

MCRH MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

February 2025
Volume 6, Issue 2

OUR MISSION

To coordinate, plan, and advocate for improved health for Michigan's rural residents and communities



Registration is Now Open for the 2025 Michigan Rural Health Conference!
April 24-25, 2025 at Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort

28TH ANNUAL MICHIGAN RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

REGISTER NOW



Brock Slabach
Chief Operations Officer
National Rural Health Association

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Natasha Bagdasarian
Chief Medical Executive
State of Michigan

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



April 24-25, 2025



Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort
Mt. Pleasant, MI



Since 1997, the 28th Annual Michigan Rural Health Conference has been the premier gathering for rural health professionals across the state. Join us for this annual event, where a diverse group of stakeholders come together to engage in cutting-edge discussions, educational sessions, and networking opportunities designed to strengthen rural healthcare.

[Register Today!](#)

[Draft Agenda](#)

Expanding Rural Palliative Care in Michigan



The Michigan Center for Rural Health is committed to expanding access to palliative care in Michigan's rural communities, ensuring that patients and families receive the comprehensive, compassionate support they need. Our recent efforts were highlighted in Hospice News, recognizing the impact of this work in bridging gaps in care and enhancing quality of life for those facing serious illnesses.

Through partnerships, education, and technical assistance, MCRH is supporting rural healthcare providers in developing sustainable palliative care programs that address the unique challenges of rural populations. By equipping providers with the right tools and resources, we aim to make palliative care more accessible, improving patient-centered care across Michigan.

[Read the Full Article Here](#)

[More Information on Palliative Care](#)

Bridging Gaps in Care: How MCRH is Advancing Remote Patient Monitoring

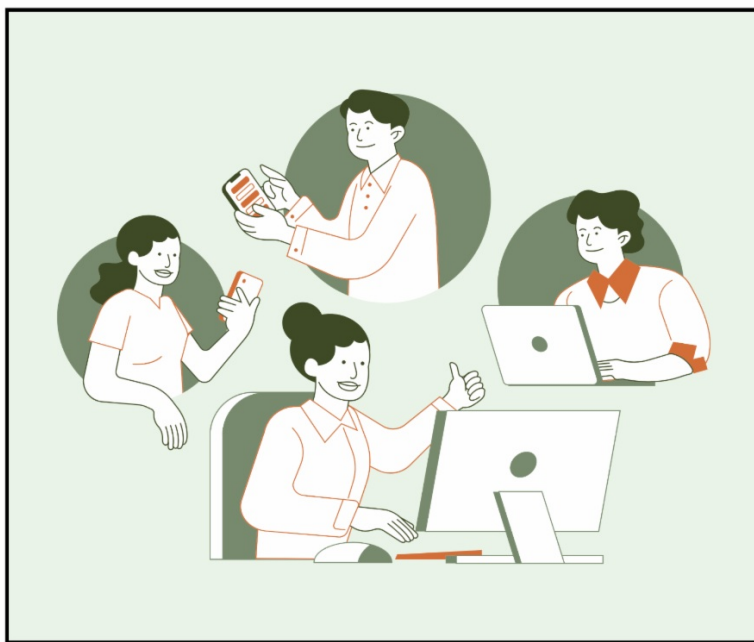


The Michigan Center for Rural Health (MCRH) has been at the forefront of advancing remote patient monitoring (RPM) in rural communities, playing a crucial role in research and implementation efforts across Michigan. A recent study, *The Promise of Remote Patient Monitoring*, highlights how RPM can revolutionize healthcare delivery by leveraging technology such as wearable devices, AI integration, and broadband expansion. The study underscores the importance of overcoming digital access barriers and policy constraints to fully realize RPM's potential, particularly in addressing chronic disease management and rural maternal health disparities.

MCRH has actively contributed to this mission through a collaborative RPM pilot program funded by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund. This initiative, detailed in *Remote Patient Monitoring for Rural Michigan Hospitals*, supported RPM deployment in three independent rural hospitals: Helen Newberry Joy Hospital, McKenzie Health System, and Schoolcraft Memorial Hospital. The pilot demonstrated significant improvements in patient outcomes, engagement, and provider satisfaction. Key findings included enhanced chronic disease management, a reduction in emergency visits, and improved integration of social determinants of health into patient care. By spearheading these efforts, MCRH continues to drive transformative healthcare solutions that bridge access gaps and enhance rural health equity across Michigan.

