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October 29, 2020 [Share Bulletin](#)

## Iowa Department of Public Health Rural Health Programs Newsletter



The purpose of this newsletter is to provide program updates, news, and notifications on funding opportunities.

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Please note that direct responses to this newsletter will not be delivered. If you have any questions, comments, or content for the next newsletter, **please reply to [pwsbureaucontact@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:pwsbureaucontact@idph.iowa.gov).**

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## Rural Health Programs News

### Save the Date for National Rural Health Day on November 19, 2020!



Mark your calendar for National Rural Health Day (NRHD) on **November 19, 2020!** On the third Thursday every November, the National Organization of State

Offices of Rural Health, all 50 State Offices of Rural Health, their partners, sponsors and community stakeholders celebrate NRHD! We encourage you to share your NRHD activities with the IDPH Rural Health Team by emailing stories and photos to [samra.hiros@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:samra.hiros@idph.iowa.gov) or by sharing a post on the [IDPH Facebook page!](#) We would love to hear what the Power of Rural means to you!



### A Few Ideas on How to Celebrate NRHD

- Use the hashtag #PowerofRural on all social media posts on November 19, 2020.
- \*Small Gesture = Big Impact: Use the #PowerofRural in your social media for the entire month of November!
- Commit to at least ONE "healthy" activity-- skip the sweets and opt for vegetables, bike instead of drive, quit smoking, volunteer to make your community healthier
- Make an "I Love Rural Health Heroes" face covering and snap a photo
- Display NRHD banners and posters
- Email signature with NRHD date
- Link the NRHD website ([powerofrural.org](http://powerofrural.org)) to your website

If you are looking for additional ideas on ways to celebrate the Power of Rural, see the [NRHD Idea Guide](#).

## J-1 Visa/Conrad 30 Waivers Now Being Accepted

The Iowa Department of Public Health receives requests and makes recommendations for waivers on behalf of physicians holding J-1 visas in accordance with the Conrad State 30 program. The program allows J-1 exchange visitors to apply for a waiver of the 2-year home residency requirement upon completion of their exchange program. Waiver requests are accepted for physicians who provide primary health care, mental health care, and specialty care. Recipients of a waiver agree to a service commitment in an underserved area of the state, as designated by the federal government. The IDPH is currently receiving applications through **October 30, 2020**. For more information, go to the [Rural Health and Primary Care website](#).

## National Health Service Corps Recertification Deadline Extended to October 13, 2020

**The deadline for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Site Recertification cycle has been extended until Tuesday, October 13 at 11:59 p.m. ET.** Don't miss this opportunity to recertify your NHSC site so that your clinicians can continue to take advantage of the [loan repayment](#) opportunities and you can use other recruitment resources like the [Health Workforce Connector](#) and [Virtual Job Fairs](#).

The [NHSC site recertification webpage](#) is a comprehensive resource for all sites and includes answers to your FAQs.

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## Success Stories

### MercyOne's Community Health Worker Program



MercyOne is a connected system of health care facilities and services with 420 hospitals, clinics and health care locations across Iowa and beyond. MercyOne is a joint venture between CommonSpirit Health and Trinity Health. MercyOne Population Health Services Organization (PHSO) joined CommonSpirit Health's Total Health Roadmap in 2017 to implement a new, innovative model for addressing the social determinants of health. The program focuses on implementing social needs screening in rural and urban primary care settings and included adding Community Health Workers to the population health care management team.

Community Health Workers are non-clinical team members with a deep understanding of the community and have training to serve as a liaison between the health system and community. Community health workers are embedded in primary care clinics alongside RN health coaches. Together they partner with patients to navigate complex clinical and social factors and make healthy behavior changes.

The program launched in MercyOne's Central Iowa region in 2017 at two pilot clinics, MercyOne South Des Moines Family Medicine Clinic and MercyOne Centerville Family Medicine Clinic. The program has since expanded to more than 10 participating primary care clinics in MercyOne's Central Iowa and North Iowa regions.

Patients visiting participating clinics are asked questions related to social needs – such as access to safe housing, quality food, and reliable transportation. Patients who voluntarily identify a need are connected with a Community Health Worker who assists them in navigating health and social services. Community Health Workers meet regularly with community based organizations to better understand resources available, as well as where gaps exist in the availability of needed resources.

More than 28,000 patients have been screened through the program with close to 20% of patients reporting at least one social need. Social isolation is the area of greatest need, followed by food insecurity. More than 75% of patients report successfully connecting to at least one resource, and 60% report the resource was able to help them.

