



South Dakota Department of Health

SDAHO Post Acute Care Conference

Rural Health Care Today and Tomorrow

Melissa Magstadt, DOH Cabinet Secretary

April 1, 2026



What is Public Health?

Public health is the science of protecting and improving the health of families and communities through promotion of healthy lifestyles, research for disease and injury prevention, and detection and control of infectious diseases.



VISION
Every South Dakotan Healthy and Strong

MISSION
Working together to promote, protect, and improve health



South Dakota Department of Health

South Dakota Health Landscape

Elder Population: What does this look like?

South Dakota Population by Age						
10 Yr Age Group	2005	2010	2015	2020	2024	Percent Change 2005-2024
0-9	105,812	115,152	121,510	121,851	119,060	13%
10-19	115,723	111,588	113,106	120,111	126,285	9%
20-29	110,224	113,166	117,038	117,444	119,007	8%
30-39	90,509	95,625	107,249	114,285	117,273	30%
40-49	114,492	104,865	93,786	97,381	109,865	-4%
50-59	98,408	113,630	116,611	104,645	98,725	0%
60-69	61,931	75,517	98,130	113,858	119,054	92%
70-79	47,008	47,407	52,055	65,142	78,250	66%
80+	35,977	37,230	38,984	38,000	37,150	3%
Total	780,084	814,180	858,469	892,717	924,669	19%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Elder Population: What does this look like?

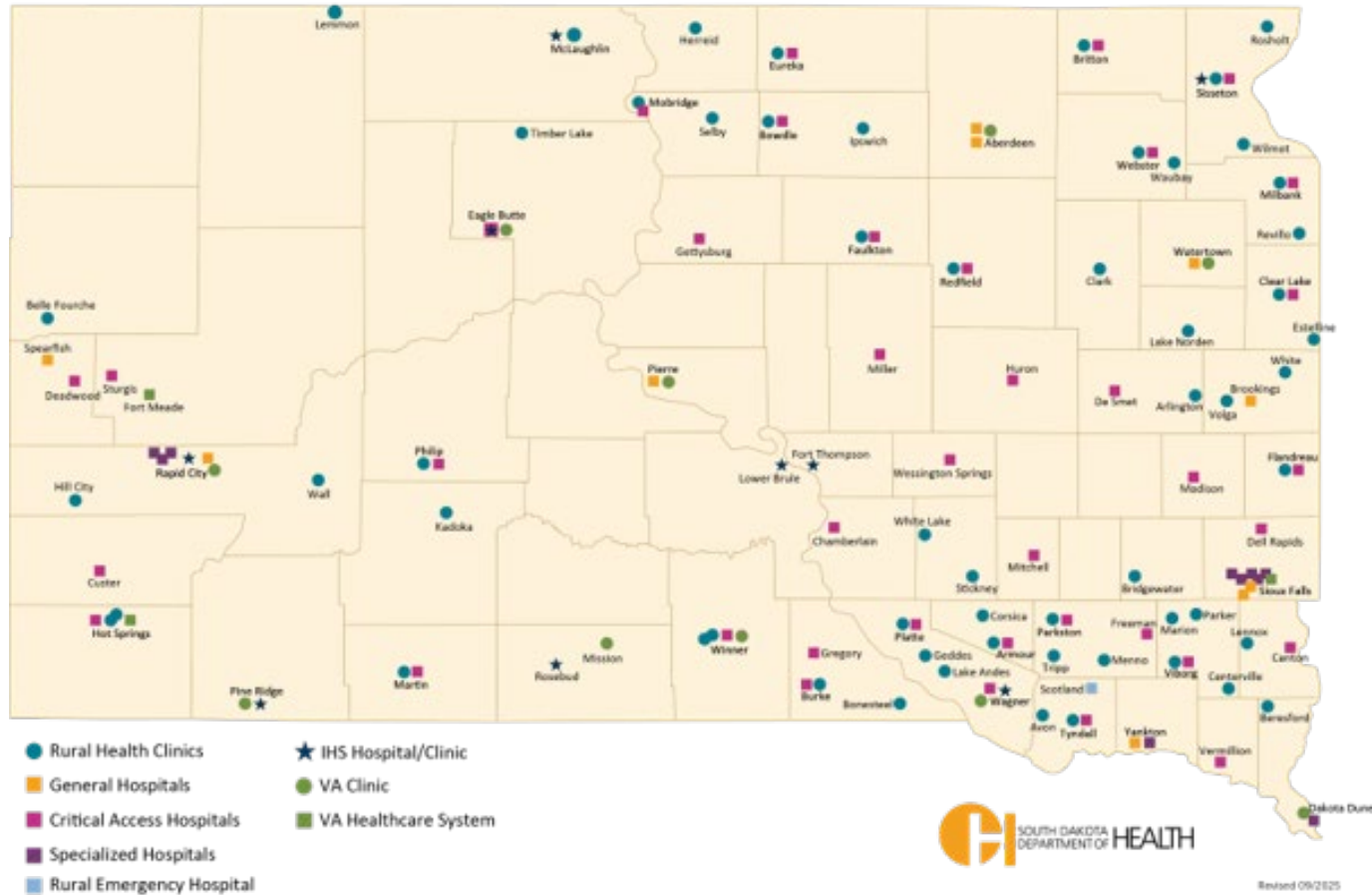
Chronic Disease in South Dakotans 65+ Years of Age		
Heart Disease	20,000	12%
Cancer	33,000	20%
COPD	20,000	12%
Kidney Disease	12,000	7%
Arthritis	84,000	51%
Diabetes	33,000	20%
BRFSS Data, 2020 - 2024		

