



Meeting Mental Health Needs of Rural Persons during the Global Health Pandemic

Shawnda Schroeder, PhD
Associate Director of Research and Evaluation
Research Associate Professor
Center for Rural Health
Shawnda.Schroeder@UND.edu



1

- Established in 1980, at The University of North Dakota (UND) School of Medicine and Health Sciences in Grand Forks, ND
- One of the country's most experienced state rural health offices
- UND Center of Excellence in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity
- Home to seven national programs
- Recipient of the UND Award for Departmental Excellence in Research

Focus on

- Educating and Informing
- Policy
- Research and Evaluation
- Working with Communities
- American Indians
- Health Workforce
- Hospitals and Facilities

ruralhealth.und.edu

2

2

CORONAVIRUS

In rural areas with surging COVID-19 cases, masks are rare and concern levels low

HEALTH

**'Our neighbors, our family members':
Small-town hospitals overwhelmed
by COVID-19 deaths**

Ken Alltucker USA TODAY

Published 3:49 a.m. ET Nov. 15, 2020 | Updated 7:57 a.m. ET Nov. 16, 2020

◆ WSJ NEWS EXCLUSIVE | HEALTH

**Covid-19 Hits Rural Nursing Homes, Which Are Among
Those Least Equipped to Fight It**

Staffers follow recommended precautions, but coronavirus spread like wildfire, administrator said

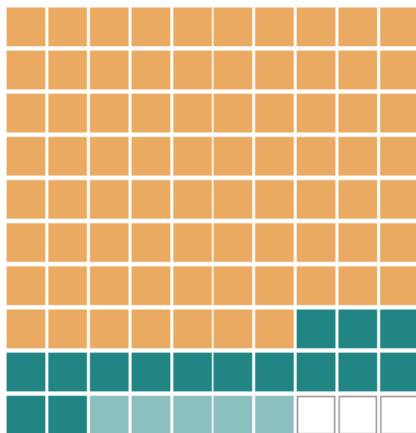
3

3

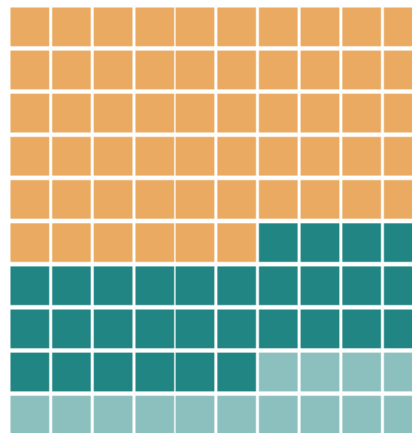
Each square represents 1,000 people who died from COVID-19.

