

NC Office of Rural Health Operations Team

SFY 2024 Q2 Quarterly Newsletter

This newsletter serves a repository of information relevant to North Carolina State-Designated Rural Health Centers (SDRHCs) and CMS Rural Health Clinics (RHCs). Please share any content suggestions or feedback with Justin Kearley at justin.kearley@dhhs.nc.gov



Holiday Greetings from the NC Office of Rural Health Operations Team! We are sending all of you warmth, joy and peace. Additionally, it is our hope that the season fills you up with the things that mean the most to you – energizing the spirit for a healthy and happy new year.

As always, our team is happy to share news this quarter highlighting folks from across the state who are going the extra mile to care for our rural communities.

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Grantee Highlights

Carie Free of Chatuge Family Practice, Speaks on National Rural Health Day



Carie Free, Practice Administrator at Chatuge Family Practice in Hayesville, NC helped to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the NC Office of Rural Health on National Rural Health Day this year.

On the special day, Carie participated in a panel discussion on engaging the future rural health workforce. During the session, Ms. Free spoke about how Chatuge Family Practice partners with the MedServe Program to immerse young folks in rural healthcare. When asked about the MedServe program, she responded, “Clay Comprehensive Health Services partners with MedServe to bring in one to two fellows per year to work in the clinic. These fellows learn what working in rural healthcare is and from their two years of service, they make long-term decisions about their career path. Most of our fellows have attended medical or physician assistant schools. Our first MedServe fellow has finished his clinical rotation and will start work in Roberson County. We believe that mentoring and guiding these young fellows will help (bridge) the rural healthcare gap that is so desperately needed. Fellows act as medical assistants, community volunteers, and scribes and are vital to a small practice.”

Carie also shared about a fantastic resource the practice has to help support the fellows in meeting their needs. Many years ago, a supporter of the practice passed away and left the organization a home where the MedServe fellows could stay during their fellowship at Chatuge. This has helped to integrate the fellows into the rural community in which they live and alleviates the stress of searching for a place to live.

The Operations team would like to sincerely thank Carie Free and Chatuge Family Practice for their many years of service to rural and underserved communities in southwestern North Carolina and taking the time to celebrate the unique and innovative work they are doing to support the future rural health workforce.

Scotland Health Care System Hosts Virtual Watch Party for National Rural Health Day



“As I reflect on the work that the Office has done over the last fifty years, I am both thankful and humbled. We feel privileged here at Scotland Health to share with you this good work of caring for the health of rural North Carolinians.”

- **David L. Pope, DrPH, JD, MHA**
Chief Operating Officer
Scotland Health Care System

In true 21st-century fashion, Scotland Health Care System hosted a Virtual Watch Party for National Rural Health Day. With more than 50 participants joining from across the organization, the event proved to be a resounding success, fostering a sense of unity and camaraderie.

Beth Blaise, Operations Specialist for the site, joined the team in celebrating and shared her enthusiasm for the good work happening in the community.

Attendees had the chance to reminisce about key milestones, applaud the dedicated individuals who have contributed to improving the health of their community, and envision a future where healthcare in rural areas continues to thrive. The event allowed for open dialogue, fostering connections among attendees who may not have otherwise crossed paths.

The success of this virtual watch party serves as a testament to the adaptability of the community. Even in the face of challenges, we find innovative ways to come together, celebrate our achievements, and reaffirm our commitment to the shared values that bring us together.

Recent Events

NC Office of Rural Health Celebrates 50th Anniversary on National Rural Health Day in Bertie County



On Thursday, November 16, 2023, with many partners the NC Office of Rural Health, "[Honored the Past, Celebrated the Present, and Embraced the Future](#)" in Bertie County and virtually across the state! The Bertie County Council on Aging/Senior Center – thanks to a creative partnership with North Carolina Rural Health Association (NCRHA) hosted the 50th Anniversary of ORH and National Rural Health Day. This year's celebration put a spotlight on the enduring efforts of rural healthcare providers, and dedicated stakeholders who navigate the unique healthcare landscape of the past, present, and future in our rural communities.

Federal and state officials, including CDC Office of Rural Health Director, Diane Hall, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy Associate Administrator, Tom Morris, USDA NC Rural Development State Director, Reginald Speight, and ORH Director, Maggie Sauer, were present in Bertie County for the hybrid event. The NCRHA Co-Chair and President & CEO of the NC Rural Center, Patrick Woodie, delivered a keynote address highlighting how education, equity, diversity, infrastructure, and pandemic recovery will drive rural health outcomes in the future.

Over 200 participants joined us for our event - 60 in-person, 8 virtual watch parties with multiple attendees, and 100+ individuals online. Together, we stand in the #PowerofRural across North Carolina! Check out [this article](#) by the Bertie Ledger-Advance to learn more about the celebration.

