

COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT & COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

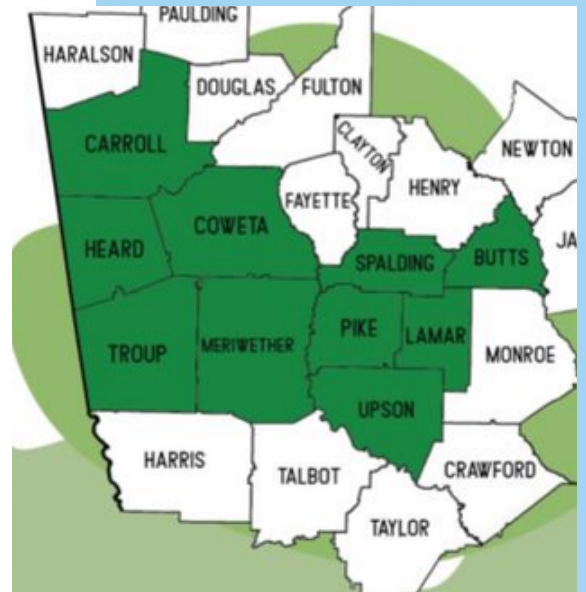
2026



www.pathwayscsb.org

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Executive Summary

Improving Behavioral Health Across West Central Georgia

For more than fifty years, Pathways Center for Behavioral and Developmental Growth ("Pathways Center") has served as a trusted provider of behavioral health, substance use disorder, intellectual and developmental disability, crisis intervention, and recovery support services throughout west-central Georgia. As Georgia's designated Community Service Board (CSB) for Carroll, Coweta, Heard, Meriwether, Spalding, and Troup Counties, Pathways Center is committed to ensuring that individuals and families have timely access to compassionate, high-quality, person-centered care regardless of their ability to pay.

This 2026 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) represents Pathways Center's commitment to understanding the evolving behavioral health needs of the communities it serves while strengthening partnerships that improve health outcomes across the region. The assessment combines organizational performance data, consumer feedback, demographic analyses, community stakeholder input, public health indicators, and state and national behavioral health data to identify existing strengths, emerging challenges, and opportunities for continued improvement.

Serving a geographically diverse region that includes rapidly growing suburban communities, rural counties, and economically challenged areas, Pathways Center recognizes that behavioral health outcomes are influenced by far more than clinical treatment alone. Factors such as poverty, transportation barriers, housing instability, workforce shortages, limited access to healthcare, food insecurity, educational opportunities, and social isolation significantly affect an individual's ability to achieve and maintain wellness. Addressing these social determinants of health is essential to improving long-term behavioral health outcomes and reducing disparities throughout the region.

About Pathways Center

Founded in 1972 as Chatt-Flint Mental Health Center, Pathways Center has evolved into one of Georgia's leading community behavioral healthcare organizations. Today, the organization delivers a comprehensive continuum of services that promotes recovery, resilience, independence, and community integration for thousands of children, adolescents, adults, and families each year.



Services include:

- Adult Behavioral Health Services
- Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Services
- Crisis Stabilization Services
- Mobile Crisis Response
- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)
- Community Support Team (CST)
- Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)
- Substance Use Disorder Treatment
- Peer Support Services
- Psychiatric Evaluation and Medication Management
- Nursing Services
- Psychological Assessment
- Developmental Disabilities Services
- Care Coordination and Case Management
- Residential and Community-Based Supports
- Prevention, Education, and Community Outreach

These services are delivered through a network of outpatient clinics, crisis programs, residential and community-based services, school partnerships, telehealth, and collaborative community initiatives designed to meet individuals where they are and support recovery throughout every stage of life.

Service Area

Pathways Center serves approximately six counties across west-central Georgia:

- ✓ Carroll County
- ✓ Heard County
- ✓ Spalding County
- ✓ Coweta County
- ✓ Meriwether County
- ✓ Troup County

This region includes a diverse population with varying healthcare needs, ranging from rapidly expanding suburban communities to rural areas where behavioral healthcare resources remain limited. The service area includes individuals experiencing serious mental illness, substance use disorders, developmental disabilities, co-occurring conditions, and behavioral health crises across the lifespan.

Community Health Needs Assessment Findings

The assessment identified several significant behavioral health priorities affecting individuals and families throughout the service area.

Priority Community Needs

- Increasing prevalence of anxiety and depression among youth and adults.
- Rising demand for child and adolescent behavioral health services.
- Continued need for substance use disorder treatment and recovery support.
- Behavioral health workforce shortages, particularly in psychiatry and licensed clinical professionals.
- Transportation barriers limiting access to healthcare in rural communities.
- Housing instability and homelessness affecting treatment engagement and recovery.
- Increased demand for crisis intervention and crisis stabilization services.
- Greater need for school-based behavioral health supports.
- Continued integration of physical health and behavioral healthcare.
- Expanded access to telehealth and technology-enabled services.

Social Determinants of Health

Community health is influenced by a wide range of non-medical factors. Throughout its service area, Pathways Center recognizes the impact of:

- Economic instability
- Poverty
- Food insecurity
- Housing instability
- Transportation limitations
- Limited healthcare access
- Workforce shortages
- Educational attainment
- Digital connectivity
- Rural healthcare disparities



Through partnerships with healthcare providers, school systems, transportation providers, judicial systems, social service agencies, and community organizations, Pathways Center works collaboratively to reduce these barriers and improve access to care.

Organizational Strengths

The assessment identified numerous strengths that position Pathways Center as the region's leading behavioral healthcare provider. These strengths include:

- More than five decades of service to west-central Georgia.
- Comprehensive continuum of behavioral health, substance use, crisis, and developmental disability services.
- Strong partnerships with hospitals, federally qualified health centers, school systems, courts, social service agencies, and community organizations.
- Highly qualified multidisciplinary workforce.
- Commitment to evidence-based, person-centered care.
- State and national accreditation demonstrating excellence in quality and service delivery.
- Strong consumer satisfaction and positive treatment outcomes.
- Modern behavioral healthcare campuses and expanded community-based services.

Looking Forward

Behavioral healthcare continues to evolve as communities experience changing demographics, increasing demand for services, and new challenges affecting overall health and well-being. Pathways Center remains committed to adapting to these changing needs through innovation, collaboration, and continuous quality improvement.

This Community Health Needs Assessment serves not only as a planning document but also as a reaffirmation of Pathways Center's mission to improve lives by providing compassionate, accessible, and high-quality behavioral healthcare throughout west-central Georgia. By working together with community partners, healthcare providers, public agencies, schools, families, and individuals, Pathways Center will continue building healthier, stronger, and more resilient communities for generations to come.





A Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Building Healthier Communities Through Hope, Partnership, and Innovation

Dear Community Members, Partners, and Stakeholders,

It is my honor to present the 2026 Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Impact Report for Pathways Center for Behavioral and Developmental Growth.

For more than fifty years, Pathways Center has served as a trusted partner in improving the behavioral health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities throughout west-central Georgia. Since our founding in 1972, our organization has remained steadfast in its commitment to ensuring that every individual—regardless of age, diagnosis, financial circumstance, or geographic location—has access to compassionate, high-quality behavioral healthcare and developmental disability services.

As Georgia's designated Community Service Board serving Carroll, Coweta, Heard, Meriwether, Spalding, and Troup Counties, we recognize that the needs of our communities continue to evolve. Population growth, workforce shortages, increasing behavioral health needs, substance use disorders, youth mental health concerns, housing instability, and other social determinants of health present significant challenges for the individuals and families we serve. These realities require thoughtful planning, strong community partnerships, and innovative approaches to care.

This Community Health Needs Assessment represents much more than a regulatory requirement. It reflects our commitment to listening carefully to our communities, evaluating our performance honestly, and using data to guide meaningful improvements. The assessment incorporates community input, stakeholder feedback, organizational performance measures, demographic trends, public health data, and evidence-based practices to better understand the current and future behavioral health needs across our service area.

The findings reinforce what we have experienced firsthand: the demand for accessible behavioral health services has never been greater. Individuals and families are seeking timely access to outpatient treatment, crisis intervention, psychiatric care, substance use treatment, developmental disability services, peer support, and integrated healthcare. At the same time, our communities continue to face barriers related to transportation, workforce shortages, housing instability, insurance limitations, and provider availability.

Pathways Center has continued to invest in innovative programs, expand crisis services, strengthen community partnerships, enhance telehealth capabilities, improve access through centralized scheduling, and develop new models of integrated care that place individuals and families at the center of everything we do.

We are proud of our dedicated employees whose compassion, professionalism, and commitment to excellence make recovery and hope possible every day.

Our success would not be possible without the collaboration of our many partners, including local hospitals, healthcare providers, school systems, law enforcement agencies, accountability courts, veterans' organizations, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Department of Family and Children Services, community-based organizations, faith communities, and countless others who share our vision of healthier communities.

Together, we are building a stronger behavioral healthcare system—one that emphasizes prevention, early intervention, integrated treatment, recovery, resilience, and whole-person care.

As you read this report, I encourage you to view it not only as an assessment of community needs but also as a roadmap for collaboration. The opportunities identified throughout this report cannot be addressed by one organization alone. Lasting improvements in behavioral health require collective action, shared responsibility, and sustained partnerships across every sector of our communities.

At Pathways Center, we embrace that responsibility. We remain committed to continuous quality improvement, responsible stewardship of public resources, evidence-based practices, innovation, and compassionate service. Most importantly, we remain committed to the individuals and families who entrust us with their care each day.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, leadership team, and dedicated employees, thank you for your continued confidence in Pathways Center.

We are honored to serve this region and look forward to working alongside our community partners to create healthier, safer, and more resilient communities for generations to come.

Together, we are creating pathways to hope, healing, recovery, and opportunity.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Ellis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Stephanie Ellis, MSHR, PHR, SHRM-CP
Chief Executive Officer
Pathways Center for Behavioral and
Developmental Growth



Mission, Core Values & Culture

The Foundation of Everything We Do

"Our mission is simple. Our values guide us. Our culture inspires us."



Introduction

Exceptional behavioral healthcare begins with a clear purpose, shared values, and a culture that empowers employees to serve others with compassion, professionalism, and excellence. For more than fifty years, Pathways Center for Behavioral and Developmental Growth has built an organizational culture centered on people—those who receive services, those who provide care, and the communities in which they live.

Every strategic decision, every clinical interaction, and every organizational initiative is guided by a simple but powerful mission:

- ✓ To serve as many people as possible.
- ✓ To provide quality care and service.
- ✓ To operate in a fiscally responsible manner.

These three principles have shaped the organization for decades and continue to guide Pathways Center as it responds to the changing behavioral healthcare needs of west-central Georgia.

Our Mission

Unlike lengthy mission statements, Pathways Center's mission is intentionally straightforward, memorable, and action-oriented.

1 Serve as Many People as Possible

Access to behavioral healthcare remains one of the greatest healthcare challenges facing communities throughout Georgia.

Pathways Center believes that every individual deserves access to compassionate, high-quality behavioral healthcare regardless of age, diagnosis, insurance status, or financial circumstances.

This commitment drives the organization's continued investment in:

- Expanding behavioral health services
- Developing innovative programs
- Increasing crisis response capacity
- Strengthening school partnerships
- Improving access through telehealth
- Removing barriers to care
- Building strong community partnerships
- Every decision begins with one question: How can we serve more people?



2 Provide Quality Care and Service

Quality extends far beyond clinical outcomes. It encompasses every interaction a patient, family member, community partner, or employee has with Pathways Center. Quality means:

- Evidence-based clinical care
- Exceptional customer service
- Safe treatment environments
- Respectful communication
- Compassionate interactions
- Timely access to services
- Continuous quality improvement
- Accountability
- Professional excellence

Pathways Center continually measures performance through accreditation reviews, quality indicators, consumer satisfaction surveys, clinical outcomes, and regulatory compliance to ensure services consistently meet the highest standards.

3 Operate in a Fiscally Responsible Manner

As a public Community Service Board, Pathways Center recognizes its responsibility to be a careful steward of taxpayer resources. Financial stewardship enables the organization to:

- Expand behavioral healthcare services
- Invest in modern facilities
- Recruit and retain exceptional employees
- Develop innovative programs
- Improve technology
- Strengthen community partnerships
- Ensure long-term organizational sustainability

Responsible financial management supports the organization's ability to fulfill its mission today while preparing for future community needs.

Pathways Center's mission is more than a statement—it is reflected in the organization's daily work. Every employee contributes to advancing the mission, whether providing direct clinical care, supporting crisis services, coordinating appointments, maintaining facilities, managing technology, or developing future leaders.

The mission serves as a shared commitment that unites employees across all programs and locations.

Our CARES Culture

At Pathways Center, culture is defined by the way employees treat one another and the individuals they serve.

The organization's customer service philosophy is built around the CARES initiative.

CARES serves as both a customer service model and a cultural expectation that guides every interaction throughout the organization.



C

Compassion

We demonstrate kindness, empathy, dignity, and respect in every interaction.

Compassion means recognizing that every individual has a unique story and deserves to be treated with patience, understanding, and humanity. Employees strive to create an environment where individuals feel welcomed, valued, and safe.

A

Affirm

We affirm the worth, strengths, and potential of every individual. Recovery begins with hope.

Employees recognize and celebrate each person's abilities while encouraging resilience, independence, and personal growth.

R

Relate

We build meaningful relationships through trust, collaboration, active listening, and person-centered care. Behavioral healthcare is built upon relationships. Employees work collaboratively with patients, families, coworkers, and community partners to develop individualized plans that promote long-term success.

E

Exceed

We strive to exceed expectations through exceptional service, innovation, accountability, and clinical excellence. Employees continuously seek opportunities to improve patient experiences while embracing new ideas that strengthen organizational performance.

S

Support

We support individuals, families, coworkers, and community partners through encouragement, teamwork, education, advocacy, and compassionate service. Support extends beyond clinical treatment and reflects Pathways Center's commitment to improving the overall well-being of the communities it serves.

CARES Recognition Program

Exceptional service deserves recognition.

Pathways Center's CARES Recognition Program celebrates employees who consistently demonstrate the CARES values while serving patients, families, coworkers, and community partners.

Members of the Senior Leadership Team recognize employees who go above and beyond expectations. Employees receiving a CARES Award receive:

- A CARES recognition sticker displayed on their employee badge
- A \$100 recognition award
- Organization-wide recognition celebrating outstanding customer service

The CARES Recognition Program reinforces a workplace culture where compassion, professionalism, teamwork, and service excellence are celebrated throughout the organization.

A Culture of Leadership

One of Pathways Center's defining strengths is its commitment to developing leaders from within.

Rather than relying primarily on external recruitment, the organization intentionally invests in employee growth and leadership development.

This philosophy has resulted in an organization where leadership opportunities are accessible to employees who demonstrate commitment, professionalism, and potential.



Pathways to Leadership

Recognizing that today's employees are tomorrow's leaders, Pathways Center launched Pathways to Leadership in 2011.

The program identifies employees with leadership potential and prepares them for future management and supervisory roles through a structured, year-long development experience.

Participants complete:

- Leadership development curriculum
- Executive mentoring
- Leadership book studies
- Group discussions
- Cross-functional learning experiences
- Organizational improvement projects
- Formal presentations to executive leadership

The program encourages participants to think strategically while developing practical leadership skills that strengthen both individual careers and organizational performance

Growing Leaders From Within

Perhaps the greatest measure of the program's success is the organization itself.

Nearly every member of Pathways Center's Senior Leadership Team began their career in a different role before advancing into executive leadership.

Likewise, approximately 95 percent of the organization's managers and supervisors have been promoted from within. This culture of internal advancement preserves organizational knowledge, strengthens employee engagement, and supports long-term succession planning.

Investing in Professional Development

Pathways Center believes learning should continue throughout an employee's career.

The organization provides extensive opportunities for professional growth, including:

- Clinical supervision for professional licensure
- Continuing education
- Leadership development
- Professional conferences
- Certification support
- Internal training
- Mentoring

These investments strengthen clinical quality while supporting employee engagement and career advancement.



Supporting Clinical Licensure

Behavioral healthcare depends upon highly qualified professionals.

To strengthen the workforce throughout west-central Georgia, Pathways Center provides clinical supervision at no cost for employees pursuing full professional licensure as counselors and nurses.

By removing financial barriers to supervision, the organization helps employees advance professionally while expanding access to licensed behavioral healthcare providers throughout the region.

Building the Future Workforce

Pathways Center serves as a clinical education partner for colleges and universities throughout Georgia and across the Southeast. Graduate students pursuing degrees in the following areas complete supervised internships under licensed and experienced clinicians:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| ✓ Counseling | ✓ Marriage & Family Therapy |
| ✓ Social Work | ✓ Nursing |
| ✓ Psychology | ✓ Behavioral Health |

This investment benefits both students and the communities Pathways serves by creating a strong pipeline of future behavioral healthcare professionals.

