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 Paramedic 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