Large Cities Medium Cities Small/Rural Towns Unknown

FIRST 100,00 DEATHS



SECOND 100,00 DEATHS



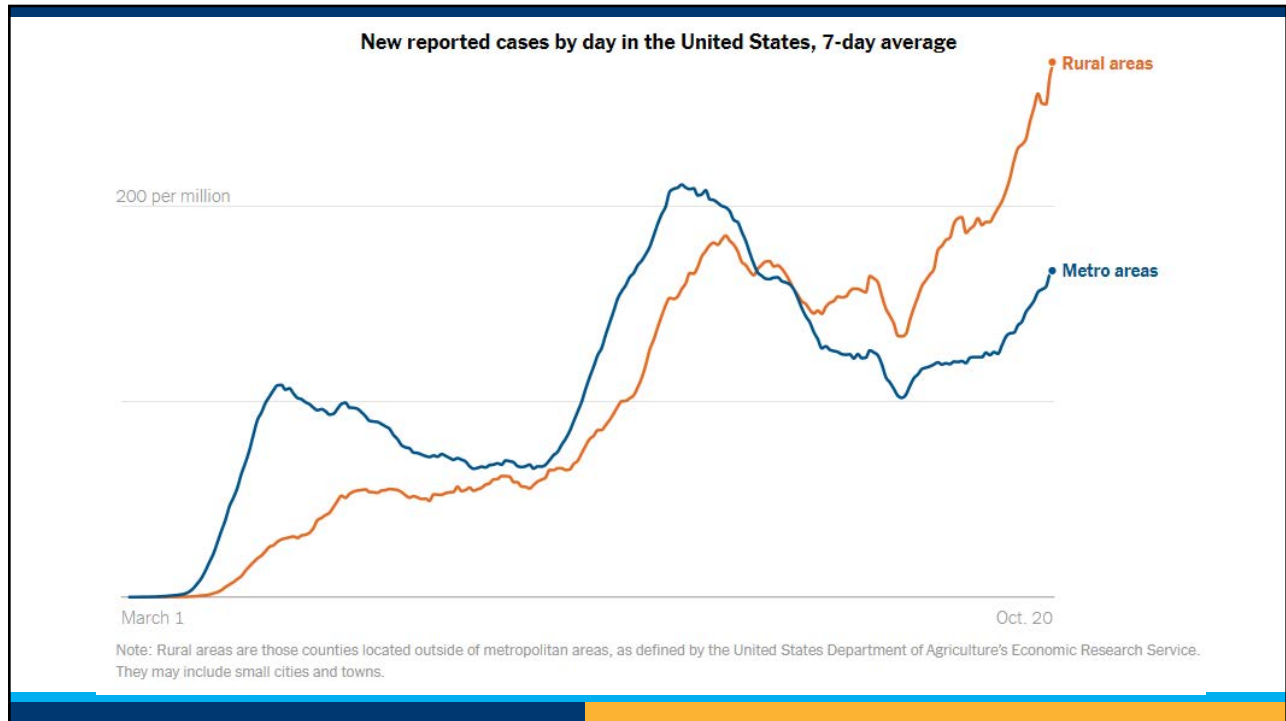
Notes

Deaths marked as unknown were uncategorized as of the time the U.S. crossed 100,000 deaths.

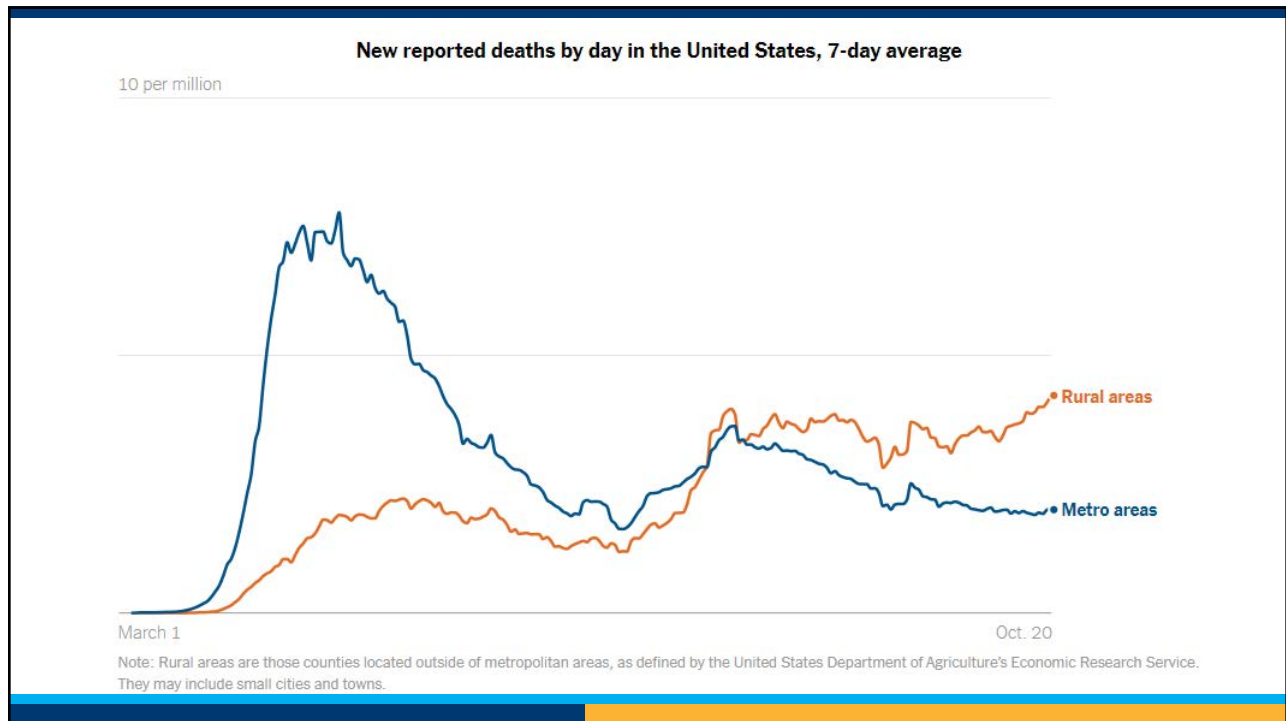
Source: Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Credit: Sean McMinn/NPR

