

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota Rural Health Grant Awards

*Year Three Projects
2003-2004*

Ashley- Ashley Medical Center--Community School and Wellness Program

This community consortium, comprised of the Ashley Medical Center, Ashley Public Schools, and Ashley Park District, will develop a community and county wide physical activity and wellness program. This intergenerational community process has identified the local school as the “Community Hub” for physical fitness and social interaction for all age groups. McIntosh County hosts the highest percentage of elderly of any county in the state but has chosen to address community fitness in the institution associated with its youngest citizens – the school. Citing Healthy People 2010 national objectives and relying on local health data, Ashley Medical Center and its school and park district partners will develop a truly “community” focus on fitness and health. A recreational therapist will be hired to work with the medical center, park district and the school as the Community School Coordinator to develop and promote activity programs, wellness and prevention, and to conduct community education. The Community School and Wellness Program of Ashley exemplifies how rural communities can address a common need through the maximization of physical resources and collaboration. Special attention will be focused on the conditions of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. These are conditions that were identified by the applicant as four major causes of illness in McIntosh County.

Carrington- Carrington Health Center Ambulance- Pediatric Pre-Hospital Care in Rural ND

The Carrington Health Center Ambulance along with its ambulance partners in Bowdon, Fessenden, McHenry, and New Rockford will target pediatric pre-hospital care in this EMS consortium. These independent ambulance services seek to align and collaborate under a new coordinated model to address an important issue for a vulnerable population. The ambulances cover the counties of Eddy, Foster, and Wells and will work together to improve the quality of emergency care for the pediatric patient. This new EMS consortium will standardize ambulance protocols; standardize equipment (facilitating patient transfers and maintaining quality control); develop common protocols for advanced life support intercept dispatch; provide uniform training on CPR and First Aid to area schools, certified daycare centers, and parents of newborns; obtain State Instructor’s Licensure for Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS); obtain Instructor’s Licensure for Pediatric Education Pre-Hospital Professional (PEPP); and purchase an emergency dispatch radio.

Cavalier- Faith in Action Health Coalition- Transition Plan to New Models of Rural Health Care Delivery

This faith based coalition operates in the northeast corner of North Dakota in Pembina County. Organized to improve both access and quality of care, this broad-based network includes eight churches, Pembina County Memorial Hospital (Cavalier), Wedgewood Manor Nursing Home, Pembina County Board of Commissioners, Pembina County Meals and Transportation, Cavalier Senior Center, Options Resource Center for Independent Living, and the Cavalier Public School. Initially established through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Faith in Action Coalition will use the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota Rural Health grant to establish a network of Parish Nurses and trained volunteers to provide holistic health care

services for individuals through home based services. In addition, the Coalition will develop an organizational structure to oversee the activities of the Parish Nurses and volunteers, monitor and implement the health data collection system, identify appropriate responses, and build community awareness of the Faith In Action program and health services.

Cooperstown- Mid-Valley Health Alliance- Preventive Outreach Service Program

The Mid-Valley Health Alliance is comprised of four eastern rural hospitals that have collaborated on a number of programs and activities over the years. Cooperstown Medical Center, Cooperstown; Hillsboro Medical Center, Hillsboro; Union Hospital, Mayville; and Northwood Deaconess Health Center, Northwood developed, through Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota funding, a collaborative prevention program for the four facilities last year. Now, they are expanding the model to include four other rural communities: Unity Medical Center, Grafton; First Care Health Center, Park River; Cavalier County Memorial Hospital, Langdon; and Pembina County Memorial Hospital, Cavalier. All eight hospitals maintain their autonomy but work together utilizing the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota grant to improve organizational efficiencies, enhance quality of services, and to improve access to preventive services. The eight hospitals are members of the Valley Rural Health Cooperative, a 14 member organization representing North Dakota and Minnesota hospitals in the Red River Valley. The hospitals will target their program to adolescents in grades 5-12 and adults. Program goals include: enhancing school based programs designed to meet the needs of children grades 5-12 who have, or are at-risk of developing diabetes (e.g., nutritional and exercise programs); expanding respiratory therapy programs; expanding educational programs (e.g. for community and staff by pooling professional staff resources from the eight hospitals and achieving connectivity for educational purposes through Polycom Video Conferencing); enhancing school STD educational programming (with grade 7); and providing community wellness activities by targeting obesity, hypercholesterolemia, high blood pressure, colon cancer, and respiratory problems.

