RURAL HOSPITAL INTERVENTIONS FOR COVID-19
Resources and References

Some 57 million rural Americans depend on their hospital as an important source of care as well as a critical component of their area’s economic and social fabric. Below is the most current policy and advocacy priorities along with the latest stories highlighting the good work of rural health leaders. From innovations in AI to telehealth to new payment models, hospitals and health systems in rural areas are brainstorming bold new ideas.

NEWSLETTERS & UPDATES

August 25, 2020
Rural Health Update

Rural Health Update and COVID-19 Resources and References
This newsletter updates readers on federal advocacy and policy actions in general as well as those that are COVID-19 related. It reviews several educational opportunities for rural hospitals including podcasts, webinars and an updated compendium of COVID-19 resources and references. It also includes several excellent tools and resources curated from both federal agencies and the private sector. The AHA remains committed to helping rural hospitals and health systems address the COVID-19 pandemic in their communities. Read the full newsletter here.

July 30, 2020
Rural Health Update

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June 25, 2020
Rural Health Special Edition

COVID-19 Update for Rural Hospitals and Health Systems
As cities and states begin the process of re-opening, AHA remains committed to helping rural hospitals and health systems combat and recover from the COVID-19 public health pandemic. The AHA is urging Congress to provide more funding and additional assistance to hospitals to help address the challenges COVID-19 has wrought. In this edition of the Rural Health Services special newsletter, you'll find the latest resources to help you navigate the new normal. Read the full newsletter here.

May 28, 2020
Rural Health Special Edition

COVID-19 Update for Rural Hospitals & Health Systems
The AHA remains committed to helping rural hospitals and health systems address the COVID-19 pandemic in their communities. Many states are removing restrictions under new local, state and federal guidelines, and hospitals are resuming non-emergency procedures. In Washington, D.C., the AHA is advocating on behalf of rural hospitals and health systems and working to convince Congress that it must provide additional funding and resources during these challenging times. In this newsletter, you'll find a wealth of new assets to help you meet your communities’ needs amid the shifting COVID-19 landscape. Read the full newsletter here.
April 30, 2020

COVID-19 Update for Rural Hospitals & Health Systems
The AHA remains committed to helping rural hospitals and health systems successfully navigate the global pandemic facing our nation. We recognize the challenges you are facing and AHA continues working with Congress to quickly pass legislation to help alleviate burden on providers, fast-track federal assistance dollars and increase the availability of needed resources during these times. We also continue to urge the Administration to distribute emergency funds swiftly, and provide further flexibilities so that hospitals can respond to patient care needs. We also remain inspired by the stories of front-line workers on the ground risking their lives to care for patients and communities in bold new ways. Included are case studies, additional resources and funding opportunities to help you and your counterparts in rural areas. Read the full newsletter here.

April 9, 2020

Resources to Help Rural Hospitals and Health Systems Navigate COVID-19
The AHA is hard at work advocating for the needs of rural hospitals and health systems amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, working with Congress and the administration to ensure the frontlines of health care – hospitals, physicians and nurses – remain a priority for federal assistance. During these unprecedented times we know that there are many challenges, especially for rural hospitals. But we’re inspired to see so many rural hospitals stepping up to meet this moment in our history. Included are some case studies featuring rural hospitals that may help you quickly implement your own solutions to help care for patients and your community, as well as additional resources that you may find helpful. Read the full newsletter here.

April 1, 2020

Summary of CARES Act Provisions to Help Rural Hospitals
The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, signed into law on March 27, provides resources and flexibility for rural hospitals. The legislation will help rural hospitals and critical access hospitals that are in dire financial need due to this pandemic. View the AHA’s two-page fact sheet outlining provisions to help rural hospitals. The AHA has urged the Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to directly and expeditiously distribute to hospitals and health systems funds from the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund that were designated for providers in the CARES Act. Read the full newsletter here.

