

Iowa Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program (FLEX Program) Accomplishments

The Flex Program is a Federal initiative that provides funding to State Governments to strengthen rural health. The program helps stabilize rural hospitals and improves access to health services in rural communities.

2008 Accomplishments include, but are not limited to:

- Provide \$189,400 in grant funding to 18 CAHs to maintain and advance integration of public health activities; maintain and advance the delivery of essential services and core public health functions; build stronger relationships with community partners; provide a measurable improvement to an existing Iowa rural health system using established or innovative initiatives; increase access to healthcare services; engage in activities related to planning; engage in quality and/or performance improvement activities; improve patient safety; enhance and expand health information technology; and implement rural health networks.
- Provide \$25,000 to three county EMS associations to implement state EMS standards county-wide.
- Provide \$25,000 in grant funding to one network hospital to provide development, improvement, or expansion of network activities for Iowa's Critical Access Hospitals.
- Provide \$35,500 in grant funding to 20 CAHs to provide continuous education, training and leadership development to CAH staff to attend national conferences and meetings to gain up-to-date knowledge, skills, and resources about best practices that will expand, enhance, and improve patient safety, health information technology, and access to quality care.
- Partner with Bureau of EMS to conduct multiple budgeting workshops to assist local EMS directors in development of comprehensive annual budgets.
- Conduct an annual two-day CAH conference for over 120 rural health care providers and stakeholders.
- Conduct quarterly CAH Peer User Group meetings for hospital administrators, directors of nursing, chief financial officers, quality improvement coordinators, and stakeholders to learn, share, and discuss current and emerging issues.
- Conduct semi-annual meetings for CAH health information technology staff and network hospital technology staff to learn, share, and discuss the challenges, barriers, outcomes, and successes of implementing new technologies such as electronic health records, telemedicine, and patient portals in rural health care settings.
- Partner with the Iowa Hospital Association, Iowa Health Care Collaborative, Iowa Foundation for Medical Care, and the Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals to provide information, training and resources to Iowa's CAHs.

Iowa Health Workforce Center

Accomplishments

The Iowa Health Workforce Center is the IDPH unit designed to develop a strategic plan, provide for continuous collection of data, and make recommendations on the health care delivery infrastructure and the health care workforce. The Center will staff the [Health and Long-Term Care Access Advisory Council](#) established in House File 2539 Health Care Reform legislation.

The Iowa Health Workforce Center will soon establish a new mission and strategic goals consistent with recommendations from stakeholders obtained at the [Health and Long-Term Care Workforce Summit in November 2007](#) and with guidance from the Health and Long-Term Care Access Advisory Council.

The Bureau of Health Care Access has, for some time, included health workforce in its mission, accomplishing the following:

- First in the nation recommendations for a credentialing system for all direct care workers in Iowa.
- Completion of the [Health and Long-Term Care Workforce Review and Recommendations](#).
- Retention of approximately 8 health professionals per year since 1994, keeping these professionals in many different Iowa communities.
- Constant free advertisement of hundreds of health professional job vacancies on www.3RNet.org since 2001.
- Tuition reimbursement to 12 individuals, 3 schools and 13 health facilities.
- Twenty-six long-term care facilities and home care agencies have received equipment and training to prevent lift injuries, improve patient quality of life and retain health professionals.

Primary Care Office Accomplishments

The PCO engages in various activities that increase access to health care through enhancement of the health care infrastructure and through recruitment and retention activities. Some of the recent accomplishments of the office include:

