

February 19, 2021

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



2021 Special Enrollment Period for Marketplace Coverage Starts on HealthCare.gov

Monday, February 15: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that the Special Enrollment Period (SEP) for the Health Insurance Marketplace is available for consumers of 36 states from February 15-May 15, 2021. This announcement is in accordance with the Executive Order signed by President Biden to allow those impacted by the COVID-19 Public Health. To read more, see [2021 Special Enrollment Period for Marketplace Coverage Starts on HealthCare.gov Monday, February 15](#).

Resources:

Emergency Medical Services Personnel as Vaccinators: Status by State: Information from all states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and American Samoa, showing scope of practice by level of licensure for paramedics, advanced-emergency medical technicians, emergency medical technicians, emergency medical responders, and other intermediate levels. Features maps with shadings showing whether vaccination administration is always allowed, currently or temporarily allowed, never allowed, or under consideration for administrative or executive action. Information is current as of the first week of February 2021. To read more, see [Emergency Medical Services Personnel as Vaccinators: Status by State](#).

Preliminary Evaluation of Nonresponse Bias Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic on National Health Interview Survey Estimates, April-June 2020: Examines potential nonresponse bias for the National Health Interview Survey associated with a shift to telephone-only interviewing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Includes data on changes in response rates for metropolitan and nonmetro areas. To read more, see [Preliminary Evaluation of Nonresponse Bias Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic on National Health Interview Survey Estimates, April-June 2020](#).

In the News:

Feb 17, 2021 -- [Rural Hospital Remains Entrenched in COVID 'War' Even Amid Vaccine Rollout](#): While the nation's focus shifted to rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, a rural hospital in Louisiana struggled to handle a surge of COVID patients after the holidays. Examines health disparities present in rural communities and describes the burnout healthcare workers are experiencing after months of pandemic stress.

Feb 17, 2021 -- [Rural Transit Systems Must Balance the Safety of Passengers and Drivers](#): Rural transit systems reported over a 50 percent decrease in ridership since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and experience difficulties restoring ridership. Describes how public transit drivers are often part of high-risk groups and that they should be prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine as it is a high-exposure job.

Feb 16, 2021 -- [Expanding Testing on Reservations](#): Highlights researchers who are working on reducing transmission of the COVID-19 virus and increasing COVID-19 testing on the Navajo

Nation. Details the study, which is part of the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics Underserved Populations (RADxSM-UP) program and explores two different ways of encouraging people to get COVID-19 testing.

Feb 15, 2021 -- [Rural Health System Part of Operation Warp Speed Trials for COVID-19](#)

Treatments: Features a rural health system in Upstate New York that is participating in clinical trials for Operation Warp Speed to test treatments for COVID-19. Describes how having clinical trials in rural hospitals helps to reduce disparities between rural and urban hospitals and increase trust in rural communities.

Feb 11, 2021 -- [Veterans in Rural Montana Receive COVID-19 Vaccine via Airplane Delivery:](#)

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) organized a private charter plane to deliver 400 COVID-19 vaccines for high-risk veterans in remote Montana. VA staff from four different locations helped to plan the mass vaccination event and distribute the vaccines to rural veterans.

Feb 10, 2021 -- [In the Rural Race to Distribute COVID Vaccines, a Piecemeal Approach:](#)

Highlights efforts by rural providers to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine to isolated seniors across rural North Carolina, including organizing drive-thru vaccine clinics and utilizing phone trees to inform residents of vaccination events. Addresses challenges in vaccine distribution, such as lack of supply, storage requirements, and transportation barriers.