

Maine CDC Rural Health and Primary Care Program

HealthReach Named Maine Rural Health Day Community Star

Since 2011, the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) has set aside the third Thursday of November as National Rural Health Day. This day is an opportunity to honor the incredible efforts of rural health care providers, communities, organizations, State Offices of Rural Health, and other stakeholders dedicated to addressing the unique health care needs of rural America. This year, National Rural Health Day will be celebrated on **November 19, 2026**.

Each year, for National Rural Health Day, NOSORH invites the 50 State Offices of Rural Health and other rural health stakeholders to recognize individuals and organizations making a significant impact in rural health through the Community Star Recognition Program. Since 2015, this program has honored nearly 500 Community Stars across all 50 states, shining a spotlight on those dedicated to making a difference.

The Maine Rural Health and Primary Care Program is delighted to share that it has selected **HealthReach Community Health Centers** as Maine's 2026 Community Star!

Over the next few months, the Maine Rural Health and Primary Program will be visiting each of the HealthReach facilities in the state to congratulate the staff and express our thanks for everything that they do in the rural health care space.

Please visit the NOSORH [website](#) to start planning your National Rural Health Day. The site includes logos, promotional tools, and suggestions for social media posts.



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Interested in Rural Health?

Join the New England Rural Health Association for a day at the [Rural Health Student Summit](#), a unique opportunity designed for students passionate about making a difference in rural health care. Whether you're just beginning your health care journey or preparing to enter the workforce, this event will equip you with the tools, connections, and inspiration to help shape the future of rural health.

Saturday, September 12, 2026, 8:30 am to 3:00 pm,
at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon,
New Hampshire.



2026 NERHA Conference

The [2026 New England Rural Health Association Conference](#), at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord, New Hampshire, on **November 17 and 18**, will explore how innovation, collaboration, and community are shaping the future of rural health.

This year's theme, "Weaving Transformation into the Rural Fabric," celebrates the strength and interconnectedness of rural communities.

The NERHA Annual Conference is a dynamic, cross-sector gathering of rural health leaders and changemakers, including:

- Hospitals and health systems
- Primary care and oral health providers
- Behavioral health professionals
- Human services organizations
- Higher education institutions
- Community leaders, advocates, and policymakers

From big-picture strategy to on-the-ground solutions, this year's sessions and events are designed to interweave knowledge, practice, and connection:

- Learn about innovative models, best practices, and emerging trends
- Discover upcoming funding and grant opportunities
- Share your experiences and lessons learned
- Connect with peers, partners, and new collaborators
- Be inspired by student presentations and research posters
- Engage with sponsors and exhibitors showcasing valuable resources
- Celebrate rural health leaders and champions
- Meet one-on-one with your SORH director

[Register here!](#)



Course: Innovating to Provide Rural Perinatal Care in Challenging Times

The Rural Perinatal Care ECHO will address the special challenges faced by rural and remote rural pregnant and postpartum moms and their care teams. Participants and faculty will explore innovative approaches aimed to resolve current challenges to care. Topics will range from mitigating geographic risk to network development and maintaining access to high-quality maternity and neonatal care in rural communities.

Clinical staff in New Hampshire, Maine, and beyond, primary care teams, ER staff, EMS, ObGyns, midwives, OB nursing staff, pediatricians, doulas, public health nurses, community health workers, administrators, and others with interest.

Learners may claim CME-designated participation credit.

After participating, learners will be able to:

- Describe current challenges and opportunities affecting perinatal care in rural communities.
- Identify innovative models and strategies to address the challenges of perinatal care in rural communities.
- Establish a collaborative learning network that can share ideas and strategize solutions on an ongoing basis.

The registration for this activity is free. To register please visit the [event site](#).

Sessions will take place every **second Tuesday of the month** from **September 8, 2026, through April 13, 2027**, at 12:30–1:30 pm.

For questions, please email ECHO@hitchcock.org or visit the [website](#).

Maine Rural Health Field Guide

Lots of interesting and innovative rural health initiatives, projects, and programs are happening all over the state of Maine, but finding information about them can be challenging.