Blog: Rural hospitals innovate during COVID-19
Aug 07, 2020 - 11:33 AM by John Supplitt
In this first in a series of three blogs, we highlight leaders’ reactions and initiatives. AHA's Rural Health Services team has documented the work of rural hospital leaders through case examples, podcasts and webinars. Here are just some of the many examples of ways leaders are improving quality of patient care during the COVID-19 pandemic.
**Rural Hospital Interventions for COVID-19 Podcasts**

As the COVID-19 outbreak evolves, AHA has captured seven inspirational stories and lessons learned of how rural hospitals and health systems are working to increase access points, deliver care, improve safety and meet the needs of the residents of their communities. We have interviewed the CEOs from several case examples and in their own words, they share their planning, implementation and lessons learned so that others may benefit from their experiences. They are provided as podcasts as part of the AHA Advancing Health series.

**Living and Learning through COVID-19**

September 4, 2020

Samaritan Health Services, Lincoln County, Oregon is comprised of two critical access hospitals. Lesley Ogden, M.D., CEO shares her experience of having lived with and learned from a 7 month battle with COVID-19 and the significance of emergency disaster planning, community collaboration, flex staffing, supply chain challenges for PPE and testing, and that cultural awareness leads to cultural competency. Listen to the podcast here.

**Doula program enhances the birthing experience**

August 20, 2020

Statistics show that doula services — which provide help and suggestions on comfort measures such as breathing, relaxation, movement and positioning — are effective in reducing stress and anxiety in expectant mothers, while improving birthing experience and outcomes. In this podcast, two experts from Brookings (S.D.) Health System discuss the impact of the volunteer doula program at New Beginnings Birth Center. Listen here.

**Rural Philanthropy as a Long-Term Strategy**

July 29, 2020

On this podcast, Joy Lewis, AHA vice president for strategic policy planning, and Allen Smart, principal at Winston-Salem, N.C.-based PhilanthropywoRx, discuss the imperative for rural hospital leaders to develop long-term strategies where community engagement and philanthropy meet for the good of communities’ health.
Applying for Federal Funds to Expand Telehealth and to Include Home Monitoring  
July 9, 2020  
AHA has tracked the stories of several rural community hospitals as part of our coverage of COVID-19. On this podcast we hear from Brian Evans, CEO of Clarke County Hospital in Osceola, Iowa and Corey Martin, senior director at the Iowa Hospital Association, who applied for and received federal funds to expand telehealth services to include home monitoring.

Preparing for a COVID-19 Surge and its Aftermath – Marshall Medical Center  
May 13, 2020  
For this podcast we hear the story of hospital heroes from the perspective of Siri Nelson, CEO of Marshall Medical Center located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in Northern California. Marshall is a full service, 125-bed not-for-profit hospital with a Level 3 trauma center serving El Dorado and its neighboring counties.

Kings’ Daughters Medical Center: Meeting the Challenge of COVID-19  
May 6, 2020  
For this podcast, we honor our hospital heroes and focus on surviving the surge from the perspective of Alvin Hoover, CEO, King’s Daughters Medical Center, Brookhaven, Mississippi, a 99-bed sole community hospital.

Surviving the Coronavirus Surge – Margaret Mary Healthcare, Batesville, Ind.  
Apr 29, 2020  
For this podcast, we honor our hospital heroes and focus on surviving the surge from the perspective of Tim Putnam, CEO, Margaret Mary Healthcare, Batesville, Indiana, a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital.
Case Studies

