



  
**Resilient**  
Southwest Georgia

**Resilient Georgia Regional  
Grantee**

**Annual Report 2024**



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# ABOUT THE RESILIENT GEORGIA REGIONAL COALITIONS



*Resilient Georgia has been working with 16 regions across Georgia to provide an emphasis on trauma-informed awareness and care, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and child sexual abuse prevention training as a basis to transform systems and procedures crossing both public and private sectors.*

Resilient Georgia serves as a supportive and guiding resource during each region's planning and implementation process.

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These regional action plans each address the behavioral health needs of individuals birth through 26 years old and families in the community and surrounding counties using the Collective Impact framework (a diverse, robust and well-planned public-private partnership).

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Trauma-Informed Care, ACEs and child sexual abuse prevention can be the basis for systemic changes in a community. Each region has identified how one or more of these content areas are delivered to diverse community members through formal training, education, marketing and communications.

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In November of 2019, Resilient Georgia began partnering with Round 1 regional coalitions based out of Athens, Augusta, Macon, Savannah and surrounding areas. Round 2 partnerships began in July 2020 with regional coalitions based out of Albany, Columbus, Rome, Thomasville and surrounding areas. Round 3 partnerships began in March 2021 with regional coalitions based out of Clayton, Cobb, Gwinnett, Valdosta and surrounding areas. Round 4 partnerships began in December 2021 with regional coalitions based out of Atlanta, Brunswick, Gainesville, and Waycross and the surrounding areas.

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In their third and fourth years of partnership with Resilient Georgia, coalitions have bolstered their work to create bold, systemic, sustainable change in consistent ways across statewide issues, to affect policy, systems and environmental (PSE) change and incorporated a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) lens in their action plans.

# COALITION MISSION



The Resilient Southwest Georgia – Albany coalition is our upstream move to tackle the root cause of the many challenges faced by our community.

**The goal is to dramatically improve the health and well-being of our community by addressing ACEs issues. Partnering with over 30 organizations and agencies across Southwest GA, United Way is working to raise awareness of the effects of trauma, and to reduce its incidence and impact, as well as build resilience in individuals, families, and our community.**

