



Annual Report

2025

The Center for Advancing Rural Health Equity



Making sure **everyone** has a fair shot at a healthy life

<https://www.dartmouth-health.org/carhe>

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About Us



Our mission is to make sure that people in rural areas have the chance to live healthy lives.

Rural health equity means that all people living in rural areas can live their healthiest lives. A healthy life includes living a life free from discrimination and unfair treatment.

Dartmouth Health launched the Center for Advancing Rural Health Equity (CARHE) in 2022 to help foster partnerships and programs to make sure everyone has a fair shot at a healthy life, no matter who they are or where they live. We value commitment, action, respect and humility. We strive to be inclusive, transparent, accountable, good stewards of resources, and to co-create the best solutions through shared leadership with partners and the wider community.



Sally Kraft
Executive Director



Greg Norman
Team Lead



Chelsey Canavan
Manager



Katie Keating
Project Manager



Angela Zhang
Population Health Coordinator

Executive Summary

In this report, we are proud to present our achievements in 2025, in spite of a challenging year with a shifting landscape.

- CARHE undertook a 12-month strategic planning process to determine our goals and objectives for the next three years.
- CARHE provided technical and administrative support to regional partners on five community-led projects.
- CARHE supported the development and capacity building of key stakeholders in skills such as authentic community engagement, project design, and participatory research.

As we embark on our strategic plan in 2026, we remain committed partnering and working together with our communities to improve rural health equity.



Rural Health Symposium 2025



Letter from our Chair & Executive Director

Rural health equity means that all people living in rural communities have a fair and meaningful opportunity to live their healthiest lives. Health is impacted not only by clinical care but importantly by many non-medical factors such as social connections, housing, education, and employment. Improving health requires the collaborative work of many groups focused on just and fair access to clinical care and supportive community conditions. Since its launch in 2022, the Center for Advancing Rural Health Equity (CARHE) has worked to foster partnerships that honor this vision and reflect our shared values of commitment, action, respect, and humility.

The past year has been a challenging one. Shifting policy landscapes, fiscal constraints, and growing uncertainty have tested many of the systems that support rural communities. At the same time, these realities have underscored the power of communities when they come together. In the face of increased need and pressure, CARHE and our partners remain grounded in purpose, community voice, and action.

We continue to learn, listen, and act alongside partners across northern New England. Our work brings together healthcare, education, research, and community organizations to co-create solutions rooted in shared leadership and accountability. We remain committed to transparency, stewardship of resources, and embedding equity in all that we do.

This annual report reflects both the complexity of the moment and the resilience of our partnerships. We are grateful to all who contribute their time, expertise, and dedication. Together, we remain hopeful—and determined—to advance rural health equity for the long term.

Sally Kraft, MD, MPH
Population Health Officer,
Dartmouth Health
Executive Director, CARHE

Denise Pouliot
Sag8moskwa (Female Head Speaker) of the
Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook Abenaki People
Chair, CARHE Leadership Council

Introducing Our Strategic Plan

The CARHE Leadership Council convened six times over 12 months in 2025 to develop our strategic plan. We developed this plan based on our three years of experience since launching in 2022 and in response to an evolving rural health equity landscape. The CARHE Leadership Council, which includes individuals across healthcare, research, education, and community services, oversees CARHE's strategic direction with input from a group of Affiliate Members from the community.

We wanted our plan to be flexible and adaptable. We remain grounded in our mission, vision, and values. Our principles continue to guide how we do our work. With a strong set of core beliefs, our strategic plan outlines four goals with corresponding objectives to help us advance our mission: to make sure that people in rural areas have the chance to live healthy lives, by learning and acting together in our rural communities.



Our vision is that everyone living in rural communities has the chance to thrive, feel safe, and be welcomed.



