Federal Support for the Rural Health Care Ecosystem

Arizona Rural Health Association
Flagstaff, AZ

June 6-7th, 2023

Tom Morris
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

Vision: Healthy Communities, Healthy People
The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) collaborates with rural communities and partners to support community programs and shape policy that will improve health in rural America.

**Cross Agency Collaboration**
Works across HRSA, HHS, and several other federal partners to accomplish its goals

**Capacity Building**
Increases access to health care for people in rural communities through grant programs and public partnerships

**Voice for Rural**
Advises the HHS Secretary on policy and regulation that affect rural areas

Established in Section 711 of the Social Security Act
People in rural areas live 3 fewer years than people in urban areas, with rural areas having higher death rates for heart disease and stroke.

- Rural women face higher maternal mortality rates.
- Rural residents face higher rates of tobacco use, physical inactivity, obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Rural populations face greater challenges with mental and behavioral health and have limited access to mental health care.
- Rural hospitals are closing or facing the possibility of closing + Increasing shortages of clinicians.
- Long distances and lack of transportation make it difficult to access emergency, specialty and preventive care.
- Rural populations are more likely to be uninsured and have fewer affordable health insurance options than in suburban and urban areas.
Pushing for a Connected Rural Health Ecosystem

Acknowledging the Challenges ...

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Pushing for a Connected Rural Health Ecosystem

Acknowledging the Challenges ...

- Rural Hospital Closure and Financial Risk

https://www.shepscenter.unc.edu/programs-projects/rural-health/rural-hospital-closures/
Assessing the Current Landscape
Nursing Home and Pharmacy Closures

Rural Nursing Home Closures
• 10% of rural counties are nursing home deserts
• From 2008 - 2018, 400 rural counties experienced at least 1 nursing home closure

Rural Pharmacy Closures
• From 2003 - 2018, 1,231 independently owned rural pharmacies (16.1%) closed
• 630 rural communities with at least 1 retail pharmacy in 2003 had 0 in 2018

Pushing for a Connected Rural Health Ecosystem

Acknowledging the Challenges ...

The Fragile Reality of the Rural Health Care Infrastructure
Out of 1,975 rural counties:
• 216 with just an RHC
• 306 with just an FQHC
• 431 with an RHC and CAH but no FQHC

Source: Identification of Rural Communities with Limited Access to Safety Net Healthcare Providers, 2017
Pushing for a Connected Rural Health Ecosystem
Acknowledging the Challenges ...

New CDC Data Confirm the Ongoing Rural Health Lifespan Challenges building on Reports from 2017 and 2019

*Rural-urban disparities in preventable early deaths vary by cause*
Persons living in rural counties are at higher risk of dying early from a preventable cause than their urban counterparts

Unintentional Injury: 57% rural, 47% urban
Stroke: 65% rural, 63% urban
Heart Disease: 42% rural, 30% urban
Lung Disease: 26% rural, 20% urban
Cancer: 13% rural, 15% urban

*Provisional mortality data, NCHS https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvsr/vsrr/provisional-tables.htm*
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Acknowledging the Emerging New Realities ...

- Racial and ethnic diversity is increasing in rural America
- In 2017, there were 10 million rural residents who identified as Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), Asian American/Pacific Islander (AA/PI), or mixed race
- 1 in 5 rural residents belongs to one or more of these groups
- 40% of AI/AN live in non-metro areas

Figure: Zahnd WE, et. al. The Intersection of Rural Residence and Minority Race/Ethnicity in Cancer Disparities in the U.S.
Imagining the Ideal Rural Health Ecosystem
What Would It Look Like Locally?

Rural Community

- Primary Care
- Nutritious Food
- Schools and Education
- Capital for Investment
- Life Course: Child Care, Aging Support, and Everything in Between
- Employment Opportunities
- Hospital Services
- Broadband Access
- Stable Housing and Reliable Transportation
Imagining the Ideal Rural Health Ecosystem
What Would It Look Like Regionally? And at the State Level?

- Rural and Tribal Communities
- Regional Tertiary Providers and Specialists
- Philanthropies, Community Development Financial Institutions
- State Partners (AHECs, USDA State Office, State Health and Human Services Departments)
- Governmental Partners (County, Town, Councils of Government)
Imagining the Ideal Rural Health Ecosystem
An Evolving Approach to Rural “Place-Based Policy”
Where Does It Start?
Local Leadership Is the Building Block

• From the Ground Up and Locally Led ...
• Ability to Chart the Path While Also Collaborating
• Being Vested in the Outcome

What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?

Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

Ongoing Support
- Rural Hospital Flex Grants, Small Hospital Improvement Grants, Rural Health Clinic Technical Assistance
- Research Policy Analysis, Flex Monitoring Team

Targeted Technical Assistance
- Focusing on “At-Risk” Facilities
  - Delta Region Community Health Systems Project
  - Sustaining Essential Access To Hospital Services Program
- Rural Hospital Quality Improvement Technical Assistance

Transition and Redesign
- HRSA
  - Rural Health Value, Rural Health Providers Transition Project
- CMS
  - Rural Emergency Hospital Designation, Innovation Center Models, Medicare Shared Savings

Additional Resources:
- https://ruralhealthvalue.public-health.uiowa.edu/
- https://www.hrsa.gov/library/vulnerable-rural-hospital-assistance
- https://www.ruralcenter.org/rhptp
- https://stratishealth.org/initiative/rural-quality-improvement-technical-assistance-rqita/
What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?

Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) has supported:

- at least 750,000 people each year since 2011
- with over 200 grantees
- of which 80% continue services after program ends

The goal of rural community programs is to improve health service delivery by strengthening health networks and encourage collaboration among rural health care providers.

Watch Video Profiles of Innovative FORHP Grantees:

https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/project-examples

Direct Services

- Rural Health Care Services Outreach
- Small Health Care Provider Quality Improvement
- Delta States Network Program
- Pilot Programs
  - Care Coordination

Capacity-Building

- Rural Health Network Development
- Rural Health Network Development Planning
- Pilot Programs
- Rural Maternal Obstetrics Management Strategies Program
Advancing Behavioral Health Equity in Rural Communities

The Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) provides direct funding and technical assistance to rural communities.

We have invested over $500 million since 2018. This funding addresses behavioral health needs, substance use disorder, and opioid use disorder.

Stats

From the National Center for Health Statistics

Drug Overdose Death Rates* Among Persons Aged ≥15 Years, by Age Group and Urban-Rural Status† — National Vital Statistics System, United States, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group, yrs</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13–24</td>
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<td>25–44</td>
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<td>45–64</td>
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<tr>
<td>65+</td>
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* Deaths per 100,000 population. 99% CIs indicated by error bars. Drug overdose deaths were identified using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision underlying cause-of-death codes X40–X44 (unintentional), X60–X64 (suicide), X85 (homicide), or Y10–Y14 (undetermined intent).
† Urban-rural status is based on county of residence using the National Center for Health Statistics Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr69/nvsr69_168.pdf
What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

The Rural Health Information Hub

Topic Guides

- Rural Health Workforce
  - Maintaining the healthcare workforce is fundamental to providing access to quality healthcare in rural areas. Rural healthcare facilities must employ enough healthcare professionals to meet the needs of the community. They must have proper licensure, adequate education and training, and cultural competency skills. Equally important, optimizing how health professionals are used and enhancing coordination among them helps ensure that patients are getting the best care possible.
  - Strategies can include:
    - Using interprofessional teams to provide coordinated and efficient care for patients and to extend the reach of each provider.
    - Ensuring that all professionals are fully utilizing their skill sets and working at the top of their license; that is, practicing to the full extent of their training and allowed scope of practice.
    - Removing state and federal barriers to professional practice, where appropriate.
    - Changing policy to allow alternative provider types, once evidence shows they can provide quality care.

- Indian Health Service Loan Repayment Program
  - Loan repayment for undergraduate and graduate health professional educational loans in return for full-time clinical service in Indian Health Service programs.
  - Geographic coverage: Nationwide
  - Application Deadline: Aug 15, 2019
  - Sponsors: Indian Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- NIDDK Education Program Grants (R25 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)
  - Grants to support educational activities that complement and/or enhance the training of a workforce to meet the nation’s biomedical, behavioral and clinical research needs. Institutions are encouraged to diversify their student and faculty populations to enhance the participation of individuals from groups identified as underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral and social sciences.

https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/
What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

AgriSafe

Addressing Health Disparities and Safeties in the Agricultural Sector
• Training
• Certification
• Webinars

https://www.agrisafe.org/
What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

https://www.3rnet.org/
What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

Rural Residency Planning and Development

• Helping to expand rural residencies nationally in support of the Rural Residency Planning Grant Program and the Teaching Health Center Planning Grant Program
  • Rural GME development resources and tools available via the RuralGME.org portal
  • To register for free access to portal resources, visit: https://portal.ruralgme.org/register

• Teaching Health Center Program
• CMS Efforts to Support Rural Residency Training
What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?

Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

Rural Emergency Hospital Support

National Technical Assistance Center
- Rural Health Redesign Center:
  - https://www.rhco.org/reh-tac
  - REHSupport@rhco.org

Supplemental Funding for State Flex Programs
- Outreach and broad education

Supplement to HRSA partners
- National Conference of State Legislators:
  - Tracking state activity on establishing laws on REH licensure:
- National Academy for State Health Policy
  - Developing model licensing language
What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?

Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

Supporting Rural Health Clinics

• Cooperative agreement providing assistance, solutions, and information to RHCs on key policy, regulatory, programmatic, and clinical issues
  • Highlights of NARHC TA:
    • Technical assistance webinars
      • Recordings, slides and transcripts are posted https://www.narhc.org/narhc/TA_Webinars1.asp
    • NARHC forums and email listserv: online information exchange/referral service
      • Sign up https://www.narhc.org/discussionforums/DiscussionDefault.asp
    • NARHC website and resources

[Image]
### What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?

