



RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMISSION

NEBRASKA OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH
P.O. BOX 95026 • LINCOLN, NE 68509-5026 • PHONE (402) 471-2337 • FAX (402) 471-0180

MINUTES of the

Rural Health Advisory Commission (RHAC)

Friday, February 24th, 2023
1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Nebraska State Office Building
Lincoln, NE
3rd Floor, Conference Room H

and

Virtual via Webex

1. Call Meeting to Order; Open Meetings Act and Agenda Posted/Available for Download; Adopt Agenda; Approve Minutes from November 18th, 2022 Meeting

Chairman Marty Fattig called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. with the following members present: April Dexter, N.P.; Marty Fattig; Tony Green; Michael Greene, M.D.; Jeffrey Harrison, M.D.; Kate Hesser, M.D.; Cherlyn Hunt; Kate Kusek, D.D.S.; Sara Morgan for Charity Menefee; Myra Stoney; Roger Wells, PA-C.

Guests in attendance: Anne Byers, Digital Equity Manager/NITC Administrative Manager, Nebraska Information Technology Commission; Robert Dyer, Cozad Hospital CEO; Joann Bourlier-Childress with Aligned Providers (*speakers*)

Mr. Fattig announced that the meeting notice had been posted to the DHHS website and sent out via email and USPS on February 10, 2023.* Handouts, the open meetings act, and meeting agenda were also posted on the DHHS website, with a link to these given on the agenda itself (<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Rural-Health-Advisory-Commission.aspx> - under "Documents"). Additionally, the open meetings act and meeting agenda were posted outside the meeting room.

**Sent as usual to: NE Rural Hospital CEOs, NE Certified Rural Health Clinic Directors, NE Local Public Health Departments, NE Community Action Partners, NE Community Health Centers/FQHCs, NE Professional Associations/Organizations, NE State Senators, the Offices of the Governor and Lt. Governor, and other rural interested parties and groups.*

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. moved to approve the February 24th, 2023 meeting agenda and Roger Wells, P.A.-C., seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Green, Greene, Harrison, Hesser, Hunt, Kusek, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Schroeder, Menefee, Wallman.

Roger Wells, P.A.-C. moved to approve the November 18th, 2022 meeting minutes and Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Green, Greene, Harrison, Hesser, Hunt, Kusek, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Schroeder, Menefee, Wallman.

2. Administrative Items

Accountability and Disclosure Forms

Statement of Financial Interests (C-1) due March 1st, 2023 for the reporting period through 12/31/22.

Student Loan Form 1098s

Student Loan Form 1098s were completed and sent by accounting.

Commission Member Update

Chairman Fattig welcomed the following new members:

Charity Menefee – Director, Division of Public Health (NE DHHS Representative).

Tony Green – Interim Director, Division of Behavioral Health (NE DHHS Representative)

Charity Menefee was unable to attend the meeting, but had Sara Morgan attend in her place.

Other Announcements

Emily Lux, the new staff member with the Office of Rural Health (ORH) temporarily, was introduced to the Commission. She will manage the ARPA State Loan Repayment Awards (“no match”).

3. State of Nebraska Planning Grant to Develop a State Digital Equity Plan

Presentation given by Anne Byers, Digital Equity Manager/NITC Administrative Manager, Nebraska Information Technology Commission. She spoke about connectivity issues in rural areas and progress being made. State of Nebraska will be developing a plan to make sure all Nebraskans have internet access. See handout.

4. Developing Midlevel Providers in Emergency Room (Pilot Program)

Robert Dyer, Cozad Hospital CEO spoke about struggling to find qualified providers for emergency rooms in rural areas. Joann Bourlier-Childress with Aligned Providers presented on current APP Fellowship Program in Wyoming and posed the question: could this work in Nebraska? See handout.

Commission members were receptive to the idea and planned to reach out to contacts at UNMC to further discuss.

Rebecca Schroeder joined the meeting at 2:30pm.

5. Rural Health Systems & Professional Incentive Act Program Updates

Funding of Geriatric Providers

At the November meeting, a question was posed: can geriatric providers be funded for loan repayment, or would this require a statutory change?

Rachael Wolfe reached out to legal and confirmed that these providers can be funded without a statutory change, provided they already qualify via their discipline and specialty and are simply focusing on geriatrics.

The individual who posed the question at the November meeting will be informed of this.

Budget Update

Total spent in FY2021-22 (which ended June 30, 2022) was about \$1.7 million out of the total General Fund allotment of \$2.18 million, and \$450,000 was carried over to FY2022-23. Total currently obligated for FY2022-23 is around \$1.71 million. Available general funds (allotment plus carryover) total \$2.63 million.

