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Maryland Department of Health  
and Mental Hygiene

Martin O'Malley  
*Governor*

Anthony G. Brown  
*Lt. Governor*

Joshua M. Sharfstein  
*Secretary, DHMH*

Family Health Administration

Donna Gugel, MHS  
*Acting Director, FHA*



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## Director's Notes

The Negotiated Rulemaking Committee, established to revise HRSA's shortage designation methodology, was not able to come to consensus at its last meeting in Alexandria, VA in mid October 2011. Therefore, it is once again up to HRSA to publish a proposed methodology based on what the Committee worked on, but could not agree on. For more information, visit <http://www.hrsa.gov/advisorycommittees/shortage/index.html>.

The SORH is asking everyone to join them in celebrating National Rural Health Day on November 17. Additional information regarding this day can be found on page 4.

The Primary Care Office (PCO) will establish a Workforce Committee that will be made up of PCO stakeholders (Primary Care Association, Federally Qualified Health Centers, State Office of Rural Health, Medicaid, local health departments, hospitals, etc.) to assist the PCO in retention and evaluation by developing goals and implementing activities to increase retention of health care providers funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. If you are interested in serving on this Committee, please contact me at [evaidya@dhhm.state.md.us](mailto:evaidya@dhhm.state.md.us).

Please welcome our newest staff member, Dimitar Naydenov. He is a graduate student at UMBC and will be working with the PCO on shortage designations and activities associated with the new ARRA funding. He also put together this nicely prepared newsletter.

Best regards,  
Liz Vaidya, Director of Primary Care and Rural Health

## Maryland Shortage Designations Updates

The Office of Shortage Designations approved the following shortage designations:

Primary Care HPSA: none

Primary Care Facility HPSA: none

Dental Care HPSA: Medicaid eligible Allegany County, Medicaid eligible Garrett County, Medicaid eligible Tri-County Lower Eastern Shore (Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties).

Dental Care Facility HPSA: none

Mental Care HPSA: Garrett County, Kent County, Saint Mary's County, Tri-County Lower Eastern Shore (Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties), and Washington County.

Mental Health Facility HPSA: Baltimore City Detention Center, Central Booking and Intake Facility, Maryland Reception and Diagnostic Center, Maryland Correctional Institution – Jessup, and Metro Transition Center.

For more information on HPSA and MUA/P designations in Maryland, visit [http://fha.maryland.gov/ohpp/pco\\_shortage.cfm](http://fha.maryland.gov/ohpp/pco_shortage.cfm).

## Changes to the Electronic Prescribing Incentive Program

The 2011 Medicare Electronic Prescribing Incentive Program Final Rule was published in the Federal Register on September 2.

According to a reference guide posted on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), there are three main changes for the 2011 eRx Incentive Program, which started on October 6 and will end in 2014. The reference guide notes that the new program extends the significant hardship exemption request deadline for eligible professionals for the 2012 eRx payment adjustment to November 1, 2011, provides significant hardship exemption categories for the 2012 eRx payment adjustment, and allows the use of Certified EHR Technology both for the 2011 eRx incentive and the 2013 eRx payment adjustment. The deadline for exemption requests is November 2011. Eligible individuals should go to <http://www.qualitynet.org/pgrs> and enter their request together with their rationale, while group practices should submit a 2012 exemption request to the following address:

Significant Hardship Exemptions  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
Office of Clinical Standards and Quality,  
Quality Measurement and Health Assessment Group  
7500 Security Boulevard  
Mail Stop S3-02-01  
Baltimore, MD 21244-1850

Payment adjustments are as follows: 1 percent in 2012, 1.5 percent in 2013, and 2 percent in 2014 for Medicare Part B PFS covered professional services.

