



MICHIGAN RURAL HEALTH CLINIC MONTHLY BULLETIN

Volume 8 | Issue 3
March 2026

A few words from Jill

March is National Kidney Month, a reminder of the important role rural health clinics play in the early detection and management of chronic kidney disease. [Get resources and more ideas on how to celebrate](#) from the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan.

This month, we are highlighting a success from Kalkaska Medical Associates, two Michigan Certified Rural Health Clinic serving Kalkaska and Antrim Counties. Through participation in Michigan's Rural Health Clinic Quality Network and the Chronic Kidney Disease Learning Collaborative, the clinic implemented an EMR workflow change that expands urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio (UACR) screening following a hypertension diagnosis—supporting earlier detection of kidney disease and now reaching patients across Munson Healthcare's network.



To continue supporting kidney care in rural clinics, we are also proud to uplift the Kidney Series Grand Rounds, organized by the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan and Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine. This six-part educational series beginning April 8 focused on practical strategies to improve CKD screening, diagnosis, and management in clinical practice.

I encourage you to [learn more about the Kalkaska story](#) and consider joining us for the [upcoming Grand Rounds sessions](#).

Thanks,

Jill

APRIL 2026

RHC QN QUARTERLY MEETING

Register Now



Registration is now open for the next MI RHC Quality Network Quarterly Meeting, which will take place Wednesday, April 22, the afternoon before the 29th Annual Michigan Rural Health Conference at Soaring Eagle Casino & Conference Center in Mt. Pleasant. This meeting will be in-person only and will focus on interactive, strategy-driven activities designed to support collaboration among Michigan's Rural Health Clinics.

As part of these ongoing efforts, the Michigan Center for Rural Health recently launched the MI RHC QN Collective, a new hub designed to support connection, learning, and collaboration among Rural Health Clinic professionals across Michigan. A [short informational video](#) is also available to help you learn more. The Collective houses meeting recordings, presentations, and shared resources, while also creating opportunities for clinics to engage in strategy group work and peer learning.

Staff from Michigan-certified Rural Health Clinics—including clinical, administrative, billing, quality, leadership, and IT professionals—are encouraged to join the Collective. Members can access materials from previous quarterly meetings, including a recorded MC3 presentation highlighting free pediatric psychiatry support available to clinics. Clinics interested in participating in the Benchmarking & Operations Strategy Group should also complete the MI RHC Benchmarking Survey.

We encourage clinics to register for the April Quarterly Meeting and sign up for the MI RHC QN Collective to stay connected and engaged in this growing network.

Register

Join the Collective



Registration is open for the 29th Annual Michigan Rural Health Conference, taking place April 23–24, 2026, at Soaring Eagle Casino & Conference Center in Mt. Pleasant.

This year's conference agenda includes a strong Rural Health Clinic breakout track designed to support clinic leaders and staff with practical, relevant information. Sessions will cover topics such as preparing survey-ready medical records, strategies for stronger alignment between Rural Health Clinics and hospitals, and effective billing strategies for Provider Delivered Care Management (PDCM) across Michigan payers.

Additional sessions focused on coding, compliance, and operational strategy provide opportunities for clinic administrators, billing staff, quality leaders, and providers to gain insights that can be applied directly within their clinics.

The conference also features sessions on workforce, population health, cybersecurity, policy updates, and rural health innovation, along with networking opportunities with rural health professionals from across the state.

Register today to join us in Mt. Pleasant for the 29th Annual Michigan Rural Health Conference.

[Register](#)

[More Information](#)

The Michigan State Loan Repayment Program is Now Open!



The 2026 **Michigan State Loan Repayment Program (MSLRP)** application cycle is now open through March 31st. The 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 (**HPSAs**) 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.

Please reach out to our Workforce Initiative Manager, [Kyra](#), with any questions or additional application support.

New PFAS Resources Available for Michigan Healthcare Providers



The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is leading statewide efforts to support healthcare providers responding to patient questions about **per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)**. As communities across Michigan continue to address PFAS contamination concerns, clinicians play an important role in helping patients understand potential health risks and ways to reduce exposure.

PFAS are a group of synthetic chemicals widely used in industrial processes and consumer products. Exposure most commonly occurs through contaminated drinking water or food sources. Research has linked PFAS exposure to several potential health outcomes, including increased cholesterol, reduced immune response to some vaccines, small decreases in birth weight, and certain cancers.

MDHHS encourages providers to share practical steps patients can take to reduce exposure, including learning whether local drinking water is impacted by PFAS, considering certified water filters, following fish and wildlife consumption advisories, and avoiding products that may contain PFAS.

PFAS Resources for Healthcare Providers

Clinical Guidance

- ATSDR PFAS Information for Clinicians (Overview) ([ATSDR's PFAS Information for Clinicians Overview](#).)
- ATSDR PFAS Information for Clinicians – Full Guidance ([ATSDR's PFAS Information for Clinicians - Full Document](#).)

