



RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMISSION

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

Friday, June 26, 2020

Via Zoom

Members Present: Gary Anthone, M.D.; Marty Fattig; Jessye Goertz; Ben Iske, D.D.S.; Lynette Kramer, M.D.; Mike Sitorius, M.D.; Roger Wells, PA-C.

Members Not Present: Sheri Dawson, R.N.; April Dexter, N.P.; Michael Greene, M.D.; Cherlyn Hunt; Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D.; Sandra Torres, M.D.

Staff Present: Margaret Brockman; Tom Rauner; Deb Stoltenberg; Rachael Wolfe

1. **Call Meeting to Order; Open Meetings Act and Agenda Available for Download; Adopt Agenda; Approve Minutes.**

The meeting was called to order at 1:32 p.m. with the following members present: Gary Anthone, M.D.; Marty Fattig; Jessye Goertz; Ben Iske, D.D.S.; Lynette Kramer, M.D.; Mike Sitorius, M.D.; Roger Wells, PA-C.

Marty Fattig announced that the Open Meetings Act and today's Agenda were available for download and to type in the chat box if a copy of either document was needed.

Dr. Mike Sitorius moved to adopt the June 26, 2020, meeting agenda with one change; the behavioral health update would take place before the analysis of primary care spend rate across Nebraska. Jessye Goertz seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Anthone, Fattig, Goertz, Iske, Kramer, Sitorius, Wells. NOT VOTING: Wittmuss. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dawson, Dexter, Greene, Hunt, Schroeder, Torres.

Roger Wells moved to approve the February 21, 2020, and May 27, 2020, meeting minutes. Dr. Lynette Kramer seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Anthone, Fattig, Goertz, Iske, Kramer, Sitorius, Wells. NOT VOTING: Wittmuss. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dawson, Dexter, Greene, Hunt, Schroeder, Torres.

2. **Administrative Items**

Deb Stoltenberg reported that the next Commission meeting was planned to take place at the Kearney Public Library on Friday, September 18th from 9:30-noon. Currently,

restrictions would prevent us from using that location. Dr. Lynette Kramer asked if we could plan to have another Zoom meeting. Rachael Wolfe explained that this would require a change to the open meeting law or an extension of the Governor's executive order. Staff agreed to look into the situation and update the Commission if another suitable location could be found.

3. Behavioral Health Update

Linda Wittmuss updated the Commission on the progress of the SAMHSA Emergency COVID Grant; two million dollars in funding was given to each qualifying state and Behavioral Health was pleased to receive funds for this project. One aspect of the grant has been provide access to services for health care providers. They're hoping to partner with Interchurch Ministries and Legal Aid of Nebraska on infrastructure and are seeking other organizations to partner with as well. They will be executing subawards within the next thirty days. They'd like the Rural Health Advisory Commission to help advertise services available through the work of this grant.

4. Analysis of Primary Care Spend Rate Across Nebraska

Dr. Bob Rauner and his colleague Ted Fraser presented an analysis of primary care spend rate (the proportion of all medical spending devoted to primary care) across Nebraska. Primary care spend rate can be used to measure health system performance, to focus public awareness, and to shape policies. Supply of primary care providers is one metric used to create America's health rankings. Dr. Rauner explained that they opted to base the geographical regions in their analysis on current public health districts. Disparities in health status are one of Nebraska's main issues; for example, looking at rural vs. urban. Rural health clinics and federally qualified health centers have been specifically excluded from some federal funding opportunities. Dr. Rauner explained further, stating that there are differences in the amount spent on primary care across the state, and that these differences correspond with different health outcomes. Maps for mammography, colorectal screening, and immunization rates were shown to correspond with the primary care spend rate. He remarked that the disparities for immunization are of particular concern considering the situation with Coronavirus. Dr. Rauner stated that these issues will need to be addressed in order to reverse Nebraska's slide in America's Health Rankings and move Nebraska back to its place in the top 10.