Why Culture Matters

Research consistently demonstrates that engaged employees provide better patient experiences, stronger clinical outcomes, improved teamwork, and higher organizational performance.

Pathways Center's investment in culture, leadership, professional development, and employee recognition directly supports its ability to fulfill its mission while improving behavioral healthcare throughout west-central Georgia.

Simply stated: Healthy organizations create healthier communities.

Looking Forward

As behavioral healthcare continues to evolve, Pathways Center remains committed to strengthening its organizational culture while investing in the people who make its mission possible.

Guided by its mission, grounded in the CARES values, and strengthened through leadership development, Pathways Center will continue creating a workplace where employees thrive, patients receive exceptional care, and communities grow stronger.



Executive Summary

The three-year results show a workforce with a strong service ethic and deep connection to the mission, alongside clear opportunities to strengthen the employee experience. Employees consistently report high involvement in their work, strong focus, willingness to give their best effort, and satisfaction with using their expertise. Training satisfaction improved meaningfully from 60.3% positive in 2023 to 72.0% in 2025.

The three-year results show a workforce with a strong service ethic and deep connection to the mission, alongside clear opportunities to strengthen the employee experience. Employees consistently report high involvement in their work, strong focus, willingness to give their best effort, and satisfaction with using their expertise. Training satisfaction improved meaningfully from 60.3% positive in 2023 to 72.0% in 2025.

What is working Well

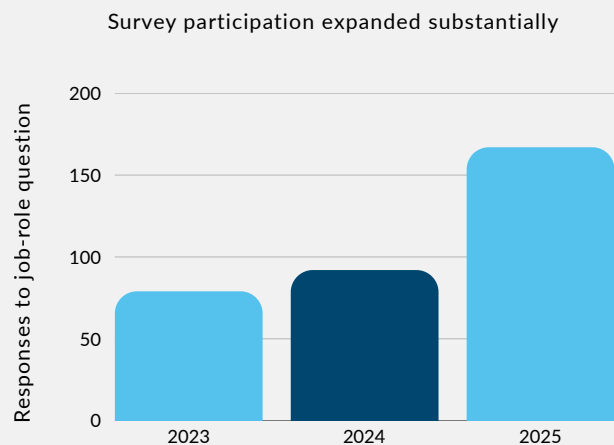
Mission commitment; high discretionary effort; meaningful client impact; strong skill utilization; improving perceptions of training; positive local supervisor relationships; and examples of advancement, conference participation, teamwork, and pride in Pathways Center.

Primary opportunities

Create clearer career pathways beyond management; strengthen job-specific onboarding and continuing education; improve recognition and compensation transparency; reduce burnout and workload friction; increase communication consistency; and address uneven culture experiences across sites and departments.

Overall interpretation

The results do not indicate a disengaged workforce. Rather, they show employees who remain highly committed to clients and performance, but who want the organization's systems, leaders, and rewards to more visibly match that commitment.



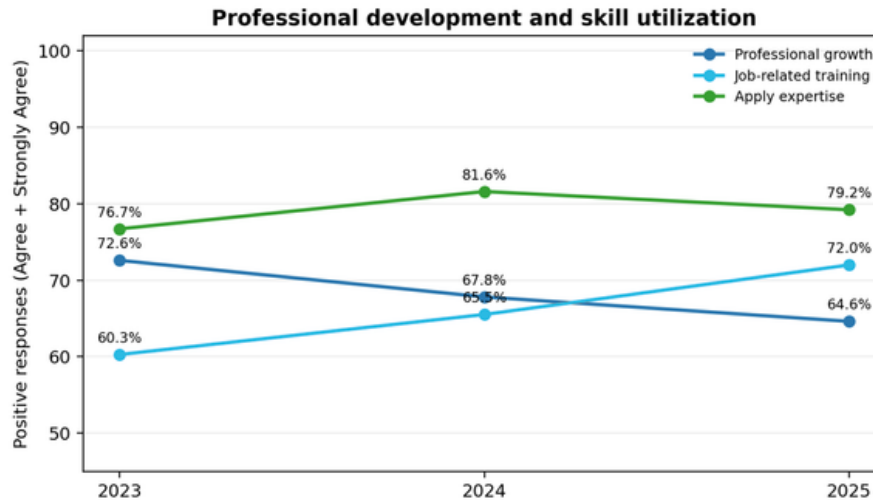
Interpretive note:

The large increase in participation improves the breadth of employee voice.



Three-Year Quantitative Trends

Professional development: training improved, but career visibility weakened

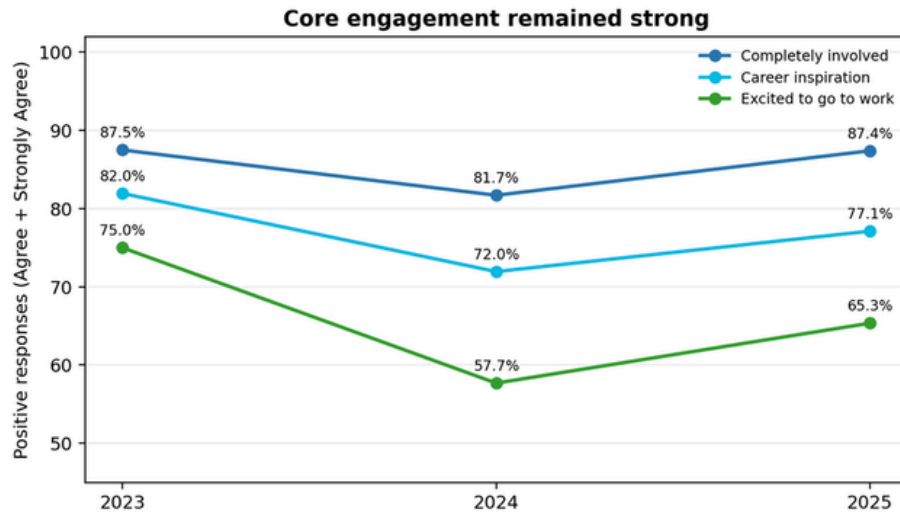


Job-related training is the clearest positive trend, rising nearly 12 percentage points over three years. Skill utilization remained high, suggesting most employees believe their knowledge and abilities are useful in their roles. Professional-growth satisfaction, however, declined each year. This combination suggests that employees increasingly recognize the training being provided but do not always see how learning translates into advancement, expanded responsibility, credential recognition, or compensation.

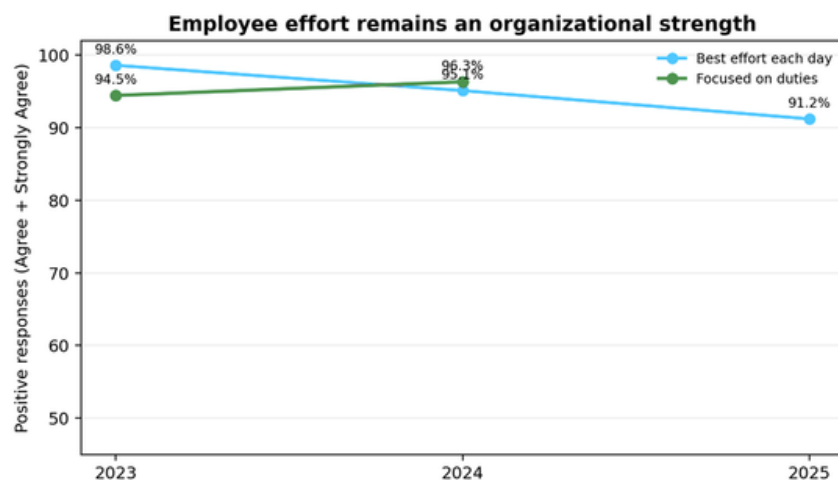
Measure	2023	2024	2025	3-year change
Professional growth	72.60%	67.80%	64.60%	-8.0 pts
Job-related training	60.30%	65.50%	72.00%	+11.7 pts
Apply expertise	76.70%	81.60%	79.20%	+2.5 pts
Career inspiration	81.90%	72.00%	77.10%	-4.8 pts
Completely involved	87.50%	81.70%	87.40%	-0.1 pts
Excited to go to work	75.00%	57.70%	65.40%	-9.6 pts
Best effort each day	98.60%	95.10%	91.20%	-7.4 pts

Three-Year Quantitative Trends

Engagement: strong involvement, but emotional energy is more variable



Employees remain highly involved in their work. Career inspiration improved in 2025 after a 2024 decline, and excitement about coming to work also rebounded. Nevertheless, excitement remains below the 2023 level and is materially lower than involvement. This gap is important: employees can be productive, committed, and absorbed in their work while simultaneously experiencing fatigue, workload pressure, inconsistent support, or reduced morale.



More than nine in ten respondents in every year reported determination to give their best effort. Focus on job duties also remained exceptionally high when measured. Although the best-effort rate declined from an unusually high 98.6% in 2023 to 91.2% in 2025, it remains a major strength. The decline, paired with comments about burnout and appreciation, should be viewed as an early warning to protect—not take for granted—employee commitment.

What Is Working Well

1 Employees are strongly connected to the mission

Employees repeatedly described satisfaction from helping clients, seeing progress, and making a difference. This mission connection is a powerful retention and culture asset. It supports quality care, resilience, and the willingness to go beyond minimum expectations.

3 Training perceptions are moving in the right direction

The positive rate for job-related training rose from 60.3% to 72.0%. Employees cited useful training, greater confidence in delivering quality care, and appreciation for opportunities such as conferences. This is evidence that workforce investments are visible to a growing share of employees.

5 Strong supervisors and teams are making a difference locally

Positive comments identify supervisors who provide direction, communicate openly, inspire goal attainment, and allow flexibility during family needs. These examples show that the desired culture is already present in parts of the organization and can be scaled through leadership standards and peer learning.

2 Employees bring strong work ethic and personal accountability

The best-effort results were among the highest measures in all three surveys. Employees described coming to work ready to perform, striving to support teammates, and continuing through difficult situations.

4 Many employees can apply their expertise

Positive ratings remained near or above 79% in 2024 and 2025. This indicates meaningful role alignment and gives Pathways a strong foundation for employee-led improvement, mentoring, and cross-functional problem solving.



Employee Voice: Illustrative Comments



"I love seeing our clients accomplish their goals."

—Employee comment, 2025 (Mission and pride)



"Pathway's is a phenomenal organization that I am proud to be a part of. I see the changes that are made in our client's lives and am proud of Pathway's."

-Employee comment, 2025 (Mission and organizational pride)



"I was able to attend an out of state conference! I appreciate Pathways involvement in me."

-Employee comment, 2025 (Training investment)



The trainings offered make me feel confident in providing top quality care."

-Employee comment, 2025 (Training quality)



"Meeting with Abby monthly keeps me inspired and focused on my goals."

— Employee comment, 2024 (Supervisor support)



"Pathways has been a positive environment for me. We always work together to perform the best quality of care."

-Employee comment,comment, 2024 (Team culture)



I am so proud of many of my coworkers that have moved up the ladder."

— Employee comment, 2025 (Professional growth opportunity)



"Any business is always striving to do more... I also feel that Pathways is going in the right direction. It is one of the best places I've worked."

- Employee comment, 2024 (Overall experience)



Opportunities to Continue Enhancing Company Culture

Build visible career pathways

Publish role families and advancement pathways for clinical, direct-support, administrative, and technical employees—not only management. Pair this with consistent post-interview feedback, internal talent reviews, mentoring, stretch assignments, and recognition of advanced credentials.

Make training more role-specific and experiential

Create structured onboarding by job title, minimum guided shadowing periods, quarterly department training, competency checks, and a balanced mix of in-person, hands-on, and online learning. Expand access to CE/CEU opportunities and clearly communicate available supports.

Strengthen recognition and reward systems

Employees frequently connect effort with a desire for appreciation, raises, incentives, and acknowledgement. Continue and expand timely recognition through CARES awards, supervisor recognition routines, service milestones, peer recognition, and transparent explanations of compensation decisions and constraints.

Address workload, burnout, and productivity friction

Evaluate staffing levels, caseload expectations, administrative burden, scheduling practices, safety concerns, and the interaction between productivity requirements and quality care. Use site-level pulse checks and turnover/absence data to identify hotspots.

Use employee voice as a continuous improvement system

Report back what was heard, what action will be taken, who owns the action, and when progress will be reviewed. Conduct short pulse surveys between annual surveys and segment results by division, location, tenure, role, and supervisory status while protecting confidentiality.



Employee Comments Supporting the Opportunities



Advancement process:

“Was not offered feedback after interviewing for promotions.” (2025)



Job-specific onboarding:

“For newer employees, whatever the job title is, the training should be at least two weeks with someone in that same job title.” (2025)



Recognition:

“Even when I give my best efforts it is not always recognized by leadership.” (2025)



Burnout:

“I truly enjoy the work I do; however, I do experience burnout at times.” (2025)



Workload:

“I enjoy my clients, but the workload and expectations are overwhelming.” (2025)



Communication:

“Communication, collaboration, consistency, and response-time need improvement.” (2025)



Respect and appreciation:

“We have a lot of great staff, compassionate and caring... Employees that feel appreciated work harder.” (2025)

Alignment With Pathways Center’s Continued Investment in Employees

The survey results strongly support Pathways Center’s position that employees are its most important asset. The organization’s mission can only be achieved through employees who provide direct care, respond to crises, support individuals with developmental disabilities, coordinate access, maintain operations, and lead quality improvement. The results provide both validation and direction for continued investment:

- The rise in training satisfaction indicates that investments in workforce development are producing measurable improvement.
- High skill-utilization and engagement ratings show that employees are contributing substantial professional expertise and discretionary effort.
- Employee pride in client outcomes demonstrates that investment in employees directly strengthens patient experience and mission fulfillment.
- Comments praising supervisors, conferences, flexibility, and growth show which investments employees experience as meaningful.
- Persistent concerns about career visibility, recognition, communication, workload, and compensation identify where future investment can have the greatest retention and culture impact.

Investing in employees should therefore be understood as a quality-of-care strategy, a recruitment and retention strategy, and a long-term sustainability strategy. When employees are well trained, supported, recognized, and given opportunities to grow, Pathways Center is better positioned to expand access, maintain clinical quality, innovate, and serve more people in a fiscally responsible manner.

2026-2028 Workforce Culture Priorities

Priority	Three-year focus
Career Growth & Internal Mobility	Define pathways, credential recognition, mentoring, and fair internal-selection feedback.
Role-Specific Learning	Standardize onboarding, guided practice, CE/CEU access, and competency validation.
Leadership & Communication	Set consistent manager expectations for communication, coaching, recognition, and change management.
Well-Being, Staffing & Work Design	Monitor workload and burnout, reduce unnecessary friction, and strengthen flexibility where operationally feasible.
Respectful, Collaborative Culture	Apply CARES values internally, address any conflict, and reinforce accountability across sites.
Measurement & Accountability	Use annual engagement surveys, pulse surveys, site-level action plans, and published progress updates.

Conclusion

Across 2023-2025, Pathways Center employees demonstrated strong commitment, expertise, focus, and pride in serving clients. The workforce is not asking the organization to create commitment from nothing; employees are asking Pathways Center to sustain and reciprocate the commitment they already bring. Continued investment in career growth, job-specific development, leadership communication, recognition, work design, and respectful culture will help convert strong individual dedication into an increasingly consistent organization-wide employee experience.

Workforce Trends & Highlights

Investing in Our Most Important Asset—Our Employees

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"Pathways Center's greatest strength is not simply the behavioral health services we provide—it is the dedicated employees who make those services possible every day. Our workforce is the foundation of our mission to serve as many people as possible, provide quality care and service, and operate in a fiscally responsible manner."



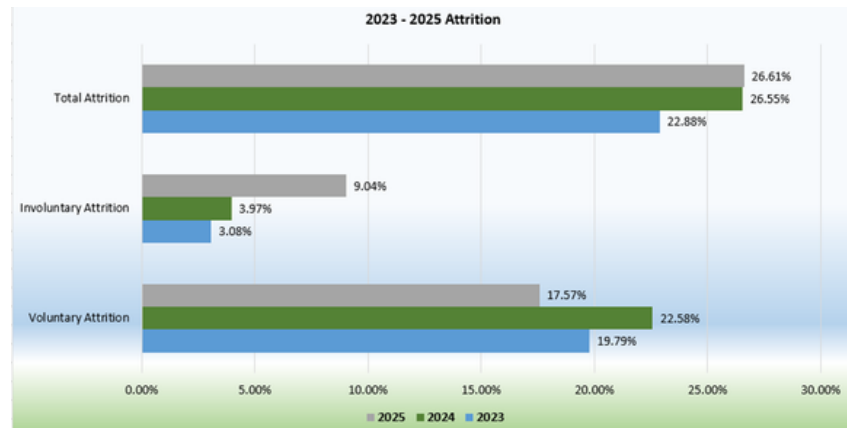
Overview

Behavioral healthcare organizations across the nation continue to experience unprecedented workforce shortages, increasing demand for behavioral health professionals, and heightened competition for qualified clinicians, nurses, direct support professionals, and support staff. Despite these industry-wide challenges, Behavioral healthcare organizations across the nation continue to experience unprecedented workforce shortages, increasing demand for behavioral health professionals, and heightened competition for qualified clinicians, nurses, direct support professionals, and support staff. Despite these industry-wide challenges, Pathways Center has continued to recruit, retain, develop, and promote talented employees while expanding behavioral health services throughout west-central Georgia.

