

MCRH MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

April 2026

Volume 8, Issue 4

OUR MISSION

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



Michigan Center for Rural Health to Develop Roscommon County Senior Telehealth Hub to Improve Access to Care for Older Adults

MCRH is partnering with the [Roscommon County Commission on Aging](#) to develop a Senior Telehealth Hub that expands access to care for older adults. Supported by funding from the [Michigan Health Endowment Fund](#), the hub will offer welcoming, private telehealth spaces, hands-on technology support, and connections to primary, specialty, and community-based services. By addressing barriers like transportation and digital access, this model strengthens care coordination in a way that is rooted in the community. Lessons learned will help inform future telehealth access points across rural Michigan.



For more information about the Roscommon County Senior Telehealth Hub initiative, please contact | Laura Stoddard, Social Drivers of Health Manager at laura.mispelon@affiliate.msu.edu.

[Learn More](#)



SAVE THE DATE!

2026 Rural Michigan Opioid & Substance Use Summit

Navigating the Next Era of Rural Health

Mark your calendars for **July 16, 2026**, and join us at Treetops Resort for the annual summit hosted by the Northern Michigan Opioid Response Consortium (NMORC), a program of the Michigan Center for Rural Health.

This annual gathering brings together rural partners from across Michigan to address substance use through collaboration, shared learning, and meaningful dialogue. The summit will feature engaging panel discussions, voices of lived experience, and opportunities to explore best practices in prevention, treatment, recovery, and workforce development.

Attendee registration opens in early May. Stay tuned for more details!

Summit Information

Rural Recovery Hero Nomination Opens

The Northern Michigan Opioid Response Consortium is pleased to announce that nominations are now open for the **fourth annual Rural Recovery Hero of the Year Award**.

This award recognizes individuals across rural Michigan who are making a meaningful difference in the lives of those impacted by substance use and opioid use disorder. From grassroots advocates to clinical professionals and community partners, this award highlights those who are working to reduce stigma, expand access to care, and build stronger, more supportive communities.



We invite you to nominate an individual who is creating positive change in your community. Nominations should include examples of their advocacy, efforts to reduce stigma, and leadership in addressing substance use and opioid use disorder in rural Michigan.

Nominations are due by May 29, 2026. The award will be presented at the 2026 Rural Michigan Opioid and Substance Use Summit on July 16 at Treetops Resort in Gaylord.

Questions can be directed to Laura Stoddard at laura.mispelon@affiliate.msu.edu



Strength of Rural Spotlight Series

2026 Food Pantry Grant | BCBSM

April 2026 Edition



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

Across Michigan, partners like Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan are helping strengthen access to healthy food in rural communities. The St. Ignace Food Pantry is one example, serving nearly 800 residents each year and providing essential groceries and hygiene items to individuals and families facing financial hardship.

In a community shaped by seasonal employment, access to consistent, healthy food can be a challenge during off-peak months. With support from the Food Pantry Grant Program, the pantry was able to add refrigeration, expanding its ability to offer fresh, nutrient-rich foods like milk, eggs, produce, and meat. This investment not only increased access to healthier options but also strengthened the pantry's role as a reliable resource for the community.

Building on this impact, a new opportunity is now available. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, United Dairy Industry of Michigan, Blue Cross Complete of Michigan, and the Superior Health Foundation are collaborating to address food and nutrition insecurity by supporting food pantries in expanding access to nutrient-rich, fresh foods.



2026 EMS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

June 15th - 19th, 2026

The EMS Leadership Academy is a 40-hour, in-person program designed to support and strengthen rural EMS leaders at all stages of their careers—whether newly promoted or seasoned in leadership roles. EMS leadership often means being promoted from within, and the transition from road crew to leader can be challenging. This academy is intentionally designed to help participants make that shift by focusing on leadership mindset, healthy organizational culture, and practical application rather than administrative management.