Dickinson- St. Joseph's Hospital and Health Center- Diabetes Self-Management Education Program

Three Dickinson health organizations – St. Joseph's Hospital and Health Center, Great Plains Clinic, and Southwestern District Health Unit -- are collaborating to address diabetes issues in southwestern North Dakota. In addition to Dickinson, the communities of Beach, Bowman, Killdeer, and Richardton are impacted by the alliance. Under this initiative, dietitians, diabetes educators, and community health nurses will conduct pre-assessments with each class participant to identify areas of diabetes management and to identify learning needs. Participants will attend a nine hour diabetes class that will focus on the disease process, nutritional management, physical activity, medications, acute and chronic complications, foot care, lifestyle changes, available resources, and a post test to determine understanding. This coalition seeks to bring quality diabetes education and self management to rural citizens in the region. Participants will continue to receive the follow-up services of a community health nurse.

Dickinson- Roughrider Education Services- Feasibility Study on the Use of Public School Transportation for Healthcare Access in Southwestern North Dakota

Roughrider Education Services Program, a school cooperative organization, along with its partners Dickinson State University and the Roosevelt-Custer Regional Council will conduct a feasibility study to determine the viability of using school transportation (i.e., buses, vans, etc.) systems for health care transportation for rural residents. In rural North Dakota, transportation is an emerging issue, particularly as it relates to health care access. Rural residents in southwestern North Dakota must deal with a numerically smaller and aging population spread over a large

geographical area. All of the counties in the study area, with the exception of Stark, are classified as frontier counties having six or less people per square mile. This innovative and timely approach will measure a variety of factors including, but not limited to, the following: community and citizen needs for health care transportation, attitudes toward using school vehicles for health care, transportation provider input, existing transportation plans and studies, health care provider attitudes, existing inventory, funding options, and safety and driver education needs. Health care providers in the five communities of Bowman, Dickinson, Hettinger, Killdeer, and Richardton are also participating in the partnership. Educational systems that cooperate within Roughrider include the school districts of Beach, Belfield, Billings County, Bowman, Dickinson, Glen Ullin, Halliday, Hebron, Hettinger, Killdeer, Lone Tree (Golva), Mott-Regent, New England, Richardton-Taylor, Scranton, Slope County, South Heart, and Dickinson Catholic Schools.

New Town- Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara Nations of the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Federal Indian Reservation- Home Health Care Delivery System

The focus of this project is to provide training/education to 24 certified nurse assistant candidates and to provide direct services to the elderly, the diabetic, disabled or otherwise homebound patient. Direct services include health surveillance, tracking, and personal care assistance. The Fort Berthold Indian Reservation is one of the most isolated areas in North Dakota. Geographically dispersed into four distinct regions by Lake Sakakawea, most of the reservation is isolated from the main clinic system in New Town. This project seeks to bring more health care directly to the citizens as opposed to them trying to travel the great distances to New Town. For example, Twin Buttes is a 200 mile round trip. When trained, the 24 CNAs will be living in their home towns throughout the reservation providing necessary health services to an isolated population. Special focus will be on diabetics. Approximately 10 percent of the tribal population is diabetic in comparison to approximately 4 percent of North Dakota's population. The consortium for this project includes the Tribal Health Program; Community Health Nursing Staff; Clinical Nursing Staff; Tribal Social Services; Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara Elder's Association; and the Kidney Dialysis Unit.