Strategic Plan Goals

Goal 1

Work as partners to reduce health disparities by strengthening systems of care



Goal 2

Mobilize cross-sector partners to take action on rural health equity



Mission



To make sure that people in rural areas have the chance to live healthy lives, by learning and acting together in our rural communities



Goal 3

Continuously improve the model of partnership & support



Goal 4

Ensure sustainable impact

Strategic Plan in Depth

Goal 1: Work as partners to reduce health disparities by strengthening systems of care

Change policy, structure, process, and/or culture to decrease health disparities of northern New England populations through community-centered programs and capacity building

Objectives:

- CARHE undertook a 12-month strategic planning process to determine our goals and objectives for the next three years.
- CARHE provided technical and administrative support to regional partners on five community-led projects.
- CARHE supported the development and capacity building of key stakeholders in skills such as authentic community engagement, project design, and participatory research.

Goal 2: Mobilize Cross-Sector Partners to Take Action on Rural Health Equity

Leverage, expand, and connect to increase awareness and interest, promote partnerships, and spread lessons learned and best practices for addressing health disparities

Objectives:

- Engage at least 100 people in cross-sector* events focused on rural health equity topics, with at least 70% reporting that the event increased their knowledge or capacity to take action
- Reach at least 500 people through bi-monthly CARHE newsletter highlighting health equity issues

Goal 3: Continuously Improve the Model of Partnership and Support

Engage partners in the continuous gathering and use of data to improve CARHE projects and programs

Objectives:

- Collect and review data aligned with CARHE principles from all CARHE-supported projects and activities, synthesize data, and disseminate key themes
- Develop a process for ongoing review of CARHE data across CARHE projects/activities and document recommended improvements based on data

Goal 4: Ensure Sustainable Impact

Develop sustainable strategies, resources, and partnerships to support CARHE programs now and in the future

Objectives:

- Secure at least one external grant to fund CARHE activities
- Increase CARHE's visibility by delivering at least one regional or national presentation and/or publishing one peer-reviewed article

Year in Review: Partner Projects

Continuing Projects

CARHE continued to support three projects that had applied for technical and implementation assistance in 2024--Little Rivers Health Care Food Farmacy Program, the Fall Mountain Community Corps, and the Windsor Recovery Supports groups.



Fall Mountain

CARHE is partnering with residents and service providers in the Fall Mountain Region of New Hampshire to build and sustain a coalition to address local food security and transportation needs through community engagement, education, mutual aid, and advocacy. Together, we've established a growing multi-sector coalition that has convened for over a year, collected data to inform our approach, and helped secure funding to continue the work. We aim to pilot a "Community Connector" program to strengthen grassroots capacity to support resident access to critical resources and mutual aid.



Fall Mountain Food Summit



Little Rivers

CARHE partnered with Little Rivers Health Care (LRHC) in the Bradford, Vermont area to create a strategic plan and secure additional funding for their Food Farmacy (FF) Program. The Food Farmacy program supports the nutritional needs patients who are food insecure with diet-responsive health conditions. Together, we worked to develop a strategic plan, a Food Farmacy branding guide, and an evaluation plan and data collection tools. We also helped secure grants to sustain the work and disseminated information about the program throughout the region.



Little Rivers Food Shelf



Little Rivers van

Windsor Recovery Supports

CARHE is partnering with residents and service providers in Windsor, Vermont to strengthen recovery supports for people living with substance use challenges in the Windsor area with the ultimate goal of expanding access to Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs). Together, we conducted outreach to key community leaders, started a local Narcotics Anonymous group, and created partnerships with organizations addressing mental health and substance use disorder.



In July 2025, we hosted a documentary film screening of Recovery City and held a discussion panel with film director Lisa Olivier and other regional experts on recovery and substance use.

Year in Review: Partner Projects

New Projects

This year, CARHE also adopted some new projects under our portfolio.