Highlights included:

- Sessions on the Future of Rural Health, Community Engagement, and Healthy Aging, allowing participants to learn more about initiatives shaping the well-being of those in rural areas.

- Remarks were made by Governor Cooper and Secretary Kinsley, highlighting their commitment to rural health.
- The Governor's Proclamation was read by community leaders from across the state. Community Star Dr. Karen Smith shared her insights as a rural practitioner.

The event was sponsored by:



NC RURAL HEALTH
ASSOCIATION



HOMETOWN
STRONG
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We appreciated your presence, whether in person at The Bertie Council on Aging or virtually via livestream. We look forward to continuing to build strong relationships across our state in the 50 years to come and into the future.

In the News

Medicaid Expansion Live on December 1



This historic moment has been a long time in the making. Nearly 300,000 North Carolinians woke up on Dec 1 with full Medicaid health care coverage and an additional 300,000 people are now eligible to apply. It is the most significant investment in health care in North Carolina's history.

NCDHHS has created a new website to provide essential information on expansion, including updated income requirements, videos on how to apply for coverage through using <https://epass.nc.gov/>, social media content, FAQs, and ways for community partners to help get more people enrolled.

Bookmark this website for [NC Medicaid Updates](#) and use the materials <https://socialpresskit.com/nc-medicaid-social-media-toolkit> to promote expanded NC Medicaid. Additionally, as a trusted messenger, NCDHHS encourages you to join their Presenter Network to help bring this guidance to your community. Learn more at www.Medicaid.nc.gov and help spread the word!

Reminder: Prescriptions written by non-Medicaid enrolled providers will not be reimbursable by NC Medicaid due to federal requirements. If a patient, *new to Medicaid after expansion* or one that previously sought treatment with a non-Medicaid free clinic or provider, has a current prescription issued by non-Medicaid provider or clinic, they will not be reimbursable by NC Medicaid. These patients will need to have their prescriptions written by a NC Medicaid provider for future fulfillment. Full explanation can be found [here](#)

Training and Continuing Education CAH Conference

February 21 – 22 Critical Access Hospital Conference – SAVE THE DATE
Embassy Suites by Hilton RTP

The Rural Hospital Program supports Critical Access Hospitals (CAH) through the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program (FLEX Program). FLEX offers grants to states to help implement initiatives to strengthen the rural healthcare infrastructure, focusing on quality reporting and improvement, financial and operational improvement, emergency medical service integration, and population health management including support for Rural Health Clinics.

The Critical Access Hospital Conference is designed to bring together CAH Leadership, including CEOs, CFOs, CNOs, Directors of Patient Safety and Quality, RHC leaders and staff.

[LilyPad Webinar for CMS Rural Health Clinics](#)

March 11, 2024 1:00 PM EST Value Based Payments for RHCs [Register](#)

We are in the midst of a healthcare reimbursement sea change based on the concept of value, and one that can benefit rural health clinics and small rural hospitals. Effective primary care practices and networks have the unique ability to reduce the overall cost of care in rural communities through better patient engagement, education, prevention, clinic operations and a culture of improvement. The economic value of these cost savings should accrue at least in part to the providers and not exclusively to public and private payers. This presentation offers examples and action steps to design, implement and market rural primary care oriented VBP programs.

[Practice Manager Bootcamp through NC AHEC](#)

What basic knowledge do practice managers need to make their practices thrive? Anyone wanting to increase their understanding of practice management can benefit from this training opportunity. Registration for **the January 2024 Practice Managers Bootcamp is now open**. To learn more and register, click [here](#).

[Safety Stuff That Matters: A Compliance Webinar Series through NC AHEC](#)

Join South Piedmont AHEC for this Lunch & Learn Series of monthly, 1-hour sessions for clinical and leadership staff. This series will address concerns that may affect patient safety while visiting a practice. **The live webinar will begin January 17, 2024**, and will be held on the third Wednesday of the month for 5 sessions.

[Click](#) for more information and register [here](#).

Funding Opportunities

North Carolina Farmworker Health Program

Funding to increase access to primary, preventive, and behavioral healthcare services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families in North Carolina.

Geographic coverage: North Carolina

Application Deadline: Jan 9, 2024

Sponsor: North Carolina Office of Rural Health

MedServe North Carolina Fellowships in Primary Care Medicine

A 2-year, full-time, post-college community service fellowship in rural and other underserved community primary care sites in North Carolina.

Geographic coverage: North Carolina

Application Deadline: Feb 15, 2024

Sponsor: MedServe

North Carolina Ribbon of Hope Grants

Funding to support activities that establish or expand local programs in health, science, and education that serve identified needs of local North Carolina communities. The goal of the program is to reach all counties in North Carolina.

Geographic coverage: North Carolina

Application Deadline: Apr 1, 2024

Sponsor: The North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation

Contact Information

[Rural Health Operations Website](#)

For technical assistance or general inquiries, please contact your regional contract monitor.

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