

Mark your Calendar!



The Branch

An Update for State Offices of Rural Health and our Partners

September, 2013

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September 5

- RHC Committee (1pm EDT)
- Webinar: Mental Health First Aid Training and Resources for Rural Communities (2pm EDT)
- Joint Committee on Rural Emergency Care (JCREC) Committee (3pm EDT)

September 10

- Development Committee (2pm EDT)

September 11-12

- New SORH Orientation – Rockville, MD

September 17

- Webinar: FORHP Network Development Grant Overview for SORHs (3pm EDT)

September 19

- Learning Community: ACA (Health Insurance Marketplaces and Medicaid Expansion) (2pm EDT)

September 22

- Policy Committee (2pm EDT)

September 23

- Learning Community: TruServe uses for PIMS and FLEX reporting (3pm EDT)

September 24

- Communications Committee (1pm EDT)
- Education Exchange Committee (2pm EDT)

September 26

- Flex Committee (3pm EDT)
- Learning Community: Working with Rural Veterans (2pm EDT)

September 30

- Learning Community: Integrating Primary Care and Public Health (2pm EDT)

Region B Attendees Go to the Hospital

In addition to hearing speakers discuss topics ranging from patient centered medical homes to economic development initiatives, attendees at the Region B meeting got an up close and personal look at a local Critical Access Hospital (CAH).

Marcum and Wallace Memorial Hospital, in Irvine, is one of the few CAHs in the state with a trauma designation, and was recently named one of the [top CAHs](#) in the country. The group was welcomed by hospital CEO Susan Starling during a working luncheon. After hearing presentations on topics including rural health networks and hospital quality performance, the group toured the hospital and witnessed a mock trauma drill.

Through an ongoing partnership, the KY SORH has supported and assisted the hospital in obtaining outreach, network and development grants from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. "We wanted to take this opportunity to showcase the achievements of Susan and her staff," said Larry Allen, director of the Kentucky Office of Rural Health (KY SORH). Congratulations to the Kentucky Office for a great meeting.



SORH staff from Region B states and others convened in Lexington, KY., last month, where they took a field trip to a local hospital in addition to other meeting activities.



Region C Meets in Omaha



SORH staff from IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, OH and WI gathered last month for the Region C annual meeting, along with staff from FORHP, NOSORH and RAC.

Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), stroke prevention, the advantages and disadvantages of focus groups, and the Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project (MBQIP) were among the topics presented at the Region C Grantee Meeting in Omaha, NE., August 20th - 21st.

Highlights of the meeting included:

- [Don Rice, M.D.](#), Nebraska physician and consultant, and Peggy Jones, Stroke and STEMI Consultant for Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network (ICAHN), discussed [STEMI and stroke initiatives](#)
- Tracy Morton, MPH, of the National Rural Health Resource Center, spoke about [Facilitating Focus Groups](#)
- Megan Meacham and David Dietz, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, talked about [Learning from MBQIP](#)

Please visit our [News & Events](#) section to learn about these and additional upcoming events.

National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health

Annual Meeting
October 28-30, 2013
Asheville, North Carolina

Steal This!

The September Steal Sheet includes selected articles from this issue written in a more generic format, so that they may be used in newsletters, blogs, web pages, etc. NOSORH members are free to use and distribute any item from the Steal Sheet. This month's Steal Sheet includes additional resources and information on upcoming trainings.

In the September 2013 Steal Sheet:

- Michigan Network Puts Emphasis on Rural Health Clinic Quality
- NOSORH Award Nominations Deadline Nears
- NOSORH Grant Writing Institute Begins in October
- VA eHealth Presentation on Chronic Pain Management: Meeting the Challenge in Rural Settings
- Enroll America
- Support for Rural Providers During ACA Marketplace Rollout

The September Steal Sheet is available from the NOSORH Steal Sheets section on the [NOSORH Toolkits](#) page.

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For questions, comments or ideas for Branch articles, please contact Beth Blevins, Branch editor at bethb@nosorh.org. For questions about Branch distribution, please contact Paige Law at paigel@nosorh.org.

Policy Committee Update: Response to the OIG Report

NOSORH, NRHA and other partners have been sharing resources to support CAH response to the HHS [OIG report on CAHs](#). We've sent out the full report and the list of CAHs OIG determined would not meet the distance criteria and rural location requirement. We've heard from partners about the impact of the closing on Rural Health Clinics (provider-based RHCs could be subject to a cap on reimbursement). Other resources on this topic include:

an [article](#) from our friends at the National Association of EMS Officials; a [transcript of the OIG podcast](#); and the [NRHA response](#) to the OIG report.

