



## 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

### **DRAFT** MINUTES of the

### Rural Health Advisory Commission (RHAC)

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

1:30 p.m. – 2:58 p.m.

Younes Conference Center-North  
Bronze Room #1  
Kearney, NE

#### **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: Makayla Brockhaus, M.D.; April Dexter, N.P.; Jeffrey Harrison, M.D.; Kate Kusek, D.D.S.; Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D.; Myra Stoney; Timothy Tesmer, M.D.; Jim Ulrich; Diva Wilson, M.D.; Tracy Zamora.

Dr. Harrison noted that the meeting notice was posted to the DHHS website and distributed via email and USPS on May 27, 2026\*. The Open Meetings Act and meeting agenda were posted outside the meeting room.

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

Timothy Tesmer, M.D. moved to approve the March 6, 2026, meeting minutes and Jim Ulrich seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Brockhaus, Dexter, Harrison, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Ulrich, Wilson, Zamora. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hesser, Janousek, Wells.

#### **2. Administrative Items**

Rachael Wolfe explained 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.

Members were invited to request additional training on legislative processes or the Open Meetings Act.

New Office of Rural Health (ORH) staff members Joni Dulaney and Jenise Trautman were welcomed.

#### **3. Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Update**

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

*\*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.*

Heidi Peirce provided updates on RHTP Items 2.5 and 3.1.

Item 2.5: Although titled “CAH to REH,” the opportunity extends more broadly. Funds are available for small renovations, equipment purchases, and projects that improve access to care and promote financial stability. Applications remain open with no closing date. Approximately 10 applications have been received. Eligible uses may include equipment replacement, service expansion, or staff service contracting. Restrictions include a 5% cap on EMR expenses and ineligibility for EMR replacement if previously federally funded. Statewide distribution must remain equitable.

Item 3.1: Workforce incentive program. The Office has received about 5,000 applications with 2.5 weeks remaining in the application period. Prioritization protocols, informed by stakeholder discussions, will guide award decisions. Providers will be notified by mid-July. Contracts must be signed before August 1.

Questions raised involved provider mobility between rural sites, employer commitment requirements, and data collection plans. Priority type lists are available in the FAQ on the ORH website. New applications and awards beyond year one are unlikely without additional federal funding.

Tim Tesmer, M.D., discussed progress on regional advisory area meetings and solicited feedback on meeting locations. Initial meetings will be completed by next week and will provide region-specific input to DHHS.

Dr. Tesmer reviewed key elements of Items 4.4a (chronic disease/community health workers), 4.4b (remote patient monitoring), and 5.3 (crisis response modifications, including potential rural stabilization units).

He acknowledged the scale of the RHTP and the compressed implementation period and commended Ms. Peirce and DHHS staff for their work.

*Roger Wells arrived at 1:58 p.m.*

#### **4. Office of Rural Health Update (ORH)**

Heidi Peirce updated the commission on the work ORH has been doing, specifically regarding grants. She remarked that many HRSA grants nationally are still awaiting federal approval.

State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP): the program had been paused since August. A new Notice of Award has been received for a project period beginning July 1, with funding at one-third of the previous amount. ORH staff will work to fund as many applicants as possible. Individuals cannot participate in both RHTP and SLRP simultaneously but may discontinue one program to enter another.

Primary Care Office: all federal shortage area designations have been updated. Summer work will focus on updating HPSA scores.

FLEX Program: Nancy Jo Hansen, who currently manages this program, will retire this fall and hopes to train her successor.

SORH Program: A new NOA has been received.

Staff update: Sue Medinger will retire July 15; a celebration is planned.

#### **5. Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act Program**

Topics included shortage area requests, budget updates, and application prioritization.

*Shortage area requests:*

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

Timothy Tesmer, M.D. moved to approve the designation of Pawnee County as a shortage area for Physical Therapy and Rebecca Schroeder, PhD. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES:

Brockhaus, Dexter, Harrison, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Ulrich, Wells, Wilson, Zamora. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hesser, Janousek, Kusek. Motion Carried.

