



Optimal Health for All Iowans



Swatches

Connecting Rural Iowa

March 2017

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President's Message - Health Care Update

submitted by Kate Walton, IRHA Board President

Health care payment and delivery has evolved significantly over the past decade, with changes at both the state and federal level. Today those changes are bringing uncertainty as policy makers look to make adjustments that could bring with it risk to Iowans living in rural communities. Today approximately 680,000 Iowans receive their health care through the Medicaid program, this is approximately 22% of the state's population.

The recent transition to managed care in Iowa's Medicaid program has come at great financial loss to the three companies who are contracted to run the program. Recent reports put their total collective losses at \$450 million. In the face of this news, one of the managed care organizations began notifying contracted providers they would be reducing previously agreed to reimbursement rates. This move jeopardizes access to hospitals, physicians clinics and community providers for approximately 220,000 Iowans who are covered under this plan, many who live in rural areas. Those patients will obviously have the choice to either select another carrier or receive care from other providers, but the move is disruptive and unsettling on the heels of a difficult transition to managed care.

Iowa's struggle to stabilize the Medicaid program could be further compounded by the House of Representatives proposal to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (also referred to as the ACA or Obamacare) with the American Health Care Act (AHCA). The plan includes a major shift in how Medicaid is financed. Currently, in a state/federal partnership the federal government reimburses the state a percentage share of all Medicaid expenses.



IRHA membership renewal notices have been sent. The new membership year began January 1, 2017. If you have not yet renewed, please take a minute to do so now. [Click here to renew online.](#)

Your continued support through membership allows IRHA to continue the work to attain Optimal Health for All Iowans.

If your renewal has not been received by April 1, you will be removed from the IRHA mailing lists until your membership is renewed.

Benefits of being an IRHA member:

1. Health advocacy with a rural perspective
2. Access to resources through the IRHA and NRHA websites and

Under the AHCA this would change to a fixed, per beneficiary federal participation and provide states additional flexibility in determining who is eligible for the program and what types of health care services are included. The AHCA is projected to reduce tax burdens and the federal deficit, but places at risk health care coverage for 14 million Americans.

I'm not sure there's been a time where it has been more important for those who have a stake in our health care system to become engaged. Patients and providers have the unique opportunity to shape what the next phase of health care delivery will look like as policy makers grapple with these complicated issues.

Save the Date - IRHA Spring Workshops Addressing Iowa's Critical Need for Health Care Providers in Rural Areas

IRHA is going on the road and will be hosting half day workshops on the topic of the need for health care providers in rural Iowa.

Friday, May 12 - Upper Iowa University in Fayette

Tuesday, May 16 - ICCC Campus in Storm Lake

The workshops will run from 8:00 AM to 11:30 AM and will be free for all to attend. This will be a time to hear from people who have been successful in recruiting providers to rural areas, to hear from providers and why they choose to practice in rural Iowa, to share with and ask questions of colleagues, and to learn from each others experiences. Please share this information with hospital administrators, city council members, city leaders, economic development offices, county health offices, and others that might be interested.

Please mark your calendars and look for more details soon.

Note from NRHA

The National Rural Health Association is disappointed that President Trump's budget calls for a nearly 18 percent, or \$15.1 billion, cut to the Department of Health and Human Services.

The cuts include funding to the National Institutes of Health, which would decrease by \$5.8 billion, and to health professions and nurse training programs, which would decrease by \$403 million.

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3. Networking opportunities with professionals from diverse disciplines

4. Input opportunities for State and Federal Policy issues

5. Discounted rates for Annual Conference

6. Opportunities for leadership development

Thank you for your continued support of IRHA!

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The budget does not provide enough detail to determine how the cuts would affect the rural health safety net, or the budget areas of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy or the State Offices of Rural Health, which are priorities to NRHA. While the budget does not specify which health professional and nurse training programs would be cut, NRHA is concerned these cuts will impact important rural workforce programs.

NRHA does applaud President Trump for not calling for cuts to Critical Access Hospitals, as President Obama's budget called for.

Funding for the rural health safety net is more important than ever as rural Americans are facing a hospital closure crisis. Eighty rural hospitals have closed since 2010. Right now, 673 additional facilities are vulnerable and could close-this represents over 1/3 of rural hospitals in the U.S. Continued cuts in hospital payments have taken their toll, forcing far too many closures. Medical deserts are appearing across rural America, leaving many of our nation's most vulnerable populations without timely access to care.

Rural health programs assist rural communities in maintaining and building a strong health care delivery system into the future. Most importantly, these programs help increase the capacity of the rural health care delivery system and true safety net providers.

Programs in the rural health safety net increase access to health care, help communities create new health programs for those in need and train the future health professionals that will care for the 62 million rural Americans. With modest investments, these programs evaluate, study and implement quality improvement programs and health information technology systems.

NRHA asks Congress to support strong funding for these important rural health programs.

