



NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (HIT) COALITION MEETING

Tuesday, October 29, 2019

Conference Call

The National Rural HIT Coalition is supported by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) and coordinated by the Technical Assistance & Services Center (TASC), a program of the National Rural Health Resource Center (The Center).

Participants:

- Sally Buck, Nicole Clement, Brooke Davis, Terry Hill, Andrew Naslund, National Rural Health Resource Center
- Jill Bullock, Arizona Center for Rural Health)
- Jennifer Contreras, Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)
- Scott Daniels, Hawaii State Office of Rural Health
- Gerard Jolley and Phillip Stringfield, National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC)
- Natassja Manzanero and Whitney Wiggins, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), FORHP, Office for the Advancement of Telehealth (OAT)
- Lakeisha Moore, North Carolina State Office of Rural Health
- Neal Neuberger, HealthTech Strategies
- Matt Quinn, HRSA
- Cristal Ramos, Urban Institute (ONC contractor)
- Wendy Ross, South Central Telehealth Resource Center
- Brock Slabach, National Rural Health Association (NRHA)
- Gary Wingrove, Mayo Ambulance
- Joe Wivoda, Analysts, Inc.



Update on State and Federal HIT and Telehealth Legislation and Regulations – Neal Neuberger, Health Tech Strategies

- The [CONNECT for Health Act of 2019](#) was introduced on October 30, 2019. The legislation would further ease the restrictions on telehealth to increase patient access to telehealth services and remove barriers to adoption and use by hospitals and other providers. Medicare currently reimburses only for live-video telehealth services, and asynchronous services (store-and-forward) is not permitted for reimbursement (except for Federal telemedicine demonstration programs in Alaska or Hawaii). This legislation would allow current restrictions (geographic, originating site, modality limitation, provider type, and service requirements) to be waived by the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) if deemed that:
 - the waiver is expected to reduce spending without reducing the quality of care or improve quality of care without increasing spending; or
 - the waiver would apply to telehealth services furnished in originating sites located in a high need health professional shortage area.
- The [Lower Health Care Costs Act](#) bill was introduced by the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions on June 26, 2019. The bill focuses on drug pricing. There are some provisions related to making claims data public to facilitate state-led initiatives to lower health care costs, improve quality, and promote competition based on quality and cost. The proposed bill has some bipartisan support and includes perinatal and maternal health as well.

Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) Electronic Health Record Reporting Program—Christal Ramos, Urban Institute

In the [21st Century Cures Act](#), Congress directed HHS to establish a new electronic health record (EHR) reporting program to provide publicly available, comparative information about certified health IT features related to security, usability, interoperability, conformance to certification testing, and other areas in order to improve transparency of the market. The Office



of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) is currently developing this program and contracting with the Urban Institute (UI) on its development.

- It's been important to ONC that UI hear from rural and small health care organizations so that it fits them as well. UI had a call with stakeholder groups and traveled around the country for input and put out a Request for Information. They've analyzed and are writing up all the input for ONC and will create measures while considering the information received from stakeholders.
- Following this series of stakeholder calls, listening sessions, and RFI (80 responses), common themes include interoperability, price transparency, substance use records needing to be segmented, purchasing decisions, vendor contracting processes, privacy and security, usability, customizability, and the need for remote/mobile access.
- Going forward, once measures are developed, they will test them and post measures in the Federal Register in the Spring of 2020 for public comment. The plan is to implement the program in 2021 and 2022. They want to create measures that can be updated to remain relevant.

Telehealth Updates—Natassja Manzanero, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), Office for the Advancement of Telehealth (OAT)

- National Rural Health Day (NRHD) is November 21st. Visit the NRHD website <https://www.powerofrural.org/>. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will be collaborating on [multiple events](#) that week, including telehealth as a topic.
- HRSA and the Telehealth Resource Centers (TRCs) will be at HIMSS 2020 in Orlando, FL March 9-13, 2020.
- TRCs continue to make an impact, check out annual impact [report](#).
- [Mercy Virtual Care Center](#) in Missouri is an example of a completely virtual care center. They develop and deliver telehealth to collaborate with bedside clinicians, primary providers, and specialists to maximize patient data in real time in order to diagnose and intervene earlier.



- The Center for Connected Health Policy, which is the national telehealth policy resource center, released [2019 Telehealth Reimbursement Report](#). This report is updated annually.

Cybersecurity Update—Matt Quinn, HRSA

- October was National Cybersecurity Awareness Month. To celebrate, the CISA 405(D) group sent out an email each week in detailing a major cybersecurity threat that is plaguing the healthcare industry and tips on how to safeguard against it. The information provided in the weekly emails was derived from the [Health Industry Cybersecurity Practices: Mitigating Threats and Protecting Patients \(HICP\)](#) publication which helps the healthcare industry prepare and stay aware of the five major cybersecurity threats.
 - Email Phishing Attack
 - Ransomware
 - Loss or Theft of Equipment or Data
 - Insider, Accidental, or Intentional Data Loss
 - Attacks on Connected Medical Devices
- There is a future effort planned to look at additional threats. They will also consider other risks and telehealth will also be a future consideration as it is becoming more widely adopted.
- The [Health Sector Coordinating Council](#) has a task group for telemedicine. The goal is to establish resources and standards of practices for secure provision of web-based or other connected medical services. They are seeking best practices and insights from industry experts and turned those into usable resources. Matt Quinn is co-chair of this task group.

Neal Neuberger, Health Tech Strategies

A recent report noted that breaches in 2019 have already doubled from 2018, including hackers, stolen credentials, ransomware, and other forms of attacks. Now more than half of American's health care records have already been breached.

- Rural facilities are unprepared to deal with all this due to their lack of resources. Medical device vulnerabilities are significant. End-to-end



encryption is underused. Issues with data continue, such as who owns patient data. Data quality is also an issue and fake data coming in.

- There are a couple of bills pending while FCC and HRSA are both trying to get their arms around the issues too.
- The [Information Sharing and Analysis Center \(ISAC\)](#) and Information Sharing and Analysis Organizations (ISAOs) have responsibility for health care organizations that join a U.S. cybersecurity sharing ecosystem . They are also a conduit to communicate with agencies engaged in cybersecurity initiatives such as FCC and others.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Connected Care Pilot and Rural Health Care Programs –Jennifer Contreras, Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)

- Rural Health Care (RHC) Program: A webinar was held on November 7, 2019 that focused on applicant best practices in preparation for Funding Year (FY) 2020. This webinar was aimed toward first time applicants interested in requesting funding, current applicants, and consortium leaders. With FCC order 19-78 released August 20, 2019, there are program changes that were highlighted in the webinar, though the changes do not affect FY2019 funding requests and application. View a side by side [comparison of RHC Program Changes from FY2019 to FY2020](#).
- **Connected Care:** A [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking \(NPRM\)](#) came out in late July 2019, seeking comment on the appropriate budget, duration, structure and other issues related to a proposed to a three-year, \$100 million Connected Care pilot program to support bringing telehealth services directly to low-income patients and veterans. The NPRM can be viewed on the [Federal Register](#), however the comment period has closed.