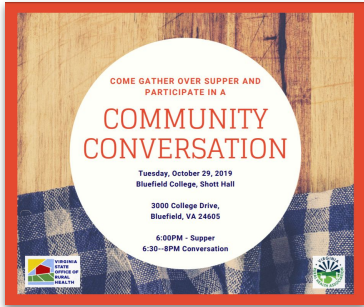
# Virginia State Office of Rural Health (VA-SORH)

## Mission

To partner with rural communities; identify opportunities and long-term solutions that ensure the health and prosperity of rural Virginia

*The VA-SORH is dedicated to:*

- Fostering collaboration and leveraging resources across and within various levels of government, communities, and non-profit organizations
- Collecting and disseminating information to stakeholders
- Providing technical assistance
- Assisting the coordination of rural health interests statewide
- Recruitment and retention of health professionals in rural and medically underserved areas



# Virginia Rural Health Plan(ning)

*Goals: The Virginia Rural Health Plan would have a community-informed lens & best define rurality for the Commonwealth*

## Question:

- What is most important to a rural community?

## Approach:

- Meet people where they are through community-driven conversations
- Hold conversations in a familiar and centralized locality
- Trusted community member to facilitate the conversation
- Absolutely **NO PowerPoint presentation**
- Converse over a warm meal provided by a local restaurant
- Schedule visits with local leaders, anchor institutions, agencies and/or grassroots organizations
- Asset-based



Community Conversation  
Bluefield, VA



Bland Ministry Center  
Bland, VA

# Virginia Rural Health Plan(ning) continued

## Community Profile Patrick & Henry Counties

### Community Conversation #3 - Patrick County Summary of Patrick and Henry Counties

#### Top priority health-related issues identified during most recent assessment:

- 1. Affordable Health Care**  
More physicians, affordable care and medications, mental health and substance abuse services, dental services, healthy living education
  - 2. Transportation**  
Community-based transportation initiatives, public transportation, medical, employment and critical need transportation, services in rural areas
  - 3. Employment**  
Hard and soft skill training, living wage
  - 4. Affordable Housing**  
Safe, affordable, energy efficient, accessible and age appropriate housing. Housing assistance, homeless & homeless prevention services, weatherization, resources for veterans and returning citizens
  - 5. Education/youth services**  
High school (graduation) and post-secondary education (access), knowledge of available resources, financial literacy, college/trade school access, after school and summer, teen pregnancy awareness/education
  - 6. Child Care**  
Early Head Start program in Henry County, after school and summer programs, services for disabled children, prenatal care
  - 7. Food Security**  
Food deserts, access to affordable, nutritious food, stable access to food
  - 8. Motivation/desire/commitment to escape poverty**
- Top priority health-related issues identified during most recent assessment:
1. Access to primary care
  2. High cost of care
  3. Access to dental care
  4. Access to mental / behavioral health services
  5. Transportation / transit system
  6. Poverty / low household income
  7. Alcohol and drug use
  8. Culture: health behaviors not a priority
  9. Lack of health literacy / lack of knowledge of healthy behaviors
  10. Coordination of care

#### Community Protective Factors/Bright Spots:

**The Faith Community Grace Network** is a network of churches, pastors and ministry leaders that have pooled their resources to equip, assist and strengthen one another and provide opportunities for fellowship and accountability, while still recognizing the autonomy of each local church.

**Piedmont Community Services.** The District is working with the organization on drug abuse issues including a recently concluded evaluation of drug-related health issues and intervention solutions.

**West Piedmont District Planning Commission.** In addition to being data partners, the health district and the planning commission work together on big-picture projects relating to improving the health of the region. **Complete Streets** is an example of this partnership.

**Franklin County Family YMCA, Martinsville-Henry County YMCA.** YMCA organizations in Franklin and Henry counties provide programs that encourage physical activity for the entire family.

**Go Healthy West Piedmont** is a Centers for Disease Control-funded project led by the WPHD. The district-wide initiative is helping adults at risk for diabetes and other chronic diseases make lifestyle changes for long-term good health and educating the community about better food choices via vending machine, restaurant and cafeteria inventories.

**Community Giving Gardens** provide thousands of pounds of fresh produce to the region's food banks and soup kitchens effectively improving the quality of food that is available to the poor. Educational outreach ensures that people receiving the produce are able to prepare it in an economical and healthy manner.



