



The State Office of Rural Health

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Colorado Rural Health Center Releases 2018 Snapshot of Rural Health

**Colorado Rural Health Center Snapshot of Rural Health Explores Demographics,
Population Health, and Opioid Use in Rural Colorado**

*The 2018 Edition Snapshot of Rural Health makes the argument for committing to the vibrancy
of the healthcare industry in rural areas of the state.*

Denver, CO – February 12, 2018 – This week, the Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) released the 2018 edition of its *Snapshot of Rural Health*. The annual publication highlights rural health data such as demographic trends, economic impact analysis, health risk indicators, and county-level health data through the use of infographic data visualization, text, and maps.

Colorado Rural Health Center CEO Michelle Mills is confident that the annual publication will once again provide clear and concise information about the state of rural healthcare in Colorado. “The Snapshot starts our calendar year out on a knowledgeable foundation for building our advocacy efforts on as the year progresses. The Snapshot is an essential look into what’s important in rural health amidst a changing healthcare system,” explains Mills.

The *Snapshot of Rural Health* also includes data collected and analyzed by CRHC’s internal quality improvement program, Improving Communications and Readmissions (iCARE). The three primary goals of iCARE are to work with hospitals and clinics to improve communications in transitions of care, improve the clinical process and systems to reduce readmissions, particularly for heart failure, pneumonia, and diabetic patients, and to maintain low readmission rates. The data highlights preventable hospital stays for counties in which iCARE hospitals reside and indicates that for this area the average rate was 46 per 1,000 Medicare enrollees,

compared to the state's average rate of 32. The data also highlights that the measure for Hemoglobin HbA1c, Poor Control (>9.0%) displays that participating iCARE clinics report that of patients 18-75 years of age with diabetes, only 25.7% either had HbA1c poor control, a missing a result, or an HbA1c test was not done during the measurement year when compared to the state average of 55%.

Michelle Mills, alongside other CRHC staff, attended the National Rural Health Association's [Rural Health Policy Institute](#) on February 6-8 in Washington DC. The event affords Colorado-based staff an opportunity to meet with policymakers and stakeholders to discuss legislative priorities. The *Snapshot of Rural Health* is a vital component of these discussions.

Examples of featured data include:

- 750,230 Coloradans live in a rural or frontier county
- The state's 10 oldest counties are rural with a median age of at least 50
- 50% of rural children enrolled in public schools are eligible for free or reduced lunch compared to 36% of urban children
- Colorado has over 314,900 health and wellness workers across the state and a \$16.5 billion annual payroll. Healthcare is one of the top 3 industries in rural Colorado
- Roughly 1 in 4 rural households in the state do not have access to broadband today (25 megabits per second download and 3 mbps upload)
- Implementing an Electronic Medical Record (EMR) could cost a single provider approximately \$163,765 with roughly 52% of costs applied to software and maintenance
- A total of 912 people in Colorado died from overdoses in 2016. Of those deaths, 300 were caused by opioids while 228 were caused by heroin
- On average, it takes 1 to 3 years to recruit a physician for rural Colorado.
- A total of 51 facilities in rural Colorado participated in CRHC's iCARE program in 2017. The program is aimed, in part, at combatting the fact that diabetes complications account for nearly 32% of total readmissions.

As Colorado's State Office of Rural Health and member-based association for rural health facilities, CRHC is a clearinghouse for rural health information and resources, helping providers throughout Colorado enhance healthcare services available in rural communities, and helping elected officials make informed decisions about healthcare policy.

The Snapshot of Rural Health is available for download at

<http://coruralhealth.org/services/policy-and-advocacy> - For additional resources, visit the CRHC resource center at <http://coruralhealth.org/resources>.

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 and the State Rural Health Association. The organization's mission is to enhance healthcare services in the state by providing information, education, linkages, tools, and energy toward addressing rural health issues. CRHC's vision is to improve healthcare services available in rural communities to ensure that all rural Coloradans have access to comprehensive, affordable, high quality healthcare. For more information visit www.coruralhealth.org, call 303-832-7493, or call toll free 800-851-6782 from rural Colorado.