Kearsarge Food Hub

CARHE is partnering with Kearsarge Food Hub (KFH) to assess local food security and their community food shelf (known as the Community FREEEdge) to build a more comprehensive understanding of how to improve access to local food for low- and middle-income families in the Kearsarge New Hampshire region, as part of KFH's strategic planning process. Together, we've reviewed existing food and nutrition data, developed a plan for data collection, and implemented a survey to assess the FREEEdge.

Dartmouth Cancer Center



Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital

Dartmouth Cancer Center Mini-Grants

CARHE is partnering with the Dartmouth Cancer Center (DCC) in its efforts to improve cancer outcomes and reduce cancer inequities in New Hampshire and Vermont. In 2025, DCC launched a Community Mini-Grant program to implement cancer-relevant projects that have the potential to improve health equity. CARHE staff participated in the DCC application review process, which ultimately led to the selection of Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital (NVRH) in St Johnsbury, Vermont as the awardee. NVRH will receive \$25,000 and technical assistance to develop a comprehensive outreach and education campaign to increase cancer screening and early detection among populations in the Northeast Kingdom (NEK). CARHE will work directly with DCC and NVRH staff over the coming months to provide technical assistance and support to the team as they plan, implement, and evaluate their project.

Housing First Upper Valley

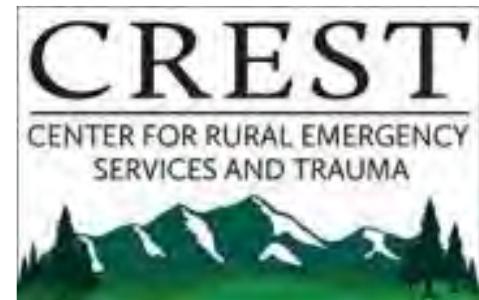
CARHE is providing technical and administrative support to Housing First Upper Valley, a community coalition of concerned residents, elected representatives, nonprofit organizations, and community organizers. Founded in 2016, this group's goal is to advocate for shelter and affordable housing, and address homelessness in the greater Lebanon, New Hampshire area. Together, we have supported the convening of monthly meetings, the coordination of local research and data collection on homelessness, and raising awareness of these issues through community events. By supporting this grassroots group, we aim to empower more local community experts in finding and implementing solutions.



In June 2025, CARHE co-sponsored a documentary film screening of Just Getting By, with film director Bess O'Brien and regional experts on housing insecurity.

Center for Rural Emergency Services and Trauma (CREST)

The Center for Rural Emergency Services and Trauma (CREST) is a Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center-based collaborative program of 18 critical access hospitals and community hospitals. CREST's mission is to improve the emergency care of rural patients through efficient access to specialty care and support high-quality local care. Healthcare workforce staffing shortages and hospital closures exacerbate barriers to accessing health care in rural communities. CREST works to share best practices, collaboratively solve problems, and jointly advocate for shared interests.



CARHE partnered with CREST in 2025 to assess needs among the network's members. The goal was to gather actionable information to improve educational offerings, events and other network activities. The project team, including two medical students, developed and implemented a network survey, analyzed data, and disseminated findings.

Year in Review: Learning Together

Community Engaged Research Hub

The Community Engaged Scholarship Hub was launched in early February by the Dartmouth Community Engagement Coalition. This set of resources was created to provide a foundation for academic colleagues working in our communities, and offers a common set of principles, practices, and shared language to promote trusting and sustained partnerships.



Stronger by Design ECHO

CARHE partnered with the Center for Program Design and Evaluation (CPDE) to sponsor this six-session ECHO series in October 2025 to support nonprofit organizations and community health entities in developing practical plans and tools to evaluate the impact of community-based projects and programs.



Community Engagement ECHO

This seven-part ECHO series ran from February through August 2025 to explore principles and practices for community engagement in diverse types of research and to prepare participants to engage community members in their research projects. CARHE contributed to the planning team for this ECHO, which was supported in part by Dartmouth SYNERGY with funding from the NIH National Center for Advancing Translation Science.