Community Center  
Pennington Gap, VA



Grayson County Community Conversation  
hosted at the County Administrator's Office



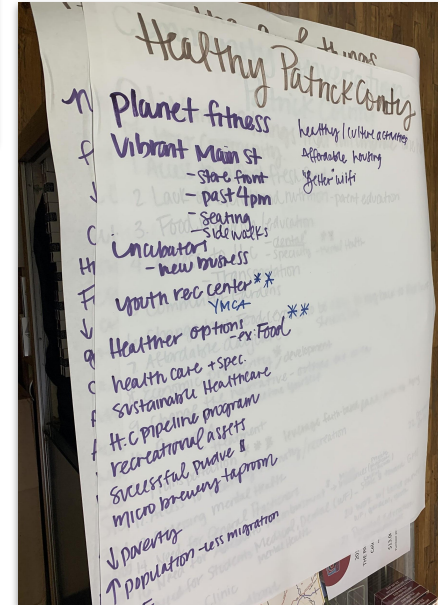
Youth Health Equity Leadership  
Institute (YHELI)  
George Washington High School  
Danville, VA



United Way of  
Southwest Virginia

Lee County Conversation led  
by Community Champion

Table conversation notes  
Stuart, VA



# Virginia Rural Health Plan Roadmap

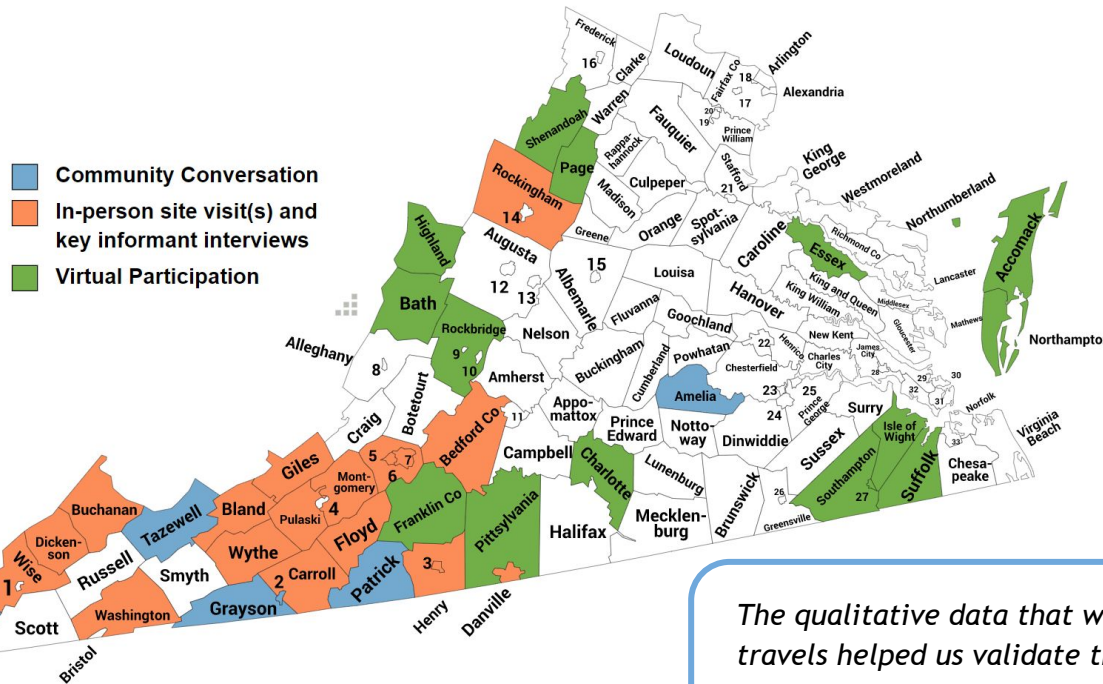
## Determining Community Conversation Locations

- RWJF's Community Health Rankings
- ARC's Economic Distress Index
- OHE's Health Opportunity Index
- Lived Experience of VDH staff

## Data Collection, Analysis and Results

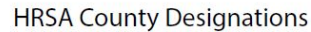
- Qualitative data analysis identified recurring topics/themes
  - Framework of the plan
- Asset-based approach
- Identified community/regional leading and promising practices

