

ARIZONA RURAL HEALTH OFFICE

2009-2010 Rural Health Policy Assemblies and Forums

Executive Summary | February 2011



Introduction

The Arizona Rural Health Office (RHO) at the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health (MEZCOPH) works to improve the health of rural people through education, service, and research. To fulfill our service and education goals, RHO coordinates with partner agencies to conduct regional Rural Health Policy Assemblies to bring together stakeholders in health care services and the public to explore regional issues impacting the delivery of care, along with potential solutions to challenges faced in the region. In 2009-2010, regional assemblies were conducted in Lake Havasu City (Mohave County), Bisbee (Cochise County), and Tuba City (Northern Arizona). In addition, there were four other Community Health Forums conducted by Masters of Public Health graduate students participating in the Rural and Border Health Service Learning Institutes in Globe (Gila County), Yuma (Yuma County), Nogales (Santa Cruz County) and Douglas (Cochise County) from 2008-2010. This executive summary highlights key recommendations from the three assemblies and four community forums.

Background & Purpose

The **Rural Health Policy Assemblies** were sponsored by the Arizona Rural Health Office at the University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health along with the Arizona Rural Health Association and other regional partners, including: the Regional Center for Border Health, the Western Region Area Health Education Center, the Cochise County Health Department, Copper Queen Community Hospital, Southeast Arizona Area Health Education Center, Mohave Community College District, Lake Havasu Community College campus, Gila County Division of Health and Community Service, and the Eastern Arizona Area Health Education Center. Each regional assembly focused on a variety of topic areas identified by the conveners representing regional partners. Topic areas included: (1) health care workforce, (2) access to care, (3) disease prevention, (4) health information technology and Broadband, (5) research ethics and Native Americans, and (6) protections for Native American women.

A panel of health care stakeholders, including health care administrators, elected officials, and Rural Health Office representatives, presided over each assembly to provide comments and seek clarification of statements. Recommendations from the Rural Health Policy Assemblies were developed by RHO staff members in collaboration with the Arizona Rural Health Association using the content provided during the meetings. Presenters gave formal presentations to the panel and assembly attendees, and following the presentations, the public was invited to provide comment.

The **Community Health Forums** were conducted by students in the Rural and Border Health Service Learning Institutes, which were developed and implemented through the Rural Health Professions Program. This program is a partnership between MEZCOPH and the Arizona Area Health Education Centers Program (AHEC). The forums were sponsored by community-based AHECs and other partners. The public forums were convened for residents and representatives from local community organizations to present their concerns to a panel of local health professionals and representatives of MEZCOPH and RHO in order to guide the direction of their future work. Community members identified key issues and proposed recommendations through the forums.

The information provided at the assemblies and community forums will be used to shape recommendations for policy and/or programmatic solutions in line with the challenges identified by participants.

Policy Themes Identified Through the Rural Health Policy Assemblies and Forums

The following table demonstrates overarching health policy themes that were identified at the Rural Health Policy Assemblies and Community Health Forums held across the state between August 2008 and December 2010. Below the table are lists of the specific issues and concerns that were identified at each assembly. They are presented here in an abbreviated form, while the full recommendations along with the forum reports in their entirety can be accessed at: rho.arizona.edu/Publications/ForumReports.aspx

HEALTH POLICY THEMES						
COMMUNITY	RURAL PARITY	WORK FORCE	ACCESS TO CARE	HEALTH PROMOTION	INFRA-STRUCTURE	ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
Lake Havasu City (Mohave County)	X	X	X	X	X	
Bisbee (Cochise County)		X	X	X	X	
Tuba City (Northern AZ – Tribal)		X	X	X	X	X
Douglas (Cochise County)		X		X		X
Nogales (Santa Cruz County)		X	X		X	
Yuma (Yuma County)		X	X	X		
Globe-Miami (Gila County)		X		X	X	

RURAL PARITY THEME

- School-based formulas have a negative consequence for obtaining resources in rural communities (Mohave County)
- Reassess hospital regulations governing pediatric units to consider rural parity (Mohave County)
- Examine telemedicine reimbursement policies to determine the extent of the reimbursement differentials experienced by rural and urban users of the technology (Cochise County)

WORKFORCE THEME

- Expand workforce training models at community colleges (Mohave County)
- Provide physician incentives to work in Arizona (Mohave County)
- Provide incentives for surgeons (Mohave County)
- Improve retention of paramedics (Mohave County)
- Encourage rural student access to medical schools (Cochise County)
- Invest in rural residencies (Cochise County, Yuma County)
- Include training on rural culture in health professions (medicine, nursing) (Cochise County)

