MCRH MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

November 20, 2025
Volume 6, Issue 11

National Rural Health Day
Celebrating the **Power of Rural!** ®

Celebrating National Rural Health Day!

Today, November 20, we join partners across the country in celebrating **National Rural Health Day** and the people and places that continue to move the Power of Rural forward. This day is dedicated to honoring the vital contributions of rural healthcare teams, community organizations, and the many individuals who work every day to strengthen health and well-being across rural America.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to the State of Michigan and Governor Gretchen Whitmer for issuing this year's **Rural Health Day Proclamation**, recognizing the resilience, innovation, and essential role of rural communities and providers across our state.

To mark the occasion, the MCRH staff are spending the day out in communities across the state - visiting clinics, hospitals, and local partners. These visits are a great opportunity to listen, learn, and celebrate the resilience and innovation found throughout rural Michigan. By connecting directly with the organizations we serve, we aim to uplift local stories, recognize the dedication of our rural health workforce, and reinforce the shared mission that brings us together.

Thank you for all you do to support the health of Michigan's rural communities. Your work is the heart of this celebration.
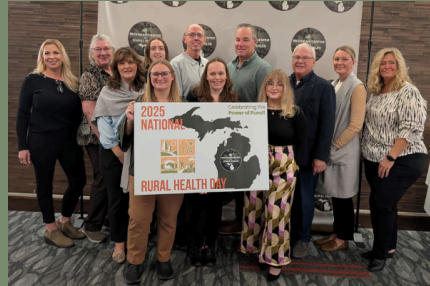
2025 Michigan Community Star

Kari Granz, BBA
Program and Communication Specialist
Thumb Community Health Partnership
Ubly, Michigan

Read the Full Story

See more MCRH team travel for National Rural Health Day and share the **#PowerofRural** on Facebook and LinkedIn.

To learn more about NRHD and explore additional resources, visit the **MCRH website**

Pictured is Elise Bur, Director, **NMU Center for Rural Health**, Professor Kel Sassi and NMU English Education Students that graded more than 50 essay submissions!

Essay Contest Highlight

In partnership with the Northern Michigan University Center for Rural Health, the annual **National Rural Health Day Essay Contest** invites Upper Peninsula high school seniors interested in healthcare careers to share their perspectives on rural health.

We're grateful for this collaboration and look forward to celebrating the winning writers. Check our social media channels and website to see this year's winners once announced.

Call for Presentations

29th Annual Michigan Rural Health Conference

Navigating the Next Era of Rural Health

MCRH is now accepting presentation proposals for the 29th Annual Michigan Rural Health Conference, returning April 23–24, 2026, at the Soaring Eagle Resort in Mt. Pleasant. Topics include workforce development and telehealth integration; Rural Health Clinic quality, access, and sustainability; and population health priorities such as social drivers of health, behavioral and mental health, and innovative models of rural care. A full list of details can be found on our website.

Save the Date

Call for Presentations

Michigan Releases Application for the Rural Health Transformation Program

The Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) has published the **state's application materials for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP**). MCRH encourages rural providers to review the released materials and subscribe to the state's listserv to stay informed about future announcements, including any Requests for Proposals (RFPs) related to this funding opportunity. The RHTP is a federally-authorized funding initiative created under H.R. 1 (Public Law 119-21) that sets aside approximately $50 billion over five fiscal years (FY 2026 through FY 2030) to support rural health care delivery. The program is structured so that states submit a one-time application outlining how they will use funds to transform rural health care ecosystems — focusing on access, sustainability, workforce, innovation, and technology.

Michigan's submission includes a "**Project Narrative"** and a **summary document** that outline the state's vision for rural health transformation and the proposed use of the RHTP funding. Key highlights of the Michigan application include funding priorities listed as:

- Supporting the development and strengthening of regional partnerships among rural hospitals, clinics, and community organizations to improve

care coordination, align service delivery, expand access points, and promote financially sustainable care models.

- Recruiting and retaining rural health professional, behavioral health providers, and community health workers. Funds will also promote prevention and chronic disease management training and integrated behavioral health care access.
- Implementing technology tools and advancing rural interoperability, including a rural technology catalyst fund to support expanding data exchange, and increasing adoption of telehealth, remote patient monitoring, and technology-driven care coordination tools.
- Establishing digital referral networks that connect residents to local care, prevention, and wellness resources needed to live healthy lives.