*The qualitative data that we collected during our travels helped us validate the quantitative data, and informed us of upstream root causes to rural inequities that hadn't yet been quantified*



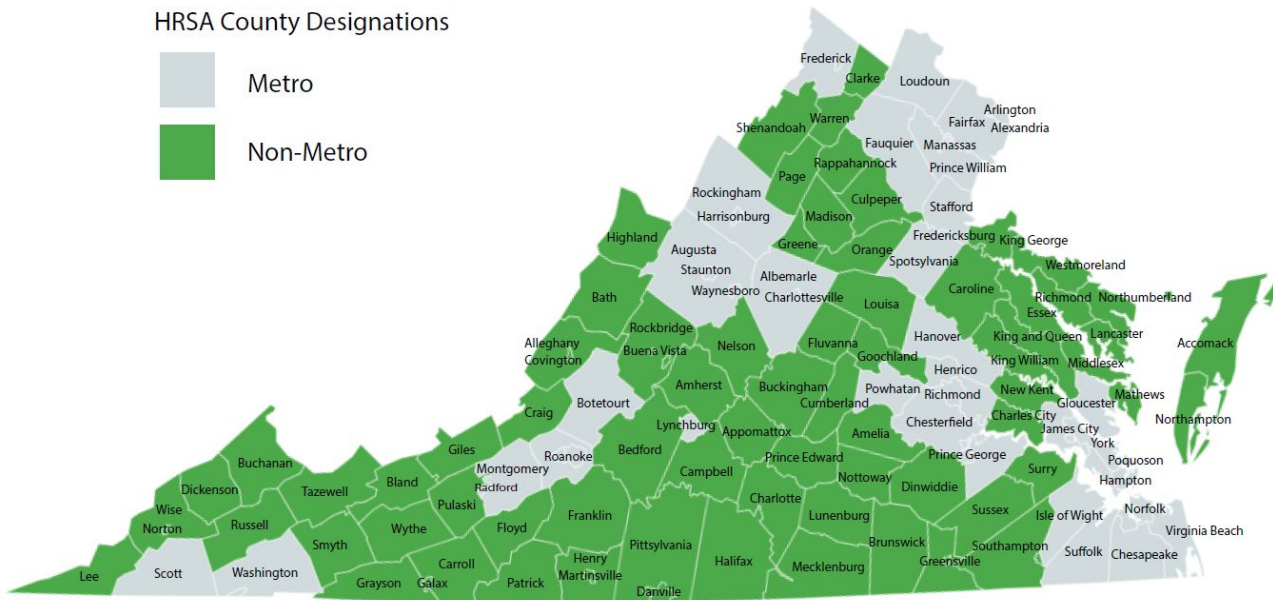
# Defining Rurality

- Rural Virginia is diverse in geography, demographics, and cultural identity
- Definitions vary based on the lens (economic, statistical classifications, funding opportunities)
- Rurality exists within the shadows of urban cores and suburban areas



