Rural COVID-19 Innovations

Rural Health Information Hub, December 2021.

Learn about how rural communities have innovated in the face of COVID-19. A collection of promising practices, lessons learned, and other examples addressing healthcare and health-related concerns, collected from March 2020 through December 2021.

COVID-19 Vaccination

Examples of how rural communities and healthcare providers have innovated to provide COVID-19 vaccinations in rural areas.

- **Public health district and community partners providing mobile vaccination clinics**
  Idaho
  December 17, 2021 - To prepare for the vaccine rollout, Central District Health (CDH), a public health district serving rural Boise, Elmore, and Valley counties, had weekly phone calls with community partners like schools, business leaders, and city councils to discuss ways to address pandemic-related challenges. One major partner was a pharmacy with adequate cold storage freezers and capacity for mobile vaccination clinics. In about three months, Boise County vaccinated over 500 people at eight school-located events. In addition, CDH partnered with Idaho Meals on Wheels and the state's National Guard to vaccinate homebound people.
  Source: [Partnerships Key to COVID-19 Vaccinations in Rural and Frontier Central Idaho](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- **Funding free and charitable clinics to provide vaccines and information**
  North Carolina
  August 26, 2021 - Blue Cross NC and the North Carolina Association of Free & Charitable Clinics awarded grant money to five free and charitable clinics to reduce health disparities and address the impacts of COVID-19. The Community Care Clinic in rural Elizabeth City is using its funding to expand clinics offered at large employers and reach out to underrepresented groups like Black and Latino people. The Community Care Clinic of Dare in Dare County will work with a sample group of Latino patients with diabetes to provide information about the vaccine and promote nutrition.
  Source: [NC Free and Charitable Clinics Team Up with Blue Cross NC to Fight Impact of Health Disparities, COVID-19 on State's Most Vulnerable](#), BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina

- **Bringing vaccines into hard-to-reach communities**
  Alabama
  June 30, 2021 - Hill Hospital of Sumter County takes vaccines to surrounding communities without doctors or clinics. The hospital has staff who live in these communities and commute, so community members already know and trust the people working at the vaccination clinics. The hospital advertises its vaccination clinics through newspapers; social media; and local leaders like pastors, teachers, county commissioners, and the city council. Vaccination clinics are held at churches, fire departments, and local businesses. Hill Hospital provides transportation to those who can't get to a clinic on their own and brings vaccines to people who are homebound. About 70 to 80 people have attended each clinic. So far, 4,372 people have received at least one shot, and 40-50% of county residents are fully vaccinated.
  Source: Loretta Wilson, CEO, Hill Hospital of Sumter County
- **Drive-thru vaccination clinic and door-to-door vaccinations**
  Virginia
  May 14, 2021 - The Health Wagon, a mobile clinic in Wise County, hosts a drive-thru vaccination clinic and goes door-to-door to businesses (to vaccinate employees) and to houses (to vaccinate homebound people and their caregivers). The organization has completed 2,500 vaccinations so far. The Health Wagon has a 99% vaccination rate among employees, thanks to employee culture and buy-in from leadership, and posts videos about these vaccinations to encourage community members.
  Source: Dr. Teresa Tyson, President and CEO, The Health Wagon, via the National Rural Health Association
- **Vaccinating homebound individuals**
  Vermont
  May 14, 2021 - The Vermont Department of Health worked with local stakeholder groups to identify homebound individuals who need to be vaccinated and created a call center to find any individuals they missed. The State Health Operations Center worked with emergency medical services and home health agencies to deliver vaccines to homebound individuals. EMS agencies additionally provided vaccinations in long-term care facilities to support and augment gaps in the federal pharmacy program. In the first month, EMS vaccinated 2,625 homebound individuals and have since delivered homebound vaccine to over 4,500 individuals.
  Source: Dan Batsie, Director, Vermont Department of Health, Division of Emergency Preparedness, Response & Injury Prevention, via the National Rural Health Association
- **Helping older adults schedule and access the vaccine**
  Vermont
  March 29, 2021 - Support and Services at Home (SASH) is an organization that works with affordable-housing organizations across the state to help older adults live independently. SASH staff reach out to individual residents to inform them about the vaccine and help them schedule and get to appointments. Staff has reached 90% of SASH participants in affordable-housing buildings in two communities, providing these residents information, helping them schedule appointments, and making sure they attend both appointments at an in-house vaccination clinic. For SASH participants who don't live in affordable-housing buildings, SASH staff use a newsletter and prerecorded phone calls to reach every participant and then help them schedule appointments and any needed transportation. This

approach has helped 95% of these participants receive at least one shot of the vaccine. One SASH provider has hosted 9 clinics at small low-income independent senior housing sites, resulting in about 152 people receiving both shots.
Source: Casey Doerner, Health Systems Educator/Wellness Nurse Lead, Support and Services at Home, via the National Rural Health Association

- **Vaccine registration system, weekly vaccination clinic, and task force**
  West Virginia
  March 29, 2021 - The Greater Greenbrier COVID-19 Task Force holds a virtual meeting at least once per week (since March 2020) to coordinate, collaborate, and communicate local COVID-19 response efforts across governmental, nonprofit, business, and grassroots organizations; this "task force" model has been replicated in nearby counties. The Greenbrier County Health Department — with support from many community organizations and 50-60 weekly volunteers — administers a large-scale, weekly vaccination clinic at the State Fair of West Virginia with capacity to vaccinate 75 people per 1/2 hour. The West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine Center for Rural and Community Health assists the Health Department with information and data management linked to evolving vaccine response needs including: hotline and database management system for scheduling and coordinating vaccination appointments, onsite clinic information management, and online map data integration to assist with building routes to coordinate vaccinations for homebound people throughout the county.
  Source: Courtney Hereford, Executive Director, West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine Center for Rural and Community Health, via the National Rural Health Association

- **Vaccination clinics and "vaccine swat teams"**
  Colorado
  March 23, 2021 - Southwest Health System has vaccination clinics in which it's able to seat, vaccinate, and monitor 25 people every 30 minutes. In addition, Southwest Health System has "vaccine swat teams" that travel throughout its service area to deliver vaccines to long-term care facilities and to people who are homebound or who are experiencing homelessness. Southwest Health System has administered 7,500 shots of the COVID-19 vaccine since December 15, 2020.
  Source: Marc Meyer, Retail Pharmacy Director, Southwest Health System

- **In-person scheduling of vaccination appointments and transportation**
  Oregon, Washington
  March 9, 2021 - The Gorge Native American Collaborative and the Gorge TransLink Alliance are hosting vaccination clinics at a shared tribal longhouse in Celilo Village. Outreach teams visit individuals in person to schedule a vaccination appointment and arrange transportation. The first event led to 104 people getting vaccinated, with transit picking up people as far away as 70 miles from the event site.
  Source: Covid-19 Resource Center, National Center for Mobility Management

- **Mobile vaccine clinics and appointment scheduling hotline**
  Washington
  March 9, 2021 - Twin Transit, Lewis County Public Health and Social Services, Bird's Eye Medical, and United Way of Lewis County are providing mobile vaccine clinics. Twin Transit manages a hotline so people can schedule vaccination appointments over the phone.