- A case study from Samaritan Health Services in Lincoln County, Oregon located on the Pacific coast documents how two critical access hospitals have lived and learned the significance of emergency disaster planning, community collaboration, flex staffing, supply chain challenges for PPE and testing and that cultural awareness leads to cultural competency.
- A case study from Opelousas General Health System in St. Landry Parish explains how its associated community health consortium confront the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in rural Louisiana.
- A case study from St. James Parish Hospital demonstrates how local government and community partners accelerate coordinated communications efforts to slow the virus’ spread in rural Lutcher, Louisiana.
- A case study from Wilson Medical Center, Neodesha, Kan., identifies consumer conscious approaches to testing and caring for patients and community collaboration to acquire PPE.
- A case study from Marshall Medical Center, Placerville, Calif., outlines four stages of planning and implementation the hospital has undertaken to prepare for COVID-19.
- A case study on key lessons learned from Katherine Bethea Shaw Hospital in Dixon, Ill., which used its ambulance garage as its drive-through site to rapidly test patients for COVID-19.
- A case study from Southern Humboldt Community Healthcare District (SoHum Health), in Garberville, Calif., tells how it is proactively addressing social determinants of health for seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A case study from Margaret Mary Hospital in Batesville, Ind., a not-for-profit, critical access hospital describes how it is handling its COVID-19 surge.
- A case study from King’s Daughters Medical Center in rural Mississippi, reveals how it is implementing a variety of strategic and operational shifts in anticipation of an April surge of COVID-19 patients.
- A case study on how Riverwood Healthcare Center in Aitkin, Minn., explains how they deployed a virtual care model for patients amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the full compendium of resources, view AHA’s updated Rural Health Services webpage.

Webinar: Fast-track Your Digital Strategy to Drive Results. A sound digital strategy is essential for driving results, but it can be challenging to know how to prioritize digital initiatives for the greatest impact. Hear how Lexington Regional Health Center, a critical access hospital in central Nebraska, moved quickly under the leadership of CEO Leslie Marsh to assess the organization’s digital readiness, identify priorities and launch a strategy for success. The replay is available here.

A panel of 4 experts discussed federal policy emerging from Congress and the Administration under COVID-19 focusing on rural health priorities and took questions from the audience. They reviewed emergency funding, Medicare and Medicaid payment improvements, telehealth, regulatory relief, 340B drug pricing, access to PPE and steps toward recovery. Listen to the recording of the May 1, webinar here.
AHA webinar on rural hospitals’ efforts to manage COVID-19 - Replay

The AHA April 14 hosted a webinar with speakers from two rural hospitals sharing their real-time experiences and promising practices as they deliver care to COVID-19 patients. The webinar included an opportunity for questions and answers. A replay of this highly evaluated program is available at [http://sponsored.aha.org/2020-04-14-Managing-COVID19-in-RuralCommunities-webinar-replay.html](http://sponsored.aha.org/2020-04-14-Managing-COVID19-in-RuralCommunities-webinar-replay.html).

Webinar replay: Alliance for Health Policy rural health leaders discuss COVID-19


New AHA fact sheet: Rural Community Hospital Demonstration

The Rural Community Hospital demonstration tests an alternative payment model for small rural hospitals in response to concerns that these facilities face financial difficulties with Medicare’s inpatient prospective payment system. In [this AHA fact sheet](http://www.allhealthpolicy.org/covid-19-webinar-series-session-11-rural-health-system-response/), read the basis for our position that Congress should extend the RCH program for an additional five years and require a case mix adjustment be applied to the target amount in order to account for fluctuations in patient acuity.

FEATURED STORIES

Rural health system faces financial cliff due to COVID-19

Kittitas Valley Healthcare in Ellensburg, Wash., was among the nation’s first hospitals to feel the impact of COVID-19. As the rural delivery system and its critical access hospital pivoted to care for COVID-19 patients, it postponed orthopedics and general surgery services; the financial hit was felt almost immediately. “Our revenues and volumes fell off a cliff,” says CEO Julie Petersen. [Read the full story here.](http://www.allhealthpolicy.org/covid-19-webinar-series-session-11-rural-health-system-response/)

Rural health system takes notes on cities first hit by COVID-19

Community HealthCare System in Onaga, Kan., like many rural hospitals, wanted to be prepared when COVID-19 finally reached them. So, health care teams watched how urban hospitals responded and maintained supplies of personal protective equipment and ventilators according to what they observed. [Read more](http://www.allhealthpolicy.org/covid-19-webinar-series-session-11-rural-health-system-response/) about the health system’s preparations and creative solutions.

