



RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMISSION

NEBRASKA OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

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DRAFT MINUTES of the

Rural Health Advisory Commission (RHAC)

Friday August 14, 2026

1:32 p.m. – 3:08 p.m.

NSOB Lower Level Goldenrod Room

301 Centennial Mall South

Lincoln, Nebraska

And Webex for Members of the Public

1. Call Meeting to Order; Open Meetings Act and Agenda Posted; Adopt Agenda.

Chairperson Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. with the following members present: Kate Hesser, M.D.; Jeffrey Harrison, M.D.; Thomas Janousek, Psy.D.; Kate Kusek, D.D.S.; Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D.; Myra Stoney; Timothy Tesmer, M.D.; Roger Wells, PA-C; Diva Wilson, M.D.

Chairperson Harrison invited Commission members and Office of Rural Health (ORH) staff to introduce themselves. Public attendees were not asked to introduce themselves but were informed they may speak during the public comment period after providing their name and address (business address acceptable).

Dr. Harrison confirmed the meeting notice was posted to the DHHS website and distributed via email and USPS on July 31, 2026*. The Open Meetings Act and meeting agenda were posted outside the meeting room. Handouts were available on site and online.

Roger Wells, PA-C moved to approve the August 14, 2026 meeting agenda and Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Hesser, Harrison, Janousek, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Brockhaus, Dexter, Wilson, Ulrich, Zamora. Motion carried.

Kate Hesser, M.D. moved to approve the June 10, 2026, meeting minutes and Kate Kusek, D.D.S. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Hesser, Harrison, Janousek, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Brockhaus, Dexter, Wilson, Ulrich, Zamora. Motion carried.

2. Administrative Items

Rachael Wolfe stated that members due for reappointment in September include Jeffrey Harrison, M.D.; Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D.; Diva Wilson, M.D.; and Roger Wells, PA-C. Rebecca Schroeder noted

**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.*

receiving a notice that her term ends in 2027. Upon review, this date is correct. An updated membership list will be posted to the website and distributed to commission members.

Roger Wells, PA-C announced this will be his final meeting after 24 years of service. Members thanked him for his dedication and advocacy over the years.

Diva Wilson, M.D. arrived at 1:37 PM.

A new applicant will be required to fill the rural physician assistant seat. ORH will put out a request and members are welcome to share the application with any qualified rural PAs.

3. Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Update

Presenters: Tim Tesmer, M.D.; Heidi Peirce

Key updates:

- CMS administrators conducted a site visit this week.
- \$218.5 million awarded for the first year; 60% obligated to date.
- Obligations must be completed by October.
- Multiple agreements are under procurement review.
- Annual report due end of month.
- RHTP dashboard released July 30 and has over 4,000 views.
- Budget period two requests due by end of month.
- Long term goal: program sustainability beyond the five-year grant term without additional state or federal funding.

Initiative 2.5: CAH to REH Transition

Name change anticipated. Focus on analytics to identify opportunities for revenue stabilization.

Initiative 3.1: Workforce Incentive Program

Scoring was completed this week; validation underway. Thousands of applications were received. Award notices will be issued shortly.

Additional Program Highlights

- Crisis stabilization equipment grant fully obligated (\$5.5 million) within one month.
- Nutrition and physical activity programming expanding through partnerships with UNK and UNMC.
- Local food initiatives connecting producers and schools.
- HCARS (Healthcare Advisory Regions): all six regions have held initial meetings; second round underway. Regional requests will be brought to the Commission.

4. Office of Rural Health Update (ORH)

Heidi Peirce updated the commission on the work ORH has been doing.

- Significant focus remains on RHTP activities.
- SLRP funding received; smaller allocation but program continues.
- Awaiting RHTP awards and potential impacts to state programs.
- Flex Coordinator Nancy Jo Hansen retiring November 3.
- SORH grant application submitted; NOA delayed.
- National Rural Health Day: November 19, 2026 (15th anniversary).
Ideas include sign campaigns, thank you notes, photo challenges, participation in national webinars, and social media initiatives.

5. Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act Program

Topics included shortage area requests and budget updates.

Shortage area requests:

Kearney County requested re-assessment as a shortage area for Family Medicine. Upon review by ORH (verified by HPTS), they do qualify.

Kate Kusek, D.D.S. moved to approve the designation of Kearney County as a shortage area for Family Medicine and Kate Hesser, M.D. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Hesser, Harrison, Janousek, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells, Wilson. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Brockhaus, Dexter, Ulrich, Zamora. Motion carried.

Nance County requested re-assessment as a shortage area for Physical Therapy. Upon review by ORH (verified by HPTS), they do qualify.

Rebecca Schroeder, PhD. moved to approve the designation of Nance County as a shortage area for Physical Therapy and Roger Wells, PA-C seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Hesser, Harrison, Janousek, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells, Wilson. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Brockhaus, Dexter, Ulrich, Zamora. Motion carried.

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

Timothy Tesmer, M.D. departed at 2:19pm.