5. Rural Health Advisory Commission Recommendations

Rather than attempting a virtual discussion of two of the recommendations at the June meeting, it was suggested by Marty Fattig that a more general discussion take place; about how to proceed with the process of updating the recommendations. Roger Wells suggested a survey could be sent to Commission members by the Office of Rural Health. The survey would ask for top 3 interests of each Commission member and the top 3 needs for Nebraska (in their opinion). Small workgroups could be formed based on these preferences and the recommendations broken into smaller sections to get some focused work before being brought together and presented to the Commission as a fully revised document. Lynette Kramer asked if undergoing a strategic plan process had been considered. It was remarked that picking some strategic items (2, 3, 4 - or even just one

main focus) and putting an effort behind that could be beneficial. Denny Berens (guest, previous Administrator of the Office of Rural Health) expressed that he thinks now is the time to lay out a vision for Rural Nebraska. It was discussed that if a survey was sent and members agreed about areas to focus on, a focused priority list could be created. Generally, the Commission seemed to agree that they didn't want to rush through the process, or put out an unchanged document. Cutting too many items was a concern to Jessye Goertz. The uniqueness of this time as ripe for visioning was agreed upon. Margaret Brockman remarked that a strategic planning meeting or other facilitated meeting could be arranged, but a contract would need to be processed as soon as possible. It was agreed to determine some priorities now and take a deep dive at a later point. Rachael Wolfe would follow up on sending out a survey to the Commission to determine priorities.

6. Office of Rural Health Activities

Margaret Brockman discussed the recent activities of the Office of Rural Health, stating that although much had changed because of COVID, the Office was continuing with planned projects as much as possible. Adding telehealth as a covered work activity under the Loan Repayment program was discussed.

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

Marty Fattig remarked that LB778, which would have provided funds to address the loan repayment waiting list, was not approved. He remains concerned about losing health providers to other states due to the lack of funding for this program. Some outcomes of COVID (relaxing telehealth regulations, 2% sequestration) would be helpful to maintain, especially for rural areas.

8. Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act Program Updates

Rachael Wolfe went over two designation requests that had been received by the Office of Rural Health.

Review Adams County State Shortage Designation

With the retirement of one physician, the Adams County General Surgery physician ratio is above 10,000 to 1 and therefore would qualify as a State General Surgery Shortage Area.

Mike Sitorius moved to approve the designation of Adams County as a shortage area for General Surgery and Roger Wells seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Anthone, Fattig, Goertz, Iske, Kramer, Sitorius, Wells. NOT VOTING: Wittmuss. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Dawson, Dexter, Greene, Hunt, Schroeder, Torres.

Review Antelope and Madison County Shortage Designation

Tilden straddles two counties; Antelope (dental shortage area) and Madison (not a dental shortage area). There is a dental practice 100-some feet outside of Antelope County and it was requested by Tilden that the Commission consider designating the city and/or this specific site.

After some discussion, it was determined that the Office of Rural Health would gather more information and present to the Commission at their September meeting. They'd like to look at the population ratio of the community, as well as how far away the next dentist is.

Review Budget

Rachael Wolfe then presented the budget for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2020. She stated that twelve individuals would be starting contracts in the new year. Twenty eight individuals remain on the waiting list for state funds. She remarked that current wait time is 700 days on average. Ms. Wolfe mentioned that the general fund allocation has recently been about \$680,000 per year and that an additional \$600,000 would allow all those who currently qualify to be funded. She also notified the Commission of an expected \$54,000 per year cut to general funds for FY21-22 and FY22-23. Finally, she reminded members that the cash funds that have been used to make up for prior decreases to general funds are scheduled to run out in FY23. At that point, state awards will have to be decreased by about \$400,000 per year.

9. Closed Session

Ben Iske had to drop off the meeting and there was no longer a quorum so the Commission could not vote to enter closed session. The pending applications were put on hold until the next meeting.

10. Adjourn

As there was no longer a quorum, Marty Fattig moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:26 p.m. Meeting adjourned.