Small-town community and hospital confront COVID-19 together

When COVID-19 arrived in the small town of Cynthiana, Kentucky the residents of this hardworking community refused to let fear set in. They leaned on Harrison Memorial Hospital to provide accurate and easy-to-understand information about the virus and its potential spread, education and resources to stay safe and a sense of calm to help people cope. In return, the community responded. [Read](http://www.allhealthpolicy.org/covid-19-webinar-series-session-11-rural-health-system-response/) about how the community returned the favor.
Arizona hospital uses social media to help with behavioral health care during pandemic
Summit Healthcare, a nonprofit medical center in rural Navajo County in Arizona, launched a video series on the hospital’s YouTube channel about managing stress during these unprecedented and unnerving times. Read more about the resource that uses a Navajo story to make the resource highly relevant to its audience.

A small, rural hospital shows impact of COVID-19 on its community
At small rural hospitals, the challenges of fighting COVID-19 can be particularly intense. Staff on the front lines at Margaret Mary Health (MMH) in Batesville, Ind., shared “A View from the Frontlines of the COVID Pandemic” with their community. MMH has had 37% of lab tests come back positive for COVID-19, much higher than the 20% the state of Indiana had observed, on average.

A CAH shares tips for managing COVID-19
Wilson Medical Center, a Neodesha, Kan.-based hospital, transformed its care delivery following the state’s stay-at-home order because of the pandemic. Read more about what the leaders and staff learned.

Wellness pod nurtures health care workers
Cody Regional Health in Wyoming created a wellness pod for hardworking staff to care for themselves while fighting COVID-19. The wellness area includes a meditation room, eight bedrooms, laundry and shower facilities, on-site access to licensed therapists, games and an exercise area. Read more.

Trustees share messages with rural hospital staff
At Coffey Health System in Burlington, Kans., the board of trustees took time to create a video of heartfelt messages to show its appreciation to hospital staff working particularly hard during the COVID-19 emergency. Read more about the overwhelming response.

OTHER AHA RESOURCES

New AHA Connect App
The AHA has a new members-only app designed to help you stay current with the latest health policy news and legislative updates. The app offers a personalized experience through customization according to your issue interests, enables you to contact your congressional representatives with a single tap and participate in discussion groups. The app includes a link to the AHA Rural Forum digital community. Learn more here (https://www.aha.org/advocacy/2020-04-16-introducing-ahas-new-app-my-aha-connect#download).
AHA Physician Alliance: Addressing Rural Health Care Challenges

In 2019, the Physician Alliance hosted rural physician leaders to a discussion about challenges and innovative strategies when providing care in rural hospitals. This issue brief includes keys to leadership in a rural setting, and clickable icon links to resources to explore how rural leaders are providing better care for their patients.

New AHA fact sheet: Rural Community Hospital Demonstration

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Get engaged with the AHA Digital Community for Rural Hospitals CEOs

In this letter to rural health care leaders, Marty Fattig, CEO of Nemaha County Hospital in Auburn, Neb., shares the value of support from AHA’s Rural Hospital Executive Community. “The feedback continues to be positive and we encourage our colleagues from across rural America to use this resource for problem solving and knowledge transfer,” Fattig writes. “This is a safe and secure platform to examine key operational and management priorities with input from rural health care subject matter experts and thought leaders.”

AHA releases updated resource for members on COVID-19 pathways to recovery

The AHA today shared with members an updated resource, COVID-19 Pathways to Recovery, which includes considerations, questions and checklists for hospitals and health systems to consider as they work toward a safe, orderly return to providing comprehensive health care services to their communities. The second installment of this resource focuses on support and ancillary services, plant operations/environment of care, financial management and governance. The first part of the resource covered workforce, testing and contact tracing, internal and external communications, and the supply chain.