[More Information on Remote Patient Monitoring](#)

Supporting Rural Health Clinics: The 2025 RHC Practice Management Webinar Series



Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) play a vital role in ensuring access to high-quality healthcare in underserved communities. To help RHC leaders and staff navigate evolving regulations, enhance operations, and improve patient care, the 2025 RHC Practice Management Webinar Series offers expert-led sessions covering key topics such as certification, billing, compliance, emergency preparedness, and performance improvement. Running from May 2025 through April 2026, this monthly webinar series provides practical guidance and regulatory insights tailored to the unique needs of rural healthcare providers. Each session includes live Q&A with industry experts, ensuring participants can engage in meaningful discussions and gain actionable takeaways.

Sessions will take place on the second Thursday of each month from 12 PM – 1 PM EST. Missed a session? No problem! Registered attendees will have access to recordings and materials in our Online Learning Portal.

Registration is now open! Secure your spot today and equip your RHC with the knowledge and tools needed for success.

[Additional Information](#)

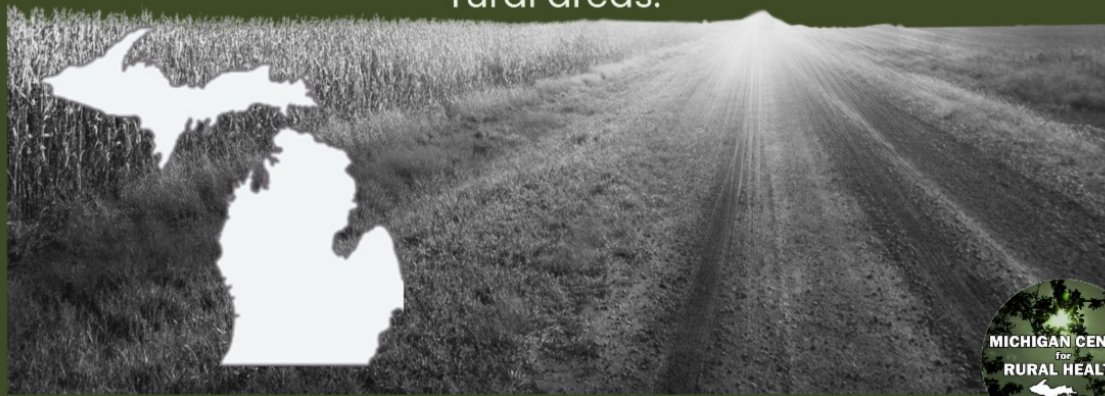
[Register](#)

**Nominate the 2025 Rural Health
Professional of the Year**

Nominations Are Being Accepted Until March 7

2025 RURAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

Presented to individuals deserving of recognition for their efforts in carrying out exemplary work promoting health in rural areas.



Nominations Due March 7, 2025

Since 1994, the Michigan Center for Rural Health (MCRH) has celebrated an outstanding rural health professional for achievements they have directed to advance Michigan's rural health initiatives. The recipient is chosen through a nomination process and will be celebrated with a special award during the 28th Annual Michigan Rural Health Conference on April 24, 2025, at Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

"The Rural Health Professional of the Year Award" formally acknowledges someone deserving of recognition for their distinctive efforts to elevate rural health in Michigan.

The award is granted to an individual who has carried out exemplary work promoting health in rural areas, shown excellent leadership in improving health care services in rural Michigan, and made worthy contributions to improving the health of the people in rural Michigan.

If you know someone who fits this description – nominate them TODAY!

Please contact Laura Mispelon (laura.mispelon@affiliate.msu.edu) for more information about the Rural Health Professional of the Year nomination process.

[Rural Health Professional of the Year Nomination Form](#)

[Additional Information](#)

NRHA's 2024 Policy Papers Are Now Available

We're thrilled to share that National Rural Health Associations (NRHA) 2024 policy papers have been released! These papers address critical issues impacting rural health and offer actionable recommendations to support rural communities nationwide.

As part of the 2024 NRHA Fellowship Program, **Laura Stoddard, Social Drivers of Health Manager at MCRH**, explored the effects of **Medicaid Redetermination** on rural communities. Her policy paper highlights key challenges and provides recommendations to ensure continuity of coverage for rural populations.



[Read the Full Story Here](#)

McLaren Health Care Awards President's Trophy to McLaren Thumb Region



McLaren Health Care has presented its annual President's Trophy to McLaren Thumb Region, recognizing the hospital with the statewide health care system's

most prestigious honor as its top-performing subsidiary.