NOSORH's response includes an effort to disseminate information to Hill staffers about the role of the states, the necessary provider designations, the importance of state expertise and input in the designation process, and the impact of any changes on other providers.

We've heard from at least 23 SORHs that they and their state partners are getting the word out to CAHs. We need to hear from all SORHs about their efforts.

SORHs and their state partners can also get the word out that sign-on letters in the House and Senate are being circulated by Reps McKinley (R-WV) and Kind (D-WI) and Senators Baldwin (D-WI) and Crapo (R-ID).

One Month Left to Make NOSORH Award Nominations

People love to celebrate—a quick Google search will bring up reasons to celebrate every day of the year. For instance, September 22nd is the Autumnal Equinox and also Elephant Appreciation Day. March 16th is Freedom of Information Day, Everything You Do is Right Day, as well as the birthday of our fearless leader,

NOSORH President Scott Ekblad! And on October 30th, we will celebrate Candy Corn Day, Haunted Refrigerator Night and, most importantly, ourselves. On that day, the NOSORH Awards will be presented at the Annual NOSORH meeting. Get your thinkin' caps on, click the link below to nominate your colleagues and peers, and give them a

big reason to celebrate on that day! For a complete list of NOSORH Awards, visit the [Awards Committee](#) page. To make a nomination online, please click [here](#). **All nominations are due by 5 PM (EDT) October 1, 2013.** For more information, contact Sharla Allen at sharla.allen@health.wyo.gov.

Volunteers Sought for TruServe Advisory Committee

Are you using TruServe? Want to help make it even better? NOSORH is looking for volunteers to serve on its TruServe Advisory Committee (TAC). The purpose of TAC will be to provide advice and support for TruServe users. Committee members are expected to give staff feedback, recommend new features and enhancements to existing features, and promote the value of TruServe as a tool to new and existing users.

[TruServe](#) is a web-based activity

tracking system run by University of North Dakota's Center for Rural Health that allows users to add, update, and report activities and their impacts using a series of easy-to-use forms. NOSORH provides guidance on the direction of TruServe, while facilitating the process for TruServe client enrollment. "We've heard from several SORHs on how easy TruServe is to use," said Teryl Eisinger, NOSORH Executive Director. "Some SORHs say it takes only them five minutes now to run a PIM report when they use it."

The time commitment for committee participation is one year. Members are expected to attend two to four meetings per year, held via webinar. As specific issues or initiatives arise, members may be asked to occasionally provide feedback via email/phone.

For more information or to volunteer for the committee, please contact Matt Strycker, NOSORH Special Projects Coordinator, at (574) 855-4671 or stryckerm@nosorh.org.

NOSORH Grant Writing Institute Begins Next Month

Grant writing is more competitive than ever, according to Kassie Clarke of [Grant Expectations](#). "Funders are under pressure to demonstrate value on the money distributed to communities," Clarke said. "Not only is a strong application important, but it is increasingly important to show strong partnerships and demonstrated need within the communities to be served." Clarke will discuss all aspects of grants when she leads the NOSORH

Grant Writing Institute (GWI) this year. The introductory-level series of webinar classes will cover the basics of rural health grant writing, including writing proposals, finding funding and using data.

GWI will run from October 3, 2013 to February 20, 2014. Registration closes October 1st. Space in the class is limited and early registration is recommended. To register, click [here](#). If your SORH is interested in offering

scholarships to rural constituents to attend the GWI, please contact Matt Strycker (stryckerm@nosorh.org) for additional details.

In addition, for the first time, GWI is offering an intermediate-level "Beyond the Basics" Mini Institute in March 2014. Additional information and registration for this course will be available later in the fall.

Celebrate Rural: Share Your Community Success Stories!

Sharing rural success stories is now a traditional part of the National Rural Health Day (NRHD) celebration – a tradition we've made even easier this year by creating a [Community Success Story Tip Sheet](#), which includes valuable advice on collecting and sharing stories with us and others. Other materials recently added to the NRHD website include a [Media Release Template](#) to alert media contacts

about NRHD, as well as a [Partners/Sponsors Media/Newsletter Release Template](#) that others can use to promote NRHD among their members and colleagues. There's also a [PowerPoint Presentation Template](#) available for you to use when making your own NRHD presentation!

Be sure to visit the [NRHD website](#) on a regular basis for updates. You can also contact NRHD Coordinator Bill Hessert

at (814) 231-1213 or billh@nosorh.org for more information.