This is not a traditional, lecture-heavy program. The EMS Leadership Academy delivers engaging, interactive content through discussion, breakout groups, real-world scenarios, and facilitated peer learning. Participants will explore what makes EMS organizations thrive, what today's workforce expects from leadership, and how to recruit, retain, and motivate high-performing teams. Emphasis is placed on ethical leadership, effective communication, leading through change, and influencing across all levels of an organization.

The final portion of the academy functions as a facilitated leadership retreat, allowing participants to bring forward their own challenges and topics for collaborative problem-solving. Attendees leave with practical tools they can immediately apply, a clearer understanding of their leadership role, and a strong network of fellow EMS leaders.

MCRH is proud to support this opportunity by covering tuition (a \$1,800 value) and providing meals throughout the week. An application process will be used, with priority given to rural EMS agency leaders. Accepted participants may reserve lodging at Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort at a discounted rate.

[Learn More](#)

2026 Billing & Coding Bootcamp

June 9 – 10, 2026

MICHIGAN CENTER
for
RURAL HEALTH



To strengthen revenue cycle operations, the Michigan Center for Rural Health, with support from the Northern Michigan Opioid Response Consortium, will host the “2026 Documenting, Billing and Coding Bootcamp” at Soaring Eagle Resort in Mt. Pleasant on June 9 and 10, 2026.

Accurate documentation, billing, and coding are critical to the financial stability of Michigan’s Rural Health Clinics, Federally Qualified Health Clinics (FQHC), local public health agencies and Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs). This class is specifically designed for coders, billers, EHR professionals, clinical personnel (MD, DO, NP, PA, RN), facility and financial managers.

What’s Covered:

- Clinical documentation and coding best practices
- Billing compliance and maximizing reimbursement
- Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial payer strategies
- Hands-on practice with essential coding resources

Who Should Attend?

- Coding, billing and revenue cycle staff
- Facility and financial managers
- Quality reporting professionals
- Clinical providers (MD, DO, NP, PA, RN)

The 2025 Bootcamp received great reviews. Participants praised the balance of practical instruction and broad perspective. ***“I loved that it was billing and coding so that each department could see what the other must do. Certainly, it helps bridge some gaps in communication,”*** one attendee noted. Another reflected on the value of peer learning: ***“Networking with other billers working at other facilities is very helpful. Knowing others may struggle with the same complications and denials helps me understand it’s not just our system.”***

Providers also attended the 2025 Bootcamp and found it eye-opening. One shared, ***“This has been amazing and opened my eyes to how my work impacts others down the line. I wish more of this would be taught in the early education and internship phases of my career.”*** Their presence underscored the importance of connecting documentation at the point of care with the downstream processes of coding and billing.

This intensive training will focus on clinical documentation, coding, and billing to ensure compliance, optimize reimbursement, and prepare participants for optional certification.

Registration Fee: \$70 (valued at \$499) CEUs: 11 CEUs approved by ArchProCoding & AAPC

Program Schedule:

June 9 | Day 1: 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm

June 10 | Day 2: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Location: Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort, Mount Pleasant, MI 6800 Soaring Eagle Blvd, Mt Pleasant, MI 48858

[Learn More and Register](#)

CMS Highlights New Expectations for Hospital Nutrition Services



The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently released guidance reinforcing the role of nutrition in patient care, highlighting its direct connection to chronic disease, health outcomes, and overall healthcare costs. Aligned with the [2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), CMS encourages hospitals to prioritize whole, minimally processed foods while reducing ultra-processed items, added sugars, and sugar-sweetened beverages.

The guidance also reinforces existing Conditions of Participation, reminding hospitals to ensure individualized nutrition plans, dietitian oversight, and integration of nutrition services into quality improvement efforts.

[Read the Full Press Memo](#)

Going Pro Spring Application Cycle Now Open!



The Going PRO Talent Fund (Talent Fund) makes awards to employers to assist in training, developing and retaining current and newly hired employees. Training funded by the Talent Fund must be short-term and fill a demonstrated talent need experienced by the employer. Training must lead to a credential for a skill that is transferable and recognized by industry.