Rolla- Presentation Medical Center- Protect Our Children

The Protect Our Children coalition, in north central North Dakota, is addressing evidence-based teen wellness screenings and pediatric advanced life support education. The coalition consists of Presentation Medical Center, Rolla; Rolette County Public Health District; Northland Community Health Center, Rolette; Rolla Clinic, PC; Rolla Community Ambulance; Dunseith Public School; St. John Public School; Mount Pleasant Public School; Turtle Mountain Public School; and Rolette Public School. Under the first priority – evidence-based teen wellness screenings – health care providers will enter the five participating Rolette County schools to offer the Wellsource Teen Edition personal wellness profile to 10th grade students. This is a national program used throughout the country. The teen wellness profile is written in an upbeat, easy to understand language that appeals to teens. The Wellsource process produces an individual report for the student, a health provider summary for the wellness counselor or physician, a progress report for the student and health provider, an executive summary that compares Rolette County with national averages, and a group summary for final review and planning. Topics to be covered in this phase of the project include pregnancy, extreme dieting, teen suicide, substance abuse, and violence. The second priority under the Protect Our Children program relates to pediatric advanced life support education (PALS). Two staff members will become certified PALS Instructors. This local faculty will then provide PALS education to 80 percent of the nursing and medical staff.

Rugby- Golden Heart Services- Rural Advanced Pre-Hospital Education Program

A voluntary coalition of professional educators, rural EMS educators, health care facilities, and rural ambulance services have forged a partnership to offer high quality paramedic programs to rural areas. Heart of America Medical Center and Golden Heart Paramedics, both of Rugby, along with the F-M Ambulance Service of Fargo/Moorhead will bring advanced EMS training to rural EMS personnel who want to remain in their communities providing advanced level emergency care. Presently, the most common way for a rural EMT to receive advanced training as a paramedic is to travel to Bismarck or Fargo to complete the required 700 hours of clinical education. This entails three days a week in classroom activity outside of the home community making it very difficult to simultaneously travel and to hold a full time job. The solution offered by this coalition is to employ interactive video conferencing with the EMT remaining in the rural community for class work and the education being broadcast from the F-M Ambulance Service. A local paramedic or nurse proctor will supervise the education at the rural site. The clinical aspect of the training will occur in both Fargo and the rural site. Through video conferencing the travel requirements for the rural EMT will be significantly reduced. The program is accredited through Bismarck State College and the student can also earn an associate degree

Trenton Indian Service Area- Program Development Specialist

The Trenton Indian Service Area is the only congressionally approved and classified Indian Service Area in the country. It is not organized as a reservation or urban area. The Service Area covers six counties in north western North Dakota and north eastern Montana serving the needs of the area members of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. A case management system was created and funded last year through Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota grant funding. The case management system has facilitated a more seamless system of assisting tribal patients making their way through tribal, IHS, public, and private health infrastructures and at the same time it has assisted the various provider groups by monitoring payment streams, tracking patient data (computerized clinical outcomes and administrative information), and fostering collaborative relationships built around the needs of the client. Both the patient and the provider groups experience more coordination and the payment process is maintained and even streamlined. In the first year, the partners consisted of the Trenton Indian Service Area, Mercy Medical Center of Williston, and Northwest Human Service Center also of Williston. For this second round, the three core partners remain but have been joined by Williams County Social Services. The goals of the Case Management Program are to improve and facilitate access to appropriate services, to provide and facilitate continuity of care, to improve coordination of services, to provide alternate care sites, to contain and/or decrease costs (while improving access) and to ensure appropriate utilization of the entire spectrum of services.