4



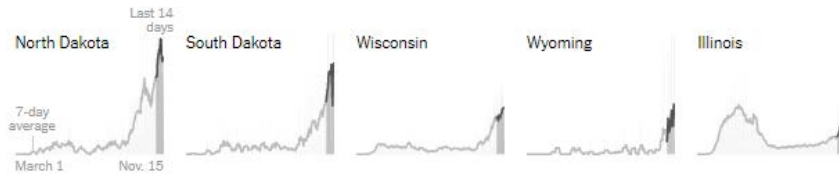
5



6

Where new deaths are increasing

Charts show daily deaths per capita and are on the same scale. States are sorted by deaths per capita for the most recent day. Tap a state to see detailed map page.



Where new cases are higher and staying high

States where new cases are higher had a daily average of at least 15 new cases per 100,000 people over the past week. Charts show daily cases per capita and are on the same scale. Tap a state to see detailed map page.



7

GF Grand Forks Herald

Rural schools stressed; teachers 'starting to drown' across North Dakota

Severe staffing shortages due to quarantines and community spread of COVID-19 threaten to force schools, both rural and urban, away from ...



Valley News Live

Nurses say ND's response to COVID-19 'is a dumpster fire'

North Dakota nurses are hitting their breaking points as COVID-19 continues to surge through the state.

USA TODAY

The Dakotas are 'as bad as it gets anywhere in the world' for COVID-19

North and South Dakota face a tragic reality in coronavirus cases that health experts say could have been largely prevented with earlier action.

NPR

In North And South Dakota, Hospitals Are Overloaded : Shots - Health News

Faced with overloaded hospitals, doctors in South Dakota and North Dakota struggle to deal with uncontained community spread of COVID-19 ...



8

Mental Health Care BEFORE the Pandemic

- Already in a place of crisis (depression, anxiety, illicit drug use, and suicide rates increasing).
- Opioid pandemic.
- Provider shortages (for all licenses mental health professionals).
- Stigma among providers, self-stigma, community stigma.
- Growing inequities by geography, race, age, sexual orientation, gender, and insurance status.
- Low utilization (provider and consumer) of virtual visits (tele-mental health) and low reimbursements rates (if any at all) for virtual care.

9

9

Mental Health Care NOW

- Fewer providers working, or working fewer hours.
- Increased need and demand for services which impacts availability.
- CDC guidelines influencing how in-person visits need to occur and time spent with patient(s) virtually which impacts availability.
- Not recognize symptoms as a mental health concern, but result of quarantine or physical distancing.
- May downplay feelings and concerns.

10

NEED is Evident

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

Health

The coronavirus pandemic is pushing America into a mental health crisis

Anxiety and depression are rising. The U.S. is ill-prepared, with some clinics already on the brink of collapse.

11

Otu et al. *Int J Ment Health Syst* (2020) 14:38
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-020-00371-w>

International Journal of
Mental Health Systems

COMMENTARY

Open Access

Mental health and psychosocial well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: the invisible elephant in the room

Akaninyene Otu^{1,2}, Carlo Handy Charles^{3,4} and Sanni Yaya^{5,6*}

AJPH
A JOURNAL OF THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

COVID-19 Exposes the Cracks in Our Already Fragile Mental Health System

John Auerbach MBA, and Benjamin F. Miller PsyD

American Journal of Public Health, 08 Apr 2020, :e1-e2

DOI: [10.2105/ajph.2020.305699](https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2020.305699) PMID: 32271609

12



Calls to US helpline jump 891%, as White House is warned of mental health crisis

Some federal officials worry the U.S. isn't prepared to meet nation's needs.



