



The State Office of Rural Health

For Immediate Release

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Colorado Rural Health Center Launched Fifth Year of the Improving Communications and Readmissions (iCARE) Program

Denver, Colo – Earlier this month the Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) kicked off its fifth year of the Improving Communications and Readmissions (iCARE) program. Hospitalizations account for almost one-third of the \$2 trillion spent on healthcare in the United States.

Many of these hospitalizations are considered necessary and appropriate, but a significant number of these patients are returning to the hospital after a recent stay. In a study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation it was estimated that more than \$17 billion is spent annually for unneeded readmissions.

“The iCARE program is a statewide improvement project that aligns with these national trends and funding priorities,” said Jen Dunn, CRHC’s director of programs.

“The program focuses on sustainable improvements and outcomes addressing avoidable hospital readmissions at Colorado’s Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs),” added Dunn.

In 2012, the CRHC expanded the iCARE program to include the provider based rural health clinics affiliated with the hospitals. In its current year, 19 CAHs and 22 provider based clinics from around Colorado are participating in the program. Over the course of the program CAHs have made great improvements in their readmission rates and the processes that contribute to readmissions, decreasing their collective rate from 5 percent median to a current 3.8 percent median.

In addition, iCARE clinics have made improvements in their diabetes processes resulting in improved rates. For example, in the first half of 2014, iCARE facilities reported an average of 63 percent of patients with blood pressure less than 140/90 (better than the national average of 48 percent).

“When we created iCARE, we were excited about the opportunity to engage rural communities in their journey of focus on chronic disease towards management of health and wellness,” recalls Michelle Mills, CRHC’s chief executive. “I am very proud of the development and progress over the years, and the outcomes we are seeing from the program.”

To celebrate the start of the program’s fifth year, CRHC is recognizing one of its members – Mt. San Rafael Hospital –for their engagement and innovation in the iCARE program.

Caleb Murphy Siem manages the iCARE program at CRHC. “Mt. San Rafael Hospital has initiated some truly innovative projects that support the goals of the iCARE program.”

“Healthcare is changing at a rapid pace,” added Siem. “We are featuring Mt. San Rafael Hospital this month because they are creating and transforming new models for success in today’s healthcare environment, and really becoming leaders within the iCARE program.”

The Mt. San Rafael Hospital is a family-centered hospital that prides itself on providing the best care and service to the communities they serve. Mt. San Rafael Hospital is a recognized leader in rural healthcare, with 200 full and part-time staff working together to provide high quality, personalized care. To learn more about Mr. San Rafael Hospital visit, www.msrlhc.org. To learn more about CRHC’s iCARE program visit www.coruralhealth.org/icare-2.

iCARE is supported through CRHC’s receipt of Federal HRSA Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program Grant: CFDA 93.241; Award 2 H54RH00056-13-00 and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s Cancer, Cardiovascular, and Pulmonary Disease Grant Program.

About The Colorado Rural Health Center

The Colorado Rural Health Center was established in 1991 as Colorado's State Office of Rural Health. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, CRHC serves dual roles as the State Office of Rural Health with the mission of assisting rural communities in addressing healthcare issues; and as the State Rural Health Association, advocating for policy change to ensure that rural Coloradans have access to comprehensive, affordable healthcare services of the highest quality. For more information visit www.coruralhealth.org, call 303-832-7493, or call toll free 800-851-6782 from rural Colorado.

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