2026

RCEG Annual **Report**

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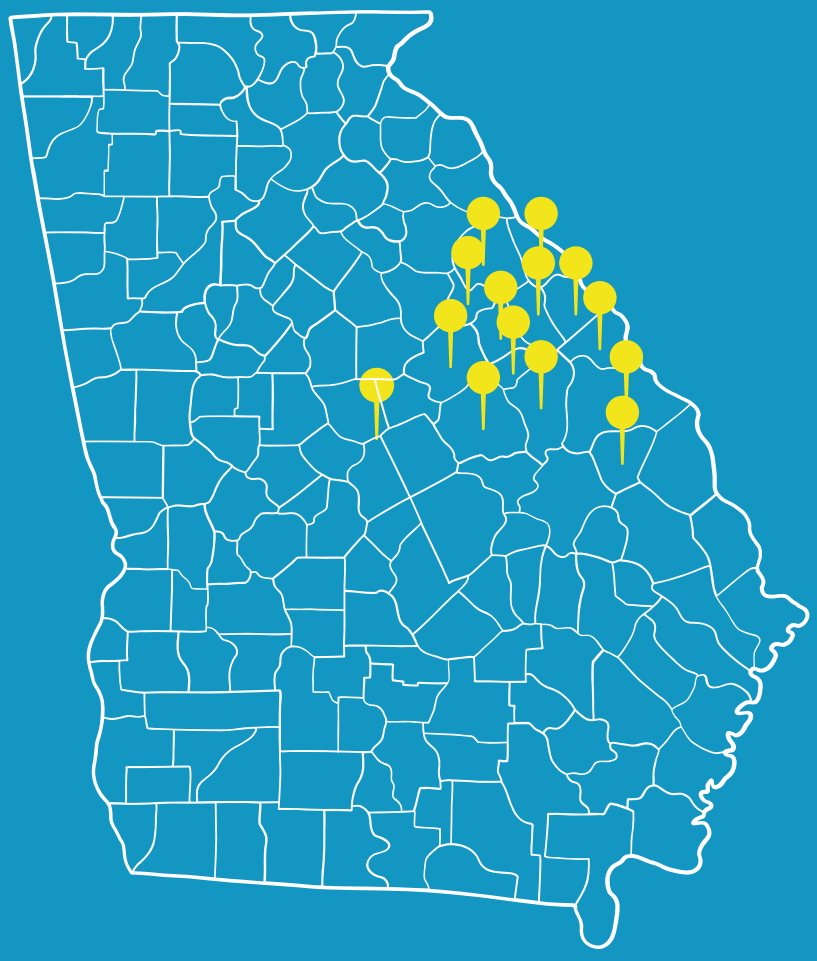
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Coalition Mission

Resilient Communities of East Georgia (RCEG) is committed to strengthening the health, well-being, and resilience of children, youth, families, and communities across 14 counties in East Central Georgia. Through prevention, intervention, education, research, advocacy, and cross-sector collaboration, RCEG works to address the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), advance trauma-informed practices, and foster environments where individuals and communities can thrive.

By bringing together partners across public and private sectors, RCEG seeks to create meaningful, sustainable changes in the systems and communities that influence the lives of children and families.



Map of the 14 counties of Gorgia served by RCEG


Creating
a resilient
future,
together.

Executive Summary

During the December 2025–October 2026 reporting period, Resilient Communities of East Georgia (RCEG) continued advancing its mission to strengthen the health, well-being, and resilience of children, youth, and families throughout its 14-county service region. Through a coordinated approach encompassing prevention, intervention, workforce development, research, advocacy, and systems change, RCEG expanded opportunities for individuals and organizations to recognize adversity, foster positive childhood experiences, and implement trauma-informed practices.

RCEG continued strengthening its flagship Resilient Teens initiative through traditional cohorts, school-based clubs, and expanded youth leadership opportunities, while engaging medical students and other emerging professionals in meaningful mentoring and experiential learning. The coalition also advanced trauma-informed workforce development through evidence-informed training opportunities, including Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI), the Community Resiliency Model (CRM), and other educational initiatives designed to strengthen the capacity of professionals serving children and families.

