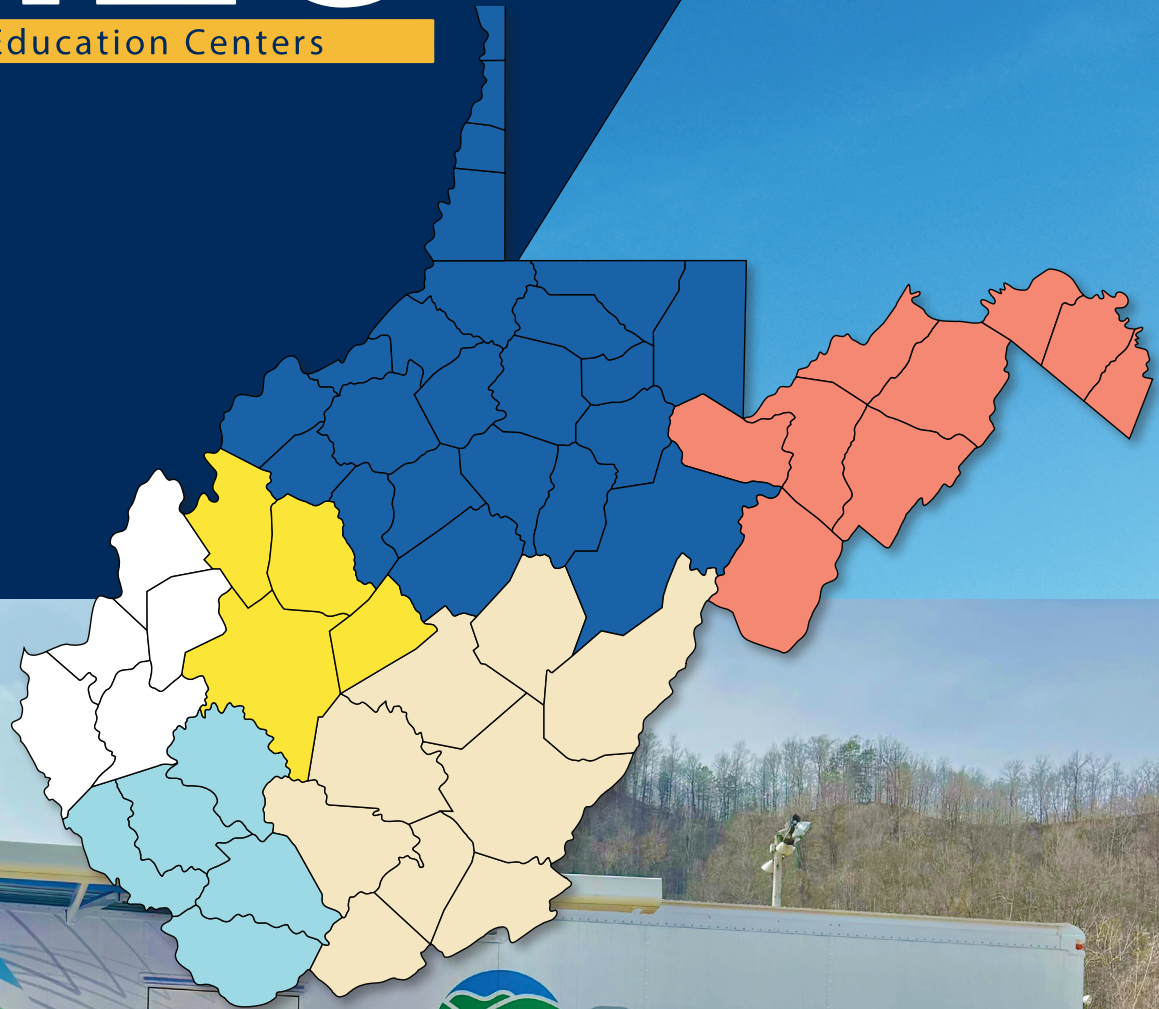


WEST VIRGINIA

AHEC

Area Health Education Centers



2024 Report

Dedicated to Community Health

West Virginia Area Health Education Centers

health.wvu.edu/ahec

West Virginia AHEC is a *HRSA-funded rural health program housed within the West Virginia University Institute for Community and Rural Health.

Dr. Larry A. Rhodes

Executive Director Rural Programs

WV AHEC Staff

Dr. Brianna Sheppard

Director and Principal Investigator

Terry Wooten

Associate Director

Kisstaman Epps

AHEC Scholars Program Manager

Hannah Ihnat

Program Coordinator

Central WV AHEC

Adam Flack

Center Director

Eastern WV AHEC

Morgan Wright

Executive Director

Candus Sutphin

Center Director

Ashlee Hedrick

Rural Experiences Specialist

Northern WV AHEC

Amanda Fisher

Center Director

Donna Rollyson

Americorps Mental Health First Aid Instructor

Southeastern WV AHEC

Angela Alston

Center Director

Amy McIntire

Administrative Assistant

Southern WV AHEC

Audrianna Ray

Center Director

Rebecca Johnson

Program Coordinator

WVU Institute for Community and Rural Health

health.wvu.edu/rural-health/

April Vestal

Director

Dr. Victoria Sanchez

Director of Research and Evaluation

Dr. Mohammad Alam

Senior Research Specialist

Rachel Baker

Project Manager

Donna Bush

Southern Housing Coordinator

Jacquelynn Copenhaver

Grants Administrator

Dr. Megan Govindan

Research Scientist

Heather Hanks

Program Manager

Molly Linkous

Program Specialist

Nikki Luna

Senior Manager of Development and Communications

Olivia McConnell

Program Manager

Jamie Riffle

Northern Housing Coordinator

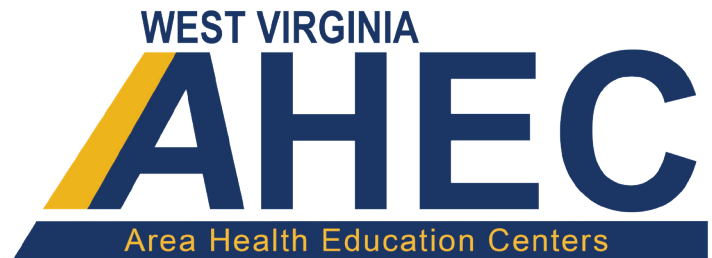
Matthew Walker

Research Specialist

Christie Zachary

Program Manager, Student Outreach and Marketing

*The West Virginia Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program is funded in part by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number U77HP16458. The total program cost is \$1,653,960.91, of which \$823,295.00 (49.8%) is financed by federal funds and \$830,665.91 (50.2%) is financed by non-federal sources. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.



A Mission Born from Community Needs

In the mountains of West Virginia, the West Virginia Area Health Education Centers (WV AHEC) Program builds bridges that connect education, service, and opportunity. With a mission to improve the health of communities by developing an interprofessional workforce prepared to address the health needs of rural and medically underserved communities of West Virginia, WV AHEC is more than a program; it's a commitment to growing a workforce that understands and uplifts the people it serves.

The national Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) program was established by Congress in 1971 to improve healthcare access in underserved areas. By linking academic institutions with community-based training, AHECs were designed to recruit and retain health professionals in rural and disadvantaged regions. Today, this federally supported network continues to strengthen the healthcare workforce through education, outreach, and strategic partnerships.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to improve the health of our communities by developing an interprofessional workforce prepared to address the health needs of rural and underserved communities of West Virginia.