- Shortage designations that enable communities to access federal and state funding opportunities for recruitment and retention programs, and funding. In 2010, 18 Primary Health Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), 81 Dental HPSAs, and 3 Mental Health HPSAs were reviewed. Currently, Iowa has 50 Primary Care HPSAs, 68 Dental HPSAs, and 16 Mental Health HPSAs in 89 counties.
- As a result of HPSA designations, PCO outreach, and a 3-year grant of ARRA funding, the PCO worked with 78 health care entities to become eligible for their providers to receive up to \$50,000 each in loan repayment through the National Health Service Corps. As of August 2010, 65 clinicians were receiving loan repayment through the program.
- Federally Qualified Community Health Centers (FQHCs) in Iowa see patients regardless of their ability to pay. The PCO works with the Iowa/Nebraska Primary Care Association to designate areas of the state as eligible for new FQHCs. Due to increased funding through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, the PCO worked with IANEPCHA to analyze 6 areas of the state as potential expansion locations for FQHCs.
- In communities where efforts to hire an American born physician have been unsuccessful, the PCO has assisted by sponsoring up to 30 foreign physicians through the J1-Visa Waiver/Conrad 30 program in health professional shortage areas and areas that are shown to be medically underserved. In 2010, 25 physicians were supported; 11 primary care physicians and 14 specialists in rural and urban underserved areas of Iowa.
- Through state-funded programs aimed at increasing access to mental health, the Cherokee Mental Health NP/PA training program supported 3 trainees, the University of Iowa NP/PA psychiatric training program supported 77 trainees, the Psychologist Training Program supported 2 trainees, and 4 communities received \$35,000 in funding support to recruit or retain psychiatrists to mental health shortage areas in Iowa.

Small Hospital Improvement Program Accomplishments

The Office of Rural Health Policy's Small Rural Hospital Improvement (SHIP) Grant Program provides funding to small rural hospitals to help them do any or all of the following: 1) pay for costs related to the implementation of PPS, 2) comply with provisions of HIPAA and 3) reduce medical errors and support quality improvement.

- Iowa has received and managed this grant award every year since 2002.
- For fiscal years 2008-2009 Iowa was awarded \$671,301.00. Five percent of the award is allowed for administrative costs and the remaining 95 percent will be divided equally among 77 eligible hospitals that applied.
- Hospitals qualifying for SHIP funds will receive \$8282.00. The funds are to be used for PPS, HIPAA, and/or QI activities.
- Each year the State SHIP program submits a Progress Report to the Office of Rural Health Policy which details the use and benefits of funding Iowa small hospitals.

State Office of Rural Health Accomplishments

Since 1997 the State Office of Rural Health (SORH) program secured approximately \$2,026,000 in federal grants funds to assure program infrastructure in Iowa. The grant requires a 3:1 match commitment from Iowa. The match comes from IA Department of Public Health (IDPH) state general funds allocated by the legislature. The SORH is a federal-state partnership and supports [Iowa Code Chapter 135.007](#) and House File 2529 as they relate to health care access, farm safety, health-provider support, and community benefit. In 2010 the SORH engaged in various partnerships and initiatives including:

- Serves on 5 national and state boards and committees related to rural health policy, performance measures reporting, education, agricultural health and safety, and EMS
- Supports national and state level health provider training and technical assistance to 140 Rural Health Clinics (RHC). Also acquired federal approval for the 2009 Governor's Designation for Rural Health Clinics.
 - The Governor's Designation process ensures RHC status for counties which would not otherwise be eligible or could lose their clinic eligibility status.
- Collaborates with state and national groups to offer rural communities and providers opportunities including:
 - One of 7 states in the [National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health](#) responsible for development of webinars and a Tool Kit for rural clinics
 - Sponsored 5 scholarships for the University of Iowa Agricultural Occupational Health Training medical course
 - Sponsored 5 state conferences which offer training and learning for rural audiences. Enabling over 865 attendees to receive valuable education
 - Provided grant application information, technical assistance, and resources to rural organizations
 - Since 2005 seventeen Iowa communities and organizations have been awarded over 2.5 million dollars in rural health grants through [HRSA/Office of Rural Health Policy](#)
- Disseminates information and articles at the state, and national levels including the bureau [ACCESS Update](#) electronic newsletter which has approximately 1,100 subscribers and an average of 650 web downloads per month
 - Coordinated completion of the 2010 Center for [Rural Health and Primary Care Annual Report](#)
 - Currently coordinating completion of the 2011 Rural & Agricultural Health & Safety Resource Plan which assist the IDPH with strategic planning and will fold into the State Health Care Reform Initiative