Recognizing that sustainable change requires coordinated action across systems, RCEG strengthened partnerships among educational institutions, healthcare providers, first responders, juvenile justice professionals, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders. Initiatives such as Handle with Care reflect the coalition's commitment to translating trauma awareness into practical approaches that improve how community systems recognize and respond to children experiencing adversity.

Throughout its work, RCEG remained committed to equitable access, inclusive participation, and the meaningful engagement of rural and historically underserved communities. By integrating community perspectives, expanding strategic partnerships, and strengthening organizational sustainability, RCEG continued laying the groundwork for lasting regional impact and a more coordinated, trauma-informed future.

Youth & Families

Systems Change

Workforce Development

Research & Collaboration

Leadership Team and Contributors

Board of Directors

Anna Reeves — Chair
Owner, Paws and Claws Pet Bakery

Jonathan English — Vice Chair
Owner, State Farm Agency

Jennifer Scott — Treasurer
Interim Vice President for Communications and Marketing, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta University

Angela Hickson — Secretary
IRB Reviewer, Augusta University

Allison Layman
Clinical Counselor, Riverfront Counseling

Lauren Petro
Owner and Clinical Counselor, Holly Counseling

Holly Weaver
Interior Designer, Design Images and Gifts

Chandler Shields
Audit Supervisor, SME CPAs

Coalition Leaders Council

Dr. April Hartman, MD, FAAP
Professor and Vice Chair for Advocacy; Associate Program Director, Pediatric Residency Program; Dorothy A. Hahn, MD Endowed Chair in Pediatrics; Division Chief, General Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta University / Wellstar Children's Hospital of Georgia

Julie Miller, MPA
Regional Manager, Georgia Family Connection Partnership

Dr. Tracy Casanova, PhD
Associate Professor, Psychiatry and Health Behavior; Assistant Dean of Learner Well-Being,
Medical College of Georgia, Augusta University

Kari Viola-Brooke, LPC, CPCS
Executive Director, Child Enrichment

Caitlyn Brantley, LCSW
Prevention Services Director, Child Enrichment

Teresa Carter, M.Ed., MNLM
Executive Director, Burke County Family Connection, Inc.



RCEG Leadership and Staff

Rebecca Best, MBA
Executive Director, Resilient Communities of East Georgia

Lena Garrard
Program and Communications Manager, Resilient Communities of East Georgia

AmeriCorps VISTA Members

Through its partnership with United Way of the CSRA and AmeriCorps VISTA, RCEG continues to benefit from dedicated national service members who strengthen organizational capacity, support strategic initiatives, and advance collaboration throughout the region.

Amber Bowick
AmeriCorps VISTA

Jackson Owens
AmeriCorps VISTA

Reseach Strategy Team

Dr. Tracy Casanova, PhD
Associate Professor, Psychiatry and Health Behavior; Assistant Dean of Learner Well-Being, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta University

Dr. Sabina Widner, PhD
Professor and Graduate Director, Department of Psychological Sciences, Augusta University

Dr. Ashwini Tiwari Pandey, PhD
Assistant Professor; B-STRONG Lab Director, Department of Community and Behavioral Health Sciences, School of Public Health, Augusta University



Coalition Partners

Stronger Together: Advancing Resilience Through Cross-Sector Collaboration

Meaningful and sustainable change requires collaboration across the many systems that influence the health, well-being, and development of children, youth, and families. Resilient Communities of East Georgia brings together a diverse network of organizations, institutions, professionals, and community leaders committed to preventing adversity, strengthening protective factors, and advancing trauma-informed practices throughout our 14-county region.

Our partners represent 12 key sectors: first responders, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, juvenile justice, community, early childhood and education, youth-serving organizations, public health and social services, youth, schools, parents and caregivers, and business. Together, these partners contribute diverse perspectives, expertise, and resources that strengthen our collective ability to address community needs and support children and families.

Through shared learning, training, advocacy, and coordinated action, we are building a trauma-informed workforce and establishing a common language and understanding of trauma-informed care across sectors. These collaborative efforts strengthen relationships, promote consistent and compassionate practices, and support lasting systems change. We recognize and appreciate the many individuals and organizations whose commitment to this shared vision is helping build more resilient communities throughout East Georgia.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the following partners whose time, expertise, resources, and commitment help advance our mission across East Georgia. Their collaboration strengthens our collective impact and plays a vital role in building trauma-informed, resilient communities where children and families can thrive.