Metro

Non-Metro

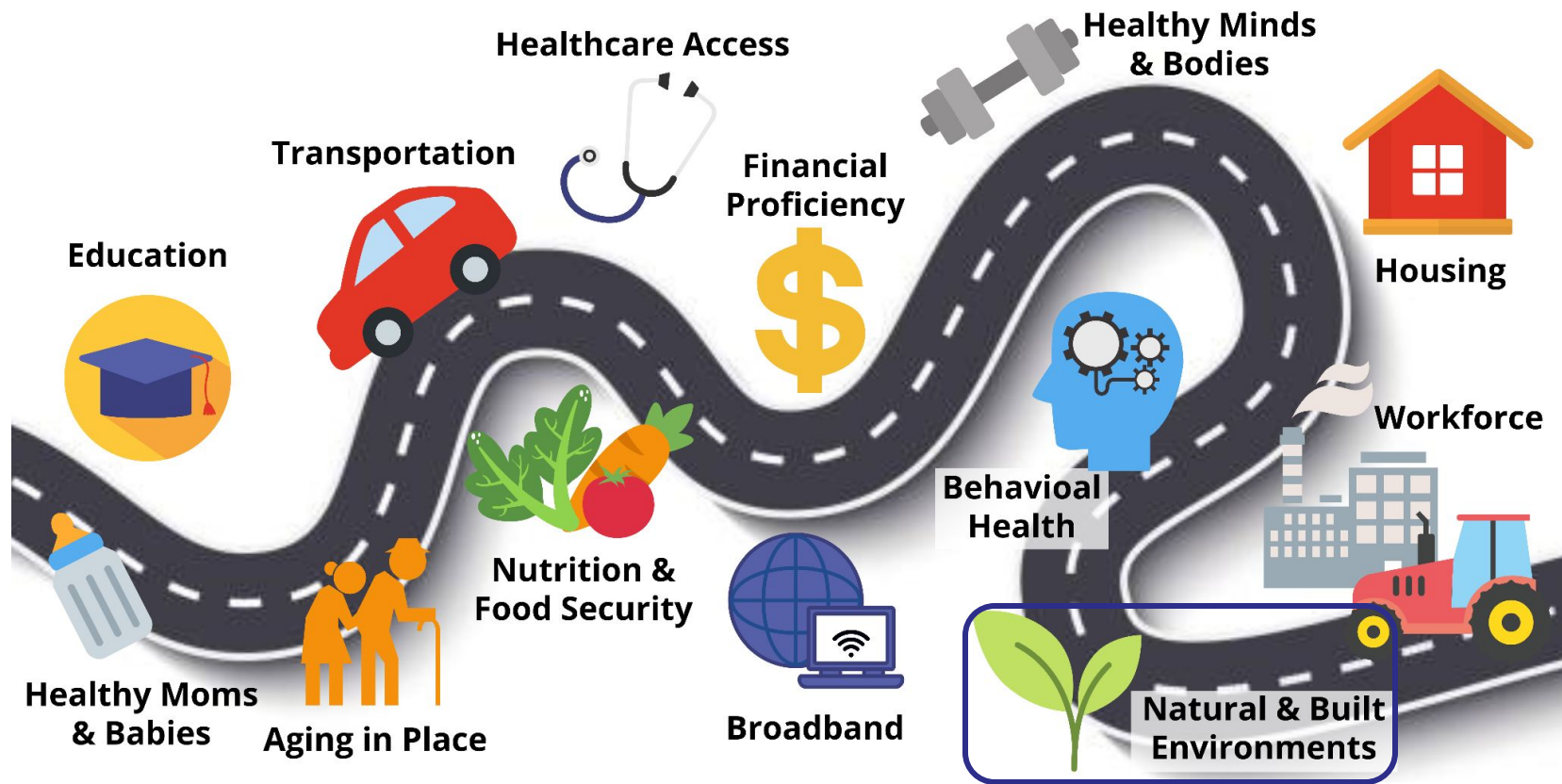


*Tazewell County*



*Accomack County*

# Virginia Rural Health Plan 2022-2026 Topics



## Spotlight: Built and Natural Environments

*“Where we live influences how well we live. You might say that our zip code is more important than our genetic code.” - RWJF*

### Leading Practice: Virginia Main Street

Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

**Need addressed:** Helping localities revitalize downtown commercial districts

**Approach:** Comprehensive and incremental approach centered around a community’s unique heritage and attributes.

**Outcome:** Communities develop their own strategies to stimulate long-term economic growth and pride in their traditional or commercial districts, also known as, downtowns.



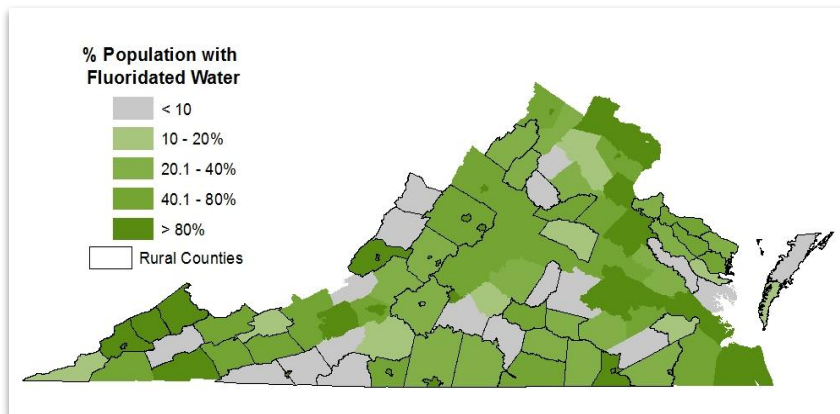
### Southern Virginia Food Hub Project | Community Vitality Grant | \$7,000

