

## Announcements from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

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July 11, 2019

### What's New

**States Awarded for High-Performing Rural Hospitals.** This morning, HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) recognized ten states as top performers in their work to improve the quality of care at rural hospitals. The states – Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Michigan, Utah, Alabama, Nebraska, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, and Wisconsin – have engaged in the FORHP-funded Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project (MBQIP), a project across 45 states designed to help [federally-designated Critical Access Hospitals](#) (CAHs) improve patient outcomes through quality reporting. Before this project, there was no federal program focused on helping these low volume hospitals prioritize quality reporting and improvement. MBQIP sets rural-specific measures for quality and provides technical assistance and resources to help CAHs improve.

**New Network Planning Grants Awarded.** The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) is pleased to announce over \$2.4M has been awarded to 25 rural community healthcare organizations in Fiscal Year 2019 for the new competitive funding cycle of the Rural Health Network Development Planning (Network Planning) Program. The Network Planning Program is a one-year grant program designed to promote the planning and development of integrated health care networks, specifically network participants who do not have a history of formal collaborative efforts in order to achieve efficiencies; expand access to, coordinate, and improve the quality of essential health care services; and strengthen the rural health care system as a whole.

**New Data on HIV Diagnoses: Disproportionate in Rural Areas.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released a new *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (MMWR) on HIV testing. The CDC data show that less than 40% of people in the U.S. have ever been tested for HIV; in the seven states with rural areas that are particularly affected by HIV, just 26% of people recommended for annual HIV testing were tested in the past year. The proposed HHS-wide initiative, "[Ending the HIV Epidemic – A Plan for America](#)," is multiyear initiative designed to end the HIV epidemic over 10 years by significantly increasing public health resources, technology, and expertise on the ground in the hardest-impacted areas. The plan, if funded, will focus first on the geographic areas with the greatest HIV burden, including the 50 local jurisdictions and seven states highlighted in the MMWR report, before expanding to reach all areas of the nation affected by HIV.

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### Funding Opportunities

**Support for Rural Hospitals in the Delta Region – July 22.** The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy in partnership with the [Delta Regional Authority](#) administers the Delta Region Community Health Systems Program. The program provides technical assistance through comprehensive onsite consultations to [eligible healthcare facilities](#) located in the 252 counties and parishes in the Delta Region. Program activities include hospital/clinic consultations around financial operations and quality improvement, and care coordination activities. Interested applicants that meet program

[readiness requirements and project expectations](#) should submit a [notice of intent](#) by July 22, 2019 to begin implementation in October 2019.

**[Planning Grants for Community Mobility Design Challenge](#) – August 1.** Supported by the Federal Transit Administration, the National Center for Mobility Management will make six community grants of up to \$25,000 each for innovative solutions that improve transportation – a barrier to health care access in rural areas. The challenge is meant to help low-income residents become more fully engaged in economic opportunities and services for health and well-being in their communities.

**[ACF Community Economic Development – Social Enterprises](#) – August 5.** The Administration for Children & Families (ACF) will give bonus points to applications from rural communities with high rates of poverty, unemployment and substance abuse. Through the Community Economic Development Focus on Social Enterprises program, the ACF will make six awards of up to \$400,000 each for social enterprise projects developing products, services, and commercial activities that result in new positions for individuals with low incomes, while also addressing a local unmet need in social services. Eligible applicants are private, non-profit community development corporations that have housing and economic development as a principal purpose.

**[ACF Leadership Academy for Preventing Trafficking among Native Youth](#) – August 16.** The Administration for Children & Families (ACF) will sponsor a six-month Leadership Academy to address the project question “*How can culture be a protective factor in preventing trafficking among Native youth?*” Applicants must have a minimum of 3-4 years of professional and/or lived experience in a career that enables them to contribute, and the ability to participate in two full-day seminars once per month for the project period. Fellows will collaborate virtually approximately 2-4 hours per week between each seminar and present recommendations to federal stakeholders in Washington, DC.

**[Coming Soon: NIH Research on Environmental Health Disparities.](#)** The National Institutes of Health (NIH) intend to publish a funding opportunity announcement (FOA) next month for research activities focused on understanding and reducing or eliminating environmentally-driven health disparities. Projects must include a focus on one or more NIH-designated health disparities populations in the United States: Blacks or African Americans, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Asians, Hispanics or Latinos, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, underserved rural populations, and sexual and gender minorities.

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## **Policy Updates**

Visit the [FORHP Policy page](#) to see all recent updates and send questions to [ruralpolicy@hrsa.gov](mailto:ruralpolicy@hrsa.gov).

No policy updates this week.

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## **Learning Events and Technical Assistance**

**[Applying for NHSC Rural Community Loan Repayment Program](#) – Thursday, July 11.** The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) will make loan repayment awards in coordination with the [Rural Communities Opioid Response Program \(RCORP\)](#) initiative within the Federal Office of Rural

Health Policy (FORHP) to provide evidence-based substance use treatment, assist in recovery, and to prevent overdose deaths across the nation. Applicants may join this online Q&A session any time between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm ET. [A second all-day Q&A session will take place on Tuesday, July 16.](#) Deadline to apply is Thursday, July 18.

[NOSORH Grant Writing Institute – Friday, July 12.](#) The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) presents the Grant Writing Institute featuring a series of online learning sessions covering every aspect of grant writing with a unique rural health focus. The series is intended for beginners seeking to gain the skills to research and draft winning proposals from various agencies. The original July 9 deadline for registration is extended to July 12.

[AgriSafe: Opioid Prescribing for Safety-Sensitive Agricultural Occupations – Tuesday, July 23 at 3:30 pm ET.](#) Farm duties frequently demand the use of heavy machinery and use of opioids alongside safety-sensitive work can be dangerous. This hour-long training from the AgriSafe Network educates healthcare providers on how to assess occupational agricultural risks and corresponding patient guidance for those who are taking opioid medications.

[SUD Treatment for Pregnant and Parenting Women – Wednesday, July 24 at 3:00pm ET.](#) This hour-long webinar will share promising practices by two HRSA-supported health centers to treat and support the needs of pregnant and parenting women diagnosed with a substance use disorder (SUD). Additionally, experts from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) will share maternal and child health safety resources concerning the prevention and treatment of substance use disorder. Join the webinar via [Adobe Connect Room Link](#) and audio Conference Line: 888-942-9264, Passcode: 9893674. There is no need to pre-register.

[Save the Date: 3RNet 2019 Annual Conference – September 24-26 in Wichita, KS.](#) The [National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network \(3RNet\)](#) is a nonprofit that matches health care professionals to employers in rural and underserved areas. Attendees at their annual two-day conference will network with other 3RNet members, learn strategies for rural recruitment and retention, and gain insight from experienced leaders in health professions staffing. Last year, [3RNet made more than 2,500 clinician placements](#) in rural, frontier, and underserved urban communities.