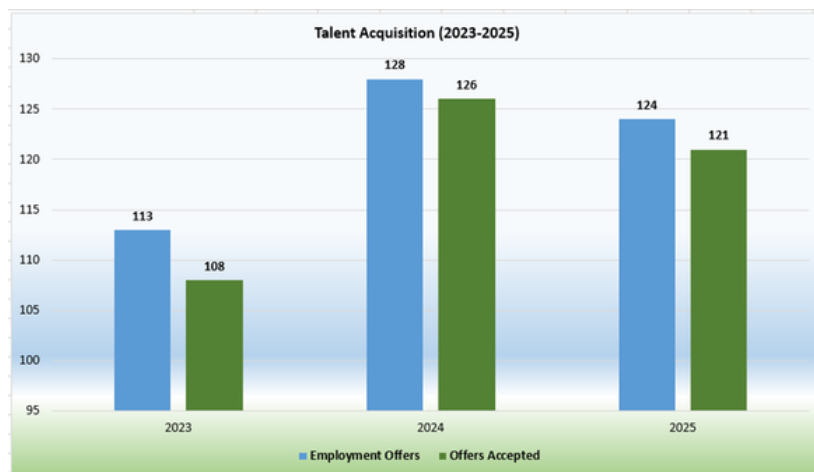
This section highlights workforce trends from calendar years 2023 through 2025 and demonstrates how Pathways Center's investment in its people supports organizational stability, quality clinical care, succession planning, and long-term sustainability.

The findings presented in this chapter complement the employee engagement survey results and illustrate Pathways Center's commitment to creating a workplace where employees can build meaningful careers while improving the lives of individuals and families across the region.

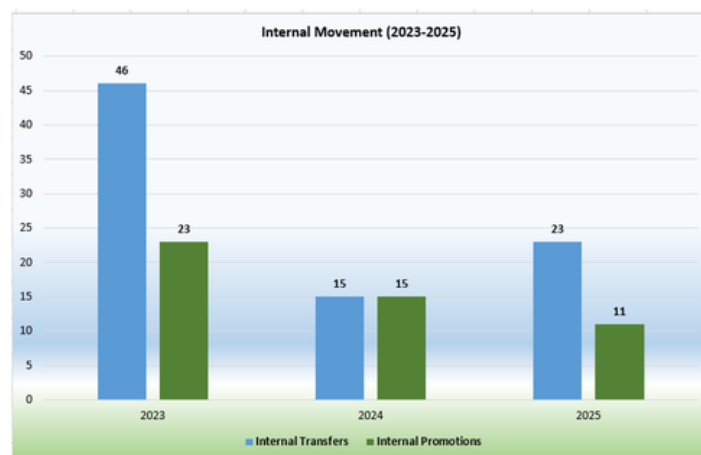
Workforce at a Glance



Source: Pathways Center Talent Management Reports, Calendar Years 2023-2025.



Source: Pathways Center Talent Management Reports, Calendar Years 2023-2025



Source: Pathways Center Talent Management Reports, Calendar Years 2023-2025

Recruitment & Talent Acquisition

Recruitment activity increased substantially over the three-year period as Pathways Center expanded services and responded to workforce shortages affecting the behavioral health industry. Phone screenings increased from 310 in 2023 to 466 in 2024, before moderating to 391 in 2025, indicating that the organization maintained a robust recruitment pipeline even as staffing stabilized. Employment offers increased from 113 in 2023 to 124 in 2025, while accepted offers remained consistently high at more than 95% of all offers extended.

These trends demonstrate that Pathways Center remains an employer of choice within the region. High offer acceptance rates suggest that prospective employees value the organization's mission, culture, professional development opportunities, and commitment to employee success.

Employee Retention & Workforce Stability

Voluntary turnover peaked in 2024 before declining significantly in 2025, falling from 91 voluntary separations to 68, a reduction of approximately 25%. This improvement suggests that workforce retention efforts—including leadership development, employee engagement initiatives, professional growth opportunities, and the CARES recognition program—are strengthening employee commitment and organizational loyalty.

In contrast, involuntary separations increased during 2025. Rather than indicating organizational instability, this trend likely reflects increased performance accountability and a continued emphasis on maintaining a workforce aligned with Pathways Center's values, service expectations, and commitment to quality care.

Overall staffing remained remarkably consistent despite nationwide workforce shortages. Filled positions remained near 90 percent of approved staffing levels throughout the three-year period, illustrating organizational resilience and effective workforce planning.



Internal Career Growth

Building Careers from Within

Pathways Center has intentionally developed a culture in which employees are encouraged to grow professionally and pursue leadership opportunities throughout their careers.

Internal workforce movement demonstrates this commitment:

- 84 internal transfers occurred across the organization between 2023 and 2025.
- 49 employees received promotions during the same period.

Nearly every member of the current Senior Leadership Team began their career with Pathways Center in another role before advancing into positions of greater responsibility.

This philosophy is reinforced through the organization's Pathways to Leadership program, which prepares high-potential employees for future leadership responsibilities through a structured year-long curriculum that includes leadership development, executive mentoring, strategic projects, and formal presentations to senior leadership.

Although annual promotion totals declined as organizational growth stabilized, internal advancement continues to be an essential component of Pathways Center's talent strategy.



Workforce Distribution

The talent management reports demonstrate that recruitment activity is concentrated within the organization's largest clinical operations:

- Outpatient Behavioral Health Services
- Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Services
- Care Campus 24/7 Crisis Programs

These areas account for the majority of recruitment, hiring, and workforce movement due to their size, service demand, and direct impact on community access to care.



Supporting Clinical Excellence

Investing in employees extends beyond recruitment and retention. Pathways Center continues to support workforce excellence by:

- Providing free clinical supervision for counselors pursuing independent licensure.
- Supporting nurses seeking professional advancement.
- Serving as a clinical internship site for colleges and universities across Georgia and the Southeast.
- Developing future behavioral health professionals through structured internships.
- Creating a sustainable workforce pipeline that benefits both students and the communities served.

These initiatives strengthen workforce capacity while addressing statewide shortages of licensed behavioral health professionals.



Alignment with Employee Engagement Findings

The workforce data closely aligns with findings from the organization's employee engagement surveys. Employees consistently report:

- Strong commitment to the mission.
- Pride in serving individuals and families.
- Appreciation for supportive supervisors.
- Opportunities for meaningful work.
- Continued interest in professional development.

The reduction in voluntary turnover during 2025 mirrors improvements observed in employee engagement, suggesting that investments in workplace culture, recognition, communication, and leadership development are producing measurable organizational benefits.



Supporting the CARES Culture

Pathways Center's CARES initiative reinforces the organization's commitment to exceptional customer service and employee recognition.

By celebrating employees who exemplify Compassion, Affirmation, Relationships, Excellence, and Support, Pathways Center reinforces the behaviors that create exceptional experiences for individuals receiving behavioral healthcare.



Workforce Trends Supporting the Mission

The workforce data illustrates that Pathways Center's investment in employees directly supports each element of its mission:

Serve as Many People as Possible

Maintaining a strong recruitment pipeline and high staffing levels ensures that behavioral health services remain available throughout the six-county service area.

Provide Quality Care and Service

Investments in employee development, clinical supervision, leadership training, and recognition contribute to high-quality, person-centered care.

Operate in a Fiscally Responsible Manner

Improved employee retention reduces recruitment costs, preserves institutional knowledge, and strengthens continuity of care while promoting long-term organizational sustainability.

Key Workforce Highlights (2023–2025)



Recruitment

More than
1,100 phone
screenings conducted.

765 in-person
interviews completed

365 employment
offers extended.

355 accepted
offers.



Retention

- ✓ Voluntary turnover declined significantly in 2025.
- ✓ Workforce occupancy remained close to 90% despite industry shortages.
- ✓ Stable staffing supported continued service delivery across all major clinical divisions.



Career Development

84 internal
transfers.

✓ Continued investment in the Pathways to Leadership program.

49 internal
promotions.

✓ Ongoing clinical supervision and internship partnerships supporting workforce sustainability.

Conclusion

The workforce trends observed from 2023 through 2025 demonstrate that Pathways Center continues to strengthen its organizational capacity by investing in its employees. Recruitment efforts remain robust, employee retention has improved, and internal career advancement continues to support leadership succession and workforce stability.

These findings reinforce Pathways Center's long-standing belief that exceptional behavioral healthcare begins with exceptional people. By cultivating a mission-driven culture, recognizing employee contributions, investing in professional growth, and preparing future leaders, the organization is well positioned to meet the evolving behavioral health needs of west-central Georgia while remaining true to its mission of serving communities with compassion, quality, and fiscal responsibility.

Leadership That Serves Our Community

Experienced Leaders. Community-Focused Care.

Leadership Driving Excellence Across West Central Georgia

Pathways Center's Senior Leadership Team brings together experienced executives, physicians, clinicians, and operational leaders whose collective expertise spans psychiatry, behavioral health administration, quality improvement, healthcare operations, organizational strategy, human resources, intellectual and developmental disabilities, crisis services, community engagement, and regulatory compliance.

Collectively, the team represents more than a century of healthcare and behavioral health leadership experience. Their backgrounds include executive healthcare administration, physician leadership, clinical research, counselor education, accreditation, workforce development, crisis intervention, quality improvement, organizational effectiveness, and community partnerships.

Together, they oversee a comprehensive behavioral healthcare system serving thousands of children, adolescents, adults, and families throughout West Central Georgia while maintaining Pathways Center's commitment to quality, accessibility, innovation, and compassionate care.





Stephanie Ellis,

MSHR, PHR, SHRM-CP - Chief Executive Officer

As Chief Executive Officer, Stephanie Ellis provides executive leadership for one of Georgia's largest community behavioral healthcare organizations. With more than 20 years of executive leadership experience, she is responsible for establishing the organization's strategic vision while ensuring operational excellence, financial stewardship, workforce development, and long-term sustainability.

Throughout her career at Pathways Center, Ms. Ellis has served in progressively responsible executive leadership positions, including Human Resources Director, Corporate Compliance Officer, Chief Administrative Officer, and Chief Executive Officer. Her leadership has been instrumental in expanding organizational infrastructure, strengthening operational effectiveness, modernizing workforce strategies, and positioning Pathways Center for continued growth.

Her executive responsibilities include:

- Organizational strategic planning
- Executive leadership and governance
- Human Resources
- Organizational effectiveness
- Workforce planning and succession management
- Risk management and corporate compliance
- Compensation and benefits strategy
- Information technology oversight
- Facilities and fleet management
- Financial planning and budget development
- Workforce analytics and organizational performance
- Executive leadership development

She has also led numerous enterprise-wide initiatives involving organizational transformation, workforce expansion, leadership development, regulatory compliance, and operational modernization. Her expertise in organizational effectiveness has helped Pathways Center become recognized as an employer of choice within Georgia's behavioral healthcare system.



Allen Lavender,

DO, MBA Chief Medical Officer

Board-certified in both Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine, Dr. Allen Lavender serves as Pathways Center's Chief Medical Officer, providing executive physician leadership for all psychiatric, medical, and nursing services throughout the organization.

Since joining Pathways Center in 2014, Dr. Lavender has overseen the organization's expanding continuum of psychiatric care while ensuring the delivery of safe, evidence-based, person-centered treatment. His responsibilities include:

- Medical oversight of all psychiatric services
- Clinical governance
- Physician recruitment and retention
- Medical staff supervision
- Nursing leadership
- Medication management
- Clinical quality improvement
- Risk management
- Regulatory compliance
- Medical policy development
- Integration of psychiatric and addiction treatment

Among his many accomplishments are the development of Pathways Center's Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program, collaboration in securing more than \$10 million in state and federal grant funding, maintaining medical staff retention exceeding 90 percent, improving outpatient psychiatric productivity, and leading one of Georgia's highest-performing crisis stabilization programs with consistently high occupancy and patient satisfaction.



Stephanie Garcia,

PhD, LPC, CPCS
Associate Clinical Director

Carroll, Coweta & Heard Counties

Dr. Stephanie Garcia provides executive clinical leadership for outpatient behavioral health services across Carroll, Coweta, and Heard Counties. Fluent in English and Spanish, she oversees one of the organization's largest regional service areas while promoting access to culturally responsive behavioral healthcare.

Dr. Garcia's career reflects exceptional professional growth within Pathways Center, having advanced from Administrative Clerk to Human Resources Analyst, Counselor, Site Supervisor, Regional Manager, and ultimately Associate Clinical Director. Her leadership responsibilities include:

Her leadership responsibilities include:

- Clinical operations for multiple outpatient clinics
- Regional management
- Clinical supervision
- Community partnership development
- Performance improvement
- Evidence-based practice implementation
- Contract compliance
- Revenue optimization
- Staff recruitment and development
- Program expansion
- Crisis intervention oversight

Her doctoral education in Counselor Education and Supervision complements extensive experience in outpatient behavioral health operations, clinical counseling, human resources, organizational leadership, and multicultural service delivery.



Meribeth Pillot,

LPC, CPCS - Associate Clinical Director

Troup, Meriwether & Spalding Counties

Meribeth Pillot provides executive clinical leadership for Pathways Center's outpatient behavioral health services throughout Troup, Meriwether, and Spalding Counties. With more than three decades of behavioral healthcare experience, she brings extensive expertise in outpatient services, crisis intervention, partial hospitalization, child welfare, community mental health, and clinical supervision.

As Associate Clinical Director, she oversees:

- Outpatient behavioral health clinics
- Clinical supervisors
- Licensed clinicians
- Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR)
- Supportive Living services
- Clinical operations
- Program development
- Staff recruitment
- Clinical supervision for counselors pursuing licensure
- Community partnerships

Before joining Pathways Center's executive leadership team, Ms. Pillot held numerous leadership positions including Admissions Director, Mobile Crisis Coordinator, Program Director, Regional Director, and Family Consultant. Fluent in Spanish, she also helps ensure services remain accessible to diverse populations throughout the region.



Courtney Pierce,

LPC, CPCS - Clinical Director – Specialty Programs

Dr. Courtney Pierce provides executive oversight for several of Pathways Center's most clinically complex and innovative service lines, including Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Community Support Team (CST), inpatient counseling services, and the Coweta Cares Co-Responder Program.

Her scope of responsibility includes:

- Clinical leadership for specialty programs
- Program evaluation and performance improvement
- Clinical quality assurance
- Staff supervision
- Clinical education
- Evidence-based practice implementation
- Program development
- Crisis response services
- Community partnerships
- Compliance monitoring

In addition to her executive leadership role, Dr. Pierce is an accomplished researcher, counselor educator, national conference presenter, certified trainer in suicide prevention, and clinical supervisor. Her work advancing crisis counseling, interdisciplinary collaboration, and counselor education contributes to continuous innovation across the organization.



Timothy McGruder,

Director of Operations

Care Campus

Timothy McGruder oversees daily operations of Pathways Center's Care Campus, one of Georgia's premier behavioral health crisis stabilization facilities serving both adults and children.

Beginning his Pathways career providing direct patient care, he advanced through progressively responsible leadership positions including Social Service Technician, Case Manager, Social Service Technician Supervisor, Operations Manager, and Director of Operations.

His responsibilities include:

- Twenty-four-hour operational leadership
- Adult Crisis Stabilization Unit
- Child & Adolescent Crisis Stabilization Unit
- Environmental safety
- Regulatory compliance
- Staffing and workforce management
- Performance improvement
- Operational policy implementation
- Interdisciplinary coordination
- Emergency operations

His frontline experience provides valuable operational insight that supports efficient, patient-centered crisis care throughout the Care Campus.



Abigail Kimbell,

MBA, CPRP - Director of Client Engagement

Abigail Kimbell leads Pathways Center's Client Engagement Division, where she oversees therapeutic programming, recovery-oriented services, patient engagement initiatives, volunteer coordination, fundraising activities, and community outreach.

Her department plays a significant role in enhancing the patient experience by developing meaningful therapeutic, recreational, educational, and recovery-focused programming for children, adolescents, adults, and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Her responsibilities include:

- Therapeutic programming
- Client engagement strategy
- Peer Support programming
- Psychosocial Rehabilitation programming
- IDD Day Services programming
- Volunteer management
- Community partnerships
- Fundraising initiatives
- Community education
- Marketing and social media
- Patient experience initiatives

Outside Pathways Center, Ms. Kimbell serves as Vice Chair of the AnotherWay Foundation, leading regional suicide prevention initiatives, inclusive community events for individuals with developmental disabilities, and veteran outreach efforts. Her leadership has expanded Pathways Center's visibility and strengthened partnerships across West Central Georgia.