It is important to note that the application remains subject to federal review and final award decisions by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

The release of Michigan's RHTP application materials provides an opportunity for rural providers and health systems to align with the state's proposed strategies and prepare for upcoming funding rounds. MCRH encourages rural organizations to use this time to assess their readiness in relation to the program's funding priorities, as the state's plan anticipates forthcoming sub-award opportunities for rural health clinics, hospitals, community-based organizations, and other partners.

The Michigan Center for Rural Health is actively developing a technical assistance plan to support rural providers statewide in preparing strong applications and positioning themselves for success in the next phase of the Rural Health Transformation Program.

Invitation to Participate in a Rural Hypertension Care Improvement Project

We are pleased to invite you and your clinic to participate in a new and important project. The Michigan Center for Rural Health, in collaboration with iMPROve Health, is applying for a **Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)** implementation opportunity. This project aims to enhance care for rural adults with uncontrolled hypertension through evidence-based, team-based care strategies in Michigan.

This project, **Enhancing Care for Rural Adults with Uncontrolled Hypertension through Team-Based Care**, builds on a successful PCORI-funded research study. That study compared clinic-based and telehealth-based blood pressure monitoring visits and found both approaches to be effective.

PCORI is supporting the broader implementation of these strategies through new grant funding.
View the orientation packet that outlines the project details.

Benefits of Participation Include:
- $2,500 in compensation cost
- Self-Measured Blood Pressure (SMBP) training
- Technical assistance and troubleshooting support
- Process improvement support, which includes a dedicated ECHO series focused on the selected care strategies.
- Promotional materials to raise awareness and boost patient enrollment
- Sustainability planning to help maintain program success

For inquiries and participation requirements, please contact Jill Oesterle @ **oester35@msu.edu**

Orientation Package Information

Michigan Rural Population Health Network Meets in Traverse City, MI

On November 5, 2025, representatives from 33 out of Michigan's 35 Critical Access Hospitals gathered in Traverse City for the first Michigan Rural Population Health Network's in-person meeting. The session highlighted innovative approaches to improving rural population health.
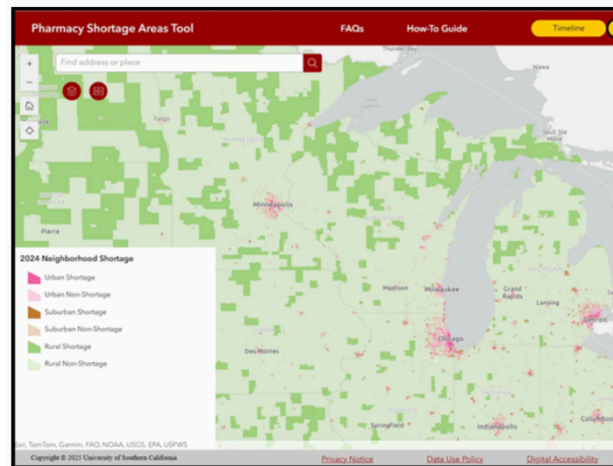
A featured panel discussion showcased how hospitals are advancing population health through community partnerships, data integration, and equity-focused strategies. Panelists shared real-world examples of how collaboration across healthcare, public health, and community organizations can address barriers such as access, workforce shortages, and sustainability.

Key themes of this event emphasized the importance of local engagement, shared resources, and sustainable funding models to strengthen population health across Michigan's rural communities.

The next Network meeting will be held virtually in Winter 2026, focusing on peer sharing and key themes to support continued progress.

For more information reach out to Amanda St. Martin, Hospital Programs Manager @ **amanda.saintmartin@affiliate.msu.edu**

New Tool to Identify Pharmacy Shortage Areas Across America

The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), in collaboration with the University of Southern California (USC), today unveiled an interactive, user-friendly pharmacy shortage area mapping tool available to the general public for the first time.

The mapping tool reveals that approximately one in eight U.S. neighborhoods - representing millions of Americans - persistently lack convenient access to pharmacy services. In rural areas and underserved urban communities, the problem is far more severe, with some states and counties experiencing shortage rates approaching 50 percent.
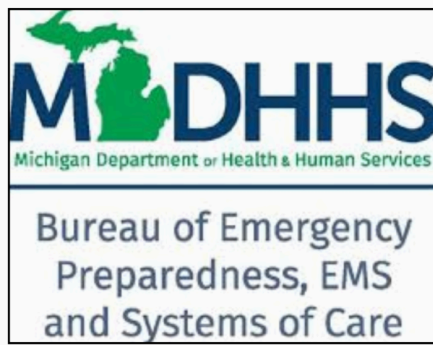
The tool defines pharmacy shortage areas based on travel distance to the nearest pharmacy as defined below:

- More than 10 miles in rural areas
- More than 2 miles in suburban areas
- More than 1 mile in urban areas
- More than half a mile in low-income neighborhoods with low vehicle ownership

To access the tool, you'll need to sign up for an account.

