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Rural Health Clinics Increase Access to COVID-19 Testing

Nathan Baugh:

0:05

Good afternoon, everyone, or good morning to those of you on the West Coast.

0:10

I want to thank you all for participating in today's webinar.

0:13

My name is Nathan Baugh, the Director of Government Relations for the National Association of Rural Health Clinics, and I'm the moderator for today's call.

0:24

Today's topic is Rural Health Clinics: Increasing: Increase Access to COVID 19 testing.

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And this series is sponsored by HRSA Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

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It's done in conjunction with the National Association of Rural Health Clinics.

0:42

We are supported by a co-operative agreement, as you can see on your screen, or was just on your screen a moment ago.

0:50

And through the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, that allows us to bring you these webinars free of charge.

0:56

Purpose of the series is to provide RHC staff with valuable Technical Assistance, an RHC specific information as it pertains to COVID 19 testing.

1:06

And the funds' RHCs received for testing.

1:10

Please help us spread the word about these free webinars by encouraging anyone who may benefit from this information to sign up to receive announcements regarding dates, topics, and speakers at either the RHI hub website or the NARHC website.

1:24

When we get to the Q&A portion of today's presentation, we'll open a question box that will allow participants to ask questions.

1:33

As with all webinars, we are at the mercy of good bandwidth for all parties and we all know that connectivity can go up and down.

1:43

So, if you have any audio or visual freezes, we suggest refreshing the page, and usually that fixes the issue. If you continue to have issues, don't worry because a recording of today's presentation will be posted on both the RHI Hub website as well as the NARHC website with links to the slides, slides, and transcripts.

2:04

With that, I have the pleasure of introducing our first speaker, Tom Morris.

2:08

Tom Morris serves as the Associate Administrator for the Rural Health Policy for Rural Health Policy in the Health Resources and Services Administration, or HRSA of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

2:22

In that role, Tom oversees the work of the Office of Rural Health Policy, which is charged with advising the Secretary on rural health issues.

2:31

The office, which has an annual budget of \$317 million, administers a range of research and capacity building grant programs that serve rural communities such as this one.

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In 2015 Tom received the Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Service.

2:49

A North Carolina native, Tom came into government as a Presidential Management Intern and has work experience in the US Senate, as well as various policy and program positions within HRSA and HHS.

Tom Morris:

3:04

Thanks so much for that. I really appreciate the opportunity to be part of today's webinar. I'm really thrilled that we're going to be able to highlight the important work underway within the rural health clinic community to expand COVID testing in response to the pandemic. And this is really unique on a couple of levels, and I think Bill Finerfrock will pick up on this later, I suspect, But we've known for years that the rural health clinics are a critical part of the healthcare safety net. And we always try to be on the lookout for them in our policy and our program work here at Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

3:37

When Congress decided to dramatically expand testing earlier this year to the Paycheck Protection Act, we knew this going to be particularly important for rural communities. At that point, it had not hit rural communities, but we knew it was going to. And, if you've looked at the

data for the last few days, you see that it really has. And so, as expected, the bill included funding to expand testing and community health centers. And that was important because one in five rural residents gets their health care from a community health center.

4:04

But they're not in every community. And so, we were just thrilled to see a direct appropriation to rural health clinics, to help them be a part of this.

4:12

In fact, you know, by my reckoning, it's the first time that Congress has appropriated funds specifically to rural health clinics as a group and that's remarkable when you consider that a program whereas the authorization for RHCS was passed in 1977.

4:29

So, really, we, we find ourselves at a very unique time. This is a historic recognition.

4:34

I think at the importance of RHCS and delivering positive health care results for rural communities and particularly during a public health emergency like we're facing with this pandemic.

4:45

So because of the passage of that legislation, our office received \$225 million to support the more than 4500 rural health clinics that are spread across the 45 states for COVID testing and related expenses. and so as part of this, we also funded technical assistance program. And that's been led by our partners, who are on the call today. The National Organization, National Association of Rural Health Clinics. And the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health. And these are longstanding partners for us. But we're so thrilled that we're able to work with them on this initiative. So, we're really happy to be able to organize the session today to have ... to talk to you about the crucial work they're doing to support rural health clinics in the fight against COVID. But you're also going to hear from Lindsey Niendstedt, the FORHP Program coordinator for the RHC testing efforts.

5:40

And so, the National Association of Rural Health Clinics, they're leading this TA response to support the RHC recipients who are getting this funding. And they're well positioned for this because they've been the voice for rural health clinics for many, many years. And so, they know this community well. And then they have a lot of respect in the community, so they were well positioned to do this. At the same time, the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health has been the, or group that represents all the State Offices of rural health around the country. And they have a tremendous amount of experience working with state Offices of Rural Health, but also with a lot of rural communities. And a lot of the state offices of rural health had long been focused on doing what they can to support rural health clinics. So, when the funding became available, it made perfect sense that there might be a natural partnership here. And that's exactly what happened. They work hand in glove and standing up a really large-scale program in an amazingly short period of time.