Patient Education Materials

- [PFAS Exposure and Your Health](#).
- [An Introduction to PFAS](#).
- [PFAS Sources and Tips to Reduce Exposure fact sheet](#).
- [How PFAS Enters Your Body fact sheet](#).

Provider Support

For questions about PFAS and health, contact the MDHHS Environmental Health Hotline at 800-648-6942 or visit the MDHHS Website ([Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\)](#)) to learn more. You may also contact the Health Care Provider Engagement Program at MDHHS-PHDetailing@Michigan.gov for more information.

No-cost Psychiatry Consultation & Support from MC3



MC3 is hosting an in-person conference in Gaylord, MI on May 15th for pediatric primary care providers in Northern Michigan and the UP. *It's Rarely "Just Anxiety": Managing the Complexities and Comorbidities of Anxiety Disorders Among Children and Adolescents in Primary Care Settings.*

Register for Conference

Sign up for MC3 to access free psychiatry consultation, education, and resources to support the behavioral and mental health needs of your child, adolescent, pregnant and postpartum patients.

Sign Up for MC3

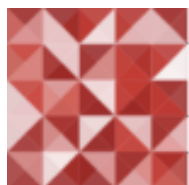
Calling All Michigan Licensed Nurses!

The 2026 Nurse Licensure Survey is now open, and all licensed nurses are encouraged to participate. Survey results play a critical role in shaping efforts to strengthen the recruitment, education and employment of Michigan's nursing workforce.

The survey has been supported by MDHHS since 2004 and provides valuable, statewide workforce data. [Learn more on the MDHHS website](#) or visit the link below to participate in the survey. Please share this survey with your nursing partners. For questions, contact Casey Klein at kleinc7@michigan.gov. This survey is expected to close in mid March so please complete responses as soon as possible.

Take the Survey

Workforce as Strategy: A Practical Guide to Attract and Retain Key Personnel



Gingham

The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) is hosting an upcoming webinar on **Monday, April 13, 2026 at 2:00 pm ET**, focused on practical strategies to help rural health organizations address workforce recruitment and retention challenges.

This session will explore how financial strategies—such as deferred compensation models, self-funded health plans, and housing finance approaches—can support recruitment and long-term retention of clinical and executive staff in rural communities. Presenters from Gingham Solutions, formed by established NOSORH partners Wintergreen, United Professional Benefits, and Ameritas, will share approaches designed specifically for rural providers.

Participants will also learn how to structure long-term incentive packages and align workforce strategies with Rural Hospital Transformation Program priorities to support sustainable staffing and financial stability. Register to attend this webinar and learn practical strategies to strengthen your rural workforce.

[Register](#)

Embracing Quality Improvement as an Organizational Strategy



The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) will host an upcoming webinar on **Tuesday, March 24 from 3:00–4:00 PM ET** focused on positioning quality improvement as a core organizational strategy for rural hospitals.

This session will explore how rural health organizations can integrate quality improvement into leadership decision-making, operational workflows, and strategic planning to improve patient outcomes, strengthen financial performance, and support long-term sustainability. Through practical frameworks and real-world examples, participants will learn strategies for moving beyond one-time initiatives and embedding quality improvement into everyday operations.

The webinar will also highlight practical approaches for engaging staff, providers, and boards in a culture of continuous improvement while building the leadership structures, infrastructure, and measurement strategies needed to sustain meaningful quality work.

Register to attend and learn how quality improvement can support stronger performance, better patient experience, and long-term organizational resilience.

[Register](#)

Funding Opportunity: Microsoft Rural Health Resiliency Program

Rural health organizations across the country have an opportunity to strengthen their cybersecurity and technology infrastructure through the Microsoft Rural Health Resiliency Program. This initiative helps rural hospitals and healthcare facilities access affordable Microsoft security solutions, artificial intelligence tools, and resources to build cybersecurity capacity and protect critical health services.

The program is available nationwide, including U.S. territories, and applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. Rural health organizations interested in improving their digital security and resilience are encouraged to explore the opportunity and learn more about available support.

[More Information](#)

Catalog of Value-Based Initiatives for Rural Providers



Navigating value-based care opportunities can be challenging for rural providers. The Catalog of Value-Based Initiatives for Rural Providers from Rural Health Value offers a helpful overview of rural-relevant value-based programs currently or recently implemented by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, including the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation.

Released in February 2026, the catalog summarizes each initiative and provides direct links to agency resources, making it easier for rural healthcare leaders to explore programs that may be a good fit for their organization. This resource can help clinics better understand federal value-based opportunities and determine where rural participation may be possible.

