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# Rural & Frontier Health Division Update

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Welcome to the twelfth issue of the "Rural and Frontier Health Division Update!" This newsletter is provided as an informational source on activities involving the programs and services within the division. Comments and/or suggestions are welcomed and may be addressed to WDH-RFHD@health.wyo.gov.

### Office of Rural Health



### National Health Service Corps New Loan Repayment Pilot Program:

The NHSC announces a new loan repayment pilot program for part-time clinicians. Part-time clinicians can now receive up to \$50,000 in loan repayment in exchange for a four-year service commitment. Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. EDT May 25, 2010. Please visit this NHSC website for more information and to apply <a href="http://www.nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/halftime/default.htm">http://www.nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/halftime/default.htm</a>.

### Loan Repayment Program Tax Liability:

ORH received the following notice on April 1, 2010, that the Healthcare Reform Bill (AKA Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act) removed the federal tax liability from Wyoming Healthcare Professional Loan Repayment Program payments.

Public Law 111-148, Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, became law on March 23, 2010. Section 10908 of this law states, "Payments under...certain state loan repayment programs – in the case of an individual, gross income shall not include any amount received...under any other State loan repayment or loan forgiveness program that is intended to provide for the increase availability of health care services in underserved or health professional shortage areas (as determined by such State)." The effective date of this amendment applies to payments received by an individual in taxable years beginning after December 31, 2008.

ORH notified program participants via letter of this change in federal law on April 2, 2010. ORH has worked diligently with the State Auditor's office to generate 'amended 1099' tax forms and most participants should receive the amended 1099 were mailed April 23, 2010. Wyoming Healthcare Professional Loan Repayment Program recipients, who received loan repayment payments from the State of Wyoming in 2009, should have received revised Form 1099 from the Wyoming State Auditor's Office. ORH made \$2.3 million in payments during 2009, and this change in the law will keep nearly \$670,000 in Wyoming (estimate based on all payees being in the 30% tax bracket).

Federal loan repayment programs, such as the National Health Service Corps program became tax exempt in 2004, but this exemption did not apply to state funded programs.

### Wyoming Healthcare Professional Loan Repayment Program Survey:

In January 2010, the Wyoming Office of Rural Health (ORH) sent a survey to 183 participants in the Wyoming Healthcare Professional Loan Repayment Program (Program or WHPLRP). The purpose of the survey was to: 1) improve the Program; and 2) use data from the survey to educate policy makers on the impact of the Program in Wyoming. The survey closed in March with an 82% response rate.

One hundred percent of the physicians who considered practicing in another state identified the Program as Very Important or Important in their initial decision to practice in Wyoming. The Program was the number one consideration for all participants in their decision to continue practicing in Wyoming.

One responder commented "I believe firmly that without this program Wyoming has no hope of meeting their healthcare provider needs. Our malpractice insurance rates, harsh physical environment and lack of employment opportunities for physician family members make our beautiful state a hard place to recruit to. The Wyoming Healthcare Professional Loan Repayment Program helps offset these disadvantages."

The survey results indicated that the ORH has an opportunity to educate healthcare professionals on various programs that provide loan repayment opportunities, especially National Health Service Corps and Nurse Education Loan Repayment programs.

The survey report will soon be posted on the ORH website: <a href="http://health.wyo.gov/rfhd/rural/index.html">http://health.wyo.gov/rfhd/rural/index.html</a>. Information on the next cycle of the Wyoming Healthcare Professional Loan Repayment Program will also be available online soon at <a href="http://health.wyo.gov/rfhd/rural/loan.html">http://health.wyo.gov/rfhd/rural/loan.html</a>.

### Rural Health Works:

- Do you know how much a rural physician contributes to a local community and the local hospital?
- Could you use tools to determine the need for physicians and/or midlevel professionals in your rural communities?
- Do you need tools to assist with recruiting physicians and/or midlevel professionals?
- Could your rural hospitals benefit from knowing the economic impact of constructing a new facility?
- Do you need to assist rural health facilities by showing the economic impact on their local communities?
- Do you need to determine the financial feasibility for new or expanded health facilities in your local communities?
- Do you know rural communities that need to better plan for healthcare needs through strategic health planning (community health engagement)?

In these times of economic concerns, be sure you know all the tools available to assist rural health providers and rural hospitals to survive. If any of the above are concerns in your state's local communities, be sure to check out the National Center for Rural Health Works for assistance.

