

South Dakota Rural Health Transformation Project Summary

Organization: Office of the Governor, State of South Dakota

Lead Agency: South Dakota Department of Health

Total Budget: \$1,000,000,000 over 5 years

Overview: South Dakota's Rural Health Transformation Plan addresses the state's health access challenges in one of America's most rural states. Rural and frontier residents often face long distances to providers, limited transportation, lower incomes, and workforce shortages that strain hospitals and clinics. These factors contribute to higher rates of suicide and chronic disease. This five-year initiative invests strategically to build capacity and resilience within rural healthcare systems to ensure access to quality care endures far beyond this grant period.

Strategic Approach & Project Goals

The plan advances four interconnected goals. First, it modernizes South Dakota's health infrastructure through expanded electronic health records, telehealth platforms, and data systems that support smarter resource use. Second, it builds a sustainable healthcare workforce by attracting and retaining professionals and expanding the community health worker network. Third, it strengthens access to quality care close to home through innovative payment models, facility reinvention, and enhanced chronic disease and maternal health services. Fourth, it transforms care delivery by integrating behavioral health into primary care and reinforcing emergency medical services across the state. To achieve these goals, the plan focuses on:

1. **Connecting Technology & Data:** Deploy certified EHR systems, integrate health information exchange, fund telehealth equipment and platforms, support cybersecurity enhancements, and create a Rural Data Atlas for evidence-based planning.
2. **Advancing the Rural Workforce:** Provide recruitment incentives and retention supports for healthcare professionals, expand Community Health Worker training and certification, and establish a Training and Resource Hub for continuing education.
3. **Keeping Healthcare Local and Strong:** Explore new Medicaid payment models, award Rural Health Access and Quality Grants for facility optimization, strengthen chronic disease management programs, and improve access to maternal care.
4. **Transforming Systems for Sustainability:** Implement Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics statewide, integrate behavioral health into primary care through the Collaborative Care Model, and establish regional Emergency Medical Services hubs.

Together, these goals create a more connected, capable, and resilient rural health system to improve access, quality, and outcomes for all South Dakotans.