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

## Maryland Given 51 Awards in Federal Money to Strengthen the Nursing Workforce

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary, Kathleen Sebelius, announced on October 11 the total of 1716 awards to strengthen the nursing workforce throughout the country, including Puerto Rico. The awards, worth \$82.3 million in total and administered by the Health Resources and Security Administration (HRSA), are divided into two programs: the Nursing Scholarship Program (NSP) and the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program (NELPP), both of which are worth \$27 million and \$55.3 million respectively. Eligible nurses under the NELPP are required to work at a Critical Shortage Facility or education institution, according to a press release. The press release also includes data concerning the number of awards by state. The data indicates that Maryland was awarded 15 scholarships and 36 loan repayments.

NELPP is a two-year effort by the federal government on a selective basis in an effort to address growing health care needs and nursing shortage in underserved communities. According to the HRSA website, it covers 60 percent of registered nurses' qualifying education loan balance for that period of time plus 25 percent of their original total qualifying nursing education loan balance for an optional third year of service.

The NSP is also a selective effort aimed at helping needy admitted nursing students with their tuition costs. In return, newly registered nurses will work at health care facilities in critical shortage of registered nurses for at least two years for a competitive salary and benefits package negotiated with their prospective employer. For more information, visit [www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/](http://www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/).

## Primary care grants for Johns Hopkins, University of Maryland

The Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland, Baltimore received federal grants as part of three federal programs to stimulate the primary care workforce, administered by HRSA, Secretary Sebelius announced on October 6. The programs are part of the Primary Care Training and Enhancement grants from the fiscal year 2011 federal budget, which are worth \$19.3 million in total.

Both the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and the University of Maryland, Baltimore were granted \$118,860 and \$204,633, respectively under the Residency Training in Primary Care, a \$5.9 million effort aimed at developing innovative curricula concerning anything related to general internal medicine, general pediatrics, and family health medicine.

Meanwhile, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland, Baltimore received one grant each as part of the same grants: \$194,673 under the Faculty Development in Primary Care program, worth \$4.4 million in total; and \$170,268 under the Pre-Doctoral Training in Primary Care program, worth \$3.8 million in total, respectively. Both programs are designed to prepare physicians and medical students, respectively in teaching careers in family medicine, general internal medicine, and general pediatrics programs.

## Medicare Incentive Program Published in Federal Register

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that the 2011 Medicare Electronic Prescribing (eRx) Incentive Program Final Rule was published in Federal Register on September 6. Click on the following link to view the full text: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-09-06/pdf/2011-22629.pdf>.

The purpose of the eRx is to encourage the use of electronic prescribing systems, as noted in a quick reference guide. An increasing physician fee over the next three fiscal years (FY) is scheduled for those physicians who do not become “successful electronic prescribers.” The fees, subtracted from the physicians’ Medicare Part B-covered services, are 1.0 percent in FY 2012, 1.5 percent in FY 2013, and 2.0 percent in FY 2014. There are significant hardship exemption categories which include lack of high-speed internet access and limitations in prescribing activity, among other things you can access the quick reference guide by clicking on the following link: [https://www.cms.gov/ERxIncentive/Downloads/2011eRxRule-QRG\\_08-31-2011F.pdf](https://www.cms.gov/ERxIncentive/Downloads/2011eRxRule-QRG_08-31-2011F.pdf).

The deadline to request an exemption is November 1, 2011.

## National Rural Health Awareness Day on November 17

The Maryland State Office of Rural Health (SORH) announced that it will observe the first National Rural Health Awareness Day, which was created by the National Organization of the State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) on November 17, 2011. The purpose of this day is to raise awareness of health-related issues in rural areas.

Maryland SORH's initial plan includes the reading of the Governor's Proclamation on November 4 by DHMH Secretary Joshua M. Sharfstein as the official announcement of National Rural Health Awareness Day at the Maryland Rural Health Association's conference "Navigating Change by Connecting With Others." The proclamation will be presented to Debbie Goeller, RN, MSN, president of MRHA and local health officer for Worcester County. The SORH will also have an Awareness Booth at the conference and will issue a press release on the DHMH website encouraging rural communities throughout Maryland to share their health-related experiences and plans, and promotion of the National Rural Health Awareness Day through the DHMH Facebook and Twitter pages.

