

Project Summary

From the shores of the Great Lakes to the banks of the Mississippi, from the vast Northwoods to the rugged bluffs of the Driftless southwest, rural Wisconsin holds immense strength, tradition, and sense of community. And though *all* Wisconsinites deserve access to high quality and timely health care, rural residents face major challenges due to geographic barriers and a fragmented health care system.

We imagine a future where geography doesn't determine your health, and where communities can work together to improve care for themselves and their neighbors.

To bring this vision closer to reality, the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services, as directed by Governor Tony Evers, is applying for the Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program. The Department will partner with rural communities to transform health care, while strengthening our economy, our workforce, and our communities. This \$1 billion investment will focus on rural capacity, sustainability, and innovation across three major initiatives:

- **Strengthen Rural Health Care Workforce - \$337 million.** Recruiting and retaining an adequate health care workforce is a challenge in rural areas, making access to quality, timely care for rural residents difficult. RHT funds will provide grants for **innovative workforce projects** in rural communities, **support career pathways** for rural health care providers, and fund services provided by **community health workers**.
- **Drive Rural Technology and Innovation - \$329 million.** Rural Wisconsin needs the technology to support and reach residents, such as closed-loop referral systems and telehealth capabilities. Wisconsin will invest RHT funds to **upgrade rural provider systems and digital infrastructure** and develop a **digital rural health care collaborative**.
- **Transform Rural Care through Partnerships - \$279 million.** Rural Wisconsinites experience fragmented coordination across primary care, specialty care, behavioral health, chronic disease prevention, and community social supports. Wisconsin will stand up a **competitive grant program** for rural regions to create coordinated systems of care where multi-sector partnerships show a clear path to sustainability.

Each region of Wisconsin has unique challenges and strengths. Wisconsin's RHT application recognizes this variation and leans on partnerships and flexibility for local expertise to solve problems. A wide range of organizations across the state will be involved in this work:

- **Health care providers**, such as rural hospitals, community health centers, dental providers, behavioral health clinics, long-term care providers, pharmacies, and emergency medical service agencies.
- **Local and Tribal governments**, such as local and Tribal health departments, county human services agencies, school districts, and colleges and universities.
- **Other private and public sector partners** based on community strengths and needs, such as businesses, transportation companies, food pantries, and libraries.

*We see a day when rural Wisconsin has the resources, technologies, and partnerships needed to connect **everyone** to the care they need, when they need it.* This is a future worth fighting for, and the once-in-a-generation investment of the RHT Program will help us get there. Wisconsin is ready for the challenge.



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of **HEALTH SERVICES**