6:43

They're doing this in a variety of ways. They're doing webinars, they're having consultations with stakeholders, I mean, the rural health clinics. And then they've also created an RHC COVID 19 testing data website, so that we can begin gathering that data about what's happening in this testing. So, we can quantify that and make sure that we're able to pass that along that information back along to the Congress and to the Administration. And so, just a fantastic opportunity, I think here to really lift up RHCS and provide them with some resources to really ramp up the testing. We know that that's going to be critical as we move forward to getting control in the pandemic. And so, thank you again for the chance to kick this off. But I want to turn it over to Lindsey. There's going to provide an overview of the program, and then she'll set up the other presentations by Bill Finerfrock. So, thanks again for the opportunity to be with you.

Lindsey Nienstedt:

7:40

Much time, I couldn't agree with you more.

7:43

My name is Lindsey Said and Public Health Analyst at the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. And as Tom mentioned, the program officer for the Rural Health Clinic Technical Assistance co-operative Agreement. I'm also the program officer for the Rural Health Clinic.

7:58

COVID 19 tech, testing program, technical assistance, co-operative agreement, which is what we're talking about today primarily.

8:06

Um, so Tom mentioned quite a bit in this next slide.

8:15

You want to go to the next slide, Bill.

8:18

And so, just briefly, I want to go over some of the RHC COVID 19 test testing program background.

8:25

So, 225 million was awarded via the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act to support over 4500 rural health clinics for Coburn 19 testing and related expenses.

8:38

As Tom just mentioned, and this added up to approximately \$49,000 per RHC Clinic as identified by the CMS Certification Number, otherwise known as a CCN.

8:50

And the identified RHCS. CCN is using CMS data as of May 20th of this year.

8:58

If an organization with multiple RHC had multiple RHCS and then the organization would have received a higher amount of funding proportional to the number of clinic sites in the organization. Otherwise, you can incorporate that. It's like 49,000 times the number of clinic sites.

9:17

And this funding was allocated through the Provider Relief Fund Mechanism, meaning the funding went directly into the accounts, as opposed to a grant application process.

9:29

So, for this program, there was no grant process.

9:33

I would also note that the funds went out at the Tax Identification number level.

9:41

So, for an RHC that is a provider based through a Critical Access Hospital, the funds likely went to the hospital in that case.

9:49

Next slide.

9:51

This slide provides a screenshot of our website, where you can find a seat by state by breakdown of funds offered under the program.

9:59

You can also see the number of RHC sites that received program funding in each state.

10:06

Next slide.

10:08

HRSA has an additional webpage where you can find information on the program and FAQs ranging from basic facts to more detailed scenarios and examples to help RHCS interpret the terms and conditions of the program.

10:22

We also have a webpage where you can access the terms and conditions.

10:26

All RHCS who accepted the funds must abide by those terms and conditions.

10:32

Next slide.

10:34

On that note, I also want to just kind of highlight what what Tom has already highlighted, which is the Technical Assistance Program for the RFC ... Testing Program Funds.

10:45

It's led by the National Association of Rural Health Clinics.

10:50

And they are leading the national response, and they partnered up with the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health to be that key partner.

10:59

Next slide.

11:01

Under this program, no soar is providing resources to participating RHCS, including individualized strategy, to build collaborations.

11:11

Resources to develop and implement a comprehensive community centric COVID 19 testing program.

11:17

Comprehensive tools to build RHC capacity and customized indebt Remote Technical Assistance in order to meet it needs the RHC and community row operational and clinic clinical viability.

11:33

Provide access to subject matter experts.

11:35

And they have also been providing assistance with the reporting requirements process on RHC, obeyed Reporting.

11:45

Next slide.

11:47

Nathan mentioned that, this, this webinar will be on RHI Hub, I have, after, after we've finished and all of the webinars are announced and archived on RHI hub, I have so I would encourage you to go there and kind of see what else we have to offer.

12:05

You can access all of the slides and presentations following the events at a time that works best for you.

12:11

Next slide.

12:13

In addition to the RHC Technical Assistance e-mail for recently compiles an e-mail list of rural health clinic administrators and managers in order to better communicate two, Rural Health Clinic COVID19 testing program information and updates.

12:30

Yes.

12:33

So, part of the terms and conditions, HRSA is collecting data from RHCS in the Program.

12:39

The other Rural Health Clinic COVID 19 testing reporting website, which we have given the acronym RHCCTR.

12:49

And that collects monthly aggregated data, from funded organizations, at the tax identification number, organizational level, to monitor and assess the RHC ... Testing Program.

13:03

So, the brief set of proposed measures that funded RHCS report back to HRSA ...

13:09

level includes basic information on the RHC organization, the number of and the location of testing sites of active and inactive.

13:19

Information on the use of funds, the total number of tests conducted.

13:26

And the number of COVID 19 positive tests, our hope really is to minimize burden and streamlined data reporting. And a HRSA, and an RHC opened the website on October six and monthly data is due at the last day of each month.

13:42

The data can be edited to allow for RHC revisions. Should they receive updated numbers due to lag time.

13:49

And, next slide.

13:53

After the initial funding distribution, I do want to just kinda mentioned this as some of the future work that we're doing.

14:01

And some of the policy considerations that are upcoming and have been kind of surfacing.

14:07

And so, after this first way of RHC, organizations have the opportunity to accept a return.

14:13

The program testing funds, most, TIN organizations accepted the funds.

14:20

Based on the feedback from the field, organizations that chose to return the money was that they were not in a position to conduct testing and meet federal reporting requirements and or because

they believed that there was sufficient COVID 19 testing available from other organizations in that service area.