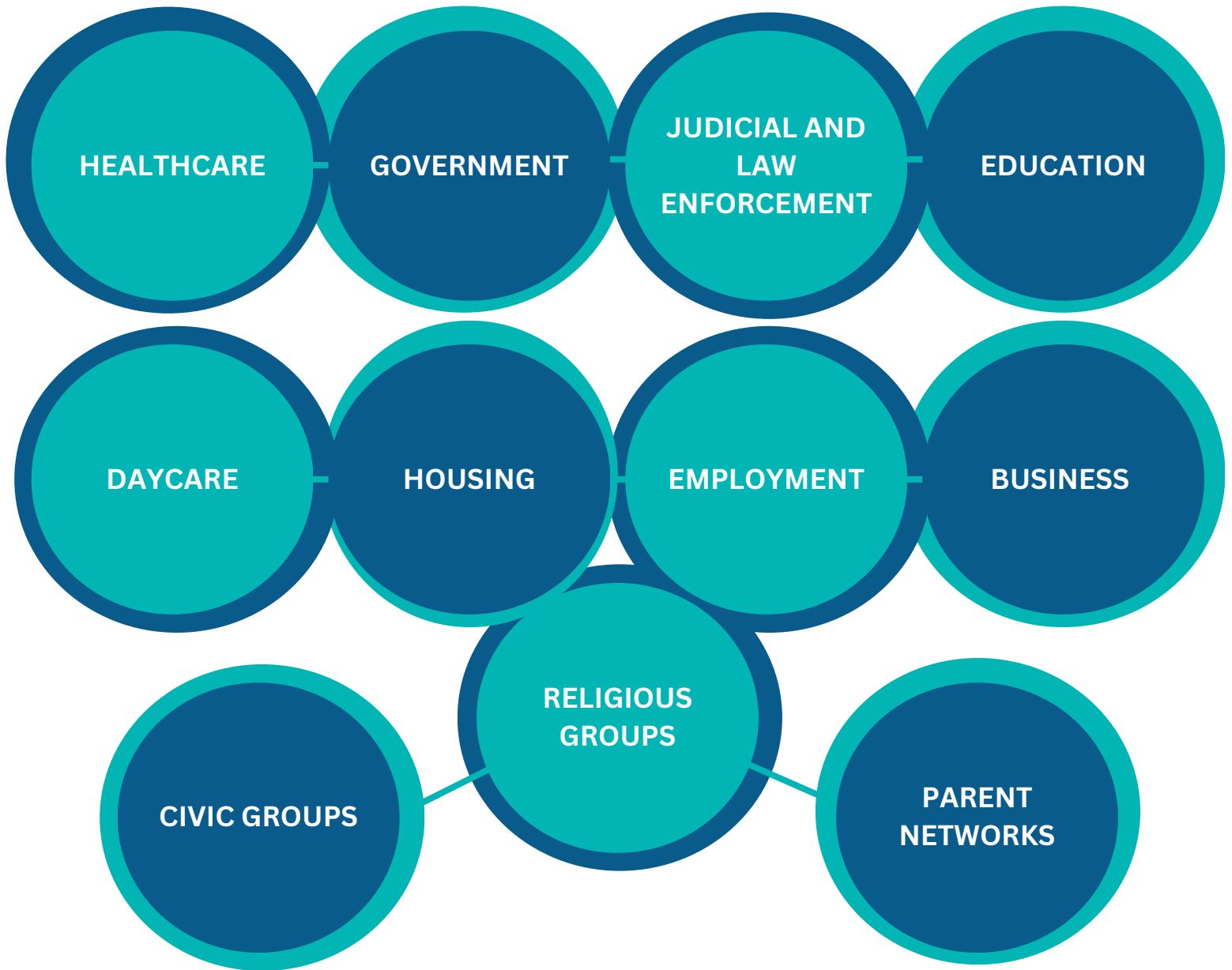
Visit our  
website to learn  
more at

<https://www.resilientswga.org>



# SUMMARY

The Albany coalition focuses its evidence-based coalition efforts on all sectors of rural southwest Georgia with targeted populations including but not limited to:



*The coalition takes on a holistic approach to tackle the root cause of trauma so that all individuals will recognize the impact of trauma on health from preconception through age 26. The coalition works to provide or support services for raising healthy children in safe, stable, nurturing environments. This is implemented through a variety of methods such as training on trauma and secondary trauma, therapy, and nontraditional interventions.*

# Leadership Team and Contributors

**Angie Williams**

Aspire  
System of Care Coordinator

**Ashley Williams**

Family Wellness Outreach  
Center of Georgia  
Program Director

**Danita Wiggins**

Dougherty County School  
System  
Wraparound Services  
Coordinator

**Allisha Green-Hosely**

Artesian Alliance  
Membership Manager

**Debbie**

**Richardson**

DBHDD Advisory  
Council – Region 4

**Darrell Sabbs**

**Phoebe Putney**

Memorial Hospital  
Community  
Liaison

**Ashley Nestale**

Family Literacy  
Connection  
Executive Director

# Coalition Partners



ASPIRE Behavioral Health and  
Developmental Disability Services

Childcare  
Resource &  
Referral - Albany

Liberty House Lily Pad

Albany Area Primary Health Care

Dougherty County  
School System

Lorio Psych Group

Albany Area  
Primary Health  
Care

Family Wellness  
Outreach Center  
of Georgia

Mental Health America  
of Georgia National Alliance on  
Mental Illness

Albany Area YMCA

Friendship  
Missionary Baptist  
Church

Albany Phoebe Putney  
Health System

Albany Housing  
Authority

Georgia  
Association of  
Housing and  
Redevelopment  
Authorities

Southwest Public Health  
District Southwest

Albany State  
University

Georgia Budget &  
Policy Institute

RESA

Albany Technical  
College

Georgia Center for  
Child Advocacy  
Georgia

The City of Albany

Andrew College

Center for Nonprofits Georgia  
Division of  
Family & Children Services,  
Regions 4 & 5

United Way of Southwest  
Georgia

Augusta  
University

Georgia Department of Juvenile  
Justice CSO

Thank you to  
all of our  
partners!