116,000 (70%) of South Dakotans 65+ years of age have been diagnosed with at least one of the above chronic diseases.



Statewide Rural Health Challenges

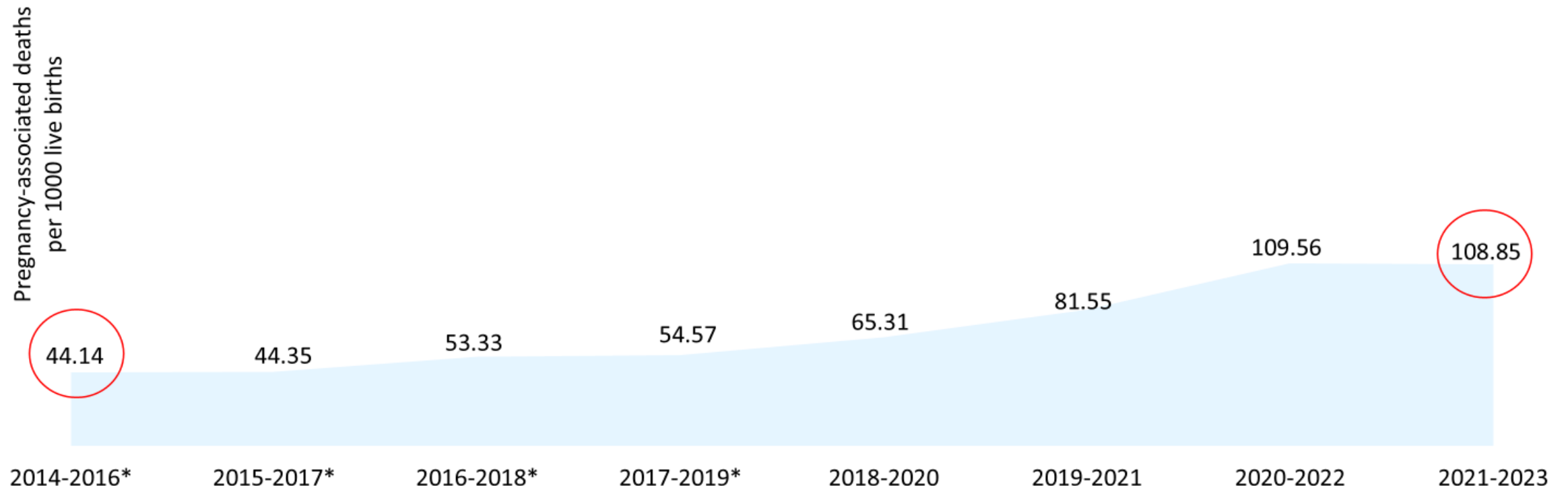
SOUTH DAKOTA HOSPITALS & CLINICS



- Vast geography and low population density
- Long travel distances for care
- Workforce shortages
- Rural and Tribal health disparities
- High chronic disease burden