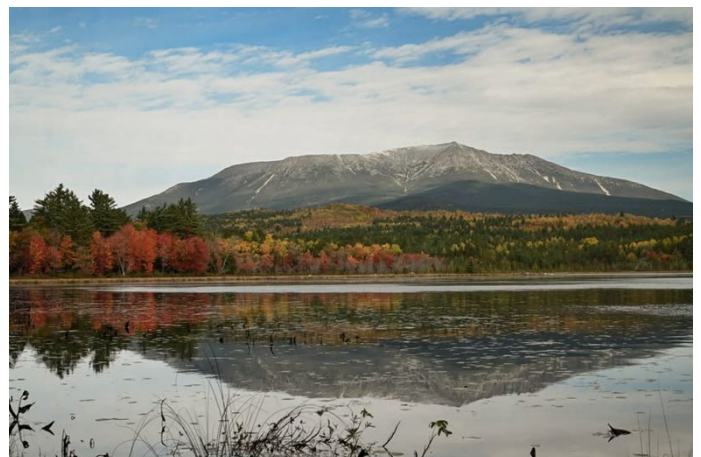
This [Maine Rural Health Field Guide](#) was created to help inform, inspire, and encourage connections among people and organizations who want to improve the health and well-being of people and communities in rural Maine.

The Field Guide is an easy-to-use resource to:

- Locate projects in your region or topic of interest
- Connect with people behind the projects
- Get ideas for new or expanded initiatives
- Learn about funding sources
- Understand the depth, breadth, and impact of rural health activity in Maine
- And much, much more!

In the Resources section, you'll find links to national, regional, and state organizations involved with rural health, upcoming funding opportunities, and valuable tools, articles, and links that support health professionals and community members alike.

To nominate a program for inclusion in the Maine Rural Health Field Guide, [click here](#).



2026 J-1 Conrad Slots Remain Available

The Conrad 30 waiver program allows J-1 foreign medical graduates to apply for a waiver of the 2-year foreign residence requirement upon completion of a residency or fellowship. Each state is allotted 30 waivers for J-1 foreign medical graduates to allow them to remain in the United States if they provide health care in a designated Health Professional Shortage Area or a Medically Underserved Area/Population.

As of this issue, only 19 of the 30 J-1 Conrad 30 slots allotted to Maine have been filled for the 2026 cycle. Eleven positions remain available for any facility interested in hiring a J-1 physician during the 2026 cycle. For more information, please contact this office.

UND Updates Grant-Writing Toolkit

The [University of North Dakota Center for Rural Health](#) has released an updated [Grant Writing Toolkit](#) to help rural communities and organizations navigate the grant-writing process.

The toolkit offers resources to support the development and submission of rural health grant proposals, with information on grant writing, assessing community needs, proposal development, sustainability, funding opportunities, and more. [Learn more about the updated toolkit.](#)

2027 J-1 Conrad Pre-Application Opens October 1

Thirty additional positions in the 2027 cycle will become available to facilities in Maine beginning **October 1**. As in previous years, 10 of these 30 may be flex positions, i.e., not in a designated shortage area. Candidates are allotted on a first come, first served basis.

The coming year's application process will remain very similar to the current process. The two main differences are that:

- Only a single original application packet will be required (no copy required).
- The community letter of support will not be required this year.

An updated Conrad 30 Guide will be made available during September to provide all necessary details on the application process.

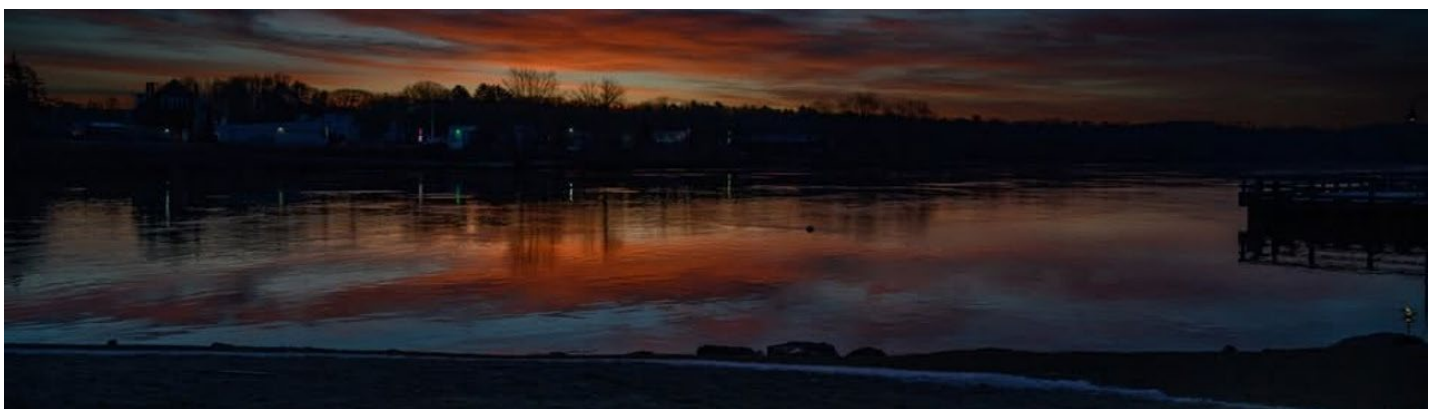
A link to Smartsheet will also be made available later this month.