- Augusta University
  - College of Education and Human Development
  - Department of Psychological Sciences
  - Dr. Paulette P. Harris Literacy Center
  - Hull College of Business
  - Medical College of Georgia
  - School of Public Health
- Bridge Builders
- Child Enrichment
- Community Foundation for the CSRA
- County Family Connection Collaboratives
- Fire and Emergency Response Agencies
- GEEARS
- Georgia Department of Public Health
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership
- Georgia Health Initiative
- Holly Counselling
- Hope Givers
- Jonathan English – State Farm
- Local Government and Public Agency Partners
- MCG Foundation
- Medical Student Near-Peer Mentors
- Parent and Caregiver Representatives
- Participating Juvenile Courts
- Participating Public and Private Schools
- Participating Sheriff's Offices
- Piedmont Hospital
- Resilient Georgia
- Resilient Teens Ambassadors
- Riverfront Counseling
- Riverfront Dental
- Sexual Assault Response Center
- SRP Federal Credit Union
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- The Basics of Richmond County
- The Cigna Group Foundation
- The Family Y
- The Pittuloch Foundation
- The Salvation Army
- United Way of the CSRA

A Message from our Executive Director

Building on Our Progress. Investing in Our Future.

The past two years have marked a period of meaningful growth, evolution, and opportunity for Resilient Communities of East Georgia. What began as a commitment to increasing awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, and resilience has continued to evolve into a coordinated regional effort to strengthen the systems, relationships, and environments that influence the well-being of children, youth, and families.

Together with our partners, we have expanded prevention programming, strengthened trauma-informed workforce development, elevated youth voices, advanced research and evaluation, and cultivated relationships across education, healthcare, juvenile justice, public safety, and community organizations. Through initiatives such as Resilient Teens, professional training, and emerging systems-change efforts, we are working to move beyond awareness toward meaningful, sustainable action.

These accomplishments reflect more than the growth of individual programs. They demonstrate the power of collective investment and a shared commitment to addressing the root causes of adversity while strengthening the protective factors that help individuals and communities thrive. We recognize that meaningful change does not happen in isolation. It requires trusted relationships, thoughtful collaboration, evidence-informed approaches, and the willingness to work across traditional boundaries.

As we reflect on our progress, we are equally focused on what comes next. Throughout the latter part of 2026, RCEG has undertaken a strategic planning process to help shape our priorities for 2027 and beyond. By intentionally engaging our Board of Directors, Coalition Leaders Council, and broader network of coalition partners, we are gathering diverse perspectives to evaluate our progress, identify emerging community needs, strengthen organizational effectiveness, and determine where our collective efforts can make the greatest difference.

This process represents an important opportunity to build upon what we have learned while positioning RCEG for its next phase of growth. Our priorities include **deepening regional engagement,** strengthening the measurement and communication of outcomes, expanding sustainable funding opportunities, and advancing practices that can become embedded within the organizations and systems serving our communities.

We understand that lasting impact requires more than successful initiatives. It requires intentional planning, accountability, responsible stewardship of resources, and the capacity to adapt as community needs evolve. Our commitment is to ensure that the investments made in RCEG today continue creating value for children, families, professionals, and communities well into the future.

To our funders and supporters, thank you for believing in the importance of prevention and the potential of community-driven solutions. Your investments do more than support programs; they help strengthen relationships, expand access to resources, develop future leaders, and create opportunities for lasting change.

To our Board of Directors, Coalition Leaders Council, community partners, volunteers, and dedicated team members, thank you for contributing your expertise, time, resources, and commitment to this shared mission. The progress reflected in this report is a testament to what is possible when individuals and organizations come together around a common purpose.

As we look toward 2027 and beyond, I am encouraged by the foundation we have built and energized by the opportunities ahead. Our vision remains clear: to help create communities where children and families are supported, professionals are equipped, and resilience is not simply an individual responsibility, but a shared community commitment.

Together, we are not only responding to adversity. We are helping build the conditions in which future generations can thrive.

Rebecca Best, MBA
Executive Director
Resilient Communities of East Georgia




Resilience is not simply an individual responsibility, but a shared community commitment.