Year Two Projects
2002-2003

Cooperstown- Cooperstown Medical Center- Coordinated Health Program

Four rural hospitals are working together to reduce service duplication, create administrative and clinical efficiencies, enhance technological connectivity, and improve the overall quality of life in the area. Cooperstown Medical Center, Cooperstown; Union Hospital, Mayville; Hillsboro Medical Center, Hillsboro; and Northwood Deaconess Health Center, Northwood have banded together to establish a Coordinated Health Program (CHP) model that involves screening for childhood diseases, addressing categorical health problems, and expanding collaborative staff education and training. The Coordinated Health Program, relying on goals identified from the Healthy People 2010 objectives, addresses the following conditions: childhood obesity and exercise, diabetes, asthma, and sexually transmitted diseases. In addition to the focus on children and adolescent health status, the CHP provides community wellness activities including a free wellness screening in four towns served by the four hospitals. The education coordinator (shared by the four hospitals) will pool professional staff resources from the respective organizations to conduct community education and staff training. The four hospitals will use Polycom Video Conferencing, purchased through the grant, to link the facilities for training and education. The four hospitals are members of the Valley Rural Health Cooperative, a rural hospital based network, located in the Red River Valley of North Dakota and Minnesota. Three of the four hospitals are Critical Access Hospitals (CAH's).

Fort Totten- Spirit Lake Health Tracks Program- Comprehensive Respiratory Therapy

A coalition of health programs and education systems of the Spirit Lake Nation are collaborating to offer a comprehensive respiratory therapy initiative including individualized baseline data, asthma care, management, treatment, and home-based follow-up care. The partners include the Spirit Lake Health Tracks Program, Maternal & Child Health Program, Indian Health Service, and Four Winds Community School. The incidence rate of Native American children in North Dakota requiring an emergency response for breathing difficulties is three times the rate of Caucasian children (7.2/1000 compared to 2.3/1000), based on state health department statistics. The Spirit Lake Nation rate is also influenced by the on-going flooding and high water table associated with Devils Lake causing molds and fungus to grow. In response, this tribal coalition is working to improve access to care and the quality of care for children and their families on or near the Spirit Lake Reservation. Staff provided on-going training in the diagnosis, care, and management of asthma according to the American Academy of Pediatrics-Pediatric Clinical Practice Guidelines. The coalition plans to use the BCBSND grant to enhance the capacity for data collection, needs assessment, performance monitoring, and surveillance. Currently, the Health Tracks Program uses an electronic filing database that includes asthma clinic data. The program will investigate the possibility of establishing a wireless system to connect all the clinic sites on the reservation.

Garrison- Garrison Memorial Hospital- Community Education on Heart Disease, Osteoporosis, and Spinal Injuries

A McLean County coalition is addressing heart disease, osteoporosis, and spinal injuries through the combined efforts of the Garrison Memorial Hospital and Nursing Facility, the Community Memorial Hospital in Turtle Lake, and the Washburn Clinic. The coalition seeks to spur on a “public commitment to healthy lifestyles,” through a series of community education interventions. The coalition, working closely with area school systems and businesses, seeks to improve the awareness of risk factors, prevention, management, and cost reduction. The county-wide coalition used a strategic planning technique to identify area issues and to map out a strategy. For example, studies indicated that 90 percent of the population was concerned about heart disease but 70 percent were afraid ask their physicians about their risks or prevention. The conclusion was to initiate a process to educate the public, including school children, about risks, life style issues, and to foster more interaction between the public and providers thus lessening some of the fear and apprehension. The process begins first with health professionals gaining more specialized education on the three diseases. This will be followed by community-based education through lectures and presentations. The stated goal is to improve participant awareness of risk factors, prevention strategies, and condition management by 20-25 percent. Participants will be pre-tested and post-tested on knowledge. The two hospitals are licensed as CAH facilities.

Minot- North Dakota Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Association- Forge a Communications Network

A significant member of the rural health safety net is the rural ambulance system. North Dakota has over 140 ground ambulance services. Over 90 percent of the pre-hospital EMS workforce is volunteers. Many of the services are in very small towns and do not have access to the resources necessary to establish communication systems that can facilitate access to training, reimbursement, program and service information, and other valuable information. The North Dakota EMS Association along with the state Division of Emergency Health Services, and rural health ambulance systems are working together to forge a communications network. This communications program will provide computers and software to 70 rural ambulance services; develop an EMS web page; develop local communication tools (e.g., recruitment/retention, EMS awareness program for publication in local media); and training and other workshops (e.g., educational tools for local instructors, quality assurance programs, billing processes, record keeping, and other workshops).