If all new applications are approved, general fund obligation will total \$1.73 million for FY22-23, with just under \$900,000 remaining. We have obligated ~\$500,000 of these remaining general funds as state match for the federally funded NHSC SLRP program. The SLRP awards are two-year contracts and state cash can be used for match next year if

there are not sufficient general funds available in FY23-24. This puts the total general fund obligation at around \$2 million for FY2022-23 and leaves just under \$400,000 in general funds remaining for any contracts that may be initiated in the final three months of the fiscal year.

ARPA funds of \$5 million (made available for loan repayment with no match required) have been obligated and one staff person hired to manage the program. ORH maintains a waiting list of people who qualify in case there are any withdrawals/defaults for that program.

Based on applications received, it could be beneficial to look at amending the existing statute to make “no match” awards a standard option, at least for certain providers that have historically had difficulty getting community match (mainly behavioral health providers and dentists). Allowing providers to participate more than once could also be beneficial.

Kate Kusek, D.D.S. reiterated support for this “no match” aspect.

6. Public Comment

No one spoke.

7. Rural Health Advisory Commission Recommendations

Commission members discussed this item and determined they would like a strategic planning session to take place the morning of the August 18th meeting, including as many members as possible. Rachael Wolfe was asked to contact Dave Palm to see if he is available to facilitate.

8. Review Current Federal and State Legislative Activities Impacting Rural Health

Update given by Roger Wells. Under a Statutory PAYGO sequestration order, Medicare benefit payments and Medicare Program Integrity spending cannot be reduced by more than 4% . This has been pushed back to January 2025.

Out of 820 bills (247 priority bills), 61 advanced. Senator Brewer of Gordon introduced a bill to require parity for telehealth. There was also a bill about making nutritionist professionals billable.

9. CLOSED SESSION

Myra Stoney moved to go to Closed Session for the purpose of review and discussion of accounts receivable, loan repayment program applications, and other confidential information, and for the prevention of needless injury to the reputation of the individuals at 3:00 p.m.

Roger Wells, P.A.-C. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Green, Greene, Harrison, Hesser, Hunt, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Menefee, Wallman.

Chairman Marty Fattig announced that the Commission would go into Closed Session at 3:05 p.m.

It was announced that guests should leave the room. No guests remained at this time.

10. OPEN SESSION

Myra Stoney moved to go into Open Session at 3:16 p.m. and Roger Wells, PA-C seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Green, Greene, Harrison, Hesser, Hunt, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Menefee, Wallman.

Michael Greene, M.D. moved to approve the loan repayment applications with estimated loan repayment start dates and loan repayment amounts as indicated or as determined by Office of Rural Health staff, based on issuance of license and/or loan documentation, practice time in the shortage area, and the availability of funds for the state match, and also to

approve action discussed during the accounts receivable portion. Roger Wells, P.A.-C. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Green, Greene, Harrison, Hesser, Hunt, Kusek, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Menefee, Wallman.

Date application submitted	First Name:	Last Name:	Profession	County	State Start Date:	State Award Amount:	SLRP Start Date:	SLRP Minimum Award Amount:	SLRP Maximum Award Amount:
11/15/2022	Bridget	Gallagher	Pharmacist	Hamilton	4/1/2023	\$90,000.00			
11/21/2022	Benjamin	Franzen	Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatry	Dodge	4/1/2023	\$70,860.24			
11/28/2022	Alisa	Churchill	Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatry	Buffalo	4/1/2023	\$0.00			
11/30/2022	Marit	Westrich	Licensed Mental Health Professional	Dakota	6/1/2023	\$0.00	9/1/2026	\$0.00	\$0.00
12/8/2022	Paige	Chesley	Licensed Mental Health Professional	Adams	3/1/2023	\$21,600.00	9/1/2026	\$0.00	\$0.00
12/23/2022	Matthew	Fosket	Licensed Mental Health Professional	Lincoln	4/1/2023	\$0.00			
1/9/2023	Karla	Crane	Licensed Mental Health Professional	Buffalo	7/1/2024	\$0.00			
1/10/2023	Jordan	Kohtz	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	Kearney	4/1/2023	\$90,000.00			
1/17/2023	Kendal	Laux	MD/DO, Family Practice	Morrill			7/1/2024	\$100,000.00	\$200,000.00

Note: If award amount is blank for a particular program, provider does not qualify for that program. If \$0 is listed, funds for that program were already obligated and provider will be added to a waitlist to allow time for them to find a match or to potentially be funded in the case of another provider's withdrawal.

11. Adjourn

Roger Wells, P.A.-C. moved to adjourn at 3:21 p.m., and no second is necessary. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Green, Greene, Harrison, Hesser, Hunt, Kusek, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Menefee, Wallman.