Since 2006, the Virginia Center for Diabetes Professional Education (VCDPE) has offered tele-education programs to critical access hospitals (CAH’s), health districts, small rural hospitals, and community health centers located in high diabetes risk areas of the state. The program provides self-management education to diabetes patients. This innovative educational initiative was accomplished using Flex grant funding received from the Virginia Department of Health Office of Minority Health and Health Equity. Partner programs and agencies included the University of Virginia Diabetes Education and Management Program (DEMP), the University of Virginia Office of Telemedicine, and the Northern Neck Middle Peninsula Telehealth Consortium (NNMPTC).

As the accompanying map shows, the recipients of programs in 2010 were located primarily in the southwestern and northern neck areas of Virginia. Two educational programs were offered in each of the months of May, June, September, and October, for a total of 8 programs and 18 hours of broadcasting. Each month a general introduction and overview of diabetes (“the Nuts and Bolts of Diabetes”) was offered, followed a week or two later by the basic nutrition program (“I Have Diabetes, Now What Do I Eat?”).

Seventeen (17) individual sites and a total of 179 participants participated in the diabetes tele-education programs in 2010. Reactions to the programs were extremely positive in terms of their personal usefulness (average rating of 4.49 out of 5) and helpfulness in managing diabetes (119 out of 120 said it was helpful). Most people judged teleconferencing to be an effective or very effective means of delivering diabetes education (average rating of 4.1 out of 5). Teleconferencing technology continues to be an essential and effective means of reaching people with diabetes in high risk areas of Virginia.
Map 1: Sites Participating in Broadcasts and Number of People Per Site