The Southern Virginia Food Hub (SVFH) in South Hill utilized DHCD funding to provide additional support for the SVFH producer services coordinator, focusing on community outreach efforts to ensure broad public awareness of SVFH services. The project led to increased foot traffic downtown, assisted new food businesses to become viable and provided the community with healthy food options for personal and commercial purposes.

# Virginia Rural Plan in Action: Water Equity Taskforce

- Opportunity for Growth:
  - Employ Health in All Policies (HiAP), Collaborating across sectors to improve health
- Invitation to join the Virginia Health Catalyst's Water Equity Taskforce (WET)
- Cross-sector group of invested stakeholders, working to ensure water in Virginia is equitably accessible, safe, trusted, and fluoridated, and that people want to drink it.
- The group identifies concrete and actionable strategies to:
  - Address access issues related to race and income inequities;
  - Improve water literacy;
  - Fund water systems and infrastructure; and,
  - Encourage water consumption.

## Intersection between Health and Built Environment Case Study: Water Fluoridation



# VA-SORH Longitudinal Priority Metrics

## 1. Education

- Child Readiness via Third Grade Standards of Learning Reading Assessment

## 2. Broadband

- Percentage of Households with Broadband

## 3. Nutrition and Food Security

- Rates of Food Security
- Rates of Food Insecurity among Households with Children

## 4. Healthy Moms and Babies

- Adequacy of Prenatal Care Utilization via Kotelchuck Index

## 5. Access to Health Care Services

- Rates of Avoidable Hospitalizations per 100,000 Residents

## 6. Behavioral Health, Substance Use Disorder and Recovery

- Rates of Emergency Department Visits for Overdose (All drugs)

## 7. Employment/Workforce Development

- Earnings/Income per Job
- Employment Rates per Census Tract

# Rural Health Data Commons



UVA

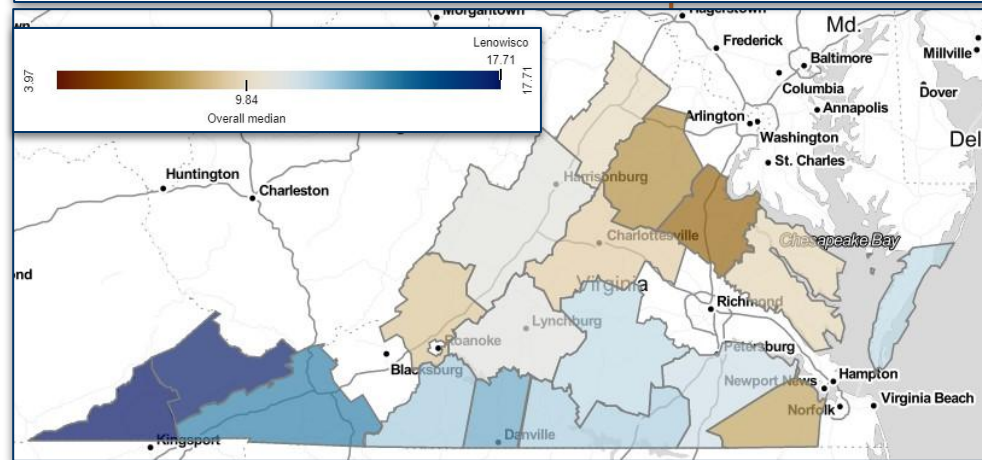
BIOCOMPLEXITY  
INSTITUTE

## PURPOSE

### BRING VIRGINIA RURAL HEALTH PLAN TO LIFE

- **AMPLIFY**  
understanding of priority areas
- **PROVIDE**  
opportunity to explore current data insights to dive deeper into regions, communities, or neighborhoods
- **CREATE**  
a sustainable tool with current data ingested over time
- **SUPPORT**  
multiple audiences

#### Food Insecurity Rate, Rural and Mixed Health Districts, 2019



# Rural Health Data Commons

An open knowledge repository that co-locates data from a variety of sources, builds and curates data insights, and provides tools designed to track issues over time and geography allowing governments and community stakeholders to learn continuously from their own data.