Adams County requested re-assessment as a shortage area for General Surgery. Upon review by ORH (verified by HPTS), they do qualify.

Myra Stoney moved to approve the designation of Adams County as a shortage area for General Surgery and April Dexter, N.P. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Brockhaus, Dexter, Harrison, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Ulrich, Wells, Wilson, Zamora. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hesser, Janousek, Kusek. Motion Carried.

York County requested re-assessment as a shortage area for General Surgery Upon review by ORH (verified by HPTS), they do qualify.

Myra Stoney moved to approve the designation of York County as a shortage area for General Surgery and Timothy Tesmer, M.D. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Brockhaus, Dexter, Harrison, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells, Wilson, Zamora. ABSTAIN: Ulrich. EXCUSED: Hesser, Janousek. Motion Carried.

#### *Budget update*

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

- Total allocation: \$2,180,723
- General funds obligated: \$1,848,634
- Remaining general funds: \$332,000 (this amount can be carried over)
- New applications won't add any funds for this fiscal year because it ends June 30th.

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

- Total allocation: \$1,680,723 (a 22% decrease)
- With carryover from FY25–26, available funds total \$2,012,812
- General funds obligated: \$1,791,058
- New applications will add approximately \$200,000 to the obligated amount for this year.

#### *Overall Outlook*

- Most all available funds for the next two fiscal years will be obligated at this meeting.
- A waiting list will be created, and no new awards will be issued until July 2028.

#### *Application prioritization:*

The Commission reviewed prioritization guidelines.

Roger Wells, PA-C inquired about availability of other federal programs; Ms. Peirce noted overall decreases in federal rural health funding and Nebraska's low competitiveness for NHSC programs due to HPSA scores.

Kate Kusek, D.D.S. moved to maintain existing prioritization guidelines and Roger Wells, PA-C, seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Brockhaus, Dexter, Harrison, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Ulrich, Wells, Wilson, Zamora. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hesser, Janousek.

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

Report by Roger Wells, PA-C.

Mr. Wells discussed concerns regarding federal designation restrictions affecting allied health program eligibility for loan and grant opportunities. The issue is being appealed.

He also reviewed federal proposals limiting nurse practitioners' ability to work in emergency departments without specialized certifications, raising concerns for rural staffing.

Additional updates included financial pressures on critical access hospitals and upcoming changes prohibiting fax-based electronic record transmission by 2027.

## **7. Public Comment**

Senator Dan Lonosky (District #33-Hastings) was attending the meeting to learn more about rural issues from this perspective and expressed appreciation to the commission and staff for their work.

Jeremy Escilman, Two Rivers Public Health Department Director, thanked the Commission for meeting in rural NE and encouraged increased use of technology for future meetings. Dr. Harrison noted that RHAC is limited by statute to two virtual meetings per year and has reached that limit.

Chloe Zigursky, Reproductive Health Collaborative of Nebraska, expressed interest in RHTP.

Margaret Woeppel, Nebraska Hospital Association, shared concerns regarding federal APRN regulatory issues and emphasized the importance of advocacy.

## **8. Closed Session**

April Dexter, N.P. 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 Kusek, D.D.S. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Brockhaus, Dexter, Harrison, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Ulrich, Wells, Wilson, Zamora. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hesser, Janousek.

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. announced that the Commission would go into Closed Session at 2:42 p.m.

## **9. Open Session**

Roger Wells, PA-C. 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 Rebecca Schroeder, PhD. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Brockhaus, Dexter, Harrison, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Ulrich, Wells, Wilson, Zamora. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hesser, Janousek.