**Health Resources and Services Administration**

| Community and Migrant Health Centers (Federally Qualified Health Centers) | ✓ FTCA Coverage ✓ 340B ✓ Health Center Controlled Networks |
| - ✓ Expansions into Behavioral Health and Substance Use Services |
| National Health Service Corps | Health Profession Training |
| - Nurse Corps | ✓ Primary Care |
| - Area Health Education Centers | ✓ Nursing ✓ Behavioral Health |
| Title V Block Grant | Pediatric Mental Health Access Program |
| - Home Visiting | |
| - Healthy Start | |
What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?

Health Resources and Services Administration

Office for the Advancement of Telehealth
- Grants for Capacity Building
- Telehealth Resource Centers
- Centers for Excellence
- Reducing the Burden of Cross-State Licensure through the Provider Bridge

https://www.cchpca.org/

https://southwesttrc.org/

https://www.cchpca.org
What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?
Other Agencies at the Department of Health and Human Services
The creation of 988 is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to strengthen and expand the Lifeline and transform America’s behavioral health crisis care system to one that saves lives by serving anyone, at any time, from anywhere across the nation.

- In 2020 alone, the U.S. had one death by suicide about every 11 minutes
- For people aged 10 – 34 years, suicide is a leading cause of death
- Suicide rates increase as population density decreases and an area becomes more rural
- During the 12-month period ending June 2022, over 100,000 individuals died from drug overdoses in the U.S.
- While the overall drug overdose death rate is higher in urban than rural areas, the rate of psychostimulant-related drug overdose deaths is 1.4 times higher in rural than urban areas
What Resources and Tools Are Available To Help?

Other Federal Opportunities

- The Veterans Administration Office of Rural Health
  - https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/

- Environmental Protection Agency
  - https://www.epa.gov-smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities

- Small Business Administration

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/rural-gateway
https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta
https://www.rd.usda.gov/
https://www.cdfifund.gov/
# Broadband Funding

**Infrastructure Act Created $658 B in Funding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title I - Broadband Equity, Access &amp; Deployment Program</th>
<th>Title II - Tribal Broadband Connectivity Technical Amendments</th>
<th>Title III – Digital Equity Act</th>
<th>Title IV - Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEAD $42.45B</td>
<td>Furthers current Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program by investing an additional $2B to fund broadband adoption and infrastructure projects.</td>
<td>Three programs, established for planning &amp; implementation of programs that promote digital equity, support digital inclusion activities, and build capacity related to the adoption of broadband.</td>
<td>Provides funding to extend middle mile capacity to reduce cost of serving unserved and underserved areas and enhance network resilience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital Equity $2.75B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tribal $2.00B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle Mile $1.00B</td>
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**NTIA will administer $48B of this new funding**

- BEAD: $42.45B
- Digital Equity: $2.75B
- Tribal: $2.00B
- Middle Mile: $1.00B

FCC to administer $14.2B

For Affordable Connectivity Program, which will replace the EBB program

USDA to administer $2B

Via the Rural Utilities Service

Private Activity Bonds $600M

Authorizes State/local gov’ts to use private activity bonds

Enhancing Broadband Access

The Affordable Connectivity Program

Affordable Connectivity Program

A Federal Communications Commission program that provides a monthly discount on internet service for qualifying households and one device discount on a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer.

Learn more at AffordableConnectivity.gov

ACP SUPPORT CENTER

(877) 384-2575 | 9 AM-9 PM ET
7 DAYS PER WEEK | ACPSupport@usac.org

Universal Service Administrative Co.
Imagining the Ideal Rural Health Ecosystem

National Association of Counties Tool: https://explorer.naco.org/
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National Resources

- Robert Wood Johnson County Health Rankings
  - https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/?&utm_source=google&utm_medium=paidsocial&utm_campaign=rankings2023
- CDC Places
  - https://www.cdc.gov/places/index.html
- CDC Social Vulnerability Index
- Area Deprivation Index
  - https://www.neighborhoodatlas.medicine.wisc.edu/
- Opioids Mapping/Prosperity Index:
  - https://opioidmisusetool.norc.org/
- Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America:
HRSA Needs Your Help!

- Consider Being a Grant Reviewer
- Ensures We Get the Rural Perspective
- Provides a good insight into the grants process
- Key Steps:
  - Once registered note rural as your area of expertise
  - Let us know when you are in the database (so we can select you)
    - Email Lisa Chechile at lchechile@hrsa.gov

https://www.hrsa.gov/grants/reviewers
FORHP Weekly Announcements

Focus on …

✓ Rural-focused Funding opportunities
✓ Policy and Regulatory Developments Affecting Rural Providers and Communities
✓ Rural Research findings
✓ Policy updates from a Rural Perspective

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