



RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMISSION

NEBRASKA OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

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MINUTES of the

Rural Health Advisory Commission (RHAC)

Friday August 16, 2024

1:30 p.m. – 3:05 p.m.

Nebraska State Office Building – Lincoln, NE

Lower Level Goldenrod Conference Room

1. Call Meeting to Order; Open Meetings Act and Agenda Posted/Available for Download; Adopt Agenda; Approve Minutes from June 5, 2024, Meeting

Chairman Marty Fattig called the quarterly meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. with the following members present: Marty Fattig; Jeffrey Harrison, M.D.; Kate Hesser, M.D.; Kate Kusek, D.D.S.; Myra Stoney; Timothy Tesmer, M.D.; Roger Wells, PA-C.

Mr. Fattig announced that the meeting notice had been posted to the DHHS website and sent out via email and USPS on August 2, 2024.* Handouts 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"). The Open Meetings Act and meeting agenda were also posted outside the meeting room.

Roger Wells, PA-C moved to approve the August 16, 2024, meeting agenda and Timothy Tesmer, M.D. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dexter, Green, Greene, Hunt, Schroeder. Motion carried.

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. moved to approve the June 5, 2024, meeting minutes and Kate Kusek, D.D.S. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dexter, Green, Greene, Hunt, Schroeder. Motion carried.

2. Administrative Items

Commission Member Update

The Rural Resident position remains vacant. Schroeder, Harrison, Hunt, Greene, and Wells' positions expire in September and they will need to reapply in order to continue serving. A link to the application was emailed out to those members.

Next Meeting

November 15, 2024 in Lincoln, NE – Meadowlark Conference Room (hybrid). Dates for all meetings next year will be set and new Chair/Vice-Chair will be nominated and voted on.

**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.*

Other Announcements

Chairman Fattig welcomed Martha Gonzalez in her new role as PCO for the Office of Rural Health. Martha spoke about her experience working with Medicaid (~15 years) and remarked that she's been in Lincoln for 5 years but is originally from Lexington. She spoke about her experience with a presumptive eligibility pilot program for Medicaid that was housed through Bryan West. It was great for maternal health and wellbeing. Members agreed, remarking that programs like this can get women seen earlier in their pregnancies.

3. Walk to Unlock/National Rural Health Day

Heidi Peirce gave commission members an update on the plans leading up to National Rural Health Day (November 21). The special event trail will be turned on about a month before Rural Health Day (October 14th). People can sign up for the event from then on. Monday, October 21 is when the event will officially start, and it will run through November 22.

She asked members to please submit 1-2 facts about their community or Rural Nebraska that can be included in the emails to go out in conjunction with this event.

4. Office of Rural Health Update

Heidi Peirce spoke about the commission's encouragement to the Office of Rural Health (ORH) to market the loan repayment programs. Per that request, ORH took two marketing trips this summer (to Western and Northeast Nebraska). Sites spoke about need for nurses and radiology techs.

Rebecca Schroeder arrived at 1:45 p.m.

ORH will be making plans to visit Southeast Nebraska and Northwest Nebraska later this year or the next.

Additionally, Nebraska hosted the NOSORH Region C meeting for SORHs in Omaha last month. The meeting went well. Jed Hansen with NeRHA presented and welcomed the other states to Nebraska, sharing the "I Love Rural" initiative. There will be a Rural Emergency Hospital (REH) reverse site visit this October in Washington, DC. Representatives from Friend and from the state will plan to attend.

5. Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act Program Updates

Shortage Area Requests

Johnson County requested re-assessment as a shortage area for Pharmacy. Upon review by ORH (verified by HPTS), they do qualify

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. moved to approve the designation of Johnson County as a shortage area for Pharmacy and Kate Hesser, M.D. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dexter, Green, Greene, Hunt. Motion carried.

Timothy Tesmer stepped out to take a call.