Pre-applications for 2027 J-1 visa waivers will open at **9:00 am October 1**. Facilities must submit a separate pre-application form via Smartsheet for each physician being considered.

Once a pre-application is approved, the immigration attorney will send the application packet to RHPCP via FedEx or UPS. The application packet is due within three days of approval.

For more information, please contact the RHPCP office.

Please note that RHPCP staff cannot provide any legal advice or consultation.



VET FEST

Last year, Maine was awarded a Rural Veterans Health Access Program grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration. The program will enable a community-driven model of care coordination that reduces barriers for veterans to connect with health care and other services.

The program is being implemented as a collaboration of the Maine Rural Health and Primary Care Program, Somerset Public Health, local providers, hospitals, the VA system, and other partners in and around Somerset County.

On **Saturday, September 12**, Somerset Public Health is presenting the first annual VET FEST, a veteran resource fair taking place at Skowhegan Area High School. The event will be a day-long opportunity to connect veterans and their family members with organizations that support them.

On-sites services will include assistance with enrollment for VA health care and benefits, employment, food security, housing, legal issues, and education.

Among the more than 80 organizations participating will be the Togus VA Medical Center, Veterans Benefits Administration, Maine Bureau of Veteran' Services, Maine Army National Guard, Maine Career Centers, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veterans Upward Bound, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, and many others.

Food trucks, live music, and a Kid Zone will be available to enjoy as well.

Ross Sirois, who also serves in the Maine Army National Guard, is leading the effort at Somerset Public Health. For more information on the event, you can contact Ross at (207) 858-8461 or rsirois@rfgh.net.

2026 MPCA Conference

Join the Maine Primary Care Association at the Samoset Resort in Rockport on **October 14 and 15** for the 2026 Annual Conference. This year's theme is Maine's CHCs: Rooted in Community, Growing Stronger Together.

The conference's target audience consists of health center C-suite, clinical leadership, board members, operational and HR staff, workforce champions, partner organizations, students, legislators, and health care professionals interested in learning more about FQHCs.

Over two days, health center leaders, clinicians, board members, staff, and partners will explore the opportunities and challenges facing Maine's Community Health Centers (CHCs). Through keynote presentations, expert-led sessions, panel discussions, and peer learning, attendees will gain practical strategies, share innovative ideas, and strengthen relationships across Maine's primary care network.

Maine's CHCs make up the largest independent primary care network in the state, providing high-quality and accessible primary and preventive medical, behavioral, and dental health services for over 200,000 Maine people. This conference will celebrate the immense impact that this network has on healthcare across our state and the work that CHC staff do every day to provide compassionate care to everyone who walks through their door.

Whether you're a longtime health center leader or newer to the CHC community, you'll leave with new connections, fresh ideas, and practical tools to support your work.

To view the agenda, click [here](#). Agenda may be subject to change.



NHSC Site Recertification

The National Health Service Corps Site Recertification is now open. As a reminder, the recertification period will close on **September 22, 2026, at 11:59 pm ET**. All NHSC-approved sites with an expiration date of December 31, 2026, must complete recertification to maintain their NHSC Active status.

Here is a [link to training conducted this spring for new site applications](#). The information covered in this training also applies to site recertifications.

If you have any questions, please reach out to your NHSC State Lead for assistance.



Martha Ballard Statue

On August 19, a 12-foot statue of Martha Ballard was unveiled at a ceremony at Mill Park in Augusta. The statue honors the 18th-century midwife and healer whose diary chronicled decades of care for mothers and babies in the Augusta/Hallowell area. By her own estimates, Ballard delivered 816 babies over the course of 27 years.

Writer and professor Laurel Thatcher Ulrich discovered Ballard's diary while working on another project in the 1980s. She became intrigued by the story and spent several years crafting the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, "A Midwife's Tale," which was released in 1990. A few years later, a documentary of the same name was produced for PBS's American Experience. Recently, Ballard's story became the basis of a historical novel, "The Frozen River," by Ariel Lawhon.

Attending the ceremony were three of Ballard's descendants: seventh great-granddaughters Glee and Ruth Ballard and eighth great-granddaughter Major General Diane Dunn. All three relatives also served on the city's memorial committee, who were in attendance as well. The event drew approximately 100 people to commemorate the life of a prolific healer in our community.

Augusta Mayor Mark O'Brien and others addressed the gathering and spoke of the important, often overlooked, work that Ballard did for the community. The event included an appearance by the Southern Maine Nurse Honor Guard, whose members placed roses around the statue, and a reenactor who appeared in period garb from Ballard's day.

The site at Mill Park also features an herb garden containing plants that she used in her practice as described in her diary and a sign with historical high points of Ballard's life.



