

The Ohio State Office of Rural Health (SORH) is co-located with the Primary Care Office within the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). The goal of the Ohio SORH is to help rural communities build strong healthcare networks by providing information and technical assistance, by helping to build state and local partnerships, and by encouraging recruitment and retention of providers in rural areas. The Ohio Black Lung Clinics Program, Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (Flex), and Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP) are administered through the Ohio SORH.

From the Ohio SORH:

[Registration Open for Ohio Rural Health Clinic \(RHC\) Practice Management Training on March 5, 2014](#)

The SORH is sponsoring a one-day Rural Health Clinic (RHC) Practice Management Training that will be held in downtown Columbus on Wednesday, March 5, 2014. There is no fee to register, and the training is open to all certified RHCs and clinics working toward RHC certification in Ohio. Sessions will cover managing your RHC, corporate compliance, RHC billing and other topics. Assistance will also be available with questions regarding Medicare enrollment for the RHC and commercial credentialing. For more information, see the training brochure on the [SORH Web page](#), which includes a complete agenda. To register, [complete the online form](#) by no later than Feb. 24, 2014. If you have questions, please contact Jennifer Jones at 614-466-5333 or jennifer.jones@odh.ohio.gov.

[Coming Soon - Quality Network for Ohio's RHCs and Educational Webinar Series](#)

The Ohio SORH is sponsoring a project to assist with development of a quality network for Ohio's RHCs that will begin in early 2014. The project will focus on assessing needs related to quality improvement among participating clinics and identifying quality measures for future collection and benchmarking. Participation will be open to Ohio's certified RHCs and clinics working toward RHC certification. The consulting firm John Snow, Inc. will be assisting with the project, and more information will be shared soon.

The Ohio SORH is also currently planning a series of several monthly educational webinars for Ohio's RHCs and clinics working toward RHC certification. Webinars are being planned with Health Services Associates, Inc. and will likely cover the topics of RHC program evaluation, RHC services and regulation, ICD-10 and compliance with meaningful use. The series will likely start during February, and more information and specific dates will be announced soon. If you have questions, please contact Jennifer Jones at 614-466-5333 or jennifer.jones@odh.ohio.gov.

[Congratulations to Ohio Critical Access Hospitals \(CAHs\) Recognized for Excellence](#)

The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) and iVantage Health Analytics recently recognized five rural Ohio hospitals for overall excellence, based on the Hospital Strength Index, the first rating system in the country to include all rural providers. Top quartile performers recognized for excellence based on the overall HSI ranking in Ohio include: Barnesville Hospital Association, Bluffton Hospital, H.B. Magruder Memorial Hospital, Mercy Allen Hospital, and Wyandot Memorial Hospital. Four of these CAHs have consistently participated in the ongoing Flex CAH Quality, Financial and Operational Improvement (QI) Network since 2008. Many other Ohio hospitals were also recognized for excellence in areas such as quality, outcomes and patient satisfaction. Congratulations to these hospitals for their recent recognition and dedication to excellence!

[Update on the 2013 Statewide Rural Health Conference and Flex Annual Meeting and National Rural Health Day](#)

The Ohio SORH would like to thank all of the speakers, exhibitors, facilitators, participants and others who helped make the 2013 Ohio Statewide Rural Health Conference and Flex Annual Meeting successful. The conference was held Nov. 21

– 22 at Cherry Valley Lodge in Newark and featured a total of 27 breakout and plenary sessions, with tracks designed for Ohio’s Critical Access Hospitals and other small rural hospitals, RHCs and clinics pursuing RHC certification, and rural local health departments and other community-based organizations. The conference also featured a total of 18 exhibitor tables providing information on various ODH programs, the Upper Midwest Telehealth Resource Center, the Ohio Black Lung Clinics, and many other entities.

Dr. Theodore E. Wymyslo, Director of Health, presented the opening keynote session on transforming the health care delivery system in rural Ohio. During his presentation, Dr. Wymyslo described the need to focus on the primary care workforce in Ohio, the importance of integrating primary care and public health, Ohio’s plans for payment innovation, and various efforts statewide to strengthen patient-centered medical home capacity.



Dr. Theodore E. Wymyslo, Director of the Ohio Department of Health, presenting the opening keynote session during the 2013 Ohio Statewide Rural Health Conference on Nov. 21, 2013.

The first day of the conference coincided with National Rural Health Day, which is celebrated each year during November to increase awareness of rural health-related issues and highlight efforts to address the healthcare needs of rural communities. Slides from many of the conference sessions are still available by visiting the [Statewide Rural Health Conference Web page](#).

