

Mark your Calendar!



The Branch

An Update for State Offices of Rural Health and our Partners

August 2011

Website: www.nosorh.org Wikispaces: nosorh.wikispaces.com



August 4

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

August 9

- *Community Health Benefit & Needs Assessment Workshop* (Indianapolis, Indiana)
- Development Committee (2:00 p.m. EDT)

August 10-11

- ORHP Region C Meeting (Indianapolis, Indiana)

August 16

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

August 18

- Policy Program Monitoring Team (3:00 p.m. EDT)

August 22

- Webinar: *How Are SORHs/Partners Planning to Celebrate National Rural Health Day?* (3:00 p.m. EDT)

August 23

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

August 24

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

August 25

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

August 31

- Rural Health Clinic Learning Community (2:00 p.m. EDT)

September 1

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

September 7-8

- [NOSORH Annual Meeting](#) (Denver, Colorado)

September 8-9

- Rural EMS Learning Session (Denver, Colorado)

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

Performance Measurement Tool Now Available

A Web-based performance tool is now available to SORHs!

Developed by the University of North Dakota's Center for Rural Health, TruServe (formerly known as CATS) enables participating SORHs to collect data and track performance measures

that assess the impact of SORHs, Flex or other programs unique to each state.

NOSORH is able to offer SORHs access to TruServe for a fee of just \$1,000 per year. Enrolling is easy – just [click here](#) to begin taking advantage of a tried

and tested, top-shelf performance measures tool developed specifically for SORHs!

[Click here](#) to download a recording of the July 28 Webinar introducing SORHs to TruServe.

SORHs Begin Planning National Rural Health Day Celebrations



Congratulations to Nevada and New Hampshire (the first states that have secured gubernatorial proclamations recognizing November 17 as National Rural Health Day) – and to SORHs and partners for sharing community success stories from Delaware, Maine and New Mexico.

Has your state also started making plans to celebrate National Rural

Health Day? We're making it easy for you to share those ideas with others and help us keep track of what everyone is planning – just click here to access the [Google Docs spreadsheet](#) where we will collect that information. We are also hosting a Webinar on August 22 at 3:00 p.m. EDT during which you'll hear how some of your colleagues are planning to celebrate National Rural Health Day.

Do you have any rural health-related "community success stories" that you think we should be sharing with others? We'd like to know! NOSORH

is planning to share celebration ideas and community success stories on our soon-to-be launched National Rural Health Day website. Feel free to send your stories and ideas to NOSORH Communications Coordinator [Bill Hessert](#).

Stay tuned for additional details about the Webinar and the website launch slated for mid-August! In the meantime, feel free to download and print a [National Rural Health Day "Save the Date" card](#) to share with your state partners.

Board Accepts Rural General Surgery Report Findings

The NOSORH Board of Directors recently accepted a rural general surgery report that includes recommendations for NOSORH's participation in national rural general surgery-focused dialogues and strategic planning; specific recommendations for state-level actions; and recommendations for continuing the committee or a similarly focused work group.

"After more than a year of discussion with a numerous experts, we are still at the beginning of addressing the complex set of issues that have created a [rural general surgery] shortage," says [Charles Dwyer](#), director of the Maine Office of Rural Health & Primary Care who co-championed the project along with [Jonathan Sprague](#) of Rocky Coast Consulting. "I think this report gives SORH directors a

greater awareness of the problem and offers both immediate and long-term strategies and actions for addressing the issue."

A copy of the report can be found in the [Other Resources/Publications](#) section of the NOSORH website.

Rural Health Clinic Learning Community Conference Calls

- Who:** State Offices of Rural Health (SORHs) and their invited guests
- What:** Bimonthly conference calls to discuss rural health clinic (RHC) issues
This month: How SORHs Engage and Support RHCs
- When:** Wednesday, August 31, 2011 (**Our first call!**)
2:00 - 3:00 PM EDT
- How:** Phone: (877) 669-3239; Passcode: 667 195 698
- Questions?** Contact Stephanie Hansen at steph@nosorh.org or (208) 375-0407



NOSORH Seeking Host State for 2012 Annual Meeting

We're already looking ahead to 2012, too – if you would like to host the 2012 NOSORH Annual Meeting/ORHP Grantees Meeting, we'd love to visit! Simply download the [host state proposal application](#) to learn more and submit your proposal by August 16 if you're interested.



What Great Hosts! **Pat Carr**, director of the Alaska State Office of Rural Health, stands in front of the savory selections awaiting those attending the ORHP Region E Meeting, which took place July 27 & 28 in Juneau, Alaska. Presentations from this and the other regional meetings to date are now available in the [Past Event Materials](#) section of the NOSORH website.

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Building Partnerships and Community while Celebrating the “Power of Rural” – See You in Denver!

