



RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMISSION

NEBRASKA OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH
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MINUTES of the

Rural Health Advisory Commission (RHAC)

Wednesday, June 5, 2024

1:30 p.m. – 3:04 p.m.

Crowne Plaza & Younes Conference Center North
Silver Room #3 – 1st Floor
707 W. Talmadge Street
Kearney, NE

1. Call Meeting to Order; Open Meetings Act and Agenda Posted/Available for Download; Adopt Agenda; Approve Minutes from February 23, 2024, Meeting

Chairman Marty Fattig called the quarterly meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. with the following members present: April Dexter, N.P.; Marty Fattig; Jeffrey Harrison, M.D.; Cherlyn Hunt; Kate Kusek, D.D.S.; Myra Stoney; 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 May 21, 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"). Additionally, the Open Meetings Act and meeting agenda were posted outside the meeting room.

Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D. joined at 1:33 p.m.

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

Jeffrey Wallman, M.D. joined at 1:36 p.m.

Roger Wells, PA-C moved to approve the February 23, 2024, meeting minutes and April Dexter, N.P. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hunt, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Green, Greene, Hesser, Tesmer. Motion carried.

**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.*

2. Administrative Items

Commission Member Update

As mentioned at the previous meeting, Jeffrey Wallman, M.D. will be leaving when he completes his residency at the end of June. Members thanked Dr. Wallman for his service and wished him well. He will continue practicing at Fillmore County Hospital.

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. agreed to send a note to the residency programs to gauge interest and hopefully find a new candidate to fill the position Dr. Wallman leaves behind on the commission.

Next Meeting – August 16th in Lincoln

Other Announcements

Heidi Peirce was welcomed in her new role as administrator for the Office of Rural Health (ORH). She is actively working to hire for the Primary Care Office (PCO) position she is leaving behind in her move to the administrator role.

3. Office of Rural Health Update

Summer Marketing Trip

Heidi Peirce discussed a summer marketing trip that was planned by the ORH to take place June 12-14th. Heidi Peirce, Jok Akech, and Rachael Wolfe will visit Cambridge, Ogallala, Kimball, Gering, Alliance, and Ord.

ORH will plan another trip to Northeast Nebraska in August. Kate Kusek, D.D.S. mentioned adding Albion to the list as there is a new CEO there.

Marty Fattig stated it would be desirable to have a printed document for ORH to leave behind on these visits. Brochures and a new infographic were discussed.

4. Walk to Unlock/National Rural Health Day

Erika Wibbels then presented about the Walk to Unlock initiative through Nebraska Department of Education. This was initially a program to encourage physical activity and learning about history for schoolchildren, but they are broadening the focus. This is a physical activity program where teams can track activities of their choice on a website, which move them down a trail, “unlocking” it and revealing facts about the state as progress is made. The site is somewhat customizable, with a special event trail that can be used by large groups or for one-off events. Emails can be scheduled to go out in conjunction with the special event trail, as it does not have the same unlockable facts attached to it. Their website is: walk2unlock.ne.gov

The ORH would like to partner with Walk to Unlock on a National Rural Health Day activity this fall. Content would go out in a daily or weekly email, rather than popping up on a “checkpoint” along the trail. Individuals could join as a “team” of one, or organizations can create teams for their staff or community members. There is a “whole state” total miles number that will be posted on the special event page. The event could be open for a month leading up to Rural Health Day, which is on the third Thursday of each November (11/21/24 this year). It could be called “The Rural Health Day challenge.” ORH will draft a proposal to present to the commission at the meeting in August.

5. RHAC Strategic Planning Session Follow-Up Marketing Update from Subcommittee

Roger Wells, PA-C, Jeffrey Harrison, M.D., and Marty Fattig met to discuss marketing. They suggested there is a need to let interested parties know who we are, what we're doing, and what's involved. Dr. Harrison spoke with a dean who didn't realize loan repayment funding was available to non-doctors. There's also a misconception that no money is available. The time is ripe for marketing. Social media, testimonials, authentic storytelling, email campaigns, influencer partnerships, etc. were mentioned. Doing a spot via the "I Love Rural" initiative about loan repayment was mentioned, along with sending that information to rural senators.

