



Center *for*
Rural Health

University of North Dakota
School of Medicine & Health Sciences

Listening to Rural Voices:
Center for Rural Health
Response to the
2003 Rural Health Dialogues

Fall 2005

*Connecting resources and knowledge to strengthen
the health of people in rural communities.*



Listening to Rural Voices: Center for Rural Health Response to the 2003 Rural Health Dialogues

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2003, the Center for Rural Health (CRH) at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences engaged in dialogues in 12 rural communities across the state of North Dakota. The purpose of the “Rural Health Dialogues” was to identify health priorities among rural populations including current and emerging healthcare challenges and share information about resources available through the CRH. The copy of the final report can be found at <http://medicine.nodak.edu/crh>. Upon completion of the dialogues, the CRH formed work groups based on the eight topic areas that emerged from the visits to identify CRH activities relevant to each of the eight areas and to plan new initiatives that would address these areas. A summary of CRH activities pertaining to each of the eight areas is provided. Related resources for each area are also listed.

Topic Areas

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1. Networking and Communication

The Networking and Communication workgroup addresses issues relating to the following: lack of resources available to agencies to network with one another, the need to organize state associations and agencies to create a stronger voice, the need for increased collaboration among associations, informing the congressional delegation of rural health issues, offering regular community meetings and engaging others (e.g. school systems, public health) in communication around shared interests, and coordinating of reservation-based programs to provide continuity of care.



Current CRH Activities

- Reviewing current CRH communication process and materials such as the various newsletters, Rural Health and Tribal Updates, and the listserv to determine how to foster efficiency and usefulness to communities.
- Increasing use of technology, such as video conferencing, to conduct meetings and trainings. This technology will allow for more communities to participate and will facilitate networking among communities.
- Planning future dialogues to be held in the fall of 2005.
- Developing an information request handout that highlights available resources at the CRH.

New CRH Activities

- Discussing the formation of a rural health coalition.
- Ongoing discussions with regional Indian Health Services in order to develop beneficial working relationships.

Resources (more information at <http://medicine.nodak.edu/crh>)

- Networking grants:
 - EMS Network Grant program. Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) use the Flex program to build stronger relationships with their local and area Emergency Medical Service (EMS) systems (i.e. ambulance units). This grant funds small equipment acquisition (e.g., Automatic External Defibrillators), Emergency Medical Training (EMT), and EMT recruitment and retention.
 - Flex Network Enhancement Grant Program. Assists CAHs in exploring and developing local and regional provider networks.
 - Network Development Planning Grant Program. Supports development of collaborative relationships among healthcare organizations by funding rural health networks that focus on integrating clinical, information, administrative, and financial systems across members.
 - Rural Health Network Development Program. Develops organizational capacity in the rural health sector through formal collaborative partnerships involving shared resources and possible risk-sharing.
 - A large number of North Dakota communities have the capacity to connect with one another through polycom, video conferencing, etc. Don Larson at UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences information resources department is available to provide technical assistance with varying forms of technology. Contact Don at (701) 777-2329
- CRH contact is Marlene Miller, marlenemiller@medicine.nodak.edu, 701-777-4499.

2. Technology and Equipment

The Technology and Equipment workgroup identifies key technology areas to address in rural North Dakota. The goal of the committee is to connect rural healthcare services with potential funding opportunities to provide “state of the art” technology.

Current CRH Activities

- Identify local, state, and federal grants that emphasize the implementation and utilization of technology.

New CRH Activities

- Develop a plan to connect the School of Medicine and Health Sciences Information Technology Center with rural communities to explore opportunities in the acquisition and implementation of technology.

Resources

- Interactive Video Network sites available in North Dakota K-12 schools, colleges and selected sites. Specific information may be obtained by logging on at <http://www.ndivn.nodak.edu/> or by calling (701) 777-6486.
 - UND Telemedicine Program brings healthcare to rural communities by allowing healthcare providers in one community to view medical images, patient records, and provide advice to healthcare providers and patients in rural communities. More information is available at <http://cf.med.und.nodak.edu/hit/> or by contacting Bob Rubeck at (701) 777-5046.
 - CRH contact is Mike Cogan, mcogan@medicine.nodak.edu, 701-777-6046.
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3. Access to Healthcare and Transportation

The Access to Healthcare and Transportation workgroup addresses issues relating to distance and transportation to health services, access to health services (e.g., specialists, long-term care), and transportation needs of special populations, such as the elderly.