The National Center presents two regional workshops each year, one in the Eastern states and one in the Western states. This year the workshops are May 5, 2010, Brentwood, TN (Nashville metro area) and July 7, 2010, in Reno, Nevada. The workshops include information on:

### **Economic Impact**

✓ Show the impact of your local hospital on the local economy from both employment and wages, salaries, and benefits

- ✓ Show the impact of constructing a new local hospital
- ✓ Show the impact of a physician on the local community and local hospital from (1) revenues, (2) employment and (3) proprietary income, wages, salaries, and benefits

### Community health engagement

- ✓ Show the community the impact of all health services on the local economy
- ✓ Develop a comprehensive directory of health services and resources available in the local community
- ✓ Using secondary data and information, determine issues of concern in the local community
- ✓ Through a telephone survey, know how health care is perceived by the local residents and determine issues of concern in the local community
- ✓ Envision health service needs for the future and create a strategic plan with objectives, goals, and timetables to develop your vision

# Feasibility Studies

- Estimate the need for physicians and midlevel professionals in your local community
- ✓ Determine the feasibility of upgrading emergency medical services to a higher service level
- ✓ Provide alternative funding mechanisms to sustain emergency medical services
- ✓ Consider a kidney dialysis unit; estimate the need, the cost, and the bottom-line to provide services locally
- ✓ Estimate need for specialty physician services locally

Local health providers or community leaders may be interested in providing better access to quality health services in your local community. Rural Development Specialists and Economic Development Specialists are interested in learning the importance of rural health care to local economies.

### Kudos to the Office of Rural Health:

Dr. Sherard, I'm not sure if Jeff Hopkins in the office of Rural Health reports to you, but I do think he is part of your "team". I want you to know that he has been GREAT to work with on many things, but especially to get our application for the Loan Repayment for Providers. After helping, proofing and talking me through the application, today he answered a physician's specific questions about her application if she were to take the position here in Torrington. She was very impressed, and this gave her one more reason she should stay in WY. (Our competition is Sterling and Windsor CO) I just want someone above Jeff to know how pleasant and nice he is to work with. Very responsive to our needs and questions.

CARIE CAMPBELL - Practice Administrator Banner Medical Clinic Torrington, WY 82240

# **Training Webinars:**

The Wyoming Office of Rural Health (ORH) is co-sponsoring a series of training webinars geared toward Rural Health Clinic staff. Webinars will be held every first Thursday of every other month from 12:00 to 1:00, beginning July 8, 2010. Funding for the webinars is through the federal State Office of Rural Health (SORH) grant, and partners in the trainings are SORHs in Wyoming, Washington, Michigan, Montana, Iowa, and Maine. More information will be available on the ORH website later this month: <a href="http://health.wyo.gov/rfhd.rural/index.html">http://health.wyo.gov/rfhd.rural/index.html</a>.

### Small Rural Hospital Grant Program changes:

Rural hospital grant fine-tuned for health reform news article may be viewed at: http://www.govhealthit.com/newsitem.aspx?nid=73656

### National Summit of Rural America:

Please see the link below for information on the upcoming "National Summit of Rural America: A Dialogue for Renewing Promise" to be held June 3, 2010, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on the campus of the Jefferson College in Hillsboro, MO. This looks to be an excellent opportunity to discuss the future of rural America. http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/ruraltour?navid=RURALSUMMIT

# Multicultural Health (WOMH)

# Staff Change:

The Rural and Frontier Health Division is pleased to welcome Lillian Zuniga as the newest team member. Lillian will serve as the Office of Multicultural Health manager. Lillian's background includes service in various health and human service areas, including the Wellness Center (a part of the Eppson Senior Center in Laramie), Laramie Head Start and Hospice of Laramie. She enjoys the diversity of her work and especially the opportunity to help programs that cover a broad range of the human life span.

Born in Worland and raised in Wyoming, Lillian loves the state's mountains and wide open spaces. Following graduation from Northwest College in Powell, Montana State College, and the University of Wyoming, Lillian lived 15 years in Laramie before coming to Cheyenne to work at WDH. She enjoys cooking, gardening, being outdoors, and is a devoted UW sports fan. Go Pokes!

# Summer Workshops:

The Office of Multicultural Health is sponsoring Summer Cultural Sensitivity Training Series workshops. For more information or to sign up for the webcast, contact Lillian Zuniga at 307-777-5601 or via email at Lillian.Zuniga@health.wyo.gov. Please click here for flier: http://wdh.state.wy.us/rfhd/multicultural/index.html.