This approach reaches people who don't have transportation to attend a mass vaccination event, are homebound, and cannot or struggle to access an online scheduling portal.
Source: Covid-19 Resource Center, National Center for Mobility Management

- **Mobile health unit for testing and vaccines**
  Pennsylvania, Ohio
  March 3, 2021 - Primary Health Network, an FQHC serving 16 counties in Pennsylvania and one in Ohio, purchased a mobile health system where healthcare staff can travel to underserved communities and provide COVID-19 testing or vaccines. The mobile unit can be set up in about 45 minutes; this process includes powering up generators for the freezers that house the vaccines and creating negative air flow to prevent airborne spreading of the virus. Primary Health Network plans to mobilize their COVID-19 vaccination efforts, once adequate supply of vaccine is available. Additionally, the FQHC is performing COVID testing from the mobile unit 3-4 days per week for Mercer County, PA, residents. To address any misinformation and encourage community members to get the vaccine, Primary Health Network's Chief Medical Officer, George Garrow, MD, talks to organizations like farmers' groups, trade unions, and church groups.
  Source: Sara Rupp, Marketing Director, Primary Health Network

- **Increasing vaccine compliance rate among healthcare workers**
  Tennessee
  February 24, 2021 - Bolivar General Hospital is at an 86% compliance rate with healthcare staff receiving the vaccine. Executive leaders had one-on-one conversations with employees, board members, and community members who were hesitant about getting the vaccine and answering any questions or concerns they had. The hospital leadership team and department heads were the first to get vaccinated and talked about their experiences so employees could learn more about potential side effects. In addition, the hospital offered vaccine appointments at times that better accommodated people working nights or weekends.
  Source: Ruby Kirby, CEO, Bolivar General Hospital

- **Prisma Health launches mobile vaccination units**
  South Carolina
  February 24, 2021 - To help vaccination efforts reach rural and underserved communities, Prisma Health in Greenville, South Carolina, has created mobile vaccination units. The vehicles, staffed with medical professionals, will be hosted in target areas chosen in collaboration with their community partners. The mobile vaccination units will distribute vaccines to eligible members of the community by appointment, following up three weeks later with the second dose. The community partners help spread the word, even going as far as helping people make appointments for the clinic. After completing these pilot events, the goal is to have seven mobile units (three working in the Upstate and three in the Midlands service area) available by the end of this spring.
  Source: Prisma Health Launches Mobile Vaccination for Rural and Underserved Communities, WIS News 10

- **Calling veterans to schedule vaccination appointments and answering questions**
  Montana
  February 19, 2021 - The Merril Lundman VA Outpatient Clinic called every patient in its service area, which includes two American Indian reservations, to schedule a vaccination. When some patients were hesitant in getting the vaccine, a nurse called each of these

patients back to answer any questions they had. This second phone call led to 10 more veterans agreeing to be vaccinated.

Source: [To Vaccinate Veterans, Health Care Workers Must Cross Mountains, Plains and Tundra](#), Kaiser Health News

- **Reaching out to Black preachers and leaders to encourage vaccination**
  Louisiana
  February 17, 2021 - St. James Parish Hospital staff noticed that the majority of people choosing to get vaccinated after seeing the hospital's online and social media advertising were White — in a parish in which almost 49% of the population is Black. Hospital staff reached out to Black preachers and local leaders (including a state representative) and established a phone line to spread the word about getting vaccinated. The next week, vaccination among Black community members increased from 9% of the total number of people vaccinated to 30%.
  Source: [Rural Hospital Remains Entrenched in Covid 'War' Even Amid Vaccine Rollout](#), Kaiser Health News

- **Using phone trees and regional transit systems to reach individuals**
  North Carolina
  February 10, 2021 - When CommWell Health in Brunswick County had 200 vaccine doses available, the NAACP county branch president organized a phone tree so that the vaccination event held the next day would have enough attendees. This method of communication was important in reaching individuals unable to access their usual sources of information, like churches or senior centers. In Jackson County, the regional transit system is picking up older adults and driving them to vaccination sites. These rides (in vans and small buses) are free, a small number of passengers can ride at any given time, and plexiglass separates passengers from one another.
  Source: [In the Rural Race to Distribute COVID Vaccines, a Piecemeal Approach](#), North Carolina Health News

- **Virtual town hall for informed discussions about vaccines and health equity**
  North Carolina
  February 4, 2021 - Buncombe County Health & Human Services, in partnership with the YWCA of Asheville & WNC, is hosting a two-part virtual town hall to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine distribution. The first part, held on January 27, discussed historical and ongoing reasons that BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color) populations tend to mistrust medical systems. The second part will be held in early February and will discuss the science of vaccines. In addition, Buncombe County Health & Human Services is creating a Community Vaccine Conversation Toolkit to help faith organizations, civic groups, and community members have fact-based, informed conversations about vaccines.
  Source: Zo Mpofu, Public Health Program Consultant, Buncombe County Health & Human Services

- **Information website and vaccine priority mapping tool**
  North Carolina
  February 1, 2021 - East Carolina University (ECU) Brody School of Medicine and Vidant Health created an information website called [COVID-19 and Eastern North Carolina](#) to provide COVID-19 and vaccine distribution information for healthcare providers, health departments, and community members in the 41-county service area. ECU also developed

a [Vaccine Priority Index Tool](#) so that groups like health departments could identify populations and high-risk facilities (like nursing homes and meat packing plants) that are of high priority to receive the vaccine. In addition, a team led by the ECU Department of Bioethics is creating an ethical framework to address questions such as vaccine hesitancy. Source: Greg Kearney, Associate Professor, East Carolina University Department of Public Health

- **1,232 doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine distributed**
  Texas
  January 28, 2021 - In Dalhart, Texas, a team of nurses, volunteer police, and volunteer firefighters converted the town's event space, the coliseum, into a vaccine clinic. The police and firefighters helped direct the crowd, each person given a number and set up in the socially-distanced waiting area. Once given the vaccine, they were kept for 15 minutes of observation before getting checked out and given instructions on how to schedule their second dose in approximately 21 days. The clinic was targeted at residents in the counties of Dallam, Hartley, and Sherman, although no one was turned away. Senior citizens and essential workers were given priority, but ultimately 1,232 Pfizer vaccines were distributed, making the clinic an overwhelming success. The community plans to continue its vaccination clinics in the same manner. For more on this event, see [1,232 Doses of Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine Distributed at Coliseum in Dalhart, Texas](#) in the *Rural Monitor*.
  Source: Joyce Bezner, Dallam Hartley Counties Healthcare Foundation

- **Community health centers work with local organizations to distribute COVID-19 vaccine**
  Wisconsin
  January 28, 2021 - Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers, a rural community health center in western Wisconsin, reached out beyond its own frontline healthcare staff in order to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine to as many eligible Phase 1a individuals in the community as possible. They contacted independent healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, and local rural emergency services, such as first responders, EMTs, fire departments, and small municipal police departments ― who all play an integral part in rural communities, and could face potential COVID-19 exposure. Because vaccine delivery often came at short notice, Scenic Bluffs collected contact information from these groups ahead of time, to quickly direct them to online registration for a vaccine appointment when the health center had vaccine in-hand. They also work with other community organizations, such as local school districts, to ensure COVID-19 vaccine educational resources are available, questions are answered, and preparation is made for the organizations in phase 1b.
  Source: Samantha Knutson, Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers

- **Book club pivots to vaccination effort**
  New Mexico
  January 26, 2021 - The Fabulous Ladies Book Club in Ruidoso, New Mexico began coordinating local COVID-19 vaccination efforts when they learned that their state department of health needed help with distribution in their area. The book club networked with the local community and the state department of health, even setting up a hotline for questions. They helped people register for the clinic, providing technical assistance and walking participants through the process. Once the clinic began, the women volunteered their time at the site, doing everything from managing the vaccine stock to shoveling snow

so the clinic was accessible. Some book club members volunteered up to 50 hours a week. Their efforts paid off, with more than 2,417 vaccine doses administered so far – estimated to be a little over 30% of the area's population.
Source: [Meet the Book Club That's Helping to Quickly Vaccinate Its Town](#), The Washington Post

- **Addressing vaccine hesitancy through social media and graphics**
  North Carolina
  January 22, 2021 - Roanoke Chowan Community Health Center is using social media to address vaccine hesitancy with patients. The center posted videos of trusted providers talking about why they received the vaccine. In addition, the center created graphics that address common questions about vaccines and have photos of staff members getting vaccinated. For examples, see [Community Health Center Addresses Vaccine Hesitancy through Social Media](#) in the *Rural Monitor*.
  Source: Erin Storie, Communications & Advocacy Coordinator, Roanoke Chowan Community Health Center