Black Child  
Development  
Institute (BCDI)  
Atlanta

Georgia Family Connection  
Partnership,  
Regions 8 & 10

Boys and Girls  
Clubs of Albany

Georgia Statewide Afterschool  
Network

Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia

# MESSAGE FROM RESILIENT SWGA

In the heart of Southwest Georgia, a transformative movement is underway —one that transcends the conventional boundaries of community development. This movement seeks not just to address the visible wounds of trauma but to cultivate a culture of understanding, empathy, and resilience. By championing the creation of a trauma-informed region, we embark on a journey that promises profound benefits across multiple spheres of our society.

At its core, a trauma-informed approach recognizes that trauma is pervasive and affects individuals from all walks of life. Whether stemming from adverse childhood experiences, natural disasters, economic hardships, or systemic injustices, trauma casts a long shadow over our communities, manifesting in myriad forms such as substance abuse, mental health disorders, crime, and chronic health conditions. Yet, amidst the darkness, lies an opportunity for profound change.

In essence, the journey towards becoming a trauma-informed region is not just about treating symptoms but about fundamentally reshaping our communities for the better. It is about recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of every individual, regardless of their past experiences or current circumstances. It is about building a future where resilience triumphs over adversity, where compassion prevails over judgment, and where every member of our community has the opportunity to thrive.





# KEY IMPACTS/ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Resilient SWGA engaged and impacted most of the counties within the Southwest Georgia region, with a focus on expanding trauma-informed practices to rural and under-resourced areas. The coalition strategically served individuals across the region through trauma informed programs, training, and outreach services.

## **Training Sessions Delivered:**

Conducted 15 trauma-informed care training sessions for educators, healthcare providers, and community leaders.

## **Participants Trained:**

Trained 267 professionals in trauma-informed practices, resulting in 42% increase in trauma informed services across the region.

## **Programs Implemented:**

Launched Youth United and Sandy Hook Promise programs focused on preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and fostering Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs).

## **Community Workshops:**

Held 7 community workshops educating 86 parents and caregivers on ACEs prevention and PCEs promotion.

## **Common Language Campaign:**

Implemented region-wide Suicide Prevention, Mental Health Awareness, and Bullying Prevention campaigns to promote a common language around trauma-informed care, reaching 13 counties.

## **Increased Participation:**

Achieved a 25% increase in participation in training sessions and workshops.

## **Stakeholder Engagement:**

Engaged with 28 diverse stakeholders, including representatives from education, healthcare, business, and community organizations.

## **Sustainability Efforts:**

Secured \$200,000 in additional funding and resources to support long-term sustainability of trauma-informed initiatives.

## **Coalition Expansion:**

Expanded the coalition to include 17 new partner organizations.

## **Materials Distributed:**

Distributed educational materials and resources to 25 schools, 12 healthcare facilities, and 17 community organizations.

# Description of Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)- Related Efforts

## Prevention/Intervention

Prevention and intervention efforts within Resilient SWGA - Albany are vital for fostering healthier, more resilient communities. Without proper intervention, the long-term impacts of trauma can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including chronic illness, mental health disorders, and substance abuse.

The coalition's community-focused initiatives, such as trauma-awareness events, youth engagement activities, and a speaker series featuring experts in trauma-informed care, play a critical role in creating trauma-informed communities. These events raise awareness, educate the public, and build a collective understanding of the impact of trauma, equipping community members with the knowledge and tools to respond effectively. By fostering an environment where trauma is recognized and addressed, Resilient SWGA is helping to create communities that support the well-being of all individuals.

### **Mentoring Programs:**

Launched mentoring programs in partnership with local schools and youth organizations, reaching 67 at-risk youth.

### **Parenting Workshops:**

Held 7 parenting workshops focused on trauma-informed parenting techniques, reaching 86 parents and caregivers. Feedback surveys indicated a 23% increase in confidence among participants in managing trauma-related behaviors in children.

### **Suicide Prevention Month:**

Organized a series of events during Suicide Prevention Month, including community play production, spoken word sessions, and a regional teen care summit. These events engaged over 300 community members and raised awareness of the impact of trauma and the importance of ACEs prevention.

### **Youth Engagement Events:**

Youth Engagement Events: Hosted youth-focused events such as sports clinics, teen summits, and youth field day, which provided trauma-informed activities and support for over 400 young people in the region.

Moving forward, the coalition plans to build on these successes by expanding access to services, enhancing cross-sector partnerships, and continuing to engage the community through innovative and inclusive initiatives.