Executive Summary

In 2023–2024, the WV AHEC Program continued to strengthen the state’s healthcare workforce by connecting students of all ages with hands-on learning in rural and underserved communities. This report highlights the programs, partnerships, and outcomes that demonstrate WV AHEC’s impact over the past year. Across its five regional Centers, WV AHEC offered immersive experiences focused on community health, food security, women’s health, policy, and interprofessional teamwork. High school students explored health careers through pipeline programs and partnerships with initiatives like the Health Sciences & Technology Academy (HSTA), while current health professions students completed more than a thousand clinical rotations supervised by preceptors across West Virginia—most in medically underserved or rural areas.

The WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars Program continued to build future leaders through interprofessional education, community-based training, and didactic modules exploring cultural competency, addiction, chronic disease, and trauma-informed care. Students reported stronger confidence in collaborating across disciplines and a deeper appreciation for rural health needs. Together, these efforts reflect WV AHEC’s ongoing commitment to growing a homegrown, community-centered healthcare workforce prepared to serve West Virginia.



Message From the Director

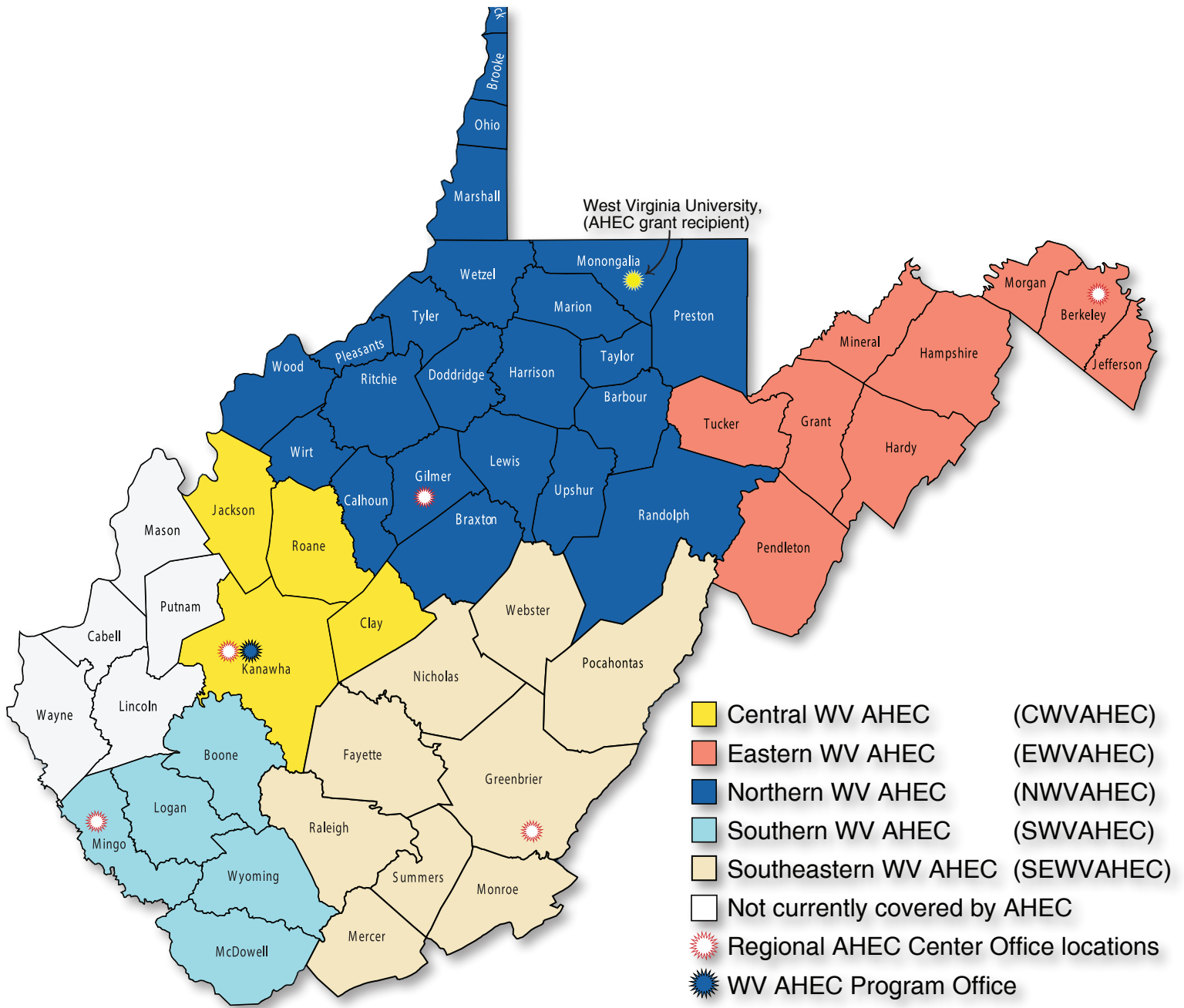
As we look back on the 2023-2024 program year, I’m proud to share the progress and impact made by WV AHEC. Our five regional Centers have worked closely with communities to spark interest in health careers and support students on their journey into the healthcare workforce. Each Center brings its own strengths to this important work, but all share a common goal: building a skilled, compassionate, and dedicated workforce that serves where it’s needed most.

We’re grateful to our partners, educators, preceptors, and students for their continued dedication. With your support, WV AHEC will keep building bridges—between people, professions, and possibilities.



Dr. Brianna Sheppard
Director and Principal Investigator

West Virginia AHEC Centers



A Statewide Network for Community-Based Health Education

The WV AHEC Program operates through a coordinated structure that includes a central Program Office and five regional Centers, each serving distinct geographic areas of the state.

The Program Office, located at the West Virginia University (WVU) Health Sciences Center Charleston Division, provides strategic guidance, oversight, and support to the regional Centers. It collaborates with each Center to develop annual program plans aligned with federal HRSA grant requirements and state workforce priorities. The Program Office also facilitates partnerships and monitors progress to ensure statewide impact.

Each regional AHEC Center is embedded within a local organization and tailored to meet the unique needs of its service area:

- Central WV AHEC, hosted by Cabin Creek Health Systems, serves Clay, Jackson, Kanawha, and Roane counties.
 - Eastern WV AHEC, a nonprofit based in Martinsburg, covers nine counties in the Eastern Panhandle.
 - Northern WV AHEC, a nonprofit headquartered at Glenville State University, supports 23 counties across north-central and northern West Virginia.
 - Southeastern WV AHEC, located in Lewisburg, is hosted by Mountain State Osteopathic Postdoctoral Training Institutions (MSOPTI) and serves nine counties in the southeastern region.
 - Southern WV AHEC, hosted by Williamson Health and Wellness Center, serves five counties in the southern coalfields region.
- Together, these Centers work with local communities, healthcare providers, and academic institutions to deliver community-based training, promote health careers, and strengthen the rural healthcare workforce across West Virginia.