Historical Impact

Since its establishment as a Resilient Georgia Regional Coalition in 2019, Resilient Communities of East Georgia (RCEG) has evolved into a regional leader in trauma-informed education, prevention, youth development, and cross-sector collaboration. Serving 14 counties across East Central Georgia, RCEG has worked to increase awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), strengthen protective factors, and advance coordinated approaches to improving the well-being of children, youth, and families.

A cornerstone of this work has been the development and expansion of Resilient Teens, an evidence-informed, near-peer mentoring initiative that connects adolescents with medical students and other emerging professionals. Since its launch during the COVID-19 pandemic, the program has grown to serve more than 1,000 teens while engaging more than 300 medical students in meaningful mentoring and experiential learning opportunities. The initiative has expanded beyond traditional cohorts to include school-based clubs, summer programming, and youth leadership opportunities, extending its reach and accessibility.

Beyond direct programming, RCEG has strengthened regional capacity through trauma-informed education and training, research collaborations, community engagement, and advocacy. By working with schools, healthcare institutions, nonprofit organizations, local governments, and other community stakeholders, the coalition has helped establish a shared understanding of adversity, resilience, and the importance of positive childhood experiences.

As RCEG moves into its next chapter, its focus continues to evolve from building awareness and delivering programs toward embedding sustainable, trauma-informed practices within the systems and organizations that serve communities. This foundation positions the coalition to deepen its impact through strategic partnerships, measurable outcomes, and coordinated regional action.

2026 Key Accomplishments

Expanding Our Reach. Strengthening Partnerships. Advancing Systems Change.

Expanded Community Resiliency Model (CRM) Training:

Continued delivering CRM training to educators, healthcare professionals, community organizations, and other regional stakeholders, equipping participants with practical skills to recognize stress responses, support emotional regulation, and promote individual and community resilience. Expanded access across all 14 counties.

Advanced Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) Training:

Expanded access to TBRI training for professionals working with children and families, emphasizing trauma-informed, relationship-based approaches that strengthen connection, trust, and behavioral support. Continued developing regional practitioner capacity to support long-term training sustainability.

Strengthened Strategic Partnership with CSRA RESA:

Deepened collaboration with the Central Savannah River Area Regional Educational Service Agency (CSRA RESA) to support trauma-informed professional development, regional convenings, and coordinated initiatives connecting education with other child- and family-serving systems.

Expanded Collaboration with Richmond-Burke Juvenile Court:

Strengthened relationships with juvenile justice professionals to advance trauma-informed approaches for justice-involved youth and families, support professional learning, and explore coordinated community responses to childhood adversity.

Advanced Handle With Care Implementation:

Convened education, law enforcement, juvenile justice, emergency response, and community partners to build awareness of Handle With Care and support county-level implementation planning. Emphasized coordinated communication and practical strategies for supporting children exposed to potentially traumatic events.

Continued Expansion of Resilient Teens:

Expanded RCEG's flagship youth prevention initiative through additional cohorts, school-based Resilient Teens Clubs, and opportunities for youth leadership and engagement. Continued strengthening the near-peer mentoring model connecting adolescents with medical students and other emerging professionals.

Strengthened Collaboration with Resilient Coastal Georgia (RCG):

Advanced opportunities to expand Resilient Teens beyond RCEG's 14-county region through collaboration with Resilient Coastal Georgia, supporting program replication, shared learning, and a broader network of communities investing in youth mental health and resilience.

Launched Resilient Teens Ambassadors:

Established a youth leadership initiative to elevate teen perspectives, encourage peer-to-peer engagement, and create opportunities for young people to contribute meaningfully to conversations and initiatives addressing youth well-being.

Hosted the 2026 Resilient Teens Summit:

Convened youth, families, educators, healthcare professionals, community organizations, and regional leaders for a day of learning, connection, youth engagement, and shared strategies for strengthening adolescent mental health and resilience.

Expanded University Partnerships and Research Capacity:

Continued collaborating with Augusta University's Medical College of Georgia, School of Public Health, and other academic programs to support near-peer mentoring, program evaluation, curriculum development, internships, and research-informed programming.

Strengthened Regional Collaboration and Organizational Sustainability:

Continued engaging partners across RCEG's 14-county service region while investing in organizational infrastructure, diversified funding, program evaluation, and strategic planning for 2027 and beyond.