# Advocacy and Policy, Systems and Environmental (PSE) Changes

Over the past year, Resilient SWGA has made significant strides in the areas of advocacy, policy, systems, and environmental changes, all aimed at creating a more supportive and resilient community.

The coalition has been at the forefront of advancing trauma-informed legislation in the region.

Recognizing the profound impact that trauma can have on individuals and communities, we focused our efforts on advocating for the inclusion of trauma-informed practices in state-level education and healthcare policies. Through strategic collaboration with local legislators, organizing advocacy days at the state capitol, and providing compelling testimony on the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), we were able to bring about meaningful change.

In our commitment to creating systemic change, the coalition has worked diligently to integrate trauma-informed practices across various sectors. We recognized the need for a comprehensive approach that extends beyond individual interventions and focused on embedding trauma-informed principles within the operations of key institutions such as schools, healthcare providers, and law enforcement agencies.

## **Advocacy and Policy Accomplishments:**

The coalition successfully advocated for the inclusion of trauma-informed practices in state-level education and health policies. As a result of these efforts, new policies were explored that require trauma-informed training for educators and healthcare providers in Southwest Georgia. This has led to a significant increase in schools and healthcare facilities' consideration of trauma-informed practices.

## **Systems Change Accomplishments:**

The coalition worked to integrate trauma-informed practices into the operations of key sectors, including education, healthcare, and law enforcement. Over 10 schools and 7 healthcare facilities have now implemented trauma-informed practices, with measurable improvements in service delivery and outcomes, such as reduced disciplinary actions in schools and increased patient satisfaction in healthcare settings.

## **Environmental Change Accomplishments:**

The coalition focused on transforming public spaces to be more supportive of individuals affected by trauma. This included redesigning waiting areas in healthcare facilities, creating calming spaces in schools, and establishing community gardens that provide a therapeutic environment for residents.

# Research

Over the past year, Resilient SWGA has made substantial progress in the area of research, with a focus on understanding and addressing the impacts of trauma within our community.

One of our key accomplishments was completing research aimed at exploring the effects of Covid-19 on the mental/behavioral health of youth in our region. The results of this study will also be used to educate community groups, nonprofits, and government agencies on systems transformation with the goal of creating more trauma-informed school systems for our region.

We engaged roughly 53 students, 17 caregivers, and 20 local partners at this event.

The following findings are based on the experiences of, and perceptions shared by, caregivers and youth that participated in the COPE Clinic. These findings add invaluable context in understanding the unique needs of Southwest Georgia's caregivers and youth.

## Key Findings:

- ◆ Isolation, uncertainty, and drastic lifestyle changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated mental health issues in both caregivers and youth. Caregivers said that the pandemic led to increased responsibilities at home and work, separation from community, and financial uncertainty that significantly increased their stress and anxiety. For youth, separation from friends and activities disrupted their social lives, while virtual learning left many students struggling to keep up with schoolwork.
- ◆ Access to mental health care before and during the pandemic was extremely limited due to a shortage of providers, inadequate insurance coverage, high costs, and insufficient information. Caregivers living in rural communities reported having limited, if any, options for mental health care, resulting in long commutes to seek treatment.
- ◆ Identity, family characteristics, and social status create barriers to seeking and receiving mental health care. Youth reported being hesitant to discuss mental health with parents as a result of cultural norms that frown upon or do not accept mental health issues as a legitimate problem – some even fear being ostracized. Both caregivers and youth said that a lack of diversity among mental health care professionals also discourages people from seeking mental health care, as they often seek treatment from those with whom they can relate.

# Research

## Continued

### Key Findings:

◆ School-based mental health (SBMH) care is limited due to administrative demands, training deficiencies, and shortages of school guidance counselors. Caregivers viewed school as a key setting where youth mental health needs should be addressed but felt that most schools fall woefully short in this area.

◆ Knowledge of local mental health resources vary.

Better communication and awareness of those that do exist was identified as a critical need. Caregivers identified community service boards (CSBs) and residential treatment facilities as behavioral health resources; however, access to these options may be limited based on location and type of care needed (immediate or intensive care versus less intensive treatment). Some participants were unaware of available resources in their community and were unsure where to begin should they need care.

Further, there are very few, if any, local resources for youth in most communities.



