

Mark your
Calendar!



October 1

Annual Meeting Planning
Committee (2:00 PM EDT)

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

October 6

Leadership Institute
Resources for SORHs (2:00
p.m. EDT)

October 13

Performance Measures
Committee (1:00 p.m. EDT)

Development Committee
(3:00 p.m. EDT)

October 15

Communications Committee
(1:00 p.m. EDT)

October 19

HIT Committee (Noon EDT)

October 20

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

Webinar: *What is the SORH
Role in Preparing for the
H1N1 Influenza* (1:00 p.m.
EDT)

October 22

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

October 27

Communications Committee
(2:00 p.m. EDT)

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

September 2009

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



Stephanie Hansen Joins NOSORH Staff

Stephanie Hansen, formerly the health program specialist for the Idaho State Office of Rural Health and Primary Care (Idaho SORH), joined NOSORH as its first full-time education coordinator on September 21.

Stephanie brings seven years of rural healthcare experience to her new position. While with the Idaho SORH, she provided program leadership for the Small Hospital Improvement Program and provided program support for the SORH, FLEX and other grant programs designed to improve healthcare access. Stephanie also has experience planning conferences, supporting rural health clinics and

recruiting and retaining healthcare providers.

As education coordinator, Stephanie will oversee and provide staff support for NOSORH's peer-to-peer learning programs; educational Webinars; NOSORH Leadership Institute; various NOSORH committees; regional/national meetings; and other activities that facilitate the professional and leadership development of State Offices of Rural Health.

Stephanie says that she is "excited to be a part of the NOSORH team and looks forward to meeting and working with State Office staffs around the country." Feel free to [contact Stephanie](#) if you



haven't done so already and welcome her to the NOSORH family!

Register Now for Austin!

Please plan to join us – and invite your partners – for the **NOSORH Annual Meeting** slated to take place November 18-19 at the Hilton Garden Inn Downtown in Austin, Texas. This year's format has been redesigned to offer attendees even more opportunities to share information, explore partnership opportunities and strengthen the collective voice of SORHs and their partners. Highlights include plenary and concurrent sessions on healthcare reform, economic stimulus funding and other policies affecting rural health;

educational sessions designed to strengthen SORHs; a "President's Breakfast"; and a Town Hall Meeting during which attendees will have an opportunity to "speak up and sound off for SORHs and Rural America."

Those with a special interest in health information technology-related issues should also plan to attend the **Preparing for Tomorrow Today Pre-conference HIT Summit** on November 17. The hands-on, day-long session will enable attendees to identify model programs that have optimized

economic stimulus funding to improve HIT and develop strategies for tapping into those and other HIT-related resources.

Of course, there will also be plenty of time to catch up with old friends and make new ones! Preliminary meeting agendas and additional registration, sponsor and exhibitor information is available in the [Annual Meeting Information](#) section on the NOSORH Web site. The hotel registration deadline is October 17, so sign up now!

NOSORH Enhances, Redesigns Web Site

If you haven't done so already, please be sure to visit the redesigned [NOSORH Web site](#) launched earlier this month.

Improvements to the site have made it a much more visually appealing, user-friendly resource for members and other rural health stakeholders. Some of the noteworthy improvements include the addition of a "Policy"

section to the main menu; the addition of a Google calendar and other enhancements to "News and Events" that make it easier to download information from past and future meetings and Webinars; and streamlined, more user-friendly "Member Resources" and "Other Resources" sections. SORHs can also visit the [Regions & Offices](#) section to quickly and easily update their

directory listings and promising practice/areas of expertise information.

While, we're extremely excited by the Web site enhancements, we also know that Web sites are a constantly evolving work-in-progress. Please contact [Bill Hessert](#) if you stumble upon any problems or have any ideas for enhancing the site.

State Offices of Rural Health on Display at RCCA Conference

NOSORH will have a display at the Rural Community College Alliance Conference – “Keeping America Healthy: The Role of Rural Community Colleges” – being held October 13-15 at the Mount Washington Resort at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. If you would like to include any materials with the display, please contact or send them to [Donna Pfaendtner](#). All materials must be received by October 7 in order to be included with the display.

Thanks to Alisa Butler-Druzba (New Hampshire Office of Rural Health and Primary Care) for coordinating the display at the RCCA conference on NOSORH’s behalf!

October Webinar to Address H1N1 Virus

Exploring the impact of, and SORHs’ role in responding to, the H1N1 virus in rural communities is the focus of NOSORH’s next Educational Exchange Webinar. “What is the SORH Role in Preparing for the H1N1 Influenza – 2009” will take place at 1:00 p.m. EDT on Tuesday, October 20. Be sure to visit our [News & Events](#) section on the Web for call-in instructions and additional information.