Heidi Peirce remarked that the shortage designations are all public and available on the website, but ORH doesn't necessarily know which areas have specific needs. If commission members know of people who could benefit from this information or areas that could benefit from a site visit, please let us know. She stated that ORH can get the information out there and will take direction from the commission.

Roger Wells, PA-C remarked that Doximity can monitor activity of providers within any state, as far as who's looking at what type of job.

Kate Kusek, D.D.S. asked if members thought Flatwater Free Press would do a story about the programs. Heidi Peirce remarked that the commission or Nebraska Rural Health Association NeRHA (Jed Hansen) could take the lead on that if there is interest. Dr. Kusek also mentioned eliminating match for mental health, pharmacy, and dentistry. She wanted to know if the commission needs to speak with the legislature. Marty Fattig replied affirmatively and stated that a sponsor would need to be found.

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. asked if providing education in the community could be considered equivalent to a match. This would require a legislative language change, but could be worth looking into as it would encourage preceptorships and utilization of the program.

Marty Fattig remarked that what we learned from ARPA funding and availability of "no match" awards is that there is hunger for those types of awards. He still believes the match to be good as it provides some community buy-in.

Chairman Fattig then tasked members with coming up with some specific ideas to take to the Legislature.

6. Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act Program Updates

Shortage Area Requests

Antelope County requested re-assessment as a shortage area for Pharmacy. Upon review by ORH (verified by HPTS), they do NOT qualify.

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

\$1,916,796.98 obligated on state awards (88%)

\$44,853.86 used for SLRP

~\$220,000 remaining (*any remaining amount can be carried over to FY24-25*).

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

Roger Wells, PA-C just returned from the National Rural Health Association meeting in New Orleans and remarked that devastating things will be coming in the rural world. He stated that 63% of all providers are now recognized as experiencing burnout. They are two times more likely to leave practice if burned out, which results in a million-dollar loss to that facility, and increases the likelihood of medical errors as well. One-third of all physicians are planning to leave or reduce to part time: 220,000 will leave practice this year, and 20,000 are educated per year. He posed a question to the commission: what are we going to do about that as a state? He feels that prior authorization, regulations, and other issues are causing a lot of stress on providers, and stated that a team approach will be integral going forward. He also mentioned potential involvement of AI.

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. agreed that a team approach will be integral but feels burnout isn't new, it's just being spoken about more now.

Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D. remarked that rural physicians exist in isolation a lot, and that substance abuse and mental health issues also go along with burnout; the team approach helps with all of this.

Marty Fattig stated that the legislature is not currently in session, and that this is an election year and not much is likely to get done in Washington. On the state level, he did have some items to discuss, mentioning 340B; they tried to get a state law in place, but it stalled at the commerce/banking committee. They wanted to get telehealth extensions in place as well, but roadblocks were put up. He feels optimistic that the next chair of the committee will be supportive of these issues. He then mentioned LB1087. This would bring in federal funds and increase Medicaid reimbursement. \$1.3 billion total would be brought in and distributed to hospitals across the state, which would be a boon for all the hospitals if it works as planned. This will be administered through DHHS, Division of Medicaid. An application is going to CMS at the end of next week.

8. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

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 2:51 p.m.

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

Chairman Marty Fattig announced that the Commission would go into Closed Session at 2:51 p.m.

It was announced that guests should leave the meeting.

10. OPEN SESSION

The Commission returned to open session at 3:03 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: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hunt, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Green, Greene, Hesser, Tesmer. Motion carried.