Jessica Bloodworth,

Director of Quality Assurance & Compliance

Jessica Bloodworth leads Pathways Center's Quality Assurance and Compliance Department, ensuring that clinical services consistently meet state, federal, and nationally recognized accreditation standards.

Her responsibilities include:

- Organization-wide quality assurance
- CARF accreditation
- Regulatory compliance
- DBHDD reviews
- Internal auditing
- Corrective action planning
- Performance improvement
- Risk management
- Clinical documentation compliance
- Utilization review
- Hospital coordination
- Staff education and training

As a CARF International Surveyor, Ms. Bloodworth also evaluates behavioral healthcare organizations across the country, bringing national best practices and accreditation expertise back to Pathways Center. Her leadership has been instrumental in maintaining the organization's reputation for clinical excellence and continuous quality improvement.



Joseph Alford,

Director of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Services

Joseph Alford provides executive leadership for Pathways Center's Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Division, overseeing residential services, crisis supports, community living programs, and day services across multiple counties.

His responsibilities include:

- IDD Residential Services
- IDD Mobile Crisis Services
- Community Residential Rehabilitation
- Day Services
- Residential operations
- Budget and resource management
- Staff development
- Regulatory compliance
- Community partnerships
- Program planning
- Strategic growth initiatives

With leadership experience spanning community mental health systems in both Georgia and Texas, Mr. Alford brings extensive expertise in residential care, crisis intervention, program administration, and person-centered service delivery. His multilingual abilities—including American Sign Language, Spanish, French, Japanese, and German—enhance Pathways Center's capacity to serve diverse populations and support inclusive care.

Quality & Accreditation

Accredited. Trusted. Committed to Quality.

"Quality is not simply a standard we meet—it is a commitment we make every day to the individuals, families, and communities we serve."

At Pathways Center for Behavioral and Developmental Growth, quality is more than regulatory compliance—it is the foundation upon which exceptional behavioral healthcare is built. Every individual who walks through our doors deserves safe, compassionate, evidence-based, person-centered care delivered by highly qualified professionals in an environment committed to continuous improvement.

Our commitment to quality extends across every aspect of the organization—from clinical care and crisis intervention to customer service, leadership development, patient safety, workforce excellence, and community partnerships.

The results of this commitment are reflected in nationally recognized accreditations, exceptional quality review scores, positive consumer outcomes, and the trust placed in Pathways Center by the communities we proudly serve.

A Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement

Pathways Center embraces a philosophy of continuous quality improvement (CQI), recognizing that excellence is an ongoing journey rather than a destination.

Every clinical program, administrative department, and support service participates in an organization-wide quality management program designed to:

- Improve patient outcomes
- Enhance safety
- Increase access to care
- Strengthen clinical effectiveness
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Monitor regulatory compliance
- Promote operational excellence
- Support evidence-based practice

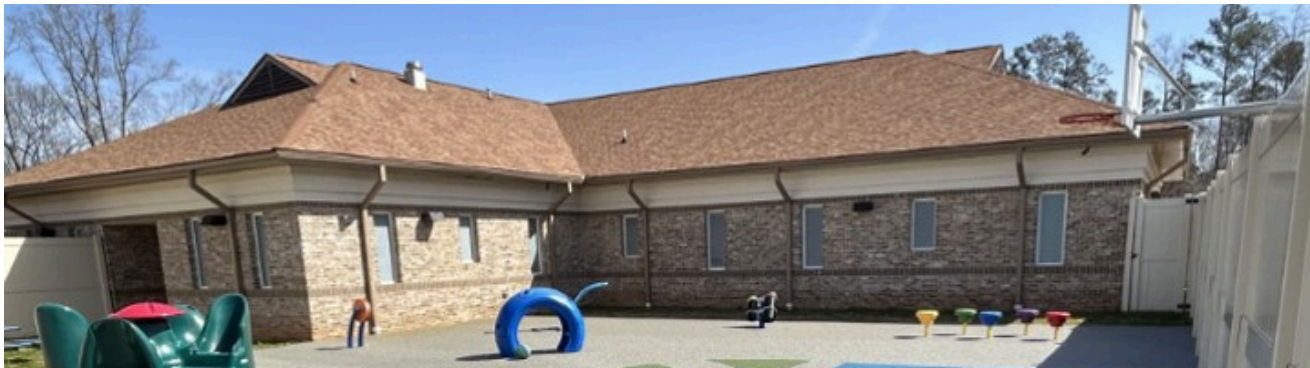
Quality improvement activities are integrated into everyday operations through data-driven decision-making, performance monitoring, accreditation reviews, risk management, consumer feedback, and employee engagement.



Nationally Accredited Excellence

Pathways Center maintains accreditation from nationally recognized organizations that evaluate healthcare quality, patient safety, clinical effectiveness, and organizational performance.

These independent reviews confirm that Pathways Center consistently meets or exceeds nationally recognized standards for behavioral healthcare.



CARF Three-Year Accreditation

The Gold Standard in Behavioral Healthcare

Pathways Center has earned a Three-Year Accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF International)—the highest level of accreditation awarded by CARF.

This distinction recognizes organizations that demonstrate substantial conformance to internationally recognized standards for quality, accountability, leadership, governance, risk management, and person-centered care.

CARF accreditation encompasses numerous behavioral health and community-based programs, reflecting Pathways Center's commitment to providing coordinated, recovery-oriented services that improve quality of life.

The accreditation process evaluates:

- Leadership and governance
- Strategic planning
- Clinical quality
- Risk management
- Patient rights
- Outcomes measurement
- Performance improvement
- Workforce development
- Community integration
- Financial stewardship

Receiving a three-year accreditation signifies that Pathways Center has demonstrated excellence across all major operational and clinical domains.

NADD Accreditation

Excellence in Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Services

Pathways Center has also achieved Three-Year Accreditation from the National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (NADD).

NADD accreditation recognizes organizations providing specialized behavioral health services to individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). This accreditation reflects Pathways Center's commitment to:

- ✓ Person-centered planning
- ✓ Community integration
- ✓ Trauma-informed care
- ✓ Positive behavioral supports
- ✓ Family engagement
- ✓ Interdisciplinary treatment
- ✓ Recovery-oriented practices

The review validates the organization's ability to successfully integrate behavioral healthcare with developmental disability services while promoting independence, dignity, and quality of life.

Georgia Collaborative Quality Reviews

In addition to national accreditation, Pathways Center participates in rigorous quality reviews conducted through the Georgia Collaborative Administrative Services Organization. Recent reviews demonstrated exceptional organizational performance.

Behavioral Health Quality Review - Overall Score:

92%

The review recognized Pathways Center for strong performance across multiple quality indicators, including:

- ✓ Clinical documentation
- ✓ Outcomes measurement
- ✓ Compliance with state standards
- ✓ Service planning
- ✓ Care coordination

The organization exceeded the statewide average while demonstrating ongoing commitment to quality improvement.

Crisis Stabilization Unit Quality Review - Overall Score: 96%

Service Guidelines Compliance: 100%

The Crisis Stabilization Unit achieved outstanding performance in providing safe, effective, person-centered crisis intervention services for adults and children. Reviewers recognized:

- ✓ Clinical quality
- ✓ Crisis intervention
- ✓ Recovery planning
- ✓ Interdisciplinary collaboration

These results reflect the high level of care provided at the Pathways Care Campus.

Quality Enhancement Provider Review (QEPR) - Overall Score: 90%

Whole Health Standards: 100%

The QEPR evaluates organizational performance related to:

- ✓ Person-centered care
- ✓ Clinical effectiveness
- ✓ Whole health integration
- ✓ Care coordination
- ✓ Recovery support

The review affirmed Pathways Center's commitment to integrating behavioral healthcare with physical health, wellness, and community supports.



Measuring What Matters

Pathways Center routinely monitors a broad range of quality indicators to evaluate organizational performance. Examples include:

- Access
- Appointment availability
- Wait times
- Referral completion
- Same-day access
- Clinical Effectiveness
- Treatment engagement
- Recovery outcomes
- Crisis stabilization outcomes
- Care coordination
- Care coordination
- Patient Experience
- Client satisfaction
- Family satisfaction
- Grievances and Complaints
- Safety
- Incident reporting
- Medication safety
- Infection prevention
- Risk management
- Environment of care
- Employee retention
- Leadership development
- Professional licensure
- Continuing education

These measures provide leadership with real-time information used to improve organizational performance.



Listening to Those We Serve

Quality improvement begins by listening.

Pathways Center actively gathers feedback through:

- Consumer satisfaction surveys
- Family surveys
- Community stakeholder surveys
- Complaint resolution
- Suggestion processes
- Community advisory groups
- Overall quality of care
- Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) quality measures
- Respect shown by staff
- Participation in treatment planning
- Ease of accessing services
- Confidence in recovery

This feedback is incorporated into quality improvement planning and organizational decision-making.

A Learning Organization

Pathways Center views every quality review, accreditation survey, consumer survey, and performance measure as an opportunity to learn. Lessons learned are translated into:

- New clinical initiatives
- Policy enhancements
- Process improvements
- Technology improvements
- Staff education
- Expanded community partnerships

This continuous learning approach allows the organization to remain responsive to changing community needs while preparing for future healthcare challenges.



Looking Ahead

As behavioral healthcare continues to evolve, Pathways Center remains committed to advancing clinical excellence through innovation, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Future quality initiatives include:

- Expansion of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) quality measures
- Enhanced population health analytics
- Increased use of outcome measurement tools
- Expanded telehealth quality monitoring
- Integrated behavioral and primary healthcare quality initiatives
- Workforce development and retention strategies
- Continued accreditation readiness
- Patient-centered innovation

These efforts will ensure that Pathways Center continues providing high-quality behavioral healthcare that improves lives throughout west-central Georgia.

Quality by the Numbers

**50+
Years**

of serving west-
central Georgia

CARF

Three-Year
Accreditation

NADD

Three-Year
Accreditation

92%

Georgia Collaborative Behavioral
Health Quality Review

96%

Crisis Stabilization Unit Quality
Review

100%

Compliance with Crisis Service
Guidelines

90%

Quality Enhancement Provider
Review

100%

Whole Health Standards

95%

of managers and supervisors
promoted from within

7,000 +

Clients served annually

Closing Message

Quality is not measured by accreditation alone.

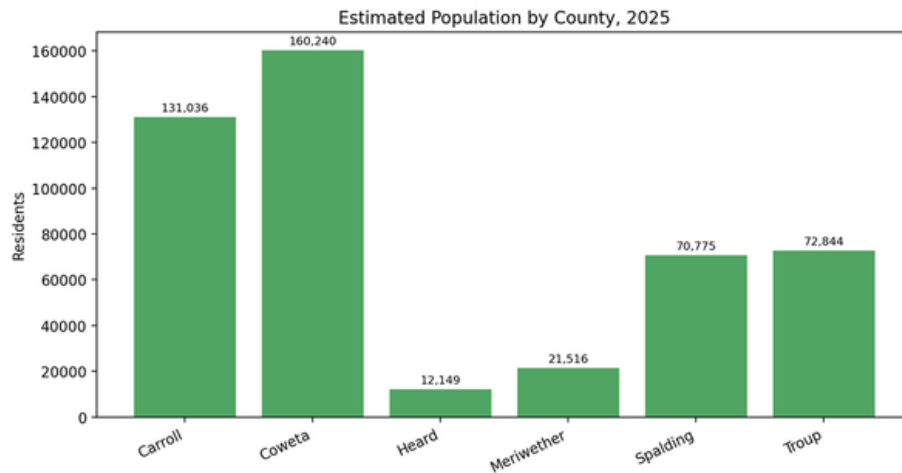
It is reflected in every life improved, every crisis stabilized, every family strengthened, every employee developed, and every community partnership formed.

For more than five decades, Pathways Center has earned the trust of west-central Georgia by combining compassionate care with clinical excellence, operational accountability, and an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement.

As the organization looks toward the future, quality will remain at the heart of everything it does—ensuring that every person served receives exceptional care, every employee has the opportunity to grow, and every community continues to benefit from a trusted behavioral healthcare partner.

Community Profile & Population Health

Demographics, social determinants, health status, access to care, and suicide trends across West Central Georgia



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts (2025 estimates);
Pathways Center CHNA community data workbook.

Overview

Pathways Center serves communities that differ substantially in population size, age composition, racial diversity, economic resources, rurality, health status, and access to care. These differences shape both the prevalence of behavioral health needs and the practical ability of residents to obtain timely services. The data reviewed for this chapter show two distinct service-planning environments: rapidly growing suburban counties with rising demand and rural or economically stressed counties where transportation, insurance, broadband, provider availability, and poverty create additional barriers.

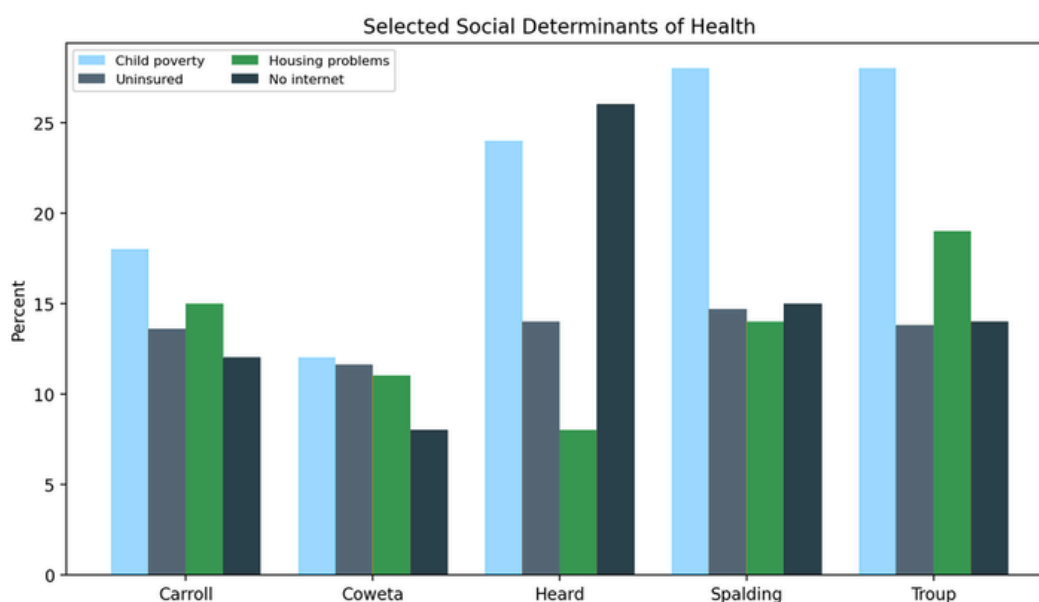
County	Population	Under 18	65+	Female	Veterans	Uninsured <65
Carroll	131,036	23.70%	15.70%	51.50%	5,705	13.60%
Coweta	160,240	22.40%	17.40%	51.80%	10,218	11.60%
Heard	12,149	22.40%	17.80%	51.30%	857	14.00%
Meriwether	21,516	18.80%	23.80%	51.80%	1,119	15.60%
Spalding	70,775	21.80%	20.60%	52.80%	4,495	14.70%
Troup	72,844	24.10%	17.80%	52.00%	3,383	13.80%

Note: Population and demographic values are 2025 estimates or 2020–2024 ACS measures

Regional Interpretation

Coweta and Carroll are the largest counties and together account for most of the region's population. Their continued growth creates pressure on outpatient, psychiatric, crisis, and youth service capacity. Troup and Spalding are mid-sized regional centers with sizable youth populations and comparatively high indicators of economic and health vulnerability. Heard remains the smallest and most rural county, with the most limited provider ratios and broadband access. Meriwether has the oldest age profile and the highest uninsured rate among the six county demographic reports, indicating a need for accessible, publicly funded, age-responsive services.

Social Determinants of Health



Source: 2025 County Health Rankings data and Census QuickFacts. "No internet" is calculated as 100% minus the reported percentage of households with internet access.

The regional SDOH profile demonstrates that access barriers are not uniform. Child poverty is highest in Spalding and Troup Counties at 28%, followed by Heard County at 24%. Housing problems are most prevalent in Troup County, where 19% of households experience at least one of the measured concerns, including overcrowding, high costs, or inadequate kitchen or plumbing facilities. Heard County has the lowest household internet access at 74%, which limits the reach of telehealth unless broadband and digital access are addressed. Uninsured rates remain elevated across the region, particularly in Meriwether, Spalding, Heard, and Troup Counties.

These conditions can increase the likelihood of delayed treatment, missed appointments, crisis utilization, medication interruptions, and difficulty sustaining recovery. They also reinforce the importance of transportation coordination, flexible scheduling, community-based services, telehealth alternatives, benefits navigation, and partnerships addressing housing and food insecurity.

