



RHTP TOWN HALL – JANUARY 2026

# **North Carolina Rural Health Transformation Program (NCRHTP)**

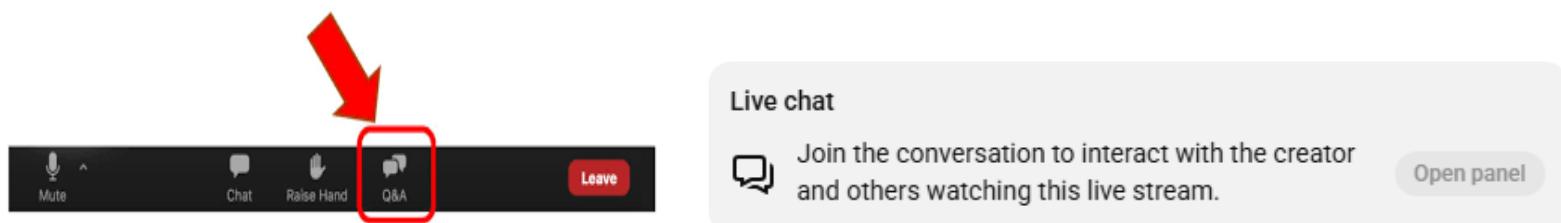
**Debra Farrington  
Deputy Secretary for Health, North Carolina  
Department of Health and Human Services**

**January 16, 2026**

# Housekeeping

## Reminders about the webinar technology on Zoom:

- Please make sure you are using a computer or smart phone connected to the internet, the audio function is on, and the volume is turned up.
- Please make sure your microphone is muted for the duration of the call.
- Questions can be submitted any time during the presentation using the “Q&A” box located on your control panel.



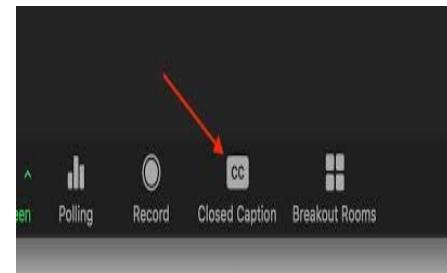
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# Housekeeping

## American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters and Closed-Captioning via Zoom.

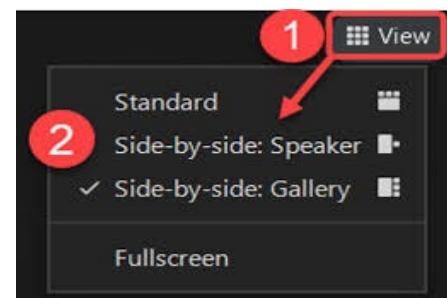
- ASL Interpreters and Closed-Captioning options will be available for today's event.
- For closed-captioning options select the "Closed Caption" feature located on your control panel.



## Adjusting Video Layout and Screen View.

- Select the "View" feature located in the top-right hand corner of your screen.

**A copy of today's slide deck and recording will be available on our website at [ncdhhs.gov/rhtp](http://ncdhhs.gov/rhtp).**



# Welcome

**Thank you for joining us for today's NC Rural Health Transformation Program Town Hall**

## Agenda:

- Opening remarks
- Overview of NCRHTP
- Panel discussion
- Q&A

**Debra  
Farrington,  
Deputy Secretary  
for Health,  
North Carolina  
Department of Health  
and Human Services**



**Dr. Devdutta  
Sangvai,  
Secretary,  
North Carolina  
Department of  
Health and Human  
Services**



**Josh Stein,**  
Governor,  
North Carolina



## Purpose of Today's Town Hall

- Overview of NC's Rural Health Transformation Program (NCRHTP) award
- Highlights of NC's RHTP initiatives and governance
- Looking ahead and important next steps
- Panel discussion and Q&A



RALEIGH, NC (News Release) — The federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today awarded North Carolina \$213 million through the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP). These funds will improve health care access for rural North Carolinians. In November, North Carolina submitted its application for these funds with bipartisan support from the state's congressional delegation. These funds are awarded for 2026, and North Carolina will be eligible for more funding each year for the next five years.

## The Rural Health Transformation Fund is a unique, \$213M+ opportunity to transform rural health in North Carolina

### Rural Health Challenges in North Carolina at-a-glance

-  **28.4% of North Carolinians are rural** (nearly 3 million people).
-  **Chronic, perinatal, & mental health needs** i.e., 17% higher diabetes rate compared to urban areas; 90 counties are mental health shortage areas; maternal care deserts and higher pregnancy-related mortality; higher infant death rates
-  **Workforce shortages** where 24 counties lack adequate primary care; shortages in behavioral health, oral health and EMS are acute.
-  **Financial instability** i.e., 12 rural hospitals have closed or converted since 2006 limiting access to emergency and inpatient care.
-  **Digital divide** including broadband gaps and low digital literacy limit telehealth and care coordination.

