October 30, 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:

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Update:

All RHC Administrators and Managers that received funding ($49, 416), for COVID19 testing and related expenses, have received recent email communication from FORHP reminding them of the reporting requirements related to receiving this funding. There are a brief set of measures that funded RHCs report back to HRSA at the Tax Identification Number (TIN) level which includes basic information on the RHC organization, the number of and location of testing sites (active and inactive), information on the use of funds, the total number of tests conducted, and the number of COVID-19 positive tests. If you are interested in receiving the emails sent by FORHP to the RHCs you can subscribe to the RHC COVID-19 Testing Program mailing list, by clicking here. An upcoming reporting deadline is **October 31, 2020.**

- **RHC COVID-19 testing (required) Reporting Portal:** https://www.rhccovidreporting.com
- **RHC COVID-19 testing Reporting Process Tool: Assists RHCs with registering on the NARHC reporting portal** https://www.narhc.org/Document.asp?DocID=9163
- **HRSA COVID-19 testing FAQs:** https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions
- **NARHC COVID-19 testing FAQs:** https://www.rhccovidreporting.com/faq/
- Clinics can email the NOSORH team if they have any questions: rhccovidtestinginfo@nosorh.org

Resources:

Association Between Social Vulnerability and a County's Risk for Becoming a COVID-19 Hotspot — United States, June 1–July 25, 2020: Examines associations between social vulnerability and COVID-19 hotspot locations, based on June 1–July 25, 2020 county-level COVID-19 cases and data from the 2018 CDC social vulnerability index. Includes data by level of urbanicity for large metropolitan, small/medium metro, and nonmetro counties. Looks at both social vulnerability overall and specific components, including racial/ethnic minority population, percent of residents who speak English less than well, and housing and transportation vulnerability. To read more, see Association Between Social Vulnerability and a County's Risk for Becoming a COVID-19 Hotspot — United States, June 1–July 25, 2020.

Coronavirus Pandemic Highlights Critical Gaps in Rural Internet Access for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers: A Call for Partnership with Medical Libraries: Highlights the challenges of reaching migrant and seasonal farmworkers with public health information during the COVID-19 pandemic. Discusses migrants' lack of broadband internet as an inhibitor to migrants' ability to access both healthcare and public health information. To read more, see Coronavirus Pandemic Highlights Critical Gaps in Rural Internet Access for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers: A Call for Partnership with Medical Libraries.

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of PUBLIC HEALTH

Medicare and Home Health: Taking Stock in the COVID-19 Era: Provides an overview of the Medicare home health benefit including Medicare financing, demographics of beneficiaries, and the home health workforce. Describes the impact of COVID-19 on the utilization home health services and regulatory changes taken in response to the pandemic. Offers policy recommendations to increase the value of home health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. To read more, see [Medicare and Home Health: Taking Stock in the COVID-19 Era](#).

COVID-19 Funding Sources Impacting Rural Providers: This funding resource is intended to support rural health care providers navigate the availability of federal funds to support the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic response and recovery efforts. This guide is updated regularly to capture changes in funding sources. To read more, see [COVID-19 Funding Sources Impacting Rural Providers](#).

In the News:

Oct 27, 2020 -- [Rural Counties Have 5th Consecutive Week of Record-Setting COVID Rates](#): Analyzes new COVID-19 infection rates between October 18-24, 2020. Findings show that rural counties had a record number of cases, making it the fifth consecutive week that rural counties have seen a record-setting increase in infections. Includes an interactive map of new infections for each U.S. county, as well as additional findings.

Oct 26, 2020 -- [Minn. Nursing Homes in Rural Areas See Staff Shortages Worsen with COVID-19:](#) Describes how the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the Midwest has exacerbated a workforce shortage in rural Minnesota nursing homes. Since May, 55 facilities have called for emergency staffing, reaching out to those laid off in the healthcare industry. Addresses how COVID fatigue or burnout has led many experienced workers to leave as well.

Oct 22, 2020 -- [COVID-19 Surges in Rural Communities, Overwhelming Some Local Hospitals:](#) Rural areas across the U.S. experience a spike in COVID-19 infections, while small hospitals lack the capacity and resources to handle a surge of patients. As healthcare workers are exposed to the virus while out in the community, staffing becomes an issue, and larger hospitals do not have enough staffed ICU beds to handle transferred COVID patients.

Oct 22, 2020 -- [Rural Public Libraries as Telehealth Providers During COVID-19](#): Commentary discusses the important role that libraries play in providing Internet access in rural and low-income communities. Highlights a public library in Pottsboro, Texas that offers telehealth services to its patrons during the COVID-19 pandemic, acting as a blueprint for other rural libraries and community sites that could provide telehealth services.

Oct 21, 2020 -- [Building Blocks for Rural Payment and Delivery Models During COVID-19 and Beyond:](#) Blog post discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problems rural hospitals face, especially as rural counties see infection rates rise. Highlights three critical

building blocks for rural payment and delivery models: stability, including reliability of income and security that the funds are adequate; connectedness through telehealth support; and flexibility in allowing hospitals to tailor activities to local needs.

Oct 20, 2020 -- [Rural U.S. Hospitals Are on Life Support as a Third Wave of COVID-19 Strikes](): A struggling rural hospital in Georgia is set to close in October after experiencing severe financial setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, joining 11 other facilities in rural parts of the U.S. that have closed since March 2020. Describes the pandemic's impact on hospitals across the country and discusses how federal stimulus relief packages and Medicaid expansion has helped keep facilities afloat.

Webinar Opportunity:

[COVID-19 and Native American Health: How Tribal Leaders Are Beating Back the Virus]() on **November 9, 2020 from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. CST.** U.S. News and World Report. For more information, contact: pbowes@usnews.com

Recording:

National Association of RHCs (NARHC) webinar (recording from 10/6): *Navigating RHC COVID Reporting Requirements*. https://www.narhc.org/Document.asp?DocID=9146