

## Mark your Calendar!



### February 3

- Workforce Committee (1:30 p.m. EST)
- Webinar: *Successful Budget Management – A Few Key Things* (3:00 p.m. EST)

### February 4

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

### February 8

- HIT Committee (Noon EST)

### February 9

- Development Committee (3:00 p.m. EST)

### February 16

- Policy Committee (2:00 pm EST)

### February 18

- RHC Technical Assistance Team (2:00 p.m. EST)

### February 23

- Communications Committee (2:00 p.m. EST)

### February 25

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

### March 3

- Workforce Committee (1:30 p.m. EST)

### March 4

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

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

# The Branch

An Update for State Offices of Rural Health and our Partners

February 2010

Website: <http://www.nosorh.org/> Wiki space: <http://nosorh.wikispaces.com/>



## President's Message

Dear Friends and Colleagues,  
NOSORH is celebrating its 15th birthday!

Last week during the NRHA and Partners Policy Institute in Washington, we had the opportunity to honor three leaders for their contributions to NOSORH and rural health. We celebrated Jerry Coopey's retirement from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and acknowledged his role in NOSORH's creation. We also presented a special award to Marcia Brand, former director of the Office of Rural Health Policy. NOSORH first received federal funds during Marcia's tenure, and those funds allowed NOSORH to expand its services to State Offices. Finally, we presented NOSORH's Legislator of the Year Award to Iowa Senator Tom Harkin for his leadership as chair of the U.S. Senate Rural Health Caucus.

It is a privilege for me to serve as NOSORH's president in 2010. The support NOSORH now enjoys has been earned by its past leaders and collaborators; it's sustained by the daily accomplishments of all 50 State Offices of Rural Health and by NOSORH's board, staff and partners.

Moving forward, the NOSORH Board of Directors and NOSORH Director Teryl Eisinger met in early January to set

our priorities. We chose to focus on three areas: serving NOSORH's State Office of Rural Health members; working with our partners to improve rural health policy; and strengthening NOSORH's organizational capacity. [Click here](#) for full details; let me or any of your colleagues on the board know what you think of this action plan.

Also, if you're already not serving on a NOSORH committee, please consider doing so. These committees coordinate NOSORH services benefiting State Offices and recommend advocacy positions; they also provide an easy way to plug into the bigger picture and get ideas for your own work.

NOSORH has become an effective champion of State Offices in the last 15 years, but 2010 promises to bring a lot of changes and challenges to all of us and the rural health system. Building on our history, I'm confident that we'll win more victories for rural health.

Sincerely,

Mark Schoenbaum  
2010 NOSORH President

## SORHs Well Represented at NRHA Policy Institute

Presentations of NOSORH awards to HRSA Deputy Administrator Marcia Brand and Iowa Senator Tom Harkin were among the highlights for NOSORH members attending the NRHA and Partners Rural Health Policy Institute held January 25-27 in Washington, D.C. This year's Policy Institute allowed NOSORH members to hear the latest information regarding healthcare reform and other rural health-related issues from legislators and policymakers; it also gave attendees an opportunity to make Hill visits and ensure that "the rural voice" continues to be heard loudly and clearly in the ongoing healthcare debate. It also marked the public "debut" of Denny Berens (Nebraska) as NRHA president.

Congratulations, Denny — and to NRHA on a timely and relevant Policy Institute!



HRSA Deputy Administrator Marcia Brand receives a special lifetime Distinguished Service Award to honor her "lifetime of distinguished and dedicated service to improve the health of Rural Americans." Those attending the awards presentation included (L to R): HRSA Administrator Mary Wakefield; Lisa Davis (Pennsylvania); NOSORH Director Teryl Eisinger; Karen Madden (New York); NOSORH President Mark Schoenbaum (Minnesota); Brand; Lynette Dickson (North Dakota); and Graham Adams (South Carolina).



NOSORH President Mark Schoenbaum presents NOSORH's Legislator of the Year Award to Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin during the Policy Institute's Capitol Hill Reception honoring the co-chairs of the House Rural Health Care Coalition and Senate Rural Health Caucus; looking on is Doreen Chamberlin, chief of the Iowa Bureau of Health Care Access. As noted by Gloria Vermie, director of the Iowa State Office of Rural Health, in her award nomination, "[NOSORH] recognizes that the United States is a safer, more health-conscious nation due to the never-ending energies and leadership of Tom Harkin."

