



RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMISSION

NEBRASKA OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH
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MINUTES of the Rural Health Advisory Commission (RHAC)

Friday, March 18, 2022

1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

301 Centennial Mall South
Conference Room LLB
Lincoln, NE

1. Call Meeting to Order; Open Meetings Act and Agenda Posted/Available for Download; Adopt Agenda; Approve Minutes from August 13, 2021 Meeting

Chairman Marty Fattig called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. with the following members present: Gary Anthone, M.D.; Marty Fattig; Jessye Goertz; Jeffrey Harrison, M.D.; Cherlyn Hunt; Lynette Kramer, M.D.; Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D; Roger Wells, PA-C; Jeffrey Wallman, M.D.

Guests in attendance: Douglas States, M.D.; Bob Rauner, M.D.; Cindy Kadavy, Nebraska Health Care Association.

Mr. Fattig announced that the meeting notice had been posted to the DHHS website and sent out via email and USPS on March 2, 2022.* Handouts, the open meetings act, and 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 groups and parties.*

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. moved to approve the March 18th 2022 meeting agenda and Gary Anthone, M.D. seconded the motion. Rachael Wolfe initiated roll call vote. YES: Anthone, Fattig, Goertz, Harrison, Hunt, Kramer, Schroeder, Wells, Wallman. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dawson, Greene, Dexter. Motion carried.

Roger Wells moved to approve the November 19th, 2021 meeting minutes and Rebecca Schroeder seconded the motion. Rachael Wolfe initiated roll call vote. YES: Anthone, Fattig, Goertz, Harrison, Hunt, Kramer, Schroeder, Wells, Wallman. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dawson, Greene, Dexter. Motion carried.

2. Administrative Items

Accountability and Disclosure Forms

Rachael Wolfe announced that forms were due in early March for Commission members and these members had been notified. Additionally, Student Loan Form 1098s were completed and sent by accounting.

Commission Member Update

The position of Rural Dentist remains open for applicants.

The Family Practice Resident Representative position has been filled by Jeffrey Wallman, M.D. The other members welcomed Dr. Wallman.

Other Announcements

The Office of Rural Health (ORH) introduced their new staff member, Jok Akech. He had been working with epidemiology on COVID response and has now joined Rural Health and will be running the NHSC Nebraska State Loan Repayment (SLRP) program.

3. Rural Health Systems & Professional Incentive Act Program Updates

Review and Approve Updated State Shortage Areas

Rachael Wolfe remarked that this is the statewide assessment done every three years and shortage area maps have been updated using guidelines determined by the Commission in years prior. After initial Commission approval, proposed maps will go out for public comment before being finalized at the next RHAC meeting.

Tom Rauner further explained that information had been received from UNMC's Health Professions Tracking Service (HPTS) in February and that the ORH intern had updated all maps in conjunction with the guidelines, under Mr. Rauner's supervision. A public notice will be posted on the ORH website and notices sent to hospitals, clinics, and health professional organizations to make sure they can let us know if any corrections or reassessment are needed. As usual, a few counties came on and a few counties went off. Mr. Rauner also included a list of rural health clinics and will prioritize outreach to clinics in counties that will be losing a designation or have no designation. Application for NHSC sites opened a couple of days ago and will continue through May. Sites will qualify for state and federal programs this way (for family medicine and general dentistry).

Mr. Rauner recommends we add an agenda item to the next meeting to make changes to guidelines, simplifying and clarifying the process as wording around provider ratio when population is very small is confusing and seems to contradict itself. ORH will present a proposed change at the next meeting.

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. moved to approve the updated state shortage areas and Lynette Kramer, M.D. seconded the motion. Rachael Wolfe initiated roll call vote. YES: Anthone, Fattig, Goertz, Harrison, Hunt, Kramer, Schroeder, Wells, Wallman. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dawson, Greene, Dexter. Motion carried.

