



RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMISSION

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

**Friday November 15th, 2024
1:30 p.m. – 3:19 p.m.
Nebraska State Office Building
Lower Level Meadowlark Conference Room
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, Nebraska**

- or -

Virtual Via Webex

1. Call Meeting to Order; Open Meetings Act and Agenda Posted/Available for Download; Adopt Agenda; Approve Minutes from August 16th, 2024 Meeting

Chairman Marty Fattig called the quarterly meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. with the following members present: April Dexter, N.P.; Marty Fattig; Jeffrey Harrison, M.D.; Kate Hesser, M.D.; Kate Kusek, D.D.S.; Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D.; 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 November 1, 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.

Roger Wells, PA-C moved to approve the November 15th, 2024, meeting agenda and Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. seconded the motion. Emily Lux initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Janousek, Tesmer, Wilson. Motion carried.

Timothy Tesmer, M.D. arrived at 1:36 pm.

Kate Hesser, M.D. moved to approve the August 16th, 2024, meeting minutes, and Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. seconded the motion. Emily Lux initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Janousek, Wilson. 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

Three residents have applied for the vacant spot; one will be appointed by Governor Pillen.

Dr. Thomas Janousek will be replacing Tony Green as the DHHS representative (Behavioral Health). Dr. Diva Wilson will be replacing Dr. Michael Greene as the Creighton Medical School representative.

Nominate and Vote for Chair and Vice-Chair

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. moved to nominate Marty Fattig as Chair and Kate Hesser, M.D. seconded the motion. Emily Lux initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Janousek, Wilson. Motion carried.

Timothy Tesmer, M.D. moved to nominate Rebecca Schroeder, PhD as Vice-Chair and Roger Wells, PA-C seconded the motion. Emily Lux initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Janousek, Wilson. Motion carried.

Set Meeting Dates for 2025

The Commission will meet on the following dates and times:

1. Friday, February 21st from 1:30-4pm in Lincoln, NE State Office Building (or via Webex)
2. Wednesday, June 11th from 1:30-4pm in Kearney, NE to coincide with the Annual NE Rural Health Conference
3. Friday, August 15th from 1:30-4pm in Lincoln, NE State Office Building
4. Friday, November 7th from 1:30-4pm in Lincoln, NE State Office Building (or via Webex)

Other Announcements

Heidi Peirce announced that it was Dave Bell's last day with the Office of Rural Health (ORH). She then gave an overview of his work and thanked him for all he accomplished over the past several years. Mr. Bell was a temporary worker responsible for implementing an infrastructure project for Nebraska hospitals. He distributed about \$13 million and worked with 71 hospitals on projects ranging from new phone systems, updated HVACs, updated Electronic Medical Record systems, and more.

3. Walk to Unlock/National Rural Health Day

Heidi Peirce spoke about this year's Walk2Unlock challenge. Groups across the state are participating in the activity tracker. A walk around the State Capitol just took place, and the activity challenge ends 11/21/24 - on National Rural Health Day. A final mile tally will be available on Friday November 22nd.

4. Office of Rural Health Update

Heidi Peirce then gave an update on the Office of Rural Health activities. She spoke about the Quality Conference that had just taken place in Kearney. ORH will continue working on loan repayment and shortage areas and work on some more marketing ideas in 2025.

Dr. Tesmer left the meeting at 1:56 p.m. and planned to rejoin by Webex.

5. Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act Program Updates

Shortage Area Requests

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

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

Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. moved to approve the designation of Dawes County as a shortage area for General Surgery and Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D. seconded the motion. Emily Lux initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Janousek, Tesmer, Wilson. Motion carried.

Budget Update

Fiscal Year 2024-25; July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025 – second year of new biennium:

Total allocation = \$2,180,723+\$220,000 carryover

\$2,399,795.16 total

General Funds Obligated FY24-25 (total):

\$1,735,484.43

General Funds Remaining for FY24-25:

\$664,310.73

Commission members discussed how to use the remaining funds. Rachael Wolfe asked if there will be movement with making a change to the legislation, allowing “no match” for dental, mental health, and pharmacy. Marty Fattig remarked it was unlikely to be soon enough to use the remaining funds. Commission members discussed how to get the word out that there are funds available for loan repayment. Putting out a notice through ORH announcing that funds are available was discussed, along with contacting interest groups for each specialty.