- **Grassroots education to encourage acceptance of COVID-19 vaccination**
  Arkansas
  January 21, 2021 - Dr. Jason Lofton, a family physician who practices in the rural community of De Queen, AR, has noticed a trend of vaccine hesitancy in his community, which was hit especially hard by COVID-19 in June and July. To combat the issues of mistrust and lack of understanding, Dr. Lofton has taken a grassroots approach to educate his patients and members of the community, using various media and meeting with local leaders. Dr. Lofton provides education on the COVID-19 vaccine as part of every patient encounter. He has discussed current issues about both the virus and vaccine on local radio, along with presenting to the area's police department, Rotary and Lion's Club, and public school administration ― who used their new video department to record and broadcast a video. Dr. Lofton also records Facebook videos in order to inform the public, sometimes collaborating with another local physician, Dr. Randy Walker. Additionally, to aid in education of the community's Hispanic and Marshallese populations, they have worked on bringing in Spanish and Marshallese interpreters on some of their videos.
  Source: Dr. Jason Lofton, De Queen, Arkansas

- **Holding a vaccine town hall**
  Texas
  January 20, 2021 - Titus Regional Medical Center in Mount Pleasant held a [virtual COVID-19 Vaccine Town Hall](#). Two doctors and the CEO answered community members' questions (submitted ahead of the event and during the event) about the vaccine. In addition, the medical center created an online waiting list for receiving the vaccine, and over 4,500 community members have signed up so far.
  Source: Terry Scoggin, Chief Executive Officer, Titus Regional Medical Center

- **Delivering vaccines to remote villages by plane, water taxi, or sled**
  Alaska
  January 8, 2021 - To reach remote Alaska villages, tribal healthcare providers have delivered vaccines via chartered planes, water taxis, and sleds pulled by snow machines (what people in other states and regions call "snowmobiles"). One group of providers administered the shots in village clinics and made home visits to elders who weren't able to travel. Another team asked anyone eligible to receive the vaccine to meet on the tarmac so

vaccines could be administered as soon as the plane landed. After administering the shots, these providers waited 20 minutes (to make sure no one had an allergic reaction) before flying to the next village. Thousands of doses have been delivered so far.
Source: [In Rural Alaska, COVID-19 Vaccines Hitch a Ride on Planes, Sleds and Water Taxi](), Alaska Public Media

- **Pueblos of Acoma, Laguna team up with New Mexico Department of Health and EMS to deliver COVID-19 vaccine**
  New Mexico
  January 7, 2021 - The Pueblo of Acoma and the Pueblo of Laguna have partnered with the New Mexico Department of Health in order to distribute the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to reservation residents. The EMS services of both Pueblos provide a key role in the vaccination efforts, mobilizing to administer the vaccine in drive-through sites. The first events focused on those who are at higher risk of infection, such as the elderly and front-line workers, with both locations vaccinating over 200 residents. Vaccination efforts are currently ongoing, with pre-registration open to tribal members who live within the reservations. To date, more than 800 people in each area have received the vaccine, with the goal of vaccinating all of the roughly 4,000 members who reside in both locations. For photos and more information, see the [Pueblo of Laguna Covid-19 Facebook page]() and the [POA Health & Human Services Division Facebook page]().
  Source: Chelsea White IV, University of New Mexico Center for Rural and Tribal EMS

- **Using existing relationships between pharmacies and long-term care facilities**
  West Virginia
  January 7, 2021 - Since West Virginia has few chain pharmacies, it did not sign on with a federal program using two nationwide chains to distribute the vaccine in long-term care and assisted living facilities. Instead, West Virginia created a plan to deliver the vaccine to 250 pharmacies, many of which are small and independent. Many long-term care facilities in the state already have a relationship with these pharmacies, so these pharmacies already had patient data. Thus, pharmacies were able to schedule appointments, secure consent forms, and match doses to eligible patients before vaccine doses even arrived in the state. When the vaccines arrived, pharmacists already knew how many doses they'd need. West Virginia has completed a first round of shots at all long-term care facilities in the state and has begun administering second doses.
  Source: [Why West Virginia's Winning the Race to Get COVID-19 Vaccine into Arms](), NPR

- **After freezer failure, hospital must distribute vaccines on a wide scale**
  California
  January 5, 2021 - In the rural community of Ukiah, California, health professionals at Adventist Health Ukiah Valley Medical Center found themselves with only two hours to distribute 830 doses of the new Moderna COVID-19 vaccine after their freezer failed. Staff quickly mobilized and coordinated with the county and an eldercare facility, getting doses to frontline workers at the county jail, as well as the eldercare staff. Hospital staff networked with other medical professionals and members of the community and were able to get four vaccination sites established, and word spread quickly in the isolated community. All remaining doses were administered within the time frame due to this impressive coordinated effort. This provides an example with lessons learned of how mass distribution of COVID-19 vaccines may work in the near future.

Source: [Its Freezer Kaput, This NorCal Hospital Had Two Hours to Give out 600 Vaccine Shots](#), Los Angeles Times.

- **Buying specialized freezers for vaccine**
  Washington
  December 3, 2020 - Ferry County Health built two outbuildings and bought specialized freezers cold enough to store one type of COVID-19 vaccines. Coordinators purchased these freezers before the vaccine had received FDA emergency use authorization because they knew the freezers would be in short supply once a vaccine was approved.
  Source: [In Rural Washington, a Small County Gets Ahead of the Curve for Vaccination Planning](#), The Daily Yonder

Helping Community Members

Examples of how rural communities and organizations have innovated to help community members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **COVID-19 Town Hall Series**
  Michigan
  November 22, 2021 - To convey COVID-19 information and public heath recommendations, Michigan Technological University in the Upper Peninsula hosts a monthly [town hall series](#) on TV, radio, and online platforms. Each town hall features a panel including public health officials, clinicians, educators, and other local experts who discuss a COVID-related topic and answer community members' questions. So far, there have been 21 town halls featuring over 100 different speakers. Program coordinators plan to expand the town halls to discuss broader health issues.
  Source: Steven Elmer, PhD, Associate Professor, Michigan Technological University
- **Nemaha County Hospital CEO Marty Fattig's daily COVID-19 updates**
  Nebraska
  January 13, 2021 - Starting on March 31st of 2019, the CEO of Nemaha County Hospital Marty Fattig has created daily updates on the COVID-19 virus, sent out first as a memo to staff and then posted on their website for the public to view. As the community the hospital serves is largely rural, keeping its patients and the local area informed has been a crucial part of slowing the spread of the virus. Each update contains information on:
  - The total number of cases and deaths in the U.S
  - The number of new cases and deaths on the previous day
  - The total number of cases and deaths for Nebraska
  - The number of cases and deaths for Nebraska on the previous day

  Recent updates have also featured information about the hospital's vaccination efforts and plans for the future. Marty Fattig closes each update as follows: "Thanks for all you do for us! Be kind to each other!"
  Source: [CEO's Daily COVID-19 Updates Keep a Rural Community Informed](#), American Hospital Association
- **Meal program for COVID-positive patients and family members**
  Minnesota

December 23, 2020 - Lakewood Health Systems adapted their free frozen meal program to include patients who have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Instead of going out into the community to stock up on groceries for themselves and their families, thereby increasing the risk of spreading the virus, Lakewood Engage gives COVID-positive patients two weeks of frozen meals designed by a dietician. This allows them access to nutritious food that takes very little preparation as they recover from the effects of the virus. Should they indicate that dependent family members will also be affected, meals will be provided for the entire family, reducing stress on recovering patients and their dependents.
Source: [Lakewood Engage Tackles Food Insecurity in Rural Minnesota](), the Rural Monitor