WV AHEC Centers Spotlight

Central WV Area Health Education Center (CWVAHEC)

Charleston, WV

Counties Served

Clay, Jackson, Kanawha, Roane

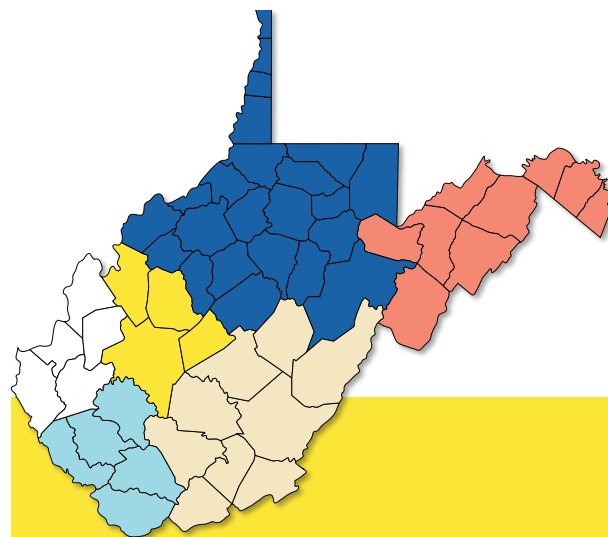
Central WV AHEC: Strengthening the Pipeline through Partnerships and Immersive Learning

Central WV AHEC fostered powerful connections between students, providers, and communities this year through immersive experiences that emphasized advocacy, service, and holistic health.

In partnership with community organizations across their service area, Central WV AHEC launched the West Side Youth Intervention, a summer program designed to engage local youth in health education, mindfulness, and exploration of healthcare careers. Working alongside the Jr. Master Gardeners Program, students participated in weekly lessons that combined hands-on science and wellness — from handwashing and garden safety to understanding nutrition, movement, and mental well-being. Health professions students and behavioral health providers from Cabin Creek Health Systems joined the sessions, sharing their own journeys into healthcare and inspiring campers to imagine futures in the field.

Throughout the fall, Central WV AHEC expanded learning through a two-part workshop series on Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) and Implicit Bias, guiding students to explore how community context and personal awareness influence patient care. Participants compared national screening tools, identified local referral resources, and practiced strategies like PAUSE to address bias in healthcare decision-making.

The Center also provided interprofessional clinical experiences through its Rural Women's Health



Staff

Adam Flack, Center Director

Host Agency

Cabin Creek Health Systems

Interprofessional Team (IPT) experience, where a group of interprofessional students including individuals studying to be nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians and physician assistants worked with Cabin Creek Health System and partner clinics to provide care for women and families. The experience exposed learners to the realities of healthcare system access barriers and the social and cultural factors that shape women's health in rural West Virginia.

Rounding out a year of impactful learning, Central WV AHEC hosted the Rural Immersion *Provider Advocacy in Rural Communities through Policy and Outreach*, an intensive three-day experience that immersed students in the state's policymaking process. From blood pressure screenings at Rural Health Day at the Legislature to candid discussions with lawmakers, advocates, and service providers, participants gained firsthand insight into how clinical voices can influence health policy. Through panels with community partners such as the United Way of Central WV, WV Center on Budget and Policy, and Solutions Oriented Addiction Response of WV (SOAR WV), students learned that advocacy begins with understanding — and that lasting change often starts at the intersection of community, care, and policy.

WV AHEC Centers Spotlight

Eastern WV Area Health Education Center, Inc. (EWVAHEC)

Martinsburg, WV

Counties Served

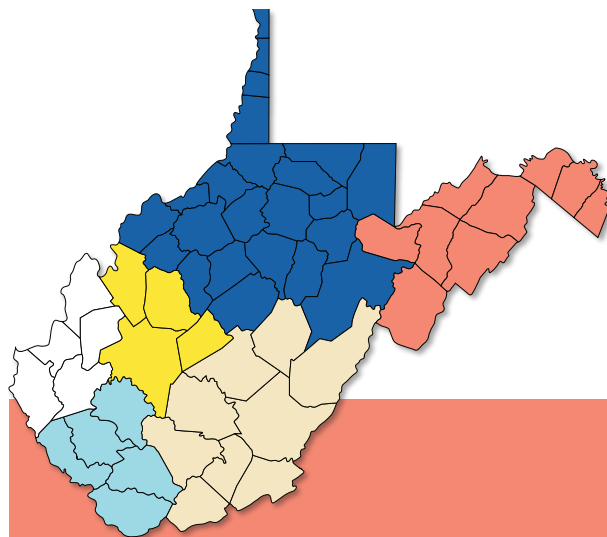
Berkeley, Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Jefferson, Mineral, Morgan, Pendleton, Tucker

Eastern WV AHEC: Empowering Communities and Inspiring Future Healthcare Leaders

Eastern WV AHEC brought students into the heart of Berkeley Springs for a three-day Rural Immersion on *Food Insecurity and Nutrition in Rural Communities*, blending hands-on service, interprofessional learning, and community connection.

Participants explored how access to healthy food shapes overall health by engaging directly with local organizations, farms, and families in Morgan County. They began their experience by joining a *Farm to You* event at the Berkeley Springs Family Medicine Clinic, where they toured the rural practice, spoke with providers about their work, and helped share fresh, seasonal produce with patients. Students also toured Glascock's Produce Farm to see local agriculture in action before preparing a group dinner using the same ingredients provided at the clinic event.

Throughout the immersion, teamwork and reflection were built into student learning. They bonded during horseback riding at Good Luck Stable and volunteering at the local community kitchen, where they prepared and served meals to residents in need. Representatives from Starting Points of Morgan County shared their efforts to reduce food insecurity through family-focused initiatives, and the experience concluded with an interactive session led by Morgan County's WVU Extension Agent, where students learned about SNAP, tended a small gardening activity, and packed boxes for the community food pantry.



Staff

Morgan Wright, Executive Director
Candus Sutphin, Center Director
Ashlee Hedrick, Rural Experiences
Specialist

Host Agency

The Eastern WV AHEC is a stand-alone
501(c)(3) non-profit organization

By the end of the weekend, participants left with a deeper understanding of how food access, community engagement, and rural healthcare intertwine — and how collaboration can create lasting change in the health of West Virginia's communities.

Eastern WV AHEC strengthened its youth pipeline this year through two active Health Careers Clubs serving high school students across Berkeley and Grant counties. The Berkeley County Health Careers Club engaged students in grades 9–12 in public health career exploration and mentorship, offering 20 hours of interactive programming to help them understand pathways into the health professions. Similarly, the Petersburg High School Health Careers Club provided a comprehensive introduction to healthcare careers through presentations, hands-on demonstrations, CPR and First Aid training, and a college visit. Both clubs were delivered in partnership with local schools, healthcare organizations, and community collaborators, and together supported 24 students—all of whom completed the program. These clubs continue to play an important role in sparking early interest in health careers and preparing students for future training opportunities in the region.