Update Policy to Allow Multiple Loan Repayment Awards in Certain Situations

Rachael Wolfe shared wording for a proposal to add an item six to the application prioritization guidelines, allowing multiple loan repayment awards in certain situations. There are at least two applicants who would benefit from this change whose applications were approved at the last meeting (with this information known at that time). Proposed wording is as follows:

6. When sufficient funds are available, and if all other program requirements are met; a second award may be made to those recipients who first received less than the maximum allowed by statute. Total state portion for both awards combined cannot exceed \$45,000 for mid-level or \$90,000 for doctorate-level providers.

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. moved to approve the policy wording and Jessye Goertz seconded the motion. Rachael Wolfe initiated roll call vote. YES: Anthonie, Fattig, Goertz, Harrison, Hunt, Kramer, Schroeder, Wells, Wallman. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dawson, Greene, Dexter. Motion carried.

Budget Update

Ms. Wolfe then gave an update on the budget, stating that nearly \$1.8 million is currently obligated for FY2021-22, out of the total General Fund allotment of \$2.4 million. About \$200,000 in cash spending authority remains for FY21-22 (ending June 30, 2022). If all pending applications for loan repayment are approved with current estimated start dates, about \$123,000 in cash spending authority will remain. Roughly \$335,000 in General Funds will need to be carried over to next year (FY2022-23), and cash spending authority will be increased to allow us to spend all funds (cash spending authority is needed to cover the match portion for both the state and federal loan repayment programs).

If all pending applications are approved current estimated start dates, 90 recipients will have been added this fiscal year. For comparison, 19 new recipients were added in FY19-20, and 21 were added in FY 20-21. The federally funded program will begin allowing bachelor's level registered nurses and a "no match" option in September 2022, provided the grant application is approved. A press release will be sent out soon to advertise for both programs.

4. Rural Health Advisory Commission Recommendations

Rachael Wolfe remarked that it was requested to add a running agenda item to discuss these recommendations. Workforce is the first item up for discussion.

Chairman Fattig remarked that workforce was the top priority identified and that's why it was determined to discuss this first. He then opened the floor for discussion.

Lynette Kramer, M.D. expressed excitement about the potential new training site at Kearney. She thinks this will draw local kids into local communities. It got through round one of appropriations but was cut. Roger Wells and Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. joined the conversation. It was remarked that funding is there to build it but not to run it. Roger Wells asked what the interest in medicine is now as far as applications and Dr. Harrison stated they had the usual amount of applicants and that residency slots haven't been increased due to funding and need of clinical sites. Every residency spot filled in Nebraska this year.

Dr. Kramer remarked that the other workforce issue being seen is that solid RNs are moving into APRNs, leaving a gap between LPNs and APRNs. She stated there is a real need for RNs (bedside nurses).

Douglas States, M.D. mentioned a new high school being built in Lincoln with an emphasis on health professions curriculum. Bob Rauner, M.D. remarked that it's a collaboration between Bryan LGH and the Career Academy. Some courses will be dual credit, and it's beginning in August. Contact James Blake for more info.

Gary Anthone, M.D. asked about the training center in Kearney and Chairman Fattig explained it as an expansion of an existing training center that will include MDs and other providers (currently RNs, PA, and other midlevels). He stated that this is an attempt to get rural kids to stay rural and that 85% of graduates stay in the state.

Mr. Fattig hopes workforce will improve after COVID calms down and that people will come back. Dr. Kramer mentioned traveling nurses are making \$200 an hour and that this is an issue. Cherlyn Hunt mentioned they were asked to bid against another area on nursing staff and opted not to do that.