This is a great opportunity for healthcare organizations in rural Michigan to invest in their future, along with the future of their employees. In the first FY26 award cycle, Aspire Rural Health System was awarded \$23,500.

Trisha Clark, the Director of Human Resources at Aspire, has this to say about the program:

"The program has also helped us offset training costs and expand opportunities for both new and existing staff. Being able to upskill our workforce, support career growth, and strengthen our pipeline in a rural setting has made a meaningful impact. It's especially helpful in healthcare, where building and retaining a strong, skilled team is so important. We've appreciated how accessible and practical the program is, and the partnership and support throughout the process has been great. We would absolutely encourage other rural health systems to take advantage of it."

The current application cycle closes on April 24th. To learn more about the program, connect with [Kyra](#), or your local [Michigan Works Agency](#).

[More Information](#)

**New Micro-Credential Supports
Regulatory Readiness and Quality
Improvement**



The Joint Commission and the National Association for Healthcare Quality (NAHQ) have launched the Regulatory & Accreditation (R&A) Micro-Credential, a new program designed to help healthcare quality professionals strengthen survey readiness and navigate evolving regulatory requirements.

Combining NAHQ's expertise in healthcare quality competencies with The Joint Commission's leadership in accreditation, the self-paced program provides practical, scenario-based learning that can be immediately applied in healthcare settings. Key focus areas include identifying regulatory standards, managing all phases of the survey process, and developing sustainable corrective action plans.

Developed by subject matter experts, the program features interactive case studies, real-world tools, and five focused modules covering preparation, on-site survey activities, and post-survey improvement. It also offers continuing education credit and flexible learning options.

This micro-credential reflects a shared commitment to advancing patient safety, strengthening workforce capability, and supporting continuous readiness across healthcare organizations.

[Learn More](#)

April 16 is National Healthcare Decisions Day

National Healthcare Decisions Day is a reminder of the importance of advance care planning—ensuring individuals' healthcare preferences are known, documented, and respected. Through MCRH's palliative care programming, we continue to support rural providers and communities with education and resources that strengthen these conversations and improve quality of life across the care continuum. [Learn more about our work in this space and available resources on our palliative care program page.](#)

For those looking to build skills in facilitating these conversations, a [free Advance Care Planning Community Facilitator Training](#) is available through MyMichigan Health in partnership with the Michigan Community Health Worker Alliance (MiCHWA). This training is designed for community health workers, nurses, and social workers, and offers continuing education credits with both in-person and virtual attendance options. Upcoming sessions include May 12, August 11, and November 10 in Midland.

Expand Your Expertise in Quality and Patient Safety with Free Access to IHI Open School



Members of the Michigan Critical Access Hospital Quality Network have a special opportunity to deepen their knowledge of patient safety and quality improvement through the [Institute for Healthcare Improvement \(IHI\) Open School](#).

Through the Michigan Center for Rural Health free spots are available for members to complete a curated series of online learning modules and earn the Basic Certificate in Quality and Safety. These self-paced, interactive courses build foundational skills that strengthen quality improvement work in rural healthcare settings, making them an excellent fit for both new and experienced team members.

MCRH encourages hospital quality leaders to take advantage of this opportunity to stay current with best practices that drive improved outcomes for patients. This program offers practical, applicable tools for day-to-day improvement efforts while also providing nationally recognized certification.

Participants who complete the required modules will earn the IHI Basic Certificate in Quality and Safety, a credential that demonstrates commitment to excellence in patient care.

To learn more or reserve your free spot, contact Amanda St. Martin, Hospital Programs Manager, at amanda.saintmartin@affiliate.msu.edu.

Applications Cycle for Student Loan Repayment Program to Help Expand SUD Treatment Now Open!



As part of continuing efforts to increase access to substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is accepting applications for the Michigan Opioid Treatment Access Loan Repayment Program through Thursday, April 30. This program is open to providers who begin offering or expand opioid addiction treatment programs.

