

Vol. 70, Issue 17

Thursday, April 30, 2026

Expert Panel Sessions at the WHA Wisconsin Rural Health Conference

During the 2026 Wisconsin Rural Health Conference, attendees will have the opportunity to hear two expert panels, featuring health care leaders from across the state.

Rural Health Care Today & Tomorrow: A Conversation with WHA CEO Leaders

Panelists:

Matt Heywood, President & CEO, Aspirus Health

Dan Rohrbach, President & CEO, Southwest Health

John Russell, President & CEO, Prairie Ridge Health

Heather Schimmers, President, Emplify Health

Moderator:

Kyle O'Brien, President and CEO, WHA

This panel will bring together four prominent rural hospital and health system leaders from across the state. The must-attend session, featuring WHA Board members, will offer candid perspectives on the trends, challenges and opportunities shaping rural health care delivery in Wisconsin. Attendees will hear directly from leaders who are navigating these issues every day and helping guide the future of health care in rural communities.



Caring for Wisconsin's Caregivers: A Panel on Advancing Health Workforce Well Being Across Hospital Settings

Panelists:

Sue Anderson, Regional President with SSM Health Wisconsin

Dr. Heather Schmidt, Chief Wellness Officer with SSM Health - Fond du Lac Integrative Health

Shawn Lerch, CEO, Sauk Prairie Health

Dr. Wendy Ledesma, Sauk Prairie Health

Moderator:

Dr. Stefanie Simmons, Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation

Rising patient complexity and an aging population are demographic factors, largely beyond the state's control, that will continue to increase health care demand and stress on the health care workforce for decades to come. Recognizing the urgency to support and sustain those who care for Wisconsin's communities, the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment (AHW) selected the Health Workforce Well Being Initiative as a landmark investment and awarded WHA the responsibility to lead this transformative statewide effort. This session will highlight the early work, vision and impact of the five-year initiative to strengthen workforce well being across all care settings. Grounded in evidence, national standards and the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation multi-phase model, this initiative is building a statewide infrastructure to equip hospitals and health systems with tools, resources, training and other strategies to better support clinician well being.



Don't miss these sessions and more by registering today!

[Register here](#)

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- Expert Panel Sessions at the WHA Wisconsin Rural Health Conference
- Health Care Leadership Academy Participants Learn About the Importance of Quality in Their Work as Hospital Leaders
- WHA Speaker Bureau – A Member Benefit You Don't Want to Miss
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EDUCATION EVENTS

May. 14, 2026

Substance Use Disorders (SUD) Management Boot Camp

Jun. 8, 2026

2026 Wisconsin Rural Health Conference

Aug. 4, 2026

Seeing the Real Market: Using Claims Enhanced Intelligence to Make Better Strategy, Access, and Growth Decisions