14:42

So, we are recommending that we do a second round of funding, or RHC that were not initially funded because they had not appeared in that data or RHCS, who return to the funds in error of the first wave.

15:00

So, I just want to be clear that that's not a second round for people who are RHCS who have already received funding.

15:07

But for RHCS, RHCS, who were excluded in that first round.

15:14

This will be provided via the provider relief fund payment mechanism similar to the first wave and the terms and conditions will be the same.

15:24

I also just want to point out that we recently updated the FAQs to reflect the RHC COVID 19 testing, reporting website, and reporting guidelines.

15:34

And we re-organized FAQs for some clarity and some ease of navigation.

15:41

We are continuing to work with NARHC, NOSORH, and the Provider Relief Fund team to update policy and allowable use of the RHC COVID 19 Testing Program funds. And we plan on updating the FAQs accordingly.

15:58

So, the RFC CTR communications with RHCS and frequent touch base calls between partners, NARHC and NOSORH, provide continuous monitoring of the historic program.

16:13

And next slide.

16:16

I just wanted to highlight my contact information for you there.

16:21

Um, and before I quickly turn it over to Bill, the Executive Director for the National Association of Rural Health Clinics and thank an RHC for pulling this webinar together where and really leading the charge on this co-operative agreement. We so appreciate it. So, with that, I will give you go.

Bill Finerfrock:

16:48

Thanks Lindsay and thanks everybody for taking time to join us today for this webinar updating you on COVID Testing and also kicking off our Rural Health Week here which is an important recognition at the federal level of the role.

17:04

That rural health clinics, rural hospitals, critical access hospitals independently practicing rural providers all play in ensuring access to health care in rural communities across this country. I think our title today, really, the, the subtitle is Even more important, which was, Recognizing the Power of rural. I think, you know, one of the, the good news if there's a silver lining in a crisis.

17:32

It's, you know, we find things that perhaps we had neither acknowledged or known or or realize prior to that, that crisis. And I think that one of the things that we're seeing is a much broader recognition of the role and power of rural in our nation's healthcare delivery system. Now, some of that is because we've seen how some of our rural providers who've been overwhelmed most recently with this latest surge.

18:00

We're hearing reports of, you know, rural hospitals, critical access hospitals, not being able, having to turn patients away simply because they don't have a bed.

18:09

And it really is highlighting the fragility of the rural infrastructure that is out there, and I think that over the next several months and years, if we are successful at doing our jobs, we will hopefully see that translated into additional resources for rural communities.

18:32

I wanted to bring something back. This was, we've used this at NARHC on a couple of different occasions, but this was something that was uttered by Senator Ron Wyden from Oregon, at a Finance Committee hearing in 2018, and it was at the very end of a rural health hearing. And he said after some introductory remarks.

18:51

He said, what is really the backbone of rural healthcare, literally from sea to shining sea and that is rural health clinics. And to our knowledge that was really one of the first times that RHCS were really kind of acknowledged for that role. Although, as Tom mentioned, the program has been around since 19 77.

19:12

In some ways, we we feel like, you know, we often get overshadowed or overlooked by some programs that are larger programs. And, you know, frankly, I have a few more dollars but, you know, I think through what Tom mentioned, we're going to talk about today this money for Rural Health Clinics. This growing recognition of the role that RHCS and Critical Access Hospitals and small rural hospitals play, I think, is part of the good news that can come out of all this.

19:40

In April, one of the next examples of this is HHS Secretary Alex Azar, announced that the department was setting aside \$10 billion in provider relief money specifically for rural hospitals and rural health clinics.

19:57

This was a really important acknowledgement that Congress had given, at that time, \$100 billion to the Department for provider relief. And it was really up to the to the department to determine how that money was going to be distributed, to whom it would go. Is it going to go to hospitals, doctors, other providers?

20:17

And so when Secretary Azar came out and said, you know, \$10 billion of this money was going to be specifically allocated to rural hospitals and rural health clinics, we were just really excited.

20:31

We had spent a lot of time and we work very closely with the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, as Tom had mentioned. But we had also been working very closely with the Secretary's office for months preceding the COVID pandemic.

20:46

To where the Secretary had reached out to us, I went in and met with him personally. He wanted to know what some of the issues were, nascent. Join me in that, and we really had with a couple of other rural stakeholders had an opportunity to have a real lengthy conversation about some of the challenges. And so, to see that get translated into actual action on the part of the secretary and this kind of money going into RHCS and, you know, the minimum amount, a clinic received got to this was over \$100,000, was really very encouraging in terms of the response of the secretary and the administration.

21:28

This was then followed, as Tom mentioned, by the fact that Congress authorized the \$225 million for RHC's for COVID 19 testing and testing related activities.

21:39

And this amounted to just under \$50,000 per clinic site, And Tom is absolutely correct.

21:45

This was the first time that Congress had specifically allocated money for this purpose for RHCS and so it was again, further evidence of this growing recognition of the role that rural health clinics play in our healthcare delivery system and the need to try and provide resources to the RHC community.

22:10

I think this money also will serve an important purpose as we begin to see a transition to vaccine distribution. Hopefully in the next few or several weeks as, you know, we've received very promising information with regard to the efficacy of at least two of the vaccines in development.

22:30

And those are going to hopefully get emergency use authorization in the not too distant future and it will immediately then kick into the the distribution of that.

