

June 5, 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](https://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:

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## Resources:

**Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) - Agriculture Workers and Employers: Interim Guidance from CDC and the U.S. Department of Labor:** Presents guidance on preventing the spread of COVID-19 among agricultural workers on farms, ranches, and other sites of agricultural production. Discusses operational planning for cleaning and disinfecting, risk management, and screening. To read more, see [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) - Agriculture Workers and Employers: Interim Guidance from CDC and the U.S. Department of Labor](#).

**Rural Health and COVID-19:** Information to help hospital and health system emergency planners and state and local public health emergency planners understand the challenges rural communities face related to COVID-19. Addresses issues facing healthcare facilities and those related to at-risk residents. Includes proposed solutions and mitigation steps. To read more, see [Rural Health and COVID-19](#).

**COVID-19: Telehealth and Virtual Care Best Practices:** Provides an overview of how hospitals and health systems are using telehealth services and online tools to address COVID-19. Describes how to utilize online assessment tools, remotely care for patients, protect healthcare workers, and leverage telehealth services vendors. Includes links to additional resources throughout. To read more, see [COVID-19: Telehealth and Virtual Care Best Practices](#).

**The Universal Service Fund and COVID-19: The FCC and Industry Response:** Provides an overview of three Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Universal Service Fund programs and actions taken through these programs in response to COVID-19. Describes actions taken through the Rural Health Care Program to promote access to telehealth services during the public health emergency. To read more, see [The Universal Service Fund and COVID-19: The FCC and Industry Response](#).

**Projected Deaths of Despair from COVID-19:** Report looks at the potential effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the rates of deaths of despair, or those related to drugs, alcohol, and from suicide. Discusses potential increases in rates and details a number of policy solutions to prevent an increase in deaths. To read more, see [Projected Deaths of Despair from COVID-19](#).

**NRHA COVID-19 Technical Assistance Center:** Supports the needs of rural providers and communities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Assists rural healthcare organizations through financial consultations, operational support, and help obtaining essential medical resources, including Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). To read more, see [NRHA COVID-19 Technical Assistance Center](#).

**COVID-19 Survey Activities, CARES Act Funding, Enhanced Enforcement for Infection Control Deficiencies, and Quality Improvement Activities in Nursing Homes:** Provides guidance to state survey agencies on nursing home infection control surveys in response to COVID-19, CARES Act funding, enhanced enforcement for infection control deficiencies, and Quality Improvement Organization support in preventing COVID-19 transmission in nursing homes. In the News. To read more, see [COVID-19 Survey Activities, CARES Act Funding, Enhanced Enforcement for Infection Control Deficiencies, and Quality Improvement Activities in Nursing Homes](#).

### **In the News:**

Jun 3, 2020 -- Interactive map shows new cases of COVID-19 in nonmetro counties for the month of May. Analysis finds 352 rural counties reported no additional cases in May, but other rural parts of the country, including the Navajo nation, were among the hardest hit and deadliest. To read more, see [Rural Counties Rank Among Best – and Worst – for Infections in May](#).

Jun 2, 2020 -- The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) created the Rural COVID-19 Technical Assistance Center to help rural providers overcome barriers they face during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Technical Assistance Center will focus on finance/reimbursement and operations/supplies, assessing and triaging needs to ensure rural communities are equipped with knowledge, resources, and connections. To read more, see [NRHA Creates Rural COVID-19 Technical Assistance Center](#).

Jun 1, 2020 -- Jackman Community Health Center in rural Maine implemented a new model that recruits paramedics to work under remote direction of its doctors so they can continue to offer on-call overnight care during the coronavirus pandemic. Describes how the program could recruit more primary care providers to the area and be replicated in other rural communities. To read more, see [A Remote Part of Maine May Have Found a Way to Save Access to 24/7 Healthcare](#).

Jun 1, 2020 -- Discusses research that shows suicide rates in America have been rising for the past two years and are expected to continue to rise during the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts and researchers explain how a lack of access to mental healthcare in rural areas and a combination of economic failure, unemployment, social isolation, and uncertainty could result in additional deaths of despair. To read more, see [Rural America Could See Dramatic Rise in Mental Health Issues and Suicides, Experts Say](#).

May 28, 2020 -- Explores the future of healthcare post COVID-19, discusses how changes in telehealth improved patient access to care and will continue to do so. Describes the negative impact of the pandemic on rural hospitals, but explains how our healthcare system can learn

from the public health emergency. To read more, see [Rebuilding America: What Will Health Care Look Like After COVID-19?](#)

May 27, 2020 -- Highlights maternity care providers across the U.S. that offer virtual visits and at-home monitoring for expecting mothers and how they have scaled up these efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Discusses policy changes necessary to support telematernity care. To read more, see [Maternity Care, Interrupted](#).

## **Webinars:**

[The American Heart Association](#) is hosting its second **COVID-19: A Focus on the Impact in Appalachian and Rural Communities** webinar. The webinar will be on **Tuesday, June 9<sup>th</sup> from 11:00am – 12:00 pm (CST)**, and will focus on the economic impacts of the pandemic on the Appalachian and rural communities. To register for this webinar, click on: [https://heart.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_h-F6INUVTIqq7Im3fQNVjQ](https://heart.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_h-F6INUVTIqq7Im3fQNVjQ) to join this important conversation.

[SAMHSA Best Practices/ Preventing Suicide Among Veterans](#) – **Tuesday, June 10 at 12:30 pm CST**. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has a center dedicated to Service Members, Veterans, and their Families called SMVF. During this two-hour webinar, the SMVF Technical Assistance Center will focus on the core elements of their process for finding community service gaps and opportunities for intervening and responding to crises.

[RWJF: Using Data to Address Income Inequality](#) – **Tuesday, June 16 at 2:00 pm CST**. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) will share data tools for using key social and financial health indicators to address income inequality at the local level.