



Optimal Health for All Iowans



# *Swatches*

## Connecting Rural Iowa

November 2015

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### **President's Message**

Keith J. Mueller, Ph.D.

As we enter the season of giving thanks and counting our blessings, we should pause to realize how successful we have been in maintaining access to high quality services in much of rural Iowa, and how fortunate we are to have advocates and leaders committed to improving health care choices for rural Iowans. I am continuously impressed by the dedication I see among the Iowa Rural Health Association Board members and general membership to forging collaborations and programs needed to help rural healthcare providers and communities navigate the challenging waters of change in health insurance plans and premiums, in new payment policies from Medicare and Medicaid, and the promise of improvements in clinical care.

We should be thankful for the models of the 1970s through 1990s creating options for primary care services in remote rural places. First the Rural Health Clinic program and then the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Critical Access Hospitals) program created payment methodologies in Medicare recognizing the special circumstances of those two provider types. Iowans have points of access that may very well not have been created without the enabling legislation and subsequent regulatory policies that our associations, including the Iowa Rural Health Association and the National Rural Health Association, continue to work hard to maintain and improve. Similarly, the policies and programs sustaining the safety net in the state, which includes Community Health Centers, Free Clinics, Rural Health Clinics and other clinics, are the result of hard work by those providers, their associations (such as the Primary Care Association and the Association of Rural Health Clinics) and others. All of the aforementioned Iowa



Benefits of being an IRHA member:

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

The IRHA membership year runs with the calendar year. Renewal notices will be sent via email in early December. Renewal is easy. Please take a few minutes to renew

healthcare organizations, and the professionals who work in them, are responsible for the success of the policies and programs put in place during the past forty years. They are great stewards of public resources supporting access to care, seeking policies that enable them to succeed, in contrast to asking for "bailouts" to merely stay afloat. Even in these times of great challenges to a fragile infrastructure, health administrators, professionals, and advocates in Iowa are asking for the flexibility and tools to embrace and take full advantage of change in ways that carry on the tradition of securing access to high quality services throughout the state. They need our support through the actions of the Iowa Rural Health Association and other advocates.

There may well be new models on the horizon to supplant the ones developed in the 1970s through 1990s. Senator Grassley has introduced legislation that starts the conversation about one such model, the Rural Emergency Acute Care Hospital Act, an effort to secure emergency medical services in rural communities, connected to other acute care services and integrated with hospital services. Leave it to Iowa to be at the forefront of discussions of how to sustain essential services locally! We are a state with pioneers in new service configurations, new payment models, and new organizational models. As I said in the beginning of this column, we should be grateful and count our blessings.

### **Iowa Medicaid Modernization Initiative**

As things move forward on the Iowa Medicaid Modernization Initiative, the Iowa Rural Health Association invited the four Managed Care Organizations to share a little information about themselves and the transition. The following are the articles submitted by these organizations.

#### **Amerigroup Iowa, Inc**

Amerigroup is part of an organization that is the nation's leading provider of healthcare solutions for state-sponsored programs. Together with our affiliate health plans, we serve more than 5.2 million people in state-sponsored health plans across 20 states. We bring deep organizational expertise and passion for serving individuals with complex needs through a variety of state-sponsored programs. During the last 24 years, Amerigroup's affiliate health plans have implemented more than 100 publicly funded healthcare programs, service area expansions, and program enhancements.

In rural areas, Amerigroup is utilizing telehealth strategies to

when you receive the notice.

**Thank you for your continued support of IRHA!**

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## **Save the Date**

### **Iowa Stroke Conference**

May 19, 2016  
The Longbranch Hotel  
90 Twixt Town Road,  
NE  
Cedar Rapids, IA

Hosted by the  
American Heart  
Association and  
American Stroke  
Association.

[Click here](#) for more information or to register. There is no fee to attend but advanced registration is required.