Prevention & Intervention

Through Resilient Teens, RCEG equips young people with social-emotional skills, mental health literacy, supportive relationships, and opportunities for leadership. Our expanding prevention model combines near-peer mentoring, school-based programming, and strategic partnerships to strengthen protective factors and promote youth well-being.

1000+ teens reached

300+ medical students

14 counties in RCEG's region

14th program cohort

Four pathways to resilience

Resilient Teens

Mental health literacy, coping skills, and supportive near-peer mentoring

RT Clubs

School-based resilience programming that reduces barriers to participation

RT Ambassadors

Youth leadership, peer engagement, and authentic youth voice

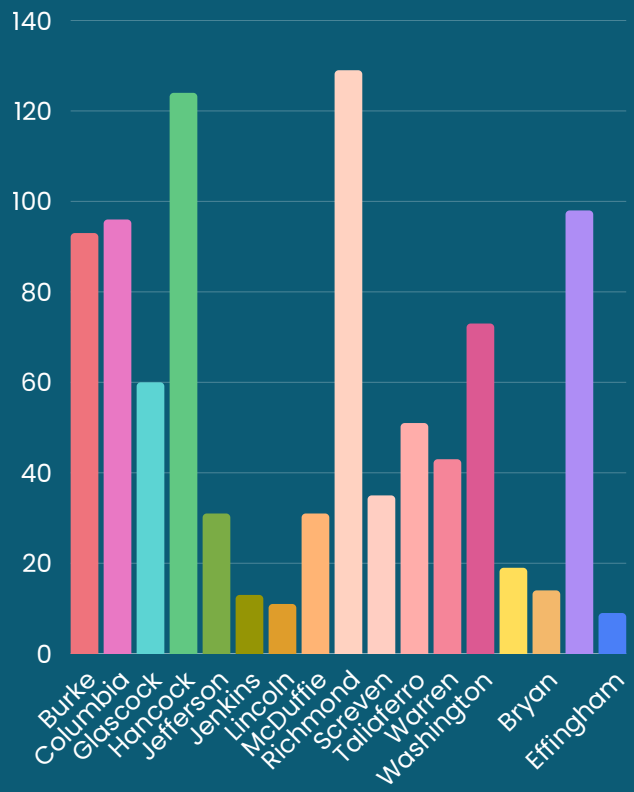
Regional Expansion

Collaboration with Resilient Coastal Georgia to broaded program access



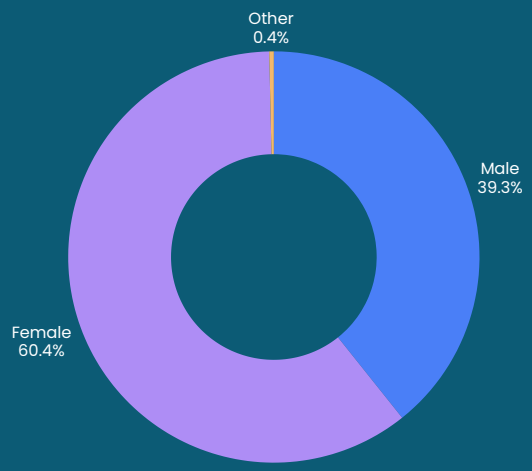
Resilient Teens

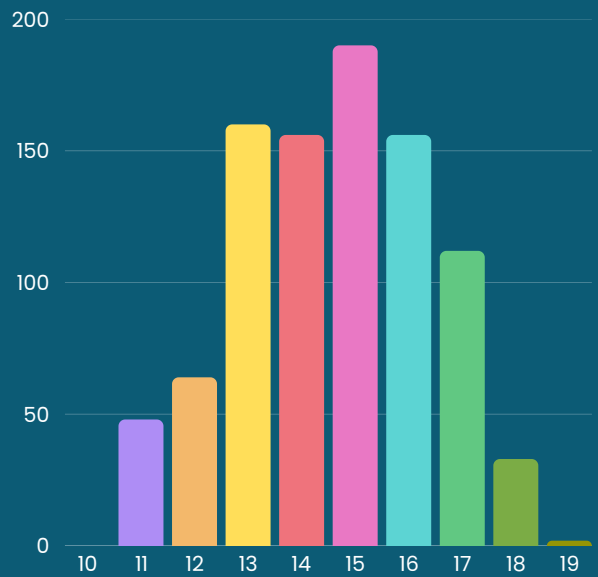
By the Numbers



BY COUNTY

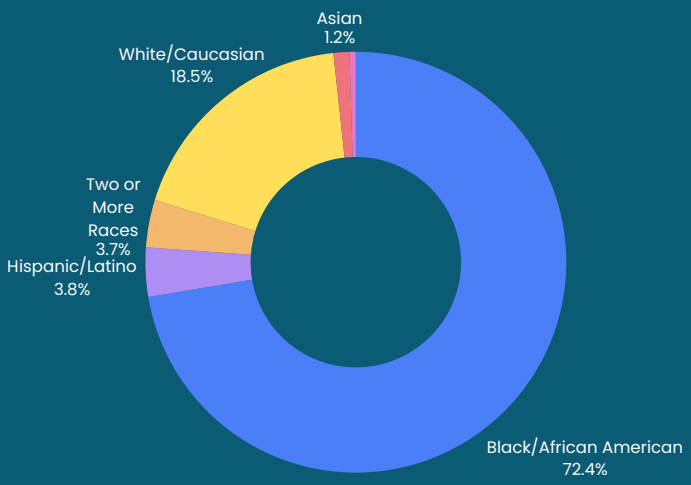
BY GENDER





BY AGE

BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Advocacy & Systems Change

Elevating Community Voices. Influencing Policy. Advancing Lasting Change.

RCEG works to strengthen the policies, practices, and systems that influence the well-being of children and families across East Georgia. Through statewide advocacy, community engagement, and cross-sector leadership, we elevate local perspectives, advance prevention-focused approaches, and promote more responsive, trauma-informed systems.

Statewide Advocacy & Early Childhood Policy

- Expanded statewide advocacy engagement through the Executive Director's participation as a GEEARS Changemaker, elevating the needs of young children and families across urban and rural communities.
- Participated in Strolling Thunder through the GEEARS Changemaker role, helping amplify family voices and awareness of policies that support early childhood development and family well-being.

Healthcare Access & Family Voice

Participated in a Medicaid listening session, contributing community perspectives to discussions about healthcare access, coverage, and the needs of children and families.

Juvenile Justice & Systems Reform

Contributed to juvenile justice reform through leadership involvement with the Diversion Committee and Annie E. Casey Foundation-supported reform efforts, promoting prevention, early intervention, and trauma-informed approaches for justice-involved youth.

