

Mark your Calendar!



The Branch

An Update for State Offices of Rural Health and our Partners

April 2011

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April 5

- RHC TA Advisory Team (2:00 p.m. EDT)
- Development Committee (3:00 p.m. EDT)

April 7

- Joint Committee on Rural Emergency Care (3:00 p.m. EDT)

April 13

- Communications Committee (3:00 p.m. EDT)

April 19

- Policy Committee (2:00 p.m. EDT)

April 26

- Communications Committee (3:00 p.m. EDT)

April 27

- Educational Exchange Committee (2:00 p.m. EDT)

April 28

- Webinar: "Stayin' Alive" in These Economic Times (1:30 p.m. EDT)
- FLEX Committee (3:00 p.m. EDT)

May 3

- RHC TA Advisory Team (2:30 p.m. CDT, Hilton Austin, Austin, Texas)

May 4

- NOSORH Membership Meeting (1:45 p.m. CDT, Hilton Austin, Austin, Texas)

See Y'all in Austin ...

Heading to NRHA's 34th Annual Rural Health Conference in Austin, Texas? Then join us for the **NOSORH Membership Meeting** tentatively scheduled to take place at 1:45 p.m. CDT on **Wednesday, May 4**. A meeting agenda is available in the [Calendar of Events](#) section of the NOSORH website.

NOSORH will also be hosting a display table throughout the conference. Please add your name to the [Volunteer Sign-up Sheet](#) if you would be willing and able to help staff the display. Also plan to bring your SORH information to display at the NOSORH table – or contact [Stephanie Hansen](#) as soon as possible if you won't be attending

the conference but would still like to display your information.

Finally, please encourage your partners to attend the **State Offices of Rural Health: Get to Know Your Partners** session scheduled to take place at the NRHA conference at 10:15 a.m. CDT on Thursday, May 5.

Colorado Rural Health Center to Host NOSORH 2011 Annual Meeting

Please mark your calendars – and invite your partners to attend – the **2011 NOSORH Annual Meeting** taking place September 7-8 in Denver, Colorado. Those who are interested should also plan to stay for the post-conference **EMS Learning Session** scheduled for September 8-9.

"The Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) is thrilled to be hosting NOSORH's Annual Meeting this year," says Cari Fouts, CRHC's director of communication and development. "If you haven't experienced September in the Rocky Mountains, you're in for

a treat. The weather is warm in the daytime and just starting to get crisp in the evenings. And with the Labor Day holiday right before the conference, this is the perfect opportunity for those of you looking to extend your trip!"

This year's conference will feature a host of informative sessions and networking opportunities designed to help you cultivate partnerships, enhance the technical assistance capacity of your SORH and celebrate The Power of Rural! A draft agenda is available for review in the [Upcoming Events](#) section of the

NOSORH website. Be sure to check it out and let [Stephanie Hansen](#) know what you think.



NOSORH Policy Committee Update

Things continue to be in a state of flux – and changing daily – in Washington regarding the budgets for this year and next. Rural health-related "direct hits" in President Obama's 2012 HRSA budget include the elimination of the State Health Access Grants (\$75 million) that go to about 13 states; and

the elimination of the Small Hospital Improvement Program (\$15 million).

The NOSORH Board and Policy Committee will continue to strategize and respond as needed to ongoing budget discussions. In the meantime, please make sure that your senators and representative understand the

importance of rural funding in your state. Feel free to contact either [Lisa Davis](#) or [Mark Schoenbaum](#), your Policy Committee co-chairs, if you need any help preparing for those conversations. You can also use the [SORH Profile Directory and Survey Results](#) as a resource.

Rural Health Clinic Technical Assistance Resources Available

Last month's Rural Health Clinic (RHC) virtual conference, **Understanding RHCs and How to Work with Them**, was an overwhelming success! More than 31 states participated in the three-day conference featuring a mix of discussions, resources and networking opportunities. Viewable recordings and presentations from the conference are available in the [Past Webinar Materials](#)

section of the NOSORH website.

NOSORH has a host of additional RHC technical assistance resources available to members. For example, the first three modules in the **Working with Rural Health Clinics** educational series are available for downloading in the [Member Resources/Toolkits](#) section of the website. Travel scholarships offered through the NOSORH Educational

Exchange program also give members an excellent opportunity to visit and learn from SORHs already providing technical assistance to RHCs in their states. Visit the [Travel Scholarships](#) section of the website to complete an application and obtain additional information.

Please contact NOSORH Education Coordinator [Stephanie Hansen](#) to learn more about these resources.

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

Webinar to Provide Tips on “Stayin’ Alive”

Is it becoming increasingly difficult for your SORH to keep its head above water in this era of budget cuts and economic uncertainty? Wondering what other SORHs are doing to keep their heads above water? Then join us for our next educational Webinar, “Stayin’ Alive” in *These Tough Economic Times*, at 1:30 p.m. EDT on Thursday, April 28.

