

**Rural Health Association of Tennessee FORHP Grant Activities  
February 2024 – February 2025**

**I. Progress on Activities:**

The Rural Health Association of Tennessee (RHA) mission is to *Lead the way for a healthy tomorrow throughout Rural Tennessee* through partnerships, advocacy, education, and resources. For 30 years RHA has been serving as liaison between rural leaders and Tennessee’s State Office of Rural Health (SORH). As part of our formal partnership, RHA is tasked with various tasks centered on providing education to rural health leaders, keeping them abreast of state and federal grants and initiatives, and listening and learning from rural communities to relay important issues back to state and federal agencies. Regional spring events, annual conference, website, and newsletters, have proven to be valuable resources to rural providers and leaders, as demonstrated by the growth and expanded reach of RHA’s events and communications.

Spring 2024 Events – RHA hosted its 2024 East Tennessee event at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) on March 19th in collaboration with ETSU’s Rural and Community Programs, welcoming 31 attendees. Discussions covered social drivers of health, substance use and behavioral disorders in rural Appalachian communities, Naloxone training, and a presentation from Tennessee Bureau of Investigations (TBI). The West Tennessee event took place on April 9th at Paris Landing State Park, attracting 75 attendees. Topics included social drivers of health, Naloxone training, Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) in corrections, and another TBI investigation. Middle Tennessee’s event was held on April 23rd at Fall Creek Falls State Park, with 56 attendees. Sessions focused on MAT in emergency department settings, the ESSENCE data resource, suicide prevention, and Naloxone training. We were pleased to have the Tennessee Department of Health’s Office of Rural Health present at all three events, with Ms. Ann providing updates on her programs.

Spring 2025 Events – RHA has secured locations and begun promoting the 2025 spring events. The West Tennessee event will be held on March 25<sup>th</sup> at Paris Landing State Park with topics to include maternal health, trauma informed care, and substance use disorder prevention. Combined with this regional event, RHA will provide a “Billing and Coding Training Bootcamp” for Rural Health Clinic (RHC) network members and guests with funds leveraged from Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) (Award # 1 D06RH49185-01-00). The Middle Tennessee event will be April 1<sup>st</sup> at Fall Creeks Falls State Park with topics including crisis Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training, therapy dogs and the benefits on mental health, education on anti-stigma, Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) training. The East Tennessee event will be held in partnership with Lincoln Memorial University’s DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine on April 22, 2025, in Harrogate, Tennessee. Education will be presented on medicated assisted treatment (MAT), pediatric depression and anxiety, and QPR training.

2024 Annual Conference – RHA’s Conference Committee convened from February to November to plan the annual conference for November 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 in Knoxville. The committee has representation from leaders across the state to ensure topics are timely and relevant. Members emphasize the continued need to address access to healthcare; education and support for mental and behavioral health; maternal health; school health

specific education; and finance and operations education relevant to hospitals and clinics. RHA leveraged this feedback to analyze proposal submissions and plan the annual conference as part of the SORH grant. For the first time, the 2024 annual conference included “tracks” for maternal health, public health, mental and behavioral health, rural clinics and hospitals, and coordinated school health. The event theme was “30 Years Strong: Honoring Our Past, Shaping Our Future” and attracted more than 375 people over the two and half-days. Speakers included representatives from the Tennessee Department of Health, Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, among other professionals willing to contribute to the rural health Community of Practice. We were also delighted to have guests from the regional and federal HRSA offices.

February 2025 – RHA’s Conference Committee will convene to begin planning for the 2025 Annual Conference. This year’s conference will be on November 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> in a new location at the Sevierville Convention Center in Sevierville, TN. The conference committee will meet to discuss the needs and expectations of this year’s conference.

Communication Activities – RHA connects with over 4,000 through their online newsletters, including the bimonthly general newsletter the “Rural Health Digest,” and four additional monthly newsletters that target membership groups within RHA’s membership, including School Health, Rural Health Clinics, RCORP members, and Workforce Participants and Employers. These newsletters highlight events, learning opportunities, grant opportunities, and other relevant updates from partners across the state and the government to keep our rural members informed. The blog continues to be a source of the most up to date information we receive to share with members regularly as well. The website had over 230,000 views in 2024. Also in 2024, RHA hosted a webinar series that featured experts in patient-centered care strategies that garnered over 500 attendees over the eight-week series.

## **II. Noteworthy Accomplishments:**

Through HRSA’s Rural Health Network Implementation Grant (Award # 1 D06RH49185-01-00), RHA continues to expand technical assistance offerings to rural hospitals and RHCS. Examples of assistance includes general support through “mock surveys,” navigating state and federal regulations, and Value Based Care strategies. RHA has developed a “Community of Practice” for RHCs to participate in peer-to-peer learning on topics such as billing and coding, improving patient outcomes, and more. RHA continues to support RHCs in developing Sliding Fee Scales to help clinics qualify and apply for the National Health Service Corps..

RHA was awarded a subcontract to support the implementation of TennCare’s closed loop referral system (CLRS) called Tennessee Community Compass. RHA role is to engage community-based organizations in listing their programs that address social drivers of health such as food security, housing, and transportation. This contract has expanded RHA’s reach across the state, while also educating clinics and providers on the benefits of implementing a CLRS system.

RHA was also has a contract with WellPoint, a state Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO) to expand recruit, train, and provide Doula services. This has allowed RHA to build infrastructure to support Doulas in rural communities, effectively

expanding access to much needed maternal care. In October 2024, RHA was awarded a HRSA Maternal Health expand the program in Tennessee’s Delta Region.

III. **Significant Changes:** Allie Haynes, Senior Director of Membership and Advocacy, remains involved in the contract activities, but now does so in an indirect capacity as supervisor of grant-funded staff and the SORH primary point of contact. Ms. Shaw spends 40% of her time on the SORH grant for her work planning the annual conference, regional events, website, and newsletters. Missie Babb, RHA’s Bookkeeper, spends 20% of her time on the SORH grant for administrative support related to the above activities. Ms. Haynes and RHA’s CEO contribute to grant reporting and compliance.

IV. **Plan for Upcoming Budget Year:** RHA will not be sending a revised budget. Budget amount will stay the same.

**Work Plan Metrics February 2024 – February 2025**

<b>Activity</b>	
# of Emails	24 Rural Health Digests
# of Recipients	3,391
# of Referrals to RHlhub	24
TDH-RHA Webinars	8 webinars -500 Attendees
Regional events	3 – 162 attendees
TDH presentation at conference	375 Conference Attendees
Federal Policy Updates	24
State Policy Updates	24
Funding Opportunities shared	240
Grant Assistance	17 letters of support

**Metrics February 2024 – February 2025**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Count</b>
Newsletter Opens	23,427 Opens
Resources Shared	792 Resources
2024 Conference	375 Attendees
Blog Posts	66 Posts
Website visits	360,597
Webinars	505 Attendees
RHA Members	1140
Newsletter subscribers	3,551
Learning Module Added in Resource Center	20