Regional Advocacy & Awareness

Advanced conversations around prevention, protective factors, and equitable access to resources, with particular attention to rural communities across the 14-county region.

Training & Workforce Development

Moving Beyond Awareness. Creating Lasting Change.

RCEG expands access to evidence-informed training that equips professionals with practical tools to recognize adversity, strengthen relationships, and create supportive environments for children and families.

Community Resilience Model (CRM)

RCEG expands access to evidence-informed training that equips professionals with practical tools to recognize adversity, strengthen relationships, and create supportive environments for children and families.

Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)

Provided relationship-centered, trauma-informed professional development to strengthen the ability of educators and child-serving professionals to support children who have experienced adversity.

Cross-Sector Professional Development

Engaged educators, healthcare professionals, nonprofit organizations, and other community stakeholders in opportunities to build a shared understanding of trauma and resilience.

Regional Training Partnerships

Collaborated with CSRA RESA and other partners to increase training accessibility and strengthen regional capacity.

Training Impact

86+
Trainings & Events

36+
Rural county engagements

2800+
Individuals Impacted



Research & Evaluation

Measuring Progress. Informing Practice. Strengthening Impact.

RCEG integrates research, evaluation, and academic collaboration into its programming to strengthen effectiveness, inform continuous improvement, and demonstrate measurable outcomes.

Resilient Teens Program Evaluation

Continued collecting pre- and post-program surveys to assess changes in youth knowledge, coping skills, emotional awareness, and help-seeking behaviors.

In spring 2026, a Master of Public Health (MPH) intern analyzed fall 2025 survey data, identifying a statistically significant improvement in emotional regulation, which demonstrated participants' increased ability to recognize and manage their emotions.

Augusta University Collaboration

Engaged faculty and students from the Medical College of Georgia, School of Public Health, and other academic programs in research, curriculum development, and evaluation activities.

