



Issues Impacting Georgia Counties

Contact: Schuyler Harding, Communications Manager; (404) 522-5022; sharding@accg.org

Issue: Mental Health

Background: Georgia's mental health crisis is a multi-faceted issue that has created new dynamics for its county government officials. The mentally ill are housed in county jails as opposed to treatment centers where they can receive the proper and necessary care. This often leads to overcrowding of county jails.

- **How is ACCG working with counties to address the mental health challenge in the coming year?**
 - **Standing Committee on Mental Health** – In response to rapidly growing problems related to the lack of access to mental health services in Georgia, the ACCG Board of Managers created a Standing Committee on Mental Health devoted to studying and addressing the issue. The Committee was created in 2017.
 - **Messaging** - Traditional press release announcing the committee was sent to state media outlets (included small local papers as well as business publications under the Georgia CEO umbrella)
 - **ACCG Mental Health Summit** – In August 2018, ACCG hosted its first-ever Mental Health Summit in Macon-Bibb County, Georgia. Included speakers from all key stakeholders involved in the issue – Georgia Department of Public Health, Georgia National Alliance on Mental Illness, NACo Stepping Up Initiative, Georgia Community Service Board Association, and state Psychiatric Association among others.
 - **Messaging** – Media advisory sent to Macon news outlets; used ACCG social media channels to promote the event; traditional promotion/marketing efforts – story on ACCG website, email messages to membership; included information about the event in ACCG's two newsletters.
 - **Note:** During a meeting held after the Mental Health Summit, the Committee appointed a Data Subcommittee. It was noted that all current information on local mental health issues in Georgia is anecdotal and that hard data is needed to successfully move forward in addressing this issue.

Issue: Broadband Access and Management of Local Government Rights-of-Way

Background: Georgia's county commissioners recognize the critical importance of, and fully support, expanding affordable broadband access throughout the state to enhance citizens' quality of life, foster economic development, and make their communities more vibrant and competitive. Toward this end counties statewide continue to partner with the telecommunications industry to facilitate market-based solutions to enhance high quality service, including the accommodation of towers, structures and equipment in the public's right-of-way (ROW), to address their respective community's needs. The state could greatly enhance these local efforts; however, preemption of local government ROW management is not needed. Additionally, a reliable and equitable funding source is needed to support increasing

demand for county services to support anticipated economic development associated with broadband expansion.

- **How is ACCG working with counties to address the broadband/right-of-way issue in the coming year?**
 - **ACCG Legislative Agenda/Priorities** – This issue was an ACCG Legislative Priority in 2018, thus it was an issue actively pursued by the ACCG policy team
 - **Messaging** – Legislative Update newsletter, weekly newsletter produced while the Georgia General Assembly is in session. It is distributed via email, shared on social media, posted to the homepage of the ACCG website in the Policy Resource Center. This issue was covered in the Facebook Live version of the Legislative Update (every Friday morning) and in Action Alerts when deemed appropriate. Issue also covered in the upcoming fall issue of Georgia County Government magazine.

Issue: Cybersecurity

Background: Local governments are not immune to cybersecurity issues. Counties collect and store a massive amount of personal information on their computer systems by virtue of their governmental responsibilities. That information may be leaked, used and/or destroyed before the county even knows it happened. A number of Georgia county and municipal governments have had their computer systems hacked and sensitive information compromised.

- **How is ACCG working with counties to address the cybersecurity in the coming year?**
 - **ACCG SuITte** - ACCG has launched a new program to assist counties with information technology services such as cybersecurity protection and backups called ACCG SuITte.
 - **Messaging** – Article published in the 2018 Georgia County Government Member Services Guide; web story on the ACCG homepage; standalone booth at the 2018 ACCG Annual conference
 - **Note:** Members of the ACCG-Interlocal Risk Management Agency (property and liability program) are automatically offered liability coverage with a portion of the coverage covering privacy response expenses. Privacy response services include access to an attorney that specializes in data breaches and access to credit monitoring and other services.

Primary Messaging for Advocacy Issues

- **Facebook Live** - Weekly Legislative Updates - every Friday morning during the legislative session
- Legislative Update newsletter – distributed via email, shared on social media, posted to the homepage of the ACCG website in the Policy Resource Center. Members of the media who follow state and local government are on the mailing list for this publication.
- **Legislative Toolkit** – print version is distributed to the ACCG membership at Fall District Meetings and shared with state legislators. Electronic version is posted on the ACCG website and shared on social media. Includes the Associations priorities and legislative agenda.
- **Action Alerts** – sent to the ACCG membership via email when immediate action is needed on specific legislation. Normally sent before/on Crossover Day and Sine Die.
- **Occasional Press Releases** – depending on the significance, press releases on select policy issues are distributed.