“Michigan has made great strides in reducing overdose deaths through significant investments in prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery services,” said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. “However, SUD workforce shortages can limit access to treatment. Through this program, we have been able to treat an additional 8,000 opioid use disorder clients and provide \$3.7 million in loan repayment assistance to 202 providers.”

Questions? Connect with MCRH Workforce Initiative Manager, [Kyra](#).

[Learn More](#)

Optimizing Resilience with Frontline Strong Together (FST5)

Frontline Strong Together is a statewide initiative committed to the mental well-being of Michigan’s first responders and their families. By providing specialized training and clinical support, FST5 helps current and retired personnel navigate the unique challenges of their profession.



Key Services Include:

- **24/7/365 Crisis Line: Confidential support available any time for you and your family.**
- **Specialized Clinical Care:** Including EMDR, trauma-informed therapy, and substance abuse intervention.
- **Peer Support:** Programs designed by first responders, for first responders.

Important Benefit: There are **no out-of-pocket costs** for mental health clinical services when utilizing Wayne Health providers.

[Learn More](#)

Bridging the Gap: A Scoping Review of Family Caregiver Roles in Rural Health Settings

New resource presents a literature review exploring how unpaid caregivers contribute to rural healthcare systems by filling gaps in the rural healthcare infrastructure. Highlights the various roles that unpaid caregivers play in the

provision of healthcare, such as providing transportation, translating for family members, and telehealth mediation, among other activities.

[Read More](#)

Webinar: Sustaining Rural Labor & Delivery Programs



Monday, May 4 at 3:00 pm Eastern

Rural hospitals face ongoing financial and operational pressures that have contributed to the closure of many Labor & Delivery programs nationwide. This webinar, hosted by the Flex Monitoring Team (FMT) and presented by Stroudwater, will highlight practical strategies to help rural hospitals assess and strengthen the financial sustainability of these services.

Highlighting key insights from the Sustaining Rural Labor & Delivery Programs [brief](#), this session will cover approaches to improving how costs are tracked and reported, understanding the financial performance of Labor and Delivery services, and identifying opportunities to improve efficiency and partnerships. Attendees will gain actionable insights to support informed decision-making and help maintain access to essential maternity care in rural communities.

[Register Today](#)

April is Career Exploration and Awareness Month!



Governor Whitmer has declared April Career Exploration & Awareness Month in order to spotlight the state's growing need for talent and the programs and services in place to support residents in employment, training and educational opportunities available to them - including career pathways in healthcare. The Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) has created the new **Pathways to Healthcare Careers** page on Pathfinder!

Pathways to in-demand healthcare careers in Michigan can be found in nine categories including nursing, radiology, community health and occupational therapy.

Pathways to Healthcare Careers

MBQIP Upcoming Deadlines, Reporting Reminders, and Resources



MBQIP Data Submission Deadlines

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).

Resource Updates for Critical Access Hospitals that reflect the new MBQIP Core Measure Set

[MBQIP Navigator](#)

[MBQIP Information Guide](#)

[Monthly MBQIP Data Submission Deadlines](#)

Data Submission Guides

These guides provide detailed instructions for submitting MBQIP measure data. They include measure details, linked trainings and step-by-step data submission instructions for the measure:

- [Hybrid-Hospital Wide Readmissions Data Submission Guide](#)
- [Safe Use of Opioids-Concurrent Prescribing Data Submission Guide](#)
- [CAH Quality Infrastructure Submission Guide](#)
- [MBQIP Navigator](#)

UPCOMING DEADLINES:

April 30, 2026

Emergency Department Transfer Communication (**EDTC**) Q1 2026 encounters (1/1/26-3/31/26) is due **April 30, 2026**. Connect with Crystal Barter at barthcry@msu.edu for submission process details.

May 15, 2026

Patient Left Without Being Seen (**OP-22**) CY 2025 data is due **May 15, 2026**. Submission is through the HQR via HARP log in. For information on submitting OP-22 including submission verification review the [MBQIP Navigator](#) beginning at page 9.