Medical Student Learning Outcomes

Utilized weekly feedback, facilitator debriefings, and post-cohort discussions to understand how near-peer mentoring influences future healthcare professionals' confidence and communication skills.

Student Research & Internships

Expanded opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to contribute to program evaluation, research initiatives, and organizational projects.



Innovative Partnerships

Connecting Expertise. Leveraging Resources. Expanding Impact.

Meaningful community change requires organizations to move beyond traditional partnerships toward shared responsibility, coordinated action, and strategic investment. RCEG brings together partners across education, healthcare, child welfare, juvenile justice, and community services to strengthen regional capacity and expand the reach of prevention-focused initiatives.

CHILD ENRICHMENT, INC. Strengthening Prevention Infrastructure	Continued collaboration to expand trauma-informed training capacity, strengthen child abuse prevention efforts, and connect youth-serving programs with specialized expertise and resources.
CSRA RESA Education & Regional Collaboration	Strengthened regional capacity through trauma-informed professional development, cross-sector convenings, and collaborative initiatives supporting children, families, and educators.
Augusta University & Medical College of Georgia Connecting Education, Healthcare & Youth Development	Leveraged academic partnerships to support Resilient Teens through medical student Near Peer Mentors, graduate-level engagement, research, and professional learning opportunities.
Georgia Family Connection Collaboratives Expanding Regional Reach	Worked alongside local collaboratives across RCEG's 14-county service area to connect community partners, identify shared priorities, and support coordinated approaches responsive to local needs.
Resilient Coastal Georgia Building Opportunities for Replication	Continued collaborative planning to support the future expansion of Resilient Teens, with a long-term vision of strengthening local capacity for independent program delivery.

The Value of Collaboration

These partnerships demonstrate how shared expertise, resources, and organizational strengths can expand RCEG's capacity, reduce duplication of effort, and create opportunities for sustainable community impact.

2026 Spotlight

Handle with Care

From Awareness to Action: Building a Coordinated Response to Childhood Trauma

When children experience potentially traumatic events, a simple notification can help schools respond with additional care, understanding, and support—without disclosing the details of what occurred.

In 2026, RCEG advanced Handle With Care across East Georgia by bringing together first responders, educators, juvenile justice professionals, and community partners to explore coordinated, trauma-informed responses.

A key milestone was the October 15 County Implementation Workday, hosted in partnership with CSRA RESA, which brought representatives from six counties together to strengthen local planning and collaboration.

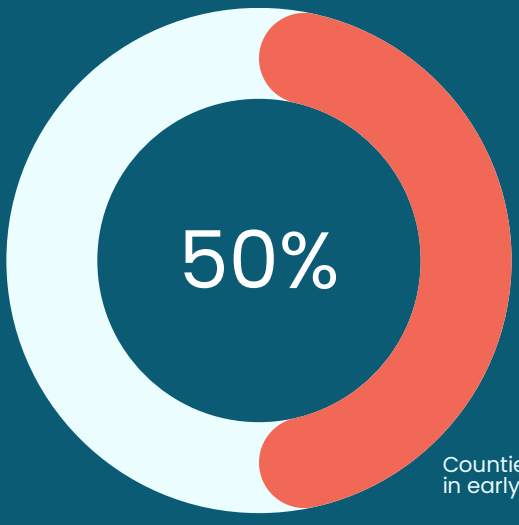
2026 Progress

45 **45 participants** represented at the Handle With Care Implementation Workday.

6 **6 counties** represented at the Handle With Care Implementation Workday.

7 **7 counties** engaged in discussions or early implementation activities.

Regional Progress



Why It Matters

Early Awareness: Helps educators recognize when a child may need additional support.
Coordinated Response: Connects first responders, schools, and community partners.
Privacy & Dignity: Protects sensitive information while communicating the need for care.
Systems Change: Establishes a pathway for trauma-informed responses to become part of routine community practice.

Looking Ahead > RCEG will continue to support participating counties as they move from planning toward implementation, with the goal of expanding Handle With Care throughout all 14 counties in the region.








Resilience
is built
together.

Inspired Action

Creating communities where children and families thrive takes more than programs. It takes people, partnerships, and a shared commitment to lasting change.