- Provide culturally sensitive Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner trainings (Northern Arizona)
- Create victim advocate positions within tribal courts (Northern Arizona)
- Increase recruitment of female police officers and training law enforcement to respond to domestic violence and sexual assault (Northern Arizona)
- Pursue collaboration between Cochise County Health Department and UA College of Public Health students in epidemiology to fill the gap (Douglas)
- Advocate for funding, stipends, and residency programs that bring health professionals to the rural Nogales area as well as funding for the SEAHEC programs. (Nogales)
- Pursue collaboration between the University, AHEC centers, and the Board of Nursing to bring over Nurses from Mexico. (Nogales)
- Increase physician placement at community health centers (Yuma County)
- Address health care workforce recruitment, retention, and “growing our own” development (Globe-Miami)

ACCESS TO CARE THEME

- Fund coverage for diabetes-related prevention and management (Mohave County)
- Invest in behavioral health crisis care to decrease burden on first responders (Cochise County)
- Medicaid and Medicare should cover oral health services (Cochise County)
- Support integration/co-location of primary and behavioral health care for AHCCCS (Cochise County)
- Support full funding for Indian Health Services (Mohave County)
- Increase availability of culturally-appropriate shelters for men and women on rural reservations (Northern Arizona)
- Advocate for clearer state resident classification for citizens who live in the border region. (Nogales)
- Sponsor mobile medical specialty clinics (Yuma County)
- Provide means for uninsured community members to explore health insurance alternatives and other affordable health care options (Yuma County)

HEALTH PROMOTION – DISEASE PREVENTION THEME

- Support establishment of women’s health resource center (Mohave County)
- Increase funding for disease prevention and early detection (Mohave County)
- Develop oral health education curriculum for schools (Cochise County)
- Create HHS-administered sealant program (Cochise County)
- Provide federal funding for technical assistance to implement the Tribal Law and Order Act (Northern Arizona)
- Develop offender intervention programs for batterers (Northern Arizona)
- Develop parenting classes for teenage fathers on reservations (Northern Arizona)
- Provide outreach to existing veterans on reservations and in urban areas (Northern Arizona)
- Advocate for policy that facilitates better cross-border communication and sharing of documents, especially regarding immunizations (Douglas)
- Examine the possibility of a separate Agua Prieta Food Bank and, if feasible, create plan and timeline for opening one (Douglas)
- Enhance collaboration efforts between border communities in the U.S. and Mexico (Yuma County)

- Investigate reasons for tuberculosis recurrence (Yuma County)
- Establish outreach campaigns in grocery stores to educate community members on tuberculosis risk (Yuma County)
- Encourage health providers to practice healthy lifestyles (Yuma County)
- Investigate the possibility of bringing Well Woman Health Check to Gila County residents (Globe-Miami)
- Pursue elder care and quality of life options, including opportunities for intergenerational activities (Globe-Miami)

INFRASTRUCTURE THEME

- Lake Havasu Regional Medical Center should advance plan for pediatric units (Mohave County)
- Explore tele-home health technology (Mohave County)
- Explore electronic lab order transmission from county health department to state (Mohave County)
- Support expansion of health centers and clinics (Mohave County)
- Support telemedicine technologies (Cochise County)
- Make electronic health records available to emergency care (Cochise County)
- Support development of Broadband infrastructure in rural areas and reservations (Cochise County, Northern Arizona)
- Create a domestic violence/sexual assault response system in IHS health care facilities to facilitate coordinated community response (Northern Arizona)
- Advocate for policy that facilitates better cross-border communication and sharing of evidence in regards to sexual assault cases that occur in Mexico but victims are residents of the U.S. (Nogales)
- Advocate for policy that facilitates cross-border collaboration in regards to medical treatment of migrants before repatriation (Nogales)
- Increase and maintain the communication and collaboration begun between the San Carlos Apache Reservation and the other communities of Gila County (Globe-Miami)
- Strengthen partnerships between University of Arizona faculty/students and community organizations in both Gila County and the San Carlos Apache Reservation (Globe-Miami)

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH THEME

- Expand eligibility of Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) (Northern Arizona)
- Provide cancer and health screening in communities with uranium mining/milling/processing (Northern Arizona)
- Research link between water contamination and health impacts (Northern Arizona)
- Examine the possibility of an environmental assessment to locate causes of high rate of special needs children on the border (Douglas)
- Examine links to local mining and smelting operations (Douglas)

To contact the RHO and view the full reports, visit: rho.arizona.edu/Publications/ForumReports.aspx

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