Budget Update

Fiscal Year 2024-25; July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025 – second year of new biennium:

Total allocation = \$2,180,723+\$220,000 carryover General Funds used for SLRP in FY23-24:
\$44,853.86

General Funds that will be used for SLRP in FY24-25:
\$310,018.87

General Funds Remaining for FY24-25:

\$745,000 (30% of total)

New applications will obligate about \$80,000 of that remaining amount.

Dr. Harrison asked if ORH encountered a belief that no funds are available on the marketing trips. Heidi Peirce remarked that, moreso, people were not aware of which programs covered nurses or of timelines for applying.

It was mentioned that ORH will need to do more outreach to nursing schools, get infographic out to community colleges and other sites, and review marketing handout from RHAC.

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

Marty Fattig commented that the provider assessment program is working its way through CMS. This will bring 1.4 billion in new money to the state. As it's a new program, yet to be determined how it works out; but it could be a boon to the state.

Roger Wells, PA-C remarked that he'd been monitoring activities in different arenas. There are higher rates of uninsured in rural areas. Trying to project how many clinics will remain open and how to reflect this in the RHAC policies going forward; one thousand nursing home beds lost in past ten years. In North Platte, Medicare Advantage is being denied. Mr. Wells stated that facilities are looking for radiology techs, lab workers, front desk etc., and that the commission may need to change the professions they give money for in the future.

Marty Fattig says they do tuition repayment but not scholarships at his facility. Commission members wondered if the ORH could be a clearinghouse for sites where those programs are available. Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) was also mentioned as an existing clearinghouse for this type of information. Mr. Fattig thinks we need an office of workforce at the state. Heidi Peirce remarked that there needs to be an infrastructure in each town bringing health professionals in as they're needed and working to keep them. Kate Kusek, D.D.S. recommended looking at what already exists to try and address this issue. Martha Gonzalez proposed advertising these opportunities on TV, radio, and social media. Heidi Peirce suggested tiktok specifically.

Myra Stoney remarked that there is a September 18th hearing on an interim study regarding DHHS fluoride regulations. She recommended members keep an eye on that.

Rebecca Schroeder, PhD remarked that Medicaid Managed Care is causing issues with behavioral health. They're going back and reviewing things and not allowing certain items, but changing the rules as they go along. The theory is that Total Care is trying to recoup funds. This is really causing issues in the mental health therapist community.

7. CLOSED SESSION

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. 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 2:26 p.m. Kate Hesser, M.D. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dexter, Green, Greene, Hunt, Tesmer. Motion carried.

Marty Fattig announced that the Commission would go into closed session at 2:26 p.m.

8. OPEN SESSION

The Commission returned to open session at 2:33 p.m. (no vote required per legal).

Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.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. Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: Tesmer. EXCUSED: Dexter, Green, Greene, Hunt. Motion carried.