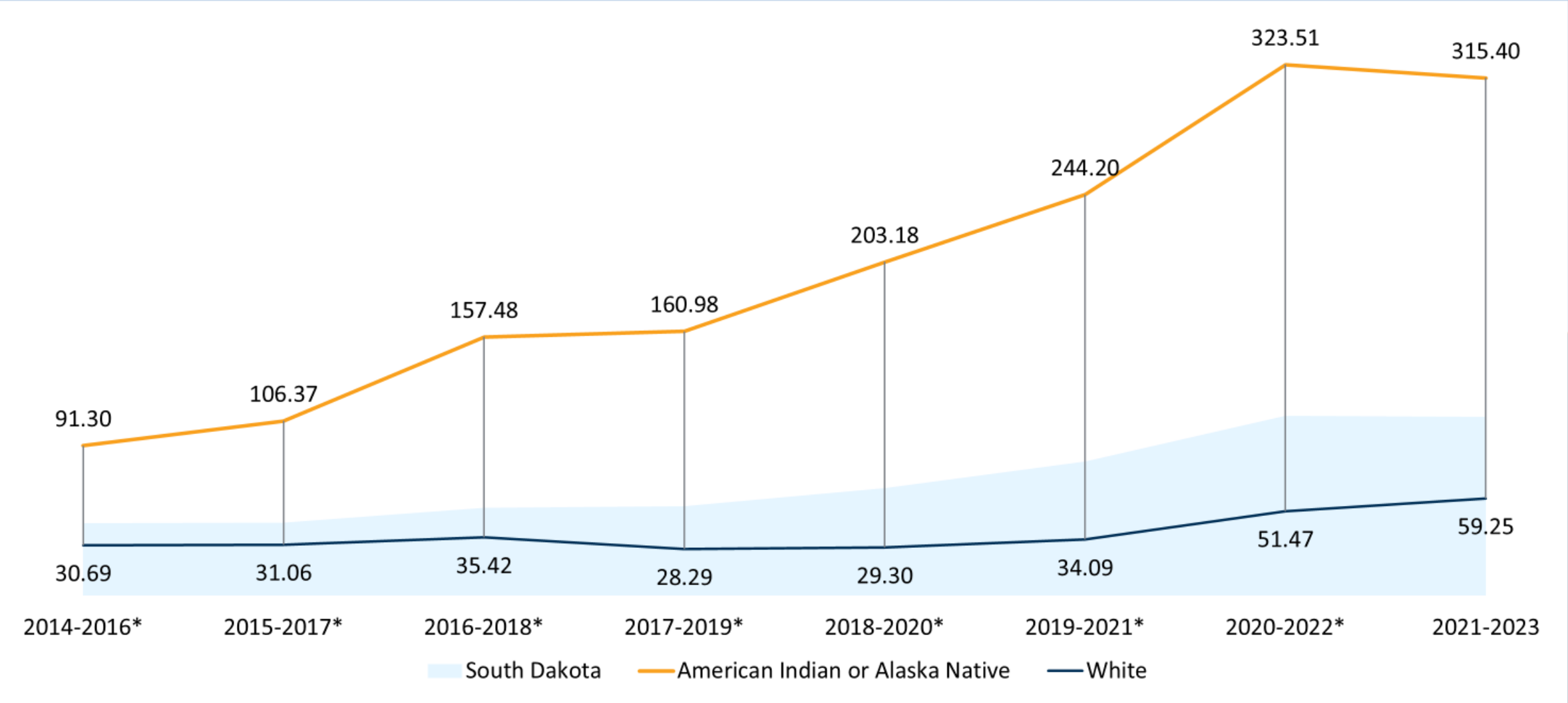


Pregnancy-associated mortality rates more than doubled in the last 10 years.



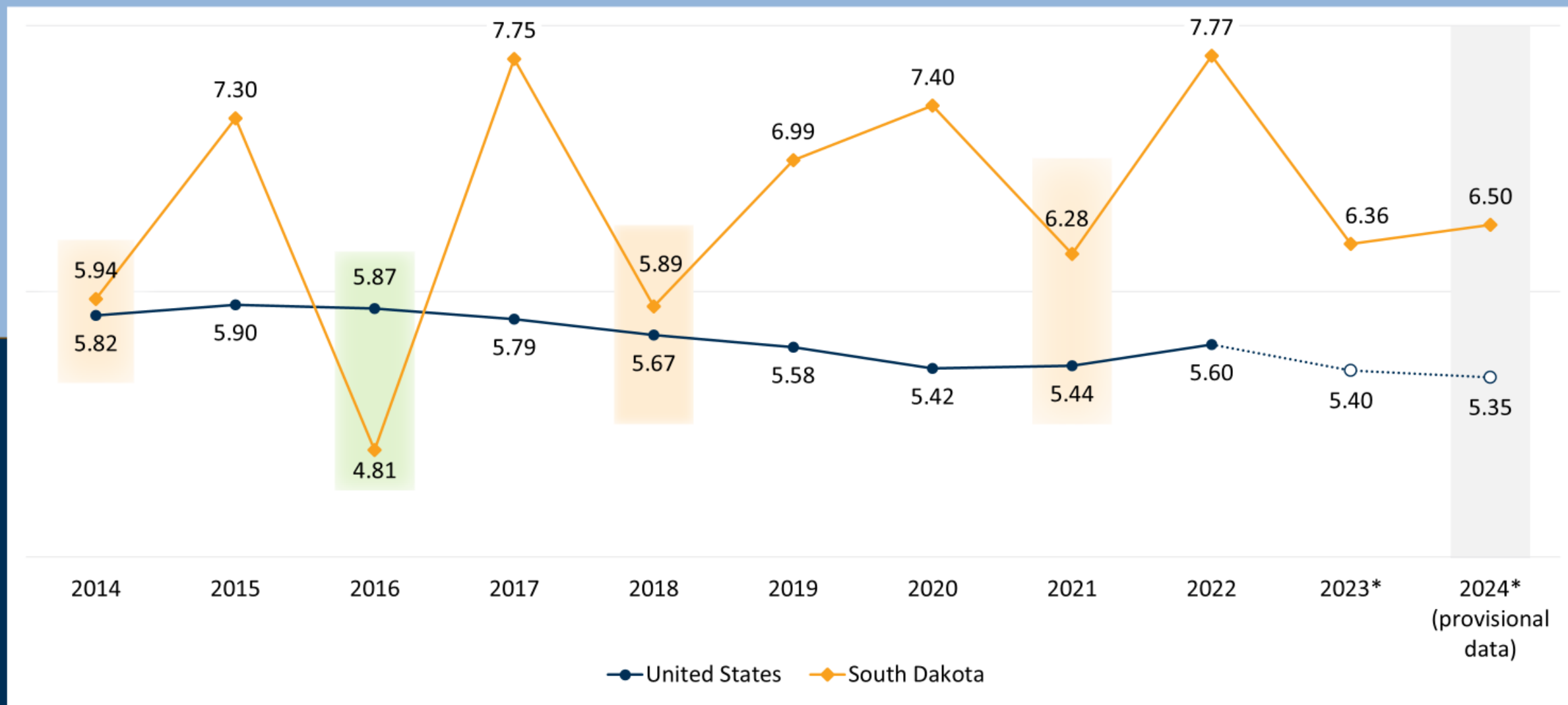
Source: South Dakota Birth and Death Records, 2014-2023.