As RCEG looks toward 2027 and beyond, we invite you to help build a future where every child has the relationships, resources, and opportunities needed to thrive.

1 Invest

Fuel Prevention. Expand Possibilities.

Support evidence-informed programming, professional development, and community initiatives that strengthen youth mental health and family well-being.

2 Partner

Connect Expertise. Multiply Impact.

Bring your organization, resources, and perspective to collaborative efforts that strengthen prevention and create sustainable community solutions.

3 Advocate

Elevate Awareness. Influence Change.

Champion trauma-informed practices, policies, and systems that prioritize the well-being of children and families.

4 Engage

Share Your Time. Shape the Future.

Participate in coalition initiatives, volunteer, mentor, attend training, or help elevate youth voices throughout our region.

Together, we can transform awareness into action, strengthen the systems surrounding children and families, and build a more resilient East Georgia.

Join us in creating what's next.

Resilient Communities of East Georgia

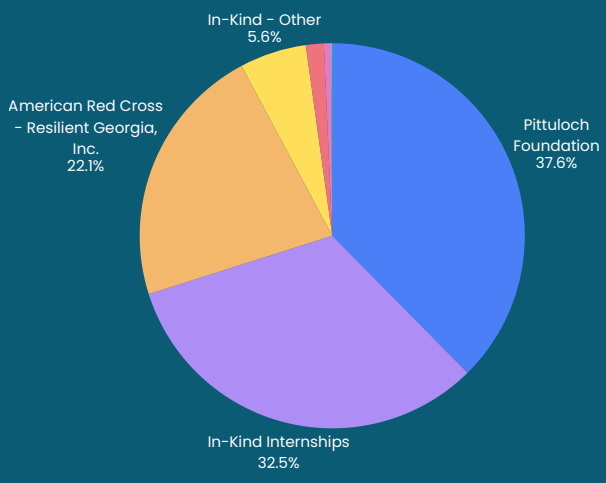
Financial Overview

Maximizing Impact Through Partnership

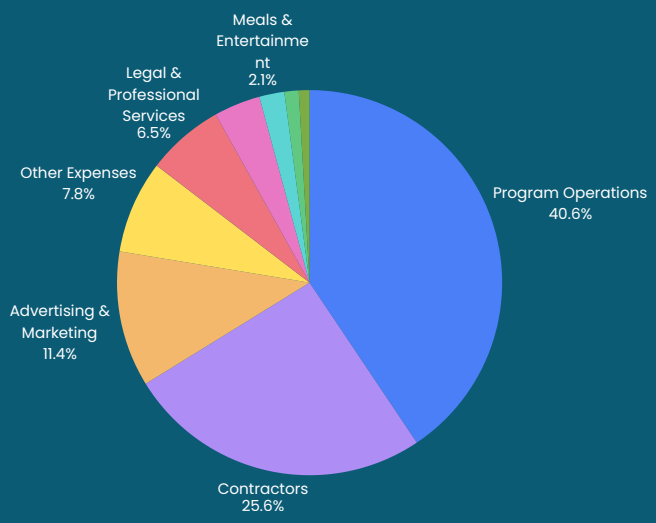
Through strategic partnerships and collaborative investments, RCEG extends the reach of every dollar contributed. In-kind support represents 38.1% of our total revenue, reflecting the significant value of resources, expertise, and services contributed by partners who share our commitment to building resilient communities.

This collective investment demonstrates what is possible when people, organizations, and communities unite around a shared vision. Creating lasting change takes more than programs—it requires strong relationships, meaningful partnerships, and a commitment to working together. As we look toward 2027 and beyond, we invite you to continue building on this momentum and help create a future where every child and family has the relationships, resources, and opportunities needed to thrive.

2026 Revenue Breakdown



2026 Expense Breakdown



With Gratitude

Because of You, Resilience Grows.

Meaningful community change is made possible through the generosity, trust, and commitment of those who invest in our mission.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the foundations, businesses, organizations, and individuals whose financial and in-kind contributions support youth prevention, professional development, research, and collaborative systems change throughout East Georgia.

Your partnership helps transform shared vision into meaningful action—and creates opportunities for children, families, and communities to thrive.

Thank you for believing in the power of prevention, the importance of connection, and the possibility of a more resilient future.