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Are crisis lines meeting new mental health needs?

So far, yes, though that might change as the pandemic continues, psychologists say.

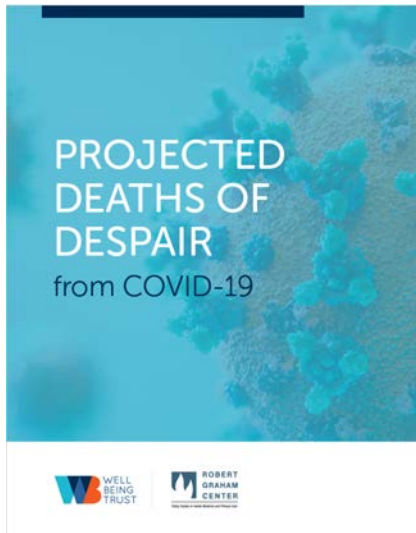
By Tori DeAngelis Date created: July 28, 2020

HEALTH

Crisis counselors, the 'paramedics of mental health,' wage a wrenching battle on the coronavirus front lines

By GABRIELLE GLASER / MAY 4, 2020

13



RISKS OF PANDEMIC

Economic Recovery
Unemployment
Isolation



TARGET PROBLEMS

Drug use
Alcohol abuse
Suicide

https://wellbeingtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WBT_Deaths-of-Despair_COVID-19-FINAL-FINAL.pdf

14

Opportunities

Increased attention around mental health (and tele-mental health care) need among new groups, including:

- Media
- Schools
- Primary care
- Parents
- Funding agencies
- Not-for-profits
- Long-term care
- Payers
- Federal government
- Policy makers
- Clergy
- Primary care
- Agricultural groups
- Public health

15

Local and Statewide Response: North Dakota

16


[Home](#)
[Behavioral Health](#)
[Stress & Coping](#)
[Caring](#)
[Support & Treatment](#)
[Healthcare Providers](#)



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BRIDGE

Behavioral Health Bridge

Supports for our communities

The Behavioral Health Bridge is powered by a partnership between Sanford Health and the University of North Dakota. The purpose of the Behavioral Health Bridge is to provide information on common behavioral health conditions and launch virtual behavioral health treatments to address the current needs of people in our community.

Partnership

Beginning in March of 2020, a team of individuals with experience in psychiatry, bio-behavioral research, rural health equity, social work, behavioral health workforce development, and behavioral health stigma began to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the behavioral health of North Dakota residents.

A Work in Progress

The content on this webpage is a first step in providing reliable, valid, and useful information about various elements of behavioral health. However, like many other aspects of our life during the current COVID-19 pandemic, information about behavioral health is constantly changing and developing. ***Please check this site regularly for new information and helpful resources.***

COVID-19 Behavioral Health Modules

There is a growing need for scientifically and clinically valid information to assist the public in gaining awareness of potential behavioral health issues in the current pandemic. This includes information on how to manage stress effectively and seek behavioral health assistance when needed. We understand that members of our community are being bombarded with information coming from a variety of different sources. The following information, which has been collected by trained members of our partnership team, is meant to provide members of our community with reliable information, tips, and resources for managing behavioral health concerns during (and following) the COVID-19 pandemic.

17

behavioralhealthbridge.org

COVID-19 Behavioral Health Modules

There is a growing need for scientifically and clinically valid information to assist the public in gaining awareness of potential behavioral health issues in the current pandemic. This includes information on how to manage stress effectively and seek behavioral health assistance when needed. We understand that members of our community are being bombarded with information coming from a variety of different sources. The following information, which has been collected by trained members of our partnership team, is meant to provide members of our community with reliable information, tips, and resources for managing behavioral health concerns during (and following) the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Behavioral Health: Impact of COVID-19** →
- Stress & Coping: Coping with Stress, Worry, Grief, and Loss** →
- Caring: Self-Care and Caring for Loved Ones** →
- Support & Treatment: Considerations, Need, and Behavioral Health Resources** →
- Healthcare Providers: COVID-19 and Behavioral Health** →



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BRIDGE

18

The goals of this module include:

1. Help you carefully review how you are doing and make adaptive decisions to promote positive mental health.
2. Provide information that can help you to determine whether or not reaching out to a mental health professional could be useful.
3. Provide you with information about the easiest ways to get mental health assistance, by identifying resources in your community and the potential value of the use of telehealth or telemedicine services in mental health treatment.