Additional information will soon be available in the [Upcoming Events](#) section of the NOSORH website. You can also contact [Stephanie Hansen](#) for additional information.

Save These Dates

May 24-25

ORHP Region D Meeting
(Henderson, Nevada)

June 13-15

ORHP Region A Meeting
(Bar Harbor, Maine)

July 27-28

ORHP Region E Meeting
(Juneau, Alaska)

August 1-3

ORHP Region B Meeting
(Tampa/St. Petersburg, Florida)

August 10-11

ORHP Region C Meeting
(Indianapolis, Indiana)

September 7-8

NOSORH Annual Meeting
(Denver, Colorado)

September 8-9

Rural EMS Learning
Session (Denver, Colorado)

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NOSORH Seeks to Offer State Rural Health Plan Assistance

In an ongoing effort to meet the technical assistance needs of SORHs, NOSORH recently contracted with **Kassie Clarke** of Grant Expectations to develop a template that SORHs can use to complete their state rural health plans.

Kassie is no stranger to NOSORH, having served as the community grants coordinator for the Oregon Office of Rural Health before launching her own consulting firm. In addition to managing Oregon’s Flex and SHIP grants, Kassie wrote the Oregon State Rural Health Plan.

“I’m excited to help NOSORH create a template that will enable SORHs

to fully utilize rural health plans as a strategic planning document for SORH activities,” Kassie says.

NOSORH will convene (and Kassie will facilitate) a meeting of SORH leaders before the NRHA conference in order to document exemplary state rural health plans examples; identify and implement a data collection plan; and develop a plan for meeting the technical assistance needs of SORHs in this area.

Kassie would also like to collect a sampling of previously prepared state rural plans to review. Please [email Kassie directly](#) if you are willing to share your state’s plan with her.

NOSORH especially wishes to thank **Graham Adams** and the **South Carolina Office of Rural Health** for the vision and funding that have made this project possible.



Work Nearly Complete on Community Assessment Template

The National Center for Rural Health Works has nearly completed work on a template for SORHs, hospital administrators and others to use to meet their community assessment requirements.

According to [Gerald Doeksen](#), center director and Regents professor of agricultural economics at Oklahoma State University, Rural Health Works completed a first draft of the template

and has been testing it with two hospitals in Kansas. “We’re modifying the template based on what we’ve learned and hope to have a revised template ready to share with our national advisory team within the next week.”

NOSORH Director Teryl Eisinger is part of the national advisory team helping Rural Health Works design and review the community assessment template.

NOSORH and Rural Health Works will hold a Webinar in the very near future to share the revised template with SORHs and discuss how to utilize it most effectively when completing community assessments. Stay tuned!

A summary of some of the community assessment work currently being completed by SORHs can be found in the [Member Resources/Reports](#) section of the NOSORH website.

Update on MUA/HPSA Negotiated Rulemaking Committee Activities

[Charles Owens](#), executive director of the **Georgia State Office of Rural Health**, currently serves on the **HRSA Negotiated Rulemaking Committee to Review Criteria for the Designation of Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs) and Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs)**. Charles recently provided the following update.

The Rulemaking Committee continues to make progress on evaluating potential measures to be used as a core set for impact testing. Because of the numerous factors to consider, subcommittees have been designated to advance this work more swiftly. Current subcommittees include data, barriers and facility designations; others will be created as issues are identified.

Work groups address various topics and report back to the group. The Committee typically gains consensus on specific elements to move the process along to evaluation; after evaluation, the Committee again seeks consensus on the measures.

Deliberations to date have led to preliminary agreements on certain key concepts:

- Evaluating shortages in rational service areas that recognize how healthcare services are organized locally;
- Maintaining separate designations for, and weighting factors differently to achieve the distinct goals of, HPSAs and MUAs;
- Including factors that reflect the health status of the population and correlate socio-economic factors

with health status and barriers to care;

- Developing a streamlined processing option for special populations with widely recognized health status and access problems;
- Accounting for the range of primary care providers who serve a population;
- Ensuring that the need/demand component of any methodology is age- and sex-adjusted to recognize differences in utilization; and
- Considering options for facility designations.

The Committee anticipates asking HRSA for a deadline extension that will enable the group to complete this fall. Please feel free to call (229.401.3081) or [email me](#) with any questions or comments about the Committee’s work.

Webinars, Toolkit Provide Tips on Incorporating EMS Projects into Flex Proposals

The Joint Committee on Rural Emergency Care – a partnership between NOSORH and the National Association of State EMS Officials – recently offered two Webinars focused on helping state Flex coordinators work with state EMS Offices to build trauma, stroke and cardiac “systems of care” and incorporate EMS projects into their Flex grant proposals. Viewable recordings and additional materials for both **Enhancing EMS in Your State** Webinars (presented February 22 and March 16) are available for viewing/downloading in the [Past Webinar Materials](#) section of the NOSORH website. A toolkit for including three specific EMS items in each state’s 2011-2012 Flex grant application is also available in the [Member Resources/Toolkits](#) section of the NOSORH website.