Pregnancy-associated deaths disproportionately affect certain populations



Source: South Dakota Birth and Death Records, 2014-2023.

South Dakota Infant Mortality rates have been persistently higher than the country's



*US rates obtained from the National Vital statistics System, Linked Birth and Infant Death Data. Publications available at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/linked-birth.htm>. **National infant mortality rates for 2023 and 2024 are not yet available.** United States' 2023 and 2024 rates displayed are projections (what those rates will probably be) based on the last 20 years of live births and infant deaths national data.

Elder Population: What does this look like?

Leading Cause of Death (Ages 65+), 2024	
Heart Disease	1,405
Cancer	1,403
Alzheimer's Disease	503
Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	397
Stroke	370
Dementia	222
Diabetes	204
Accidental Falls	180
Influenza and Pneumonia	131
Parkinson's Disease	113



Healthcare Disparities | Chronic Disease

Alzheimer's Disease & Other-Related Dementias (ADRD)

- Alzheimer's Disease was the 3rd leading cause of death and dementia was the 8th leading cause of death among South Dakotans in 2024
- The age-adjusted mortality rate of Alzheimer's disease has increased from 24.5 in 2004 to 43.1 per 100,000 persons in 2024
- Older adults 65+ years are at the highest risk of an ADRD diagnosis
 - 18.8% (173,800 adults) of South Dakotans were at least 65 years of age in 2024
 - 68.6% of these older adults were living in a rural or frontier county in 2024
- The median age of death in SD due to Alzheimer's disease and dementia was 88 years in 2024

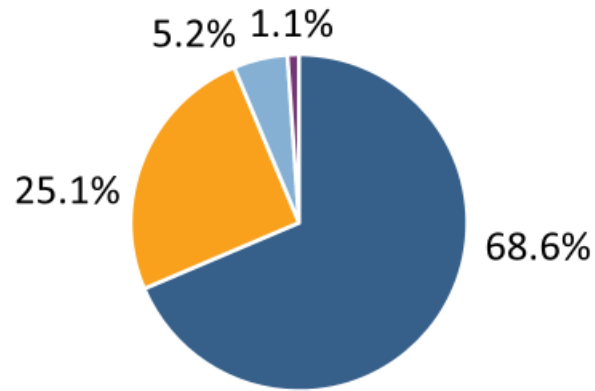


Healthcare Disparities | Chronic Disease

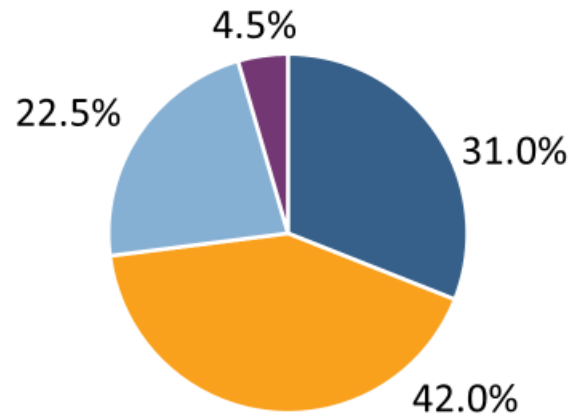
Cancer

- Cancer was the leading cause of death among South Dakotans in 2024 (20.1% of all deaths)
- It was the leading cause of death among older adults 60-69 and 70-79 years of age
- The median age of death due to cancer was 75 years in 2024
- The most common cancers in SD are prostate, female breast, lung, and colorectal cancer

