

Rural Health Coordinating Council

Minutes | January 26, 2023

Virtual Meeting via Webex and Telephone

Call to Order

Kim Lovato, Chair, called to order the January 16, 2023, meeting of the Rural Health Coordinating Council (RHCC) at 9:07 am.

Oregon Office of Rural Health (ORH) Staff

Robert Duehmig, Interim Director; Khaye Rausa, Administrative Coordinator

Call to order – Kim Lovato, Chair

Roll call, introductions

- *Jennifer Little*
- *Charles Wardle*
- *Linda Callahan*
- *Wayne Endersby*
- *Kim Lovato*
- *Donald Benschoter*
- *Kirsten Plunkett*
- *Allison Whisenhunt*

Agenda approval

The draft agenda for the meeting was unanimously approved.

ORH Updates

General

- We are going to remain semi-at-home work and will give up some of our space.
- ORH had a staff retreat at the Riverhouse last year, the first time we had all been together since the conference in 2019. We will start working on making a regular staff retreat in person once a year, ideally in a rural area.
- This year's year-end report will look like last year's in some previous years. We are looking to do a different format for 2023. You will notice a big swing in our budgets from the previous report. COVID money has dried up and we are back to a more "normal" budget.
- The Area of Unmet Healthcare Need Report is up on the website. It took a bit longer this year because of issues getting data from the state. The report is used to score applicants on provider incentive programs, help

determine cost based Medicaid reimbursement for CAHs and support community planning.

- Reminder to check out our Opportunity Knocks video that is on our website. Utilizes providers from Baker City, Roseburg and Gold Beach. Currently being shared with our sites to help promote working in rural Oregon. It has been shared on our 3Rnet accounts and social media. Please feel free to use.

Rural Health Conference/Forum on Aging

- Forum on Aging registration will open on February 14th. Forum will be at the Seaside Conference. The seaside convention center is in a great location and very affordable.
- Rural Health Conference session RFPs will be going out in early February. More updates at the next meeting.

OHA Partnership Updates

- ORH have several partnerships with OHA that are managed through IGAs - intergovernmental agreements – These includes one that pays for the provider incentive programs: loan repayment and loan forgiveness medical malpractice insurance subsidy and the tax credit program.
- Two IGAs are winding down: the long-term care and testing program. We are looking at extension if possible. Will update at the next meeting.

Grant Updates

- We are in the middle of writing the SORH grant, and it's a noncompetitive grant year. We expect the grant process to be smooth. It is a 3:1 match- the match comes from a combination of state and OHSU support.
- Most of the money from the SORH goes into salary and fringe benefits. We use that mainly to support the office and then do projects primarily directed at independent rural health clinics.
- Congress reauthorized the SORH program in the 2022 omnibus bill. We tried to get the funding up to \$15 million but were not able to do so – it remains at \$12M. As the next Congress looks to cut spending, non-authorized programs are more at risk.
- The FLEX Program authorization will end at the end of this year. We're working with NOSORH (National Organization of State Office of Rural Health) and our delegation to reauthorize the program this year.
- ORH has partnered with the Coalition of Local Health Officials (CLHO) on a HRSA grant to train more community health workers (CHW). This training will have a more public health focus working with OSU and NEON (North East Oregon Network) The grant will also support training of community paramedics at Treasure Valley Community College. We are the fiscal manager of the grant and CLHO manages activities.

Partner Updates

- NOSORH (National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health) – Robert has been elected as incoming president and will start January 1, 2024
- NRHA (National Rural Health Association) – Robert is not Vice-Chair of the Policy Congress and a member of the Government Relations Committee.
 - NRHA Advocacy Website is a great place to keep up with the various issue facing rural at the federal level. Gives detailed information and how people can participate.
 - NRHA Policy Institute will be held in February. Have meetings scheduled with the Oregon delegation. We will send out the materials to RHCC members to see what we are sharing w/ the delegation. Oregon has three new members of our delegation and one new congressional seat.

I. Legislature/Policy

- Starting April 1, people who qualified for Medicaid because of the public emergency may lose coverage. Up to 300,000 Oregonians on Medicaid may be impacted. The state is contacting everybody they can, giving everybody multiple warnings that they're going to lose their coverage.
- The Oregon legislature started on January 7th and will end on June 25. This is a budget session so that we will see the final budgets after May,
- Budget decision during this session will have an eye on the 25/27 budget. Economist are predicting a more troubling economy ahead and legislators will want to try and keep some money saved for emergencies.
- Next week, the Governor's recommended budget will come out, and we don't know whether Governor Kotek will keep the same priorities as Governor Brown. She is expected focus on all the workforce challenges across sectors, as well as housing and behavioral health.
- The Oregon Legislative website (<https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/>) is a very good site to follow. You can follow find your legislator, bill progress, check agendas, listen to hearing and testify virtually. Please share with your constituents and if you have questions, please reach out.
- Capitol building is undergoing earthquake upgrades. Hearings will continue to be held virtually. This is a big benefit for rural constituents that may want to testify.
- Significant attempts to support workforce and behavioral health across the board, including training, tax credits, loan repayment, redefining nurse educators, and setting up pipeline programs and K-12 through some community colleges.
- Tax credits will be slow moving until the May revenue forecast is released. The Revenue Committee will set a dollar amount available for credits and then release on big bill at the end of session.

- Multiple new provider incentive programs will be introduced- additional behavioral health, public health, expansion of existing programs.
- House Bill 2312 has a relating clause that says it relates to behavioral health. That means at any point during the legislative process you can wipe out all the content in that bill and put something else in there as long as that relates to behavioral health. This will be a bill to watch.
- A lot of new members, and new leadership, are entering the legislature this session. They will have to learn the process and know how to close the chamber. This is a challenge, but we have to be able to move and make those tough decisions.
- If you or your constituents want to set up a meeting with your legislator and you are uncertain how, please reach out. ORH is happy to help. Members are doing virtual meetings and it makes it very accessible.
- The Governor said she would make it to every county this year, and I think she will. It'll all depend on the legislative session is how quickly it happens. There are many ways clinics, hospitals, and schools can work together to help do a host piece. There is a link on her website where you can apply to host – reach out if you need assistance.

Federal Update

- The CMS is finalizing a component of the outpatient rule for critical access hospitals: primary roads. Primary roads are defined as numbered federal highways, interstates, intrastate expressways, and numbered state highways with two or more lanes each way. The new definitional change allows us to avoid being impacted on highway 30 and highway one on one, which is huge for us.

RHCC member reports

- Kim Lovato is working with Bill Pfunder, and we have 12 applicants for the primary care forgiveness loan program. I'll also mention that several students in my program have received HERSA awards.
- The kind of students attracted to BPA are 1/3 interested in serving underserved communities and 1/3 interested in being a part of a rural community. Many seek that rather than being pulled by incentives into a rural area.
- EMS and Baker County is currently struggling because the city turned over its responsibility to the county commissioners and the county commissioners got a contract with Metro West to provide ambulance service for that area. The county is trying to find another physician advisor that will only take on the part of the county physician advisor that covered Baker City. The current physician advisor took the narcotic privileges away from the physicians in the panhandle because he felt he needed to provide more education on the use of narcotics.

II. Adjourn

DRAFT