U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
HRSA
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

Announcements from the

Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

November 21, 2018

Funding Opportunities

Assistance for Vulnerable Rural Hospitals – November 30. The Center for Optimizing Rural Health Technical Advisory Center is a HRSA/FORHP-funded initiative with the goal of understanding economic challenges, community health needs and resources, and finding ways rural hospitals and communities can keep needed care locally. Application is required to become one of the hospitals receiving this assistance, with a new cohort selected each year. In each application cycle, five hospitals will be selected for on-site technical assistance and twenty-five hospitals will be selected for remotely facilitated technical assistance. To check eligibility information and other application information please see the website.

Rural Health Research

Rural Health Recap: Age, Income, and Health Status in Rural Communities. The Rural Health Research Centers provide timely, quality, national research on the most pressing rural health issues, occasionally exploring the same topics from various perspectives. The Rural Health Research Gateway compiles key findings on shared topics from the research centers into Rural Health Research Recaps. Most recently, a Recap was developed from studies that cover the implications of income or age on health-seeking behavior, health status, access, or utilization of care, and what it means for older and lower-income individuals living in rural communities.

Changes to the Merit-based Incentive Payment System Pertinent to Small and Rural Practices. The Quality Payment Program (QPP) was established by the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA). The QPP consolidates existing Medicare pay-for-performance programs – the Physician Quality Reporting System, the Physician Value-based Payment Modifier, and the Medicare Electronic Health Record Incentive Program for Eligible Professionals – into a unified, cohesive program. The Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) is one of the two tracks of the QPP program, and the regulatory framework for MIPs was originally provided by MACRA and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' calendar year (CY) 2017 QPP final rule. This brief discusses changes to the original MIPS regulatory framework brought about by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 and the CY 2018 QPP final rule of importance to small rural practices in the categories of quality, cost, interoperability and others.

Policy Updates

Visit the FORHP Policy page to see all recent updates and send questions to ruralpolicy@hrsa.gov

CMS Report on Telehealth in Medicare. Last week, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) published a report to Congress detailing the state of telehealth in the Medicare program. The report has four areas of focus: 1) Medicare beneficiaries whose care would benefit the most from telehealth expansion; 2) activities by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation that increased access to telehealth; 3) the types of high-volume services suitable for telehealth; and 4) barriers that might prevent the expansion of telehealth. CMS found that, overall, telehealth utilization among Medicare-fee-service beneficiaries has increased, though services have primarily focused on the needs of rural beneficiaries.

Resources, Learning Events and Technical Assistance

Engaging the Dually-Eligible in Rural Areas – Tuesday, November 27 at 1:00 pm ET. Individuals who received coverage through both Medicare and Medicaid and live in a rural area often contend with distance and transportation barriers, a shortage of primary care providers, and limited access to specialty care. As such, health plans serving dually-eligible beneficiaries in rural areas may require creative strategies to overcome barriers to member engagement. Featured speakers at this hour-long event will share their expertise in Medicare-Medicaid plans, dually-eligible special needs plans and managed care plans and discuss how to build connections with enrollees and assist them in managing their health.

NRHA on the All of Us Research Program – Tuesday, November 27 at 2:00 pm ET. The All of Us Research Program is a long-term initiative conducted by the National Institutes of Health that aims to enroll one million or more participants who will share information about their family health histories, lifestyles, and personal medical histories. The goal is to help improve researchers' baseline understanding of what it means to be healthy and sick, ultimately to develop more precise and effective methods to keep people healthy and treat those who get sick. In this one-hour webinar, the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) will share information about the effort and provide context on why rural communities should participate and how to get involved. Read more about the program on NRHA's blog.

Supporting Emotional Wellness in Frontier Areas – Tuesday, November 27 at 3:00 pm ET. The Northwest Center for Public Health Practice hosts this one-hour webinar to explain how one rural Montana health department adopted an emergency response framework to better support emotional health in their community. Mental healthcare needs are not met in many rural communities across the country because adequate services are not present.

Rural Virtual Job Fair – Wednesday, November 28 at 6:45 pm ET. HRSA's Bureau of Health Workforce will host a Rural Focused Virtual Job Fair a free, interactive event held online to allow primary care providers a chance to talk about their sites approved for the National Health Service Corps or NURSE Corps. Recruiters will discuss their organization's benefits, their clinical environments (including approaches to integrated care), the populations they serve, and the rewards of providing care in their rural communities.

Enrollment Tutorial: Diabetes Prevention Program – Wednesday, December 12 at 11:00 am ET. Diabetes affects more than 25 percent of Americans aged 65 or older and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is about 17 percent more prevalent in rural areas. The Medicare Diabetes Prevention Plan (MDPP) Expanded Model is lifestyle change curriculum approved by the CDC that teaches beneficiaries how to manage their diabetes. This hour-long webinar hosted by the CMS will provide a tutorial on how to enroll Medicare beneficiaries into the program.

Approaching Deadlines

USDA Delta Health Care Services Grant Program – November 26

MCHB Challenge: Remote Pregnancy Monitoring – November 27

Nurse Faculty Loan Program – November 28

Responding to Opioid Use Disorder in Tribal Communities – November 29

Assistance for Vulnerable Rural Hospitals – November 30

Rural Veterans Health Access Program – Letter of intent November 30

Grants for Early Head Start Child Care in Low-Income Communities – November 30

Head Start Child Care in Migrant and Seasonal Communities – November 30

Head Start Child Care for American Indian/Alaska Native Communities – November 30

CDC Cooperative Agreement for Public Health Crisis Response – November 30

Rural Health Network Development Planning Program – November 30

Farm to School Grant Program – December 4

Health Disparities Research with Tribal Epidemiology Centers – December 4

AHRQ Dissemination of Research for Unhealthy Alcohol Use – Letter of Intent December 5

EPA Design Competition for People, Prosperity and the Planet – December 11

Research to Address Opioid Crisis (Clinical Trial Required) – December 11

Research to Address Opioid Crisis (Clinical Trial Not Allowed) – December 11

NBCC Minority Fellowship for Addictions Counselors – December 15

NBCC Minority Fellowship for Mental Health Counselors – December 15

Comments Requested: Telehealth for Substance Use Disorder Treatment – December 31

AHRQ Dissemination of Research for Unhealthy Alcohol Use – January 4

Rural Communities Opioid Response Planning – January 5

Advanced Nursing Education Workforce (ANEW) – January 8

Rural Veterans Health Access Program – February 12

Grants for Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) – February 12

Rural Primary Care SBIRT for Maternal Opioid Use – March 29

Indian Health Service Loan Repayment Program – Ongoing through August 2019

Guaranteed Loans for Rural Rental Housing – Ongoing through 2021

Telecommunications Infrastructure Loans – Ongoing

Funding for Rural Water and Waste Disposal Projects – Ongoing

Drinking Water and Waste Disposal for Rural and Native Alaskan Villages – Ongoing

HIT Strategies for Patient-Reported Outcome Measures – Ongoing

HIT to Improve Health Care Quality and Outcomes – Ongoing

Community Facilities Program – Ongoing

Summer Food Service Program – Ongoing