- **Gift cards and matching funds to support local businesses**
  Wisconsin
  November 19, 2020 - To help local businesses in Richland Center stay afloat during the pandemic, Southwest Partners, a coalition of individuals and community organizations, created the COVID CARING CASH program. When community members bought $25 worth of $5 gift cards, they received a bonus $10 from program sponsors. Community members spent the gift cards at participating businesses, and these businesses were reimbursed by Southwest Partners. Overall, 23,335 cards were sold, totaling $31,185 in matching funds and a total economic impact of approximately $300,000-$360,000.
  Source: Mick Cosgrove, Southwest Partners, and Rachel Peller, Wisconsin Partners

- **Telephone trees and personal calls to inform community members about COVID-19**
  South Carolina
  October 23, 2020 - Hollywood, SC, municipal leadership shares COVID-19 information through its town website, social media, email, and press releases, but not all community members have adequate internet access to view this information. Clergy use telephone trees and personal phone calls to make sure high-risk individuals such as older adults and people with disabilities stay informed.
  Source: [Case Study: Rural Municipal COVID-19 Research Leadership](), NRHA Rural Health Voices

- **Delivering consistent messaging to immigrant communities**
  Wisconsin
  October 22, 2020 - To make sure Hmong and Latino communities in urban Marathon County and surrounding rural counties were receiving consistent messaging in their preferred language about COVID-19, local and state organizations trained eight people to become part-time community liaisons. Liaisons learned how to answer community members' questions through role-playing and how to model preventive behaviors like mask-wearing and handwashing. From May to July, the initiative worked with over 1,000 families.
  Source: [Community Collaboration during COVID-19: Reaching Hmong and Latino Residents in a Rural Setting](), AHA Members in Action Case Study

- **Library increases access to internet and telehealth for community members**
  Texas
  October 22, 2020 - Thanks to a grant, a local wireless internet service provider serving Pottsboro, TX, has put wireless equipment on water towers, and people in low-income households with students can check out portable Wi-Fi routers from the Pottsboro Public Library. A library network funded three neighborhood access stations for the community.

The Pottsboro Public Library director even let patrons use her office for telehealth sessions. With an additional grant, the library is working on launching a telehealth program, including creating a room specifically for telehealth.
Source: [Commentary: Rural Public Libraries as Telehealth Providers During Covid-19](#), The Daily Yonder

- **Creating a free wireless internet service for students**
  Texas
  September 21, 2020 - Lockhart Independent School District surveyed its students' families in March and found that at least 40% of students did not have reliable internet access. The school district diverted money from other projects to create a free wireless internet service. This project involved building towers, installing home routers, and installing antennas.
  Source: [Rural School District Creates Free Internet Service to Keep Students Connected](#), WRBL.com

- **Paying restaurants to provide free meals to people in need**
  Vermont
  September 8, 2020 - Vermont Everyone Eats! is a program that pays restaurants in rural Vermont to provide free meals to people in need. With funds from the CARES Act, the Southeast Vermont Community Action agency pays $10 per meal to restaurants and stipulates that 10% of the food come from local farms. Organizations like food shelves can receive meals in bulk to deliver to their clients. Since early August, this program has provided about 650 meals a day.
  Source: [In Rural Vermont, Food Relief Program Is Eyed as Model](#), The Daily Yonder

- **Using cultural competency to identify gaps in care**
  Oregon
  August 11, 2020 - When a coronavirus outbreak occurred at a seafood company, Samaritan Health Services discovered that over 50% of people testing positive were Hispanic, many of whom carpooled to work and lived in congregate housing. Samaritan Health Services, Centro de Ayuda (a center offering education, language support, and service referrals), Lincoln County Public Health, and community members participate in biweekly meetings to discuss gaps in healthcare access and ways they can improve healthcare for this population.
  Source: [Living and Learning through COVID-19](#), AHA Members in Action Case Study

- **Distributing cloth facemasks to water and wastewater operators**
  Arizona, California, Nevada
  June 30, 2020 - RCAC worked with California's Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network to deliver cloth facemasks to tribal and rural water/wastewater offices. RCAC used its Tribal Circuit Rider program, which travels to tribal communities to provide technical assistance and trainings, to deliver the masks. The Tribal Circuit Rider program expanded to include rural, nontribal communities on its circuit and delivered over 5,500 masks in California. A few thousand masks have been delivered in Arizona and Nevada under similar efforts.
  Source: [RCAC Joins Collaborative Effort to Distribute Cloth Masks](#), Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)

- **Program for rural people without computers**
  Texas

May 27, 2020 - Due to the pandemic, many people need to work and learn from home. Some people in rural communities have access to broadband but can't afford to buy a computer or replace a poorly working one. Programs in Texas collect donated laptops, wipe their disks clean (so there's no data/information from the previous owner), load them with a free operating system and other programs, and give them to people in need, especially those who now have to complete their ESL classes online. The article below provides contact information for those looking to start a similar program in their communities.
Source: [You Can Do It: Computer Rehab Program Transforms Trash into Treasure](#), The Daily Yonder

- **Community resources hub for agencies**
  New York
  May 15, 2020 - A COVID-19 community resources hub was created by Common Ground Health, S2AY Rural Health Network, the Finger Lakes Performing Provider System, and the Systems Integration Project of the United Way of Greater Rochester. This hub allows agencies to share resources, updates, and guidance with one another. Hub topics include child safety and childcare, food, housing services, and older adult services.
  Source: Kathi Lynch, Health Planning Research Analyst, Common Ground Health

- **Determining churches' capacity to host health and human services projects**
  North Carolina
  May 10, 2020 - The North Carolina Office of Rural Health and the Wesley Community Development Corporation, NC United Methodist Association, created a survey to determine churches' capacity to host blood drives and programs for day care, food assistance, and serving homeless COVID-19 patients or patients without caregiver support. Survey results go to county Emergency Management System officials.
  Source: Glenn D. Field, Community Development Specialist, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

- **Foundation supporting information dissemination and relief efforts**
  Alaska
  May 8, 2020 - In Alaska, Rasmuson Foundation is supporting public radio and weekly newspapers so they can still provide accurate COVID-19 information after losing advertising and sponsorship revenue. In addition, the foundation set aside $2 million for COVID-19 relief efforts and gathered leaders together to create the Alaska COVID-19 response fund.
  Source: [Leveraging Deep Community Ties: Rural Funders Tackle COVID-19](#), National Center for Family Philanthropy

- **Protecting and educating farmworkers**
  New York
  April 28, 2020 - To protect farmworkers and slow the spread of COVID-19, the Cornell Farmworker Program is coordinating an effort to make and distribute face masks. As of April 28, volunteers had made over 1,400 cloth masks. Health clinic workers wearing protective gear deliver the masks, provide information like local health resources, and administer COVID-19 tests. In addition, the Cornell Farmworker Program sends text updates and hosts weekly webinars in English and Spanish and provides materials in some indigenous languages.
  Source: [Program Delivers Masks, COVID-19 Info for NY Farmworkers](#), Cornell Chronicle

- **Using rural transit to deliver food and medicine and drive those who are homeless**

Michigan, Pennsylvania
April 23, 2020 - In Michigan, Charlevoix County Transit delivers groceries (including food pantry deliveries and senior center-provided meals) and prescription medications to the homes of older adults and at-risk individuals. The agency also provides transportation to people who need a ride to a school food program or a local restaurant offering free or discounted meals to students. In addition, the agency waived its fare for all riders and eligibility requirements for medical transportation services. In Pennsylvania, rabbittransit, which serves 10 counties, is providing transportation to people who are homeless so they can access safe quarantine locations and testing facilities.
Source: [Public Transit as a Pandemic Lifeline](), AARP

- **Providing Wi-Fi hotspots for those who need internet**
  Kentucky
  April 22, 2020 - Three telecommunications companies (two cooperatives, one privately owned) created 23 Wi-Fi hotspots in 10 rural counties. The hotspots, located in large parking lots so people can stay in their vehicles, are geared toward people completing schoolwork, but anyone can use them.
  Source: [Locally Owned Rural Telcos Establish Hotspots to Meet Demand during Pandemic](), The Daily Yonder