Can you believe it? Our 2011 Annual Meeting is only five weeks away!

We've made great plans to learn and share September 7 & 8 at the Grand Hyatt Denver, especially during our breakout sessions focused on building connections with rural communities and building the capacity of your SORH. Representatives from SORH partner organizations (state rural health associations; primary care organizations; EMS, HIT, QIO and rural workforce stakeholders) will also enjoy sessions and networking opportunities designed to strengthen partnerships and celebrate the “Power of Rural.”

“We hear over and over again that SORHs learn best from other SORHs, and that small informal group sessions are the best place for that learning,” notes NOSORH Director Teryl Eisinger.

“These breakout sessions are planned to allow for that. It's a different format from other rural health conferences, and we're really looking forward to it.”

Discounted hotel rates for this year's meeting are available until August 16 on a first-come, first serve basis. [Click here](#) to download registration materials and the latest meeting agenda.

The 2011 NOSORH Annual Meeting also gives organizations, agencies and

rural stakeholders the opportunity to support the efforts of NOSORH and SORHs by becoming a sponsor or exhibitor. Be sure to download the [Sponsor and Exhibitor Information Packet](#) to sign up or to learn more about this exciting opportunity. For more information, feel free to contact NOSORH Communications Coordinator [Bill Hessert](#).



NOSORH to Present Annual Awards in Denver

One of the highlights of each Annual Meeting is the opportunity to present our Annual Awards. This year is no different – we're looking forward to honoring our 2011 award winners on Thursday, September 8 in Denver!

*Although the deadline for submitting nominations for the 2011 awards has passed, we're continuing our monthly profiles of our 2010 award winners. This month we feature **Steve Hirsch**, ORHP Flex program coordinator and recipient of the **2010 NOSORH Recognition Award**.*

Each year, NOSORH presents its NOSORH Recognition Award to honor someone who has been helpful and supportive of State Offices of Rural Health – someone like Steve Hirsch, who has worked closely with SORHs and NOSORH to ensure that Flex

programs operate at the highest possible level.

Those who nominated Steve for the award describe him as “incredibly patient, open-minded and flexible” – someone who helps states interpret the various goals and guidelines associated with their Flex grants while showing a willingness to listen and work with people on different approaches for meeting the program's objectives. As someone noted on his nomination form, Steve is “someone who will work with you on an idea rather than just saying no to your crazy ambition.”

Steve has also provided valuable input to the NOSORH Flex Committee by providing regular updates and clarifying issues. He has also sought input from the committee and from

SORHs on shaping the guidance and the future direction of the Flex program. These interactions ensure that the program will continue to support the needs of Critical Access Hospitals throughout the nation.



Steve Hirsch (left) receives the 2010 NOSORH Recognition Award from then-NOSORH President Mark Schoenbaum (Photo by Keith Clark).

Travel Scholarships Available for Educational Exchanges

Last year, the Iowa Bureau of Health Care Access—the agency responsible for maintaining Iowa's State Office of Rural Health (SORH) grant program—used the NOSORH Education Exchange Program to invite Steve Shotwell, recruitment coordinator for the Michigan Center for Rural Health (MCRH), to discuss recruitment and retention best practices and share retention survey/needs assessment tool.

According to Erin Drinnin from the Iowa Bureau of Health Care Access, “the visit provided an opportunity to learn

best practices from an experienced organization and individual. The Flex program is now using the sample needs assessment, and our Critical Access Hospitals and nonprofit/rural providers are receiving a copy of the retention tool. This provided [us] a great opportunity; I would recommend it to other states.”

The NOSORH Education Exchange Program can benefit your SORH as well! Visit the [Educational Exchange](#) section of the NOSORH website to obtain a listing of mentors/peers by state or area

of expertise. You can also complete and submit an [Educational Exchange Application](#) for funding to support your experience. The application process is easy, and the Educational Exchange Committee will review your application quickly.

Feel free to contact NOSORH Education Coordinator [Stephanie Hansen](#) to discover how an education exchange can help you and your SORH meet your learning/program development needs.

Information from Our Partners

• The **Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP)** anticipates releasing guidelines for its **Rural Health Care Services Outreach Grant** program either later this summer or early this fall for projects beginning in or about May 2012. NOSORH will begin rolling out resources to support SORH technical assistance work with prospective grantees soon.

ORHP's Outreach Program supports projects that demonstrate effective models of outreach and service delivery in rural communities. Proposed projects should utilize an outcomes-oriented approach

to enhancing and sustaining the delivery of effective health care in rural communities by tracking specific health indicators that demonstrate the impact of the project throughout the grant period. While programs should be based on evidence-based or promising practice models that avoid "reinventing the wheel" and demonstrate health status improvement in rural communities, implemented models can be tailored to meet the applicant community's specific needs.