WV AHEC Centers Spotlight

Northern WV Area Health Education Center, Inc. (NWVAHEC)

Glenville, WV

Counties Served

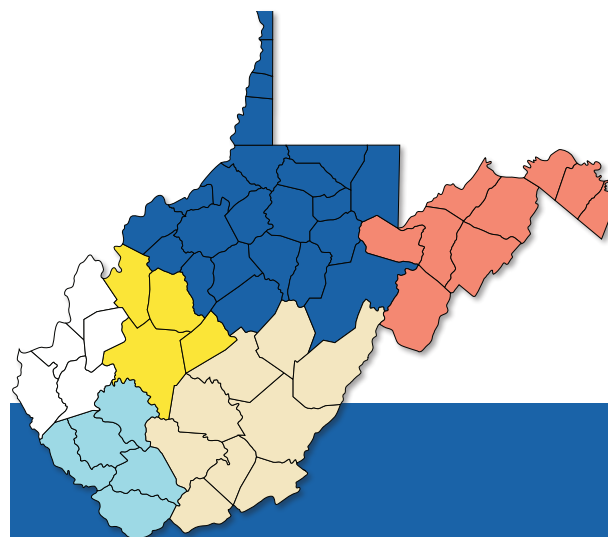
Barbour, Braxton, Brooke, Calhoun, Doddridge, Gilmer, Hancock, Harrison, Lewis, Marion, Marshall, Monongalia, Ohio, Pleasants, Preston, Randolph, Ritchie, Taylor, Tyler, Upshur, Wetzel, Wirt, Wood

Northern WV AHEC: Building Bridges to Health Careers and Strengthening Rural Healthcare

Northern WV AHEC continued to foster hands-on learning and community engagement through immersive experiences that connect classroom knowledge to real-world impact.

During the Summer of 2023, nursing student Madison Brown from West Virginia Wesleyan College completed a Medical Clinic Internship at the office of Dr. Ali Khan in Buckhannon. Over 150 hours, Madison gained practical experience in nearly every aspect of clinic operations — from understanding medical terminology and navigating insurance reimbursement to exploring financial management and healthcare law. Her internship also included a special project focused on re-engaging patients who had been “out of care,” giving her a firsthand look at the importance of patient outreach and continuity in rural health systems.

Later in the year, Northern WV AHEC hosted a Rural Immersion on *Nutrition and Food Insecurity in Rural Communities*, where students from multiple health disciplines spent two days exploring the intersection of nutrition, chronic disease, and food access. Partnering with WVU Extension, participants learned practical food preservation and budgeting skills at the Normantown Historical Community Center before volunteering at the Mountaineer Food Bank in Gassaway. Together, students packed more than 300 food boxes for seniors, directly contributing to the fight against hunger in West Virginia while deepening their understanding of the social determinants of health in rural settings.



Staff

Amanda Fisher, Executive Director
Donna Rollyson, Instructor
Americorps Mental Health First Aid

Host Agency

Glenville State University
Research Corporation



WV AHEC Centers Spotlight

Southeastern WV Area Health Education Center (SEWVAHEC)

Lewisburg, WV

Counties Served

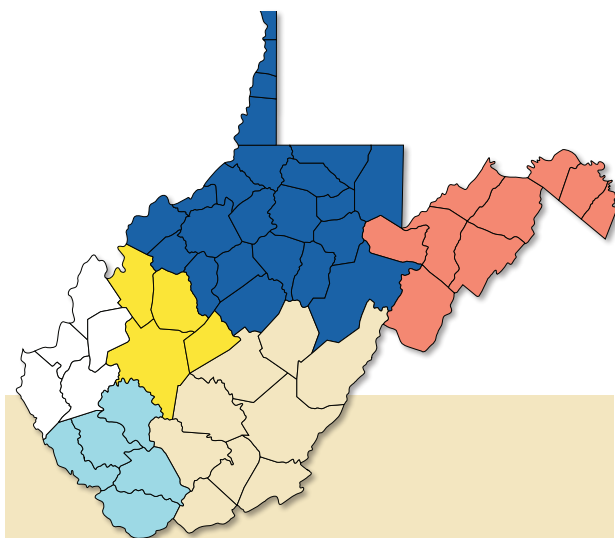
Fayette, Greenbrier, Mercer, Monroe, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Raleigh, Summers, Webster

Southeastern WV AHEC: Leading with Community-Centered, Immersive Rural Training

In fiscal year (FY) 2024, Southeastern WV AHEC, hosted by the non-profit Mountain State Osteopathic Postdoctoral Training Institutions (MSOPTI), continued to lead with purpose, bridging education, local needs, and rural health. Southeastern WV AHEC brought health education to life through a series of hands-on, community-centered learning experiences that bridged the gap between clinical training and real-world impact.

In partnership with the WV 100 Million Mouths Campaign and the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM) Center for Rural and Community Health (CRCH), students led a Diabetes and Periodontal Health outreach at a Raleigh County community health fair. Serving 59 participants, they offered blood glucose screenings and shared critical information on how diabetes and oral health are deeply connected. Their work didn't end there — students created a community brochure and developed a literature review to be shared during an upcoming "lunch and learn" hosted by WVSOM CRCH, ensuring the project's reach extends beyond a single event.

Southeastern WV AHEC also emphasized early prevention through a Substance Use Prevention in Adolescence project held at Ronceverte Elementary during National Red Ribbon Week. Partnering with the WVSOM Pathology Club, second-year medical students engaged more than 160 third through fifth graders with interactive lessons on the effects of alcohol, tobacco, and vaping — sparking early conversations about health



Staff

Angela L. Alston, Executive Director
Amy McIntire, Administrative Assistant

Host Agency

Mountain State Osteopathic
Postdoctoral Training Institutions
(MSOPTI)

and choice in a way young students could understand.

Rounding out the year, Southeastern WV AHEC hosted a three-day Rural Immersion on the *Integration of Primary Care and Oral Health* at the WVSOM. Under the guidance of state and national experts, students explored how oral and systemic health intertwine, practiced fluoride varnish application, and connected with community members during a local health fair. The experience highlighted how interprofessional collaboration between medical, dental, and public health disciplines can strengthen care in West Virginia's rural communities.



WV AHEC Centers Spotlight

Southern WV Area Health Education Center (SWVAHEC)

Williamson, WV

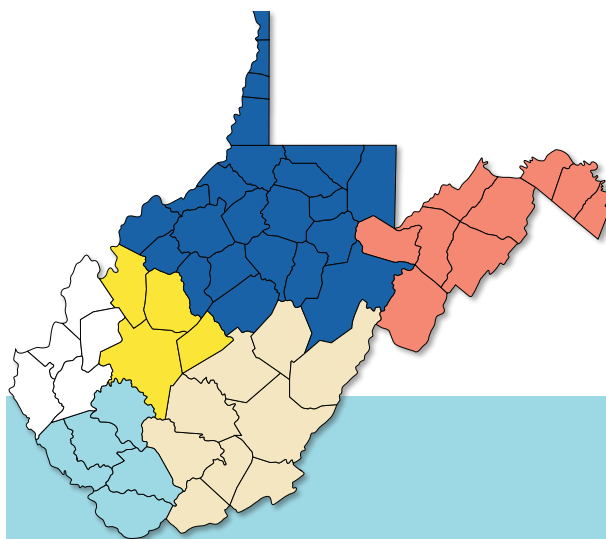
Counties Served

Boone, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, Wyoming

Southern WV AHEC: Inspiring Health Careers and Strengthening Local Pathways

Southern WV AHEC continued its mission this year to connect students with meaningful health career opportunities through immersive education and community engagement. In FY2024, Southern WV AHEC delivered two Health Career Presentations at both Mingo Central and Tug Valley High Schools, reaching a total of 40 students. Led by Andrea Clark, APRN, Maxine Colegrove, RN, and Audrianna Ray Neil, Southern WV AHEC Director, the sessions introduced students to career tracks in medicine, pharmacy, and dentistry. Presenters shared information on educational pathways, available programs, and financial aid options, such as student loan repayment options, aiming to inspire interest in healthcare professions and provide students with practical tools to pursue careers in the field.