Date application submitted	First Name:	Last Name:	Profession:	License Number OR Date 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:
2/27/2024	Jeslynn	Love	Licensed Mental Health Professional	5780	Midwest Encouragement and Counseling Center	Buffalo	40	0	2/19/2024	\$ 23,239.14	\$ -			9/1/2025	\$ -	\$ -
2/28/2024	Jessica	Hansen	Nurse Practitioner, Family Med	3/8/2024	Box Butte General Hospital	Box Butte	40	0	2/28/2024	\$ 52,644.43	\$ 15,000.00	7/1/2024	\$ 52,644.42			
2/29/2024	LESLIE	PECHARICH	Physician Assistant, General Surgery	2074	GREAT PLAINS HEALTH	Lincoln	40	0	9/20/2021	\$ 177,935.16	\$ 2,000.00	7/1/2024	\$ 12,000.00			
3/21/2024	Diana	Bruguera Diaz	Registered Nurse (Bachelor's level or higher)	77391	OneWorld Community Health Centers	Douglas	40	0	4/7/2021	\$ 18,817.65	\$ 4,500.00			9/1/2025	\$ 18,817.65	\$ -
4/7/2024	Ellie	Johnson	Physician Assistant, Family Med	5/21/2024	Tecumseh Family Health	Johnson	40	0	6/19/2024	\$ 166,428.94	\$ 15,000.00	7/1/2024	\$ 90,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ 50,000.00	\$100,000.00
4/12/2024	Brooke	Raines	Licensed Mental Health Professional	LIMHP License #3060	Regional West Medical Center - Physician's Clinic Women's Center	Scotts Bluff	40	0	6/5/2023	\$ 80,226.13	\$ 10,000.00	7/1/2024	\$ 60,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 80,000.00
4/22/2024	Josie	Cox	Occupational Therapist	8/5/2024	Great Plains Health	Lincoln	40	0	7/8/2024	\$ 42,404.18	\$ 3,000.00	9/1/2024	\$ 18,000.00			
4/25/2024	Brooke	Janas	Nurse Practitioner, OB GYN	112084	People's Health	Lincoln	11	0	8/1/2017	\$ 43,353.52	\$ -	7/1/2024	\$ -			
5/6/2024	Bryce	Gosselin	Licensed Mental Health Professional	3/31/2024	Mary Lanning Healthcare - The Lanning Center	Adams	40	0	9/19/2022	\$ 44,325.46	\$ -	7/1/2024	\$ -	9/1/2025	\$ 44,325.46	\$ 44,325.46
5/7/2024	Brett	Copley	MD/DO, Family Med	2486	Syracuse Area Health North Clinic	Cass	40	2	4/1/2024	\$ 336,537.00	\$ 30,000.00			9/1/2025	\$100,000.00	\$200,000.00
5/9/2024	Kaitlyn	Carlson	Nurse Practitioner, Family Med	9/1/2024	Kearney County Health Services	Kearney	40	4	8/1/2024	\$ 26,600.50	\$ 4,500.00	10/1/2024	\$ 26,600.50			
5/13/2024	Clancy	Hesseltine	Occupational Therapist	7/31/2024	Cherry County Hospital	Cherry	40	0	7/8/2024	\$ 63,893.76	\$ 15,000.00	8/1/2024	\$ 63,893.76			
5/19/2024	Kaitlynn	Harvey	DDS/DMD, Pediatric Dentistry	6/30/2025	Columbus Pediatric Dentistry	Platte	40	0	8/1/2025	\$ 330,281.86	\$ 30,000.00	7/1/2025	\$ 180,000.00			
5/30/2024	Anthony	Ridder	Nurse Practitioner, Family Med	7/1/2024	Pender Community Hospital	Thurston	42	40	7/1/2024	\$ 113,704.43	\$15,000.00	7/1/2024	\$ 90,000.00			

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.

11. Adjourn

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. moved to adjourn at 3:04 p.m., and no second is necessary. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hunt, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wallman, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Green, Greene, Hesser, Tesmer. Motion carried.