For more information on 2011 National Rural Health Day, visit <http://celebratepowerofrural.org/>

The following is a list of funding opportunities with their corresponding deadlines, eligibility, amount of funds provided, and the length of funding:

### Funding Opportunities

Program	Eligibility	Funding amount length	Deadline
Rural Health Care Services Outreach Grant program	State, county, city, township, special district, Native American tribal governments, 501(c)(3) nonprofits other than institutions of higher education, and American tribal organizations	\$12,000,000 for 3 years	November 22, 2011
Licensure Portability Grant Program	Must be limited by statute to state professional licensing boards with strong record in implementing cross-border activities to overcome licensure barriers to the provision of telemedicine services across many states	\$700,000 for 3 years	January 17, 2012
NIH Health Disparities Research Loan Repayment Program.	Health professionals who commit to do research related to health disparities	NA	November 15, 2011

## HHS with New Incentives for Health Care Providers

On October 20, HHS issued a new program designed to encourage primary care doctors, specialists, hospitals, and other healthcare providers to coordinate their efforts. The program is part of the Affordable Care Act, and includes two initiatives: the Medicare Shared Savings Program which provides incentives for health providers who work together and become accountable for coordinating care for patients, and the Advance Payment model which will provide additional support to physician-owned and rural providers participating in the Medicare Shared Savings Program who also would benefit from additional start-up resources to build the necessary infrastructure, such as new staff or information technology systems paid for by future shared savings by the Accountable Care Organization.

For more information on the Medicare Shared Savings Program final rule, click on the following link:

[http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-27461\\_PI.pdf](http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-27461_PI.pdf)

To read the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services press release on the two programs, click on the following link: <http://www.cms.gov/apps/media/press/release.asp?Counter=4132>

For more information on the Advanced Payment solicitation, click on the following link:

<http://innovations.cms.gov/areas-of-focus/seamless-and-coordinated-care-models/advance-payment/>

For more information on the two initiatives, click here:

<http://www.healthcare.gov/news/factsheets/2011/10/accountable-care10202011a.html>

For more information on Affordable Care Organizations, click here:

<http://www.cms.gov/ACO/>

For more information on a joint CMS and HSS Office of Inspector General Interim Rule in an effort to address possible frauds and abuses, click here:

<http://www.ofr.gov/inspection.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

To access the policy statement, click on either of the following two links:

<http://www.ftc.gov/opp/aco/>

[http://www.justice.gov/atr/public/health\\_care/aco.html](http://www.justice.gov/atr/public/health_care/aco.html)

The Internal Revenue Service Fact Sheet, Tax-exempt Organizations Participating in the Medicare Shared Savings Program through Accountable Care (FS-2011-11) is posted online. It is available by clicking here:

<http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=248490,00.html>

For access to CMS factsheets, click on the following link:

[https://www.cms.gov/apps/media/fact\\_sheets.asp](https://www.cms.gov/apps/media/fact_sheets.asp)

For more information on the final rule on the Medicare Shared Savings Program, click here:

[http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-27461\\_PI.pdf](http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-27461_PI.pdf)

For more information on the interim final rule on final waivers connected with the Shared Savings Program, follow the link below:

[http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-27460\\_PI.pdf](http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-27460_PI.pdf)

For more information on Medicare's Advanced Payment Model's notice, click here:

[http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-27458\\_PI.pdf](http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-27458_PI.pdf)

### List of upcoming events

Event	Time	Location	Contact Information
Maryland Rural Health Association Annual Conference	November 3— November 4	Ocean City, MD	<i>Michelle Clark at <a href="mailto:mrha@allconet.org">mrha@allconet.org</a></i>
Update on Revised Shortage Designation Rules for HPSAs and MUAs	10:00 a.m.— 11:00 a.m. (Arizona Time)	Webinar only	520-626-2432 <i><a href="mailto:hospodar@email.arizona.edu">hospodar@email.arizona.edu</a></i>
The National Rural Health Day	November 17	NA	NA
Health Outcomes Among Children and Families Living in Rural Communities	December 1— December 2	Masur Auditorium	NA
Rural Health Policy Institute	January 30— February 1	Capital Hilton, Washington, D.C.	<a href="http://www.ruralhealthweb.org/pi">http://www.ruralhealthweb.org/pi</a>

