

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RURAL HEALTH CARE

October 2002

PRINCIPLES OF RURAL HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN

Throughout the design of the strategic plan, Task Force members and consultants thought it was important to define a set of principles and the social contract that would guide the plan's formation. These principles, with brief explanations are:

- Make quality, affordable, comprehensive health care available to all Nevadans – The most important part of this principle is “all Nevadans”. This includes rural and urban residents, rich and poor, those with and without health care coverage, and citizens, documented individuals, and undocumented persons. The Task Force is cognizant of the philosophical and financial implications of this principle. Nevertheless, it maintains that progress toward this is imperative, given the long term benefits to society.
- Utilize currently available infrastructure – Although the infrastructure of the rural health care system needs improvement, it does exist in most rural communities. A key component of our strategic plan is to support and build on what currently exists. This approach will also increase the transparency of changes for community residents.
- Facilitate local control – Individuals that live in local communities are in the best position to decide the needs of their communities. We suggest that as this strategic plan is considered and, hopefully implemented, community representatives will be involved in the implementation process.
- Facilitate the development of a DHR system that distributes resources to rural communities to allow parity to achieve needed outcomes – Currently, State resources are distributed to Clark, Washoe, and “other” counties. Only five to ten percent of State health care dollars are distributed to rural counties. To improve the health care and health of rural Nevadans, rural communities must not be considered as an afterthought during the resource distribution process. DHR and related health agencies must consider the unique needs and resources of each county, and fund initiatives accordingly. Because of the vast needs of each county, funding strategic plan initiatives must be a priority.
- Enhance flexibility of health care providers through maximum use of physician extenders, nurses, public health and EMS personnel, dental hygienists, and pharmacists – As described in this report, the rural counties have a severe health care workforce shortage. As one way to reduce this shortage, we suggest that the scopes of practice of rural providers be reviewed and expanded. • Focus on prevention activities that reduce the need for ongoing and costly treatment – Another key element to the success of rural health care initiatives is the improvement of rural Nevadans’ health and lifestyle. Improved health, facilitated by good nutrition and exercise, will minimize the need for health care services and reduce the cost of health care expenditures.

EXHIBIT C Health Care

Document consists of 3 pages

☒ Entire document provided.

☐ Due to size limitations, pages _____ provided.

A copy of the complete document is available through the Research Library
(775/684-6827 or e-mail library@lcb.state.nv.us). Meeting Date: April 13, 2006

- Implement “no wrong door” and share administrative resources – To maximize available resources, we suggest that State and local agencies collocate to share administrative resources and minimize the time and travel distances their clients must expend to obtain needed services.
- Maximize the use of case managers and care coordinators – Obtaining needed health care is not an easy task in today's world of specialization. To ensure that limited services are not unnecessarily duplicated and that rural patients obtain needed care as efficiently as possible, rural health care entities should utilize case managers and care coordinators whenever possible.
- Adopt a public policy that encourages a consistently supportive approach to rural health care – Data obtained from the State Demographer illustrate that most rural counties are growing and increasingly being populated by elderly Nevadans. State resources and policy makers must support the development and maintenance of health care in rural communities before their needs are even more critical than they are today.
- Support collection of accurate and timely data to enhance effective decision making – Throughout the completion of this project, Task Force members and the consulting team had difficulty, or were often unable to obtain needed data. A centralized data collection system is needed to ensure that health care data used to make policy and funding decisions is complete, accurate, current, and readily available.
- Work with the Legislature to expand revenue base to fund health care and social programs – We understand that a Task Force is currently addressing tax and revenue issues for the Legislature. It is clear that a revenue expansion is necessary to address the needs of Nevada residents and we support these efforts.
- Recruit, hire, and train local residents whenever possible – Health care professionals that were raised in a rural area are more likely to remain there than individuals that were raised elsewhere. All recruitment, hiring, and training initiatives are based on this premise and should be pursued by policy makers.
- Enhance efficiency and reduce administrative barriers within the system – Rural health care practitioners must deal with limited resources on a daily basis. State legislators and policy makers must do everything possible to reduce or eliminate barriers to the delivery of health care services to rural residents.
- Strive for long term financial viability and self-sustainability – Whatever action items are chosen for implementation, the long term financial health of the community hospitals and clinics should be the highest priority. They are usually one of the top two or three employers in each community. The revenues generated by health care can be the largest, most dependable source of income to rural communities and their residents.
- Focus on initiatives that are likely to result in the greatest health benefits for the largest proportion of rural citizens – Like the sixth principle described above, prevention of future

health care problems is critical in an age of limited resources. Additionally, the vast number of health care issues and their possible solutions require that the greatest good for the greatest number be ensured.

- Maximize federal funding – In an age of limited resources, it is important that health care solutions strive to take maximum advantage of federal reimbursement opportunities.