## A Special Thank You ...

... to those who have agreed to serve as a NOSORH committee chair/co-chair or program liaison during the upcoming year:

- **Annual Conference** – Corie Kaiser (Oklahoma)
- **Bylaws** – Caroline Ford (Nevada)
- **Communications** – Karen Madden (New York)
- **Development** – Graham Adams (South Carolina)
- **Educational Exchange** – Shawn Balleydier (West Virginia); Patsy Whaley (Georgia)
- **EMS** – Chris Tilden (Kansas); Matt Womble (North Carolina)
- **Finance** – Theresa Cruz (Texas)
- **Flex Program** – Pat Carr (Alaska); Scott Daniels (Hawaii)
- **HIT** – John Hanson (Washington); Alison Hughes (Arizona)
- **Leadership Liaison** – Alison Hughes (Arizona)
- **Nominating** – Lynette Dickson (North Dakota)
- **Performance Measures** – Lynda Bergsma (Arizona); Charles Owens (Georgia)
- **Policy** – John Barnas (Michigan); Lisa Davis (Pennsylvania)
- **SRHA Liaison** – Kris Sparks (Washington)
- **Strategic Planning** – Caroline Ford (Nevada)
- **Workforce** – Lynette Dickson (North Dakota); Bob Duehmig (Oregon)

Committee agendas, minutes and reports can be found in the [About NOSORH/Committees](#) section of the NOSORH Web site.

### Contact Information

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## NOSORH Launching Grant Writing Institute This March

Would you like to enhance your grant-writing skills and learn how to use *rurality* to your advantage when submitting proposals? Are you interested in gaining additional grant-writing experience or even becoming a rural grant-writing educator in your state? Then the Rural Health Grant Writing Specialist program being offered by the NOSORH Grant Writing Institute is just the course for you!

Bi-monthly Webinar training sessions will be offered beginning this March. Two sessions developed around the same theme will be offered each month, culminating with an intensive in-person training session held in conjunction with the NOSORH Annual Meeting this fall. Participants can choose the track that meets their needs or participate in both! The Institute will also offer an optional

“train-the-trainer” session for those interested in educating grant writers in their own state.

Look for registration information to arrive in your inbox soon. Registration will end March 1, so apply early to ensure your place in this one-of-a-kind training opportunity! Feel free to contact [Stephanie Hansen](#) for additional information.

## Rural Health Clinic Technical Assistance Project Update

NOSORH has retained Rita Salain of Health Management Consultants, a former director of the Georgia Office of Rural Health, to work with NOSORH and a ten-state SORH expert advisory team on a project designed to build the capacity of SORHs to provide technical assistance to rural health clinics.

The project seeks to identify best practices of State Offices already providing technical assistance to rural

health clinics and develop resources that all SORHs could use to offer similar programs. The expert advisory team consists of representatives from the ten SORHs currently offering technical assistance to RHCs in their respective states – Colorado, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Virginia and Washington.

Salain will help NOSORH and the

advisory group refine its workplan; identify and document best practices/model programs of SORHs currently providing technical assistance to RHCs; conduct a needs assessment; and recommend strategies and resources that all SORHs can implement to provide technical assistance to RHCs.

For more information on this project, please contact [Teryl Eisinger](#).

## Board Endorses JCREC Policy Brief on EMS Integration

The NOSORH Board of Directors recently endorsed a policy brief prepared by the Joint Committee on Rural Emergency Care (JCREC) on integrating Emergency Medical Services (EMS) into the healthcare delivery system.

JCREC is a collaborative undertaking between NOSORH and the National Association of State EMS Officials that seeks to develop a stronger, more comprehensive approach to improving

the quality of emergency care in rural and frontier communities. According to Matt Womble (North Carolina), co-chair of NOSORH’s EMS Committee and a NOSORH representative on JCREC, the policy brief highlights the important role that EMS plays in health care and recommends steps to be taken to integrate EMS into the healthcare delivery system more effectively.

“EMS is a young but critical profession

that bridges public safety and public health care,” Womble says. “This policy brief provides suggestions on formalizing that link in ways that have never been done before. Doing so could help avoid duplication of efforts, eliminate waste and increase the quality of health care.”

A copy of the policy can be found under the Position Statements heading in the [Policy/Other Documents](#) section of the NOSORH Web site.

## SORH Profile Survey Deadline Extended Budget Management Webinar Planned

Oops! When we set a January 20 deadline for State Offices to complete the SORH Profile Survey, we obviously didn’t take into account looming grant deadlines and the upcoming Policy Institute. To those SORHs that managed to find extra time amid the chaos and have already completed the survey, thank you! To those that haven’t had the opportunity to finish (or even start) the survey, we’ve extended the deadline to February 28; just [click here](#) to get started.