To learn more about MercyOne's Community Health Worker Program, visit <https://www.mercyone.org/aco/> or contact Emily Fletcher at [efletcher@mercydesmoines.org](mailto:efletcher@mercydesmoines.org).

## Iowa Hospitals Receive Recognition for Top Performance

Earlier this year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released new patient experience star ratings based on the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) and The Chartis Group and iVantage released its list of Top 100 CAHs. Three Iowa hospitals, Floyd Valley Healthcare, Jones Regional Medical Center, and Orange City Area Health System, were recognized on both lists.

### Five Star HCAHPS Ratings

The CMS released new patient experience star ratings based on the HCAHPS scores collected from January 1 to December 31, 2020. Based on this data, 266 hospitals in the United States received five stars, including the following 13 Iowa hospitals:

- Buena Vista Regional Medical Center (Storm Lake)
- Compass Memorial Healthcare (Marengo)
- Floyd Valley Healthcare (Le Mars)
- Iowa Specialty Hospital - Belmond (Belmond)
- Jones Regional Medical Center (Anamosa)
- Orange City Area Health System (Orange City)
- Regional Medical Center (Manchester)
- St. Anthony Regional Hospital and Nursing Home (Carroll)
- Stewart Memorial Community Hospital (Lake City)
- Washington County Hospital and Clinics (Washington)
- Waverly Health Center (Waverly)
- Wayne County Hospital (Corydon)
- Winneshiek Medical Center (Decorah)

### The 2020 Top 100 CAHs

Each year, rural hospitals are assessed on managing risk, achieving higher quality, securing better outcomes, increasing patient satisfaction, and operating at a cost lower than their peers. Using data on these factors, The Chartis Group and iVantage develop a list of Top 100 CAHs. This list of Top 100 CAHs included the following 14 Iowa hospitals:

- Avera Merrill Pioneer Hospital (Rock Rapids)
- Cass County Memorial Hospital (Atlantic)
- CHI Health Missouri Valley (Missouri Valley)
- Decatur County Hospital (Leon)
- Floyd Valley Healthcare (Le Mars)
- Greater Regional Medical Center (Creston)
- Guthrie County Hospital (Guthrie Center)
- Jones Regional Medical Center (Anamosa)
- Knoxville Hospital and Clinics (Knoxville)
- Kossuth Regional Health Center (Algona)
- Loring Hospital (Sac City)
- MercyOne Centerville Medical Center (Centerville)
- Myrtue Medical Center (Harlan)
- Orange City Area Health System (Orange City)

## Iowa the Most Heavily Represented State in Healthiest Communities Rankings

Iowa is the most heavily represented state in the US News and World Report's Healthiest Communities rankings overall. The rankings were based on 10 categories, with population health and equity given the heaviest weights. More than half of Iowa's 99 counties rank among the [top 500 Healthiest Communities](#) nationally, including No. 12 [Sioux County](#), No. 17 [Bremer County](#) and No. 18 [Grundy County](#). Taken together, Iowa counties score above the national average in each of the 10 Healthiest Communities categories. Iowa is strong in population health, boasting one of the highest rates of insurance coverage and lowest rates of deaths of despair, on average. Each Iowa community assessed in the rankings scores above the national average in the population health category.

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## Available Funding Opportunities

### Addressing Needs of People with Disabilities in COVID-19 Local Preparedness Planning, Mitigation, and Recovery Efforts:

Funding to improve the capacity of local health departments to address the needs of people with disabilities when planning and responding to outbreaks and other national emergencies, particularly during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Funding amount: Fixed price contracts up to \$83,000 to 10 local health departments.

*Applications are due by October 13, 2020.*

**[Board Certified Behavior Analyst \(BCBA/BCaBA\) Grants:](#)** The Iowa Department of Public Health has issued RFP #58821016 to solicit applications that will enable the Iowa Department of Public Health (referred to as Department) to select the most qualified applicant to receive a grant towards program tuition and fees associated with obtaining certification as a behavior analyst or assistant behavior analyst. The goal of this endeavor is to expand the number of board-certified behavior analysts (BCBA) and board-certified assistant behavior analysts (BCaBA) providing behavioral analysis services to Iowans.

*Applications are due by October 20, 2020.*

**[Primary Care Provider Loan Repayment Program:](#)** The Iowa Department of Public Health has issued RFP #58821015 to solicit applications that will enable the Iowa Department of Public Health (referred to as Department) to select the most qualified applicant to improve access to primary health care among underserved populations by providing educational loan repayment assistance to primary care medical, dental, and mental health practitioners. In exchange, practitioners must complete a minimum two year, full-time (or four year, half-time) service obligation at an eligible practice site/s located in a federally designated health professional shortage area (HPSA). Applicants that have not received an award in the past will be given priority under this RFP.

