RURAL HEALTH LINK:
THE RURAL HEALTH NETWORKS
QUARTERLY DIGEST

Community Health Systems Development

Georgia Health Policy Center
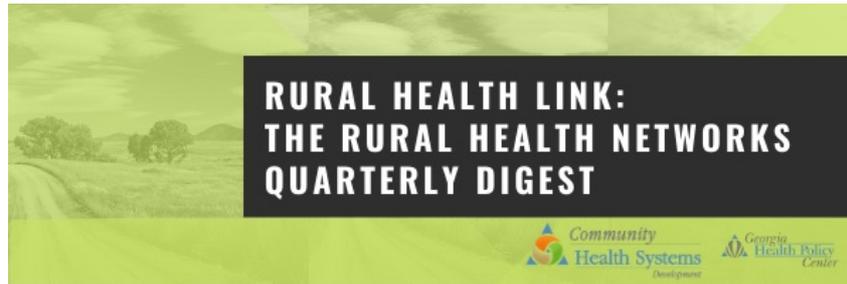
Brought to you by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) and the Community Health Systems Development Team at the Georgia Health Policy Center

Welcome to the first issue of the **Rural Health Link: Rural Health Networks Quarterly Digest**. This newsletter will share program updates, the technical assistance (TA) schedule of events, as well as a variety of resources focused on rural health networks. Each issue will also feature a grantee spotlight article. We welcome your feedback. If you have any comments or recommendations for future content, please reach out to us at chsdteam@gsu.edu.

Grantee Spotlight

St. Claire HealthCare/Northeast Kentucky Area Health Education Center (on behalf of the Northeast Kentucky Substance Use Response Coalition)

The Northeast Kentucky Substance Use Response Coalition serves an 18-county service area in northeastern Kentucky (central Appalachia). The coalition is a formal network of eight health care and social service organizations working on building a community-based approach to address the opioid crisis. As part of the Network Development Program, the coalition, through the Northeast Kentucky Area Health Education Center, is deploying regional training with a focus on implementation of three evidence-based strategies including continuing medical education, mentoring, and youth prevention education. Overall, the project aims to increase access to Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), particularly in the primary care setting.

The Georgia Health Policy Center recently interviewed David Gross, KaSandra Hensley, and KaLeigh Hemminger, from the Northeast Kentucky Area Health Education Center, about participation in the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy's Network Development Program. Click on the image above to view the video.

Read More

Schedule of Quarterly TA-Related Activities

Evaluation Plan Resources

Should you need additional support to complete your evaluation plan by the **March 1, 2020**, due date, or to align that plan with your strategic plan, please feel free to discuss with your TA provider this quarter. You may find the evaluation plan template, draft Performance Improvement Measurement System (PIMS) measures handout, and related webinar recording in the webinars section.

Data Collection

With the completion of your evaluation plan and the ongoing collection of FORHP's PIMS measures that will be reported annually, a data tracking tool might come in handy as you ramp up your data collection and analysis efforts. Such a tool is currently under development and will be shared with you during the **first quarter of 2021**.

Rural Health Network Development (RHND) Peer Groups Forming

Per our earlier communication, RHND Peer Groups will begin meeting in **early 2021**. Going forward these groups will meet quarterly and will be driven by the interests and needs of those participating in each group. If you have questions regarding participation, please reach out to your technical assistance provider. Stay tuned for more information on the upcoming calls in early 2021.

Program-Specific Updates

Upcoming Due Dates
- **Strategic Plan:** December 14, 2020. Uploaded in the Electronic Handbooks (EHBs).
- **Evaluation Plan**: March 1, 2021. Uploaded in the Electronic Handbooks (EHBs).

Additional Information -
Economic Impact Analysis Tool-A question in the Performance Improvement Measurement System (PIMS) requires the use of the Economic Impact Analysis Tool. This tool shows how your RHND project's spending on staff, supplies, and other expenses benefits your community. Be sure to visit the RHIhub website to learn what information you should collect during the first year of your RHND grant in order to provide an accurate estimate. If you have questions, contact your HRSA Project Officer.

CMS Community Health Access and Rural Transformation (CHART) Model Funding Opportunity—To learn more, please see the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) or contact the CHART Help Desk at CHARTmodel@cms.hhs.gov.

Rural Health Information Hub Toolkits—RHIhub's website routinely creates and updates over 20 evidence-based toolkits that provide step by step guides to build effective community health. Toolkit focus areas include care coordination, health networks and coalitions,and telehealth.

Articles

Evaluating Telehealth Adoption and Related Barriers Among Hospitals Located in Rural and Urban Areas
This article in *The Journal of Rural Health* assesses telehealth adoption among hospitals located in rural and urban areas, and identifies barriers related to enhanced telehealth capabilities in the areas of patient engagement and health information exchange capacity with external providers and community partners.