- **Translating health information into Spanish and educating community members**
  Puerto Rico
  April 22, 2020 - An epidemiologist, public health professionals, and graduate students in Puerto Rico are educating community members about COVID-19 prevention. The Coalición Comunitaria COVID-19 de Puerto Rico has three working groups: Education, led by a licensed public health educator; Resources, led by a data scientist; and Epidemiology and Social Determinants of Health Group, led by an epidemiologist and doctoral student. Coalition members take information from the CDC and WHO; translate it into Spanish; and post the information on [Facebook](), [Twitter](), and [Instagram](). In addition, the coalition has a [Spanish-language website]() with graphs and maps of COVID-19 cases and deaths along with resources such as pharmacies and restaurants that deliver and telehealth services available in Puerto Rico. The coalition also developed a training session for community leaders.
  Source: Mariela Alvarado Ortiz, Epidemiologist and Doctor of Public Health student, Coalición para un Puerto Rico Saludable, Inc.; Jennis Vicente Feliciano, data scientist, Data Science Consultants, LLC

- **Reaching students without adequate internet access**
  Arkansas, Tennessee
  April 19, 2020 - Every weekday, Arkansas's PBS affiliate provides television programming that's connected to the state's distance learning curriculum and geared toward preschool through eighth grade students. Local educators, who all have won teacher of the year awards, introduce each day's episode and close out the episode by reflecting on the different lessons. In Meigs County, TN, a special education teacher created printed packets for his students so they could learn from home without needing internet access.
  Source: [How to Reach Students Without Internet Access at Home? Schools Get Creative](), The Hechinger Report

- **Childcare services, meals, and homework help**
  Arkansas

April 16, 2020 - ARcare, a Federally Qualified Health Center, provides child care for school-aged children of families who cannot work from home. Every day, students receive breakfast, lunch, and a snack and help with their homework.
Source: Tracy Holleman, Community Development Director, ARcare

- **Community engagement Facebook videos about substance use and recovery**
  North Carolina
  April 16, 2020 - To reach those with substance use disorder and their families as they self-isolate, the Drug-Free Burke team of Burke Recovery and [Burke Substance Abuse Network](#) (BSAN) is creating videos and posting them on Facebook. The videos fall into three categories: Real Talk with Real People (roundtable discussions about substance use/misuse), Recovering Families (fun activities for children), and Journey to Hope (programming and interviews celebrating recovery). BSAN provides services in urban Burke County but extends its community engagement efforts to rural Caldwell, McDowell, and Rutherford counties.
  Source: Kim James, Executive Director, Burke Recovery

- **Delivering 30-day supplies of food to tribal members and reservation residents**
  California
  April 16, 2020 - The Yurok Health and Human Services Food Distribution Program along with other tribal organizations are delivering 30-day supplies of food to any enrolled member of a federally recognized tribe (or any non-tribal member living on the Yurok Reservation) who lost their jobs or had work hours reduced due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Vulnerable residents, including elders, are served first. The boxes of food include meat and produce as well as dry goods.
  Source: [Yurok Tribe Delivers Groceries and Supplies to Elderly and Vulnerable During SIP Order](#), KRCR News

- **Online self-assessment for people potentially exposed to COVID-19**
  Arkansas
  April 16, 2020 - ARcare, a Federally Qualified Health Center, worked with a telemedicine platform to design an online self-assessment tool. People who may have been exposed to COVID-19 can assess their symptoms without going to a clinic and potentially exposing others. In addition, the online tool helps connect users with a provider via telehealth if needed.
  Source: Tracy Holleman, Community Development Director, ARcare

- **Screening childcare employees and clients**
  Arkansas
  April 16, 2020 - The ARcare Center for Education and Wellness (ACEW), a Federally Qualified Health Center that serves 6-week-old infants to 6th grade students, now screens anyone, including employees, therapy partners, and the children, who enters the building for COVID-19 symptoms. Parents are not allowed to enter the building, and children are escorted from the entrance to the appropriate classroom and vice versa.
  Source: Tracy Holleman, Community Development Director, ARcare

- **Homeless shelter protecting employees and clients**
  Alaska
  April 15, 2020 - Family Promise Mat-Su serves those in Alaska's Matanuska-Susitna Valley who are homeless, facing possible homelessness, or transitioning out of homelessness. To prevent COVID-19, employees are working from home. If employees

need to retrieve anything from the main office, they schedule to visit when others aren't there, wear gloves and masks, and clean surfaces. With shelter applicants, Family Promise Mat-Su conducts phone interviews and has a secured mailbox for people to drop off or pick up applications. In addition, the organization's traditional rotation model of housing families has been replaced with one location. Volunteers who would normally house or serve these families can instead connect with them virtually.

Source: Ginger Bear, Executive Director, Family Promise Mat-Su

- **Feeding schoolchildren and their families**
  Kentucky, New York
  April 14, 2020 - Some school districts in rural Kentucky created grab-and-go sites for families to pick up meals, and some districts designated vehicles to drive to different communities and neighborhoods to drop off food. In New York's rural Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties, families can pick up meals at any distribution site, even if it's outside their own school district.
  Source: Serving School Meals in Challenging Times, State of Childhood Obesity

- **Website for community information and resources**
  Minnesota
  April 13, 2020 - The Cook County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Coronavirus Response Hub provides updated information for community members. This information includes food (Grocery Finder, Takeout Food, Community Services, and Student Meal Pickup Program), mental well-being, healthcare facilities' entrance/screening procedures, and frequently asked questions. In addition, the website lists COVID-19 symptoms and ways for people to protect themselves and others.
  Source: Grace Grinager, Public Health Supervisor

- **Using buses to bring Wi-Fi to students**
  Utah
  April 12, 2020 - Millard School District is parking buses equipped with Wi-Fi in neighborhoods where students don't have adequate internet access. In addition, the district boosted its schools' internet signals so students can drive up and access the internet in the school parking lots. The buses had already been outfitted with Wi-Fi so students could complete homework while traveling to games and other extracurricular events.
  Source: No Wi-Fi? No Problem When the Solution Is Parking a School Bus Outside a Rural Neighborhood, Deseret News

- **Community volunteer Facebook page**
  Pennsylvania
  April 9, 2020 - A private Facebook group with over 1,400 members has become a one-stop shop of COVID-19 information and community volunteer efforts in Bradford, PA. The Facebook page also lists a hotline number providing information about different community resources. The group filled four pickup trucks with food to deliver to those financially impacted by the crisis, and other volunteers are sewing masks for healthcare professionals and others.
  Source: Lori Bebko, Administrator/Volunteer for "Helping Bradford, PA During Coronavirus"

- **Community mutual aid**
  Massachusetts

April 7, 2020 - The [Western Massachusetts Community Mutual Aid](link) is an online tool for community members to *request help* for services like translation, getting supplies, or financial aid; *volunteer* for tasks like driving people or completing errands; or *donate* money to help individuals and families struggling to make ends meet. Community members can also create neighborhood pods for neighbors to connect with and help out one another.
Source: Kirby Lecy, Project Coordinator, Massachusetts State Office of Rural Health

- **Foundation awarding grants to organizations to offer food, child care, and other support**
New York
April 2, 2020 - The Adirondack Foundation, partnering with businesses and other donors like the Cloudsplitter Foundation and United Way of the Adirondack Region, created the Special and Urgent Needs Fund. The grants from this fund went to different organizations' efforts like delivering food, providing financial assistance to healthcare workers, and childcare services.
Source: [Adirondack Foundation Awards 1st Round of COVID-19 Response Grants](link), Adirondack Almanack

