

August 7, 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:

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Update:

WASHINGTON D.C. ~ President Trump signed an Executive Order late on Monday aimed at improving rural health and telehealth access. You can read the full Executive Order here:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-improving-rural-health-telehealth-access/>

Resources:

How Clarke County Hospital Is Expanding Its Telehealth Services into Home Monitoring COVID-19 Patients: Describes how Clarke County Hospital, a Critical Access Hospital in rural Osceola, Iowa, is using funding from the Federal Communications Commission's COVID-19 Telehealth Program to expand its telehealth and remote patient monitoring services. Offers lessons learned from applying for funding from the program. To read more, see [How Clarke County Hospital Is Expanding Its Telehealth Services into Home Monitoring COVID-19 Patients](#).

American Indian and Alaska Native People: Social Vulnerability and COVID-19: Details the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tribal areas and the social vulnerability of American Indian and Alaska Native people. Discusses poverty, household composition, and transportation access, among other factors. To read more, see [American Indian and Alaska Native People: Social Vulnerability and COVID-19](#).

Barriers & Challenges to FQHC Use of Telehealth for Substance Use Disorder: An Examination of Policies Affecting FQHCs Pre- and During the COVID-19 Emergency: Describes barriers for implementing telehealth medication assisted treatment (MAT) programs in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) prior to COVID-19 in Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, and where entities received funding from the Health Resources Services Administration for substance use disorder projects. Includes analysis on the policies that have impacted FQHCs' ability to deliver MAT via telehealth during the COVID-19 public health emergency, and features a chart showing changes to Medicare and Medicaid telehealth policies for FQHC MAT services. To read more, see [Barriers & Challenges to FQHC Use of Telehealth for Substance Use Disorder: An Examination of Policies Affecting FQHCs Pre- and During the COVID-19 Emergency](#).

Contact Tracing for Native Americans in Rural Arizona: Details the efforts to do COVID-19 contact tracing in Native American communities in rural Arizona. Discusses the role of a Critical Access Hospital in providing public health support in rural communities during the pandemic. To read more, see [Contact Tracing for Native Americans in Rural Arizona](#).

COVID Urban Rural Explorer (CURE): Provides data on COVID-19 cases and deaths in metropolitan and nonmetro areas. Identifies nonmetro counties experiencing spikes in COVID-19 cases, and offers county-level data on cases and deaths, the number of hospital beds, and population density. To read more, see [COVID Urban Rural Explorer \(CURE\)](#).

COVID-19 Guidance for Community Providers: Highlights guidance and support for community providers caring for veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Discusses care specifically for COVID-19 and general care during the pandemic. Includes training and best practices for clinicians. To read more, see [COVID-19 Guidance for Community Providers](#).

Medicare Beneficiary Use of Telehealth Visits: Early Data from the Start of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Examines changes in Medicare in-person primary care visits and the use of telehealth services at the start of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Discusses how Medicare telehealth flexibilities implemented in response to COVID-19 impacted access to these services. Compares the percentage of primary care telehealth visits between rural and urban providers. Includes a county-level map displaying the percentage of primary care visits conducted via telehealth services in April 2020. To read more, see [Medicare Beneficiary Use of Telehealth Visits: Early Data from the Start of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

Pharmacist-Led Chronic Care Management for Medically Underserved Rural Populations in Florida During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Describes how ambulatory care pharmacists and student pharmacists are implementing telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide chronic care management to underserved, rural communities in Florida. Discusses implications for public health. To read more, see [Pharmacist-Led Chronic Care Management for Medically Underserved Rural Populations in Florida During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

The Role of Public Health in COVID-19 Emergency Response Efforts From a Rural Health Perspective: Examines the difficulties rural communities face in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the southeastern region of the U.S. Discusses the COVID-19 Community Vulnerability Index, a tool that analyzes epidemiological factors, socioeconomic status, and other indicators to determine which communities are at an increased risk of COVID-19. To read more, see [The Role of Public Health in COVID-19 Emergency Response Efforts From a Rural Health Perspective](#).

Telehealth in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic: Implications for Rural Health Disparities: Investigates the potential effects of telehealth implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic on rural health disparities. Includes discussion on telehealth initiatives and barriers to accessing broadband, and provides recommendations for researchers and policymakers. To read

more, see [Telehealth in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic: Implications for Rural Health Disparities](#).

In the News:

Jul 31, 2020 -- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) extended the deadline for Phase 2 of the CARES Act Provider Relief Fund general distribution to Medicaid, Medicaid managed care, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and dental providers. The extension includes allowing certain Medicare providers who experienced challenges in the Phase 1 Medicare General Distribution application period a second opportunity at funding. Both groups have until August 28, 2020 to submit applications. To read more, see [HHS Extends Application Deadline for Medicaid Providers and Plans to Reopen Portal to Certain Medicare Providers](#).

Jul 31, 2020 -- Features several ambulance services in rural North Dakota and discusses the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on operations. Describes how rural volunteer emergency services across the state are having difficulty with staffing out of fear for contracting the virus, while a decrease in calls has created additional financial burdens. (May require a subscription to view full article). To read more, see [Pandemic Exacerbates Rural EMS Struggles](#).

Jul 30, 2020 -- Notice from the Department of Health and Human Services extending the [March 23, 2020 Executive Order](#) to prevent hoarding of health and medical resources necessary to respond to COVID-19 pandemic. Also includes modifications and additions to the original list of scarce or threatened materials. This action took effect July 23, 2020 and terminates January 19, 2021. To read more, see [HHS: Extension of Designation of Scarce Materials or Threatened Materials Subject to COVID-19 Hoarding Prevention Measures Under Executive Order 13910 and Section 102 of the Defense Production Act of 1950](#).

Jul 30, 2020 -- Features the Yakama Nation, a Native community in Washington state that has been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Discusses how COVID-19 data collected often omits information about race and ethnicity, making it difficult for tribes to receive sufficient funds aimed at economic recovery. To read more, see [Native Americans Feel Devastated by the Virus Yet Overlooked in the Data](#).

Funding Opportunity:

[COVID-19/Violence Against Women Assistance to Tribes:](#) Grants for activities that address tribal needs in responding to violent crimes against women that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 national emergency. Application Deadline: **September 16, 2020**.