Southern WV AHEC continues to expand hands-on learning opportunities by coordinating clinical shadowing experiences for high school students pursuing patient care training. Students from Mingo Central and Tug Valley High Schools completed the clinical portion of their education at Williamson Health and Wellness Center and the Mingo County Health Department. They observed a wide range of healthcare disciplines—including dentistry, primary care, pediatrics, podiatry, and behavioral medicine—and shadowed professionals such as physicians, nurses, dental hygienists, social workers, and lab technicians. These experiences offered students a meaningful glimpse into the diverse roles and responsibilities within the healthcare field.



Staff

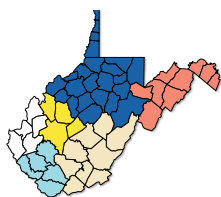
Audrianna Ray Neil, Director
Rebecca Johnson, Program Coordinator

Host Agency

Williamson Health and Wellness Center



Together, these initiatives reflect Southern WV AHEC's commitment to building a locally rooted, culturally competent healthcare workforce: one student, one experience at a time.



Objective 1: To introduce health profession careers and offer opportunities for academic enhancement to students in grades 9-12 (youth pipeline programs)

The Journey Begins: Sparking Interest in Health Careers through Pipeline Programs

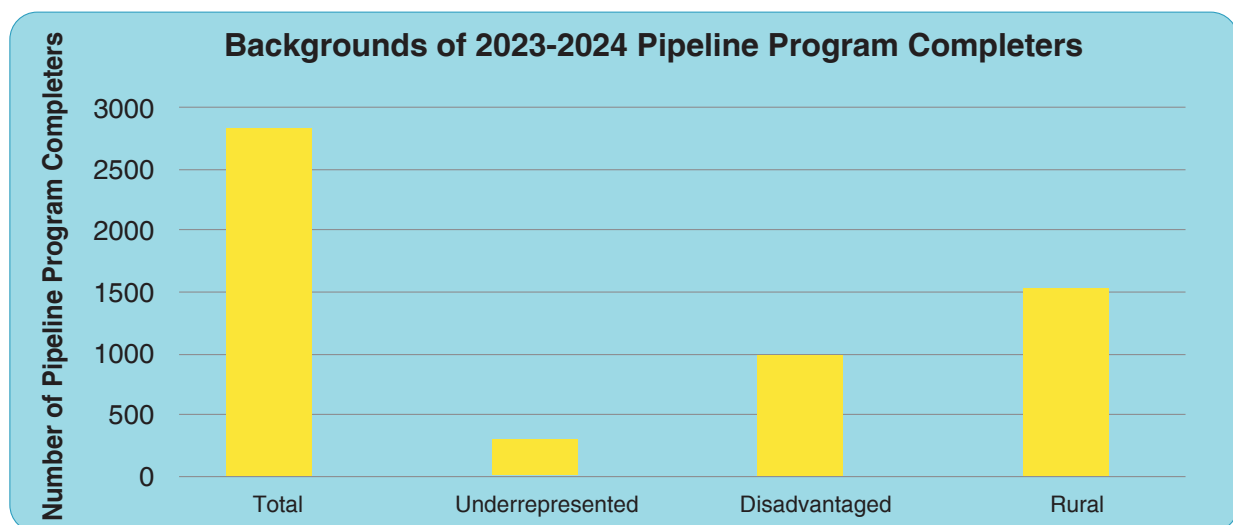
Across West Virginia, many young people dream of becoming nurses, physicians, therapists, and public health leaders—but often, they need the right exposure and encouragement to see that future as possible. WV AHEC's youth pipeline programs were created to bridge that gap—connecting students from rural and medically underserved communities with meaningful, hands-on experiences in health careers.

One of the strongest partners in this effort is the Health Sciences & Technology Academy (HSTA)—a long-standing, nationally recognized initiative housed at WVU that empowers high school students to pursue degrees in science, technology, engineering, and health fields. HSTA operates through a network of community-based clubs across the state, where students participate in year-round mentoring, academic enrichment, health-related projects, and summer learning experiences on college campuses.

WV AHEC collaborates with HSTA to expand these opportunities for students and strengthen the health professions pipeline. In counties where HSTA clubs are active, WV AHEC supports student learning by helping connect local health professionals, clinics, and training sites to the program—facilitating shadowing experiences (both in-person and virtual), mentoring connections, and exposure to real-world healthcare environments.

WV AHEC extends similar outreach independently through health career exploration events, interactive workshops, and community-based shadowing programs that give high school and early-college students hands-on insight into health professions. (see graph)

Another cornerstone of WV AHEC's youth pipeline work is the Northern WV AHEC Moving Onward & Upward (MOU) Program. Designed for high school juniors and seniors, this program offers guided, hands-on exposure to the healthcare field through structured shadowing experiences, mentorship, and professional development. Students spend time at local Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and other clinical sites, observing healthcare teams in action, exploring different professions, and reflecting

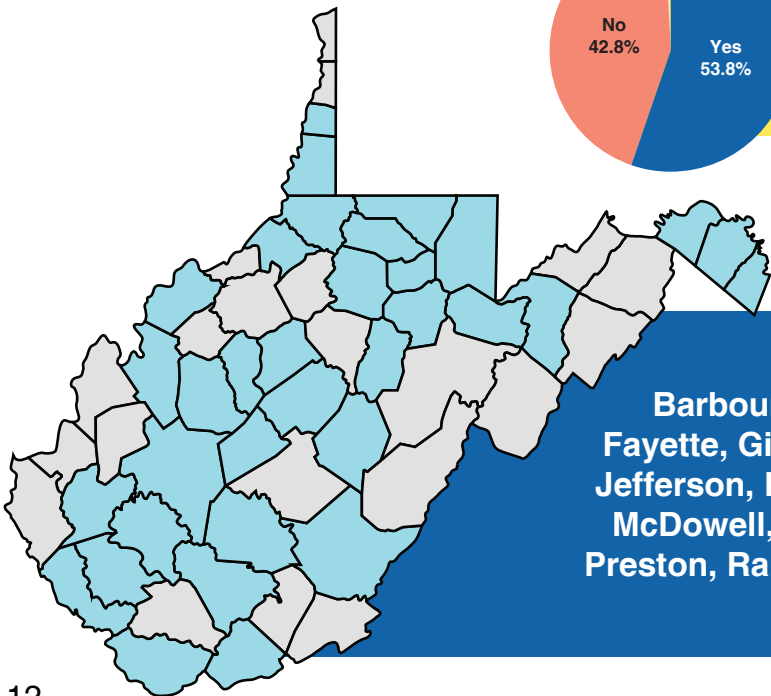
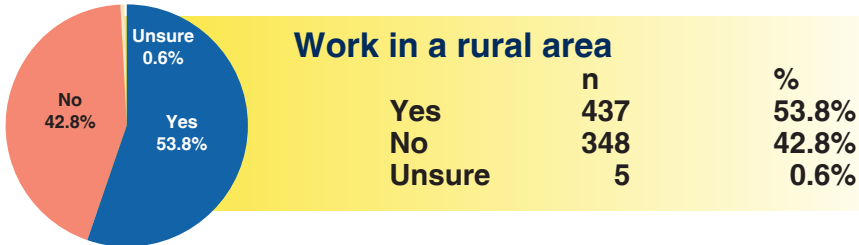
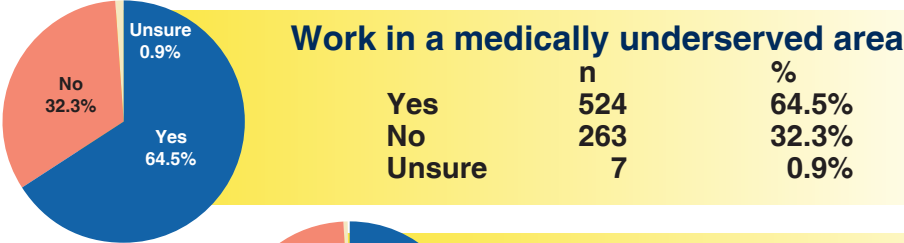
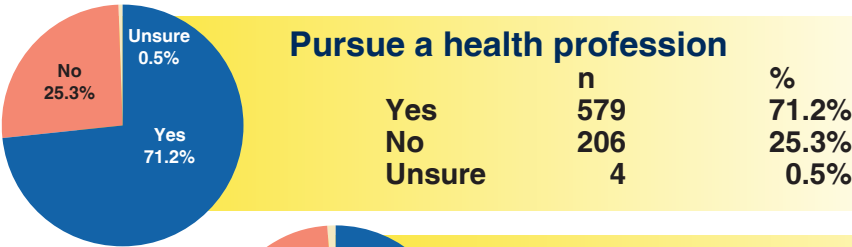