Carroll County

Carroll County combines rapid population growth with meaningful behavioral health demand. Residents report 5.7 mentally unhealthy days per month, and 17% of adults report at least 14 days of poor mental health in a month. The county has the strongest mental-health-provider ratio at approximately 521 residents per provider, yet its large population means total demand remains high. Eighteen percent of children live in poverty, 15% of residents lack adequate food access, and approximately 13.6% of residents under age 65 lack health insurance. The suicide rate is reported at 19 deaths per 100,000, with an average annual count of 20.

Mentally unhealthy days	Physically unhealthy days	Poor mental health	Child poverty	Mental health provider ratio	Suicide rate
5.7	4.7	17%	18%	1:521	19/100k

Source: 2025 County Health Rankings and Census Quickfacts

Coweta County Profile

Coweta County is the largest county in the service area and has comparatively strong economic, educational, internet, and food-environment indicators. It also has the lowest child poverty rate at 12% and the fewest mentally and physically unhealthy days. Even so, population growth and a mental-health-provider ratio of 917 residents per provider create significant capacity pressure. Coweta records the highest average annual number of suicide deaths at 26, although its age-adjusted rate of 17 per 100,000 is below Carroll, Heard, and Spalding because of its larger population.

Mentally unhealthy days	Physically unhealthy days	Poor mental health	Child poverty	Mental health provider ratio	Suicide rate
5.4	4	17%	12%	1:917	17/100k

Source: 2025 County Health Rankings and Census Quickfacts



Community business partner support in FY26 allowed for the purchase of four vans to enhance transportation services for Peer and Psychosocial Rehabilitation mental health day programs.

Heard County Profile

Heard County's rural profile produces the clearest access challenges. It has one primary care physician for approximately 5,783 residents and one mental health provider for approximately 3,009 residents—the least favorable ratios. Only 74% of households have internet access, and 20% of adults report frequent poor mental health. Eighteen percent of residents lack adequate food access, and 24% of children live in poverty. Heard's reported age-adjusted suicide rate is 31 deaths per 100,000, the highest among the counties included in the suicide table, even though its small population produces an average annual count of three.

Mentally unhealthy days	Physically unhealthy days	Poor mental health	Child poverty	Mental health provider ratio	Suicide rate
5.8	4.8	20%	24%	1:3,009	31/100k

Community Health Needs Assessment Community Impact Report - 2026

Spalding County Profile

Spalding County combines substantial racial diversity with some of the region's most significant socioeconomic and health concerns. Twenty-eight percent of children live in poverty, 20% of adults report frequent poor mental health, 13% of adults have diagnosed diabetes, and 36% report loneliness. The county's mental-health-provider ratio is relatively favorable at 593 residents per provider, but high need and a 14.7% uninsured rate may still constrain access. Its suicide rate is reported at 21 deaths per 100,000, with an average annual count of 13.

Mentally unhealthy days	Physically unhealthy days	Poor mental health	Child poverty	Mental health provider ratio	Suicide rate
5.6	4.8	20%	28%	1:593	21/100k

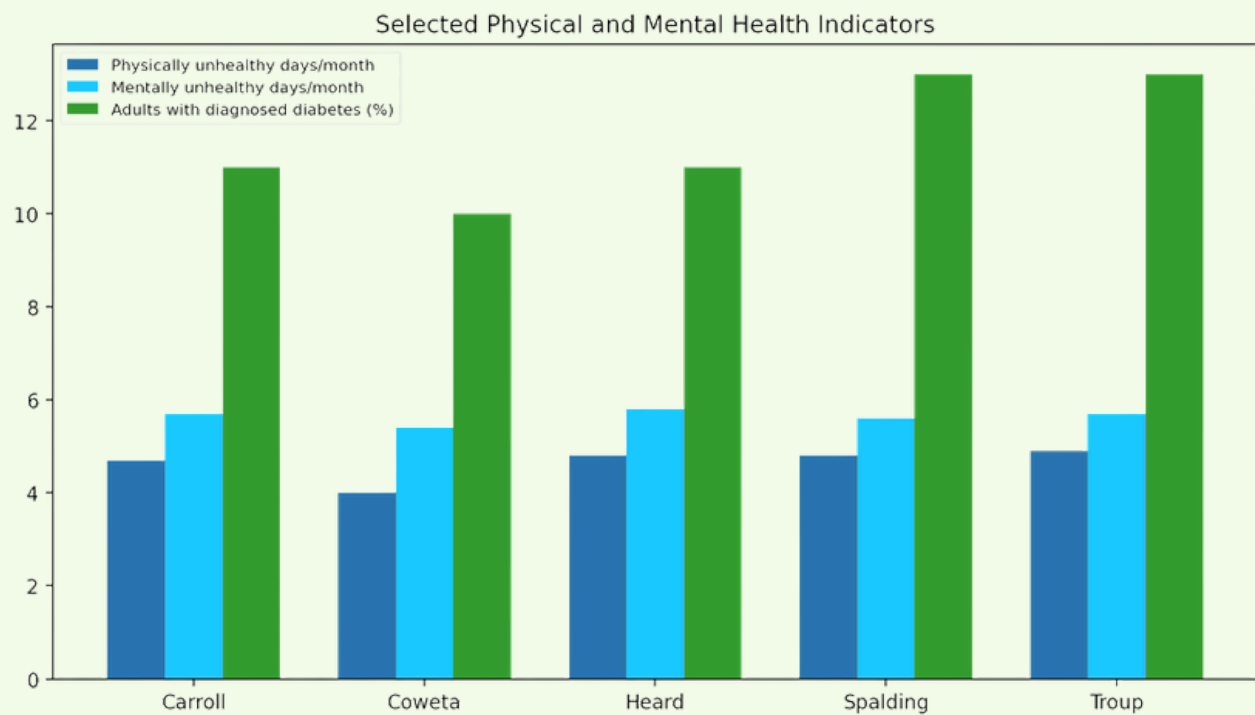
Community Health Needs Assessment Community Impact Report - 2026

Troup County Profile

Troup County has the largest share of residents under age 18 among the six counties at 24.1%, making youth behavioral health and prevention especially important. Twenty-eight percent of children live in poverty, 19% of households experience housing problems, and 15% of residents lack adequate food access. The county has relatively favorable provider ratios compared with Heard and Coweta, but persistent poverty and housing instability can interfere with treatment engagement. Troup has the lowest reported suicide rate among the five counties in the workbook at 14 deaths per 100,000, with an average annual count of 11.

Mentally unhealthy days	Physically unhealthy days	Poor mental health	Child poverty	Mental health provider ratio	Suicide rate
5.7	4.9	18%	28%	1:532	14/100k

Community Health Needs Assessment Community Impact Report - 2026



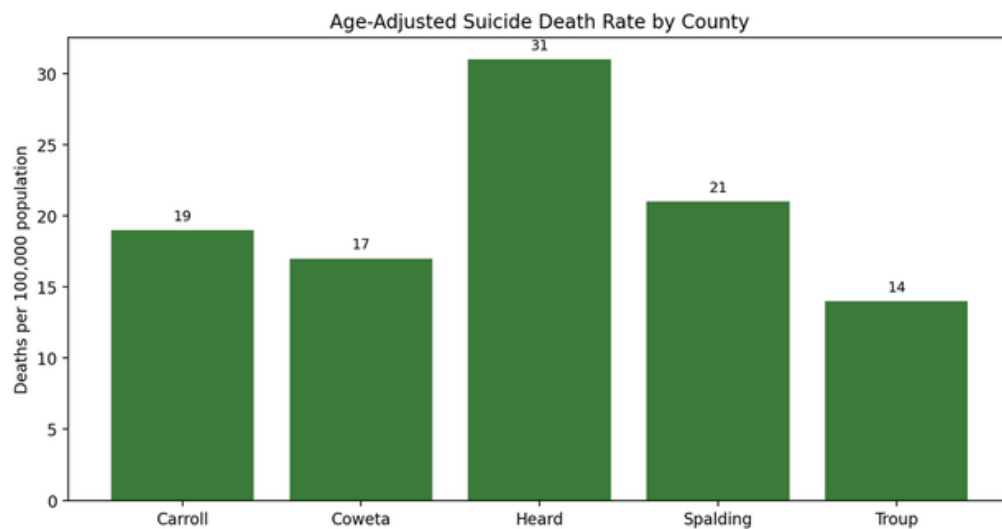
Source: 2025 County Health Rankings measures. Days are average self-reported unhealthy days per month; diabetes is an age-adjusted percentage.

Across the five counties with health data, residents report more mentally unhealthy days than physically unhealthy days each month. The difference is largest in Coweta and Carroll, but all counties show a sustained behavioral health burden. Frequent poor mental health affects 17% to 20% of adults, with the highest reported values in Heard and Spalding Counties. Diabetes affects 10% to 13% of adults, underscoring the importance of whole-person care because behavioral health conditions, medication effects, chronic disease, nutrition, and access to primary care often interact.

Access to Care

County	Primary care ratio	Mental health ratio	Internet access	Number uninsured
Carroll	1:1,967	1:521	88%	14,324
Coweta	1:2,205	1:917	92%	14,234
Heard	1:5,783	1:3,009	74%	1,398
Spalding	1:2,425	1:593	85%	8,214
Troup	1:1,992	1:532	86%	7,882

Provider ratios reveal that rurality and workforce availability remain central access issues. Heard County has the most pronounced shortages for both primary care and mental health services. Coweta's relatively high mental-health-provider ratio, despite stronger overall resources, suggests that rapid population growth may be outpacing provider capacity. Internet access is high in Coweta but materially lower in Heard, meaning telehealth cannot be treated as a complete substitute for local, mobile, or transportation-supported care.



Source: National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities mortality data

Suicide mortality shows meaningful variation across the region. Heard County has the highest age-adjusted rate at 31 deaths per 100,000, followed by Spalding at 21, Carroll at 19, Coweta at 17, and Troup at 14. Because rates can fluctuate substantially in small populations, they should be interpreted alongside average annual counts. Coweta has the highest average annual count at 26, followed by Carroll at 20, Spalding at 13, Troup at 11, and Heard at 3.

These findings support a regional prevention strategy that combines broad public awareness with targeted approaches. Higher-rate rural communities need enhanced screening, rapid connection to treatment, lethal-means safety education, and access to crisis services. Larger counties require scalable prevention systems, school and healthcare partnerships, and strong post-crisis follow-up because even moderate rates can translate into substantial numbers of deaths.



Cross-County Findings and Implications

1

Population growth requires scalable capacity

Carroll and Coweta are growing rapidly and together represent the majority of residents in the service area. Outpatient, psychiatric, youth, crisis, and integrated-care capacity must grow with the population

2

Rural counties require different access strategies

Heard and Meriwether face greater challenges related to provider availability, broadband, transportation, disability, aging, and insurance. Mobile care, transportation partnerships, local outreach, and flexible telehealth models are especially important.

3

Youth needs are closely tied to economic conditions

Troup and Spalding have the highest child poverty percentages, while Troup has the largest youth share of the population. School partnerships, family support, prevention, and child psychiatry should remain strategic priorities.

4

Behavioral and physical health are interconnected

Frequent poor mental health and chronic disease burdens support integrated screening, care coordination, medication monitoring, wellness programming, and stronger links with primary care.

5

Suicide prevention must be both universal and targeted

The highest rates occur in smaller or more vulnerable communities, while the highest counts occur in the largest counties. Prevention, crisis response, and follow-up should therefore be scaled by both rate and total burden.



How Pathways Center Is Positioned to Respond

The findings support continued development of a regionally coordinated continuum that includes outpatient mental health and substance use treatment, psychiatric services, crisis stabilization, ACT and CST, peer support, child and adolescent services, intellectual and developmental disability supports, integrated care, and community partnerships. The data also point to the need for county-specific implementation rather than a single uniform strategy.

- Expand outpatient and psychiatric capacity in high-growth counties.
- Strengthen school-based, family-centered, and youth crisis services in counties with large youth populations or high child poverty.
- Use mobile, community-based, transportation-supported, and telehealth services to address rural access barriers.
- Increase screening and integrated care for depression, anxiety, substance use, diabetes, and other chronic conditions.
- Coordinate suicide prevention with schools, hospitals, primary care, courts, public safety, veterans' organizations, and community groups.
- Continue collecting county-level data so service utilization, outcomes, and gaps can be monitored over time.

Data Sources and Limitations

U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2025 population estimates and 2020–2024 American Community Survey measures.

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2025 Georgia county health data.

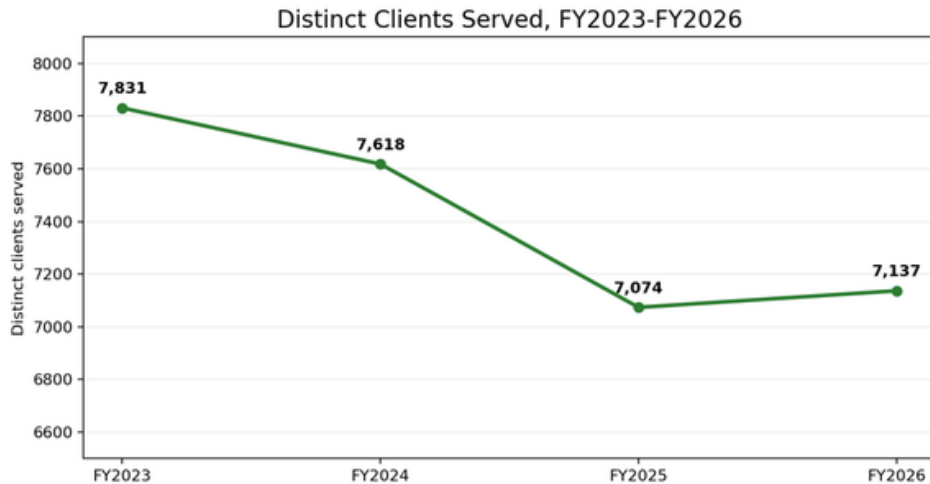
National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities mortality data portal.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center (combined teen homicide, suicide, and accident measure).



Clients Served, Clinical Trends, and Regional Alignment

FY2023-FY2026



Four-year trend in distinct clients receiving Pathways Center services.

At a Glance

Pathways Center served between 7,074 and 7,831 distinct clients annually. The total client population declined after FY2023, then stabilized in FY2026, while the number of children and adolescents served increased by approximately 80%.

Overview

This section examines who Pathways Center served from FY2023 through FY2026, where clients received care, and which diagnoses most frequently shaped treatment demand. It also compares internal CareLogic utilization patterns with the population, health, and social-determinant conditions of Carroll, Coweta, Heard, Meriwether, Spalding, and Troup Counties.

The result is a practical population-health view of service demand across Pathways Center's regional footprint.

The analysis uses distinct-client counts for demographic trends, program-level counts for service-line trends, and percentages of clients with selected primary diagnoses for diagnostic trends. Program counts should not be added together to calculate unique clients because one individual may receive services in multiple programs during the same fiscal year.

Overall Client Reach

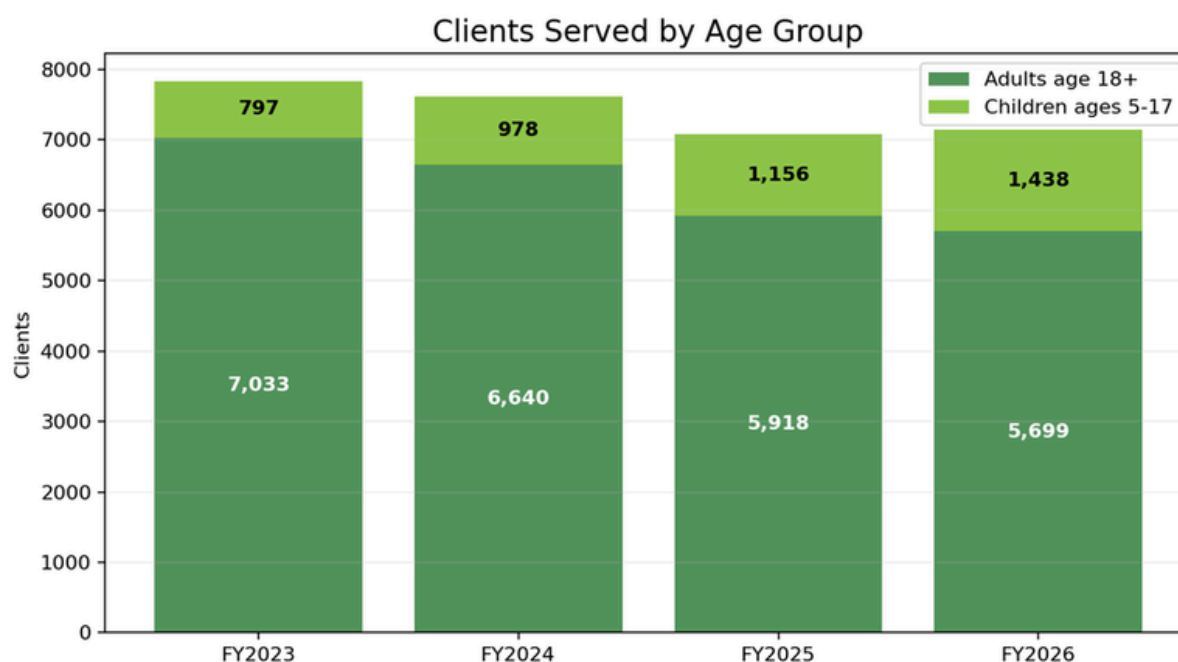
Pathways Center served 7,831 distinct clients in FY2023, 7,618 in FY2024, 7,074 in FY2025, and 7,137 in FY2026. The four-year pattern reflects an overall reduction of 694 clients, or 8.9%, from FY2023 to FY2026. However, the 63-client increase between FY2025 and FY2026 indicates stabilization rather than continued contraction. Sustained annual reach above 7,000 clients confirms continued demand for safety-net behavioral health, substance use, crisis, and community-based services.