Across Ohio:

[Ohio Supreme Court Upholds Controlling Board’s Vote to Expand Medicaid](#)

The Ohio Supreme Court upheld a vote by the State Controlling Board to allow the expansion of Medicaid in a decision issued on Dec. 20. During October, the Controlling Board voted to authorize spending more than \$2.5 billion in federal money on the expansion of Medicaid under federal health care law. As of Jan. 1, 2014, adults between the ages of 19 and 64 with incomes at or below 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level are eligible to apply for Medicaid benefits in Ohio. More details on extending Medicaid are available [here](#) from the Ohio Department of Medicaid.

[Community Health & Quality of Life RFP from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundations \(Reminder\)](#)

Deadline: Feb. 6, 2014 -The Osteopathic Heritage Foundations has released a Request for Proposals (RFP) supporting Jackson, Meigs and Vinton Counties. Through this RFP process, the Foundation will allocate up to \$300,000 to increase

access to and quality of existing health and social services and programs for vulnerable populations in three Ohio counties: Jackson, Meigs and Vinton. Organizations interested in applying must submit a Letter of Intent through the Foundation's on-line grantmaking system no later than Feb. 6, 2014. [Click here](#) to review the Request for Proposal and to access the Letter of Intent.

[Ohio Dentist Loan Repayment Program Accepting Applications](#)

Deadline: March 14, 2014 - The ODH Oral Health Section is accepting applications for the Ohio Dentist Loan Repayment Program (ODLRP), which offers loan repayment to general and pediatric dentists who agree to work in a dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) or state-designated dental health resource shortage area in Ohio.

[HPIO Develops Online Guide to Evidence-based Prevention](#)

The Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO) has created a new tool called “[The Online Guide to Evidence-Based Prevention](#).” The guide provides policymakers, funders and prevention planners with a common understanding of “evidence-based practice” and tools to identify effective strategies to prevent Ohio’s high-priority health problems. Focusing on sources that are credible and user-friendly, this guide is designed to help planners navigate the many online sources of evidence about community-based prevention that have emerged in recent years.

[HPIO Releases Repository of Tools and Resources on the New Health Insurance Exchange](#)

HPIO has created an online resource page titled [Ohio and the federally facilitated marketplace](#) to serve as a central repository for tools and resources on the new health insurance exchange. Among the resources are tools for calculating tax credits and subsidies to understand how the marketplace operates, links to sites for finding marketplace enrollment assistance, and HPIO publications on the impact of the marketplace on Ohio. HPIO also recently updated its resource page titled [Understanding the Affordable Care Act](#), which includes an overview of the law.

National News:

[National Health Service Corps 2014 Loan Repayment Program Application Cycle Open](#)

HRSA recently announced the opening of the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) [2014 Loan Repayment Program application cycle](#). The NHSC Loan Repayment Program is open to licensed primary care medical, dental, and behavioral health providers who are employed or seeking employment at approved sites. Awardees receive up to \$50,000 in exchange for two years of service, if they practice in a HPSA with a score of 14 and above, which is considered Tier 1. The application cycle will close on March 20 at 7:30 p.m. Additional information is available on the [NHSC website](#).

[Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation Request for Information: Evolution of ACO Initiatives at CMS](#)

Dec. 23, 2013 - The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is considering opening the application process to allow more organizations to join the Pioneer ACO program. This request for information has been issued to gauge organizations' interest in joining the current Pioneer program, and comments are due by March 1, 2014.

[CMS Information Collection Activities: Comment Request on Conditions of Participation for CAHs](#)

Dec. 20, 2013 - CMS is accepting comments through Feb. 18, 2014 on the Conditions of Participation for Critical Access Hospitals (CAH) and Supporting Regulations.

[In Rural Wisconsin, Nurses Come to the Farm](#)

Dec. 21, 2013 - Article on the Rural Health Initiative, a program in Wisconsin that sends a nurse to local farms to screen farmers for health risks and makes referrals to physicians when necessary, providing them with access to health care right in their own back yard.

[USDA Announces Support for Mental Health Facilities in Rural Areas](#)

Dec. 10, 2013 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced its goal of investing \$50 million to increase access

to mental health care in rural areas during the next three years. The funding will be used for the construction, expansion or equipping of rural mental health facilities and will be provided through the [USDA's Community Facilities Direct Loan program](#).