22:42

And I want you to know that another part of this is the CDC and Operation Warp speed which are handling the distribution of that. RHCS are playing an important role in our, Are on their radar screen. They have included us in a number of their discussions.

23:00

The challenge is understanding what some of the challenges will be in getting money out or getting vaccines, I should say, out to rural communities and utilizing rural health clinics for that vaccine distribution process. And, I think some of the things that many of you went through as part of your COVID testing, testing related activities will have given you a lot of good experience. so, that when it comes time to do the vaccine distribution.

23:27

Some of the same things that you put in place for testing will be appropriate for the vaccine distribution. So, I think this is all playing out in a way that should be a benefit to the communities, that you're you're serving so well.

23:44

As I said, this was the first time that RHCS and, of course, we hope it won't be the last.

23:50

Um, HRSA then awarded some of that money to for technical assistance and education to the National Association of Rural Health Clinics, and, as was mentioned, we've conducted a number of webinars over the last few months. And here, a listing of those that were specifically targeted to rural health clinics for covert billing, and coding and telehealth, as you know. Telehealth opportunities were expanded for rural health clinics. As a consequence of COVID, Lessons Learned and ...

24:23

for managers and directors navigating RHC, reporting requirements, cost reporting during ..., COVID testing, testing and testing related activities with folks from CDC. Funds what you need to know, et cetera. So, more to come. There will be another webinar that's being asked later today that we're going to be holding, I believe, a week from today, next Monday. And, you're good information about that. And, those will, those will continue. And then, I would imagine we will be doing some on vaccine distribution once that information becomes available. So, if you want to go and look at any of those webinars and go to the ... website, here is the link on your screen to where you can go to find all of those webinars, as well as others that we did on non COVID topics. But, all of those are, they're there for your ability to download.

25:23

I'll leave it on the screen for a minute in case anybody's trying to write that down, And, if not, the slides will be available after this for download as well.

25:34

In terms of reporting, as was mentioned, alright, sees that received the testing monies must report information on how the money was used as a condition of taking the money. To date, we're pleased to report that nearly 3000 RHCS have recorded how they have used this money thus far to complete the Mandatory reporting, if you have not done so. Here's the link to the Web, to the Web portal, where you can go, you can register, and you can begin entering in the information for your ... testing information. If you are not clear, we have a, there is a webinar that you can go and look at. The web address is also there, and just look for RHC Reporting Tools, and there is also a step by step instructions.

26:24

You can watch there, on how to complete the, the COVID reporting process.

26:29

There should be no reason why any rural health clinic is unable to report that data, and if you have not done so, we highly, and strongly encourage you, to go to register and report your ... testing data.

26:45

As part of this process is and has been mentioned, NARHC has partnered with the National Organization of State Offices.

26:52

Rural Health to Magnify, the impact of the Money, the Federal Office, provided for COVID education and outreach.

27:00

We recognize that our ability to communicate with the RHC community is often at a national level. We have very robust databases. We've done a lot of education, but we also recognize that we can't reach everyone. And, very often, the state Offices of rural health have a strong relationship with rural health clinics, and an ability to educate and communicate. So, when we were approached about this initiative, it really came to us very quickly that we needed to partner with the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health, who can then work with the individual State Offices of Rural Health. In order to get this information out to make folks aware. This is all about not only educating the providers, but educating the communities and the patients you serve.

27:47

And in this type of partnership between the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, the National Association of Rural Health Clinics, and the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health, I think, is a great example of how, you know, we can work together a public private partnership, if you will, to really enhance the ability of communities to obtain better care, more timely care, and more appropriate care.

28:11

So, for the duration of the, the COVID 19, I did want to also mention before turning it over to a Teryl telehealth, we get a lot of questions about telehealth.

28:26

And for the duration of the public health emergency, RHCS are recognized as the Distance site for Medicare Telehealth Visits.

28:34

This authority ends with a public health emergency and unless extended by Congress, right now, the public health emergency is extended through January 21.

28:43

The Secretary can do these in 90 day increments.

28:46

We fully expect that the secretary will announce another 90 day extension prior to its expiration on January 21st, and it will then be up to the next administration to determine what they wanted to do with the public health emergencies and the continuation of the waivers that were granted under that. I will tell you that there is strong bipartisan, bicameral.

29:12

And at either end of Pennsylvania Avenue, whether it's the current administration or a new administration coming in for continuation of telehealth opportunities for rural health clinics. That doesn't mean it's a slam dunk. But we're very encouraged by the positive responses we've gotten from a full range of people.

29:34

At this point, I'm going to turn it over to my, my friend and colleague Teryl who is the Executive Director of the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health. And a great partner in our efforts to ensure continued access to quality health care in rural, underserved areas. Teryl the floor is yours.

Teryl Eisinger:

29:55

Thank you, Bill, and thanks to all of you and congratulations to FORHP and to Nathan for the great work on the response for rural health clinics to COVID 19. So, my task today is just to start out by letting me know that this is National Rural Health Week, which we mostly celebrate on National Rural Health Day this Thursday. And then also to share with you more information about the Connections for Community Care program, which is to support RHCS in their work on testing for 2019. Next slide, please. So, here at NOSORH, or we're really focused on partnerships, As you heard, we, we know, over our work of many years with the National Association of Rural Health Clinics, and the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, and State Offices of Rural Health. It's so necessary that we educate, and communicate, and we innovate, and we collaborate to make a difference, and rural.