Tower City and Buffalo- Parish Nurse Program

The two small communities of Buffalo and Tower City have formed an area-wide coalition sponsoring a Parish Nurse program. Initiated through a faith-based coalition in 1998 – Buffalo Lutheran and St. Thomas Catholic Church – the Community Health Ministry coalition now includes St. Paul Lutheran Church of Tower City; First Presbyterian Church, Buffalo; Meritcare Health System; First State Bank of North Dakota/Buffalo; Maple Valley School District and FCCLA; Senior Citizens of both Buffalo and Tower City; Buffalo Community Club; First Responders; and the city councils of both Buffalo and Tower City. From 2000 to the summer of 2002, the Parish Nurse program has had approximately 1,500 encounters and made approximately 475 referrals to physicians and other providers. In addition to providing patient follow-up care, the parish nurse teaches women’s groups about breast self-examination, Sunday

school students about dental hygiene, administers blood pressure readings at senior centers and churches, assists the Faithfully Fit Forever exercise program, and facilitates a variety of other education programs.

Rolla- Presentation Medical Center- Advanced Cardiac Live Support Program

In an effort to improve quality of care and access to essential services, coalitions of health providers in north-central North Dakota are developing an Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) program. Presentation Medical Center with the Presentation Care Center, Presentation Clinic, and the Rolla Community Ambulance are working to train and upgrade the skill level of 79 staff members (55 nursing, seven medical and 17 emergency medical technicians/first responders). Presentation Medical Center has three certified ACLS instructors. Currently, approximately 16 percent of North Dakota's EMTs has ACLS certification. The need for such training is significant as approximately 40 percent of North Dakota's deaths are related to heart disease. The Rolla area providers seek to expand on current programming which includes CPR training and access to Automatic External Defibrillators. Rolette County does not have 911 access so the Presentation Medical Center and its partners are working together to improve vital emergency services. Presentation Medical Center is licensed as a CAH.

Trenton Indian Service Area- Case Management Program

A coalition in northwestern North Dakota – Trenton Indian Service Area, Mercy Medical Center, Williston and Northwest Human Service Center, Williston – is working together to organize and develop a case manager system. The program addresses the coordination of health services, benefits, and community resources. The Trenton Indian Service refers approximately 2,400 clients annually and approximately 31 percent of the clients are denied funding for services annually. Issues revolve around scheduling, travel, information management, and service fragmentation. The case manager system works to improve access to appropriate services by initiating and maintaining patient records and file data; to facilitate the continuum of care by computerized information tracking; to improve the coordination of services by data collection before, during, and after the referral; and to contain or decrease costs by providing case management referrals generated from pre-certification, concurrent review, employers, physicians, and others. The coalition makes use of a nationally recognized tracking system called Referred Care Information System.

Hettinger- West River Health Services- Disease Management Program

With arthritis being the top disability in the United States and with 31 percent of North Dakotans stating they have arthritis (state health department data), a coalition in West River is developing a disease management program to address the condition. The coalition is comprised of West River Health Services of Hettinger, the Hettinger Public School, and the Southwest District Health Unit of Dickinson. Two community health needs assessments, performed over the last five years, have found arthritis to be the number one health condition in southwestern North Dakota. The program involves individualized nutrition counseling by a dietician, individualized physical activity program designed and supervised by registered physical and occupational therapists, mental health counseling for stress and depression, and assistance with medication management by a doctor of pharmacy. Certified instructors provide various exercise classes including yoga, aquatics, and water exercises for seniors. The initiative monitors ambulatory data, studies behavior modification and referral patterns. The arthritis program is the only program of this nature in southwestern North Dakota.