Marty Fattig remarked he had an upcoming meeting with the Nebraska Hospital Association (NHA) policy development committee; will see where the needs are in those communities and report back.

Commission members requested copies of the loan repayment program infographic and loan repayment brochure, and asked that the infographic be placed on the ORH website as well.

RHAC's 2023 Annual Report and Distribution

Roger Wells, PA-C moved to approve the Rural Health Advisory Commission's 2024 Annual Report, with updated maps to be added to the report after today's meeting, and agreed that the Chair would distribute the Annual Report with a cover letter from the Commission via email to the following individuals/groups: Governor, Lt. Governor, all State Senators, Nebraska's Congressional representatives, and DHHS' Directors. Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. seconded motion. Emily Lux initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Janousek, Tesmer, Wilson. Motion carried.

Annual Report will be added to the webpage that ORH maintains for the Commission, replacing prior versions. If any physical copies are desired, ORH can assist with printing these documents.

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

Marty Fattig mentioned the NHA task force to study EMS and hopes they can come up with some resolutions to present to the different bodies to get some support for EMS because it is on very shaky legs.

Roger Wells shared that Microsoft put out a good cyber security program for rural hospitals, using Copilot. Not sure how the new administration will impact things. Productivity standards were recently eliminated along with primary care needing to be 51% of rural health clinic activity, which opens up rural health clinics to provide other services (dental, etc.). Mr. Wells gave ORH a copy of the documents he was reading from.

7. Public Comment

Mackenzie Owen, DDS from Valentine joined by Webex. She is currently practicing in Ainsworth. She was hired on in 2018 and bought the dental practice where she was employed in 2021. She came on with the promise of loan repayment, amongst other considerations, but her employer was ultimately not able to provide match. She was looking into alternatives and found out from a local pharmacist that match funds were available through NCDC/LB840. Dr. Owen then pursued that. The LB840 committee approved the proposal, but when it went to the city council, they denied it. Their reasoning was that funds have been used for recruitment, but since she's been there for six years, it's no longer recruitment. She came to the meeting today to share that she's looking for other avenues to explore for match and to ask the Commission if they had any suggestions.

Marty Fattig asked if there's a Nebraska Community Foundation in Ainsworth; Dr. Owen didn't think so. Kate Hesser, M.D. asked if the Ainsworth Hospital could help. Dr. Owen remarked that she approached the hospital and was told to seek out NCDC funds, but that the hospital auxiliary committee would be the local entity (LB840 funds would be paid to them and they would then provide match). They thought that would be the most likely route. She's contracted with ER, but not an employee, so they didn't think they could provide match directly.

Kate Kusek, DDS spoke with a Grand Island dentist whose match has been through the hospital. It reduces load on ER if a dentist is in the community providing those services. She's willing to speak with the hospital or come to a city council meeting if that will help.

April Dexter, RN from Atkinson suggested reaching out to those who cover ER call and primary care providers for extra support from the medical community. Dr. Owen mentioned she's an on call provider for Atkinson as well.

Marty Fattig mentioned talking to county commissioners might also help. Heidi Peirce mentioned the Brown County Community Foundation Fund. Dr. Owen thought that had already been considered but will reach out again.

Marty Fattig remarked he is going to do some research; ORH was asked to share Dr. Owen's contact information with Marty Fattig and Kate Kusek, D.D.S. so they could help advocate for her. Consensus was that Kate Kusek would draft a letter to city council, for review by ORH and Chairman Fattig.

Impact of providers on the community was discussed. Dr. Owen is the only dentist in a 45-mile radius and the practice struggled to recruit a full-time dentist for six years before she came. Dental access is a sorely needed in rural Nebraska. Heidi Peirce mentioned that recruitment and retention go hand in hand, and Commission members concurred.

Rachael Wolfe will update the Commission on the outcome of this matter.

Medicaid and Behavioral Health

Myra Stoney asked for an update about Medicaid not paying for behavioral health costs (an issue Rebecca Schroeder, PhD brought up at a previous meeting) – Rebecca Schroeder, PhD stated that the number of Medicaid providers keeps falling due to this issue.

8. CLOSED SESSION

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 2:46 p.m.

Kate Hesser, M.D. seconded the motion. Emily Lux initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Janousek, Tesmer, Wilson. Motion carried.

Chairman Marty Fattig announced that the Commission would go into Closed Session at 2:46 p.m.

It was announced that guests should leave the room and the Webex.