Current CRH Activities

- The State Office of Rural Health Grant provides grant writing training to rural and tribal communities in North Dakota. These efforts assist agencies in rural and frontier areas to develop projects that will increase access to health for their populations.
- The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Dakota Rural Health Grant program provides funding to a number of projects related to transportation and access to healthcare in rural communities.
- The Administration on Aging provides funding to the National Resource Center on Native American Aging to assist tribal aging offices to gather information on health status, access to healthcare, and home and community based services. Four of the five American Indian communities in North Dakota participate in this project.

New CRH Activities

- A proposal has been submitted to the Bremer Foundation to explore access to healthcare issues among American Indian veterans in all five American Indian communities in North Dakota. Additional funding sources to provide training to reservation service providers for the elderly are being explored by CRH staff.
- Proposals have been submitted to various funding agencies addressing mental health training for community members. *Mental Health First Aid* is a project that would train first responders and others to provide assistance to people before professional mental health services are obtained. It would teach people how to recognize the symptoms of mental health problems, how to provide initial help, and how to go about guiding a person to appropriate professional help.
- A proposal, *Healthy North Dakota Smiles Project Oral Health Initiative*, was submitted with Mayville State University Child Development Program to address the need for enhanced dental services for low-income children and pregnant women.

Resources

- Rural Health Grant Development Process Guide ldickson@medicine.nodak.edu
- Transportation and Dental Information Guide http://www.raconline.org/info_guides
- ND Transportation Guide <http://www.ndinfo.org/transportation/default.taf>
- CRH contact is Brad Gibbens bgibbens@medicine.nodak.edu, 701-777-2569.

4. Healthcare Finance

The Healthcare Finance workgroup examines issues associated with provider reimbursement, healthcare cost factors, funding sources and grant development, and health insurance. Community development, health services research, and educational resources are offered to rural communities to assist them in addressing current healthcare finance issues.

Current CRH Activities

- Dakota Conference on Rural and Public Health offers sessions on the following:
 - Hospital and clinic reimbursement
 - Medicare/Medicaid
 - Statewide insurance coverage study
 - Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Regional Office reports
- Provide grant development assistance (e.g., identify potential funding sources, meetings with health and community representatives, proposal critiques, background information).
- Administration of three federal and private grant programs providing direct grants to rural communities (e.g., Rural Hospital Flexibility Program, Small Hospital Improvement Program, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota Rural Health Grant Program).

- Continue with the study of statewide health insurance coverage.
- Health insurance study fact sheet and policy paper developed.

New CRH Activities

- CRH grant development workshops designed to meet the needs of tribal communities. Two workshops were conducted in tribal communities.

Resources (more information at <http://medicine.nodak.edu/crh>)

- CRH provides:
 - Grant development workshops
 - Grant proposal critiques
 - Rural Health Grant Development Process Guide – compendium of grant-related information
 - Funding searches by CRH State Office of Rural Health and Rural Assistance Center (RAC)
 - Powerpoint presentations on insurance and grant writing
- Capital funding, grantwriting and Medicare/Medicaid information guide (RAC) available at <http://www.raconline.org>
- CRH contact is Brad Gibbens, bgibbens@medicine.nodak.edu 701-777-2569

5. Healthcare Quality

The Healthcare Quality workgroup addresses quality issues related to healthcare facilities and services.

Current CRH Activities

- In January 2005, a survey was conducted of North Dakota hospital administrators to assess their opinions on a variety of healthcare issues, including healthcare quality.
- CRH is collaborating with the North Dakota Healthcare Review, Inc (NDHCRI) on a number of initiatives addressing quality of healthcare.
- NDHCRI staff conducted a presentation on the topic of healthcare quality improvement at the 2005 Dakota Conference on Rural and Public Health in Bismarck, ND.

New CRH Activities

- A workshop on healthcare quality improvement via the North Dakota Hospital Flex Program is being planned for summer 2006. Persons targeted for the workshop include rural hospital CEOs and board members.
- The CRH and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) are partnering to build upon UNMC's project for voluntary reporting of medical errors in rural hospitals. The 12 rural North Dakota hospitals will be invited to participate in the program.
- A proposal was funded to study rural hospitals and the implementation of safety measures that increase healthcare quality and decrease medical errors.