The Bad Axe hospital earned this celebrated recognition through its team's performance in vital clinical quality and patient safety metrics, while also accounting for patient experience and satisfaction, operational excellence, and financial stewardship.

[Read the Full Story Here](#)

Rural Health Grant Writing Education Opportunity



The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) cordially invites you to register for the spring Rural Health Grant Writing Institute! Through nine engaging sessions, participants will gain the skills and strategies needed to write successful grants, including documenting needs, crafting budgets, developing evaluations and work plans, and finding the right funding opportunities. Take the next step in advancing your grant writing skills and driving meaningful change in rural health. Visit the [Rural Health Grant Writing Institute](#) webpage for the full curriculum.

[Register Here](#)

American Heart Month Webinar Opportunity



February is American Heart Month, a time to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease and promote heart-healthy habits. Rural communities face unique challenges in accessing timely cardiac care, making it even more critical to implement evidence-based strategies for prevention and treatment.

To support this effort, we are proud to partner with the **American Heart Association (AHA)** to host an **educational webinar on February 27, 2025, from 12–1 PM EST**. This session will highlight how rural hospitals in Michigan and across the nation are optimizing acute stroke and cardiac care through the **Rural Health Care Outcomes Accelerator Initiative**.

This webinar is intended for Rural PPS and Critical Access Hospitals.

Attendees will learn about:

- The benefits of participating in AHA's **Get With The Guidelines®** programs for stroke, coronary artery disease (CAD), and heart failure
- Strategies to improve rapid response and patient outcomes in rural settings
- Success stories from Michigan's rural hospitals
- Steps to enroll in the program and enhance quality improvement efforts

Join us in strengthening heart health care for our communities.

[Register Here](#)

[Rural Healthcare Outcomes Accelerator Initiative Flyer](#)

2025 Michigan State Loan Repayment Program Application Cycle Begins



The Michigan State Loan Repayment Program (MSLRP) helps employers recruit and retain primary medical, dental, and mental healthcare providers by providing loan repayment to those entering into MSLRP service obligations. MSLRP service obligations require participants to provide full-time primary healthcare services in Health Professional Shortage Areas ([HPSA](#)) at not-for-profit health clinics for two years.

MSLRP will assist those selected by providing up to \$300,000 in tax-free funds to repay their educational debt over a period of up to ten years. Participants will enter into consecutive two-year MSLRP service obligations requiring them to remain employed for a minimum of 40 hours per week for no less than 45 weeks per year at eligible nonprofit practice sites providing primary healthcare services to ambulatory populations.

The FY26 MSLRP Application Period begins February 3, 2025 and continues through April 30, 2025 for two-year contracts starting October 1, 2025. Northern Obstetric Service Providers, Genesee County Applicants, and Inpatient Pediatric Providers including only Psychiatrists, Physician Assistants, and Nurse Practitioners remain the program's top priority this year. Additional eligibility information can be found [here](#).

[Additional Information Regarding MSLRP](#)

Mental Wellness Conference for First Responders

April 23rd & 24th, 2025 in Traverse City, MI

Join the Michigan Rural EMS Network as they bring together local, state, national, and international industry experts with real-world experience to address the impact of job-related stress and trauma. Gain insights on recognizing when you or a colleague may need support and develop effective strategies to manage stress and enhance your quality of life both on and off the job. Discover valuable resources and practical tools to prioritize your well-being and better serve those who rely on you for help.



[More Information & Registration](#)

New Critical Access Hospital Financial Sustainability Guide

The National Rural Health Resource Center recently posted the Critical Access Hospital Financial Sustainability Guide as a resource for the nation's CAHs.

This guide is designed for state Medicare Rural Hospital Flex (Flex) Program personnel, CAH leaders, and others who support these providers in managing long-term financial stability. While CAH finance can be complex, the guide aims to be non-technical, offering practical strategies and interventions to help address ongoing financial challenges in rural healthcare. Successful implementation of these strategies will improve CAH's performance and enhance financial stability over time.

Benchmarking Financial Indicators

Benchmarking allows CAHs to compare their performance against industry standards and peers. Experts have identified 10 key indicators for evaluating financial health. Establishing a benchmarking process helps facilities pinpoint areas for improvement and take targeted actions to enhance financial performance. Tracking both current performance and trends supports proactive management, while identifying high and low performers provides valuable insights—low performers may need intervention, while high performers can share best practices.

The resource outlines various interventions to improve the financial health of CAHs, with projects categorized by short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes, each identified in Appendix A.