Dr. States then spoke about the medical student loan program in Kansas. He stated it has a low default rate and that they fund all tuition plus a stipend. He recommends looking at emulating this program with a focus on family medicine providers. Dr. Kramer agrees that family medicine is the right area of focus, but since funds are plentiful currently, it probably does not need to be limited to that. Dr. Rauner stated that funds are not always so plentiful and mentioned being waitlisted when he participated in the program in the past. Mr. Fattig mentioned that it would be possible to make some prioritization decisions about applications accepted. Dr. Kramer mentioned that South Dakota and Kansas also have enticing programs. Dr. States further explained that Kansas gets \$6.5 million dollars for their program and it goes through their legislature.

Dr. Rauner remarked that changing how doctors are paid makes a difference as well and wondered about looking into reimbursement from insurance.

Items 7 and 8 were moved up to allow the guests to participate in those portions.

Linda Wittmuss attended for Sheri Dawson, joining at 2:15pm.

5. Review Current Federal & State Legislative Activities Impacting Rural Health (originally Item 7 on the Agenda)

Roger Wells remarked that rural suicide rates are higher, and infant mortality has increased as well. He stated that Critical Access Hospitals need to be expanded. Telehealth was expanded during COVID – for “up to 151 days after public health emergency” so when that ends, the guidelines most likely go back to normal, and we're probably looking at July 1 (new fiscal year) for reverting back to old methods. Money is shifting down the road if it's not being used. Mental health can currently be done at RHCs with full charges via telehealth, and that will continue after end of public health emergency.

Mr. Wells stated it's time to make some noise and advocate for what's important. If emulating Kansas is the desired direction, it would be important to get a foot in the door so legislation can go through next FY. He would like to go forward with a commission recommendation in May.

Mr. Fattig reported on the following legislation:

LB 1007 - \$10 million ARPA funds to create program similar to state loan repayment, but no community match. Amount going to physician is the same. LB is in final reading right now. Currently ties into our statute for loan repayment.

LB1269 – funding bill for LB 1007 – appropriations bill.

\$4 billion in asks in the legislature right now for \$1.3 billion actual. Sen. Stinner will be sorting through that next week to see what gets funding and what doesn't.

LB 697 – passed – rural emergency hospital program (hasn't passed at federal level yet but they're designing this at state level already).

LB 943 – limits white bagging

LB 767 – regulates pharmacy benefit managers

Mr. Fattig then mentioned some federal items:

Medicare rural hospital flexibility program passed, rural community program, core rural health programs.

Support for 340B but need to put some teeth in it.

Rural maternal and obstetrics modernization of service act is on the books. Supposed to improve OB deserts.

He echoed Mr. Wells's report on the extension of telehealth programs and stated there's a really good chance that Adrian Smith will be chair of ways and means committee and recently submitted proposal to remove 96 hour rule. Chairman Fattig mentioned he is searching for a new champion in the state legislature as his previous contact is term limited.

Roger Wells mentioned the importance of the Commission and recommendations remaining visible.

6. Public Comment (originally Item 8 on Agenda)

Cindy Kadavy with the Nebraska Healthcare Association mentioned that she appreciated the opportunity to hear what the Commission is working on, stating that recent closures of facilities are concerning.

7. CLOSED SESSION (originally Item 5 on Agenda)

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 2:47 p.m.

Lynette Kramer, M.D. seconded the motion. Rachael Wolfe initiated roll call vote. YES: Anthone, Fattig, Goertz, Harrison, Hunt, Kramer, Schroeder, Wells, Wallman. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dawson, Greene, Dexter. Motion carried.

Marty Fattig announced that the Commission would go into closed session at 2:47 p.m.

Guests should leave room.

8. OPEN SESSION (originally Item 6 on Agenda)

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. moved to go into Open Session at 3:11 p.m. and Lynette Kramer, M.D. seconded the motion. Rachael Wolfe initiated roll call vote. YES: Anthone, Fattig, Goertz, Harrison, Hunt,

Kramer, Schroeder, Wells, Wallman. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dawson, Greene, Dexter. Motion carried.

Guests can return.