- **Pop-up food pantry**
Iowa, Wisconsin
April 2, 2020 - SWCAP's [Pop-Up Food Pantry program](link) was created to deliver fresh food to rural residents who may not be able to access a grocery store. A local Head Start donated the bus, the Alliant Energy Foundation donated money, and local businesses helped turn the bus into a mobile food pantry with refrigerators, storage, and shelving. The bus travels to Grant, Lafayette, Iowa, and Richland counties in Wisconsin, and program coordinators hope to add another county to its route. Coordinators schedule weekly Pop-Ups in rural communities and deliver to senior apartments on a regular basis. Delivery people wear gloves and face masks when handing out food.
Source: Wally Orzechowski, Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program

- **Shelter-in-place services for seniors**
California
April 2, 2020 - Since Humboldt County is under a shelter-in-place order, SoHum Health is calling its local seniors to check in and provide assistance. During these calls, hospital and clinic staff provide wellness checks, telehealth visits with seniors' providers as needed, prescription refills and delivery, and information about grocery deliveries. Healy Senior Center, working with markets and volunteer drivers, is coordinating grocery delivery, and the Southern Humboldt Chamber of Commerce is donating face masks to the volunteer drivers. To learn more, see this April 2020 [American Hospital Association case study featuring SoHum Health](link).
Source: Kristen Rees, Manager of Quality, Southern Humboldt Community Healthcare District

- **Food delivery service by local market**
Montana
April 1, 2020 - Camas Organic Market in rural Hot Springs, Montana, is helping customers maintain social distancing by offering groceries through delivery or curbside pick-up only. Customers can share their grocery lists with the market via phone, email, FaceTime, or Facebook Messenger or knock on the door and an employee will shop for them. The

market is also working on a way for customers to order groceries online. Customers can pick up their groceries for free or have them delivered for a $3.00 fee ($5.00 for customers who live up to 10 miles outside of Hot Springs).
Source: Frances DeForrest, BSN, RN

- **School bus drivers deliver homework and meals**
  Utah
  March 31, 2020 - Every day, school bus drivers deliver homework packets and sack lunches to Navajo Nation students in San Juan County. Monument Valley High School uses its buses to deliver breakfast and lunch every school day to students in need, and educators have been helping the kitchen staff make and deliver these meals. Washington County School District and Carbon School District also deliver meals via bus.
  Source: [During Coronavirus Outbreak, School Buses Are Delivering Food and Homework to Utah Students in Rural Communities](#), Salt Lake Tribune
- **Allowing restaurants to sell excess food**
  Michigan
  March 30, 2020 - The Michigan Restaurant and Lodging Association partnered with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to allow restaurants to sell food and pantry items, which only grocery and retail stores could sell before. Restaurants that want to participate need to receive guidance on properly labeling food to sell directly to customers. The partnership allows restaurants to sell excess food and gives customers more options when grocery stores are overwhelmed.
  Source: [Restaurants Teaming Up with Agriculture Department to Sell Food](#), WSJM (Southwest Michigan)

Helping Healthcare Providers

Examples of innovative ways communities and organizations have helped healthcare providers stay safe and deliver care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Ordering and delivering personal protective equipment to rural healthcare facilities**
  Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Wyoming
  July 15, 2020 - In a campaign called [Heart4Heroes](#), rural healthcare facilities complete order requests for PPE through the nonprofit Project C.U.R.E., which has seven warehouses across the country and connections with PPE vendors. Project C.U.R.E. fulfills the orders, and then Angel Flight volunteers fly the PPE to those facilities. In Colorado alone, the initiative has delivered over 250,000 pieces of PPE to 30 rural hospitals, and the Heart4Heroes website lists a total number of over 2.1 million pieces delivered. People, businesses, and other organizations can donate money or PPE to Heart4Heroes.
  Source: Benjamin Anderson, Vice President for Rural Health and Hospitals, Colorado Hospital Association
- **Helpline for healthcare workers and community members**
  North Carolina
  May 18, 2020 - The Hope4Healers Helpline (919.226.2002) provides resilience and mental health support to healthcare workers and their families experiencing stress from responding to COVID-19. This helpline is available 24/7, and callers will receive follow-up from a

volunteer licensed behavioral health professional. The 24/7 Hope4NC Helpline (1.855.587.3463), previously used for hurricane relief efforts, is now available for every North Carolina county.
Source: Glenn D. Field, Community Development Specialist, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

- **Creating an online version of a hands-on proficiency demonstration for certification**
Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee
April 23, 2020 - Fast Pace Health, with 113 clinics across four states, developed a way to complete a hands-on Proficiency Demonstration component in a virtual, real-time environment instead of in person. The hands-on component is required by the Department of Transportation in order to be certified as a urine drug screen collector or breath alcohol test technician.
Source: Dana Keeton, Learning & Development Partner, Fast Pace Health

- **Council encouraging healthcare professionals to write about COVID-19's effect on miners**
New Mexico
April 21, 2020 - The Mining Advisory Council of the Southwest Mining Health Center for Interdisciplinary Collaboration for Miners' Health and Safety is working to raise awareness of the effects of COVID-19 on mining populations, since these groups may already have compromised lungs. Specifically, the Council helps rural professionals and trainees write perspectives on COVID-19 and miners. One such article that's resulted from this effort is Caring for Miners During the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic.
Source: Gail Nowosadko, Outreach Clinic Coordinator, Radiation Exposure Screening and Education Program (RESEP)

- **Grant to help hospitals offer or reimburse child care for their employees**
Illinois
April 21, 2020 - The Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation (ILCHF) awarded a $500,000 grant to the Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network (ICAHN). This funding will help hospitals reimburse costs for opening a childcare center for their employees, working with another organization to open a childcare center, or helping employees cover childcare costs. Over 30 ICAHN members are participating in this grant.
Source: ILCHF, ICAHN Offer $500,000 to Essential Hospital Workers for Child Care, Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network

- **Online platform to serve and protect first responders**
North Carolina
April 20, 2020 - Buncombe County launched the online platform Community Connect, in which community members can create accounts and provide information about their homes to better serve first responders (such as home layout, emergency contacts, number of residents and pets, and any special needs or medical conditions requiring accommodation). While the platform was planned before the coronavirus outbreak – Asheville piloted the platform in 2019 – Community Connect added an option for residents to indicate if anyone in their household has tested positive for COVID-19 or is considered high-risk.
Source: Buncombe Launches Online Emergency Platform During Pandemic, Carolina Public Press

- **Helping healthcare employees transition into new roles**
Indiana

April 17, 2020 - Daviess Community Hospital in Washington, Indiana, has implemented a COVID-19 hotline, employee screenings, and community screenings. These new projects have led to a shift in employees' roles and schedules. Operating room nurses answer the 24-hour hotline, and the screening locations are run by therapists, athletic trainers, registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses (LPNs). The hospital is also providing cross-training to employees to help them transition into new roles.
Source: Angie Steiner, Director of Business Development/Marketing, Daviess Community Hospital

- **Tele-dentistry protocols and resources**
  Virginia
  April 16, 2020 - The nonprofit Virginia Health Catalyst developed a protocol to help providers conduct tele-dentistry visits with patients who don't have the needed technology at home, by having the patient drive to the clinic's parking lot and receive equipment and assistance from a staff member (wearing protective equipment) to complete the tele-appointment in their vehicle. In addition, Virginia Health Catalyst has created a [COVID-19 Resources](#) page and a [Crisis Teledentistry Implementation Guide](#), complete with implementation steps, a tele-dentistry Dos and Don'ts list, and billing updates for Virginia Medicaid.
  Source: McAllister Castelaz, Dental Director, Ivor Dental Center – Horizon Health Services, Inc.; Sarah Holland, CEO, Virginia Health Catalyst

- **Tele-mentoring rural providers caring for miners**
  New Mexico
  April 16, 2020 - Due to the pandemic, spirometry training courses and annual conferences related to lung diseases have been postponed. To help fill this gap in knowledge, the [Miners' Wellness TeleECHO](#) (Extension for Community Health Outcomes) program creates a virtual community of practice to help rural providers treat patients with mining-related diseases.
  Source: Akshay Sood, Miners' Colfax Medical Center Endowed Chair in Mining-Related Lung Diseases, University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center

