April 15, 2020

Rural Health Information during COVID-19

Dear Rural Stakeholders,

To continue to have consistent and efficient communication to provide rural health stakeholders with the information needed during this global pandemic, here are updates from the rural health programs at the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH).

As mentioned previously, for critical information relating to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), we recommend that you regularly monitor information on the [Iowa Department of Public Health COVID-19 Page](#). In addition, discover the latest resources, maps and information about the coronavirus (COVID-19) on [coronavirus.iowa.gov](#).

For additional resources and updates, see the following pages. Please reach out for technical assistance and for any questions you may have.

We are an ongoing resource for you.

Best,

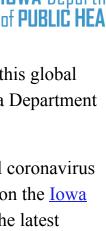Rural Health Programs

Iowa Department of Public Health

For questions, contact:

Samra Hiros, MPH

State Office of Rural Health

E-mail: Samra.Hiros@idph.iowa.gov.

Phone: (515) 423-7900

Did you know that Iowa has released an updated dashboard on coronavirus.iowa.gov? The new dashboard includes cases, deaths, and tests conducted in each county. Demographic information not previously provided as well as Iowa's epidemiological curve is now available.

Resources:

USDA's COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide Lists Federal Programs That Can Help Rural Communities, Organizations and Residents Impacted by COVID-19:
WASHINGTON, April 13, 2020 – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue unveiled a one-stop-shop of federal programs that can be used by rural communities, organizations and individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide (PDF, 349 KB) is a first-of-its-kind resource for rural leaders looking for federal funding and partnership opportunities to help address this pandemic. USDA has taken many immediate actions to assist farmers, ranchers, producers, rural communities, and rural-based businesses and organizations impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information on these actions, visit www.usda.gov/coronavirus.

Rural Case Studies About Planning and Response to COVID-19: The American Hospital Association has released a series of rural case studies about planning and response to COVID-19. These five rural case studies include lessons learned on drive-through testing, senior resident social determinants of health, surge capacity, strategic and operational planning, and virtual care models.

COVID-19 Rural Response Topic Guide: The Rural Health Information Hub (RHIhub) has compiled a topic guide on the rural response to COVID-19. They are actively curating this list, which includes federal information, state and national initiatives and resources, including information for various professional groups or health care and community settings. A variety of upcoming webinars are also listed.

Plan to Streamline Hospital COVID-19 Data Reporting: The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sent this letter to hospitals on Friday, April 10, 2020. The letter includes a plan to streamline hospital data reporting to help the public health response to COVID-19.

Webinar Opportunities:

On April 21, 2020: 9 am - 11 am CST (10 am - 12 pm EST), **the Bipartisan Policy Center's Rural Health Task Force** will release a new report that offers practical and politically

viable solutions for fixing the current health care crisis in rural communities. The recommendations aim to stabilize hundreds of rural hospitals that are at risk of closing and create pathways for transforming these facilities into models of care that best meet a community's needs. Members of the task force will discuss how these policy proposals will also stem closures of obstetric units, promote the uptake of value-based care, provide incentives for clinicians to stay in rural areas, and remove barriers to telehealth. To register for the *Confronting Rural America's Health Care Crisis: BPC Rural Health Task Force Recommendations* webcast, click on Register Now

On April 30, 2020, 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm CST, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is offering a free webinar on **Telehealth and COVID-19**, for registration, click on: HRSA Telehealth Learning Series: Telehealth in the Time of COVID-19

National Health Service Corps Update

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is actively working to address issues that affect National Health Service Corps (NHSC) participants, Nurse Corps participants, and approved sites. The goal is to offer flexibility in program requirements, so participants and sites can focus on facing this public health emergency.

The passing of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act has granted additional NHSC site approval flexibilities. As such, and in support of HRSA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau of Health Workforce (BHW) Division of Regional Operations (DRO) in collaboration with Division of Participant Support and Compliance (DPSC) will be approving certain NHSC sites on an emergency basis to allow unemployed NHSC clinicians to earn credit toward their service obligation. Participants who are laid-off or furloughed due to a permanent or temporary site closure, and who wish to provide services in support of this public health emergency may be allowed, on a temporary basis, provide primary care to patients impacted by COVID-19 at a temporary location and earn service credit. Emergency/temporary locations require approval HRSA, and a Site Administrator/Point of Contact would be required to verify clinical service hour requirements are met. Note that this emergency site approval process does not require Primary Care Offices to review and approve these temporary sites.

The flexibilities noted above are temporary/limited in time and specific to assisting in the COVID-19 response (i.e. not permanent, and not for something other than COVID-19 response). The temporary sites will be terminated at the end of the public health emergency, and unemployed clinicians assigned to the temporary sites will need to return to service at a regular NHSC site.

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