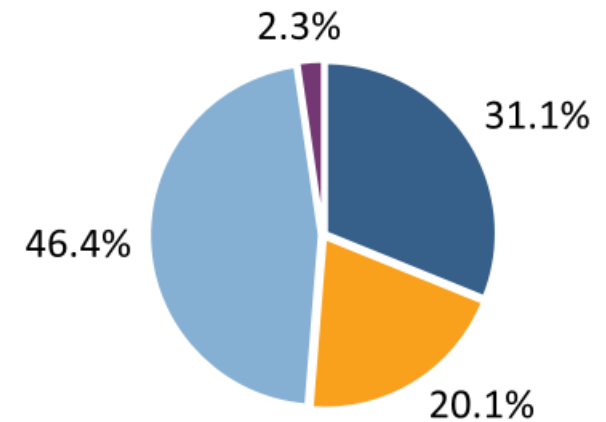
Stage at Diagnosis (Female Breast)



Stage at Diagnosis (Colorectal)



Stage at Diagnosis (Lung)



■ Localized ■ Regional ■ Distant ■ Unstaged

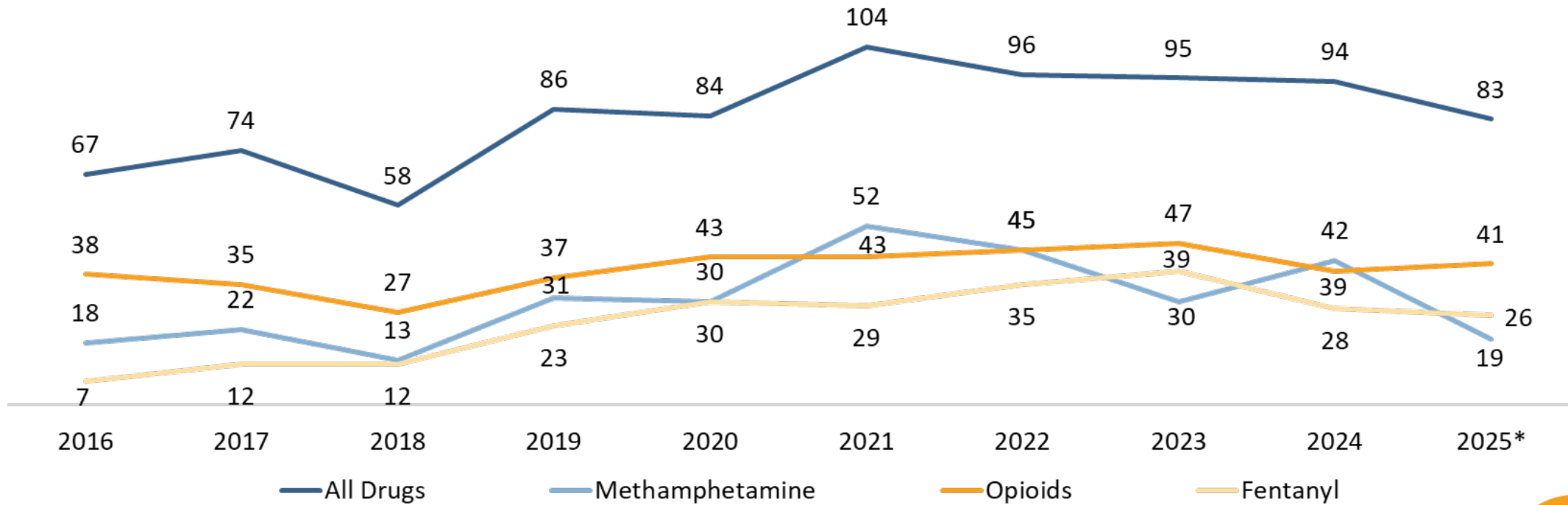
Data Source(s): SD Vital Statistics, US Cancer Statistics



Healthcare Disparities | Overdose

- South Dakota had the 2nd lowest all drug overdose death rate in the nation (2024)
- South Dakota had the 2nd lowest opioid overdose death rate in the nation (2024)
- 6% of overdose deaths in South Dakota among adults aged 65 years and older (2015-2024)