- A proposal was submitted to build CRH research infrastructure and capacity to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of healthcare for people in rural and frontier areas.

Resources

- Institute of Medicine. (IOM; 2005). Quality through Collaboration: The Future of Rural Health (Executive Summary). Report addresses the state of healthcare quality and patient safety in rural America.
http://www.nap.edu/execsumm_pdf/11140.pdf
- RAC Information Guide to Healthcare Quality
http://www.raconline.org/info_guides/quality/
- North Dakota Healthcare Review, Inc. <http://www.ndhcri.org/>
- CRH contact is Kyle Muus, kmuus@medicine.nodak.edu, 701-777-4048

6. Healthcare Workforce

The Healthcare Workforce workgroup addresses issues pertaining to the recruitment and retention of healthcare providers throughout North Dakota.

Current CRH Activities

- Support communities in reducing workforce vacancies in rural and underserved areas:
 - The National Health Services Corps' Student/Resident Experiences and Rotations in Community Health (SEARCH) provides a rural community-based interdisciplinary learning experience for students in medicine, nursing, social work and dentistry.
 - The National Health Services Corps (NHSC) loan repayment program is administered by CRH.
 - Conrad State J-1 Waiver Program, administered by the CRH and the State Health Department, recommends waivers of the foreign residence requirement on behalf of physicians holding J-1 visas.
 - Assist healthcare facilities to become designated as a health professional shortage area (HPSA), or Medically Underserved Area/Population (MUA or MUP)
- Collect, analyze and disseminate health professions data to health policy makers:
 - The North Dakota Center for Health Workforce Data and The Research Nursing Needs Study examines issues of supply and demand for nurses including recruitment, retention and utilization of nurses.
 - The Health Professions Tracking Program (HPTP) monitors healthcare workforce supply, demand and trends for North Dakota physicians, and dentists.

New CRH Activities

- Ongoing efforts to add additional healthcare providers to the HPTP, i.e., pharmacists.
- The Flex program is working with rural hospitals on strategies to recruit nurses.
- Examine mentoring opportunities with the McNair program, a program which supports minority and disadvantaged students interested in continuing their education to the doctoral level.
- *Medication Assistants in Healthcare Facilities* is a newly funded effort that will examine procedures, staffing patterns, delegation process and administrative perceptions of medication assistants in healthcare facilities. It is a part of the current nursing workforce study conducted by the CRH.

Resources

- <http://www.medicine.nodak.edu/crh> describes the above mentioned programs including fact sheets for North Dakota health professions: nursing, primary care providers and oral health – dentists; and health professional shortage designation maps
- Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions, <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/>
- CRH contacts are Mary Amundson, mamundson@medicine.nodak.edu 701-777-4018 and Patricia Moulton, pmoulton@medicine.nodak.edu, 701-777-6781

7. Prevention

The Prevention workgroup addresses the lack of primary prevention activities including the need to prevent alcohol and tobacco use, increase physical activity and wellness activities, prevent chronic illnesses, and increase mental health education.

Current CRH Activities

- **State Office of Rural Health (SORH) program** coordinates the Dakota Conference on Rural and Public Health annually. This offers a state-wide opportunity for education where prevention issues such as obesity in children, tobacco use cessation, HIV prevention, and screening for depression are typically presented. CRH staff is also available to assist with funding searches, strategic planning and survey planning related to a number of issues, including prevention.
- **Comprehensive Cancer Control (CCC) Program** - The ND Department of Health (Division of Cancer Control and Prevention) subcontracts with the CRH to conduct epidemiological studies to assess the burden of cancer on the lives of North Dakotans.
- **Flex Grant Program** offers funding directly to communities which may be used to address prevention. A few examples of previously funded grants include wellness center development, cardiac rehabilitation programs, and health screening initiatives.

- **Chronic Diseases and Functional Limitations Among Native American Elders** - This research project, funded by the Administration on Aging and the Office of Rural Health Policy, measures the prevalence of chronic diseases and functional limitations among a national sample of Native American elders. In addition, assessment is conducted on the presence of demographic, geographic and health-related factors that increased the likelihood of developing chronic diseases.
- **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) State Planning Grant** - The North Dakota Department of Health (Division of Injury Control and Prevention) has subcontracts with the CRH to conduct a statewide needs assessment of persons with TBI and their families.