Learn More

EMS Continuing Education Opportunities

New and upcoming webinars, provided by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Division of EMS and Systems of Care, Bureau of Emergency Preparedness, are scheduled for EMS Continuing Education Credits available at no cost. Interested attendees may register using the course numbers listed in the **eLicensing Portal**. Registration closes at 10:00 a.m. on the day of the webinar, and a Teams meeting link will be emailed to those registered at that time.

For additional information on continuing or specialty education, please contact Anthony Pantaleo, CE & Specialty Education Coordinator, at **pantaleoa@michigan.gov**

Schedule and More Information

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.

Introducing Quality Improvement Basics: Bite-Sized Learning

The Michigan Center for Rural Health is pleased to share a new educational resource from Telligen's RQITA Resource Center - **Bite Sized Learning: Quality Improvement Basics**.

This series of short, focused videos is designed to strengthen skills for healthcare quality improvement professionals. Each video offers practical tools, valuable insights, and proven strategies to support continuous improvement. Whether you're new to quality improvement or looking to sharpen your expertise, these bite-sized lessons are perfect for fitting learning into a busy schedule.

Watch all 10 videos in the series:
Introduction to Quality Improvement
Building a Quality Improvement Team
Team Roles and Responsibilities
The 5 Ws of Effective Team Communication
Setting SMART Goals
Leveraging Process Mapping
Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle
Root Cause Analysis and the 5 Whys
The Fishbone Diagram
A Plan for Sustaining Change

These videos are especially helpful for Critical Access Hospital Quality staff seeking to strengthen their quality improvement programs.

New CE course: Strengthen Team-Based Care for Better Eye Health

Diabetes-related eye disease requires more than just treatment, it requires coordinated care. The American Diabetes Association is offering a new free CE course, Collaborative Care: Enhancing Communication Between Eye Specialists, Primary Care, and Endocrinology. This program helps health care professionals work together to close communication gaps, streamline referrals, and improve outcomes for people living with diabetes.

In this one-module course, you'll learn how to:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities across the care team
- Incorporate diabetes metrics like A1C and time in range into eye health care plans
- Create effective, bidirectional referral and feedback systems
- Identify and resolve communication breakdowns to improve coordination

Earn 1 free CE credit while gaining actionable strategies to support timely, informed, team-based care.

Register Today

Calling All Rural and Tribal Health Practices: Apply for the AAP Rural-Health Community of Practice

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is recruiting pediatric clinicians practicing in rural and/or Tribal communities to participate in a virtual Rural-health Community of Practice (COP) focusing on practical strategies for improving care for children living with birth defects and infant disorders (BDID)

and their families. The COP will include four bi-monthly educational sessions emphasizing peer-to-peer learning. Through collaboration and shared expertise, pediatric clinicians in rural areas will strengthen their capacity to deliver high-quality care for infants and children with BDID. As much as possible, the project will highlight congenital syphilis and congenital cytomegalovirus.

Participants will be eligible for continuing education credits. **View the informational flyer** for more details and for session topics and dates.

Individual clinicians or health teams from rural and/or Tribal practices are welcome to participate. When possible, we encourage participation of multidisciplinary teams that may include pediatricians, family medicine providers, pediatric subspecialists, nurses, social workers, and other physician and non-physician clinicians. Those interested in participating should **complete the application** by **Friday, December 15, 2025.**

You can contact Jennifer Gorlewski (**jgorlewski@aap.org**) for additional information about this opportunity.

Upcoming Kidney Series Grand Rounds: Chronic Disease Self-Management

Our partners at the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan invite providers to Session 4 of the 2025 Kidney Series Grand Rounds, taking place virtually on **Wednesday, December 3 from 12:15–1:15 PM EST**. This session offers **1.0 contact hour** for physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.

The session will focus on clinical testing and the early detection of kidney disease, including the role of **uACR as a critical marker in cardiorenal risk management.** Registration details, learning objectives, and additional information can be found in the flyer linked in this section.