Fiscal Year	Distinct Clients	Change from Prior Year	Percent Change
FY2023	7,831	-	-
FY2024	7,618	-213	-2.70%
FY2025	7,074	-544	-7.10%
FY2026	7,137	63	0.90%

Source: Pathways Center CareLogic data, Clients by Demographic, FY2023-FY2026.

Demographic Trends

Age: Rapid Growth in Youth Served

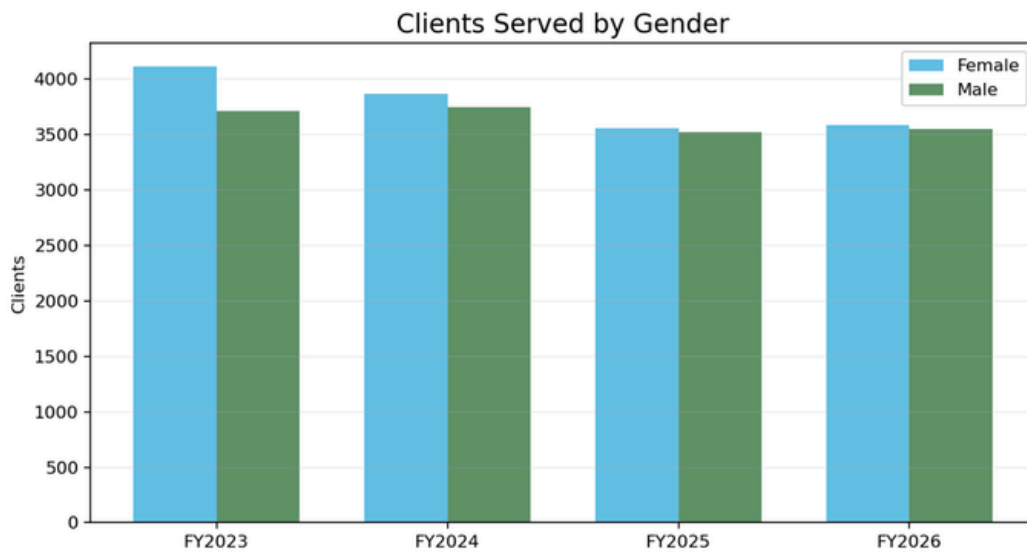


Children and adolescents increased as a share of the total population served.

The most significant demographic shift was growth in children and adolescents ages 5-17. Youth served increased from 797 in FY2023 to 1,438 in FY2026, an increase of 641 clients or 80.4%. Over the same period, adults age 18 and older declined from 7,033 to 5,699. Youth therefore grew from approximately 10% of all clients in FY2023 to about 20% in FY2026.

This pattern is consistent with the regional footprint, where roughly one in five residents is under age 18 and where Carroll, Coweta, and Troup Counties have particularly large youth populations. It also aligns with elevated child-poverty rates in Heard, Troup, and Spalding Counties and with the opening of the Child & Adolescent Crisis Walk-In Center in November 2025. The data support continued investment in school partnerships, family-centered treatment, youth psychiatry, early intervention, and child crisis services.

Gender: Broad and Stable Access



Gender distribution remained nearly balanced.

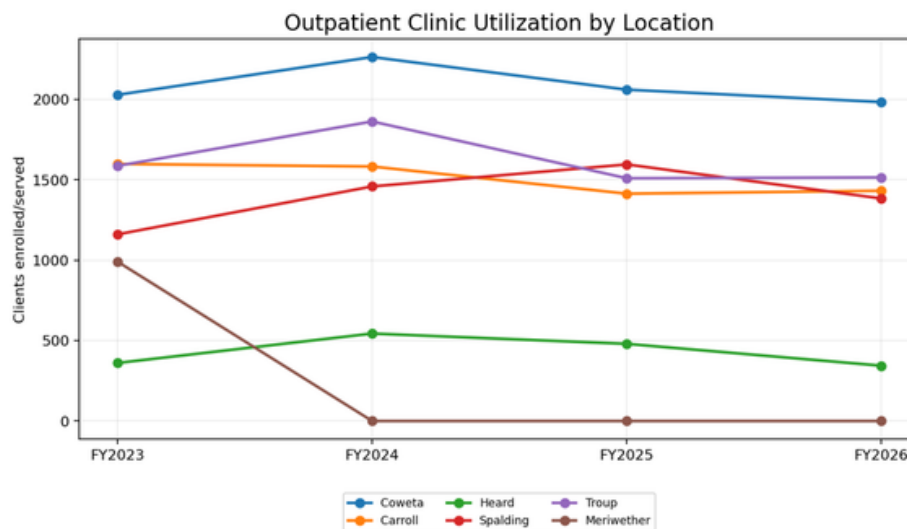
Race and Ethnicity: A Diverse Safety-Net Population

Race/Ethnicity	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026
White/Caucasian	4,662	4,490	4,117	3,998
Black/African American	2,797	2,723	2,548	2,706
Multiracial	226	262	270	298
Unknown/Other	112	114	107	108
Asian	22	19	22	18
American Indian/Alaska Native	8	8	7	8
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	5	3	4	2

White/Caucasian clients remained the largest group served, while Black/African American clients represented the second-largest group and increased from 2,548 in FY2025 to 2,706 in FY2026. Multiracial clients also increased steadily, from 226 in FY2023 to 298 in FY2026. These patterns broadly reflect a regional population that is approximately two-thirds White and one-quarter Black, with particularly high Black population shares in Troup and Spalding Counties. The comparatively small number of Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander clients should be monitored alongside county population estimates to ensure equitable outreach and culturally responsive access.

Clinical Programs and Services

Outpatient Services



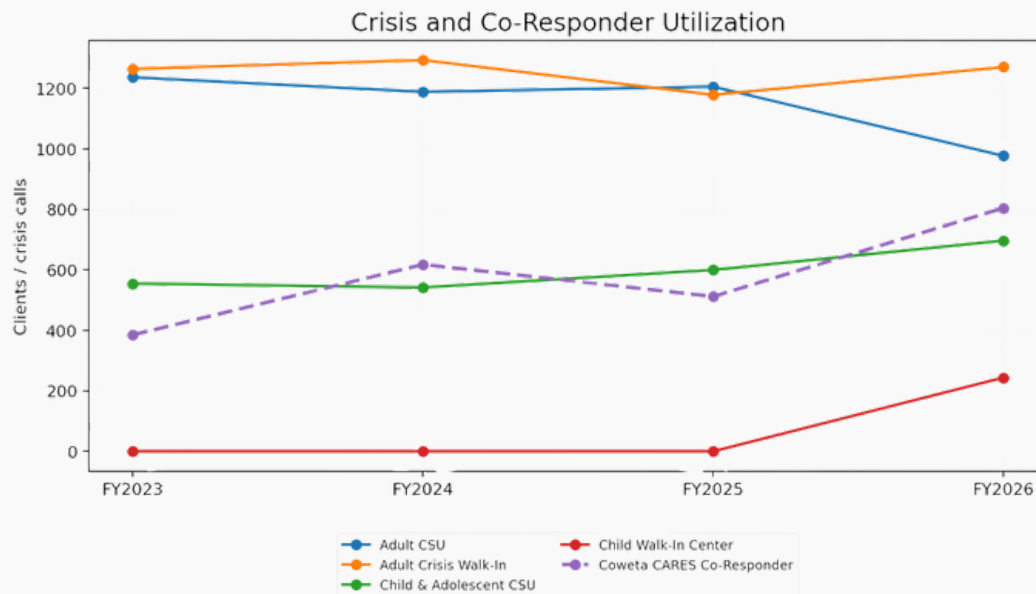
Outpatient utilization by clinic location, FY2023-FY2026.

Outpatient services remained the foundation of Pathways Center's service continuum. Coweta consistently served the largest clinic population, followed by Troup, Carroll, and Spalding. This distribution generally mirrors county population size and regional service-hub roles. Coweta is the largest county in the footprint and hosts the administrative headquarters and Care Campus; Carroll is the second-largest county; and Troup and Spalding function as regional centers for surrounding communities.

Spalding outpatient utilization grew from 1,161 clients in FY2023 to a peak of 1,596 in FY2025 before declining to 1,384 in FY2026. This elevated utilization is consistent with the county's high poverty, child-poverty, poor-mental-health, uninsured, and suicide indicators. Heard served fewer clients in absolute terms because of its smaller population, but its limited provider supply, high mental-health-provider ratio, and rural access barriers mean each local service point has disproportionate importance.

The Meriwether outpatient clinic closed in July 2023 because operating costs were not sustainable relative to local client volume. Residents continued to receive care through Troup, Spalding, and Coweta clinics. Given Meriwether's rural geography and socioeconomic vulnerability, referral patterns and travel burdens should continue to be monitored to determine whether telehealth, mobile services, transportation support, or future satellite access is warranted.

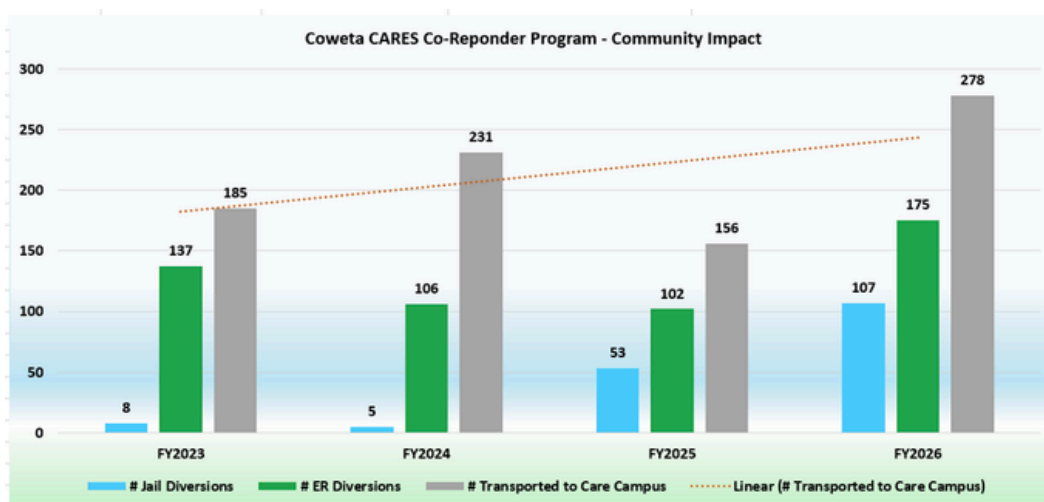
Crisis Services and Co-Responder Activity



Crisis utilization and Coweta CARES co-responder activity.

Adult crisis walk-in utilization remained consistently high, ranging from 1,179 to 1,294 annually. Adult Crisis Stabilization Unit volume declined to 977 in FY2026, while Child & Adolescent CSU utilization increased from 555 in FY2023 to 697 in FY2026. The new Child & Adolescent Crisis Walk-In Center served 244 clients during FY2026 after opening on November 13, 2025, providing additional evidence of unmet pediatric crisis demand.

Coweta CARES co-responder crisis calls more than doubled, rising from 385 in FY2023 to 805 in FY2026. During the four-year period, the program recorded 173 jail diversions, 520 hospital emergency-department diversions, and 850 transports to the Care Campus. This growth reflects both community need and the value of embedding behavioral health expertise in public-safety response. The pattern is especially relevant in a region where suicide rates, firearm deaths, drug-poisoning deaths, and poor mental-health days remain elevated in several counties.

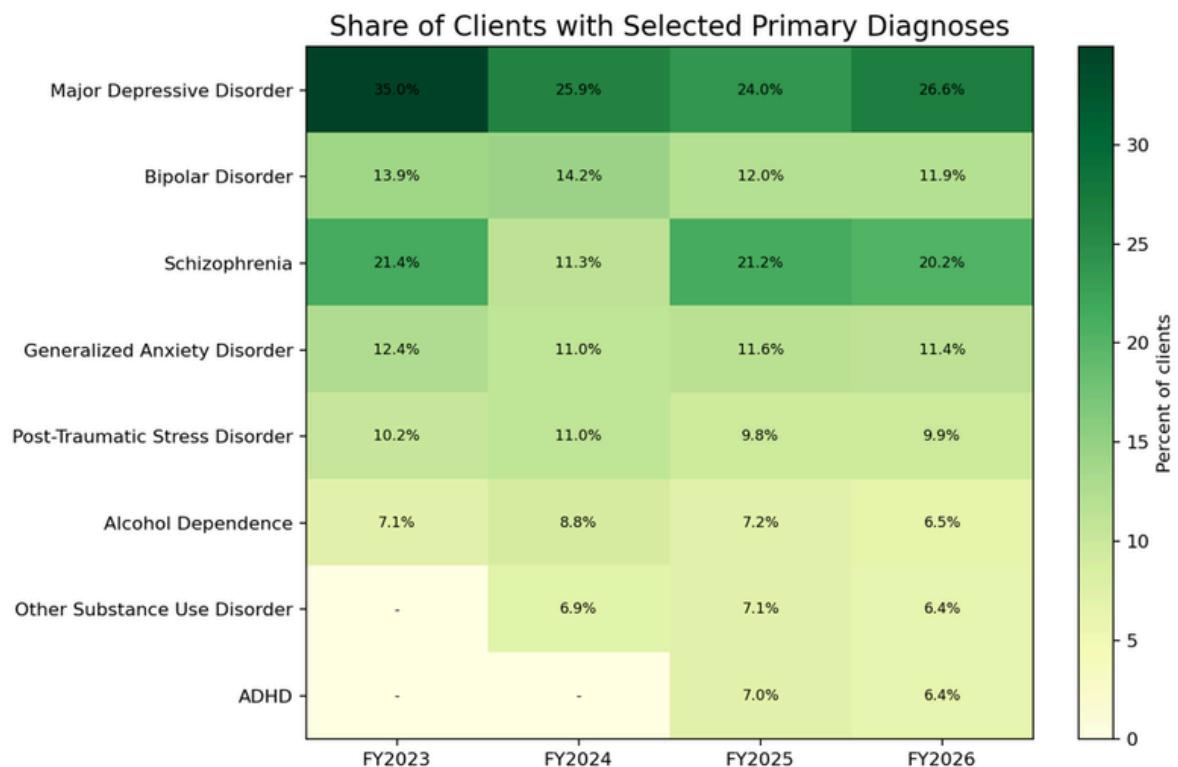


Intensive Community-Based Services

Program	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026
Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)	113	118	114	108
Community Support Team (CST)	68	56	51	50

ACT and CST census levels were comparatively stable, reflecting the targeted nature of these intensive services. Although the number of clients is smaller than outpatient volumes, these programs serve individuals with serious and persistent mental illness who often require frequent, multidisciplinary support to remain safely in the community. Stable program counts should therefore be interpreted as sustained high-acuity demand rather than limited impact.

Primary Diagnosis Trends



Percentage of clients with selected primary diagnoses, FY2023-FY2026.



Above photos shown of the Child & Adolescent Temporary Observation Unit opened in November 2025.

Mood disorders, serious mental illness, anxiety, trauma, and substance use disorders consistently shaped Pathways Center’s clinical population. Major Depressive Disorder was the most common selected primary diagnosis in every year. Its share declined from 35.0% in FY2023 to 24.0% in FY2025 before rising to 26.6% in FY2026, indicating persistent and substantial need for psychotherapy, medication management, crisis intervention, and suicide-prevention services.