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**Iowa Rural Health Association**  
515-282-8192  
[www.iaruralhealth.org](http://www.iaruralhealth.org)

reduce the need for some face-to-face specialty visits and to expand access to services, such as psychiatry, that have traditionally had an inadequate supply of providers. For example, in Georgia almost half of the counties do not have psychiatrists, resulting in many Medicaid patients being forced to travel long distances for care or completely forgo the care they need. Understanding the gap in access for many Georgians, Amerigroup collaborated with the Georgia Partnership for Telehealth (GPT) to expand behavioral health access through appointments at one of GPT's "presentation sites," often within 30 miles of a member's home. Responses have been positive and members receiving behavioral health services through telehealth grew more than twelvefold from 2011 - 2014.

Amerigroup Iowa has partnered with rural health centers, hospitals, and public health departments to collaborate on solutions for health care services, such as rotating provider clinics for primary and specialty care. We understand the value local health agencies and community-based organizations have in the delivery of healthcare to the Medicaid population. Federal Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) are essential to providing the medical, behavioral, and other support services needed for more rural populations.

Amerigroup has a wonderful opportunity to serve Iowa residents, and work with providers and community partners to deliver access to high quality care and improve health outcomes. We look forward to serving Iowans soon!

#### **AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa, Inc**

For more than 30 years, AmeriHealth Caritas has specialized in helping individuals who are most in need to access quality health care and services. Our personal, community-based approach to care reaches members where they live, empowering them to make lasting changes that improve their health while reducing strains on the health care system. Everything we do and every decision we make starts with our members in mind.

Many of Iowa's Medicaid members live in rural communities that have significant challenges with access to primary, specialty, emergency and behavioral health care, as well as long-term services and supports. AmeriHealth Caritas will have close communication and engagement with members, providers and advocates to ensure a smooth transition and excellent member experience as well as offering new ways of accessing care. This is what we do best, and this is what we look forward to partnering with you to do in the rural parts of this state.

Our expertise in working with rural populations can be seen

around the country including Iowa's neighbor to the west, Nebraska. Since July 2012, our Nebraska affiliate, Arbor Health Plan, has provided Medicaid managed care and services to residents of 83 rural Nebraska counties.

We are excited to have been selected as one of four managed care organizations to serve the IA Health Link program. We are looking forward to working with our members, their families and caregivers, providers and community organizations to ensure our members get the right care in the right setting at the right time.

Core to our mission is that every person should have access to quality health care and services. We are committed to making lasting improvements in the well-being of the families and communities we serve by ensuring they have access to the care and services they need.

**UnitedHealthcare Plan of the River Valley, Inc.**

UnitedHealthcare's mission is "to help people live healthier lives." We have operated health plans in Iowa since the 1980s, serving a wide range of Iowans, including those who get their coverage through employers, the armed forces and Medicare plans. We have served children in the Iowa hawk-i program since 2000. We are dedicated to promoting health for all Iowans in every stage of their lives.

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Iowa is part of a national organization operating in 24 states. We offer distinctive health care programs tailored to the needs of Medicaid/CHIP beneficiaries, while leveraging a broad array of capabilities to serve our members and our community.

We leverage national experience at the local level. UnitedHealthcare Community & State serves over 5 million Medicaid/CHIP beneficiaries across the nation. In many of our states, we are responsible for integration of behavioral and medical benefits under Medicaid. Our member-centric, field-based care management systems have gotten results.

**WellCare of Iowa, Inc.**

**WellCare: Committed to Improving Access to Quality Care**

By Lauralie Rubel, state president, WellCare of Iowa, Inc.

At WellCare, we manage health care services for people eligible for government-sponsored health care programs, such as Medicaid and Medicare. We use a coordinated care approach designed to ensure all members receive the unique services and supports they need to achieve and maintain the best health outcomes possible.

For some members, staying healthy can be tough. In fact, just getting to the doctor can be hard, and challenges like these are often more intense for people living in rural communities. WellCare works in collaboration with governments and community partners to find innovative ways to fill the gaps in care that exist for members who live in rural settings. For example, in Georgia, we have taken aggressive steps to support three areas: telemedicine in schools, cross-training for emergency management technicians that supports the development of social service skills, and workforce development that encourages primary care physicians to serve rural communities.