[CMS Announces One-Year Delay in Requirement for Providers to Demonstrate Meaningful Use Stage 2 Compliance](#)

Dec. 13, 2013 - CMS has announced a revised timeline to delay the requirement for providers to demonstrate compliance with Meaningful Use Stage 2 by one year. Under the revised timeline, Stage 2 will be extended through 2016, and Stage 3 will begin in 2017 for those providers that have completed at least two years in Stage 2.

Resources:

[CMS Releases 2014 RHC and FQHC Rates](#)

CMS has announced the Rural Health Clinic (RHC) upper payment limit per visit will increase to \$79.80 effective Jan. 1, 2014 through Dec. 31, 2014. This rate increase reflects a 0.8 percent increase over the 2013 upper payment limit of \$79.17 per visit. Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) will also have their upper payment limit per visit for urban FQHCs increased from \$128.00 to \$129.02 effective Jan. 1, 2014 through Dec. 31, 2014, and the maximum Medicare payment limit per visit for rural FQHCs is increased from \$110.78 to \$111.67 effective Jan. 1, 2014 through Dec. 31, 2014.

[CMS Releases MLN Matters on Updates to Chapter 13 of the Medicare Benefit Policy Manual](#)

CMS recently released an MLN Matters with information on the Nov. 22, 2013 Change Request 8504 to advise Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) of updates to Chapter 13 of the "Medicare Benefit Policy Manual" for RHCs and FQHCs.

[Medicaid Expansion as a Rural Issue: Rural and Urban States and the Expansion Decision](#)

This Center for Rural Affairs report examines the differences between rural and urban states regarding the decision of whether or not they would expand the Medicaid program as provided for in the Affordable Care Act.

[Health Literacy CME Activity Available Online](#)

A new video vignette, case-based continuing medical education (CME) activity teaches health care providers how to communicate to improve patient comprehension. Dr. Ruth Parker of Emory University, Dr. Michael Wolf of Northwestern University and Cindy Brach of the HRSA Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) describe questions you can ask patients to assess their understanding of clinical information, resources to refer patients to help them with insurance choices, methods for delivering clear instructions for taking medicine, and health literacy universal precautions that can be incorporated into all clinical encounters. Physicians, nurses, and pharmacists can earn continuing education credits free of charge. View this activity [here](#). Access AHRQ's Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit [here](#).

[AHRQ's New Evidence-Based Guide Helps Implement Health Assessments in Primary Care Settings](#)

AHRQ has [announced](#) an evidence-based guide to help primary care doctors, nurses and other staff select, adopt and implement health assessments. The Affordable Care Act authorized annual wellness visits for Medicare beneficiaries and specifies that a health risk assessment be included as part of those visits. The [Health Assessments in Primary Care: A How-to Guide for Clinicians and Staff](#) combines the best evidence for successful implementation of the assessments in the primary care setting, with tools to help clinicians decide which health assessments to use, integrate them into their daily workflow and maintain the process. The guide can be used by practices that maintain electronic health records and those that continue to use paper charts.

[Health IT Video Provides CAHs with Strategies for Successfully Achieving Meaningful Use](#)

This HealthIT.gov webinar from November 2013 provides a high-level overview of strategies for CAHs for successful

participation in the Meaningful Use (MU) Incentive Program. HealthIT.gov also offers [various resources for CAHs and Small Rural Hospitals](#) on attaining meaningful use.

National Policy and Research in Brief:

[Telemental Health in Today's Rural Health System](#)

Dec. 2013 – The Maine Rural Health Research Center has released a research and policy brief (five pages) on telemental health in today's rural health system. The brief describes the organizational setting, services provided and staff used in 53 telemental health programs nationwide.

[Two Cases Studies Released on Regional Extension Centers Serving Rural Practices](#)

Dec. 2013 - The University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center has released two case studies of Regional Extension Centers (RECs) serving rural practices. These two case studies focus on the experiences of HIT RECs working with rural physicians in their respective service areas. The first case study focuses on the [Minnesota and North Dakota RECs](#) (nine pages). The second focuses on the [North Carolina REC](#) (eight pages).

[Series of Briefs Released on Impact of Potential Policy Changes for CAHs](#)

Dec. 2013 – The North Carolina Rural Health Research Program has released a series of three briefs that provide information for policy makers and stakeholders as policy changes for CAHs are considered. The briefs focus on [potential increases in beneficiary travel distance if financially vulnerable CAHs close](#) (three pages); on [the projected financial impact that a reduction in Medicare payments might have on CAHs](#) (five pages); and on [the rural-urban differences in inpatient costs and use among Medicare beneficiaries](#) (five pages).

