

**144.1483 RURAL HEALTH INITIATIVES.**

The commissioner of health, through the Office of Rural Health, and consulting as necessary with the commissioner of human services, the commissioner of commerce, the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, and other state agencies, shall:

(1) develop a detailed plan regarding the feasibility of coordinating rural health care services by organizing individual medical providers and smaller hospitals and clinics into referral networks with larger rural hospitals and clinics that provide a broader array of services;

(2) develop recommendations regarding health education and training programs in rural areas, including but not limited to a physician assistants' training program, continuing education programs for rural health care providers, and rural outreach programs for nurse practitioners within existing training programs;

(3) develop a statewide, coordinated recruitment strategy for health care personnel and maintain a database on health care personnel as required under section 144.1485;

(4) develop and administer technical assistance programs to assist rural communities in: (i) planning and coordinating the delivery of local health care services; and (ii) hiring physicians, nurse practitioners, public health nurses, physician assistants, and other health personnel;

(5) study and recommend changes in the regulation of health care personnel, such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants, related to scope of practice, the amount of on-site physician supervision, and dispensing of medication, to address rural health personnel shortages;

(6) support efforts to ensure continued funding for medical and nursing education programs that will increase the number of health professionals serving in rural areas;

(7) support efforts to secure higher reimbursement for rural health care providers from the Medicare and medical assistance programs;

(8) coordinate the development of a statewide plan for emergency medical services, in cooperation with the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council;

(9) establish a Medicare rural hospital flexibility program pursuant to section 1820 of the federal Social Security Act, United States Code, title 42, section 1395i-4, by developing a state rural health plan and designating, consistent with the rural health plan, rural nonprofit or public hospitals in the state as critical access hospitals. Critical access hospitals shall include facilities that are certified by the state as necessary providers of health care services to residents in the area. Necessary providers of health care services are designated as critical access hospitals on the basis of being more than 20 miles, defined as official mileage as reported by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, from the next nearest hospital, being the sole hospital in the county, being a hospital located in a county with a designated medically underserved area or health professional shortage area, or being a hospital located in a county contiguous to a county with a medically underserved area or health professional shortage area. A critical access hospital located in a county with a designated medically underserved area or a health professional shortage area or in a county contiguous to a county with a medically underserved area or health professional shortage area shall continue to be recognized as a critical access hospital in the event the medically underserved area or health professional shortage area designation is subsequently withdrawn; and

(10) carry out other activities necessary to address rural health problems.

**History:** *1992 c 549 art 5 s 9; 1995 c 212 art 3 s 59; 1998 c 257 s 1; 1999 c 245 art 2 s 22; 2001 c 171 s 4; 1Sp2003 c 14 art 7 s 30; 2005 c 107 art 2 s 60; 1Sp2005 c 4 art 6 s 12*