9. OPEN SESSION

The Commission returned to Open Session at 3:16pm

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. Roger Wells, PA-C seconded the motion. Emily Lux initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Schroeder, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Janousek, Tesmer, Wilson. Motion carried.

Date application submitted	First Name:	Last Name:	Profession/Specialty:	License Number OR Date you 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:
8/21/2024	Janae	Whitaker	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	115032	Friend Community Healthcare System	Saline	24	15	8/3/2024	\$ 30,907.23	\$ 6,000.00	12/1/2024	\$ 30,907.22			
8/21/2024	Bethany	Collins	Physician Assistant, Family Practice	1/23/2025	Callaway District Hospital	Custer	40	24	1/1/2025	\$142,503.81	\$ 15,000.00	2/1/2025	\$ 90,000.00	2/1/2025	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
8/27/2024	Abbie	Carpenter	Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatry	115570	Abbie Enterprise LLC	Holt	40	0	10/14/2024	\$120,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	1/1/2024	\$ -			
8/28/2024	Mustafa	Rahman	MD/DO, Psychiatry	35920	Great Plains Health	Lincoln	40	0	9/28/2023	\$207,759.43	\$ 30,000.00	12/1/2024	\$ 180,000.00	12/1/2024	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 200,000.00
9/4/2024	Melissa	Hinrichs	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	115489	Heartland Health Center	Hall	40	0	9/30/2024	\$ 65,632.23	\$ -	1/1/2024	\$ -	9/1/2025	\$ -	\$ -
9/4/2024	Zachary	Kaster	Pharmacist	16868	Chief Drug	Johnson	45	0	12/16/2022	\$160,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	1/1/2024	\$ 120,000.00			
9/10/2024	Samantha	Rogers	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	9/30/2024	Kearney County Health Services	Kearney	40	40	11/18/2024	\$ 68,026.00	\$ 15,000.00	1/1/2024	\$ 68,026.00	9/1/2025	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 68,026.00
9/23/2024	Emilee	Kuhn	Physical Therapist	3562	Resilient Rehab	Merrick	40	0	7/1/2024	\$108,455.54	\$ -	1/1/2025	\$ -			
10/4/2024	Katie	Sunde	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	113295	One world community health center	Sarpy	40	0	10/24/2023	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	1/1/2025	\$ 90,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
10/7/2024	Alexandria	Janssen	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	113813	Saunders Medical Center	Saunders	40	40	10/11/2021	\$ 48,259.87	\$ 15,000.00	1/1/2025	\$ 48,259.87			
10/16/2024	Nicole	Josephsen	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	114691	Saunders Medical Center	Saunders	40	0	2/28/2017	\$ 40,272.16	\$ 15,000.00	1/1/2025	\$ 40,272.16			
10/22/2024	Seth	Roberg	Physical Therapist,	109502 IOWA LICENSE	Tri-State Physicians and Physical Therapy Clinic	Dakota	40	0	11/4/2024	\$ 9,179.88	\$ 1,000.00	1/1/2025	\$ 6,000.00			
10/24/2024	Jordan	Kunz	MD/DO, Family Practice	36268	Greater Sandhills Family Healthcare-Bassett	Rock	16	5	8/27/2024	\$206,854.28	\$ 30,000.00	1/1/2025	\$ 180,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 150,000.00
10/31/2024	Jayla	Trosper	Registered Nurse (Bachelor's level or higher)	96715	Callaway District Hospital	Custer	40	5	6/12/2023	\$212,357.90	\$ 3,000.00			9/1/2025	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 24,000.00
11/6/2024	Kachine	Banahan	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	115420	Memorial Community Health Clinic	Hamilton	40	0	8/5/2024	\$102,864.78	\$ 15,000.00	1/1/2025	\$ 90,000.00			
11/8/2024	Taylor	Deal	Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatry	115436	Methodist Fremont Health	Dodge	32	0	9/1/2024	\$ 51,684.00	\$ 10,000.00	1/1/2025	\$ 51,684.00			
11/10/2024	Jenifer	Fowler	Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatry	9/10/2024	Psychiatric Hope	Lincoln	32	0	11/15/2023	\$ 36,160.59	\$ 12,159.00	1/1/2025	\$ 36,160.52			

Note: If award amount is blank for a particular program, provider does not qualify for that program. If \$0 is listed, 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.

10. Adjourn

The Commission adjourned at 3:19 p.m.