Overdose Deaths by Substance, South Dakota

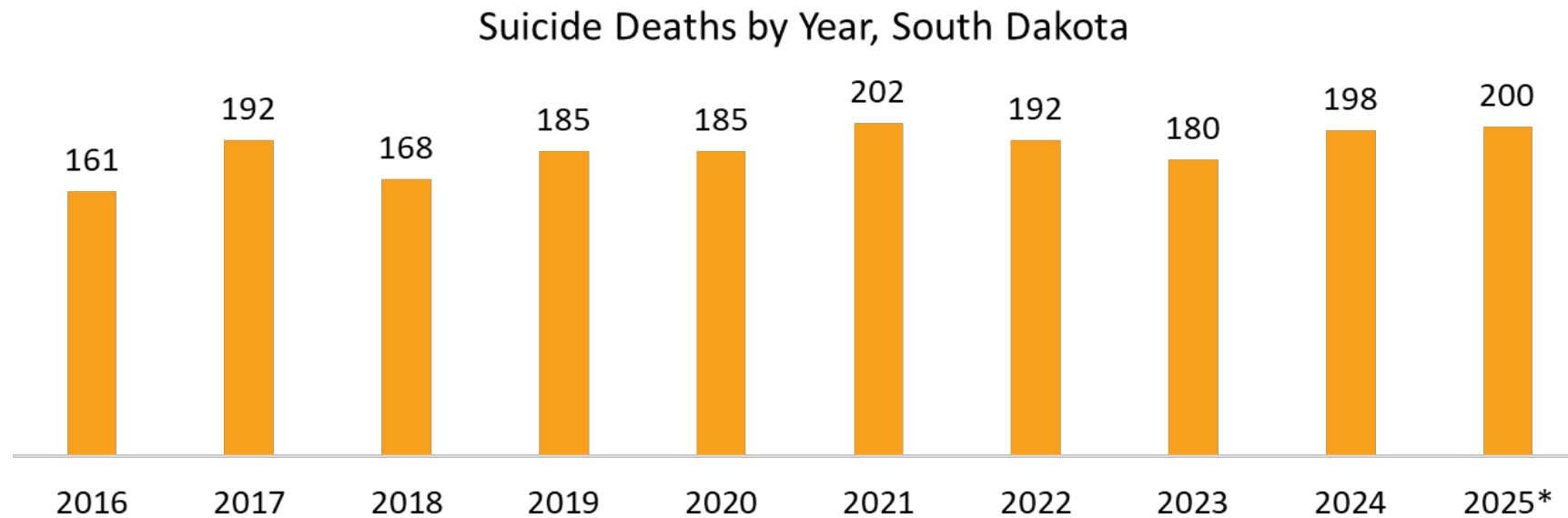


* 2025 data is provisional and subject to change



Healthcare Disparities | Suicide Rates

- Suicide was the 10th leading cause of death among South Dakotans (2024)
- South Dakota had the 5th highest age-adjusted rate in the nation (2024)
- Suicide is a growing concern among adults aged 65 years and older
 - 17% of suicide deaths were among adults aged 65 years and older (2024)
 - 19% of suicide deaths were among adults aged 65 years and older (2025*)



