

November 2, 2021

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Dear Secretary Becerra,

On behalf of the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services, I am pleased to send you a policy brief and accompanying recommendations on a new Medicare provider type called the Rural Emergency Hospital (REH) that HHS will establish recommendations for in the coming year. The REH, which will be a new rural hospital type that will not provide inpatient care but will provide 24-hour emergency services, provides an important new options to ensure access to care for rural communities. The Committee approved this policy brief at its recent meeting October 25-27th.

The Consolidated Appropriations (CAA) Act of 2020 created the REH, reflecting policymakers' ongoing concerns about access to essential services in rural communities. As you are aware, more than 130 rural hospitals have closed. The CAA created the REH provider type to give rural communities with struggling rural hospitals an option between a traditional acute-care hospital and complete closure. This is the first new rural provider type in more than 20 years, since the Critical Access Hospital (CAH) was created in 1997 under the Balanced Budget Act.

The Committee hopes these recommendations will be useful to HHS and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which will be drafting the REH regulations. We offer these considerations in the interest of ensuring that the REHs are able to serve as a viable, sustainable feature of the rural health infrastructure in the United States. The policy brief includes a range of recommendations from staffing requirements to reimbursement and the need to provide technical assistance to communities considering converting their rural hospital to an REH.



National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services

We have just concluded a productive meeting examining behavioral health and primary care integration in rural America. We received valuable input from providers and the state of Arizona. We will be providing a policy brief with recommendations for your consideration on that topic soon.

In 2022, we intend to hold two meetings in rural areas. We would welcome your participation or the participation of your representatives.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,

Jeff Colyer, M.D., former Governor, Kansas
Chair