30:55

So, National Rural Health Day, and the Power Rural Campaign is all about building national, state, and local partnerships to improve rural health. And we tried to bring attention to those on National Rural Health Day.

31:07

So, I'm going to talk to you a little bit about what the State Offices of Rural Health are about, what we're trying to achieve, in general, and also with our Community Care project. Next slide, please.

31:22

Though, the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health is the Membership Association, the 50 State Offices of Rural Health, we are focused on our mission, has evolved over the years to be focused, not just on state offices of rural health, but you, the stakeholders of the state offices of rural health, And we do our work by developing leadership, advocacy, education, and partnerships. If you don't know, I must take a quick time out to let you know that State Offices of Rural Health are really uniquely funded kind of organization there. If they are built-in federal, state partnership focused on the needs of rural areas in your state, an anomaly of the grant programs that Fund State Office of Rural Health, is that they're matched with three dot non federal dollars to every state dollars, so that And that enables state offices of rural health to be on it.

32:19

A friend in, with the link with the federal government, with, and focused on state, means they are a true part of the state, 37 of them are in state government, 11, or an academic institutions, and there are three non-profits. But they all have a responsibility for three core functions, And that our information: Dissemination, Rural Health co-ordination, and Technical Assistance. Man, an old, and very trite saying that if you've seen one State Office of Rural Health, you've seen one State Office of Rural Health. But what we want you to know is that as you're doing this work that and as you reach to the State Offices of Rural Health that we're here to back them up and that's our job as the national organization. And we think that part of the work that we do with an RHC and also around the power of rural with ... is so important that work. Next slide, please.

33:14

So, State Offices of Rural Health are have really had a heavy lift during the public health emergency. They've been called on to disseminate information through the Small Hospital Improvement Program, \$150 million, going out to rural hospitals. And as you all know, that money for rural health clinics has gone directly to the rural health clinics, so we're helping to continuing. And sharing and growing the access of care to millions of American State Offices of Rural Health around the country. The last time we took a, got a really good data measure, was that they're delivering technical assistance to about 6 about 67 encounter, 67,000 encounters to about 23,000 stakeholders across rural, and that's growing every single day, and as you can imagine, the big lift to measure that. Next slide, please.

34:13

We also know, and want you to know, that rural health clinics are important to state offices of rural health, These little graphics here. In our, as our community based organizations, when we talk about rural health clinics, we talk about the fact that rural health clinics, just as Tom said, our Safety net providers, they provide a backbone to the primary care infrastructure in rural America. Bill's work. And that effort was recognized by no sort of this year's. He received the

news or Andy Nickel's worth for social justice and ensuring access for underserved through his work with the RHC. We also know that the work of the independent rural health clinics is difficult as they're independent and maybe not as associate as resources.

35:02

We would like all rural providers to be, but still offer free and reduced care and accept Medicaid and state chip. And we think that that's sometimes goes unsaid, But RHCS are recognized by state offices of rural health for that good work.

35:18

Next slide we shout out about that through our power rural Kim. Wanted to talk to you about this great partnership that we call the Connections for Community Care Program, which is powered through our work at ..., or, as has already been said, it's a partnership funded by ..., in conjunction with the National Association of Rural Health Clinics.

35:42

And, it's really all about the technical assistance digging in and providing rural health clinics across the nation with a comprehensive community centric COVID 19, on-site testing, and assistance with, and with help with the required reporting. And we use that word community centric as we think about and talk about the technical assistance program. Because we know that every rural community is different, and that what one rural health clinic is dealing with in one community can be a lesson for others. But everyone must take an approach and leverage the resources that are available within their community, and, and to do that collaboratively. So there isn't a cookie cutter, there are some requirements that we all must meet, more certainly all face some very, very, many common challenges, but that we must always be focused on the needs of rural community.

36:37

And that ensures that the work that we do, addresses the social determinants of health, ensures the health equity Without that community centric approach. We can't truly serve the underserved Americans, 57 million people who call Rural America Home.

36:55

So, we do this work, not only in conjunction with the ..., the National Association, with Rural Health Clinics, that, also, with the State Offices of rural health across the country, We feel that's critical. We feel that State Offices of rural health are, are really being called upon now, more than ever. To answer those questions to, especially be a source of factual information, as we try to understand when we were trying or early on, when the funding was passed, to understand what all of those things that we certainly rely on our partners. For those, we want to make sure that state Offices of Rural Health can be strong anchors, have information for rural health clinics across the country. Next slide, please.

37:42

So, as you can see, we try to be very clear about the information. We're trying to make sure that we're providing and advising the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and any RHC. What all the efforts that they're doing, and I have to give, I have to really given to Lindsay, and to Nathan,

and Bill for the work that they've done to rollout the reporting requirements, to develop a portal, to hit the ground running. What's really being resource, to make sure that that information gets out to you, that there's an ability to directly communicate, RHC, so that you all can understand the reporting process.

