



## 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 November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

1:30 p.m. – 3:11 p.m.

Nebraska State Office Building

Lower Level Goldenrod Conference Room

301 Centennial Mall South

Lincoln, Nebraska

- or -

Virtual Via Webex

#### 1. Call Meeting to Order; Open Meetings Act and Agenda Posted/Available for Download; Adopt Agenda; Approve Minutes from August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Meeting

Chairman Marty Fattig called the quarterly meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. with the following members present: April Dexter, N.P.; Marty Fattig; Jeffrey Harrison, M.D.; Kate Hesser, M.D.; Kate Kusek, D.D.S.; Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D; Myra Stoney; Timothy Tesmer, M.D.; Jeffrey Wallman, 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 October 27, 2023.\* 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"). 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.*

Myra Stoney moved to approve the November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, meeting agenda and Kate Hesser, MD seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Green, Greene, Hunt.

Roger Wells, PA-C moved to approve the August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, meeting minutes with the correction that there are 23, not 223 FQHCs where referenced, and Myra Stoney seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Green, Greene, Hunt.

#### 2. Administrative Items

*Commission Member Update*

Timothy Tesmer, MD was welcomed by the chair and other commission members.

*Nominate and Vote for Chair and Vice-Chair*

Chairman Fattig discussed that he is willing to serve one more term.

Jeffrey Harrison, MD moved to nominate Marty Fattig as Chair and Roger Wells, PA-C seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Green, Greene, Hunt. Motion Carried.

Kate Hesser, MD moved to nominate Rebecca Schroeder, PhD as Vice-Chair and Jeffrey Wallman, MD seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Green, Greene, Hunt. Motion Carried.

*Set Meeting Dates for 2024*

The commission will meet on the following dates and times:

1. Friday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> from 1:30-4pm in Lincoln, Nebraska State Office Building (or via Webex)
2. Wednesday, June 5<sup>th</sup> from 1:30-4pm in Kearney, Nebraska to coincide with the Annual NE Rural Health Conference
3. Friday, August 16<sup>th</sup> from 1:30-4pm in Lincoln, Nebraska State Office Building
4. Friday, November 15<sup>th</sup> from 1:30-4pm in Lincoln, Nebraska State Office Building (or via Webex)

**3. RHAC Strategic Planning Session Follow Up**

Commission members discussed next steps and determined they should choose 2-3 of the strategic goals identified in the session in August. They would then have a subcommittee meet and discuss. Marketing of loan program, optimizing financial support, and optimized rural workforce were the three areas discussed. Subcommittees were not determined. Marketing the programs was discussed as a major item and Office of Rural Health (ORH) staff mentioned they have a brochure available and do some outreach but could do more if there are specific organizations the commission feels would be good to focus on. Members asked ORH to reach out to Dr. Harrison and Dr. Greene to determine which areas to focus on. Kearney Hub was mentioned, and April Dexter remarked that nursing students in Wayne and Kearney should also be considered.

Heidi Peirce spoke about a needs assessment ORH is pursuing per Roger Wells, PA-C request after the last meeting. ORH will be contracting with Dave Palm on a needs assessment to determine what areas of Nebraska are experiencing shortages and which provider types are most needed, looking at primary care, dental, mental health. Would then be able to base a matrix on the finds of this assessment. HPTS data will be used.

**4. Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act Program Updates**

*Shortage Area Requests*

Nuckolls County requested re-assessment as a shortage area for Occupational Therapy. Upon review by ORH (verified by HPTS), they do not qualify.

*Budget Update*

Fiscal Year 2023-24; July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024 - first year of new biennium:

Total allocation = \$2,180,723  
\$1,906,339.54 obligated  
\$274,383.46 remaining

New applications will obligate some of these funds (remaining amount can be carried over to FY24-25).

*Cherlyn Hunt joined the meeting via Webex at 1:46pm.*

*RHAC's 2023 Annual Report and Distribution*

Roger Wells, PA-C moved to approve the Rural Health Advisory Commission's 2023 Annual Report, with updated maps to be added to the report after today's meeting, and agreed that the Chair would distribute the Annual Report with a cover letter from the Commission via email to the following individuals/groups: Governor, Lt. Governor, all State Senators,

Nebraska's Congressional representatives, and DHHS' Directors. April Dexter, RN seconded motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Hunt, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: Tesmer. EXCUSED: Green, Greene. Motion carried.

Annual Report will be added to the webpage that ORH maintains for the Commission, replacing prior versions. If any physical copies are desired, ORH can assist with printing these documents.

#### *Dental Checkup*

ORH sent a note to dental providers in the program and asked them to report on the situation with Medicaid patients in their areas. Two responses were received. Kate Kusek, DDS appreciated the messages and agreed with many points. Most dentists limit the number of Medicaid patients they see or limit days they accept Medicaid in order to keep their practice financially viable. Claims process is going from 1 to 3 companies (increased complexity), but annual cap is being lifted. There are still limits to procedures that can be done, but after this change, they will be able to take out teeth and deliver a denture in the same session. Dentistry is struggling with ethics right now; needs to be treated as essential healthcare. There is astronomical need: two-year waitlists. Myra Stoney mentioned that the health directors have been discussing convening a dental summit; they try to address some needs with "dental days" but, as Kate Kusek, DDS remarked, "people need a dental home"/a permanent provider to go to. Tim Tesmer, MD remarked that as CMO his role is to be a liaison between healthcare agencies. He will talk to Medicaid and see if anything additional can be done.

