October 23, 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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Resources:

Rural Healthcare Surge Readiness: Developed by the COVID-19 Healthcare Resilience Working Group, this tool provides critical resources for rural health systems to prepare for and respond to a COVID-19 surge. To read more, see [Rural Healthcare Surge Readiness](#).

Addressing Opioid Overdose Deaths: The Vision for the HEALing Communities Study: Highlights a study on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ongoing HEALing Communities Study (HCS), which began in 2019 with the goal of reducing opioid overdose deaths by 40% over 3 years. Discusses the intersection of the two crises across the country and discusses the variations in rural and urban locations. To read more, see [Addressing Opioid Overdose Deaths: The Vision for the HEALing Communities Study](#).

Community Collaboration During COVID-19: Reaching Hmong and Latino Residents in a Rural Setting: Describes how local and state organizations collaborated to reduce the impact of COVID-19 in Hmong and Latino populations in rural north central Wisconsin. Discusses the recruitment and training of community liaisons, the impact of the project, and lessons learned. To read more, see [Community Collaboration During COVID-19: Reaching Hmong and Latino Residents in a Rural Setting](#).

The Evolving Landscape of National Telehealth Policies during a Public Health Emergency: Responsiveness to Rural Needs: Provides an overview of the telehealth policy landscape and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on telehealth utilization. Compares policy recommendations from the Bipartisan Policy Center's Rural Health Task Force to COVID-19-related policy changes. Includes considerations for additional telehealth policy changes. To read more, see [The Evolving Landscape of National Telehealth Policies during a Public Health Emergency: Responsiveness to Rural Needs](#).

Health Equity, Indigenous Populations, History, Culture, Policy and Science with Donald Warne: Video recording of an interview with Dr. Donald Warne discusses health disparities in Indian Country historically and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Highlights the need for more Native American providers and how healthcare policy affects the health outcomes of American Indians and Alaska Natives. To read more, see [Health Equity, Indigenous Populations, History, Culture, Policy and Science with Donald Warne](#).

Medicaid Telehealth Policies in Response to COVID-19: Provides an overview of Medicaid telehealth policies before and in response to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). Discusses how states have utilized existing flexibilities and PHE-specific federal authorities to increase the number of services, provider types, and other telehealth coverage options under Medicaid. To read more, see [Medicaid Telehealth Policies in Response to COVID-19](#).

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State Medicaid Programs Respond to Meet COVID-19 Challenges: Results from a 50-State Medicaid Budget Survey for State Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021: Report examines changes taking place in Medicaid programs in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Features sections on eligibility and enrollment; provider rates and taxes; delivery systems; long-term services and supports; benefits, cost-sharing, and telehealth; and pharmacy cost containment actions. Highlights challenges posed by the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) and policy changes taken in response to the PHE. To read more, see State Medicaid Programs Respond to Meet COVID-19 Challenges: Results from a 50-State Medicaid Budget Survey for State Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021.

In the News:

Oct 19, 2020 -- Domestic Violence in Rural America Increased During COVID-19: Addresses the rise in domestic violence and abuse in rural America during the COVID-19 pandemic, with economic pressures and limited access to transportation contributing to the increase. Describes how social distancing requirements limits shelter capacity, discusses the potential long-term impacts on children exposed to domestic violence.

Oct 16, 2020 -- Data Collection Site Launched for the RHC COVID-19 Testing Program: The National Association of Rural Health Clinics (NARHC) launched the online portal to collect official data for the Rural Health Clinic (RHC) COVID-19 Testing Program. All RHCs that received money from the program are required to report through this portal, which requests basic data regarding COVID-19.

Oct 16, 2020 -- Rural Jails Reel as U.S. Coronavirus Cases Surpass 8 Million: Covers an outbreak of COVID-19 in a rural Montana jail, in which infections make up a quarter of all known virus cases in the county. Describes how COVID-19 is affecting the rest of the town, as hospitals and the public health system are at capacity. Discusses the difficulty of containing the spread of infection as social distancing in the jail is nearly impossible.

Oct 14, 2020 -- CMS Adds 11 New Telehealth Services to Medicare Coverage: Reports that Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has added 11 new telehealth services to the list of services it will pay for during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Webinar Opportunity:

NIH: Telehealth for Rural Cancer Care During COVID-19 – **Friday, October 30 at 11:00 am CST**. The National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will hold an hour-long discussion on sustained cancer control for rural populations during the pandemic. The session is part of the Healthcare Teams (HTC) Cyber Discussions Series.

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