New CRH Activities

- The Center for Rural Health has responded to the community expressed need for help with mental health issues by adding a faculty member with expertise in mental health services, teaching, and research to develop projects addressing the mental health needs in rural, frontier, and tribal communities.
- The CRH has initiated meetings with Aberdeen Area IHS staff to explore areas where partnerships can assist with developing prevention activities and intervention models within tribal communities such as the Mental Health First Aid training.
- **Robert Wood Johnson State Forums Partnership Program:** This project provides stakeholders with information on current and emerging healthcare issues (including prevention) in North Dakota by conducting community forums throughout North Dakota. Policy briefs for state legislators, tribal representatives, and policymakers on health policy programs, issues and research are developed.
- The **Dakota Geriatric Education Center** funded by the Health Research and Services Administration (HRSA) will provide continuing education for health providers including physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses (all levels), pharmacists, occupational and physical therapists, and mental health providers throughout North Dakota to better serve the needs of the growing elder population.
- A proposal was submitted with Mayville State University Child Development Program. The Healthy North Dakota Smiles project seeks to demonstrate that access to comprehensive “enhanced” dental services, coupled with prevention and education, will positively impact the overall health and oral health status of children and pregnant women.
- A proposal in collaboration with a rural hospital and a North Dakota tribe was submitted to address mental health. *Mental Health First Aid* is a project that would train first responders and others to provide assistance to people before professional mental health services are obtained. It would teach people how to recognize the symptoms of mental health problems, how to provide initial help, and how to guide a person to appropriate professional help.

Resources

- **Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion**
<http://odphp.osophs.dhhs.gov/>
 - **Comprehensive source of information on nutrition and dietary guidance from multiple government agencies** <http://www.nutrition.gov/>
 - **Rural Assistance Center (RAC) Resources**
Information Guides: http://www.raconline.org/info_guides/
 - Dental Health: http://www.raconline.org/info_guides/dental/
 - Obesity and Weight Control: http://www.raconline.org/info_guides/obesity/
 - Women's Health:
http://www.raconline.org/info_guides/public_health/womenshealth.php
- Funding Opportunities: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
http://www.raconline.org/funding/funding_topic_details.php?topic=Health%20promotion%20and%20disease%20prevention
- News by Topic: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
<http://www.raconline.org/news/topic.php?topic=Health%20promotion%20and%20disease%20prevention>
- Gamm, L.; Castillo, G.; and Williams, L. (2004). Education and Community-Based Programs in Rural Areas. In Gamm, L. and Hutchison, L. (eds.) **Rural Healthy People 2010: A companion document to Healthy People 2010. Volume 3.** College Station, TX: The Texas A&M University System Health Science Center, School of Rural Public Health, Southwest Rural Health Research Center. Online:
http://www.srph.tamhsc.edu/centers/rhp2010/Volume_3/Vol3Ch4OV.htm
 - **Health Promotion and Health Education A-Z Index**
<http://www.fda.gov/opacom/hpchoice.html>
An index of health topics available from the Food and Drug Administration.
 - **Health Promotion and Health Education Community Tool Box**
<http://ctb.ku.edu/> The Tool Box provides over 6,000 pages of practical information to support your work in promoting community health and development.
 - CRH contact is Lynette Dickson, ldickson@medicine.nodak.edu 701-777-6049.

8. Community and Population

The Community and Population workgroup examines the out-migration of younger populations and a proportional increase in the older populations, as well as other community dynamics. Concerns include lack of jobs in rural areas, the distribution of legislative representation, community support, poverty and a perception by younger employees that urban areas are better places to live. These issues produce a range of challenges impacting health and healthcare.

Current CRH Activities

- See workforce activities that are addressing recruitment, retention and tracking.
- Long-term care for the aging population is being addressed through the Native Elders Long Term Care study.
- Obtain claims data from various sources to analyze market trends such as who is using a facility, for what services do they travel out of the area and how far will they travel for a specific service. This information will help hospital providers to better understand their market and target their services.
- Family to Family Network provides information and support to families raising children with special needs.

Resources

- RAC conducts searches related to community and population issues.
- Family to Family Network [Family to Family Support Network](#)
- CRH contact is Sue Offutt, soffutt@medicine.nodak.edu or 701-777-6084.