[View the Catalog](#)

Usual Source of Care for Rural Medicare Fee-for-Service Beneficiaries in 2021

Having a regular place to go for health care—often called a *usual source of care* (USC)—is important because it helps people get timely and consistent medical attention. This brief describes where rural Medicare Fee-for-Service (FFS) beneficiaries received their routine care in 2021 and which groups were most likely to lack a regular care source. It also looks at how access differs across rural areas and regions of the country. Understanding these patterns is important for policymakers working to strengthen rural health care systems and reduce gaps in access.

Key Findings:

A USC is typically defined as a health care provider or facility that patients visit for consistent and ongoing primary care. This study found:

- Overall, 89.1 percent of rural Medicare FFS beneficiaries had a USC, 10.9 percent did not. Most beneficiaries used private provider offices as their USC, followed by Rural Health Clinics (RHCs), Federally Qualified Health Centers, Prospective Payment System hospitals, and Critical Access Hospitals.
- Beneficiaries more likely to lack a USC included males and those under age 65 who qualify based on disability.
- Beneficiaries using private provider offices were predominantly from large rural areas, while RHC use grew with increasing rurality.
- Regional patterns varied: the South had the highest use of private provider offices; the Midwest had the greatest reliance on RHCs; and the West had the highest percentage without a USC.

Keep Reading

Bridging Aging and Disability: Strategies for Aging Well



American
Society
on Aging

This engaging session explores how adults with intellectual-developmental disabilities (IDD), and physical disabilities (PD) can age well. We'll examine age-related health needs, social and environmental factors, and practical strategies to support this population. Learn how to reduce health disparities, promote wellness, and implement effective services and interventions. Discover innovative policies and practices that connect the fields of aging and disability—creating a stronger framework for healthy aging.

Wednesday, April 8, 2026 1:00 PM

Why Disaggregated Data Matters for Rural Health Clinics



Rural populations are often treated as a single analytic group in public health datasets and reports. However, this broad classification can mask important differences within rural communities. Disaggregating rural data helps uncover subgroup-specific patterns in disease burden, health behaviors, social determinants of health, and access to care—insights that are essential for designing effective public health programs, allocating resources efficiently, and tracking progress over time.

Rural communities across the United States are diverse and multidimensional. When rural populations are treated as a homogeneous group, important differences in health outcomes, risk factors, and access to care may be overlooked. Disaggregated data can help:

- **Reveal disparities** by race/ethnicity, age, geography, income, sex, and other factors.
- **Support results-driven public health efforts** prioritized by the CDC's Office of Rural Health.
- **Improve targeting of interventions** for underserved or higher-risk populations.
- **Guide resource allocation** so support reaches the communities that need it most.

[Keep Reading](#)

Value-Based Payments Are Catching On, but Rural and Small Practices Lag

A new report from Commonwealth Fund, *Value-Based Payments Are Catching On, but Rural and Small Practices Lag*, examines current trends in primary care physician participation in value-based payment models.

The analysis includes 2025 data on the percentage of primary care physicians in rural and small practices reporting revenue from value-based payment arrangements. The report also explores barriers that may limit participation and outlines potential strategies to help rural providers engage more fully in value-based care models.

Keep Reading

Common Cancers in Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Counties

The Common Cancers in Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Counties provides valuable insight into cancer incidence and mortality patterns across rural and urban communities. Using data from U.S. Cancer Statistics, the resource compares outcomes by metropolitan and non-metropolitan residence.

The report highlights trends for several of the most common cancers—including lung and bronchus, colon and rectum, female breast, and prostate cancer—helping rural healthcare providers better understand differences in cancer burden across communities. These insights can support data-informed planning for prevention, screening, and patient care in rural settings.

Keep Reading



Share the RHC Newsletter

This newsletter is designed for Rural Health Clinics in mind, but we know the value doesn't stop at your inbox.

If you find these updates helpful, consider forwarding the newsletter to others on your team or in your network who work in or support Rural Health Clinics. Whether it's a provider in your primary care clinic, a biller or coder managing RHC claims, or a colleague interested in rural health - sharing is a simple way to strengthen connections and keep everyone informed.

Know someone who should be added to the list? They can [subscribe here](#) or reach out to us directly.

Additional Resources

Here are some topics impacting the RHC Community in Michigan this month.

Funding Opportunities

- [National Main Street Center](#)
- [AHRQ Small Research Projects to Advance the Science of Primary Care \(R01 and R03\)](#)

Resources:

- [Personal Protective Equipment for Influenza A \(H5N1\) in High-Risk Farm Settings: Proceedings of a Workshop](#)
- [Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Database: April Update](#)

Stay updated by visiting the Michigan Center for Rural Health's website and following us on social media.

Learn More



Michigan Center For Rural Health | 909 Wilson Road B-218 W Fee Hall | East Lansing, MI 48824 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!