38:24

We've tried to jump in with trying to be as support and help with our own experience and the experience of the community care team to relate back about what is meaningful. And, you know, certainly NARHC has some great understanding of the challenges of RHC, But we, we take our brain and melt that together into tools that we believe that will work for you and think about what resources are available and need to be available. And we aren't going to be moving forward with the reporting and helping state offices of rural health to take a look at state summaries on the RHC reporting. As those reports get finer and more available, we'll be doing outreach to make sure that no one gets left behind, or no one is struggling with the reporting requirements.

39:15

We believe that the ... together made that something that's doable, and we want to be able to help with that. And then we're going to continue our outreach through the State Offices of rural health to the RHC with individual meetings and online and on the on the phone a person. Here's the quarter call somebody who cares to help you with that work. So, there is an e-mail there, where you can send directly to our staff that teams up, to support the work of the RHCS. And you can e-mail directly to that RHC coven testing info, at ... dot org, and we hope that you'll do that, with any little thing that you're struggling with, Because we know that every rural health clinic has its own challenges, as it deals with this work. Next slide, please.

40:08

So, some of the things that you'll be able to receive, is to help you develop and implement testing program, if you're trying to do that in your community. Tools that also, while you're doing that, build the capacity of the rural health clinics. Sometimes. It's about operations or other things that you need to be mindful of as you're trying to build the capacity of your RHC around coding testing. You need to build the capacity of your organization. Overall, this is an opportunity to do that. And sometimes, we can help you with that assessment, to see what's getting in your way, also.

40:45

Within Jeff, Remote Technical Assistance, getting phone calls, whatever it is, to meet your specific needs, and then to help you with data collection processing, and understanding that process, or what's required reporting, we really want to come alongside you, to help make sure that you don't have any difficulty with that, and that you can understand it. And we'll work closely with the state offices, again, and there's, again, another reminder of that e-mail that you can e-mail. Next slide, please.

41:19

Think one of the things that I'm most proud of around this work is that our team and you see pictures of them there is led by Tammy Norville, who's not only as certified biller encoder, has worked with RHCS in her work with the North Carolina Office of Rural Health. And then, more

directly now with us and building the building capacity across the country sheets and instructors that more initials after her name, around billing and coding and operation than I understand. So, she is has been a great leap for this work, Shannon. Chambers is with the South Carolina Office of Rural Health. She's been serving this rural health clinics and HRSA, she has a unique and practical knowledge and ability to get right to exactly what it is. That RHC mean she has her ears on at all times to make sure that we understand even the little nuances of that work. And then, Lynette Dixon is a former state Office of Rural Health person out of North Dakota. And she's really great at building connections between state offices and their clinic. So, just a couple of quotes here. Tim, you helped me a couple of talking points for this.

42:32

But these this is how we roll with this chain that the RH. we know that RHCS are the cornerstone of Rural Health Safety Net and that they know their patients and communities. In a shoe were here She would be talking to you in a great North Carolina accident would be much which would be much more charming than my own.

42:51

But really, we, we want you to know that we are committed to supporting you in the care that you're giving to your communities and helping you to be equipped and to take advantage of every resource that's available to you to ensure that there's testing. We know that you're taking care of our neighbors every day, and we want to help you in that effort, and this is a great team to help with that, So we do hope that you will reach out to that e-mail in and you will get a response and it will get into the weeds with you with that team. So we wish you the best of luck with all of that. And again, it's all customized for your particular needs Next slide, please.

43:35

We think this work is so important. And as Bill and, as Bill referenced, bills, one of the best advocates for the rural health clinic community than I've ever known in rural health. So one of the things that we think that is so important for rural health, clinics, and small providers across the nation is to be able to tell your story. It's all well and good for someone in DC to go in and talk, But we need you to tell the real story, not just at a national level, but on a local level, Tell about the good work that you're doing, so that your community understand that work. So we founded National Rural Health Day about 10 years ago. This is our 10th annual celebration.

44:22

And actually, when we first started out, we didn't know where width where it was going to go. It has really grown. We provide you all kinds of resources there. Coloring books than table tents and all kinds of things that it's not too late for you to take advantage of, for you to go to the Power of rural dot org website. And check out exactly what you can grab for free and be shouting out about your good work, that is the point. We're talking about the innovation and the good care that you gifts. So those are, there are a lot of free resources there for you in the toolkits. I'll point out a couple of things. So certainly, go to power our world dot org. And then I'm gonna point out a couple of other things. I want you to understand what National, Rural Health Day is, all about. Also on the website.

45:13

You'll see that there is a spot to share your plans, and tell us what you're doing, because we will, in turn, tell others about it.

45:24

And that's what we're all about, is sharing your good work, and shouting out about the needs, and the successes that small clinics are having taking care of small towns with very small staffs. So I hope that you'll join us in participating in the activities this week. There are lots of them. So next slide, please, Little bit more about what National Rural Health Day is about. one of our key messages is that we focus on health care. Rural America is a great place for our mission minded health professional to provide individualized care. We know that it's a challenging environment, but we also know that health primary care providers, and others, who have a mind, to be mission minded and their work, they're kind of find that job satisfaction. Yes, living, and small town, and practicing in a community where that they know that they're making a difference.

46:20

So we know that, that takes a special kind of health professional. It takes a special kind of community to retain a health professional. And we believe that our power rural work is a great opportunity to thank your providers and just focus on the good health care that they are delivering. Next slide, please.