May 15, 2026

Influenza Vaccination coverage among health care professionals (**HCP/IMM-3**) Q4 2025 - Q1 2026 is due **May 15, 2026**. Submission is through NHSN. Resources and instructions on how hospitals submit HCP influenza data can be found on the [Surveillance for Healthcare Personnel Vaccination webpage](#). For submission questions, specification questions and data confirmation steps review the [HCP Influenza Summary Reporting FAQs](#).

Upcoming MCRH Educational Events

Grand Rounds:

Dietetics Grand Rounds: Reducing Weight Stigma for Children and Families

Speaker: Kate W. Bauer, PhD MS

May 12, 2026, 12- 1 pm EST

CE is available for Nutritionists, Community Health Workers, Nurses, Dietitians, Social Workers, Advanced Practice Providers. Physicians and other professionals may use the certificate to self-claim hours.

[PDF Flyer](#)

[Register](#)

Environmental Health: Climate and Health- Air quality and Asthma

Speaker: Caroline Helsen

May 13, 2026, 12 - 1 p.m. EST

CE is available for Advanced Practice Providers, Community Health Workers, Nurses, Social Workers. Physicians and other professionals may use the certificate to self-claim hours.

[PDF Flyer](#)

[Register](#)

Project ECHO:

Diabetes ECHO:

April 28, 2026, 12-1 pm EST

Speaker: Dr. Kim Pfothenauer, DO

CME available for medical professionals: Physicians, Physician Assistants, APP, DNP, Registered Nurses

[PDF Flyer](#)

Project ECHO

CHW ECHO: Self Care

May 1, 2026, 12-1 pm EST

Speaker: Shannon Lijewski, MBA, CHCEF, NCHW, CEO -Everyday Life Consulting
MiCHWA CHW CEU available

[PDF Flyer](#)

[Register](#)

Diabetes ECHO: Type 1 Diabetes Screening and Staging

May 19, 2026, 12-1 pm EST

Speaker: Dr. Kim Pfothenauer, DO

CME is available for medical professionals: Physicians, Physician Assistants, APP, DNP, Registered Nurses

To register email: renee.calkins@affiliate.msu.edu

Infectious Disease ECHO: Part 2: ABCs of Hepatitis

May 20, 2026, 12-1 pm EST

Speaker: Dr. Peter Gulick, DO

CME is available for medical professionals: Physicians, Physician Assistants, APP, DNP, Registered Nurses

[Register](#)

ADDITIONAL NEWS & RESOURCES:

RURAL EMERGENCY HOSPITALS:

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

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

PALLIATIVE CARE:

[Glossary of Value-Based Care Terms](#)

[A Rural Wisconsin Community Charts a Path for Intergenerational Care](#)

TELEHEALTH:

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

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

[New Resource – Fact Sheet from Center for Connected Health Policy on telehealth related changes under the Proposed 2026 Physician Fee Schedule \(PFS\)](#)

HOSPITAL PROGRAMS:

[The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\) Rural Emergency Hospital Specifications Manual version 3.0](#)

PRIMARY CARE:

[MI RHC Quality Network Collective](#) is a shared online space for staff working in Michigan Certified Rural Health Clinics. It supports connection, learning, and collaboration among RHC professionals across Michigan.

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

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

[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](#)

SOCIAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH:

[Updated Michigan Overdose Data to Action Dashboard](#)

[MiTracking Program: Michigan-specific environmental, health & population data](#)

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER:

[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:

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

VETERANS:

[Sign up for Veterans Health Updates](#)

[Providers and Services Survey](#)

[Sign up for the VA Office of Rural Health \(ORH\) quarterly newsletter](#)

[Fraud Alert for Veterans](#)

[Why the VA's Disability System Is Really Worker's Compensation | Military.com](#)

[Visit Military Exposures](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

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

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

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

[ICYMI: CMS repeals Minimum Staffing Standards for Long-Term Care \(LTC\) Facilities and Medicaid Institutional Payment Transparency Reporting Final Rule that was finalized in April 2024](#)

[2026 Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\) Training Series](#)

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Learn More



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