Contact Information

[Teryl Eisinger](#)

Director

(586) 739-9940

[Stephanie Hansen](#)

Education Coordinator

(208) 375-0407

[Bill Hessert](#)

Communications Coordinator

(814) 308-8697

[Donna Pfaendtner](#)

Administrative Coordinator

(586) 336-4627

NOSORH Seeks to Develop Additional Partnerships

A small contingent of NOSORH board and staff members met with representatives the American Public Health Association, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and the National Conference of State Legislatures while in Washington, DC for the ORHP Grantees Meeting to explore potential partnership opportunities with those organizations.

Earlier this year, the NOSORH Board of Directors decided to make the exploration of such partnership opportunities one of its priorities for 2009. The intent of such efforts is to compliment the strong partnerships that State Offices of Rural Health already have in place, thereby enhancing collective efforts to address rural health concerns.

Stay tuned as we continue to explore opportunities to collaborate with these and other potential partners. Also, please contact [Teryl Eisinger](#) if you’re currently a member, or serve on a board/committee, of an organization with whom you think NOSORH should be exploring partnership opportunities.

EMS Committee Update

It has been a very busy and exciting summer for the NOSORH EMS Committee. Since July, the Joint Committee for Rural Emergency Care (JCREC) – a collaborative effort between NOSORH and the National Organization of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO) – has been working on a position paper that clearly outlines the current EMS needs of rural communities, offers insight on future trends and recommends potential solutions. In August, NOSORH

representatives and other state leaders gathered in Park City, Utah for two EMS-focused meetings: the “SORH & EMS Learning Session” and “The Summit Meeting: Rural & Frontier EMS & Trauma.” NOSORH was also represented at the NASEMSO Annual Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, in late September.

These efforts and conversations during the meetings have resulted in a series of draft documents that provide a vision for what needs to be done,

the framework for a strategic plan and a collection of one-page position papers to be shared with local and federal policymakers. While much work remains before finalizing these documents, the vision being outlined holds tremendous promise for providing short and long-term solutions to rural EMS concerns.

Please contact [Chris Tilden](#) or [Matt Womble](#) if you are interested in joining the EMS Committee or learning more about its work.

SORH Comings and Goings

Marvin Firch, director of the FLEX Program in the Iowa Department of Public Health, stepped down on September 14 to become the compliance consultant for the Department’s Bureau of Professional Licensure. During his 11-year tenure, the Iowa FLEX program helped establish and certify of 82 critical

access hospitals throughout the state. Although he will be missed dearly by his colleagues, Marvin remarked he is comfortable departing at a time when the program is strong and recently received the highest federal grant award in its history. **Note:** The Educational Exchange Committee periodically sends “Welcome to

NOSORH” letters to new SORH staff members that also highlights the NOSORH educational exchange opportunities available to them. If you have had any new staff members join your office since June 1 (the last time letters were sent), please contact [Stephanie Hansen](#) so we can contact them!

Healthcare Reform/Appropriations Updates

Congress continues working on reforming our nation’s health insurance system. Last week, the Senate Finance Committee began considering a proposal forwarded by Chairman Max Baucus (D-Montana) – a debate that has been contentious at times with members largely following partisan lines. On Tuesday the Committee debated and defeated amendments to add a public option to the proposal. Baucus’ original proposal authorized the establishment of state-based insurance cooperatives rather than including a “public option.”

Chairman Baucus hopes to have a vote on the proposal by the end of the week; whether that will happen is unclear, however, given the several hundred amendments that still need to be considered. Once the Finance Committee completes its action, the bill must be merged with a bill passed earlier by the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee before being taken to the floor for

consideration. Some speculate merging the bills could take two weeks.

Congress also will soon pass a short-term Continuing Resolution (CR) to allow the federal government to continue operating until October 31 (one month beyond the end of the fiscal year). Under a CR, agencies can continue spending money at a rate equivalent to what was available the previous fiscal year. This is necessary because none of the 13 appropriations bills Congress must pass have been sent to the President. The hope is that Congress will send a majority of the bills to the President over the next 30 days. However, it is unlikely that Congress will complete all of the appropriations bills, thereby necessitating another CR at the end of October.

Should be an interesting 30 days in Washington!

[Bill Finerfrock](#), NOSORH Legislative Liaison



Scott Ekblad (right), director of the Oregon Office of Rural Health, recently presented former U.S. Senator Gordon Smith (R-Oregon) with his 2008 NOSORH Legislator of the Year Award. The award honors Sen. Smith for his tireless efforts to bolster the rural healthcare workforce, strengthen rural health clinics and critical access hospitals, protect Medicare and Medicaid, and improve women’s access to healthcare services in rural areas while in Congress.