March 26, 2020

What's New

FCC Expands Broadband Access in Response to COVID-19. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced waivers to its Rural Health Care and E-Rate programs to allow for improved internet capacity, Wi-Fi hotspots, networking gear, or other equipment or services during the coronavirus outbreak. Other actions by the FCC related to COVID-19 include more funding for the Rural Health Care program and efforts to keep low-income consumers connected.

SAMHSA Lists Online Resources for Treatment and Recovery. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides a list of help lines, websites, and virtual meeting options to support substance use treatment, as well as resources and information for mental health response to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Toolkit from the National Telehealth Resource Centers. The toolkit explains how telehealth can be used to provide care remotely, as well as what's covered through public and private insurance.

COVID-19 Resources for Emergency Medical Personnel. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has a website with resources for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel. Separately, the Interstate Commission for EMS Personnel Practice updated the Interstate Licensing Compact to allow EMS operations to cross state borders in response to the crisis.

Rural Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019. The Rural Health Information Hub has created a guide to help you learn about activities underway to address COVID-19.

CDC Updates on the Coronavirus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides daily updates on the Coronavirus with guidance for health providers and local public health officials.

Funding and Opportunities

DOL National Emergency Grants for Dislocated Workers – Ongoing. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) expects to make 150 awards with total funding of $300 million to provide employment-related services for dislocated workers. Two types of Dislocated Worker Grants (DWG) will be funded: Disaster Recovery and Employment Recovery. Eligibility depends on the type of DWG requested and includes state and tribal governments, local Workforce Development Boards, or consortia of these entities.

DOL Training and Employment for Re-Entry – April 15. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) will make 17 awards with total investment of $65 million to provide workforce services for

incarcerated individuals prior to their release. The projects are meant to ensure that these individuals are prepared to meet the needs of local labor markets before they leave state or local facilities. Eligible applicants are state and local governments, non-profit organizations, and Native American entities eligible under Section 166 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

DOT Accelerating Innovative Mobility Challenge Grants – **April 17.** The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) will make 40 awards with total funding of $11 million for projects that can accelerate technologies, practices, and service models to provide more efficient and frequent transportation services. Eligible applicants are state, local, and tribal governments. The DOT seeks to fund multiple projects aligned with their new Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) initiative.

DOJ Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program – **May 18.** The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) will make 25 awards with total funding of $19 million to implement or enhance collaborations between mental health practitioners and local law enforcement. A separate funding opportunity, **DOJ Juvenile Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program** – **May 4,** will make six awards with total funding of $5 million to train local law enforcement to better respond to youth with mental illness and/or co-occurring disorders. Eligible applicants for both programs are state, local, and Tribal governments, with priority given to applications that address challenges specific to rural communities.

DOJ Second Chance Act Community-Based Reentry Program – **May 4**. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) will make 18 awards with total funding of $13.5 million to support the successful reintegration of individuals returning from incarceration. Eligible applicants are nonprofit organizations and federally-recognized Tribes.

NIH Cancer Research in Geographically Underserved Areas – **May 15.** Part of the National Institutes of Health, the National Cancer Institute will provide funding to current R01 awardees to support cancer control research in areas with high and/or persistent poverty, Health Professional Shortage Areas, or Frontier and Remote Areas of the country.

DOJ Direct Services for Victims of Human Trafficking – **May 18.** The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) will make 30 awards with total funding of $16.5 million to develop, expand, or strengthen victim service programs for victims of human trafficking. Eligible applicants are state, local, and tribal governments, as well as nonprofit/nongovernmental victims' service organizations. Priority will be given to federally-recognized Tribes, applications that address rural community challenges, and applications demonstrating benefit for high-poverty areas.

Delta Regional Authority Economic Development Assistance – **May 31.** State and local governments and nonprofit organizations can apply for funding intended to create jobs and improve infrastructure in the eight states of the Delta Region: Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. The Delta Regional Authority is a federal agency established to improve economic opportunity through local and regional partnerships.

Rural Health Research

Research in this section is provided by the HRSA/FORHP-supported Rural Health Research Gateway. Sign up to receive alerts when new publications become available.