CAH Financial Sustainability Interventions:

- Strategic, Financial, and Operational Assessments
- Medicare Cost Report Reviews, Strategy, and Education
- Revenue Cycle Management
- Clinic Practice Management Assessments
- Process Improvement
- Financial Education for CAH Department Managers
- Financial Education for Boards
- Pooling of Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP) Funds
- Developing Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Networks
- Benchmarking Financial Indicators
- Strategic Planning
- Service Line Analysis
- Marketing Plan Assessments
- Rural Emergency Hospital (REH)

For more details on each intervention, refer to the [Critical Access Hospital Financial Sustainability Guide](#).

February is Career and Technical

Education Month in Michigan



Governor Gretchen Whitmer is shining a spotlight on the power of hands-on learning to prepare Michiganders for in-demand, good-paying careers through high-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that are helping students gain the real-world skills they need to succeed. That's why Gov. Whitmer, along with the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), has proclaimed February as **Career and Technical Education Month!**

With nearly 500,000 job openings projected in our state each year through 2032, CTE offers high school and college students hands-on learning experiences that can be applied to real-world training and career pathways. This February, students and job seekers of all ages are encouraged to explore programs that pave the way for career success, advancement, and further education.

NURSES Grant: Seeking Partners for the Spring 2025 Semester



The primary goal of the NURSES Grant is to provide community-based outpatient clinical experiences to BSN students. This initiative addresses the nursing shortage in rural Michigan by offering comprehensive student support. The grant covers mileage and lodging for clinical rotations and provides additional funding for paid internships. We are excited to welcome Rural Health Clinics to participate in this impactful program, developed in collaboration with the Michigan Primary Care Association.

If you are interested in learning more about the NURSES Grant opportunities, please contact Kyra Burkeen, Workforce Initiative Manager, at

NURSES Grant Internship
Information

Additional Details on the
NURSES Grant

National Kidney Month Toolkit & Resources



March is Kidney Month, and we are excited to partner with the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan (NKFM) to raise awareness of kidney disease. Did you know that 33%, or 1 in 3, adults in Michigan are at risk for kidney disease and most don't know it? Risk factors for kidney disease are type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and family history.

The NKFM's "Are You the 33%? @" campaign raises awareness of these risk factors and empowers individuals to learn more about their kidney health. Here are three ways you can participate in raising awareness:

1. **Raise Awareness:** Encourage your staff, patients, and friends to take the one-minute [Kidney Risk Quiz](#).
2. **Spread the News:** Educate your office about kidney disease prevention using the campaign toolkit at nkfm.org/areyouthe33. Their new campaign materials support caregivers in understanding their loved one's chronic kidney disease (CKD) risk.
3. **Join the Conversation:** Utilize social media to raise awareness. Encourage staff to share the quiz using #MinuteForYourKidneys. Their MIKM toolkit offers sample social media posts for easy sharing.

Thank you for joining us in the effort to make a difference in kidney health awareness. Together, we can create positive change!

More Information on Kidney Disease

IHI Open School Courses for Michigan Critical Access Hospital Quality Network (MICAQH QN) Members

Michigan Center of Rural Health is encouraging MICAQH QN members and RHC Practice Managers to complete courses from the Institute of Healthcare Improvement. Attendees will receive a Basic Certificate in Patient Safety and Quality upon completion of the courses. These courses are free to MICAQH QN members and RHC Practice Managers and must be completed by March 31, 2025.

For more information and to register, please contact Amanda St. Martin, Hospital Programs Manager, at amanda.saintmartin@affiliate.msu.edu.

MBQIP Upcoming Deadlines, Reporting Reminders, and Resources



MCRH continues to provide monthly Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project (MBQIP) updates that will help improve the quality of care provided in Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs).

MBQIP Reporting Updates

MBQIP 2025 Assistance

Not sure where to start with reporting the [new MBQIP 2025 core measures](#)? The Data Submission Guides are a great place to start! These guides are designed to meet hospitals where they are at in their reporting journey, such as:

- Rural relevancy and buy-in

- Measure specifications
- Data collection and hospital implementation
- Data submission
- Understanding outcomes and quality improvement

MBQIP Data Submission Deadlines

Safe Use of Opioids-Concurrent Prescribing Deadline Extension

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has notified eligible hospitals and critical access hospitals (CAHs) participating in the Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting (IQR) Program and/or the Medicare Promoting Interoperability Program of a deadline extension. The deadline for the submission of electronic clinical quality measure (eCQM) data for the calendar year (CY) 2024 reporting period, pertaining to the fiscal year (FY) 2026 payment determination, has been extended from Thursday, February 28, 2025, to **Friday, March 14, 2025** at 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time (PT).