- **Making PPE and test swabs for rural clinics and a local health department**
  North Carolina
  April 14, 2020 - UNC-Chapel Hill medical students, the Mountain Area Health Education Center, and local manufacturers with 3D printers are making personal protective equipment like face shields for rural clinics and a local health department in the western part of the state. The group also received a local grant to make test swabs.
  Source: [Med Students Are Producing PPE for Rural Clinics in North Carolina](#), Vice News

- **Protecting hospital staff while preserving PPE**
  Mississippi
  April 8, 2020 - King's Daughters Medical Center (KDMC) in Brookhaven prepared for a surge of COVID-19 patients, since it's located two hours north of New Orleans, which has been hard-hit. In preparation, KDMC dedicated one floor to COVID-19 patients and will place intravenous (IV) poles and pumps outside of patients' isolation rooms so that staff can change IV fluids without having to put on personal protective equipment (PPE).
  Source: [Rural Hospital Shifts Operations in Anticipation of COVID-19 Surge](#), American Hospital Association case study

- **Facilitating donations/sales of personal protection equipment (PPE)**

Virginia
April 2, 2020 - The Graduate Medical Education Consortium of Southwest Virginia (GMEC) and Virginia Rural Health Association (VRHA) asked construction companies, nail salons, tattoo parlors, other businesses and industries, and laypeople to donate or sell PPE so GMEC and VRHA can deliver these supplies to healthcare providers. So far, the two organizations have been able to deliver supplies to three hospitals, four residency programs, and many other Federally Qualified Health Centers and Rural Health Clinics.
Source: Wendy Welch, Executive Director, Graduate Medical Education Consortium of Southwest Virginia

- **Free telehealth services for physicians**
  Georgia
  April 1, 2020 - Rural physicians or physicians treating rural patients in Georgia can access six free months of a new telehealth consultation software, thanks to the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center and the Georgia Partnership for Telehealth (GPT). Patients can access [GPT's telehealth system](#) through a computer, tablet, or smart phone. Interested physicians in the state can contact the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center at 478.301.4700 or info@georgiaruralhealth.org to get more information or enroll.
  Source: Stephanie M. Basey, Director of Training, Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center

- **Shared purchasing for unaffiliated clinics to get personal protection equipment (PPE)**
  Virginia
  April 1, 2020 - The Virginia Rural Health Association (VRHA) worked with PPE vendors to place one large order of PPE for 30 small clinics that were not affiliated with a large healthcare system. VRHA staff then deliver PPE to these clinics across the state.
  Source: Beth O'Connor, Executive Director, Virginia Rural Health Association

- **Making gowns for hospital employees**
  Maine
  March 27, 2020 - Houlton Regional Hospital employees made washable, reusable gowns for coworkers by creating a pattern from an existing gown, buying fabric to sew a new gown, and cutting the tops off crew socks to attach to the ends of sleeves to make cuffs.
  Source: [Rural Maine Hospitals Get Creative to Prepare Facilities for COVID-19](#), Maine Public Radio

- **Businesses making healthcare supplies**
  Georgia
  March 26, 2020 - In an effort led by the Georgia Department of Economic Development, many manufacturers and distributors have shifted business models to make healthcare supplies. The Rural Georgia Initiatives division has reported rural breweries and distilleries making hand sanitizer, a laser-cutting business retooling its machines to cut fabric for masks, and universities and colleges donating excess medical supplies.
  Source: [Rural Georgia Businesses Shift to Making Critical Medical Supplies](#), Georgia.org

Providing Health Services

Examples of how rural healthcare providers and facilities have innovated to deliver healthcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Mobile health unit for testing and vaccines**
  Pennsylvania, Ohio
  March 3, 2021 - Primary Health Network, an FQHC serving 16 counties in Pennsylvania and one in Ohio, purchased a mobile health system where healthcare staff can travel to underserved communities and provide COVID-19 testing or vaccines. The mobile unit can be set up in about 45 minutes; this process includes powering up generators for the freezers that house the vaccines and creating negative air flow to prevent airborne spreading of the virus. Primary Health Network plans to mobilize their COVID-19 vaccination efforts, once adequate supply of vaccine is available. Additionally, the FQHC is performing COVID testing from the mobile unit 3-4 days per week for Mercer County, PA, residents. To address any misinformation and encourage community members to get the vaccine, Primary Health Network's Chief Medical Officer, George Garrow, MD, talks to organizations like farmers' groups, trade unions, and church groups.
  Source: Sara Rupp, Marketing Director, Primary Health Network

- **Door-to-door screenings and education**
  Arizona
  November 6, 2020 - The Hopi Health Care Center (HHCC), the Hopi Tribe Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the CDC collaborated to visit every household in two villages. Five pairs of community health representatives and volunteers from HHCC, Hopi Tribe DHHS, or CDC went door to door to screen for COVID-19, recommend any needed testing, and provide education on how to prevent or mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within a household. The pairs screened a total of 141 people in under 10 hours, with only 5% of households refusing services.
  Source: [Notes from the Field: Development of an Enhanced Community-Focused COVID-19 Surveillance Program – Hopi Tribe, June-July 2020](), CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)

- **Library increases access to internet and telehealth for community members**
  Texas
  October 22, 2020 - Thanks to a grant, a local wireless internet service provider serving Pottsboro, TX, has put wireless equipment on water towers, and people in low-income households with students can check out portable Wi-Fi routers from the Pottsboro Public Library. A library network funded three neighborhood access stations for the community. The Pottsboro Public Library director even let patrons use her office for telehealth sessions. With an additional grant, the library is working on launching a telehealth program, including creating a room specifically for telehealth.
  Source: [Commentary: Rural Public Libraries as Telehealth Providers During Covid-19](), The Daily Yonder

- **Free smartphones for mental health patients**
  North Carolina
  August 7, 2020 - Partners Behavioral Health Management and Vaya Health in western North Carolina gave free smartphones with data plans to patients who weren't able to access mental health services via telehealth. A total of 1,000 patients served by the two agencies received phones. The agencies received the phones at no cost from a telecommunications company but had to pay for the data plans.
  Source: [Free Phones, Masks in Parks: Rural Providers Get Creative with Mental Health Outreach Post-COVID](#), North Carolina Health News
- **Flexing use of school-based telehealth equipment**
  Indiana
  May 22, 2020 - By January 2020, Green County General Hospital, Linton, Indiana, had newly established school-based telehealth in 6 of the county's schools. With school closures secondary to COVID-19, the school-based telehealth equipment and appointment processes were flexed to meet the organization's COVID-19 surge needs. In the first several months of new demand, the organization was able to complete over 800 primary care, long-term care, and surgery telehealth visits.
  Source: [My Virtual Clinic School-Based Telehealth Program](#)
- **Behavioral health support groups offered online**
  North Carolina
  May 18, 2020 - Caswell Family Medical Center, with locations in Yanceyville and Eden, offers behavioral health support groups via telehealth. The four support groups are called Parents Coping with Covid, Caregiving through Covid, Hope in Healthcare (for healthcare workers), and Covid Connection (for teenagers). People who want to join a group but can't access these group video sessions can join a session by phone or schedule an individual appointment.
  Source: Glenn D. Field, Community Development Specialist, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
- **Curbside services and telehealth**
  Kansas
  April 27, 2020 - Wilson Medical Center (WMC) in Neodesha is offering curbside lab services and clinic care. Hospital patients do not need an appointment to drive up and access services from their vehicle, but patients completing lab work will need a lab order. Patients of WMC's three family medicine clinics need to make an appointment first. Patients can also make appointments for telehealth services; those who don't have the needed technology will receive a home visit from a nursing assistant who will bring an iPad.
  Source: [Wilson Medical Center Implements Creative Care Alternatives to Address COVID-19](#), American Hospital Association case study
- **Creating and expanding telehealth services, including tele-psychiatric**
  Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee
  April 23, 2020 - [Fast Pace Health](#), with 113 clinics across four states, added telehealth services by partnering with its electronic medical records vendor to create an online check-in process and implement a telehealth app (for face-to-face visits with providers). Patients can also receive tele-psychiatric visits with psychiatric nurse practitioners. Fast Pace Health

implemented these services in its four-state service area and has now expanded into states without brick-and-mortar Fast Pace Health clinics.
Source: Dana Keeton, Learning & Development Partner, Fast Pace Health