Providers can also explore NKFM's Healthcare Professionals page for related **clinical resources and education opportunities** ahead of the December session.

More Information

Thriving in the AI Era: Rural Healthcare Leaders Share Real-World Results

Rural hospitals are increasingly turning to AI to ease documentation burdens, improve discharge planning, and support reimbursement accuracy.

On **Wednesday, December 10 from 3:00–4:00 PM EST**, leaders from Cascade Medical (WA) and Ohio County Healthcare (KY) will share how their teams have evaluated and implemented AI tools that fit rural capacity and resources.

Participants will learn:

- Practical strategies for using AI to streamline documentation and workflows
- How rural hospitals are selecting AI tools based on size, staffing, and operational needs
- Real outcomes related to efficiency, reimbursement, and clinician well-being
- Next steps for integrating AI into existing processes to support sustainable operations

This interactive session is designed for rural healthcare teams looking to reduce burnout and enhance patient care through thoughtful use of AI.

Register Now

Establishing Resident Experiences in Medically Underserved Areas: New Site Perspective

Establishing Resident Experiences in Medically Underserved Areas: New Site Perspective

ACGME Webinar

Is recruiting physicians important to your organization? Are you interested in learning about opportunities to educate and train resident physicians as a successful physician recruitment strategy? Join the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) for a webinar on Tuesday, December 2 at 1:00 pm EST.

Learn more about:
- The benefits of becoming a rotation site for residents
- Accreditation, reimbursement, and other considerations
- Practical tips, resources, and steps for getting started

1.25 CME credit hours will be available for this activity. Email **mua@acgme.org** with questions.

Register

Alcohol Misuse Among Women in Rural America

Rural Mental Health *Connections*
Webinar Series
Presented by Rural Minds and The National Grange

Rural Minds is hosting a one-hour webinar on **December 4 at 4:00 PM EST** focused on alcohol misuse among women living in rural communities. The session will explore the unique challenges rural women face, including stigma, limited access to treatment, and increased vulnerability during the holiday season.

The webinar will feature lived experience shared by Heather Majewski and insights from Dr. Pravesh Sharma of the Mayo Clinic, who leads a PCORI-funded project on improving patient-centered research with women who misuse alcohol. The session will include a moderated Q&A and will protect attendee confidentiality - only presenters will appear on screen.

Register Today

Connected and Protected: The Power of Rural Cybersecurity

Join NOSORH on National Rural Health Day (NRHD) at 2:00 pm EST for the **2025 NRHD Main Event!**

Experts from the Center for Long-Term Cybersecurity, Google, Dakota State University, and Madison Regional Health System will share real-world stories of collaboration, innovation, and strategies for building resilience against evolving cyber threats in rural communities.

Panelists:
- Ann Cleaveland, Center for Long-Term Cybersecurity (UC Berkeley)
- Josh Entringer, Madison Regional Health System
- Sarah Morales, Office of the CISO, Google Cloud
- Ashley Podhradsky, D.Sc., Dakota State University

Register Now

Major Gaps in Awareness of Palliative and Hospice Care Among Older Adults

A new national and Michigan-specific poll from the University of Michigan reveals that most older adults know little or nothing about palliative care—yet interest rises sharply once the term is explained. Only 36% of adults ages 50+ nationally, and 33% in Michigan, reported any awareness of palliative care. After learning what it is, nearly 80% of older Michiganders said they would be interested in receiving it if facing a serious illness.

The poll also highlights gaps in awareness of hospice care and identifies significant disparities across racial and ethnic groups. These findings have important implications for rural communities, where access to services can be limited and where clear, early conversations about care options may help patients and families navigate serious illness with greater confidence.

For those working to expand or strengthen rural palliative care efforts in Michigan, the poll reinforces a key message: education matters. When people understand what palliative care is—and what it is not—they are far more open to using it.

Read the full article to explore the findings and recommended strategies for improving awareness.

Read the Full Story

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
- Updated to remove the SD0H-1 and SDOH-2 measures

 MBQIP Information Guide
- Updated to remove the SDOH-1 and SDOH-2 measures as well as outdated MBQIP 2025 language

Monthly MBQIP Data Submission Deadlines
- Updated monthly with MBQIP data submission deadlines. The SDOH-1 and SDOH-2 measures have been removed from this resource.