Record ID	Date application submitted	First Name:	Last Name:	Profession/Specialty	License Number OR date you will be licensed:	County	Date of Practice	Loan Balance	Match Funds	State Start Date:	State Award Amount:	SLRP Start Date:	SLRP Minimum Award Amount:	SLRP Maximum Award Amount:
886	4/3/2026	Amanda	Standage	Nurse Practitioner, Family Medicine	113430	Dawson	11/28/2022	\$ 16,629.67	\$ 15,000.00			7/1/2027	\$ 16,629.60	\$ -
888	3/18/2026	Katherine	Baillie	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	116421	Box Butte	1/5/2026	\$ 76,039.89	\$ 15,000.00	7/1/2026	\$ 76,039.88			
897	5/13/2026	Emily	Carlson	DDS/DMD	6/1/2026	Lancaster	6/1/2026	\$ 414,106.46	\$ 30,000.00	7/1/2026	\$ 180,000.00			
905	5/12/2026	Sara	Linder-Hittle	Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatry	114218	Gage	4/3/2023	\$ 215,039.58	\$ 15,000.00	12/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00	7/1/2027	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
924	3/13/2026	Will	Fehringer	Physician Assistant, Family Practice	3416	Antelope	2/23/2026	\$ 136,648.53	\$ 15,000.00	7/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00	7/1/2027	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 60,000.00
927	3/11/2026	Shannon	Stuhlmitter	Physician Assistant, Family Medicine	2887	Boone	2/13/2023	\$ 85,138.16	\$ 15,000.00			7/1/2027	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 85,138.16
929	3/25/2026	Brett	Copley	MD/DO, Family Practice	2486	Cass	4/1/2024	\$ 226,657.02	\$ 30,000.00	7/1/2026	\$ 180,000.00	7/1/2027	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 215,000.00
931	3/19/2026	Daniela	Lagunas	Physician Assistant, Family Practice	3/31/2026	Nemaha	3/1/2026	\$ 140,342.47	\$ 15,000.00	7/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00			
933	3/19/2026	Mae	Grahek	Physician Assistant, Family Practice	3386	Thayer	4/7/2026	\$ 117,878.79	\$ 15,000.00	12/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00	7/1/2027	\$ 37,500.00	\$ 75,000.00
934	3/23/2026	Jordan	Grooms	Physician Assistant, Family Practice	1123704879	Furnas	5/18/2026	\$ 78,316.40	\$ 15,000.00	12/1/2026	\$ 78,316.40	7/1/2027	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 78,316.40
938	3/30/2026	Jamie	Shaw	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	112445	Cass	1/8/2025	\$ 210,745.08	\$ 15,000.00	7/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00			
940	3/31/2026	Uzoamaka	Akporotu	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	5/30/2026	Sheridan	6/15/2026	\$ 54,826.67	\$ 12,500.00	12/1/2026	\$ 54,826.56	7/1/2027	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 54,826.67
941	4/12/2026	Amparo	Fernandez	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	116248	Saline	4/12/2026	\$ 107,715.00	\$ 15,000.00	7/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00			
942	4/8/2026	Adam	Mackley	DDS/DMD	8093	Hooker	7/1/2025	\$ 375,011.71	\$ 10,000.00	7/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00			
944	4/1/2026	Luke	Broeckelman	Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist	7/1/2026	Nuckolls	6/1/2026	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	7/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00			
951	4/29/2026	Jennifer	Leiting	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	112177	Hamilton	2/24/2026	\$ 7,193.52	\$ 15,000.00	12/1/2026	\$ 30,000.00	7/1/2027	\$ 7,193.44	\$ -
957	5/27/2026	Hannah	Harrison	Registered Dietitian Nutritionist/Medical Nutrition Therapist	2056	Dawson	5/21/2026	\$ 22,815.40	\$ 15,000.00	12/1/2026	\$ 22,815.40	7/1/2027	\$ 22,815.36	\$ -
964	5/22/2026	Marilyn	Stephenson	Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist	101704	Adams	7/13/2026	\$ 131,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	8/1/2026	\$ 90,000.00			
969	5/27/2026	Samuel	Dawson	Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist	101805	Adams	7/6/2025	\$ 60,292.95	\$ 15,000.00	7/1/2026	\$ 60,292.94			

## 10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.