Authentic Community Engagement Series with Liberation Nexus Lab

In Spring 2025, CARHE and Better Behavioral Health Outcomes sponsored an Authentic Community Engagement three-part virtual workshop series. We were fortunate to have Emerald Anderson-Ford and Erin Allgood from Liberation Nexus Lab facilitate these trainings on how to strengthen community engagement practices to better serve our communities. We had 45 participants representing a wide range of organizations and sectors join us for lively and enriching conversations.



**Liberation
Nexus
Lab**



CARHE Unconference

On October 1, 2025 CARHE brought together over 75 passionate, caring individuals from across northern New England to CARHE's first "Unconference" on Rural Health Equity. The group co-created an agenda that morning on issues they were most passionate about and divided into breakout sessions on everything from housing, supporting aging populations, food insecurity, substance use and mental health, transportation, and access to health insurance. Throughout the day, we used art and storytelling to help participants connect in new and different ways. It was a day of serious conversation as well as joy, creativity, and community-building.



Rural Health Symposium

Thank you to everyone who attended the inaugural Rural Health Symposium in May 2025. CARHE led the Community Engagement breakout session track for the symposium. This session was facilitated by Dr. Jack Westfall and Angela Zhang and attended by over 100 people from various sectors. Together, we explored the principles of participatory research and presented examples of deep and long-lasting community engagement in other areas of the United States. Attendees discussed ways that researchers could approach communities authentically and respectfully and formed new connections with each other to work on improving rural health.





Rural Health Symposium 2025



Vision



Our vision is that everyone living in rural communities has the chance to thrive, feel safe, and be welcomed.

Mission



Our mission is to make sure that people in rural areas have the chance to live healthy lives, by learning and acting together in our rural communities.

Leadership Team

The Leadership Council is the primary governing body of CARHE. It provides strategic direction and ensures CARHE activities remain consistent with its mission, vision and values.

CARHE Affiliate Members bring the voice of the community to the Center for Advancing Rural Health Equity and serves as a resource for Center activities. CARHE Affiliate Members are representative of diverse communities in rural northern New England.

Leadership Team Members:

- **Sonia Chimenti**
- **Tina Foster**
- **Ann Fournier**
- **Helen Hong**
- **Terri Lewinson**
- **Andrew Loehrer**
- **Andy Lowe**
- **Denise Pouliot, CHAIR**
- **Roscoe Putnam**
- **Jim Rowe**

Affiliate Team Members:

- **Aiyana Banks**
- **Lindsey Boisvert**
- **Cheri Bryer**
- **Laura Byrne**
- **Bryanna McConnell**
- **Ann Kobylenski Sanderson**
- **Emily Zanleoni**

New Team Members:

We are very excited to welcome our new members to the CARHE Leadership Team.

- **Sonia Chimenti**
- **Roscoe Putnam**
- **Ann Kobylenski Sanderson**
- **Jim Rowe**

Departing Team Members:

We are eternally grateful for the contributions of these departing Leadership and Affiliate team members. Thank you for your service to CARHE!

- **Rudy Fedrizzi**
- **Faye Gearson**
- **Helen Hong**
- **Lisa McBride**
- **Beth Wilson**

Contact CARHE

Contact Information

To learn more about CARHE, please contact us at



carhe@hitchcock.org



<https://www.dartmouth-health.org/carhe>

Contact



Join CARHE's Newsletter

CARHE sends out an e-newsletter every other month with updates on our partner projects, upcoming events on rural health equity, and more. [Join our email list here.](#)

Newsletter



Submit a Project

Are you interested in partnering with CARHE? Please complete [this brief form](#) to explore how we might be able to work together.



Are you a researcher? Read our [Guidelines for Research and Project Support \(PDF\)](#) before you contact us.

Guidelines



CARHE Social Media

Find us on social media!

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/carhेड्ह>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/carhe-at-dartmouth-health>



carhe@hitchcock.org



<https://www.dartmouth-health.org/carhe>



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