Date application submitted	First Name:	Last Name:	Profession/Specialty:	License Number OR Date you will be licensed:	Name of Facility:	County:	Average hours per week TOTAL:	Average ER hours per week:	Practice Start Date	Loan Balance	Local Match	State Start Date:	State Award Amount:	SLRP Start Date:	SLRP Minimum Award Amount:	SLRP Maximum Award Amount:
6/27/2024	McKenzie	Owen	DDS/DMD, General Dentistry	NE-7488	Ainsworth Family Dental	Brown	40	0	9/1/2018	\$ 587,591.84	\$ -	10/1/2024	\$ -			
6/28/2024	Bryant	Carlson	MD/DO, Family Practice	36324	Boone County Health Center	Boone	40	10	6/1/2024	\$ 182,659.55	\$30,000.00			9/1/2025	\$ 75,000.00	\$150,000.00
7/23/2024	Hallie	Messersmith	Masters Level Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	12/2/2024	Medicine Creek Counseling	Furnas	10	0	1/17/2023	\$ 78,725.77	\$10,000.00			9/1/2025	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 78,725.77
5/10/2024	Camellia	Brown	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	115183	Banner Health	Keith	40	0	2/1/2024	\$ 70,481.93	\$10,000.00	10/1/2024	\$ 60,000.00			
6/17/2024	Kara	Ramold	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	9/1/2024	Heartland Health Center Medical and Behavioral	Hall	40	0	8/19/2024	\$ 134,490.00	\$15,000.00	10/1/2024	\$ 90,000.00	9/1/2025	\$100,000.00	\$134,490.00
6/19/2024	Christine	Feltes	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	114857	Thayer County Health Services	Thayer	40	8	10/15/2023	\$ 37,666.10	\$15,000.00	10/1/2024	\$ 37,666.10	9/1/2025	\$ 37,666.10	\$ 37,666.10
7/3/2024	Ryan	Santin	MD/DO, Psychiatry	32734	Merrick Medical Center	Merrick	40	0	8/1/2023	\$ 335,337.82	\$10,000.00	10/1/2024	\$ 60,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 80,000.00
8/5/2024	Aaron	McCoy	DDS/DMD, General Dentistry	7476	Charles Drew Health Center	Douglas	40	0	7/1/2019	\$ 70,000.00	\$30,000.00	10/1/2024	\$ 70,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 70,000.00
8/5/2024	Puja	Kandel	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	115017	Charles Drew Health Center	Douglas	40	0	6/3/2024	\$ 52,479.00	\$15,000.00	10/1/2024	\$ 52,479.00	9/1/2025	\$ 52,479.00	\$ 52,479.00
8/9/2024	Morgan	Hancock	MD/DO, Family Practice	35922	Saunders Medical Center	Saunders	40	15	8/1/2024	\$ 446,103.00	\$25,000.00	10/1/2024	\$ 150,000.00	9/1/2025	\$100,000.00	\$150,000.00
8/12/2024	Larissa	Hoffman	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	115101	Johnson County Hospital	Johnson	48	48	11/2/2023	\$ 92,836.00	\$15,000.00	10/1/2024	\$ 90,000.00			
8/15/2024	Evelyn	Causgrove	Physician Assistant, Internal Medicine	2963	Johnson County Hospital	Johnson	48	48	6/13/2024	\$ 61,520.85	\$15,000.00	10/1/2024	\$ 61,520.84			

Note: If award amount is blank for a particular program, provider does not qualify for that program or 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.

9. Public Comment

Kent Rogert attended and spoke about adding CRNAs to the program. He plans to make an ask-of to the Legislature on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Nurse Anesthetists. The goal would be to add funding as needed with the addition of this profession. He anticipates 3-5 new applicants a year, if added.

Commission members echoed a need for this provider type and are surprised that CRNAs don't already qualify. They think it's appropriate and needed.

Roger Wells, PA-C remarked that higher loan repayment amounts for all providers are probably needed, possibly even money beyond loan amount to act as an incentive.

Mr. Rogert remarked that members think of any other statutory changes that should be made, he'd be happy to add some other changes.

Kate Kusek, D.D.S. mentioned that match can be an issue for pharmacy, dental, and mental health providers (anyone who doesn't work in a hospital); Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D. and Kate Hesser, M.D. seconded this. There was discussion of making some provision for this in the statute; doesn't require match if the person isn't working in a hospital system.

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. also inquired about including work training learners as the match. Kate Kusek, D.D.S. thinks that's a great idea but is unsure how to line item. A certain number of hours of work could go towards a certain amount of match, but would it be profession or community-specific ?

Roger Wells, PA-C asked who Mr. Rogert works with and discussed running it past other appropriate organizations. Marty Fattig mentioned the Nebraska Medical Association and the Nebraska Hospital Association.

10. Adjourn

Kate Kusek, D.D.S. moved to adjourn at 2:58 p.m., and no second is necessary. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dexter, Green, Greene, Hunt. Motion carried.