Occupancy Rates in Rural and Urban Hospitals: Measuring Surge Capacity. As policymakers deal with the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on hospital infrastructure, understanding the differences in occupancy rates between rural and urban hospitals may help state and local officials

plan for surge demand. The purpose of this brief is to describe variations in hospital occupancy rates nationally and by state, provide additional data for state and local officials, and highlight challenges in identifying surge capacity.

Policy Updates

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

[CMS Telehealth Tool Kit for General Practitioners](#). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) created a toolkit with information on telehealth and telemedicine, resources for providers who may want to establish a telemedicine program, and temporary telehealth services that can be used to treat patients. [CMS created a separate Telehealth Tool Kit for End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Providers](#).

[CMS Announces Quality Reporting Program Relief in Response to COVID-19](#). In response to COVID-19, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced relief for clinicians, providers, hospitals, and facilities that participate in the [Quality Reporting Programs](#). These updates would apply to rural providers that participate in these programs. For a complete and updated list of CMS actions, and other information specific to CMS, please visit the [Current Emergencies Website](#).

[CMS Information Related to Coronavirus](#). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has a website with guidance and information that is updated daily.

Learning Events and Technical Assistance

[Rural PREP Grand Rounds: Why Do I Teach in Rural Practice?](#) – Thursday, March 26 at 1:00 pm ET. In this one-hour webinar from Rural PREP – the Collaborative for Rural Primary care, Research, Education and Practice – experts will discuss one-on-one teaching and mentorship in rural clinical practice.

[SAMHSA Treatment and Recovery for Older Adults](#) – Thursday, March 26 at 2:00 pm ET. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy (BRSS TACS) invites you to join national experts in a conversation about treatment and recovery services that can best meet the needs of older adults.

[ATTC Peer Recovery Support Series, Section I](#) – Friday, March 27 at 12:00 pm ET. The first part of this series from the Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network (ATTC) will focus on engaging all stakeholders to build a successful organizational culture.

[National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week](#), March 30 - April 5. This week-long event is aimed at raising teenagers' awareness and knowledge of facts about drug and alcohol. Launched in 2010 by scientists at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the annual observance relies on locally-planned school and community events that present scientific facts about drug and alcohol use, what causes addiction, and evidence-based strategies for helping friends or family. NIDA provides an online guide for planning and promoting events, as well as free booklets and other resources for

teens. Research from 2016 showed that [roughly 10% of rural teens meet criteria for alcohol use disorder](#).

[Designing and Implementing Systems for Behavioral Health Crisis](#) – Monday, March 30 at 1:30 pm ET. Experts will discuss elements and best practices for developing a community system of behavioral health practitioners and first responders for a more effective approach to individuals in a behavioral health crisis. The webinar is hosted by the Mental Health Technology Center Network.

[NIH Linking Research to Rural Communities](#) – Tuesday, March 31 at 1:00 pm ET. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences was established to transform the translational science process so that patients with illness and disease can receive new treatments, no matter where they live. In this one-hour session, speakers will describe their efforts to tackle rural health disparities by including rural communities in clinical and public health research.

[AgriSafe: What Ag Producers Need to Know About COVID19](#) – Thursday, April 2 at 1:00 pm ET. The AgriSafe Network will host a one-hour webinar with experts in public health and infectious disease providing information and resources for agricultural workers and rural health care providers. At the end of the webinar, participants will better understand the signs and symptoms of the Coronavirus, appropriate strategies for limiting disease transmission, and how to find local resources.

[NOSORH Rural Health Data Institute](#) – Register by May 1. The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) will hold **a series of 90-minute webinars each week from May 12 to June 30**. Designed for those with limited knowledge of how to use data, the learning sessions will move through the process of collecting data, cleaning it up, and analyzing it in a way that everyone can understand. The Institute is open to rural health professionals, including clinical, administrative, and academic personnel.

Resource of the Week

[Epidemic Preparedness For Community Organizations](#). This training program originally was designed by EDEN (Extension Disaster Education Network), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as Pandemic Preparedness for Faith-based Organizations and other community organizations more broadly to enable them to protect the health of their staff and the communities they serve and to fulfill their mission during a pandemic.