# Training

Over the past year, Resilient SWGA has prioritized the delivery of comprehensive training opportunities aimed at building the capacity of professionals and community members to address trauma effectively. These evidence-based training initiatives are designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement trauma informed practices across various sectors.

## Community Resiliency Model (CRM) –

The goal is to help to create “trauma-informed” and “resiliency-focused” communities that share a common understanding of the impact of trauma and chronic stress on the nervous system and how resiliency can be restored or increased using this skills-based approach.

## Connections Matter –

Training is designed to engage community members in building caring connections to improve resiliency. It is a community-based initiative that explores how the connections we make in life profoundly impact our brain’s ability to grow and our own individual abilities to cope and thrive.

## QPR –

Question, Persuade, Refer. An educational program that teaches ordinary citizens how to recognize a mental health emergency and how to get a person at risk the help they need. QPR was developed specifically to detect and respond to anyone showing suicide warning signs.

## Workshops and Training Sessions

Resilient SWGA successfully organized and delivered over 25 trauma-informed training and workshops throughout the year.

### 500 Participants



The training sessions reached a diverse audience, including over 500 participants from various sectors such as education, healthcare, law enforcement, social services, and community organizations.

### Collaborative Efforts:



These training opportunities were made possible through strategic partnerships with local and regional organizations, including the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, NAMI, local school districts, Phoebe Putney Health System, Albany Area Primary Health Center, and various community organizations.

### Community Engagement:



The training sessions also facilitated greater community engagement by raising awareness of the prevalence and impact of trauma. This has led to 42% increased community involvement in the coalition’s broader initiatives and a stronger collective commitment to creating a trauma-informed region.

# Innovative Partnerships

Youth United Teen Mental Health Coalition partnered with the Southwest Georgia Performing Arts Academy to produce a compelling play centered on youth mental health, aimed at sparking dialogue and raising awareness across the Southwest Georgia community.

This partnership was born out of a shared commitment to address the growing mental health challenges faced by young people in the region and to provide a creative platform for expression, education, and healing.

**Resilient SWGA /  
SWGA Performing  
Arts Academy  
September 2023**

The play was performed at several venues across Southwest Georgia, reaching a diverse audience that included students, parents, educators, and community leaders.

This partnership exemplifies the power of collaboration between community organizations and the arts, demonstrating that when we come together with a shared purpose, we can create impactful experiences that resonate far beyond the stage.



# SPOTLIGHT

## YOUTH UNITED

In its pilot year, the Youth United Teen Mental Health Coalition made significant strides in Southwest Georgia, laying a strong foundation for ongoing efforts to support and uplift the mental well-being of the region's youth. The coalition, formed in response to the growing mental health needs of teenagers, quickly became a vital resource and advocate for positive change in the community.

### Launch of Mental Health Awareness Campaigns:

The coalition kicked off its work with a series of mental health awareness campaigns aimed at destigmatizing mental health issues among teens.

### Establishment of Peer Support Networks:

Recognizing the power of peer support, the coalition successfully launched peer support groups in several high schools across Southwest Georgia. These groups provided a safe space for students to share their experiences, offer support to one another, and receive guidance from trained peer leaders.

### Community-Wide Events and Workshops:

Throughout the year, the Youth United Teen Mental Health Coalition organized a variety of community events and workshops designed to engage not only students but also parents, educators, and community leaders.

### Collaboration with the Southwest Georgia Performing Arts Academy:

One of the most notable achievements of the coalition's pilot year was its partnership with the Southwest Georgia Performing Arts Academy to produce a play centered on youth mental health. This creative endeavor provided a powerful platform to explore the challenges faced by young people and sparked important conversations within the community.

### Advocacy and Policy Engagement:

The coalition also played an active role in advocating for better mental health services and support at both the local and state levels. By engaging with policymakers and community leaders, the coalition helped to raise awareness of the unique mental health challenges faced by teens in Southwest Georgia.



Looking ahead, the coalition is poised to build on this momentum, with plans to expand its programs, deepen its partnerships, and continue advocating for systemic changes that will benefit the mental health of all youth in the region. The pilot year has set a high standard for what can be achieved when a community comes together to prioritize the well-being of its youngest members, and the Youth United Teen Mental Health Coalition is committed to leading this important work into the future.