on what they learn. They also meet with guest speakers and current health professions students, gaining insight into the educational and career pathways ahead of them.

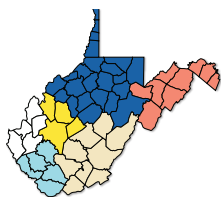
Through strategic partnerships and parallel programming, WV AHEC ensures that students across all corners of the state have equitable access to health career pathways. Together, WV AHEC and HSTA help build a homegrown pipeline of motivated, well-prepared students who are not only excited about the health professions but also deeply committed to serving their West Virginia communities. In FY 2024, 2,839 students participated in these pipeline programs, with 54% having come from rural backgrounds, and many others having come from a disadvantaged background.

Future in Focus

After months of engaging in hands-on learning and immersive health career activities, students who completed pipeline activities were asked to reflect on their future. The results were inspiring! Of the 813 participants surveyed in FY 2024, an impressive 97% responded, a testament to their engagement and enthusiasm! Among those who answered, over 70% expressed intentions to pursue a health profession, with 64.5% stating the intent to work in medically underserved and 53.8% rural communities. These responses highlight the growing passion among youth to serve where they're needed most, and the power of early exposure to shape meaningful career paths.



Pipeline activities served these counties:
Barbour, Berkeley, Boone, Braxton, Calhoun, Clay, Fayette, Gilmer, Grant, Greenbrier, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Marion, Marshall, McDowell, Mercer, Mingo, Monongalia, Morgan, Ohio, Preston, Raleigh, Roane, Taylor, Tucker, Tyler, Upshur, Webster, Wetzel, Wood



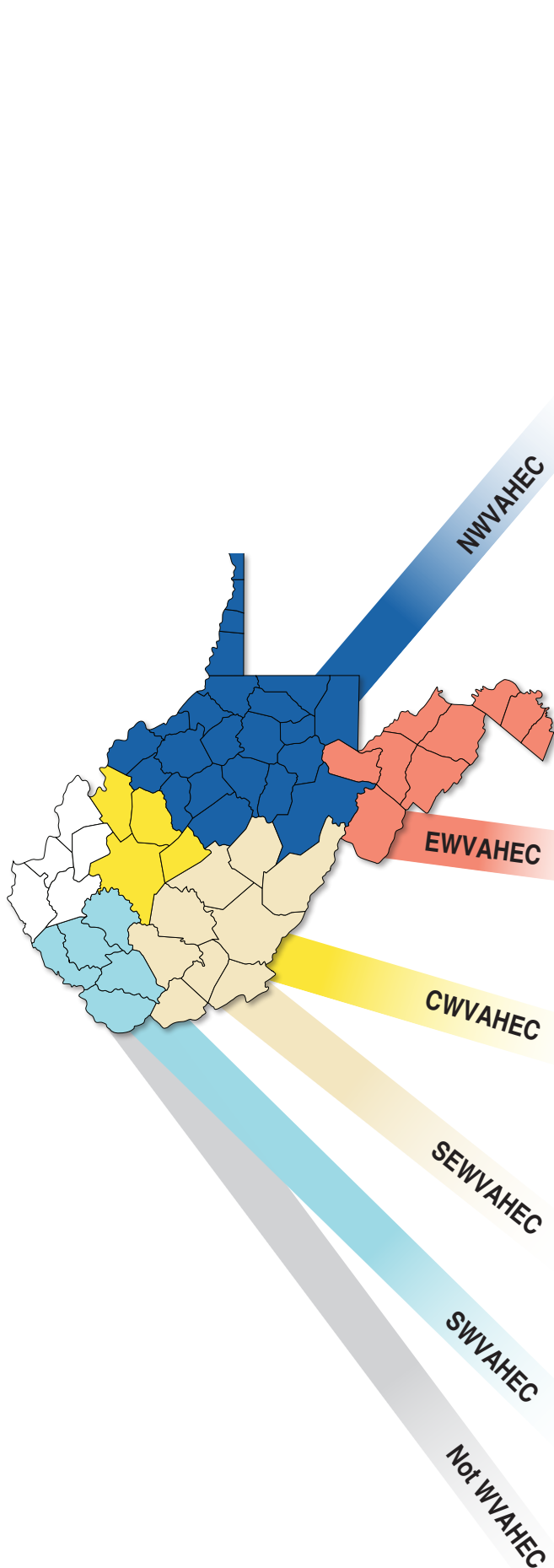
Objective 2: To provide health professions students and residents in higher education with clinical experiences in community-based settings

Learning Where It Matters Most

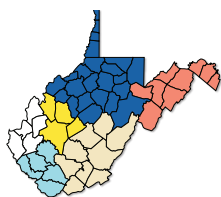
Across West Virginia, health professions students stepped out of the classroom and into communities, many of them rural or medically underserved, to complete their clinical training. Guided by dedicated preceptors from every corner of the state, these students gained firsthand experience in the realities of rural healthcare. Whether in small clinics, critical access hospitals, or community health centers, they didn't just learn how to care for patients, they learned how to connect with and serve communities. This immersive, community-based training is a cornerstone of our mission to grow a healthcare workforce that's not only skilled, but deeply rooted.

The tables below show that in FY 2024, many of these students completed their community-based clinical rotations in rural or medically underserved communities (MUC). Out of all clinical rotations completed by the students represented in the table below, 84% were completed in West Virginia. Out of all the West Virginia rotations, 94.8% of sites were in MUCs.