Be sure to visit the [ORHP website](#) periodically for updates.

• The **Health Workforce Information Center (HWIC)** would like SORHs to complete a [short survey](#) to learn more about your information needs! Even if you've never used HWIC, the center would like to develop a better understanding of SORHs' use of health workforce information and services. Participants will have the opportunity to enter a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift certificate. Feel free to call (888-332-4942) or [email HWIC](#) with any questions.

• The **National Health Service Corps (NHSC)** has begun accepting [online applications](#) from those

interested in becoming NHSC-approved sites. Interested sites are also encouraged to review the NHSC Service Site Reference Guide posted at the web link before applying.

Please be sure to share this information with any partners you feel may qualify and benefit from becoming an NHSC-approved site! Prospective sites may also contact the NHSC Recruitment, Training and Support Center at (877) 313-1823 (Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Eastern) with any questions.

NOSORH Taking Action for SORHs

As of press time, Congress is still working on debt limit negotiations (which have become *the* key focus of nearly all House and Senate activities). The results of these negotiations could potentially affect all future funding of programs important to SORHs.

NOSORH recently distributed a letter to U.S. House and Senate legislative aides expressing concern over \$14 billion in proposed Medicare payment cuts to rural hospitals and an additional \$2 billion in proposed cuts to other "frontier" programs. It's not too late for you to use this letter to inform your congressional

officials about the importance of ensuring no cuts to rural programs. A copy of the letter can be found under the "[Position Statements](#)" heading in the [Policy/Other Documents](#) section of the NOSORH website.

NOSORH Legislative Liaison Bill Finerfrock – along with representatives from the National Rural Health Association, American Medical Association, American Hospital Association and Rural Policy Research Institute – recently attended a meeting with staff for Senators Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Kent Conrad (D-North Dakota), Pat Roberts (R-Kansas) and John

Barrasso (R-Wyoming) to discuss introduction of the Rural Health bill in the Senate.

The key takeaway for NOSORH was that the Senators have agreed to include reauthorization of the State Office of Rural Health grant program in the legislation. The group also has agreed to include a "fix" for the Critical Access Hospital supervision issue as well as language that addresses on-call time issues for CRNAs – all in addition to the core issues included in the Rural Health bill the group introduced during the last Congress.

No firm date has been set on when the bill will be introduced other than "soon." The Senate is scheduled to go on recess at the end of the first week of August, but that is all subject to debt limit negotiations. Stay tuned for more information on the introduction of the Rural Health bill and what you can do to show your support.

Congratulations on letting your voices be heard – Bill noted that the Senators' staff indicated they had heard from several SORHs and Senate staff about the importance of reauthorizing SORH funding.

"Straight from the SORHs": News from the State Offices and ORHP

[Rachel Green](#) has joined the **Vermont Office of Rural Health & Primary Care** as its first-ever Flex/SHIP coordinator. In this capacity, Rachel will manage Vermont's Flex and Small Hospital Improvement Program grants, and work closely with the Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care and the New England Rural Health Roundtable to support quality improvement efforts at small and Critical Access Hospitals in Vermont and across New England. Rachel will also serve as the coordinator of the Hospital Preparedness Program within Vermont's Office of Public Health Preparedness. Welcome, Rachel!

[Terri Byers](#) has rejoined the **Hawai'i State Office of Rural Health** as a rural communities health coordinator. Terri was with the Hawai'i SORH for a good portion of 2010 before serving as an early childhood coordinator for

the Hawaii Department of Health. She brings with her a wealth of program management expertise and strong health policy credentials from her work with the Hawaiian Congressional delegation. Welcome back, Terri!

The **Texas Department of Rural Affairs** recently welcomed to new staff members – [Amanda Maedgen](#) joined TDRA as a rural health specialist, while [Stephanie Uecker](#) came on board as the new Flex coordinator. Welcome, Amanda and Stephanie!



[Lynette Dickson](#), (left) associate director for the **North Dakota Center for Rural Health**, has been tapped by Medicaid Management

Information Systems (MMIS) to share tips on coordinating resources/partnerships and sharing information about strengthening HIT in rural communities. She and Nancy Willis, North Dakota's Medicaid HIT coordinator, will both share tips during their joint presentation at the MMIS Annual Conference taking place July 31-August 4 in Austin, Texas. Thanks and congratulations to Lynette for making the case to collaborate with SORHs!

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.



Students attending the **Rural Collaborative Opportunities for Occupational Learning in Health (R-COOL-Health) Scrubs Academy** learn about CPR. The Scrubs Academy, hosted June 20-22 by the [North Dakota Center for Rural Health](#) and the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, introduced students in grades 6-8 to different healthcare professions. [Click here](#) to view more photos from the Academy.