#### *Annual PRISM Update*

Heidi Peirce reported on the PRISM system used by ORH and other states to survey loan repayment participants in all programs (about 35 states currently are using this system). Types of surveys – annual, end of year (provider, administrator) – alumni, 1 year after completion. J1 visa waiver recipient study – starting 2nd year. Date range – data pulled from last year for this report (planning to report back annually). Surveys in contract period – demographics, characteristics of job worked – alumni survey adds forecasting into the future. Key indicators of overall feeling about the program and their interaction with administration.

### **5. Review Current Federal and State Legislative Activities Impacting Rural Health**

Roger Wells, PA-C remarked that CMS 2024 regulatory update allowed Medicare coverage for marriage and family therapists; offering intensive outpatient treatment program. Changed definition of Nurse Practitioner to be all inclusive/standardized. Congressman Smith – modernization act – decrease administrative burden (updating requirements that haven't been looked at since the 70s) – unsure if this will pass.

Chairman Fattig mentioned that there will be some legislative acts to watch during the upcoming session in state legislature, one dealing with EMS, one with COVID. Sixty-day session is coming up, so anything you'd like to get introduced, get it in quick. Also mentioned Medicaid eligibility was changed from 90 days post-delivery to 12 months. Governor's taskforce to talk about workforce shortage – discuss rural housing and childcare.

### **6. Public Comment**

*No comments.*

### **7. CLOSED SESSION**

Kate Hesser, MD 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 2:56 p.m.

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

Chairman Marty Fattig announced that the Commission would go into Closed Session at 2:57 p.m.

*It was announced that guests should leave the room and the Webex.*

## 8. OPEN SESSION

Myra Stoney moved to go into Open Session at 3:07 p.m. and Roger Wells, PA-C seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Hunt, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Green, Greene. Motion carried.

Myra Stoney 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. Kate Hesser, MD seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Hunt, Kusek, Stoney, Tesmer, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: Schroeder. EXCUSED: Green, Greene. Motion carried.

Date application submitted	First Name:	Last Name:	Profession:	Name of Facility:	County	Average hours per week	Average ER hours per week	Date provider began or will begin practice in the shortage area:	Loan Balance	Matching Funds	State Start Date:	State Award Amount:	SLRP Start Date:	SLRP Minimum Award Amount:	SLRP Maximum Award Amount:
8/16/2023	Shauna	Lindstedt Easterday	MD/DO, Obstetrics and Gynecology	North Platte OBGYN	Lincoln	40	0	7/29/2024	\$252,769.62	\$30,000.00	8/1/2024	\$180,000.00			
8/16/2023	Danielle	Rose	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	Community Action Health Center	Scotts Bluff	35	0	6/23/2020	\$ 70,723.04	\$15,000.00			7/1/2024	\$43,750.00	\$ 70,723.04
8/30/2023	Darian	Nordhues	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	Valley County Health System	Valley	40	20	1/22/2020	\$119,972.10	\$15,000.00			9/1/2025	\$25,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
9/25/2023	Michelina	Hollister	Licensed Mental Health Professional	Blue Valley Behavioral Health Beatrice	Gage	35	0	11/3/2020	\$125,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	1/1/2024	\$ 24,000.00			
9/27/2023	Katelyn	Wisnieski	Physician Assistant, Family Practice	Alegent Health Memorial Hospital DBA CHI Health Schuyler	Colfax	40	0	7/24/2023	\$202,992.00	\$15,000.00	1/1/2024	\$ 90,000.00			
9/28/2023	Karla	Crane	Licensed Mental Health Professional	Kearney Counseling Associates	Buffalo	45	0	6/17/2022	\$ 52,206.53	\$ -	1/1/2024	\$ -			
10/2/2023	Crystal	Wilson	Licensed Mental Health Professional	Fillmore County Hospital	Fillmore	40	5	4/1/2022	\$ 66,620.88	\$10,000.00	9/1/2024	\$ 60,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ -	\$ -
10/18/2023	Emily	Royer	MD/DO, Psychiatry	Columbus Community Hospital	Platte	40	0	8/1/2024	\$170,591.88	\$30,000.00	7/1/2024	\$170,591.88			
10/23/2023	Christopher	Buckley	MD/DO, General Internal Medicine	Columbus Community Hospital	Platte	40	0	9/5/2022	\$470,000.00	\$30,000.00	1/1/2024	\$180,000.00			
10/25/2023	Alexi	Peterson	Physician Assistant, Obstetrics and Gynecology	North Platte OBGYN	Lincoln	40	0	2/9/2021	\$148,000.00	\$15,000.00	1/1/2024	\$ 90,000.00			
10/26/2023	Kathryn	Weaver	Nurse Practitioner, Obstetrics and Gynecology	North Platte OBGYN	Lincoln	40	0	1/11/2022	\$ 48,238.85	\$ 8,000.00	1/1/2024	\$ 48,000.00			
10/30/2023	April	Vonderfecht	MD/DO, Family Practice	Brodstone Healthcare	Nuckolls	40	6	6/1/2025	\$188,758.27	\$30,000.00	6/1/2025	\$180,000.00	9/1/2025	\$90,000.00	\$180,000.00
11/2/2023	Allyson	Jablonski	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	Chase County Community Hospital and Clinics	Chase	40	34	9/25/2023	\$185,667.99	\$15,000.00	1/1/2024	\$ 90,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ -	\$ -

*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.*

## **9. Adjourn**

Kate Hesser, MD moved to adjourn at 3:11 p.m., and no second is necessary. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Hunt, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Green, Greene. Motion Carried.

The next meeting will take place on Friday February 23<sup>rd</sup> from 1:30-4pm in Lincoln, Nebraska in the NE State Office Building.