### Mid-Atlantic Public Health Training Center's Grant Training Opportunities

Event	Time	Location	Costs
Practical Grant Writing	9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. November 3 (registration begins at 8:15AM)	Philip Merrill Environmental Center 6 Herndon Avenue Annapolis, MD 21403	\$25 (Breakfast and lunch will be provided)
Logic Modeling	9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. on November 17	Ten Oaks Ballroom 5000 Signal Bell Lane Clarksville, MD 21029	\$25 (Breakfast and lunch will be provided)

Both training can be registered on the website at:

[http://www.jhsph.edu/maphtc/training\\_events/events\\_calendar.html](http://www.jhsph.edu/maphtc/training_events/events_calendar.html)

For more information, contact the Mid Atlantic Training Center at 443-287-7833 or [maphtc@jhsph.edu](mailto:maphtc@jhsph.edu)

## A 2-Day Conference on Rural Health at the Masur Auditorium

On December 1 at 8:30 a.m. and December 2 at 8:45 a.m., the Mansur Auditorium will host a conference entitled “Health Outcomes Among Children and Families Living in Rural Communities.” The audience includes, Policy makers, researchers, health professionals, community members, educators, and members of professional organizations. The purpose of the conference is to bring awareness of the lapses in research on the differences between health outcomes for children and families in the rural and urban areas, and how to address disparities between the two kinds of population—including approaches on how to recruit and retain rural populations in prevention, intervention, and health services research, particularly hard-to-reach and high-risk populations both now and in the future.

### Useful resources

- The 2011 edition of Rural America at a Glance highlights the most recent indicators of social and economic conditions in rural areas for use in developing policies and programs to assist rural areas. The 2011 edition focuses on the U.S. rural economy, including employment trends, poverty, education, and population trends. Organization: USDA Economic Research Service. For more information, click on the following link: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB85/> and click on the PDF link.
- The White House Rural Council: Feedback from Rural America is an overview of the challenges and the opportunities rural Americans have voiced during the White House Rural Council's visits to rural communities. For more information, click on the following link: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/whrc\\_travel.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/whrc_travel.pdf).
- The September 2011 Rural Health Research Center policy brief on the feasibility and consequences of bundled payments for rural health providers and patients assesses the financial and quality challenges of implementing them, explores the possible impact on quality of care delivered under a facility-physician bundled payment system, and describes potential modifications to address issues in rural areas. For more information, click here: <http://www.uppermidwestrhrc.org/pdf/bundling.pdf>.

## Maryland Health Benefits Exchange Issues Requests for Proposals to build an enrollment and eligibility system

On Monday, October 24, 2011, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange issued a Request for Proposals for the purpose of maintaining opportunities to individuals for access to health care under the Affordable Care Act, according to a press release on the DHMH website. According to the overview, the Affordable Care Act requires states to begin operating Health Insurance Exchange by January 2014 or to allow the federal government to operate an Exchange on its behalf, and Maryland adopted a Health Insurance Exchange (HIX) bill on April 12, 2011. In order to prevent abuse of the system the state established a single IT infrastructure.

A pre-proposal conference is scheduled for Friday, November 4, at 1:00 p.m. at 300 W. Preston Street in the auditorium. The deadline for all proposals is 3:00 p.m. on December 5 at the same location.

To access the Request for Proposals, go to [https://ebidmarketplace.com/downloads/DHMSO294031/Maryland Health Benefit Exchange ACA RFP - FINAL - PDF 1.pdf](https://ebidmarketplace.com/downloads/DHMSO294031/Maryland%20Health%20Benefit%20Exchange%20ACA%20RFP%20-%20FINAL%20-%20PDF%201.pdf)

For more information on the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, please visit <http://dhhm.maryland.gov/healthreform/exchange/>