## Guiding Principles for NCRHTP Implementation

- ✓ **Maximize resources for rural health**
- ✓ **Build out details on high level approaches**
- ✓ **Achieve quick wins**
- ✓ **Plan for long-term sustainability**
- ✓ **Prioritize measurable, community-level impact**
- ✓ **Employ flexible and agile approach; pivot when needed**
- ✓ **Communicate transparently and with integrity**

# Six Initiatives Work Together to Achieve NCRHTP Goals

**Vision** *To advance innovative solutions that foster independence, improve health, and promote well-being for all rural North Carolinians*

Required Federal Elements	Improving Access   Improving Outcomes   Partnerships	Workforce	Cause ID   Financial Solvency	Technology Use   Data-Driven Solutions		
NC Rural Health Priorities	<p>1</p> <p>Build Rural Community Care Network “Hubs”</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Create Models &amp; Capacity for Expanded Primary Care, Prevention, and Chronic Disease Management</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Expand and Integrate Behavioral Health and SUD Services</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Build a Robust &amp; Resilient Workforce &amp; Innovative Care Team Models for Rural Communities</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Ensure Fiscal Sustainability of Rural Health Providers Through Innovative Financial Models</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Modernize Rural Care Delivery Through Digital Forward Solutions</p>
Success measures	<p>Coordinated networks of care serving rural residents resulting in reductions of chronic disease burden, increases in access for mental health care; 10% reduction in rural provider vacancy rates by Year 5; 70 new rural practices connected to the state’s health information exchange; 15% increase in rural hospital readiness for value-based payment</p>					

## Timeline and Milestones for Project Year 2026\*

### January – March 2026

- Submit revised budget to CMS by January 30 for \$213M Year 1 funding.
- Establish statewide program management and governance structures.
- Release Request for Applications (RFA) for NC ROOTS Hub Lead entities.

### April – October 2026

- Conduct award process for regional hubs; Select and onboard Regional Hub Lead entities; Regional hubs develop action plans and local governance.
- Expand reach of existing statewide efforts aligned with NCRHTP.
  - Expanded behavioral health/SUD services
  - Expanded perinatal mental health support
  - Increased HIE participation, digital literacy efforts, & Rural Health Innovation Fund
  - Workforce initiatives launched
- Submit first annual progress report to CMS.
- Maintain continuous engagement with stakeholders and CMS to monitor success and progress toward goals.

**Note: Year-two funding is conditional upon Year-one success.**

\* Assuming timely approvals from CMS and state administrative process, follows federal fiscal year

## Immediate Next Steps

- **DHHS focus on Implementation activities**
  - Revise Implementation Plan
  - Build out requirements for prioritized initiatives/activities (Quick wins)
- **Continued stakeholder communication and engagement**
  - Use existing engagements to (i.e., information through divisions, conferences, and community partner engagements)
  - Design and implement advisory committee structure
  - Initiate DHHS standard communication to partners/vendors to protect procurement/potential Conflict of interest
- **How you can get involved**
  - Visit our website to obtain information including upcoming procurements and awards (e.g., NC ROOTS Lead Entity application process)
  - Respond to RFAs or other requests for information when posted
  - Engage with ROOTS Hubs as partners once selected
  - Participate in existing advisory groups, councils and meetings i.e. Side by Side to get information

## Thank You!

**Thank you for your continued contributions during the application and now to ensure the success of NCRHTP for our state!**

**We'll now begin our Q&A portion with our panelists.**

**Learn more, including links to FAQs, Town Hall recording, and other NC award information:**

**[ncdhhs.gov/rhtp](http://ncdhhs.gov/rhtp)**

## Meet Our Panel



**Debra  
Farrington  
(Moderator)**  
*NCDHHS  
Deputy  
Secretary for  
Health*



**Dr. Larry  
Greenblatt**  
*NCDHHS State  
Health Director  
and Chief  
Medical Officer*



**Maggie  
Sauer**  
*NCDHHS  
Director  
Office of  
Rural Health*



**Kelly Crosbie**  
*NCDHHS Director  
Division of Mental  
Health,  
Developmental  
Disabilities and  
Substance Use  
Disorders*