46:40

To that end, one of our partners, that the Army Collaborative Challenge, coming up on Saturday afternoon, National Rural Health Day, towards the end of the week, is holding their second annual Rural Health, Clinical Con, Congress. It's an all day affair. We have over, I believe, 650 registrants. I'm not sure if that number, so don't quote me on that. But it's a free live, see an event that is hosted by our friends at R&D Collaborative last Chair, when they told us that, on their first Danielle, when they told us that they are going to do an all day event. I told them that they were crazy. That retention rate for that, Jay, was magnificent. People stayed on all day long. It's facilitated by all rural providers, or rural experts are folks who really know the field. It's set up to be very collaborative. This year, they're going to have an ask an expert about it. There are sessions on intelligence mythology, there.

47:48

Things on diagnosing, retinal neuropathy there. It's got a variety of subjects.

47:55

So I want you to check that out and know that you can be part of that and get your providers into that webinar and that they have really plan that should be interactive and really high quality events. So I hope that you'll take advantage of that. Next slide.

48:15

We also focus on innovation. We know that innovation is happening in small towns, and by small hospitals, that there's a high quality of care that can happen in rural communities, small hospitals, and clinics. And we know that, in small settings, we can fuel innovation, and we can test things. And the power of collaboration makes a big difference. So, that's one ever. Also, one of our key messages, and we hope that you will shout out about your own innovation and how

you've had to pivot for COVID 19 into that, and next slide, please. And every year, we features feature stories.

48:52

Community stars, people that are dedicated to improving rural health. This year we'll be featuring stars from all that Tuesday, the 48 states in the nation. That's an important celebrations. Some of them are rural health clinics, just like you. So, we hope that you'll check out their, There'll be an online book, will be featuring during one of our webinars on November the 19th, and we really know that it really is through the sharing of the story that we all get better. We inspire each other, we can build the resilience amongst rural communities as we see our own actions and your good work out in front on National Rural Health Day and throughout the year. Next slide, please.

49:41

I hope you'll check out this community to start. There'll be a great video then.

49:45

The other thing is that we know that now people want to go to rural America for its beautiful landscape, they want to go and they wanna know Hella ski here, climb the mountains or whatever that is. There's a challenging healthcare landscape, as well, as, as you all know. And it requires unique approaches. So we try to always be focused on solutions. They don't always happen within the walls of the clinic. High, as you know, in, in your work, as a clinic, you touch all parts of the community, you, you touch all the issues that are helping people to stay healthy or making them sick. So, we really tried to bring attention on National Rural Health Day in the power of rural to the solution out there, across the country, and to that in, Next slide, please.

50:35

On November the 19th at 2 PM Eastern, we are hosting, and will have guessed from, are small rural communities in the state, mostly in the state of New Mexico on a webinar called Surviving and Thriving. And it's about essential services and essential essential services to help rural communities survive and to thrive. And we'll be focusing on those from two o'clock to 315. We're very proud that with the help of the federal Office of Rural Health Policy will have an address and an acknowledgement from Secretary Azar. We also, the Deputy Secretary of USDA will be sending gradients as well.

51:19

And we're going to really hear about individual, rural community members who have made a difference. And with a call to action, that shouldn't every resident in every rural county have what is required to survive and thrive. So, again, we hope that you'll be part of that on National Rural Health Day, and to join us in those efforts, and to really learn, you can really see how your work, and what you might do within and without outside the walls of your clinic to make a difference for rural America. Next slide.

51:55

Maybe that's it now. And so, I'd encourage you to have a very happy National Rural Health Day, to keep telling the story of your good work. Keep up the good work as you're trying to keep up

with the public health crisis. We thank you for everything that you do, every single day, not just on National Rural Health Day. You, I've given you a link to find your State Office of Rural Health, and if we can help you in any way, make that connection, we'd be happy to do that. And, again, we're here for you with that community care project, and, Bill, back to you, and congratulations on your good work, and giving us the opportunity to share this time with you today.

Bill Finerfrock:

52:36

Thanks, Teryl. Thanks, Tom, and Thank you, Lindsay.

52:41

At this point, I think we're going to open it up for questions from the audience. Nathan, you want to let folks know how they can pose the question?

Nathan Baugh:

52:51

I just opened the question box.

52:55

We have some time for questions.

52:56

But I do just want to point out that, I know there's been a lot of webinars coming up. And I think all the content coming to the RHC community and the rural health community is great. But I just want to point out that a week from today.

53:11

We will have a another webinar, that's going to just be largely focused on Q and A It will be with myself, Shannon.

53:19

Chambers, we're trying to get a third expert in to dive into all the weeds of COVID 19 Testing Program. Provide a really fun and Patriot Protection Telehealth data reporting website. All of that. and more so it's just going to be a very informal conversation.

53:37

So if people have questions about those, I would hold those topics.

53:42

Let's hold off to next week.

53:45

If people have questions about Rural Health Day, Rural Health Week, as you know, the, all the activities and NOSORH is planning, and the Federal Office of Rural Health is planning this week.

53:56

Please, You know, submit those in the question box now.

54:01

And then the other webinar I will flag non COVID related.

54:05

So if you get tired of the COVID Stuff, in two weeks, we're going to have a hipps 101 or for Rural Health Clinics webinar, which I'm actually pretty excited about.

54:17

Finally, and before we get into questions, I just want to verbalize the CEU code for our Certified Rural Health Clinics Professionals that are on on this webinar, which is CWL5483.