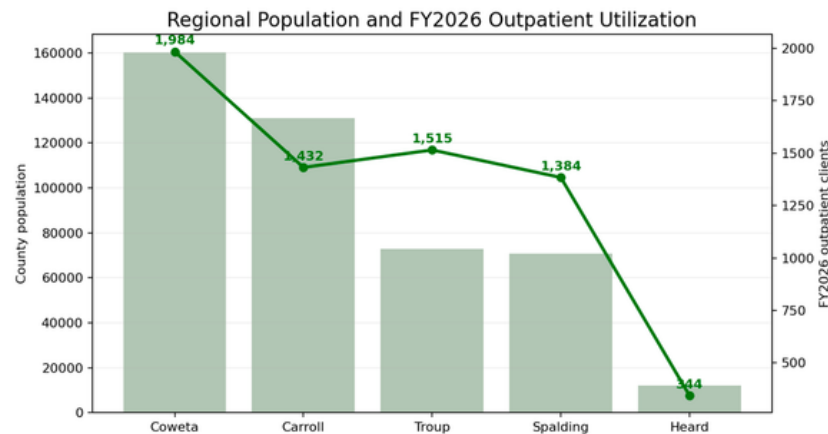
Schizophrenia remained a major driver of service demand. The reported share fell sharply in FY2024, then returned to more than 20% in FY2025 and FY2026. The multi-year pattern confirms the importance of ACT, CST, psychiatric services, peer support, crisis care, and supported community living.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder were consistently present at meaningful levels, mirroring stakeholder concerns about anxiety, depression, trauma, and suicide risk. Bipolar disorder declined modestly as a share of clients, but still represented approximately 12% of the FY2026 population. Alcohol dependence decreased from 8.8% in FY2024 to 6.5% in FY2026, while other substance-use disorders remained above 6%. ADHD entered the top diagnostic group in FY2025 and remained at 6.4% in FY2026, which is consistent with the rapid increase in children and adolescents served.

Clinical Interpretation

The diagnosis profile shows simultaneous demand for broad-access outpatient care and specialized high-acuity services. Depression, anxiety, trauma, and ADHD require scalable early intervention and therapy capacity, while schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and co-occurring substance use require sustained psychiatric, crisis, and community-based treatment.

Alignment with Regional Community Need



County population and FY2026 outpatient utilization are directionally aligned, while local health risks influence service intensity.

At a regional level, service volume generally follows population concentration. Coweta and Carroll are the two largest counties and account for the largest outpatient populations. Troup and Spalding, although smaller, generate substantial outpatient volume because they function as regional service hubs and face higher poverty, child-poverty, uninsured, and chronic-health burdens. Heard's smaller absolute utilization must be viewed in the context of a population of approximately 12,000 residents and one mental health provider for every 3,009 residents, the least favorable provider ratio of all county data.

County	2025 Population	FY2026 Outpatient Clients	Adults with Frequent Poor Mental Health	Population per Mental Health Provider	Suicide Deaths per 100,000	Children in Poverty
Carroll	131,036	1,432	17%	521:1	19	18%
Coweta	160,240	1,984	17%	917:1	17	12%
Heard	12,149	344	20%	3009:1	31	24%
Troup	72,844	1,515	18%	532:1	14	28%
Spalding	70,775	1,384	20%	593:1	21	28%

Source: Pathways Center CareLogic data; 2025 County Health Rankings data; U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts.

Social Determinants and Access

The community data show that clinical demand is shaped by more than diagnosis alone. Uninsured residents, housing problems, food insecurity, limited internet access, transportation challenges, disability, poverty, and provider shortages can delay treatment and increase the likelihood of crisis. Heard County combines rural isolation, a severe provider shortage, and the lowest internet-access rate. Spalding and Troup report the highest child-poverty rates, while Carroll reports the highest drug-poisoning death count and Coweta's rapid growth places continuing pressure on provider capacity.

These factors help explain why Pathways Center's regional model must include multiple access channels: local outpatient clinics, telehealth, mobile and community-based teams, crisis walk-in services, co-responder programs, school partnerships, transportation collaboration, and integrated primary-care relationships. The utilization data support continued expansion of flexible access rather than reliance on a single clinic-based model.

Strategic Implications

Expand youth capacity: The 80% increase in children and adolescents served, increasing child CSU use, the new child crisis walk-in volume, and the emergence of ADHD among leading diagnoses support additional youth psychiatry, therapy, school partnerships, family engagement, and prevention capacity.

Preserve high-acuity adult services: Schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and recurrent depression remain major components of the clinical population, requiring sustained investment in psychiatry, ACT, CST, peer support, crisis stabilization, and care transitions.

Strengthen rural access: Heard and Meriwether require targeted strategies addressing travel, broadband, provider shortages, and transportation. Telehealth should be paired with mobile and community-based options where internet access is limited.

Expand integrated substance-use care: Alcohol dependence and other substance-use disorders remain prominent, while community data show substantial drug-poisoning mortality. MAT, recovery support, co-occurring treatment, overdose prevention, and court/hospital partnerships should remain priorities.

Conclusion

The four-year data demonstrate that Pathways Center continues to serve a large, clinically complex, and increasingly youth-oriented population. Outpatient care remains the principal access point, crisis demand remains substantial, and community-based programs serve a smaller but highly acute group of individuals. The diagnostic profile confirms persistent need for depression, anxiety, trauma, serious mental illness, and substance-use treatment. When these utilization patterns are viewed alongside regional population growth, poverty, provider shortages, insurance gaps, and suicide and overdose indicators, they provide a strong evidence base for Pathways Center's strategic priorities and future resource allocation.

Client Experience – Feedback & Findings

Quantitative survey data demonstrated consistently high levels of satisfaction with Pathways Center services. Across the survey periods reviewed, most respondents reported being satisfied with the services they received, felt respected by staff, believed they received the help they needed, and indicated they would recommend Pathways Center to others.

The survey findings are reinforced by the voices of the individuals and families served.

These responses demonstrate the meaningful impact behavioral healthcare services have on individuals seeking recovery, stability, and improved quality of life.

“

Pathways has made a difference in my life. A difference for the better. Thanks Pathways.

“

"Great place. Don't know what I'd do without your services."

“

"I got all the help that I needed."

Finding 1 - Compassionate, Person-Centered Care is Pathways Center's Greatest Strength



The most common theme identified throughout client feedback was appreciation for the compassion, professionalism, and commitment demonstrated by Pathways Center staff. Clients repeatedly described staff as respectful, kind, supportive, and genuinely invested in their recovery.

Client Voices

“

"The front desk staff is always so kind... Mr. Kevin takes the time to listen and always provides helpful information and guidance... I truly appreciate the care here and would definitely give this place 5 stars."

“

"The services and help I have received have been a game changer in my day-to-day mental health. The people—from the front desk to the doctors—are absolutely wonderful. They have made me comfortable and feel that I matter."

“

"The entire staff are absolutely amazing! Professional, courteous, pleasant, kind, and very attentive!"

Finding 2 - Behavioral Healthcare Improves Lives



Clients consistently reported meaningful improvements in their mental health, recovery, daily functioning, and relationships. Many respondents indicated that Pathways Center helped them regain hope and stability.

Client Voices



"Pathways has changed my life so much, I would have never believed just how much in the beginning."



"I love this place. If it wasn't for them, God knows what I would be doing."



"Without their assistance and support I would not be living a safe, healthy life."

Finding 3 - Strong Therapeutic Relationships Matter



Many respondents specifically recognized physicians, nurses, therapists, case managers, peer specialists, and front office staff by name, emphasizing the importance of trusting relationships.

Client Voices



"My therapist has been a major blessing in my life. She makes therapy feel so easy and carefree."



"Both the doctor and therapist assigned were excellent: kind, helpful, good listeners, and non-judgmental."



"Everyone there is awesome."

Finding 4 Opportunities Exist to Improve Access and Communication



Although overall satisfaction remains exceptionally high, clients also identified opportunities for continued improvement. Several respondents noted challenges involving appointment scheduling, medication refills, telephone communication, provider continuity, and wait times.

Client Voices



"The intake services take too long. We have to be there sometimes up to two hours."



"Took over two weeks to get medicine refilled."

“

"I was supposed to receive a call when my therapist came back after the holidays but I have yet to receive a text."

“

"Day program has minimal availability. I'm not able to get in touch with doctors."

These comments support continued organizational efforts to improve appointment access, communication, medication management, and responsiveness.

Finding 4 - Clients Value Safety and Respect



Many survey responses emphasized that clients felt emotionally and physically safe while receiving services. One respondent noted:

Client Voices

“

"The staff was all hands on deck to make sure my kids and I were safe. I really appreciated their handling of the situation."

This feedback reinforces the importance of trauma-informed care, de-escalation practices, and maintaining a safe treatment environment.

Independent Validation of Client Experience

The themes identified through the Community Health Needs Assessment were independently confirmed during Pathways Center's Georgia Collaborative review. Individuals interviewed during the review reported that they:

- Felt supported in achieving their goals.
- Were treated with dignity and respect.
- Were satisfied with the services they received.

Several comments particularly illustrate the impact of Pathways Center's services:

“

"The service is great, but it's the people that are special."

“

"The most important thing is that they have given me a community. I have friends now, and I was so lonely before."

“

My psychiatrist is amazing. I've never had a better one. She actually listens to me."

“

"I have no intention of leaving."

These independent interview findings closely mirror the themes identified through client satisfaction surveys, further validating Pathways Center's strengths in person-centered care, therapeutic relationships, and recovery-oriented services.

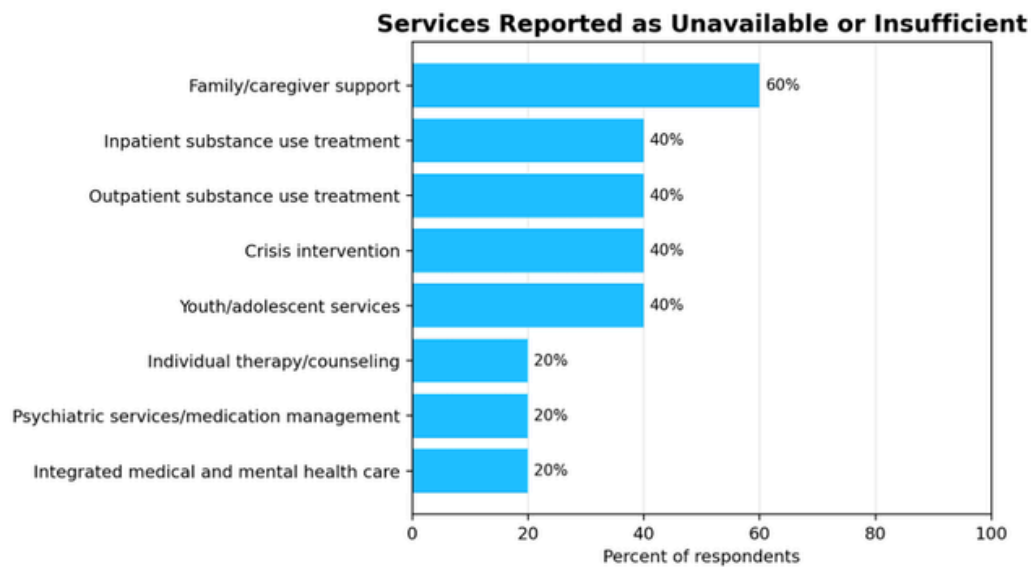
Community Business Partners – Feedback & Findings

Partner perspectives on access, coordination, prevention, recovery, and regional priorities

The survey captures the observations of Pathways Center community business partners regarding behavioral health needs, access barriers, system strengths, and opportunities for collaboration.

The results reinforce Pathways Center's three-year strategic direction while also identifying concrete opportunities to strengthen referral pathways, integrated care, crisis follow-up, youth and family services, substance use treatment, peer support, and the social conditions that shape recovery.

Service Gaps and Priority Populations



Source: Pathways Center Community Business Partners Survey, 2026.

Family and caregiver support ranked as the most frequently identified insufficient service (60%). Inpatient and outpatient substance use treatment, crisis intervention, and youth/adolescent services were each selected by 40%. Partners also identified counseling, psychiatric medication management, peer support, case management, developmental disability services, integrated care, and justice-involved services as areas requiring additional capacity.

Partner Voice

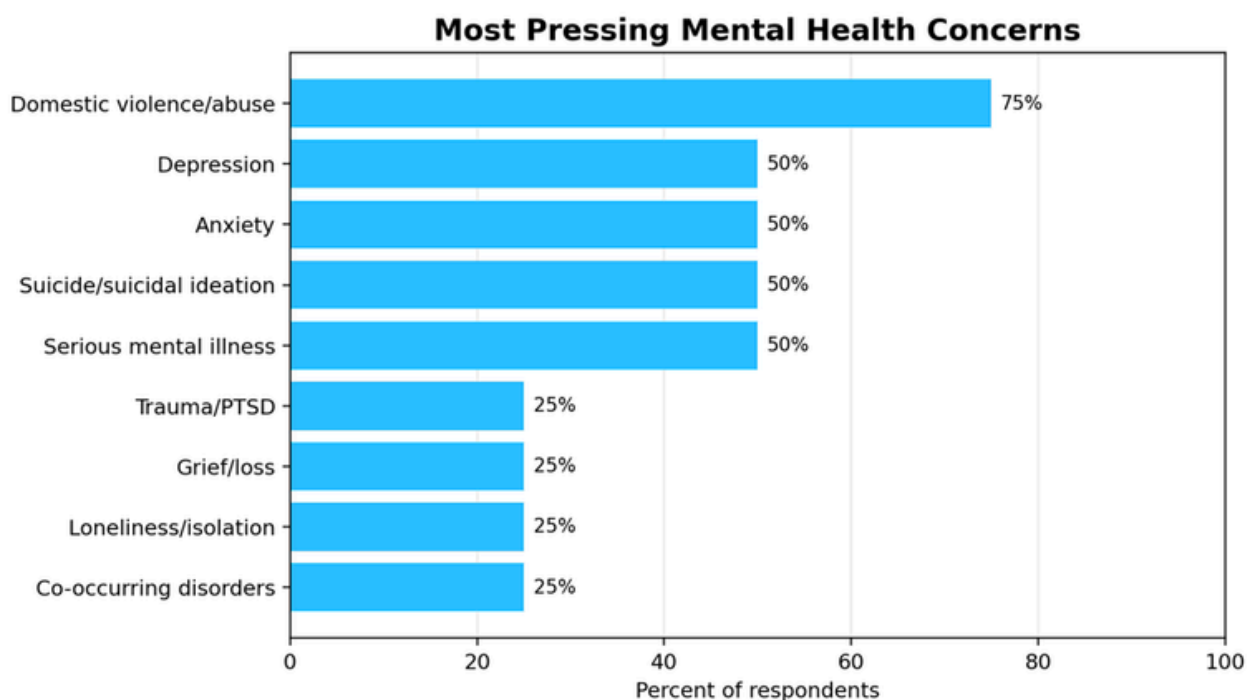
"The ability to help them receive the services they need (family counseling, individual child counseling, & mental health centers)."

These comments give particular urgency to the expansion of family counseling, child and adolescent services, and locally accessible higher levels of care. The Heard County comment also demonstrates how regional averages can obscure severe local scarcity in rural communities.

Partner Voice - Heard County

"Our families really need help dealing with the issues of mental health, but we are very limited in Heard County (family counseling and therapeutic services for our kids)."

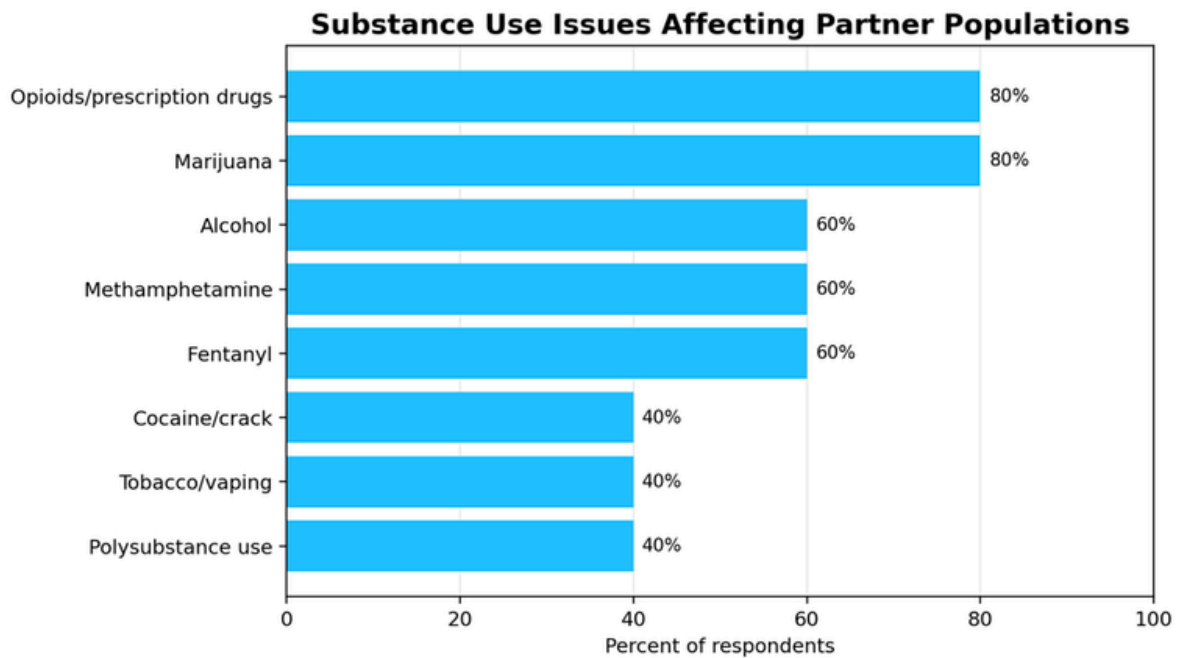
Mental Health and Substance Use Priorities



Source: Pathways Center Community Business Partners Survey, 2026.