January 2025 Upcoming MBQIP Deadlines

March 1, 2025

- The Antibiotic Stewardship CDC NHSN Annual Facility Survey reflecting CY 2024 activity is due **March 1, 2025**. Submission is through NHSN.

March 14, 2025

- Safe Use of Opioids- Concurrent Prescribing CY 2024 encounters is due **March 14, 2025**. Specifications **CMS eCQM ID CMS506v6**. Submission is through the HQR Secure Portal. Note: This measure is not currently being submitted for MBQIP but is available for reporting to CMS.

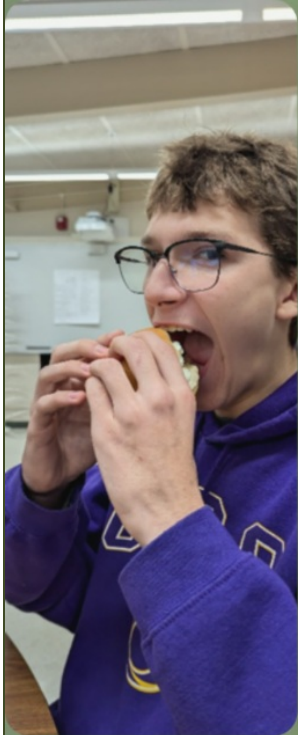
April 2, 2025

- Reporting Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) Q4 2024 encounters (10/1/24-12/31/24) is due **April 2, 2025**. Submission is through the HQR Secure Portal-Vendor. **Quality Assurance Guidelines V.18.0**.

MBQIP Data Submission Deadlines are on the RQITA Resource Center website under Data Reporting, linked below.

[Data Reporting | Telligen](#)

For more on MBQIP, please contact Amanda St. Martin, Hospital Programs Manager, at amanda.saintmartin@affiliate.msu.edu.



Strength of Rural Spotlight Series

MSU Extension | Choose Health: Food, Fun
& Fitness (CHFFF) For Families

February Edition

Full Length Spotlight
Story on Choose Health
by MSU Extension

Each month, the Michigan Center for Rural Health highlights people and organizations who uplift rural health through the Strength of Rural Spotlight Series. In February, MCRH spotlights MSU Extension and their programs to bring nutrition and wellness education to Tuscola County.

Do you have a story to share? Know a rural organization or individual making a difference? Email Laura Mispelon, Social Drivers of Health Manager, at laura.mispelon@affiliate.msu.edu, and let us share your story!

MCRH is excited to spotlight the Choose Health: Food, Fun & Fitness (CHFFF) for Families program, led by Wendy Friend, Community Nutrition Instructor with MSU Extension. Seeing a need for better access to fresh, healthy food and nutrition education, the program partnered with Tuscola County ISD, local educators, and healthcare partners to break down barriers, making nutrition education more inclusive, engaging, and accessible for rural Michigan families.

Wendy and her team are bringing much-needed **nutrition and wellness education** to families in Tuscola County, empowering both students and parents to make healthier choices together. This 6-week program addresses barriers to healthy eating by providing:

- Hands-on nutrition education
- Cooking demonstrations with budget-friendly meals
- Childcare support
- Transportation solutions
- Grocery bags for meal prep at home
- Incentives for participation

Upcoming MCRH Educational Events

Grand Rounds:

March 5, 2025, 12-1 PM EST

Geriatrics Grand Rounds: Working Optimally with Older Adults

Speaker: Linda Keilman, DNP, MSN, GNP-BC, DEGN, FNAP, FAANP

[Register Here](#)

CE Provided for Nurses, Social Workers, Community Health Workers, Physicians

March 11, 2025, 12-1 PM EST

Special Topics Grand Rounds: HOPE: Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences

Speaker: Mary Neumaier, RD, ACEs, Master Trainer

[Register Here](#)

CE Provided for Social Workers, Nurses, Physicians, Community Health Workers, Registered Dietitians, Dietetic Technicians, Nutritionists

March 20, 2025, 12-1 PM EST

Pediatrics Grand Rounds: Michigan's Complex Children

Speaker: Danilee Pitchford, BA

[Register Here](#)

CE Provided for Social Workers, Nurses, Physicians

Project ECHO

March 19, 2025, 12-1 PM EST

Infectious Disease ECHO: Vaccination Updates for Primary Care Providers

Speaker: Dr. Peter Gulick, DO

[Register Here](#)