Chronic Disease Management in the COVID-19 Era
This article in *The American Journal of Managed Care* outlines various strategies that health care facilities can develop and implement to assist with the management of chronic diseases during the COVID-19 era. Strategies include developing a real-time clinical registry to identify and monitor both high-risk and rising-risk patients; developing both synchronous and asynchronous virtual care delivery tools to reduce in-person visits for patients with chronic diseases; and incorporating social networks (virtual group visits, etc.) in telehealth chronic disease management interventions.

Care of Older Adults in Rural Emergency Departments During the COVID-19 Pandemic
This paper outlines the challenges presented by the unique needs of rural older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic and briefly describes the care of older adults in the rural emergency department, the care of older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the emergency care of those older patients suspected of COVID-19. The article highlights the necessity of re-engineering rural emergency department processes to better meet the needs of vulnerable older adults.

Resources, News, and Other Updates

States Turn to Telehealth During the Pandemic
With funding support from the Health Resources and Services Administration, the National Conference of State Legislatures provides details on more than 79 bills changing telehealth policies in 36 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Advancing CHW Engagement in COVID-19 Response Strategies
The National Community-Based Workforce Alliance published a playbook for local health departments to assist with COVID-19 Response Strategies for community health workers. The playbook provides a framework for key areas of engagement as well as strategic recommendations for advancement.

Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) Provides How-To Guide for Sustaining Telehealth Programs
GHPC highlights the stories of ingenuity and innovation emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic in the latest online series installment, Provider Telehealth Innovations & How-To Guide for Thinking Sustainably. GHPC's how-to-guide for sustainability planning helps providers and organizations think how to move a telehealth program from initial "response mode" into a longer-term sustainable strategy.

How Practices Can Advance the Implementation of Integrated Care in the COVID-19 Era
This issue brief by The Commonwealth Fund covers barriers to integrated care, including challenges in financing, health information technology (HIT), and workforce supply. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified how advancement of HIT could increase access to integrated care.

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) in Rural Communities Toolkit
The toolkit comprises of evidence-based models and resources to support organizations implementing programs addressing SDOH in rural communities. The toolkit provides modules on evidence-based approaches, program implementation, evaluation, and sustainability, as well disseminating strategies for SDOH programs in rural communities. Additionally, the toolkit highlights programs that have already been implemented in rural communities.

Rural Hospitals Are Dying. This One Saved Itself—and Its Community
This TIME article features a struggling rural hospital in South Georgia and the CEO that helped turn it around with the help of a seasoned CEO from another rural hospital. After implementing a swing bed program and taking in patients from out of town, the rural hospital improved financially, allowing the hospital to prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

How Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) in Rural and Underserved Areas Responded to Medicare's ACO Investment Model
This blog post from Health Affairs discusses the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' ACO Investment Model and its impacts. Analysis finds that the ACO Investment Model can help under resourced providers reduce spending to offset the costs of delivery system investments, even under an upside-only financial risk model.

Guide to Network Evaluation
This "state of the field" framing paper and casebook was developed by Network Impact in partnership with the Center for Evaluation Innovation. It explores three dimensions of focus for network evaluation-- connectivity, health and results. Find practical examples of network evaluation frameworks, methods, and tools.

New Plan to Treat Opioid Use Disorder Could Help Rural Communities Combat Addiction
Research at the University of Kentucky gives hope for a holistic approach to treating addiction in rural areas, merging intravenous drug infections treatments with mental health and social services support.

The Impact of Coronavirus on Households Across America
Both the health and economic impact of COVID-19 has raised concerns about our ability to weather the long-term health and financial harms of the pandemic. This article highlights key findings from five survey reports developed by NPR, the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The surveys provide insight to the impact the pandemic has had on households' areas such as finances, housing, jobs, health care, transportation, care giving, and overall well-being. The household survey data is stratified by major cities, racial/ethnic groups, households with children, households located in rural communities, and households throughout the nation collectively.

Upcoming Events

A Pathway for Rural Health to Thrive in a Post COVID-19 World

Feb. 9, 2021 12:00–1:00pm (CST)

Join the Center for Optimizing Rural Health as they host a webinar on strategies to ensure rural health thrives after the COVID-19 era. Benjamin Anderson, MBA, MHCDS, Vice President, Rural Health and Hospitals will be the guest speaker.

Rural Health Policy Institute - NRHA

Feb. 9-11, 2021 Washington, D.C.

Join NRHA's 32nd Annual Rural Health Policy Institute and guide the future of rural health policy with NRHA leadership. This institute offers the opportunity to advocate for issues you care about with new and returning members of Congress and the administration.

AcademyHealth 2021 Health Datapalooza and National Health Policy Conference

Feb. 16-18, 2021 VIRTUAL

Health data and policy innovation are an integral part of all efforts to transform health care. Recognizing the consequential relationship that exists between health data and health policy advancements, AcademyHealth is virtually convening the two communities to share their work, exchange ideas, collaborate, and tackle the most critical health issues facing the country today.