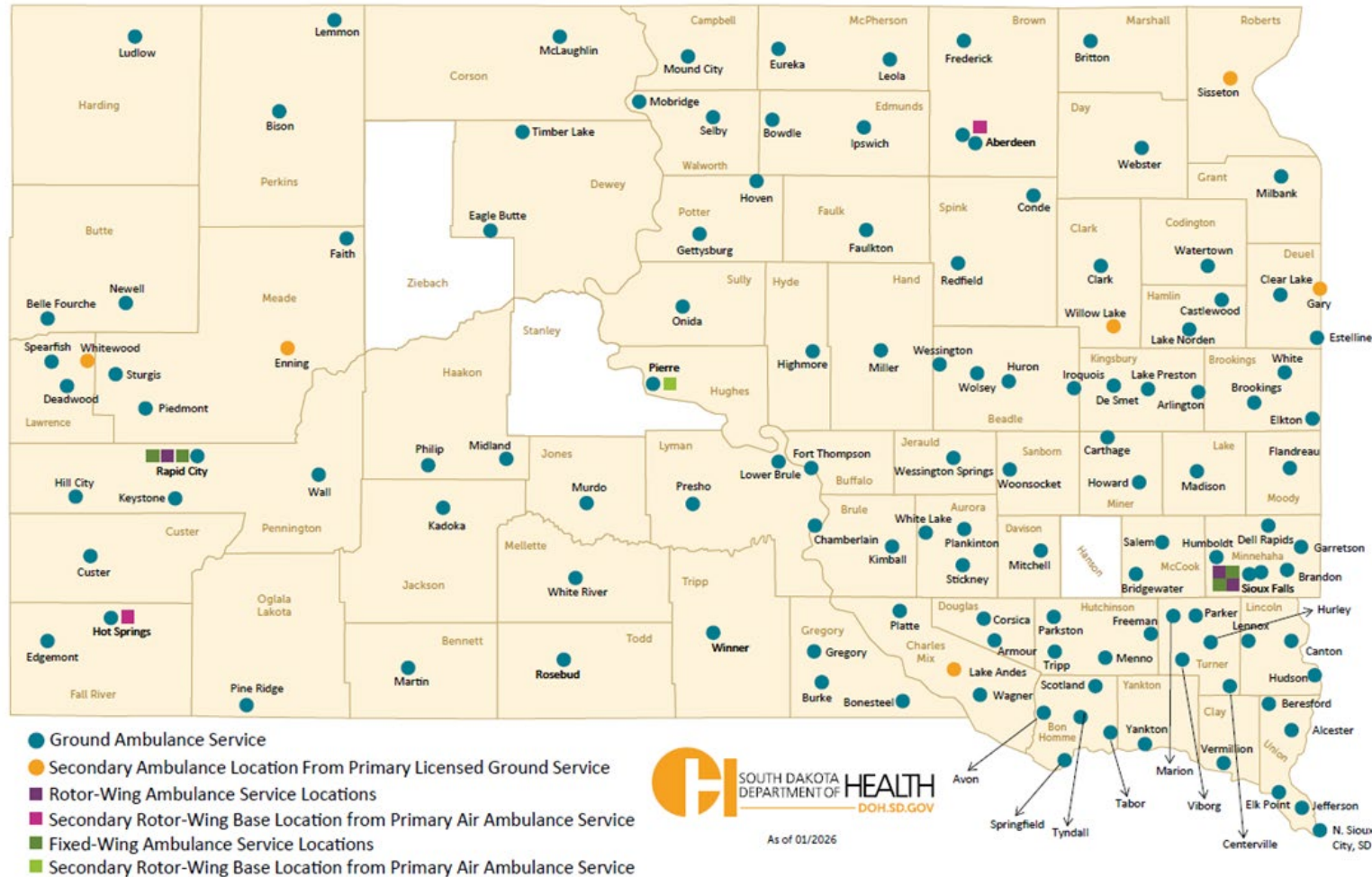
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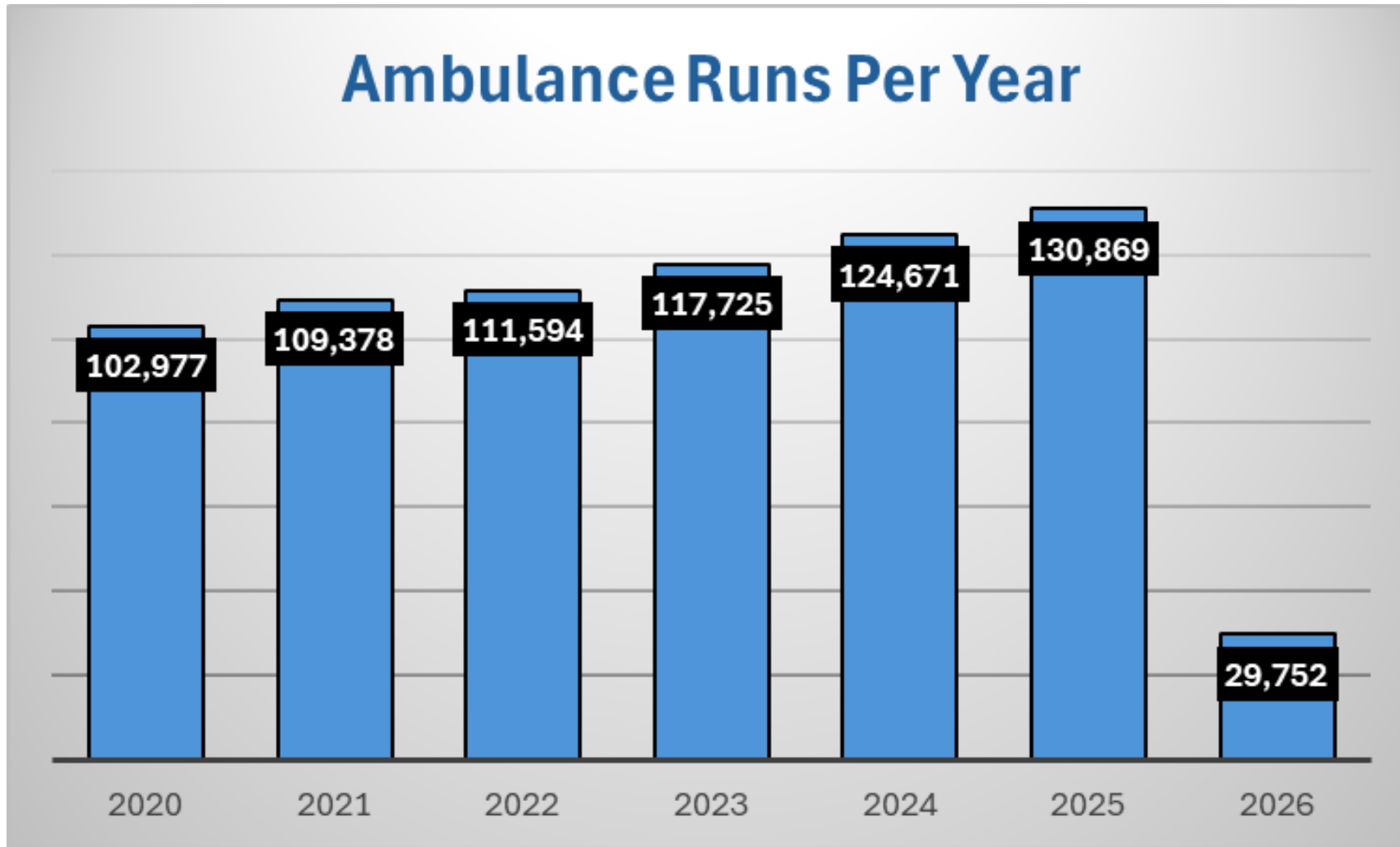
EMS Service Coverage

