

Coos Economic Action Plan

Health Care Technical Review Committee

Recommendation Three

Action Step Recommendation Statement

Provide capacity for the county's health care providers, community leaders and policy makers to learn about alternative models of care delivery and to determine the applicability, feasibility and impact of systems changes in the delivery of health care services that would ensure sustainability and accessibility to services for the region's population.

The goals for this initiative will be to provide information to health providers, community leaders and policy makers about alternative models of care for rural regions and facilitate a process to:

- Examine the applicability of these models to this rural region;
- Determine the feasibility of the models in the current funding environment;
- Understand the impact of the models on the region's population and health status;
- Develop a plan for moving forward any changes; and
- Develop policy that might be necessary to implement successful changes in the current system of care.

Justification of Recommendation

The financial health of the region's health care system is tenuous. Despite federal designations of the region's hospitals and health centers that allow for cost based reimbursement and grants for the uninsured, the Critical Access Hospitals (CAH), primary care clinics and mental health providers in Coos County struggle to sustain basic services to the region's population. The payor mix, low volume and low numbers of insured patients create a disparity in the financial health of rural providers from those in other parts of the State. A higher percentage of the region's population are recipients of Medicare and Medicaid, which traditionally reimburses at a lower rate than private insurance. The region has higher rates of uninsured with less than 50 percent of the age 19 to 64 population having access to employer sponsored health insurance coverage.

Who

Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital (UCVH), in collaboration with Androscoggin Valley Hospital and Weeks Medical Center would hire a consultant to study consolidation and management models in rural health. Additional work would be done by North Country Health Consortium to educate health providers and policy makers about alternative models of care for rural regions and facilitate a process to determine how to move forward on any collaborative initiatives. Alternative models may include the use of technology, sharing of services, facilities and/or workforce or other redesign of the system.

Timeline for Implementation

A funding request has been submitted to the Tillotson Fund by UCVH. A consultant would be hired within a couple months of receiving funding. The consultant will start by studying collaborative models for managing and providing care in the region. The report will be provided to the three Coos County Hospitals. During several initial meetings, a process and timeline would be developed with the group of providers and other interested parties. A funding proposal will be submitted to the Endowment for Health to provide education to providers and community leaders in the region on rural models of care. More time will be needed to examine the applicability of these models to this rural region; to determine the feasibility and impact on the region's population; to develop a plan to move forward; and to develop necessary policy changes.

Major Measures of Success

1. Collaborative models of care identified
2. Financial feasibility of alternatives determined in the funding environment in New Hampshire
3. Health status impact reviewed
4. Process and plan developed to move forward any recommendations
5. Policy and funding changes identified

Resources

Funding Resources include Coos Economic Adjustment project funding. Additional funds will be requested from sources such as the Tillotson Fund, the Endowment for Health and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Northern Division. Funds to be leveraged include funds through the NH Department of Health and Human Services, State Office of Rural Health. The National Rural Health Association is a resource for experts in this field.