Video about mental health, how to spot the signs that your mental health may be affected, and when to seek help.

[Click here for video](#)

What you Need to Know

[Understanding Impact of COVID-19 on Your Mental Health](#) →

[Depression: Signs and Symptoms](#) →

[Anxiety: Signs and Symptoms](#) →

[Substance Use Disorder: Signs and Symptoms](#) →

[Post-traumatic Stress Disorder: Signs and Symptoms](#) →

[Suicidal Thoughts](#) →

[How You Can Gain Access to Mental Health Supports](#) →

[What You Need to Know About "Teletherapy" for Mental Health](#) →

19

Next Stage of the Behavioral Health Bridge

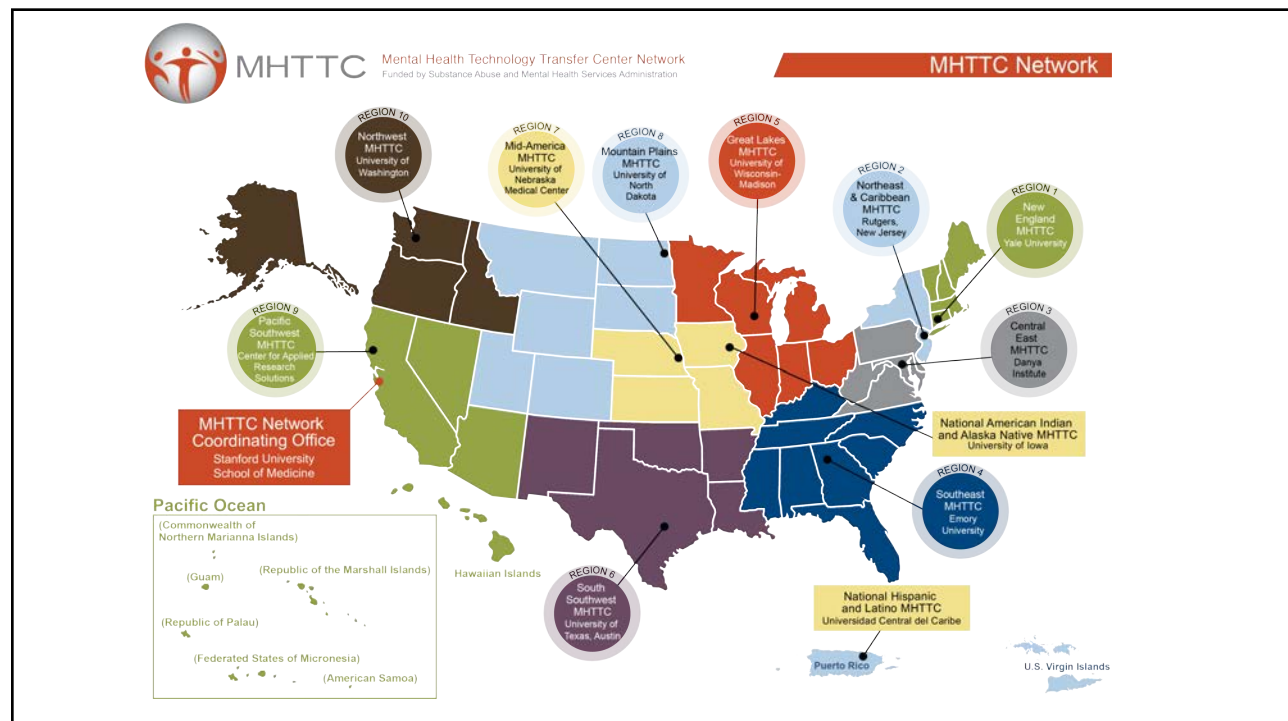
- Access to self-administered, interactive, mental health screening tools (evidence-based)
 - Depression
 - Alcohol use
 - Illicit drug use
 - Anxiety
 - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Connection to tele-mental health
- Q&A with a behavioral health clinician

20

Mental Health Technology Transfer Centers

- Years of research and knowledge of evidence-based practices show that well-designed mental health prevention, treatment, and recovery support efforts are effective and can have multiple benefits for individuals with mental disorders.
- The purpose of the MHTTC Network is technology transfer - disseminating and implementing evidence-based practices for mental disorders into the field.
- Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the MHTTC Network includes 10 Regional Centers, a National American Indian and Alaska Native Center, a National Hispanic and Latino Center, and a Network Coordinating Office.