There are four areas we are immediately focused on to build networks and to identify supports in rural Iowa. First, we are actively encouraging all qualified providers to join our network. Second, we are determining where people are going for care today to show us the opportunities and gaps. Third, we are becoming familiar with and offering support to existing social service organizations that can fill those gaps, and address needs for things such as food, clothing, shelter and safety. Fourth, we will leverage our transportation benefit to support access.

As a caregiver myself, I understand the importance of accessible health care. I think WellCare of Iowa's greatest opportunity and responsibility is to help Iowans understand who we are as a company and how we truly help our members live better, healthier lives.

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### **IRHA Fall Conference Wrap-up**

On September 10, nearly 100 individuals participated in the IRHA Annual Conference. The theme for this year's conference was Population Health - Growing in Rural Iowa. The day included a keynote presentation from Dr. Keith Mueller, Promising Practices presentations, a student panel, roundtable discussions, and a presentation on telemedicine. The conference also included time for attendees to visit with exhibitors and sponsors and opportunities for informal networking.

The Annual Conference is also the time when IRHA has the opportunity to recognize individuals who are making significant contributions to rural health in Iowa. This year, IRHA recognized Mark Bowden with the Friend of IRHA Award for the work done on the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact. IRHA also presented the Jerry Karbeling Award to TJ Johnsrud, a pharmacist from rural Iowa who has been a champion for rural for many years. Congratulations and thank you!

Thank you also to all who participated in the conference as attendees, presenters, and sponsors.



Mark Bowden accepts the Friend of IRHA Award



Jerry Karbeling Award Recipient - TJ Johnsrud



## Resource for Rural Iowa: Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline

Sexual abuse is an issue that affects all Iowans directly or indirectly. In many rural communities, medical providers may be the closest and most trusted resource that a survivor or their loved ones have access to. This is why having a working knowledge of the Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline is important as a rural medical provider.

The Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline (ISAH) is a 24-7 statewide crisis line for individuals affected by sexual violence. It also provides

afterhours rollover and respite support for Iowa's comprehensive sexual abuse programs. ISAH is an independent program operating within the Rape Victim Advocacy Program (RVAP). RVAP is the oldest rape crisis center in the state and operates out of the Department of Student Life at the University of Iowa.

The ISAH provides free, confidential, and trauma-informed services for all affected by sexual violence. Sexual violence exists on a continuum of experiences and encompasses everything from sexual harassment in the workplace to historical childhood sexual abuse to acute rape. ISAH is a support and resource service for individuals who have experiences that fall anywhere on that continuum. ISAH also provides resources and consultation for professionals working with survivors of sexual violence. ISAH can provide posters, handouts, brochures, and trainings in English and Spanish upon request at no cost.

**Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline**

1-800-284-7821

332 South Linn Street, Suite 100

Iowa City, IA 52240

rvap.org

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**Interstate Medical Licensure Compact - Update**

On July 2, 2015 Iowa joined the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact when Governor Terry Branstad signed the compact bill into law. The compact includes eleven member states including Iowa's neighboring states of South Dakota, Minnesota and Illinois.

In addition, Wisconsin and Nebraska introduced the bill for consideration this legislative session.

The Iowa Board of Medicine recently appointed Mark Bowden and Diane Clark to represent Iowa as its commissioners at the inaugural meeting of the Commission in Chicago in late October. Mark Bowden, who is the Executive Director of the Iowa Board of Medicine, served on the original compact drafting team for the Federation of State Medical Boards.

Proponents of the compact are hopeful the compact will improve access to healthcare, particularly in rural and underserved areas, where there is often a shortage of available providers. The expedited interstate licensure process could be available to interested physicians within the next couple years. IRHA will continue to monitor the Commission's efforts to develop an



expedited interstate medical licensure process and its impact on access to care.



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