Year One Projects
2001-2002

Cooperstown- Cooperstown Medical Center- Community Health Education

Emergency Medical Services (EMS), community health education, and health promotion and wellness efforts are the focus of a collaborative effort involving Cooperstown Medical Center, Cooperstown; Union Hospital, Mayville; and Hillsboro Medical Center, Hillsboro. The service area covers 25 rural North Dakota communities in Griggs, Steele, and Trail Counties in eastern North Dakota. The three rural hospitals and their medical systems work together to provide automatic defibrillators to each county law enforcement department or first responder unit and to Mayville State University, offer training on defibrillator equipment, recruit a health education coordinator (to work with all three hospitals), develop an educational model and activities, develop and distribute health educational materials throughout the three county area, and host wellness screenings. The project also involves the cooperation of local/area EMS providers and law enforcement. Its primary focus is on access to services and cost effective health services. The hospitals in Cooperstown and Mayville are Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs).

Finley- Finley Ambulance Service- Address EMS from a Regional Perspective

The Finley Ambulance Service with its partners the Hope Ambulance Service, Steele County Sheriff, Steele County Public Health, and Union Hospital are collaborating to address emergency medical services from a regional perspective. Recruitment and retention of volunteers is a serious rural health problem. Health care providers in Steele County have selected access to EMS services and quality of care as their focus areas. Showing strong county-wide collaboration, health care providers in Steele County have embarked on a multifaceted process that will link EMS training throughout the county, build cooperation and collaboration between rural ambulance units, combine efforts to promote 911, purchase automatic external defibrillators (AED), educate the public on the utility of AEDs, and address recruitment and retention issues through the development of a Service Recognition Program (squad jackets, patches, and newspaper promotion of EMTs).

Rugby- Good Samaritan Hospital Association (Heart of America Medical Center)- Address Rural EMS through an Innovative and Resourceful Effort

Good Samaritan Hospital Association of Rugby, North Dakota represented by Heart of America Medical Center and the Golden Heart Paramedics is seeking to address rural emergency medical services through an innovative and resourceful effort. This initiative seeks to integrate emergency medical training into the high school curriculum. Heart of America and Golden Heart Paramedics are working with the rural ambulance units and high schools in Leeds, Maddock, Rolette, Rolla, Rugby, Towner, and Willow City. The High School Emergency Medical Health Careers Program is designed to provide high school juniors and seniors with vocational education leading to an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) license, to encourage high school students to consider a career in health care, and to provide a new base of volunteers for local ambulance units. Following certification, the students will work with their local ambulance units. This "grow your own" effort is meant to expose young students to health careers and to address an all too common problem: volunteer recruitment. The primary focus of the grant is access to services.

Jamestown- Jamestown Hospital- Disease State Management Program

Jamestown Hospital with its partners Dakota Clinic (Jamestown) and MedCenter One Clinic (Jamestown) has developed a Disease State Management program that allows pharmacists to enter into collaborative practices with physicians to assist in the management of disease. Presently, 26 states have allowed such arrangements. North Dakota recently passed similar legislation. This innovative initiative will permit Jamestown pharmacists to meet with patients and conduct face-to-face counseling for physician specified DSM programs in the area of anticoagulation and asthma medications. Under the BCBSND grant, pharmacists will educate, test, monitor, and advise patients on specific medications following the development of physician established protocols. The program is expected to decrease health care dollars spent on disease management, decrease adverse medication events for patients, improve patient compliance, and improve patient outcomes. The focal area for the initiative is to provide cost effective services and to improve quality of care.

