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**New York Rural Health Leader Karen Madden Receives
2026 Calico Quality Leadership Award**

Karen Madden, Director of the Center for Health Care Policy and Resource Development at the New York State Department of Health, has received the 2026 Calico Quality Leadership Award for her lasting contributions to rural health care and the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program. The award was presented during the annual Flex Program Reverse Site Visit held July 14-16 in Washington, D.C.

The Calico Quality Leadership Award is presented annually by the Technical Assistance and Services Center (TASC), a program of the National Rural Health Resource Center (The Center), to recognize an individual whose leadership has made a significant and lasting contribution to rural health care. Madden's career reflects the very qualities this award honors, demonstrating exceptional leadership, unwavering commitment to rural communities, and making a positive impact on the Medicare Flex program at both the state and national levels.

An original member of the TASC Advisory Council, Madden's work with the Flex Program has helped improve the financial stability, quality performance and long-term viability of critical access hospitals while advancing rural health initiatives nationwide. Throughout her career, she has routinely worked to improve access to quality health care services for rural populations through advocacy, supporting rural health care providers, and promoting the development of innovative care delivery models. She has also mentored and supported countless Flex Program and State Office of Rural Health leaders across the country.

Center CEO Sally Buck said Madden's commitment and knowledge of the Flex Program benefits all states, not only New York. "Karen is an innovative rural health leader committed to excellence in rural hospitals," Buck said. "Her collaboration and dedication to improving

access to sustainable, high-quality health care in rural communities reflect the leadership qualities exemplified by Dr. Calico [the award's namesake] and previous award winners."

Terry Hill, The Center's senior advisor for rural health leadership and policy praised Karen's years of dedicated leadership and impact, stating, "Karen has been a longtime leader in the Flex program and has made significant contributions to advancing rural health in New York and across the nation."

In receiving this award, Madden joins a distinguished group of rural health leaders whose careers have advanced access, quality, and innovation in rural health care. Her contributions have left a lasting impact on rural communities in New York and throughout the nation.

The Calico Quality Leadership Award honors the legacy of Dr. Forrest Calico, a former clinician and health care administrator. After graduating from the University of Kentucky College of Medicine, Calico served as a flight surgeon in the U.S. Air Force. He was later a family physician and the residency program director at St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Edgewood, Kentucky, before being named president and CEO of Lexington, Kentucky-based Appalachian Regional Healthcare. Calico also served in administrative roles at the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and the National Rural Health Association.

The National Rural Health Resource Center is the nation's leading technical assistance and knowledge center focused on rural health — directly supporting rural hospitals, clinics and community health centers, State Offices of Rural Health and other rural health organizations with information, tools and resources designed to help sustain access to quality health services in rural communities and improve the health of residents living there. Visit www.ruralcenter.org for more information.