

Gloria Vermie RN, MPH

Gloria Vermie is the director of the Iowa State Office of Rural Health. She also is serving as a Region C representative on the NOSORH Board this year.

Your SORH is currently engaged with several statewide partnerships, including the Iowa Rural HIT Collaborative and the Iowa VA Research Center. What is your role, as a SORH director, in fostering and sustaining partnership activities?

SORHs seem to have a talent for bringing people together for a cause, effort or project. When partnerships become strong collaborative efforts, personal relations and camaraderie often form, which sustain the partnerships. It is important to have others to call on and rely on. In turn, it is more important to be the resource and go-to person for your partners, stakeholders and constituents. Our partnerships are ongoing and spontaneous. On any given day, we reach out to each other for support and consultation, and sometimes just to say-"Hey, how are you doing?"

What are the benefits of partnership?

For the last two years the IA SORH has partnered with the Iowa Healthcare Collaborative (IHC) to implement the PFP (Partnership for Patients) program here. Involvement on the PFP advisory board and committees has helped ensure that rural hospitals are included and involved; IHC includes the SORH on their Board, in strategic planning and as a presenter at their annual conferences. In our partnership with Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, the IA SORH participates on the Board and two committees. This partnership has resulted in rural providers being included in a yearly agricultural medical training course that helps providers to better diagnosis, treat and identify ag-related health risks.

What makes a successful partnership?

Wanting to be a partner and understanding the partnership's mutual needs can help initiate and grow the partnership. Also it helps if you can consistently be "at the table."

How important do you think partnerships are to the success of a SORH?

My experience is that very little can be done alone. Most SORHs do not have the funding, staff and time. In the work world of rural health, partnerships are like family, they are your foundation.