NOSORH Seeks Cooperative Agreement Input

NOSORH is in the process of completing its Noncompeting Continuation Progress Report (Cooperative Agreement). Funding provided through the Cooperative Agreement supports leadership and partnerships that improve rural health and supports the educational exchange, mentoring and collaborative work of NOSORH on behalf of SORHs.

If you have thoughts on how NOSORH can better serve your SORH, please contact [Teryl Eisinger](#). Any suggestions you feel would benefit your SORH or NOSORH are welcome.

Award Recognizes Distinguished Service to NOSORH, SORHs

NOSORH will highlight one of its annual awards in each issue of *The Branch* over the next several months.

Each year, NOSORH presents its **Distinguished Service Award** to a member for his/her contributions to the organization and for being actively involved in a State Office of Rural Health. The most recent Distinguished Service Award recipient – [John Barnas](#), executive director of the **Michigan Center for Rural Health** – fits that description perfectly.

John has been actively involved in many NOSORH committees through the years, including the EMS Committee/Joint Committee on Rural Emergency Care, the RHC Technical Assistance Advisory Committee and the Policy Committee (which he also co-chaired). John stepped up to the plate to fill NOSORH’s treasurer position last year

and has done an excellent job filling that role since then.

More importantly, John’s work as director of the Michigan Center for Rural Health is a model that many of his SORH colleagues try to emulate. “John is a living example of the Jim Bernstein philosophy: compassionate consultation through relationship building that results in the development of innovative strategies for improving access, quality and cost-effective primary health care,” according to his awards nomination.

Nominations for 2011 NOSORH Awards can be made anytime; visit the [Awards Committee](#) section of the NOSORH website to download an Awards Nomination Form, Awards Descriptions and a list of previous award winners. The Awards Committee also wants to promote SORHs and SORH leaders

for national rural health awards and to encourage more SORHs to submit nominations. Please [email Sharla Allen](#) if you would like to nominate a SORH or SORH employee for any NOSORH or other national rural health award.



John Barnas (left) receives his 2010 Distinguished Service Award from NOSORH Past President Mark Schoenbaum (Photo by Keith Clark).

Report Identifies SORH Participation in Rural, Frontier Oral Health Projects

The NOSORH Board of Directors recently accepted a report that identifies SORH participation in rural and frontier oral health projects. The report – a joint undertaking by NOSORH, the Alaska Office of Rural Health and the National Center for Frontier Communities –

identified advances being made in providing oral health services to these communities and the influential role that SORHs play in these efforts. It also recommended that NOSORH serve as a single point of contact for SORHs and national oral health organizations

seeking to undertake similar endeavors. The report, **Creating State and National Partnerships to Improve Rural and Frontier Oral Health**, is available in the [Other Resources/Publications](#) section of the NOSORH website.

“Straight from the SORHs”: News from the State Offices and ORHP

Be sure to check out [HRSA in Your State, McAllister](#) (CLAS specialist) with the new resource offering overviews of HRSA programs on a state-by-state basis. In addition to the number and amount of grants awarded, HRSA in Your State provides state-specific information about health centers; National Health Service Corps members and the communities they serve; and the number of participating providers through the 340B program.

A special welcome to three of NOSORH’s newest members: [Deryl Metzger](#), director of information technology for the **South Carolina Office of Rural Health**; and [Keisha L. Smith](#) (below) (health workforce program manager) and [Valerie](#)



Office of Minority Health & Health Equity and the Virginia Rural Health Association)

A project undertaken by the **Alabama Office of Primary Care & Rural Health** and its partners recently received Life-Saving Patient Safety and Health Outcome Management awards from HRSA. The Alabama Patient Safety Prescription Collaborative – a collaborative project between the Alabama SORH, the Auburn University School of Pharmacy, the Alabama Primary Health Care Association, the Alabama Quality Assurance Foundation, the Alabama Medicaid Agency and an Alabama Federally Qualified Health Center – prevented 114 potential adverse drug events and identified seven actual adverse drug events among chronically ill, diabetic patients taking five or more medications.

Upcoming State Conferences:

April 4-7 – [2011 Virginia Rural Health Summit](#) (hosted by the Virginia

Office of Minority Health & Health Equity and the Virginia Rural Health Association)

April 19-20 – [The Forum 2011: Essential Perspectives for Safety Net Providers](#) (presented by the Colorado Rural Health Center and ClinicNet)

April 27-28 – [Alabama Rural Health Conference](#) (sponsored by the Alabama Office of Primary Care & Rural Health, the Alabama Rural Health Association and the Alabama Office of Emergency Medical Services & Trauma)

Please contact [Bill Hessert](#) with any staffing changes, awards or other news about you or your SORH to share with your NOSORH colleagues! Also, please let [Stephanie Hansen](#) know when any new employees join your staff so the Educational Exchange Committee can welcome them and share information about NOSORH’s various educational exchange opportunities.