

December 4, 2020

Rural Health Information during COVID-19

Dear Rural Stakeholders,

To continue to have consistent and efficient communication to provide rural health stakeholders with the information needed during this global pandemic, here are updates from the rural health programs at the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH).

As mentioned previously, for critical information relating to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), we recommend that you regularly monitor information on the [Iowa Department of Public Health COVID-19 Page](#). In addition, discover the latest resources, maps and information about the coronavirus (COVID-19) on coronavirus.iowa.gov.

For additional resources and updates, see the following pages. Please reach out for technical assistance and for any questions you may have.

We are an ongoing resource for you.

Best,

Rural Health Programs

Iowa Department of Public Health

For questions, contact:

Samra Hiros, MPH

State Office of Rural Health

E-mail: Samra.Hiros@idph.iowa.gov.

Phone: (515) 423-7900



Resources:

America at a Glance: Early Fears Realized as COVID-19 Surges in Rural Counties:

Examines the difference between the expected need for local COVID-19 ICU beds and the number of actual beds available between October 26 - November 8, 2020. Includes a map illustrating the difference at the county level. To read more, see [America at a Glance: Early Fears Realized as COVID-19 Surges in Rural Counties](#).

The Future of State Telehealth Policy: Provides an overview of state and federal telehealth flexibilities implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Discusses long-term considerations for governors regarding the impact of these flexibilities on healthcare delivery and payment and the appropriateness of these policies in the future. To read more, see [The Future of State Telehealth Policy](#).

Re-imagining Leadership: A Pathway for Rural Health to Thrive in a COVID-19 World: A COVID-19 emergency response playbook for rural healthcare delivery systems. Designed to build rural hospital and primary care leadership capacities around strategic thinking and local problem solving. Distills insights from rural hospital administrators, clinicians, and public health experts. Includes an assessment tool to help rural communities examine governance and leadership, community engagement, financial health, clinical care, and emergency preparedness and resilience. To read more, see [Re-imagining Leadership: A Pathway for Rural Health to Thrive in a COVID-19 World](#).

In the News:

Dec 1, 2020 -- [COVID-19 Takes a Holiday? Rural Infection Rate Drops During Thanksgiving Week](#): Analyzes new COVID-19 infection rates between November 22-28, 2020, finds that for the first time in 10 weeks, rural counties saw a decrease in the number of new infections, with a drop of eight percent from the previous week. Discusses how the Thanksgiving holiday could have impacted reporting, as more than a third of U.S. states altered their reporting schedule.

Nov 30, 2020 -- [Primary Care Offices Struggling to Survive During COVID-19](#): Discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted primary care offices and summarizes a study that estimated 16,000 physician practices have closed under the stress of the pandemic, while many more struggle financially. Describes how rural areas are especially impacted, as they already lack an adequate number of healthcare providers.

Nov 27, 2020 -- [Rural Hospitals in Alabama Struggle to Find Enough Nurses to Face COVID-19](#): Describes the challenges an administrator at Choctaw General Hospital faces while trying to recruit nurses in rural Alabama. Discusses how a shortage of nurses makes recruitment difficult,

but the COVID-19 pandemic creates additional challenges, as nurses are in high demand across the entire country and urban hospitals have the resources to pay higher salaries.

Webinar Opportunity:

[The Joint Commission's Health Center Educational Session: Use of Telehealth During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#): **1 - 2 pm CST Thursday, December 10, 2020.** An overview of the expansion of telehealth during COVID-19 and a discussion of The Joint Commission's standards and survey process to evaluate the quality and safety of telehealth services will be discussed.

[The Hidden Farm Crisis: Chronic Stress and Mental Health in Rural Communities](#): **12 -1 pm CST Tuesday, December 15, 2020.** Rural communities often lack access to health services. This barrier, along with cultural expectations of self-sufficiency, isolation, financial strain, and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, has increased stress on communities that were already ill-equipped to cope. In this session, we will discuss these concerns, how the extension system is equipping farmers and their communities, and what we all gain from improved rural community health.

[CMS-CDC Fundamentals of COVID-19 Prevention for Nursing Home Management Live Q&A Sessions](#): **3 - 4 pm CST Thursday, January 7, 2020.** Held with CMS and the CDC twice a month on Thursdays at 3 p.m. to help keep nursing home teams on track with their training. [Sign up to receive training updates](#), including additional resources and tools!