Budget Update

FY 2025–26 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)

- Total allocation: \$2,180,723
- General funds spent: \$1,843,139.95
- Remaining general funds: \$337,583.05 (carried over to FY26-27)

FY 2026–27 (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027)

- Total allocation: \$1,680,723 (a 22% decrease from prior year)
- Total available funds with carryover: just over \$2 million
- General funds obligated: \$1,950,000
- Remaining general funds: \$68,000
- New applications are expected to add approximately \$67,000 to this year's obligated amount

Overall Outlook

- All available FY 2026-27 funds will be fully obligated at this meeting
- Prioritization is in place, and a waiting list has been established
- No new awards will be issued until FY2027-28

RHTP Impact

- If current loan repayment recipients are selected for the RHTP workforce incentive program, their transition could free up funds and allow new applicants to begin sooner.

6. Review Current Federal & State Legislative Activities Impacting Rural Health

Report by Roger Wells, PA-C.

Key issues identified included

- NE RHTP as the largest current health policy initiative.
- Financial viability of rural hospitals—59% of CAHs operating at negative margins.
- Dietitian reimbursement issues in RHCs.
- Medicaid reimbursement reforms.
- International provider workforce considerations.
- Medicaid disability care changes.

Suggestion: commission members could give 2-minute updates on areas of concern at future meetings.

Thomas Janousek, PsyD. noted Nebraska is among the top ten states in efficient allocation of RHTP funds.

7. Public Comment

Micheal Dwyer (EMT Advocate) shared concerns that Emergency Medical Services in Nebraska may not be receiving RHTP funding and asked whether year two funding levels will mirror year one.

Megan McGuffy, Unit Administrator with NE DHHS, stated that initiatives remain consistent, but funding variations may occur. All changes will be publicly posted.

Tim Wilson, Program Director, Emergency Health Systems, explained Initiatives 2.1b and 2.2a. EMS services will not receive funds directly from the state; instead, contractors will distribute funds and support. This prevents EMS agencies from needing to front costs. Contractors will connect with local EMS through regional technical assistance centers aligned with HCARS regions. Emergency Medical Services may contact the State EMS Office until contractor contacts are established.

Mr. Dwyer emphasized sustainability planning for EMS going forward.

Kate Kusek, D.D.S. agreed, noting that EMS is essential to rural health systems.

Amy Reynoldson (NE Hospital Association) introduced Morgan Christiansen (new advocacy staff).

8. 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 and Kate Hesser, M.D. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Hesser, Harrison, Janousek, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wells, Wilson. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Brockhaus, Dexter, Tesmer, Ulrich, Zamora. Motion carried.

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. announced that the Commission would go into Closed Session at 2:50 p.m.

9. Open Session

Kate Hesser, 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 (see Closed Session Agenda Item 8A) and Kate Kusek, D.D.S. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Hesser, Harrison, Janousek, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wilson. ABSTAIN: Wells. EXCUSED: Brockhaus, Dexter, Tesmer, Ulrich, Zamora. Motion carried.

Record ID	Date application submitted	Name	Professional/Specialty	License Number OR Date You Will Be Licensed	County	Date of Practice:	Loan Balance	Matching Funds	State Start Date:	State Award Amount:	SLRP Start Date:	SLRP Minimum Award Amount:	SLRP Maximum Award Amount:
973	6/9/2026	Vanessa Lo	Pharmacist	7/27/2026	Dawson	3/3/2026	\$ 99,567.94	\$15,000.00	7/1/2028	\$ 90,000.00	\$46,935.00	\$43,750.00	\$ 99,567.84
970	6/9/2026	Abby Quadhamer	Pharmacist	7/14/2026	Dawson	2/2/2026	\$ 54,815.35	\$15,000.00	7/1/2028	\$ 54,815.34	\$46,935.00	\$43,750.00	\$ 54,815.35
975	6/12/2026	Leah Koss	Occupational Therapist	3085	Thayer	7/29/2025	\$181,113.67	\$15,000.00	11/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00			
976	6/16/2026	Ashley Bailey	Occupational Therapist	8/1/2026	Dundy	7/15/2026	\$206,009.43	\$15,000.00	11/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00			
981	6/17/2026	Crystal Haase	Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatry	115174	Madison	4/24/2024	\$ 91,678.91	\$15,000.00	11/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00			
985	6/29/2026	Emma Rutt	Occupational Therapist	7/6/2026	Harlan	7/20/2026	\$ 96,195.25	\$15,000.00	11/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00			
967	7/1/2026	Anthony Amore	Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist	102000	Buffalo	7/12/2026	\$332,015.99	\$15,000.00	4/1/2027	\$ 90,000.00			
977	7/27/2026	Sabre Menninga	Physical Therapist	11-07747	Pawnee	6/15/2026	\$229,509.00	\$ 5,000.00	11/1/2026	\$ 30,000.00			
990	7/30/2026	Sidra Akhter	MD/DO, Obstetrics/Gynecology	36565	Butler	8/27/2025	\$403,475.37	\$30,000.00	11/1/2026	\$180,000.00			
984	8/12/2026	Christina Reynolds	Nurse Practitioner, General Pediatrics	116977	Douglas	7/13/2026	\$209,288.30	\$15,000.00			7/1/2028	\$50,000.00	\$100,000.00
		SLRP Only											

10. Adjourn

Next meeting scheduled for November 6th, 2026 in Lincoln (hybrid).The meeting was adjourned at 3:08 p.m.