CE Provided

EMS:

March 12, 2025, 6-7 PM EST

MCI/ICS Overview

Speaker: Patrick Fox, MPA, NRP, EMSIC

[Register Here](#)

CE Provided

April 15, 2025, 9 AM - 5 PM EST

EMS Workshop: Certified Ambulance Documentation Specialist Course

Presenter: Page, Wolfberg, and Wirth

[Register Here](#)

CE Provided

ADDITIONAL NEWS & RESOURCES:

RURAL EMERGENCY HOSPITALS:

[Thinking of Converting to REH? Key Observations from Financial Modeling](#)

[Updated Guidance for Rural Emergency Hospitals \(REHs\)](#)

CYBERSECURITY:

[AHA Helps Secure New Cybersecurity Resources from Microsoft and Google to Assist Rural Hospitals](#)

[Information on Microsoft Cybersecurity Program for Rural Hospitals // SIGN UP](#)

TELEHEALTH:

[Expanding Dental Care to Children Through Telehealth](#)

[Building Michigan's State Broadband Plan](#)

[VIDEO: How Broadband Access Positively Impacts the Growing American Workforce](#)

HOSPITAL PROGRAMS:

[CMS Updates Hospital Policies for Fiscal Year 2025 and Finalizes a New Payment Model for Select Surgeries](#)

PRIMARY CARE:

[CMS Enhancing Coverage of Preventive Services Under the Affordable Care Act](#)

[CMS Finalizes New Model to Improve Access to Kidney Transplants](#)

[Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute \(PCORI\) Funding: Improving Mental and Behavioral Health – Letters of Intent January 14](#)

[CMS Announces New Lower Drug Prices for 2026 / Negotiated Pricing Fact Sheet](#)

[CMS Innovation in Behavioral Health Model](#)

[New Changes to Behavioral Health Intensive Outpatient Program Coverage in Medicare](#)

[Medicare Advantage Plan Growth in Rural America: Availability of Supplemental Benefits](#)

SOCIAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH:

[Physician Engagement in Addressing Health-Related Social Needs and Burnout](#)

[A Toolkit for Developing Local Multisector Plans for Aging in Rural Areas](#)

[HHS Launches New "Food as Medicine" Resources](#)

[A Healthy Mouth for Every Body - A Look At The Connection Between Oral Health and Overall Health](#)

[Engaging Policymakers for Healthier Communities | County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#)

[The U.S. Playbook to Address Social Determinants of Health](#)

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER:

[Take 10! Transforming Care for Women with Substance Use Disorders \(SUDs\) and Their Families Webinar Series](#)

[Opioid Settlement Resource Center - The Michigan Association of Counties \(micounties.org\)](#)

[Opioid Settlement Overview Table](#)

[Recovery-Ready Workplace Toolkit for Businesses](#)

[Rural Communities Opioid Response Program – Pathways](#)

WORKFORCE:

[HRSA Nurse Faculty Loan Program – February 24](#)

[Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program for Paraprofessionals](#)

[Statewide Investment Helps Youth Explore Future Careers In Michigan](#)

[Mental Health in the Rural Workplace](#)

[Mobilizing Health Care Workforce via Telehealth](#)

[MiCHWA's Advocacy Day](#)

[Navigating Workplace Violence: Safety Strategies for Managing Agitation and Aggression](#)

VETERANS:

[Sign up for Veterans Health Updates](#)

[TRICARE: What You Need to Know About Referrals and Authorizations](#)

[How VA Health Care Works with Other Health Insurance](#)

[Veterans Beware: Help Stop Scams Involving Substance Use Disorder Treatment](#)

[National Association of Community Health Centers Veterans Interest Group](#)

[Find Your County's Veteran Service Officers](#)

[Updated Veterans Educational Videos from the IREACH Program](#)

[Questions about VA healthcare? Attend the Veterans Healthcare Workgroup Monthly Meeting on the Second Monday of Every Month at 1 PM EST \(Zoom Link\)](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[Access to Justice Prize: Closing the Rural Justice Gap](#)

[Cold Weather Emergencies Pediatric Hour](#)

[Michigan Pediatric Readiness Conference](#)

[Obstetric Care Access at Rural Hospitals in the United States](#)

[Local Data for Equitable Communities Grant Program](#)

[Rural Residency Planning and Development \(RRPD\) program](#)

[New Map Shows Rural Emergency Hospitals](#)

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CPAs / ADVISORS





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