## PURPOSE

### INTENDED AUDIENCE

- General public
- Virginia government: elected officials and agency personnel
- Community stakeholders and leaders: local government, NGOs, business and industry
- Researchers: universities, institutes, think tanks
- Health professionals

**A Data Commons allows multiple audiences to explore issues relevant to their communities.**

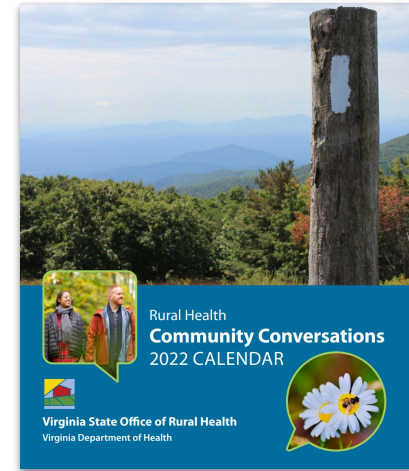
RURAL HEALTH  
DATA COMMONS

### Features

- Data sources, collected and created
- Maps reflecting multiple geographies
- Composite metrics
- Navigation and capability to statistically explore the data
- Data download via web or API

# Lessons Learned & Moving Beyond 2022

- **Be Adaptable & Flexible**
- **Marketing/Outreach**
  - Unique to each community
  - Social media, radio, local newspaper, canvassing main street & businesses
  - Leverage local partnerships
- **Go outside your comfort zone**
  - Grassroot community canvassing & cold calling
- **Qualitative data is just as meaningful as quantitative data collection to inform meaningful policy/strategic planning**
  - Validity to the quantitative data/information
  - Provide new information to follow up on/explore
- **Look for ways to stay in touch**
  - Follow-up (resources, funding opportunities, information)
  - Provide communities something tangible (Community Calendar)
  - Cross-sector partnerships/collaborations to move the needle



# Acknowledgements

- **The Health Resources and Services Administration, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy**
- **Virginia Department of Health**
  - Virginia Rural Hospital Flexibility Program
  - Office of the Commissioner
  - Office of Emergency Medical Services
    - Division of Community Health and Technical Resources
  - Office of Health Equity
    - Division of Social Epidemiology
- **Virginia Rural Health Association**
- **Virginia Department of General Services**
  - Office of Graphic Communications
- **Virginia Rural Health Plan Working Group**
  - Heather Anderson, MPH
  - Clarissa Noble, MPH
  - Sarah O'Connor, MPH
  - Ellie Wilson
  - Carole Pratt, DDS
  - Brenden Rivenbark, MHDS
  - Tim Perkins
  - Hannah Lyons
  - Justin Crow, MPA
- The communities and community members of Amelia, Bedford, Bland, Bluefield, Danville, Dickenson, the Eastern Shore, Grayson, Galax City, Highland, Independence (Grayson), Laurel Fork (Carroll), the New River Valley, Page, Pennington Gap (Lee County), Stuart (Patrick County), Western Tidewater, Wytheville (Wythe) and the 2019-2020 Danville George Washington High School Youth Health Equity Leadership Institute (YHELI) program.



Orange County Virginia

# Contact Information & Links



Stone Mountain Health Services Black Lung Clinic  
St. Charles, VA

Heather Anderson, MPH  
Director, Division of Primary Care & Rural Health  
[Heather.Anderson@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Heather.Anderson@vdh.virginia.gov)

Sarah O'Connor, MPH  
SORH Program Coordinator  
[Sarah.Oconnor@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Sarah.Oconnor@vdh.virginia.gov)

Clarissa Noble, MPH  
Rural Health Manager  
[Clarissa.Noble@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Clarissa.Noble@vdh.virginia.gov)

Ellie Wilson  
SORH Outreach/PR Specialist  
[Ellie.Wilson@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Ellie.Wilson@vdh.virginia.gov)

[VRHP 2022-2026](#)

[Request a Copy of the VRHP](#)

[Rural Resource Toolkit](#)

[Submit Feedback on VRHP](#)

[Rural Health Data Commons](#)