21



22

Collaborative COVID-19 Response

- Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)
 - **Building Telehealth Capacity:** mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mountain-plains-mhttc/telehealth-resources
- Mid-America MHTTC and Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC)
 - **TLC Tuesdays:** mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mountain-plains-mhttc/telehealth-resources
- MHTTC National Coordinating Office
 - **Responding to COVID-19:** mhttcnetwork.org/centers/global-mhttc/responding-covid-19



23

Sample: MHTTC COVID-19 Resources

- [Mental Health Resources for College and University Faculty and Staff to Support Student Mental Health During COVID-19](#)
- [Mental Health Resources for K-12 Educators During COVID-19](#)
- [Mental Health Resources for Parents and Caregivers During COVID-19](#)
- [Telehealth Learning and Consultation \(TLC\) Tuesdays](#)
- [Session one: Changing the Conversation about Mental Health to Support College Students During a Pandemic](#)
- [Session two: Campus Mental Health: How do we Come Back to the New Normal?](#)
- [Tips for Educators: Supporting Parents During this Pandemic](#)
- [Psychosocial Impacts of Disasters: Assisting Community Leaders](#)

24

Sample: MHTTC COVID-19 Resources

- [Farm Stress: Facts, Impact of COVID-19, and Resource and Training Needs of Mental Health Care Providers](#)
- [Student Mental Health During COVID-19: How to Prepare as Schools Reopen](#)
- [Self-Care Through the Summer](#)
- [Resources for Primary Care Providers Experiencing Stress Related to COVID-19 or Other Health Care Crises](#)
- [Telehealth Learning and Consultation \(TLC\) Tuesdays Webinar Series](#)
- [Telehealth Toolbox for School Personnel](#)
- [HHS Region 7 COVID-19 Resources](#)

25

Sample: MHTTC COVID-19 Resources

- [Responding to COVID-19 | Grief, Loss, and Bereavement](#)
- [Responding to COVID-19 | Intimate Partner Violence \(IPV\) and Child Abuse](#)
- [Responding to COVID-19 | Mental Health Disparities](#)
- [Responding to COVID-19 | School Mental Health](#)
- [Responding to COVID-19 | Telehealth](#)

26

Sample: MHTTC COVID-19 Resources

- [Responding to COVID-19 | Grief, Loss, and Bereavement](#)
- [Responding to COVID-19 | Intimate Partner Violence \(IPV\) and Child Abuse](#)
- [Responding to COVID-19 | Mental Health Disparities](#)
- [Responding to COVID-19 | School Mental Health](#)
- [Responding to COVID-19 | Telehealth](#)

27

Summary

- Mental health care access was a concern prior to the pandemic for all demographic groups.
- Mental health inequities have been exasperated by the pandemic.
- Providers and community groups are in need of additional training on how to address growing mental health needs through collaboration.
- New community groups are eager to learn more about how they can collaborate to address mental health concerns:
 - Media
 - Schools
 - Primary care
 - Parents
 - Primary care
 - Payers
 - Federal government
 - Policy makers
 - Clergy
 - Agricultural groups
 - Funding agencies
 - Not-for-profits
 - Long-term care
 - Public health

28

Center *for* Rural Health

Shawnda Schroeder, PhD, MA

Associate Director of Research and Evaluation
Research Associate Professor
Center for Rural Health
University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences
701-777-3848 main | shawnda.schroeder@und.edu

My pronouns are she, her, and hers



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BRIDGE

behavioralhealthbridge.org



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mountain-plains-mhttc/home

29

Center *for* Rural Health



Contact us for more information!

501 North Columbia Road, Stop 9037
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202-9037

701.777.0787 • ruralhealth.und.edu



Center *for* Rural Health
University of North Dakota
School of Medicine & Health Sciences

30

30