Register Now for the NOSORH Annual Meeting



"Photo courtesy of www.ExploreAsheville.com."

We're gearing up for a fantastic NOSORH Annual Meeting in the N.C. mountains in October—you don't want to miss it! We'll discuss topics like Recruitment and Retention and Promising Practices for Rural Health, and view the Hawaii Primary Care Association's movie [Ola-Health is Everything](#).

Register online now by clicking [here](#). (Or, you can click [here](#) to get a pdf registration form). Registration deadline is September 27th. Reminder: if you can't get everyone from your SORH to the meeting, register for the "virtual meeting." (This option is available to SORHs sending at least one person to Asheville). For a list of virtual sessions, check for the  symbol on the meeting [Agenda](#). For more information on the Annual Meeting, please contact Donna Pfaendtner, NOSORH Administrator, at donna@nosorh.org.

Promising Practices

Michigan RHC Network Puts Emphasis on Quality

Peer-to-peer sharing is one of the benefits of the Michigan Rural Health Clinic Quality Network (MI RHC QN), sponsored by the Michigan Center for Rural Health (MCRH). What started as a small, informal quality network with only 15 active members in June 2011 has continued to grow and gain enthusiastic members. Today, representatives from over 50 of Michigan's 170 clinics participate in the network and attend its quarterly meetings held in Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

"When members want to talk about quality improvement initiatives in their clinics, we make sure they're on the agenda," said Crystal Barter, MCRH Health Systems Development Coordinator, who coordinates the network. "It doesn't matter what initiative they choose, as long as it has made an impact in their clinic and they feel their peers would benefit from listening to it."

The quality network is part of the MCRH's recent effort to ramp up their work with RHCs, which also includes a focus on ICD-10 and practice management, according to John Barnas, director of the MCRH. In the past year, MCRH has been going through a process of getting clinics to collect a cohesive set of data, Barnas said. This has become increasingly important because insurance companies are giving RHCs incentive payments based on data and because of the implementation of meaningful use standards for Medicaid patients.

MCRH looked at a core group of RHCs in the quality network and compared what they were doing with various initiatives, and came up with a set of Quality Assessment Performance Improvement Measures. The measures include three core measures that network members must collect at minimum—for high blood pressure, tobacco use, and BMI (body mass index). (An Excel file of the measures is available on the [RHC section of the MCRH web site](#)).

Participation in the MI RHC QN and its quality collection is voluntary. "There's no monetary incentive right now," Barnas said. "These people are driven to do the right thing. We pay for their travel and buy them lunch. They like having the chance to get together. But we think eventually CMS is going to require this type of thing—to prove you've had some kind of impact."

If other SORHs are interested in sponsoring a RHC quality network, Barnas suggests that they use their annual rural health conferences to convene a meeting for it. There's a tool already out there for them to dump and track their data in real time, he said, called [Quality Health Indicators](#) (QHI).

Nominating Committee News

Our thanks to the NOSORH Nominating Committee, which has developed a slate of candidates for next year's NOSORH positions. The committee is chaired by John Barnas (MI), with members including Ernie Scott (KY), Joyce Hospodar (AZ), Melinda Merrell (SC) and Sara Roberts (KS). Mary Sheridan (ID) has been nominated as NOSORH President-Elect and Scott Daniels (HI) has been nominated to serve a

second term on the Executive Committee as Secretary. A letter informing SORH directors of the election procedures and candidate qualifications was sent on August 29th. SORH directors and their staff should plan for proxies at the annual meeting to vote on these positions if they won't be present for the vote.

Enroll America Web Site Offers ACA Resources

[Enroll America](#) is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to maximize the number of uninsured Americans who enroll in health coverage made available by the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Enroll America is a collaborative organization, working with partners that span the gamut of stakeholders—insurers, hospitals, doctors, pharmaceutical companies, employers, consumer groups, and philanthropies—to engage many different voices in support of an easy, accessible, and widely available enrollment process.

The Enroll America web site offers many resources for outreach and enrollment assistance related to the Affordable Care Act, including:

- [Get Covered America](#) lets consumers and volunteers find information on health coverage options by searching for resources by zip codes, lists benefits and coverage under the ACA, and offers a complimentary Get Covered America Digital Toolkit for volunteers.
- [State Profiles](#) offers profiles for each state including information on Health Insurance Marketplaces, maps of uninsured residents, and state-level assistance including navigators and advisory committees.
- [Best Practices Institute](#) offers an online library of publications and presentations for stakeholders from Enroll America and other policy experts related to the best practices in outreach, enrollment, and retention.