3RNET

Does your health care facility advertise job opportunities

on www.3rnet.org? If not, here are some benefits to consider:

- The Rural Health and Primary Care Program does not charge health care facilities to enroll in 3RNET to post their jobs.
- 3RNET holds monthly website trainings to show you new features and strategies for recruiting to rural.
- 3RNET offers free resources on recruiting and retention.
- Every October–December, 3RNET hosts the 3RNET Academy, a series of biweekly webinars covering various recruitment and retention strategies.
- The RHPCP sponsors the 3RNET Academy so enrolled facilities in Maine can attend for free.
- Weekly referrals of candidates interested in working in Maine are sent to you.

If you are interested in enrolling in 3RNET, please visit www.3rnet.org and click on REGISTER EMPLOYER in the upper right-hand corner. Please let us know if you have any questions.



Upcoming Events

- Beginning Sep 8: Innovating to Provide Rural Perinatal Care in Challenging Times (through next April)
- Sep 12: VET FEST
- Sep 12: Rural Health Student Summit
- Sep 22: NHSC Site recertification closes
- Oct 1: Conrad 30 J-1 Pre-Application Opens
- Oct 14 & 15: 2026 MPCA Conference
- Nov 1: Daylight Saving Time Ends
- Nov 17 & 18: 2026 NERHA Conference
- Nov 19: National Rural Health Day

Tallo

The Maine Rural Health and Primary Care Program partners with Tallo so that health care facilities in Maine can match opportunities with future health care professionals.

Tallo is a free online career exploration and job-matching platform designed for students and young adults who are exploring education, training, internships, or early-career jobs. Students can take career assessments, build a profile, and apply for scholarships or internships. Job seekers can also use Tallo to match with entry-level jobs or training programs.

Employers and colleges can use Tallo to recruit students and early-career talent. Teachers can request a speaker from Tallo to speak virtually in their classroom to showcase a certain career.

For more information, visit www.tallo.com.



Resources

Rural Recruitment and Retention Network ([3RNET](#))

- Recruitment and retention resources
- Free job board
- Annual 3RNET Recruitment and Retention Academy

HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy ([FORHP](#))

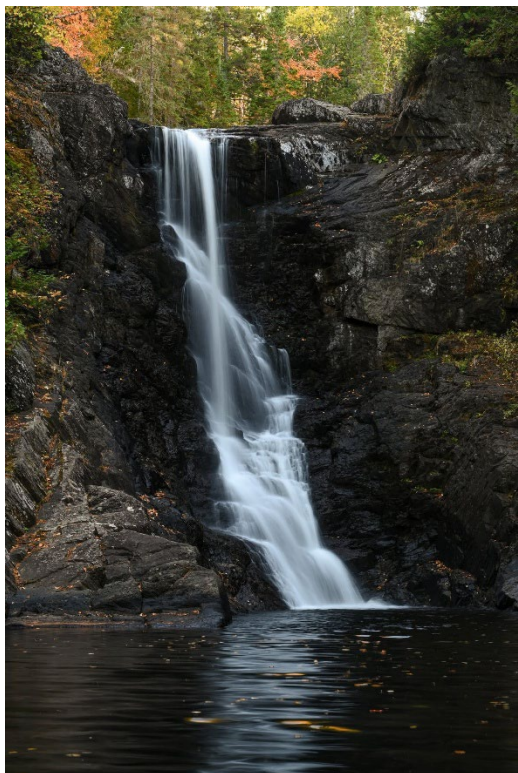
- Targeted Technical Assistance for Rural Hospitals Program ([TTAP](#))
- Rural Health Care Provider Transition Project ([RHPTP](#))
- The [Rural Hospital Stabilization Pilot Program](#)

Maine Health Access Foundation ([MeHAF](#))

- [Responsive Grants Programs](#)
- [Discretionary Grants Program](#)
- [Meeting Support Program](#)
- [Reports and Research](#)

[Maine Rural Health and Primary Care Program](#)

- Funding opportunity announcements
- Rural health updates
- State workforce program updates
- Upcoming webinars and events
- Other rural health resources



Rural Health Information Hub ([RHHub](#))

- Funding opportunities
- Rural data
- Online library
- Articles on rural health issues

[Rural Health Research Gateway](#)

- Anything related to rural health research
- Webinars

United States Department of Agriculture ([USDA](#))

[Maine Dental Directory](#)

- Maine CDC Oral Health Program
- MaineCare Provider Directory

[Maine Rural Health Field Guide](#)

New England Rural Health Association ([NERHA](#))

- [New England Rural Health Association Rural Data Analysis Dashboard](#)

National Rural Health Association ([NRHA](#))

Comments or Questions?

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