MBQIP Measure List (updated 9/1/2025)
- This shows the MBQIP Core Measure Set and Additional Measures. This table was updated to remove the SDOH-1 and SDOH-2 measures per the 8/7/2025 email from FORHP titled "MBQIP Measures Update for SDOH 1 and SDOH 2".
- The table has also been updated to remove language on MBQIP 2025 launch date and MBQIP 2025 rollout. As of September 1, 2025, we will simply be referring to the core measure set as the MBQIP Core Measure Set and no longer MBQIP 2025 due to the official launch of the measures beginning with September 1, 2025.
- Within the table we also updated the categories under the HCAHPS measure. The HCAHPS composite measures and categories were changed within HCAHPS January 1, 2025. These new categories will be reflected in the MBQIP reports next year.

UPCOMING DEADLINES:
November 2025 Upcoming MBQIP Deadlines

November 3, 2025
Reporting Median time from ED arrival to ED departure (OP-18) Q2 2025 encounters (4/1/2025-6/30/2025) is due November 3, 2025. Submission is through the HQR Secure Portal-Outpatient Chart Abstracted. Previous CART users may enter abstractions into the HQR abstraction tool. **Outpatient Quality Reporting Specifications version 18.0a**

November 21, 2025
Critical Access Hospital Quality Inventory and Assessment is due November 21, 2025. Reach out to your **State Flex Program** for details.

January 14, 2026
Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) Q3 2025 encounters (7/1/25-9/30/25) is due January 14, 2026. Submission is through the HQR Secure Portal-Vendor. **Quality Assurance Guidelines V.19.0**

February 2, 2026
Emergency Department Transfer Communication (EDTC) Q4 2025 encounters (10/1/25-12/31/25) are due February 2, 2026. Connect with Crystal Barter @ **barthcry@msu.edu** for submission process details.

Rural Firefighters Delivering Agriculture Safety and Health | Free Online Course

Farm-related emergencies bring unique challenges for rural EMS, from equipment entrapments to remote-access rescues. The Rural Firefighters Delivering Agriculture Safety and Health (RF-DASH) Online Course is a free training from the National Farm Medicine Center. Suited for rural first responders, this course covers agricultural health and safety topics for injury prevention and emergency preparedness through 34 lessons across 6 online modules.

Learn More & Register

Michigan CAH Leaders Gather for Successful Annual Conference

Earlier this month, Critical Access Hospital leaders from across the state gathered in Traverse City for the 2025 Michigan CAH Conference. Attended by representatives from all 35 of Michigan's Critical Access Hospitals and featuring over 120 participants and 17 speakers, the event spotlighted collaboration, innovation and the future sustainability of rural hospitals.

Over two days, attendees joined interactive forums - including CEO, CFO and quality-network sessions, and heard from national and state experts, and explored new technologies and partnerships.

Ready to carry the momentum forward, we extend sincere thanks to all attendees, exhibitors, speakers and sponsors who helped make this year's conference a success.

Keep Reading

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:
Access to Outpatient Palliative Care: Insights from Michigan

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)

Reminder – Telehealth Resources (telehealth basics, telehealth coverage, payment parity, state specific resources) from the Upper Midwest Telehealth Resource Center

HOSPITAL PROGRAMS:
Michigan Value Collaboration Rural Health Workgroup July Meeting

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

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:

Updated Michigan Overdose Data to Action Dashboard

HHS Launches New "Food as Medicine" Resources

The U.S. Playbook to Address Social Determinants of Health

MiTracking Program: Michigan-specific environmental, health & population data

Geographic and Demographic Correlates of Living in Manufactured Homes: Implications for 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:

Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program for Paraprofessionals

Statewide Investment Helps Youth Explore Future Careers In Michigan

Mental Health in the Rural Workplace

Navigating Workplace Violence: Safety Strategies for Managing Agitation and Aggression

VETERANS:

VA Makes it Easier for Veterans to Use Community Care

Sign up for Veterans Health Updates

Things Every Veteran Can Do to Prepare for VA's New Electronic Health Record System

Sign up for the VA Office of Rural Health (ORH) quarterly newsletter

Veteran with parkinsons: Telehealth saved my life - VA News

How to get reimbursed for your VA-related travel - VA News

Survey Report: findings from a statewide survey conducted as part of the I-REACH Rural Veterans program

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

New Map Shows Rural Emergency Hospitals

Utilization of Community Health Workers for Emergency Preparedness and Response (On Demand-No CE)

RubinBrown

HALL RENDER
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