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Four Rural Hospital Leaders Appointed to Wisconsin's Rural Health Transformation Program Advisory Council

On April 7, the state Department of Health Services (DHS) announced four rural hospital leaders were appointed to advise the agency on implementation of Wisconsin's Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program, among other updates.

Authorized under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the RHT Program is a competitive five-year, \$50 billion federal funding opportunity available to all states to strengthen and support rural health care.

The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced in December that it had awarded Wisconsin \$203.7 million for the first year of the program.

Included among the 23 members DHS appointed to Wisconsin's RHT Program Advisory Council are: WHA Board Members John Russell, President/CEO Prairie Ridge Health, and Bob Van Meeteren, President/CEO Reedsburg Area Medical Center, as well as Julie Bulin, Vice President of Operations at Bellin Health Oconto Hospital, and Eilidh Pederson, CEO, Western Wisconsin Health.

The advisory council's first meeting will be held on Thursday, April 23. The meetings will be open to the public. Information will be posted on the Wisconsin Public Meeting Notices webpage before the meeting.

Upcoming Grant Funding Opportunities

In its announcement, DHS said it plans to release several RHT Program funding opportunities in late spring or early summer, including Care Coordination Grants, Community Health Worker Grants and Dental Provider Grants, as well as a formula-based or standardized allocation to a broad base of rural providers for one-time technology investments. DHS will leave grant funding opportunities open for 10 weeks.

In addition, DHS said RHT Program subrecipients, such as the Department of Workforce Development, will announce their funding opportunities for Rural Workforce Grants, Workforce Readiness Grants and other grants over the course of the year.

More information about Wisconsin's RHT Program grant opportunities can be found in the state's application [here](#).

Electronic Health Records System Proposals

DHS also announced that it is seeking proposals for a statewide electronic health records (EHR) system or "shared digital backbone." The selected vendor will build, maintain, and manage a shared statewide EHR system that "will allow smaller rural providers to deploy modern technology faster, with fewer resources, and at lower costs than acquiring their own individual systems," according to DHS. DHS' request for proposals can be found on Wisconsin's eSupplier portal by searching for "Digital Access to Care" (Event Number 14009). Vendor proposals are due April 20.

DHS' full announcement of RHT Program updates can be found [here](#).

Please direct questions to Christian Moran, WHA Vice President Medicaid & Payer Reimbursement Policy.

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