



10 Questions with Angie LaFlamme

1. What is your name, title and how long have you worked at the Center?

Angie LaFlamme, Program Specialist, and I have worked at the National Rural Health Resource Center for 28 years, as of March 2024.

2. What do you do in your role at the Center?

I work closely with my colleagues, Rhonda Barcus and Molly Carmack, to administer the Center's Rural Healthcare Provider Transition Project (RHPTP), a five-year cooperative agreement made possible through the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. My role within the project is to assist with providing direct support to five small rural hospitals and certified rural health clinics each year, helping them strengthen their organization's understanding of VBC and learn strategies for being effective participants in a health care system focused on value.

3. How has the Center grown since you joined?

When I started at The Center in March 1996, the organization was called the Minnesota Center for Rural Health, and our work focused within the state of Minnesota, for the most part. By 2003, our work had begun encompassing many states across the country. Because of this, we needed to change our name to reflect our work nationally and became the Rural Health Resource Center. Two years later, in

2005, Rural Health Innovations, LLC, a subsidiary of the Rural Health Resource Center was created. Our national work continued to grow, and we became a leading technical assistance and knowledge center. Therefore, we underwent one more name change to become the National Rural Health Resource Center.

Some fun facts about my early years at the Center: We had roughly 10 employees, took phone messages on the pink "While You Were Out" message pads, saved documents to floppy discs, had a sign-up sheet to secure the "bag phone" for upcoming work travel, and rarely utilized the internet, as it was only 4 or 5 years old at the time, and information was extremely limited.

4. What's the most rewarding aspect of your job?

Seeing the health care organizations we work with succeed. Despite the many positive attributes and assets associated with working and living in rural communities, being a part of a rural health care organization has its challenges. These "boots on the ground people" show up daily to provide quality care, even though they are isolated, short-staffed, wear multiple hats, and struggle with reliable internet access, just to name a few. Yet, despite all their challenges, they continue to seek improvement. In addition, many are working towards and preparing for a transition to value-based care. I get to show up daily and witness rural health care organizations working to improve quality, patient safety culture, satisfaction, engagement, and care coordination. It's so inspiring!

5. What's the most challenging part of your job?

The rural healthcare organizations we work with struggle to do more than their typical daily patient care due to various obstacles. For instance, finding the time to develop sustainable processes for quality improvement activities, tracking quality data that would increase patient satisfaction, focusing on health equity, or cultivating meaningful partnerships. These are all tasks that take time and, more importantly, staff. Most rural health care organizations are dealing with increasing staff shortages,

elevated turnover, financial strain, and competing priorities, making it increasingly more challenging to focus on these areas and build sustainability.



6. Where do you live, and what does rural mean to you?

I live in the village of Lake Nebagamon, located in northwest Wisconsin, with a population of 1,130. Rural is important to me as my parents live in a rural Minnesota community, and as they age, knowing that they have access to quality care is comforting, especially as I live 4+ hours from them.

7. Do you have a family, children, spouse, or partner that you'd like to highlight?

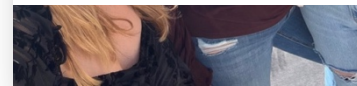
I live with my significant other, Tom, on 10 acres in Lake Nebagamon. I have two adult children: Josh (30), who lives and works in Minnesota, and Abby (26), who is married and lives in Kansas.

8. Do you have any pets?

I have two dogs: Chapin, a 12-year-old white multipoo, and a rescue, Rocko, who we think may be a black lab/Cane Corso mix. Both have the sweetest dispositions and are the very best companions. I would have ten more if I could.



I - Angie visiting Abby in Kansas.



9. What do you like to do for fun?

I love antiquing, building small furniture pieces, thrifting old home décor, and reimagining what it could look like, then turning it into a unique and in-style piece again. I also enjoy my road trips to visit my daughter in Kansas and spending time with my son, parents, and extended family.

10. What advice would you give someone to find happiness in life?

Limit judgments, practice gratitude, and always look for beauty in the mundane.