Rural Health Issues: A Federal Perspective

The Dakota Conference on Rural & Public Health
June 13th, 2018

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy
Health Resources and Services Administration
Focus Areas for FORHP

- Rural Health Policy & Research
- Enhancing Rural Health Care Delivery
- Federal and Private Partnerships
- Departmental Priorities
- Telehealth

HHS Priorities

- Opioids
- Prescription Drug Pricing
- Value in Health Care
- Health Insurance Affordability
- Mental Health
Addressing the Opioid Epidemic

Though opioid abuse and opioid-related death has been on the rise nationally, rural communities face unique challenges.

- Opioid-related overdose deaths in rural areas increased more than 10% from 2015 to 2016.
- Rural residents are most likely to be prescribed, and overdose on, prescription painkillers.
- Rural residents with opioid use disorder tend to be younger, less wealthy and educated, un or uninsured.
- More than 60% of rural counties lack a single physician that can prescribe buprenorphine, < 10% of opioid treatment programs in rural areas.

https://www.hhs.gov/opioids
Rural Opioid Research

Additional Federal Focus on Opioid Issues

USDA Rural Development
- Capital Resources
- Distance Learning and Telemedicine
- Tribal Resources
  - https://www.usda.gov/topics/opioids
Rural Community Opioid Response Initiative

Key Items
• $120 Million
• Combination of Planning and Implementation Grants
  • Loan Repayment for Clinicians
• Guidance in Development

The Challenge and Opportunity
• Building Sustainable Projects
• Developing Cross-Sector Partnerships
  • (clinical, human services, law enforcement, employment, housing, etc.)
• Opportunity for Creativity and Innovation

Rural Policy and Research

Emerging and Ongoing Concerns
• Rural and Tribal Hospitals
  • Viability of Other Models?
  • Vulnerable Rural Hospitals Assistance Program

Rural Policy and Research

Emerging and Ongoing Concerns

• Rural Hospitals and Obstetrical Services
  • Ongoing Loss of Services
  • More Pre-Term Births
  • Higher Travel Burden
  • More ED Births
  • North Dakota one of three states with highest decline in OB services
  • Raises Important Policy Questions

Emerging and Ongoing Concerns

• The Rural Health Transition to Value
• The Question of “Risk”

The Rural Safety Net

- CAH Cost-Based Reimbursement
- Rural Health Clinic and FQHC Payment
- Swing Bed Payment
- Method II Billing

Traditional Medicare

- DRGs
- Physician Fee Schedule
- Medicare DSH
- Medicare GME

Legislation and regulation moving toward value has emphasized standard payment

Unique rural payment methodologies not often included in quality reporting requirements
Rural Health Value
Tools and Resources to Help in the Value Transition

https://cph.uiowa.edu/ruralhealthvalue/

Rural Policy and Research

Telehealth
- Medicare and Medicaid data show telehealth utilization still relatively low
- Evidence for telehealth effectiveness varies by service and modality
- Use of consistent telehealth measures will help build the evidence base
  - AHRQ Evidence Map points to limited evidence base
  - CMS support of National Quality Forum will help
- Other Issues
  - Reimbursement
  - Broadband Issues
  - Licensure
  - Operational
In 2014, a higher rate of potentially excess deaths occurred among rural Americans than urban Americans from:

- **Heart disease**
  - More than 25,000 excess deaths
  - 42.6% in rural areas; 27.8% in urban areas
  - Approx. 50% higher in rural areas than urban

- **Cancer**
  - More than 19,000 excess deaths
  - Overall cancer deaths declined 1.5%/year between (2003-2012);
  - declined less in rural vs. urban areas

- **Unintentional injuries**
  - More than 12,000 excess deaths
  - 57.5% in rural areas; 39.2% in urban areas
  - Approx. 50% higher in rural areas than urban (age-adjusted between 1999-2014)

- **Chronic lower respiratory disease**
  - More than 11,000 excess deaths
  - 54.3% in rural areas; 30.9% in urban areas
  - Approx. 50% higher in rural areas than urban

- **Mental Health**
Rural Policy and Research

Mental Health

• Challenges
  • Limited access to health care facilities that focus on behavioral health
  • Only 88 Rural Psychiatric Hospitals in the US
  • Few small rural hospitals have an inpatient psychiatric unit
  • Approximately 83 CAHs have added a psychiatric distinct part unit
  • Approximately 6% of independent and 2% of provider-based Rural Health Clinics offer mental health services
  • Medicare Partial Hospitalization Primarily an Urban Service

• Opportunities
  • FQHCs increasingly offering access through ongoing investment and expansion
  • Tele-mental health service volume increasing in Medicare and Medicaid

Emerging and Ongoing Concerns

• High Rate of Suicide in Rural Communities a Public Health Issue
  • Impact on Agricultural Communities?
Enhancing Rural Health Care Delivery

State and Community Grants

- Rural Health Outreach Programs
  - Key Opportunity for Public Health Departments
  - Example: Valley City Health Department Obesity Project
- Rural Hospital Flexibility and Small Hospital Improvement Grants
- Telehealth Network Grants

Information, Toolkits, etc.