Devils Lake- Lake Region State College- Nursing Workforce Shortages in Rural ND

Lake Region State College (LRSC) is taking a lead in addressing nursing workforce shortages in rural North Dakota. In developing and implementing a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Distance Learning Program, LRSC works with partner organizations to offer rural residents an opportunity to become valued rural health care providers. Recognizing that many rural residents do not have the luxury of traveling for extended periods of time to participate in traditional education programs, LRSC is targeting “place-bound” students (i.e., having family and work obligations that prevent travel). With its partners– Bismarck State College, Williston State College, and health care provider consortia in Langdon, Grafton-Park River, and Devils Lake – LRSC has developed an innovative and rural-focused project that has four main components: distance learning development (including on-line Internet courses, video conferencing, web-based presentation applications, and video streaming); community distance learning centers (technology equipped rooms located at rural health facilities); field and technical support services (trained technicians and field counselors located at the rural sites); and, community clinical instruction (some instruction will integrate local providers with academic instruction from Lake Region, Bismarck, and Williston). This creative model focuses on access to services and quality of care factors by linking academic and rural health institutions.

Maddock Drug & Gift- Develop and Implement the First Tele-pharmacy

In an effort to develop and implement the first tele-pharmacy in North Dakota, Maddock Drug & Gift in Maddock along with partner organizations -- the City of Rolette, IsoRX (a telecommunications company), and Weibe Electronics (a contracting company and developer of the Rolette mini-mall) -- are collaborating to develop a remote-based pharmacy in Rolette. Maddock is serving as the central pharmacy connected to a new Rolette remote-site pharmacy via telecommunications. Access to necessary medications in rural North Dakota has been hindered by the closure of 26 pharmacies in recent years with the prospect of nine more in the immediate future. The Rolette pharmacy closed seven years ago. This project links access to health services with economic development to help sustain health access and community infrastructure. Tele-pharmacy, through a central pharmacy with a licensed pharmacist and a remote site pharmacy to be staffed by a licensed pharmacy technician, offers an innovative opportunity to maintain access to medical services and supplies. The pharmacist and technician communicate via video and audio links to assure the proper dispensing of medications. The technician is under the direct supervision of the pharmacist.

Tower City and Buffalo-Parish Nurse Community Ministry Board

Churches in Tower City and Buffalo, south-central North Dakota, are implementing a parish nurse program. The Buffalo Lutheran Church, Buffalo; St. Thomas Catholic Church, Buffalo; and St. Paul Lutheran Church, Tower City address crisis intervention for patients and families, provide follow-up medical care, and offer community health education. The partners are contributing matching dollars and Meritcare Health System of Fargo has provided financial support. The Parish Nurse Program will concentrate on access to services, cost effective services, and improved quality of care. The initiative builds on previous accomplishments in the area.

Richardton Committee- Keep Health Care Services

This broad-based community group in western North Dakota has selected access to services as its focus area. Richardton citizens used a community development process to identify key community needs and issues. The Committee to Keep Health Care Services was formed from this process to address specific community and area health needs. Comprised of concerned citizens, including representation from the five community health care facilities (hospital, clinic, dental clinic, ambulance, and pharmacy), the Committee has been funded to address specific emergency medical service issues. This includes CPR and automatic external defibrillator training and the purchase of one defibrillator.

Grafton- Valley Rural Health Cooperative (VRHC)- Diabetes Education Program

This cooperative of rural hospitals covers the Red River Valley corridor of eastern North Dakota extending from a southern point in Hillsboro to a northern edge in Langdon. The collaborating members are using the BCBSND award to increase nursing hours devoted to outpatient diabetes education, implement a diabetes data tracking system, develop an Indigent Medication Program, provide in-service diabetes education, and establish community-based diabetes health care networks. The eight collaborating partners include the following: Unity Medical Center, Grafton; Pembina County Memorial Hospital, Cavalier; Cavalier County Memorial Hospital, Langdon; First Care, Park River; Cooperstown Medical Center, Cooperstown; Northwood Deaconess Health Center, Northwood; Union Hospital, Mayville; and Hillsboro Community Hospital, Hillsboro. Each partner is making a financial contribution to cover part of the total program costs. The Diabetes Education Program will address access to services, cost effective services, and improved quality of care.