	Number of students who did rotations	Number of rotations done by students	Number of rotations done by students in MUC or Rural
Clinical Mental Health Counseling	1	1	1
Dentistry	47	47	47
Dental Hygiene	1	1	1
Dietetics	4	4	4
Exercise Physiology	4	4	4
Medicine	255	367	341
Medical Resident	17	17	17
Nursing	143	143	134
Nurse Practitioner	27	51	50
Pharmacy	143	269	242
Physician Assistant	45	48	47
Pathologists' Assistant	30	102	55
Physical Therapy	35	62	60
Social Work	3	3	3
Total	755	1,119	1,006



<i>WV County</i>	Number of Preceptors	Number of Preceptors MUC or Rural	% of Preceptors MUC or Rural
Barbour	4	4	100%
Braxton	2	2	100%
Brooke	5	5	100%
Calhoun	1	1	100%
Doddridge	2	2	100%
Gilmer	0	0	
Hancock	3	3	100%
Harrison	31	31	100%
Lewis	4	4	100%
Marion	19	19	100%
Marshall	3	3	100%
Monongalia	40	39	98%
Ohio	4	4	100%
Pleasants	1	1	100%
Preston	11	11	100%
Randolph	5	5	100%
Ritchie	2	2	100%
Taylor	7	7	100%
Tyler	0	0	
Upshur	7	7	100%
Wetzel	1	1	100%
Wirt	0	0	
Wood	9	9	100%
Berkeley	17	6	35%
Grant	2	2	100%
Hampshire	0	0	
Hardy	1	1	100%
Jefferson	12	12	100%
Mineral	5	5	100%
Morgan	1	1	100%
Pendleton	1	1	100%
Tucker	2	2	100%
Clay	2	2	100%
Jackson	2	2	100%
Kanawha	12	12	100%
Roane	2	2	100%
Fayette	6	6	100%
Greenbrier	8	8	100%
Mercer	6	6	100%
Monroe	1	1	100%
Nicholas	4	4	100%
Pocahontas	2	2	100%
Raleigh	16	16	100%
Summers	2	2	100%
Webster	2	2	100%
Boone	1	1	100%
Logan	3	3	100%
McDowell	0	0	
Mingo	2	2	100%
Wyoming	1	1	100%
Cabell	3	3	100%
Lincoln	1	1	100%
Mason	1	1	100%
Putnam	6	6	100%
Wayne	2	2	100%
Out of State	65	40	62%



Objective 3: To promote the optimal use of the healthcare workforce and improve quality of care delivered through interprofessional collaboration

WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars

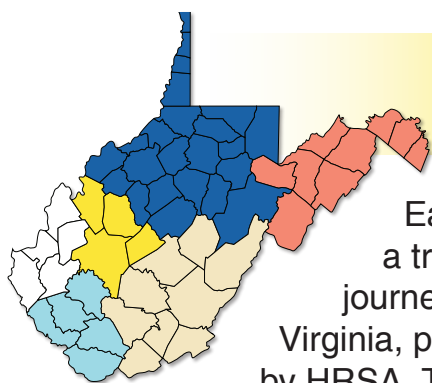
Shaping Tomorrow's Health Leaders

Across West Virginia, a select group of students is stepping into a unique journey that blends education, service, and purpose. Each year, the WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars Program invites up to 75 of the state's health professions students into a two-year experience designed to prepare them for careers in rural and medically underserved communities. These Scholars come from diverse institutions and disciplines, but they all share a common goal: to make a difference where it is needed most.

Through interprofessional learning, community-based training, and immersive experiences, students gain more than clinical skills. They gain insight into the challenges and strengths of rural healthcare. Whether working alongside local providers or engaging in community health projects, they're learning to be advocates, collaborators, and leaders.

Participation over time has reflected broad representation across health-related disciplines, highlighting the program's interdisciplinary reach. Students from medicine, dentistry, and physician assistant programs have remained the most consistently engaged, with steady involvement also seen from nursing, exercise physiology, and public health. Since its launch in 2018, 224 Scholars have successfully completed the two-year program and transitioned into the healthcare workforce. The overall trend demonstrates ongoing collaboration and shared commitment to interprofessional education and improving community health outcomes.

Discipline	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Clinical Psychology (PhD, MA)	3	10	3	1	0	0	0
Dental Hygiene	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Dentistry	6	9	3	2	0	2	6
Dietetics	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Exercise Physiology	1	3	0	7	2	1	5
Health Informatics & Information Management	2	0	1	2	0	0	0
Medicine	7	13	11	7	11	13	12
Nursing (BS)	2	1	2	2	2	1	4
Nursing (DNP, PhD)	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Occupational Therapy	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
Pharmacy	3	6	1	1	0	0	0
Physical Therapy	3	2	1	2	2	0	0
Physician Assistant	0	3	2	3	9	4	4
Public Health (MPH, PhD)	1	1	2	2	0	2	0
Social Work	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
Total	33	51	27	30	27	25	31



Learning by Doing: Community-Based and Didactic Education

Each year, WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars dive into a transformative experience that blends learning with service. Their journey includes 40 hours of community-based experiences in rural West Virginia, plus 40 hours of didactic education, exploring core topics outlined by HRSA. This didactic education is designed to deepen their understanding of challenges and lived experiences in underserved communities.

Here's a look at the core modules from 2023-2024:

Addiction in Rural Populations

Scholars explored the roots of addiction, the treatment continuum, and the unique impact of opioids in rural areas. They gained firsthand insight into 12-step recovery models and learned how Drug Courts offer alternatives to traditional justice systems.

Community-Based Chronic Disease Prevention

This module connected the dots between food insecurity, physical activity, and chronic illness. Scholars examined youth engagement strategies and reflected on their role in promoting long-term health behavior change.

Cultural Competency

Students developed frameworks for understanding the uniqueness of individuals into public health and optimized care for patient populations.

Interprofessional Education (IPE)

Through collaborative learning, Scholars practiced teamwork across disciplines. They engaged in simulation, debriefing, and IPE Week activities, building skills to work effectively in integrated care teams.

Substance Use Disorder in Pregnant and Parenting Women

This module focused on the biopsychosocial risks facing Appalachian women, the developmental impacts on children, and best practices for supporting recovery. Scholars also participated in a community rural immersion experience.

Trauma-Informed Treatment Practices for Children and Families in Rural Areas

Scholars examined how rural definitions vary and how cultural factors shape resilience. They learned to support families with complex needs through integrated, culturally grounded care.

Veterans in Rural Healthcare

Scholars explored the unique health needs of veterans who live and work in rural areas, shaped by service experiences and social determinants. They studied evidence-based practices and models of care tailored to veteran populations.

