

# Rural Health In Maine: Strategies for Rural Health Innovation

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# Overview: Rural Health Profiles and Innovations

- Provide an overview of health status and health resources and services in rural Maine.
- Share examples of rural health system innovation in Maine and other states.

# Rural Mainers Are Less Healthy Than Their Urban Counterparts

- On multiple health status measures (e.g. disability, multiple chronic conditions, diabetes) rural Mainers are less healthy than those living in urban parts of the state.
- Rural residents have higher rates of hospitalization and ED use.
- Poor health has a detrimental impact on rural families (e.g. lost wages, increased expenses).
- The poor health of Maine's rural communities strains rural health systems that have more limited infrastructure and financial capacity.
- Poor rural health status likely affects rural economic growth.

# Assessing the Rural Health Infrastructure

- There are wide variations in the availability or supply of health resources and services across the state and across rural counties.
- Many rural areas in Maine are formally designated as having primary care, dental, and mental health provider shortages.
- While resource/service availability can affect access to essential services, how services are organized and delivered also matters (e.g. telehealth is making specialty services more available in rural areas).

# Rural Access to Care and Insurance

- Access to essential preventive, screening, and treatment services affects health status:
  - While rural Maine residents are somewhat more likely to report having difficulty accessing some health services than urban residents, there is considerable variability across counties.
- Rural residents are less likely to be insured:
  - Residents of **Hancock**, **Piscataquis**, and **Washington** counties are the least likely to have private or public health insurance in Maine; these counties also have the highest percentage of uninsured children.

# Health Care and the Rural Economy

- The health care sector is the largest source of jobs in Maine, and employs nearly 1 in 5 rural Mainers.
- Hospitals are the major driver of health care employment and wages.
- Health care makes up a higher share of employment in some smaller and midsized rural counties.
- Wages in the health care sector in Maine are higher on average (17%) than for all other industries in the state.

# Rural Innovations: Financing and Payment

## Rural Accountable Care Models

- *The Maine Community ACO*
- *Beacon Health*
- *Illinois Rural Community Care Organization*
- *Kennebec Region Health Alliance*

## Other Strategies

- *Cary Medical Center and Pines Health System*
- *PrimeWest Health, Minnesota: County-owned Health Care Plan*

# Rural Innovations: Governance

- **Hospitals and health systems partnering with primary care and other providers to create new organizational and governance structures**
  - *Coastal Healthcare Alliance: Sharing Leadership and Clinical Services*
  - *Maine Rural Health Collaborative: Joint Purchasing and Contracting*
  - *Cary Medical Center and Pines Health System: Sharing Financial Resources and Specialists*
- **Hospital-Community Partnerships for Population Health Improvement**
  - *Somerset Public Health-Redington-Fairview General Hospital: Hospital-Sponsored Public Health Partnership*
  - *Mt Ascutney Hospital and Health Center, Vermont: Hospital Supported Community Organizations*



# Rural Innovations: Workforce

- **Rural-focused Medical Education Programs**
  - *Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships: MMC/Tufts Maine Track Program*
  - *Rural Training Track Residency Programs: Swift River RTT*
- **Oral and Behavioral Health Workforce Development**
  - *Community-based Dental Education: UNE Dental School*
  - *Pipeline Programs: Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska*
- **New Health Workers**
  - *Community Health Workers: Kentucky Homeplace*
  - *Community Paramedicine: Lincoln County Community Paramedicine Project*

# Rural Innovations: Service Delivery

- **Alternative Models of Emergency Care**
  - *Freestanding Emergency Departments: Thayer Center for Health*
  - *Collaborative Emergency Centers: Nova Scotia*
  - *Microhospitals*
- **Telehealth:** *MaineHealth Telestroke Network; Androscoggin Health and Hospice Telehealth Monitoring*
- **Care Coordination Programs:** *Community Care Teams; NC E-Care Diabetes*