South Dakota In-State Ambulance Service Map

125 In-State Ambulance Services



EMS Providers in South Dakota



What is a Community Health Worker (CHW)?

Community Health Worker (CHW):

- Frontline public health worker
- Trusted member of the community or has a close understanding of it
- Serves as liaison between health/social services and the community
- Facilitates access to services
- Improves the quality and cultural competence of service delivery

Community Health Representative (CHR):

- Frontline public health workers who are trusted members of the community
- Strong understanding of community language, culture, and traditions
- Link between clinical settings and the community
- Facilitate access to services
- Improve the quality and cultural competence of care



CHW SD Medicaid Findings

- Early analysis shows recipients using CHW services had:
 - Lower ambulance utilization
 - Fewer hospitalizations
 - Higher likelihood of attending preventative care visits
 - Higher rates of cancer screenings





South Dakota Department of Health

Rural Health Transformation

Rural Health Transformation

The program is guided by five overarching strategic goals:

Make rural America healthy again – promote prevention, address root causes, chronic care

Sustainable access – strengthen rural providers, networks, coordination

Workforce development – recruit, retain, expand provider capacity in rural areas

Innovative care models – encourage flexible care, new payment models, better coordination

Tech innovation – support telehealth, data sharing, cybersecurity, advanced tools



Rural Health Transformation

Funding
FY26

\$189M

Overview: This five-year initiative focuses on strengthening healthcare systems in rural communities and ensuring that access to quality care is available statewide. Every South Dakotan deserves access to safe, high-quality care close to home. This project is designed to make rural healthcare more sustainable, connected, and resilient for the long term.



FOCUS AREAS

- Connecting Technology and Data
- Advancing the Rural Workforce
- Keeping Healthcare Local & Strong
- Transforming System Sustainability



10 INITIATIVES

- Technology and Data Connection
- Building a Sustainable Rural Healthcare Workforce
- Community Health Worker Expansion
- Rural Health Forward Training Hub
- Enhancing EMS
- Medicaid Quality Grants
- Medicaid Primary Care Transformation
- Regional Maternal and Infant Health Hubs
- Integrated Behavioral Health Systems
- Strengthening Chronic Disease Management



LEARN MORE

- [Ruralhealthtransformation.sd.gov](https://ruralhealthtransformation.sd.gov)



Critical Website

RuralHealthTransformation.SD.gov



Rural Health Transformation: Timeline

Early 2026 (January-March)

- Launch of foundational RFPs and planning efforts
- Focus areas: technology and data modernization, Medicaid transformation, chronic disease planning, behavioral health frameworks
- Workforce and EMS initiatives center on planning and stakeholder engagement

Spring 2026 (March-May)

- Major release of programmatic RFPs and RFAs
- Focus areas: chronic disease, maternal and infant health, behavioral health, Medicaid providers, rural training and resources
- Proposal review and awards begin

Early Summer 2026 (June)

- Transition from planning to program launch
- Initial awards for digital modernization, chronic disease, and behavioral health programs

Mid to Late 2026 (Summer-Fall)

- Additional funding rounds and technical assistance
- Expanded behavioral health funding, Medicaid PACT support, and remote patient monitoring initiatives



Rural Health Transformation: Current Progress

KEY UPDATES and RESOURCES:

11 Request for Proposals Active as of March 25, 2026

- Funding Forecast available – outlook for 2026
- Proposals incoming, review committees being assembled

Online Webinars

- Feb. 19 – overview of each of the 10 initiatives
- Technical Assistance Webinars – forthcoming

Frequently Asked Questions

CMS Project Officer Site Visit

- Opportunity to showcase South Dakota, and a rural community



Once in a Generation Funding

*This project is not just about immediate improvements.
It is a long-term investment in the health and resilience of
South Dakota's rural communities.*





SOUTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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