# Community Services Programs (CSP)

The National Association of State Community Services Programs (NASCSP) uses the Information System (IS) Survey to report to Congress in Washington, DC about the services and activities being conducted through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program in Wyoming. The service providers, tripartite boards, and Community Services Programs (CSP) spend a great deal of time collecting and compiling this data to provide a true representation of Wyoming. The following link provides the IS Survey Highlights: <a href="http://wdh.state.wy.us/rfhd/CSP/index.html">http://wdh.state.wy.us/rfhd/CSP/index.html</a>

### Kudos to the Community Services Program:

I want to thank you for addressing the concerns of the Albany County's CSBG Board. It was so nice to have the set-aside grant applications and requirements early this year. It gave adequate time to notify the agencies and the board was able to study and deliberate over the recommendations for funding without feeling the time constraints as we have in the past. I appreciate all the hard work and effort that you both put into this program and just wanted you to know what a difference it has made for both the agencies and the board.

Sharon relayed the information on the set aside funding and needless to say I'm tickled. The Board worked hard in making some tough choices but feel we made recommendations based on the purpose of the set-aside funds, I appreciate every penny as we continue to try and assist the citizens of Albany County.

Thank you again! Linda Simpson Albany County Treasurer Laramie WY 82070

# Telehealth/Telemedicine Consortium

- Currently both CRMC and WMC are offering CME classes. Offerings are also available through the Utah Telehealth Network and Children's Hospital in Denver.
- The Consortium's Content/Education Committee is talking with other telehealth networks to access their content through the Southeast Wyoming Telehealth Network.
- The WHA met via telehealth in March.
- Including testing, the system is being used approximately 10,000 minutes each month.
- The April 15 Telehealth Summit in Laramie:
  - 70 attendees in person and 20 via webinar;
  - Reviews were generally good;
  - CME was provided;
  - Presentations are on the WYNETTE site. http://www.uwyo.edu/wynette/summit.html.
- The University of Washington will provide telepsychiatric services, and their staff will be licensed in Wyoming.

# Vital Statistics Services

- Average time span in days to file birth certificates has improved by four days statewide.
  - Comparing, Oct 2008 thru March 2009, and Oct 2009 thru March 2010, Laramie County has improved by almost 25 days from the date of birth to local registrar—the greatest improvement.
  - Platte County, became worse by almost a week.
- Average time span in days to file death certificates with coroner certification has improved almost four days statewide.
  - Comparing, Oct 2007 thru March 2008, and Oct 2009 thru March 2010, Crook County reduced the number of days from date of death to coroner signature by 18 days—the greatest improvement.
  - Fremont County reduced the number by 15 days.

### Most Popular Baby Names:



Most popular girl names for 2009: Madison, Isabella, Hailey, Abigail/Addison (tied), Ava/Emma (tied), Aiden

Most popular boy names for 2009: Kayden/Caden \*, Brayden, Wyatt, Jacob

Boys Name "Kayden" = Spelled ten different ways Girls Name "Jayden" = Spelled nine different ways

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# Reader Feedback:

 Thanks for including the information on Angel Flight West. I sent this to all of our PHNs, and asked them to visit the website for more information.

We get LOTS of emails and newsletters, but I always read the one from RFHD. I find information very valuable to our staff, so please pass my thanks along to your colleagues!

 Thanks so much for the wonderful write up about Angel Flight. It will provide much needed exposure since we have limited resources to reach rural Wyoming medical facilities being a volunteer organization.

Thanks again, Rob Breitbarth Wyoming Mission Outreach Coordinator

# NEWS FROM THE RURAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (RAC):

The Rural Assistance Center Health Update recent news and funding opportunities can be found on the following link: <a href="http://www.raconline.org/updates/health/050510.html">http://www.raconline.org/updates/health/050510.html</a>

# **Upcoming Events:**

- Annual Rural Health Conference, May 18-21, 2010, Savannah, GA
- Quality and Clinical Conference, July 21-23, 2010, Portland, ME
- Rural Health Clinic Conference, September 28-29, 2010, Kansas City, MO
- Critical Access Hospital Conference, September 29-October 1, 2010, Kansas City, MO
- Rural Multiracial and Multicultural Health Conference, December 1-3, 2010, Tucson, AZ

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.health.wyo.gov/rfhd