[Perinatal Health in the Rural United States, 2005](#)

Oct. 2013 - The Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho (WWAMI) Rural Health Research Center has released a series of briefs examining perinatal outcomes in rural areas across the United States in 2005. Low birth weight, a key indicator of the health of the U.S. population, and adequacy of prenatal care, a critical indicator of access and quality of health care, are explored to discover how they are related to rural or urban location, race, and ethnicity.

[The Aging of the Rural Primary Care Physician Workforce: Will Some Locations Be More Affected than Others?](#)

Sept. 2013 - The WWAMI Rural Health Research Center has released a report (14 pages) on the aging of the primary care physician workforce. As the aging primary care provider population retires, rural provider shortages will be further exacerbated. Identifying states and counties that are at particularly high risk for primary care physician (PCP) attrition through retirement can help inform policy and planning decisions in an effort to avoid PCP shortages in these vulnerable locations.

[Causes and Consequences of Rural Pharmacy Closures: A Multi-Case Study](#)

Aug. 2013 – This policy brief (4 pages) from the RUPRI Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis describes case studies completed in six rural communities that lost their only remaining retail pharmacy since 2007.

[Obstetric Services and Quality among Critical Access, Rural and Urban Hospitals in Nine States](#)

June 2013 – The University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center has released a policy brief (9 pages) on obstetric services in CAHs, rural and urban hospitals within nine states. Approximately 25 percent of U.S. births occur in rural hospitals.

Upcoming Events:

- Jan. 31, 2014 [CAH Quality, Financial and Operational Improvement \(QI\) Network Meeting](#)
The next face-to-face meeting of the CAH Quality, Financial and Operational (QI) Network will be held on Jan. 31, 2014 in downtown Columbus at ODH from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Please RSVP by contacting Paula Knowlton at pknowlton@ivantagehealth.com by Jan. 17, 2014. For more information, please contact the Flex Program Coordinator Lucrecia Johnson at 614-728-0519 or lucrecia.johnson@odh.ohio.gov.
- March 5, 2014 [Ohio RHC Practice Management Training](#)
The SORH is sponsoring a one-day Ohio RHC Practice Management Training on Wednesday, March 5, 2014 in downtown Columbus from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. There is no fee to register, and the training is open to all certified RHCs and clinics working toward RHC certification in Ohio. The training will cover managing the RHC, corporate compliance, basic RHC billing and other topics, and assistance will also be available with questions regarding Medicare enrollment and commercial credentialing. For more information, see the RHC Practice Management Training brochure on the [SORH Web page](#). To register, complete the online form [here](#) no later than Feb. 21, 2014.
- March 12, 2014 [Ohio Medicaid Training for Physician Providers](#)
The Ohio Department of Medicaid is offering [Medicaid training](#) for Physician Providers that serve Ohio Medicaid consumers in the Lazarus Building on 50 W. Town Street in downtown Columbus from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Attendees will receive basic information regarding Ohio Medicaid rules, billing and resources. Registration closes one week prior to the training. To register, please send an email to Ombudsmen_training@medicaid.ohio.gov.
- March 17, 2014 [Ohio Medicaid Training for RHCs and FQHCs](#)
The Ohio Department of Medicaid is offering [Medicaid training](#) specifically for Ohio RHCs and FQHCs in the Lazarus Building on 50 W. Town Street in downtown Columbus from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The training will provide information regarding Ohio Medicaid rules and regulations, and MITS hands-on billing. Registration closes one week prior to the training. To register, please send an email to Ombudsmen_training@medicaid.ohio.gov.
- March 17-19, 2014 [National Association of Rural Health Clinics \(NARHC\) – 2014 Spring Institute for RHCs](#)
The NARHC 2014 Spring Institute will be held at the Hyatt Regency Riverwalk in San Antonio, TX on March 17-19 (Monday, Tuesday and half a day on Wednesday). Registration is open, and early bird rates are available through Jan. 31.

Send Us Your Suggestions:

We would love to hear about local events, news and story ideas for the quarterly rural health newsletter. If **you have a suggestion** you would like considered, please send it to jennifer.jones@odh.ohio.gov.

To subscribe to the Rural Health Listserv, unsubscribe, or change your subscribed email address, please contact Jennifer Jones at jennifer.jones@odh.ohio.gov.

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