- **Preparing for a surge of patients**
  California
  April 23, 2020 - Marshall Medical Center (MMC) in Placerville created a surge plan in the event of inpatient capacity expansion by 50% to 100% of normal capacity. This plan, coordinated with El Dorado County Office of Emergency Services, addresses 1) facility and equipment needs, 2) medical professional support, 3) support staff such as pharmacists and respiratory therapists, and 4) COVID-19 patients and other patients. In addition, MMC developed plans addressing staff stress and burnout.
  Source: [Four Stages of Planning and Implementation During COVID-19: One Rural Hospital's Preparations](#), American Hospital Association case study

- **iPads donated to recovery centers**
  Kentucky
  April 22, 2020 - The not-for-profit [Fletcher Group](#) helped arrange the donation by for-profit companies of [28 iPads to 14 Recovery Kentucky facilities](#) (9 of which are in rural communities). The tablets allow residents in the substance use recovery facilities to communicate with their family members (since visitations are currently not allowed) and complete 12-step programming that would normally take place in person.
  Source: Richard Faylor, Communications Director, Fletcher Group

- **Delivering healthcare and food to families**
  Georgia
  April 19, 2020 - CarePartners, serving Emanuel and Candler counties, has mobilized a bus on loan from the Swainsboro fire department to deliver behavioral healthcare to families. With the THRIVE bus (Taking Hope, Recovery, Integrated care and Vitality Everywhere), a certified addiction counselor, a registered nurse, and a community support worker complete a basic medical and mental health screening and address any issues that come up, check patients for COVID-19 symptoms, and deliver food to families in need.
  Source: [Bus Brings Behavioral Health Care to Rural Georgia Families](#), Albany Herald

- **Hospital teams develop solutions, including community cloth mask initiative**
  Wisconsin
  April 13, 2020 - Sauk Prairie Healthcare, a 36-bed hospital in Prairie du Sac, WI, created three workgroups called the Research, Innovation, Community Corps (RIC Team). The research team studies data and develops treatment plans and procedural best practices, the innovation team identifies potential equipment shortages to then prototype and develop needed equipment, and the community corps team mobilizes the public. One RIC Team project is the [Social Distancing + Mask = Better](#) campaign to engage community members in how to make cloth masks and why they are so important. The masks are for community members as well as healthcare employees who do not have direct patient contact.
  Source: Nathan D. Grunewald, Chief Innovation Officer, Sauk Prairie Healthcare

- **Serving people with substance use disorders**
  New Mexico
  April 13, 2020 - El Centro Family Health in Rio Arriba County is making adjustments to better serve people with substance use disorders during this pandemic. El Centro providers are able to prescribe buprenorphine over the phone, write month-long prescriptions instead

of one- or two-week supplies, and have appointments over the phone instead of in person. People who need higher-level care, such as pregnant women on medication-assisted treatment, can still make in-person appointments. In addition, El Centro is offering group therapy sessions using a videoconferencing platform.
Source: [Rio Arriba Addiction Treatment, Harm Reduction Groups Adapt Amid Outbreak](#), Santa Fe New Mexican

- **Providing information to immigrant communities**
  Arizona
  April 9, 2020 - The Primary Prevention Mobile Health Unit-Tucson, which serves immigrant communities in Pima County, is calling clients to check in and is updating its Facebook page with Spanish-language posts about different local, state, and federal resources. The health unit also informs its clients that people who are undocumented can access COVID-19 testing and treatment without fear of losing the ability to gain citizenship under the public charge rule.
  Source: [Public Health Workers Innovate Around Social Distancing Guidelines](#), High Country News

- **Drive-through testing for COVID-19**
  Illinois
  April 8, 2020 - The Katherine Shaw Bethea Hospital (KSB) in Dixon turned its four-bay ambulance garage into a drive-through testing location. Patients first complete a pre-screening by phone or the KSB telehealth platform; patients who are identified as potentially symptomatic then complete a drive-through test, available Monday through Friday. KSB partnered with Lee County and Whiteside County health departments to deliver test results to patients.
  Source: [KSB Hospital Response for Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Katherine Shaw Bethea Hospital, Dixon, Ill.](#), American Hospital Association case study

- **Offering telehealth services through videoconferencing**
  Minnesota
  April 8, 2020 - Riverwood Healthcare Center (RHCC) in Aitkin uses a videoconferencing service to complete telehealth appointments. RHCC trained provider-nurse teams in how to use the service. In addition, the center has been able to bring family members into the appointments, with the patient's permission. For example, a nursing home patient who isn't allowed to have visitors was able to have a family member join the telehealth visit.
  Source: [Rapid Deployment of Telehealth Services for Rural Hospitals Fighting COVID-19](#), American Hospital Association case study

- **Thinking beyond lab tests to diagnose patients**
  Indiana
  April 8, 2020 - Margaret Mary Health (MMH), a Critical Access Hospital in Batesville, was hit with a surge of COVID-19 patients in the first half of March. Providers realized that their lab testing had a high rate of false negatives (saying people did not have COVID-19 when they actually did), so they instead relied on a physical exam, a chest X-ray or CT scan, and markers like low oxygen levels to diagnose patients. MMH also coordinated with neighboring hospitals to share staff when other employees were sick.
  Source: [Rural COVID-19 Case Study: Surviving a COVID-19 Surge](#), American Hospital Association case study

- **Moving to online and telephone-based health services**
  New York
  April 1, 2020 - To adapt to offering services remotely, Cayuga Community Health Network in rural Cayuga County, New York, upgraded all its computers and adapted all its community programs so they can be offered via Zoom and Facebook Live. The network uses its website and Facebook page to provide weekly health tips and share information with community partners. One in-home program is now offered via telephone, so participants can complete health questionnaires over the phone and have health products delivered to them.
  Source: Shari Weiss, Executive Director, Cayuga Community Health Network
- **Training and information provided at a distance**
  Mississippi
  April 1, 2020 - To communicate with the public, Mississippi State University Extension curates resources from trusted organizations such as the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MSU Extension has also made resources covering various topics, such as ways to help children combat boredom and a 14-day meal plan with shelf-stable foods and ingredients that freeze well.
  Source: David R. Buys, State Health Specialist, Mississippi State University Extension

Sharing Data on COVID-19

Innovative approaches to help communities and individuals collect and share data on COVID-19.

- **COVID-19 symptom tracker**
  Alabama
  April 6, 2020 - The University of Alabama at Birmingham created a COVID-19 symptom tracker to identify where symptoms of the novel coronavirus are emerging. Viewers can check in every day, selecting I feel good or I feel sick, to contribute to tracking and visualization of emerging hot spots. The website also lists COVID-19 symptoms, Alabama's hotline number, and a resource to find your nearest testing location.
  Source: Sue Feldman, Director, Graduate Programs in Health Informatics, University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Health Professions
- **County-by-county data**
  Georgia
  April 1, 2020 - The Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center's blog post COVID19 Cases by County – Updated Daily features two color-coded maps: one with current confirmed cases per county and a time-lapse map to show the spread of COVID-19 since March 11, 2020. Another blog post, COVID19 Case Rates per County, provides two color-coded maps: one with current number of cases per 1,000 residents and a time-lapse map to show the spread of COVID-19 since March 11, 2020. Featuring cases per 1,000 residents helps viewers compare the urban areas with rural areas while taking into account their population.
  Source: Stephanie M. Basey, Director of Training, Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center