54:32

With that, we'll take a few questions. We'll go a little past three o'clock and we'll try to answer as many as we can.

54:41

Skip, mmm.

54:42

Mmm, I'm going to say, let's hold off on those technical types of questions for next, uh.

54:49

Next week, you can also e-mail me, Nathan.baugh@narhc.

54:56

Calls, types of questions.

54:58

Next question is from La Rika, Joachim.

55:02

I have a question about billing physician rates for COVID, OK?

55:08

Sorry, I'm reading these as we can, Bill, Can you help me out here and see if there's any, that we should address right now?

Bill Finerfrock:

55:16

If I could find the questions, I don't know where you have them.

Nathan Baugh:

55:19

They're in the questions box, not in the chat.

55:24

I'm like, I'm reading through them quickly now.

Bill Finerfrock:

55:31

I'm not, I'm not seeing it, OK.

Nathan Baugh:

55:36

So, the questions that are coming in are, in a little bit in the weeds for this webinar. I promise Monday is the place to ask all these questions.

55:49

And, so, I'd, I would just sit, maybe let's hold off on the technical types of questions until then.

55:58

Maybe I'll have a question for Teryl, I'll verbalize it.

56:06

So, for the average clinic manager, uh, do they, would you recommend, on Rural Health Day doing a post of one of the content that you've created, or can they also maybe take a picture of their clinic or their providers, and what they're doing?

56:27

And just use that hashtag power of rural, is that, um, yes.

Teryl Eisinger:

56:34

So, a couple of things in that community toolkit, there are all kinds of social media graphics that are blank for you to plug in. the name of your clinic. They have pretty visual background, but they're blank for you to login information about your clinic. We definitely want you, if you use the hashtag Power of, Really, it's a big social media campaign that we really want you to be telling the story of what your rural health clinic is doing. There's lots of graphics that you can use and customize for yourself.

57:06

So, also, on November the 19th, at 11,019, your, your time, tweet something that you love about your clinic, or something that you want people to know about your clinic with the hashtag power of rural on that day, does that make sense?

57:25

And I just want to call out that it's, it's important, too. That we make as much of a splash as we can on rural Health Day to really just bringing attention to the work that we're doing. It does help, you know, throughout the year, to, to get people to realize, the rural health community is doing great work, and that, we're, we're, a player.

57:48

And, Rural Health Day really brings a spotlight to us. So, it's just something that I encourage everyone on the call, to just make a social media post, if you can, on Thursday.

Nathan Baugh:

58:01

I'm getting a lot of, and I understand that, the panelists can't see the question. So, we're having some technical difficulties here.

58:09

I promise the webinar on Monday, we'll get into the weeds and it'll just be all Q&A based.

58:15

So, with that, unless Bill or Lindsey or Tom and ... had have anything that you guys want to add, or a question for another panelist?

Bill Finerfrock:

58:29

Now, I, again, just want to thank the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Tom and Lindsey and Kerry and others for all the tremendous support that they have provided to the Rural Health Clinics community over the years. You know, Tom mentioned that he's been at this for awhile. And I think I've known Tom pretty much since he started terrill. If similar with you, since you've been with, those are, actually, before that.

58:56

And so, you, know, all those folks have been just tremendous advocates and allies, in the work for, on behalf of rural communities. I just want to thank you for everything you guys do.

Lindsey Nienstedt:

59:09

Thank you, Bill, for that. And, this is Lindsey, you, know, thanks for putting this webinar together.

59:18

I do just want to emphasize all of the people that aren't presenting today, you know, Shannon and Lynette and Carrie and Sarah. And ...and Jason. So there's, there's a big team behind all of this, and we really do try to get out to you and respond to you very quickly.

59:39

So, I know that Nathan mentioned that we're having this upcoming webinar on, on November 23rd, for all of these questions.

59:48

More technical questions that you have, that you've listed in the chat.

59:52

A reminder, though, that you can also e-mail those different.

59:59

That's different e-mail lists that we have. You can e-mail any NARHC directly.

1:00:04

You can send an e-mail to the FORHP email for COVID 19 testing.

1:00:11

Um, and, and NOSORH also has an e-mail address.

1:00:14

So, we're here to take your questions and to help you through it, and, with that, I just, I really appreciate everybody joining us today.

Nathan Baugh:

1:00:27

All right, so with that, I'm gonna go ahead and conclude the call. Thank you all for joining us.

1:00:32

Again, we'd like to thank Tom Morris, Lindsey.

1:00:35

Nienstedt, Bill Finerfrock and Teryl Eisinger for their presentations today is, of course, as well as the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy for sponsoring today's webinar.

1:00:47

We, again, we encourage you to get others who may be interested to register for the webinar series at narhc.org or the RHI Hub website.

1:01:02

In addition, we welcome you to e-mail us with your thoughts and suggestions for future topics at Nathan.baugh@narhc.org, and be sure to put RHC webinar topic in the subject line.

1:01:16

Again, the CEU code is C WL 5, 4, 8, 3, and the next webinar in this series. Although there are many webinars this week as part of Rural Health Week, but the next webinar in this series will be next Monday, with the one unhip says, the week. That follows. And thank you for your participation, And that concludes today's presentation.

1:01:42

Thanks, everybody.