Domestic violence and abuse was the most frequently selected pressing mental health concern (75%). Depression, anxiety, suicide or suicidal ideation, and serious mental illness were each identified by 50%. These results support a continuum that combines trauma-informed outpatient care, crisis response, suicide prevention, services for serious mental illness, and coordinated partnerships with schools, courts, healthcare providers, and victim-support organizations.



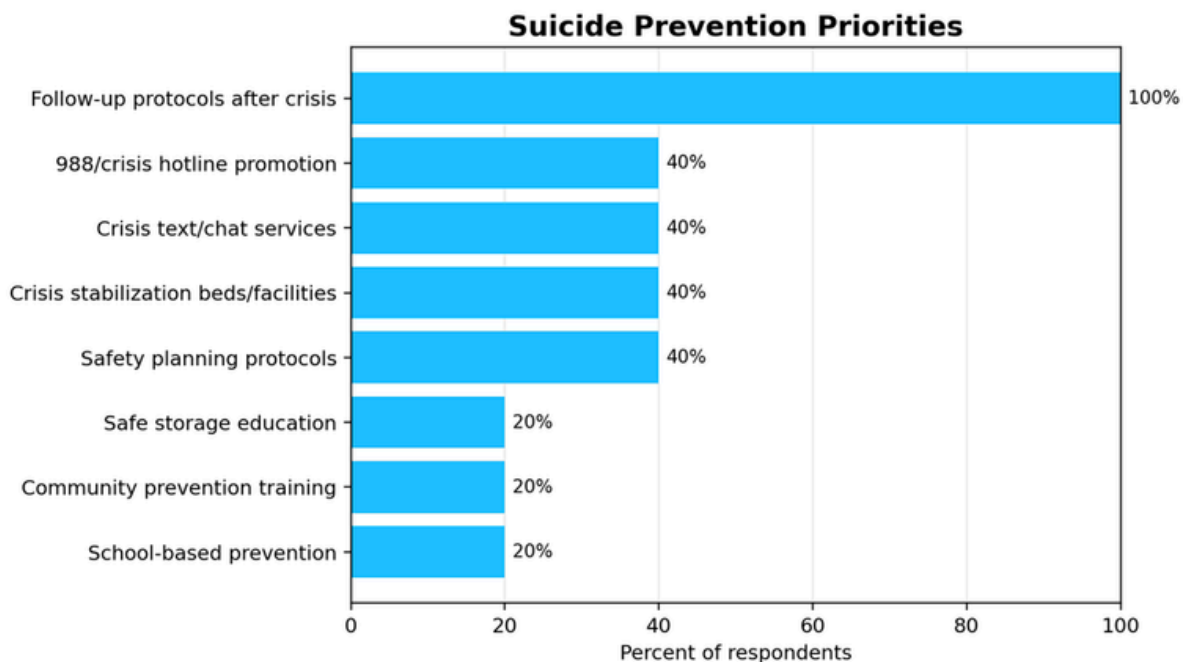


Source: Pathways Center Community Business Partners Survey, 2026.

Substance use concerns were broad rather than limited to one drug category. Opioids or prescription drugs and marijuana were each selected by 80%; alcohol, methamphetamine, and fentanyl by 60%; and cocaine, tobacco/vaping, and polysubstance use by 40%. The pattern supports a comprehensive substance use strategy that includes MAT, stimulant and alcohol treatment, overdose prevention, outpatient and inpatient referral pathways, recovery supports, and treatment for co-occurring disorders.

Suicide Prevention, Crisis Response, and Follow-up

All respondents were concerned about suicide, and all had encountered suicide crises or losses in their professional role. Only 20% described their organization as very well equipped to identify risk; 60% were only somewhat equipped and 20% reported minimal training. Every respondent said suicide-prevention training would probably be helpful.



Source: Pathways Center Community Business Partners Survey, 2026.

The clearest suicide-prevention finding was unanimous support for stronger follow-up protocols after a crisis. Respondents also identified crisis hotlines and text services, crisis stabilization capacity, safety planning, school-based prevention, community training, and safe-storage education. The emphasis on follow-up is consistent with concerns elsewhere in the survey about care transitions, referral completion, and ongoing treatment access

Strategic Focus

Expand a regional suicide-prevention framework that includes partner training, standardized safety planning, timely post-crisis outreach, warm handoffs, family education, school partnerships, and measurable follow-up after emergency or crisis encounters.



Peer Support and Recovery-Oriented Services

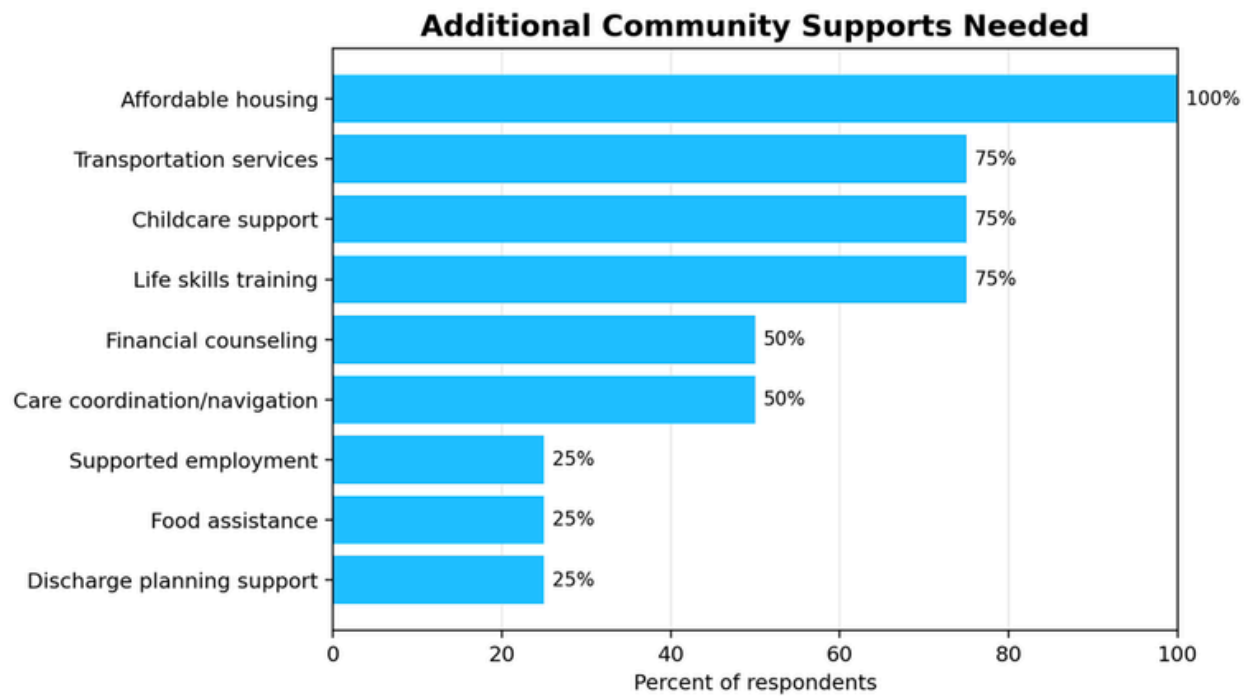
peer support: 40% answered “yes, definitely” and 60% “yes, probably.” One-on-one peer mentoring received the strongest support (60%), while embedded peer specialists, peer-run drop-in centers, family/caregiver peer support, youth peer support, and peer support in justice settings each received meaningful support.

Implementation barriers were substantial: funding limitations (80%), lack of trained peer specialists (60%), uncertainty about integration into existing services (60%), and unclear credentialing or certification requirements (60%). Half of respondents whose organizations answered the partnership question indicated possible interest in hosting or partnering on peer services; the other half wanted more information.

Strategic Focus

Grow peer services in phases: establish a sustainable funding and workforce plan, clarify roles and credentialing, integrate peers into multidisciplinary teams, and offer partner education before expanding into schools, faith communities, justice settings, and community locations.

Social Determinants of Health and Family Support



Source: Pathways Center Community Business Partners Survey, 2026.

Partners clearly linked behavioral health outcomes to nonclinical conditions. Affordable housing was selected by every respondent to the question; transportation, childcare, and life-skills training were each selected by 75%. Financial counseling and care coordination/navigation were each selected by 50%. Families and caregivers were also reported to need financial assistance (80%), crisis support (60%), and training on how to support loved ones (60%).

These findings support incorporating social-needs screening and navigation into routine care, strengthening transportation and housing partnerships, and developing practical caregiver education. They also reinforce that successful treatment depends on stability outside the clinic.

Strengths of the Current System

The survey identified a meaningful foundation on which to build. Compassionate care was selected by 80% as a system strength, while provider quality, timely access, and communication with referral sources were each selected by 40%. Sixty percent rated overall mental health and substance use service quality as excellent or good. Eighty percent reported well-established formal partnerships with behavioral health providers, and 80% rated coordination among behavioral health and community organizations as very good or somewhat good.

These strengths are consistent with Pathways Center's CARES culture and its established collaborations. At the same time, partners identified appointment availability, communication with referral sources, and follow-up care as the most common improvement opportunities.

Quality is therefore viewed favorably, while consistency, capacity, and continuity remain areas for action.

Prevention, Education, and Cross-Sector Collaboration

Youth mental health education in schools was the leading prevention priority (80%), followed by substance use prevention and early intervention for at-risk youth (60% each). Every respondent selected school-based education as a way to reduce stigma; faith-community involvement and social media campaigns were each selected by 60%.

Partners favored shared care coordination (60%), clear referral protocols (40%), shared data systems within privacy requirements (40%), and memorandums of understanding (40%). Schools were the most frequently identified sector for enhanced collaboration, although 40% emphasized that all sectors should participate.

Implications for Pathways Center's 2026-2029 Strategic Priorities

Strategic priority	Survey evidence	Recommended three-year emphasis
Expand Access	Cost/insurance, transportation, provider availability, service hours, and appointment availability	Track days to access; referral completion; evening/weekend access; transportation and coverage-navigation referrals.
Strengthen Crisis and Suicide Prevention	Universal suicide concern; 24/7 demand; crisis capacity; unanimous need for post-crisis follow-up	Measure crisis follow-up within defined timeframes; partner training; safety planning; diversion and readmission outcomes.
Improve Child and Family Behavioral Health	Youth services and caregiver support insufficient; schools central to prevention; Heard County scarcity	Expand youth and family counseling, school partnerships, caregiver training, and rural access.
Expand Substance Use Treatment	Opioids, marijuana, fentanyl, methamphetamine, alcohol, and polysubstance use identified	Increase MAT and co-occurring treatment; improve inpatient/outpatient referral pathways; strengthen recovery and overdose prevention.
Address Social Determinants	Housing, transportation, childcare, financial strain, and life-skills needs	Implement social-needs screening, closed-loop referrals, and measurable community-resource partnerships.
Expand Peer Support	100% believe peers would help; implementation limited by funding and workforce	Develop peer workforce and funding plan; integrate peers into treatment, youth, family, and justice settings.

Conclusion

Community business partners view compassionate care, provider quality, and established partnerships as important strengths. Their central message is that the next phase of improvement should focus on reliable access, integrated and coordinated care, crisis follow-up, child and family capacity, substance use treatment, peer support, and the social conditions that determine whether people can successfully engage in treatment.

Strategic Plan & Looking Ahead

The 2026 Community Health Needs Assessment identified several priority behavioral health needs through an analysis of community demographics, county-level public health indicators, client and stakeholder surveys, service utilization trends, and four years of clinical data from Pathways Center. Together, these findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the region's behavioral health landscape and establish priorities for organizational planning over the next three to five years.

The strategic priorities that follow are grounded in:

- Community demographic trends across six counties
- Social determinants of health
- Community stakeholder and client feedback
- Clinical utilization patterns
- Diagnostic trends
- Population health indicators
- Existing service capacity
- Emerging behavioral health needs

1

Strategic Priority 1 Expand Access to Behavioral Healthcare

More than 7,000 unique individuals have received services annually over the past four fiscal years, demonstrating sustained demand for behavioral health services throughout the region. Although annual client volume declined modestly from FY2023 to FY2025, utilization stabilized in FY2026, indicating that community need remains consistently high.

At the same time, county demographic data show continued population growth—particularly in Carroll and Coweta Counties—which is expected to increase future demand for outpatient behavioral health services, psychiatric care, crisis intervention, and community-based treatment.

Strategic Objectives

- Reduce wait times for services.
- Expand outpatient clinic capacity.
- Increase same-day access.
- Extend evening and telehealth availability.
- Recruit psychiatrists, therapists, nurses, and behavioral health professionals.

Success Measures

- Days to first appointment
- New patients served
- Psychiatric provider capacity
- Access by county

2

Strategic Priority 2 **Strengthen Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Services**

One of the most significant findings of the CHNA is the steady increase in youth receiving services. Children and adolescents (ages 5–17) served increased from 797 in FY2023 to 1,438 in FY2026, an increase of approximately 80 percent.

In addition, ADHD emerged among the top diagnoses in FY2025 and FY2026, while anxiety and depression remained highly prevalent among younger populations.

These trends, combined with community feedback and school partnerships, underscore the need for expanded youth behavioral health capacity.

Strategic Objectives

- Expand school-based behavioral health.
- Increase child psychiatry access.
- Expand family therapy.
- Increase autism services.
- Enhance youth crisis response.
- Expand prevention programming.

3

Strategic Priority 3 **Advance Comprehensive Care for Serious Mental Illness**

Across all four fiscal years, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and schizoaffective disorder consistently ranked among the most common diagnoses treated by Pathways Center.

This diagnostic profile confirms that the organization serves a large population with serious mental illness requiring long-term, multidisciplinary care.

Strategic Objectives

- Expand Assertive Community Treatment (ACT).
- Strengthen Community Support Team (CST) services.
- Increase psychiatric rehabilitation.
- Expand peer support.
- Improve care transitions following hospitalization.
- Strengthen supportive housing partnerships.

4

Strategic Priority 4

Address Depression, Anxiety, and Trauma through Early Intervention

Major Depressive Disorder remained the leading diagnosis throughout FY2023–FY2026, while Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder consistently ranked among the most common conditions treated.

These findings mirror national behavioral health trends and reinforce the importance of timely, evidence-based intervention.

Strategic Objectives

- Expand outpatient counseling.
- Increase trauma-informed care.
- Implement additional evidence-based therapies.
- Expand suicide prevention initiatives.
- Increase behavioral health screenings.
- Strengthen primary care integration.

5

Strategic Priority 5

Expand Integrated Substance Use Disorder Services

Alcohol Use Disorder remained among the top diagnoses across all four fiscal years, while stimulant dependence emerged as a leading diagnosis in FY2026.

Combined with community stakeholder feedback, these data indicate an evolving substance use landscape that requires expanded prevention, treatment, and recovery supports.

Strategic Objectives

- Expand Medication-Assisted Treatment.
- Increase recovery support services.
- Strengthen partnerships with accountability courts.
- Expand co-occurring disorder treatment.
- Increase overdose prevention and education.

6

Strategic Priority 6

Improve Health Equity and Address Social Determinants of Health

County demographic profiles identified disparities in poverty, insurance coverage, educational attainment, transportation access, and broadband availability across the six-county service area. Rural counties such as Heard and Meriwether face additional barriers related to provider shortages and transportation, while growth in Carroll and Coweta is increasing demand for services.

Community feedback also identified transportation, housing instability, and financial hardship as ongoing barriers to accessing behavioral healthcare.

Strategic Objectives

- Expand transportation partnerships.
- Increase telehealth access where appropriate.
- Strengthen housing and employment collaborations.
- Enhance care coordination.
- Improve outreach to underserved populations.
- Continue community-based and mobile service delivery.



Cross-Cutting Organizational Priorities

The assessment also supports continued investment in organizational capabilities that underpin all six strategic priorities:

- Workforce recruitment and retention
- Leadership development through the Pathways to Leadership program
- Clinical supervision and licensure support
- Internship partnerships with colleges and universities
- Quality improvement and accreditation
- Data analytics and population health management
- Community partnerships with hospitals, school systems, courts, DFCS, FQHCs, and other stakeholders

Alignment with Pathways Center's Mission

Each strategic priority directly advances the organization's mission:

To serve as many people as possible

by expanding access and reducing barriers to care

To provide quality care and service

through evidence-based treatment, integrated care, and continuous quality improvement.

To operate in a fiscally responsible manner

by using data-driven planning, strategic partnerships, and efficient resource allocation to meet community needs.







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**COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS
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IMPACT REPORT**

2026



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