Gary Anthon, 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. Lynette Kramer, M.D. seconded the motion. Rachael Wolfe initiated roll call vote. YES: Anthon, Goertz, Harrison, Hunt, Kramer, Schroeder, Wells, Wallman. NO: None. ABSTAIN: Fattig. EXCUSED: Dawson, Greene, Dexter. Motion carried.

Date Complete App Received	License	Name	Actual Practice Date	Expect/Eligible Start Date	Specialty	County (Community) of Practice	Total Loan Repayment (State and Local)
11/18/2021	2572	Linton, Nicole	3/1/2022	4/1/2022	PA (FP)	Cheyenne (Sidney)	\$70,013.62
11/30/2021	15864	Koch, Stephanie	8/1/2018	9/1/2022	PharmD	Richardson (Falls City)	\$12,000.00
12/8/2021	2387	Boutwell, Justin	12/8/2021	4/1/2022	PA (FP)	Custer (Broken Bow)	\$60,000.00
12/15/2021	2705	Odvody, Katie	3/7/2022	4/1/2022	PA (FP)	Kearny (Minden)	\$83,030.00
12/15/2021	1332	Ford, Haley	6/2/2015	4/1/2022	PA (FP)	Cheyenne (Sidney)	\$11,431.88
12/16/2021	113198	Hoffman, Amy	11/1/2021	4/1/2022	NP (FP)	Keith (Ogallala)	\$60,000.00
12/20/2021	5140	Baker, Kayla	1/3/2022	9/1/2022	Licensed Mental Health Professional, LDAC	Boone (Albion)	\$40,413.45
1/4/2022	7761	Howell, Jonathan	7/1/2022	7/1/2022	DDS (General)	Cuming (West Point)	\$180,000.00
1/6/2022	2704	Hartman, Jessica	3/2/2022	4/1/2022	PA (FP)	Box Butte (Alliance)	\$90,000.00
1/7/2022	1762	Solt, Holly	1/3/2022	4/1/2022	PA (FP)	Hamilton (Aurora)	\$48,978.30
1/17/2022	2564	Fahey, Jenna	2/7/2022	4/1/2022	PA (FP)	York (York)	\$90,000.00
1/17/2022	30938	Luhrs, Kayla	3/21/2022	4/1/2022	MD (FP)	Chase (Imperial)	\$180,000.00
1/18/2022	2417	Sobotka, Jenna	1/1/2022	4/1/2022	PA (FP)	Nemaha (Auburn)	\$88,447.18
1/21/2022	112037	Gregg, Jessica	4/20/2020	4/1/2022	NP (Gen Int)	Buffalo (Kearney)	\$20,607.84
1/31/2022	111851	Murray, Jennifer	4/1/2021	4/1/2022	NP (Psychiatry)	Grand Island (Hall)	\$90,000.00
2/21/2022	2615	Harris, JennaLee	2/21/2022	4/1/2022	LMHP	Thayer (Hebron)	\$90,000.00
2/22/2022	2662	Taggart, Denise	12/27/2021	4/1/2022	PA (FP)	Cedar (Hartington)	\$44,546.00
2/25/2022	113654	Sydow, Stephanie	7/1/2021	4/1/2022	NP (Gen Int)	Buffalo (Kearney)	\$30,000.00
3/2/2022	2631	Eller, Nicolas	5/1/2022	5/1/2022	PA (FP)	Polk (Stromsburg)	\$90,000.00

Dr. Kramer mentioned using grant funds for a facilitator to discuss the commission's recommendations. Roger Wells stated that could be discussed but thinks now is time to move forward with some action. He would like to bring a specific speaker on for the next meeting and will contact this person or assist ORH in contacting her.

9. Adjourn

Rebecca Schroeder, PhD. moved to adjourn at 3:19 p.m., and no second is necessary. Rachael Wolfe initiated roll call vote. YES: Anthone, Fattig, Goertz, Harrison, Hunt, Kramer, Schroeder, Wells, Wallman. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dawson, Greene, Dexter. Meeting Adjourned.