And, join NRHA on Wednesday, March 29 at 12 p.m. ET for our March Grassroots call. Learn the latest news from Capitol Hill and the Administration, and get updated on issues affecting rural health, including the latest rural health legislation, regulations, and Committee hearings. NRHA will also provide an analysis of the American Health Care Act.

Registration URL: attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8120983368487806721

Erin Mahn Zumbrun
National Rural Health Association
Government Affairs & Policy Manager
Washington DC



On December 1, IRHA and the University of Iowa Health Sciences Policy Council co-hosted the *Delivering the Vision of Comprehensive Health Services in Rural Iowa* Conference. Over 150 individuals participated in this day of learning and networking.

The conference included a Keynote Presentation by Clay Alspach, Leavitt Partners, Washington DC - *Health Care Policy Landscape: Market Trends & Frontline Perspectives*, a lunch presentation by Brock Slabach, Senior Vice-President, National Rural Health Association, and three panel presentations: Telemedicine Panel, Medicare Access & CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) Panel, and a Post Election Discussion with Legislators.

We thank our sponsors for their support of the conference, the speakers and panelists for their willingness to share their knowledge, and all who attended and participated in the day.





2016 Karbeling Award Recipient Todd C. Linden, FACHE



At the Annual Conference, IRHA recognized Mr. Todd Linden as the 2016 recipient of the Jerry Karbeling Award.

Jerry Karbeling was a member of the Iowa Rural Health Association and served on the Board for 5 years. He served as President of the Association in 2002-2003. At the time of his death in 2005, Jerry was the Senior Vice President for Public

Affairs and Corporate Development for the Iowa Pharmacists Association, a practicing community pharmacist, and owner of Big Creek Pharmacy in Polk City. He was a healthcare activist, an adjunct professor, and served on the City Council of Polk City.

The Iowa Rural Health Association seeks to recognize Jerry's legacy and to retain the memory of his contributions. The Jerry Karbeling award is presented annually to an individual who has demonstrated successful activism for improving rural health and a commitment to community service as exemplified by Jerry.

The 2016 recipient, Todd Linden, is president and CEO of Grinnell Regional Medical Center (GRMC), a 49 bed, private non-profit rural hospital in Grinnell, Iowa. He earned his Master of Arts degree in Health Administration and a Bachelor of Arts degree, both from the University of Iowa. He is a fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives.

The following are a few of the comments made in Mr. Linden's nomination materials that point to the clear reason to honor him with this award.

- Todd Linden is a committed, dedicated health care professional who understands the rewards and challenges with rural health today. He is admired by his peers, relied on by those who work for him, and deeply respected by his family and community.
- Since coming to Grinnell in 1994, GRMC has transitioned to a high performing hospital with national recognition for patient care and safety.
- Todd Linden is one of those leaders who believe that an organization's impact must extend beyond its own doors. Todd's commitment to the Grinnell and Poweshiek County community goes far beyond the health care offered at Grinnell Regional Medical Center (GRMC).

In every way Todd Linden upholds the memory and honor of Jerry Karbeling in that he is a visionary, advocate, and leader for Iowa rural health. Iowa is fortunate to have an individual like Todd Linden.

Emerging Public Health Priority: Water Quality

Access to clean water has a major impact on Public Health. For many communities, access to plentiful healthy water has not been a contentious issue, however as demonstrated by recent events, new challenges are quickly emerging as we struggle to find a balance to provide affordable healthy water while respecting the priorities of major economic drivers in our communities. Although some old challenges remain, a growing number of communities are facing new challenges such as the presence of environmental pollutants, nutrient runoff, drought and aquifer depletion, flooding events, extreme weather events associated with climate change, regulatory changes, or failure in water supply infrastructure.

As rural health stakeholders, it is the Iowa Rural Health Association's duty to help bring the issue of water quality into Public Health discussions. Further, Public Health is frequently being called upon provide information and positions on emerging water issues. In the coming months, IRHA will be working to develop a formal position on water quality. In the meantime, we encourage our rural health members and stakeholders to become more educated on the issue.

The Iowa Public Health Association is convening a

workshop, Iowa's Water Quality: A Public Health Perspective, on April 10, 2017. The workshop is targeted towards public and environmental health officials, laboratory professionals, water utilities and water operators, drinking water and water quality advocates, municipalities and legislators - with goal of establishing a foundation for a public health perspective on water quality. The workshop will precede the 2017 Iowa Governor's Conference on Public Health in Des Moines. For more information please visit: <https://www.iowapha.org/event-2392901>

Iowa Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for Rural Health Professionals Course

Agricultural Safety and Health: The Core Course will be held at the University of Iowa June 12-16, 2017. This course has been the national model of effective agricultural safety and health education for a decade, providing a strong foundation in the principles of occupational safety and health in agricultural settings. The course is ideal for safety managers, health care providers, veterinarians, and anyone interested in the specific health and safety needs of rural and agricultural populations. Scholarships are available for Iowa residents and Continuing Medical and Continuing Nursing Education Units are offered. For more information contact Kay Mohling at kay-mohling@uiowa.edu or visit: <http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/education/iowa-ag-med-course/>

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