Please contact NOSORH Communications Coordinator [Bill Hessert](#) if you have any questions regarding the survey.

Does your Office need help tracking or managing its budget? Then NOSORH’s next Webinar could be just the thing for you!

*Successful Budget Management: A Few Key Things* will take place at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 3. Rob McVay, director of operations and chief financial officer of the National Rural Health Association, will share the principles of a good budgeting process; underscore the importance of using budgeting tools; go through the process of developing a budget; and demonstrate how a budget can be used as an evaluation tool.

Please visit the [Upcoming Events](#) section on our Web site for call-in information and additional details. Feel free to contact [Donna Pfaendtner](#) or [Stephanie Hansen](#) if you have any questions.

## USAC Funding Reminder from NOSORH's HIT Committee

During the HIT Summit which preceded the NOSORH 2009 Annual Meeting last November, Bill England – vice president of the Universal Service Administrative Company's (USAC) Rural Health Division – shared a chart outlining USAC discounts by state. Since the summit, England has prepared an [updated chart](#) which shows how some states have fallen off in submitting discount applications.

These funds are available to discount the cost of high speed telecommunication lines that are used in health education, telehealth applications and telecommunications systems. In this national era of economic shortfalls in most states, every dollar helps our state and local economies; yet, here is a pot of gold of which rural America is not taking full advantage.

If your state is not getting much in USAC funding, perhaps it is time to begin asking questions. [Click here](#) for more information on USAC and the rural health-related programs and services it offers. Also feel free to contact NOSORH Committee Co-chairs [John Hanson](#) and [Alison Hughes](#) if you would like to know more about this issue and how you can be involved.

## "Straight from the SORHs": News from the State Offices

*If any new employees recently joined your SORH staff, please contact [Stephanie Hansen](#) so the Educational Exchange Committee can welcome them and let them know about the NOSORH educational exchange opportunities that are available to them. Also, please be sure to contact [Bill Hessert](#) about any staffing changes, awards or other news about your SORH so we can share the news with your NOSORH colleagues!*

### Staff News

Congratulations to [Kylie Nissen](#), project coordinator for the **North Dakota Center for Rural Health**, and her husband, Jory, on their early Christmas gift – the birth of their daughter, Kamryn Jean, on December 22!



[Mary Altenberg](#), chief of the Health Systems Bureau in the New Mexico Department of Health's Public Health Division, has been appointed acting director of the **New Mexico Office of Rural Health/Primary Care**. She steps in for Harvey Licht, who retired on December 1. Kim Kinsey also recently retired; her last day as program manager was December 31.

[Michelle Mills](#) has been named director of programs for the **Colorado Rural Health Center**. [Cari Fouts](#), who previously served in this capacity, is now CRHC's director of communication and development.

[John Barnas](#), executive director of the **Michigan Center for Rural Health**, has been appointed to the Governance Workgroup of the Michigan Health Information Network (MiHIN). MiHIN seeks to improve health care quality, cost, efficiency, and patient safety in Michigan through the electronic exchange of health information. The Governance Workgroup will be responsible for the comprehensive governance and financial planning of the project; it will also monitor the progress of the other workgroups, ensure their integration and approve the recommendations they produce.



### Upcoming Opportunities

The **Colorado Rural Health Center** is currently seeking a Recruitment Specialist to oversee the daily operations of its Colorado Provider Recruitment Program, which matches health professionals and providers with job opportunities in rural and underserved communities of Colorado. Interested candidates must submit a resume and cover letter to the [Colorado Rural Health Center](#) by February 8. [Click here](#) to download a copy of the job description and application requirements.

The **University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences** is currently accepting nominations and applications for the

next Director of its nationally recognized Center for Rural Health. In addition to a terminal degree in health sciences or a related field, prospective candidates should have experience in rural health policy development and legislative initiatives; managing a health-related research center and in developing funding/research priorities; community engagement and rural health care delivery systems; and an understanding of the role of health education and information dissemination. [Click here](#) for additional information about the position and search process; a review of applications will commence February 1.

**Alaska Call for Submissions:** Abstracts are now being accepted for the 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Alaska Rural Health Conference, which will take place April 28-30 at the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel. The theme for the upcoming conference is "Sustaining Our Systems of Care: Planning for the Decade Ahead." Building on previous conference initiatives and incorporating current rural health information and resources, the conference will deliver the most up-to-date and innovative approaches for addressing health information technology, quality improvement, workforce development and other rural health-related issues. [Click here](#) to obtain additional registration and abstract submission information.