In Their Own Words: Informing Future Practice

“ I have become more interested in rural health after going through this module. I will be sure to take a more holistic approach in my future practice—taking into consideration the patient as a whole and not just the presented illness. It’s important to get to know the patient and develop that trust with them, and this module has helped me realize that. ”

— WV AHEC Scholar, *Community-Based Chronic Disease Prevention Module Participant*

“ Modules like these continue to remind me to show empathy and understanding in each patient encounter and to not write patients off immediately. Stigmas like those have no place in the medical field when treating real and unique patients every day. ”

— WV AHEC Scholar, *Substance Use Disorder: Pregnant and Parenting Women Module Participant*

“ The information provided has greatly informed my future practice by enhancing my understanding of cultural competency and its impact on healthcare delivery. ”

— WV AHEC Scholar, *Cultural Competency Module Participant*

Learning Across Disciplines

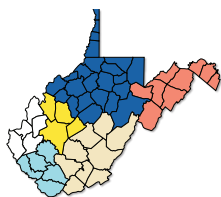
In today’s complex healthcare landscape, collaboration is a necessity. That’s why interprofessional education is at the heart of our programs. When students from medicine, nursing, pharmacy, social work, and other fields come together to learn, something powerful happens. Not only do they share knowledge, but they also build trust, challenge assumptions, and learn to see the patient through each other’s eyes. Whether in classrooms, clinics, or community settings, these shared experiences prepare future professionals to work as cohesive teams, delivering care that’s coordinated, compassionate, and truly patient-centered. After completing interprofessional team experiences, rural immersions, and didactic modules, Scholars were asked to reflect on their experiences and how they relate to their future, and the results were powerful.

93% gained a better understanding of their own approach to care within an interprofessional team

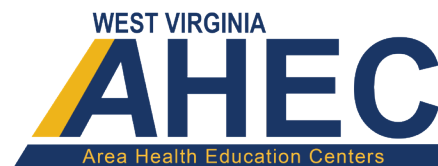
86% were confident in their ability to work collaboratively with other health professionals to achieve a common goal

95% gained an appreciation for the benefits of interprofessional work

87% see themselves preferring to work on an interprofessional team



FY2024 Objectives:



Objective 4: To strengthen the existing healthcare workforce in rural and underserved areas and support the retention of community-based health professionals

Advancing Continuing Education Through Project ECHO

WV AHEC remains committed to supporting a well-prepared, continuously learning healthcare workforce in rural and medically underserved communities. The program prioritized the expansion of access to high-quality continuing education by scaling the reach of Project ECHO, an evidence-based model that connects frontline clinicians with specialist-led teams through virtual, case-based learning.

Throughout this reporting period, WV AHEC Centers supported awareness of and participation in a series of continuing education opportunities designed to enhance clinical knowledge, strengthen interprofessional collaboration, and address emerging public health needs across the state. These offerings ensured that health professionals could maintain licensure requirements while gaining timely, practice-relevant competencies. Project ECHO served as a central platform for this work, enabling providers from both West Virginia and out-of-state to participate in interactive learning networks without leaving their communities.

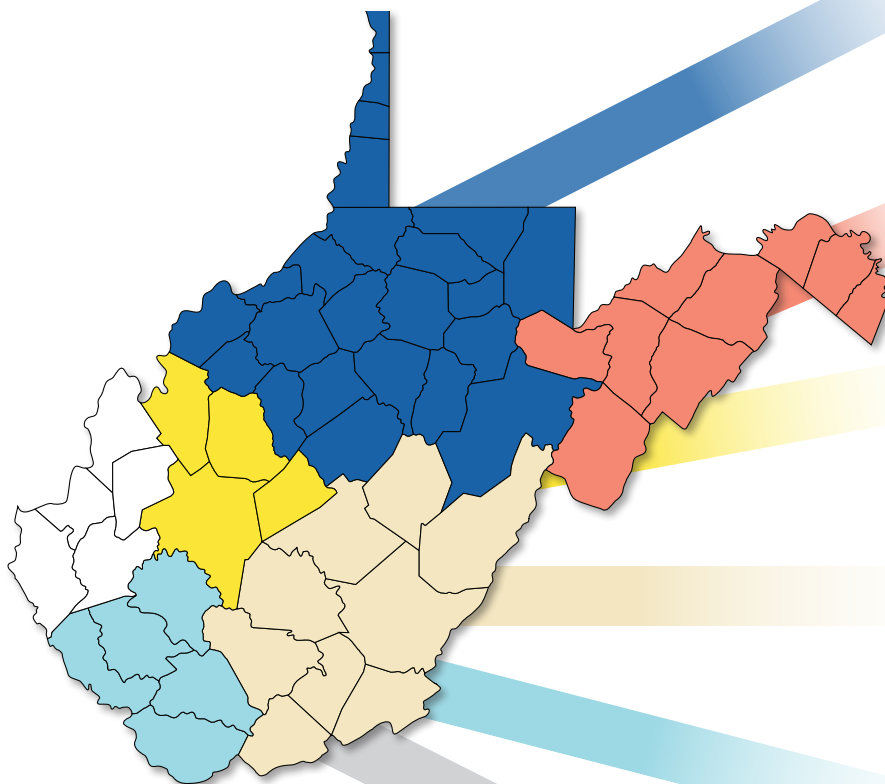
In FY 2024, Project ECHO topic areas included:

- Antimicrobial Stewardship
- Campus Mental Health
- Child Protective Services
- Chronic Lung Disease
- Diabetes/PAD Footcare & Amputation Prevention
- Endocrine
- Hepatitis & HIV
- Multiple Sclerosis and Neurodegenerative Diseases
- Pregnant and Parenting Women with Substance Use Disorder
- Psychiatry
- Substance Use Disorder

Our continuing education events attracted a broad spectrum of professionals, creating a rich, multidisciplinary learning environment. Participants spanned behavioral health, medicine, nursing, public health, allied health—including respiratory therapy, medical assistants, and other allied roles—along with paraprofessionals, physician assistants, and many additional professions captured in the “Other” category. This broad mix reflects the depth and diversity of engagement across our healthcare community.

This table shows participation from each of West Virginia's 55 counties, representing strength in statewide reach and engagement across diverse communities.

By investing in continuing education and leveraging the Project ECHO framework, WV AHEC continued to advance workforce capacity, promote knowledge sharing, and strengthen the quality of care delivered throughout West Virginia's rural and underserved regions. This model of collaborative learning not only equips providers with up-to-date, evidence-based practices but also fosters a supportive network that reduces professional isolation and empowers clinicians to address complex health challenges within their own communities. Together, these efforts reinforce AHEC's commitment to building a skilled, connected, and resilient healthcare workforce across the state.



NWVAHEC	Barbour	4
	Braxton	15
	Brooke	13
	Calhoun	43
	Doddridge	2
	Gilmer	9
	Hancock	7
	Harrison	20
	Lewis	4
	Marion	24
	Marshall	4
	Monongalia	202
	Ohio	31
	Pleasants	1
	Preston	9
	Randolph	13
	Ritchie	8
	Taylor	3
	Tyler	1
	Upshur	13
	Wetzel	2
EWVAHEC	Wirt	4
	Wood	38
	Berkeley	20
	Grant	24
	Hampshire	6
	Hardy	3
	Jefferson	9
	Mineral	2
	Morgan	2
CWVAHEC	Pendleton	1
	Tucker	1
	Clay	5
	Jackson	2
SEWVAHEC	Kanawha	264
	Roane	6
	Fayette	23
	Greenbrier	52
	Mercer	42
	Monroe	1
	Nicholas	7
	Pocahontas	15
	Raleigh	42
	Summers	2
SWVAHEC	Webster	6
	Boone	5
	Logan	11
	McDowell	5
	Mingo	43
Not WV AHEC	Wyoming	1
	Cabell	100
	Lincoln	13
	Mason	7
	Putnam	16
	Wayne	9
	Unknown	26
	Out of State	119