- Rural Health Information Hub and the Community Health Gateway
- Rural Health Resource Center

Enhancing Rural Health Care Delivery

Leveraging the Rural Health Outreach Funding

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Enhancing Rural Health Care Delivery

Small Health Care Quality Improvement Program
The Small Health Care Provider Quality Improvement (SHCPQI) Program provides support to rural primary care providers for planning and implementation of quality improvement (QI) activities. The goal is to promote evidence-based coordinated care in the primary care setting, while improving health outcomes for patients, enhancing chronic disease management and creating better engagement between patients and their caregivers. For the FY 2016 competitive cycle, 108 eligible applications were received and 32 grant awards were made.

Program Activities Include:
- Develop collaborative partnerships across care settings for enhanced coordination, access and quality of patient care.
- Integrate services and multidisciplinary teams.
- Share approaches to data collection, reporting and utilization for quality improvement, incentive program reporting and contributions to population health efforts.

3 Year Program
Up To $200,000
Competitive FY 2019

Network Planning Grant Program
The Rural Health Network Development Planning Program is a one-year program that focuses on the development of an integrated health care network in a rural area. The program supports one year of planning with the primary goal of helping networks create a foundation for their infrastructure and focusing member efforts to address important regional or local community health needs. For the FY 2017 competitive schedule, 64 applications were received and 23 grants were made.

Program Activities Include:
- Support strategic planning and community development
- Hire consultants and facilitators to support community-wide strategic planning or coordinated health needs assessments.

1 Year Program
Up To $100,000
Competitive FY 2019

Enhancing Rural Health Care Delivery

Population Health Portal
- Designed CAHs, Flex Programs, and rural health networks
- Online readiness assessment
- Resources to support population health
- Demographic data
- Information to effectively conduct population health analytics

https://www.ruralcenter.org/resource-library/population-health-portal
Enhancing Rural Health Care Delivery

Opportunities to Learn from Others
- Community Health Gateway

Tools and Models
- Economic Impact Tool
- Sustainability Guide
- FORHP Grants in Motion
- Billing and Coding Guide
- Rural Toolkits

https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/community-health

Enhancing Rural Health Care Delivery

Leveraging Lessons Learned from the Rural Health Outreach Programs
- Rural Health Toolkits
Enhancing Rural Health Care Delivery

Telehealth Resources

**Telehealth Network Grants**
- Rolling Three-Year Program
- Focus on enhancing access and informing the telehealth evidence base
- Next Funding Opportunity:

**Licensure and Portability**
- Federation of State Medical Boards
- Board of Provincial Boards of Psychology

**Telehealth Resource Centers**
- Technical Assistance
- Information Dissemination
- Webinars and Conferences
- North Dakota TRC is Great Plains Telehealth Resource and Assistance Center

**Telehealth Centers for Excellence**
- South Carolina and Mississippi
- Focus on Promising Practices, Use Cases

Enhancing Rural Health Care Delivery

**Workforce**
- Linking to HRSA’s Loan Repayment Programs
- Becoming a National Health Service Site
- Tapping into the Nurse Corps Programs

[HRSA Link]

Enhancing Rural Health Care Delivery

Workforce: New Resources

- Rural Residency Planning Grants
- 2018 Budget Included $15 million to support the planning and development of new rural physician training residency programs
  - Concept: Providing the support to create new accredited and sustainable rural-based residencies
  - Guidance to be released early in FY 2019

Federal and Private Partnerships

Working with Our Federal Partners

https://www.cdc.gov/ruralhealth/index.html


Federal and Private Partnerships

State Partners
- State Offices of Rural Health
- National Governor’s Association
  - State Team Workshops
  - Rural Health Products
- National Conference of State Legislatures
  - State Team Efforts
  - Rural Health Tools

http://scopeofpracticepolicy.org

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- Rural Research findings
- Policy updates from a Rural Perspective

To sign up, email Michelle Daniels at: mdaniels@hrsa.gov
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