*Applications are due by October 26, 2020.*

**[HRSA National Research Service Award Grants:](#)** The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will make 15 awards of \$500,000 each for training postdoctoral professionals pursuing careers in biomedical and behavioral health research related to primary care. Eligible applicants are public and private institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and community-based organizations.

*Applications are due by November 9, 2020.*

**[DOL H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant Program:](#)** The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) will make up to 40 awards with a total investment of \$40 million to train health care professionals working in rural areas. [The H-1B Skills Training Grants fund projects that train workers](#) for high-skill jobs in underserved areas of the country to allow employers to meet workforce needs.

*Applications are due by November 13, 2020.*

**[HRSA Rural Health Network Development Planning Program:](#)** The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will make 20 awards of up to \$100,000 each to plan the development of networks among at least three separately-owned local health care providers. Eligible applicants include public, private, and nonprofit entities with the capacity to serve rural populations. A technical assistance webinar for applicants is scheduled on **Wednesday October 7, from 2-3pm CT**. A recording will be made available for those who cannot attend.

*Applications are due by November 16, 2020.*

**[CDC Monitoring/Evaluating Harm Reduction Syringe Services:](#)** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will invest \$6.9 million in a three-year program to monitor and evaluate syringe services throughout the United States. Applicant eligibility is unrestricted for two cooperative agreements that will include technical assistance for syringe service programs (SSP), development of a national training network, and implementation of an SSP monitoring and evaluation program.

*Applications are due by October 28, 2020.*

**[FY21 Rural Health Care Services Outreach Program \(Outreach\):](#)** The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) plans to award approximately \$12.7 million to 60 organizations. The Outreach Program administered by HRSA's FORHP focuses on expanding the delivery of health care services to include new and enhanced services exclusively in rural communities. Applicants are required to deliver health care services through a consortium of at least three organizations, use an evidence-based or promising practice model to inform their approach, and demonstrate health outcomes and sustainability by the end of the four-year performance period. A webinar for applicants is scheduled on **Tuesday October 13, from 2-3:30 pm CT**.

*Applications are due by December 1, 2020.*

**[AmeriCorps State and National Grants for Community Service:](#)** AmeriCorps awards federal grants to community organizations for civic engagement through service and volunteering. Funding priorities include recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic and programs that actively advance racial equality.

*Applications are due by January 6, 2020.*

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## Publications and Resources

**[Rural Action Plan:](#)** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released the Rural Action Plan, a product developed by HHS's Rural Task Force in

collaboration with 18 HHS agencies and offices. The plan seeks to strengthen coordination within HHS departments to better serve rural communities and address several emerging health challenges, including health disparities, chronic disease, maternal mortality, and limited access to mental health services. Announces a four-point strategy to transform rural health and human services that targets: building a sustainable health and human services model for rural communities, leveraging technology and innovation, focusing on preventing disease and mortality, and increasing rural access to care.

**Healthy People 2030:** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released Healthy People 2030, the nation's 10-year plan for addressing our most critical public health priorities and challenges. Healthy People 2030 features 355 measurable objectives with 10-year targets, including those related to opioid use disorder and youth e-cigarette use, as well as emerging public health threats like COVID-19.

**The Check-Up:** The Check-Up is a newsletter designed to keep interested Iowans up-to-date on health reform initiatives. The Check-Up features updates on activities of IDPH's Office of Health Care Transformation (OHCT) and partners. The OHCT is a key point-of-contact for health care transformation initiatives within IDPH and they monitor federal health care issues and disseminates the key information, opportunities, and impacts to the public and other partners- internal and external to IDPH.

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## Upcoming Events

### [2020 Iowa Community Health Conference](#)

**October 26-27, 2020**

**REGISTER BY OCTOBER 9, 2020!**

Iowa's premier conference on community health and rural healthcare has arrived. The Iowa Primary Care Association, Iowa Rural Health Association, Iowa Chronic Care Consortium, and Iowa Association of Rural Health Clinics are excited to announce the 1st annual Iowa Community Health Conference on October 26-27, 2020.

This year's conference will bring together leaders in community health for a two-day virtual event full of inspiration and relevant topics such as health equity, social determinants of health, rural healthcare in Iowa, and much more.

[Registration](#) is now open and is \$100 for all attendees regardless of membership or affiliation. More information can be found at <https://iowapca.org/events/annual-conference>.

For questions, please email [pwsbureaucontact@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:pwsbureaucontact@idph.iowa.gov).

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