AHA Leadership Team Award – Applications closed August 31

AHA is accepting applications for the AHA Rural Hospital Leadership Team Award, which honors outstanding efforts by AHA members who have guided their hospital and community through transformational change on the road to health care reform. The team will have displayed exemplary leadership and responsiveness to the community’s health needs and demonstrated a collaborative community process that has led to measurable outcomes.

AHA Virtual Conference - Navigating a New Reality – Health Care Leaders Confront the Future

A virtual event brought to you by the AHA Center for Health Innovation and the Society for Health Care Strategy and Market Development that includes rural sessions for, Readiness for Future Pandemic Surges and Using the Road to Recovery to Build the Health Care System We Need.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CMS Issues Rural Crosswalk: CMS Flexibilities to Fight COVID-19. Recently, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a Rural Crosswalk: CMS Flexibilities to Fight COVID-19. This new resource documents all current COVID-19-related waivers and flexibilities issued by CMS that impact Rural

Nursing staff at Wilson Medical Center, Neodesha, Kan.
Health Clinics, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Critical Access Hospitals, rural hospitals generally, and long term care facilities, and describes the significance of each provision for these rural providers and facilities. The Rural Crosswalk can be found here: https://www.cms.gov/files/document/2020-08-12rural-crosswalk.pdf.

**COVID-19 Funding Sources Impacting Rural Providers Guide**
The Guide from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and the Technical Assistance and Services Center (TASC), at https://www.ruralcenter.org/resource-library/covid-19-funding-sources-impacting-rural-providers supports rural health care providers, along with their state and local partners, navigate the availability of federal funds for COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery efforts. Also, visit the National Rural Health Resource Center new COVID-19 Collection located on The Center's website at https://www.ruralcenter.org/resource-library/covid-19

**CDC Rural Communities**
CDC updated information on rural communities and their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for public health professionals, healthcare providers, and healthcare systems in these areas. Learn more here https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/other-at-risk-populations/rural-communities.html

**Federal Resources to Improve Living at Home in Rural Areas.** Recently in August, three federal departments – the Departments of Health & Human Services, Agriculture, and Housing and Urban Development – released a joint informational bulletin summarizing the federal resources available to improve home safety for older adults and people with disabilities in rural areas. It describes how states can improve accessibility of home environments through Medicaid, programs that can facilitate home repair and modification, initiatives to reduce and prevent falls, resources to support aging in place, and loan opportunities for mortgages and housing repair. A joint press release describing the opportunity may be found here https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/cib081920.pdf.

**Rural Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019.** The Rural Health Information Hub posted a guide to help you learn about activities underway to address COVID-19. This guide will help you learn about activities underway to address COVID-19, the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, with a focus on rural communities. It may be found at https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/covid-19

**Rural Healthcare Surge Readiness.** Developed by the COVID-19 Healthcare Resilience Working Group and HRSA this tool provides the most up-to-date and critical resources for rural healthcare systems preparing for and responding to a COVID-19 surge. The resources span a wide range of healthcare settings (EMS, inpatient and hospital care, ambulatory care, and long-term care) and cover a broad array of topics ranging from behavioral health to healthcare operations to telehealth. It may be found at https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/healthcare-surge-readiness?utm_source=racupdate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=update072920

**Rural-Specific Resources and Assistance from USDA**
USDA Rural Development has taken a number of immediate actions to help rural residents, businesses and communities affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Visit www.rd.usda.gov/coronavirus for information on Rural Development loan payment assistance, application deadline extensions and more. Learn more here https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDARDCOVID-19CummulativeSA_06032020.pdf

**Maintaining financial viability:** Stroudwater Associates developed a sample 26-week cash planning document hospitals should use to prepare cash projections and identify resources for the coming weeks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit this link to download the workbook.

For additional information, please contact John Supplitt at jsupplitt@aha.org.  

September 8, 2020